



The Swallow



Volume 27, # 2
Spring/Summer 2010

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		Benita Richardson	



About seven years ago, Nancy Hiscock tried her hand at 'salamander farming'. You can see the cluster of eggs, the swimming larvae with their feathery gills and the container that she raised them in. To see what species she was studying, see page 8. photos: Nancy Hiscock

Membership in the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists is available by writing to: the PAFN, Box 1242, Pembroke, ON K8A 6Y6. 2007/2008 dues are: Student \$10, Senior \$10, Individual \$15, Family \$20, Individual Life \$150, Family Life \$200.

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 the PAFN web site (Webmaster, Mike MacDonald): www.pafn.on.ca



• E v e n t s & T r i p s •

Owling Night

The Owl outing is on Sat., March 27 at 7:30 pm at the Wilberforce Township Park. Go south on Hwy 41 past the intersection of Hwy 41 and Lake Dore Rd., cross the bridge, go 100 metres more then turn right and go a short distance to the park.

Trip Coordinator: Chris Michener, 625-2263 (cmichener@hughes.net)

This trip will involve a driving loop through through varied habitat. We'll use a CD of owl calls to encourage a response. The main expected species is Barred Owl, but a few other species are possible.



PAFN Annual Meeting

Wed., April 28, 2010, Room 201, Algonquin College, Pembroke.

Agenda: 7:00 pm to 7:30 pm - Annual General Meeting.

7:30 pm to 8:00 pm - social with refreshments.

8:00 pm. Amy Cameron, a Planning Ecologist from Pembroke MNR who is involved with the wind power initiative and has specialized in bats, has agreed to give a bat presentation at the PAFN AGM in addition to her normal bat presentation, she will be able to include her experiences from Belize, as she will be attending bat conference from April 10 to 19.

A Trip to Bellow's Bay

Date: Saturday, April 17, 2010.

Time: at 9 am.

Trip Leader: Manson Fleguel, 732-7703.

Meet at the marina in Pembroke, at the mouth of the Muskrat River. Car pooling will be offered. Bring rubber boots, as mud and water will be encountered on the walk (1.5 km total). Migrant songbirds, ducks and friendly people are highlights. Spotting scopes are useful, binoculars essential.

A Walk in the Petawawa Terrace (Old Fish Hatchery)

Date: Sunday, May 16, 2010.

Time: 5 pm.

Trip Leader: Myron Loback 735-1278.

Meet in the upper parking lot of the Terrace, on Laurentian Drive. (go west of Pembroke on Pembroke St. towards Petawawa, turn north on Laurentian Dr., watch for sign and parking area). Some migrant songbirds and waterfowl can be expected. Good outing for children as Canada Geese will likely be present and, quite possibly, with young. This is an enjoyable, relaxed outing. Please bring rubber boots for some wet/muddy areas.

Shaw Woods: Mother's Day Weekend Wildflowers and Nature Walk

Date: Sunday May 9th, 2010 at 2:00 pm

Place: Due to limited parking at Shaw Woods, we will first meet at Wilberforce Twp.

Beach & Picnic Park. From the intersection of Hwy 41/Lake Dore Rd., go south on Hwy 41 over the Snake River bridge and make the next right.

Trip Leaders: Rob Cunningham, forester and naturalist (732-8402) and Bernd Krueger, photographer and naturalist (625-2879).

The purpose of this outing will be to enjoy early spring in the beautiful Shaw Woods. The main focus will be to see woodland wildflowers. We should see Blue Cohosh, Trout Lily, Trilliums and several others species. This walk is for all ages and is an introduction to the Shaw Woods, an old-growth forest. The walk will be easy to moderate on well-maintained trails. The pace will be determined by the participants and will last about 2.5 hours. Photographers are welcome and we will split into groups depending on interests.

7th Annual Natural History Day

Date: Saturday, May 22rd at the Calabogie Community Centre.

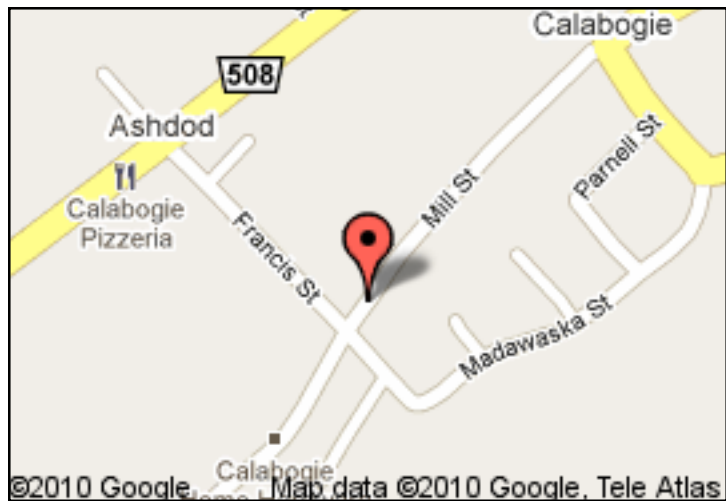
Time: Doors open at 8:30 am; Talks start at 9 am; free lunch is at 12 am; field trips will head out by car at 1 pm. The agenda is being worked out, but will include talks on interesting topics.

The Children's program will start at 10:30 and run until lunch.

The field trips will be announced later.

Please register with a phone call. Check our web page for the number after April 14th. Leave a message with how many adults and children you are registering.

The event is free and partially funded with a Trillium grant awarded to the McNamara Field-Naturalists, Arnprior.



Garage Sale - Fundraiser

Date: May 29th.

Where: Children's Garden Nursery, 375 Doran St, Pembroke.

This a combined garage sale at the Children's Garden on Saturday, May 29. Benita and other volunteers from the Club will be staffing the sale of all manner of goods with the proceeds going to both the Childre's Garden Nursery School and the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists. Donations of goods are welcome during the week up to the sale. For more information, please call Benita Richardson at 735-5404.

22nd Lake Dore Butterfly Count

Date: Saturday, July 3rd, 2010 (Rain/wind date, Sunday, July 4th).

Time: 9 am. Organizer: Chris Michener 625-2263.

Where: Wilberforce Twp. Park. Go south on Hwy 41 past intersection of Hwy 41 and Lake Dore Rd., cross the bridge, turn right after bridge and go a short distance to park.

Bring butterfly field guide, binoculars, rubber boots (optional) for the bog after lunch,

net (for catch & release) and lunch. A map of the Count circle and species list will be available. A participants' fee (under 12 free) of \$3 is asked to cover publishing costs of the North American results (North American Butterfly Association).

19th Hog Island Butterfly Count

Date: Sat., July 17th, 2010 (lousy weather day, Sun., July 18th).

Time: 9 am.

Organizer: Chris Michener (625-2263).

Meet at Mullen's Esso, Pembroke St. E., near the turn to Quebec. The Count Circle for this butterfly Count is half in Ontario and half in Quebec. In the past, some groups have gone to the Westmeath area; others have butterflyed on Allumette Island. You can choose the area you prefer. Maps of the circle and checklists will be available. A participants fee (under 12 free) of \$3 is asked to cover publishing costs.

The 13th Lake Dore Odonate (Dragonfly) Count

Date: Sat., July 31st, 2010 (lousy weather day Sun., August 1)

Time: 9 am. Organizer: Chris Michener (625-2263).

An excellent opportunity to appreciate this group of insects! We have had fun with nets and encountered a good variety of damselflies and dragonflies. The idea is to search for 'odes' within a 7.5 mile radius of Biederman Park, Lake Dore. Meet at the Wilberforce Twp Park. Go south on Hwy 41 past intersection of Hwy 41 and Lake Dore Rd., cross the bridge, turn right after bridge and go a short distance to park. Picture guides will be available as well as experienced 'odonaters'. A large insect net, optional rubber boots, close focus binoculars, and lunch/drinks are suggested.

Marina/Waterfront Bird Walk

Date: Saturday, August 21, 2010

Time: 8 am.

Trip Leader: Ken Hooles (735-4430).

Meet at the Pembroke marina, by the mouth of the Muskrat River in Pembroke. Ken will introduce us to migrant birdlife along the Pembroke waterfront. There are usually gulls, terns, ducks, geese, cormorants and songbirds such as vireos, warblers, sparrows and finches. Surprises usually occur and it's a good social outing... a chance to meet some very nice people!



Renfrew County Woodlot Conference

Check our website for more details or call Rob Cunningham at (732-8402).



The 2009 Pembroke Christmas Bird Count

by Manson Fleguel

The count was held on Saturday, December 19. While the wind was calm, the temperatures barely made it out of the -20's with -26 being the temperature at day-break. In the morning, any open water had cold fog lifting, making visibility impossible at water level. This year 29 field birders were out and 47 feeders were watched. More on these details later. Thanks to all who looked for the birds.

As usual, the count circle had 6 sectors. In total, we found **44 species** of which 1 species, N. Bobwhite, was probably an escape. Five additional species were found in "count week", the period of 3 days before and 3 days after count day. Of course, part of the fun is a friendly competition between the sectors to claim the most species spotted. This year the top sector was 3E.

The following shows the results of the count, by sector.

In **sector 3E**, Ken and Pat Hooles, Ron Bertrand, Vic Harmer and Merv Fediuk drove the sector. Along with the feeder watchers, they found **31 species**. The feeders were watched in this area by Jim Anderson, Nancy Armstrong, Lorraine Bertrand, Ray Brazeau, Jack and Barb Darbyson, Merv and Janie Dougherty, Lorna Fediuk, Beth Guimond, Carolyn Lance, Francis Marcotte, Wendell McLaughlin, John Payne, Bob and Julie Pick, A J Recoskie, Mac and Diane Thrasher, Gary and Sue Walton and George Young.

In **sector 3W**, **29 species** were spotted. Myron and Evan Loback, Leo Boland, Teresa Frechette, Mark, Levi and Michaella Dojczman, Benita Richardson and Cameron Dube were in the field. The feeder watchers in this sector were Dan Callaghan, Daryl Coulson, Howard and Frances Doelle, Judy Fleguel, Randy and Sheila Handke, Ken and Pat Hooles, Jeremy Inglis and Jonah Schuetz, Beth Loback, Wes Loback, Kathleen Moss, Mac Nussey, Harold and Shirley Wirth and Jim Wright.

Sector 1W had **25 species**. Here the field people were Bert Cain, David Beimers, Martin Roncetti and Manson Fleguel. Jean Berrigan was the feeder watcher.

Sector 2S found **23 species**. In the field were Chris Michener, Jean Brereton and Mike and Sandra MacDonald. Their feeder watchers were Barbara and Sarah Beimers, Tina Beimers, Sheila and Gary Bucholtz, Dwight and Lucy Dickerson, Dawn, Tom and Ryan Farnell, Ted Hiscock, Erna Maves and Jill and Andre Renault.

In **sector 1E**, Bruce and Ben DiLabio and Susan Ellis, along with 1 feeder watcher, Lynn Jones and Ole, Grace and Claire Hendrickson, found **23 species**

Sector 2N had **17 species**. Robin Cunningham, Elizabeth Link and Christian and Andre Renault were the field birders. Feeder watchers were Ann and Jim Clarke, Keith Curry, Patricia Harmer, Marilyn Kruschenske, Erick Leskie, Ivy Levoy, Bruce Schoof and Art and Shirley VanWinckle.

The following is the list of bird species found on count day:

Canada Goose	Am. Black Duck	Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser	Common Merganser	Ruffed Grouse
Wild Turkey	Northern Bobwhite	Bald Eagle
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Coopers Hawk	Northern Goshawk
Red-tailed Hawk	Rough-legged Hawk	Gyrfalcon
Rock Pigeon	Mourning Dove	Great Horned Owl
Northern Hawk Owl	Downy Woodpecker	Hairy Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Shrike	Blue Jay
American Crow	Common Raven	Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch	White-breasted Nuthatch	Brown Creeper
European Starling	Bohemian Waxwing	Am. Tree Sparrow
Dark-eyed (S.C.) Junco	Snow Bunting	Northern Cardinal
Pine Grosbeak	Purple Finch	House Finch
Common Redpoll	Pine Siskin	American Goldfinch
Evening Grosbeak	House Sparrow	

Count Week species:

American Kestrel	Ring-billed Gull	Gray Jay
Common Grackle	European Goldfinch	

Comment: One new species, a white phase Gyrfalcon, was found on the count, Wild Turkeys continue to increase in numbers, a Northern Bobwhite coming to a feeder is presumed to be an escaped bird, The European Goldfinch, an immature bird seen in count week, is presumed to be an escaped bird (2 other sightings of immature birds were seen earlier in the fall)



Notes on a Trip to PEI

by Manson Fleguel

Weddings happen, and when they happen far from home, there is a built-in excuse to do a bit of birding and sightseeing as we attend. Last year, our nephew married a Charlottetown girl on September 26, 2009.

The trip down was a hurried one, since we only had 2 days to drive the 1500 km. One birding highlight occurred just after we emerged from the tunnel under the St. Lawrence River in Montreal. A Rock Dove (Pigeon) flew across the highway just ahead of the car, perhaps 10 meters above the ground and over the median between the 4 lanes of traffic. In hot pursuit was a Peregrine Falcon which managed to close the gap and strike the pigeon. Feathers flew, but it was unable to hold on and the pigeon flew on. I can't finish that vignette because at 100 kilometers per hour plus, the event was quickly behind us. I assume the Peregrine didn't give up!

One aspect of the trip I found surprising, was seeing a lot of Common Ravens, a species I related more to the north. They were seen soaring everywhere. Sometimes a Turkey Vulture joined them. A few Red-tailed hawks perched in open areas.

We saw only one Bald Eagle on our trip. The morning of the wedding, another relative and I drove to the ocean to bird. Of course, Great Blue Herons were everywhere. Some of the sandbars were lined with Double-crested Cormorants, Herring, Great Black-backed, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. Lots of Greater Yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plovers and one of the Dowitcher species frequented the sheltered sandbars, while Sanderlings and Semi-palmated Plovers chose the surf to feed in. Behind the dunes we spotted Black-

capped Chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Song Sparrows.

Alas, the wedding bells rang so we had to cut it short. For the rest of our trip back, we decided to drive the Gaspé Peninsula, a first for us. The scenery was spectacular and the 2 lanes were traffic free as the summer tourist rush was past. Northern Gannets appeared as we approached the eastern tip, near Perce Rock. It was fascinating to watch them diving from perhaps 15 meters up and folding their wings into a dart like shape just before they hit the water. I couldn't understand how they could see fish in 2 or 3 meter waves but they often surfaced with a small fish. I studied their actions carefully as, someday, I hope to find one on Lake Dore. Keep your eyes open for me.

After leaving the village of Gaspé, travelling west, the road follows the shoreline for miles with nothing between your car and the water but guardrails. Spectacular cliffs and lookouts made the trip one to remember. Huge rafts of Eider ducks (mostly Common Eiders) were just off shore. They seemed to be concentrated near shallower water where you could see the waves breaking over submerged rocks.

By Rivière Du Loup, the flocks had thinned, because we were now a considerable distance from the ocean. Several times we noted Whales breaking the surface, but they were usually at least a kilometre from shore.

Just east of Quebec City, we began to see large white irregular shaped objects in some of the fields, looking like the white plastic jumbles one sometimes sees where hay bales have been removed from their wrappers. A closer look revealed these were flocks of Snow Geese. I had expected to see more than we did, but when we reached the town of Montmagny, we saw that their Snow Goose Festival only starts a week after we were there so I assume we were seeing only the first early flocks. The rest of the trip was uneventful, culminating in another wedding in Kingston. All I can say was we saw lots of love-birds!



These Snow Geese were seen on Woito Road in September 2009.

photo: Chris Michener

Salamander Farming?

by Nancy Hiscock

Basically, I was out walking with the dogs one day in late May (21st) and our usual jaunt normally included a partial walk along the natural gas pipeline not far from the house. One area in particular was always quite wet; I suspect it's likely a permanent seep or spring, as it's quite damp there year-round. Cattails, grasses & sedges, willows etc. all grow in the general area, and in the spring, a small area fills with water to about 18-24" deep.

It was during one of these wades through the pool that I noticed several gelatinous egg masses; all submerged and attached to fairly sturdy stems of emergent vegetation (not cattails, but sedges/grasses). The masses were roundish to oval-shaped, dark greenish, and anywhere from 7 to 13" in length (I found out later that as the eggs develop over several weeks, they become green from the symbiotic alga, *Oophila amblystomatis*). I recognized them as salamander eggs and was curious as to what kind they might be, so I fashioned a fine-wired mesh basket, anchored it in the pool, and placed one of the egg masses inside.

I checked it frequently and photographed the larvae at various stages. By June 23, the larvae had developed front legs and the back ones were appearing as nubs. By July 20th, the front and back legs were fully developed. Note the bushy gills (cover photo) as well. At this point, the larvae were ~ 3 cm in length. I eventually released all of them but not before I had a chance to take a few more photos. I sent some snaps off to a herp specialist (sorry, can't remember his name at this point) and he identified them as (yellow) Spotted Salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*).



Spotted Salamander from near the above pool.

photo: Nancy Hiscock



Species In Focus - Ghost Crabs

It's cold, it's snowy, and it's winter in Renfrew County. I am having some difficulty with this, now that I know first hand that it is sunny and warm in Cuba. Vacation packages should come with a warning that they may harm your future enjoyment of winter! So, indulge me on a more tropical themed Species In Focus.

Did you know that there are ghosts on the beaches? It's true...and they're not named Casper! But they are friendly, well, sort of.

Ghost Crabs (*Ocypode quadrata*) are really interesting little crustaceans that come out at night. Found on the Atlantic coast, they range north to the shores of Massachusetts and south to Brazil, scurrying about the beaches at night, searching for food. Ghost Crabs are hard to spot because they are cleverly coloured like sand.

At full size, the Ghost Crab measures about 1.5 to 2 inches across, has a whitish-tan or sand-coloured shell, and strong pincers. They have large eye and eyestalks, and can see 360 degrees. The eyes look like submarine periscopes and the Ghost Crab can retract them into grooves in this shell when it feels threatened - "down periscope"!



One of the fastest critters on the beach, if not the fastest, the little Ghost Crab can travel up to 16 km/h (about 10 mph). Its six little legs help him to run forwards, backwards and sideways as it works its way along the beach looking for food. The Ghost Crab is a scavenger and an opportunist, feeding on insects, mole crabs, lizards, turtle hatchlings and carrion.

Ghost Crabs can't swim, but they do require water to stay hydrated and for their eggs to hatch. In order to rehydrate, the Ghost Crab sidles up to the shoreline, stands sideways, and waits for a wave to wet him. Kind of like we do when we're trying to test how cold the water actually is! Once the crab is wet it scampers back up the beach.

During the day, Ghost Crabs live in burrows in the sand. These elaborate homes can sometimes extend more than a metre into the ground and have an enlarged chamber at one end. The older the crab, the further away from the water it lives, with the oldest crabs having burrows up to 400 m away from water. The Ghost Crab stays in its burrow during the heat of the day and comes out at night to hunt. In the colder weather, it doesn't come out at all, hibernating for up to six weeks, surviving on the oxygen it has stored near its gills.

Ghost Crabs are eaten by birds, raccoons, and sometimes people. While populations are not considered to currently be at risk, Ghost Crabs are being impacted by beach and sand dune development and shoreline stabilization.

Next time, a native Renfrew County species, I promise!

