



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 2, 2014

COME LEARN WHY BIRDS MATTER DURING THE CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY!

This year's theme of International Migratory Bird Day is *Why Birds Matter* and there is no better way to learn about this than through events planned at Point Pelee National Park and Hillman Marsh in Leamington, Ontario, Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown, Michigan, and Humbug Marsh in Trenton, Michigan. Birdwatchers from near and far mark their calendars each year 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 10, 7:30-4:00 PM

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 at either 7:30 AM or 11:00 AM or participate in family activities all afternoon till 4:00 PM at the education shelter in Humbug Marsh (5437 West Jefferson Avenue, Trenton, MI 48183). At 1:00 PM in the afternoon there will be a special program called *The How of Migration* by Dr. Craig Perdue on the observation deck at Humbug Marsh. On previous bird walks, 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.”

Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum & Nature Center

Saturday, May 10 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 10

7:00 AM- Early bird hike

9:00 AM- Light refreshments

10:00 AM- “Bird” is the Word (for kids ages 6-12)

1:00 PM- Lazy Bird Walk

3:00 PM- “Here Today, Gone Tomorrow—This Migration Thing is Neat!”

Event Fee: program is free—vehicle entry permit required

Contact: 734-379-5020

Essex Region Conservation Authority – Shore & Songbird Celebration at Hillman Marsh

Saturday and Sunday, May 10 & 11

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day 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 and Marbled Godwits. 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.

This type of constructed habitat is very rare in North America and provides optimal viewing opportunities. Visit the Shore and Songbird Celebration on May 10th and 11th from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM for scheduled hikes, talks, banding demonstrations, and opportunities to adopt and release a beautiful songbird courtesy of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory. Visit the Passenger Pigeon exhibit to learn about the 100th Anniversary of the extinction of this remarkable bird and its

ties to modern wildlife conservation efforts. On Saturday evening from 4:30 – 6 PM, join the Ontario Field Ornithologists for a special *Shorebird Nights* event.

Hillman Marsh is located at the intersection of Concession 2 and County Road 37, approximately 7 kilometers east of the Municipality of Leamington and minutes from Point Pelee National Park. For a schedule of events, visit www.erca.org. For birding updates, follow us on Twitter at @essexregionca. Since 1973, the Essex Region Conservation Authority has served as a community-based organization dedicated to protecting, restoring and managing the natural resources of the Windsor-Essex-Pelee Island region.

Point Pelee National Park, Leamington, ON **Saturday and Sunday, May 10 & 11**

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at Point Pelee National Park!

Located at the crossroads of major migration routes, the park is a key stopover for migrating songbirds each spring. Each year, in collaboration with the Friends of Point Pelee, Parks Canada welcomes thousands of birdwatchers from across Canada, the United States and abroad. The Festival of Birds has something to offer to people of all levels of birding experience, from guided experiences to self-tours. Whether it is your first visit or you've been coming every year, there is something for everyone.

May 10 & 11 and throughout the festival daily birding hikes will be offered. Hikes last two hours and are led by experienced guides. The daytime hikes focus on songbirds, while twilight hikes not only introduce participants to songbird activity at the end of the day, they also allow visitors the chance to watch the aerial courtship flight of the American Woodcock (separate pricing).

In addition to the hikes, lunch and learn sessions are also available daily at 12 PM. They focus on the finer details of bird identification and other natural history topics; lasting 45 minutes to an hour, these sessions allow visitors to take a break from walking the trails; to relax, eat lunch and learn. Sessions are included with Park admission.

100 Species Challenge

One of the best parts about birding at Point Pelee during the Festival of Birds is the diversity of species you can see during your visit. On a really good day, with a little hard work, 100 species is not an impossible goal. Why not take the 100 Species Challenge while you're visiting – not only will you have fun, but you can also win a great prize.

Birder Breakfast and Lunch (located behind the Visitor Centre)

Daily 7-11 AM and 11:30 AM–2PM.

Volunteer and Friends of Point Pelee staff are on hand to serve delicious and affordable breakfast and lunch options, featuring fare from local restaurants. All proceeds support the Friends of Point Pelee.

Shorebird Nights

Location: Hillman Marsh Conservation Area – Shorebird Cell

Cost: entry fee to Hillman Marsh

Time: 4:30–6:00 PM

Dates: May 2, 5, 7, 10, 13 & 16

Join volunteers from the Ontario Field Ornithologists and learn the basics of shorebird identification.

Park entry fees are:
Family/Group: \$19.60
Adult: \$7.80/each
Senior: \$6.80/each
Youth 6 to 16: \$3.90

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge extends along the shoreline of the Detroit River and western Lake Erie, and focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitats for 30 species of waterfowl, 117 kinds of fish, and over 300 species of birds. Unique habitats being managed in the refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and riverfront lands. To date, 3,797 acres of Essex Region Conservation Authority lands and 981 acres of City of Windsor lands have been added to the Canadian registry of lands for the refuge, and 7,897 acres of Michigan Department of Natural Resources lands have been added to the U.S. registry of lands that already includes 5,787 acres of lands owned and/or cooperatively managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. When totaled between Canada and U.S., 18,462 acres of land in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan are now being managed collaboratively for conservation and outdoor recreation in the spirit and intent of the 2001 Conservation Vision and 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 x352; **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; or **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge**, John Hartig, Refuge Manager, 734.692.7608.

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