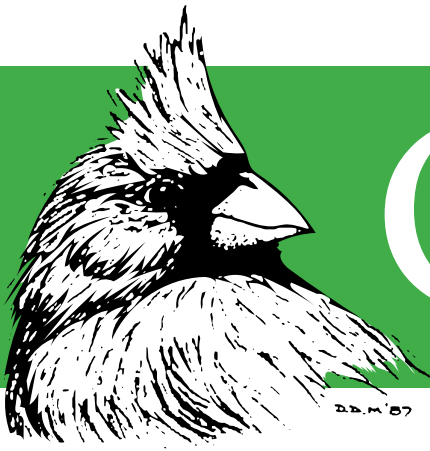




The Cardinal

Nature London's Quarterly Publication

No. 283 • Spring 2026



*Wild Turkeys resting on
Greenwood Ave. bench – R. Voros*

"To Preserve and Enjoy Nature"

About The Cardinal

The Cardinal, Nature London's quarterly publication, is published four times yearly – winter, spring, summer, and fall. Members can receive a printed copy directly in the mail or access it online. Current and back issues are available at naturelondon.com. Views expressed in *The Cardinal* are not necessarily those of Nature London or the editors.

Cardinal Submissions

Articles, notes, reports, reviews and records are welcome. Microsoft Word text documents are preferred. Most articles contain fewer than 2,000 words, but longer submissions will be considered. Photographs, drawings, maps, or other images to accompany written material should be supplied separately as clear high-quality JPEG files saved with high resolution. Please send submissions to thecardinal@naturelondon.ca.

All contributions are reviewed and edited by *The Cardinal* editorial committee. Publication may be delayed if space is limited in a pending issue.

The editorial committee reserves the right to reject submissions that are too long, contain material not relevant to the Nature London membership, or have serious factual errors. The committee may modify, omit or substitute supplied images at its discretion. Ideas, suggestions, and constructive criticisms are always appreciated.

Submission Deadlines

- 31 December (Winter issue)
- 30 March (Spring issue)
- 30 June (Summer issue)
- 30 September (Autumn issue)

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Thanks!

To the authors, artists, photographers, and many others, thank you for your contributions. Thanks to Gail McNeil, Hugh Casbourn, Mike Channon, Leslie Rockwell, and Glen Winegarden for their role in mailing the publication. Also, to Glenn Berry, webmaster, and Ric and Sandy Symmes, the E-Newsletter editors, for their help with access to *The Cardinal* online.

About Nature London

Nature London Inc. is a Registered Charity (No. 130585722RR 0001) dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of nature. Nature London is affiliated with Ontario Nature (Federation of Ontario Naturalists) and Nature Canada (Canadian Nature Federation).

More information can be obtained from the club's website naturelondon.com.

How to contact Nature London

Our website is naturelondon.com

Email us at info@naturelondon.ca

Inside this issue:

The President's Message.....	3	Conservation Action	
Highlights From Recent		Committee Report.....	14-15
Board Meetings	4	Favourite Local	
Save the Date: Nature		Birding Hotspots.....	16-17
London Banquet 2026.....	4	Outing Reports	18-21
Eco-Grants Program		Family Day at Cedarcroft.....	22
Report 2026	5	Cedarcroft Map	23
A Very Exciting Lunch Indeed..	6-7	Items for Sale	23
Ask the Cardinal	8	Nature in the City 2026: This	
Books, Naturally	9	Year Was A Great Success..	24-25
Nature London Butterfly Count		Remembering Dave Martin.....	26-27
2026 Announcement.....	9	Remembering Ann White	28-29
Bioblitz London.....	10	Eastern Redbud: A Native Plant	
TTLT Passport to Nature.....	11	For Your Garden.....	30
Nature London Outreach.....	11	Rat Overpopulation in London ...	31
Ode to Opossums	12-13		

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- Features Editor - Susan Berry
- Club News Editor - Mike Channon
- Outings Editor - Mike Channon
- Layout/Images Editor - Carrie Long
- Copy Editor - Colleen Kelly

Contact The Cardinal Committee by email:

thecardinal@naturelondon.ca

We encourage any comments, questions or concerns and look forward to hearing from you.

The President's Message



Spring is always a hopeful and energizing season for Nature London, a time when renewal is visible all around us and our connection to nature feels especially strong. As longer days return, so do familiar signs of the season: the peent of an American Woodcock, the calls of Spring Peepers, budding trees in Cedarcroft, and opportunities to gather outdoors with fellow members. I'm continually inspired by the enthusiasm and care our organization brings to walks, talks, and conservation activities.

This spring also represents a period of positive momentum for our organization. We are making meaningful progress on modernization efforts involving our new membership and website platform, improved payment options, and expanded outreach through Instagram. At the same time, we remain firmly grounded in our core mission of conservation, education, and stewardship. Our recently approved Eco-Grants, ongoing work at Cedarcroft, and strong attendance at events like Nature in the City, Seedy Saturday and EarthFest all reflect that balance between innovation and impact.

This spring, I'm seeing a revival of Nature London core activities. Cathy McCrae has revived our long-missed bus tour to Rondeau; with its success, we hope to offer more of these events in the future. We also have Scouts and Girl Guides reaching out to us for partnerships, and thanks to our investments in Cedarcroft and the Chimney Swift Monitoring Program, we are ready to host them.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, committee members, and board, and I am deeply grateful for their commitment. Stay tuned for our volunteer social coming up on June 8th. It will be a night for us to celebrate all of your tremendous hard work!

As you enjoy the spring season, whether birding, gardening, hiking, or attending meetings, I encourage you to stay connected, participate where you can, and invite others to join us. Please sign up to be Chimney Swift monitors, volunteer at Cedarcroft, or lead a hike

this spring. Together, we continue to learn from, protect, and celebrate the natural world we share.

See you on the trails.

— Jennifer Evans



Patrons of Nature in the City 2026 visiting the Nature London display area to learn more about the club. Photo by Jennifer Evans



Photo taken after the presentation of Western Ivey's 180x Consulting group with presenters and Nature London members both in person and online. Photo supplied by Don Taves

Highlights of Recent Board Meetings



February 2026

In February, the Nature London Board approved moving forward with a new Wild Apricot website and membership system, targeted for launch by the fall, and discussed efforts to modernize outreach, including a free marketing consultation with Western Ivey's 180x Consulting group. The board reviewed potential new board members, ongoing conservation engagement, and strong attendance at the Nature in the City speaker series. Plans were confirmed for upcoming events, including the Volunteer Social on June 8 and a proposed Annual General Meeting date adjustment to improve participation. Financially, the club remains in a healthy position, and a new member was appointed to the Finance Committee. The board also decided not to renew the Urban League membership, approved next steps for Cedarcroft planning, and explored new community partnerships, such as pilot activities with local Scouts



White Trilliums at Cedarcroft by Jeff Paul

Board of Directors:

1 September 2025 – 31 August 2026

President: Jennifer Evans

president@naturelondon.ca

Vice-President: Brienna French

vicepresident@naturelondon.ca

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March 2026

In March, the Nature London Board approved the purchase of the Wild Apricot membership and website platform, with the transition planned for late July and member support sessions scheduled for the fall. The board created a new Instagram position to strengthen outreach, expanded payment options by enabling e-transfer, and discussed further modernization initiatives, including a potential digital, audio-enabled version of *The Cardinal*. Eco-Grants totalling \$13,600 were approved for three community partners supporting biodiversity conservation, habitat restoration, and early childhood nature education. Plans were confirmed for major upcoming events such as EarthFest, the Volunteer Social, and the November Awards Banquet, and the board agreed to phase out Zoom for regular monthly meetings starting in September, with presentations recorded and shared online.

– Jennifer Evans (President)

EARLY SAVE THE DATE: Nature London Awards Banquet 2026

Planning for the 2026 Nature London Awards Banquet is underway! Many details are a work in progress, so stay tuned to Nature London's information-sharing platforms for updates on guest speaker, ticket sales, menu choices, bucket raffle donations and more.

When: Friday, November 20, 2026

Time: 5:30 p.m to 9:30 p.m.

Where: Lambeth Legion.

7097 Kilbourne Rd, London, ON

Looking forward to a lovely gathering!
Cheers from the 2026 Banquet Committee

Eco-Grants Program



Eco-Grants Program: 2026 Funding Highlights

I am pleased to announce the approval of \$13,600 in Eco-Grants for 2026, supporting three community organizations whose work advances conservation, biodiversity, and environmental education in London. This year's funded projects reflect Nature London's commitment to hands-on stewardship, inclusive programming, and meaningful learning opportunities for people of all ages, from infants and families to students and volunteers.

UPPER THAMES RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) received funding for its *Biodiversity Builders Partnership*, which will employ graduate students from Western University's Master of Environment and Sustainability program. These students will help deliver on-the-ground biodiversity and habitat projects, strengthening conservation capacity while providing valuable applied learning and career experience for emerging environmental professionals.

ALUS Middlesex

The ALUS Middlesex *Crump Family Farm Community Restoration Project* will create new wetland habitat on agricultural land while engaging a diverse group of volunteers, including local high school students. The project expands wetland habitat adjacent to a community planting event funded by a 2025 Eco-Grant last year. Participants will learn about habitat design, restoration planning, and implementation while contributing directly to biodiversity and ecosystem health on the landscape.

childREACH

Funding was also approved for Childreach's Wild Babies program, which introduces infants (ages 0–18 months) and their caregivers to nature through weekly outdoor experiences. The program blends short walks, songs, and storytelling to help families build confidence in spending time outdoors, fostering an early connection to nature and encouraging lifelong appreciation for the environment.

Together, these Eco-Grants support conservation that is practical, educational, and community-driven, reflecting Nature London's mission to protect nature while inspiring people to connect with it.

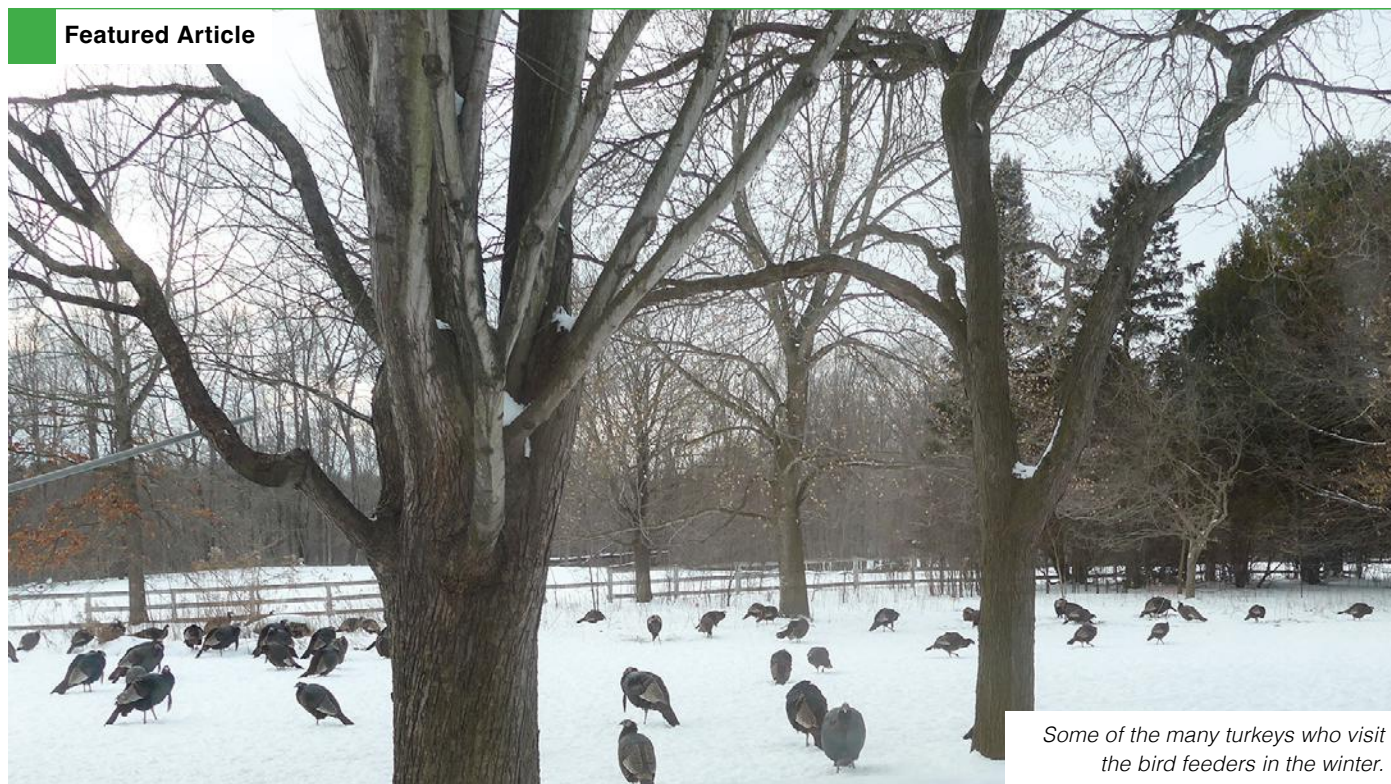
Thank you to our amazing Eco-Grants Committee this year, including Carol Agocs, Garry Cruickshank, Susan Hall, Lesley Pergau, Cathy Quinlan, and Lora Yurdakul.

– Jennifer Evans
Eco-Grants Chair

Organization	Project Name	Focus Area	Grant Amount
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)	Biodiversity Builders Partnership	Habitat conservation, student engagement, biodiversity	\$3,600
ALUS Middlesex	Crump Family Farm Community Restoration Project	Wetland creation, community restoration	\$5,000
Childreach	Wild Babies	Early childhood nature education	\$5,000
Total Approved Funding			\$13,600



Photo by Katrin Bolovisova from pexels.com



Some of the many turkeys who visit the bird feeders in the winter.

A Very Exciting Lunch Indeed

Introduction

We live on a country property just outside of London. Some members may recall me giving my “Turkey Talk” at a Birding Wing meeting back in 2007.

Wild turkeys were extirpated from Ontario by the early 1900s, but started to be reintroduced into Ontario in the mid-1980s. In 2002, 21 turkeys were reintroduced just behind our property at the Delaware Sportsmen Conservation Association. Those turkeys found our bird feeders, and turkeys have been visiting ever since.

The number of turkeys has grown since the birds were introduced. We now often get 70 birds visiting our feeders and have had over 100 at times. During the winter months when there is lots of snow, the flock spends most of the day in our backyard. All year long, they roost at night in the trees at the back of our property.

Over the years, we have been fortunate to watch these birds and see the various interactions they have with

other wildlife. On February 9th, while my husband and I were having lunch and the turkeys were doing the same, we witnessed a very rare interaction indeed.

The Interaction

We all had a very exciting lunch indeed, especially the turkeys. About three turkeys were just hanging out in the field in front of the tree line, while the rest of the flock was in our yard.

All of a sudden, a big bird flew out of nowhere and dove right at the three field turkeys. The noise from the turkeys in the field and all the turkeys in the yard, was really, really loud. All the yard turkeys looked over at the field turkeys with their heads up, and then they started to run for cover under the grove of trees in the corner of the yard.

After diving at the turkeys in the field, the big bird flew up into the trees just above them. A few minutes later, the big bird took another dive at them and ended up sitting in the snow while the field turkeys flew over to the yard.

The big bird flew after them and soared right over our house, just skimming the trees. I got a really good look at it - an immature Golden Eagle. What a sight! The eagle circled back and came in low again, and the turkeys that were not under the trees crowded right up against the house.

After a couple of more passes, and without any luck, the eagle flew back over the trees and disappeared. I thought it might be pulling a trick I have seen hawks do, pretending they are gone and waiting until the birds start coming out again before making another pass at the birds. But the eagle did not play that trick.

However, I wouldn't be surprised if it shows up again. After all, about 70 turkeys all in one place must look pretty appetizing.

Unfortunately, the eagle did not stay still long enough for Eric to get a picture, but maybe next time! Although Bald Eagles do visit here from time to time, I have never seen them actively hunt the turkeys like this Golden Eagle did.



Hens bring their poults to eat under the feeders in July.



Toms strutting in the winter

Why So Many Turkeys and How They Spend Their Time

The reason turkeys were extirpated from Ontario was due to overhunting and habitat loss. Although they are hunted today, the numbers that can be harvested are carefully regulated.

The wooded area behind our home is a nature sanctuary. The flock of turkeys there enjoys an ideal habitat that consists of well over 100 acres of woods and wetlands. Turkeys are omnivores, and food is plentiful, not only what they eat from the natural areas, but what they can glean from leftover grains harvested in the farm fields that surround their habitat. The turkeys that live there consider our property, and ourselves, part of that sanctuary, so we get to witness how they live their lives.

Turkeys are fowl and scratch the ground to find their food. When ice and snow cover the ground, they have a hard time, so they spend those winter days in our yard waiting for the bird feeders to be filled and for corn to be scattered on the snow.

Winter is also the time when the toms (the males) start to vie for breeding rights by fighting with other toms and strutting to impress the hens (the females).

In April, the flock starts to break up. The hens find a secluded spot on the ground to make their nests and incubate their eggs. After the eggs hatch, they spend the summer raising their young. The toms spend the summer in small groups.

Around July, the hens will sometimes bring their poults to the yard to glean under the feeders.

In the fall, the flock members come together again to spend the winter, and their life cycle repeats.

Each evening throughout the year, the turkeys fly up into the trees behind our home to roost for the night.

— Karen Auzins
Photos by Eric Auzins



Turkeys roosting in trees at night



Turkeys sitting on the fence waiting for bird feeders to be filled



Ask the Cardinal



Perplexed By Wasp Nests

Are those wasps that made both of these nests? I can see the wasps in the one nest, but did they also make the other one? Will they add a covering to the nest that has all the wasps visible on it?

Signed, Wasp-cautious

Dear Cautious,

Whoa, now those are two nests I would not build my nest next to. Property values would go down!

You are right, wasps made both of those nests, but they were made by two different kinds of wasps. Wasps are grouped in the Hymenopteran family of insects called Vespidae. Two of the subfamilies of Vespidae, Polistinae and Vespinae, are often called the paper wasps because of their papery nests. Species from these subfamilies are eusocial, which means that they have a social structure of mostly female workers, a few males, and royalty – the queens. They divide the labour of maintaining the colony, and because of that, they can have nests containing many, sometimes hundreds, of individuals. Not all wasps are eusocial; in fact, the majority of species in Canada are solitary and have small, usually well-hidden nests in cavities or in the ground – little to worry about there for a cautious wasp-watcher.

We can easily identify the makers of the uncovered nest as European Paper Wasps (*Polistes dominula*). Polistinae wasps are considered more primitive than Vespinae wasps. The queen starts her nest in a sheltered, but not hidden, place above ground. I have watched them building their nest, and it is very interesting. Experts in a form of papier mâché, they scrape fibers from exposed wood or plant stems and mix them with saliva to make the material with which they build their nests. If you have an older deck, you may see them industriously at work.

A relatively recently introduced species to North America, the European Paper Wasp is from, you guessed it, Europe as well as North Africa. Its nests do not get large enough to house hundreds of individuals, but it is an aggressive species that you should watch from a distance, especially if you are allergic to being stung.

The other paper wasp subfamily, Vespinae, has species that build nests above ground, often hanging in trees, and cover their nests with a paper covering, as the other photo shows. Inside the ball are multiple layers of cell structures for raising the larvae. Vespinae wasps can have larger colonies than Polistinae, and they are even more adept in their papier mâché skills, making balls that can last nearly through the winter like this one. They do not reuse their nests, but make new ones every year.

Two wasp species around here make covered nests like this one. Most of the conspicuous aerial nests are built by the Aerial Yellowjacket

(*Dolichovespula arenaria*). But this nest with its patterned paper is a nest of the Bald-faced Hornet (*Dolichovespula maculata*). Black and white, the Bald-faced Hornet is one of the most striking and largest of the wasps in our area. Fortunately, it is less aggressive than the smaller yellowjackets.

The most pestiferous wasps around my nest are the Eastern Yellowjacket (*Vespula maculifrons*) and the German Yellowjacket (*Vespula germanica*). They love picnics in August and September. They nest in the ground or in cavities in trees, walls, or attics and can have very large colonies. A few months yet before we have to avoid them.

The wasp queens will soon be emerging from their winter hiding spots to begin this year's colonies and nests. They are entertaining to watch and very photogenic! Enjoy them as they go about making their livings, but don't get really close.

*Yours,
The Cardinal*



Left: Nest of European Paper Wasps from the Polistinae subfamily

Above: Bald-faced Hornet nest. Bald-faced Hornets are from the Vespinae subfamily



Trees in Canada

By John Laird Farrar. Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service and Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, 2021. 502 pages.

Trees in Canada is the definitive guide to tree species in Canada. Now in its eighth edition, *Trees in Canada* continues a tradition that began with the publication of *Native Trees of Canada* in 1917. The title was changed in 1995 when non-native or introduced tree species were included for the first time.

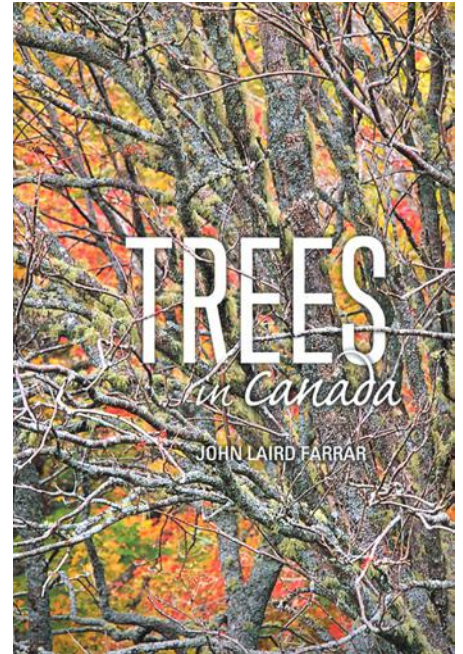
The author notes that the book is intended for both the professional forester and the amateur naturalist. A Reader's Guide explains how the book is organized and provides illustrated descriptions of the technical terms used throughout the book.

To aid identification, the trees are organized into 12 groups based mainly

on leaf shape and arrangement. These groups are described on the endleaves at the front and back of the book. Individual trees in each group are covered in two-page layouts that include written information, range maps, detailed drawings and colour photographs. Dichotomous keys are also provided for identifying trees in leaf and in winter.

This edition is the product of an eight-year revision with contributions by specialists across Canada and the United States. It contains a wealth of information vital to learning about the trees that enrich our environment and our lives.

— Susan Berry



Join us for Nature London's annual Skunk's Misery Butterfly Count on Sunday, July 5, 2026.

No experience is necessary!

Meet at the Newbury Hospital parking lot at 8:30 a.m. for instructions.

Picnic lunch rendezvous at Little Kins Parks in Wardsville.

More details will be announced in the Nature London E-Newsletter.

**You can contact cathyquinlan2@gmail.com,
or the organizer, George at george.w.prieksaitis@ca.ey.com**

The Clear Creek Butterfly Count is on July 28, 2026.

Bioblitz London

Discover nature. Connect with community. Support conservation.

Bioblitz London is a community-led effort that brings people together to explore local natural areas and contribute real, usable biodiversity data through iNaturalist. It's all about getting people outside to look closely and discover just how much nature is living right here in our city.

If you haven't used iNaturalist (or "iNat") before, it's a free app that lets you take photos of plants, animals, fungi, and other living things and upload them as observations. A combination of image recognition software and a global community of naturalists helps identify what you've found. Those observations don't just sit there, but get put to work! Around the world, scientists, conservation groups, and land managers use iNaturalist data to track species, monitor changes over time, and support conservation decisions. In London, I have heard of iNat data being used by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, Thames Talbot Land Trust, and ReForest London for various conservation initiatives, such as tracking invasive species or locating species at risk. In other words, your curiosity can actually help protect nature.

In London, over 5,000 iNat users have documented over 168,000 observations from over 6,000 species. That's pretty good, but I would like to see those numbers grow. Particularly,

the number of people involved in making observations. To help with this, I started the City Nature Challenge for London in 2023. This is a global event where hundreds of cities around the world collaborate to document as much local biodiversity as possible over a few days at the end of April every year. In 2025, we began to participate in the Great Canadian Bioblitz, which runs in September and aims to get a snapshot of biodiversity in Canada. You may have noticed in my writing that the "I" turned into a "we". As interest grew, I teamed up with other enthusiastic iNaturalist lovers to make more opportunities to get people outside and keep observing. And so, Bioblitz London was born.

Our goal now is to create regular opportunities for people to explore nature together. Going forward, Bioblitz London plans to host monthly events throughout the year, including bug hunts, lightsheeting (aka "mothing"), fungi forays, and other themed bioblitzes. These are relaxed, social events where people can wander, photograph, ask questions, and learn from one another. No prior knowledge is needed, and you don't have to be an expert naturalist to join in. We will also continue to host occasional guided nature walks with experienced naturalists to give people the opportunity to learn more about nature in the beautiful place we call home. And, of course, we'll make some iNat observations along the way.

Getting involved is easy. Download the free iNaturalist app, create an account, and come out to an event. Bioblitz London volunteers will help you get started and show you how to turn your nature photos into observations that really matter.

To find upcoming events, learn more, and stay in the loop, visit bioblitzlondon.ca and follow Bioblitz London on social media ([@CNCLdnOnt](https://twitter.com/CNCLdnOnt)). Whether you're brand new to noticing nature or already an avid observer, we would love to have you come explore with us.

— Kari Moreland, Nature enthusiast



Above: Bioblitz participants take photos to upload onto iNaturalist. Photo from Bioblitz London

Right: QR Code to download iNaturalist App.



New to iNaturalist?

Here are a few useful tips to avoid common mistakes as you get started:

- Each observation is about a single organism (photos of different organisms should be uploaded as their own separate observations)
- Multiple photos of the same organism are helpful (e.g., leaves, flowers and stem of a plant all uploaded as one observation)
- Check that the date and location are correct (since these are essential for identification and research)
- Make it clear what you're observing (crop photos to focus on one organism or add notes)
- Add an identification (the app will make a recommendation and the iNat community will confirm/edit)
- Check your notifications (the iNat community will help recommend identifications and make comments; don't click "Agree" on someone else's identification unless you can identify it yourself!)

TTLT Passport to Nature

2026–2027

Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) is excited to announce the Passport to Nature program for 2026-2027. Returning for its eighth season, this popular program offers a series of 12 nature-themed events from April 2026 to March 2027. The early events are over, but don't worry, there are many more events to come.

Many of the outdoor Passport to Nature events take place at TTLT nature reserves. In some cases, you will visit reserves that are not normally open to visitors. These trips provide a rare chance to experience these special places in person.

In July, you will have the opportunity to learn about meadow wildflowers. In October, your options are fungi and trees. Registration for each Passport event opens one month before the date of the activity.

In addition to the Passport items, this year's booklet gives information on

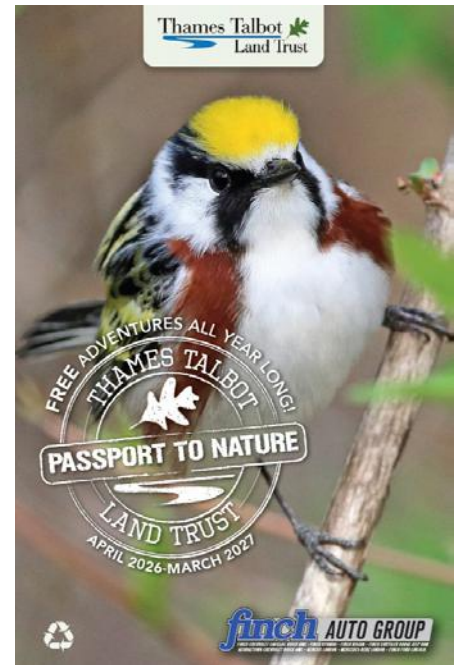
other TTLT activities. These include stewardship events at TTLT reserves, where you can learn more about TTLT and participate in its efforts to protect, restore, and nurture. There are opportunities to help with wildflower gardening, seed collecting, or management of invasive plants, to name a few.

There is no charge for any Passport to Nature events, but advance registration is required. You can find information about all events and register for them at **Thames Talbot Land Trust: Passport to Nature**. The Passport booklet is available as a flipbook or for download in PDF format. Please check the website regularly for updates on events. Copies of the Passport to Nature booklet will be available through sponsors, at events, from local tourism offices and other locations throughout the region.

These free events are possible because of the generous sponsoring organizations that are listed in the

Passport booklet and on the TTLT website. Please consider using their services. Thank you to Nature London for being one of those sponsors!

— David Wake



NL Outreach Involvement

On Saturday, March 7, 2026, Nature London had a table at Carling Heights Community Centre for London Middlesex Master Gardeners' Seedy Saturday event. Attendees were busy buying and swapping seeds, listening to guest speakers, and learning about local groups. Nature London volunteers were busy answering questions from curious visitors. Many interested families and individuals walked away with club brochures. We hope to soon welcome them as new members.

Nature London will have a presence at other events this year. If you would like to volunteer for community outreach, contact volunteers@naturelondon.ca.



Right: Nature London volunteers Leslie Rockwell and Carol Agocs answering questions at Seedy Saturday 2026
Photo by C. Long

Ode to Opossums

Last summer, we expanded our container gardens of vegetable and fruit plantings near our house. We picked up a small peach tree during one of ReForest London's tree giveaways and kept it beside our pergola until we could plant it. As the first showing of fruit grew, it was nibbled one night and even more the next night, and I was curious to know who the culprit could be.

That's where viewing the footage from our two trail cameras with night vision capabilities came in handy. We were able to see the usual nighttime visitors, which included curious Cottontails, Skunks, and the annual family of Raccoons traveling through our yard.

However, one night we caught something new on camera. The footage was distant and hard to make out, but it looked like, GASP, a giant rat. Oh no, I thought. Had I set up an all-you-can-eat buffet right outside our door for rodents that have become a problem in our city? I had already lost all my bean plants to the cutest little Cottontail who snipped them off one by one at ground level. But I like rabbits, so he got a free pass. On the other hand, I didn't want to attract rats.

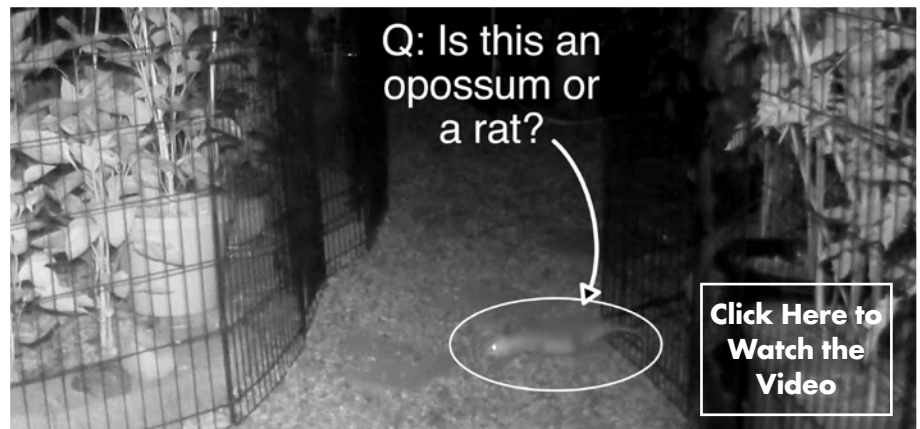
I wasn't exactly sure what I was seeing when I viewed the video on my phone, so we copied the footage to view it on our desktop computer screen. After some debate, we realized it was an Opossum. Whew! Some indicators were larger size, front-facing eyes, bigger ears, a thicker tail held higher off the ground, and Opossums move more slowly with a waddling gait. Thankfully, the term scurrying away like rats does not apply to Opossums.

We were happy to have this visitor, even if it did perhaps nibble on a small unripe peach. I didn't know much about Opossums, but I did know they eat ticks. That fact alone meant we hoped to see it on our cameras more often! Unfortunately, before this sighting, the

only one we had previously found in the yard was dead, either killed by the cats that roam the neighbourhood, or perhaps poisoned by one of our neighbours who thought they had a rodent problem.

We didn't find evidence that an Opossum had taken up residence in the yard, although our shed would be a good choice, especially in the winter. It was probably just passing through, and we only saw it in a couple of videos after that. Hopefully, one will appear again this summer, but similar to the Raccoon family that lived under our deck, we don't try to set up a free hospitality suite and encourage them to move in forever.

— C. Long



YouTube.com: Nature London. Opossum

Above: A still image of an Opossum from trail camera video (C. Long)

Left: Female Opossum with joeys on her back (Adobe Stock Image by Evelyn)

Photos on Opposite Page:

Upper Right: Opossum carrying leaves with its tail from Jerry Reynolds' trail camera shown on North Carolina Museum of Nature Science's YouTube page

Middle Right: Opossum on a trash container at Western University by Trisha Niles

Lower Right: Opossum in spring by Trish Snider

Lower Left: Opossum in winter by Tristan Ducharme



Fast Facts About Opossums

1. Virginia Opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) are from the southeastern United States. They traveled to Southern Ontario via trucks and trains and stayed, because with climate change the winters are milder and food sources more available.
2. Opossum, pronounced 'a possum', is not the same as a Possum which is native to Australia, New Guinea, and New Zealand.
3. They are Canada's only marsupial. Up to 13 babies (joeys) are born furless, about the size of a dime, and blind. They continue to develop inside the mother's pouch and leave for short periods at about two months old.
4. Young Opossums ride on their mother's back, and after three months of age, they are fully weaned and independent.
5. They build dens in woodpiles, abandoned animal burrows, under porches, and in entry holes in buildings. They can use their tails to carry nesting material to their dens. After collecting leaves and other material with their mouths and feet, they transfer the collected bundle to their prehensile tail, which wraps around and helps hold the bundle while they move it to the den.
6. They are omnivores who forage at night. They will eat insects, such as ticks, worms, small mammals, woody plants, berries, and even scavenge for human food if garbage is not contained.
7. They are short-lived due to predators and being hit by cars.
8. Our winters are difficult for them, and they can easily develop frostbite, especially on their ears and tails. If you find an Opossum in distress, contact a local wildlife rehabilitation centre such as [Salthaven Wildlife and Rehabilitation Centre](#). Salthaven overwinters Opossums because winter survival is so challenging for them.
9. They have 50 teeth and will display them if they feel threatened, but they are not aggressive and are often shy of people.
10. They are famous for 'playing possum', i.e., they play dead. They can curl up on their side, hang their tongues out, and emit an odour from their scent glands similar to the smell of rotting meat to ward off predators. They can remain in this state for up to six hours. When the danger has passed, they get up and walk away.

Online Reference:

[Thecanadianencyclopedia.ca: Opossum](#) and [Breakfasttelevision.ca: Why Opossums are Canadas Most Misunderstood Marsupial](#)



Videos of Opossums carrying leaves and other woody materials with their tails:

[Youtube.com: North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences: Leaf-carrying opossum](#)

[Youtube.com: MyBackyardBirding: Opossum's Amazing Prehensile Tail Carries Nest Building Material](#)

[Youtube.com: Busch Wildlife: The Virginia Opossum: Nature's Misunderstood Marsupial](#)



Conservation Action



Conservation Action Committee (CAC) Report

Changes to Conservation

Authorities in Ontario

On March 10, 2026, the Ontario government posted a decision on the Environmental Bill of Rights regarding the proposed consolidation of conservation authorities. The decision indicates that the consolidation boundaries have been refined and are now final (refer to the map below).

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) will be consolidated with the:

- Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA)
- St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA)
- Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)

According to the province, there will be no changes to the programs and services offered locally by conservation authorities. How this will work after the transition will be determined by additional regulations passed by the government and the work of the Transition Committee for the new Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA).

It is anticipated that there will be no direct impact on the species at risk program Scott Gillingwater operates as it is a local program supported by grants and donations. Nor will this affect the current contract with the City of London for the management of its Environmentally Significant Areas.

As part of the reorganization, local Watershed Councils are to be established to ensure watershed management continues to be informed by local knowledge and input. These councils are expected to include members from the area First Nations. The criteria for membership and how these councils will operate will be set out by the province in a regulation later this year.

Governance Changes

The current UTRCA Board consists of 17 municipalities from London, Middlesex County, Oxford County, Huron, Perth and Stratford. London has four representatives who comprise 50% of the votes on budget matters. It is unclear how much voting weight London will have in the new WLERCA.

The new provincial plan would limit participating municipalities to those that are at the upper- and single-tier levels, as shown in the table opposite. The number of members appointed to each authority will be around 15 to 20 individuals, with population-based representation, the details of which will be set out in regulation. The plan is for each participating municipality to be guaranteed a member, and for limitations to be placed on the number of members appointed by any one municipality to ensure fairness and balance. It is unknown how many members will be allocated to London. Members will be appointed by the

municipal councils elected in the October 26, 2026 municipal election.

The following are the current 17 member municipalities of the UTRCA:

London and Middlesex:

City of London
Municipality of Middlesex Centre
Municipality of Thames Centre
Township of Lucan-Biddulph

Huron, Perth, St. Marys, and Stratford:

Township of Perth East
Township of Perth South
Town of St. Marys
Municipality of South Huron
City of Stratford
Municipality of West Perth

Oxford:

Township of Blandford-Blenheim
Township of East-Zorra Tavistock
Town of Ingersoll
Township of Norwich
Township of South-West Oxford
City of Woodstock
Township of Zorra

Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority

Essex Region CA

St. Clair Region CA

Lower Thames Valley CA

Upper Thames River CA



The new WLERCA would have representation from the municipalities listed in the chart. The seven counties (*) collectively represent 39 lower-tier municipalities.

Participating Municipalities	
Upper Tier – 7 Counties*	Single Tier – 6 Municipalities
Essex	Chatham-Kent (Municipality)
Lambton	London (City)
Elgin	Pelee (Township)
Huron	Stratford (City)
Middlesex	St. Marys (Town)
Oxford	Windsor (City)
Perth	

What’s Not Supposed to be Changing
Each new regional conservation authority (CA) is to continue to fulfill provincially mandated programs such as drinking water source protection under the Clean Water Act, regulating development and other activities in areas at risk of natural hazards like flooding and erosion (e.g., floodplains, shorelines, watercourse and wetlands), flood forecasting and

warning, and managing their lands and recreational trails so that Ontarians have access to local natural areas and outdoor activities.

The province has also provided the following information:

• Transition to the consolidations will occur throughout 2026 and will have an effective date of early 2027.

- Transition committees for each regional CA will be established. Each predecessor CA will appoint one municipally elected member and its Chief Administration Officer (CAO) as members of the transition committee.
- The Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency will appoint a Project Executive to each transition committee. This individual will become the inaugural CAO for the CA for up to 24 months. The Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency will provide oversight for the new regional CAs. It will have a provincially appointed board. The province is budgeting \$20 million to set up this agency.

– Sandy Levin
Conservation Action Committee Chair
conservation@naturelondon.ca

Suncatcher Awards 2026

At the Members’ Night meeting, held on April 8, 2026, President Jennifer Evans presented Suncatcher Awards to Linda Bristow and Sylvia White. The Suncatcher Award was established to thank members who have served Nature London on the executive or on a committee for three years or more.

Linda Bristow was recognized for helping create a sense of community as she and her husband Jim extended a warm welcome and provided refreshments to Nature London members at club meetings.

Sylvia White was honoured for providing long-distance consultation and access to her personal web server for many years as Nature London developed its web presence and connectivity for members. Her mother, Muriel Andreae, accepted the award on her behalf.



Jennifer Evans and Linda Bristow



Jennifer Evans and Muriel Andreae



Recipients of the Suncatcher Award receive a stained glass ornament of a cardinal.

Photos by Don Taves

Favourite Local Birding Hotspots

We asked some members who are avid birders to share their favourite local spots to visit during spring migration. If you haven't visited these places, we encourage you to explore what they have to offer this year or in the future.

Woodcock Street

London, ON.

Behind the Mandarin, at the end of Woodcock Street by the pond, you may be able to see breeding woodcocks doing their mating sky dance in late March to mid-April.

Jennifer Evans

Fanshawe Conservation Area

1424 Clarke Road, London, ON.

A gold mine for migrating birds. A good number of habitats harbour nesting birds as well as host many migrants that follow the river as a leading line for migration.

Pete Read

Westminster Ponds Environmentally Significant Area (ESA)

696 Wellington Road, London, ON.

An ultimate source in the city for birders looking for migrant birds. So many great birding experiences await people on the various trails surrounding the ponds during the spring. *Pete Read*

Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA

29 Doncaster Avenue, London, ON.

There are several places I like to go birding in the spring, and Medway is one of them. I'm not looking for any specific birds, but there are many to see there.

Lisette Verbeem

Kilally Meadows ESA

1195 Adelaide Street North, London, ON.

Depending on the year, in the spring, there can be a great selection of warblers along with resident Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Baltimore Orioles, and American Woodcock. *Cathy McCrae*

The Coves ESA

1 Cove Road, London, ON.

In early to mid-May, the boardwalk, west of the German Canadian Club parking lot, is a good spot to watch for warblers, both high in the trees and flitting on the low shrubbery. I also look for Eastern Wood-Pewee, Gray Catbird, Eastern Phoebe and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Behind the German Canadian Club and soccer fields, I look for sparrows, Eastern Towhees and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. I also check the mudflats for shorebirds and herons. *Stacey Jaczko*



Indigo Bunting – Paul Nicholson



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – Gerard Pas

Aylmer Wildlife Management Area

10594 Hacienda Road, Aylmer, ON.

Once there is open water, there will be hundreds of Tundra Swans, and in the back ponds, there are quite a few different ducks.

Evelyn Rogers

Along with waterfowl, we have seen Eastern Bluebirds, warblers, sparrows, robins, catbirds, mockingbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks, harriers, Horned Larks and eagles.

Nick and Liz Bell

Yarmouth Natural Heritage Area

47502 Sparta Line, Sparta, ON.

It's farther afield than within London, but it has good sightings of Pileated Woodpecker, and many songbirds, such as tanagers, gnatcatchers, orioles and more. *Leslie Rockwell and Glen Winegarden*

Cade Tract

4695 Line 5 Road, Perth South, ON.

I lead an annual Nature London walk to the Cade Tract near St. Marys in spring, and it is a great place to see orioles, Red-winged Blackbirds and, if we are lucky, Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks. *Cathy Quinlan*

Komoka Provincial Park South

503 Gideon Drive, London, ON.

Eastern Bluebirds and Meadowlarks arrive in early spring. Later, there are the Field Sparrows, Song Sparrows and the elusive Grasshopper Sparrow – often heard, but difficult to see. It is also worth checking the trees for migrating warblers. In early May, I see Pine Warblers that nest in the White Pines near the entrance. Later in the month, I look for Blue-winged Warblers and Scarlet Tanagers in the wooded area.

Stacey Jaczko

A favourite place for me is Komoka Provincial Park to look for the Blue-winged and Pine Warblers, as well as the Willow Flycatcher and Grasshopper Sparrow.

Don Taves

Komoka Provincial Park North

22290 Komoka Road, Middlesex Centre, ON.

A favourite of mine with more than 200 species recorded there. “The Ponds” are old gravel pit ponds that usually hold 25 or more waterfowl at times during migration.

Pete Read

In spring, Tree Swallows nest in the boxes provided. Near the entrance, one year in early May, every small shrub or tree contained a Brown Thrasher. It was amazing, and they were gone the following day. Warblers can be seen in the woods alongside the path. I found my “lifer” Blackpoll Warbler here in late May. Breeding species that show up in May include Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird and Indigo Bunting.

Stacey Jaczko

Lower Dingman ESA

3370 Homewood Lane, London, ON.

In April, look for Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets high in the trees, as well as Hermit Thrushes on the forest floor. Check the trees along the creek for mixed flocks of warblers in early May, and into June, listen for a Scarlet Tanager singing high the treetops.

Stacey Jaczko

Strathroy Sewage Lagoons

Pike Road, Strathroy, ON.

In April, look for Wood Ducks, Blue-and Green-winged Teal and Northern Shovelers near the shore and diving ducks such as Ring-necked, Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck farther out. Binoculars are a must to see most things. Early in the year, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot and Purple Gallinule use the cattails that are found in the corners of the lagoons. Watch for Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpipers and Solitary Sandpipers, along with an assortment of harder to identify “peeps”, if you are up for a challenge. At the far end of the property, there is a small wooded area with a path towards the river, which is a good spot to look for warblers, towhees, and various woodpeckers.

Stacey Jaczko

Morrison Dam Conservation Area

RR 3, 71108 Morrison Line, Exeter, ON.

There is the opportunity to see many birds here, including ducks, herons, kingfishers, phoebes, vireos, warblers, woodpeckers, kinglets, and hummingbirds.

Nick and Liz Bell

Rondeau Provincial Park

18050 Rondeau Park Road, Morpeth, ON.

I love Rondeau Provincial Park. It has a wonderful variety of habitats, and whether I’m birding with friends or birding on my own, it’s never a mistake to be there. Through May, it’s prime time for neotropical warblers, but I love Rondeau in any season. *Paul Nicholson*

I enjoy visiting Rondeau Provincial Park. It offers a variety of habitats, with the star attractions being Purple Martins and Prothonotary Warblers. *Cathy McCrae*

We happily spend time in May at Rondeau and along the Erieau Marsh Trail to find warblers, other migrants and a show of late spring wildflowers. *Glenn and Susan Berry*

Point Pelee National Park

1118 Point Pelee Drive, Leamington, ON.

I lead spring hikes during The Festival of Birds, held during the first three weeks of May, with the potential to see over 200 species in the area. I prefer Pelee for sheer numbers of birds and the comradery of other birders, as well as the network to find some of my favourite birds, which include the striking black/white/orange Blackburnian, the multicolored Northern Parula and the striking yellow-faced Black-throated Green, and the brightly coloured American Redstart. *Pete Read*

One of my favourite spring traditions is going to Point Pelee National Park to look for warblers in their beautiful breeding plumage. Not only do the trails never disappoint, it is also a great opportunity to connect with some of my birding friends from across the province.

Susan Nagy

**For more information about local birding hotspots, purchase a
Guide to the Natural Areas of London and Region or visit birdinghotspots.org**

Outing Reports



Winter Stroll at Fanshawe Conservation Area

Sunday, February 22, 2026

A pleasant winter day greeted 21 members on February 22 as we set out for a walk in Fanshawe Conservation Area. As the group gathered in the parking lot, a number of Blue Jays were flying back and forth across the road. It prompted me to look up the collective noun for a group of Blue Jays, which is apparently a band or a party. A Downy Woodpecker and several Black-capped Chickadees perched nearby. Suddenly, a group of about 25 Cedar Waxwings appeared and perched at the far end of the lot. As we approached their location, a large group of Mourning Doves was observed in a large deciduous tree on the west side of the road.

Next, we headed across the dam. Because of fast-flowing water heading west, the only waterfowl spotted was one male Mallard. Two Rock Pigeons circled along with some American Crows that were first heard and eventually seen. Approaching the road that leads to the bottom of the dam, we began to hear Black-capped Chickadees in the trees. A large group of them visited us for some hand-feeding by the picnic table at the top of the hill. They were joined by a Red-bellied and a Downy Woodpecker, along with a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

We proceeded down the hill, noting Sycamore and White Pine trees along the way and Ninebark shrubs by the river. Two Canada Geese were seen flying to the south. One wet spot was encountered along the trail to the west. With the woods being quiet, we headed up the hill. A Brown Creeper was heard by some of the group and seen briefly by one participant.

Returning across the dam, we noted some fall wildflower and plant remains along the road, including Milkweed, Evening Primrose, Tansy, and Mullein. After a quick stop at some of our cars, we continued south to the entrance to



Above: Thames River west of the dam at Fanshawe Conservation Area

Below: Fanshawe Conservation walk participants handfeeding birds
Photos by Lissette Verbeem



the Tamarack Trail area. We again hand-fed Black-capped Chickadees and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. We followed the trail through to the stormwater management pond. It was still frozen over, but we discussed birds that can be seen there and how to access it from Huron Street. We retraced our steps back to the start of the trail and walked a short distance east along the roadway, but the surrounding area was quiet.

Some of the group continued east to pick up the trail through the pine plantation and to follow the water for a short distance. We saw a Red Squirrel, and Wilhelmina spotted a Red-tailed Hawk perched on the opposite side of the water. In all, we tallied 16 bird species during the trip. It was an enjoyable outing.

– Cathy McCrae, walk leader

Early Spring Birds in Elgin County

Sunday, March 15, 2026

A little freezing rain was predicted before our trip to Elgin County on Sunday, March 15. Nevertheless, 15 members braved the weather and met at the Aylmer Wildlife Management Area. Although there was a cold wind, the precipitation held off. We were greeted by approximately 250 Tundra Swans on the main pond, accompanied by Mallards, Canada Geese, and one male Hooded Merganser. A Cooper's Hawk flew over the water to the south.

During a quick stop at the indoor viewing stand, a Killdeer passed by, calling. We visited the water-level observation spot by the feeders and saw some Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Lots of Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds were around. Pussy Willows were beginning to open along the path to the back road. At the rear viewing stand, we added Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, and Gadwall to our lists. Song Sparrows serenaded us from the grassy areas behind the fence.

A Red-tailed Hawk circled overhead as we began the walk back to the parking lot. Returning to the bird feeders, we had better luck with a Downy Woodpecker enjoying the suet cake. Feeding on the ground were White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. As we were leaving this first site, Bald Eagles and Horned Larks were spotted across the road.

Our next stop was the westmost entrance to Archie Coulter Conservation Area. The woods were quiet when we arrived, so we left some seed by the gate. Two woodpeckers were seen, but no consensus was reached on Downy versus Hairy before they flew off. We walked across the pedestrian bridge on the left side and into the mixed woods on the opposite side of the creek. Some chickadees were seen, and a White-breasted Nuthatch was heard. The

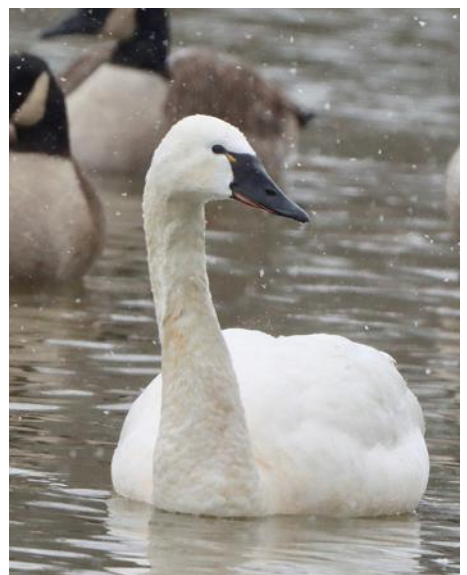
highlight was seeing a Tufted Titmouse back at the gate, visiting the birdseed we had left.

Driving towards Port Stanley along Dexter Line, a lone male Bufflehead was spotted in a roadside pond. After lunch at Mackie's, we visited Little Beach, but the wind and rough water did not assist us in making any interesting sightings. We continued to the Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons on Scotch Line. Here we found a nice collection of waterfowl, including American Black Duck, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, and Ruddy Duck. Thanks to Gord, we located the Horned Grebe that was known to be in the ponds over the past few days. A somewhat shy American Coot was also spotted by Ray along the front of the fourth pond. A Bald Eagle flew over the water and landed on the ground at the back for all to observe. Overall, we tallied over 40 bird species. Lissette and I were lucky to add Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, and American Kestrel to our lists while driving north up Centennial Drive through St. Thomas. Although windy, the precipitation held off, making it a fairly pleasant day for mid-March.

– Cathy McCrae, walk leader

Lower Left: Tundra Swans in Aylmer by Lissette Verbeem

Below: Tundra Swan by Stephen Taylor



Medway Valley Heritage Forest Walk

Saturday, March 28, 2026

It was a wonderful day to get out for a hike – a bit of snow and a cool wind soon gave way to a bit more sun, a bit less wind and a bit warmer temperature. It was about -1°C at the start and about 3°C at the finish. We hiked from 10 a.m. to about noon. I was joined by nine members. I apologize to the couple of people who were not able to find us.

Snowdrop flowers were ready to open, just waiting for some sunshine to melt the snow to show in their full glory. They were open on our return. The yellow flowers of Coltsfoot (looks a bit like dandelions, but not the same green leaf shape) and Skunk Cabbage were up, not yet in the full green leaf stage. Pussy Willows were also in bloom.

Some of the hikers were first-timers on this trail and at this trailhead location, so I gave everyone an idea as to where some of the other trailheads are and what the trail is like in different parts of this Environmentally Significant Area. This one is near 1780 Attawandaran and is mostly paved with a section through the forest that is usually woodchip covered. The trail was dry for the most part, unlike what we might have encountered had we hiked this in December when there was freezing rain, snow, and rain all within a couple of days.

We started by spotting a couple of House Finches, some robins, and a couple of grackles. Down the path to the bridge, we encountered Mallards, a few redwings, Canada Geese overhead, crows, a Cooper's Hawk and some flying TVs (oh yes – most known as Turkey Vultures) circling on the thermals. The river was moving, but there weren't many ducks. Back on the main path heading towards Sunningdale, we encountered goldfinch, robins, grackles, House Sparrows, more House Finches, a couple of black morph Eastern Gray Squirrels, Mourning Doves, Rock or Feral Pigeons, Brown-headed Cowbird,

cardinal, Eastern Phoebe (first of the season), White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Black-capped Chickadees. A juvenile Bald Eagle graced us with its presence and sat for quite a while so all of us could get a good look at it. We saw a few more Mallards in a couple of locations, as well as a Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jays, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, Chipping Sparrows, and starlings to round out our 25 or so bird species, spring flowers, and mammal species.

We made it through the forest, but by that point, it was about time to head back. A very productive wander along the Medway Creek.

– Lissette Verbeem, walk leader



Above: Juvenile Bald Eagle by Don Taves

Below: Medway Valley Heritage Forest walk participants by Lissette Verbeem

Bottom: Medway Creek by Don Taves



Early Spring at Hullett Provincial Wildlife Area

Monday, April 6, 2026

Due to forecasted rain and thunderstorms, the trip to Hullett Provincial Wildlife Area in Clinton was postponed from April 4 to Monday, April 6. As a result, only three members made the trip on a partly sunny day. It was a little surprising to see ice on several of the vernal ponds, but it soon melted as the sun came out. Our first stops were along Summerhill Line. Near the bridge, we found a nice patch of bird activity, including the usual Eastern Phoebe, along with Golden-crowned Kinglets, White-breasted Nuthatch, and two Brown Creepers. Cedar Waxwings, a Fox Sparrow and a Wilson's Snipe were heard, but not seen. On the surrounding ponds, a good selection of waterfowl was seen, including Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, and American Black Duck. A Double-crested Cormorant did a flyover. As we were getting ready to move on, a very cooperative Hermit Thrush posed in a tree by the bridge.

Continuing east to the viewing stand on the hill, we found mainly the same types of waterfowl. Farther east, we added Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Hooded Merganser to our list. Nearing the main viewing stand, we saw at least four Bald Eagles kettling with a Red-tailed Hawk. Two Sandhill Cranes were found by a pool on the north side of the road, and this species was heard throughout our time at Hullett. A Pied-billed Grebe was seen in the large pond. Several Great Blue Herons were observed, along with Redheads and Common Mergansers. A Northern Harrier put in a brief appearance at the back of the ponds.

On our way to a lunch break in Clinton, Lisette spotted a White Squirrel along Wildlife Line near Conservation Line. After lunch, we returned to Summerhill Line. Passing the main viewing stand, two Wild Turkeys were spotted on the north side of the road. A surprisingly

late Northern Shrike was seen on a hydro wire. Then, a lone Tundra Swan flew in; it seemed to have decided that it was still too cold to head farther north. Burns Line was blocked to cars not far south of Summerhill Line, and we missed seeing the usual Tree Swallows at the boxes there. We did find another Eastern Phoebe and a couple of American Tree Sparrows nearby.

After visiting several spots along Wildlife Line, we headed east on Conservation Line to walk in the area near the bridge. Two more Hermit Thrushes were spotted along the road. A White-throated Sparrow and Eastern Towhee were heard, but not seen in this area. There was a lot of water at the

east end of Conservation, making it impossible to cross the bridge. However, the flooded woods made for some serene swimming areas for Wood Ducks and Blue-winged Teals. A Belted Kingfisher was seen diving for fish in an area of more open water.

Our final stop was Front Line. Here we added American Kestrel and Northern Cardinal to our trip list. An Eastern Bluebird was heard but not seen. As we headed west out of Hullett, we saw two Rock Pigeons. In all, we tallied over 60 bird species during the outing. Although a little on the cool side, we enjoyed some sunshine and some nice walks.

— Cathy McCrae, walk leader



Above: Wilson's Snipe
by Mike Nelson

Left: View of the flooding
at Conservation Line
by Cathy McCrae

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all-new flipbook version of *The Cardinal* online!
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Cedarcroft: Family Day

February 16, 2026

This was a challenging year for Family Day. The preparations started with a Zoom meeting in January. At that time, there were only three people signed up. The weather was extremely cold at -17°C, with heavy snowstorms, and it looked like no relief was in sight. The committee members decided to wait until February 6th to see if the weather was going to change and if more people had signed up. Lo and behold, the situation changed drastically! The temperature was going to be close to 0°C, and 25 people had signed up. Family Day was a go! As it turned out, the day started at -1°C with fog, but everyone made it there safely.

Jeff, Herb, Daisy and I went out on Saturday, February 14th, to carry in everything but the food and start the set up. Herb cleaned a mountain of snow off the picnic tables and then

started digging in the snow to look for the patio stones to put the fire pit on. It was decided that next fall we would stake where the patio stones were located. Jeff was hauling items into the cabin from my car, and Daisy was topping up bird feeders. The benches were brought out and put around the fire pit, and the supply of wood was cut and ready for Monday.

Monday came early for the volunteers who started rolling in around 9:00 a.m. Gail, Daisy and Lissette set up the food and started heating the water for the hot chocolate. Jeff and Herb got the fire going. Kathleen brought her famous skulls, which are always a hit with the kids and adults alike. She also got Jim's famous apple cider heating up by using a lot of her camping gear. As she finished setting up, the kids swarmed her and were asking very intelligent questions about the skulls.

Pat, Kathleen and I walked the trails to set up the matching card game. Later, the children had so much fun finding the matching cards along the trails. Phyllis made up a scavenger hunt game. We looked for the items along the way, and the adults found this interesting.

When all the people arrived, Jeff welcomed the visitors, talked about Cedarcroft, and thanked the volunteers. We broke into three groups. The hungry ones stayed at the fire and started cooking their hot dogs. Pat took a group on the Pine Trail, and I took the last group on the Beech Point Trail.

Getting back to the food and the fire, Gail and Lissette were kept very busy handing out the hot dogs, hot chocolate, and frying up onions. Oh, what a wonderful smell! Jeff was busy controlling all these hungry kids and adults. S'mores were added to the menu this year, and they were a huge hit. By the time the two hours were up, there were no hot dogs or graham wafers left.

We know the young children had fun, but we also had a couple of teens, and it was so nice to talk to them. They said they were having a good time, cooking hot dogs over an open fire in the winter. There were also several new members and members who were at Cedarcroft for the first time. They all assured us that they would be back to enjoy the trails.

At the end of two and a half hours, the families were going home, full of food and very happy, and so were the volunteers. Another very successful Family Day!

— Evelyn Rogers
Cedarcroft Committee Member

Above Right: Kids learning about nature from naturalist Kathleen Holland

Lower Right: Members and families enjoying refreshments on Family Day at Cedarcroft

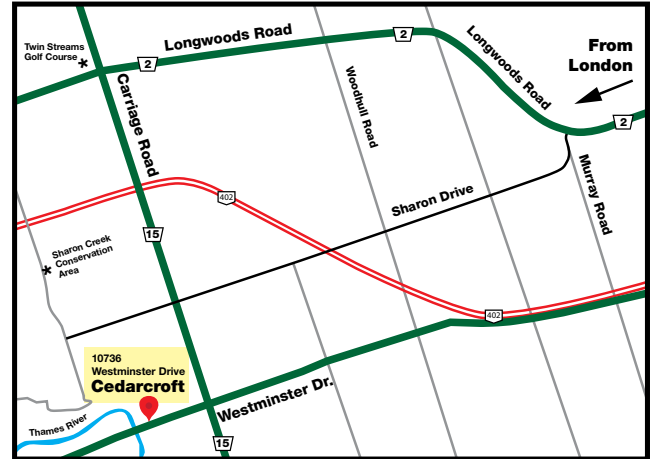
Photos by Evelyn Rogers



Cedarcroft



Members are welcome to walk the trails at our nature reserve



10736 Westminister Drive, Southwold, Ontario. **Directions from London:** Travel on Wharncliffe Road through Lambeth (County Road #2/Longwoods Road) and continue for several kilometers. Turn left onto Carriage Road (County Road #15). Turn right onto Westminister Drive. Watch for the blue marker (**10736**) on the right, after the big green shed, and before the road slopes down to the river. Turn into the driveway. **Park:** On the grass to the right side only. Do not block the shared lane. **Enter:** Through the wire gate at the Cedarcroft sign. **Trail Maps:** Available outside the (locked) cabin. **Please do not visit on windy days. Enjoy Cedarcroft!**

Items For Sale \$\$\$

Publications for Sale:

Published by Nature London:

Guide to the Natural Areas of London and Region (6th Edition) = \$15.00

Photo field guides published by the St. Thomas Field Naturalist Club:

Reptiles and Amphibians of Ontario = \$15.00

Bats of Ontario = \$10.00

Butterflies of Southern Ontario = \$10.00

Dragonflies and Damselflies of Southwestern Ontario = \$10.00

Some Caterpillars of Southern Ontario = \$10.00

Some Wildflowers of Southern Ontario = \$15.00

Published by Hawk Cliff Foundation:

A Field Guide to the Migrating Raptors of Hawk Cliff = \$10.00

*Prices include tax

Where to purchase the books:

Books are available at Nature London meetings or contact Ann Henderson, Nature London Sales Coordinator sales@naturelondon.ca or (519) 473-6719 for purchase details.

The Guide is for sale on the **Nature London** website, or available from Mike Channon at natural_areas_guide@naturelondon.ca. Also from the following retailers: Camera Canada Stores (both), Featherfields (both locations), Hoskin Feed and Country Store, Hyde Park Feed and Country Store, Oxford Books, Wild Birds Unlimited, the Museum of Ontario Archaeology and Strathroy General Hospital Gift Shop.

Used Nature Books for Sale:

Used books can be purchased in person at club meetings. In addition, for donations or purchases of used books, puzzles, etc. contact Betsy Baldwin at (519) 471-4450 or bookdonations@naturelondon.ca.



Cover photo: Pectoral Sandpiper – Paul Roedding

Nature in the City 2026:

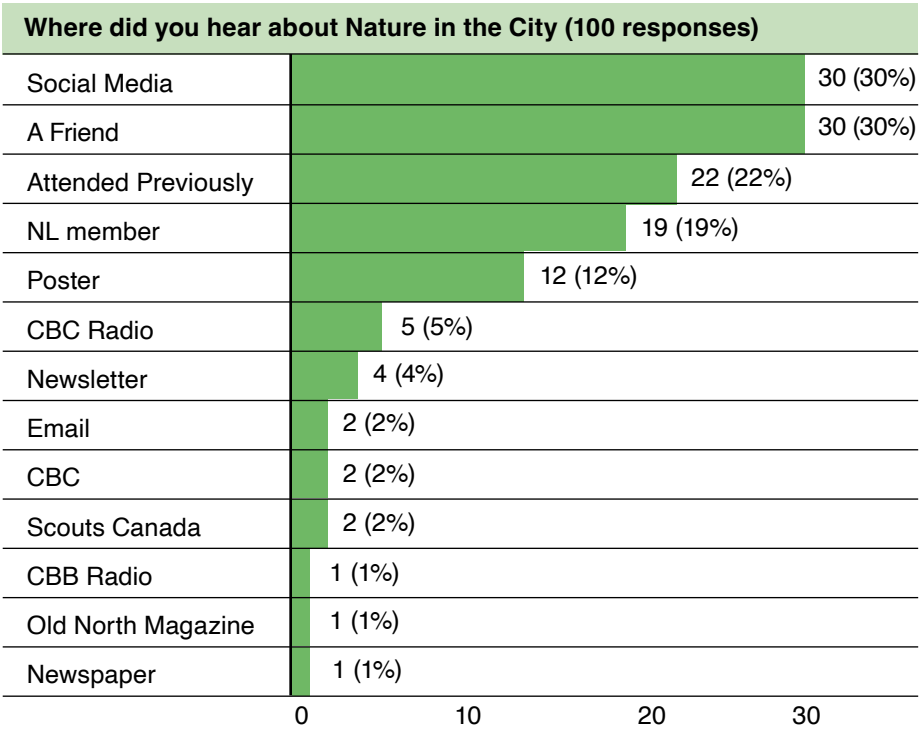
This Year Was Another Great Success

This was the 20th year since Nature in the City began in 2006! Although we had a three-year break during the COVID-19 shutdown, this annual winter speaker series remains a popular mainstay for the community. Last year, our attendance was just under 200 compared with 133 in 2024. This year, our attendance grew to 271! We're so excited to build on each year's success and on the fine work of the committee members who ignited the torch of inspiration for this event. Did you know that many of these torch bearers continue to support Nature in the City to this day by attending presentations, sharing the lineup with friends and family, or providing speaker suggestions to help us plan for the future years? It's not surprising, since being a part of Nature London has a way of inspiring members to become more involved.

This venture is co-sponsored by Nature London (NL) and the London Public Library (LPL). This year's committee was made up of the following NL

members: Lissette Verbeem, Cathie Penalagan, Dianne Bellchamber and Kathleen Holland. An honourable mention is given to our President, Jennifer Evans, who attended presentations to provide closing remarks and an honourarium to each speaker. We also had LPL liaisons Alannah Vanderburgh-Oakley and Michaela Bouzkova working on our team. They provided consistent communication with other LPL staff who helped host the presentations at the Wolf Performance Hall at the Central Library in downtown London

According to the survey results, of the many possible ways to find out about Nature in the City, four methods stood head and shoulders above the rest: through social media, attending in previous years, from a friend, or being a NL member. We know that many NL members are regular attendees. Thanks to your ongoing enthusiasm and interest, you are largely responsible for filling the auditorium.



The first speaker in the lineup was Kevin Callan, who has written many paddling books and has a popular YouTube channel, *KC Happy Camper*. His presentation, "How to be a Happy Camper", took place on January 27th. In it, he provided tips on how to pack for camping trips and why he seeks time in the wilderness. This year, presentations were not video-recorded. However, he generously set aside time for an interview on my YouTube channel, *Hiking With Kathleen*. To view that interview, "The REAL Kevin Callan, The Happy Camper – Find Out Why Kevin Wants to Inspire Others to be Outside", please watch on YouTube at [Hiking with Kathleen: The REAL Kevin Callan, The Happy Camper](https://www.youtube.com/@TheHappyCamper). Kevin's YouTube Channel is [youtube.com/@TheHappyCamper](https://www.youtube.com/@TheHappyCamper)

The next week, on February 3rd, David Rankine shared some secrets that he discovered when following a coyote pack in his presentation "By the Sweep of the Bay – my five years with the coyotes". He shared information that helped audience members learn about the roles and responsibilities of the members of a family pack. Although that presentation was not recorded, I hiked with David in the spring of 2025 and filmed him discussing his insights about coyotes and touching stories. View that video on YouTube at [Hiking with Kathleen: Camping at MacGregor Point - Part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). An interview with David along with links to his books about the coyotes is available at [Guelpharts.ca](https://www.guelpharts.ca): [The Two Bays Pack, The Coyotes of Inverhuron](https://www.guelpharts.ca).

On February 10th, Jordan Phelps of Pollinator Partnership Canada spoke on "Pollinators, their importance and how we can support them". In his presentation, he provided examples of pollinators beyond the well-known honeybee, and emphasized their importance and challenges. He gave ideas for protecting them.



To find out more about Pollinator Partnership Canada and the work they do, visit pollinatorpartnership.ca

Then, on February 17th, Harry Cartner, a noted photographer for the past 40 years and current President of the London Camera Club, provided reasons “To See is a Continuing Gift” and provided many examples of how to see beauty through his photography. Harry’s YouTube channel is youtube.com/c/HarryCartner

On February 24th, Dr. Nina Zitani, Biology Professor at Western University, explained how “Biodiversity Gardening and the Restoration of Nature”, even in our own backyards, is key to providing for wildlife and helping them overcome habitat challenges, often at the hands of humans. To learn more about biodiversity gardening, please visit her website at biodiversitygardening.com

And to wrap up this year’s speaker series, retired teacher, photographer and bird lover Brian Lasenby spoke on March 3rd about “Birds in the City”. Brian provided incredible bird photos and explained the stories behind them, as well as some of the camera settings required to make such shots possible. To see some of his incredible photos, visit brianlasenby.com

We look forward to another great year, with planning already underway for 2027. We welcome your suggestions for excellent speakers for us to consider in 2027 or future years. Please send the person’s name, topic and contact information to nature.in.the.city@naturelondon.ca. Thank you so much!

– Kathleen Holland
Committee Chair, Nature in the City



Top Left: David Raskine presenting at Nature in the City February 3, 2026.
Photo by Jennifer Evans

Middle Left: Jordan Phelps presenting at Nature in the City February 10, 2026.
Photo by C. Long

Bottom Left: Nina Zitani presenting at Nature in the City February 24, 2026.
Photo by C. Long



Remembering Dave Martin



Dave Martin Saunders Award Recipient

Pete Read remembers Dave: It is with a broken heart that I report that longtime Nature London member and recipient of Nature London's Saunders Award (2004), Dave Martin, passed away on January 29 after four years with Alzheimer's. Dave and Linda, his loving wife of 43 years, were both active members of Nature London from 1982 until their move to Amherstburg in 2016. I would like to mention a few points about his involvement with Nature London and introduce you to this fine member who left a lasting legacy in our club.

Dave was born in Calgary, but moved to Sarnia with his family when he was young. As a teen, he and his good friend, Ross Snider, met Dennis Rupert, who mentored them in birdwatching and instilled in both a lifelong love of birds.

Though Dave's university degree was in History and English, his love of birding prompted him to look for a job involving birds. Dave asked Dr. Dave Ankney, a professor of Zoology at Western. An ornithological research assistant had just resigned. Would Dave like the job? Yes! Later, after attaining a teaching certificate, Dave got a job as a teacher-naturalist for the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) at Fanshawe Conservation Area. Dave was a licensed bird bander, and when students came out, he showed them the

birds being banded and taught them about birds. He really enjoyed that, and I brought my students out a few times to see the action at the nets and hear Dave enthusiastically talk about his favourite subject.

When staff cutbacks were announced at UTRCA, Dave volunteered to be dismissed. He knew others needed their positions more than he did, and so he branched off into environmental consulting. He excelled at that because he did meticulous and skilled field work, understood the legal regulations, and wrote excellent reports. Dave came to this work when wind turbines were being introduced, and companies were clamouring to investigate suitable locations. Dave and his wife Linda worked together in true partnership and ethically reported on sites to ensure the least impact on wildlife.

I met Dave through our common interest in birds and birding around 1980. I was just starting to work with Bill Jarman to accumulate bird sightings for Middlesex County on behalf of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists, now Nature London. Dave provided many records from Fanshawe Conservation Area. Dave gave me great insight into how meticulous bird records were important for understanding bird lives and movements. Using his many bird records and those which I had access to in the journals from Bill Jarman and Bill Girling, as well as many issues of *The Cardinal*, we made an updated seasonal Bird Checklist for Nature London. He continued to help with revisions until recently.

Dave and I taught an introductory extension birdwatching course together at Fanshawe College and at Western. The first night, I would appear as the "consummate birder", dressed in all the regalia that was normally associated with birdwatching. This included a pocketed birding vest packed with checklists, lens cleaners, and camera lenses, and strapped around my neck were a camera and binoculars, all while

I carried a telescope and wore waterproof clothing and headgear. Then Dave would go over my outfit one by one, explaining the use of each item. I looked rather overdressed, but the classes enjoyed it. We believed in immersing people in birdwatching, so we took them out to experience birding on many field trips. And of course, we encouraged many of these novice birders to join Nature London.

In 1988, we decided to start a "Birding Wing" for McIlwraith. We organized extra meetings to discuss birds and to gather data for my seasonal and annual reports for *The Cardinal*. We either secured a guest speaker or one of us talked about birding. We would start each meeting with friendly banter with each other. Stan Caveney enjoyed this greatly – "It was like having our own Peter Cook and Dudley Moore leading the meeting". Karen Auzins remembers Dave describing, in great detail, how to find a Bald Eagle's nest near Delaware that was about the size of a Volkswagen. He added, "and if you can't find it, then you might consider another hobby". Dave and I informed the audience about birds and collected sightings from the previous month. I am sure Birding Wing brought new members to McIlwraith.

Dave joined the Friends of Point Pelee as a hike leader at Point Pelee National Park during the Festival of Birds each spring. He became a very popular hike leader who combined his skills and sense of humour to teach all things birding, and he developed a legacy of providing excellent experiences for novice birdwatchers. Many people at Pelee credit Dave's enthusiasm with getting them into birding.

Dave was an important contributor to the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlases. Beginning in 1981, he assisted Bill Girling as Coordinator for Region 4. Many of the participants were members of McIlwraith because he and Bill promoted the atlas within the club.

The atlasers became better birders because of his mentoring and their field experiences. During the second atlas, starting in 2001, Dave was the Regional Coordinator for Region 4 and organized the plethora of participants and their records. By the time of the third atlas, starting in 2021, Dave and Linda were in Essex County and took part in that region's research.

For years, Dave and Linda spent most weather-cooperative mornings with a cup of coffee on their deck in Elgin County near Harrietsville. Besides seeing many birds, they noted that in March and April, quite a few Common Loons flew over, presumably having lifted off Lake Erie on their way north to Lake Huron and beyond. Dave contacted me, and I drove down to Komoka Provincial Park to my usual overlook spot and noted that about 40 minutes after the first loons flew over Dave and Linda's, I would see them flying over. We realized the path they followed was indeed in a line across the narrowest passage between the two lakes. For several years, we enjoyed many days coordinating our Loon Watch, and I know that a few Nature London members also took up this fun activity.

As well as leading many field trips for Nature London, Dave kept meticulous records and reported the results in *The Cardinal*. In fact, I don't think many issues went by without Dave contributing something to the publication. He also wrote many articles on birds and birding, which enriched our club members' knowledge about birds.

Please take a moment to remember this kind, warm member of the Nature London family and his many contributions to our club. Please let me know about any special memories you might have of Dave.

Dave was an inspiration to many for his care for friends, nature, and the environment.

Photos supplied by Pete Read

Stan Caveney remembers Dave:

My wife Anita and I have a particularly strong memory of Dave and Linda from when a Magnificent Frigatebird was seen at Clearville Park alongside Lake Erie on July 1-2 in 2012. We were staying at our trailer on the bluffs above Lake Erie near the Elgin - Chatham/Kent border when two excited members of the West Elgin Nature Club rapped on the trailer door at about 10 p.m. and insisted we go first thing the next morning to try to locate the bird. We got up at 5:30 a.m. and drove to the beach at Clearville. Because we were so early, the blinding light from the rising sun prevented us from checking the cliffs on the east side. There was no sight of the bird to the west. We left.

Chris, Sanda and Ryan Leys of the West Elgin Nature Club arrived later that morning only to find that Linda and Dave, who were down in the forested area near the beach looking for Bald Eagle nests, had found the frigatebird perched in a tree, and you guessed it — to the east of Clearville Park. We and others were informed and rushed back, only to see the bird disappearing to the west, where it stayed at Rondeau Provincial Park for a few days, and then disappeared. This was the first known sighting of a Magnificent Frigatebird in Elgin County. You could trust Dave Martin to see it before the rest of us.

Hugh Casbourn remembers Dave:

I have many memories of Dave echoing those of Pete's, including Birding Wing, Breeding Bird Atlas, and the Loon Watch. It probably wasn't the wisest idea for me to roam our urban street with binoculars, looking for Common Loons, especially while the elementary school students were getting on the bus. Just a tad crazy, but Dave really wanted the loon data.

Dave and I go back to high school at Northern in Sarnia. Ross Snider and I played soccer while Dave and I shared many classes. McIlwraith brought us together again in the late 90s. I wrote the first McIlwraith advertising brochures and would have to pester Dave for his Birding Wing speakers for the second half of the year. He did not like to work that far ahead. It was a sad day when he and Linda moved to Amherstburg. Even sadder when he started his journey with Alzheimer's.

These last four years, together with another high school friend, we have had many memorable Zoom sessions. Of course, we always had to talk about birds, and that passion stayed with Dave nearly to the end. I know I speak for many Nature London members who will miss Dave and think of him often.

Dave's obituary is at familiesfirst.ca/memorials/dave-martin/5682998/



*Dave Martin (left) and Ross Snider
with Screech Owls in 1989*

Remembering Ann White



*Ann White with the sign at Wardsville Woods Butterfly Meadow that bears her name.
Photo by David Wake*

Ann White

Saunders Award Recipient

Winifred Wake remembers Ann:

Ann White's name first appeared on the Nature London membership list in 1972. When she passed away peacefully on February 18, 2026 at the age of 95, she had been a member for more than half a century. One might say her role in the club was that of an unsung hero – she was always there, quietly contributing almost to the end.

Ann was a lifelong teacher and learner. She developed skills in multiple facets of nature, and took advantage of opportunities to share what she knew and to serve as a mentor to others.

Ann's first and always interest was birds. She learned birds by associating with people who knew more than she did and then spent countless hours in the field honing and refining her knowledge. She found joy in the returning birds of spring and in regularly visiting regional hotspots throughout the seasons. As the years went by, she also fearlessly camped across the continent to experience the special birds of other places. She participated in annual Christmas Bird Counts and the three Breeding Bird Atlases.

In her early years in the club, Ann was the leader of the Junior Naturalists' group, providing the youngsters with many memorable nature experiences, including camping trips. She served on the club board for a number of years.

Ann was recognized for her knowledge of wildflowers. One of her favourite places to enjoy them was Meadowlily Woods. She led numerous field trips to many destinations. She was a prolific contributor to *The Cardinal*, providing book reviews; reports on meetings and field trips; and articles featuring her diverse interests in birds, wildflowers, butterflies and more.

In the mid-1990s, when Ann was looking for an additional avenue of nature to explore during the low-birding season of summer, she set about learning butterflies. Noticing there were few records for Middlesex, Ann enlisted others to help rectify the deficiency. For several years she organized groups to visit different habitats around the county where specialized species might occur. Under her leadership, a butterfly checklist was created in 1996 and updated in 2000, and the southwest corner of Middlesex County was pinpointed for its high butterfly diversity. In 2001, Ann officially established the Skunk's Misery Butterfly Count under the umbrella of the North American Butterfly Association. This enabled local butterfly records to be systematically collected and contributed to the wider body of knowledge on Lepidoptera. In later years, Ann added dragonflies to her portfolio of interests.

Ann was organized, efficient and reliable, often preferring to work quietly in the background. She liked to identify a need or a niche and then go about filling it, as she had done in launching the butterfly count.

Here are some other examples.

When she found it difficult to obtain suitable butterfly nets, she decided to make her own. She experimented with fabrics and designs until she hit upon

the combo that worked best. Then she made extras to share with others (I still have one of Ann's hand-crafted nets).

A fixture at Birding Wing for as long as she was able to attend, Ann decided a little extra fun and learning might enliven Wing meetings. Her quizzes and games, with a touch of education thrown in, and complete with prizes she supplied, became a regular and much enjoyed part of meetings.

In the summer of 2000, an Anhinga showed up at the Sportsman's Club Pond in Delaware and remained for several months. Birders arrived from all over the province and beyond to add the species to their Ontario lists. To document the Anhinga summer, Ann placed a hard-covered logbook in a waterproof container by the roadside. In it, visiting birders were invited to record their experiences with the bird. Hundreds did. Ann later presented the book to the Nature London archives.

Ann came up with the perfect antidote to the dark and dreary days of winter – a gathering of naturalists for fun and friendship. For such events, she would invite people over for an evening of food and board games set up at multiple tables around her home. She was an excellent cook and a gracious hostess.

Ann was what might be called a master naturalist, but she was much, much more. At club meetings and other functions, she was cheerful and welcoming to both regulars and newcomers. Ann was always willing to lend a hand with any new club venture. She had an eye for noticing little gaps or needs and coming up with solutions to address them. She then quietly went about making things happen. Ann's competence, generosity, and contributions over many decades endeared her to Nature London and its members. Her pleasant personality, gentle ways, and broad knowledge of natural history will be remembered with warmth and fondness in the years to come.

Stan Caveney remembers Ann:

On 1 July 1995, Ann White attended an annual summer butterfly count day organized by the Norfolk County Naturalists. Encouraged by the concept, on July 4 and 5 that year, she mounted a personal annual butterfly count in the London area.

On 7 July 1996, now known as “MFN’s butterfly expert”, she mounted the club’s first Annual Middlesex Butterfly Count with eight participants. The Annual Middlesex Butterfly Day count ended in 1999, when Ann suggested that for 2000, the club join the North American Butterfly Association and adopt its policies, among which were to restrict the butterfly count time to a day in June or July. The butterfly count was aptly renamed the Skunk’s Misery Butterfly Count, as Skunk’s Misery (aka Mosa Forest Conservation Area), the jewel in Middlesex’s butterfly crown, lies entirely within the official count circle. Ann compiled a new Middlesex County checklist in 1990 to help participants keep track of the butterfly species they spotted.

Always on time, well prepared and rigorously efficient, Ann would pass out butterfly checklists and hand-coloured maps (shades of her days as a teacher) of the road network through Skunk’s Misery, and then assign groups to the various dirt roads and road intersections for our morning’s hunting pleasure. Her annual reports in *The Cardinal* were always precise and accurate.

Ann was highly competitive. She enjoyed recording the first and last butterfly species seen during the season, and was thrilled when she spotted butterflies (such as Cabbage Whites and Sulfurs) in April and November. Ann was honoured by the Thames Talbot Land Trust in having the native wildflower meadow at Wardsville Woods in Skunk’s Misery named the Ann White Butterfly Meadow on July 7, 2019.

Pete Read remembers Ann: I first met Ann when I became a member of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists. She was one of a generation of skilled birders from whom I learned a lot about

birds and nature. I went on the numerous outings she led for the club. But what brought us closer was working together on the Junior Naturalists programs at Grosvenor Lodge. Over the years, Ann instilled a love of nature in these budding naturalists. We also worked on other club birding activities, like the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. As many of you will remember, keeping up with Ann as we walked was hard. I joined her in many Christmas Bird Counts in Ingersoll, Point Pelee, St. Clair and West Elgin. It was always a fun outing. I was also pleased to join Ann in the Skunk’s Misery Butterfly Count for many years. And who could forget our gatherings for the Beetle Drives at her place? A great time was had by all, feasting on her generous preparations and enjoying the British dice game.

Ann will be remembered as a great friend, wonderful birder, natural teacher, dedicated wife and mother, generous hostess and a valued member of Nature London.

Betsy Baldwin and Hugh Casbourn remember Ann: One of our first conversations with Ann took place at Westminster Ponds Environmentally Significant Area. We were birding with friends, stopped by what we thought

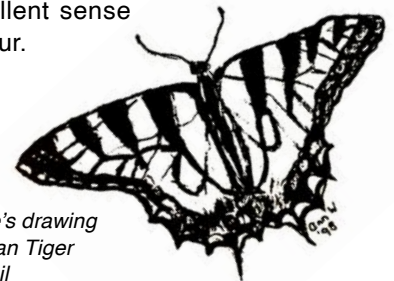
might be a Rusty Blackbird. Along came Ann, who overheard and quickly and kindly put us straight (embarrassingly for the optimistic birders, it was a Common Grackle).

Hugh took Ann’s spot on the Board of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists. True to her vocation of teaching, she organized all the materials needed and instructed him on everything he would need to try to fill her shoes. Fortunately, she was a kindergarten teacher, so he was able to follow her very clear instructions.

Ann was such a good naturalist, whose knowledge extended far beyond birds. She introduced us, and many others, to butterfly watching by enticing us to join the Skunk’s Misery Butterfly Count. For 21 years, she organized the count, tabulated all the observations, and wrote reports for the umbrella organization, North American Butterfly Association and, of course, for MFN / Nature London.

From 2011 to 2015, Ann wrote an article for each April Cardinal, introducing a spring wildflower, from Skunk Cabbage to Foamflower. As editors, we were delighted: she never forgot, chose her own topic, needed no reminders and, best of all, her articles were a great pleasure to read.

In recent years, Ann weeded out her extensive collection of nature books and donated many to NL. Some of the books on the back tables at meetings are there thanks to Ann. From that first grackle to recent book donations, we have fond memories of all our interactions with Ann. In her quiet and unassuming way, she was always thoughtful, very well informed, and had an excellent sense of humour.



Ann White’s drawing of Canadian Tiger Swallowtail

Left: Ann White in 2022, with a handmade butterfly net. Photo by Susan Berry



Eastern Redbud:

A Native Plant For Your Garden

The Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) is a large deciduous shrub or small tree in the Legume Family (Fabaceae). It is native to eastern North America from Mexico north through the eastern United States. In Canada, it is likely native only to Pelee Island, but has since naturalized throughout southern Ontario, where it has been widely planted as an ornamental. There are several cultivars and types of Eastern Redbud available, including *C. canadensis* f. *alba*, a smaller, naturally occurring form with white flowers.

Characteristics

Redbud trees generally have a short trunk and twisting branches. It grows to 6 to 9 m (20–30 ft) tall with an 8 to 10 m (26–33 ft) spread. The bark is dark and smooth, but becomes scaly with age. The tree begins to bloom three to five years after it is planted. Showy pink-to-magenta blossoms line the bare branches in April or May. The dark green heart-shaped or oval leaves open as the blossoms fade. By mid-summer, a multitude of two-and-a-half to three-inch seed pods, reminiscent of pea pods, hang from the branches. These fall to the ground in early winter. New trees may grow from the ten to twelve seeds enclosed in each pod.

In the garden

In the wild, Eastern Redbud is a frequent native understory tree in mixed forests and hedgerows. In the garden, the trees are best planted in a location that is sheltered from the wind and provides at least four hours of direct sunlight each day. Redbuds are generally easy to maintain. They require consistently moist, well-drained conditions, but are tolerant of different soil types and acidity, and require little or no fertilizer. Eastern Redbuds can be planted near Black Walnut trees because they tolerate the walnut's juglone toxin. It is important to source seeds from a northern tree to ensure they are

genetically adapted to set seed and have the genetic predisposition to survive in our harsher climate.

Ecological Value

The redbud's early blossoms provide high-quality nectar and pollen to native bees and bumblebees. The seeds are eaten by various birds and mammals. The flowers are pollinated by long-tongued bees, such as carpenter bees. The tree is a host plant for several butterfly and moth species whose larvae eat the leaves. The tree is adaptable and resilient as a component of a diverse, sustainable ecosystem.

– Susan Berry

Online References

[Arboretum.uoguelph.ca](https://arboretum.uoguelph.ca/): April 2020 newsletter. Redbud plant profile

[Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cercis_canadensis): *Cercis canadensis*

[Thespruce.com](https://thespruce.com/key-facts-about-growing-the-eastern-redbud-bush): Key facts about growing the eastern redbud bush

[Reforestlondon.ca](https://reforestlondon.ca/). Tree of the month: Eastern Redbud

Bottom: Eastern Redbud in bloom.

Inset photo: Eastern Redbud blossoms in bud.

Photos by Susan Berry



Rat Overpopulation in London

Some urban centres are experiencing significant rodent infestations, and London has now identified this as a growing concern. Residents in East London have been sounding the alarm over the number of rat sightings and the infiltration of some homes and neighbourhoods. There have been increased complaints to ward councillors and calls for action at city hall for faster response times. The topic has been discussed at council meetings, and councillors passed a motion to look into improving the enforcement of existing bylaws. The issue may be taken up by other advisory committees within city hall.

The primary species of rat found in London is the Norway (or Brown) Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). They are large, stocky rodents with shaggy brown or gray fur, blunt snouts and tails that are shorter than their body length. They are burrowers that find their way into basements, sewers and ground-level areas.

How did we get here?

There are several theories about what has caused the increased rat population in the city in recent years. These include milder winters due to climate change; the COVID pandemic, which shut many restaurants, so rats looked for food in other places; increased construction and demolition activity that displaced rats; cutbacks in garbage removal services in parks and public spaces; and the introduction of the Green Bin Program, along with longer times between household garbage pickup implemented by the city.

How to deter rats from your property

Do frequent visual checks of building exteriors for possible points of entry. Seal cracks or holes in the foundation, around doors and windows, electrical lines, and pipes that lead into the building. Check the roof to ensure the gutters, flashing, roofing materials, and roof vents are intact. If you aren't able to inspect these areas yourself,

contact a reputable and responsible pest management company to assess your property.

Make sure any containers of waste or food are properly secured and not attracting vermin. If possible, put the green bin and garbage container in another enclosure to provide an added layer of protection.

Understand that bird feeders and fruit-bearing plants can attract rodents, so determine the best placement of these, keep the area under them clean, or remove them for all or part of the year.

What hurts and what helps?

Do not use rat poison inside or outside your house. Rodents that ingest poison indoors can move outdoors. Rodenticide is deadly to other animals and birds of prey, who are at the top of the food chain.

Do not use glue or sticky traps that can catch other animals and birds.

Try using essential oils or ultrasonic deterrents, although the success of these products varies.

Invest in live traps if you are comfortable with catching and releasing into a non-populated area.

If you have large trees, install a nest box for an Eastern Screech Owl to bring predators onto your property. Screech Owls look for nesting areas in early spring, so put the box up in early March.

If you visit a local park and see overflowing garbage bins, don't add to the bin. Instead, take your garbage home with you.

Join a local clean-up effort. Many groups work together to clean up areas of London, especially in spring and in April around Earth Day.

– C. Long

Online Reference and Resources:
CBC News: Oh rats! With complaints growing, councillors call for stepped up rodent response

London Free Press: Politician's push aims at London rat problems. Can you protect your home?

Craig Needles Podcast: We need a Rat Czar? or Rat King?

Bird Friendly London: Pest Management



Screech Owl Box. Photo by R. Voros

The Cardinal Needs Proofreaders

Be among the first to read *The Cardinal* from cover to cover and help find typos and other errors before *The Cardinal* is finalized.

You will receive PDF files and provide corrections via email.

Contact thecardinal@naturelondon.ca

Swallow Species In Our Region To Look For This Season



Tree Swallow – Glenn Berry



Purple Martins (male and female) – Glenn Berry



Northern Rough-winged Swallow – Andrew Murray



Bank Swallow – Andrew Murray



Cliff Swallow – Stephen Taylor



Barn Swallow – Paul Nicholson