



COMING EVENTS

The September Curlew lists Coming Events throughout the 2008/2009 season. There will be additional events throughout the year which will be announced in the Curlew. Please note that guests are always welcome at all WBFN meetings and outings.

Note also that meeting locations have changed.

● **Sunday, September 21, 2008 - Outing to Garden Hill Pond**

Destination meeting time: 10:00am

Carpool location: Carpool lot on Phillip's Road in Port Hope (Off Ontario St. across from Arby's). **Carpool meeting time:** 9:30 a.m.

Secondary carpool location: Intersection of Highway 28 and County Rd. 9. **Secondary carpool meeting time:** 9:45am

Details: Garden Hill Conservation Area is located on County Rd. 9 (Ganaraska Rd.) west of Highway 28 in the village of Garden Hill. The outing will mainly focus on waterfowl, however, the local otters at this pond have become a sight to see all on their own. For more information please contact Ben Walters at 905-885-8586, or benjaminwalters@trentu.ca.

● **Friday, September 26, 2008, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St., Cobourg**

Speaker: Paul O'Hara of Blue Oak Native Landscapes. **Topic: Native Trees of Southern Ontario.** Paul O'Hara shows dozens of photographs of gardens he has built as owner/operator of Blue Oak Native Landscapes. He describes his landscape aesthetic, offers practical tips to aspiring gardeners and theorizes on the future of native plant gardening in Southern Ontario.

● **Saturday, October 4, 2008 - Outing to Brighton Provincial Wildlife Area**

Destination meeting time: 9:30am

Carpool location: Carpool lot on Phillip's Road in Port Hope (Off Ontario St. across from

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Arby's). **Carpool meeting time:** 8:00am

Secondary carpool location: the Cobourg carpool lot at Cty. Rd. 45 and Hwy 401. **Secondary carpool meeting time:** 8:20am

Tertiary carpool location: Wooler Road carpool lot at the 401 and County Road 30 (Wooler Rd.). **Tertiary carpool meeting time:** 9:00am

Details: The 392ha Brighton Provincial Wildlife Area has a mixture of ponds, streams, and meadows and wooded areas. To get there drive north on County Road 30 and turn east on Carman Rd. Following Carman Rd. east we will continue to Coltman Rd. and turn right (south). After following Coltman Rd. for 2km we will park in the Wildlife Area's parking area on the right hand side (west). For more information please contact Ben Walters at 905-885-8586, or benjaminwalters@trentu.ca.

● **Friday, October 24, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting, Ruth Clarke Activity Centre, 81 Mill St.S., Port Hope.** Parking lot on the across Mill St.. from the Centre.

Speaker: Alison Elliott, Science Teacher at Trinity College School. **Topic: Teachers Teaching Teachers - Uganda Earth Education with the Jane Goodall Institute.**

● **Friday, November 28, 2008, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St., Cobourg**

Speaker: Anthony Holmes of Port Hope. **Topic: The migration of the Red Admiral Butterfly.**

● **Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 20, 2008.** Contact Roger Frost (905-885-9615 or ekrf@eagle.ca) if you would like participate.

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The editor is most grateful to those who have contributed to this issue of the Curlew. Copy for the October 2008 issue should be received by September 30, 2008. Rare or interesting sightings should be reported to Elizabeth Kellogg and Roger Frost at 905-885-9615, ekrf@eagle.ca, or Norma Wallace (885-5552) for the October Curlew. Correspondence for WBFN should be addressed to: "The Willow Beach Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 421, Port Hope, ON L1A 3Z3."

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● **Friday, January 30, 2009, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St., Cobourg**

Speaker: Ben Walters, Trent University Master of science Candidate. **Topic: Avian Research in the Ganaraska Forest.** The presentation will also include information on shorebird research he helped with at Assateague Island National Seashore in Maryland and on Akimiski Island, Nunavut on James Bay.

● **Friday, February 27, 2009, 7:00 p.m. - Annual General Meeting.** Location and Speaker to be determined.

● **Friday, March 27, 2009, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting, Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St., Cobourg**

Speaker: Jeff Beaver, Topic: Growing Wild Rice

● **Friday, April 24, 7:30 p.m., General Meeting.** Location and Speaker to be determined.

● **Northumberland Summer Bird Count, Saturday, June 13 and Sunday June 14, 2009.** Contact Roger Frost (905-885-9615 or ekrf@eagle.ca) if you would like to participate.

Rare Plant in Cobourg

The last sighting of this month's very long list is of a Bur Buttercup in bloom in Cobourg Campground. This is one of only two sites in the Province where it occurs. It was discovered here by Clive Goodwin in April 23, 2004. Incredibly, Sean Blaney found it growing in Long Point Provincial Park 5 days before Clive found it in Cobourg. These finds were written up and finally published last November in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*. The reference is Bur Buttercup, *Ranunculus testiculatus*, New to Eastern Canada by Michael J. Oldham, Clive E. Goodwin and Sean Blaney, *The Canadian Field-Naturalists* 120 (3): 319-322.

Membership News

● WBFN extends sympathy to the family of Margueriet Huggins, who passed away in June. Margueriet was a long time member of the club and often submitted sightings from around her feeders on Choate Road

● The Club extends wishes to Elinor Kelly as she convalesces. She had a lengthy stay in hospital this summer.

New Program Coordinator

At the time of the 2008 AGM, Susanne Williams indicated that she wanted to step down as Program Coordinator. We are pleased to announce that Deborah Panko has agreed to accept this position. Thank you, Deborah.

Many thanks to Susanne for the great work she has done in this job. We have been treated to a very interesting line-up of speakers under her leadership.

Interesting Observation

On July 18, Ray and Marilyn Inch of Deer Park Rd., Port Hope Ward 2, reported watching a pair of Cedar Waxwings coming to their Bougainvillea bush, pulling off short pieces of string. Ray had placed this "construction material" on branches of the bush, on a daily basis and the waxwings were using it in the building of their nest in a large red maple tree nearby. Television can't top this!!

- Norma Wallace

Audrey Wilson
receives
Ontario Nature Achievement Award
at
Federation of Ontario Naturalists Annual Meeting, June 2008

Following is the text of the nomination for this award which was submitted by the WBFN Board, recommending Audrey Wilson for this award.

Audrey is a naturalist who is well known within our community, many parts of the province and beyond. Over the years, Audrey's name has become synonymous with natural history, nature study and specifically outdoor education.

Audrey cannot remember a time when she was not involved in nature study. She was raised on a farm and nurtured by interested parents who came by it honestly - her late father's uncle was Professor John D. Wilson, author of *How to Study Nature in Elementary Schools* (1900) - a manual for teachers. She was also encouraged by such people as Norman Massey, Secondary School teacher and Anne Merrill, nature columnist with the *Globe and Mail*.

Audrey is an all round naturalist with special interests in ornithology, entomology (especially Lepidoptera), nature photography and lapidary work.

Academically, Audrey studied science-oriented subjects. She spent 5 summer sessions at F.O.N. Camp Billie Bear. Specialized courses at Queens and Michigan State University in Outdoor Education came later. Still, she explains, "the practical field aspect has come by hours alone in the field or with fellow naturalists, sharing what was found. Academic work simply complimented this approach."

Recognition for her outstanding ability has come to Audrey Wilson on several occasions. In 1955, she received the Lillian Payne Memorial Scholarship from Toronto Field Naturalists to attend Camp Billie Bear (her first experience); in 1962 she was honored,

along with Rachel Carson, as one of two women to receive "Orchid of the Year" for her Monarch Butterfly research studies; in 1969 she received a British Field Studies certificate in teaching and in 1973 a Master of Arts degree from Michigan State University in Curriculum with an emphasis on Outdoor Education.

Audrey is the author of "Studying Birds" (published in English and French) and co-author of "Studies for Open Places" - both approved by the Ministry of Education for use in Canadian Schools. As well, she has written a scientific paper on her Monarch Butterfly Research studies.

In teaching on her subject her students range from nursery school to post-graduate students at two American universities and teachers in the field.

Few people, we feel, could equal Audrey Wilson's background and experience in her vocation. Her teaching career began in 1954 in a one-roomed rural school; for 1956-1958, while a classroom teacher emphasizing natural science, she spent her summers at Camp Winnebago as Nature Lore Specialist. She pioneered the Outdoor Education county programme and since 1968 has held the position of full-time Outdoor Education Consultant for the Northumberland and Newcastle Board of Education for kindergarten to Grade 13 students. As well, she conducted teachers in-service workshops for Ontario Teachers Federation, participated in many conferences, also Council of Outdoor Educators. She represented elementary teachers in Outdoor Education at the first Geneva Conference at Lake

Couchiching in 1967. She has been editor of "Insect Migration studies" for 10 years, is a member of the executive of CPAC - Colour Photography Association of Canada, Nature Division; was outdoor Education representative on the Ontario Teachers Federation Committee for 6 years and is advisor to the Lower Trent Conservation Authority.

In 1975-76, Miss Wilson was granted a leave of absence for a year to serve on a provincial level as an Executive Assistant in the Federation Women Teachers Association of Ontario. In this capacity she conducted 178 Outdoor Education Workshops for teachers across the province - and drove some 30,000 miles on the job!

Audrey notes some other points of interest along the way: "We've had over 26,000 students days at our Outdoor Education Centre on Dr. Laurie Lawson's property near Cobourg; since 1957 have tagged over 15,000 Monarch Butterflies personally and have had approximately 50 returns; have some 800+ nests on file at the Royal Ontario Museum; have 14 nature slides in the National Collection of Nature Photographs in Ottawa; have enjoyed looking after numerous waifs and strays, such as Wee Willis the Saw-whet Owl, Sam the Screech Owl, Teddy the Porcupine, Susie the Raccoon, Spike the Great Blue Heron, Mickey the Robin and many more - including the current guest, Ruby the Hummingbird, that has only one wing."

A founding member of the W.B.F.N., Audrey was two years editor of "The Curlew" and served as indoor and outdoor programme convenor. Audrey received a volunteer service award for 30+ years of service to W.B.F.N. in 2001 and is presently a valued director of the club.

**CONGRATULATIONS
AUDREY!**

News From Lone Pine Marsh

The Lone Pine Marsh is still growing. In May, we received two adjacent parcels of land northwest of our original location on the Cold Creek Watershed. Robert and Frieda Kennedy donated 123 acres of Alder swamp, which brings our total area to 300 acres. Accessibility is difficult, so we plan to leave it just as it is.

Our spring walk with Willow Beach produced several sightings, including Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Yellow Warbler, Alder Flycatcher, Great Egret, Wood Duck, Pied-billed Grebe and Virginia Rail.

New members are always welcome for one bargain price of \$10 per year. See me at the September meeting.

- Marilyn Harris

Noted Peterborough Naturalist Dies

Doug Sadler, well-known Peterborough naturalist, writer, educator and former F.O.N. President passed away on August 18, 2008 at the age of 92. Doug was a member of WBFN years ago. He lived at Canton and was at the Evening Guide in Port Hope for a short time.

- E.R. Ted McDonald

Monthly Meeting Raffles

To help defray the cost of the room rentals for the monthly meetings, a raffle is held at each meeting. We rely on the generosity of our members to have prizes to raffle off. Prizes have included books, baking, an oriole feeder and a painted pumpkin - use your imagination. If you would like to donate a prize, Marguerite Short would like to hear from you. You can contact Marguerite at 905-885-1420 or mb.short@sympatico.ca

THE DATABASE: SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

by Clive E. Goodwin

When I embarked on a regular series of articles on the database two years ago, I never took time to give readers an overview of the database itself. We did an article for *The Curlew* on this topic back in 1999, so I simply assumed that everyone would at least be familiar with its existence, and that what it could reveal was more interesting than what it was.

That's certainly true, but many things have changed since 1999, and maybe some more details about it are now long overdue. So the next two articles are about the database itself – how it started and when, how big it is, and so on. This kind of detail is not to everyone's taste, but I suppose the same can be said of our more usual fare!

In fact I'm not really sure exactly when the idea of computerizing the county records started. I do know that by 1996 I had been thinking for some time about the vulnerability of all the records birders tend to accumulate. Some years ago a good friend of mine died unexpectedly. He had accumulated bird records for years, all of which were lost. It seemed such a waste, even though the conventional wisdom in those days was that such records were not worth much anyway. When we came to Cobourg in 1991 and I found that many of the most active naturalists here had also been birding for years, I was reminded of those lost records.

I also found there were two quite distinct record keeping initiatives occurring in the County. Ted McDonald was keeping meticulous records for the Club area, which seemed to cover the west end. At Presqu'ile records were gathered for the Park, but it was rather hit-and-miss, depending on staff availability, and many active observers there didn't bother sending records in. In between there was a kind of vast no-man's land, which

just happened to include some areas we covered quite often.

Why not try to consolidate these diverse threads into a single, computerized database? One major concern was that these collections of records grow more indigestible as time goes on. I can recall the hours spent sifting through years of data and hundreds of dates to establish early and late dates for the Toronto and Ontario Guides. None of the computer programs on the market seemed to come to grips with this problem, but were geared instead to helping birders maintain simple bird lists.

Which brings us to January 1997, when *Ontario Birds* ran a publication notice for a Kitchener-Waterloo bird checklist, which had been 'made easier' by the use of 'sophisticated software' developed by a Steven Furino of the University of Waterloo. This was briefly described and sounded ideal, and it appeared that for \$10.00 I could get a manual and a demo. So I promptly fired off my cheque, and a few days later received a phone call from Steven Furino [I don't think the cheque was ever cashed], and so began a highly productive relationship that continues to the present day. In truth, the software, *Wings*, was at that time significantly less sophisticated than I had hoped. But it has evolved enormously since then, perhaps in some degree due to a collaboration that has consisted largely of me asking stupid questions and making unreasonable requests, and Steven responding.

The first permanent County records were entered in the fledgling database in April 1998, and by now it stands at 292,186 records of 369 species of birds, from over 800 observers and 417 locations – and that's just today. [With a database this size there are al-

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ways some qualifications: for example, here the species total doesn't include 10 judged to be possible escapees, or that are otherwise questionable]. But it's far from static: In a typical year we add between 11,500 and 16,500 new records.

Although I mentioned our Club records and those from Presqu'île as the stimulus for starting, in the event these do not constitute the largest components of the database. The total of bird records from *The Curlew* since the beginning of 2000 is 6258; and Ted's records for all the years up to that time total 13,213. The corresponding records from Presqu'île total 9,394. That's only about 9% of the database. The rest comes mainly from several large sets of data we've been fortunate to acquire: first, the Thomsons at Presqu'île from about 1978 to 2006, some 58,000 records; Lori and Bill Wensley from east Cobourg from 1987 to 2007, about 46,000 records; and ourselves from Cobourg Harbour from 1990 to 2006, about 48,000 [of course, highlights from both the latter appear in Ted's records too; they're deleted from the total above]. All these represent daily, or close to daily observations during the periods given. Then we have two long runs of data that are not daily, mainly from Presqu'île: Doug McRae has over 18,000 records dating back to about 1974, and we have over 51,000 records of our own back to 1971. These, particularly the daily counts, dominate the overall statistics.

Our earliest record is from February 1813, when Charles Fothergill recorded a junco, and said that he didn't recollect ever seeing any in winter before [a reflection of how things have changed]. However, our 19th century records are very few - 269 in all - but they are interesting out of all proportion to their numbers. After all, how many datasets include Passenger Pigeon in their list of species?

A database this size certainly lends it-

self to 'gee-whiz' statistics: how about twelve million - 12,450,100 to be exact - which is the total number of individual birds we have recorded? The most numerous species is, as we might expect, Ring-billed Gull with 1,799,505. Gulls from the huge Presqu'île colony range the entire county: they're the most abundant birds on the Summer Bird Count, and they even manage a respectable showing on the CBC's, although most of them have flown south at that time. Only scaup and grackles also exceed a million individuals, with 1,032,713 and 1,092,321 respectively. [Scaup are 'lumped' and we do have separate totals for Greater, Lesser and 'scaup species'; but it's hard to be precise when presented with the bewildering mass of ducks at Presqu'île in early spring, and different observers approach the counting differently]. Canada Geese and cormorants, the next in size, both exceed 700,000 birds. At the other extreme, we have 25 species that were only seen once.

The number of records by species yields a quite different sequence, with Long-tailed Duck, of all things, the high count at 6532. It's a bird that is reliably present along the waterfront at least 8 months of the year, and unlike gulls and geese, one that birders will usually record. And indeed the top four record counts are all common wintering waterfowl. This is because the number of records is related closely to the number of birds seen at the most intensively covered sites: Presqu'île and the Cobourg waterfront. Both Cobourg locations are particularly good for waterfowl, and much less so for landbirds: hence our high numbers of waterfowl records.

But numbers are not really the focus of the database; rather the objective is to build a comprehensive record of the County's birds. Yet without large numbers that is not possible, and it's that paradox we'll talk about next month.

2008 NORTHUMBERLAND SUMMER BIRD COUNT

by Roger Frost

The twelfth Northumberland Summer Bird Count was held on June 7 and 8. Twenty-eight observers searched the many different habitats of the count circle to census the birds species found there. The 15 mile diameter circle is centred about 2 km. NNE of Centreton. The circle covers the area from Rice Lake and Roseneath in the north to the 401 just north of Grafton in the south, and from Harwood Road in the west to almost Morganston in the east. As in previous years, the circle was divided into the same six sections, with the following coverage:

Area #1 (NW Section): John Geale, Simone Mery, Anne Tesluk, Elizabeth Kellogg, Janine McLeod, Bruce Parker, Allyson Parker

Area #2 (NE Section): Bryan Baxter, Louise Baxter, Russell Lake, Brad Sherwin, Maureen Riggs, Martha Robinson, Barry Robinson

Area #3 (W-central Section): Bill Newell, Hans Maas, Karen Drew, Ben Walters, Val

Area #4 (E-central Section): Doug McRae, Sarah Petrsek, Katsu Sakuma, Roger Frost, Elizabeth Kellogg, Ben Walters, Myles Falconer

Area #5 (SW Section): Clive Goodwin, Joy Goodwin, Roger Frost

Area #6 (SE Section): Margaret Bain, Richard Pope

The 28 observers this year were 6 fewer than last year. Rounding up enough observers this year was the most frustrating task. Several of the "usual" people were away or had other commitments. In addition, a few observers were ill and not able to participate that weekend. This left 2 or 3 areas short-handed. The few observers meant that there was also about a 20% reduction in party hours over last year. The 150 km walked by observers this year was only 23 less than last year's record. For the second year in a row, John Geale canoed some of the Rice Lake marshes.

The weather was less than ideal. Saturday was partly cloudy, hot and very breezy. Sunday was cloudy, cooler and again windy with a little

light drizzle in the morning. The wind on both days made hearing bird song difficult. The heat on Saturday and the dull conditions on Sunday also depressed bird activity.

Despite fewer observers, and the windy weather, 12,238 birds of 140 species were counted. This is the lowest number of birds counted since 2003. The 140 species is the second highest species total, only 3 fewer than last year's record. Surprisingly, 30 species were found in record high numbers. Nineteen species were found in much lower than usual numbers.

Two new species were added this year. These were:

Mute Swan - two on a pond in Area 2

Swainson's Thrush - a single singing male in Area 6.

The Mute Swans were of questionable origin. They may have been captive or part of the rapidly growing feral population. The Swainson's Thrush could either have been a breeding bird or a late migrant.

Waterbirds, as usual, were scarce. Area 1 found the only 2 Common Loons. Area 6 had the only Pied-billed Grebes and Double-crested Cormorants. Area 6 also had a monopoly on bitterns, with 3 Least and one American. Three areas reported single Great Egrets.

Canada Goose numbers continue to climb, but many of the ones counted this year were likely moult migrants. Six species of ducks were well-above average. Area 2 had the only Black Ducks. Areas 2 and 6 had the only Blue-winged Teal and Hooded Mergansers. Area 6 had the only Ring-necked Duck.

Ten species of raptors were found this year. For a change, Osprey were widespread. Twelve birds were found in four areas. Usually, Area 1 has the only Osprey, as the birds seldom venture far from Rice Lake. Area 6 had the only Sharp-shinned Hawk. Areas 2 and 4 found the only Cooper's Hawks. Areas 4 and 5 counted the

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only Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks. Area 3 had the only Merlin. Goshawk was missed for the fourth year in a row.

Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkey were reported in rather low numbers. Ring-necked Pheasant was missed.

Rails were scarce this year. Area 5 and 6 found the very low total of 3 Virginia Rails. single Soras were recorded in Areas 3 and 5. Area 6 had the only Common Moorhen.

Six species of shorebirds were recorded. The 80 Killdeer counted were a record high for this species, which is thought to be declining. Area 5 found the only Spotted Sandpiper. Area 1 had the only Upland Sandpiper. Areas 3 and 4 combined for a record high six American woodcock, including at least one bird still doing a display flight.

Ring-billed Gull was again the most numerous species, with 1,276 counted. Herring Gulls were seen in Areas 1 and 3, for a record high of 12 birds. Areas 1 and 6 had the only Caspian Terns.

Both cuckoos posted record highs. Five areas reported Black-billed Cuckoos, with a total of 9 birds. Area 4 had the only 2 Yellow-billed.

Nightjars also were found in record numbers, but this was probably due to a much greater effort in finding them in Areas 3 and 4. Altogether, a total of 9 Common Nighthawks and 23 Whip-poor-wills were located this year.

Most woodpeckers were recorded in lower than average numbers. Single Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen in Areas 4 and 5. Area 1 had the only Red-bellied Woodpecker. The 12 Downy Woodpeckers were the lowest ever recorded on the count.

Most flycatchers were found in about average numbers. Only Great Crested Flycatcher was recorded in record high numbers. Area 6 reported the only 2 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers.

Swallows showed the most troubling decline. Most species were present in lower

than usual numbers, with Tree, Bank, and Barn recorded in the lowest numbers ever. Purple Martins continue to hang on, with Areas 1 and 4 combining for 9 birds. Cliff Swallows were found in four areas for a total of 28 birds.

Corvids were a mixed bag. Blue Jays were counted in average numbers, American Crows were counted in the lowest numbers since 1999. Three areas found a total of 8 Common Ravens.

Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatches were found in above average numbers. However, the seven White-breasted Nuthatch were the lowest total ever. Three areas reported a better than average total of 7 Brown Creepers.

Wrens were well represented. Winter Wrens were reported in 3 areas. Marsh Wrens were also reported in three areas. Marsh Wrens are regular in Lone Pine Marsh and some of the Rice Lake marshes, but one in a small remnant beaver pond in Area 4 was a surprise. Sedge Wren was found for only the second time, with single birds in Areas 3 and 6.

Most thrushes were counted in above average numbers. Only Eastern Bluebirds were found in slightly below average numbers. Hermit Thrushes were at an obvious song peak, with 58 counted, almost double their previous high.

Catbird and thrasher numbers were about average. Northern Mockingbird was missed this year. Both waxwing and starling numbers were well below average.

Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos were both reported in above average numbers. The 27 Blue-headed Vireos was a record high. No Yellow-throated Vireos were seen this year.

Nineteen species of warblers were recorded this year. All but Black-and-White were counted in above average numbers, with nine species recording record highs. Both Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers had record high counts, with Golden-wings

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being found in three new locations in Areas 1 and 6. The 26 "Myrtle" Warblers in Areas 3 and 4 were also a record high. The 63 Pine Warblers were 23 more than their previous high count. An impressive 266 Ovenbirds were counted, making this the most abundant warbler, as well as setting a new record high. The 125 Mourning Warblers were also impressive. The distribution of the Mourning was quite dramatic. North of County Roads 9 and 29, there was only one counted. South of these roads, the other 124 were counted. Obviously, some Mournings were missed in the northern part of the circle, but are they really that much scarcer than in the more southern areas? Area 5 found the third ever Wilson's Warbler for the count. This bird undoubtedly was a late migrant.

The Scarlet Tanager total of 59 was 15 more than their previous record high. The 33 Northern Cardinals was the lowest count since 2001.

Most species of sparrows were found in somewhat lower numbers than last year. Eastern Towhee was one shy of its record high, with 40 birds counted. Clay-colored Sparrows were found in five areas for a total of 6 birds. Field Sparrows were just slightly ahead of last year's record high, with 99 birds counted. The 41 Vesper Sparrows were the lowest total since 1999. Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows were found in above average numbers. Song Sparrows had their lowest total since 2002. For the second year in a row, Lincoln's Sparrows were found on the count, with 2 in Area 1. White-throated Sparrow numbers continue to be low. The 22 counted this year is only about half the totals from eight to ten years ago. Like last year, another very late White-crowned Sparrow was seen, this time in Area 6.

Most icterids were counted in below average numbers. Bobolinks had the lowest total since 2003. Eastern Meadowlark numbers were above average, but well short of

last year's record high. Common Grackle had the lowest total since 2001. Area 1 reported the only Orchard Oriole. The 97 Baltimore Orioles were well below last year's record 177.

Finch numbers were also quite low. Purple Finches were found in all areas for a good total of 22 birds. The single House Finch in area 6 was the lowest total ever for this species. Although never common, House Finches average about 18 birds a year. This low total is probably due to the lower number of observers, combined with a lack of coverage in the small villages in the count circle. Area 4 reported the only 2 Red Crossbills. America Goldfinch numbers were the lowest since 2003.

House Sparrows were also found in record low numbers. The 25 this year is only one-third of their average. Likely many of the effort and coverage factors that produced the low House Finch total also resulted in the low numbers of House Sparrows counted

The cool mammal of the year award goes to Ben Walters who saw a Black Bear.

Two teams tied this year for the highest number of species. Both Area 4 and 6 recorded 108 species. No other teams managed to break the 100 species mark, but all found over 90 species. The Area 4 team consisted of 7 observers in 5 parties, logging 51 hours. Area 6, however, contained only 2 observers in 1 party, logging 20 hours. This was a quite an achievement, considering the Area 6 team was down by 3 observers and at least one party than they usually field. Congratulations to both teams.

Thanks to all who participated! Without you volunteering your time, this count could not be run. Thanks to John Geale who again this year kindly hosted the post-count get-together. Also thank you to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for allowing the use of survey data from their Webber, Van Hove and Evans Properties.

Ian Tate has been doing a Baillie Birdathon on behalf of Willow Beach Field Naturalists for many years. The Baillie Birdathon is a fundraiser for Bird Studies Canada, but participants can designate their own club as recipient of 25% of the funds raised.

Baillie Birdathon 2008

How did we do this year? Well, it was enjoyable, but our total of 42 was the lowest in the last 16 years of which I have records. Of the first nine years ('92, to '02) seven were in the 60s, one was 71 and the other, 51. A pretty consistent drop started in 2001. Of the seven years since, five were in the 50s and two were in the 40s, including last year at 45.

This time, we, Sheilagh Fleming, Jack Goering, Bob Sculthorpe and I blame the morning's rain. We certainly tried: we drove 171.6 kilometers, chiefly a bit beyond the outskirts of Port Hope and Cobourg. But our avian quest was modest, alas.

Another interesting thing: 32 of this year's 42 sightings were of birds reported in at least six of the past seven years. In other words, they were very common birds. (I didn't bother going back beyond 2001.)

There. That's the best I can do for statistics!

31 friends (plus me) have pledged a total of \$715 for the cause, this year. I have sent a cheque to the Birdathon people for that amount. A quarter will come back to the Willow Beach Field Naturalists.

Thanks you, and

Cheers,
Ian

Carole Payne sent along the following information from Nature Canada. Perhaps there's an aspiring videographer among the WBFN membership.

Nature Canada Favourite Places Video Contest

What is your favourite place? Share it with others through the Nature Canada Favourite Places Video Contest!

Nature Canada Supporter, this is your chance to join an elite group of award winning video directors. OK, so it's not the Oscars, but it's just as good.

If you are looking for a little fame and even less fortune - this is your golden opportunity! Enter the Nature Canada Favourite Places Video Contest by showcasing your favourite place to get in touch with nature.

Upload your video to YouTube, fill out the Nature Canada registration for, check out the rules, tell your friends to vote and that's all there is to it.

Nature Canada supporters will vote online to select the top ten finalists and our critics will pick a grand prize winner from that group.

More details can be found at
www.naturecanada.ca

EVENTS OF NEIGHBOURING GROUPS

Alderville Black Oak Savanna

8467 Cty. Rd. 18 at the Black Oak Savanna Ecology Centre
www.alderillesavanna.ca

The Prairie Day Festival, originally scheduled for Sept. 6, has been rescheduled for **September 27**. This is a full day of activities from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Sugar Island Singers will open the event at 10 a.m. There will be children's activities throughout the day, walking tours on the Savanna and a licensed live concert in the evening, among many other things. All welcome. Bring your own chair. Food available to purchase. Check the web site for details. FREE.

Ganaraska Region Conservation

www.grca.on.ca

Saturday, September 27, 1-4 p.m.

The Ganaraska Forest Open House and Members' Day

Everyone is welcome to enjoy a fun-filled fall afternoon in the Ganaraska Forest. A variety of activities is offered including guided hikes and an historical tour of the forest, activities for kids, horse-drawn wagon rides, a scavenger hunt around the Forest Centre, crafts, campfire cooking with hot apple cider and other light refreshments. No pre-registration necessary. FREE.

Saturday, October 25, 6-9 p.m.

Nature at Night Halloween Event

Get into the Halloween spirit during this spooky guided night hike. Activities include carving pumpkins, creating Halloween crafts, an active and fun campfire with hot chocolate and an hour nature hike in the forest. Pre-registration is required. Call 905-797-2721 or e-mail gfc@grca.on.ca. Rates: \$20 per family, \$8 per adult or \$4 for children, students, and seniors.

Presqu'ile Provincial Park

www.friendsofpresquile.on.ca
613-475-4324

Sept. 6 to Oct. 12: Fall Interpretive Program.

Enjoy Friday video presentations and guided hikes on select weekends. Check the website for more details.

Lower Trent Conservation

www.ltc.on.ca

October 4, 2008, Location TBD

Join us as we appreciate landowners on the Oak Ridges Moraine with a FREE fun family day in the Rice Lake Plains. The day starts off with a bus tour showcasing local stewardship projects on private land. These projects include a pond decommissions and wetland enhancement, fencing livestock for waterways, livestock alternate watering source, a livestock stream crossing and a prairie restoration project. A free lunch will begin at 1 p.m., followed by an interactive Scien-sational Ssnakes presentation with live specimens and species at risk information. The day will finish off with a nature hike through the Alderville Black Oak Savanna.

We would love to have you stay with us all day. You can however, just attend the morning or afternoon session. Please RSVP to Ashley at 613-394-3915 X255 or ricelakdplains@ltc.on.ca. Space on the tour is limited. This event is provided by the Caring for the Moraine Project: Rice Lake Plains Area partnership with funding provided by the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

compiled by Roger Frost

Because of the large number of sightings and the length of time since the last Curlew, only a selection of sightings can be published. Please be assured that we value all your sightings and they will be forwarded to Clive Goodwin to be included in the Data Base.

- Roger

Mute Swan	July 5	110	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Brant	May 17-25	3	Cobourg Harbour	MB/MBi
Redhead	all June	1	Rice Lake off Gore's Landing	EN
	Aug. 19-21	1m, 2F	off Cobourg west beach	MB
Ring-necked Duck	June 7	1m	Lone Pine Marsh	MB
Lesser Scaup	May 12	12	of AKS Marsh, PH	
Surf Scoter	June 9	1	Port Hope Harbour	BJW
Bufflehead	Aug. 13	1f	Presqu'ile P.P.	RDM, SP
Red-throated Loon	May 23	5	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Common Loon	July	2ad, 2y	Presqu'ile Bay - fledged young for 2nd consecutive year	FH, Ontbirds
Red-necked Grebe	Aug. 24	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
American Bittern	June 24	1	flying over Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Least Bittern	June 7	2+	Lone Pine Marsh	MB
	June-July	20	Gosport Marsh	RDM, SP
	July 19	20	Keating Hoards NHA	RDM, SP
Great Blue Heron	July 24	9 (high count)	flying past Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Great Egret	July 30-Aug. 1	1	Canton Mill Pond	DA
Snowy Egret	May 18	1	Salt Point, Presqu'ile P.P.	BDiL, Ontbirds
Bald Eagle	May 28	1	Lake St. Marsh, PH	RF
	Aug. 7	1	at beach nr. Wesleyville Rd., PH Ward 2	JMcG
Northern Goshawk	May 5	1	over woods n. of Garden Hill	MB
Golden Eagle	July 9	1ad	Hwy. 401 between Cobourg & Grafton	CE
Merlin	July 11	3	Town Park, PH	BW
Peregrine Falcon	Aug. 19	1	Cobourg west beach	MB
King Rail	July 24	1	Sandy Flats Rd., e. of Stone Rd.	RDM, SP
Virginia Rail	May 25	1	Jewell Rd.	SW
Sandhill Crane	May 16	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
	May 27	2	Lake St. Marsh, PH	BR
Black-bellied Plover	May 27	31	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	May 27	54	Port Hope Harbour	RF
	May 29	50+	Presqu'ile beaches	MB
Semipalmated Plover	May 29	100+	Presqu'ile beaches	MB
Willet	June 24	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Upland Sandpiper	May 25	1	Sandercock Rd. & 4th Line	DS
Ruddy Turnstone	May 29	60+	Presqu'ile beaches & Gull Island	MB
	May 29	30	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Whimbrel	May 20	5	Cobourg Harbour breakwater	MB
	May 20	36	Cobourg Harbour	CEG, AEW
	May 29	30	Lake St. Marsh, PH	RF
	Aug. 19	3	Cobourg west beach	MB, KN
	Aug. 31	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Red Knot	May 29	240	Presqu'ile beaches & Gull Island	MB
	June 4	30	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Semipalmated Sandpiper	May 29	300+	Presqu'ile beaches	MB
	June 3	300 (high)	Cobourg Harbour	CEG

Sightings - cont'd.

Western Sandpiper	Sept. 2	1	Owen Point, Presqu'ile P.P.	DSH
	Sept. 4	10	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
White-rumped Sandpiper	May 29	2	Brighton Wetlands	MB
Dunlin	May 29	300+	Presqu'ile beaches	MB
	May 29	300	Port Hope Harbour	RF
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Sept. 5	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	DSH, IS, FH
Short-billed Dowitcher	May 24	36	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Wilson's Phalarope	May 25	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
	June 4	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Glaucous Gull	May 15	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Caspian Tern	July 20	93	Port Hope harbour	ERM
Black Tern	June 17	4	Webbview Marsh, Coyle Rd.	CEG
ARCTIC TERN	May 22	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
	May 29	1 ad	Cobourg Harbour	RDM, MObs
	June 1	1	Port Hope west pier	ERM
Forster's Tern	June 11	1	Cobourg Harbour (basic ad.)	MB
Eastern Screech-Owl	May 25	1 dead	Cty Rd. 29 & 45	DS
	July 10	1 calling	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Common Nighthawk	June 24	3	Bowmanton Rd.	KD
	June 7	1	over Northumberland Mall, Cob.	MR
	July 27	1	Cobourg	BE
Whip-poor-will	June 13	1	Jamieson Rd. & 7th, PH Ward 2	LS
Chimney Swift	Aug. 4	100 (high)	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Red-headed Woodpecker	May 12	1	Hamilton Twp.	AA
	May 27	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
	May 28	1	Cold Spring off DeJong Rd.	KD
	June/July	2	Peace Park area, Cob.	MB
	June/July	2	Henry/Queen St., Cob.	M.Obs.
	all summer	2	Lakeshore nr. Wesleyville Rd., PH Ward 2	JN, JMcG
	July 28	1	Lakeshore Rd., PH Ward 2	BE
Olive-sided Flycatcher	May 25	1	Linwood Acres, Campbellcroft	EK
	Aug. 21	2	Bull Rd. e. of Hwy. 45	MB
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	June 7	2m	Castleton area	MB
Yellow-throated Vireo	July 19	3	Keating Hoards NHA	RDM, SP
Blue-headed Vireo	June 15	1	PH Conservation Area	SL, NW
Common Raven	July 27	1	s. of Baltimore	AB
Purple Martin	Aug. 13	175	off Owen Pt., Presqu'ile P.P.	RDM, SP
Carolina Wren	July 30-Aug. 1	1	College & Elgin St., PH	DB
Sedge Wren	June 7	1m	Cty. Rd. 21 e. of Cty. Rd. 25	MB
Swainson's Thrush	May 20	2	Lucas Point (early; a juv. still shedding down!)	CEG
Hermit Thrush	May 20	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Northern Mockingbird	May 25	1	Cty Rd. 9 & Bethesda Rd.	EK
	July 4	1	Camborne	RDM, SP
	July 13	1	Hwy. 2 @ Hunco, e. of PH	EK
Golden-winged Warbler	June 7	2m, 1f	Neil McGregor Rd.	MB
Orange-crowned Warbler	May 18	1	Candlewick Woods, PH Ward 2	CP, AT, SM
	May 25	1m	Cobourg Harbour west headland	MB
Prairie Warbler	Aug. 26	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
	Sept. 2/3	1	Owen Point, Presqu'ile P.P.	DSH/RDM
Cerulean Warbler	June 18	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Prothonotary Warbler	May 13	1	Presqu'ile P.P. (2nd park record)	FH, Ontbirds
Louisiana Waterthrush	May 18	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	BDiL, Ontbirds
	May 24	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Connecticut Warbler	May 27-25	1m	Albert St., Cobourg backyard	MB
Hooded Warbler	Aug. 26	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Clay-colored Sparrow	May 15	1	Cobourg Harbour	CEG
Lincoln's Sparrow	Aug. 21	1	Calf Pasture, Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds
Dark-eyed Junco	May 28	1 (late date)	Presqu'ile P.P.	FH, Ontbirds

Sightings - cont'd.

Orchard Oriole	May 7	1	Sherbourne St., PH	AMcL
	May 31	1	n. of Garden Hill at feeder	MW
	June 23	1	Cobourg east end	BL
	June 30	1 imm. m	Albert St., Cobourg backyard	MB
Pine Siskin	May 12		Upper Cold Springs	SW
White-winged Crossbill	July 25	20	Sandy Flats Rd., e. of Stone Rd.	RDM, SP
	July 29	100	Bull Rd. e. of Hwy. 45	EK, RF
	July 29	75	Burnley-Carmel	EK, RF
Mink	May 18/July 27	1	Cobourg Harbour breakwater	CEG/MB
Star-nosed Mole	June 25	1	Packer Rd., Fenella area - running across the road!	CEG
Opossum	June 21	1 dead	Hwy. 28 & Dale Rd.	GL
Giant Swallowtail	Aug. 16	1	Bayshore Rd., Presqu'ile	AEW
	Aug. 20	1	Cobourg Harbour west headland	CEG
	Aug. 20	1	Brighton yard	DSu
	Aug. 20	1	Bayshore Rd., Presqu'ile	BG
	Aug. 20/29	3/2	Francis St., PH	RP, JP
	Aug. 21	1	Owen Point, Presqu'ile P.P.	IS
	Aug. 21/24	1	Brighton yard	DSh
	Aug. 28	1	Burnham Blvd., PH	BC
	Aug. 30	1	Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club	ERM
	Sept. 1	1	Mill St., PH	JM
Baltimore Checkerspot	July 13	1	4th Line, PH Ward 2	EK, RF
Common Buckeye	Sept. 8	1	Presqu'ile P.P.	DSh
Bur Buttercup	Apr. 25	first bloom	Cobourg campground (One of only two sites in the Province)	CEG

Observers: AA=Adele Appleman; DA=Daphne Angus; MB=Margaret Bain; MBi=Michael Biggar; AB=Ann Brightman; DB=Dave Broughton; WC=Bill Crowley; GMCD=Geoff Dale; BDiL=Bruce DiLabio; KD=Karen Drew; BE=Bill Edmunds; CE=Chris Escott; JF=Jo Foster; RF=Roger Frost; BG=Bill Gilmour; CEG=Clive Goodwin; FH=Fred Helleiner; EK=Elizabeth Kellogg; SL=Susan Laing; GL=Gary Little; BL=Bill Logan; ERM=Ted McDonald; JMcG=John McGuirk; AMcL=Andy McLachlan; RDM=Doug McRae; SM=Simone Mery; JM=Jennifer Mitchell; EN=Eva Nichols; JN=June Nichols; KN=Ken Niles; Ontbirds=Ontario Field Ornithologists listserv; JP=Joan Parrott; RP=Rod Parrott; CP=Carole Payne; SP=Sarah Petrask; BR=Barry Robinson; MR=Martha Robinson; LS=Louise Schmidt; IS=Ian Shanahan; DSh=Don Shanahan; DS=Dave Shirley; DSu=Don Sutherland; AT=Anne Tesluk; BW=Barry Walker; NEW=Norma Wallace; BJW=Ben Walters; MW=Marie Watkins; SW=Susanne Williams; AEW=Audrey Wilson;

Correction:

In the May Curlew, it was reported that Ann Brightman had a flock of 25 White-crowned Sparrows. The record should have read White-throated Sparrows. Sorry, Ann.

The Curlew is published 8 times per year, January, February, March, April, May, September, October and November by the Willow Beach Field Naturalists.

Membership in WBFN includes a subscription to *The Curlew*.

Annual membership fees are:

Family - \$25 Single - \$23

Cheques for membership should be made out to Willow Beach Field Naturalists and sent to: The Treasurer, Willow Beach Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 421, Port Hope, ON, L1A 3Z3. A receipt for Income Tax purposes will be provided for your membership fee as well as for any donation. Willow Beach Field Naturalists is a Registered Charitable organization.



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