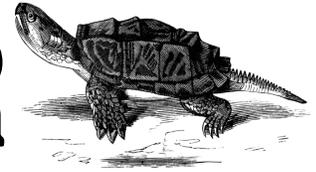




Summer 2009

Volume 1, Issue 2

# The SNAPPER



## Long Point Turtle Walk

**Mission Statement:**  
*The Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation is dedicated to conserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable communities, and partnering in research, monitoring, outreach and education.*

On Saturday evening on June 13th, 30 kids and parents gathered at the Canadian Wildlife Service parking lot along the Long Point Causeway for a Turtle Talk and Walk. One of the

province's top turtle experts, Scott Gillingwater of the Upper Thames Region Conservation Authority, showed the group various turtle shells of the 8 locally found species, while

discussing their biology and habitat preferences. The eager group then joined Scott on an interpretive hike on the CWS dyke system where they saw a painted turtle, a muskrat, Canada geese, and numerous predated turtle nests, with only egg shells remaining. Seems that raccoons, skunks, weasels and other predators can sniff out turtle nests and are very fond of the nutritious eggs! On returning to the head of the trail the kids were in for a real treat - Crystal Robinson, Wildlife Biologist with the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project, brought out a live snapping turtle, which the kids were able to observe close up and touch! All in all, a great outing!

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Photo by Bernie Solymár

## Robert Bateman's Biodiversity "Get to Know" Contest

The famous Canadian wildlife artist, Robert Bateman, is inviting youth from across Canada to create works of art, writing, or photography that celebrates biodiversity.

Go outdoors, or to a local zoo, museum, or aquarium, "get to know" your wild neighbours, and then enter the "Get to Know" contest.

Winners will receive fantastic prizes, including the chance to have their artwork featured on Canada's first ever Youth Wildlife Habitat Conservation stamp,

a trip to the Parks Canada Palisades Stewardship Education Centre in Jasper, their work published in a nationally distributed 2010 calendar, Panasonic Lumix® digital cameras, art supplies from Opus, and much more!

Get to know the contest details and entry information at [www.gettoknow.ca](http://www.gettoknow.ca).

Submitted by the Biodiversity Education & Awareness Network

## Introducing the NatureWatch Program

The NatureWatch program is being organized by Nature Canada to engage naturalists and young naturalists as 'citizen scientists', to familiarize themselves with local species and to track the changes in the natural



Northern Pearl Crescent butterfly

world around them. It includes **FrogWatch**, **PlantWatch**, **IceWatch** and **WormWatch**. The programs are a great way to better understand environmental concerns while

contributing meaningful data on ecosystem changes. There are a number of resources available including:

- PlantWatch Teacher's Guide
- FrogWatch guide (available for download)
- PlantWatch guide (available for download) and field guides
- FrogWatch and WormWatch posters available

For additional information on this project, and on the steps necessary to implementing the programs with your club, please go to [www.naturewatch.ca](http://www.naturewatch.ca).

Submitted by Environment Canada



# A Bug's Life

## Of Fairies and Fireflies

By Bernie Solymár

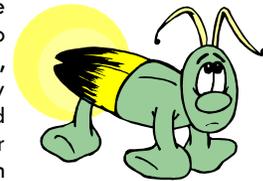
I love sitting out on the deck on a warm summer's night just listening and watching Mother Nature's creations as dusk approaches. It begins as robins bid a cheery goodnight, soon the crickets begin their nightly courtship songs, then a couple of little brown bats begin flitting overhead filling up on the abundant night flying midges and moths. And then the fairies come out to play. They light their way with little green lanterns which they turn on and off as they fly about near the spruce trees and across the lawn. Their flight pattern is often erratic and with no purpose, but if one watches carefully there is a definite pattern to those flashes.

Now, of course, my kids (19, 16, 9) have long ago stopped believing my stories of fairies with miniature lanterns flitting around at dusk and know a firefly when they see those little flashing, phosphorescent lights. But, why, my youngest asks, do

fireflies flash?

Fireflies are nocturnal beetles (*Family Lampyridae*) that are able to manufacture a photochemical compound at the tip of their abdomens. A complex chemical reaction allows them to activate this material to cause bursts of greenish or yellowish light used for attracting the opposite sex. Of the dozens of species of fireflies found around the world each has evolved a unique pattern of light pulses. These vary from species to species in duration, intensity, frequency of occurrence and color. Unlike in other insect species, both sexes signal. The male signals to attract a female but often the flashes are also meant to entice a female of the same species to announce her position so that the male can approach her.

Male fireflies of the common North American species, *Photinus pyralis*, have a flash pattern of a blip lasting 1/2 second and about 6 seconds apart. Receptive females, sitting on the end of a stalk of grass, will respond with a single



flash two seconds after the male's second flash. The male repeats his flashes as a way to induce the female to continue her response so he can approach and eventually mate with her. Interestingly, the frequency of flashes is temperature dependent and on a cooler night females don't respond to males when their flashing is greater than 6 seconds apart. Generally, there are many more males flashing in a meadow than females and several males may be attracted to a single female allowing her "the choice" of which male to mate with. She does this by aiming her abdomen and flashing

towards the lucky male hovering above her.

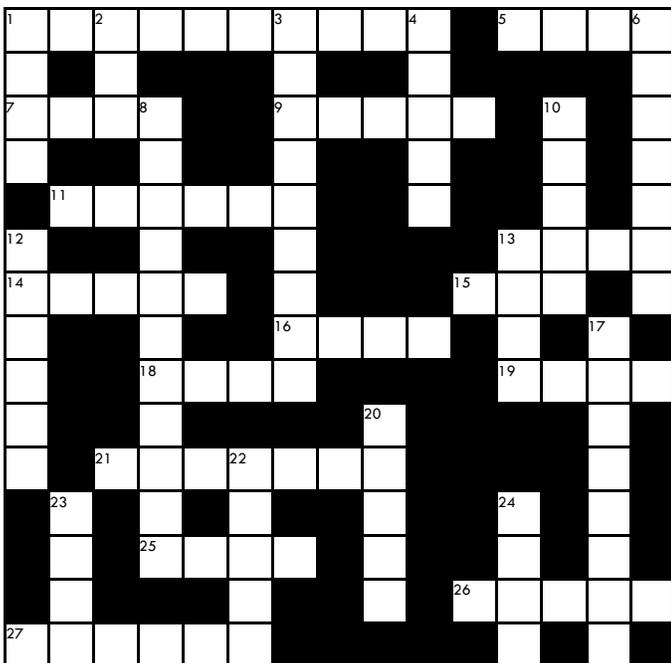
The Nova Scotian firefly, *Photuris fairchildi*, is interesting in that males of the species can emit either single or multi-pulse flashes when searching for a female. Upon receiving an answering flash from a female the male increases his frequency of flashes as he approaches. The female also begins to increase her number of flashes until the flashes of both are so rapid they look like a con-

tinuous burst of luminescence. Pair formation may actually occur in the air as the sexes circle and meet, followed by mating as the amorous pair tumble to the ground.

Now you may think that the flashes of light given off by fireflies makes them vulnerable to predators, both in the air (to bats) and on the ground (to toads, etc.). However, most species of fireflies are toxic or, at least, unpalatable to most would-be predators. The one exception to the rule lies in the firefly family itself. Females of the genus *Photuris* are predatory and mimic the flash signals of receptive *Photinus* females. These *femme fatales* attract unwary *Photinus* males, which become a tasty snack for the voracious *Photuris* females. Some male *Photuris* have, in turn, evolved the ability to imitate flashes of *Photinus* to lure females of their own species, who find not a prey item but an amorous suitor waiting for them!

Of course, I didn't get this technical when I explained the magic of fireflies to my kids when they were younger - I used more "lay-kids" terms...but I still enjoy telling younger audiences about little fairies and lanterns flitting about on a warm summer's night.

### ALL ABOUT BIRDS (Solution on page 3)



**ACROSS**

1. Will the coyote ever catch this bird? Perhaps with the help of the Acme company.

5. The only species of this family of big, black, cawing birds normally seen in southern Ontario is the American.

- 7. A large heron-like wader that can be brown, white or scarlet but is not found in Canada.
- 9. This duck-like diver looks like it doesn't have a tail.
- 11. Often named "Polly", this bird can be trained to mimic words.
- 13. A type of owl that seems to like living with horses and cows.
- 14. A big, black bird featured in North American Native legends.
- 15. \_\_\_\_bird: you might look for your pet feline when you hear this bird.
- 16. This small, energetic and noisy bird often holds its tails straight up in the air.
- 18. The most common type of raptor.
- 19. Often thought of as a symbol of peace.
- 21. A slim, streamlined and graceful flyer, this bird eats insects on the fly.
- 25. The American tree sparrow has one on its breast.
- 26. Often seen delivering babies in cartoons, this large bird has a wingspan of more than 5 feet.
- 27. The largest of these birds is great and blue.

**DOWN**

1. If you had a lot of this species, could you make an old-fashioned

- fence?
- 2. This tropical bird is a member of the cuckoo family, but is large and black.
- 3. This bird is a member of the "goatsucker" family and is commonly active at night.
- 4. If you see this bird, you think spring is here.
- 6. In the old days, men waxed their moustaches. Does this bird do the same to its wings?
- 8. Nocturnal birds with excellent hearing, silent flight and a spooky, whinny-like call.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ grey: the largest owl species in North America
- 12. This vocal and brightly coloured bird weaves a bag from the treetops for its nest.
- 13. This species of eagle really does have feathers on its head.
- 17. Does this bird have a baking teacher?
- 20. This species of sparrow lives in wet, marshy areas.
- 22. Look at the change in your wallet to see these diving birds.
- 23. Also a kid's toy used on windy days.
- 24. This species of swan isn't as quiet as its name suggests.



# Summer Nature Watch Checklist

Photos by Marg Werden



**BLACK-EYED SUSAN**

Where to look: Meadows, ditches, forest edges  
 What to look for: Yellow flowers with a large brown centre  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:



**SIX-SPOTTED TIGER BEETLE**

Where to look: Forests, meadows  
 What to look for: An emerald-green beetle  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:



**BUTTERFLY WEED**

Where to look: Meadows, at the edge of forests  
 What to look for: Bright orange blooms on tall, leafy stalks  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:



How many of these species can you spot? Use the internet or wildlife identification books from the library to get more information about these species.

## Kids for Turtles Long Point-Norfolk Chapter is Seeking Youth Columnists for The Snapper!

Ever wanted an opportunity to write about the environment and nature – and get your work published? We are seeking youth submissions for a column in *The Snapper*. This is a great chance for you to share your ideas and to be heard about issues important to you!

KFT wants to hear what environmental and conservation issues are most important to you, your friends, your school, your family, and your community. Are these issues important to you? What can be done about them?

If you are submitting an entry to our Editor at [werden@kwic.com](mailto:werden@kwic.com) please make sure that your document is in Word. Photos are more than welcome.

Check out our website at [www.longpointbiosphere.com/kids-for-turtles](http://www.longpointbiosphere.com/kids-for-turtles)



**SEVEN-SPOT LADYBIRD BEETLE**

Where to look: Meadows, gardens  
 What to look for: A red beetle with seven black spots  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:



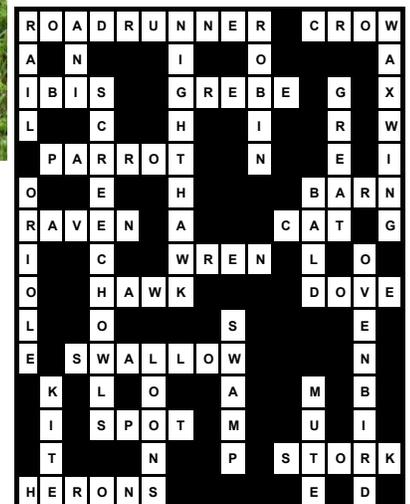
**TIGER SWALLOWTAIL**

Where to look: Meadows, gardens  
 What to look for: A large yellow butterfly with black stripes  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:



**NORTHERN (YELLOW-SHAFTED) FLICKER**

Where to look: Sides of tree trunks, lawns, grassy areas  
 What to look for: Large brown woodpecker with a red spot at the back of its head  
 Date spotted:  
 Location:





# Some Snakes of Norfolk

## KIDS FOR TURTLES LONG POINT- NORFOLK CHAPTER

P.O. Box 338  
Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M0

Phone: 519-410-8878  
E-mail: kidsforturtles@  
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Colleen Dale (Co-Chair)  
Bernie Solymár (Co-Chair)  
Marg Werden (Secretary)  
Wanda Backus-Kelly  
Wendy Cridland  
Terri Groh  
Arden Koptik  
Rick Levick  
Janice Robertson  
Jen Smit  
Elizabeth Van Stam

### Eastern Fox Snake

- 91-137 cm; record 179.1 cm
- yellow-brown with large brown or black blotches on back that alternate with smaller blotches along sides; belly yellow with black checkerboard pattern
- lays eggs
- Thought to have declined in Ontario as wetlands were drained and shorelines were developed for cottages. Illegal collecting for the pet trade and accidental kills as snakes cross roads have also impacted populations. Many are mistaken for rattlesnakes and deliberately killed. Reproduction is slow. THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (COSSARO)



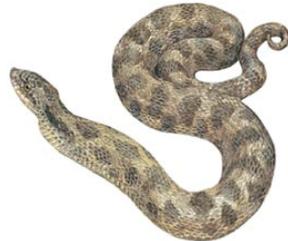
### Eastern Garter Snake

- 45-66 cm
- black, green or brown with three
- belly yellowish green
- stripes may be orange or reddish in some parts of range
- some snakes may be all black with no stripes (melanistic)
- gives birth to live young



### Eastern Hog-nosed Snake

- 51-84 cm; record 115.6 cm
- large dark blotches down back alternating with smaller blotches along sides
- when threatened, spreads neck to display darker neck pattern and will roll over and play dead
- flat head with upturned snout
- lays eggs
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (COSSARO)



### Eastern Milk Snake

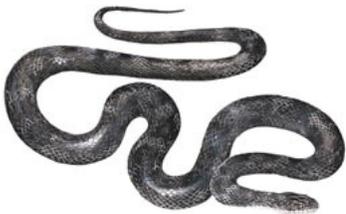
- 61-90 cm; record 132.1 cm
- cream, tan, or light grey with red or dark brown black-bordered blotches or rings on back alternating with blotches along each side; belly whitish with black checkerboard pattern
- blotch on neck may appear Y or V shaped
- Lays eggs
- Historically, human persecution has been a threat. Its aggressive behaviour and proclivity to inhabit buildings makes it more prone to being killed by humans. SPECIAL CONCERN (COSSARO)

blotches or rings on back alternating with blotches along each side; belly whitish with black checkerboard pattern

- blotch on neck may appear Y or V shaped
- Lays eggs
- Historically, human persecution has been a threat. Its aggressive behaviour and proclivity to inhabit buildings makes it more prone to being killed by humans. SPECIAL CONCERN (COSSARO)

### Gray Ratsnake

- Juvenile Rat Snake 106-183 cm (large snake); record 256.5 cm
- Adults darken to a black color, in some a faint blotched pattern
- throat white
- lays eggs
- Loss of habitat has been the main threat to the Carolinian population of Eastern Ratsnake. The northern shores of Lake Erie are dominated by agriculture and roads, which have severely fragmented this population's habitat. As well, high incidences of road mortality. THREATENED (COSEWIC)

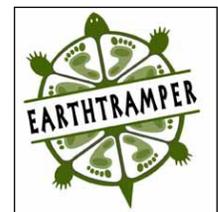


population of Eastern Ratsnake. The northern shores of Lake Erie are dominated by agriculture and roads, which have severely fragmented this population's habitat. As well, high incidences of road mortality. THREATENED (COSEWIC)

COSEWIC: Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada

COSSARO: Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario

## CORPORATE SUPPORTERS



## KFT Coming Events

### August 1st, 2009 – Sciensa-tional Ssnakes, Backus Conservation Area, 3 – 5 p.m.

Ever wondered why snakes stick out their tongues? How they swallow prey bigger than their mouth? Where do they spend the winter? Learn all this and more about Norfolk's snakes and get a chance to hold a live Eastern Fox

Snake and Gray Rat Snake, as well as other species. (Note: \$12 per car charged at entrance gate. KFT members pay only \$6)

**August 15th, 2009 – Nature Talk and Walk, Turkey Point Provincial Park, 10 A.M.** Join Colleen and Bernie and get introduced to some of Norfolk's

species-at-risk, including turtles, snakes and badgers. Then take a walk with us on the Lookout Point Trail and learn about the biodiversity of plants and animals of our Carolinian forests. Find out why poison ivy causes painful rashes in some people and not others, and why mosquitoes need your blood.

(Note: Day visitors must pay day-use park entry fee)

**September 2009 – Great Lakes Clean-Up along Long Point, Dates and times TBA** Kids for Turtles members will tackle cleaning up garbage along the beaches and shores of Long Point, together with other local community groups.