

The Swallow



Volume 28, # 1
Autumn 2010

Board of Directors:

President:	Leo Boland	Barbara Beimers	Grant Bickel
Vice-President:	Rob Cunningham	Jean Brereton	Merv Fediuk
Treasurer:	Mike MacDonald	Ted Hiscock	Myron Loback
Secretary:	Manson Fleguel	Chris Michener	John Muff
		Benita Richardson	



Some fungi photos clockwise from upper left: Lauren Trute - July 16th, 2004; Nancy Hiscock - Sep 3rd, 2003; Nancy Hiscock - Sep 28th, 2003; Chris Michener - May 8th, 2008.
Can anyone identify these?

Membership in the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists is available by writing to: the PAFN, Box 1242, Pembroke, ON K8A 6Y6. 2009/2010 dues are: Student \$10, Senior \$10, Individual \$15, Family \$20, Individual Life \$150, Family Life \$200.

Editor, The Swallow: Chris Michener, 1311 Burchat Road, Golden Lake, ON K0J 1X0. Submissions welcomed. ph: (613) 625-2263; e-mail: cmichener@hughes.net
a colour copy of the Swallow is available for download (.pdf) at:
the PAFN web site (Webmaster, Mike MacDonald): www.pafn.on.ca



● E v e n t s & T r i p s ●

“The public is welcome at all events”

Kiwanas Walkway birdwalk

When: Saturday morning, Sept. 18th, 8 am

Place: Riverside Beach parking lot, Pembroke.

Meet with Mark Dojczman as he leads us on a route with which he is very familiar and where he has found Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Western Kingbird and other unusual species. This is migration time so you can expect surprises.

Westmeath Provincial Park beach walk

Date: Saturday, Sept. 25th at 8:30 AM.

Place: Trip starts from the municipal boat launch in the town of Westmeath. Coming from the west on County Rd. 12, turn left in Westmeath before the gas station at the blue building and continue down to the water.

We're hoping to see sparrows, shorebirds, ducks and hawks.

We'll drive west from Westmeath, to Sand Point Road, then park and walk the beach. Organizer Chris Michener, pH: 613-625-2263; cmichener@hughes.net

15th Annual Renfrew County Outdoor Woodlot Conference

Date: October 2nd, 2010. 9 am - 3:30 pm

Where: Petawawa Research Forest (PRF), located on highway 17 east of Chalk River. The PRF is home to more than 75 years of forestry research in silviculture, forest ecology, fire research, and tree breeding and genetics. Admission \$5; More information: Karen Stokes, 732-5523.

Note: late sky night added, see page 9

Lake Dore Birds

Date: Oct. 30th at 9 AM

Place: Meet at the 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. The park is at the northeast corner of Lake Dore.

The focus of this trip will be on water birds, especially in the marsh.

Organizer: Chris Michener, 613-625-2263

Pembroke Christmas Bird Count

Date: Saturday, Dec. 18th

Place: Within a traditional 15 km. diameter circle. Feeder watchers count birds in their yards, while field participants drive, ski or walk a pre-designated area keeping track of the numbers of birds.

Participants are invited to meet at Manson & Judy's around 5 pm to go over results and enjoy pizza courtesy of the Club. Please contact Manson to confirm participation. pH. 613-732-7703; email: mfleguel@nrtco.net.

Cost: \$5.00 for field participants except members of Bird Studies Canada, free.



Red-bellied Woodpeckers occasionally make a Christmas Bird Count appearance. photo: Chris Michener

Eganville Christmas Bird Count

Date: Monday, Dec 20th

Place: Eganville circle includes Augsburg, the town of Golden Lake, Green Lake, Lake Dore, Mink Lake and more. To view the Count circle map and download forms, go to the PAFN web page. (see front cover for URL) After the Count, participants are invited to gather at 5 pm at the home of the compiler, Chris Michener, and partner Jean Brereton to go over results. They are at 1311 Burchat Rd. Please contact Chris to confirm participation. pH. 613-625-2263; email: cmichener@hughes.net.

Cost: \$5.00 for field participants except members of Bird Studies Canada, free.

•••••••• Trip Reports ••••••••

Bellow's Bay Field Trip - April 17, 2010
by Manson Fleguel

It was a cold wind howling in off the Ottawa as 11 birders scanned the river for any species within sight. Not many! The water was the lowest it has ever been on any of the trips I have led at this time of year. Even a sandbar was visible at the mouth of the Muskrat River. We could stand the cold for only a short time and then left for Bellows Bay. This year we skipped looking for Northern Cardinal as they are now so common in Pembroke.



Manson's cold but happy crew

With the low water levels, there were no flooded fields to scan for ducks so the trip down was quick. A lone Sandhill Crane was spotted on the way.

The bay was alive with many ducks. Several Canada Geese and Sandhill Cranes as well as Bald Eagles also entertained us. American Wigeon and Northern Pintail were more numerous this year than on past trips. Many of the ducks were dabbling in close to shore so they were easy to identify. Lots of the divers were in slightly deeper water but easily seen. 2 Redheads were observed soon after we arrived. Someone spotted a Common Loon (must be enough water depth in the shallow bay for it to dive). This year, for the first time, the group was able to WALK to the small island in front of the Ron Laderoute property. A surprise here was the presence of a small grove of hawthorn trees on the ridge in the center of the island. The island made a wonderful spot to scope the entire bay. Being cold no longer mattered! Several Sandhill Cranes landed at the west end of the bay and later called; a memorable time.

The stars of the bay a few days earlier, were no shows! 7 Trumpeter Swans and a Eurasian Wigeon could not be found, a disappointment for the group, but having the number and diversity of species made up for our missing stars.

This year the group found 47 species! Here is a listing of the birds ID'd:

Canada Goose	Wood Duck	American Wigeon
Am. Black Duck	Mallard	Northern Shoveller
Northern Pintail	Green-winged Teal	Redhead
Ring-necked Duck	Greater Scaup	Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead	Com. Goldeneye	Hooded Merganser
Com. Merganser	Wild Turkey	Com. Loon
Double-crested Cormorant	Great Blue Heron	Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle	Merlin	Sandhill Crane
Killdeer	Ring-billed Gull	Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove	Downy Woodpecker	Hairy Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Flicker	Pileated Woodpecker
Blue Jay	Am. Crow	Black-capped Chickadee
Tree Swallow	Barn Swallow	American Robin
European Starling	Chipping Sparrow	Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow	Dark-eyed Junco	Common Grackle
Red-winged Blackbird	House Sparrow	

It was so good to get out birding again. Thanks to all the birders who made my day!



Results of Petawawa Terrace Walk with Myron Loback

Fish Hatchery Walk - May 16th, 2010
 Weather: Sunny and calm, mid 20s
 Attendance: 6 people

Crow	White-throated Sparrow	Rose breasted Grosbeak
Robin	Song sparrow	Broad-winged Hawk
Yellow Bellied Sapsucker	Bald Eagle	Ruffed grouse
Canada Geese	Mallard	Pileated Woodpecker
Ovenbird	Virginia rail	Black throated green
Hermit Thrush	Wood Duck	Black throated blue
American Goldfinch	Raven	Red breasted nuthatch
Red-winged Blackbird	Grackle	Blackburnian warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Pine Warbler	Hairy woodpecker
Swamp sparrow	Great crested Flycatcher	Flicker
Yellow warbler	Kingfisher	
	American Bittern	
	Gull species	

Pembroke Marina Walk by Ken Hooles

Unlike last year's extremely hot weather, the Pembroke Marina Walk held on Saturday, August 21, was marred by rain and a slight breeze.

Despite the rain, ten persons participated in the event and were able to locate 32 bird species. This was only two bird species less than last year, and twenty-six species less than the marina record of 58 species established in 1998.

Similar to last year's count, the waterfowl species were almost non-existent with only five species located on the excursion. This is highly unusual, and I can only contribute this to the low water levels on the Ottawa River and the fact that many of the fall migrants had not yet arrived. The five species included Canada Goose, Mallard, Double-crested Cormorant, American Black Duck, and Common Merganser. This year there were no teal, Wood Duck or Common Goldeneye, or any of the migrants like Northern Shoveler, scoters or Hooded Merganser.

It was also a poor outing for warblers. The group was able to locate four species of warblers. These were Yellow, several American Redstarts, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Warbler species that are normally found such as Nashville, Black and White, and Chestnut-sided were not present. The fall migrants such as Tennessee, Wilson's, and Blackpoll had not arrived in the area yet.

There was a noticeable absence of songbirds with no Northern Cardinal, House or Purple Finch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager or Baltimore Oriole or vireos found. The only songbirds located were American Robin, American Goldfinch, and an Eastern Phoebe. Surprisingly, the Eastern Phoebe was the only flycatcher found on the excursion.

However, the highlights of the walk included Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, and a Greater Yellowlegs.

The Pembroke Marina Walk began in 1988. Between 1998 and 2009, a total of 120 bird species have been identified on this excursion over the years. This year, we located two new species for the count: a Bobolink in the field beside Supple's Landing and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. This is the 121st and 122nd species for the marina walk.

The Pembroke Marina Walk may not have been a record breaking excursion, but it was certainly a challenging and an enjoyable outing. It was good to see a few new faces this year on the walk. Thanks to all of you who turned out.



An Osprey over the Pembroke Marina, the day before the walk...Aug 20th, 2010. photo: Chris Michener

My Encounter with a Wolf Pack, McKay Twp., on 5th February 2010
by Daryl Coulson

It was at the end of a day of ice-fishing with son-in-law Ryan Schuetz and his brother Scott Schuetz, that we were sledding our fishing gear out along a forest access road south of Sand Lake (km 9 on Barron Canyon Road, McKay Geographic Township, Renfrew County). It had been a hard hike into our fishing lake through deep snow on wooded hillsides, across beaver dams and deep snow covered marshes, so when we departed our fishing in the late afternoon we decided to take the access road out even though it was more than double the distance. The access road was solid snow ground having been packed by snowmobile use and a recent thaw. It had been a splendid day with temperatures about -8C, clear skies and only a light NNW breeze. We were well out the trail but still had a long way to go when the sun began setting, so it was decided that I would leave Ryan and Scott to pull out the sled gear and I would power hike it out to the vehicle and bring it back to the trail to meet up with them, considering that they were long ago bush-wacked. It would save us (them) about 1km or more of pulling the gear depending upon how far I could drive back. It was about 4km East of the Algonquin Park boundary, 2.5 to 3.0 km south of the Barron Canyon Road km9 marker, on the forest access road, that I left the guys and marched on at a good pace.



Earlier in the day – preparing to fry up some fresh speckled trout with potatoes and onions.

The light was now rapidly fading and the air temperature was just as quickly dropping as I made my way out. Moose tracks were commonly observed throughout our travels today, with a few occurrences of fox and wolf tracks. So it occurred to me as I was hiking out that I may encounter wolves. I looked along the trail side for a good solid walking stick which would double as my companion and provide a confidence builder. The trail sides were however scattered brambles and mixed deciduous saplings, fresh regeneration that provided nothing in the way of a quality walking stick, but I was not about to hike into the above knee depth snow to find something further in the woods – doing so would take considerable energy and burn valuable ‘daylight’. So, onward I marched. Besides, what are the odds of encountering wolves on a bush road with such a short distance to travel.

I was approaching the McKay Creek crossing where the creek flowed easterly. I briefly considered an option of taking a shortcut up the winding river which had a good solid surface on it, but discounted it because it would take me off the trail that I told Ryan and Scott I would follow, and in low light it would be more difficult to read the warning signs on the water of thin ice due to springs, faster creek flow, or beaver related activity. Besides, with the meandering creek the total distance might be the same or even more than taking the access road. On I went. As I passed over the McKay Creek bridge, I observed open water in several locations associated with swift flowing water, and felt

even better about my decision to keep to the trail.

The light now was quickly fading, well into the twilight, when I thought of two things – one good, one not so good. The good thing was that with a perfectly clear sky at this time of year, the twilight period would be extended somewhat. The not so good thing was that from having taken notice of the moon phase and moon rise times the last few days, the moon would not be rising for maybe a couple of hours after sunset and that it would be only partial. So the moon was going to be no help to me tonight and when it turned dark it would be really dark. I picked up the pace.

I made it to the fork in the road and saw my cars tire tracks in the snow leading to where I had parked - finally. I made my turn westerly onto this road and figured I now had only about 750m to go.

The light now was now very low, it must be at least 30-40 minutes after sunset, and entering what I call the extended twilight. The white snow covered ground and hiking through a pine shelter-cut forest with a fairly open canopy was giving me an advantage with any light that now remained. I am almost to the vehicle now, about half way from where I originally picked up my car tracks.

I looked ahead on the trail and thought I noticed something move, just around a gentle bend from the right, and then noticed it again. I stopped. My first thought was deer. I was somewhat excited about the prospect of just standing there on the side of the trail and letting them walk right up to me and past me, as I have done before. But then, my feeling of excitement turned to almost disbelief when I realized the dark figures on the trail were not deer, they were wolves! And they were advancing my way! Can this really be happening!



Approximate location of wolf pack relative to my position when first encountered and where my vehicle was located.

My previous encounters with wolves have primarily limited to brief glimpses of them on trails, individuals running across roads, or hearing the howling of packs from various distances. The closest encounter was about 5 years ago while hiking on a bush trail one summer day, I met a wolf pup dragging a deer leg. It immediately dropped the leg and disappeared into the woods. Within seconds after the pup departed, an adult wolf stepped out onto the trail to investigate. When it saw me, it immediately and silently disappeared into the woods not to be heard or seen again.

So here I am, face to face with a wolf pack all alone in darkening woods. A few thoughts rapidly went through my mind regarding options, but there were so few. In what was probably only a second or two, I decided to take action. The wolves, which now clearly numbered at least 5 individuals, were sauntering down the road heading directly in my direction, just coming around a slight bend in the road. They had not seen me yet, my advantage. I let out a very loud yell “HEY” to startle them. The wolves all stopped in their tracks, now about 50m away from me, on the only path between me and my car, flanked by deep snow covered woods. “HEY – GET”, “GO-ON-GET”, as I made a few steps toward them. I had done this enough times with big stray dogs in my yard to know that it can work with canines and that assertive body language plays a huge role in having the upper hand. I wanted a good stick in my hand in case it came to really needing one, and besides, it would be a good confidence booster right now. But I did not want to back up, or go off the trail at this point, which could be perceived as a weakness or retreat giving the wolves incentive to do something I did not want them to do. The wolves were still there...why are they not moving off? “HEY—GET – GO-ON” I yelled again, with a step forward. The wolves in the rear I could see gradually retreating, whereas the lead wolf was standing his ground, having turned his body almost sideways on the trail and with his gaze still on me. That was very unnerving to say the least. I kept yelling at them, “GET—GO-ON”. By now there was only about one other wolf visible behind the lead wolf which was still staring me down. This time I quickly advanced several steps and yelled as loud as I could, “GET”. Then I observed the lead wolf turn his head away towards the rest of the pack behind him. Perhaps it was realizing that he was being left behind by the pack that finally made him turn away and finally retreat, I don’t know. For what ever the reason, I was glad. I took advantage of the window of opportunity to quickly scan the trail sides finding a good dry solid pine branch, which I quickly fashioned into two batons. I then resumed my advancement, banging the sticks together which gave a good solid wood clap and resonance to reinforce my yells.

Ok, so now what? I still need to get to my car, it is getting even darker, and I have to get back to the other guys who are bush-wacked and will be waiting. I was determined to press on. I reinforced my confidence and preparation for anything unexpected, basically saying to myself, go ahead wolves, make my day! As I continued down the trail, I gave a few good stick-whacks and yells to keep my advantage. I had hit the sticks so hard together the one broke into two. Now I have only one and a half batons. As I moved along I noted their tracks in the snow. First, it was the tracks of the lead wolf that I happened upon. The tracks were huge! As I continued I took note of the various track sets of the pack members and then noticed that they retreated to different sides of the road and at different locations. Oh no, was this signs of an ambush? I looked around and listened intently. Everything was still and silent. I kept up my pace and continued to yell out and give stick-whacks, and finally arrived at my car. It took me a few moments to dig my keys out of my multiple layers of clothing, as I kept my back to the car. It was now completely dark. Just about the time I put my hands on my keys in my pocket, the wolf howling started. They were a short but respectable distance in the woods on the other side of the car

which gave me relief to know where they were. I got in the car and drove out to pick up the guys. On my way out I re-lived the event seeing my tracks along the trail among the wolf tracks in the headlights of the car.

I reached the other guys just as they had arrived at the fork in the road. I asked if they had heard me yelling. I was surprised to hear that they had not heard me. The sound of the sleds on the cold crispy snow, the distance, and the surrounding forest cover must have covered the sounds of my vocal adventures. I told them I had happened upon the wolves and had been yelling at them for a while. It appeared to me that there was some doubt in their minds as I told of my encounter with the wolves as we loaded the car, or maybe it was because they just wanted to get out of the woods after a long day, or maybe yet, it could have been all the fishing stories I told during the day that raised some level of doubt in whatever outdoor story I told now. Regardless, the wolves became my witness. The pack broke into a loud and awesome display of howling that Ryan and Scott had never before heard.

Wolves are an amazing animal and they have a valuable place in our backcountry. They are by nature predators, and have to be respected as such. Although my encounter was unnerving at the time, it is an encounter that I feel privileged to have experienced and will always remember.



Sky Night: October 8, 2010, location Soike Road at crossroad of Mountain Road.

For more info contact: Jean Brereton - jbrereton@hughes.net
(613-625-2263)

New Moon is on Thursday Oct 7, 2010 so we'll have dark skies. With some luck, clear skies too. Jupiter will be visible most of the night and if there's no cloud cover we should also have an opportunity to see Uranus. These two planets are coming together to form an exact conjunction on September 18 and will still be visible in the evening sky.

Also Oct 7 and 8, 2010 might give us a possible vibrant Draconids meteor shower. According to 'EarthSky's meteor shower guide for 2010':
"An outburst is not predicted for this year, but then, one never knows when an outburst may occur. Since the new moon will fall on October 7, we're guaranteed of dark nights for observing these meteors. Unlike most meteor showers, more Draconid meteors are likely to fly in the evening than in the morning hours after midnight. Look northward for the very slow-moving Draconid meteors on the evenings of October 7 and 8."





Species in Focus

with
Lauren Trute

Have you ever gone for a walk in the woods and stopped to admire the little stream that's trickling down the hill? Next time, have a closer look and you might just find some Northern Two-lined Salamanders hiding in the pools.

The Northern Two-lined Salamander (*Eurycea bislineata*) is a lungless salamander, like the more commonly known Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*) and in Canada, is found in Ontario, Quebec, Labrador and New Brunswick.



This Northern Two-lined Salamander was photographed at the creek on the Macnamara Trail in Arnprior. photo: Lauren Trute

Now, if you're used to flipping (and replacing) logs and finding spotted salamanders, you're going to have to refine your search image....these guys are small! Adult Northern Two-lined Salamanders (NTLS) are very slender, with tiny little legs, and are only 2.5 – 4 inches (6.5-12 cm) in length, and they are fast. They are a greenish-tan colour, with a black stripe running down both sides of its back. Sometimes the stripe breaks up into spots or dashes near the tail, and there are often dark spots or speckles in the area between the stripes. If you can catch one and turn it over you will see a yellowish belly.

NTLS will breed throughout the fall and winter, and females lay their eggs in the early spring (usually April or May). One female can lay more than a hundred eggs, and she attaches them to the underside of rocks or woody debris in the stream. Sometimes more than one female will deposit eggs in the same location, and one female will guard the nest while the eggs incubate. The eggs hatch in one – two months and the small larvae (about one centimeter long) remain aquatic for about two years, and then metamorphose into semi-terrestrial juvenile salamanders.

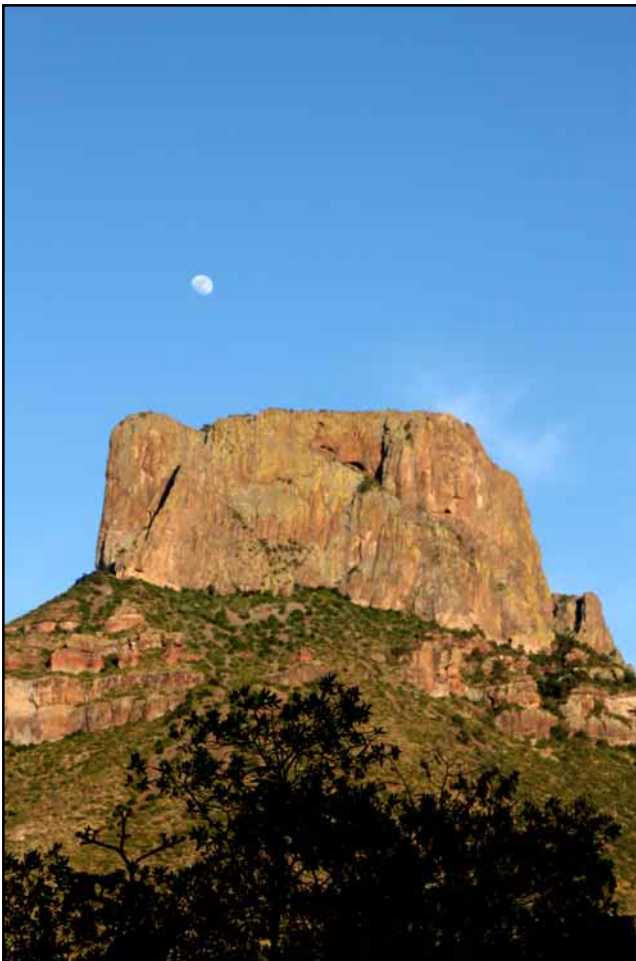
Woodland streams that have a lot of cover – rocks, fallen leaves, logs – are the preferred habitats. If the stream has a spring, and the water flows all winter, the NTLS will remain active. If it freezes, they can burrow down into the leaf litter for the winter. This salamander feeds mostly on insects – spiders, mayflies, mosquitoes (go salamanders!!) – but will also eat small crustaceans and worms. I just recently saw a number of NTLS of all shapes and sizes feeding on an earthworm.

Fun fact – one of the main predators of NTLS is the Garter Snake. If the NTLS is touched by the snake’s tongue, it will either freeze or run and jump out of the way. If that fails, the NTLS can drop its tail, which acts as a decoy while the rest of it escapes to safety.

While the NTLS is not listed as a Species At Risk, it does have very specific habitat requirements, and these habitats are often disturbed through industrial activities, development and pollution of the stream. To some degree, NTLS are used for bait by anglers.

So, next time you’re out for that stroll, stop at the stream and have a look. Check out a pool, and carefully move a rock and watch for a NTLS. They’re very quick, so be ready. If you want to pick it up (with bugspray-free hands), try cupping your hand near it and coaxing it to swim in your direction. Admire it for a minute, take a photo, and let it go. Don’t forget to replace the rocks as you found them!

If you’d like to contribute your reptile and amphibian observations to a worthwhile project, check out the Ontario Herpetofaunal Atlas at http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofaunal_atlas.php



Big Bend National Park, Texas - a few snapshots

May 23rd to May 26th

by Chris Michener

Jean and I were in Texas for my nephew’s graduation (PhD, Political Science). It was a long drive from Austin to Big Bend, but this photo of Casa Grande was taken from our campsite and illustrates a sample of the remarkable landscape, and in our opinion, worth the drive.

The Rio Grande River was 15 miles south and these mountains called the Chisos Mountains are an island set in the Chihuahan Desert which covers a swath of northcentral Mexico, southwestern Texas, southern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. Some desert species enter the United States only in this habitat and some only as far north as the Chisos Mountains, such as the Colima Warbler, my goal.

Here are a few snapshots of fauna we encountered while camping and hiking. From the Basin Trailhead at 5,400' up to the top of the Laguna Meadow Trail at about 7,100', you pass through different life zones. The Colima lived at the highest zone!



Rusty-rumped Whiptail posing at the entrance signs to the park.



Two-tailed Swallowtail, nectaring.



White-winged Dove in our campsite.



Greater Roadrunner near the Visitor Centre.



Say's Phoebe nested near the Chisos Mountain Lodge



A Queen and Golden-banded Skipper were great to see.



A Blue-throated Humminbird frequented a feeder at the lodge.

The weather was hot, but if you could find a little shade, there was always a little breeze attached to it. The species on the previous page were seen in the Chisos Basin area (vicinity of the campground and lodge). The following were at various elevations along the Laguna Meadows Trail, covering switchbacks and 3 miles of walking to climb 1,700' of elevation.



A Broad-tailed Hummingbird was very obliging as the roost between feedings on flowering Ocotilla was trailside.



Top: A Greater Earless Lizard appears to be doing pushups as it eyes the big entity taking photos in front of it. Right: A Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail was fast, but stopped just long enough for a shutter release. Fifty-six species of reptiles are currently on the Big Bend checklist with another 5 additional species listed as hypothetical.



The Acorn Woodpecker is a great looking bird, while nearby Mexican Jays were attracted to some trail mix.



Leaf-footed Bug

A Spotted Towhee was sitting quietly near the top of the trail. My goal to see and hear a Colima Warbler after climbing 3 miles uphill paid off as it flitted beside me in conifers beside the trail. I managed to get a recording of it's song, as well as a not so good photo. Trip successfull!

