



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **April 30, 2013**

BIRDERS AND BIRDS OF AN INTERNATIONAL FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER ALONG THE SHORES OF THE DETROIT RIVER AND WESTERN LAKE ERIE!

Birdwatchers near and far are marking their calendars in anticipation of the annual spring migration of birds as they journey from their southerly wintering grounds toward their nesting ground destinations across North America. Along the way, these winged migrants will make numerous stops en route to their nesting areas, touching ground to rest and refuel in preparation for the next leg of their trip. Migratory stopover sites, as they're known, are critical to the survival of migratory birds, whose journeys can span thousands of miles. The Detroit River and Western Lake are critically important for all groups of migratory birds, whether they're nesting, resting, or grabbing a bite to eat. Millions of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, song birds, and raptors use this area's varied habits that provide an assortment of food, cover and roosting areas.

Why is this corridor such an attractive and important place for birds? Lake Erie represents a barrier to most migrating passerines (songbirds) and raptors. Many birds are reluctant to cross open water when the opposite shoreline cannot be seen, and as a result, unparalleled numbers of these winged migrants can be found along the lower Detroit River and southwestern shore of Lake Erie each spring. With the exception of the Gulf coast, no other region of eastern North America can demonstrate concentrations of birds like this coastline. Important migratory pathways and habitat along Great Lakes shorelines have been identified at more than 60 sites; and 95% of the waterfowl counted during a recent Ohio Division of Wildlife aerial survey occurs in the Lake Erie marsh region.

To celebrate this natural phenomenon, International Migratory Bird Day festivals are being held at several premier bird watching sites in the region to welcome *both* the migrating birds and those who follow their travels. Events are held on both sides of the Canadian/US border, making it a truly international celebration!

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Saturday, May 11, 7:30-Noon

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Humbug Marsh Unit will hold an open house featuring bird walks and activities focusing on migratory birds of the Detroit River. Join University of Michigan-Dearborn naturalist Dorothy McLeer for two birds walks in the morning: an early riser walk from 7:30 am-9:00 am and a late riser walk from 10:00 am-11:30 am. On previous walks, such birds as blue gray gnatcatchers, yellow warblers, and Baltimore orioles have been "caught in

the act” of nest building, and birds headed for the northern boreal forests fuel up on much needed caterpillars in the trees right before our eyes. Naturalist McLeer explains, “The more time we spend in this little treasure chest along the Detroit River, the more hidden gems reveal themselves to us.” Light refreshments will be provided by the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance in between the walks, along with family friendly bird activities from 10 am-noon. The Refuge will be open to the public from 7:30 am-noon, offering visitors the opportunity to explore Humbug Marsh on their own, as well.

Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum & Nature Center **Saturday, May 11 & Sunday, May 12 from 7:00 AM-5:00 PM**

Many of “our” birds, such as the Baltimore Oriole and the Scarlet Tanager, actually spend more time in the tropics than they do here. Visitors to the Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum & Nature Center can expect to participate in a series of guided walks with park naturalists, exciting speaker presentations and other fun-filled activities to celebrate the return of our tropical migrant birds.

Saturday, May 11

7:00 AM- Guided bird walk

9:00 AM- Refreshments

9:30 AM- “Waiter, There’s a Bird in My Coffee; Coffee, Birds, and the Future”

11:00 AM- guided bird walk

1: 00 PM- “Here Today, Gone Tomorrow—This Migration Thing is Neat!”

Sunday, May 12

7:00 AM- guided bird walk

11:00 AM- guided bird walk

1:00 PM- “Here today, Today, Gone Tomorrow—This Migration Thing is Neat!”

2:00 PM- “From 10 Gauge to 10 Power—a Checkered History of Birding

3:00 PM- “Birds of a Feather—Their Tools of the Trade”

Event Fee: program is free—vehicle entry permit required

Contact: 734-379-5020

Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)

Saturday and Sunday, May 11 & 12

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on May 11 with a trip to one of our region’s key birding hotspots: **Hillman Marsh Conservation Area**. Spring comes alive with swirling flocks of shorebirds over the mudflat habitat which provides an important migration stopover for thousands of sandpipers and plovers, as well as for rarer shorebirds such as Avocets, Marbled Godwits and Sandhill Cranes. For your chance to see songbirds up close, visitors are encouraged to join staff and volunteers for the 2013 Spring Shore and Songbird Celebration May 11th and 12th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The astonishing journey of many of these spring migrants begins as far away as Central and South America to nesting grounds as far northward as the Eastern Canadian Arctic. Celebrate spring migration with songbird banding demonstrations and crafts at the nature centre, and consider adopting a songbird to support environmental programs and research of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory.

Extending the celebration, on May 9th, ERCA will invite partners and guests to share in the grand opening of our bird viewing blind at the Shorebird habitat. “This enclosure will provide optimal viewing opportunities at this unique habitat, while providing shelter from the wind and other elements,” explained Kevin Money, ERCA’s Director of Conservation Services. “We’re so grateful to Pelee Wings, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and the Ontario Field Ornithologists for their financial contributions to this project.”

Hillman Marsh is located on Concession 2 and County Road 37, approximately 7 kilometres east of the Municipality of Leamington. The Essex Region Conservation Authority is a community-based organization dedicated to protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources of the Windsor-Essex-Pelee Island region. For birding updates, follow us on Twitter @essexregionca.

Point Pelee National Park, Leamington, ON

Saturday, May 11, and Sunday, May 12

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day - all weekend! You'll have the opportunity to celebrate our spring migration, all through the day and night. The park will be open from 5 am May 11 until 10 pm May 12, for you to enjoy all the aspects of migration.

In addition to our daily programs, you can also participate in these special events:

Radar Ornithology with Dr. David La Pluma

David La Puma is currently conducting research on the potential effects of extreme climate events on migratory species. For the last three years David has been using radar to quantify and evaluate stopover habitat used by migrant landbirds. David's fascination with radar ornithology goes back almost a decade though. His quest to understand the relationships between weather, migration and the radar culminated in his website www.woodcreeper.com where he has been tracking nocturnal bird migration across the Mid-Atlantic US using radar in both spring and fall since 2004. David's work has been published in various scientific and popular outlets including Biological Conservation and WildBird Magazine, but most of all he enjoys giving live presentations of his research to groups of enthusiastic birders.

“As a birder and a scientist, I'm excited by how far we've come and where we're about to go in the world of birds,” he says. “Advances in optics and photography now allow us to see birds in ways we could never have fathomed 100 years ago, but what tools do you use when the lights go out? The 'bleeding edge' of birding includes seeing in the dark and hearing birds at 1000+ feet above the earth; while that may seem extraordinary, it's at your fingertips right now! In my presentation I'll give you a glimpse at how we're using radar to quantify stopover habitat quality for migratory species, and to help guide sustainable and responsible wind power development to minimize impacts to these charismatic creatures. I'll also show you how to use radar to predict birding conditions at your local hotspots. By the end of the day you too will be a 'bleeding edge' birder.”

Radar Migration Workshop and Hike

May 11 & 12, @ 7:30 am

Join Dr. LaPluma at the Visitor Centre and learn how to use radar to analyze bird migration. After

studying the previous evening's maps, you'll head out for a birding hike to see the results of your analysis first hand.

Cost: \$40/person, limit 12 participants.

Radar Ornithology Presentation
May 11th, 8 pm, Visitor Centre Theatre

Join Dr. Pluma for a glimpse at how we're using radar to quantify stopover habitat quality for migratory species, and to help guide sustainable and responsible wind power development to minimize impacts to these charismatic creatures. He'll also show you how to use radar to predict birding conditions at your local hotspots. By the end of the day you too will be a 'bleeding edge' birder.

Cost: \$15/person

Dark Sky Night with the Windsor Centre
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC)
May 11, 9 pm, Visitor Centre Parking Lot

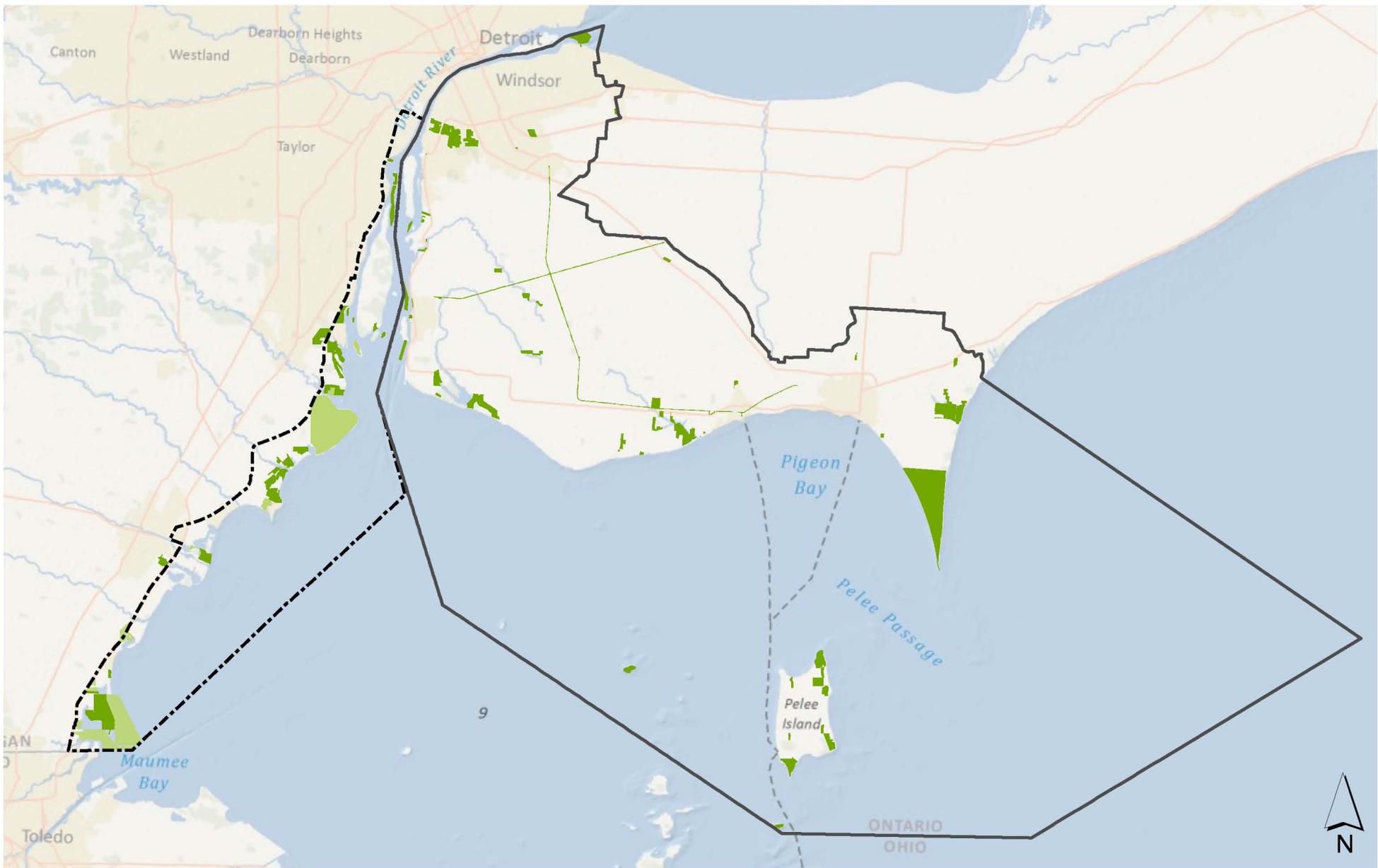
Join members of the RASC in the Visitor Centre parking lot and learn how to use the dark sky to navigate, just like our nocturnal migrants!

Cost: Free with park admission

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge incorporates 5,800 acres along 48 miles of the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, over 100 species of fish, and over 300 species of birds. It is the first international refuge in North America and one of the few urban ones in the nation. Unique habitats being managed for conservation include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and waterfront lands. The Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area is the institutional mechanism for Canadian federal, provincial, and local partners to cooperatively work with U.S. partners on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

For additional information regarding the opportunities listed throughout, please contact the following: **Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)**, Danielle Stuebing, Director of Community Outreach Services, 519.776.5209 ext.352; **International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA)**, Joann Van Aken, Executive Director, 734.692.7671; **Lake Erie Metropark Marshland Museum (HCMA)**, Kevin Arnold, Southern District Interpretive Manager, 734.379.5020; **Pointe Pelee National Park**, Meaghan Ruston, Promotions Officer, 519.322.5700 x324, **University of Michigan – Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center**, Dorothy McLeer, Interpretive Naturalist, 313.583.6372; **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge**, Jamie Lanier, Visitor Services Manager, 734.692.7649.

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Legend

-  Canadian Priority Natural Area Boundary
-  Canadian Protected Lands
-  United States Refuge Acquisition Boundary
-  Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Lands
-  Michigan DNR Protected Lands