

# The Swallow

Volume 31, # 2

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Spring/Summer 2014

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***Sandhill Cranes in flight*** - (Photo: Lauren Kruschenske)

Membership in the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists is available by writing to: The PAFN, Box 1242, Pembroke, ON K8A 6Y6  
Dues for 2013/2014 are: Student \$10, Senior \$10, Individual \$15, Family \$20, Individual Life \$150, Family Life \$200.

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PAFN web site: [www.pafn.on.ca](http://www.pafn.on.ca) Webmaster, Mike MacDonald

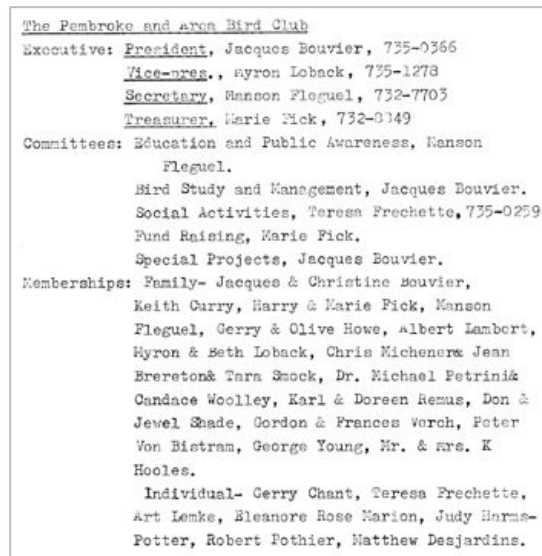
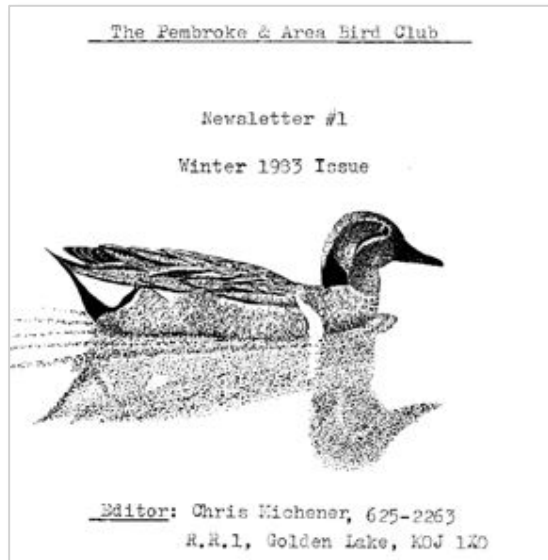
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## Message from Interim Editor

Jean Brereton

At PAFN's Annual General Meeting this past April, our club recognized the contribution of founding member and director, Manson Fleguel. Manson and wife Judy are moving to Ottawa to be closer to their son Scott and his young family. Manson was presented with a family membership to the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club,

Manson has served as Club Secretary since 1983. And he has done it well! My partner Chris and I used to joke about whether we could make it home from a club meeting before the minutes got there. A lot of times they were already in the "Inbox".



### Extract from the club's first newsletter in 1983 shows Manson as Secretary

Since 1984 Manson has meticulously organized and compiled the Pembroke Annual Christmas Bird Count. (*Christian Renault has now taken over this responsibility.*) As a volunteer citizen scientist Manson actively participated in the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, Bird Studies Canada's loon survey project, NatureWatch's Ice Watch project, as well the Forest Bird Monitoring project. And quite possibly he has volunteered on many other worthy projects of which I am unaware. Over the past 30 years Manson has led a 'whole lot' of field trips for PAFN.

In 2011 after the death of my partner Chris Michener, Ken Hooles wrote in his Pembroke Observer column that PAFN had lost the soul of the club. With the departure of Manson, I confess to feeling we may be losing the heart of the club. But I know we have been blessed with the great good fortune of a strong and capable board of directors as well as a membership who all share a deep passion and commitment to the natural world. For the evidence of this, please read on!



Thank you Manson!



## Events & Field Trips

*Note: Please be sure to check the PAFN web site for updates, notices, and details of all club events so you don't miss anything. [www.pafn.on.ca](http://www.pafn.on.ca) The general public is always welcome to attend PAFN events!*

**2014**

### **Owl Prowl (Owling Night)**

Date: **Saturday, March 29, 2014**  
Time: 8:00 PM  
Trip Leader: Christian Renault (613-735-8395)  
Place: Wilberforce Township Park. Go south on Hwy 41 past intersection of Hwy 41 and Lake Dore Rd., cross the bridge, turn right after the bridge and go a short distance to the park.

This trip will involve a driving loop through varied habitat. We'll use a CD of owl calls to encourage a response. The expected species is Barred Owl, but other species are possible. We could hear American Woodcock and other night calling birds.

### **PAFN Annual Meeting**

Date: **Wednesday, April 23, 2014**  
Place: Algonquin College, New Pembroke Campus, Room 430  
Agenda: Doors open at 6:30 pm;  
7:00-7:30 PM - annual general meeting;  
7:30-8:00 PM - social with refreshments;  
8:00 PM - Guest speaker: **Tammy Richard**

Our speaker this year, Tammy Richard, will speak on the subject of Kirtland's Warbler. There will also be a book sale.

### **Bellows Bay Waterfowl Trip**

Date: **Saturday, April 27, 2014**  
Time: 9:00 AM  
Trip Leader: Manson Fleguel (613-732-7703)  
Place: Meet at the *Pembroke Marina* (at the mouth of the Muskrat River).

Car pooling will be offered. Bring rubber boots as mud and water will be encountered on the 1.5 km (total distance) walk. Migrant songbirds, ducks and friendly people are highlights. Spotting scopes are useful, binoculars essential.

### **Shaw Woods: Mothers' Day Wildflower and Nature Walk**

Date: **Sunday, May 11, 2014**  
Time: 2:00 PM  
Place: Due to limited parking at Shaw Woods, we will meet at Wilberforce Township Beach & Picnic Park. From here, we'll proceed to the Shaw Woods.

Trip Leaders: Grant Bickel (613-687-4765), orchid and sedge aficionado and Robin Cunningham, forester and naturalist.

The focus of this outing will be to enjoy early spring in the beautiful Shaw Woods. We expect to see Blue Cohosh, Trout Lily, Trilliums, and several other species of woodland wildflowers. This walk is for all ages and is an introduction to the Shaw Woods, an old-growth forest. The walk is easy to moderate on well-maintained trails. The pace will be determined by the participants and will last about 2.5 hours.

### **A Walk in the Petawawa Terrace (Old Fish Hatchery)**

Date: **May 24, 2014**

Time: 5 PM

Trip Leader: Rob Cunningham

Place: 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.

### **PAFN - Garage Sale - Fundraiser**

Date: **June 7, 2014**

Time: 7 AM to Noon

Place: The Children's Garden Nursery School, 375 Doran St., Pembroke

This is a combined yard sale at The Children's Garden Nursery. Benita and other volunteers from the Club will be staffing the sale of all manners of goods with the proceeds going to both the Children's Garden Nursery School and the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists. Donations of goods are welcome during the week leading up to the sale.

For more information, please call Benita Richardson at 613-735-5404.

### **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Lake Dore Butterfly Count**

Date: **July 5, 2014**

**[Rain/Wind date is Sunday, July 6]**

Time: 9 AM

Organizer: Jean Brereton and Ethan Anderman

Place: 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 the 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 of \$3 (under 13 free) is asked to cover publishing costs of the results printed by the North American Butterfly Association.

For more information, please call Jean Brereton at 613-625-2263.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Hog Island Butterfly Count**

Date: **Saturday, July 19, 2014**

**[Rain/Wind date is Sunday, July 20]**

Time: 9 AM

Organizers: Jean Brereton (613-625-2263) and Ethan Anderman  
Place: Meet at Mullen's Esso, Pembroke St. E., near the turn off to Quebec.

The count circle is half in Ontario and half in Quebec. In the past, some groups have gone to the Westmeath Park area; others have butterflyed on Allumette Island. You can choose the area you prefer. Maps of the circle and checklists will be made available. Bring lunch, water, butterfly field guide, binoculars, and net (for catch & release). A participants fee of \$3 (under 13, free) is asked to cover publishing costs of the North American Butterfly Count Report. (North American Butterfly Association - NABA)

### **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Lake Dore Odonate [Dragonfly] Count**

Date: **Saturday, August 2, 2014**  
**[bad weather day, Sunday, August 3]**

Time: 9 AM (come for a half day (9-12) or a full day (9-5))

Organizers: Harry Adams (613-602-3141) and Christian Renault

Place: Meet at the Wilberforce Township Park To reach the park go south on Highway 41 past intersection of Hwy 41 and Lake Dore Road, cross the bridge, turn right after bridge and go a short distance to park.

An excellent opportunity to appreciate this group of insects! We have fun with nets and encounter 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. Experienced observers will be available as well as picture guides. A large insect net, optional rubber boots, close focus binoculars, and lunch/drinks are suggested.

### **Pembroke Marina/Waterfront Bird Walk**

Date: **Saturday, August 23, 2014**

Time: 8 AM

Trip Leader: Ken Hooles (613-735-4430)

Place: 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!

### **Westmeath Provincial Park Beach Walk**

Date: **To Be Announced** - (Around the end of September beginning of October)  
(Closer to that time check the PAFN web site: [www.pafn.on.ca](http://www.pafn.on.ca))

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 at Synton Street and continue down to the water. From the boat launch we'll drive west to Sand Point Road then park and walk along the beach. We are hoping to see sparrows (especially Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow), shorebirds, ducks and hawks. Rubber boots recommended.

### **19th Annual Renfrew County Outdoor Woodlot Conference**

Date: Saturday, October 4, 2014

Location: **To Be Announced** (Check PAFN web site: [www.pafn.on.ca](http://www.pafn.on.ca))

Everyone Welcome! This conference is focused on encouraging sustainable woodlot management on private land forests. The goal of improving the health of private woodlots is promoted by sharing ideas on forest management to meet individual objectives such as enhancing wildlife or improving timber sales. It provides an opportunity for people to network with other woodlot owners, professionals and related business representatives.

Admission \$5.00 (no preregistration required)

For information contact Rob Cunningham (613-732-8402) [rcunning@bell.net](mailto:rcunning@bell.net)  
*Details will be posted on the PAFN web page closer to the date.*

<http://www.pafn.on.ca>



### **The Pembroke Christmas Bird Count, December 14, 2013**

by Christian Renault, Compiler and Co-organizer

(Manson Fleguel, Co-organizer)

The weather for this annual event varies a lot over the years. This year was clearly not an El Nino year. Early morning temperature of -30°C made owling a real challenge, and the afternoon only reached a high of -17°C under partly clouded skies. Manson Fleguel and Vincent Agnesi, the only group who attempted early morning owling, were rewarded for their efforts with a Barred Owl on Allumette Island.

There were 66 feeder watchers for a total of 49 feeders (and 135 hours) who observed the birds grabbing easy meals on that arctic day. This was a great year for participation! Feeder watchers are, in no particular order:

Howard and Frances Doelle,  
Judy Fleguel, Pat Hooles,  
John Macgillivray,  
Harold and Shirley Wirth,  
Marilou Hansen, Mac Nussey, Jeremy  
Inglis,  
Daryl and Sabine Coulson,  
Ann and Jean Callahan,  
Michelle Smith,  
Joan McGuire, T  
erry and Glenda Duff,  
Lynn Jones, Ole Hendrickson,  
Henry and Myrna Yaniszewski,  
Ann and Jim Clarke,  
Patricia and Vic Harmer,  
Mike and Marilyn Kruschenske,  
Art and Shirley VanWinckle,  
Erick and Mary Leskie,  
Keith Curry,  
Bruce Schoof,  
Sherry Soltysiak,  
Dwight and Lucy Dickerson,  
Ted and Nancy Hiscock,

Gary and Sheila Bucholtz,  
Erna Maves,  
Tom and Dawn Farnell,  
John and Barb Beimers,  
George Chester,  
André Renault,  
Jim Anderson,  
Nancy Armstrong,  
Ron Bertrand,  
Debra Doran,  
Merv and Jane Dougherty,  
Merv Fediuk,  
Beth Guimond,  
Carolyn Lance,  
Karen Marce,  
Francis Marcotte,  
Wendell McLaughlin,  
Allan Mills,  
Floyd and Attie Milton,  
Agnes Austin,  
Sandra Muir,  
Diane Thrasher,  
Gary and Sue Walton

Thank you all for your help!

This year there were **38** field observers. New to the Pembroke CBC were 5 keen students from Algonquin College's *Outdoor Education Program* who took part despite the severe cold. Mark Dojczman wanted them to do birdwatching as part of their evaluation, and also to inspire them to learn more about birds.

Below is the list of Pembroke Area Sectors along with the names of the 38 field observers for the 2013 CBC. They braved the cold to keep our great tradition going and travelled many kilometers to see what had survived the cold nights.



**Some of the 2013 Pembroke CBC Crew**

*Photo Teresa Frechette*

**Sector 1E:** Bruce DiLabio, Ben DiLabio, Susan Ellis

**Sector 1W:** Manson Fleguel, Vince Agnesi; Algonquin College students: Danica Sommer, Shannon Graham

**Sector 2N:** Robin Cunningham, Liz Link, Kevin Boldt, Mike and Sandra MacDonald, Kyle Bertrand, Marianne Bertrand, Jeff Rivard

**Sector 2S:** Jean Brereton, Dustin Ryckman, Chantal Hopkins, Scott Pond, Ole Hendrickson, Mark Dojczman, André Renault, Christian Renault, Candace Francis; Algonquin College students: Emily-Ann Davis, Julie Ethier, Collin Arvatoon-Roy

**Sector 3E:** Ken Hooles, Pat Hooles, Merv Fediuk, Vic Harmer, Ron Bertrand

**Sector 3W:** Leo Boland, Benita Richardson, Arne Christopherson, Teresa Frechette, Myron Loback, John Macgillivray

Afterwards 31 people showed up at Manson and Judy's home for a welcomed meal of hot pizza. A memorable time was had by experienced watchers and avid-to-learn novices. Manson led the tally of the species count by sector, with all of us anticipating an announcement of possible extraordinary species.

**Species seen on count day:**

Canada Goose (2)  
 Common Goldeneye (34),  
 Common Merganser (2),  
 Ruffed Grouse (33)  
 Wild Turkey (298)  
 Bald Eagle (2)  
 Northern Harrier (1)  
 Sharp-Shinned Hawk (2)

Cooper's Hawk (1)  
 Red-tailed Hawk (1)  
 Rough-legged Hawk (2)  
 Rock Pigeon (504)  
 Mourning Dove (283)  
 Northern Hawk Owl (1)  
 Barred Owl (3)  
 Downy Woodpecker (71)

Hairy Woodpecker (77)  
Pileated Woodpecker (24)  
Northern Shrike (4)  
Blue Jay (457)  
American Crow (642)  
Common Raven (78)  
Black-capped Chickadee (674)  
Red-breasted Nuthatch (25)  
White-breasted Nuthatch (39)  
Brown Creeper (7)  
Golden-crowned Kinglet (4)  
European Starling (505)  
American Tree Sparrow (91)

White-crowned Sparrow (1)  
Dark-eyed Junco (56)  
Snow Bunting (320)  
Northern Cardinal (25)  
Red-winged Blackbird (1)  
Purple Finch (11)  
House Finch (29)  
Common Redpoll (1)  
American Goldfinch (266)  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1)  
Evening Grosbeak (12)  
House Sparrow (4)

A new species for the Pembroke CBC was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. It was first seen by Candace Francis at 9:30 a.m. along with 4 other birders (temperature was -27°C). It was located at the end of Sandy Beach Road, where the first Pembroke CBC Hermit Thrush was found 2 years earlier. Usually, these kinglets are long gone by the end of November. Responding to 'pishing', it came in and made a beautiful display of its ruby crown with its plumage all fluffed up. Less than 3 meters away, it was easy to identify.

Only **41 species** were seen; a low count for our average of 50 species. The weather was certainly a factor. Noticeably absent: northern finch species (except for one Common Redpoll) as their food source was abundant this year in the boreal forest, so they had no need to migrate and help improve our statistics. Aquatic birds, which were virtually absent due to extensive frozen water. A total of **4,494 birds** were counted. One of the most interesting species reported: a Northern Hawk Owl, seen by Kyle Bertrand and Jeff Rivard, at 4:30 p.m., at the Petawawa Terrace marsh. They saw it perched on a small tree 25 meters away from their vantage point where they watched it dive a few times in the snow. Jeff wasn't aware that this species existed until Kyle pointed it out on his smartphone with his bird identification app.

Most abundant species this year: Black-Capped Chickadee: 674; American Crow: 642; European Starling 505; Rock Pigeon: 504; Blue Jay: 457.

Special thanks to Manson Fleguel, who, since 1984, has meticulously and faithfully organized and compiled the Pembroke CBC. Manson was patient and took the time to show me the ropes, giving lots of good suggestions to ensure another successful count. He also did lots of calling to help with organizing it. If you want to know more about the CBC and how it works, navigate to ...

<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>;  
<http://birds.audubon.org/113th-christmas-bird-count-canada>





## The Chris Michener Memorial Eganville Christmas Bird Count, Sunday, December 15, 2013

by Jean Brereton, Count Organizer and Compiler

Weather on count day was mostly cloudy with periods of light snow. Temperature ranged between a morning low of -16° C and afternoon high of -12° C. Snow cover was between 9 - 10 inches (or, for the converted, between 22.86 - 25.4 cm). Not a great day for waterfowl as throughout the count area still water was completely frozen and moving water mostly frozen. The only ducks observed were 14 Goldeneye. Gulls were non-existent on the count this year. And only one lone pair of Canada Geese were found.

The six traditional count zones were covered by **17 keen field participants**. At the end of the day the collective tally was **38 species** making up a total of **2,584 individual birds** seen.



Surprisingly, no Northern Cardinals were observed on count day, although feeder watcher Rosemary Cammarrt advised that she had a pair that were overwintering and visiting her feeder with regularity. Finch numbers were low this year apparently due to good cone crops as well as excellent deciduous seed/berry crops. (See Ron Pittaway's 2013/2014 Winter Finch Forecast at: <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2013/forecast.htm> )

**Blue Jay, Cardinal, Pine Grosbeak** Photo Christal Loback

This year the zone with the highest tally was **Augsburg** with a total of **24 species**. (Note: Zone tally numbers include species reported by feeder watchers in that particular area.)

**Augsburg Zone:** Bernd Krueger (zone coordinator); and partner Elizabeth Reeves, accompanied by Claire Lepine and Kendra Smith recorded a species count of **24**. This team discovered the day's only Sharp-shinned Hawk as well as a Belted Kingfisher. And early risers, Bernd and Liz, managed to find a Barred Owl. Way to go!

**Mink Lake Zone:** Christian Renault (zone coordinator), recorded **23** species. A White-crowned Sparrow was a nice surprise. Also one of the two Rough-legged Hawks located on count day.

**Green Lake Zone:** Manson Fleguel (zone coordinator), and Mike MacDonald recorded a species count of **22**. This included the other Rough-legged Hawk found.

**Micksburg Zone:** Robin Cunningham (zone coordinator), and Sheldon Davis, recorded a species count of **20** which included the count's only American Robin.

**Golden Lake Zone:** Jean Brereton (zone coordinator); Ethan Anderman; Chantal Hopkins; Dustin Ryckman, Ole Hendrickson, and Michael Peters recorded a species count of **20**. Two Bald Eagles were a highlight of the day. Also a pair of Canada Geese - the only ones seen on count day.

**Highway 41 Zone:** Ken Hooles (zone coordinator), and Margaret McLeod, recorded a species count of **18**. This included the day's only Northern Goshawk.

The final count tally of **38 species** was made up of the following:

Canada Goose (2)	Blue Jay (333)
Common Goldeneye (14)	American Crow (312)
Ruffed Grouse (30)	Common Raven (65)
Wild Turkey (164)	Horned Lark (47)
Bald Eagle (3)	Black-capped Chickadee (249)
Sharp-shinned Hawk (1)	Red-breasted Nuthatch (6)
Northern Goshawk (1)	White-breasted Nuthatch (14)
Red-tailed Hawk (2)	Brown Creeper (2)
Rough-legged Hawk (2)	Golden-crowned Kinglet (1)
Rock Pigeon (197)	American Robin (1)
Mourning Dove (64)	European Starling (237)
Great Horned Owl (1)	American Tree Sparrow (65)
Barred Owl (1)	White-crowned Sparrow (1)
Belted Kingfisher (1)	Dark-eyed Junco (95)
Downy Woodpecker (32)	Snow Bunting (495)
Hairy Woodpecker (27)	Purple Finch (34)
Pileated Woodpecker (8)	Common Redpoll (16)
Northern Shrike (1)	American Goldfinch (47)
Gray Jay (4)	House Sparrow (9)

Thanks to all the birdwatchers who kept vigil by their feeders this year! Our feeder watchers contribute *greatly* to the count. To wit: The Great Horned Owl coming with regularity to Mike and Heather Lett's feeder near Eganville thankfully showed up again this year on count day.

**Our Feeder Watchers:**

Tom Adamchick and Susan Taylor;	Harold & Audrey McKibbon;
Viola Brunke;	Kornil Mielke;
Rosemary Cammaert;	Sandra Palmer;
Bob and Lauren Clarke;	Norman Schiemann;
Margaret and Terry Conroy;	The Tamosetis Family - (Pat, Larry,
Kim Elkington;	Jana, Sarah);
Charlotte Lehmann;	Candace Woolley and Emily Petrini-
The Lett family (Michael, Heather,	Woolley
Mitchell, and Deann);	

At the end of the day field participants gathered at the home of Bernd Krueger and Liz Reeves to enjoy a warm and hearty meal. Thank you Bernd and Liz for your generous hospitality. Thanks to everyone who participated this year in the *Chris Michener Memorial Eganville Christmas Bird Count!* Hope to see you out again next year.



## **Owling Night March 29th, 2014** *by Christian Renault, Trip Leader*

At 7:00 p.m., as the sun was setting, 33 people arrived at the Lake Dore Municipal Park. Although there was a small patch of open water on the lake, there were no birds to be seen. A generous woman distributed some delicious almond cookies to everyone present. This was really appreciated as cookies are a tradition on this outing. After a few minutes of briefing on how we would proceed, as well as a warning that we do not always see or hear owls on this trip, we drove over to the Shaw Woods. Leo Boland, acting as safety officer, closed up the line.

We had hardly begun to call for Boreal Owls when a couple of Barred Owls responded. They did a beautiful duet for us, apparently an effort to establish their territory. Even when we played their call they did not come in closer, so we were unable to see them. With respect for established owling ethics, we left them in peace and drove on to other spots. Unfortunately, none of these other locations proved to be productive. This was possibly the worst year for car interference as quite a lot of traffic disrupted our efforts to call for owls.

One pick-up truck stopped to ask what we were doing. Manson recognized the driver and explained why we were there. The fellow advised that he often heard owls on or near his property. In despair of hearing nothing, we decided to travel the 1.5 km to the man's property, and try one last time. After our last attempt we were answered... but by a pack of coyotes! Pretty cool, but not what we were hoping for. Could it be that the man had confused the coyote call with that of a distant owl? Or was 'his' owl away that night and just not responding?

Overall, only 2 Barred Owls were heard and this was at the outset. No other bird species were seen or heard. Not even an American Woodcock, which we generally have on this trip.

The weather was good: a slight breeze, temperature around 0 to -1°C under a fairly clear sky. There was still a lot of snow in the ditches which is quite unusual for this outing. The Northern Saw-whet Owls may not yet have migrated en masse, however, we only hear them on this trip every few years. Club member Vince Agnesi heard them on his property on Allumette Island during the previous week.

The group of participants was very cooperative and seems to have had fun. Especially at the first stop, and then later when we heard the coyotes.



## Bellows Bay Field Trip, April 26, 2014

*by Manson Fleguel, Trip Leader*

Only nine hardy birders showed up this year on our annual trip. A light rain was falling and the temperature hovered about 4°C. I glanced around as we gathered at the marina and was relieved to see all the long rubber boots and winter jackets. The snow was gone but the ice was still heavy on the inside as well as on the west side of the marina basin. Ice cover remained unusually late this year.

During the half hour spent exploring this location, Christian Renault spotted a Gadwall. This is an unusual duck for our area and was a great start to this trip. Several diving ducks were also present as well as the Double-crested Cormorants (20 years ago these would have been unusual, but now...). From here we carpooled and drove to the Westmeath area, stopping a few times to check out flooded fields and birds perched on barns or fences.

Our walking tour started at Ron Laderoute's farm house. This gentleman has been so welcoming of our group over the years and we really appreciate his generosity in allowing us access to the bay. Once everyone had arrived, we began the

walk through the farm field down to Bellows Bay. A lot of sparrows and juncos were noted at the field edges. A lone Bald Eagle soared overhead. The fence beside the bay had been repaired and it took a bit of a climb to scale the page-wire and barbwire, but we all made it safely. The bay had begun to flood so viewing was restricted due to high water around the trees at the edge.



**Suzanne House, Rob Cunningham, Kendra Smith, Manson Fleguel, Jeremy Inglis, Ken Hooles, Christian Renault, Vince Agnesi**

*Photo Jean Breerton*

However, walking further west we were able to get great views of hundreds of ducks feeding in the western quarter of the bay. This was worthwhile viewing indeed! When everyone was sure we hadn't missed a rarity in the flocks, we made our way back to the car. But we weren't done yet.

The group then continued to the Westmeath Village dock for a great view of the Ottawa River and the entrance to Bellows Bay. Another 2 Bald Eagles flew past for our enjoyment. More diving ducks were seen as well as some gulls that were spooked by the arrival of the eagles.

This ended our trip. Everyone assured me that the rather cool trip had been very worthwhile. I agree and thank all of the birders for their help in locating the **59 species** we found this year, a new high, beating our previous high of 54 in 2001.

Below is a list of the bird species identified:

Canada Goose	Wood Duck	American Black Duck
American Wigeon	Gadwall	Mallard
Blue-winged Teal	Northern Shoveler	Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal	Ring-necked Duck	Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup	Bufflehead	Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser	Common Merganser	Red-breasted Merganser
Ruffed Grouse	Wild Turkey	Common Loon
DC Cormorant	Turkey Vulture	Osprey
Bald Eagle	Northern Harrier	American Kestrel
Sandhill Crane	Killdeer	Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull	Rock Pigeon	Mourning Dove
Belted Kingfisher	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker	Blue Jay	American Crow
Common Raven	Tree Swallow	Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow	Black-capped Chickadee	Brown Creeper
American Robin	Brown Thrasher	European Starling
Savannah Sparrow	American Tree Sparrow	Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow	White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco	Red-winged Blackbird	Rusty Blackbird
Common Grackle	American Goldfinch	



### ***Sandhill Crane (Grus canadensis)***

After a (very) long winter, spring has finally sprung! One of the sure signs of spring for me (after the arrival of Turkey Vultures) is the return of the pair of Sandhill Cranes near our house. This very interesting bird has only moved into Renfrew County within the last 10-12 years. It was often observed in the more western areas of the province, but as its populations continue to increase it is expanding its range eastwards.

Sandhill Cranes breed throughout much of northern and central Canada (British Columbia to Ontario, and moving into Quebec) and into some of the northern United States. In Renfrew County they are commonly observed in the more agricultural areas of Westmeath, Renfrew, and Cobden, but they do occur throughout the County. These long distance migrants overwinter primarily in the southern United States. During the fall migration, large flocks can often be seen in cut fields and grasslands, sometimes numbering over a hundred birds.

These birds are generally quite easy to spot and identify. They are tall (around a metre or slightly taller), with long legs, long necks, long beaks and a fairly round and heavy looking body. In flight, their wing span is approximately two metres. They fly with their legs and neck outstretched, adding to their large and long appearance (envision a Pterodactyl). During the breeding season they are a smoky grey colour, with a rusty-red crown and a buff to whitish cheek. A fluffy clump of feathers droops over their back and down their rump, contributing to their round and fluffy body appearance. As the summer progresses, the grey feathers become stained with mud and minerals, and they take on more of a rusty or tawny colour. Juveniles range from tawny to cinnamon brown in colour. Very young (i.e. recently fledged) Sandhills are reminiscent of little brown flamingos! Their call is best described as a loud and rattling "Gaaa-roo-a-a-a".

Sandhill Cranes mate for life, and maintain the pair bond with elaborate courtship displays. If you have the opportunity to see this, it is well worth the time to stop and watch these displays of jumping, head tossing, wing stretching and bowing. It really does resemble a graceful dance. Nests are made on the ground in relatively open areas, along wetland edges or low-lying meadows. The pair raises one brood per year, laying one to three eggs (usually one or two) in late April, that incubate for approximately a month. Sandhill Crane chicks are precocial (meaning ready to rock and roll very quickly), and are ready to leave the nest within 24 hours of hatching. Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs and feed and care for the young anywhere from nine months to a year (when the pair nests again).

Sandhill Crane diets are diverse, feeding on aquatic plants and roots, insects, small mammals (i.e. mice, voles) and amphibians, grains, and berries, using their



long bill to probe beneath the ground. Natural predators include foxes, coyotes and large birds of prey, however, a Sandhill Crane is a formidable opponent (*search "sandhill crane attack" on YouTube and you will see what I mean*).

### **Sandhill Cranes**

*Photo Lauren Kruschenske*

They use their large, powerful wings, long, sharp bill and strong legs and feet to leap and stab at the predator.

Sandhill Cranes are hunted as a game bird in several areas across their range. Threats to the species include loss of, and encroachment into wetland habitats, an increase in subsidized predators (raccoons, foxes, coyotes), and collisions with power lines.

Now, put down this newsletter, get outside and find some signs of spring!!



## The Reilly Bird Nature Reserve

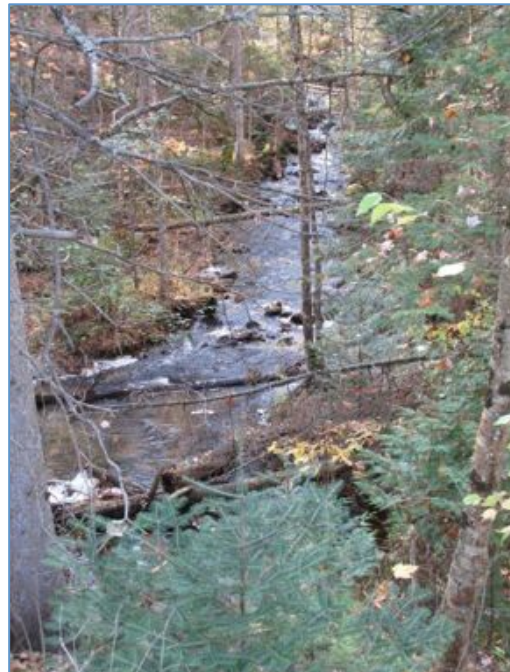
by Ted Hiscock, PAFN Director

In 2013, the Pembroke Area Field Naturalist Club was approached by Ontario Nature to see if there was any interest in acting as stewards of a new nature reserve near Deep River. The reserve, donated by Reilly Bird of Deep River, protects nearly half of the Meilleurs Bay shoreline, an inlet of the Ottawa River, as well as the mouth of Huey Creek (a cold water stream). One of the main features of the property is the steep terrace that rises from the creek bed and overlooks the Ottawa River. A wide variety of forest types exist on the property. Starting from near Huey Creek, it includes black spruce swamp, cedar swamp, lowland hardwoods, white pine mixed with poplar and jack pine at the top of the terrace.



In the fall of 2013, a group of PAFN directors visited the Reilly Bird Nature Reserve (RBNR) and found it very interesting. Notably, Ontario Nature (ON) has erected signs displaying the location of the reserve and permitted activities. At the PAFN spring director's meeting, it was decided that PAFN would take on the role of stewardship for a trial period of one year, provided that ON can provide some funding for travel since the RBNR is a distance of 60 km from Pembroke (one way).

In late April, Manson Fleguel, Nancy Hiscock and Ted Hiscock visited the site and cleared deadfalls across the trail south from the barn to the edge of the property. On May 8, Ted Hiscock, Harry Adams and Janet Nelson met at the Reilly Bird Nature Reserve with Ontario Nature staff members, John Urquhart, (Conservation Science Manager), and Megan Anevich, (Nature Reserves Coordinator). In the morning, the group was able to locate both the western, and part of the southern boundaries of the property. We returned to Deep River for lunch with Mike McDonald. After lunch, Ted, John & Megan returned to the site to map trails and look for the eastern boundary. The trail mapping on the top of the terrace was successful. However,



*Reilly Bird Nature Reserve Photo Ted Hiscock*

locating the east boundary proved unsuccessful. Since part of the boundary seems to run through a black spruce swamp, we decided it would be best to wait for dryer conditions (or winter) to run the boundary line. As the Ontario Nature Site Manager, Megan will be returning in June to undertake some additional site work. If possible, PAFN directors will be advised when she is coming.

PAFN members and the general public are welcome to visit this interesting property and when we understand better what species are on the site, guided nature walks will likely be organized.

More information about this site is available at:

[http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/habitat/reilly\\_bird.php](http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/habitat/reilly_bird.php)



**Editor's Note:**

*In the spring of 2007, PAFN Director, Chris Michener, was invited by Ontario Nature to submit a proposal to conduct an Ecological Inventory of the Reilly Bird*



*property. The bid was won and he and Rob Cunningham (also a PAFN Director) collaborated on the project. Their report was submitted in the fall of 2007 and the property was transferred later to become an Ontario Nature Reserve.*

*An avid naturalist, Reilly Bird loved this land and passionately wanted it conserved and protected for posterity.*

*Reilly Bird died at the Pembroke Regional Hospital on Tuesday, May 20, 2014.*

**Reilly Bird**





## **Snowy Owl Invasion of 2014**

by Christian Renault

This title should not create fear in anyone. On the contrary, it usually brings a smile to avid birdwatchers, who look forward to seeing these awesome birds. A large winter migration of owls is called an irruption or invasion. Last year, about 4 or 5 Snowy Owls migrated to our area. Great Greys do an invasion approximately every 4 years. Although none were seen in our area this past season, up to 5 Great Grey Owls have reportedly been seen in one evening.. Every year at the end of November some Snowy Owls migrate to more southern destinations. Since last year was a pretty good one, I didn't expect many this winter.



**Snowy Owl** *Photo* Christian Renault

Early in December 2013, someone observed 138 Snowy Owls in one day at the southeastern tip of Newfoundland. In one scan, 55 individuals, apparently all immatures, were seen. The newspapers called it an amazing number, and it is. Thanks to eBird it's possible to view data from all over North American and to check on numbers for a particular species. On the map one can see where all the hot spots are and this incredible number forewarned a great Snowy Owl invasion this winter. At the end of December, a bird watcher saw one in the western part of the Bahamas!

Field observers exploring appropriate habitat saw many during this past winter's Christmas Bird Counts in Eastern Ontario. One person told me she saw 12 in her sector! None, however, were seen in either of our club's two counts (Pembroke and Eganville). Jacques Bouvier, a founding PAFN member who now lives in southeastern Ontario, reported having seen 39 Snowies at the end of January. While travelling by train between Ottawa and Montreal, I saw two perched on posts.

Why so many this year ? And why such irregularity in other years? The answer has to do with food, of course. Snowy Owls feed mostly on Lemmings, and last summer was an excellent year for these small mammals. Snowy Owls easily double their clutch size when prey is abundant. This winter saw plenty of these marvelous birds, but they were mostly immatures, as they tend to migrate farther south. This theory bears out as the majority seen during this invasion were young birds. The adults tend to migrate not so far south, possibly due to the fact that they are more experienced in catching prey.

In winter, Lemmings are not their only prey. Many Snowies migrating south are reported in large flat open fields, often near farm buildings with cattle, or close to marinas and harbours. They also hunt for waterbirds, but especially ducks, and also geese. Hence they are occasionally observed at shores and harbours of the Great Lakes, as well as seashores.

GPS technology has created the possibility of tracking birds. You can read more about this if you follow the link at the end of this article. Some scientists

installed such a tracking device in some Snowy Owls to find out where they were migrating. They were in for a surprise: for three consecutive winters, some GPS data showed many males were way up north during the winter, in permanent darkness instead of in the south. It sounded like the GPS system was acting up. Upon checking data, the scientists realized the GPS system was working properly... many Snowies were migrating North, to areas of unfrozen sea water surrounded by ice (called *polynyas*) with waterfowl in them! Some hardy Eiders spend their winters in balmy -4°C salty water.

These Snowy Owls were wandering over 600 km away from these Arctic winter feeding waters to nest in a very different area than the previous summer. Analysis of their new nesting grounds, showed they had migrated to an area where Lemmings are abundant. How did they know? This is simply amazing ! They seem to be an itinerant species, looking for great feeding grounds, and settling in when they find one. They probably know that coming back to the same area the next year might spell disaster for them, because the prey population would be depleted. Wiser to look for prey elsewhere.

By the end of March in the Pembroke area, we usually don't see Snowy Owls anymore. This year being exceptional, due to the long cold winter and the biggest invasion in 50 years, I decided to look for them during the first week of April. I thought I might see a stray one, but to my surprise, on April 6th, I saw nine! They were a bit different from the four or five I had seen during the winter in that same general area (close to Cobden). Their plumage looked pretty rough, likely ready for a moult at the end of their migration. These birds seemed to be migrants as they looked different from those that had wintered in Cobden area. A day later, I came back to check a smaller area and found five in a different spot. Both days, I saw two on hydro poles apparently watching the traffic after rush hour along Highway 17.

Last February as my son André and I were travelling eastbound on Highway 17, past where it intersects with Highway 41, we saw two large white birds fighting above the road. I thought, "Two gulls?" But no, it was two Snowies fighting for territory. The first time we had witnessed that!

For those of you who wonder how to find Snowy Owls, here is how I've been instructed to do it. I have applied this technique and it has worked for me. First, look for the correct habitat, very large flat open fields. Second, go out at sunset, dusk, or sunrise and look for that out-of-place white lump you see on top of trees, on fence posts, hydro poles, and sometimes, on hay bales, barns or silos. Or even, right on the snow. Binoculars are a must to look farther than 100 metres from the road. More powerful spotting scopes are very helpful to check greater distances. And to confirm what you're seeing is not a Gyrfalcon!

For next winter, it's hard to say how many we'll see. It all depends on how many will survive by finding good feeding grounds. Hope enjoyed reading this, and are already anticipating next winter when no pesky mosquitoes will bother you.

<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/birds/so-many-snowies-study-scientists-are-discovering-how-little-we-know-about-bird>



## Renfrew County Nature Notebook and Facebook Page

by Ole Hendrickson

Although funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for joint work between PAFN and the Ottawa River Institute (ORI) ended in early 2013, collaboration between our two organizations remains active and strong. The *Renfrew County Biotabase* ( <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/birdmon/rcb/main.jsp> ) has been upgraded with new features, and two additional websites have been developed: the Renfrew County Nature Notebook, and the Nature Notebook Facebook Page.

The Nature Notebook Facebook Page is designed for naturalists to post photos, stories, videos and sound clips, following nature through Renfrew County's changing seasons. (See: <https://www.facebook.com/naturenotebookrenfrewcounty> )

As with any social media, an interesting feature is that people can comment on what others have posted. This is particularly useful when someone who posts a picture of an unfamiliar species, asks "Anyone know what this is?" and others suggest what it might be! The internet can be a powerful tool for sharing knowledge and engaging a new generation of naturalists.



**American Copper Butterfly** Photo Ben Anderman

Besides sharing knowledge about who's out there (in terms of our plant and animal friends), the internet can also point to where they are. Renfrew County has no shortage of special species and places! The Province of Ontario has given legal protection to over 25 provincial parks and conservation reserves in the County in recognition of their

special ecological features, and has designated dozens of other areas as significant wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest. The Nature Notebook <http://www.naturenotebook.ca> tells you where these special places are and provides details on what you may see and hear when you visit and explore them.

My fellow ORI board member, John Almstedt and I developed the Nature Notebook website because we could find no readily accessible and comprehensive source of information about the County's provincially designated natural areas. We found most of the information scattered about on various provincial websites, but we've also included reports from some of our outings to the more rarely visited areas, such as Centennial Lake Provincial Park (see the "impressions" tab on website). If you've hiked, canoed, snow-shoed, etc. in one of the County's lesser-known areas, and would like to let others know about it, or if you have

comments or suggestions about the website, we'd appreciate your input and feedback: [info@ottawariverinstitute.ca](mailto:info@ottawariverinstitute.ca).

In addition, the "Citizen Science" section of the Nature Notebook website has links to a series of videos produced by ORI coordinator Cheryl Keetch. Aimed at the general public, these cover a variety of topics, including identification of owls, sparrows and waterfowl; Renfrew County nature hotspots such as Lake Dore and Shaw Woods; how to choose binoculars best suited for your own interests, etc. Most of the bird-related videos feature PAFN members Manson Fleguel and Christian Renault. Highly entertaining and not to be missed! Posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ORIBRWP>.

As explained in the "About" section of the Nature Notebook website, all this collaborative work between PAFN and ORI was initiated by Chris Michener, long-time PAFN member, founding member of ORI, skilled naturalist, and visionary citizen scientist. Chris dearly loved all of his fellow creatures, right down to the tiniest snow flea, and he was always trying to involve more ordinary citizens in the tracking of these species. Chris believed that the more attention paid and the more people paying attention to the myriad species around us, the greater would be the chances that we would care for and protect them, thus preserving the wealth of intact ecosystems and rich biodiversity for future generations in the Ottawa Valley.



### **Ice Watching** by Manson Fleguel

Why do we do things? What interests us? What can we do with that interest? Well, I guess the thing that got me interested in noting the dates of ice events was being in the two areas I was usually near at that time of year. So I began to document them in a diary (of sorts) that had been started in 1976, the year our oldest son was born. The first location, the Ottawa River right behind my workplace, was used because of noon hour walks. The second location, Lake Dore, was started when my brother-in-law and sister-in-law bought a cottage on the lake and we were always invited out.

Then in about 2005, I noticed a magazine ad by Nature Canada requesting ice "sightings" for a new internet project. I believe the reason the data was being requested was tied in with the global warming debate. I reviewed many pages of my diary and came up with the data below. These dates were entered into the site: [www.naturewatch.ca/english/icewatch/](http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/icewatch/)

Over the years it has been a rewarding project for me. While I am unsure what the data is telling the scientists, I presume there are thousands of other observers and their submissions will make it all useful. Perhaps another member of PAFN will be interested to continue this table.

## Dates for Ottawa River Freeze-Up and Break-Up at Pembroke, Ontario

(Complete Freeze-Up or Break-Up between the Pointer Boat Memorial and Allumettes Island)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Freeze-up</b>	<b>Break-up</b>
2013/2014	Dec. 11, 2013	April 28, 2014
2012/2013	Dec. 23, 2012	April 20, 2013
2011/2012	Dec. 29, 2011	March 26, 2012
2010/2011	Dec. 14, 2010	April 16, 2011
2009/2010	Dec. 17, 2009	April 4, 2010
2008/2009	Dec. 8, 2008	April 16, 2009
2007/2008	Dec. 6, 2007	April 22, 2008
2006/2007	Jan. 16, 2007	April 21, 2007
2005/2006	Dec. 13, 2005	April 13, 2006
2004/2005	Dec. 15, 2004	April 19, 2005
2003/2004	Jan. 6, 2004	April 19, 2004
2002/2003	Dec. 4, 2002	April 23, 2003
2001/2002	Jan. 13, 2002*	April 12, 2002
2000/2001	Dec. 8, 2000	April 20, 2001
1999/2000	N/A	April 3, 2000
1998/1999	N/A	April 13, 1999
1997/1998	N/A	April 13, 1998
1996/1997	N/A	April 29, 1997
1995/1996	N/A	April 22, 1996
1994/1995	N/A	April 10, 1995
1993/1994	N/A	April 22, 1994
1992/1993	Dec. 9, 1992	N/A
1991/1992	N/A	April 29, 1992
1990/1991	N/A	April 11, 1991
1989/1990	N/A	April 18, 1990
1988/1989	N/A	April 24, 1989
1987/1988	N/A	April 11, 1988
1986/1987	N/A	April 8, 1987
1985/1986	N/A	April 7, 1986
1984/1985	N/A	April 20, 1985
1983/1984	N/A	April 2, 1984

\* Partly open again January 30, 2002, refroze early February.

**Dates for Lake Dore Freeze-Up and Break-Up  
(Complete ice across the entire lake, with only minute  
openings containing birds)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Freeze-up</b>	<b>Break-up</b>
2013/2014	Nov 29, 2013	May 5, 2014
2012/2013	Dec 12, 2012	April 26, 2013
2011/2012	Dec 23, 2011	March 26, 2012
2010/2011	Dec 9, 2010	April 17, 2011
2009/2010	Dec 17, 2009	April 4, 2010
2008/2009	Dec 5, 2008	April 8, 2009
2007/2008	Dec 6, 2007	April 22, 2008
2006/2007	Dec 26, 2006	April 20, 2007
2005/2006	Dec 7, 2005	April 16, 2006
2004/2005	Dec 15, 2004	April 23, 2005
2003/2004	Dec 4, 2003	April 19, 2004
2002/2003	Dec 4, 2002	April 25, 2003
2001/2002	Dec 27, 2001	April 15, 2002
2000/2001	N/A	April 21, 2001
1999/2000	Dec 18, 1999	April 6, 2000
1998/1999	Dec 21, 1998	N/A
1997/1998	Dec 9, 1997	April 13, 1998
1996/1997	Dec 23, 1996	April 29, 1997
1995/1996	Dec 2, 1995	April 25, 1996
1994/1995	Dec 27, 1994	N/A
1993/1994	Dec 12, 1993	N/A
1992/1993	N/A	N/A
1991/1992	N/A	N/A

*Note:* 2013 observation on Nov 30 with Ken Hooles, 1 small opening (approximately 10 ft X 30 ft) was filled with 40 plus gulls (*Herring, Glaucous and Iceland*) as well as 1 Mallard and 1 unidentified duck). In the past, many of the ducks in these small openings have been injured during the hunting season and are unable to fly. They will only live until that last bit of water freezes over and the Eagle cometh.



## First Birds: The Value of Data

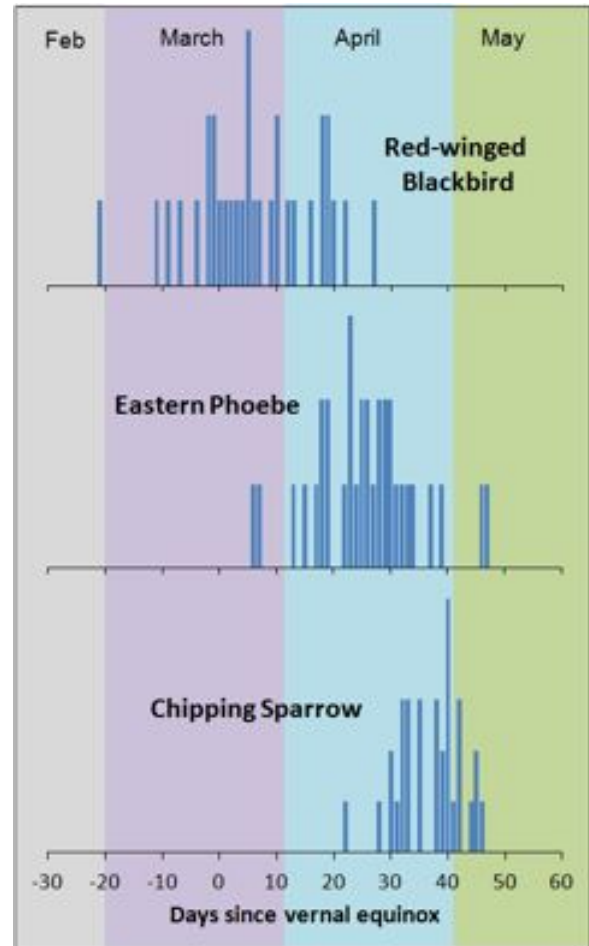
by Grant A. Bickel

I do not know Bill Walker, but I am told he is an avid birder from Deep River and has compiled many of his observations into databases. Through his diligence, he collected 40 years worth of observations and passed these onto Chris Michener for use as PAFN records. Chris, who knew I was a data enthusiast, passed these to me in hopes that I could find something of value in them. What could be learned from these records?

The motivating word for this article is: **phenology** – the study of regularly recurring biological phenomena. Since many birds are migrants, studying bird records tells us about their seasonal patterns and behavior. Their seasonal patterns and behavior are also influenced by climate. Studying bird records over time provides clues to how the climate is changing and how it affects the biological rhythm of nature. Climate is not the only factor. Changes to habitat along migratory routes may also affect the timing of bird movements.

Bill Walker kept dates of the “first birds” that arrived each spring. “First birds” and not “all birds” are of interest here. This is done because it is impossible to document a whole population of birds – you never know if you are counting the same bird more than once. The “first bird” however, is unique and provides an accurate and useful statistic of the arrival of a species even though it doesn’t describe the whole population. Bill’s records were collected between 1947 and 1987 providing a fairly healthy dataset (about 35 observations per bird species). In **Figure 1**, a few examples are plotted. In these plots, each vertical bar represents one or more (indicated by height) observations on a given date. No bars means no first bird arrivals on that date. The top plot shows the distribution of dates when the first Red-winged Blackbird appeared in Deep River. The earliest first arrival date was on February 27 in 1985 and the latest first arrival date was on April 16 in 1987. (In the plots I used the vernal equinox as a reference date because I

believe that birds do not follow the Gregorian calendar). Also shown in **Figure 1** are the Eastern Phoebe and Chipping Sparrow. It is no surprise that an insectivore like



**Figure 1. Distributions for first arrival in Deep River for the years 1947 – 1987.**

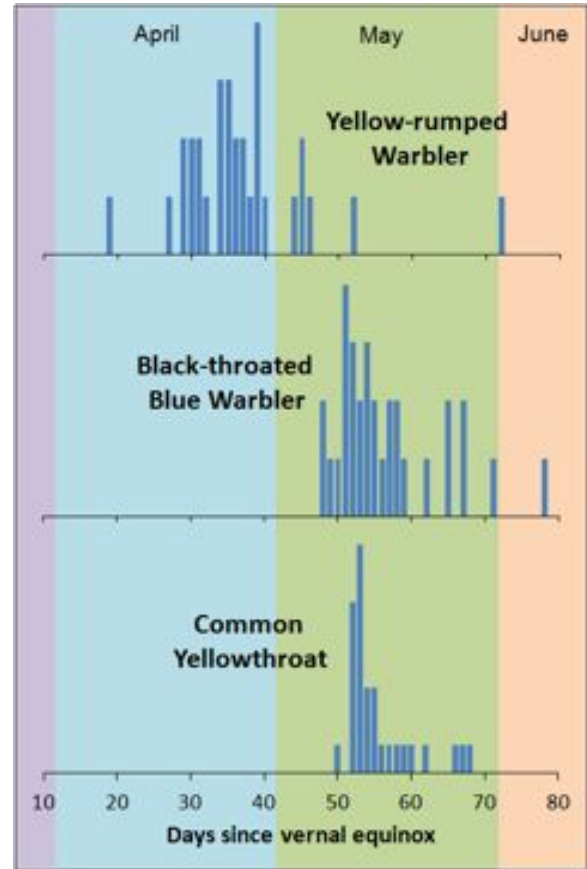
the Eastern Phoebe tends to arrive later than the Red-winged Blackbird. The Chipping Sparrow arrives even later. Note that the distribution of dates for the Chipping Sparrow first arrival is narrower than the distribution for the Red-winged Blackbird. This suggests an effect of weather. The Red-winged Blackbird is a harbinger of spring and the first arrival seems to chase the melting snow banks north each year. The larger variability of the first arrival may reflect the variability of the date when the weather becomes tolerable for the bravest Red-winged Blackbird. The narrower distribution for

the Chipping Sparrow suggests much less of an influence from the weather.

Another interesting example is for the three warblers plotted in **Figure 2**. As a birder would know, each warbler species tends to arrive in a specified order. The Yellow-rumped Warbler is one of the earliest. The distribution of the Yellow-rumped Warbler first arrival is spread out as might be expected if the weather played a role in the arrival date. The later arriving Black-throated Blue Warbler tends to have a narrower time window for the first arrival. Most peculiar of all is the first arrival of the Common Yellowthroat in Deep River. Most of the first arrivals for the Common Yellowthroat occur within a four day window! Year after year, the first Common Yellowthroat was expected to arrive in Deep River between 53-56 days after the vernal equinox. What does this tell us about how this species stages for migration and its route?

So far, I don't have answers, but this is the kind of data that can be used to educate us about the phenology of migrating birds. There are a lot of other stories hidden in this sort of data waiting to be uncovered. One question that I haven't even started to explore is how these first bird records from four decades in the mid twentieth century differ from those of more recent decades. More data is needed and perhaps you readers have such data already.

Although I don't have any new scientific findings to present here, my point is that simple information like Bill's records, when kept up for 40 years, have become a rich source of information. Field naturalists



**Figure 2.** Distributions for first arrival warblers in Deep River for the years 1947 – 1987.

contribute a lot to the public scientific knowledge by keeping records and sharing them. Chickadees, Chipmunks and Chicory should not be overlooked. No record is too trivial. Record your observations regularly.

By the way, the *Renfrew County Biotabase* is already set up as a repository for your data.

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/birdmon/rcb/>

