



THE

REDSTART

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE SPOTTED TURTLE NEWSLETTER

Celebrating the Huron Fringe Birding Festival's 20th Year!



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THE REDSTART . . .

Welcome to the inaugural edition of 'The Redstart', a special publication of the Friends of MacGregor Point 'Spotted Turtle' newsletter.

We want to share the experiences we had and remember the highlights of the 2017 Huron Fringe Birding Festival (hereafter referred to as Festival or Birdfest) but at the same time recognize the fact that we are now 20 years old. It has been a long but enjoyable journey.

This publication is being distributed to all participants of the Festival as well as all of our regular Friends members. Festival participants acknowledge the work and dedication of the Friends knowing that without them, facilities like the Bird Blind and Tower would not exist, while at the same time, the Friends members recognize that Birdfest is the single largest fundraiser for the Friends. We encourage Friends members to participate and also

encourage Birdfest participants to become a member of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park.

What an accomplishment 20 years has been. We have seen many birds, held many events and have worked with many skilled leaders. But most importantly, Birdfest is where a great group of friends come together annually to share their passion for birds and nature.

Whether you are a veteran participant or this was your first festival, we welcome all of you and hope you enjoy this issue.

A special thank you to Norah Toth and Doug Pedwell, our festival co-chairs, and the rest of the committee for their devotion to the Festival and their genuine desire that all have a positive experience.

The Newsletter Team



THE SPOTTED TURTLE



SPECIAL EDITION

OUR FIRST FESTIVAL

Dateline: May 22, 1998

Background

With the construction of the observation tower on the Ducks Unlimited Pond, the Park was looking for ways to expand the utilization of this recently completed structure. Knowing the Park's popularity with local birders each spring, under Norah Toth's leadership, it was decided to conduct a study to determine if a birding festival would be feasible. After inquiring at other festivals in Ontario during the summer of 1997 and then talking with local birders, Dave Fidler and Martin Parker, it was determined that not only did MacGregor Point Provincial Park have the required qualifications, it could serve well as a base for the entire region. The area would be ideal for people who wanted to take part in the hobby without the congestion of some of the established events further to the south.

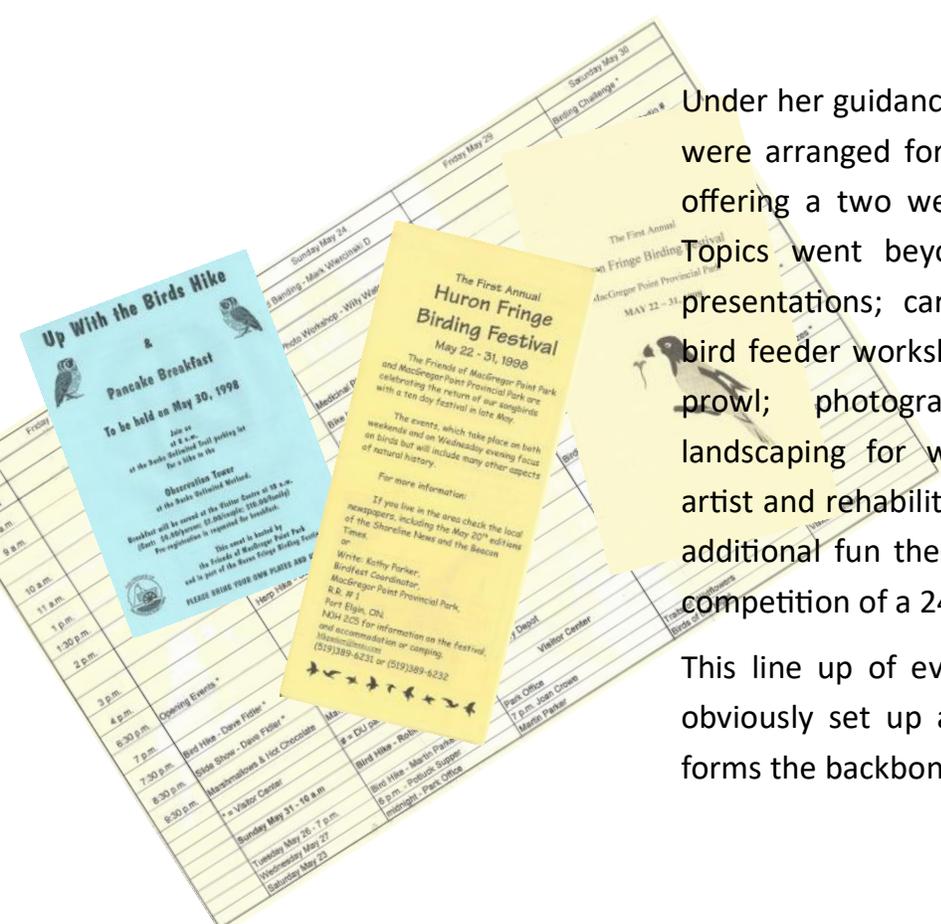


Money for an event was requested through Ontario Parks, but knowing there was no guarantee for timely funding, Norah approached the Friends of MacGregor Point Park to consider co-sponsoring a festival and to provide the required funds to hire an event coordinator. The Friends eagerly accepted the opportunity to assist. Sponsoring a birding festival met their mandate exactly and was a natural extension of the Friends existing spring event 'Up With the Birds Hike and Pancake Breakfast'. Little did they know what a giant leap it would actually be!

It's a Go!

With this positive response, Kathy Parker was hired to be the coordinator of the 1998 Huron Fringe Birding Festival. Being local, Kathy knew the Park and vicinity well, and along with her husband Martin, knew the birding hotspots intimately. They had a contact list and rapport with local birders beyond compare. These qualifications, combined with their past experience with organizing nature tours across the province made her an excellent choice for the role.





Under her guidance a program was established and leaders were arranged for our first annual festival. We went big offering a two weekend festival with midweek activities. Topics went beyond birding hikes to include: evening presentations; carving demonstrations; poetry readings; bird feeder workshops; a herptile hike; bird banding; owl prowl; photography workshops; medicinal plants; landscaping for wildlife; butterflies; mushrooms; nature artist and rehabilitated birds of prey release. To add some additional fun there was a silent auction and the friendly competition of a 24 hour birding challenge.

This line up of events sounds remarkably familiar! Kathy obviously set up a program with lasting appeal that still forms the backbone of today's festival.

Now What?

What did we learn from the first festival? ...Clearly that an event of this calibre was needed in the area! We were onto something big and knew it had to continue. It is interesting to review the notes from the first festival wind-up meeting. They are all positive and have been acted upon for the most part. Kathy's contract was extended for the second year and we were off.

Festival Wrap-up—June 20, 1998
 Kathy Parker, Doug Martin, Judith King, Martin Parker, Norah Toth

- * We need graphics and a logo for the festival
- * Broaden the base—Chantry Island, Cabot Head, Kincardine Lagoons, Arran Lake, Mirimichi Bay, Inverhuron, Baie du d'ore
- * Start everything from the V.C. and car pool to avoid meeting place confusion
- * Provide signage from the Park entrance to the V.C.
- * We need to look at how to coordinate registration
- * Promote the availability of food at the BBQ
- * Birders are social and need a special event to share experiences
- * We need to encourage community involvement such as a storefront 'Windows on Warblers' campaign
- * The event should become a fundraiser for the Friends

So here we are 20 years later. To keep costs reasonable, we have gained many local corporate sponsors whose financial assistance is truly appreciated. We consider our event to be a premiere North American Festival made so by the tremendous leaders and wonderful participants.

What is really amazing is that all of this work is coordinated through the volunteer based Birdfest Committee and their dedication is respected by all.

Year One

RETURNING LEADERS

Photos of the leaders who were at the first festival and returned for the 20th are provided below. Every one of these leaders have participated in festivals in between. Their years of service are included with their picture.

Many other leaders, while not at the first festival, have provided long term service. Event leaders not shown below, but with 10 or more years service include: Joan Crowe¹⁶, Michael Carlson¹⁴, Marshall Byle¹³, Bob Gray¹³, Judith King¹³, Doug Pedwell¹³, James Turland¹³, Jim Coles¹², Mark Peck¹², John Reaume¹², Ross Snider¹², Fred Jazvac¹¹, Joy Albrecht¹⁰, Bill Crins¹⁰, Kerry Jarvis¹⁰ and Peter Middleton¹⁰. Many participants will recognize these names.



TODAY'S LEADERS

Fresh and New . . .

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival prides itself in bringing in young leaders to ensure the continued success of the Festival. Leaders this year that many of us would consider young include Mike Burrell, Henrique Pacheco, Justin Peter, and Ian Shanahan. When those of us of a certain age go out with these young birders, we suddenly realize that our hearing may not be as pristine as it once was. Go out with a young leader and be amazed.



**HENRIQUE
PACHECO**



**IAN
SHANAHAN**



**JUSTIN
PETER**



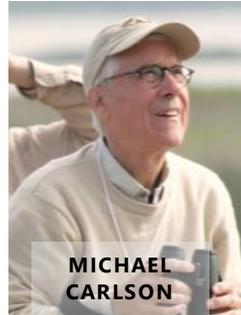
**MIKE
BURRELL**

Tried and True . .

We have also included some candid photos we had available from this year's Festival of some of our tried and true leaders that we all respect. Over the 20 years, we have had 177 event leaders so we hope you will recognize the impossible task of recognizing them all despite being truly appreciated.



Each of our leaders is selected for his or her skills whether it be a master birder leading a hike, or a recognized expert leading one of the many other nature, historical or natural environment outings or presentations provided.



**MICHAEL
CARLSON**



**TED
CHESKEY**



**BOB
GRAY**



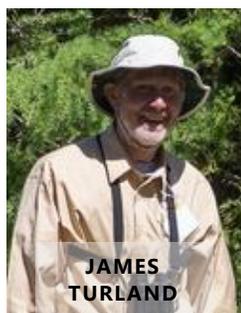
**JEAN
IRON**



**MARK
PECK**



**MARSHALL
BYLE**



**JAMES
TURLAND**



**BILL
CHRINS**



**PETER
MIDDLETON**

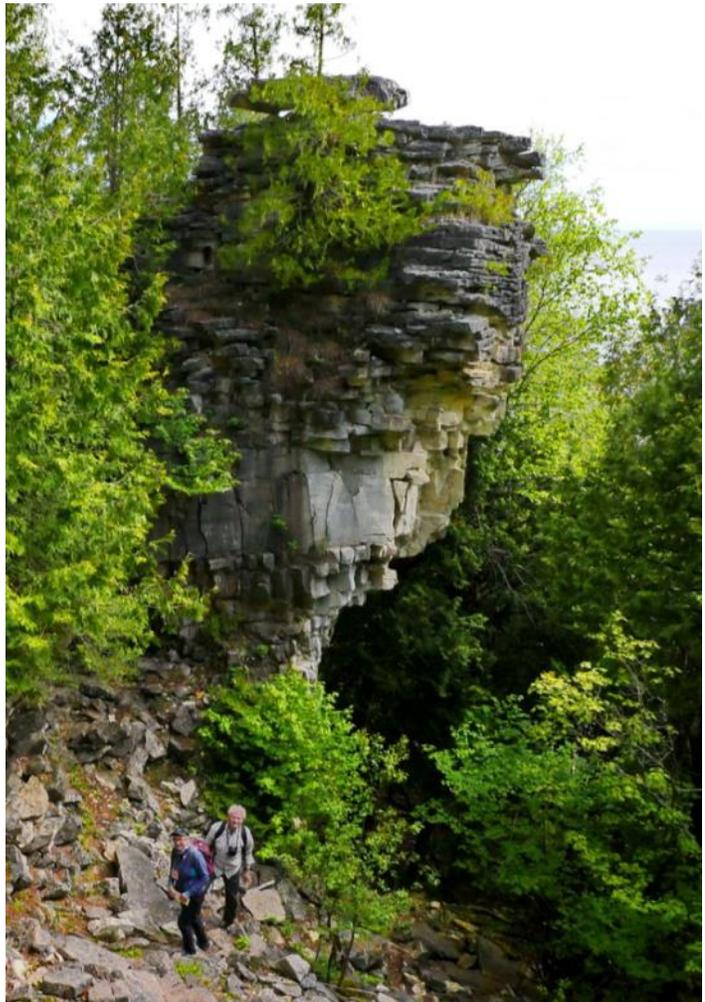
2017 FESTIVAL

Photo Highlights









GROUP SHOTS





the Nest

The nest was a new endeavour for 2017, and despite receiving modest support this year, it is an area we would like to see grow. We encourage everyone to come and visit in future years. It provides a tremendous opportunity for participants to meet casually so we can share our experiences at the Festival and gain knowledge from others. Serving as hosts of the Nest this year were Doug Pedwell on the first weekend and Sarah Rupert on the second. Their devotion is appreciated. We are sure the Festival Committee will endeavour to make this service more visible next year.





Our Feature Speaker, Ethan Meleg, easily kept the audience's attention with his amazing pictures and captivating presentation style.



Banquet

The food was great, the feature speaker was entertaining, and many people had fun at the silent auction, going home with some very special items.



Thanks to Arlene Richards and her assistant Karen Atkinson, the silent auction was very successful again this year. Almost \$4,000 was raised through their efforts and the generosity of the donors.



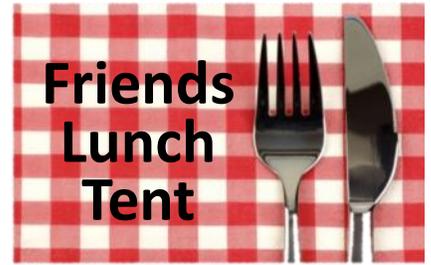
The 2017 Norah Toth award was given to Fred Jazvac for his years of service and organizing skills with the Bruce Birding Club, his support of citizen science and his commitment to and support of the Festival.

Dessert anyone?





The Friends of MacGregor assumed the responsibility of providing a BBQ this year. It was second to none and greatly appreciated.



We want to thank the volunteers for the time involved, hard work, and amazing creativity in providing a menu that was above and beyond everyone's expectations.



100% of the profits are returned to the Friends for their sponsorship of Park enhancements.



THE REGISTRATION DESK



As usual, it was all business mixed in with a lot of fun!

The Tower



In addition to the Friends of MacGregor Point Park celebrating the 20th Huron Fringe Birding Festival, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Ducks Unlimited Observation Tower. This was the Friends of MacGregor's first major project.

For many, the Tower Trail is one of their favorite trails at MacGregor Point Provincial Park. This trail covers a range of habitats and provides a wonderful atmosphere for a walk or bike ride in nature. The Tower provides a destination for trail users, and has become a focal point in the Park. Both Birdfest and the Tower demonstrate the "Naturally Connected" moto of the Friends and their desire to support and enhance the Park.

The Tower Trail is also home to the Bird Blind, which was entirely funded by the Friends of MacGregor. It had its grand opening in 2011. The boardwalks on the east leg of the Tower Trail and the trail's Interpretative signage were also a result of Friends financial contributions and volunteer efforts.

Consider joining the Friends to ensure that projects such as these continue.

Media Coverage

Some have questioned the timing of our Festival with the concern that many of the migrants have moved on. This is true, but our focus is on the breeding birds of the area.

Tom Haymen, of the London Free Press, addressed this well in his newspaper article of June 5, 1999. Our festival was only two years old at the time. Here is a condensed version of that article:

Warblers Hang On At MacGregor



You don't need to give up on wood warblers just because spring migration is all but over in our area [London]. A visit to MacGregor Point Provincial Park for the beginning of their second annual Huron Fringe Birding Festival made that clear. After a birding hike Saturday morning led by Doug Martin, we passed their 24-hour birding challenge on Saturday till noon. With the excellent help of Parker, who told us of a respectable 104 species, I went out going on Parker's 11th annual birding challenge, which netted the most birds (there were eight but calling whip-poor-wills. This followed Dave Fidler's interest in talk on Huron Fringe migration. The treat for me was the 8 a.m. "Up with the Birds Hike" along the trail to the Ducks Unlimited pond. It was then that we found where many of our migrating warblers go when they leave here.

The treat for me was the 8 a.m. Saturday "Up with the Birds Hike" along the trail to the Ducks Unlimited Pond. It was then that we found where many of our migrating warblers go when they leave here.

Along the trail we heard songs of Ovenbirds. They seemed to be on all sides, not jut one or two as I have heard in other places. The calls of Northern Waterthrush joined in the dawn chorus, together with the songs of Black-throated Green, Blackpoll, Black and White and Can-

ada Warblers, Common Yellow-throat and dozens of Redstart.

With the exception of Blackpoll, all the above warblers were on territory.

There, birds behave differently than in migration. You may not see as many, but you should see them better, for they often pick a tall sapling or dead tree and sing from its highest point. I knew that this happened, but it's a different thing to hear about this than to actually see and hear it. Most impressive was the sight of a Northern Waterthrush singing its heart out from the top of a 12-metre-tall dead tree. I have only seen them within three metres of the ground before. And there were more. Black and Whites and Black-throated Greens did the same. Not only did

the calls of Veerys echo through the woods, but one bird perched high in the sun to render its territorial song. Nearby, we heard the songs of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers and found one Golden-wing in the scope atop a six-metre-tall sapling for all to see it tilt its head back to utter its four-buzz song.

It was a treat to experience once again what birding was like 30 or 40 years ago—like going back in time. We need more areas like this.

The organizers, Kathy Parker and the Friends of MacGregor Point Park should be congratulated on a successful start to the '99 Festival.





TidBits

Make your Experience Even Better

Meeting Places: We try to accommodate additional meeting places on events that go a distance from the Park but we hope everyone understands the logistics of limiting secondary meeting spots. It means lost time in the field for the event itself and forces the event to follow the same route on return.



Full Events: We understand how discouraging it can be to find your desired event is full but we encourage you to put your name on the wait list. One attendee was on the waitlist this year for five different events and was able to attend them all due to last minute cancellations. So don't give up; there is always hope. And if that fails, we encourage you come back next year and try again!

Registration Panic: The popularity of some events means that many people attempt to register early. The method we have is an attempt to equalize the opportunities, it ensures no preferential treatment, and the website allows entry from around the world. Discussions have been held to change the start up time to a more "reasonable" hour, but ultimately there is no perfect time that will suit everyone's schedule.



Participation Limits: Events are limited in attendance to ensure all attendees receive a rewarding experience. These decisions are made at the Committee level despite no objection from the leader for more. We hope you understand the need for this despite the strong desire to go beyond the limit for your personal involvement. We cap most events at 20 people, and some less, to make the event enjoyable.

Long Driving Distances: To enhance the experience, several events are held remote from the Park. We understand that some prime birding or morning light for photos is lost, but we hope that is compensated for by the location selected.



Invisible Tourist: Doug Pedwell accurately refers to birders as the ‘invisible tourist’. This shouldn’t be! Let the community know we are here; don’t feel you have to take your binoculars off when you step out of your car when in town. Let the motels, restaurants and stores know you are a birder.

Keep it Manageable: Our growth is modest but you have to remember that our desire is not to make the Festival as big as possible, but rather to maintain the best participant experience possible.



From Far and Wide: Did you know that we had participants from Austria, Spain, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, Quebec and British Columbia? We have truly become an international event! Start up a conversation with your fellow participants. You never know what great tales and experiences they may have to share.

Use Discretion: We all have apps on our phones that make it easy for us to know the field marks to be looking for and the song the bird sings. This ability comes with responsibility. One of our long term respected leaders, James Turland, has pointed out something many of us may not know. The playback of our recordings presents a perfect song at a potentially amplified level. Some territorial birds will react in a defensive mode, coming closer for us to see, but others may simply give up, saying I can’t compete with that guy and abandon the territory. Why take a chance?



Acknowledgements

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival Committee is made up of:

Liz Addison	Fred Jazvac
Margaret Anderton	Carole Lupton
Anne Cathrae	Bette Jean Martin
Jim Duncan	Norma Nanni
Judy Duncan	Arlene Richards
Bruce Edmunds	Bob Taylor
Becky Grieveson	

Festival Co-chairs:

Norah Toth and Doug Pedwell

Supported By:

Lynne Richardson as well as park liaisons Matt Cunliffe and Kathleen Chayer.

Redstart Newsletter Team

Text and Graphics: Sarah Martin, Doug Martin
Photos: Alice Kain, Jim Punnett

The Friends of MacGregor Point Park thank each one of these individuals for their volunteer work and commitment to the festival!

Thank You.

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival thanks the following sponsors:

Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre	Hills Insurance
Bruce Power	John King Law Office
Colonial Motel	Maplewood Motel
D.C. Johnston Realty Royal LePage	Mildmay Tent Rentals
Eagle Optics	Nature's Millworks
Green Door Catering	Ontario Power Generation
Handy Andy Services	Quality Inn
Harrigan's Catering	Super 8 Motel
	Synergistic Solutions



The 2017 Festival was recognized as one of the top 100 Festivals by Festivals and Events Ontario. This is the third time our festival has been selected and we are very proud of this status.

Jim Duncan received a Certificate of Recognition from Festival and Events Ontario for his support of the Festival.

During registration 40 of the 87 events filled.

The Fishing Island event was the first to fill in the first 7 1/2 hours and the second event filled 2 hours later.

120 people registered during the first 24 hours of website activation. 19 of these people were new to the festival.

Bird sighting reports totaled 181 species, which is the fourth highest number of species in our 20 years.

This year's attendance grew to 392 participants. Of these, 171 were new to the festival. There was a 9% increase in adult attendees.

Visit our Festival

Through our Blog: <http://huronfringefest.wordpress.com>

Through Facebook: [HuronFringeBirdingFestival](https://www.facebook.com/HuronFringeBirdingFestival)

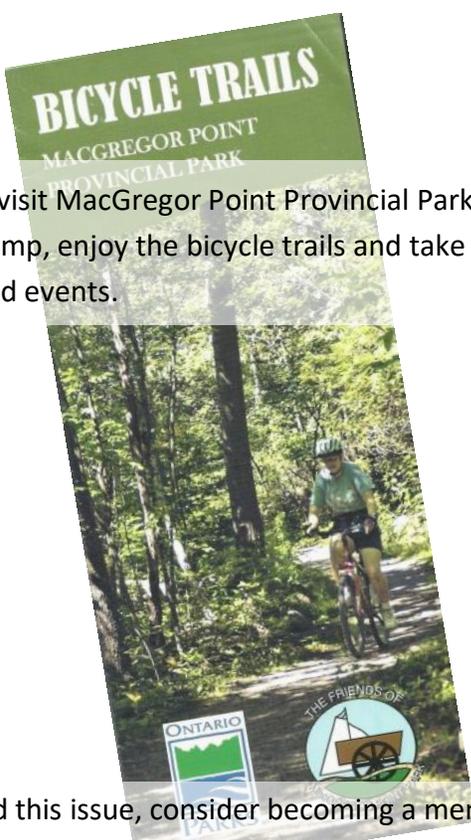
Through Twitter: [@HuronBirdfest](https://twitter.com/HuronBirdfest)

The support of our community sponsors is greatly appreciated. Their involvement helps to keep the price of the festival reasonable for all participants.

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival is presented by the Huron Fringe Birding Festival Committee in partnership with The Friends of MacGregor Point Park and MacGregor Point Provincial Park

More FUN

Come and visit MacGregor Point Provincial Park during the non birding times to camp, enjoy the bicycle trails and take part in Visitor Centre services and events.



MacGregor Point Provincial Park

Wild for the Arts

FREE ADMISSION
September 16th & 17th

MacGregor Point Provincial Park
1593 Bruce Road 33, Port Elgin, ON N0H 2C5

Wild for the Arts is another feature event sponsored by the Friends. It is held in the fall and admission is free. Enjoy the arts in a natural setting.

If you liked this issue, consider becoming a member of the Friends of MacGregor. Receive a discount in the store and get a fantastic quarterly newsletter.



Many Birdfest participants may find membership of benefit and many of the articles of direct interest. Here is a sample article on Forest Bird monitoring in MacGregor Point Provincial Park. Surprisingly to many, the most abundant bird in the count was not the American Redstart.

Sing Out! AND BE COUNTED

For more than 20 years I have conducted a forest bird count in the area of the Lake Ridge Trail in MacGregor Point Provincial Park. The count is part of a study for the Canadian Wildlife Service that utilizes Volunteers to monitor the numbers of breeding birds within large tracts of Ontario's forests. Five stations are monitored twice each year during the breeding season. All birds seen or heard during a 10 minute period, at each of the five stations are recorded, and resulting limited viewing range, 90% or more of the birds are identified by song.

Typically the results are simply transferred to Environment Canada where they are processed and long term trends in the populations of breeding birds in the province are recorded. This year, I reviewed my personal results in greater detail and thought I would share the information with you.

A total of 118 breeding pairs of 28 different species were counted. The most common birds this year, in order are:

1. Red-eyed Vireo
2. Ovenbird (What Am I # 4)
3. American Robin
4. Northern Waterthrush
5. American Redstart
6. Black-throated Green Warbler
7. Blue Jay
8. Veery
9. Great Crested Flycatcher (What Am I # 5)
10. Winter Wren
11. Wood Thrush
12. White-throated Sparrow

These results may surprise some, but you must remember that the study focuses on birds of the forests. Common species we all recognize such as the Black-capped Chickadee are more common on the forest edge and are therefore found in much lower numbers in the central forest areas. Similarly, birds of the lake shore, open fields and the city are rarely encountered. Other studies are conducted to monitor these species.

The Red-eyed Vireo (What Am I #2) made it to the top of the list as the most common species of the MacGregor Point forests. It is a regular breeding bird of MacGregor Point's campsite areas all day long from the breeding season, the male sings very patiently (observer) found that the male of this species repeated his song 22,000 times in a single day.

It is interesting that the American Robin, common in our manicured yards, is also well represented in the deep forest. Two other thrushes, the Wood Thrush (What Am I #2) and the Veery (What Am I #8) are still reasonably common in the forests of MacGregor Point, despite declining significantly elsewhere.

The American Redstart is the mascot of the Huron Fringe Birding Festival. It can be found in good numbers throughout the Park, but has a very close rival for the Birdfest honour with another regular breeder, the Black-throated Green Warbler.

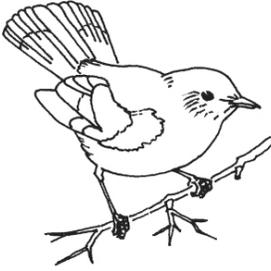
Blue Jay numbers have been noticeably larger this year than in recent years. There doesn't seem to be any particular reason for this. Perhaps during migration, it was simply decided that Southern Ontario would be the destination of choice for this year.

Overall though, it is my opinion that the numbers of birds in MacGregor Point Provincial Park seem to be declining over the years. This trend is well documented elsewhere in North America. With 20 years of data, I should devote some time to further analysis of my records to see if this drop can be quantified locally. This is just another enjoyable thing to add to my growing to do list.

Doug Martin, Friends Member
Article Bird Photography by the Author

So sing your heart out!

Here's some fun!
How many times does our Redstart logo appear in this newsletter?



Next Year

Watch for further information on the 21st Huron Fringe Birding Festival.

Be sure to register early to maximize your chances of getting on the desired event.

*One of Canada's Premier
Birding and Nature Festivals*

Huron Fringe Birding Festival

Photo by Carol L. Edwards

**May 25 - May 28
& May 31 - June 3, 2018**

Festival Headquarters
MacGregor Point Provincial Park
1593 Bruce Road 33, R.R.1
Port Elgin, ON Canada N0H 2C5
huronfringebirdfest@gmail.com

www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca

MacGregor Point Provincial Park is located along the beautiful Lake Huron shoreline at the base of Ontario's famous Bruce Peninsula. The Festival offers excursions from the Lake to the forests, fields and wetlands of this bird and botany rich area.

Highlights:

- **Birds** – 245 species have been recorded during the 20 years of the Festival.
- **Events** – the Festival offers an incredible 80 events to choose from.
- **Variety** – events include birding, botany, photography, geology, archaeology and more.
- **Leaders** – our terrific slate of leaders are well-known experts from around the province; a number are also popular international guides.
- **Banquet** – the Festival banquet offers an exceptional and entertaining keynote speaker each year.
- **Evenings** – presentations on a variety of natural history topics are offered every evening.
- **Family Friendly** – each weekend offers a number of events geared to children.
- **Accommodations** – camp in the Park or stay in nearby towns.
- **Food** – breakfasts and BBQ lunches are offered daily in the Park.
- **Join Us** – for a single event, a day, a weekend or a full Festival package.

May 26, 2018
The Listless Lister: The Addiction of Birding and How I Overcame It with Michael Runtz

Many birders are addicted to adding new ticks to their lifetime species list. During his highly visual presentation, Michael will detail the transition of a fanatical lister to someone who now enjoys birds and all other living organisms in more pacified ways.

Noteworthy Comments

"Great birding! The Bruce Peninsula has the most wonderful diversity of nesting bird species in southern Ontario." *Mark Peck, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto*

"Who would have thought that there would be the chance of seeing up to 20 species at risk during the Festival. I'm impressed!" *MB, Wasaga Beach*

"I have attended for over 10 years and always have a great time!" *SH, Toronto*

On-line registration begins February 1, 2018

The schedule of events will be available for viewing on January 15, 2018. Visit www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca
To contact the Registrar: huronfringebirdfest@gmail.com

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival is presented by the Huron Fringe Birding Festival Committee of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park and MacGregor Point Provincial Park. Bruce Power, Eagle Optics and Ontario Power Generation are Corporate sponsors of this event.

Printed in Canada 2017 / 10,000

Watch your e-mail next January for the registration start-up notice or visit the website at www.huronfringebirdingfestival.ca for more information