



The Rambler

FALL 2024

A Message from the Board

Preparing for the winter in Fort Erie always brings anticipation. What kind of winter will it be? Will we get buried in snow? Will Lake Erie freeze this year? How often will the Niagara Parkway be closed under the Peace Bridge due to a seiche on the lake?

But there is one thing that is certain that we all look forward to: the return of our outstanding winter waterfowl. As I write this, many Tundra Swans have already returned to the various bays along Lake Erie, and Viki Busche reported seeing a vast flotilla of swans at Gonder's Flats along the river. A large flock of Scaup and Redheads have been hanging out in Crescent Beach, along with a few Buffleheads and Red-breasted Mergansers.



A Tundra Swan on the Niagara River.
© Ron Goodridge

You won't want to miss our Walk on the Wide Side scheduled for Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 10:00 am. We will meet at the parking lot below the Old Fort Erie on Lakeshore Road. Bring your binoculars and dress warm!

The Board of the Bert Miller Nature Club reports that the amended Articles of Incorporation approved by the

membership at our last Annual General Meeting were not approved by the province. The province requires that our articles reference the province's Charities Accounting Act. This was not needed in the past. Unfortunately, we were unaware of this additional requirement when changes were drafted to our Articles of Incorporation to comply with Ontario's new Not-For-Profit Act. The Board is preparing updated Articles of Incorporation that will be put forward for approval by the membership at our next Annual General Meeting.

The Board is still looking to recruit new Directors. If you are a member and interested in helping, please let one of the current board members know about your interest.

Our December, January and February meetings will be held using Zoom, so watch your email for the links. The Board hopes everyone has a healthy, enjoyable holiday season, and we hope to see everyone at our next in-person meeting in March, if not before.

Enjoy nature,
Tim Seburn (on the Board's behalf)

Remembering Carl Damude

Carl Damude passed away on September 16, 2024, at 93. He was a lifelong resident of Fonthill. Carl and his wife Janet have been devoted members of the Bert Miller Nature Club since its inception and strong advocates for the nature clubs and environment in Niagara. We will miss his kind face



© Lisa Bacon

and joyful spirit. Carl was always great company while rambling on a hike or bird watching.

Carl leaves behind his wife, Janet, and his children, David, Ann, Stewart, several grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

For a snapshot of his life, visit <https://obituaries.stcatharinesstandard.ca/obituary/carl-orville-damude-1091170111>.

Welcome New Members

- Alan Derksen

Upcoming Meetings

- January 13 @ 7:00 pm - Francine McCarthy, Brock University - Crawford Lake, Defining the Anthropocene Age (on Zoom).
- February 10 @ 7:00 pm - Marcus Rostern - Western New York Wildway (on Zoom).
- March 10 @ 7:00 pm - Bruce Mackenzie - Birds of the Niagara Escarpment (in person).
- April 14 @ 7:00 pm - Steve Burrows, Published Author - From Birder to Birder Murder (in person).
- May 12 @ 7:00 pm - Win Laar - Seasons in My Garden (in person).
- June 9 @ 7:00 pm - to be announced (in person)
- 2025 Fall Meetings will be updated in our Spring 2025 Rambler.

Upcoming Outings

- Saturday, January 11 @ 10:00 am - Birds and Brews: Winter Duck Birding.
- Saturday January 25 @ 10:00 am - Walk on the Wild Side
- Details on the back page.

Memberships

- Our 2024 - 2025 season started in September; memberships are now past due. Memberships can be purchased through CanadaHelps or in person at a meeting. Thank you to everyone who has renewed already.
- We look forward to being together with old friends and meeting new ones. Everyone is always welcome.



BMNC Receives Donation from Local Group

by Lynda Goodridge

Community Voices of Fort Erie (CVFE) is a local group formed in December of 2018 to spearhead an effort to save the property commonly known as Waverly Woods/Erie Beach from development. The property extends from the lakeshore to Dominion Road and is bordered by Bassett St. on the West and Bardol/Buttwood on the east. Despite the group's efforts at the provincial tribunal and its extensive community support, the development was allowed to proceed. Fortunately, the wooded area with trails was subsequently sold to the Town of Fort Erie, allowing public access to this small portion. The remainder of the property north to Dominion Road is currently being developed as a subdivision. Although the group was unsuccessful in stopping the development, it garnered much community support and raised awareness of the importance of protecting our natural areas.



The Friendship Trail through Waverly Woods.
© Ron Goodridge

CVFE was required to donate any remaining funds to a local charitable organization with similar goals and objectives.

The three pillars of Community Voices of Fort Erie are Ecological and Environmental Issues, Historical Significance, and Community Assets. Since their goals and those of The Bert Miller Nature Club are very similar, it was felt that our club was the best choice for this purpose.

We received a donation of \$2,386.22 from Community Voices of Fort Erie in the hopes that these additional funds will help in our efforts to share our love of nature with the Greater Fort Erie community.

share our love of nature with the Greater Fort Erie community.

We are very grateful to Community Voices of Fort Erie for this generous donation and thank them for their efforts to help preserve our natural environment. They have been a great asset to our community, and we wish them well in their future endeavours.

Although they are no longer incorporated, they plan to maintain the group and continue to work to protect the natural areas of Greater Fort Erie.



Beautiful sky at Erie Beach. © Ron Goodridge

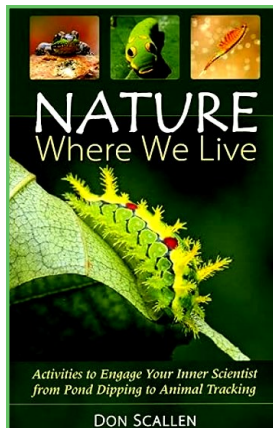


Mother Red Fox with kit.
© Ron Goodridge

Due to changes in the new Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act (ONCA) and the ensuing costs involved in maintaining its not-for-profit corporate status, the members of Community Voices decided to submit Articles of Dissolution to remove this designation. As part of the process,

Hidden Life

Don Scallen visited our Club and made a fantastic presentation at our in-person October Meeting. In his presentation, called Hidden Life, he described the amazing insects and animals that abound in our world, which we often don't see or notice. Don has also written a book called "Nature Where We Live - Activities to Engage your Inner Scientist from Pond Dipping to Animal Tracking." If you want to delve deeper into the topic covered at our meeting or would like more information, this is an excellent little book to read and keep on hand as a resource. It includes detailed information such as the time of year, time of day, and habitat to find and view salamanders, Fairy



Shrimp, American Woodcock, toads, various fish, moths, butterflies, and many other creatures. This wonderful, kid-friendly book is available at Urban Nature Stores and LoopsandLattes.ca. It would be a nice gift for an older child or a family interested in nature.

by Anne Mills

Fort Erie Conservation Club Fall Fair

by Anne Mills

The Bert Miller Nature Club was pleased to have a booth again this year at the Fort Erie Conservation Club Fall Fair on September 28, 2024. The weather was beautiful, and there were many visitors to the Fair and our booth. Thank you to Dawn Pierrynowski for bringing all the booth components and helping with set-up and take-down. The information table showcased many interesting nature identification pamphlets from the Toronto Zoo, Land Care Niagara, and our pamphlet, which included upcoming meetings and information

about the Club. A picnic table with a colouring area and a button-making machine was geared to children. There were many smiles and happy faces as they left with their button. The Fair is always an excellent way to get out, spend time with family, try out the games and pony rides, eat delicious food and see all the exciting craft and vendor booths. Thanks to all the Club volunteers who helped with set-up and tending the Club booth: Dawn Pierrynowski, Lynda Goodridge, Deb Sherk, Tim Seburn, Christine Knighton and Anne Mills.

Fall Walk at Shagbark Nature Park

by Dawn Pierrynowski

What more could you ask for in mid-October? It was cool and sunny, with a blue, cloudless sky on October 19, 2024. I was dressed in layers that were soon shed as I walked along the trail. The first stop was to observe the new signs the Town of Fort Erie installed to encourage the public to keep this “environmental park” garbage-free. The second sign reminded everyone that dogs must be on a leash. The next stop was at the Swamp Rose Mallow patch to collect some seeds, which I hope will sprout in the spring. When the group got to the Chimney Swift Tower, I was pleased to find that the Town employees had installed the repaired trap door that had been vandalized in the spring. Tim Seburn, Cathy Herbert, Maria Featherston, Viki Busche, and Lynda Goodridge posed for me beside the Tower, and then we proceeded into the forest. Viki brought her trusty snippers and a garage bag to trim back unwanted vegetation and pick up any trash present. Our destination was the Town’s newly acquired 15.5 acre (6.27 hectare) property that was added to Shagbark Nature Park. I asked Lynda if she would keep a list of observations anyone in the group made along the way.

Pack it In. Pack it Out.
© Dawn Pierrynowski

Our destination was the Town’s newly acquired 15.5 acre (6.27 hectare) property that was added to Shagbark Nature Park. I asked Lynda if she would keep a list of observations anyone in the group made along the way.

Everyone identified many birds, and Tim and Cathy identified some special plants. I photographed a magnificent poison ivy vine dressed up for fall, climbing an old, dead Sugar Maple tree.



Our beautiful, cloudless day.
© Dawn Pierrynowski

It has been a few years since the late Rick Young did an inventory of the flora in the park. It’s likely time to do a new one.



Poison Ivy dressed for fall.
© Dawn Pierrynowski

Thanks to this group of dedicated naturalists, it was a fantastic day with great company and many observations.

Our list of bird sightings included Blue Jay, House Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-throated Sparrow, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Carolina Wren, American Goldfinch, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Tufted Titmouse.

A dragonfly was also seen, and a Spring Peeper was heard.



Conopholis americana. American Cancer-root, Squawroot or Bear Corn.
© Dawn Pierrynowski

Some special plants that were seen included Northern Spicebush, American Bittersweet, Maple-leaf Viburnum, Ebony Spleenwort, Carrion Flower, Wild Basil and Bear Corn.



Group in front of the Chimney Swift Tower. © Dawn Pierrynowski

Notable Birds in Niagara 09/1/2023 to 08/31/2024 by Marcie Jacklin

This was another great time for birds in Niagara despite the noticeable decreases in many species. Loss of habitat is the leading cause, but there are other factors, like roaming cats (especially during breeding season - baby birds are an easy target), window collisions, and increased human activity in places like our shorelines and natural areas.

The season started with a Western Sandpiper Blayne, and Jean Farnan reported at Morgan’s Point on Oct 14, 2023. Western Sandpipers seem to be spotted annually now. Are birders getting better at identifying this tricky species, or are they increasing in number during migration?

Blayne and Jean Farnan also located a Franklin’s Gull on October 27, 2023, at the Catherine Street Parking lot in Fort Erie. This is an unusual visitor to Niagara. The Farnan’s spend a lot of



Slaty-backed Gull © Marcie Jacklin

time in the field, and it pays off with their exciting findings.

Purple Sandpipers can be tricky to find because they prefer poking around on rocks close to or in the water. Port Dalhousie hosted this species from November 4 to 10, 2023.

The recent invasion of Snowy Owls over several years has slowed down, and only two sightings were reported, one at Beamsville and the other at Long Beach.

Another infrequent visitor, Red Phalarope, was reported on December 28, 2023, at Jones Beach, Port Weller, and several people were able to view it.

Niagara’s gull man Ryan Griffith found a Slaty-backed Gull on February 4, 2024, at Lock 7 in Thorold. It was reported in the area until February 25—another case of hard work paying off.



Sedge Wren © Marcie Jacklin

Notable Birds in Niagara

continued

A Sedge Wren found by Brad Reinhardt put on a good show on May 1, 2024, at Morgan's Point Conservation Area.



Tricolored Heron. © Marcie Jacklin

May 5, 2024, was a crummy day - always a good day and time of year to try for overshoots and rare birds. While scanning for birds with Lynda Goodridge at Wainfleet Wetlands on Quarry Road, I heard her say, "What is this bird?" I perked up

because that usually means there is a good bird, and sure enough, when I saw it, I shouted Tricolored Heron! We got the word out quickly, and several people saw it before it took off.

May 8, 2024, was one of those days birders dream of. For me, it was getting a new bird for my Niagara list. Lynda and I were out birding along the Lake Ontario shoreline, but we both needed to get home UNTIL I got a message that a Kirtland's Warbler was being seen at Forty Mile Creek trails. We dropped everything and dashed there.

Safety for Birds

For many of us, the sight of birds in our yard is a source of joy. We welcome them with feeders and fountains, admiring their vibrant colours and cheerful calls. However, this joy can turn to sadness when these beautiful creatures mistakenly perceive a window as part of their natural environment. The glass, reflecting the foliage and the sky, can lead them to fly into what they believe is their outdoor world.

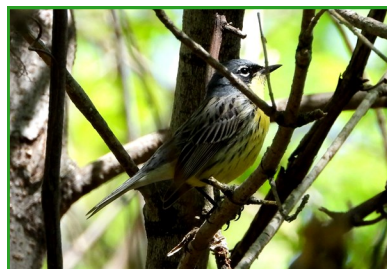


Red-breasted Nuthatch. © Ron Goodridge

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) discusses bird collisions on the web at <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/why-birds-hit-glass/>. A recent 2024 study by scientists through PLOS ONE found that over 1 billion birds die from collisions with windows, especially during migration. The common assumption by most people is that collisions occur mainly with brightly lit skyscrapers at night. Surprisingly, most collisions occur during the day, and almost half occur at home windows, with low-rise buildings accounting for the rest.

Although some birds may appear temporarily stunned following a collision, many suffer from internal bleeding, concussions, or damage to their bills. A study by the American Bird Conservancy showed that out of 29 window collisions, only two birds died immediately on site. However, birds can sustain severe injuries and frequently fly away to die elsewhere.

The good news is that we, as homeowners and bird enthusiasts, have the power to help keep birds safe from window collisions. The ABC recommends using external insect screens as a buffer. This eliminates reflections



Kirtland's Warbler © Marcie Jacklin

reason, the Kirtland's Warbler followed us to the area and put on another show less than a metre from where we were standing.

On May 22, 2024, Blayne and Jean Farnan found another great bird, a Laughing Gull, at Morgan's Point Conservation Area.

I'll end this report as I started it with a Western Sandpiper. This extraordinary bird was found in Fort Erie on August 1, 2024. It was located at Jaeger Rock and stayed for three days.

Good birding.

by Lynda Goodridge

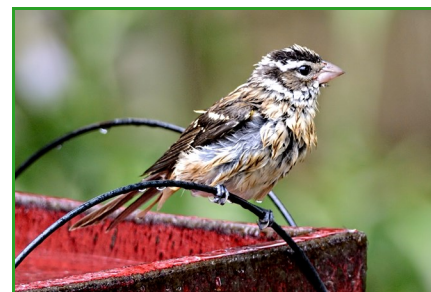
and cushions the impact if a bird hits them, reducing the likelihood of injury.

We can also use other items like special tape, string or cords. Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) has a wide range of window tapes that are easy to install and still provide an excellent view of the outdoors from within. Visit www.flap.org for more information on these products. No matter what material you use, it needs to be visible to the birds from at least ten feet away so that they have enough time to see the material and change course.

Although there are commercial products available that provide window treatments, Dawn Pierrynowski has made one of her own, using lines of paracord to create "Zen Curtains." Look for her article in this newsletter as well. Thank you, Dawn, for your practical suggestions!

It is gratifying to note that the Town of Fort Erie has also created guidelines for residents. You can download the document at <https://www.forterrie.ca/en/town-hall/resources/documents/Boards-and-Committees/Bird-friendly-Pamphlet.pdf>.

Many cities and towns now incorporate bird-friendly designs into their new building guidelines, a promising start. However, we must also consider older homes and buildings. It's a collective responsibility to ensure bird safety. Let's all work together to make our properties safer for birds, ensuring we can continue enjoying their visits for years to come.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak. © Ron Goodridge

A DIY Guide to Making Acopian BirdSaver

by Dawn Pierrynowski

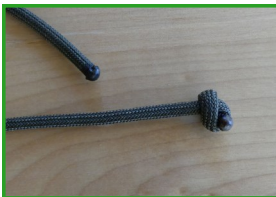
I decided to try making my own Zen Curtains after reading a story about birds crashing into windows on the Birds Canada website at <https://www.birdscanada.org/you-can-help/make-windows-safer-for-birds>. I learned how Jeff Acopian invented BirdSavers, known as Zen Curtains, at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/acopian-birdsaver-window-collision-safety/>. I then did more research. A complete comprehensive guide detailing different window sizes and mounting methods can be found here: https://www.birdsavers.com/product_images/DIY_Acopian%20BirdSavers-HowToMake.pdf

This is how I made my Zen Curtains for my two 2' x 3' front windows.

1. Assembled all my materials: 8' Vinyl J-Trim (purchased at Rona, \$4.17), 50 yards of dark 550 Paracord (black or green, purchased at Lee Valley, \$8.93), drill with 1/4" bit, a lighter, a measuring tape, and Alien Tape (I already had this, so the price is unknown).



© Dawn Pierrynowski



© Dawn Pierrynowski

2. Measured my window and determined I needed eight strands of paracord 4 feet long for the two windows. NOTE: I wanted them to dangle a little longer than the windows.

3. Sealed the ends of the paracord using a lighter. NOTE: Protect the surface under your work area. Be careful using the lighter flame (or match) and that the melted ends don't

- touch your skin until cool. Drips could occur.
4. Tied a simple overhand knot at one end of the paracord.

5. Cut the 8-foot J-Trim in half and then cut one half in half to make two 2-foot curtains. NOTE: I used the small scissors pictured.



© Dawn Pierrynowski

6. Drilled 1/4 inch holes, starting the first one 4 inches from the window frame and then three more holes every four inches. NOTE: I mounted a piece of wood in the vice and put the J-channel on top to make a stable surface for drilling.

7. Threaded the paracord through the holes, pulling the knots flush with the holes inside the channel of the J-Trim.



© Dawn Pierrynowski

8. Cleaned the window frame where the curtain was to be mounted.

9. Cut three 1-inch pieces of Alien Tape and stuck them on the back of the wide part of the J-Trim. I then peeled off the plastic cover and mounted the curtain to the top of the window. NOTE: The official instructions outline different methods for mounting the Zen Curtain. This is not one of them. I will see how the Alien tape holds up over time.

10. Repeated for the other window.

For more information about bird collisions and window treatments, visit <https://flap.org/> and <https://flap.org/stop-birds-from-hitting-windows/>.

The Pipevine Swallowtail

On July 10, 2024, Carol Dominucci, a Bert Miller Nature Club Facebook group member, posted a photo of a Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillar. I was ecstatic! To see a Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly in Ontario is an infrequent event. Finding this species' caterpillar in Canada was "mind-blowing." Marcie and I immediately made arrangements to visit Carol.



Caterpillar.
© Carol Dominucci

Sure enough, Carol had Dutchmen's Pipe Vine growing around a pillar on her porch. Pipevine Swallowtails feed on species in the botanical family Aristolochia, which includes Wild Ginger and Dutchmen's Pipe Vine. Several times in my life, I have been amazed at the ability of butterflies and caterpillars to "taste" the air and find their larval food plant. This time was no exception. The fact that a very rare (at least for Ontario) Pipevine Swallowtail was found in Carol's Dutchmen's Pipe Vine is incredible. There were several caterpillars busy defoliating her vine. Carol moved two caterpillars into a container and posted a fascinating video of one pupating on the BMNC Facebook page.

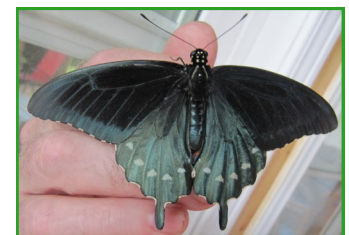


Crysalis.
© Tim Seburn

Like the Monarch, the Pipevine Swallowtail is distasteful and emetic to birds. Everyone knows how

the Monarch butterfly leaves Mexico each spring, lays eggs on milkweeds as it travels northward, and how its grandchildren miraculously navigate back to the ancestral home in Mexico each fall. Not everyone, though, may be as aware of the impact the distastefulness of Monarchs has on other butterfly species, some of which have evolved to mimic the Monarch. The Viceroy butterfly is so similar people often misidentify it as a Monarch. Monarchs have become rare and are now listed as an endangered species. If Monarchs were to disappear, how would our remaining butterfly species be impacted? Would Monarch mimics get eaten more often by birds? Would mimics eventually stop mimicking the Monarch?

Unlike the Monarch, the Pipevine Swallowtail is becoming more common northward. Many butterfly species, including our Black and Spicebush Swallowtails, also mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail. However, none of the mimics manage to reproduce the Pipevine Swallowtail's beautiful blue-green sheen perfectly. Interestingly, some Tiger Swallowtail females and all Diana Fritillary female butterflies, but not the males, mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail. Even more interesting, another species, *Limenitis arthemis*, will mimic the Pipevine Swallowtail depending on its range. In Southern Ontario, this species usually takes the mimic form known as the Red-Spotted Purple. Further north in Ontario, this same species will take the non-mimic and completely different-looking



Adult Pipevine Swallowtail.
© Tim Seburn

Bert Miller Nature Club

PO Box 1088
Ridgeway, ON
L0S 1N0



www.bertmillernatureclub.org
email: info@bertmillernatureclub.org

2023 - 2024 Executive

President •vacant
Past President •Deb Sherk
Vice President •vacant
Secretary •Viki Busche
Treasurer •Rick Stockton
Memberships •Dawn Pierrynowski
Directors •Eliza Durant
•Lynda Goodridge
•Anne Mills
•Dawn Pierrynowski
•Tim Seburn

The Rambler Newsletter

•Newsletter contact: Tim Seburn
•Editor: Lorraine Brown-Joyce

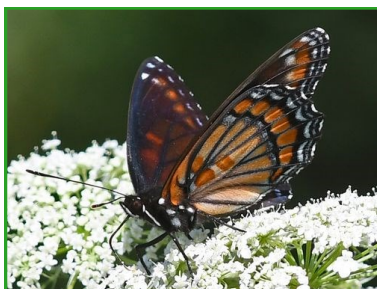
The Bert Miller Nature Club is a charitable organization formed in January of 1995 by a group of people interested in sharing their enthusiasm for nature. Earl Plato, a local naturalist and history buff, was the founding president. The club is named after a well-known naturalist and resident of Fort Erie, Bert Miller, whose passion inspired all those who participated in his many rambles throughout the Niagara Peninsula. Since its inception, the Bert Miller Nature Club has been committed to preserving, protecting, restoring and improving the Niagara Peninsula's natural environment. Through monthly meetings, field outings and advocacy activities, the Club strives to foster an understanding and awareness of our natural heritage and its value in enhancing the quality of life. It also promotes cooperation with other organizations having similar interests.

In conjunction with the Town of Fort Erie, the BMNC maintains stewardship of the Shagbark Nature Park. This rehabilitated natural area features a woodland with marked trails and interpretive signage, a meadow containing native plantings and a chimney swift tower. The Park is located on Burleigh Rd between Nigh and Dominion Roads in Ridgeway.

Meetings are held the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m., in person for September, October and April to June, and virtual via Zoom for November through March. Field outings may be scheduled periodically. Please visit our website, www.bertmillernatureclub.org for more information on our club and a complete list of activities.

The Rambler newsletter is published biannually in the Spring and Fall. Members are encouraged to submit articles, nature events or experiences, photos and outing reviews to bertmillernews@gmail.com. Items submitted may be edited and will be used subject to space allowances. Thanks to the many members who take the time to contribute to making a newsletter for everyone to enjoy.

The Pipevine Swallowtail



Cross-breed. © Josh Vandermeulen

confused? Here is a photo Josh Vandermeulen recently took of a cross between *Limenitis arthemis* and the closely related Viceroy, *Limenitis archippus*. Stay tuned!

form known as the White Admiral. Suppose Pipevine Swallowtails become more common in Ontario. Should we expect to see more black female Tiger Swallowtails and the Red Spotted Purple form of *Limenitis arthemis* push its range further north? Or will butterflies become

Carol mentioned that she has had Dutchmen's Pipe Vine growing in her garden for over 20 years. This is the first year she has been rewarded with a crop of swallowtails. On August 8, an adult butterfly emerged from one of the chrysalises Carol had caged. She was thrilled to be able to release it so it could cavort with several other adult Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies which had recently emerged in her garden.



Carol releasing an adult Pipevine Swallowtail. © Tim Seburn

continued

Upcoming Outings and Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, January 11, 2025 @ 10:00 am - Birds and Brews: Winter Duck Birding. This outing will start at 10:00 am on the Niagara River, and at 11:00 am, we will go to Little Red Coffee at 46 Queen St., Fort Erie, for a presentation by Marcie Jacklin. To ensure your spot, please register in advance on this page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1268167734435238>.

Saturday, January 25, 2025 @ 10:00 am Walk on the Wild Side. Meet at the parking area on Lakeshore Road, below the Old Fort Erie, to view some of the excellent winter waterfowl along the Niagara River. Call Tim Seburn if you have any questions at (905) 871-2577.

BIRD COUNTS

Sunday, Dec 15, 2024, Buffalo Ornithological Society Bird Count.

Friday, Dec 27, 2024, Niagara Falls Nature Club Bird Count.

Sunday, Jan 5, 2025, Port Colborne Bird Count.

Contact Marcie Jacklin at (905) 871-2577 if you are interested in participating in any of the bird counts.