

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Concerned With Publication  
Natural History and Conservation*

**The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club**

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

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**Objectives of the Club:** To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

**Club Publications:** THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

**Field Trips, Lectures** and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

**Membership Fees:** Individual (yearly) \$33      Sustaining (yearly) \$50  
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Views expressed in **Trail & Landscape** are not necessarily those of the OFNC

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April - June 2009

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# Welcome New Members

## Ottawa Area

Rose M. Cunningham & Family  
Amanda Follett  
Anke K.U. Fritsche  
Anouk Hoedeman & Family  
Bernarda Jurela & Family  
Renée Leduc / Rick Devereux  
C. McKnight-MacNeil / J. Rossman  
Michele McMillan & Family  
Mark Patry  
Jaliya Rasaputra & Family  
Joan Scott/ George Rejhon  
Deborah Stevenson  
Lynne Williamson & Family

Henry Steger  
Chair, Membership Committee  
February 2008

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# “Golden Anniversary” Membership List 1942 - 2008

*Henry Steger  
Membership Chair*

## Joined in

1942	R.Y. Edwards	Victoria BC
1943	C. Stuart Houston	Saskatoon SK
1943	Mr. & Mrs. H.A. Thomson	Ottawa ON
1946	Dr. Jack M. Gillett	Ottawa ON
1947	W.J. Cody	Ottawa ON
1948	Mr. David Erskine	Willowdale ON
1950	H.G. Lumsden	Aurora ON
1954	Yvonne & James F. Bendell	Clayton ON
1956	Dr. Charles D. Bird	Eskine AB
1956	J.W. Holliday	Ottawa ON
1957	R.E. Bedford & Family	Ottawa ON
1956	J. W. Holliday	Ottawa ON
1957	J.E. & Mary E. Bryant	Ottawa ON
1957	Dr. C.S. Churcher	Gabriola Island BC
1958	Elizabeth Alexander	Cumberland ON
1958	F.R. Cook	Ottawa ON

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# Conservation Matters

*David Hobden*

The committee is continuing to monitor several issues.

## **Ottawa Greenbelt**

We are represented at meetings of the Greenbelt Coalition where working groups are preparing position papers on Natural Environment, Agriculture and Built Environment (places produced by humans). The draft position papers are due in February.

## **Kawartha Lakes Signature Site Park**

We sent our letter of objection to extending the current bear hunting season in the park and to creating new hunting opportunities for small mammals and snapping turtles. We were particularly concerned for the snapping turtles because their populations have a very low natural mortality rate. Hunting would increase the mortality rate and cause a population decline. The Park already has a management plan in place so there was no opportunity to discuss hunting in general.

OFNC also supported a submission by Ontario Nature (ON) on the same subject. ON had sought support from affiliated naturalists' groups all across the province and received a good response. We feel that the impact of this group's response will be much greater than a submission from a single organization. In the past we have tried to get ON to do something similar when we saw problems with provincial legislation, but were not successful. Perhaps we should try again now.

## **City of Ottawa Official Plan (OP) Review and Findlay Creek Development**

This process is continuing and the main opportunities for public input will end in March. We have some concerns over the treatment of wetlands, but little else at the moment. The Greenspace Master Plan is not included in the review since it was produced two years after the main plan.

The OP Review will involve hours of volunteer effort. The city officially seeks public participation in major decisions, yet recent actions of some city staff would seem to suggest not all public input is appreciated. In a court case involving the Findlay Creek development, part of which is being built in a wetland, costs were awarded to the city against Greenspace Alliance. What a great way to discourage public participation. Fortunately, there is a motion before Ottawa City Council, which notes the value of public participation and seeks to stop such actions. If it



fails, the city stands to lose thousands of dollars worth of free advice every year.

The Findlay Creek development has a long history of public objections because it includes part of the Leitrim Wetland. The developer gave a large section of the original property to the South Nation Conservation Authority after it was identified as a Provincially Significant Wetland, but then went ahead with development that some thought would damage or even destroy the wetland. Recent observations seem to show they were right. The wetland is being damaged.

Individuals concerned about the Leitrim wetland repeatedly notified the Ministry that water taking at this development might not be in accordance with regulations. Some of the companies involved in the development of Findlay Creek were recently charged under the Ontario Water Resources Act with several offenses including illegally taking water. The maximum penalties for conviction on these offenses range up to six million dollars. That the Ministry decided to lay charges suggests that individual volunteers can make a difference.

I must conclude with a word of heartfelt thanks to Frank Pope from the Conservation Committee for his many contributions over the years. He has recently taken on the duties of Business Manager for the CFN and finds he does not have the time to devote to the Conservation Committee. You can get some understanding of the magnitude of his contributions in just one area, if you look up "Alfred Bog" in any index of *T&L* published in the past 20 years.

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## Bill Royds

*Stan Rosenbaum*

Many of you remember Bill Royds as an enthusiastic observer of nature, member of OFNC, founding member of the Greenspace Alliance, active participant with the Friends of Leitrim, expert on internet security with the federal government, and a serious mathematician whenever he could find time. And yes, he proposed the Ottawa Poets' Pathway to honour some distinguished Canadians, and to preserve some greenspace at the same time.

He was a member (by far the most active member) of OFNC's conservation committee for some years until illness forced him to resign in July 2004. His last attendance at a committee meeting was in April 2008, when one of the agenda items was to do with Leitrim Wetlands.

Bill passed away on Friday February 20. The following e-letter from Amelia, one of his daughters, expresses what Bill meant to many people much better than I can.

*Hello to all,*

*I am writing to you because my father, Bill Royds, thought you important enough to keep updated of his whereabouts.*

*Bill passed away Friday, February 20, just before sunrise. His health really started failing this past week and a half, his body progressively shutting down after such a long fight against the disease. I was with him all last night, and over that time he was exerting more and more effort to keep breathing, so that his death was marked with calm silence, as his struggle finally ceased.*

*During the last two weeks, he had a chance to say goodbye to all his family. His three siblings drove up the weekend before last, while his two nephews were up two days ago. My sister Linley and her husband Amos came to Ottawa last weekend, and spent time with him during the last few days in which he was really able to interact with visitors. Our other sister, Jessica, and her boyfriend Colin have been visiting regularly over the past week. And of course, Rhoda, his wife, has spent countless hours at his bedside, including all day yesterday, talking with him, reading to him, and simply being there with him.*

*I know he has also been in contact with many of you over the past few months, and on behalf of the whole family I would like to offer my deepest thanks for all the cards, phone calls, emails and visits. You kept him interested and involved as long as he could be. I do not know many of you personally, but I know that Bill would not have been Bill if he hadn't been busy with so many projects and groups.*

*Bill and Rhoda had worked together over the past few years to decide how he wanted to be remembered. His body will be cremated and we will hold a memorial service and internment at Beechwood Cemetery in late April. We will send out details when they are finalized.*

*If you know of anyone who knew and cared for Bill, please pass this message to them.*

A memorial for Bill will be on Friday, April 24, 2009 at 1:30pm in the Sacred Space, Beechwood National Memorial Centre on Beechwood Avenue, Ottawa.



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# The 130<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting

*Karen McLachlan Hamilton*

Someone asked the question: “Why is the annual business meeting (ABM) held in January?” I always wondered that myself and the reason, when explained, is perfectly logical. Although the Club’s year end is September 30, it takes a couple of months to prepare the financial statement, committee reports, and find new committee chairs and/or council members (where needed). It is usually December by the time everything is organised, but by then most people are busy with other things. So January is the earliest possible month to have everything in place and everyone ready to focus on a new OFNC year. As it stands, council members begin and end their service at the ABM, which happens to coincide with the calendar year. Unfortunately, January always means winter in Ottawa, so this meeting is usually under-attended.

As unexciting such a meeting may appear, it is the best opportunity for members to truly understand how Council is spending the Club’s money, what programs the OFNC are involved in, what causes are supported, and other pieces of information that pop up. One item addressed at this meeting was how the Club fared in the recent economic turn. After this particular meeting, I now have a clearer understanding of the responsibilities of a non-profit organization and what the OFNC’s primary responsibility is. So for those who missed the ABM here are some of the highlights:

The OFNC council for 2009 includes:

President	Ken Allison
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Ann Mackenzie
Recording Secretary	Annie Belair
Treasurer	Frank Pope
Past President	Michael Murphy
Administrator	Frank Pope
Editor <i>CFN</i>	Francis Cook
Editor <i>T&amp;L</i>	Karen McLachlan Hamilton
ON Nature Rep	Diane Lepage

The members at large sitting on council are Barbara Chouinard, Julia Cipriani, David Hobden, Diane Kitching (representing Rob Lee, Macoun Chair), Luke

Périard, and Jeff Skevington. Committee chairs (who also serve on Council) with their contact information members are listed below.

Oh, in case any of you are also curious about the Club's standing after the economic turn . . . since the OFNC's investments are in bonds and securities and not stock, the recent market crash had no impact. And what is the the responsibility of the Club? The OFNC "promotes the appreciation, preservation, and conservation of Canada's natural heritage. It encourages investigation and publishes the results of the research in all fields of natural history and diffuses information on these fields as widely as possible. It also supports and cooperates with other organizations engaging in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things."

The entire financial statement, complete minutes, and Council reports will be included in an upcoming issue of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

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## OFNC Committees for 2009

*Frank Pope*

The following OFNC committee members were approved by Council at its meeting on February 19. Committee members may be added during the year as approved by Council. The members listed below will operate your club in 2009. Committee Chairs appear in bold letters with their telephone numbers and email addresses. Should you have any questions, comments, complaints or compliments pertaining to the operations of a committee, or should you desire to serve on a committee, please contact the Chair or speak to a member of the relevant committee.

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Luke Périard  
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# Larose Forest Update: 2009

*Christine Hanrahan*

*I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines. - Henry David Thoreau*



*Wetland, Larose Forest. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A number of interesting developments have occurred in Larose Forest since the last update in the spring of 2006 (Hanrahan 2006), although perhaps “developments” is not really the right word to use! Increasingly, people are finding their way to the forest to enjoy a variety of outdoor experiences. Concurrent with this upsurge of interest is a new “*Protection and Development Plan*” (PDP) for Larose, commissioned and sponsored by the United Counties of Prescott-Russell (UCPR). As the forest becomes better known, more pressure is, and will be, placed upon it for

a variety of purposes. With popularity comes the risk of the forest being a victim of its own success. The PDP will be used to help guide the forest into the future, taking into account the conflicting demands of the human need for recreation, the ongoing forestry operations, and the protection of wildlife habitat.

### **PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR LAROSE FOREST**

Several years ago, the UCPR hired Horizon Multiresource Inc. (HMR), to create a "*Protection and Development Plan*" for the Larose Forest. The work wrapped up in early 2008 and a public meeting to discuss the final draft of the PDP was held in Limoges, on May 28, 2008. The finished product was released later in the year. The report was reviewed in all its different stages by the Larose Forest Advisory Committee. On behalf of the OFNC, I sit on the committee representing the interests of naturalists, and was thus able to provide some input into the plan from our perspective.

HMR spent a considerable amount of time in Larose Forest. They looked at trails, culverts, roads, recreational usage, cultural and historical sites, habitats, wildlife usage, and undertook flora and fauna inventories. They produced detailed maps of, amongst many things, the geology, hydrology, habitats, wildlife areas, wildlife usage, and recreational trails. Forestry is one component of the PDP, where the HMR worked closely with South Nation Conservation.

HMR was charged with the unenviable task of reconciling protection of the natural habitat on the one hand, with human usage on the other, and their final recommendations, which are numerous, reflect this reality.

#### ***Recommendations arising from the PDP***

The recommendations were divided into four phases. Phase 1, to be implemented within a year, includes some of the easier, less costly, but nonetheless important recommendations such as installing better signage in the forest, rebuilding the picnic shelter on Concession 11, and controlling invasive species, particularly buckthorn which is spreading quickly in the forest. Phases 2 to 4 would be implemented over the next four or five years as financing and time permit.

Of interest to naturalists are plans for the construction of an interpretive centre. Several designs have been submitted for this centre, which will be a green building using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines. The goal for the centre is to be used: by groups and individuals engaged in scientific research in the forest; as a classroom for schools and universities conducting outdoor education in Larose; and for the general public to learn about both the natural and cultural history of the forest.



Perhaps the most difficult issue arising out of the PDP concerns the allocation of an area in the forest for Motocross trails. Although HMR said "*the presence of motocross is not to be recommended in Larose Forest,*" they suggested that if a trail circuit was to be built, it should be in a "*non-wooded sector not considered wildlife habitat of interest.*" For various reasons, the Motocross group was given access to a relatively small wooded area, much of it plantation, between County Rd. 8 and de la Tours Rd. They have already roughed in preliminary trails and put up small signs. Only members of the motocross group will be allowed access, as is also the case with ATV and snowmobile trails. As things stand now, dirt bikes are not allowed anywhere in Larose Forest, and only motocross bikes will be allowed on the designated trails. Nonetheless, there is concern that dirt bikes may begin creeping back into the forest again. The damage they do can be significant. One has only to go back of the Ottawa International Airport to the fields off Bowesville Road, to see the incredible damage done in just a few days of destructive driving on sandy soils. The same kind of soil underlies Larose Forest. However, the motocross people have said that what they will be doing is a more gentle trail riding on their two-wheelers. They'll certainly be monitored by municipal by-law officers and others to make sure they stick to their promise.

*He that plants trees loves others beside himself.*

- Thomas Fuller

#### **FORESTRY OPERATIONS**

South Nation Conservation (SNC) continues to manage forestry operations for the UCPR in all county forests, including Larose. A 20-year Management Plan and a 5-year Operational Plan have been developed. The plan takes into account the necessity to accommodate wildlife concerns when working in the forest. Thus, established guidelines which call for a certain number of snags (standing dead trees, homes for woodpeckers and many other birds and animals) to be left standing, as well as the retention of mast trees for wildlife, and setbacks from waterways, will be followed.

In Larose, logging will focus on thinning the plantation stands. Revenue from logging goes into a special Larose Forest fund to help pay for such things as the new picnic shelter, forest signs, and numerous other items specifically related to Larose.

In 2006, Larose Forest attained Forest Stewardship Council certification (FSC). This is a significant achievement as it recognizes the forest as being sustainably managed with environmental standards adhered to. In publicizing this certification, it was noted that "*The Forest Stewardship Council is an international, membership-based, non-profit organization that supports environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.* (Press



release from Scott Davis, Forest Certification Coordinator with the EOMF, July 2006). Larose Forest is very proud of this recognition, and deservedly so.

### **LAROSE FOREST BIOBLITZ**

In both 2006 and 2007, a BioBlitz was held in Larose Forest. Additionally in 2006, a Mini-Blitz was held later in the year. They were organized by the OFNC and the Prescott-Russell Stewardship Council, with a committee of representatives from interested local groups. Both the United Counties of Prescott-Russell and the Prescott-Russell Stewardship Council played key roles in the two BioBlitzes, supplying logistical support and funding. They provided facilities, maps, lunch, dinner and snacks, and many other items. I am extremely grateful for their generosity, for without them we could not have succeeded.

Unlike most such events, ours was not open to the public but by invitation only. We wanted to focus on getting as much taxonomic information as possible in the short time allotted (24 hours) and felt that to do this we had to restrict the events to recognized experts and knowledgeable amateurs. As a result of these two blitzes, we substantially increased the number of species on our inventories.

#### **2006 BioBlitz**

In 2006, the BioBlitz was held on June 15-16, and the Mini-blitz, on September 8. The latter event, held later in the year to focus on fungi, took place over one day rather than a 24 hour period, but used the same site as the full BioBlitz. The area covered during the 2006 BioBlitz measured approximately 3 km X 2 km, north of Clarence-Cambridge Rd. Thirty-four people participated (five people took part in both the BioBlitz and Mini-blitz). Eight-hundred and eighty-two (882) species were found, 28 of which were regionally and/or provincially significant, and two species (a crane fly and a mushroom) were new for the region. Several taxonomic groups were surveyed for the first time during the 2006 BioBlitz: lichens, mosses and liverworts, and spiders.

#### **2007 BioBlitz**

The 2007 BioBlitz was held on June 5-6. Thirty-seven people took part, and collectively found 591 species, 21 of which were regionally and/or provincially significant. One species (a crane fly) was new for the region. For the second BioBlitz we chose an area in the southern part of Larose (south of Clarence-Cambridge Rd.), somewhat larger than the 2006 site, with much more wetland habitat, but far less accessible by car (no concession roads to drive down). Fenja Brodo, who surveyed for crane flies in both BioBlitzes, noted that she found completely new species in each event, apart from two species found in both 2006 and 2007. Furthermore, in 2007, she found two species never before collected by her in over 40 years of work in the Ottawa district. This, I think, indicates how much

there is yet to discover in Larose Forest, not only for crane flies, but for many of the taxa.

For the complete BioBlitz reports, including habitat description, discussion of the species recorded, and lists of all species found, please refer to: [www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/bioblitz2007/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/bioblitz2007/index.php).

### LAROSE FOREST 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



*Planting the Red Oak to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Larose Forest. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.*

(Hanrahan 2004). The celebration was held at the site of the old picnic shelter on Concession 11, which is also the trail head for many of the year-round outdoor activities in Larose.

After the 2007 BioBlitz, and using the momentum our committee had built during two years of working together, we began planning a community celebration of the forest which would focus on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Larose Forest in 2008. It was in 1928 when the first trees were planted, and 80 years on we can see the vast forest that flourishes on the site where once only blow-sand deserts held sway

We asked all the user groups, including the OFNC representing the naturalists' interests, to set up displays for the event which took place on 27 September 2008. In addition to the OFNC, we had representatives from the ATV, Motocross and snowmobile federations, the equestrian group, dog-sledders, and skiers. We also created a large photographic display showing the early days of tree planting, the horse-logging era, the work carried out during the MNR period, and that of the

present day. There were guided walks for a variety of forest-centred interests, including birds, trees, general natural history, current logging practices, and the history of the Grant settlement, which once existed along Concession 11. We offered a BBQ lunch at a minimal cost to visitors, which was well received! A special 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary T-shirt was created for the occasion.

We issued an open invitation for this special celebration to all those who had worked in the forest over the years. We were very honoured to have Mr. Latreille attend. He was one of the first tree planters in Larose, 80 years ago! Now in his 90s, he was clearly delighted to be at the anniversary celebrations. It was also a special honour to welcome Madame Larose, daughter of Ferdinand Larose, after whom the forest is named (for more on Ferdinand Larose, see Hanrahan 2004). Both she and Mr. Latreille, along with local mayors and others, helped to plant the large red oak which commemorated the anniversary.

Given the success of the event, we're planning to have a community picnic at the same site every two years. Keep your eyes peeled for details for 2010.

#### **RECREATIONAL PURSUITS IN LAROSE**

It wasn't that long ago that off-roaders were wheeling their way along forest tracks and roads in Larose causing considerable devastation to the forest. Finally, the UCPR said "enough." The cost of repairing these damaged roads was considerable and the damage done in the interior forest was making life difficult for those who work in Larose. Not to mention making life difficult for the wildlife there. Furthermore, with the renewed interest in the forest and as more visitors came looking for positive outdoor experiences, the conflicts amongst various users had to be resolved. Off-road vehicles were banned. The UCPR instigated signed agreements with organized groups, such as the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs (OFATV), the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC), Mush Larose (dog-sledders), Ski Larose, and the local equestrian group. These groups were allowed certain trails for their use, with the understanding that some would be multi-use trails, while others would be exclusive to a particular group. In order to ride a snowmobile or an ATV in Larose, you must be a member of the relevant federation. By-law officers, along with federation wardens, and sometimes the OPP, patrol the forest frequently, and fines for infractions are steep! So be warned. If you want to ride your ATV in Larose, you had better buy a membership in the OFATV! Ditto for snowmobiling.

Obviously, some of the trails are seasonal. Thus, the ski trails are off-limits in winter to hunting, hiking, dogs, and motorized vehicles, but are used by hikers and equestrians in summer. The ATV and snowmobile groups have their own trails, but people can walk along them. All trails have signposts. Many trails are off-limits to

all motorized vehicles year-round, (excluding forest staff who need access to the trails for maintenance). ATV and snowmobile trails, as well as most of the concession roads, are closed to traffic from the end of March (or earlier depending on conditions) to mid-May to minimize damage to them. Skiing has really taken off as a winter activity in the forest. There are 18 kilometres of groomed trails, and as word spreads about the accessibility and good trail conditions, increasing numbers of people are coming there to ski. On some winter weekends, the parking lots are full.

## FLORA AND FAUNA SPECIES LISTS

In addition to the data obtained from the two BioBlitzes, ongoing work continues to yield new species, while at the same time furthering our understanding of the distribution of these species in the forest. Several Marsh Monitoring Program routes are being surveyed in Larose, and a Forest Bird Monitoring Program continues, as it has done for some years now. Diane Lepage has contributed greatly to our list of moths found in Larose Forest. On appropriate nights (right weather/temperature conditions, time of year), she sets up her equipment, photographs and identifies the moths found. As well, the Christmas Bird Count in Larose and adjoining areas, started by Jacques Bouvier in 2005, continues to attract more and more participants, which means a greater chance of finding some winter rarities!

### Vascular Plants

The current list now stands at 645 species. There is no doubt that many more species still await discovery. Unfortunately, Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*) is becoming increasingly prevalent, now found in many areas of the forest. Most of the trees are small to very small, but in some locations there are stands of mature fruiting trees, the probable source of the seedlings and saplings now springing up. The Larose Forest Advisory Committee is serious about tackling this problem and will be looking at control methods. In 2006, I reported that a small stand of Dog-strangling vine (*Cynanchum rossicum*) had been found along a forest road. This was dealt with swiftly and so far no new plants have appeared, though we continue to keep an eye on the site.

The status assigned to plants on the Larose Forest list is derived from Dan Brunton's 2005 Ottawa Vascular Plant list. While Larose Forest is not in the city of Ottawa, the boundary of the city abuts the forest and I thought it reasonable to extrapolate status for Larose plants from this work. Some of the interesting species found over the last few years include the native Swamp Thistle (*Cirsium muticum*), Dewdrop (*Dalibarda repens*), Lance-leaved Violet (*Viola lanceolata*), Great-spurred Violet (*Viola selkirkii*), Twisted-stalk (*Streptopus amplexifolius*), and Halberd-leaved Tearthumb (*Polygonum arifolium*), all considered Regionally Significant in the Ottawa area. The Swamp Thistle was particularly interesting as, according to Brunton (2005), the only record for the Ottawa district was an old one from Moose



Creek Bog in Russell County.

### **Fungi**

Five-hundred and seven (507) species of fungi have been recorded in Larose Forest. While the BioBlitzes, and in particular the Mini-Blitz in September 2006, added many interesting new species, the majority of records on our list come from Les mycologues amateurs de l'Outaouais, who have been visiting Larose Forest for many, many years, and who generously shared their list with us. There are undoubtedly many species of fungi to add to our list yet, for much of the forest remains unexplored for this taxonomic group.

### **Lichens and Mosses**

Prior to our first BioBlitz, we had no data for either lichens or mosses and liverworts. Thanks to the experts who took part in our two events, we now have a good preliminary list of both of these taxonomic groups.

The lichen list has 56 species, with one listed as Regionally Significant.

Seventy-two (72) species of mosses and liverworts are now recorded for Larose Forest. The list includes three species listed as S3 (Vulnerable in Ontario; 80 or fewer occurrences) by the National Heritage Information Centre (NHIC), two species which are possibly S3, and one species, *Brachythecium albicans*, listed as S1 (Critically Imperiled in Ontario; usually 5 or fewer occurrences), a significant discovery.

### **Birds**

The current bird list for Larose is 141 species, an increase of 24 species over the last reported list in 2006. Perhaps the most exciting find was the Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) during the 2006 Mini-Blitz. The forest is so vast that getting adequate coverage is not always easy. Nonetheless, there are always expectations of finding new species for the list, such as the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) found on the 2007 BioBlitz. Larose continues to be a hotspot for Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) and Whip-poor-wills (*Caprimulgus vociferus*) which both breed there.

### **Insects**

**Butterflies:** The list now has a very respectable 66 species (the list for the entire Ottawa area is 103 species), with the expectation of adding quite a few more. Of note in the last few years is the discovery of several locations for the Pepper and Salt Skipper (*Amblyscirtes hegon*), considered to be an S3 species (Vulnerable in Ontario; 80 or fewer occurrences) by the NHIC, and regionally significant. Also worth noting is the Mulberry Wing skipper (*Poanes massasoit*), an uncommon

species in the district, which has been found in the same location over several years.

**Moths:** Thanks to Diane Lepage, our moth list now stands at 159 species. As Diane notes, there are many species yet to be added.

**Dragonflies  
and  
Damselflies:**

Only 34 species of Odonates have been found to date in Larose Forest. However, a few nice finds, discovered during the 2006 MiniBlitz and 2007 BioBlitz, are Halloween



Pennant (*Celithemis eponina*), Horned Clubtail (*Arigomphus cornutus*). Photo by Christine Hanrahan.

considered scarce in the Ottawa District (Bracken and Lewis 2008), and Black Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum danae*), listed as rare and local (IBID), and Horned Clubtail (*Arigomphus cornutus*). All three odonates are also considered to be S3 species (Vulnerable in Ontario; 80 or fewer occurrences) by the NHIC.

**Other insects:** This list includes flies, beetles, bugs, everything not covered by the three groups above. We've only scratched the surface of the number and diversity to be found here, with a list standing at 389 species.

**Mammals**

Six additional species were added between 2006 and the present. These include Woodland Jumping Mouse (*Napaeozapus insignis*) and Hairy-tailed Mole (*Parascalops breweri*).



## Reptiles and Amphibians

In my last update (2006), I noted we'd found 12 species of herptiles for the forest. That list now stands at 18 species, including five species of salamanders, most noteworthy being the Four-toed Salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*), Northern Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) and the discovery of the nationally threatened Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingi*) at two different locations.

Updates to these lists are regularly posted on the Conservation Pages of the OFNC website, under Larose Forest: [www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/index.php).

*Going to the woods is going home.*

- John Muir

## HOW TO GET TO LAROSE FOREST

Larose Forest is situated about 50 km east of downtown Ottawa. The largest forest in Eastern Ontario, it covers approximately 26,000 acres (10,540 hectares) in two blocks. The nearest and largest, the one most people think of when they think of Larose, is roughly 18,000 acres in size and lies between the towns of Limoges and Bourget. The forest is bisected by the Clarence-Cambridge Road, sometimes called Clarence-Cambridge Boundary Road, or C-C Rd. for short. The municipality of Clarence-Rockland lies north of the C-C Rd. while to the south is the municipality of La Nation.

Take Highway 417 east toward Montreal. At the Vars Exit (#88), turn left (north) at the T-junction, cross over the 417 and take a quick right onto Russland Rd. This leads, after several kilometres, to a T-junction at Limoges Rd. Turn left (north) and follow the road as it curves east. Continue straight (do not go north on Saumure Rd.). You will now be on Clarence-Cambridge Rd. (confusingly called Indian Creek Rd. for a short distance). From this road many tracks and forest roads lead north and south, all of which are good for hiking into the forest.

For an account of the forest's history, please check out "*The Larose Forest*" (2004).

More information is available on the website of the UCPR:

[www.prescott-russell.on.ca/counties.jsp?section=FL\\_laroseforest](http://www.prescott-russell.on.ca/counties.jsp?section=FL_laroseforest) and at [www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/index.php).

A gallery of hundreds of photos of Larose Forest, including photos of plants and animals, can be found at: [www.pbase.com/laroseforest](http://www.pbase.com/laroseforest).

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## Hunting Lesson

Young men learn to hunt in Newfoundland.  
Up in the hills in back of town  
Ed and two friends went out as planned,  
In the proper season, with guns in hand,  
And flushed a partridge and brought him down.

They surrounded the bird. He was still alive.  
He lay still on stones and stared at them,  
The result of their teen-age hunting drive.  
They all thought together to contrive  
A useful workable stratagem.

At such close range would they shoot him again?  
There'd be nothing left. It wouldn't be right.  
Or club him to death. Could they eat him then?  
The little bird pondered the ways of men,  
And got his strength back, and took off in flight.

None of those boys will ever claim  
That he took his best shot that autumn day.  
They were a touch off target, but all the same,  
I think they'll do well, however they aim.  
*I am the partridge that got away.*

Dictated to Murray Citron, July 12, 2008, at Gander

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# Our Annual Party, the OFNC Soirée

*Fenja Brodo*

The annual Soirée is our opportunity to party and to mingle with fellow naturalists. It is an upbeat evening with lots to see and do, old friends to greet and new friends to meet. At this event we honour some of our own creative and industrious members for various awards (Member of the Year, George McGee Service Award, Ann Hanes Natural History Award, Conservation Award) as well as recognize a non-member (person or group) for extraordinary effort on behalf of a local conservation issue. Relatively new, is an Education Award given for exceptional teaching in the field of natural history. From time to time we also award Honorary Memberships to particularly deserving individuals, who may or may not be members of our Club.

Good food and drink add to the celebrations. We continue to offer a selection of wines as well as non-alcoholic punch, tea/coffee, cheese and crackers and fruit. This year, for a change, we are asking members to bring deserts to be shared, home-baked or not, for a reduced admission price. General admission is still \$10 (less \$2 with a dessert), and we will not charge for children under 18. We want to encourage more kids to come, not just the exhibitors and presidents of the Macoun Field Club.

A central feature of the evening revolves around exhibits prepared by the children, most of whom are members of the junior branch of the OFNC, The Macoun Field Club. (A child does not have to be a member of the Macoun Field Club to bring an exhibit.) These kids put a lot of imagination and research into their natural history projects and from their president(s) we learn what they have been up to the past year. The enthusiasm shown by these kids is infectious.

Photographers and artists (of all ages) are invited to exhibit their work. A "People's Choice" award goes to the lucky winner(s). Mounted pictures are preferred. Unmounted photographs (4" x 6" minimum) are acceptable providing we can mount these temporarily onto Bristol board. Bring your pictures earlier to St. Basil's (after 6:30 p.m.) on Saturday April 25 or call Phil Jeffreys (613-721-0139) if you have questions or need help transporting your work.

Again this year, we shall have a live and a silent auction. For this we are soliciting donations from various local businesses as well as from our membership. Natural history books and items useful to a naturalist would be most welcome. Some of us may have outgrown, or no longer need, such things as snowshoes, skis, poles,

walking sticks, binoculars, back packs, insect nets, or various field guides. These could find new homes and the proceeds go to our Club to offset the expenses of the evening. Donations can be dropped off at the home of Connie Clark, 501 Dovercourt (on the front porch) (613-729-1815) or call Fenja at 613-723-2054.

Come to the Soirée on Saturday April 25 and celebrate your Club's 130<sup>th</sup> year!

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## Atlas of Eastern Ontario Reptiles and Amphibians

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) is looking for information on the abundance and distribution of the amphibians and reptiles for the upcoming Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary Atlas. At present, the database contains records from about the mid-1980s, and many areas in eastern Ontario were not surveyed at that time. This project aims to update the database and include the counties of Leeds and Grenville, Lanark, Ottawa, Prescott and Russell, and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

The EOMF can provide technical support, group presentations, workshops, online information and some publications. There are a series of brochures describing the atlas and photo contest, a checklist, a species key to the reptiles and amphibians of eastern Ontario, as well as information on stewardship.

What is needed are volunteers who are able to survey areas not currently covered and updates on species not previously recorded in surveyed areas. Most of the land is privately owned, so people who wish to do the surveys hopefully live in the area or know people who do. Volunteers may submit their sightings using an online form, or use the mail in cards. Photographic records are welcome, and a photo contest has been initiated to encourage people to send in their images.

Anyone interested in collecting and submitting information on species for this 2-year project contact:

Eastern Ontario Model Forest,  
P.O. Bag 2111, 10 Campus Dr., Kemptville, ON, K0G 1J0  
Tel: 613-258-8241,  
email: [modelforest@eomf.on.ca](mailto:modelforest@eomf.on.ca) or [www.eomf.on.ca](http://www.eomf.on.ca).

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# Fletcher Wildlife Garden Annual Native Plant Sale

Saturday, 6 June, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Fletcher Wildlife Garden.



- \* Buy locally grown native perennials and shrubs.
- \* Learn about wildlife gardening by touring our Backyard Garden.
- \* Share information and exchange native plants if you have extras from your own garden.

Cities have drastically altered Canada's landscape, causing serious damage to our environment. In the spirit of "thinking globally and acting locally," we can restore some of this destroyed habitat by using native plants to create wildlife-friendly backyards. Native plants provide the food and shelter that our native birds, mammals, butterflies and other insects, reptiles, and amphibians have adapted to over millions of years and rely on for their survival. Choose from a variety of beautiful flowers and attractive foliage and your garden—and the creatures that use it—will reward you all season.

This plant sale is a major fundraiser for the FWG. Please come out and support us!  
More information: 613-234-6767, [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca).



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# Eastern Cottontail at FWG

*Christine Hanrahan*

Rabbits leap through our stories and myths with abandon. Who hasn't hopped with Peter Rabbit down the bunny trails of Beatrix Potter, or followed the White Rabbit with Alice? We keep rabbits as pets, we make cuddly bunny toys, they grace endless amounts of baby paraphernalia, in short they are almost iconic. Yet we also eat them, hunt them for sport, and resort to trapping to get rid of them. What a contradictory set of sentiments we bring to bear on these timid creatures.



*Rabbit in raspberry thicket.*

## **DESCRIPTION**

Several species of cottontails inhabit North America, but here in eastern Ontario, the familiar 'bunny rabbit' is the Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*). This species weighs between 1.1 and 1.2 kg, and may be about 450 mm long (Banfield 1974, Forsyth 1985), with the female being the larger animal. Their dense coat, or pelage, is a greyish-brown with black-tipped guard hairs. If you look closely, you can see the characteristic rusty patch on their nape. Perhaps the most familiar field mark is the short, white, puffy tail (the cottontail). Twice a year they undergo a molt. The Eastern Cottontail can be distinguished from the other common lagomorph of eastern Ontario, the Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*), by its smaller size, colouration (it does not turn white in winter as hares do), and physical features (for example, shorter ears). It also lives in a very different type of habitat.

## **HABITAT**

Cottontails have benefitted greatly from land clearance. As the forests fell, this species followed along, moving further north. Cottontails may have inhabited extreme southern Ontario in pre-settlement times (Banfield 1974), but by the time settlers arrived this species was absent. Fleming (1908) comments that there was an



attempted introduction of the English rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) around Toronto and believes this led to some confusion regarding the first recorded observation of Eastern Cottontail in southern Ontario. However, Dobbyn (1994) says it was not reported in the southern part of the province until 1860, and prior to 1931 was unknown in Ottawa. Since then, the once rare Eastern Cottontail has spread throughout the region, wherever suitable habitat is found.

Unlike hares, rabbits prefer living on the edge. Edge habitat that is, where thickets, hedgerows, or treed areas meet old fields, agricultural lands, or grassy meadows. Although they can be found in very open woodlands, this is not a typical habitat. Some form of escape cover is essential and rabbits never move too far away from brushpiles, thickets, rockpiles, and burrows which provide quick escape from their many predators. Any landscape that supplies a combination of the above is considered good from a rabbit's perspective.

At the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG), we have almost perfect conditions for this species. Brushpiles of varying sizes dot the area. Thickets of shrubs and stands of raspberry (*Rubus*) are common, and the Ash Woods, New Woods, and Birch Grove provide an open wooded setting abutting onto field and thicket.

Rabbits are also found in urban parks, greenspaces, and gardens, so long as there are thickets, hedges, and places to seek cover nearby. At the FWG, rabbits were seen occasionally in the early days of the garden with one observation in 1991 and another in 1992. After that, they were either absent or not noticed, until about 1996 when we saw one hanging around the Back Yard Garden (BYG). By 2000 they were common and have been observed fairly regularly since.

Rabbit populations are cyclical, peaking and then 'crashing' every 7-10 years. At the FWG, they were very, very common during 2005 and through the winter of 2006/2007. But by summer 2007, their numbers had dropped and throughout 2008 we saw only a couple of animals and almost no indication of their presence. As 2009 begins, we are once again finding scat, chewed bark and occasional tracks. Yet elsewhere in Ottawa these animals are so common as to cause comment. The paucity of sightings at FWG is probably a result of predation (mostly by dogs), disturbance (as people ignore our signs, and continue to tromp off-trail), or even, perhaps, an increase in size of territory or home range required (see below).

## **HABITS**

Rabbits are generally quiet animals, although they may occasionally emit a few low grunts or squeals. Their primary form of communication is by stamping their hind feet. Many years ago I heard a rabbit give a very piercing human-like scream when it was picked up. It was an unnerving sound.

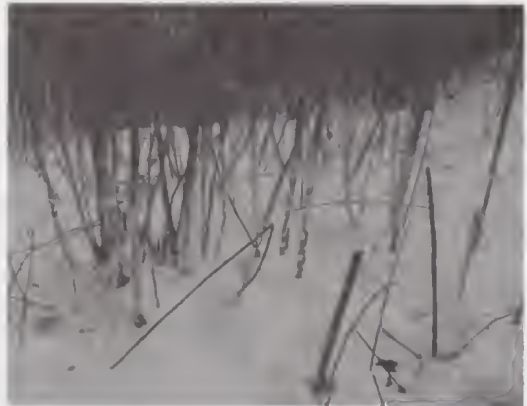
These solitary animals are largely crepuscular and nocturnal. However, cold weather often prompts daytime activity. During the day, rabbits spend long hours sitting in one spot, sleeping, grooming, and occasionally standing up or nibbling some nearby food. They often return to the same location day after day. The shallow impression created by their body weight is called a 'form'. It was relatively easy to find these shallow depressions in the snow or, in warmer months, in the grass, when rabbits were more common at FWG.

Rabbits are coprophagous, meaning that they eat their own feces in order to better digest plant material. It is also thought that "*the redigestion of food may be important for the survival of a herbivore that must often interrupt its feeding to flee a predator*" (Massachusetts Audubon 2007). The first excretion, moist and greenish in colour is of partially digested food. This scat is rarely seen for the rabbits quickly consume it. More familiar is the dry, brown, pellet-like scat (considered a delicacy by my dog). This is commonly found under, or around, favourite feeding spots and along their trails or runs. The scats may be accompanied by an orangey-red urine which looks a lot like blood, but isn't.

### PREDATORS

The list of cottontail predators is long. At FWG their main predators would be dogs, foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), and when present, weasels (*Mustela*). Raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) prey on both adults and young. A few years ago, a Red-tailed Hawk caught a rabbit in the Arboretum. Banfield (1974) adds that American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) and shrikes (*Lanius* sp.) will feed upon young rabbits. Of course, humans are one of the biggest predators. Our cars kill many rabbits annually, and hunters take more.

When a predator passes by, rabbits will freeze, in an effort to go unnoticed. If found, they can run extremely fast, often resorting to a zig-zag pattern to shake their pursuer. Most of all, they rely on reaching protective shelter such as burrows or brushpiles. The rabbits killed by dogs at FWG must have been caught in the open, away from cover.



*Chewed sumac stems*

## FEEDING HABITS

Eastern cottontails are herbivores, feeding on a variety of herbaceous plants, grasses, and shrubs. At the FWG I have seen them eating goldenrod (*Solidago*), various clovers (*Trifolium*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), the leaves of young saplings, and several species of grass especially including Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*).

In winter they turn to the buds, stems and bark of shrubs and trees, particularly sumac (*Rhus typhina*), which seems to form a good part of their winter diet at the FWG. I have also seen them eating raspberry stems (*Rubus*), the dry leaves of Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), stems of common burdock (*Arctium minus*), the bark of red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), young birch trees (*Betula*), wild rose (*Rosa*), and a number of other species. Rabbits are also quite happy to forage on garden plants. This habit does not endear them to gardeners, although at the FWG, we tolerate their excesses in the BYG, even if we don't always appreciate it. They will also feed on spilled seed from bird feeders.

## TERRITORY AND HOME RANGE

Rabbits inhabit a relatively small home range. Banfield (1974) says this varies from 1.2 acres up to 22 acres (or 0.49 ha to 8.90 ha), but notes that "*recent studies have indicated a larger home range, dependent to some extent on terrain and food supply, but in the neighbourhood of 8 acres*" (or 3.24 ha). Using the first set of figures, our five hectare site at FWG could support as many as 5-10 rabbits (which we've certainly had in peak years), or as few as one or two, which seems to be the case now.

Female cottontails are more territorial than males, particularly during breeding season. Otherwise, it seems that rabbits are not particularly protective of their turf.

Rabbits are generally creatures of habit, sticking fairly close to their familiar surroundings, unless forced to move. This means that once you get an idea of their favoured location, you may see them regularly in that area.

## REPRODUCTION

Rabbits breed like, well, like rabbits. They are notoriously prolific and if they lived in an ideal world with no predators, they would soon overpopulate. In fact, their fecundity is a response to their high mortality. Without the ability to breed rapidly and often, they would have little chance of thriving as a species.

Eastern Cottontails breed in late February to early March and continue until September. Courtship is said to be quite energetic. Banfield (1974) describes it as an "*interesting mating dance*" in which "*the buck chases the doe in a lively pursuit*

around the meadow. Eventually she turns and faces the buck and spars at him with her front paws. As they crouch facing each other, a few inches apart, one of the pair suddenly leaps about two feet in the air and the other runs nimbly underneath it." This usually occurs after dark and may be accompanied by squeals and grunts.



*Rabbit in summer.*

The female may produce 3-5 litters a year with an average of five young per litter, but many newborns do not survive. Females will breed when they are only three months old, therefore, it is easy to see how populations could explode if there were no checks. While it is thought that they could live up to seven years

under ideal conditions, most rabbits, not surprisingly, don't make it past their first year and many, according to Forsyth (1985) live no longer than six months

After a short gestation, averaging 30 days according to Banfield (1974), females give birth in a shallow nest or 'scrape', hollowed out of the ground and lined with vegetation and fur from her belly (Forsyth 1985, Banfield 1974). These nests are well concealed under shrubs or tall grass but can be very vulnerable to disturbance from dogs and humans. Although I have seen such nests elsewhere, at the FWG I have not found any, but then I rarely look for them, not wishing to disrupt the animals. However, I have seen quite a few young in some years, evidence of successful breeding.

Within about two weeks of being born the young are ready to leave the nest. By this time, their mother is probably pregnant again and will soon be ready to give birth once more. Solitary animals that they are, Banfield (1974) says that the young will only stick together for the first seven weeks before heading off alone.



## WINTER

Winter can be a very tough time for wildlife although some fare better than others. Eastern Cottontails are fairly well adapted to surviving the cold as long as they have adequate food. Perhaps the biggest problem they face in this season is their vulnerability to predators. Unlike Snowshoe Hares, they do not turn white, and are therefore very visible against the snow. During the day, they usually remain sitting in a well-concealed location, blending with the landscape. At FWG, raspberry thickets are a favourite hiding place. Around the Old Field habitat, there is a good thick growth of this species, although as winter wears on, the canes tend to get beaten down by the snow and the safety factor diminishes.

Rabbits are often more active during daylight in the cold weather. They will even sit under the bird feeder in the BYG eating spilled seed in the middle of the day. This is a dangerous activity, for there is no real protection in the immediate vicinity for an animal of that size. On sunny days, rabbits may seek the sun's warmth where it penetrates sheltered spots.

On particularly cold days, they may take advantage of old groundhog dens for cover and warmth. At the FWG, we have very few burrows, apart from a couple of groundhog holes and several old fox dens. On the Central Experimental Farm (CEF), there are dozens of groundhog burrows, and there is ample evidence of rabbits using some of them.



*Rabbit tracks across pond.*

The Eastern Cottontail frequently creates well-worn trails, particularly noticeable in winter, leading between burrows or brushpiles and a feeding area. I have seen some paths so well-trod they look like major rabbit highways. These are especially common along fencerows or hedgerows. Here you may also see where the animal has made numerous side trips to investigate a food source, but always heading back to the protective cover. One very well-worn rabbit run I investigated in winter, led from an old groundhog burrow, in a rose thicket, to a sumac stand on which the rabbit was feeding. One of the resident foxes soon discovered this site and caught the rabbit. During summer, these trails or runs are not as easy to find, being well-concealed by long grass.

When rabbits are common at the FWG, we can find regular runs leading from the BYG and the Bill Holland Trail into the Ravine; around the Old Field thickets, and in a number of other locations. Their tracks then, are numerous. One morning, after an overnight snowfall, I arrived at the FWG to find fresh and very distinct rabbit tracks leading across the Pond. Another time, I saw tracks heading across a field at the CEF followed by a set of very clear fox prints!

Eastern Cottontails are beautiful little animals and the young are, dare I say, absolutely adorable. Rabbit watching is fun, and you may find yourself becoming quite attached to them, particularly if you get to "know" an individual by watching where it sleeps, eats, and spends the day.

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Photographs by Christine Hanrahan

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## The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards for Young Ornithologists

*Long Point Bird Observatory*

This award offers people aged 13-17 "hands-on" training in field ornithology. Participants learn about bird systematics, avian behaviour and population dynamics. Regular field trips, slide shows and some nocturnal field work is also included. The workshop is 10 days long and will be held 31 July - 9 August at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Interested individuals can obtain complete information and application forms from either the website ([www.bsc-eoc.org/longpoint/index.jsp](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/longpoint/index.jsp)) or at [lpbo@birdscanada.org](mailto:lpbo@birdscanada.org). **Deadline for applications is 30 April.**



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# Falcon Watch Final Report 2008

*Eve Ticknor*

Two thousand and eight was an interesting year for us. Diana hatched two chicklets this year, a year we thought was going to pass us by.

We started the year with Diana being found nesting near the north end of the western side of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Chris Traynor and I both were checking almost daily, as we often did. She was brooding three eggs and all was well, or so we thought . . . A week after she started brooding, Chris went to the roof for a check. I arrived a bit later and the first thing he said to me was "Where is the nest?" My heart dropped! Sure enough, no nest, no eggs, no falcons! Where were they? What had happened? We both went to the Crowne Plaza Hotel, and right up to have a look at the nest ledge. It was very obvious that there was nothing. A check of the east side showed the same. Back down on the sidewalk, we could not find either falcon. The next day I checked again, some of the time with Phil Maillard. Finally we saw Connor, alone. It was much later that I found Diana on the Carlisle antenna. At least nothing had happened to our adults. Connor was the first to return to the Crowne. Eventually Diana came back, too. I notified the Ministry of Natural Resources and they sent an investigator. He looked around from all angles and talked with several people including Chris and myself. There were several theories, but nothing conclusive. The investigator and I felt the eggs had been stolen for the black market in the night. Others disagreed.

Anyway, would Diana renest? Would we have little falcons to watch? Yes. A week later, Diana was brooding again, this time on the east side. We soon determined she had three eggs. Only two hatched. However this meant the Watch would be in July, later than our volunteers are used to. We suspected many would be away on holidays, and it proved to be so. The plan was now to start the Watch July 9.

Phil and I moved the equipment in to the Constitution Square the day before. When we came out, the adult falcons were flying around overhead and screeching, very agitated. I went up to the penthouse level of the Crowne and saw a man coming down from the roof, in a hurry. It turned out he had been up taking photos of the roof as his company would be greening the roof. However he was not prepared for the falcons in spite of being told they were there. Suddenly he saw a missile coming straight for him. He ran into the stairwell and down. Then he realized his cell phone had dropped out on the roof. A man from Maintenance with a hard hat went up and

retrieved it for him.

Day 1 found the male chicklet was up on the ledge and the female was inside on the ledge, both having been given food. All was well. Connor and Diana did a bit of incentive flying but the chicklets stayed quiet for the day. I had a feeling we would soon have a fledgling . . .

The next day was a very cold, windy one. July, hmmm. The male was the only chicklet in sight. After a while, I went up to the 21<sup>st</sup> floor of Tower 2, to the offices of Scotia McLeod where I had a great look right across to the ledge. Sure enough, a pile of feathers in a corner turned out to be the young female, when the feathers moved. Later both adults were up high, one on Tower C and one on Tower A, when two pigeons flew between them. Foolish birds! Our falcons gave chase, and missed! Diana chased another down Sparks St. but gave up when it dove down below street light level. Finally one delivered a snack (an oriole). Suddenly a shout, "There he goes!" Chris and Phil were off like a shot while I sat there thinking something was off about the flight. Of course, it was Connor. The little male was looking around for his father.

Day 3 was better. We watched a food fight between siblings. One had a food drop, the other grabbed it, the first grabbed it back, etc. And, then . . . it happened. The male was off and flying well. He flew around the hotel and landed on the Podium Building. There he stayed for a while before he tried again, landing on Sparks St. where he was rescued by Chris. Luckily Bill was on location as he was doing the banding. We hurried into the Constitution Square and banded our little male. We also decided that in honour of life on the edge, the male would now be called Gatsby and his sister, Daisy. After the banding, Chris returned Gatsby to his nest ledge and all was well, or so we thought. We should learn not to do that . . . Connor and Diana were flying around frantically. We assumed it was a workman on the roof as those on the street had seen nothing. We all dispersed for our homes. Upon opening the door, I received a phone call from Martha Johnstone, a friend. She was keeping watch on a little falcon on a down ramp for a parking garage! I drove back downtown. Martha and family were standing at the Queen Street entrance below the Crowne, and there in the dark, was Gatsby. He must have popped off as soon as he was put back upstairs. I picked him up, put him in the rescue box, and took him home for the night. Not a peep from him. In the morning, still not a peep, so I opened the box a bit to check if he was still alive. He was. Back down to the Crowne where Chris carried him up again. There he stayed for the day. He and Daisy were fed a bit. Connor had reverted to his old tricks. He went to check on leftovers. Having had experience with chicklets not liking this idea, when Gatsby came to get food Connor picked up a bone and shoved it into his son's beak. Gatsby spat it back out, not happy. Connor left.

During quite times, we were sitting next to a sidewalk, watching the ledge and talking with passersby and other volunteers. People walking or driving by would look at us, smile, nod, point, etc. This must be what animals in zoos endure. I was overheard to mutter, "What, no peanuts for the monkeys?"

The next day, Gatsby did a lot of flying, especially between Tower C and the Journal Tower North, back and forth, and then disappearing. I went up into the new Tower 3 and into an office on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor for a look around. Gatsby was on a window ledge on the Standard Life Building. He spent the night there. Diana watched over him, feeding him and chasing away a crow who had found him. The next day he spent a lot of time flying here and there, gaining height until he reached the top of the antenna on Tower C. That is quite a feat for a beginner! He stayed there until the next day, being well fed by Diana.

Day 7, he spied Connor on the Carlisle antenna, and flew to join him. They both flew back and forth, as well as a trip to the antenna on Queen Elizabeth Towers, but ended up on Tower C's antenna. This turned out to be his favourite hangout. Daisy was still on the nest ledge, eating, sleeping, doing a little wing-flapping, but not doing as much as I had hoped. I needed to see her fly, and very soon as I was going out of the country the next day, as was Chris Traynor (albeit to a different country). Suddenly the shout was given, Daisy was off and flying! She headed south between Towers 1 and 2, and disappeared. Volunteers split into groups to search. Of course, once Chris showed up, he found her on top of the the Crowne's elevator housing. That proved to be her favourite spot. She flew again, same path. I knew she would never be banded, as she was flying well enough not to need rescuing. I was glad to be granted the sight of her flying before leaving Ottawa.

Over the next six days, Bernie Ladouceur supervised of the Watch, Melanie Moore continued with scheduling and Christine Grant took over the daily updates. Many thanks to all of them! Our chicklets were now airborne and were practising their flight skills daily, and being taken for hunting lessons by their parents. They demonstrated their skill at getting in and out of the nest ledge, no easy feat.

After Day 20, the Watch was done. As is usual, some volunteers still came down to check on them, finding it a bit hard to know our job was finished. Now it was up to Connor and Diana.

I would like to thank the following for their invaluable assistance for our Peregrine family:

Christine Grace and her staff at the Crowne Plaza Hotel,  
Cheryl Barrett and her staff at the Constitution Square,

Security at O & Y Tower A & B,  
Members of Scotia McLeod,  
All those who stopped by to show their support,  
All those who gave sightings and who joined in to help with searches,  
Sandy Garland of the OFNC for postings on the website,  
Elizabeth Legeyt for including us in her weekly column in the Ottawa Citizen,  
Larry Neily for postings on his website,  
The Lynwood Animal Clinic for their support  
Charlie Massel for his assistance with Daisy,  
The Wild Bird Care Centre for their support, and  
a very big Thank You to Kathy Nihei who gave us much support in many ways in the  
past years. We will miss you!

And the following volunteers:

Pauline Aubertin	Mary Hurley	Lorraine Montoya
Claudette Bernatchez	Bernie Ladouceur	Melanie Moore
Marian Bird	Josee Lepine	Brian Peart
Rosanne Bishop	Gabriel Levac	Bill Petrie
Patrick Blake	Pamela Levac	Isabelle Robert
Suzanne Deschenes	Phil Maillard	Nancy Scott
Janet Durno	Dominique Marshall	Eve Ticknor
Christine Grant	Elsa Marshall	Chris Traynor
Steven Heiter	Frank Marshall	Gilles Vauteur
Gordon Hippern	Gillian Marston	
Scott Holliday	Jordan Montoya	

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## Falcon Watch 2009

Interested in helping the falcons this season? The season usually runs about three weeks during the second half of June. We work in small groups and no prior experience is necessary. It is an opportunity to help an endangered species, to increase public awareness and learn about falcons. It may also be considered volunteer time for high school students aged 16 or older.

If you have a few hours to give, please contact Eve Ticknor at 613-737-7551 or 613-859-9545 or by email at [sandbird@magma.ca](mailto:sandbird@magma.ca).





# OFNC



**AT:** St. Basil's Church  
Enter from Maitland Avenue (east side),  
just north of the Queensway.

**BUS ACCESS:** Take bus number 85 (which passes along Carling Avenue) and get off at Maitland Avenue. Walk south on Maitland (towards the Queensway) for 0.5 km (a 7 minute walk). St. Basil's is on your left (east side).

Or take bus number 156, which passes along Maitland and stops near St. Basil's.

**RESERVATIONS:** To order tickets, fill in the Order Form and send it along with a cheque before 17 April 2009 to:

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club  
Box 35069 Westgate P.O.  
Ottawa, ON, K1Z 1A2

**Tickets will be available at the door on 25 April 2009**

# SOIRÉE

## **Wine & Cheese Party Saturday, 25 April 2009, at 7:30 p.m.**

- Selection of wines
- Non-alcoholic punch
- Cheese & crackers
- Cookies & cake
- Tea, Coffee
- Fruit

**Join us for some fun at our annual festive evening**

**Celebrate with the honoured winners of our Annual Awards**

**Photographers and artists exhibit your pictures**

**Kids bring your natural history displays**

**Bring a dessert to share and get \$2 off ticket!**

**Participate in our Live and Silent Auctions**

**(See article on the Soirée elsewhere in this issue)**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (613) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you expect to exhibit photographs or art? Yes No Maybe  
Will your child/children be preparing an exhibit? Yes No Maybe

Tickets Required: Adult(s)..... @ \$10.00; Children (under 18) .....Free

CHEQUE ENCLOSED FOR \$..... \_\_\_\_\_



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# Shirley's Bay Crown Game Preserve

*Merrill Smith – Ottawa Duck Club*

On May 21 one of natural Ottawa's best-kept secrets will be 80 years old.

The 1,058 hectare Shirley's Bay Crown Game Preserve, nestled behind the Connaught Rifle Range, was created on May 21, 1929, through a Letter of Agreement between Ontario's Department of Game and Fisheries and the federal Department of National Defence (DND). Today it is one of the very few crown game preserves left in the province and as the name suggests, no hunting is allowed on the property.

The rifle range itself was created in 1921 for the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association. In addition to housing the range, Shirleys Bay at that time was also the home of DND's only airbase used by both wheeled aircraft that were developing aerial photography and wireless telephony techniques, and by flying boats, then in general use due to the scarcity of airfields.



In those days much of the area around Shirleys Bay was farmland, including some of the land set aside for the sanctuary—a few apple trees are a reminder of that era. The rest of the preserve consisted of areas that were too swampy to cultivate.

Shirleys Bay itself has long been known as a prime staging area for waterfowl and as concerns about declining populations of various species began to grow, the founders of the Ottawa Duck Club worked out a deal, signed July 4, 1967, to manage about

120 hectares of the sanctuary on behalf of the military. Over the years, subsequent agreements expanded the club's operations to cover the wetlands and creeks within the sanctuary.

Since 1982 the northeastern part of the Crown Game Preserve has also been home to the Innis Point Bird Observatory, which is well known to members of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

During the 1960s and 70s, Duck Club members and military personnel together created a series of ponds to improve habitat for waterfowl. By the mid-70s the club's man-made ponds covered about 15 hectares. With later construction, that figure would now probably be closer to 24 hectares. Besides ducks, these ponds support a wide variety of wildlife species, including fish, frogs, turtles and aquatic mammals.



From its early days, the Duck Club has been very active in building, installing and monitoring nest boxes for Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Today, the club has about 180 nest boxes throughout the sanctuary and more than 40 years of successes behind it. Since 1984, well over 25,000 Wood Duck eggs have been laid in our boxes and more than 14,000 have hatched.



While the boxes are intended primarily for ducks, many other species of wildlife have been known to use them. During our winter box checks, we have found live Honeybees and depleted honeycombs, Flying Squirrels, a Screech Owl with a cache of frozen dead mice (sadly, the owl had starved, unable to thaw and eat the frozen mice), Starling and Northern Flicker nests and one box full of cranberries, no doubt stored there by a Red Squirrel. We also have about 40 nest boxes for Tree Swallows and Bluebirds, Purple Martins and Kestrels, 30 of which are monitored regularly; floating nest structures for Mallards and Black Ducks; and three Osprey platforms erected in 1983, with at least one still in use. Our bird feeders on March Valley Road are frequently visited by Wild Turkeys as well as the regular feeder visitors. In fact, just about any bird ever seen in Ottawa has probably visited Shirley's Bay, most famously, Elisha the errant flamingo.



Clearly, the Crown Game Preserve provides refuge to a wide spectrum of fauna. One of the more prominent species at the sanctuary is the White-tailed Deer. Deer numbers at Shirley's Bay were low in the 1970s, but have increased significantly since then and

are now conservatively estimated at 185. Today, many of the deer in the sanctuary are there year-round, where they are not only protected from hunting, but from other disturbances as well. Other mammals living there are beavers, muskrats, raccoons, fishers, porcupines, otters, hares, foxes and coyotes, with the occasional visiting wolf or bear. Duck Club members have also identified four species of turtles, eight species of frogs and toads and various snakes. Botanists would be pleased to find Yellow Ladyslippers among the plant species.

So why is it a secret? One reason for the sanctuary's relative obscurity is the fact



that it is not open to the public. Aside from members of the armed forces, no private group has as much access as members of the Ottawa Duck Club and we are always looking for new members. All that's required is a dedication to working for the environment and wildlife conservation. Check out our website at [www.ottawaduckclub.com](http://www.ottawaduckclub.com) for more information. While you're there, you can print out an application form and mail it in. We also welcome donations to help keep our feeders supplied.

Today, almost 80 years after its creation, the aeroplanes are gone from the Shirley's Bay Crown Game Preserve, but wildlife still finds a sanctuary there despite the busy rifle range right next door.

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## Upcoming Event: Ontario's Endangered Species

*Amber Cowie*

The Save Ontario's Species (SOS) Coalition (in partnership with the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club), is hosting an event on the evening of Wednesday, April 29 in the University of Ottawa Senate Room from 7 - 9 p.m. The event will consist of a formal presentation titled: Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA): A Safety Net with Holes. It will focus on the current crossroads the Ontario government is at regarding effective implementation of its new ESA and will be presented in partnership by Ontario Nature, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Wildlands League. Supporting partners include EcoJustice and ForestEthics. The presentation will be followed by sharply focused advice on how participants can get their opinion to the government by contacting their MPP and taking action on-line. Meeting attendees will have an opportunity to win a copy of the Breeding Bird Atlas. Light refreshments will also be served. For more information, contact Amber Cowie, at 416-444-8419 ext.273 or [amberc@ontarionature.org](mailto:amberc@ontarionature.org).

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# The Point Count Program of the Ottawa Breeding Bird Count: The first two years

*Adam C. Smith with maps by Jason Pitre*

The first two years of the Ottawa Breeding Bird Count's (OBBC-[www.ottawabirds.ca](http://www.ottawabirds.ca)) point count monitoring program have been a great success. The OBBC is a long-term, volunteer based survey of the birds in and around the city of Ottawa, which began in 2007. There are three OBBC field programs. This article summarizes the point count program only. The other two programs (census plots and nest monitoring) will be summarized in future articles.

## **Field methods**

Using point counts (a standardized method of counting birds), OBBC volunteers survey birds during the breeding season across the city. The field methods are similar to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, in that standardized observations are made at the same location every year. The OBBC data will eventually be used to map the distribution of species across the city, measure population changes over time, and to estimate population sizes for many bird species.

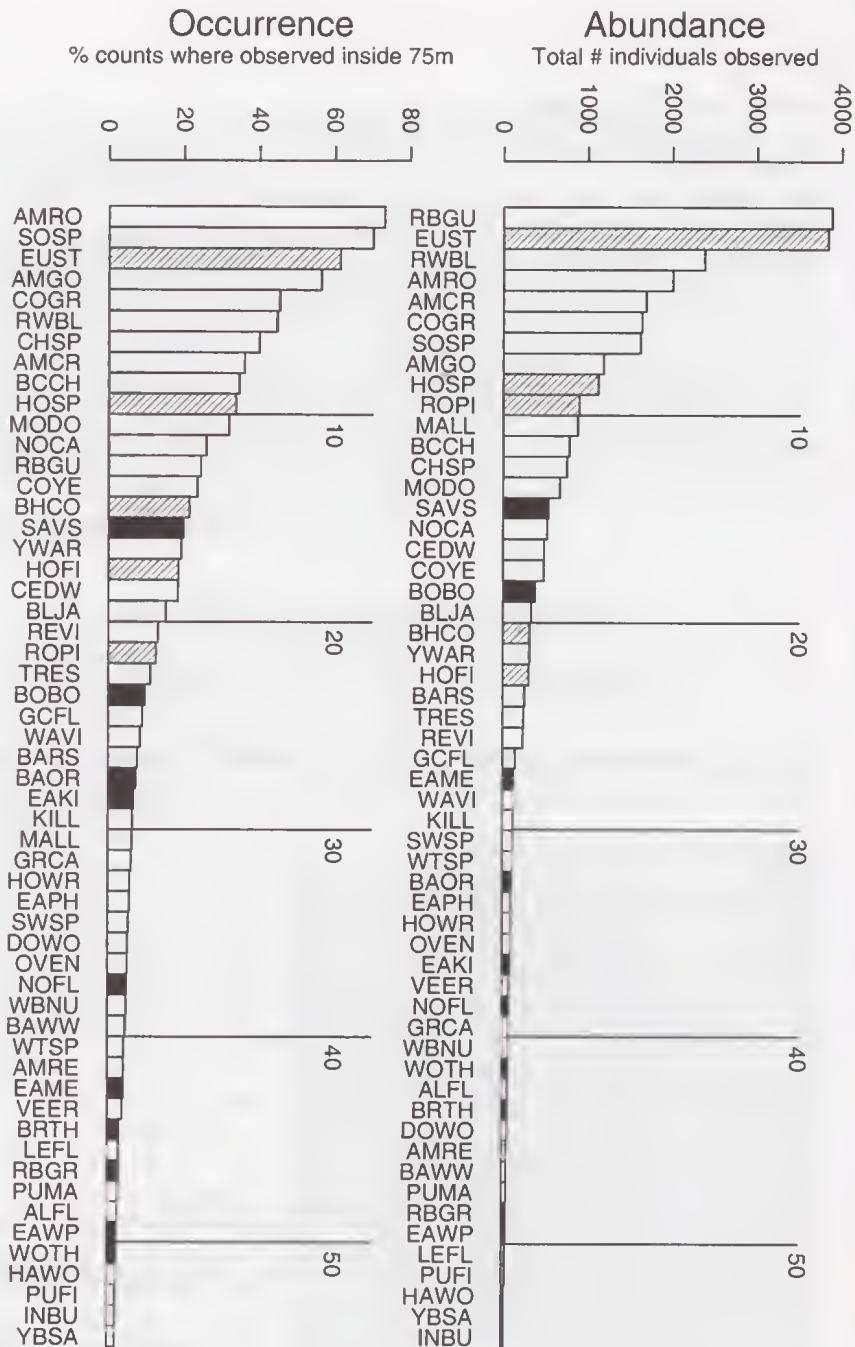
## **The first two seasons at a glance**

To date, 125 species have been observed during OBBC point counts (Table 1). The most common species were recorded at almost 75% of all count locations (American Robin, Song Sparrow, and European Starling), 14 species were observed inside a single count location, and an additional 8 species were observed only outside the 75 m radius. The 55 most common species were observed at more than 2% (18 or more) of all count locations (Figure 1). On average 9 species were observed inside the count circle during each count. Most of the counts contained between 7 and 11 species, but there were counts where as few as 1 (they were House Sparrows) and as many as 22 species were observed.

## **Where are birds most abundant?**

To look at the distribution of the more common species, Jason Pitre—an OBBC volunteer—has started to map the number of birds observed inside the 75 m count

Figure 1. The relative abundance and occurrence of the 55 most common species observed in 2007 and 2008. The top graph is the ranking of species according to the total number of individuals recorded at all distances (inside and outside the count circle). The bottom is the ranking of species according to the percent of count locations where the species was observed inside the 75 m count circle. Black bars represent species that are listed as conservation priority in BCR 13 by Ontario Partners in Flight. Cross-hatched bars represent species not native to Eastern North America. See Table 1 for the list of species codes.





circles. Using computer mapping tools, Jason has “interpolated” the number of birds observed at each point onto a surface map. These maps give a rough estimate of the number of each species that might be expected in areas between the points. In the near future, maps like these will be available on the website for many of the species in Table 1.

Song Sparrows and American Robins were the two most commonly observed species and they were observed across the city (Figures 2 and 3). Interestingly, with the exception of the urban core where they are both relatively rare, their distributions do not overlap as much as one might expect. American Robins were most abundant inside the suburban areas of Barrhaven, Orleans, Kanata, Stittsville, and Nepean (Figure 2), while Song Sparrows were most abundant in the less densely developed areas that surround these regions (Figure 3).

The three most common non-native species (European Starling, House Sparrow, and Rock Pigeon) have similar distributions. They all are most abundant near the urban core (see Figure 4 for House Sparrow, the other two species are not shown). All three of these species were also observed in relatively high numbers at a few isolated locations in the agricultural areas of the city, where the count circle happened to include farm buildings.

Ottawa has a great deal of agricultural land and, not surprisingly, some of the grassland species were reasonably common. Savannah Sparrows were observed at almost 20% of the point count locations and Bobolinks at about 10%. Both species reached their peak abundance in the fields between Navan and Orleans and in the area south of the international airport (Figures 5 and 6). Over 30% of the OBBC study area is composed of open habitats and agricultural areas according to satellite-imagery interpreted in the Geomatics and Landscape Ecology Lab at Carleton University (Dingle Robertson 2007).

### **Birds in the city—a lost cause or a conservation opportunity?**

Sometimes it is easy to think that cities are overrun with gulls, pigeons, starlings, crows and other birds that many people find distasteful. However, Ottawa’s bird community is much more than just these “city birds”; there are interesting native species almost everywhere in the city. Indeed, there are 10 species in figure 1 that are a priority for conservation in this region (i.e., they are listed by Partners in Flight as being a conservation priority for Bird Conservation Region 13, Ontario Partners in Flight 2005). The areas where we live can include diverse and interesting bird communities.

These OBBC data show that the city of Ottawa has great potential for bird conservation, particularly for open-habitat species. Of the 10 conservation priority



species, six (including four or five of the most common) are associated with grasslands or open shrub habitats. Parks and land conservation efforts in the Ottawa area often focus on forests and clearly retaining forests in an urban landscape is vital for many reasons. However, more open areas also provide an excellent opportunity for bird conservation because the large open habitats and agricultural areas in the greenbelt, the experimental farm, south of the airport, and surrounding areas currently support so many priority bird species.

### **The future of the OBBC's point count program**

These first two seasons have been a great learning opportunity. There have been a few small improvements to the field protocols and we hope to incorporate some additional off-road counts to get a more representative sample of the natural areas that are difficult to reach. Currently, the plan is to continue the program for at least the next three seasons and then re-assess whether it makes more sense either to continue with an annual survey or to concentrate on a more periodic sampling effort like the provincial atlas. In either case a long-term effort is essential because the real strength of the OBBC and any monitoring effort is its ability to measure changes over time, especially in a growing city.

### **You can help**

To help reach our goal of surveying most of the point count routes in each of the next three years, the OBBC needs your help. Adopting a point count route requires only a few hours of your time each year. You can even do it on your way to work. Contact the OBBC coordinator—Adam Smith ([ottawabirds@sympatico.ca](mailto:ottawabirds@sympatico.ca) or 613-325-2235) if you'd like to find out more. If you're feeling like your song identification skills are a bit rusty, you are welcome to take part in the 6-week point count and song identification course that will take place this spring (see the website for details: [www.ottawabirds.ca](http://www.ottawabirds.ca)). The OBBC point count database is freely available. Researchers or other interested citizens are welcome to contact the coordinator to obtain a copy of the data.

Finally and most importantly, I want to thank the OBBC observers that have volunteered their time and their excellent birding skills to make the first two years of this point count program a success. Point count routes were conducted by: Ken Allison, Celia Bodnar, Geoff Burbidge, Linda Burr, John Cartwright, Roger Clark, Peter Fuller, Peter Hall, Christine Hanrahan, Chris Harris, Richard Killeen, Bernie Ladouceur and Bob Cermak, Jude Phillips, Langis Sirois, Adam Smith, Graham Smith, Alex Stone, and Kim Zbitnew. Thanks to Bev McBride, Jude Phillips, and Ken Allison who provided editorial comments that greatly improved this article. Further thanks are due to Lutz Tischendorf for database programming, to Jason Pitre for producing these maps (and for frequent mapping help over the past 2 years), and to the participants of the Baillie Birdathon and the Baillie Fund for a seed grant in

2007 that helped to get the OBBC established.

### Technical Details

The OBBC point count program consists of 96 routes, each of which contains from 6-12 point count locations, for a total of approximately 900 survey sites spread across the city. Each permanent count location has been placed randomly within a systematic 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid overlaid on a ~900 km<sup>2</sup> study area. The counts are located in publicly accessible spaces for logistical reasons and therefore most are on roadsides. During the 2007 and 2008 breeding season, 19 volunteer observers surveyed 87 of the 96 routes (46 in 2007 and 60 in 2008 - 19 were surveyed in both years) for a total effort of 106 observer/mornings.

During the 10-minute point counts, birds are recorded separately inside and outside of a 75 m radius of the observer. The routes are designed to be surveyed annually in a predetermined order and under specific conditions (i.e., weather, time of day, season, etc.) so that observations can be compared from year to year. Unless otherwise indicated, the results reported here include only the observations of birds from inside the 75 m radius count circle. Finally, the OBBC's field protocols ensure that the data can be adjusted for the effects of background noise and other confounding issues associated with surveying birds in the city but the data reported here have not been adjusted yet.

Maps—The interpolated, relative abundance maps were created using a simple, inverse distance weighting function. This is similar to how the relative abundance maps in the recent Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas were produced, although using a much simpler function and fewer data (i.e. these maps use single point counts where as the atlas maps used averages from ~25 point counts, Cadman et al. 2007). Therefore at this point, these maps are best interpreted only as broad patterns because they likely show too much fine-scale variation in many areas. As the OBBC database grows over time, maps like these will become more accurate.

There are two other OBBC programs. One is an intensive "Census Plot" program, which surveys standardized and replicated plots in residential, green-space, and pre-development areas to measure changes in the bird community as development proceeds. The other is a nest monitoring program that is similar to the Ontario Nest Records Scheme. The OBBC is a project of the Geomatics and Landscape Ecology Lab at Carleton University ([www.glel.carleton.ca](http://www.glel.carleton.ca)) with help from the Birds Committee of the OFNC.

**References:**

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**Table 1.** Complete list of species observed during OBBC point counts in 2007 and 2008. \* Species marked with an asterisk are listed as 'Conservation Priority' for BCR 13 (Southern Ontario, Ontario Partners in Flight 2005).

Species	4-letter Code (see Figure 1)	Point counts where present inside 75 m (total = 895)	Individuals observed inside 75 m
American Robin	AMRO	655	1447
Song Sparrow	SOSP	628	1085
European Starling	EUST	550	2791
American Goldfinch	AMGO	505	968
Common Grackle	COGR	406	1263
Red-winged Blackbird	RWBL	400	1332
Chipping Sparrow	CHSP	358	586
American Crow	AMCR	323	642
Black-capped Chickadee	BCCH	310	645
House Sparrow	HOSP	302	1017
Mourning Dove	MODO	286	483
Northern Cardinal	NOCA	232	311
Ring-billed Gull	RBGU	219	1192
Common Yellowthroat	COYE	211	304
Brown-headed Cowbird	BHCO	192	287
Savannah Sparrow *	SAVS	178	364
Yellow Warbler	YWAR	173	239
House Finch	HOFI	166	255
Cedar Waxwing	CEDW	165	411
Blue Jay	BLJA	137	202
Red-eyed Vireo	REVI	118	136

Species	4-letter Code (see Figure 1)	Point counts where present inside 75 m (total = 895)	Individuals observed inside 75 m
Rock Pigeon	ROPI	113	445
Tree Swallow	TRES	100	195
Bobolink *	BOBO	87	195
Great Crested Flycatcher	GCFL	81	97
Warbling Vireo	WAVI	76	97
Barn Swallow	BARS	69	196
Baltimore Oriole *	BAOR	66	79
Eastern Kingbird *	EAKI	61	73
Killdeer	KILL	58	76
Mallard	MALL	57	204
Gray Catbird	GRCA	55	61
House Wren	HOWR	52	59
Eastern Phoebe	EAPH	51	57
Swamp Sparrow	SWSP	49	71
Downy Woodpecker	DOWO	47	52
Ovenbird	OVEN	46	60
Northern Flicker *	NOFL	45	50
White-breasted Nuthatch	WBNU	44	53
Black and White Warbler	BAWW	42	49
White-throated Sparrow	WTSP	39	46
American Redstart	AMRE	38	49
Eastern Meadowlark *	EAME	38	46
Veery	VEER	35	42
Brown Thrasher *	BRTH	28	29
Least Flycatcher	LEFL	27	28
Rose-breasted Grosbeak *	RBGR	27	32
Purple Martin	PUMA	25	44
Alder Flycatcher	ALFL	23	26
Eastern Wood-Pewee *	EAWP	21	23
Wood Thrush *	WOTH	21	23
Hairy Woodpecker	HAWO	20	22
Purple Finch	PUFI	19	28
Indigo Bunting	INBU	18	18
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	YBSA	18	20
Chestnut-sided Warbler	CSWA	16	21
Canada Goose	CAGO	13	107
Red-breasted Nuthatch	RBNU	13	14
Chimney Swift *	CHSW	12	28

Species	4-letter Code (see Figure 1)	Point counts where present inside 75 m (total = 895)	Individuals observed inside 75 m
Nashville Warbler	NAWA	12	12
Wilson's Snipe	WISN	11	13
Field Sparrow *	FISP	10	12
Grasshopper Sparrow *	GRSP	8	12
Pine Warbler	PIWA	8	8
Wood Duck	WODU	8	17
American Bittern	AMBI	7	9
Great Blue Heron	GBHE	7	7
Mourning Warbler	MOWA	7	7
Northern Waterthrush	NOWA	7	7
Pileated Woodpecker	PIWO	7	9
Sedge Wren	SEWR	7	8
Willow Flycatcher *	WIFL	7	11
Northern Harrier	NOHA	6	6
Scarlet Tanager	SCTA	6	6
Common Raven	CORA	5	6
Green Heron	GRHE	5	9
Horned Lark	HOLA	5	5
Merlin	MERL	5	5
Spotted Sandpiper	SPSA	5	8
Belted Kingfisher *	BEKI	4	4
Brown Creeper	BRCR	4	4
Eastern Bluebird	EABL	4	14
Hermit Thrush	HETH	4	5
Herring Gull	HERG	4	4
Vesper Sparrow *	VESP	4	5
Black-crowned Night Heron	BCNH	3	4
Cliff Swallow	CLSW	3	4
Golden-crowned Kinglet	GCKI	3	3
Magnolia Warbler	MAWA	3	3
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	RTHU	3	5
Swainson's Thrush	SWTH	3	3
Wild Turkey	WITU	3	7
Winter Wren	WIWR	3	3
American Kestrel *	AMKE	2	2
American Woodcock	AMWO	2	2
Bank Swallow *	BANS	2	8



Species	4-letter Code (see Figure 1)	Point counts where present inside 75 m (total = 895)	Individuals observed inside 75 m
Black-throated Green			
Warbler	BTNW	2	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	CCSP	2	2
Common Tern	COTE	2	4
Cooper's Hawk	COHA	2	2
Double-crested Cormorant	DCCO	2	2
Northern Rough-winged			
Swallow	NRWS	2	2
Red Crossbill	RECR	2	2
Red-tailed Hawk	RTHA	2	2
American Black Duck	ABDU	1	1
Canada Warbler *	CAWA	1	1
Carolina Wren	CARW	1	1
Common Loon	COLO	1	1
Gray Partridge	GRPA	1	3
Great Horned Owl	GHOW	1	1
Least Bittern	LEBI	1	2
Osprey	OSPR	1	1
Palm Warbler	PAWA	1	5
Pied-billed Grebe	PBGR	1	1
Sandhill Crane	SACR	1	1
Upland Sandpiper	UPSA	1	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	YRWA	1	1
Black-billed Cuckoo *	BBCU	Outside circle only	NA
Blackburnian Warbler	BLBW	Outside circle only	NA
Common Nighthawk	CONI	Outside circle only	NA
Evening Grosbeak	EVGR	Outside circle only	NA
Peregrine Falcon *	PEFA	Outside circle only	NA
Ring-necked Pheasant	RIPH	Outside circle only	NA
Sharp-shinned Hawk	SSHA	Outside circle only	NA
Turkey Vulture	TUVU	Outside circle only	NA

# Abundance of American Robins (AMRO)

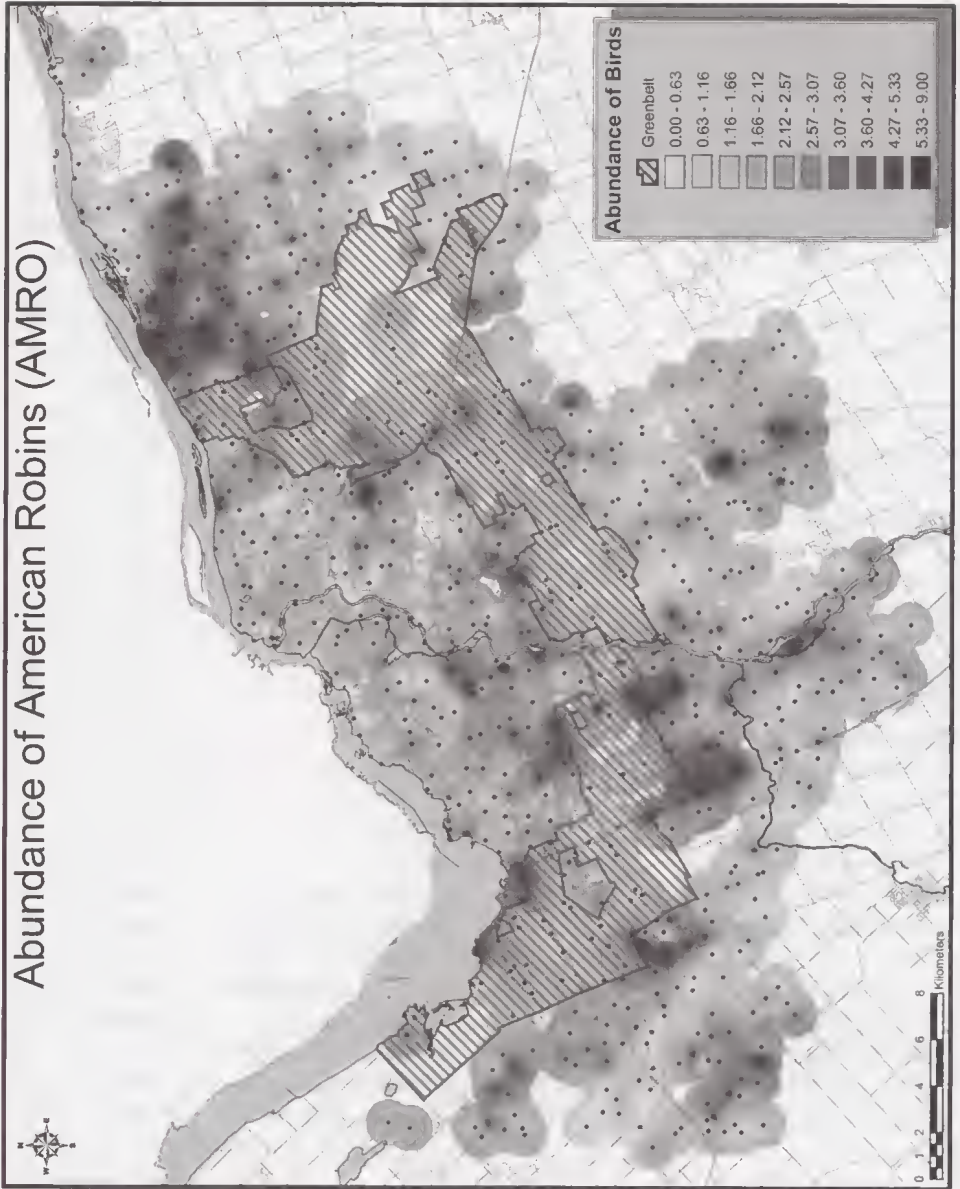


Figure 2. Interpolated relative abundance of American Robin. Interpolated using an inverse distance weighing function (areas closer to the count locations more closely represent the number of birds observed at that location). Original data are the number of birds observed inside the 75m count circle at each point count location during either 2007 or 2008.

# Abundance of Song Sparrows (SOSP)

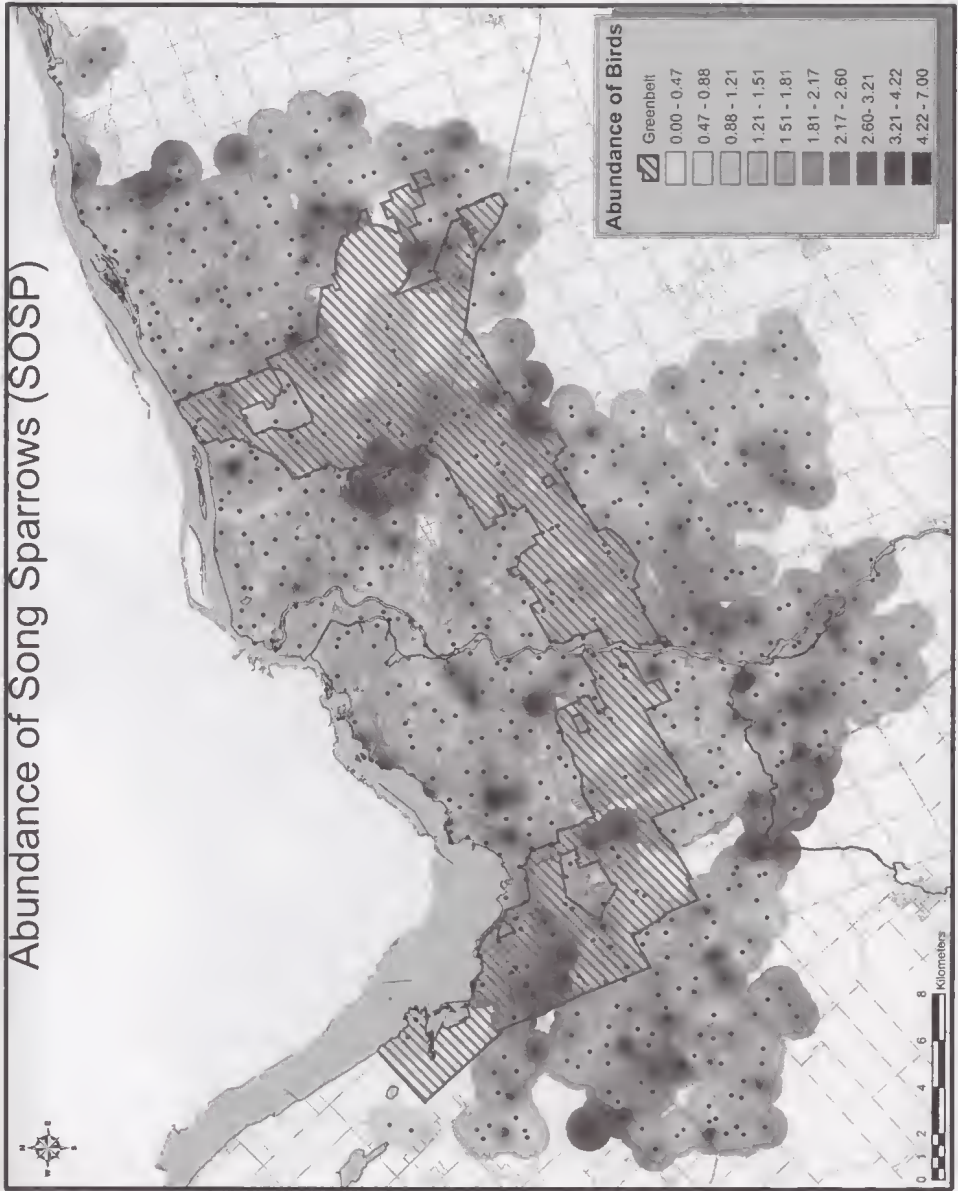


Figure 3. Interpolated relative abundance of Song Sparrow. See figure 2 for data description.

# Abundance of House Sparrows (HOSP)

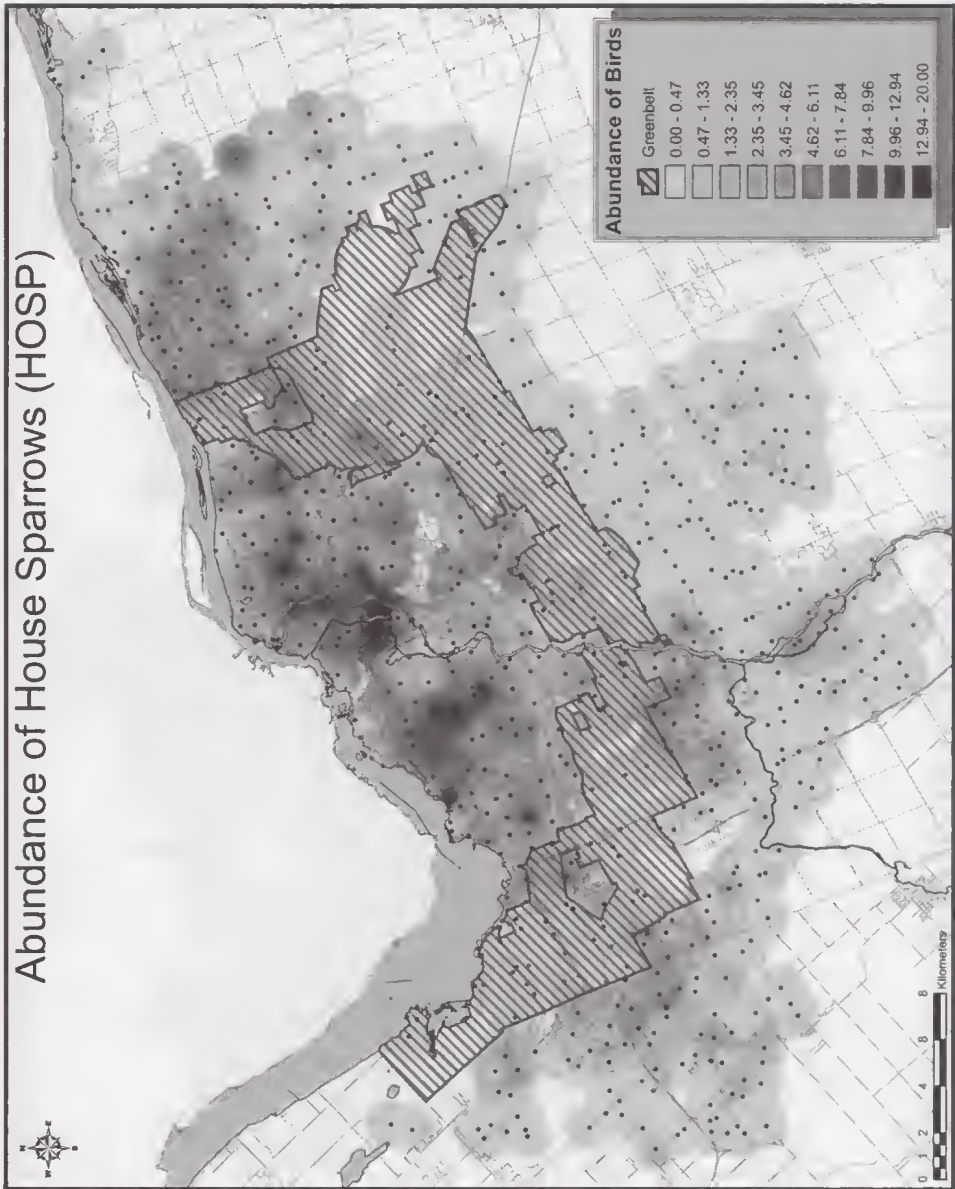


Figure 4. Interpolated relative abundance of House Sparrow. See figure 2 for data description.



# Abundance of Savannah Sparrows (SAVS)

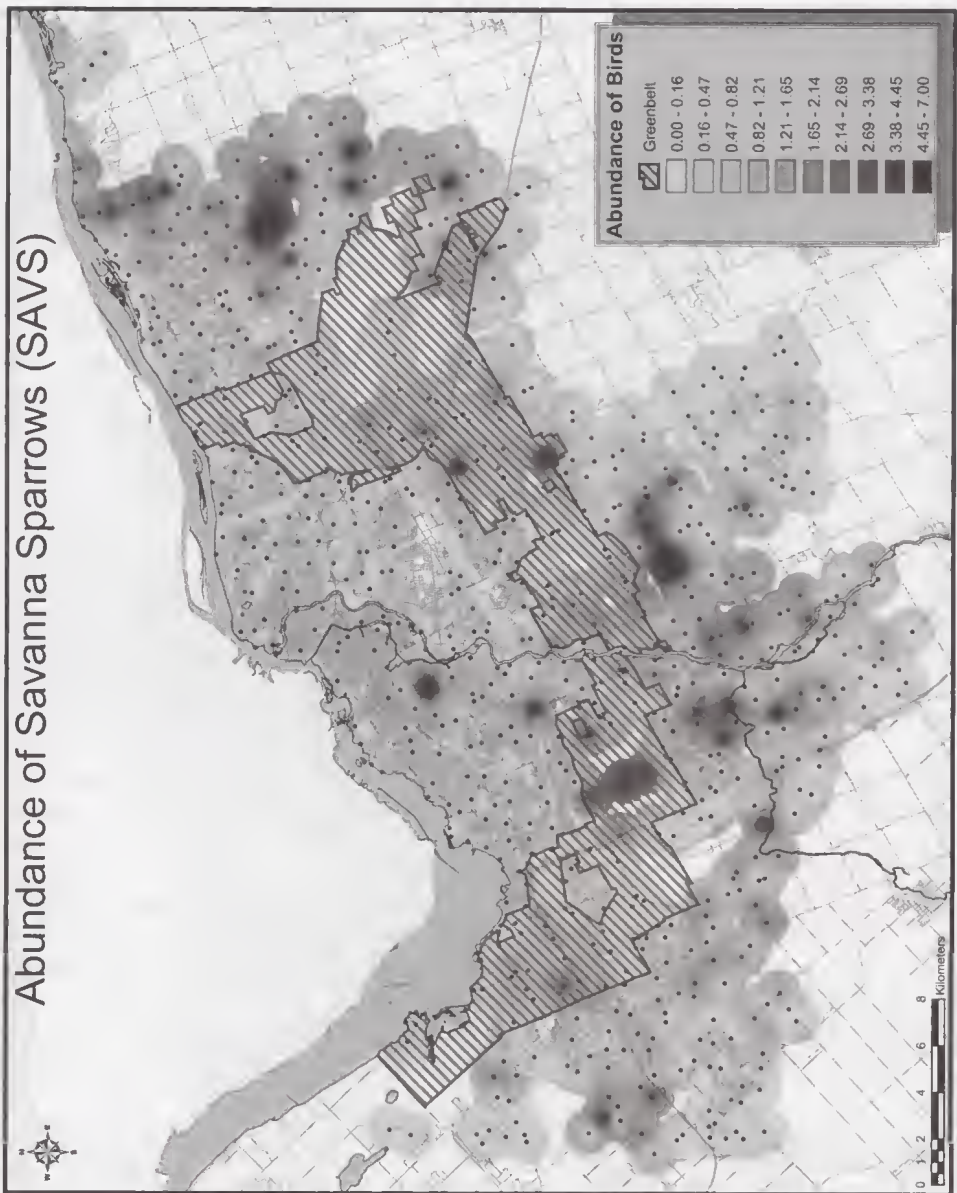


Figure 5. Interpolated relative abundance of Savannah Sparrow. See figure 2 for data description.



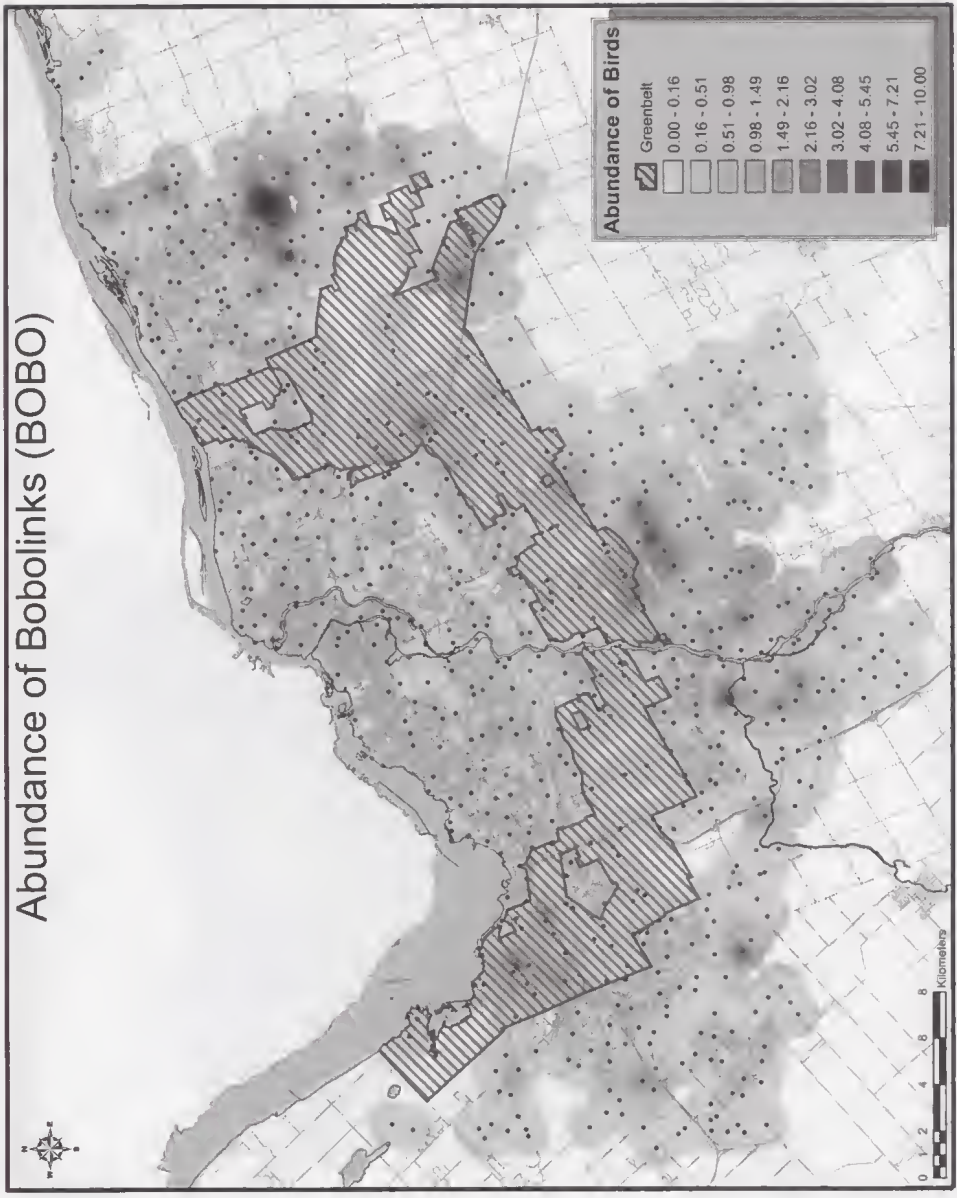


Figure 6. Interpolated relative abundance of Bobolink. See figure 2 for data description.

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# Bird Highlights from the 50k and Environs July – December 2008

*Chris Lewis*

## **WATERFOWL**

The third September record for Ottawa of a **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found 18-24 September at the large quarry pond on Moodie Dr. south of the Trail Rd. landfill. Another was on the Ottawa River near Andrew Haydon Park from 18 to 26 October. A couple of early **Snow Geese** were noted at the Moodie Dr. pond and on the Rideau River at Strathcona Park on 11 September and more continued to arrive throughout the fall until the main wave occurred in mid-November when approximately 18,000 were seen near Casselman on the 17<sup>th</sup>. On 24 October a **Ross' Goose** was discovered in a field near Alfred but was not subsequently reported. **Brant** began showing up in the first week of October but no significant numbers were observed. **Cackling Geese** are now regularly seen in the fall amongst the large flocks of **Canada Geese**.

An immature **Mute Swan** first reported from the Alfred sewage lagoons back on 26 May was still present as late as 17 August, and two juvenile **Tundra Swans** evidently took a liking to a spot on the Ottawa River south of Angers, QC; first seen here on 18 October, they were present until at least the 21<sup>st</sup>. An adult Tundra Swan appeared at Shirleys Bay on 23 October and was last reported on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

The expected dabbling and diving ducks were all well represented. A male **Canvasback** on the Ottawa River at Deschênes was a nice find from 12-17 November. One of our Ottawa "winter specialties," the **Barrow's Goldeneye**, arrived on schedule and the first seasonal report was of a male on 19 October on the Ottawa River at Relic Rapids. Up to two males and two females were seen on the Rideau River between Riverina Park and the Hartman bridge by the end of the year.

## **GALLINACEOUS BIRDS, LOONS, GREBES, PELICANS AND HERONS**

Reports of **Gray Partridge** were few and far between. A hen with 16 young was seen on 16 July near Carp, and a couple of small coveys were spotted in the Casselman and Ste-Rose areas in mid-October and early December. Many of the Christmas Bird Counts around Ontario tallied record numbers of **Wild Turkeys**, an indication of the continued explosion of the species in recent years.

Six **Red-throated Loons** dropped in on the Ottawa River between Britannia and Dick Bell Park on 23 October and at least five were counted in the same area on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The Embrun sewage lagoons hosted a very out of place and out of season **Horned Grebe** all summer until at least 31 August. More seasonable sightings of both **Horned** and **Red-necked Grebes** occurred from late September to early November.

The unequivocal "big bird" (both literally and figuratively) of the summer was an **American White Pelican**. Discovered on 11 August, it appeared quite content at the Moodie Dr. pond until it was last reported on 01 September. There were several sightings of **Great Egrets** throughout our region in late summer and early fall and a very late lingerer south of the international airport was a second record for the annual Ottawa-Gatineau Fall Bird Count on 18-19 October.

On 20 October two birders watching the Tundra Swans on the Ottawa River were completely surprised when a juvenile **Little Blue Heron** literally dropped into view along the same shoreline where the swans were feeding. After disappearing into the marshes on the north side of the river, the heron was seen again in the marshes at Petite Baie Clement and finally flying east towards Masson on the 21<sup>st</sup>. An elusive **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** appeared all too briefly at Deschênes on 05 August on the same islet where a pair of **Black-crowned Night-Herons** nested for the second consecutive year.

#### **HAWKS AND EAGLES**

Hardly a week went by without a report of one or more **Bald Eagles** in a wide variety of locations, and high numbers were reported on Christmas bird counts around the province. Unusual in December, **Red-shouldered Hawks** were found in two different locations, one of them in the same area along Old Carp Rd. where probably the same bird spent the previous winter. **Rough-legged Hawks** were quite numerous from mid-November until the end of the year. A few reports of **Golden Eagles** came in during their typical migration time, from mid-October to late November. Three **Gyrfalcons** in all three flavours (i.e. colour morphs) were spotted 14-31 December, but none seemed to stay around. **Merlins** continue to outnumber **American Kestrels** especially in urban locales. Ottawa's downtown pair of **Peregrine Falcons** successfully fledged two young.

#### **RAILS, GALLINULES, COOTS, CRANES AND SHOREBIRDS**

A very late **Sora** at Petrie Island on 19 October was a first Fall Count record. The Embrun lagoons were, as usual, good places to find **Common Moorhens** and **American Coots**. **Sandhill Cranes** held their annual fall gathering in fields adjacent to the Mer Bleue bog; up to 69 were present by 10 November.

Persistent high water on the Ottawa River made for less than ideal feeding habitat for shorebirds. Even the normally productive sewage lagoons had marginal habitat at best. Consequently, quarry ponds such as the ones on Moodie Dr. in the west and Giroux Rd. in the east, as well as smaller wet areas along Fernbank Rd. and March Valley Rd., became the most popular viewing spots. Among the 25 species reported, highlights included good numbers of **American Golden Plovers** from mid-September to late October, two **Red Knots** at Andrew Haydon Park in the first week of September, single **Purple Sandpipers** at Dick Bell Park on 29 October and 11 November, a fly-over **Hudsonian Godwit** at the Moodie Dr. pond on 29 October, a juvenile **Long-billed Dowitcher** at the same pond from 13-26 October, and **Red-necked Phalaropes** at the Moodie Dr. pond (04-17 August) and the Embrun lagoons (31 August).

### LARIDS

Once again the Moodie Dr. pond was the big magnet. Two juvenile **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were first reported at this location on 05 August and a third was seen here on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Yet another was found at the St. Albert sewage lagoons on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Two lingered at the Moodie Dr. site until the 13<sup>th</sup>, an unusual length of time for this maritime vagrant to spend in Ottawa. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were also noted in good numbers until late September, single **Thayer's Gulls** were spotted here and at Andrew Haydon Park in mid-November, and **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls** began to arrive after an early snowstorm on 29 October. Although **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were fewer than in some previous years, they were still not hard to find among gull congregations, particularly in the vicinity of the Trail Rd. landfill. Another fixture at the Moodie Dr. pond was a **Caspian Tern** that lingered until mid-August, **Common Terns** (up to 25 on 01 August) were regular customers, and at least 20 **Black Terns** also paid a visit to the pond on 24 August.

### CUCKOOS, OWLS AND WOODPECKERS

During the first two weeks of July, one of the most visited destinations was a trail on the east side of Gatineau Park along Meech Creek, where a pair of breeding **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** was discovered on 29 June and seen again on 15 July.

The first **Snowy Owls** of the season (25 and 26 October) were the vanguard of a major irruption into southern Ontario and Québec. At least seven different **Northern Hawk Owls** were found in our region from 05 November onward and one in the Crystal Beach neighbourhood even became a media celebrity. **Great Gray Owls** began to show up after the first week of December. At least four **Short-eared Owls** were regularly seen hunting at dusk from late October until the beginning of December. A very early **Boreal Owl** was banded at the Innis Point Bird Observatory on 29 September, and another visited a backyard in Alta Vista on 06 November. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found in the same location near Orleans for the second year in a row on the Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird Count.



Woodpecker numbers were generally low this season, and the only report of a **Black-backed Woodpecker** came from the Marlborough forest on 19 October.

### PASSERINES

August and September were both excellent months for observing passerine migration, with very pleasant weather and a high level of activity and variety in favourite hot spots such as the Britannia Conservation Area. Uncommon species such as **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, **Yellow-throated Vireo** and **Philadelphia Vireo** were found at Britannia, and 22 species of **warblers** were found during the peak time.

**Carolina Wrens** appeared again in the Britannia, Riverview and Qualicum Graham Park neighbourhoods as well as Aylmer, QC. A **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher** was seen along a trail off Lamoureux St. in Deschênes, QC (06-09 August). Outside the 50K, a feeder near Watson's Corners west of Lanark hosted a **Varied Thrush** from 17 December until well into the new year. A pair of **Northern Mockingbirds** nested at the international airport and a very active bird found on 06 December in the Crystal Beach area lingered into January. Rare sparrows included a **Le Conte's Sparrow** (26-27 September) at a property on Diamondview Rd. and a **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** (21 September) in the vegetation at a storm water management pond on Fernbank Rd. An extremely late male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was an intermittent visitor at a feeder near Pakenham in late December.

It turned out to be a great season for finches, especially **White-winged Crossbills**. Several roving flocks were reported during the last week of July. They began to reappear in mid-October and by the end of the year were ubiquitous, breaking many Christmas Bird Count records. **Pine Siskins** dominated the scene from mid-October to November, **Pine Grosbeaks**, **Purple Finches** and **Common Redpolls** were all noted albeit in smaller numbers, but **Evening Grosbeaks** remained mysteriously scarce.

The information in this article was derived from reports to the OFNC Bird Status Line (613-860-9000) and [sightings@ofnc.ca](mailto:sightings@ofnc.ca), personal observations and communications, postings to the Ontario Field Ornithologists listserv (ONTBIRDS) and information on the Club des Ornithologues de l'Outaouais (COO) web site [www.coo.nef.ca](http://www.coo.nef.ca). The Bird Status Line is updated regularly and transcripts are available on the OFNC web site [www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca). The OFNC web site and the Neilyworld website by Larry Neily are highly recommended resources for a wealth of information about birding in and around the region.



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## National Capital Region Wildlife Festival Events

### April 1 to May 11

Bibliothèque municipale de Gatineau, Maison du Citoyen, 25 rue Laurier, Gatineau  
The Club de photographie Polarisé presents an exhibit of photographs entitled "Les plantes indigènes au fil des saisons" (Native plants throughout the seasons). The exhibit will showcase twenty photographs which will promote a better understanding of which plants are native to our region. Information 819-561-5470.

#### **Monday, April 6, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Hazeldean, 50 Castlefrank Rd.

Jim Robertson and Gwen Williams, incredible wildlife photographers, present the multimedia shows: *A Year in the Life of a Forest*, *The Bruce Peninsula*, *Reflections on Fall*, *African Wildflowers*, *Florida Birds*, *Africa's Big Five*, *Osa Peninsula Wild and Remote*. Registration 613-836-1900.

#### **Wednesday, April 8, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library-Beaverbrook, 2500 Campeau Dr.

Max Finkelstein, an expert on Canada's heritage rivers, will showcase the flora and fauna of the North and some of the concerns facing them. Registration 613-592-2712.

#### **Tuesday, April 14, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Carlingwood, 281 Woodroffe Ave.

Join Tony Beck, acclaimed naturalist and photographer, for a journey across the country, showing the beauty of *Birds of Canada*. Canada is as diverse as its landscape. Among its many habitats are some of the most enchanting creatures on the planet. Featuring images from the Arctic, the Rockies, the Prairies, eastern Provinces and the Atlantic. Registration 613-725-2449.

#### **Wednesday, April 15, 6:30 - 8:15 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Stittsville, 1637 Stittsville Main.

Well known geoscientist and member of the Order of Canada, Dr. Denis St. Onge, has popularized geography through the development of the Canadian Geographic. He will take us on a splendid adventure of the Arctic north of Yellowknife, with music by Susan Aglukark, in *The Beauty of the Tundra*. Reservations 613-836-3381.

#### **Thursday, April 16, 7 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Main, 120 Metcalfe Street (French Presentation).

Since retirement, Geologist Jean-Serge Vincent has gathered an impressive collection of photographs of the flora and fauna of the Outaouais. He will show how beautiful nature is in our region in his presentation, *Promenade à la découverte de la flore et de la faune de l'Outaouais*. Registration 613-580-2424 ext. 32101.

#### **Friday, April 17, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Stony Swamp Parking Lot #8, Moodie Drive, south of Hunt Club.

Family Nature Walk at Stony Swamp with Martha Webber who will encourage participants to discover the wonders of the night sounds and sights of nature in spring. Information 613-839-5217.

**Saturday, April 18, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

RA Centre, 2452 Riverside Drive.

Celebrate Green Living at the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Ottawa Eco-Stewardship Fair. Explore new products and ideas in energy, food, health, outdoor recreation, home & garden, transportation, nature, and ecotourism. Over 100 exhibitors, demonstrations, seminars, children's activities, 100-mile lunch and more. An informative and fun filled day for the whole family. Free admission and parking. 613-321-6193 [www.ottawaecofair.ca](http://www.ottawaecofair.ca).

**Saturday, April 18, 8:30 a.m.**

Martin Larouche Parking Lot, Gatineau (French).

The Conseil Régional de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable de l'Outaouais host a nature walk *The Migrants from Marsh to Marsh* to observe migrating ducks. Passionate ornithologists will instruct participants in the fundamentals of bird watching. Suggested donation of \$5/adult to the group leader. Reservations required; maximum 20 participants. 819-772-4925, [info@creddo.ca](mailto:info@creddo.ca).

**Saturdays and Sundays, April 18-19 and April 25-26 from 10 a.m. to Noon and 1-4 p.m.**

Parc national de Plaisance, Plaisance, Quebec (French).

Surprises at the Pond. During the period of spring migration, the ponds at the Grand Presqu'île are full of surprises. Meet the park guides and passionate ornithologists. With the aid of telescopes, discover the new arrivals; and, perhaps you will see a rare species. Park admission required. 819-427-5350, ext. 224; [www.sepaq.com](http://www.sepaq.com).

**Sunday, April 19, 10 a.m. - Noon**

Alba Wilderness School, 502 Hills of Peace, Lanark.

Enjoy 5 km of relatively easy to moderate hiking on the Earth Day Walk to Blueberry Mountain, one of the seven wonders of Lanark County, with dramatization of the life of John Muir. Information 613-259-3412.

**Monday, April 20, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Elmvale, 1910 St. Laurent Boulevard.

Join Roy John, Canadian Field-Naturalists' Book Review Editor and ardent eco-traveler, and explore the ancient civilizations of Asia Minor. From Troy to Istanbul travel through bizarre Cappadocia to the Mediterranean coast, looking for wild life. Visit amphitheatres, churches and the strange world of troglodytes in a land where so many of our garden flowers and Santa Claus originated. Finally, stop at Gallipoli where many died and Turkey was born. Registration 613-738-0619.

**Wednesday, April 22, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Ruth E. Dickinson, 100 Malvern.

A repeat performance of Jim Robertson and Gwen Williams' multimedia presentations. Registration 613-580-2796.

**Thursday, April 23, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Manotick, 5499 South River Drive.

Discover through stories and samples how the early immigrants recognized and valued the medicinal and nutritional properties of plants they brought with them to the new country. Botanist, naturalist and expert on wild vegetables, Martha Webber will shed light on heritage plants which have adapted well and which we now know as "weeds." Registration 613-692-3854.

**Friday, April 24 (French) and Friday, May 1 (English), 7-10 p.m.**

Gatineau Park Visitors Centre, 33 Scott Road, Chelsea QC.

Friends of Gatineau Park present *The Dusk Series 2009 - Frog Chorus*. When day becomes night, when so many animals wake, when the sun gives way to the moon and stars . . . it's the Dusk Series in Gatineau Park! Join Rob Alvo, an amphibian specialist, as he presents slides on these vocal amphibians and introduces us to their different songs. After, we will go into the park to enjoy the concert and identify who is who! All participants will receive a free CD with frog calls from the Frogwatch Programme! Adults \$15 (Members \$12), Seniors/Students \$12 (Members \$10), Children \$5. Information and Registration: 819-827-2020.

[www.friendsofgatineaupark.ca](http://www.friendsofgatineaupark.ca).

**Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Open House at Wolf Grove Woods.

Explore the woods and harvest wild edible plants with botanist, Martha Webber. Bring a lunch and supplement from the wild. Meet at Mctcalfe Park in Almonte. Information 613-839-5217.

**Sunday, April 26, 2 p.m.**

Nature Walk in McCarthy Woods, Riverside Park/Hunt Club.

Explore a small but diverse urban forest with huge hardwoods, carpets of spring flowers and many signs of wild denizens. Easy trails but some may be muddy. Meet in mall parking lot at McCarthy Rd. and Paul Anka Dr. Information 613-731-6141.

**Monday, April 27, 1 - 3 p.m.**

Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive (Experimental Farm).

Nature Walk through the Garden: Guided walk. 613-234-6767.

**Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Orleans, 1705 Orleans Boulevard (French Presentation).

Jean Lauriault, Environmental Specialist of the Canadian Centre for Biodiversity at the Canadian Museum of Nature and author of the *Identification Guide to Trees of Canada*, will share his vast knowledge in describing the magnificent arboreal species in and around the National Capital area. Registration 613-824-1962.

**Thursday, April 30, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Library - Alta Vista, 2516 Alta Vista Drive.

Join Roy John, Canadian Field-Naturalists' Book Review Editor and ardent eco-traveler, and explore India, with its incredible mixture of old and new, rich and poor, tame and wild. Home of the last of the Bengal Tigers and the Taj Mahal, it is a wonderful place to visit. Join us on Elephant back for a "Tiger Show" in the midst of Peacocks, Sambar, Egrets and Storks. See the beautiful Hindu temples, opulent Mogul palaces and the raw landscape of central India. Visit with sari-clad women

and barefoot children as India leaps in to the next century. Registration 613-737-2837.

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May 1, 2 and 3, 6:30 p.m.**

Kitchissippi Marina Parking Lot (French).

The Conseil Régional de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable de l'Outaouais hosts nature walk *Evenings of Frog Stories and Songs* with Marc Delannoy who will delight participants with stories and listening to frog calls. What can be more intriguing than the marsh: refuge of spirits and sorcerers, a place full of legends and mysteries! These sessions will highlight frogs and toads. Suggested donation of \$10/adult to the group leader. Reservations required; maximum 40 participants. 819-772-4925, [info@creddo.ca](mailto:info@creddo.ca).

**Saturday, May 2, 8 - 10 a.m.**

Down to Earth Gardens, 420 Haskins Road, Burritts Rapids, off Highway 43 south between Merrickville and Kemptville.

Birding 101 along the Old Stagecoach Trail, explore nature's haven for bird watchers along this historic trail with John Mackenzie, retired MNR wildlife technician, and Pierre Secretain of Down to Earth Gardens. Information and registration: [pierre@equisol.ca](mailto:pierre@equisol.ca). 613-269-2687, [www.downtoearthgardens.ca](http://www.downtoearthgardens.ca).

**Sunday, May 3, 10 a.m. - Noon**

Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive (Experimental Farm).

Nature Walk through the Garden: Guided walk. 613-234-6767.

**Friday, May 8, 8 a.m.**

Entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant on Cassels Street.

Dave Moore and Bev McBride of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club will lead a General Interest Nature Walk through the Britannia Conservation Area. Limited to 15 participants. Information and Registration: 613-729-9330, [redstart@vif.com](mailto:redstart@vif.com).

**Saturday, May 9, 10 a.m. - Noon:**

Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive (Experimental Farm).

*International Migratory Bird Day*. Guided birding walk, free refreshments, displays and handouts. 613-234-6767.

**Thursday, May 14, 6 - 9:30 p.m.**

Canadian Museum of Nature, 240 McLeod Street (at Metcalfe), Ottawa.

*Native Plants Forum*. An information-packed evening all about native plants.

Speakers will explain which plants are considered native species, which are native to Eastern Ontario, and how you can contribute to furthering knowledge about native plants in Ontario. Free refreshments, some wonderful displays from local organizations involved with native plants, and lots of giveaways. 613-831-2253.

**Saturday, May 16, 10:30 a.m.**

Canadian Wildlife Federation, 350 Michael Cowpland Drive.

Come and join a guided Native Plant Garden Tour of the Canadian Wildlife Federation's native plant demonstration gardens. See spring flowers blooming and learn about summer and fall plants in CWF's theme beds. For information, call Sarah Coulber at 613-599-9594 ext. 216.



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# Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.

For further information,  
call the Club number (613-722-3050).

*Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.*

**ALL OUTINGS:** *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

**REGISTERED BUS TRIPS:** *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait to the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.*

**EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE:** *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Monthly meetings are held in **The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor**. Attendees may have to pay \$5 parking per vehicle.*

**BIRD STATUS LINE:** *Phone 613-860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 613-860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.*



Sunday  
5 April  
1:30 p.m.  
to  
5:00 p.m.

**THE FOSSIL COLLECTION AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE NATURAL HERITAGE BUILDING**

**Leader:** Kieran Shepherd (coordinator Fenja Brodo, 613-723-2054).

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of parking lot near Pizza Pizza or at 2:00 p.m. at 1740 Pink Rd., nr Vanier Rd. Kieran, Chief Collection Manager of Earth Sciences, invites us to see the fabulous Paleontological Collection at the CMN. The collection is very important for research and is too extensive for most of it to be on display. Kieran will give us a glimpse into some of the ongoing research projects and what is involved with the preservation and conservation of fossils. This trip is open to the first 20 people who register at the Club number (613-722-3050).

Saturday  
11 April  
7:45 a.m.

**BEGINNERS BIRD WALK FOR EARLY SPRING BIRDS**

**Leader:** Bev McBride

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre near the Pizza Pizza on Richmond Rd. Or at the Britannia Conservation area, where Cassel's Rd. meets the entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant, at 8:00 a.m.

We will explore the area looking for early-arriving migrants and overwintering birds that are still here. As in previous years, we will focus on listening as well as seeing. We will attempt to move at a slow pace, catering to beginners.

Tuesday  
14 April  
7:00 p.m.  
Social  
& Club  
business  
7:30 p.m.  
Formal  
Program

**OFNC MONTHLY MEETING**

**BULLS, BEARS, BOGS, AND BITERS: THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ONTARIO'S BOREAL FOREST**

**Speaker:** Michael Runtz

**Location:** Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets, *The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.*

The largest part of Ontario lies in the northern ecoregion known as the Boreal Forest. To some, it is a vast expanse of black spruce and biting insects. While both elements certainly are present, our boreal forest also harbours an extremely diverse array of habitats that range from prairie meadows to subarctic shorelines, from fire-driven pine forests to floating beds of cattails. During several summers of field work in Ontario's north, Michael Runtz has documented a number of the special flora and fauna that make this region so remarkable.

**Attendees may have to pay \$5 parking per vehicle.**

**Saturday**  
**18 April**  
**6:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**6:00 p.m.**

### **DERBY HILL HAWKWATCH**

**Leader:** Roy John

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot by Pizza Pizza. We will be leaving at 6 a.m. promptly.

**Saturday**  
**25 April**  
**7:30 p.m.**

### **OFNC SOIRÉE**

**Location:** St. Basil's Church, off Maitland, just north of the Queensway.

This is our annual wine and cheese party. Please see the article on page 49 of this issue as well as the centrefold.

**Sunday**  
**26 April**  
**8:00 a.m.**

### **SPRING AT CONSTANCE BAY**

**Leader:** Jeff Skevington

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

This is a full day outing with a focus on Constance Bay, but we will take a couple of hours to get there by stopping at sites along the river between Ottawa Beach and Constance Bay. Bring a field lunch and expect to be home by about 4:00 p.m. Constance Bay is a lot of fun in late April. Early warblers (Pine and Yellow-rumped for example), Common Loon, Red-shouldered Hawk, Virginia Rail, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, and lots of sparrows including Fox, Chipping and White-throated should all be back. If we get a sunny day it should be fun for insect watching too. Late April is a great time to see early butterflies and a variety of insects that can't be seen the rest of the year. Some of the pussy willows will be loaded with pollinating insects if the day is warm enough. Early season frogs, salamanders and some early season flowers are also possible depending on how advanced the season is.

**Monday**  
**27 April**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
**to**  
**3:00 p.m.**

### **GENERAL NATURE WALK**

**Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, off Prince of Wales Drive, just south of the traffic circle.

Join us with a walk through the Garden. See what is happening at this time of year. For more information, contact the Fletcher Wildlife Garden at 613-234-6767 or [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca). This event is sponsored by the Ottawa Wildlife Festival and the FWG.

Sunday  
3 May  
10:00 a.m.  
to  
noon

**FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN: GUIDED WALK**

**Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, off Prince of Wales Drive, just south of the traffic circle.

Take a stroll through the garden to look for signs of spring including spring wildflowers. For more information contact 613-234-6767, or *fletcher@ofnc.ca*. This is another event sponsored by the Ottawa Wildlife Festival and the FWG.

Saturday  
9 May  
8:00 a.m.  
to  
about noon

**BEGINNERS NATURE WALK**

**Leader:** Dave Moore

**Meet:** Parking area on Cassels St., outside the entrance to the Filtration Plant. Note: The #18 bus gets you to the corner of Britannia and Cassels St.

If you intend to come, please email Dave at *redstart@vif.com* or leave a message at 613-729-9330 so that Dave can contact you in case bad weather necessitates cancelling this walk.

Saturday  
9 May  
10:00 a.m.  
to  
noon

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRDS DAY**

**Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, off Prince of Wales Drive, just south of the traffic circle.

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with a guided birding walk through the garden. Free refreshments, displays and handouts. 613 234-6767, *vanessa@magma.ca*. Sponsored by the Ottawa Wildlife Festival and the FWG.

Tuesday  
12 May  
7:00 p.m.  
**Social & Club  
business**  
7:30 p.m.  
**Speaker**

**OFNC MONTHLY MEETING**

**THE PROBLEM WITH LEDA CLAY – LANDSLIDES & EARTHQUAKES**

**Speaker:** Jan Aylsworth, Geological Survey of Canada (GSC)

**Location:** Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and Mcleod Streets, **The Discovery Zone Theatre, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.**

Why is our Leda clay special? How can flat land move? Find out why and how the thick deposits of clay underlying much of the Ottawa-St Lawrence Lowland are so vulnerable to disastrous landslides and greatly amplified earthquake motion. The geological origins and the unusual properties of this clay will be presented. Hear the stories behind some of our local landslides including the Lemieux slide of 1993. Learn how research at the GSC discovered the big earthquake in our past and the implications for our future.

**Wednesday**

**13 May**

**8:00 a.m.**

**to**

**12:30 p.m.**

### **BIRDING IN THE SOUTH END**

**Leader:** Gord Belyea, (613-736-7051)

**Meet:** Take Albion Road south from Bank Street (approximately 4 km), turn west (right) onto Leitrim Road and proceed for approximately 2 km, turn south (left) on Bowesville Road and continue for about 200 metres to the parking space on the left side of Bowesville Road where the closed portion of High Road meets Bowesville Road.

**Rain date:**

**Thursday**

**14 May**

The fields to the south of the Airport offer one of the most diverse populations of sparrows in the area. We could expect to see Song, Savannah, Field, Chipping, Grasshopper, Vesper, Clay-Coloured, and possibly White Throat and Swamp Sparrows on this walk. Other possibilities include Indigo Buntings, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, and Black-Billed Cuckoo. There is also an important Bluebird trail in this area.

**Thursday**

**14 May**

**6 p.m.**

**to**

**9:30 p.m.**

### **OTTAWA: NATIVE PLANTS FORUM**

**Meet:** Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets.

An information-packed evening all about native plants. Speakers will explain which plants are considered native species, which plants are native to eastern Ontario, and how you can contribute to furthering knowledge about native plants in Ontario. Free refreshments, some wonderful displays from local organizations involved with native plants, and lots of giveaways. 613-831-2253, [vanessa@magma.ca](mailto:vanessa@magma.ca).

**Saturday**

**16 May**

**7:30 a.m.**

### **SPRING MIGRATION AT BRITANNIA**

**Leader:** Ken Allison

**Meet:** Parking area on Cassels Road just outside the Filtration Plant grounds. The #18 bus gets you to the corner of Britannia and Cassels St.

This will be a short half day trip in the Britannia Conservation Area. This date should put us right at the peak of spring migration with a good chance to see many species of warblers, as well as vireos, orioles, tanagers and other neotropical migrants in all their spring glory. This will be primarily a birding trip, but we will also be watching for early butterflies and wild flowers.

**Saturday**  
**23 May**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**to**  
**about**  
**1:00 p.m.**

**WILD FLOWERS AND FERNS**

**Leader:** Albert Dugal

**Meet:** Giant Tiger parking lot, northeast corner of Blossom Park Shopping Centre (next to TD Bank), west side of Bank Street, 2.2 km. past Hunt Club Road. The last street before the shopping centre is Queensdale.

The walk will be in the Greenbelt in the southern part of the city. We will visit several habitats and see a variety of wild flowers and ferns. Waterproof footwear is suggested and insect repellent may be necessary and bring a snack and drink. Rain will cancel this trip. If the weather is questionable, or for more information, call Albert at 613-821-1236.

**Sunday**  
**24 May**  
**6:30 a.m.**  
**to**  
**9:30 a.m.**

**BIRDING AT MUD LAKE**

**Leader:** John Cartwright (613-789-6714)

**Meet:** parking area on Cassels St., outside the entrance to the Filtration Plant. **Note:** The #18 bus gets you to the corner of Britannia and Cassels.

This is an early morning trip because the emphasis will be on learning to recognize bird songs and bird calls.

**Saturday**  
**30 May**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**about noon**

**BUTTERFLY WALK IN THE CONSTANCE BAY AREA**

**Leader:** Diane Lepage (613-741-5179)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza **Or** at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot of West Carleton Secondary School, RR 2, 3088 Dunrobin Rd.

This outing is for beginners who would like to find out more about butterflies that can be observed in the Ottawa District. We will look for Canadian Tiger Swallowtail, Spring Azure, Silvery Blue, Skippers, Crescents and other butterflies that are flying at this time of year. Bring along your favourite butterfly field guide and an insect net (if you have one). Also it is best to bring a snack, water and insect repellent.



**Sunday**

**May 31**

**8:30 a.m.**

**to**

**about noon.**

### **BOTANY AND BIRDING AT MARLEBOROUGH FOREST**

**Leader:** Laurie Consaul

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of parking lot by Pizza Pizza Or at Marlborough Forest Parking Lot E2, N side of Roger Stevens Rd., 9.2 km W of North Gower main intersection; 6.6 km E of Dwyer Hill Rd., at approx. 9:15 am. We will visit one or two trails in the Marleborough Forest, depending on speed of travel and number of sightings. Forests, fields and shrublands of this conservation area yield many species of beautiful late spring/early summer flowers, including orchids and gaywings, as well as interesting grasses and sedges. A large pond on one of the trails can have a variety of migrating waterfowl. We will also have the opportunity to see late migrating warblers, early breeding birds, early butterflies and dragonflies, and many other plants and animals. Wear sturdy footwear and dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, insect repellent and a snack. For questions or information, contact Laurie at 613-258-5661, [lconsaul@mus-nature.ca](mailto:lconsaul@mus-nature.ca).

**Saturday**

**6 June**

**9:30 a.m.**

**to**

**12:30 p.m.**

### **FWG ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE**

**Where:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, off Prince of Wales Drive, just south of the traffic circle.

In the spirit of "thinking globally and acting locally," we can restore some of this destroyed habitat by using native plants to create wildlife-friendly backyards. Native plants provide the food and shelter that our native birds, mammals, butterflies and other insects, reptiles, and amphibians have adapted to over millions of years and rely on for their survival. Choose from a variety of beautiful flowers and attractive foliage and your garden—and the creatures that use it—will reward you all season. See page 51 for more details

**Sunday**

**7 June**

**7:00 a.m.**

**to**

**noon**

### **BIRDING THE MEECH CREEK VALLEY**

**Leaders:** Bob Cermak and Bernie Ladouceur

**Meet:** Parking lot off Ottawa River Parkway, immediately east of Champlain Bridge.

Meech Creek offers a wonderful combination of open country, riparian woods, marsh and mixed forest. This generally produces a nice blend of species including cuckoos, flycatchers, wrens, warblers, finches and others. There will be mild elevation changes; the walking should be good, but possibly a little wet. Bring a hat, a snack and a drink—and of course your binoculars!

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>OFNC MONTHLY MEETING</b>
<b>9 June</b>	<b>THE GALAPAGOS FROM AN ECO-TOURIST</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>VIEWPOINT</b>
<b>Social &amp; Club business</b>	<b>Speaker:</b> Ray Pearman
	<b>Location:</b> Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and Mcleod Streets, <b>The Discovery Zone Theatre, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.</b>
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	You have seen all the programs on the Galapagos and heard how Darwin nearly missed the point—of the finches—their beaks.
<b>Speaker</b>	Could you do the same as an “eco-tourist” there? Ray Pearmain visited several islands and reports on what one can expect to see, embellished by many photographs.

**Saturday**  
**13 June**  
**6:30 a.m.**

**BIRDING IN LIMERICK FOREST**  
**Leader:** Peter Fuller (613-739-5639), Connie Clark coordinator (613-729-1815)  
**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of parking lot, near Pizza Pizza. **Or** at 7:15 a.m. at the Limerick Forest Chalet. Take Hwy 416 S, exit Road 20 W to Oxford Station, go ~4 km to a T-junction, turn left on Limerick Rd; it takes a 90 degree turn after ~2 km, the parking lot/chalet is on the right 500 m beyond. There are 4-5 km of easy walking trails through pine plantation, cedar/maple woods, treed wetlands, including a boardwalk through a large marsh. We hope to see a black tern colony, wetland birds, warblers and forest species such as tanagers, orioles, flycatchers, woodpeckers, etc. There are lots of interesting plants too. The walking is easy, but parts of the trail may be wet. Bring insect repellent. This excursion will probably end about 11:00 a.m.; you may like to bring a lunch and stay longer to explore more trails with Peter or on your own.

**Saturday**  
**20 June**  
**1:30 p.m.**

**MOSSES OF THE BURNT LANDS**  
**Leader:** Jennifer Doubt  
**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of parking lot. Did you know that Ontario is home to over 500 small but mighty species of moss? While their tiny size creates the illusion of mystery, mosses are actually recognized using features similar to those used to identify wild flowers and trees. On a leisurely afternoon stroll through the unique Burnt Lands Alvar, take a second look at the jungle underfoot, using hand-lenses and the naked eye to discover what differentiates one moss from its neighbour. Become familiar with some of the main parts of a moss and find out how to recognize some of the region’s common species. Witness astounding ‘tricks’ mosses do that other plants can only dream about and take home secrets you can use to detect bryological rarities in the days ahead. Hand lenses will be available, but participants are invited to bring their own.

Saturday

4 July

8:30 am.

rain date:

Sunday

5 July

### THIRD ANNUAL OTTAWA AREA BUTTERFLY COUNT

Leaders: Jeff Skevington and Peter Hall

Meet: Parking lot at the intersection of Dwyer Hill Road and March Road (NE of Almonte). Any specific questions about the trip can be directed to Jeff Skevington and if in doubt about the weather call him between 6 - 9 pm Friday night.

The North American Butterfly Association has coordinated butterfly counts following the same format as Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). These counts are published as part of an ongoing program to census the butterflies of North America (see [www.naba.org/counts.html](http://www.naba.org/counts.html)). Volunteer participants' focus on a 24 km diameter circle and conduct a one-day census of all butterflies sighted within that circle. As with CBCs, there is a \$4.00 charge to participants to support the publication of the results (fee not obligatory, but encouraged; children under 12 are free). This is the third year that OFNC will sponsor a count. The count area will be centred at Manion Corners (SW of Ottawa), a site used as a former non-OFNC count circle. It includes several important butterfly areas such as the Long Swamp and the Burnt Lands alvar. It is an all day event so bring your lunch. No experience is necessary! We will put teams together on site and match up people so that everyone has a chance to learn from the experts. If you have binoculars and a butterfly net, bring them along. Butterflies may be captured and brought to the count compilation alive for identification and release. In 2008, 23 participants found 3181 butterflies of 55 species making our count one of the most diverse in the province. Come out this year to see if we can break the 60 species barrier. If you would like to receive an excel spreadsheet summarizing the 2008 count, contact [Jeff.skevington@jhskevington@gmail.com](mailto:Jeff.skevington@jhskevington@gmail.com).

After the count, we will meet at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden for a pot luck dinner and count compilation.

DEADLINE: *Material intended for the July - September issue must be in the editor's hands by May 1, 2009. Mail your manuscripts to:*

**Karen McLachlan Hamilton,**

**2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7**

**H: (613) 838-4943; email: [hamilton@storm.ca](mailto:hamilton@storm.ca)**

#### ANY ARTICLES FOR TRAIL & LANDSCAPE?

Have you been on an interesting field trip or made some unusual observations? Write up your thoughts and send them to Trail & Landscape. We accept email, diskettes and CD's. For submissions in traditional form-typed, written, or printed.

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