

# D<sup>W</sup><sup>The</sup>Wood Duck

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*No Wandering Albatross (Diomedea exulans), has ever been spotted anywhere near Hamilton Study Area. Hamilton Naturalists' Club members, however, were able to see them up close during a slide presentation by Geoff Carpentier about his travels to the Antarctic. For a report see page 56. Photo by Geoff Carpentier*

Also in this magazine: A new damselfly, saving Backus Woods, Wood Thrush research, Ruthven Park, and more.

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# Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*) – First documented record for the Hamilton Study Area

by Karl Konze, Guelph, Ontario



Having slept in on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 and missed meeting others for the annual Hamilton Odonate Count, my son William and I decided to go out odonate hunting anyway. Conditions were excellent: mostly sunny, hot and humid. Initially we headed off to Courtcliffe Park (SW of Carlisle) in search of Eastern Amberwing (*Perithemis tenera*), an especially attractive little species of dragonfly that had previously been reported from the offline ponds associated with Bronte Creek. We searched for a while but had no luck.

We then decided to try for Dusky Dancer (*Argia translata*), a species I had only seen once before and my son, never. It is only known from a single location within the Hamilton count circle, the “reclaimed quarry” at the Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve in the Township of Puslinch, Wellington County (Rothfels, 2007). We entered the site from Gore Road, approximately 470 m east of Lennon Road and walked north along the laneway another 525 m. Here the laneway splits in two with the right fork taking one immediately down into the wetlands.



Reclaimed quarry ponds at Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve. The arrow shows the location of the Citrine Forktail - photo by Brian Wylie.

We searched the north end of the largest pond with no luck. On the south side, we saw a number of small damselflies, including Eastern Red Damselfly (*Amphiagrion saucium*), Sedge Sprite (*Nehalennia irene*) and Eastern Forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*). As we were searching the margins of the pond, William caught a small damselfly and asked me what it was. I glanced at it quickly and based on the very pale colouration of its underside, coupled with its very small size, I assumed it was a young (*i.e.* teneral) species of sprite or bluet. Having seen a few already, and not wanting to handle such a delicate individual, I turned away and began to resume my own search. However just as I did, William asked me, “What about Citrine Forktail?” I paused and decided to take a closer look.

As I took it from his hand and examined it from above this time, the abdomen was indeed bright yellow like a male Citrine Forktail (*Ischnura hastata*). Its thorax was also green, consistent with the species. Having never seen one before and with my excitement building, I decided we had better sit down and pull out our field guides to confirm its identity. After quickly reviewing the various field marks, including the characteristic reddish-orange forewing stigma that is separated from the wing margin (Lam, 2004), we were elated to have found a new species, one that I had previously considered driving all the way to Sandbanks Provincial Park, in Prince Edward County, to see! I knew the species had previously been recorded at Luther Marsh in Wellington County but I wondered what its status was in the Hamilton area? Regardless, we knew it was a rare find! Before we released it, we took a number of photographs to document the record.

After this excitement, we continued looking for the Dusky Dancer and ended up finding a single young male on the east side of the pond, opposite the wooded boardwalk. This too was a good find and we were especially pleased with our luck.



William Konze with male Citrine Forktail, 2 July 2011, Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve - photo by Karl Konze

As we were walking along the laneway back towards Gore Road, we came across the group tasked for inventorying these wetlands for the Hamilton Odonate Count; Bill Lamond, Kevin McLaughlin, Paul Smith, and Brian Wylie. Upon news of our discoveries, they convinced us to take them back to where we had found the Citrine Forktail. Remarkably, William refound it (or another individual?) within less than a minute. Everybody was excited and several more photos were taken. Bill also indicated that to the best of his knowledge, this was indeed a new record for the Hamilton area. To see a map illustrating Ontario observations, visit the following Ontario Odonata Atlas webpage:

[http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/odonates/Southern\\_Ont/Ischnurahastata.jpg](http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/odonates/Southern_Ont/Ischnurahastata.jpg)

The map shows that the species is predominantly associated with the lower Great Lakes shoreline, and in particular Lake Erie, where it has been documented from Essex, Chatham-Kent, Elgin and Oxford Counties, as well as the Regional Municipality of Niagara along Lake Erie. As previously mentioned, it has also been recorded from Luther Marsh in Wellington County and Sandbanks P.P. in Prince Edward County.

However, in addition to the locations depicted on the map, other recent observations have been made elsewhere including:

- over 100 Citrine Forktails were discovered from an alvar area near Almonte, Lanark County in September 2008 (Catling, 2008)
- at least one Citrine Forktail documented from the Big Creek Watershed in Essex County in 2009 (Learmouth, 2010)
- two male Citrine Forktails reported patrolling the grass and sedge bordered margins of a small shallow pond at the tip of Long Point on August 2, 2010 (Burrell, 2010)
- a single male photographed from a restored pond near the Rouge River in Toronto on August 8, 2010 (Edwards, 2010)
- an observation “near Thickson’s Woods”, Durham Region “a few years ago “ by Carolyn King (Aaron, 2011a). Exact date and location currently unknown.
- an observation from the “Kawartha Lakes” in 2011 by Carolyn King (Aaron, 2011b). Exact date and location currently unknown.

Amazingly, William and I again encountered this species in 2011. On 17 September we were at Hanlon’s Point on the Toronto Islands looking for Variegated Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum corruptum*) that had been reported the previous day. We did see one Variegated Meadowhawk briefly before it disappeared from view, but, while looking for others, William casually called out that he had found a Citrine Forktail, a bright one. I was excited to hear this. Unfortunately he lost sight of it. However, a few minutes later he called out again saying he had caught one this time, albeit a duller one! I went over to him and, sure enough, he was holding a lovely male. I took a few photos and after we having a good look, it was released. Afterwards, I carefully walked the area but found no more. Either there were not many around or only William is able to spot them!

The map and subsequent observations attest to the fact that this is a southern species. It has been documented from across most of the United States, except in the Midwest and Northwest states, but appears to occur most commonly in the northeast, just south of the Great Lakes. In addition to reaching Ontario, it has also been recorded in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where its conservation rank has yet to be assessed (NatureServe, 2011). In Ontario it is described as an irregular breeding immigrant, showing up at different locations in different years (C. Jones pers. comm., 2008).

The habitat at the “reclaimed quarry” at the Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve also appears to be consistent with the preferred breeding habitat for the species. The *Damselflies*

of the North Woods describes it as “Permanent but small wet areas of spring seepage, often thickly overgrown with spike rush or club-rushes” (DuBois, 2005). Although the *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Northeast Ohio* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) simply list “wetlands” as their breeding habitat, they also note that “Citrine’s seem to prefer shallow ponds with and abundance of spikerush (*Eleocharis sp.*)” (Roshe, *et al.*, 2008). These descriptions also echo what Edmund Walker wrote in Volume 1 of his classic text *The Odonata of Canada and Alaska* (Walker, 1953).

However, one outstanding question remains. Why were they found now but not previously? People interested in odonates regularly visit this location. The most likely answer probably has to do with their adaptability and ability to being carried by the winds (Dunkle, 1990). It is known to be one of the most widespread Odonates in the world. They are known to be able to travel great distances. An isolated, all female population occurs in the Azores in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean! It is also possible that global warming is contributing to its northward expansion into Ontario. Catling (2008), lists numerous species showing evidence of northward range expansions other than Citrine Forktail, such as Double-striped Bluet (*Enallagma basidens*), Familiar Bluet (*Enallagma civile*), River Bluet (*Enallagma anna*) and Great Spreadwing (*Archilestes grandis*), amongst others.

If this reasoning is correct, and recent observations from Ontario seem to suggest it is, then it is reasonable to assume that this tiny, yet very attractive species will be encountered more regularly in the Hamilton area as well, and we will be all the luckier for it!

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*Dragon’s Den* is a monthly column about dragonflies and damselflies. We encourage all those with interesting stories about these fascinating creatures to submit articles for publication – photos are most welcome too.



# Backus Woods Protected For Future Generations!

## *September Meeting Report by Louise Unitt*

The guest speaker at September's HNC meeting was Michael Bradstreet, of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Michael came as the bearer of good news: He devoted the evening to tracing the series of events that culminated in the permanent protection of Backus Woods.

Michael first visited Norfolk County as a 14-year-old volunteer at the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO). For a city boy from Toronto, the experience helped set the course of his life. Upon discovering "the wonders of Norfolk's Carolinian forests," it was only a matter of time before he would move to the area. Today Michael lives in the village of Vittoria with his wife and son.

Acting on a passionate attachment to the natural world, Michael has conducted research on wildlife habitat and endangered species throughout Canada. He was the guiding spirit behind the Natural Areas Inventory of Haldimand-Norfolk. Michael's fundraising skills proved invaluable in launching the Inventory, building the Bird Studies Canada (BSC) headquarters and establishing the Backus Woods Trust Fund.

He joined the LPBO (now Bird Studies Canada) in 1989 and was serving as its president when he left BSC in 2004 to join the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The NCC is "a private, non-profit organization devoted to the preservation of representative and unique natural areas in Canada." As Ontario Region Vice President, Michael took on a project that has so far secured over 4,000 acres of prime Carolinian habitat in Norfolk County. In his current position as Vice President of Conservation, he directs the Conservancy's land securement initiatives.

The story of Backus Woods begins with its first recorded owner, John H. Backhouse. Born in Yorkshire, he immigrated to the United States in 1791 but soon settled in Upper Canada. In 1796, he set up a logging operation near Port Rowan, on the 600-acre land grant that would eventually be known as Backus Woods. A grist mill was constructed in 1798, and both businesses prospered. John H. had eleven children from three marriages. After his death, the business remained thriving under the direction of successive generations. Insofar as their occupation

permitted, the Backhouses acted as guardians of their woodlot. John H. and his descendants took care to spare the largest trees, except for those that were damaged by lightning or disease.

John H.'s grandson John Cornelius purchased adjacent land in the early decades of the last century, an expansion that made Backus Woods "one of the largest remnants of upland Carolinian forest in Canada." In 1955, John C. sold "The Backus Tract" to Big Creek Region Conservation Authority, which later became part of the Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA). The signatures of John C. and his wife Florence on the agreement of sale reflect a change of name to Backus. (John C. considered his original name inappropriate for marketing flour, as it failed to convey the desired image of purity.) The 651 acres sold for \$79,465, consisting of \$26,040 paid for land and young growth, and \$53,425 for timber exceeding 12 inches in diameter. Today the Backhouse Grist Mill is a National Historic Site. A plaque recognizes the mill for being "in continuous operation for a longer period than any mill in this province."



Tulip Tree flower (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). – photo by Michael Bradstreet

To this day, Backus Woods remains one of Ontario's finest mature hardwood forests, featuring Sugar and Red Maple, American Beech, Yellow Birch and Red Oak. Alongside these species that typify a deciduous forest, the property boasts a number of Carolinian species--Pawpaw, Shagbark Hickory, Sweet Chestnut, Sycamore and Swamp White Oak.

Some of Ontario's oldest living trees are still standing, notably a Tulip Tree that dates back to pre-Columbian times. In the swampy areas are Black Gums that may have been seedlings when Jacques Cartier landed on our shores in 1534.

Although Carolinian Canada comprises less than a quarter of one per cent of the country's land mass, it provides vital habitat for a quarter of our at-risk species. Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, Eastern Fox Snake, Woodland Vole and Jefferson's Salamander are just a few of the many species under threat. A 292-hectare section of Backus Woods has been designated a provincially significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest.

trees to germinate and survive. While some saw a need to create gaps in some forest stands, those against it carried the day: "There is no evidence from this study that suggests that management or manipulation of gap dynamics is necessary or desirable as the forest in Backus Woods continues to mature. Indeed, at this point in the history of Backus Woods, such manipulation would disrupt the ongoing processes of the maturing forest."

Growing pressure to log the property led to a public campaign for protection. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) received more than 200 written submissions in favour of saving the woods. Representatives from the LPRCA, the MNR, the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Norfolk Field Naturalists banded



What the first explorers must have seen all over Ontario's Carolinian Zone. Photo by Michael Bradstreet.

In 1985, the Long Point Foundation funded an extensive inventory of all the plants and animals in Backus Woods. Surveys found 560 species of flowering plants, including 20 provincially and nationally rare plant species. The LPRCA followed up in 1986 with a management plan acknowledging the "diverse representation of Carolinian communities and species, variable forest age and structure, large size and relatively undisturbed condition" within Backus Woods. The plan recommended that it be allowed to return to an "old growth" forest.

In time, the Conservation Authority grew concerned that there might not be sufficient canopy gaps for shade-intolerant Tulip Trees, Black Gums and other Carolinian

together to form the Backus Woods Advisory Committee. In 1990, the Committee drew up two documents. The first was the 20-year Backus Woods Conservation Agreement. The second set up the Backus Woods Endowment Fund, a \$150,000 endowment to manage the woods. These agreements reflected the collaborative interests of many groups. Their purpose was to direct the stewardship of Backus Woods and guide all aspects of its conservation.

Several parcels were added to the core property during the 1990s. In 1991, 144.8 acres were purchased from Alphons Janzen for \$148,000. Two years later, 15 acres were acquired from Wray Brown, at a cost of \$10,000. In 1994, 12.5 acres were purchased from Betty Howe for \$12,500. Adjacent to

the southern edge of Backus Woods is the 148-acre Charles Sauriol Carolinian Forest, which abuts the Third Concession. This tract of regenerated farmland serves as a protective buffer for the property.

As the expiration of the Conservation Agreement drew near, the prospect of logging loomed once again. The LPRCA's intention to log Backus Woods for revenue was widely publicized by the media. An article that appeared in the December 5, 2008 edition of *The Simcoe Reformer* was typical of press reports at the time. The headline read: "LPRCA may log Backus; Authority prepared to log 1,933 acres of heritage woodlots." Thus alerted, the public created a facebook forum to contest the decision to log, and many rallied to the cause of safeguarding Backus Woods once and for all.

At this point the NCC stepped in to preserve the property. An ambitious management plan was put in place, with the goal of restoring the property to its original oak savanna landscape. Most of the forest's value lay in its standing timber. In 2009, the Conservancy contracted Silv-Econ Ltd. (a forest management consulting firm) for a valuation. The combined value of timber and 875 acres of land was calculated as \$5,300,000. Michael considers it a bargain: "The true value of Backus Woods is more than we paid."

On July 28, 2010, the NCC's purchase of Backus Woods from the LPRCA was approved by Linda Jeffrey, Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources. Thanks to funding by the W.

Garfield Weston Foundation and the dedicated efforts of many partners, the transaction was concluded on February 14, 2011. The Foundation had already lent financial support to the Conservancy's acquisition of 47 properties that provide natural corridors to Backus Woods. To date, the Weston Foundation's generosity has enabled the NCC to protect more than 4,300 acres in Norfolk County.

The conditions of purchase state that "Backus Woods will have public pedestrian access and be available for educational programming." Accordingly, the trails are being extended, and onsite interpretation will be installed. Horses, ATVs and competitive bicycling are prohibited, but pedestrians are welcome year-round. (The topic of trail use reminded Michael of a long-ago incident at Spooky Hollow. As he chatted with former HNC president Marion Shivas, an ATV came hurtling along the trail towards them. Marion stepped forward to block its path, seized the driver's ignition key, and swiftly pitched it into the woods!)

Michael reports that the Backus family is "ecstatic" to know that the conservation efforts of four generations of Backhouses/Backuses have been crowned by definitive protection. As for Michael, he is "awed" by the achievement. Because of the tireless efforts of many supporters, the Nature Conservancy of Canada was able to rescue Backus Woods in time. We're all invited to visit the property, ideally during the last two weeks of October when the leaves are ablaze with colour. Many thanks, Michael, for chronicling the eventful history of this natural treasure.

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## A Naturalist's Tour of Ushuaia, Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands

### *October Meeting Report by Louise Unitt*

Those who attended the Club's AGM in October were treated to a very special presentation. After the business portion was concluded, guest speaker Geoff Carpentier whisked us away to a remote corner of the world with which few of us are familiar. The evening's package tour consisted of four unique destinations: Ushuaia (oos-why-a), the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island and Antarctica.

Geoff's lifelong love of wildlife found early expression in both career and volunteer activities. He has worked at Parks

Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, and was a founding member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists, to whom he has contributed many years of service. Upon retiring from the Ontario Public Service in 2006, Geoff decided it was time to do what he'd "always wanted to do," namely, become an expedition and interpretive guide. A lifetime spent studying birds, mammals, insects and plants amply qualify him for the role. Geoff's travels have crisscrossed the seven continents. Through his tour

company, Avocet Nature Services, he has led numerous trips to far-flung places such as Cuba, Alaska, and Borneo.

But this evening was devoted to Antarctica and surrounding regions of the southern hemisphere, where Geoff's career as an international nature guide first took flight. Our tour began at Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city and capital of the Argentine province of Tierra del Fuego. Perched at the southern tip of South America, Ushuaia is home to a unique assortment of wildlife. Seals, whales and condors can be viewed from town, and a 20-minute walk puts you within sight of a glacier. \$20 US will buy a return trip to Tierra del Fuego's conifer and beech forest habitat. On his fifth trip there, Geoff finally spotted a Magellanic Woodpecker, a bird with a brilliant red head. In fact, he saw seven in one day! Other locals include the red-eyed Crested Duck, the red-legged Dolphin Gull and the Southern Lapwing, a species of plover. When threatened, the Lapwing can use a vestigial nail on its wing as a defensive weapon. Tierra del Fuego is bordered on the south by the Beagle Channel, where South American Sea Lions swim. Patagonian Foxes, relatives of our Red Fox, live in Patagonia National Park.

Ships bound for the Falkland Islands emerge from the Beagle Channel before proceeding northeast through the Le Maire Strait on an 18-or-19-day journey. Apart from the abundance of wildlife to be found in the Falklands, visitors will be struck by the sight of armaments left behind after the 1982 conflict between the U.K. and Argentina. At Gypsy Cove on East Falkland Island, beach access is restricted because of danger from decommissioned land mines. Birders have to rely on a long lens for a close look at the Fur Seals, albatrosses and penguins that frequent the shoreline.

Since livestock and wild animals don't normally share the same landscape, Geoff was surprised to see Magellanic Penguins dwelling alongside lambs on Bleaker Island (one of the Falkland Islands). Unlike Gentoo, King and Rockhopper Penguins, which nest above grade, the Magellanic is a ground nester. Also found on Bleaker Island is the Black-browed Albatross, whose worldwide population has declined by 70 to 80 percent. They, along with petrels, have been devastated by longline fishing. One of Geoff's slides showed an unfortunate Giant Petrel with a fishing hook embedded in its foot. However, methods have been devised with long-line fishing to limit this devastation.

Besides hunting and fishing, challenges to wildlife include disease, predators, people, livestock, environmental factors, exotic species and habitat decline. On the lengthy list of

predators are rats, mice, cats, rabbits, whales, seals, gulls, sheathbills and skuas. The Striated Caracara is both scavenger and predator. Once an extremely common bird, it was persecuted almost to extirpation by sheep farmers.

Of the Falklands' 208 avian species, approximately 76 are breeders or regular migrants, and two are endemic—Cobb's Wren and Falkland Steamer Duck. The latter's river rock substrate provides effective camouflage for its chicks. Sadly, the Magellanic Tapaculo has been extirpated, and ten Falklands species are threatened or vulnerable.

The Ruddy-headed Goose and the brant-sized Ashy-headed Goose are both represented here. Dark-eyed Ground-tyrants chase insects at ground level, as do most of the local flycatchers. About the size of a junco, the Black-throated (Falklands) Finch is an attractive yellow-tinged bird and highly prized by birdwatchers.

While observing a family of Sub-Antarctic Fur Seals, Geoff was fortunate to photograph a rare blond youngster, a phenomenon that occurs only once in 100,000 births. This part of the world was opened up by sealers and whalers. A rather gruesome reminder of bygone sealing days was a pot in which baby seals were boiled to extract their oil. It was in effect "a portable processing plant."

After leaving the Falklands, Geoff steered us along a southeastern course toward South Georgia Island. The British colony is located off the Antarctic coast in the South Shetland Islands. A monument marks the burial site of explorer Ernest Shackleton and commemorates his heroic rescue of crew members who were trapped on Elephant Island in 1916. Despite foul weather and numerous setbacks, all 22 seamen were saved.

Mount Paget is South Georgia's highest point and nearly always obscured by clouds. When the sky cleared for Geoff one fine day, he was quick to snap a rare photo of the exposed peak. The western part of the island is made uninhabitable by the winds that pound its coast. Wildlife keeps to the eastern part of the island and abounds in surrounding waters. Of 50 bird species recorded, roughly 42 are breeders or regular migrants and 11 are threatened or vulnerable. One species, the Upland Goose, has been extirpated. The only endemic among the "locals" is the South Georgia Pipit, which was nearly wiped out by rats. Fortunately, the rats were eliminated before it was too late.

More than 300,000 King Penguins create “a sensation of sight, sound and smell” on Salisbury Plain, the beach they inhabit. These cold-loving birds practise thermoregulation, raising their toes to expose the bottoms of their feet to the wind and cool themselves off. Gentoo Penguins are aggressive birds that will boldly steal your food.

Pity the lot of a Macaroni Penguin! When returning to land, they first have to run the gauntlet past a pod of seals. Once the penguins manage the steep and slippery ascent from shore, they must put up with being “swiped at” by its fellow Macaronis. These “very engaging, weird little birds” re-enact their ordeal two or three times a day.

The Snowy Sheathbill, a chicken-sized bird, is adapted to terrestrial life in a marine environment. Unable to swim, it must fly non-stop during migration. Kelp Gulls, Great Shearwaters, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, White-chinned Petrels and Black-browed Albatrosses also frequent South Georgia. The Wandering (Snowy) Albatross has an impressive 11-foot wing span!

On his latest visit to South Georgia Island, Geoff was dismayed to find a profusion of dandelions. Their seeds, which are bound to displace native plants, must have hitched a ride on a visitor’s clothing. Local wildlife is menaced by numerous predators—rats, mice, cats, gulls, sheathbills and skuas, along with Fin Whales and Fur Seals. In a series of photos, Geoff captured the aerobatic skills of a Sub-Antarctic/Brown (South Georgia) Skua as it dipped to snatch a penguin.

Four ships en route to Antarctica from South Georgia encounter weather extremes on the Scotia Sea. Conditions range from perfectly calm waters to wildly surging waves that tower 18 metres above the decking. Visitors to Antarctica, the coldest and driest place on earth, can usually count on sunny skies. Depending on its density, ice assumes a variety of hues. In older ice, the enormous weight of successive layers forces out gases, compressing the ice. The denser it is, the darker it is: black ice is some 600 to 700 years old.

Strict rules regulate human behaviour when viewing local wildlife, and with good reason. A Sub-Antarctic/Brown Skua will take advantage of a penguin’s momentary distraction to nab its egg. Although people are not allowed within five metres of wildlife, there’s nothing to prevent the wildlife from taking the initiative! Such was the case when a curious Gentoo Penguin sidled up to Geoff, granting him the

privilege of a close-up view. The Adelie Penguin is more dependent on ice than are other species, and hence more vulnerable. Unlike Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins, which can still feed when ice is sparse, Adelies are in serious decline. As for Emperor Penguins, Geoff has so far seen only three. The best place to seek them out is on their Snow Hill Island breeding grounds.

A crafty hunter, Wilson’s Storm-petrel dangles its yellow foot in the water like a lure. Attracted by the yellow flash, invertebrates rise to the surface, only to be snapped up. The voracious and adaptable Snowy Sheathbill devours not only the eggs and chicks of penguins, but also their feces; it will even ingest a seal’s nasal mucus! Antarctic Tern, South Polar Skua and Southern Fulmar also make their home in Antarctica. Snow and Antarctic Petrels are both found at the southernmost point of the continent.

Predators include Leopard Seals, as well as Killer and Humpback Whales. Weddell Seals make noisy neighbours, as Geoff discovered one Christmas Eve when a nearby individual “whistled and tooted” the night away! The world population of Crabeater Seals is estimated at 11 million. When humans first set eyes on these seals, they assumed the red colouration inside their stomachs came from a diet of crabs. In truth, the Crabeater Seal eats krill, not crabs.

Krill, “the foundation of all life” in Antarctica, is consumed by many animals, Humpback Whales, Southern Elephant Seals and penguins included. Now that people have begun eating it too, Geoff is very concerned about the potential depletion of this staple food, on which so many creatures’ lives depend.

Our next port of call was Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands, where a caldera marks the site of a volcano that last erupted in 1972. Whales were still being harvested there as recently as 80 years ago. While most species have rebounded, the Blue Whale has not recovered its former abundance. It is still at 1% of pre-whaling levels! Nonetheless, it is encouraging that this species has been showing a 7% population increase in the Antarctic region over the last several years.

Veering south toward the Antarctic Peninsula, tour ships often include Vernadsky Station on their itinerary. Located on Galindez Island, it is famous as the site where a “hole” in the ozone layer was discovered in the mid-‘70s. The scientific research station has been under Ukrainian control since 1996. Prior to that, the base was British, with

headquarters in a hut called Wordie House. Within the building are indications of an oddly sudden departure—for example, a loaf of bread left on the table. The cause remains a mystery to this day.

After hearing Geoff's exhilarating talk, you may well be eager to experience the magical realms he's revealed. If so,

you would do well to consult Geoff's book, *Antarctica — First Journey*, a resource guide for travellers to the Antarctic, South Georgia Island and the Falkland Islands. The book provides many practical tips to help you make the most of your once-in-a-lifetime adventure. For information, visit Geoff's website at [www.avocetnatureservices.com](http://www.avocetnatureservices.com)

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## Research on the Wood Thrush and Carbohydrates in Berries

*Report of Bird Study Group Meeting, September 2011 by Michael Rowlands*

The 200<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Bird Study Group (BSG) was held on September 19, 2011 and was also the first meeting of its 25<sup>th</sup> season! MC George Holland's first order of business was to introduce all members of the organizing committee and to encourage anyone who wanted to get more involved in the BSG to speak to one of the committee members (Arlene McCaw, Cheryl Edgecombe, Diane Green, Frank Morley, Mike Rowlands, Tom Crooks or George Holland) – we're always looking for volunteers!

Next, George acknowledged the efforts of Dave Don, Cheryl Edgecombe, Barb Charlton and Rob Dobos on their Baillie Birdathon "big day" on May 21. They saw or heard 162 species of birds in the Hamilton Study Area, (just short of the record count of 165) and raised \$3,055.60 for Bird Studies Canada's ongoing research efforts. A good portion of this will come back to the Club. Well done, team!

Our guest speaker for this auspicious get-together was Sherrene Kevan, who teaches biology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. She has taught ornithology there for over 9 years and received the University's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2003. She developed a CD called *Dawn Chorus I*, a patented system which the user can download to a computer or a handheld device to help quickly identify birds in the field by appearance and voice. She also developed an on-line ornithology course that's available for home study by interested persons.

The first part of Sherrene's talk was about a three-year field study she has been doing at Hilton Falls Conservation Area, just north of the town of Campbellville, on the nesting patterns of the Wood Thrush (. The data analysis has not been finished yet but she was able to give us a quick overview of her findings.



Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) by Charles W. Nash from *The Birds of Ontario in Relation to Agriculture*. 1909.

The Wood Thrush, like many neotropical migrants that fly into Canada to breed from Venezuela, Mexico and the southern USA, is in trouble, she claimed. One possible reason is the continuing fragmentation of the forests in which they breed. At Hilton Falls, it has been observed that they nest along groomed pathways and in clusters and it's not known exactly why they do this. Her study aims to determine what attracts the Wood Thrush to particular nest sites. These birds seem to prefer younger Sugar Maples and often build their nests only 6 metres off the ground, risking greater predation by chipmunks, snakes and other birds such as Blue Jays. The first two years of her study were marred by drought and the Wood Thrushes left by mid-July, whereas they usually stay into early August and sometimes have two broods of youngsters. Mortality was also high in the dry heat. In the third year, it was rainy and cool, and there was 94% fledgling success, so it appears that weather can have a profound effect on food supply and nest success. She is examining other studies to see if climate change has been reported as a factor by other researchers as well.

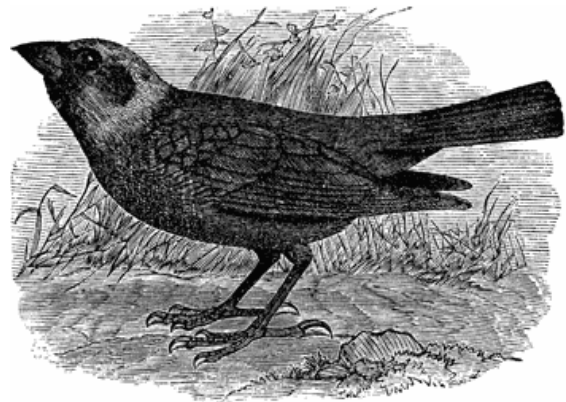
The second part of Sherrene's talk was about a study done by one of her thesis students a number of years ago in Bechtel Park in Waterloo. This study looked at the carbohydrate contents of berries from 19 species of plants. Many bird species, including American Robin, Blue Jay, European Starling, Gray Catbird, American Crow, and Cedar Waxwing, are known to eat berries as an energy source.

The principal carbohydrates in berries are three sugars: glucose and fructose, which are simple sugars, and sucrose, a complex sugar made of one molecule of glucose joined to one molecule of fructose. Most birds, with the exception of hummingbirds, cannot digest sucrose because they lack sucrase, the enzyme needed to convert it into energy. Hence, they prefer berries that have higher contents of glucose and fructose than sucrose. Parents may teach their young or the young may find out by trial and error which berries are the best to use at different times. Sucrose can be converted to glucose and fructose in a berry if the right enzymes (sucrose synthase and acid invertase) are present. The two simple sugars are then easily converted in the bird's body to fatty acids, which allow the energy to be stored.

The plants that were sampled for their berries were the following: Blue Cohosh, European Buckthorn, Common Elderberry, Common Enchanter's Nightshade, False Solomon's Seal, Fly Honeysuckle, Gooseberry, Hawthorn, Highbush Cranberry, Joe-Pye Weed, Pin Cherry, Red-berried Elder, Red-osier Dogwood, Red Raspberry, Riverbank Grape, Running Strawberry Bush, Staghorn Sumac, Star-flowered False Solomon's Seal, and Tartarian Honeysuckle. Extracts from the berries were analyzed using gas chromatography to determine their content of the three sugars at various times of the study period.

Sucrose was found in seven of the plants but, as sucrose concentration decreased, glucose and fructose concentration increased. Sucrose was high in berries that had either died or had ripened early, then dried out. Different plants produced peak levels of glucose and fructose at different times through the summer and early autumn, so some berries were always available with usable sugars for the birds. The highest concentrations of simple sugars appeared in August to October, just when the birds were preparing for migration or overwintering and needed to build up their energy stores.

Point counts of the birds seen in the study area were made periodically. In all, 25 species were noted – 10 resident and 15 migrants – but only the American Robin was seen actually eating berries! The highest migrant counts came in July; the highest resident counts came in October and November. More birds were seen when more berries were present. The study confirmed that simple sugars were more available than sucrose as energy sources for the birds but Sherrene added that further research, involving daily monitoring, is needed to determine which birds eat specific berries and when. After a lively question period, George Holland thanked our speaker for her talk and presented her with an honorarium on behalf of the BSG.



Cowbirds follow where ever deforestation occurs in North America (from <http://etc.usf.edu/>).

Frank Morley led our usual sightings report after the break. The most unusual report was of an adult Northern Cardinal feeding a young Brown-headed Cowbird sunflower seeds; later an adult Chipping Sparrow did the same and they started a fight about who can feed the cowbird! As my grandmother used to say, "Well, did you ever...?"

Peter Scholtens concluded the meeting with an upbeat presentation on a Hamilton area birding hotspot: Ruthven Park National Historic Site. Elsewhere in this issue, right below as a matter of fact, Peter explains what a jewel this site is and all the opportunities there are to explore the outdoors. Thanking Peter, George made a last few general announcements and closed the meeting – it was a good start to our 25<sup>th</sup> season!

# A Southern Jewel - Ruthven Park

by Peter Scholtens

At the southern end of the crown that is the Hamilton Study Area there is a jewel of a spot for birding, natural history, and local history. This jewel is known as Ruthven Park National Historic Site. Situated on the Grand River, it is a beautiful place to visit and explore. Ruthven Park is the former home of the Thompson family. The family contributed to the formative years of country and to the building of our nation up until the 1990s. They were also active members of the Haldimand community.

Their estate consists of 1500 acres built in the English model and largely survives intact to the present day. The 1500 acres is now made up of Carolinian forests, active farm fields, wetlands, meadows, two cemeteries, nineteenth century buildings and an island in the Grand River.



The eye-ring of this Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*) is not very distinct, a diagnostic feature in thrush identification, as the staff at Ruthven explained. Photo by Herman van Barneveld. Sept. 24, 2011. Ruthven Park

The property includes a Greek revival mansion that the family had built between 1845 and 1847. It is filled with furnishings and possessions owned by five generations of the family. In the mid-nineties the property and all the buildings passed largely intact to the Lower Grand River Land Trust Inc., who continues to steward that buildings and the property.

From a natural history perspective, of special interest is the birding activity taking place on the property. The former piggery is set up as a banding lab. Bird banding takes place during spring and fall migration season. Bird banding has been fully operational on the site for more than 15 years. The banding lab is part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and works actively at 3 different activities. The activities that the lab participates in are:

1. A structured census – following a prescribed route every day recording ever bird seen or heard,
2. Bird Banding – the nets are open from sunrise until noon weather permitting.
3. The recording of general observations including weather and notable species.

People often ask why a banding station continues to operate. Don't we know everything there is to know about these species? Banding at sites such as the Ruthven Park banding lab have the following goals:

1. To monitor migrants during the Spring and Fall migrations and analyze and identify population trends of neotropical migrants.
2. To monitor breeding/wintering birds at the site to provide baseline data for use in making decisions around land-use policy.
3. To provide a training facility for individuals interested in developing practical skills in field ornithology.
4. To provide a learning resource to the local community to enhance awareness and appreciation of the local environment.

One of the key missions of the volunteer banding staff is to pass on a love for nature to the next generation. As part of this work, the banders are particularly active training new banders and demonstrating banding activities to local school children. Graduate students and others apprentice to the licensed banders, developing skills in determining the age and sex of different bird species. School groups also come through the Park on a regularly basis. It is exceedingly rare for a day to go by without a school group spending time in the banding lab learning about banding. The banding staff allows the students to become active participants in releasing the banded bird back into the wild.

The Ruthven Park banding lab has become quite busy with these educational initiatives. They would appreciate the support of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club with ongoing census activities so that they can continue to focus on the education. If you have some birding skills and would like an opportunity to serve in the ongoing monitoring activities, please contact Rick Ludkin, the head bander, at [rludkin@hotmail.com](mailto:rludkin@hotmail.com). Who knows, you may have an

opportunity to spot one of the rarities that have appeared at Ruthven, including Prothonotary Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Golden-winged Warbler,

Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher. If you can't make the trip, make a virtual one by checking their blog: <http://www.ruthvenpark.ca/natureblog/>

## Double Check and Make Sure You Mark Your Calendars!

Join us on Saturday, November 19 for **A Night Out For Nature** as we raise funds to permanently protect land in the Pleasant View area of Dundas. The fun evening will feature homemade spaghetti dinner made by HNC chefs, live entertainment and a spaghetti sauce cook-off! It is being held at St. Paul's United Church in Dundas and tickets are \$25. Stay tuned for more details or contact Jen Baker at 905-524-3339 or [land@hamiltonnature.org](mailto:land@hamiltonnature.org).

Calling all chefs. Do you have a spaghetti sauce that gets rave reviews? If so, you should join the spaghetti sauce cook-off happening at **A Night Out For Nature!** You can keep the recipe a secret, just bring enough of the sauce for people to taste and vote on. Prizes will be available for the top chef. For more details please contact Jen Baker at 905-524-3339 or [land@hamiltonnature.org](mailto:land@hamiltonnature.org).

## Education Programs Teach Kids About Nature

*by Jen Baker, Land Trust Coordinator*

**I**t has been a busy fall with the hands-on education programs. Between the Monarchs & Milkweed and ECO Art programs we have connected more than 500 students in Hamilton with nature.

The Monarchs & Milkweed program has had a very successful year, thanks in large part to funding from the Conserver Society through the Ed Smee Fund. We worked with students in the spring to grow native plants from seed and these plants were transplanted to the restoration site at the Amaolo Nature Sanctuary. This fall we brought Monarch caterpillars into five classrooms so the students could see the life cycle first hand and then release the butterflies for their long fall migration to Mexico. Students became very engaged in the project, including one little autistic boy who now has an increased vocabulary. The next stage of the project is to go back to the classroom with The Print Studio who will work with the students to make artwork based on their experiences. This gives them a chance to tell me the stories about their

butterflies, which is very entertaining and demonstrates how much they've learned.

Through the ECO Art program we received a very generous donation to work with two grade 5 and a grade 6 class at Bennetto Elementary School which is in Hamilton's north end. We talked about wildlife that can be found in the area and the endangered species that have chosen Hamilton as their home. As the school is just down the road from the Land's Inlet Nature Project, we also talked with the students about this successful urban naturalization project. We then took the students on a walking field trip to Land's Inlet where they looked for butterflies, goldenrod galls, snails and a resident cat. Currently the students are creating artwork based on the species that we talked about. The pieces of art will be compiled into an interpretive sign that will go up at Land's Inlet.

Also through the ECO Art program, we are working with four classes in grades 3 to 6 at Memorial Elementary

School, which is just east of downtown Hamilton. This program is happening thanks to funding from the Edith H. Turner Fund of the Hamilton Community Foundation. We will be talking to the students about the Amaolo Nature Sanctuary, the species currently there and the species we expect to see in the future due to the restoration project. Like the artwork from the Bennetto students, the Memorial students' artwork will also be turned into interpretive signs to go up at the Amaolo

Nature Sanctuary. We will also be visiting the Cartwright Nature Sanctuary with the students.

The education program is always looking for volunteers to help in the classroom and/or to help with the field trips. It is a fun experience and you don't need to be an expert in outdoor education, you just need to have an interest and want to share it with students. If you would like to know more, please contact Jen Baker at 905-524-3339 or [land@hamiltonnature.org](mailto:land@hamiltonnature.org).

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## Summary of Minutes of the September 8, 2011 HNC Board Meeting

*by Joyce Litster*

### Items Discussed:

**Deer Management Advisory Committee** - Hamilton Conservation Authority staff should have the final report of the Committee ready by the end of September. It does not recommend a cull and will likely ask for more monitoring and study.

**Renegotiation of the Habitat Preservation Endowment Fund with the Hamilton Community Foundation** - Canada Revenue Agency has changed the rules concerning charitable endowment funds. It is now possible to access some of the capital held in perpetuity should the need arise. HNC has contacted the Hamilton Community Foundation, which holds our HPE Fund, to see if we could renegotiate our original agreement with them, thus allowing us the option of using some of the capital should we have the need. HCF has agreed and a new draft agreement will be circulated to the Board for approval.

**Environment Canada Pronouncement** - Environment Canada has indicated that they approve our proposed change to the wording of our by-law concerning what would happen to land gifts we have received under the Ecological Gifts Program should the Club ever have to dissolve. The change will be presented at the AGM and Club members will vote on it. If it is approved, Environment Canada will receive a certified copy.

**Glossy *Wood Duck*** - The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Spooky Hollow was marked by a special, glossy edition of the *Wood Duck* with colored photos. The next three issues will return to the old format while the printer uses up his supplies, but in January 2012, the new format will be adopted permanently.

**New Funding Models for the *Wood Duck*** - The new, glossy format of the *Wood Duck* will cost approximately \$2500 per year more to produce than the old format. The Board is examining alternative ways to raise the extra money.

**Motions Passed** - That the Board approve the new wording of the Dissolution Clause #12 in the HNC By-law #1. The change will be presented to the Club members at the AGM for their approval.

# A Hamilton Amateur Astronomers Calendar

*By Mario Carr*



**W**hen the Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1582 to replace the Julian calendar, it created a rebellion. People rebelled not because they were in love with the Julian calendar. They rebelled because they thought it was a scheme by greedy landlords to rob them of their rents by a week and a half.

Compared to the solar year, the Julian calendar had about 11 extra minutes every year. Since its introduction in 45 BC, it had accumulated 10 extra days by 1582. In order to make the Gregorian calendar accurate, these extra days had to be removed. The last day of the Julian calendar was October 4, 1582, and the first day of the Gregorian calendar started October 15, 1582. The Gregorian calendar is accurate to 26 seconds per solar year.

Another calendar that will no doubt cause a stir is the 2012 Hamilton Amateur Astronomers (HAA) calendar. In it you will find astronomical information that will guide and help you learn about the night sky. It is produced by volunteers from the HAA and is a fund raiser to help the club with their public outreach efforts. It will be available for sale at the November and December Hamilton Naturalists' Club meetings or by contacting the HAA.

Here are some important events for November stargazers. Most are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

## Planet Watching

Mercury will be low in the southwest during evening twilight and difficult to see by the end of the month. Venus will also be very low in the southwest during dusk but sets before dark.

Mars rises near midnight and is high in the southern sky near dawn. Jupiter is high in the southern sky near 11 p.m. and sets around 5 a.m. Saturn is very low in the southeastern sky during morning twilight later in the month.

Uranus rises during evening twilight and is high in the southern sky around midnight. Neptune is high in the southwestern sky at dusk and sets around midnight. Pluto is low in the southwestern evening sky during evening twilight but difficult to see by month's end.

**Nov. 2** – First Quarter Moon

**Nov. 8** – The Moon is furthest from the Earth or at apogee this month at 406,176 km

**Nov. 10** – The Full Moon this month was called the Beaver Moon by Algonquian peoples of eastern Canada.

**Nov. 11** – HAA meeting at 7:30 p.m., Hamilton Spectator building, 44 Frid St., Hamilton. Free admission with door prizes. An optional donation of non-perishable food items will be collected for local food banks.

**Nov. 14** – Mercury is at its greatest eastern elongation making it further from the Sun's glare and easier to see.

**Nov. 17-18** - The Leonids Meteor Shower peaks and 40 meteors per hour can best be seen from a dark location after midnight. Some can be seen Nov. 13-20. It's caused by falling debris burning in the atmosphere from comet Temple-Tuttle and is named Leonids as the meteors seem to radiate from constellation Leo.

**Nov. 18** – Last Quarter Moon.

**Nov. 20** – Mercury will be below Venus after sunset starting tonight and for the rest of the week.

**Nov. 23** – The Moon is closest to the Earth for the month or at perigee at 359,691 km.

**Nov. 25** – Thinking about buying a telescope? Then come out to the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers Telescope Clinic 7:30-9:30 p.m., Hamilton Spectator building, 44 Frid St., Hamilton. An optional donation of non-perishable food items will be collected for local food banks.

**Nov. 30** – The days are getting shorter. Sunrise is at 7:30 a.m. and sunset is at 4:45 p.m.

For more information, please see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers web site at [www.amateurastronomy.org](http://www.amateurastronomy.org) or call (905) 627-4323.

*Mario Carr is the HAA director of public education and a member of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club. He can be reached at [mariocarr@cogeco.ca](mailto:mariocarr@cogeco.ca). He also has a blog at <http://theskythismonth.wordpress.com/>*

# Noteworthy Bird Records, April 2011

by Rob Dobos



## Legend:

\* -first occurrence for the year  
F -first occurrence for the migration  
L -last occurrence for the migration  
HSA -Hamilton Study Area  
SM -singing male  
terr. -territorial bird

## Plumages, etc.:

m. -male  
f. -female  
ad. -adult  
ba. -basic  
alt. -alternate  
imm. -immature  
juv. -juvenile  
1<sup>st</sup> yr. -first year

## County/Region/City:

Brant [*BR*]  
Haldimand [*HD*]  
Halton [*HL*]  
Hamilton [*HM*]  
Niagara [*NG*]  
Peel [*PL*]  
Waterloo [*WT*]  
Wellington [*WL*]

Total number of species recorded in the HSA during 2011 to April 30: **217**. Underlined species or dates require documentation by the Hamilton Bird Records Committee. Capitalized species require documentation by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. For species marked with “#”, all reported records are listed. For all other species, only highlights are listed. Note that the species order follows the most recent American Ornithologists’ Union checklist and supplements.

**Observers:** Jim Anderson (JA), Glenn Barrett (GB), Kim Barrett (KB), Mark Brett (MBr), David Brewer (DBr), Duane Brown (DBn), Jacob Bruxer (JBr), George Bryant (GBy), Wayne Bullock (WB), Roger Chaput (RCh), Barb Charlton (BC), Helen Colvin (HCo), Jim Cram (JC), Mark Cranford (MCr), Robert Curry (RC), Martin Daly (MD), Jeni Darling (JDa), Sandy Darling (SD), Sandra Davey (SDv), Kathy Denomy (KDe), Rob Dobos (RD), Aidan Don (AiD), Andrew Don (AiDo), Dave R. Don (DD), Dave K. Donn (DKD), Cheryl Edgecombe (CE), Luc Fazio (LF), Mike Furber (MF), Mark Greathead (MGr), Jean Hampson (JHa), Jim Heslop (JH), Bob Highcock (BHi), Brandon Holden (BH), Eric Holden (EH), Mourad Jabra (MJa), Mark Jennings (MJ), Aaron Keating (AKe), Chris Kenaszchuk (CK), Ivars Kops (IKo), John Lamey (JLa), Bill Lamond (BL), Cody Law (CL), Rick Ludkin (RL), Bruce Mackenzie (BM), Lou Marsh (LM), Arlene McCaw (AMC), Jim McCaw (JMC), Sheldon McGregor (SMG), Kevin McLaughlin (KM), Anthony Miller (AM), Matt Mills (MM), Joe Minor (JMj), Bill Morden (BMo), Peeter Musta (PMu), Ken Newcombe (KN), Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch (NPH), Gard Otis (GO), Don Perks (DP), John Prescott (JPr), Ross Reid (RR), Wayne Renaud (WR), Gerry Shemilt (GSh), Eric Single (ESi), Glenda Slessor (GS), Dorothy Smith (DS), Paul Smith (PS), Robert Stamp (RS), Chris Street (CS), Kellie Superina (KSu), Peter Thoen (PT), Tom Thomas (TT), Fred Urie (FU), Mike Veltri (MV), Jim Watt (JWa), Katie West (KWe), Angie Williams (AWi), Ken Williams (KWi), many observers (m.obs.).

**Snow Goose#:** One white morph at Hamilton Harbour off LaSalle Marina [*HM*] Apr 5 (MJa,KN).

**Ross’s Goose#:** One ad. white morph at Mountsberg C.A. [*HM/WL*] Apr 2 L (BH *et al.*).

**Cackling Goose#:** One at Mountsberg C.A. Apr 2 (BH *et al.*); one over QEW & Lakeshore Rd [*HL*] Apr 3 (RD); one at Grimsby [*NG*] Apr 20 (CL).

**Trumpeter Swan:** Two over Crieff [*WL*] Apr 9 (DBr); three at Valens C.A. [*HM*] Apr 10 (RD,BC); two at Fifty Point C.A. [*HM/NG*] Apr 17 (CL).

**Wood Duck:** Six at Dry Lake [*HD*] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE); 12 at Dundas Marsh [*HM*] Apr 23 (RD,BC,JBr).

**Gadwall:** Three at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC).

**American Wigeon:** Six at Mountsberg C.A. Apr 2 (RD *et al.*); 25 at Millgrove Loam Pits [*HM*] Apr 2 (BC); four at Green Mt Rd Quarry Pond [*HM*] Apr 8 (KM); four at Grimsby Sewage Ponds [*NG*] Apr 22 (JBr).

**Blue-winged Teal:** Six at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E [*HM*] Apr 8 (KM); five at Dofasco Trail E of 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E [*HM*] Apr 10 (RD; KWi,AWi); two at Townline Rd E of Taquanyah C.A. [*HD*] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**Northern Shoveler:** 82 at NE Shore of Harbour [*HM*] Apr 1 (RD); 22 at E End of Cootes Paradise [*HM*] Apr 14 (RD); 35 at Windermere Basin [*HM*] Apr 21 (RD).

**Northern Pintail:** 20 off Bronte Harbour [*HL*] Apr 6 (MJ); four off Burloak Waterfront Park [*HL*] Apr 9 (RD *et al.*); seven at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd [*HM*] Apr 10 (RD).

**Green-winged Teal:** 41 at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 10 (RD); seven at Edgelake Park, Stoney Creek [*HM*] Apr 11 (RD,CE); 12 at Windermere Basin Apr 21 (RD); 12 at Dry Lake Rd N of Townline Rd [*HD*] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**Canvasback:** Two at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC); one at Grimsby Sewage Ponds Apr 22 (JBr; KWi,AWi); two on Hamilton Harbour off Bayshore Park [*HM*] Apr 25 (RD); four off Confederation Park [*HM*] Apr 27 (RD,CE).

**Redhead:** Seven off Green Rd [*HM*] Apr 9 (JBr); two at Hagersville Quarry Ponds [*HD*] (RD,BC,CE) and two at Grimsby Sewage Ponds (JBr) Apr 22.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 45 at Mountsberg C.A. Apr 2 (RD *et al.*); 50 at Millgrove Loam Pits Apr 2-10 (BC; RD); 55 at Green Mt Rd Quarry Pond Apr 8 (KM); seven at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC); six at Dry Lake and 27 at Hagersville Quarry Ponds Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**King Eider#:** One 1<sup>st</sup> yr. m. off Fifty Rd [*HM*] Apr 3 (KM); 2 1<sup>st</sup> yr. m. + 1 f. off Green Rd [*HM*] Apr 9 (JBr).

**Surf Scoter:** 80 off Green Rd Apr 9 (JBr).

**Black Scoter:** Five off Green Rd Apr 9 (JBr), and two m. + one f. there Apr 30 (RD,BC).

**Long-tailed Duck:** Flocks were heard migrating north over Crieff at night Apr 12 (DBr).

**Hooded Merganser:** Nine at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC); a pair nesting at Conc 11 E of Centre Rd [*HM*] mid-Apr (HCo).

**Common Merganser:** 107 at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** Two at Grand River at Ruthven Park [HD] Apr 4-8 (RL); one at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC).

**Ruddy Duck:** 52 at Valley Inn [HM] Apr 2 (RD *et al.*); 28 at E End of Cootes Paradise Apr 14 (RD); 79 at Windermere Basin Apr 21 (RD); 23 at Hagersville Quarry Ponds Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**Ruffed Grouse#:** Up to two at Westover Rd N of Conc 8 [HM] Apr 2-30 (PS); one terr. at Sawyers Mills [HL] Apr 11 (LM).

**Wild Turkey:** Up to 14 at Westover Rd N of Conc 8 Apr 1-30 (PS); five at Hwy 8 NW of Peters Corners [HM] Apr 10 (RD,BC); seven at Golf Links Rd & Lincoln Alexander Expressway [HM] Apr 12 (WB); one at Van Wagners Ponds [HM] Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD).

**Red-throated Loon#:** One past Fifty Rd Apr 2 (KM); one off Green Rd Apr 9 (JBr); one off Rattray Marsh [PL] Apr 12 (WR); two past Woodland Cemetery [HM] Apr 22 (RD); two off Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*).

**Common Loon:** Birds past Ruthven Park: 2 –Apr 2, 6 –Apr 12, 11 –Apr 14, 18 –Apr 19, 25 –Apr 27 (RL); 15 past Fifty Rd Apr 5 (KM); 68 off Bronte Apr 20 (MJ); six off Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*) and 240 off Green Rd (RD,BC) Apr 30.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** One at Desjardins Canal, Dundas [HM] Apr 3-25 (RD; m.obs.); two at Green Mt Rd Quarry Pond Apr 8 (KM); four at Grand River, Brantford [BR] Apr 9 (BL); two at Millgrove Loam Pits Apr 14 (BC); two at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 17-21 (CL; BC); one terr. at Dundas Marsh Apr 23 (RD,BC,JBr).

**Horned Grebe:** Seven off Burloak Waterfront Park [HL] (RD *et al.*) and eight off Green Rd (JBr) Apr 9; one at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC); three off LaSalle Marina Apr 11 (RD); nine off Shoreacres [HL] Apr 29 (PMu).

**Red-necked Grebe:** Three off Fifty Point C.A. Apr 3 (RD,BC); 125 off Burloak Waterfront Park Apr 9 (RD *et al.*); one terr. pair at Skyview Park, Bronte [HL] Apr 11 (RC,GS); 30 off Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (WR); 17 off Green Rd Apr 30 (RD,BC).

**WESTERN GREBE#:** One off Port Credit Harbour [PL] Apr 27\*-29 (LF; m.obs.).

**American White Pelican#:** One ad. at Grand River, Brantford Apr 8\*-22 (RCh; m.obs.); one ad. at Mountsberg C.A. Apr 14 (SDv *et al.*); one ad. at Dundas Marsh Apr 14-22 (MD; m.obs.).

**American Bittern#:** One terr. at Safari Rd Wetland [HM] Apr 15\*-23 (BC; m.obs.); one terr. at Valens Rd & Conc 6 [HM] Apr 23 (RD).

**Least Bittern#:** One 1<sup>st</sup> ba. f. at Van Wagners Beach [HM] Apr 26 \* (TT; m.obs.) was record early for the HSA.

**Great Blue Heron:** Ten past Beamer C.A., Grimsby [NG] Apr 4 (NPH).

**Great Egret#:** One at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 2\*-9 (KM; m.obs.); one at Rattray Marsh Apr 12 (WR); one at York Rd Pond, Dundas [HM] Apr 17 (KWe); one over Grimsby Apr 20 (CL); one at Dundas Marsh Apr 23 (RD,BC,JBr).

**Green Heron:** Birds on Apr 27 \*: 1 –Ruthven Park (RL), 2 –Dundas Marsh (JBr), 1 –Shell Park [HL] (MJ); two at North Waterdown Wetlands Trails [HM] Apr 29 (TT).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Birds at Bronte Marsh [HL]: 12 –Apr 9 (RD *et al.*), 30 –Apr 23 (CE,DD), 38 –Apr 25 (MJ); 11 ad. at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD); three ad. at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*).

**BLACK VULTURE#:** One over Sherwood Hills Park, Grimsby [NG] Apr 17 L (CL).

**Turkey Vulture:** 444 at Beamer C.A. Apr 2 (NPH).

**Osprey:** A total of 40 birds counted at Beamer C.A. Apr 2-27 (NPH); one at Valens C.A. Apr 10 (RD,BC).

**Bald Eagle:** One ad. + one 4<sup>th</sup> ba. on a nest at N Shore of Cootes Paradise [HM] Apr 1-30 (DKD; m.obs.) were apparently unsuccessful and had abandoned the nest by mid-month (TT); a total of 25 birds counted at Beamer C.A. Apr 2-29, including 10 on Apr 27 (NPH); one pair nesting on Grand River, Brantford was feeding chicks Apr 11 (MGr) but had abandoned the nest by Apr 22 (BRn); one at Ruthven Park Apr 15 (RL); one 2<sup>nd</sup> yr. at Hendrie Valley [HL] Apr 29 (PT).

**Northern Harrier:** 19 at Beamer C.A. Apr 27 (NPH).

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 664 at Beamer C.A. Apr 27 (NPH).

**Cooper's Hawk:** One terr. at Hendrie Valley Apr 2 (RD *et al.*); one terr. pair at Shell Park Apr 9 (RD *et al.*); one terr. at Dundas Marsh Apr 23 (RD,BC,JBr).

**Northern Goshawk#:** One at Beamer C.A. Apr 11 F (NPH); one at QEW & Burloak Dr [HL] Apr 16 (MJ); one at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 27 (PMu).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Two at Beamer C.A. Apr 30 (NPH).

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Birds at Beamer C.A.: 212 –Apr 12 \*, 1749 –Apr 22, 1748 –Apr 24, 4464 –Apr 27 provided the highest spring one day count for the HSA (NPH); one terr. pair at Dundas Valley C.A. [HM] Apr 25 (KWi,AWi); 97 roosting at Rock Chapel [HM] Apr 27 (SD).

**SWAINSON'S HAWK#:** One light morph ad. at 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E & Dofasco Trail Apr 9 \* (GSh).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** 247 at Beamer C.A. Apr 9 (NPH).

**Golden Eagle#:** One at Valley Inn Apr 5 F (KN); one imm. over Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School, Hamilton [HM] Apr 9 (KWi); one at Brock Rd N of Conc 4 [HM] Apr 12 (JDa); birds at Beamer C.A.: 2 –Apr 18, 1 –Apr 23, 1 –Apr 25, 3 –Apr 27 (NPH); one ad. over S Shore of Cootes Paradise [HM] Apr 22 (AD); one ad. over Central Park, Burlington [HL] Apr 29 (JA).

**Merlin#:** A total of 11 birds counted at Beamer C.A. Apr 10-27 (NPH); one terr. at James Hillier School, Brantford [BR] Apr 7-10 (BL); one at Ruthven Park Apr 8 (RL); one at Bronte [HL] Apr 8-9 (MJ; m.obs.); one at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 21 (BC); one at Webster Rd E of York [HD] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE); one at Sherwood Forest Park [HL] Apr 23 (CE,DD).

**Peregrine Falcon#:** One pair nesting at Burlington Lift Bridge [HM/HL] Apr 1-30 (RD; m.obs.); birds at Beamer C.A.: 1 –Apr 10, 1 –Apr 14, 1 –Apr 22, 1 –Apr 23, 1 –Apr 26, 1 –Apr 27 (NPH); one ad. over Edgelake Park Apr 11 (RD,CE); one at Ruthven Park Apr 12 (RL).

**Virginia Rail#:** One at Dundas Marsh Apr 7 \* (CS,AM) ties the second earliest date for the HSA; two at Slote Rd & Mineral Springs Rd Wetland [HM] Apr 25 (KWi,AWi), and one there Apr 29 (RD); one at N Shore of Cootes Paradise [HM] Apr 27 (PT); one at Windermere Basin Apr 29 (JBr); one at Kerncliff Park [HL] Apr 30 (DD,AiD).

**Sora#:** One at Grimsby Sewage Ponds Apr 17 \* (CL); one at Rattray Marsh Apr 24 (WR); two at Kerncliff Park (DD,AiD) and one at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E (JBr) Apr 30.

**American Coot:** Three at Windermere Basin Apr 12 (RD,CE); six at Green Mt Rd Quarry Pond Apr 17 (RD,BC); one at Dry Lake (RD,BC,CE) and six at Grimsby Sewage Ponds (JBr) Apr 22.

**Sandhill Crane#:** Birds at Ruthven Park: 3 –Apr 1, 1 –Apr 3, 5 –Apr 6, 1 –Apr 10 (RL); birds at Beamer C.A.: 1 –Apr 2, 2 –Apr 27, 2 –Apr 30 (NPH); two at Sideroad 20 W of First Line, Milton [HL] Apr 8 (KB,GB); one at Dundas Marsh Apr 14 (DKD), and six there Apr 20 (JBr); one at Grass Lake [WT] Apr 15 (BC); three over Central Park, Burlington Apr 29 (JA); one at Sager Rd & Conc 5 [HM] Apr 30 (RR).

**Semipalmated Plover:** One at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd Apr 30 \* (KM; m.obs.) provided a record early date for the HSA.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** One at Dundas Marsh Apr 15 \* (AD).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Two at Ruthven Park (RL) and one at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E (JBr) Apr 30 \*.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 5 \* (RL); eight at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 8 (KM); four at Powerline Rd W of 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E [HM] Apr 17 (RD,BC); five at 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E at Vinemount Swamp Apr 21 (BC); five at West River Rd, Mount Healy [HD] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**Willet#:** Birds on Apr 29 \*: 1 –Burloak Waterfront Park (JCr), 3 –Van Wagners Beach (MBr,KDe), 3 –Fifty Point C.A. (KWi,AWi).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Four at 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E at Vinemount Swamp Apr 5 \* (AD); two at West River Rd, Mount Healy Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE); two at Brock Rd N of Hwy 5 [HM] Apr 30 (RD).

**Upland Sandpiper#:** Four at West River Rd, Mount Healy Apr 22 \* (RD,BC,CE); one at Dofasco Trail & 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 24-30 (JBr; m.obs.).

**Least Sandpiper:** One at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd Apr 30 \* (KM; m.obs.).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Three at Dofasco Trail E of 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 14 \* (JBr); four at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd Apr 22 (JBr; AD).

**Dunlin:** One ba. at Valley Inn Apr 7 F (MV); three at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 9 (JBr); one ba. at Windermere Basin Apr 12 (RD,CE); six at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd Apr 22 (AD); one at Van Wagners Beach Apr 24 (CE,DD).

**Wilson's Snipe:** Four terr. at 5<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd Apr 3 (RD *et al.*), and 15 there Apr 22 (AD); one at Ridge Rd E of 8<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 8 (KM); one at Middletown Marsh [HM] Apr 9 (BC); one at Dofasco Trail E of 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 21 (CE); one at Dundas Marsh Apr 27 (JBr).

**American Woodcock:** Two at Confederation Park Apr 9 (KWi,AWi); 20 at Eramosa Karst C.A. [HM] Apr 19 (JMi).

**Little Gull#:** One ad. past Fifty Rd Apr 8 \* (KM).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 16 at Bronte Harbour Apr 6 F (MJ); 60 past Fifty Rd Apr 8 (KM); 80 at Dundas Marsh Apr 9 (JBr); 37 over Valens Rd & Conc 4 [HM] Apr 10 (RD,BC); 71 off Shoreacres Apr 11 (CE); 50 past Ruthven Park Apr 12 (RL).

**Iceland Gull#:** One 1<sup>st</sup> yr. at Woodland Cemetery Apr 2 (RD *et al.*); one ad. at Burloak Waterfront Park Apr 5-8 (MJ); one 1<sup>st</sup> yr. at CCIW [HL] Apr 8 (RD).

**Glaucous Gull:** One 2<sup>nd</sup> ba. at Suncor Pier, Bronte [HL] Apr 8 (MJ).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** Two 1<sup>st</sup> alt. at Van Wagners Beach Apr 15 (RD).

**Caspian Tern:** One at NE Shore of Harbour Apr 1 \* (RD); 74 at Dundas Marsh Apr 14 (DKD).

**Common Tern:** One off Fifty Rd Apr 5 \* (KM) provided a record early date for the HSA; one at Bronte Harbour Apr 11 (MJ); two at Windermere Basin Apr 12 (RD,CE), and 71 there Apr 24 (CE,DD).

**Forster's Tern#:** Five off Confederation Park Apr 27 \* (RD,CE); one at Burloak Waterfront Park Apr 28 (MJ); one at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (DD,CE).

**Great Horned Owl:** A pair nesting under the Plains Rd Bridge over Grindstone Creek [HL] had at least one chick Apr 25 (TT).

**Long-eared Owl#:** One at Bronte Creek Prov. Park [HL] Apr 1 L (MJ).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl#:** One at Beamer C.A. Apr 22 L (CL *et al.*).

**Chimney Swift:** One at Beamer C.A. Apr 12 \* (NPH) is the second earliest record for the HSA; one at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD); 50 at Governors & Ogilvie Rds, Dundas [HM] Apr 28-29 (RD; m.obs.).

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** One at Arkell [WZ] Apr 27 \* (GO); one at Norma Cres, Ancaster [HM] Apr 30 (SMG).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Three at Edgelake Park (CE) and one at Ruthven Park (RL) Apr 4 F; seven at Edgelake Park (RD,CE) and five at Shell Park (RC,GS) Apr 11.

**Northern Flicker:** 25 at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 21 (BC); 15 at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** One at Bronte Creek Prov Park Apr 12 (MJ); one at Beamer C.A. Apr 18 and Apr 30 (NPH); one at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (BC; m.obs.).

**Least Flycatcher:** One at Confederation Park Apr 27 \* (RD,CE); one at Ruthven Park (RL) and one at Rattray Marsh (BC; CE,DD) Apr 29.

**Eastern Phoebe:** Three at Van Wagners Ponds (CE,DD) and three at Sherwood Forest Park [HL] (CE) Apr 10.

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** One at Beamer C.A. (NPH) and one at Shell Park (MJ,AD) Apr 27 \*.

**Eastern Kingbird:** One at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 24 \* (CE,DD), and one there Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD); two at Powerline Rd W of Paddy Greene Rd [HM] (SMG) and one at Bronte Marsh (CK) Apr 30.

**Northern Shrike#:** One at 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E & Dofasco Trail Apr 2 L (BHi,JHa).

**Yellow-throated Vireo#:** One at Burloak Woods [HL] Apr 27 \* (MJ) ties the second earliest date for the HSA; one at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (BC).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** Birds on Apr 26 \*: 13 –Bronte (MJ), 2 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 4 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD), 1 –Rattray Marsh (MCR).

**Warbling Vireo:** One at Spencer Creek Trail, Dundas [HM] Apr 29 \* (MM); one at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** One at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 \* (RD *et al.*) provides the third earliest date for the HSA.

**Common Raven#:** Birds at Beamer C.A.: 1 –Apr 2, 3 –Apr 15, 2 –Apr 22, 3 –Apr 29 (NPH); one at 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E N of Green Mt Rd [HM] Apr 3 (JH,GBY,RS), and one there Apr 22 (KWi,AWi); one over Grimsby Apr 4 (CL); one at Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve [WZ] Apr 8 (DBr), was likely one of a pair nesting near there, which had two chicks Apr 23 (TT); two at Brock Rd & Conc 4 [HM] Apr 19 (MD).

**Purple Martin:** One m. past Fifty Rd Apr 5 \* (KM); one m. at Bronte Harbour Apr 6 (MJ); 12 at Beamer C.A. Apr 11 (NPH).

**Tree Swallow:** 50 at Windermere Basin (RD,CE) and 40 at Valley Inn (RD) Apr 12; 200 at Burloak Woods Apr 17 (DD); 50 at CCIW Apr 26 (RD).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** One at Bronte Harbour Apr 6 \* (MJ); six at Green Mt Rd Quarry Pond Apr 17 (RD,BC); 12 at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 24 (CE,DD).

**Bank Swallow:** One at Bronte Harbour Apr 6 \* (MJ).

**Cliff Swallow:** One at Suncor Pier, Bronte Apr 13 \* (MJ); one at Dundas Marsh Apr 15 (AD).

**Barn Swallow:** One at Bronte Apr 4 \* (MJ); 200 at CCIW Apr 26 (RD); 50 at Governors & Ogilvie Rds, Dundas Apr 28-29 (RD).

**Tufted Titmouse#:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 5-18 (RL); one at Beamer C.A. Apr 9 (NPH); one at Shoreacres Apr 10 (CE,DD).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Two at Suncor Waterfront Park, Bronte Apr 9 F (RD *et al.*).

**Brown Creeper:** Seven at Edgelake Park Apr 11 (RD,CE); 35 at Shell Park Apr 22 (JBr); 20 at Shoreacres Apr 23 (AMC,JMC).

**House Wren:** One at Sumach Dr, Aldershot [HL] Apr 12 \* (CS); one at Ruthven Park (RL) and two at Bronte (MJ) Apr 27.

**Winter Wren:** One at Edgelake Park Apr 4 F (CE); one SM at Dundas Valley C.A. Apr 25 (KWi,AWi).

**Marsh Wren#:** One at Rattray Marsh Apr 24 \* (WR); one at Starkey Hill, Arkell [WZ] Apr 25 (JPr); one at Dundas Marsh Apr 27 (JBr).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 2 F (RL); 40 at Shell Park Apr 10 (AMC,JMC); 10 at Tuck Creek Apr 12 (CE); two at Bronte Apr 27 L (MJ).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Birds on Apr 11 \*: 1 –Ruthven Park (RL), 1 –Edgelake Park (RD,CE), 3 –Bronte (MJ), 1 –LaSalle Park (RD), 1 –Shell Park (RC,GS); birds on Apr 26: 98 –Bronte (MJ), 20 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 70 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD); 25 at LaSalle Park Apr 27 (RD).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** One at Beamer C.A. Apr 2 \* (ESi) is a record early date for the HSA; one at Shoreacres Apr 12 (CE); seven at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ).

**Eastern Bluebird:** Three at Van Wagners Beach Apr 3 (RD *et al.*).

**Veery:** One at Shell Park Apr 26 \* (MJ) ties the second earliest date for the HSA.

**Hermit Thrush:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 7 F (RL); birds on Apr 26: 175 –Bronte (MJ), 25 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 100 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD).

**Wood Thrush:** One at Shell Park Apr 25 \* (CE); one at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (BC).

**Gray Catbird:** Birds on Apr 27 \*: 1 –Beamer C.A. (NPH), 2 –LaSalle Park (RD), 2 –Burloak Woods (MJ), 1 –Van Wagners Ponds (AMC,JMC).

**Brown Thrasher:** One at Dofasco Trail & 10<sup>th</sup> Rd E Apr 14 \* (JBr); one at Maple Ave & Fairview Ave, Burlington [HL] Apr 17 (IKo); one at Windermere Basin Apr 29 (JBr).

**Bohemian Waxwing#:** 100 at University of Guelph Arboretum [WL] Apr 2 (BH *et al.*); 75 at Valens C.A. Apr 6 (BM); birds at Middletown Rd S of Conc 5 [HM]: 7 –Apr 7 (BC), 120 –Apr 10 (RD,BC), 75 –Apr 11 (PMu); 100 at Conc 4 E of Westover Rd [HM] Apr 12 L (DS).

**Blue-winged Warbler:** One m. at Shell Park Apr 27\*-28 (MJ; m.obs.); one m. at Ruthven Park Apr 29 (RL).

**“Lawrence’s” Warbler#:** One m. at Dundas Valley C.A. [HM] Apr 30 \* (MM,AKe) provided a record early date for the HSA.

**Tennessee Warbler:** One at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 29 \* (KWi,AWi) ties the third earliest date for the HSA.

**Nashville Warbler:** Six at Bronte (MJ) and one at Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD) Apr 26 \*; four at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (CE,DD).

**Northern Parula:** One m. at Shell Park Apr 26 \* (MJ), and two m. there Apr 28 (MJ); one at Sherwood Forest Park Apr 27 (CE); birds on Apr 29: 1 –Rattray Marsh (CE,DD), 1 –Shell Park (BC; PMu), 1 –Spencer Creek Trail, Dundas [HM] (MM).

**Yellow Warbler:** One m. at Spencer Creek Trail, Dundas Apr 24 \* (MM); birds on Apr 26: 1 –Ruthven Park (RL), 2 –Bronte (MJ), 2 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD), 2 –Edgelake Park (JBr).

**Cape May Warbler#:** One m. at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 \* (RD,CE,DD) provided the second earliest record for the HSA.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** Birds on Apr 26 \*: 1m. –Burloak Woods (MJ), 1m. –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD), 1 –Forty Mile Creek, Grimsby [NG]; one at Sherwood Forest Park Apr 27 (CE).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** Two at Ruthven Park Apr 9 F (RL); 124 at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ), and 95 there Apr 27 (MJ); 150 at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD); 100 at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (WR); 47 at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** One m. at Shell Park Apr 22\*-23 (MJ; AMC,JMC); 10 at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ).

**Blackburnian Warbler:** One at Shoreacres Apr 26 \* (MV), and one there Apr 30 (MM,AKe).

**Yellow-throated Warbler#:** One at N Shore of Cootes Paradise Apr 23 \* (KSu) provided a record early date for the HSA; one *albilora* at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD) is the second earliest record for the HSA; one f. at Rattray Marsh Apr 28-29 (AD,JLa; m.obs.).

**Pine Warbler:** One m. at Bronte Harbour (MJ) and one at Rattray Marsh (WR) Apr 12 \*; five at Clappisons Corners Wetland [HM] Apr 19-21

(TT; BC); six at Shoreacres Apr 19 (BMo); 10 at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ); four at Confederation Park Apr 27 (RD,CE).

**Palm Warbler:** One at Burloak Waterfront Park Apr 23 \* (MJ); 21 at Bronte (MJ) and 10 at Confederation Park (RD,CE) Apr 27; 11 at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (WR); 15 at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 30 (RD *et al.*).

**Cerulean Warbler#:** One f. at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 \* (RD,CE,DD) provides the second earliest record for the HSA.

**Black-and-white Warbler:** One at Rattray Marsh Apr 24 \* (WR); birds on Apr 26: 14 –Bronte (MJ), 2 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 4 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD), 2 –Edgelake Park (JBr).

**Worm-eating Warbler#:** One at Rattray Marsh Apr 27 \* (DP).

**Ovenbird:** Birds on Apr 26 \*: 3 –Shell Park (MJ), 1 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 1 –SE Oakville [HL] (JWa).

**Northern Waterthrush:** One m. at Decewsville [HD] Apr 22 \* (RD,BC,CE); five at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ); 13 terr. at Puslinch [WL] Apr 30 (FU).

**Kentucky Warbler#:** One at Rattray Marsh Apr 27 \* (JLa; JWa) is a record early date for the HSA.

**Common Yellowthroat:** Birds on Apr 30 \*: 1 –Beamer C.A. (NPH), 1 –Fifty Point C.A. (RD *et al.*), 1 –Fletcher Creek Ecological Preserve (FU).

**Hooded Warbler#:** One m. at Shell Park Apr 27\*-30 (MJ; m.obs.).

**Eastern Towhee:** One at Edgelake Park Apr 4 F (CE); one SM at Conc 4 E of Brock Rd [HM] Apr 10 (RD).

**American Tree Sparrow:** One at Shoreacres (RD,CE) and three at Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD) Apr 26.

**Chipping Sparrow:** One at St. George St, Brantford [BR] Apr 10 \* (BL); 10 at Confederation Park Apr 24 (CE,DD).

**Clay-colored Sparrow#:** One at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 \* (RD,CE,DD) provided a record early date for the HSA.

**Field Sparrow:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 7 F (RL); two SM at Middletown Rd & Conc 4 [HM] Apr 11 (BC); five at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD).

**Vesper Sparrow:** One at Bronte Creek Prov Park Apr 20 \* (MJ); one at Indiana Rd W of Hwy 56 [HD] Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE).

**Savannah Sparrow:** Three at Bronte Creek Prov Park Apr 6 \* (MJ); five SM at West Flamborough [HM] Apr 10 (RD,BC).

**Fox Sparrow:** One at Sunrise Cres, Dundas [HM] Apr 6 F (RD); eight at Sherwood Forest Park Apr 10 (CE); birds on Apr 11: 10 –Bronte (MJ), 12 –Sherwood Forest Park (CE), 10 –Edgelake Park (RD,CE); four at Beamer C.A. Apr 13 (NPH); five at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD).

**Lincoln’s Sparrow:** Birds on Apr 27 \*: 1 –Ruthven Park (RL), 1 –Burlington Beachstrip [HL] (RD,CE), 1 –Van Wagners Ponds (PMu); one at Shell Park Apr 28 (CE); one at Rattray Marsh Apr 29 (WR).

**Swamp Sparrow:** One SM at Conc 6 & Valens Rd [HM] Apr 10 F (RD); one at Ruthven Park Apr 12 (RL).

**White-throated Sparrow:** Three at Shoreacres Apr 10 F (CE,DD); birds on Apr 26: 292 –Bronte (MJ), 35 –Shoreacres (RD,CE), 150 –Van Wagners Ponds (RD,CE,DD).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** One at Beamer C.A. Apr 21 F (NPH); one at Mount Healy Apr 22 (RD,BC,CE); one at Sunrise Cres, Dundas Apr 25 (RD); one at Burloak Waterfront Park Apr 27 (MJ).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** 40 at Edgelake Park Apr 11 (RD,CE); 35 at Fifty Point C.A. Apr 21 (BC).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Birds on Apr 27 \*: 1m. –Middletown Marsh (BC), 1 –Ruthven Park (RL), 1m. –Westover Rd N of Conc 8 (PS).

**Bobolink:** One at Ruthven Park Apr 26 \* (RL) ties the second earliest date for the HSA; one SM at East Mountain Rail Trail at Dickenson Rd [HM] Apr 27 (PWa).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Two at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 3 (RD *et al.*); one at Windermere Basin Apr 12 (RD,CE).

**Western Meadowlark#:** One at Shell Park Apr 11 \* (RC,GS).

**Rusty Blackbird:** Four over Woodland Cemetery Apr 2 (DD); ten at Vinemount Swamp [HM] Apr 10 (RD); three at Ruthven Park Apr 16 (MF); 16 at Bronte Apr 26 (MJ), and 29 there Apr 27 (MJ); 200 at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 26 (RD,CE,DD); 70 at Rattray Marsh Apr 26 (MCR).

**Orchard Oriole#:** One at Van Wagners Ponds Apr 27 \* (AMC,JMC); one at Ruthven Park Apr 29 (RL).

**Baltimore Oriole:** One at Shell Park (AD) and one m. at N Shore of Cootes Paradise (PT) Apr 27 \*; two at Shoreacres Apr 29 (PMu; JBr); one at Ruthven Park Apr 30 (RL).

**Purple Finch:** Five at Edgelake Park (RD,CE) and one m. at Shell Park (MJ) Apr 11 F; birds on Apr 26: 3 –Ruthven Park (RL), 12 –Edgelake Park (JBr), 59 –Bronte (MJ), 66 –Van Wagners Beach (CE,RD,DD); 44 at Shell Park Apr 27 (DD).

**Common Redpoll:** 15 at Confederation Park Apr 3 (RD *et al.*); one at Limerick Rd, Burlington [HL] Apr 10 (AMC,JMC); three at Shell Park Apr 11 L (RC,GS).

**Pine Siskin:** One carrying nest material at Parker Ave, Ancaster [HM] Apr 2 (JH); one carrying nest material at Shoreacres Apr 11 (CE); a terr. pair at Carlisle [HM] Apr 20 (TT); two at Shell Park Apr 29 (CE).

Please send your bird records for May 2011 by Nov 10 to: Rob Dobos, 21 Sunrise Cres., Dundas, Ont., L9H 3S1; ph: (905) 628-0297; e-mail: rdobos@cogeco.ca

## New Membership Director Needed

Your knowledge and enthusiasm are needed on the HNC Board. The Board of Directors manages the activities, finances and the operations of the Club for the mutual benefit of its members.

We are looking for an interested individual who has a love for preserving our environment and natural spaces and wants to help make this Club run smoothly. The Board is action oriented; conducts time limited meetings; is fiscally accountable and responsible; makes decisions by consensus and inclusion; and provides mentorship and ongoing support to new board members. We meet weekday evenings, 10 times per year, September to June, rotating our meetings amongst various directors homes. As we handle our issues, we learn a lot about nature and environmental issues in Hamilton/Burlington and vicinity and have a good time doing so.

We are seeking a Membership Director to take over from Acting Membership Director, Jean Stollard. The Membership Director records the new and renewed memberships in the Club using our custom computerized membership database, staffs the membership table at Club Monthly Meetings and distributes the Club E-Newsletter, along with a few other related tasks. For further information or to volunteer, please contact Jean Stollard at 905-634-3538 or [jjstollard@sympatico.ca](mailto:jjstollard@sympatico.ca).



The staff at Ruthven explain what's involved in recording observations. Photos by Herman van Barneveld. Sept.24, 2011

E v e n t s   C a l e n d a r

**Upcoming Field Events, Monthly Meetings, and Other Events  
NOW IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**

Date & Time	Description	Location & Address
<p><b>Sat. Nov 5, 1:30 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b>Looking for Late Wildflowers</b> - Join Dean Gugler and Fleur-Ange Lamothe for a late season wildflower hike at Princess Point Parking lot. The warm waters of the Hamilton Harbour and the extra light from the street lights keep the flowers blooming longer than one might expect. Contact Dean Gugler and Fleur-Ange Lamothe (519)647-2371.</p>	<p><b>Princess Point Parking Lot</b>  Corner of Longwood Drive N. and Macklin Street N.</p>
<p><b>Sun. Nov. 6</b></p>	<p><b>Hamilton Fall Bird Count</b> - This will be the 38<sup>th</sup> HNC fall Bird Count, a favorite tradition for many Hamilton area birders. Call Bill Lamond to sign up or confirm your count area (519) 756-9546.</p>	
<p><b>Mon. Nov.7 7:30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Bird Study Group</b> - <i>Birds and Dinosaurs</i> by Jody Allair at the <b>Burlington Seniors' Centre</b></p>	<p>2285 New Street, Burlington, Auditorium B</p>
<p><b>Fri. Nov.11 7:30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Hamilton Amateur Astronomers' meeting.</b> Free admission with door prizes. An optional donation of non-perishable food items will be collected for local food banks.</p>	<p><b>Hamilton Spectator Building,</b> 44 Frid St., Hamilton</p>
<p><b>Sat. Nov.12 8:00 a.m</b></p>	<p><b>LAKESHORE BIRDING with Kevin McLaughlin</b>  Kevin has been leading a fall birding hike for almost 35 years and recently he has been focussing on water birds. This is a great time of year to see a wide diversity of water birds. There will be several stops. The duration will be for at least the morning and then into the afternoon if conditions are good. Leader: Kevin McLaughlin, e-mail <a href="mailto:kam50@shaw.ca">kam50@shaw.ca</a></p>	<p>Meet in the parking lot just north of Hutch's Restaurant on the Beach strip</p>
<p><b>Sun. Nov.13 2 – 3 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Experiences in Exploring the Natural Areas of Hamilton</b> by Jon Wells – Award Winning Reporter for the Hamilton Spectator . At the Hamilton Harbour Waterfront. Followed by light refreshments. Costs: \$3.- a person.</p>	<p><b>Waterfront Trust Discovery Centre</b> on Discovery Drive</p>
<p><b>Mon. Nov. 14 7:30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>HNC Membership Meeting</b> <i>Seeking Safe Passage for Amphibians Across Roads</i> by <b>Barb Beasley</b>. Over 40 years ago, people were alarmed by large numbers of roadkill on Switzerland's highways and started building tunnels for amphibians. Europeans and, more recently, North Americans have been coaxing frogs and salamanders, through trial and error, to go under roads rather than over them. Barb will talk about her efforts to create an effective tunnel system after monitoring the movement patterns and highway mortality of six species in coastal B.C.</p>	<p><b>Royal Botanical Gardens Centre</b>  680 Plains Rd West, Burlington</p>
<p><b>Sat. Nov. 19 7-9 pm</b></p>	<p>Join us for <b>A Night Out For Nature</b> as we raise funds to permanently protect land in the Pleasant View area of Dundas. This fun evening will feature a homemade spaghetti dinner made by HNC chefs, live entertainment and a spaghetti sauce cook-off! Tickets are \$25. Stay tuned for more details or contact Jen Baker at (905) 524-3339 or <a href="mailto:land@hamiltonnature.org">land@hamiltonnature.org</a>.</p>	<p><b>St. Paul's United Church</b> in 29 Park Street West, Dundas</p>
<p><b>Thu. Nov. 24 6:30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>URBAN's Year-End Reception - Thursday, November 24,</b>  The Urban-Rural Biomonitoring and Assessment Network is a citizen-science biomonitoring program that started monitoring local streams and wetlands in Hamilton in 2010. At this event we will be presenting the results of our 2010-2011 monitoring seasons, recognizing our volunteers and hosting David Miller</p>	<p><b>McMaster Innovation Park,</b>  175 Longwood Street S.</p>

	as a guest speaker. He will be giving a presentation on “Green Cities” starting at 8:00 pm. Arrival and registration starts at 6:30 pm. and the 2011 URBAN results will be presented at 7:00 pm. This event is open to the public and admission is free. Please register in advance, as seating is limited: urbanmonitoring@gmail.com. For more details please visit: www.urbanmonitoring.ca.	
<b>Thu. Nov.24 7 – 8:30 pm</b>	<b>RBG Speakers’ Series</b> Members: \$15; Non-members: \$18 per lecture, series pricing available. <i>Lake Ontario’s Round Goby Invasion: Two Strikes Against Ecosystem Health</i> with <b>Dr. Sigal Balshine</b> , associate professor at McMaster University.	<b>Royal Botanical Gardens Centre</b> 680 Plains Rd West, Burlington
<b>Sat. Dec.3, 8:00 am</b>	<b>EARLY WINTER BIRDING</b> Visit several birding hotspots in the Hamilton area. This outing will probably go till mid-afternoon, depending on the weather. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. Contact: Sheldon McGregor (905) 304-8282 or sheldonbirder@hotmail.com .	Meet at <b>Dundurn Castle</b> parking lot (where York Boulevard meets Dundurn Street N.)
<b>Sat. Dec. 3 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Needling Around with Jodi Vanderheyden</b> - Find out, just in time for Christmas, the difference between a fir and a spruce and other conifers, plus take home a copy of the book <i>Trees of Ontario</i> by Linda Kershaw. Lecture followed by a walk in the garden where participants are guided through identification in the field. RGB members \$60 prior to deadline; \$70 after deadline and to Non-members.	<b>RBG Centre/ Hendrie Park</b> 680 Plains Rd West, Burl.
<b>Sun. Dec.4 2 – 3 pm</b>	<b>Creating Ecological Improvements Within the Red Hill Valley Since the Construction of the Parkway .</b> Presentation by <b>James Rockwood</b> - Environmental Coordinator, Public Works Department, City of Hamilton. At The Hamilton Harbour Waterfront	Waterfront Trust Discovery Centre on Discovery Drive
<b>Mon. Dec. 5 7:30 pm</b>	<b>Bird Study Group</b> - Social and Marketplace	Burlington Seniors’ Center 2285 New Street, Burlington, Auditorium B
<b>Mon. Dec.12 7:30 pm</b>	<b>HNC Monthly Meeting</b> - Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's <i>Geologic Journey — World: bringing geology to the nation's living room</i> by <b>Nick Eyles</b> . This talk will explore the scientific and logistical challenges of bringing the story of 'How planet Earth works' to a wide public television audience. The story of <i>Geologic Journey — World</i> is organized around the life cycles of oceans and supercontinents; the basic cycle of Earth's long history. The talk also touches on the peoples that live in tectonically active areas and the tectonic threat to the world's emerging megacities.	<b>Royal Botanical Gardens Centre</b> at 680 Plains Rd West, Burlington

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## P r o t e c t i n g   N a t u r e   S i n c e   1 9 0 9

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club is a nonprofit organization with over 500 members dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of our wild plants, animals, and other organisms. Our goals are to promote the enjoyment of nature through environmental appreciation and conservation, to foster public interest and education in the appreciation and study of nature, and to encourage environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources. For more information, or to join us visit [www.hamiltonnature.org](http://www.hamiltonnature.org)

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