American Pipit at Fallsview Road, Dundas, 22 November 2014 - photo Joanne Redwood. This species and many others were reported from the Hamilton area during the fall birding season. See Noteworthy Bird Records on page 127.

In This Issue:
Radio Tracking Migrating Birds
Fall Season Noteworthy Bird Records
Native Plant Gardening
Member Profile – Kim Barrett
The Band-winged Dragonlet in Ontario
The Warblers of Sedgewick Park
Table of Contents

Our Beautiful Common Redpoll
June Hitchcox 124

Radio Tracking Migrating Birds with the Motus System
Michael Rowlands 124

Jim Dowall - 2014 Senior Volunteer of the Year
Jim Stollard 126

Tropical Forests Fight Carbon Better Than We Hoped
Brian Stallard 126

Noteworthy Bird Records – September - November
Rob Dobos 127

Band-winged Dragonlet in Ontario and Canada
Bill Lamond 130

Dates To Remember – February - March
Rob Porter/Liz Rabishaw 132

Hamilton: The Best Place to Raise a Pollinator
Beatrice Ekoko 134

Native Plant Gardening With Paul O’Hara
Bill Lamond 136

Astronomy Corner - Jupiter at Opposition
Mario Carr 140

Member Profile – Kim Barrett
Glenn Barrett 141

The Warblers of Sedgewick Park
Bill Lamond 142

The Sedgewick Six (photo essay)
various photographers 143

Radio tower at the Bird Studies Canada HQ in Port Rowan (October 2010 – photo Stu Mackenzie) used to track radio-tagged birds and their movements, such as this Black-throated Blue Warbler, tagged (note tag on back) at the Tip of Long Point in October 2010 – photo Bethany Thurber. Please see article on page 124 about the Motus Wildlife Tracking System.
The Wood Duck - February, 2015

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Radio Tracking Group Meeting Summary – November 17, 2014

Radio Tracking Migrating Birds with the Motus System
by Michael Rowlands

For the second month in a row, we were treated to a presentation by a representative from Bird Studies Canada (BSC). This time it was Stuart Mackenzie, who manages the Long Point Bird Observatory and the Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus). Stuart gave us a presentation entitled “Broad-scale Stopover and Migration Ecology Research Using Automated Radio Telemetry Arrays.”

Motus is a program of Bird Studies Canada in partnership with Acadia University, Western University, The University of Guelph, and numerous collaborating researchers and organizations. The overall goal of Motus, which began as a pilot project at Long Point in 2009, is to understand how birds use landscapes throughout their annual cycles, as they migrate north or south and as they utilize numerous stopover sites. To do this requires the continuous tracking of individuals across a broad landscape, distinguishing between migratory departures (or arrivals) and movements within a stopover site, and then connecting the dots between breeding and wintering grounds. It’s particularly important to know what birds do at stopover points spatially and temporally. For instance, has a bird been in the area for a while, has it just arrived from a migratory flight, or is it simply moving from a different part of a stopover location?

Using new advances in digital technology, the Motus Wildlife Tracking System allows researchers to economically monitor thousands of birds on the same frequency as they fly near detection antennas. Miniature trackers as light as 0.3 grams that send out a signal every 5-20 seconds can be mounted on even tiny birds, such as warblers. These signals are picked up when the birds are within 15-25 km of a monitoring station. Strategic location of these stations at critical spots along their migratory routes allows the tracking of real-time movements of radio-tagged birds. The recapture rate is also very high – about 95%. This is quite different from the older technique of researchers following just a handful of tagged birds using radio telemetry, each bird on a different frequency, and with researchers trying to find individual birds in the field manually.

Our Beautiful Common Redpoll
by June Hitchcox

Common Redpolls are found globally all the way around the world’s only time that we see them is when their Arctic food crop has been poor and they must fly south to look for food in order to survive. According to Ron Pittaway’s winter finch forecast, this is one of those years – more of these finches should move into southern Ontario this winter because crops were poor in the Arctic where they live – seeds of birch, tamarack and alder. With luck, this winter we will see this attractive, energetic little bird – smaller than a House Sparrow – with a blackish chin and a jaunty, red cap on its forehead. “Poll” means more or less “head”, and that is where it gets its name – Redpoll – meaning “Red Head”. Its back is streaked; the breast in males has tinges of pinkish-red.

In flight, watch for its deeply undulating flight pattern and listen for its “chet-chet-chet” call as it keeps in touch with its group. They have a remarkable ability to survive extremely cold temperatures. They can increase their feather mass by 30% in the fall, and when they fluff up their feathers to trap air, they can dramatically increase their insulation, decreasing heat loss by a third. Not only that, they can bury themselves into the snow at night, out of the wind, to retain additional heat. With these adaptations, if there is enough food, they are able to stay in the Arctic year-round. Look for them in open fields, woodlands and at bird feeders – nyger seed is their favourite – often hanging up-side-down to get at the seeds.

They are very social birds – sometimes as many as 100 in a flock, along with a few of their cousins, the Hoary Redpoll. They have a very trusting nature and can become quite tame, so please keep an eye out for their safety.

Editor’s notes……
No real notes this month. It is the nadir of winter but it is no time to hibernate. What better time to get out and learn how to identify trees by their bark and twigs. Just a suggestion!

This month’s photo of the front cover Wood Duck is by Janet Forjan-Freedman on 8 June 2006 from the Desjardin’s Canal. This is the 6th photo in this “project” (see Wood Duck May 2014 page 196).
So far about 200 automated radio telemetry stations have been set up in southern Ontario, along the St. Lawrence River, surrounding the Bay of Fundy, on the Atlantic shore of Nova Scotia, and along the eastern seaboard south to the Delmarva Peninsula in Virginia. It is the intent that monitoring stations will soon be able to track bird or animal movements throughout the western hemisphere and elsewhere in the world.

Stuart showed us some typical charts produced by the software in the project – graphs of power output from numerous tags versus time. When the power readings are high, the birds are in flight; when low, they are on the ground. Knowing which antenna is receiving the data locates the bird so it’s possible to tell whether the bird is just passing through quickly or moving around within different habitats at a stopover site for a few days to build up its energy stores before continuing its migration.

One valuable use of the system is to see how birds deal with ecological barriers, such as large bodies of water. Flying over them can take a lot of energy and is a navigational risk; detouring around them with multiple shorter flights takes less energy per excursion but can increase predation risk.

Blackpoll Warblers were monitored between Canso (on the northeastern shore of Nova Scotia) and Cape Cod by a series of receiving antennas along the Atlantic coasts of Nova Scotia, Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Many birds departed directly for their southern destinations across the Gulf of Maine; some travelled first to the southern shore of Nova Scotia, then crossed the Gulf; and others first travelled west or southwest across Nova Scotia and the Bay of Fundy to the coast of Maine, and then proceeded southward. Of note, most of the departures were not “migratory departures” because the birds often backtracked some distance before resuming their southerly flights.

Similarly “Ipswich” Sparrows that only breed on Sable Island were tracked on the first part of their migrations to New Jersey and the Carolinas. Adults and juveniles took different routes: only about 1/3 of tagged adults flew first to the Nova Scotia coast and then on to Maine; however, almost all juveniles flew to the Nova Scotia mainland first, then made their way across the Gulf of Maine. It is theorized that the juveniles took a longer route to reduce the navigational risk of flying directly, mostly over open water.

It’s expected the Motus system will generate much more detailed information than ever available before about the migration of Red Knots between Delaware Bay and Nelson River, in Canada’s north. Stuart said he had just returned from northern Ontario where the system was being used to track the movements of Semipalmated Sandpipers at the Longridge Point and Little Piskwamish sites on James Bay.

As the network of towers and monitoring stations expands to many nations, it will eventually be possible to know in detail where in the world a particular bird has been in its entire migration and for how long at various stopping points along the way. This will be a great tool in helping determine where birds need the most protection to ensure their ongoing survival. The audience gave Stuart a warm round of applause for his informative and fascinating presentation.

After a short sightings session, the meeting was adjourned and the attendees slowly departed into the night, some to prepare for their annual winter migrations to the southern USA, but most just to go to their favourite stopover points (called home)!
Jim Dowall - 2014 Senior Volunteer of the Year

by Jim Stollard

On November 6th 2014, the HNC Board bestowed the Senior Volunteer of the Year (VOY) award on Jim Dowall. Jim was awarded this honour at the December General Meeting on 8th December. Due to ill health, Jim was unable to attend the meeting to receive his award so Club President Michael Fischer and I met with him at his home to present him with his VOY trophy and book store gift certificate. While visiting with Jim, I was impressed with three of his bird themed paintings done by local artist Bob Finlayson. One showed a flying Wood Duck at President’s Pond in Cootes Paradise. Another was of an American Kestrel in a scene along Safari Road featuring a drumlin, while the third was of a Northern Cardinal and accompanies this article.

Jim Dowall has been a member of the Hamilton Naturalists’ Club since May 1946 when he joined at the age of 15. By the 1950s, as a young man in his early 20s, Jim was leading young birders by helping Doug Davies with the Junior Nature Club. Over the years, Jim also served the Club by leading hikes and compiling bird counts. His abilities to lead were recognized by his peers in the Club and in 1974, Jim was asked to join the HNC Board. Jim was Vice-President for three years, from 1974-76, President from 1977-78, and Past-President from 1978-80. This was a period when the Club was working to protect more natural lands and when efforts by Club members contributed to the establishment of more Environmentally Sensitive Areas in Hamilton.

Jim has always had a keen interest in the Wood Duck. He was at the meeting when Bob Elstone and other Club members decided the Club needed a publication. Over the years, Jim has written articles for the Wood Duck on various topics such as bird behaviour and reports describing his experiences in the field.

A lifelong Hamilton resident, Jim had a 36 year career with the Hamilton School Board as a teacher, a vice-principal and finally, 23 years as a school principal. Jim was also a bird and orchid photographer in his earlier days and travelled extensively in search of birds, to places such as the Galapagos, Iceland, Greenland, Alaska, Ecuador, and Trinidad.

Jim Dowall has been a stalwart member of the Club since joining 68 years ago. He has supported the HNC with monetary donations and through participation in all aspects of Club activities. Jim certainly deserves recognition for his many contributions to the HNC with the 2014 Senior Volunteer of the Year Award.

Jim thanked Michael and me very much for his award, and said that ever since that day in the spring of 1946, when George North invited him to join the Club, he has always enjoyed his time with Club members and has met many accomplished people.

For these remarks about our Senior VOY Award winner I have borrowed heavily from the excellent member profile article about Jim which was written by Glenda Slessor and appeared in the April 2014 Wood Duck Volume 67, No. 8.

And Now For Some Good News!

Tropical Forests Fight Carbon Better Than We Hoped

by Brian Stallard

And just when we thought it was all bad news, a study recently led by NASA experts has revealed that the Earth’s tropical forests are somehow absorbing more carbon dioxide (CO2) than experts thought possible, taking the harmful greenhouse gas from our atmosphere at unprecedented rates.

The study, recently published in the journal Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), details how NASA experts and their peers determined a stunning new way to conduct the normal “apples-to-apples” comparison between various forms of vegetation as a carbon sink. Namely, the researchers discovered how to differentiate between and measure carbon absorbed by various forests across the globe.

That kind of knowledge not only helps scientists make more accurate and detailed carbon-cycle models, but it also helps experts better focus conservation efforts, highlighting what kinds of forests in what parts of the world are invaluable in the fight against greenhouse gas release. Forests and other land vegetation currently remove up to 30 percent of human carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere during photosynthesis, but thanks to this latest study, experts now know that we have tropical forests to thank for a great deal of this work - absorbing a whopping 1.4 billion metric tons of CO2 out of a total global absorption of 2.5 billion metric tons. That’s more than what is absorbed by most boreal forests types (as found in Canada, Siberia, and other northern regions) combined!

“This is good news, because uptake in boreal forests is already slowing [with climate change], while tropical forests may continue to take up carbon for many years,” lead researcher David Schimel, of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said in a statement.

He explains that while some studies have shown that all trees can benefit from cranked carbon levels to a point, the consequential hiked temperatures in the north are leaving boreal forests unhealthy, and thus their carbon sink potential is dwindling. Meanwhile, tropical forests (continued on page 140)
**NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS – SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2014**

by Rob Dobos

**Total number of species recorded in the HSA during 2014 to November 30: 278. Underlined species or dates require documentation by the Hamilton Bird Records Committee. Capitalized species require documentation by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. For species marked with “#”, all reported records are listed. For all other species, only highlights are listed. Note that the species order follows the most recent American Ornithologists’ Union checklist and supplements.**

**Observers:** Paul Baldassi (PBa), Duane Brown (DBr), George Bryant (GBy), Wayne Bullock (WB), Mike Cadman (MCA), Jerry Chapple (JCh), Nina Chapple (NCh), Barb Charlton (BC), Chris Cheattle (CCh), Barry Cherriere (BCh), Shena Chisholm (Sch), Helen Colvin (HCo), Barry Coombs (BCo), Dan Copeland (DCo), Mark Cranford (MCr), William Crins (WC), Sandy Darling (SD), Rob Dobos (RD), Gerry Doekes (GDo), Andrew Don (AD), Dave Don (DD), Cheryl Edgecombe (CE), Brian Enter (BEn), Luc Fazio (LF), Brett Fried (Bfr), Nancy Furber (NF), Kate Gardner (KG), Steve Garrett (SGa), Scott Gilbertson (SGi), Garth Gourlay (GG), Erika Hentsch (EHe), Jim Heslop (JH), Jim Hignell (JHi), Brandon Holden (BH), Kyle Horner (KHr), Jackson Hudecki (JHu), Leslie Hugill (LHu), Mourad Jabra (MJa), Rhondda James (RJa), Mark Jennings (MJ), Jean Johnson (JJ), Scott Johnston (SJo), Barry Jones (BJ), Jeff Jones (JJo), Carole King (CKi), Karl Konze (KK), Gordo Laidlaw (GLw), Bill Lamond (BL), Sarah Lamond (SL), Dennis Lewatering (DL), Gwen Lewatering (GL), Debbie Lindeman (DLi), Joyce Listter (JLi), Rick Ludkin (Rl), Bruce Mackenzie (BM), Len Manning (LMa), Lou Marsh (LMr), Reuven Martin (RMa), Arlene McCaw (AMC), Lesley McDonell (LMD), Sheldon McGregor (SMg), Bill McIlveen (BMI), Kevin McLaughlin (KM), Don McLean (DML), Jason Miller (JMr), Tom Miller (TMI), Matt Mills (MM), Joe Minor (JMN), David Moffatt (DMo), Andy Morgan (AMO), Chris Motherwell (CMo), Alec Napier (ANa), George Naylor (GN), Ken Newcombe (KN), Owen Novoselac (ON), Ben Oldfield (BO), Dan Oech (DO), Henrique Pacheco (HPa), Mark Patry (MPa), Richard Poort (RPo), Ann Porter (APo), Rob Porter (RPr), David Pryor (DPr), Joanne Redwood (JRe), Susan Richardson (SRi), Garth Riley (GRi), Caleb Scholtens (CSc), Peter Scholtens (PsC), George Sims (GSi), Asa Sjoberg (ASj), Bill Smith (BS), Nancy Smith (NS), Paul Smith (PS), Chris Street (CS), John Struger (JSt), Lisa Teskey (LTi), Peter Thoem (PT), Tom Thomas (TT), Josh Vandermeulen (JVi), Cyran van Twest (RvT), Mike Veltri (MV), John Vieira (JVi), Phil Waggett (PWg), Mike Waldhuber (MWa), Rob Waldhuber (RW), Angie Williams (AWi), Don Wills (DWi), Bill Wilson (BWi), Ross Wood (RWo), Brian Wylie (BW), many observers (mobs.).

**Legend:**
- * - first occurrence for the year
- F - first occurrence for the migration
- L - last occurrence for the migration
- terr. - territorial bird
- SM - singing male
- ba. - basic
- alt. - alternate
- imm. - immature
- juv. - juvenile
- 1st yr. - first year

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Two ad. on Hamilton Harbour off LaSalle Marina [HM] Nov 28*–29 (SRi; CCh).

**Snow Goose:** Six off Green Rd [HM] Nov 1 F (BH); one ad. blue morph at D’Aubigny Creek Park, Brantford [BR] Nov 14 (JHi).


**Cackling Goose:** Three at Dundas Marsh [HM] Sep 27 F (RD,CE,RPo); one off Chancery Promenade, Oakville [HL] Nov 2 (LF).


**Tundra Swan:** One at Cootes Paradise Oct 13 F (RD,CE), and 60 there Nov 1 (JH); 27 over Ruthven Park, Cayuga [HD] Oct 28 (PT); six over Dundas Hydro Pond [HM] Nov 18 (RP).

**Wood Duck:** 16 at Dundas Marsh Sep 27 (RD,CE,RPo); nine off Green Rd Sep 30 (BH); 30 at 11th Conc E of Centre Rd [HM] Oct 3 (HCo).

**Common Goldeneye:** One m. at NE Shore of Harbour [HM] Nov 16 (GLw).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** One m. at Mountsberg C.A. [WL/HL] Oct 11 * (RvT).

**American Wigeon:** Eight off Green Rd Sep 6 (BH); 24 at Mountsberg C.A. Sep 28 (RD), and 300 there Oct 13 (RD,CE); 15 at Windermere Basin [HM] Oct 12 (KM); 12 at Coronation Park [HL] Nov 5-10 (SCh).

**Blue-winged Teal:** Three at Windermere Basin Sep 1 (RD,CE), and five there Oct 6 (RD); 10 at Mountsberg C.A. Sep 28 (RD); one at Princess Point [HM] (JVI) and one at Mountsberg C.A. (RVT) Nov 2 L.

**Northern Shoveler:** 37 at Windermere Basin Sep 21 (RD,CE); 18 off Green Rd Sep 28 (BH).

**Northern Pintail:** 11 off Green Rd Sep 3 (BH), and 14 there Nov 1 (BH); 19 off Van Wagners Beach [HM] Sep 18 (RD et al.); 14 past Woodland Cemetery [HM] Sep 22 (MM).

**Green-winged Teal:** 70 at Princess Point Oct 13 (RD,CE); 240 at Dundas Marsh Nov 2 (RD,CE).

**Canvasback:** One m. at Windermere Basin Oct 12 F (KM); 32 at Tollgate Pond Nov 7 (LMA).

**Redhead:** 50 at Mountsberg C.A. Oct 13 (RD,CE); 15 off Green Rd Nov 1 (BH).

**Ring-necked Duck:** One m. at Great Lakes Boulevard & Rebecca St Stormwater Pond [HL] Jun 7 (MJ); ten at Mountsberg C.A. Oct 13 F (RD,CE).

**Greater Scaup:** Five off Van Wagners Beach Sep 8 F (RD et al.).

**Surf Scoter:** Three off Fifty Point C.A. [HM/NG] Oct 4 F (RD et al.); 2000 off Green Rd Nov 1 (BH); one at Puslinch Pit [WL] Nov 2 (MCA et al.) was rare for an inland location.

**White-winged Scoter:** 7500 off Green Rd Oct 27 (BH).

**Black Scoter:** Four m. off Grays Rd [HM] Oct 16 F (KM); 240 off Green Rd Nov 9 (RD et al.).

**Long-tailed Duck:** 10000 off Green Rd Nov 1 (BH).

**Bufflehead:** One f. at Mountsberg C.A. Oct 13 F (RD,CE).

**Hooded Merganser:** 60 at Dundas Hydro Pond Nov 14 (RP).

**Common Merganser:** One off Green Rd Sep 6 F (BH); four at Confederation Park Sep 8 (KM).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 11 off Fifty Point C.A. Sep 24 F (RD,CE).
Turkey Vulture: 97 over Hendry Village [HL] Oct 4 (PT et al.); 100 over N Shore of Cootes Paradise [RD,CE]; 102 over Bronte Village Oct 11 (MJ),
and three there Nov 7 (MJ); 235 past Woodland Cemetery and 253 past Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 [HL] Oct 19 (RD et al.); one at Hatton Dr, Ancaster [HM] Nov 30 (MS).

Osprey: Birds at Woodland Cemetery 5 – Sep 6 (RD,CE), 6 – Sep 13 (RD,CE,MM), 1 – Oct 26 (RD et al.); four at Hendry Village Oct 4 (PT et al.); two at Valley Inn Oct 24 (JRe); one at Cambridge area Nov 2 L (fide BWi).


Northern Harrier: Four over Bronte Oct 11 (MJ).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Birds at Woodland Cemetery: 42 – Sep 6 (RD,CE), 125 – Sep 13 (RD,CE,MM), 20 – Oct 19 (RD et al.); 19 over Aurora Cres, Burlington [HL] Sep 11 and 23 there Sep 22 (CE); 18 over Waterdown Sep 16 (MM); 21 at Hendry Village Oct 4 (PT et al.); 38 past Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 Oct 19 (RD et al.).

Cooper’s Hawk: Two past Woodland Cemetery Sep 6 F (RD,CE); six at Hendry Village Oct 4 (PT et al.).

Northern Goshawk#: One ad. at Bronte Creek Prov. Park [HL] Oct 5 F (AD,MJa); one juv. at Woodland Cemetery Oct 19 (RD,CE); one at Edinburgh Ave, Hamilton [HM] Nov 1 (AWi).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Two past Woodland Cemetery and 12 past Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 Oct 19 (RD et al.); two over Bronte Nov 7 (MJ).


Red-tailed Hawk: 34 past Woodland Cemetery and 31 past Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 Oct 19 (RD et al.); 59 past Woodland Cemetery Oct 26 (RD et al.); 40 over Bronte Nov 7 (MJ); one ad. dark morph calurus at Hwy 6 & Oneida 4th Line [HD] Nov 8 (LMa et al.).

Rough-legged Hawk: Two at Green Rd & Frances Ave [HM] Nov 1 F (BH); one at Burlington East frontal Park [HL] Nov 21 (JRe); one dark morph at 8th Rd E N of Green Mt Rd [HM] Nov 21 (LMD et al.); three at Windermere Basin Nov 22 (RW).

Golden Eagle#: One juv. over Nassagaweya Fourth Line & 15th Sideroad [HL] Oct 12 F (LMa); one ad. over Woodlerville Cemetery Oct 26 (RD,CC,DD); one at Valley Inn Oct 31 (TT); birds on Nov 2: 1juv. – North Shore of Coote’s Paradise (RD,CE), 3 – Bronte Creek Prov. Park (AD), 1 – Brantford Landfill [BR] (BL), 1 – Waterdown (TT), 1 – Hamilton (LMa); one imm. over Bronte Nov 7 L (MJ).

Virginia Rail#: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 4 (DPR); one imm. at NE Shore of Harbour Nov 16 L (GLW).

Sora#: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 (DP et al.).

American Coot: 12 at Windermere Basin Oct 12 (KM); 200 at Mountsberg C.A. Oct 13 (RD,CE); nine off LaSalle Marina Oct 17 (RD).

Sandhill Crane#: Two at Blue Lake [BR] Sep 28 (GSi); five over Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 Oct 19 (MM et al.); three over Chippewa Trail S of Airport Rd [HM] Nov 1 (RPr); birds on Nov 2: 2 – Dundas Valley [HM] (AWi), 2 – Onondaga Twp [BR] (DWi), 23 – Cambridge area (fide BWi); 127 over Valley Inn (TT,BCh; DCo) and another 24 over LaSalle Marina (KN) Nov 21; 40 over Christie C.A. [HM] Nov 22 (RPr); two over Nassagaweya Fourth Line & 15th Sideroad Nov 26 (LMa); 18 over Cootes Paradise Nov 27 (RPr).

Black-bellied Plover: Birds on Sep 7: 1juv. – Tollgate Pond (RD et al.), 5 – Van Wagners Beach (CE et al.), 5 – Green Rd (BH) – likely the same birds as at Van Wagners; three juv. at Tollgate Pond Sep 29 (RD,CE); birds at Windermere Basin: 4juv. – Oct 20 (RD,CE), 2 – Nov 1 (BC), 1 – Nov 2 L (RW).

American Golden-Plover: One ad. at Windermere Basin Sep 13 (JRe et al.); one juv. at Tollgate Pond Sep 12 (RD); one juv. at Sheridan College, Oakville [HL] Sep 24 (AWi); one at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 25 (CE); one at Windermere Basin Oct 2 L (CE).

Semipalmated Plover: Eight at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 1 (RD,CE), and two there Oct 2; one at Windermere Basin Oct 4 L (LMa et al.).

Kildeer: One at Bronte Beach [HL] Nov 12 (MJ); one at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Nov 12 (LMa); two at Lakeside Park, Mississauga [PL] Nov 13-17 (DPr); one at Princess Point Nov 18 (JRe); two at Bronte Marsh [HL] Nov 19 (MJ); one at Coronation Park Nov 21 (TMI).

Spotted Sandpiper: One at LaSalle Marina Oct 19 L (BCo,Sa).

Solitary Sandpiper: One at Dundas Marsh Sep 27 L (RD,CE,RPo).

Greater Yellowlegs: Four at Windermere Basin and four at Red Hill Parkway &...
Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 25 (CE), and one there Oct 6-7 (CE).

Long-billed Dowitcher:

Sep 13 L (PSc,CSc).

Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 1-6 (GLw; m.obs.), and two there

Short-billed Dowitcher:

one there Sep 12-15 (LMa; GRi); one at Bronte Beach Sep 12 L (MJ; m.obs.).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper:

Two at Tollgate Pond Sep 4-6 (BCh; m.obs.) and

C.A. Oct 13 (RD,CE); birds at Princess Point: 9 –Oct 12 (PSc,CSc), 12 –Oct 13- 

Stilt Sandpiper:

15-19L (PSc,CSc; m.obs.).

Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Nov 13 (KM); six at Princess Point Nov 

Red Knot:

One juv. with a clausal tumour at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Nov 2*-12L (PBa; CE; m.obs.) was record late for the HSA.

Semipalmated Sandpiper:

16 at NE Shore of Harbour Sep 6 (CE); seven at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 25 (CE), and one there Oct 6-7 (CE).

Least Sandpiper:

Three at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Sep 25 (CE); one at Windermere Basin Oct 4 L (Ma et al).

White-rumped Sandpiper:

One at Windermere Basin Sep 23 (RD;CE); one at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Oct 6 (CE); at Princess Point Oct 16 L (BC et al).

Baird’s Sandpiper:

Two at Tollgate Pond Sep 4-6 (RD; m.obs.); one at Mountsberg C.A. Nov 2 L (RvT).

Pectoral Sandpiper:

One juv. off Green Rd Nov 1 (BH); 49 at Tollgate Pond

One juv. off Van Wagners Beach: 1 –Sep 18 (BS), 1juv. –Sep 19 (BFr), 1juv. –Oct 12 (LMa), 1 –Oct 13 (MPa), 1 –Oct 21 (LMa), 5 –Oct 22 (LMa 

Wilson’s Phalarope at Princess Point, 10 November 2014 - photo Gerten Basom.

Greater Yellowlegs at Princess Point, 5 November 2014 - photo Lyle Jeffkins.

Long-billed Dowitchers at Valley Inn, 19 October 2014 - photo Mike Veltri.

Long-billed Dowitcher:

One juv. at Red Hill Parkway & QEW Stormwater Pond Oct 6f-9 (CE; m.obs.); birds at Princess Point: 2juv. –Oct 12-18 (PSc,CSc; s).
The Band-winged Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax umbrata) is a small to medium sized skimmer, nearly the size of an Eastern Pondhawk. For breeding, it utilizes shallow, marshy ponds, often temporary, with variable sedge and grass cover. It is a tropical/subtropical species that is abundant and widespread in the tropics, from the West Indies to eastern Mexico, south to Argentina. In the United States, it is found primarily in south Florida and south Texas where it is common. It regularly irrupts northwards into northern Texas and Oklahoma. However, it has also strayed northeastwards along the Mississippi River drainage basin, with individuals recorded as far north as northeast Ohio, southern Michigan, northern Illinois and extreme southern Ontario. This article summarizes these northern records and, in particular, the three records of this species for Ontario, all at Point Pelee National Park; these are the only records for Canada.

This species was first found far to the north of its usual haunts in 1934, when there were three records: Gibson County, Indiana, 1 September; Pike County, Indiana, 1 September; and Urbana, Ohio, 11 June. This species was not recorded again “in the north” until 11 August 2006, when an individual was photographed near Cincinnati, Ohio. The following year, this species was again found in Ohio, at four sites in three counties in the northeastern part of the state (Lake, Cuyahoga, and Geauga), with multiple individuals at three of the four sites (from 27 August to 17 October). At one site (Leroy Township, Lake County), a population consisting of about 25 immatures, females, and males, was discovered indicating that this species had successfully bred. In fact, the species had likely bred successfully at three of the four sites. Truly astounding for such a far-flung dragonfly. Also in 2007, this species was found in extreme southeast Wayne County, Michigan, at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Humbug Marsh Unit) on 6 October—the most northerly record at that time. This location is only about five km away from Boblo Island, Amherstburg, Ontario.

The first record for Ontario occurred the following year when Stephen T. Pike photographed an individual on 17 September 2008 along the West Beach of Point Pelee. From Steve’s subsequent email post:

“I walked back along West Beach and was amazed how many butterflies and dragonflies were around. The first good butterfly I ran into was a very fresh Variegated Fritillary, and then a co-operative Carolina Saddlebags. I was watching closely for something else interesting when I noticed a dragonfly that I thought might be different so I was sure to photograph it well. After emailing it to Paul Pratt, I was amazed to know it was a Band-winged Dragonlet the first record for Canada. Paul says the usual range for this species is Texas and Oklahoma but recently (last fall) it had also occurred in Michigan and Ohio, so keep your eyes peeled. For those interested in possibly re-locating this one, I found it approx. 50 meters north of the Half Way train stop on West Beach.”

In 2012 there were four sightings of dragonlets in the north, all in Illinois. There were three records from Cook County, ranging from 20 May to 5 June, and a record on 20 May from Lake County, which is about two km south of the Wisconsin border—the most northerly record to date. Both of these counties border Lake Michigan, and indeed all of these four 2012 records were within one km of Lake Michigan, a known pattern, as stray insects are often found adjacent to large bodies of water. In 2014
the species was again recorded in Illinois, on 31 August in Cook County, and another individual was found well inland in Putnum County, on 17 May. Also in 2014, this species was again reported in northeast Ohio in Lorain County (Grafton Township) on 15 June 2014. However, this record has not yet been accepted by the Ohio Photo Records Committee and is tentative, although it will likely be accepted (fide Robert Glotzhober).

Band-winged Dragonlet was recorded again in Ontario in 2014, when two individuals were found at Point Pelee. Lev Frid recorded the first individual – a male flying around the Tip of Point Pelee on 29 September. Here is a portion of his Ont-Odes post:

“At the Tip, I photographed an unusual dragonfly that came in with a small passage of Monarchs and Sharp-shinned Hawks and forwarded it [the photo] to Kyle Holloway, and after some expletives, he informed me that it was indeed a Band-winged Dragonlet. It flew around for a while and perched a few times, but was not present in the afternoon. Several pictures were acquired."

I had a trip planned to Point Pelee from 3-6 October and I was excited about the possibility of seeing Band-winged Dragonlet. As per several other occasions with stray insects; if there is one there may be more. Despite poor insect weather over the four days I was at Point Pelee, I was lucky and managed to see a dragonlet on 6 October. An excerpt from my Ont-Odes post is as follows:

"On Monday [October 6] it was substantially warmer but still cool and windy and mostly cloudy. There was a period around 11 a.m. when the sun was mostly out. I took advantage of this to look for odes south of Northwest Beach, a prime area for odes and butterflies. I was flushing Green Darners, Black Saddlebags, Autumn Meadowhawks and one female Mottled Darner. At one point I noticed a smallish pale Mottled Darner in a grassy area that initially looked uninteresting. I must have been thinking female Blue Dasher or Eastern Pondhawk but I netted it as I was curious. On examining this dragonfly it was obviously not a Dasher but resembled a very washed-out female Pondhawk, although I have never seen any variability in female pondhawks. I wondered if it was a vagrant skimmer species. I had no idea what a female Band-winged Dragonlet looked like but I wondered if this was one. I took several photos and decided to collect the dragon in a coffee cup, as I had no field guides with me. It was later at Alan Wormington’s place, when I figured out it was a female dragonlet from an internet search. Not too surprising, considering one had been seen earlier in the week at the Tip. I took more photos and released the dragonfly back where I had caught it. I’m guessing there are a few more of this species in the park, and the strong southerly winds on Friday and today (Monday) may have moved some interesting odes into the province which could end up at Point Pelee when the weather warms."

The records from Indiana and Ohio in 1934 show that the recent sightings, although exceptional, are not unique. In the words of Dennis Paulson:

“it is clear that invasions by Band-winged Dragonlets of [the northern states] have been going on for a long time. I’m sure the number of observers to document such things has continued to climb in recent years, although it’s highly probable that they have become more frequent and large-scale in recent years with the rise in temperatures.”

The Band-winged Dragonlet, with its startling appearance (males anyway) and normal tropical/sub-tropical haunts, makes it an exciting addition to the fauna of Canada. It seems certain, that with this species being reported “in the north” in five of the last ten years, and with rapid global warming, that the Band-winged Dragonlet will be seen again in Ontario. Perhaps even in Hamilton!  

Many thanks to Robert Glotzhober, Dave McShaffrey, and Dennis Paulson for providing information for this article. Thanks to Alan Wormington for reviewing this article and providing very useful comments.

References

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HNC HIKES - All of our leaders are volunteers who enjoy sharing their knowledge and time. The HNC assumes no responsibility for injuries of any kind sustained by anyone as a result of participating in any of these activities. Please assess your own ability to participate. Hikes are sometimes cancelled or rescheduled. You are advised to check the HNC website (www.hamiltonnature.org) before setting out, to ensure that the hike has not been rescheduled. Generally, pets on hikes are discouraged as they startle wildlife, damage nests, and interfere with the enjoyment of others. Contact the leader before bringing your pet and for other questions. We also publicize Royal Botanical Gardens hikes and events. Most RBG programs require pre-registration one week prior. There is a charge for these activities except for the Sunday Get Back To Nature Walks. For information on RBG hikes: Liz Rabishaw, Public Program Bookings, RBG, 905-527-1158 (1-800-694-4769) ext. 270. programs@rbg.ca www.rbg.ca


1 February (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free Nature hike (donations welcome). Hendrie Valley, meet at Cherry Hill Gate parking Lot. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404.

7 February (Saturday) 14:00 – 20:00 p.m. HNC - Winter Hawks and Owls Car Hike. Join the HNC’s owl-and-raptor-finding experts, Ken and Angie Williams, on a trip through local spots where owls and raptors can be found. Expected species include Rough-legged hawk, Short-eared Owl, Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Northern Shrike, and other over-wintering species. Meet at Tim Hortons by 2:00 p.m. at corner of Mud St. and Centennial Parkway (Hwy. 20), Stoney Creek. We tour from 2:00 p.m. until after dark and we’ve seen enough owl species. Bring snacks/lunch for dinner in the car; we may return to Tim Hortons for break and hot drinks before going for nocturnal owls. If you do not have a car, HSR bus “44 RYMAL” stops at Mud Street & Centennial, there will be plenty of participants that will be willing to offer a ride. Storm date: Sunday, February 8 at some time.

7 February (Saturday) 8:00 p.m. Hamilton Association Lecture: New Eyes on the Cold Universe - The Atacama Large Millimeter Array with Christine Wilson. The Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA) is a recently completed, extremely powerful radio telescope on a high plateau in northern Chile. The first scientific results from ALMA include stunning images ranging from very young stars, still in the process of forming, to galaxies at the limits of the visible universe. Dr. Wilson will give an overview of the telescope, its daunting construction, and some of the exciting science being conducted with it. Dr. Wilson is a professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at McMaster University and has been the Canadian ALMA Project Scientist since 1999 in a variety of roles throughout design and construction. She recently spent six months based in Santiago, Chile, working with the telescope. Room 1A1 of the Ewart Angus Centre (EAC). The EAC is in the north-west corner (rear) of the huge, multi-storey McMaster University Medical Centre (MUMC), also known more formally as the McMaster Site of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation.

8 February (Sunday) 2 to 4:00 p.m. RBG - Winter Tree ID at the Nature Centre. Learn essential skills to recognize characteristics of common woody plants during their leafless dormancy. With Jon Peter, curator and plant records manager at RBG. Pre-registration required. Fee: $15.

8 February (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free Nature hike (donations welcome). Princess Point, meet at the parking lot. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404.

9 February (Monday) 7:30 p.m. HNC Monthly Meeting. The Young and the Restless: Exploring the Universe’s Most Spectacular Explosions with Light Echoes. Our speaker Doug Welch will describe what has been learned about supernovae and their precursors (see page 142 for details). Doug Welch is an observational astronomer who is a Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at McMaster University. He also enjoys birding and nature photography. Royal Botanical Gardens, Plains Road West, Burlington.

15 February (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free Nature hike (donations welcome). Cootes North Shore, meet at the Nature Centre, Arboretum location, Old Guelph Road. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404.

21 February (Saturday) 7 to 9:00 p.m. RBG - Owl Prowl at the Nature Centre, RBG. Learn myth, magic, legends, folklore and ecology of owls, then head out onto the trails to try “conversing” with some local residents. Pre-registration required. Fee: $12, or Family Rate $30.

22 February (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free Nature hike (donations welcome). Cootes South Shore, meet at the Aviary parking lot, Oak Knoll Drive, Hamilton. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404.

23 February (Monday) 7:30 p.m. HNC - Bird Study Group meeting. This month, Jean Iron will be speaking on Arctic birds of Iceland, Greenland and Canada (see page 142). Come at 7:00 for coffee and conversation. Burlington Seniors’ Centre, 2285 New St., Burlington.

28 February (Saturday) 1 – 2:30 p.m. HNC - Awakening to Winter. Come and explore Tyneside Trail at Binbrook Conservation Area with leader Kyle McLoughlin (kylemcloughlin@gmail.com) to learn the language of winter. Experience the season like it was your very first time. This is a great opportunity to see things that you never get a chance to in our warmer seasons. Learn about winter tracks, the unique structure of certain trees, and how to use this incredible season to find the hidden gems that are present all year round. The hike will take 1.5 hours at most and is guaranteed to be interesting. Tyneside Trail, Mt Hope. Park at the west entrance of Binbrook Conservation Area, off Tyneside Road, about a half kilometre south of Chippewa Road. No fees are charged in this parking lot.
28 February (Saturday) 9:30 a.m. to noon. Junior Naturalists Club at the Nature Centre. The Jr. Nats Club started September 27, however registration is still possible. Since the Club was formed in 1986, it has instilled children with learning experiences that generate a life-long respect and appreciation of the natural world. Parents must be either RBG or Hamilton Naturalists’ Club members. Ages 7-12. Cost is $90, then $80 each sibling. Meeting dates are the 4th Saturday of each month, September to May.

DATES TO REMEMBER - March 2015

March 1 - May 15: The Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch. 41st season of monitoring raptor migration at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area, Quarry Rd. off Ridge Rd. W., Grimsby. Except in very bad weather, counters are present every day from 8AM to 4:00 p.m. EST / 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EDT. Visitors always welcome. Information: Mike Street - 905-648-3737, mikestreet1@gmail.com or Sandy Darling - 905-689-7481, darlinga@cogeco.ca

1 March (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free RBG Nature hike (donations welcome). Hendrie Valley, meet at Cherry Hill Gate parking Lot. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404

8 March (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free RBG Nature hike (donations welcome). Princess Point, meet at the parking lot. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404

9 March (Monday) 7:30 p.m. HNC Monthly Meeting. History and Experience of FOTEK with speaker Brad Gautreau. Friends of the Eramosa Karst “FOTEK” was formed by a group of local citizens in October of 2007 with a mission to educate and engage the public, and lobby the provincial government to expand protection of the Eramosa Karst lands. Political lobbying has been very successful to double the Eramosa Karst lands to 170 acres. The Hamilton Conservation Area now manages these conservation lands but FOTEK is still heavily involved. Since 2007, FOTEK has engaged the public by hosting public events with hands-on educational components, such as guided hikes, an annual dinner/dance, presentations to partner groups, educational resources on the FOTEK web site, and cave clean-ups. FOTEK has raised more than $20,000, with funds donated to the Hamilton Conservation Foundation, as well as towards the Eramosa Karst’s community bulletin board, a dedicated bench, and annual tree planting events. Friends of the Eramosa Karst were honoured with the Environmentalist of the Year award in 2012. Royal Botanical Gardens, Plains Road West, Burlington.

15 March (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free RBG Nature hike (donations welcome). Cootes North Shore, meet at the Nature Centre, Arboretum. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404

16 March (Monday) 7:30 p.m. HNC - Bird Study Group meeting. This month local birder/ornithologist David Brewer will speak about the logistics of migration. Come at 7:00 for coffee and conversation. Burlington Seniors’ Centre, 2285 New St., Burlington.

21 March (Saturday) 7 to 9 p.m. RBG - Spring Equinox at the Nature Centre, RBG. Look for signs of Spring, learn about celebrations, play games, tell stories. Pre-registration required. Fee: $12, or Family Rate $30

22 March (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free RBG Nature hike (donations welcome). Cootes South Shore, meet at the Aviary parking lot, Oak Knoll Drive. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404

28 March (Saturday) 9:30 a.m. to noon. Junior Naturalists Club at the Nature Centre. The Jr. Nats Club started September 27, however registration is still possible. Since the Club was formed in 1986, it has instilled children with learning experiences that generate a life-long respect and appreciation of the natural world. Parents must be either RBG or Hamilton Naturalists’ Club members. Ages 7-12. Cost is $90, then $80 each sibling. Meeting dates are the 4th Saturday of each month, September to May.

29 March (Sunday) 2 to 3:30 p.m. RBG - Get Back to Nature Walk. Free RBG Nature hike (donations welcome). Rock Chapel, meet at parking lot. If the weather is inclement, call Program Update Line 905-527-1158 ext. 404

29 March (Sunday) 9 to 11 a.m. RBG - Budding Birders at the Nature Centre, RBG. Find out what birds are active on some of our coldest days. Pre-registration required. Fee: $15 (Part of the Adult Education Series).

Redheads and Greater Scaup on Lake Ontario at Gray’s Road, 8 January 2014 - photo Barry Cherriere.
by Beatrice Ekoko

What's the buzz?

The Hamilton Naturalists’ Club (HNC) and Environment Hamilton have a grand vision: To make our gritty, “steel city” a paradise for monarchs and pollinators through the Pollinator Paradise Project.

As naturalists, we already know Hamilton boasts a plenitude of green space. What’s unique about this project is that it involves creating habitat by planting corridors of milkweed and wildflowers right in our public spaces, community gardens and around our homes. With mounting concerns around neonicotinoids (a class of relatively new insecticides) in the fields, attracting pollinators to the urban environment is one way of ensuring healthy food for our insect and small bird populations.

Although it was launched only months ago, the initiative is already gaining traction. Jen Baker is one of the coordinators. She points out that the project is drawing attention from people who are not your typical suspects (think naturalists and ecologists). “This seems to be different,” says Baker. “There’s a personal dimension here beyond habitat protection, like, “This will help my garden.””

As well, “People get that this is going to engage community in a really concrete way,” Baker enthuses.

This project evolved out of the HNC’s Land’s Inlet Urban Naturalization planting site in Hamilton’s north end where residents would frequently come up to Baker asking, “Where are the monarchs and what can we do to help?” Part of the credit also goes to HNC’s outdoor school program, when local kids, excited about protecting the downtown falcons, wanted to do something for pollinators in Hamilton as well. It keeps evolving,” Baker reports. “We are not prescribing its direction—we’re open to where it grows.”

Many partners are helping to make this vision a reality. Groups like the Hamilton Victory Gardens are providing beds for the pollinator patches. An obvious fit, vegetable gardens benefit from the presence of pollinators for promoting food security. Neighbourhood Associations and the ‘Adopt a Park’ program are on board. Currently, the project has many locations across the entire city where actual planting will take place this year. These include, in the west end, Victoria Park, (to be the flagship of the project), Gibson Landsdale in the middle, Macassa Lodge on the Mountain, Land’s Inlet in the north end, and the ‘Pipeline trail’ in Hamilton east—all just in year one!

So what is a pollinator patch?

Exactly what it sounds like. A patch can be as small as a pot on a sunny apartment balcony—you don’t need a lot of space since it involves insects—which means everybody can participate. It’s important that plants be native in order to benefit pollinators since those are the plants that have evolved with them. Non-native plants have a lot of flowers and petals, making it difficult for pollinators to land and grab the nectar and the pollen. As well, having been propagated and cultivated extensively, these plants don’t have the same food value.

“How much work is it really though?” I ask Baker, who is planning a patch on the flat roof of her garage (in planters) this spring. She admits that a patch requires maintenance; like any garden, it needs planning and care for the first little while. Knowing what the weeds are so that you don’t pull out the plants is handy as well. Then there is the perception that a pollinator garden looks messy or unsafe—although of course, there are ways to design around this.

Another challenge is that many people want native plants as opposed to seed, but it’s difficult to find these: “You can’t buy milkweed at a nursery,” Baker explains. That’s why, over the winter, Baker and volunteers are collecting seed, and trying to grow some milkweed into plants. She suggests that people let local nurseries know that we want native plants: “That’s the only way we are going to get more of them.”

The hope is that as more people hear about the project, they will want to do a patch on their own. Ecologists have suggested that for the sake of diversity, plant at least eight difference species, “but that might be daunting so if it’s throwing some ‘Black- eye Susans’ around the hostas plants, that’s all good. We certainly don’t want to discourage people!” Baker concludes.

Events for POLLINATING CHANGE

A series of workshops dedicated to protecting our local pollinators.

28 February (Saturday) 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Turning Our Backyard Into a Monarch Haven. The Melanson Family shares their useful tips and strategies in how to raise Monarchs in this free workshop.

28 March (Saturday) Want to plan your own Pollinator Patch at home? We can help! Paul O’Hara, field botanist, landscape designer and native plant gardening expert will be giving hands on advice and one on one guidance on creating your own pollinator patch! Details to be confirmed for this free workshop.

7 April (Tuesday) Bee Box Building Workshop. Creating habitats for our local native bee populations. Join us in this hands on workshop as we build bee boxes that native bees can use lay their eggs over the winter. $15 per person. Environment Hamilton office, 22 Wilson St.

Environmental Summit

Date and details to be confirmed
Contact Juby Lee at: jlee@environmenthamilton.org

Stay tuned for planting dates.

http://www.hamiltonpollinatorparadise.org

Special thanks to the Hamilton Community Foundation and Hamilton Future Fund for their support.
bird records - continued from page 129)

bird present in Aug; one at Tim Horton's Field, Hamilton Sep 20 (CE), and one there Oct 26 (RD,CE).  

Peregrine Falcon*: One on a nest near Tim Hortons, Oakville Sep 16 (MM); one over Plains Rd W & Gorton Ave Sep 25 (GD); one at Olympic Park, Dundas [HM] Nov 20-22 (LMa).  

Northern Flicker: One at Woodland Cemetery Sep 7 (RD,CE), and 20 there Sep 22 (MM).  

American Kestrel: 11 past Woodland Cemetery Sep 6 (RD,CE); seven over Waterdown Sep 16 (MM); five over Aurora Crens, Burlington Sep 22 (CE); 11 at McMaster Forest Sep 22 (RD,CE); four over Bronte Oct 11 (Mi).  

Merlin: A family group of four at Henderson Survey, Brantford Sep 4 (BL); one at Shoreacres and four at Shell Park [HL] Sep 20 (RD,CE,DD); one f. at Patricia Dr, Aldershot [HL] Oct 2-9L (SG).  


Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Two at Edgelake Park [HM] Sep 20 F (RP); three at Sedgewick Park, Oakville [HE] Nov 2 (MCr,AD); one at Olympic Park, Dundas [HM] Nov 20-22 (LMa).  

Northern Wheatear: One banded at Coachwood Park Sep 9 (MK), and one there Oct 26 (RD,CE).  

Northern Waterthrush: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (DPr et al.).  

Marsh Wren*: Two at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (DPr et al.).  

Winter Wren: One at Seven Oaks Golf Course Oct 4 L (DD).  

House Wren: One at Shoreacres (DD et al.) and one at Escarpment Rail Trail [HM] (GN,RJa).  

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Two at Princess Point Sep 18 F (RP); 20 at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 16 (RD,CE).  

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: One at Confederation Park Sep 14 F (RD,CE,DD); 30 at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 4 (RD et al.) and one at Sedgewick Park Nov 13-30 (LMa,LTe; m.obs.); one at Burloak Waterfront Park Nov 19 (LMa,Re).  

White-eyed Vireo: One at Shoreacres Sep 20 F (RD,CE,DD); one at Oakland Park, Dundas [HM] Sep 22-24 (RD) was likely on a winter territory; three at Hendry Valley Oct 4 (PT et al.); one at N Shore of Harbour Nov 16 (GLw); one at Burloak Waterfront Park Nov 21 (LMa,Re).  

Brown Creeper: One at Shoreacres Sep 20 F (CE).  

Veery: Two at Fifty Point C.A. and one at Forty Mile Creek, Grimsby Sep 2 F (RD et al.).  

Gray-cheeked Thrush: One at Shoreacres Sep 20 F (RD,CE,DD); one at Kings Forest [HM] Nov 2 L (GN,RJa) tied the third latest date for the HSA.  

Swinson's Thrush: Ten calling over Sunrise Cres, Dundas Sep 26 (RD); one at Sedgewick Park Nov 2 L (AD).  

American Pipit: Two at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 4 F (RD et al.); one at Sedgewick Park Nov 2 L (AMo).  


Sedge Wren*: Two at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (DPr et al.).  

Marsh Wren*: Seven at Dundas Marsh Sep 27 (RD,CE,RPo); one at Dundas Hydro Pond Nov 16-30 (RPo; JRe).  

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: One at Woodland Cemetery Nov 2 L (KM,RW).  

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: One at Confederation Park Sep 14 F (RD,CE,DD); 30 at Fifty Point C.A. (RD et al.) and one at Sedgewick Park Nov 13-30 (LMa,LTe; m.obs.); one at Burloak Waterfront Park Nov 19 (MJ).  


Veery: Two at Fifty Point C.A. and one at Forty Mile Creek, Grimsby Sep 2 F (RD et al.).  

Common Raven*: One at Westover Rd N of Conc 8 Sep 7-28, Oct 15 and Nov 5-25 (PS); one at Nasaagweyaa Fourth Line & 15th Sideroad Oct 11 and two there Nov 25 (LMr); one at Hwy 5 W of Brock Rd [HM] Oct 15 (BEn); one at Hwy 6 N of Hwy 403 Oct 19 (MM et al.); 12 counted in the HSA on Nov 2 (m.obs.); one at Green Mt Rd & 8th Rd E Nov 9 (CE et al.); one at 8th Conc, Beverly Swamp [HM] Nov 9 (RP).  


Purple Martin: 15 at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 L (RD,CE).  

Bank Swallow: One at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 L (RD,CE).  

Cliff Swallow: Three at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 (RD,CE); one at Green Rd & Frances Ave Sep 14 L (BH).  

Barn Swallow: 300 past Green Rd & Frances Ave Sep 1 (BH), and two there Nov 6 L (BH); 70 past Woodland Cemetery Sep 6 (RD,CE).  

Tufted Titmouse*: One at West Grimsby [GM] Sep 5 (LMa); one at LaSalle Park 27 (WB); birds on Nov 2: 3 –River Rd & Birkett Lane, Brantford [BR] (BL), 2 –Brantford Landfill (BL), 1 –Haldimand (JI,BJ), 5 –Ruthven Park (RL).  

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: One at Shoreacres Sep 20 F (CE).  

Brown Creeper: One at Shell Park Sep 20 F (CE).  

White-eyed Vireo: Fifteen Point Conservation Area, 10 November 2014 - photo Joanne Redwood.
Native Plant Gardening with Paul O’Hara
by Bill Lamond

The speaker for this evening was Paul O’Hara. Paul is a field biologist and dedicated native plant gardener who owns and operates Blue Oak Native Landscapes (www.blueoak.ca). After a brief introduction about his interests and background, Paul got right into his talk.

He had a series of slides about some of the gardens that he has designed and planted – all with native species. Some of the images quite dramatically compared the before and after shots of a few of the plantings. One was the New Credit First Nation administration building where the backyard of this property was large, and mostly sod, with three ceremonial fire pits. Paul redesigned this, retaining the fire pits, but with extensive naturalization with native grasses and forbs and tree and shrub plantings. Another excellent visual example was the elegant Victoria Hall in Dundas. As this was a very formal wood-sided, white structure, a more orderly planting style was utilized but again with natives such as Purple Joe-Pye-Weed, Swamp Milkweed, Bee Balm, Pussy-toes, and several native grasses and sedges, including Little Bluestem. Paul is not totally strict with “natives only” as he did plant a few hostas at this location as they fit in nicely in this type of setting.

Paul spent a bit more time explaining was a large property in Mississauga that was a 10 acre site (with 6 acres of turf) owned by a mining company. For 40 years the landscape was only turf and a few specimen trees. That's 40 years of probably 16 lawn-cuttings a year, with fertilizer spread probably yearly, and pesticides sprayed on a routine basis. Just think of the unnecessary labour involved, the gas wasted, all the chemicals needlessly broadcasted. For what? For essentially soccer or football fields that were never utilized as such. Paul was contracted to right this silly, yet all too common situation. The lawns were subsequently turned into a meadow of native perennials; Wild Bergamot, Black-eyed Susan, Common Milkweed, asters, goldenrods, and thickets of native dogwoods, Nannyberry, White Pine, White Birch. It was a wonderful image especially in comparison with what was lost; nothing! Insect life returned to this property magnificently. Bee and butterfly numbers were “off the scale” when the property was in full bloom. There were lots of sightings of dragonflies and of course Monarchs. There were even Eastern Kingbirds reported, although it was unknown whether they were migrants or breeding birds but it seems likely that with all the insects, it was suitable kingbird breeding habitat. Other wildlife that made the site home were Eastern Woodchuck, Red Squirrels, Red Foxes, and flocks of Cedar Waxwings that come to feast on the berried shrubs.

However, Paul was emphatic that changes, such as the mining company example, are too few. Changes are not happening fast.
enough for him. He stressed that things have changed which is good of course, but there is still so much that needs to be changed and the pace has to accelerate.

Paul devoted the rest of the talk to three main messages. The first message was to recognize and remove invasives. He listed some obvious examples that almost all of us know are bad news; European Buckthorn, Dog-strangling Vine, Garlic Mustard and also mentioned some examples that are a bit under the radar such as adventive honeysuckle species which are rampant in some areas, especially the Hamilton area. In fact, he related the situation at Hendrie Valley, at the Cherry Hill Gate, where the understory is choked and it is all non-native honeysuckles. Gone are the native Witch Hazel, Nannyberry, and dogwoods. Another invasive under the radar is Tree of Heaven. This alien tree is often found growing in downtown areas within the smallest cracks. It survives where few other plants can and then it spreads to adjacent natural lands where it is quite aggressive, spreading by stolons as well as the wind-blown seeds. Similarly, and perhaps worse, is Siberian Elm, which seeds itself extremely easily, and then aggressively takes over waste areas and roadsides from where it can then invade natural areas. Along several major highways in the Hamilton-Toronto area, it is thick within medians. Paul suggested the Ministry of Transport could do us all a favour and chop down these Siberian Elms. The next target was the ubiquitous White Mulberry. He suggested that everyone in the audience who had a weeping standard or White Mulberry waif growing in their backyard should chop it down. I am dumbfounded by all the landowners out there another rant here. I am dumbfounded by all the landowners out there who had a weeping standard or White Mulberry waif growing in their backyard – turning it into a lawn. I suppose they feel it looks “neat” enough for him. He stressed that things have changed which is good of course, but there is still so much that needs to be changed and the pace has to accelerate.

Paul devoted the rest of the talk to three main messages. The first message was to recognize and remove invasives. He listed some obvious examples that almost all of us know are bad news; European Buckthorn, Dog-strangling Vine, Garlic Mustard and also mentioned some examples that are a bit under the radar such as adventive honeysuckle species which are rampant in some areas, especially the Hamilton area. In fact, he related the situation at Hendrie Valley, at the Cherry Hill Gate, where the understory is choked and it is all non-native honeysuckles. Gone are the native Witch Hazel, Nannyberry, and dogwoods. Another invasive under the radar is Tree of Heaven. This alien tree is often found growing in downtown areas within the smallest cracks. It survives where few other plants can and then it spreads to adjacent natural lands where it is quite aggressive, spreading by stolons as well as the wind-blown seeds. Similarly, and perhaps worse, is Siberian Elm, which seeds itself extremely easily, and then aggressively takes over waste areas and roadsides from where it can then invade natural areas. Along several major highways in the Hamilton-Toronto area, it is thick within medians. Paul suggested the Ministry of Transport could do us all a favour and chop down these Siberian Elms. The next target was the ubiquitous White Mulberry. He suggested that everyone in the audience who had a weeping standard or White Mulberry waif growing in their backyard should chop it down. However, it is difficult to get people to comply with this sentiment as they see how much our native birds flock to eat the berries of the White Mulberry when they ripen in June. This species is threatening the existence of the native and endangered Red Mulberry by genetic swamping by the White Mulberry. Perhaps people would be more willing to remove their White Mulberries if a native Red Mulberry could be planted in its place. It is especially important to discourage White Mulberry in Hamilton because the Escarpment in Dundas is a stronghold provincially for the Red Mulberry, especially on RBG lands.

Other alien invasives Paul discussed were Russian Olive and Norway Maple. Paul showed two slides; one of the City of Hamilton and the other of the adjacent Escarpment woodlands in late April. The number of flowering Norway Maples within the mix of trees was quite disturbing. They may actually look pleasant to many people when they are flowering, but it is indicative how much this species is planted and how it can spread into abutting natural lands. Of course this is a problem of our own making, as tree nurseries still grow this alien tree in quantity with at least 17 varieties available, including, of course, the notable “Crimson King” Norway Maple. It is a shame that nurseries are growing them in such numbers and of course it is. But who is buying most of these trees? The urban forestry departments of many large cities still buy this tree and plant them along our streets. You would have thought that by 2014, that there would have been some enlightenment, such that mostly native trees would be planted by the professionals who work for the people we elect; essentially us. In my own experience, I am quite frustrated with the City of Brantford which does not plant enough native trees. I have queried them about this and they state that they no longer plant Norway Maples. Great! Except that they still plant “Crimson King” and other Norway Maple cultivars that escape the labelling as Norway Maples due to their botanical names. Very few native Sugar Maples are now planted which I think is ridiculous considering what this tree means to most of us, notwithstanding the fact that it is gorgeous in the fall when “Crimson King” is never lovely to look at. How do we change this? Is it the fault of the nurseries that grow and sell them? Certainly they are a large part of the problem but municipalities are major clients and they should be telling the nurseries that they want native trees. To me, the fault rests within each city’s forestry department. Who educates these people? This has to change. Perhaps a role for the provincial government to step in and phase out these alien trees in our garden centres? However, is there even one MPP who is aware of this or even cares?

Paul’s second message was simple. **Plant asters, goldenrods and milkweeds.** He was perplexed why we do not celebrate the flowering season of asters and goldenrods. I am totally like-minded here. There should be an annual Aster Festival! I find the flowering of asters and goldenrods more exciting than the fall leaf colour. The old-field colour in mid-September can be spectacular with the vibrant violet of New England Aster, the blues of Azure, Heart-leaved, and Smooth Asters, and the whites of Panicled, Frost (*Aster pilosus*), and Heath Asters. When all of these are mixed together with the yellows of Canada Goldenrod and Old Field Goldenrod, the effect can be simple outstanding. Roadsides vistas at this time of the year can be so rewarding. Forgive me another rant here. I am dumbfounded by all the landowners out in the countryside, who feel it is necessary to cut the grass along the roadside right to their fenceline – property they don’t even own – turning it into a lawn. I suppose they feel it looks “neat” but it is incredibly boring and pretty much useless for wildlife, especially pollinators. Next time you are out for a drive in the country, note how widespread this practice is. It wastes time, it wastes gas, it destroys habitat, and it looks barren, at least from my perspective. How do we change these attitudes?

Paul said that asters and goldenrods should be planted in all schoolyards, and he **(continued on page 139)**
Yellow-rumped Warbler: 28 at Woodland Cemetery Oct 19 (RD et al.).

Palm Warbler: Shoreacres Oct 8 L (RD, CE).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Five at Shell Park Sep 20 (RD, CE, DD); one m. at Chestnut-sided Warbler: Confederation Park Sep 14 (RD, CE, DD); one at Princess Point Sep 26 L (CE).

American Tree Sparrow: Two at McMaster Forest Sep 23 F (RPr).

Yellow Warbler: One at Confederation Park Sep 22 L (RD).

Canada Warbler: Seven at Shoreacres Sep 20 (RD, CE, DD); one at Courtcliffe Park Oct 9 L (SD).

Common Yelllowthroat: One at Ruthven Park, Cayuga Sep 6 F (RL).


Cape May Warbler: Seven at Confederation Park Sep 14 (RD, CE, DD); one at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 4 (LMa et al.).

Northern Parula: 14 at Bronte May 9 * (MJ); four at Shoreacres Sep 20 (RD, CE, DD); three at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 4 (RD et al.); one m. at Sedgewick Park Nov 16-30 (BO; m.obs.).

Magnolia Warbler: 44 at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 (RD, CE); one at LaSalle Park Nov 2 L (RWO).

Bay-breasted Warbler: Five at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 (RD, CE); one at Rock Chapel Oct 9 L (SD).

Blackburnian Warbler: One at Confederation Park Sep 22 L (RD).

Yellow Warbler: One at Green Rd & Frances Ave Sep 14 (BH); one at Confederation Park Sep 14 (RD, CE, DD); one at Princess Point Sep 26 L (CE).

Chesnut-sided Warbler: One at Shoreacres Sep 20 L (RD, CE, DD).

Blackpoll Warbler: Three at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 F (RD, CE).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Five at Shell Park Sep 20 (RD, CE, DD); one m. at Shoreacres Oct 8 L (RD, CE).

Palm Warbler: Four at Green Rd & Frances Ave Sep 13 F (BH); one at Woodland Cemetery Oct 26 (RD et al.).

Pinewarbler: One at Green Rd & Frances Ave Oct 28 (BH); one at Sedgewick Park Nov 13 L (LMa, LTe).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 28 at Woodland Cemetery Oct 19 (RD et al.); seven at Sedgewick Park Nov 13 L (LMa, LTe); two at Olympic Park, Dundas Nov 20 (LMa).

Black-throated Green Warbler: Seven at Shoreacres Sep 20 (RD, CE, DD); one at Courtcliffe Park Oct 28 L (TT).

Canada Warbler: One at Fifty Point C.A. and one at Forty Mile Creek, Grimsby Sep 2 L (RD, CE).

Wilson’s Warbler: One at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 4 (RD et al.); one at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Nov 2 (MCR et al.).

Eastern Towhee: Two at McMaster Forest Sep 23 F (RPR).

American Tree Sparrow: Ten at 10th Rd E & Dofasco Trail Oct 18 F (BM).

Chipping Sparrow: Seven at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Nov 5 L (LMa, LTe).

Clay-colored Sparrow: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (AD et al.).

Field Sparrow: Four at Gates of Heaven Cemetery Sep 28 F (RD, CE).

Vesper Sparrow: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (AD et al.).

Savannah Sparrow: One at Clappisons Corners Wetland (HM) Oct 1 (SD); one at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 4 (RD et al.); one at Cambridge area Nov 2 L (fide BWI).

Grasshopper Sparrow: One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 L (GRI et al.).

Nelson’s Sparrow#: Four at Dundas Marsh Sep 25 * (LMa, DPr), and three there Sep 27 (RD, CE, RPr); three at Bronte Creek Prov. Park Oct 5 (DPR et al.), and one there Oct 6 (DMa).

Fox Sparrow: One at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 4 F (LMa et al.); four at Dry Lake Rd S of Townline Rd (HD) Nov 17-20 (NF); one at Sumach Dr, Aldershot [HL] Nov 21 (CS); one at Fallview Rd W of Sydenham Rd Nov 21-22 (SD; m.obs.); two at Sedgewick Park Nov 26 (CE).

Lincoln’s Sparrow: One at Sheridan College, Oakville Sep 19 F (TMi); birds on Nov 2 L: 1 –Cumberland Ave S of Harvester Rd (DD et al.); 1 –Waterworks Park, Brantford [BR] (BL), 1 –Burloak Canoe Club [HL] (LF).

Swamp Sparrow: Three at fifty Point C.A. Oct 4 (RD et al.).

White-throated Sparrow: One at Fifty Point C.A. Sep 2 F (RD, CE), and 28 there Oct 4 (RD et al.); 50 at N Shore of Cootes Paradise Sep 19 (RPr); 40 at Confederation Park (RD, CE) and 36 at Burlington Beachstrip (CE) Oct 2; 25 at Hendrie Valley Oct 4 (PT et al.).

White-crowned Sparrow: One ad. at Dundas Marsh Sep 27 F (RD, CE, RPr); one imm. at Sumach Dr, Aldershot Nov 17 (CS); one at Dry Lake Rd S of Townline Rd [HD] Nov 17-20 (NF); one at Olympic Park, Dundas Nov 20 (LMa); one ad. at Sedgewick Park Nov 29 (SMG).

Dark-eyed Junco: Two at Hamilton Beachstrip [HM] Sep 19 F (JMr).

Scarlet Tanager: One at Confederation Park Sep 22 (RD); one at Tuck Creek N of Lakeshore Rd, Burlington [HL] Oct 2 L (PWg).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: One at Van Wagners Ponds (LMa et al.) and one at Fifty Point C.A. (RD et al.) Oct 4; one f. at Valley Inn Nov 9 L (BCo).

Red-winged Blackbird: One m. at Dundas Hydro Pond Nov 19 (LMa); two at Olympic Park, Dundas Nov 20 (LMa); one m. at Sumach Dr, Aldershot Nov 21 (CS).


Yellow-headed Blackbird#: One m. at Nebaubers Marsh [WL] Nov 2 L (MCA et al.).

Rusty Blackbird: One at Dundas Marsh Sep 27 F (RD, CE, RPr); 65 at Mountsberg C.A. Oct 13 (RD, CE); 18 at Woodland Cemetery Oct 18 (RD, CE), and 24 there Oct 19 (RD et al.).
Paul then gave several examples of trees that have survived and on a native tree greatly outnumber those on an alien species. The varieties of insect species that are found trees and shrubs as food and shelter. Non-natives simply come up and they have evolved with numerous other species that use these However, native species are better adapted to our climate and soils shown the dangers of alien species when they become invasive. The third main message that our speaker had for us was to plant native trees and shrubs. Of course much of his talk already had needed, all the way from Ontario to Mexico.

The third main message that our speaker had for us was to plant native trees and shrubs. Of course much of his talk already had shown the dangers of alien species when they become invasive. However, native species are better adapted to our climate and soils and they have evolved with numerous other species that use these trees and shrubs as food and shelter. Non-natives simply come up short in this regard. The varieties of insect species that are found on a native tree greatly outnumber those on an alien species. Paul then gave several examples of trees that have survived and thrived when the land was developed but the trees were spared. A notable example is Queen’s Park in Toronto where dozens of large Red, Black and White Oaks dominate the park. These trees were there before the legislative building was, and are perhaps over 200 years old. He also noted that there are several relic trees in many beautiful neighbourhoods in Hamilton, including huge Sugar Maples, Red Oaks, Bur Oaks, and Shagbark Hickories on the Mountain brow and even a few Bitternut Hickories in the downtown. Some of these species are almost never planted botanically so these trees were remnants of cleared forests. And of course there was the huge White Oak that was noted in the Trees Count project in Westdale in 2014 (see Wood Duck Vol. 68, page 42), surely a tree that was growing before any houses were in that neighbourhood. And these are amazing trees. Paul suggested that the seeds of these trees should be collected as the genetics of these trees are obviously good for surviving in an urban environment. But it is not just that, at least for me. These trees look magnificent. Go to a neighbourhood where there are large mature shade trees. They look absolutely wonderful. And homes in these neighborhoods are highly desired with inflated prices because of the trees. People want to live there because of how beautiful it is. And yet, I come back to the urban foresters and what they would plant to replace these trees when they die. Alien, small tree species, such as Tree Lilac, Turkish Hazelnut, Amur Maple, Golden Chain Tree, Ornamental Pear. Ridiculous. Who makes these planting decisions and why? Talk about a needed housecleaning in urban forestry practices. Can anyone point out to me, an enlightened municipality that puts a premium on planting native trees? Not Hamilton and certainly not Brantford.

Paul then listed several native shrubs that made great garden plants such as Alternate-leaved Dogwood, Wild Plum, Wild Crabapple, Grey Dogwood, Fragrant Sumac, Carolina Rose, Ninebark and Bittersweet. All of these look great and provide fruits that are enjoyed by wildlife, especially birds.

The talk was brief, but fast paced and enlightening as well as entertaining. His passion for his beliefs was obvious. He closed by saying that “we should do something special in Hamilton. We should make the greening of Hamilton a priority” and make it a model for other communities – a project that the Hamilton Naturalists’ Club could get behind and promote. 🌿
Jupiter at Opposition

by Mario Carr

On February 6, Jupiter will be at opposition or closer to the Earth for the entire year. On that date, we are between it and the Sun. Jupiter appears opposite to the Sun and can be seen all night rising at sunset in the east and setting at sunrise in the west. During opposition, we’re closest to Jupiter for the entire year, making it the best time for viewing. Jupiter will appear as a bright naked eye object. With binoculars, you can see its four bright moons; Io, Ganymede, Europa and Callisto. For sharp telescopic views, you will have to wait until Jupiter climbs higher in the sky later in the evening. After opposition, you won’t have to wait as long to see crisp images, because Jupiter will appear higher in the sky right after sunset. February to May will be the best months to see the planet.

Here are February stargazer events. Most are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

**Planet watching**

Mercury can be seen low in the southeast morning sky from February 6-28. Venus and Mars can be seen low in the southwest evening twilight sky. Venus climbs higher in the sky as the month progresses.

Saturn can be seen in the dawn sky. Uranus is low in the western evening sky setting mid-evening. Neptune vanishes into the twilight evening sky early in the month disappearing behind the Sun on February 26.

Feb. 3 – The Full Moon this month is called the Snow Moon as February is a time for snow and cold air temperatures. It is below Jupiter in the evening sky.

Feb. 7 – Sunlight reflecting off dust particles in the solar system, known as Zodiacal Light, can be seen in the western evening sky from a dark location for the next two weeks.

Feb. 11 – Last-quarter Moon

Feb. 12-13 – The waxing crescent Moon is close to Saturn in the western evening sky.

Feb. 13 – Hamilton Amateur Astronomers meeting 7:30-9:30 p.m., Spectator Building, 44 Frid St., Hamilton. Free admission with door prizes and everyone is welcome. An optional food bank donation of non-perishable goods would be appreciated.

Feb. 20 – There will be a close conjunction of the waxing crescent Moon with Mars and Venus in the western evening sky.

Feb. 21-22 – Venus and Mars are only a half degree apart in the western evening sky. This is the closest conjunction of these two planets for the entire year.

Feb. 24 – Mercury is at its greatest angle away from the Sun making it easier to spot in the morning sky.

Feb. 25 – The First-quarter Moon is only a half degree away from Aldebaran in evening sky. Aldebaran is the brightest star in the constellation Taurus.

For more information, see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers (HAA) website at www.amateurastronomy.org or call (905) 627-4323. The club offers a basic astronomy course for members.

Mario Carr is the HAA’s director of publicity and can be reached at mariocarr@cogeco.ca.

(Tropical forests - continued from page 126)

are quite used to heat, and can be commonly found in regions that are suffering from climate change in other ways (not necessarily with temperature spikes).

In that sense, it’s a wonderful stroke of luck that tropical tree species are the greater carbon sink, as “tropical forests may continue to take up carbon for many years,” Schimel said. He added that, with hiked carbon levels, these tropical species will grow faster and make greater use of their photosynthetic processes, taking in more CO₂ along the way.

That result “has big implications for our understanding of whether global terrestrial ecosystems might continue to offset our carbon dioxide emissions or might begin to exacerbate climate change,” added co-author Britton Stephens of the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

However, it’s important to note that this won’t really change much in terms of conservations trends, especially since the battle against deforestation has already been aimed at rainforests across the globe.

That in-part has to do with the fact that researchers have long thought that slash-and-burn, used in regions like Ecuador and Brazil for the sake of making livestock pastures, was dumping far more carbon back into the atmosphere than the remaining forests could ever hope to make up for. Worse yet, what fractured forests remain would start to suffer from “lonely tree syndrome,” in which their health and potential as a carbon sink drops severely.

Now, according to the researchers, we can be more certain that protecting these tropical forests is a very high priority in the battle against carbon-driven climate change. And, happily, we now also suspect that tropical forests can in fact make up for the released carbon of their fallen brethren... to a point, of course.

Member Profile – Kim Barrett

by Glenn Barrett

Kim Barrett (née Smith) grew up near Cornwall in eastern Ontario. Her family regularly camped throughout Ontario in their trusty Bonair pop-top trailer. These trips provided her with ample opportunities to make real connections with nature and the outdoors, no doubt contributing to the education and career path she has decided to follow. With fond memories (and photographic proof!) of feeding chipmunks as a young girl in Algonquin Park, it is little wonder that this particular location also figures prominently in her life (read on dear reader).

Kim attended the University of Guelph and graduated in 1996 with a B.Sc. in Wildlife Biology. During her time at university she spent one summer tree planting in Elliott Lake and another working for the Raisin Region Conservation Authority. When she graduated, Kim headed east to the Maritimes to work at the St. Andrews Research Station. Imagine assisting research projects as diverse as the impact of Common Eider predation on the marine intertidal community, and optimal stocking density for aquaculture production of winter flounder.

Kim returned to Ontario where she was employed by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, conducting field work on the Eastern Spiny Softshell and Queen Snake. Finishing this contract, Kim began to volunteer with Christine Bishop at the Burlington Canadian Wildlife Service which is where she and I met.

She spent that summer working for Ducks Unlimited, and in September 1998, Kim began her M.Sc. studying the demography and spatial ecology of Wood Turtles in Algonquin Provincial Park. It was now my turn to volunteer for her. I would drive six hours to visit her for a weekend, and find myself spending all weekend fending off hordes of biting insects, traipsing through the forests trying to find those wayward wandering turtles. And that continued for two long field seasons. Once she finished that second season, Kim returned to south-western Ontario to begin a position with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry as a “Species at Risk” biologist. Based out of the Vineland MNRF office, Kim worked on all aspects of “species at risk”: monitoring, research, evaluation, protection and recovery.

Now back in the Hamilton area. Kim could join the HNC and begin to participate in field events (hikes, sanctuary work days, bird counts, odonate and butterfly counts), regularly attend meetings and contribute articles to the Wood Duck. She was an excellent editor for the Birds of Hamilton & Surrounding Areas publication committee.

‘After three years of contracts Kim left MNRF for a full-time Senior Terrestrial Ecologist position with the Halton Region Conservation Authority (Conservation Halton (CH)). Having now been with CH for almost 12 years, Kim’s job involves the ecological review of planning and permit applications (road expansions and realignments, subdivisions, etc) with respect to natural heritage features (species at risk, wetlands, woodlands, etc.). She also oversees the terrestrial components of CH’s Long-term Environmental Monitoring Program which involves surveys of birds, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies, in addition to permanent survey plots to assess forest health. Working with a great team of CH planners, engineers and fellow ecologists, Kim also conducts Marsh Monitoring Program surveys at selected CH properties.

Appointed in 2008, Kim is continues to be a member of the Species at Risk Program Advisory Committee. She is able to provide advice to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry as it implements Ontario’s Endangered Species Act. Kim and her staff work with the City of Burlington to coordinate the annual closure of King Road, protecting migrating Jefferson Salamanders. Last year, Kim was able to promote the role of CH, the HNC and other local conservation partners, when she was invited to speak to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on the subject of habitat conservation.

An avid traveller, Kim has canoe-camped in the Everglades, hiked to see molten lava in Hawaii, and dipped her toes in the waters off both Vancouver Island and Newfoundland. She has also

The Wood Duck - February, 2015
explored various habitats in Ecuador, snorkelled with Galapagos Sea Lions and is looking forward to seeing the natural side of Cuba this year. She skis cross-country whenever she has the opportunity – often over her lunch hour on the rolling hills of Lowville – and in the summer, Kim is an avid kayaker who has recently taken on the challenge of stand up paddleboarding (SUP).

On the home front Kim is kept active being a great mom to two young children (Graham & Naomi). She makes sure they know how important it is to preserve and protect this planet we all need to share.

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At the Next HNC Monthly Meeting
9 February (Monday) 7:30 p.m.
The Young and the Restless: Exploring the Universe’s Most Spectacular Explosions with Light Echoes.

This talk will sound familiar to many of you as it was scheduled for this month in 2013. However our speaker Doug Welch, was unable to attend. Thankfully it has been rescheduled. Supernovae and other luminous transients produce such prodigious quantities of light that the very tiny fraction scattered towards Earth by interstellar dust hundreds of light years away can still be studied with large telescopes. In this talk, Doug Welch will describe what has been learned about supernovae and their precursors using this technique, that provides the ability to study outbursts centuries afterwards and from different perspectives in three-dimensional space. Doug Welch is an observational astronomer who is a Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at McMaster University. He also enjoys birding and nature photography. Royal Botanical Gardens, Plains Road West, Burlington.

At the Next Bird Study Group Meeting
23 February (Monday) 7:30 p.m.

This month, Jean Iron will be speaking about Arctic birds of Iceland, Greenland and Canada. Jean Iron is no stranger to the Bird Study Group as she is a returning speaker. She is well-known to the Ontario birding community due to her active involvement with the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO), being the former President of this 1000+ member organization. She is renowned for specializing in shorebird and gull identification and most of you have seen some of her excellent photographs. For several years she has spent a few weeks volunteering her time helping the CWS to monitor migrating shorebirds in southern James Bay. Many of you will also know her from her habitual presence in May at the Tip of Point Pelee. Come early at 7:00 for coffee and conversation. Burlington Seniors’ Centre, 2285 New St., Burlington.

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The Warblers of Sedgewick Park
by Bill Lamond

On the following page are the “Sedgewick Six”, the six species of warbler that were found at Sedgewick Park in Oakville in November/December of 2014: Tennessee, Nashville, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Northern Parula. This was reduced to the “Sedgewick Five” when the Northern Parula disappeared around December 10. It either succumbed to cold temperatures, was depredated, or migrated. Some observers are not comfortable saying that these birds are attempting to overwinter, feeling that they could still migrate if conditions allowed. For instance, it was suggested that the Northern Parula migrated as it disappeared during warmish weather. However, no one can know this, and it is possible the bird was caught by a Sharp-shinned Hawk or an Eastern Screech-Owl. Speculation is all that we have. At any rate the remaining five species have lingered into early January 2015.

This assemblage of six lingering warbler species was unprecedented in Ontario, although just barely, as five species of warbler were at this same location in December of 2012 and four species were here in December of 2013! This is incredibly unusual for this many species of warbler to be recorded in the winter-time in such a small, almost tiny location. However, it is explained by the presence of the sewage treatment plant adjacent to the park which produces hatches of large numbers of midges (chironomids). These emerging midges then encounter the cold air away from the treatment plant and then settle onto Sedgewick Park vegetation, and provide the food that is sustaining the warblers. It is a highly unusual situation. Normally, warblers migrate south to their normal wintering grounds in September, but apparently, the large number of late-season midges here, somehow “trick” the birds into staying put once they arrive at this location. Trick, is probably not the right word but it seems bizarre that these warblers would curtail their migration and stay at this place in southern Ontario, so far north of their regular wintering grounds. This is especially so for the Tennessee Warbler which normally winters in southern Mexico, south to northern South America. Truly it is almost an unfathomable situation. More so, considering it happened before in 2012 and 2013. In 2012, three of the species were the same – Orange-crowned (3), Nashville and Yellow-rumped – but with a Bay-breasted and a Cape May Warbler to replace the Tennessee, Wilson’s and Northern Parula of 2014. In December of 2013, the four species that occurred here were: Nashville, Orange-crowned, Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers, none lasting beyond the severe winter conditions that set in mid-December. Obviously a pattern has developed here, and if the sewage treatment plant maintains its operation in the same fashion, we can expect late lingering warblers next year. There have been eight different species in the last three years. Who knows what will turn up in the future?

It should be noted here that there was also another incredible assemblage of warblers – and other similar feeding species – in December 2011. However, this happened at the west end of Hamilton Harbour along the Waterfront Trail leading from Bayfront Park to the Desjardins Canal cut in Burlington Heights. In December of that year, there was a Black-throated Green Warbler, a vagrant Black-throated Gray Warbler, a Wilson’s Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warblers, an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Blue-headed Vireo, and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. No one really presented any reason why all of these gleaning passerines congregated in this area – an incredible situation that really deserves a separate report.

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Nashville Warbler, 20 December 2014 - photo Phil Waggett. This species normally winters from NE Mexico, south to Honduras. Small numbers winter in extreme SE Texas, and rarely north to Ontario, with a couple of dozen Ontario winter records including nine from the Hamilton area.

Northern Parula, 21 November 2014 - photo Joanne Redwood. Winters largely in the West Indies with small numbers in south Florida. There are very few December records in the Northeast with four in Ontario and two of these in Hamilton. The other HSA record was in December 2011 at Bronte Bluffs.

Wilson’s Warbler, 18 December 2014 - photo Sam Barone. Winters from northern Mexico, south to Panama, with a few wintering annually on the Gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana. There are a handful of winter records in the northeast, with six in Ontario, three of these in the Hamilton area.

Tennessee Warbler, 6 December 2014 - photo Chris Cheatle. This species winters from south Mexico to north South America. It winters very rarely in coastal Florida and Texas with very few records in the Northeast with only two winter-time Ontario records, the first one being 12 December 1981 at Point Pelee.

Orange-crowned Warbler, 7 December 2014 - photo Ken Newcombe. Winters from southern Gulf states, south to Guatemala. There are many winter records north to the Great Lakes, with dozens of December records in southern Ontario with about 10 winter-time records in Hamilton.

Yellow-rumped Warbler, 2 December 2014 - photo Alan Wormington. This species winters abundantly in the southern US with small numbers wintering throughout the southern Great Lakes Region. In Hamilton, wintering birds are found annually, sometimes in small flocks.
“The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant, “What good is it?” If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.”

Aldo Leopold

Male Painted Bunting at Arkendo Drive, Oakville, 3 January 2015 - photo Phil Waggett. This jewel showed up at a feeder on this street on 14 December and has now been seen by many thrilled birdwatchers. This is the second record of Painted Bunting for the Hamilton Study Area.