



# The Blue Bill

Quarterly Journal of the Kingston Field Naturalists

ISSN 0382-5655

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Volume 56, No. 4

December 2009

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## Celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009

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**The Blue Bill** is the quarterly journal (published March, June, September and December) of the **Kingston Field Naturalists**, P.O. Box 831, Kingston, ON (Canada), K7L 4X6.

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Send submissions to the Editor by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. by the 15<sup>th</sup> of February/May/August/November) to the address above, or to the editor via e-mail to: **alerwin@kos.net**. Please include contact phone number.

Submissions should be in MS Word format or in "plain text" format (PC or MacIntosh) or unformatted in the body of an e-mail.

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## President's Page

### Chris Grooms

Environmental change and loss of biodiversity have followed in the wake of humans since we first learned to walk upright, throw rocks and spears, and start fires. The pace of this destruction has accelerated as our population has grown and our technology has soared. Today, extinction rates are expressed in units of species per day or even per hour. We now hear daily about climate change and the loss of arctic ice, the expansion of introduced invasive species like Asian carp, round goby, zebra mussel, emerald ash borer, garlic mustard and dog strangling vine.

As naturalists we see these changes all around us and we often see them early. We have the skills to observe and document these changes and trends. Once we have knowledge of the problems, I believe we also have a responsibility to do something about them. We can advocate for improved ways of doing things, putting nature first and taking a "precautionary approach" to large-scale projects like wind farms, for example. On an individual level, we can vote for green politicians and perhaps, even Green ones. We can educate ourselves and others on the issues and help to change our society for the better.

As an organization we can have a strong voice and be a force for change. Currently and over the next year or so, the KFN is working on better defining threats to nature in a few ways. We have a chimney swift monitoring and habitat

restoration project. We have a raptor survey on Wolfe Island and a short-eared owl monitoring project which is the envy of organizations like Bird Studies Canada. The club's Conservation Committee is following the Asian carp story, working on a *Phragmites* project and meeting with other naturalists' groups to address the expanding wind farm industry and the potential threats associated with so many wind projects in the Great Lakes Basin.

Through our general meetings we are educating ourselves and the public. In January Dr. Chip Weseloh will speak on colonial waterbirds in the Great Lakes.



February brings us Dr. Barrie Gilbert to present his research on the role of grizzlies and Pacific salmon in coastal BC ecosystems. Kristen Keyes will speak on short-eared owl research in March. In April Philip Careless will present his Wasp-Watchers program, an effort to locate outbreaks of the introduced emerald ash borer. Please come to these general meetings to learn about the issues and what you can do to help. The meetings are open to the public so bring a friend.

## Kingston Teen Naturalists Field Trips September-November 2009

*Matthew Mooney, Cerridwyn Cox Henderson, Alison Zilstra*

### Freshwater Jellyfish Teen Trip September 12, 2009

*Matthew Mooney*

As the Kingston Teen Naturalists, Matthew, Elise, Adrian, and Phoenix, headed to Anne's cottage, it was a bright and early morning. The goal was to look for freshwater jellyfish. The day turned out to be quiet, sunny with a slight breeze. After a quick look at a mica deposit along the side of the road we headed towards the cottage. Along the cottage road we found Beechdrops, a parasitic plant on the roots of American Beech trees. This plant has no chlorophyll and appears brownish.

Once we reached the cottage we talked about boating safety and what should be in a small watercraft. Once the boats were loaded we headed out onto the water to look for the "elusive" freshwater jelly fish. Soon we had caught close to ten. This was an unusual sighting as this species appears to only be found in a few lakes in Eastern Ontario and only for a brief period of time, and specifically near the outer edge of the lily line. The alternate phase of the jellyfish, the hydroid form, is sedentary on the underwater plants. The swimming medusa is about 1½ cm across, almost transparent and found about 15 cm below the surface. They pulse along in this, the distribution phase of their lifecycle.

As we drifted out we discussed some of the water life we saw. All around the edges of the water there were water shield, and white waterlily plants. We discussed the insects that used the lilies, in particular a beetle that lays its eggs on the undersurface of the Fragrant Waterlily leaf. The larva lives attached to the underwater stem using three spines pushed into the air chambers in the stem to get oxygen. After a quick paddle we headed through North Otter, Sucker, and Rothwell Lakes, for lunch on a sunny point. Here we found a Garter snake and discussed the difference between garter and ribbon snakes, then the difference between dragon and damselflies when we saw a Fall Meadowhawk.

Shortly after, we headed under a very low bridge to explore the length of a large beaver dam. As we looked up through the very tall cattails we could see and hear a Red-shouldered Hawk, a species of concern. It was truly amazing. Anne with her sharp eye spotted some wild rice and explained how the Native Americans used to collect it. We all had a taste.

Paddling back to Loon Island we had a quick swim and had a look at a many years old loon's nest which had some broken shell in it. Then after returning to the cottage and writing our field notebooks there was a special surprise...  
ICE CREAM!

## Teen Trip to Rock Dunder, Morton October 31, 2009

*Cerridwyn Cox Henderson*

Rock Dunder is a granitic pluton sticking about 75 m above the surrounding land with an arresting view of the Rideau, in Eastern Ontario. It is owned by the Rideau Waterways Land Trust and the trails are maintained by the Rideau Trail Association. The aim of this trip was to practice using naturalist skills including observation, GPS, map reading and photography.

The people attending this Kingston Teen Naturalists hike to Rock Dunder were Erin, Pheonix, Adrian, Aaron, Matt and Cerridwyn. The weather was overcast, around 12°C, with a slight wind from the south and light on-and-off rain. We had a wonderful time despite the rain. The hike was about 5 km and there were two log cabins where we sheltered from the rain. We ate lunch in one of them.

The non-edible plants we saw were Running Ground Pine, a short plant (related to ferns) with leaves that resemble that of a White Cedar and striped needles in a bunch, Canada Holly (a shrub with red berries), Buckwheat, Pyxie cups which is a lichen shaped like tiny wine glasses and an aster still in bloom.

We saw edible plants too, and I will tell you how to tell them from other plants. Rock Tripe is gray on top, except when it is wet-then the top is green. It is edible and tastes a little like mushrooms. Partridge berries are small red berries

on low-growing plants. The berries are slightly sweet and quite safe to eat.



**Mating Stick Insects. Male with green legs.**

We also saw quite a few insects. We saw two stick insects mating (that's rare), a paper wasp, and two caterpillars and one Green Frog.

My favourite part was after lunch when we walked to the highest part of the outcrop. There was a wonderful view. It was so refreshing to look out, no humans as far as you can see, (and from way up there you can see pretty far!). Up there the wind was so strong that it could almost blow you over and it wasn't even a very windy day! We returned to the cars for a Hallowe'en treat, getting home damp and tired but having enjoyed our day out.



## Plot Monitoring for EMAN

November 21 2009

*Alison Zilstra*

On a cloudy November day, 3 Teen Naturalists joined Anne Robertson and Shirley French at the NCC property at Elbow Lake. We headed to a 20m by 20m plot to perform a regeneration and sapling survey, an analysis of tree health, an annual decay rate analysis and an assessment of woody debris. All these are part of the Citizen Science Initiative (CSI) and the Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN). We did not perform the actual data collection; it was a walkthrough to give us an idea of the job.

We began by identifying, measuring and counting saplings in 5 predetermined 2m by 2m squares. We learned how leaf scars and the number of scales on a bud are important in identifying tree species at times of year when they do not have leaves. We uncovered partially buried pieces of wood test strips placed to examine soil activity, but since they had been in the ground only a couple of months, they were still intact. We discussed the process of measuring the amount of decomposition in the soil. We looked at several trees, recorded whether they were alive, had any defects or problems, and what role they played in the forest. After a quick lunch break, we recorded information about the decomposing wood along one of the edges of the plot. As a break from the intense biological survey work, we went for a hike around the west beaver pond, which began with



everyone's feet getting wet, because the bridge across the pond was partially underwater due to the beaver dam. Anne reminded us that "Naturalists Notice Nature", and taught us to use our five senses to better notice our surroundings. She showed us how to scan the forest while walking to best take in our surroundings: up, down, near, far, right, left. Passing into a valley then to the lake, we had passed through the three main habitats found around the world; open areas, woodland and wetland.

We did not encounter many animals, but we did see a grouse, a beaver, several nuthatches, blue jays, chickadees, some coyote scat, a dead garter snake and a *Promethea* moth cocoon. We had a great time recording and observing the wildlife at the Nature Conservancy property and would like to thank Shirley for her help.

*(The EMAN plot at Elbow Lake is monitored annually by Shirley French and Viviane Paquin on behalf of the KFN. This project is one of many Citizen Science projects that track the health of our forests.*

## KFN Fall Round-up November 7-8 2009

*Ron D. Weir*

The 44<sup>th</sup> KFN Fall Round-up took place between 1500h Saturday Nov 7 and 1500h Sunday Nov 8. Participants numbered 29. During Saturday, sun and scattered cloud made the birding very pleasant with fairly strong winds and a temperature about 8°C. The clear night saw the SW winds diminish to become light W during Sunday morning with temperatures varying from -8°C to 18°C, which was very mild.

A total of 118 species was realized, below the 39 year 1970-2008 average of 120. The cumulative total rises to 240 species with the addition of the Summer Tanager, our first ever on the Fall Round-up. Other noteworthy finds are the Harlequin Duck 4<sup>th</sup> and first since 1992, Peregrine Falcon 5<sup>th</sup>, Gray Catbird 3<sup>rd</sup> and first since 1997. The only species with a record high count was the Canada Goose.

The totals in the following table have had known duplications removed so that the total individuals for a species may not equal the sum of the contributions from each party.

The results provide a reasonable estimate of the numbers of birds found. The composition and number in each party and the sites visited are given below. Following the 24-hour count, the birders met at the home of Marian and Joel Ellis for the potluck supper. Marian and Joel were again great hosts and a warm thank-you is extended for their continued hospitality. The assembly of

the species list after dinner was greeted with enthusiasm.

Party #1: Lynn Bell, Martin Edwards, Chris Grooms, Kurt Hennige, Mike Runtz (Wolfe Island, Prince Edward Pt., Amherst Island). (5)

Party #2: Alex & Erwin Batalla, Betsy & Gaye Beckwith, Hugh Evans, Rose-Marie Burke (Elevator Bay, Greater Cataraqui R., Wolfe Island, Cartwright's Pt., Elginburg). (6)

Party #3: Faith Avis, Marg Benson, Liz & Mike Evans, Bea & Jay McMahon (Kingston area including Cartwright Pt., Greater Cataraqui R., Little Cataraqui Conservation Area; Wolfe I., Elevator Bay and surroundings, Amherst I.). (6)

Party #4: Joel Ellis, Peter Good, Kathy Innes, Bud Rowe, Ron Weir (Prince Edward Pt., Kingston area, Waupoos peninsula, Adolphustown, Sillsville, Wilton Creek at Morven). (5)

Party #5: Sharon David (Howe Island) (1)

Party #6: Bruce Di Labio, Ben Di Labio (Amherst I.) (2)

Party #7: Miscellaneous observers: Bill Andrews, Hugues Bonin, Steve Lukits, Orest Koroluk (4).

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS							
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	TOT
Red-throated Loon	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Common Loon	90	1	30	15	-	66	2	175
Pied-b. Grebe	3	1	2	5	-	-	-	11
Horned Grebe	16	-	-	140	-	3	-	159
Red-necked Grebe	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	6
Double-c Cormorant	125	2	6	8	-	3	-	144
Great Blue Heron	5	2	3	2	-	3	-	15
Snow Goose	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Canada Goose	2000	x	18000	2200	35	92	-	<u>22000</u>
Mute Swan	6	-	-	5	-	-	-	11
Tundra Swan	6	x	144	235	-	8	-	385
Gadwall	26	x	130	300	-	-	-	325
American Wigeon	14	x	220	535	-	20	-	569
Amer. Black Duck	20	x	8	20	-	39	-	87
Mallard	130	x	140	300	5	14	-	445
N. Shoveler	8	x	30	20	-	-	-	58
N. Pintail	17	x	90	75	-	-	-	180
Green-winged Teal	10	x	22	5	-	9	-	46
Redhead	130	x	3	15	-	-	-	148
Ring-necked Duck	-	x	370	385	-	-	-	755
Greater Scaup	3000	x	5000	9550	-	1250	-	18800
Lesser Scaup	140	-	-	85	-	34	-	259
Harlequin Duck	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Surf Scoter	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
White-winged Scoter	120	-	-	40	-	-	-	160
Long-tailed Duck	2000	x	-	10500	-	7	-	12000
Bufflehead	400	x	103	160	-	74	-	737
Common Goldeneye	40	x	40	165	-	130	-	375
Hooded Merganser	25	x	8	15	-	1	-	49
Common Merganser	42	x	38	300	-	3	-	383
Red-br'd Merganser	300	x	40	150	160	72	-	720
Ruddy Duck	-	4	1	1	-	-	-	4
American Coot	1	x	18	45	-	-	-	65
Osprey	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Bald Eagle	-	-	-	-	-	-	1ad	1
N. Harrier	12	2	6	-	-	17	-	41
Shrp-shinned Hawk	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Red-tailed Hawk	7	8	11	5	-	13	-	44
Rough-legged Hawk	5	-	4	5	-	2	-	16
American Kestrel	4	1	4	-	-	4	-	13

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS							
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	TOT
Merlin	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Peregrine Falcon	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Rng-ncked Pheasant	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	4
Ruffed Grouse	2	-	-	4	-	-	-	6
Wild Turkey	-	23	-	6	-	-	-	29
Black-bellied Plover	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
Killdeer	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	3
Greater Yellowlegs	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	3
Sanderling	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Semipalm Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Wht-rmpd Sndpiper	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dunlin	24	-	-	-	-	10	-	34
Wilson's Snipe	-	22	11	-	-	-	-	33
American Woodcock	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Bonaparte's Gull	130	x	6	15	-	20	-	170
Ring-billed Gull	60	x	245	400	12	57	-	774
Herring Gull	40	x	25	25	5	10	-	105
Grt Bl-backed Gull	3	2	3	3	3	9	-	23
Rock Pigeon	34	x	14	15	-	9	x	75
Mourning Dove	20	x	22	30	35	5	x	112
E. Screech Owl	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Great Horned Owl	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Barred Owl	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
Long-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
Short-eared Owl	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Saw-whet Owl	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Belted Kingfisher	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Rd-bell'd Wdpcker	-	2	1	-	1m	-	-	4
Downy Woodpecker	5	x	x	6	2	2	-	17
Hairy Woodpecker	4	x	x	1	3	2	-	12
N. Flicker	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Pileated Woodpcker	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Eastern Phoebe	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
N. Shrike	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	5
Blue-headed Vireo	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Blue Jay	80	x	25	16	28	12	x	170
American Crow	14	x	21	235	-	15	x	288
Common Raven	6	3	-	2	1	2	7	21
Horned Lark	2	-	-	-	-	10	-	12

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS							
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	TOT
Blk-cppd Chickadee	40	x	14	27	6	34	x	290
Tufted Titmouse	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Red-brstd Nuthatch	1	x	-	4	-	-	-	6
Wht-brstd Nuthatch	5	x	4	6	4	5	x	26
Brown Creeper	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	3
Gldn-cr Kinglet	2	1	-	15	-	5	-	23
Rby-cr Kinglet	7	-	-	2	-	1	-	10
Eastern Bluebird	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
American Robin	25	2	2	25	-	7	-	61
Gray Catbird	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
European Starling	5310	x	1000	425	3	92	x	6830
American Pipit	35	-	-	-	-	3	-	38
Bohemian Waxwing	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	18
Cedar Waxwing	24	x	4	15	5	-	-	48
Yllw-rmpd Warbler	50	-	x	15	-	-	-	65
Summer Tanager	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Eastern Towhee	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Am Tree Sparrow	12	x	-	6	-	5	-	24
Chipping Sparrow	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Fox Sparrow	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	7
Song Sparrow	2	x	2	1	-	1	-	7
Swamp Sparrow	6	-	-	1	-	-	-	7
Wht-thrted Sparrow	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wht-crwnd Sparrow	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Dark-eyed Junco	45	x	1	30	1	9	x	430
Lapland Longspur	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Snow Bunting	40	100+	28	60	-	29	-	257
N. Cardinal	3	2	2	1	1	3	x	13
Red-w Blackbird	1000	x	30	30	36	62	-	1158
Rusty Blackbird	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Common Grackle	40	1	3	5	1	1	-	51
Br-headed Cowbird	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
Purple Finch	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	4
House Finch	12	1	3	5	6	-	x	28
Wh.winged Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Pine Siskin	5	-	-	3	-	-	-	8
Amer. Goldfinch	70	x	12	70	4	37	x	195
House Sparrow	2	x	30	18	8	23	x	83
TOTAL SPECIES	87	64	60	73	24	67	17	118
PARTICIPANTS	5	6	6	5	1	2	4	25

## Surveying Red Knots at Longridge Point, James Bay, July 2009

*Don Shanahan*

Five-hundred Red Knots swirled en masse about the shoreline in front of me. The drumming of their wings and the contrasting soft, murmuring calls came and went as the birds flew back and forth through a thick, pervasive mist. The tide was close to its highest point and the knots, wanting to roost, couldn't find a spot they were comfortable with. Suddenly, a couple of hundred birds peeled off from the flock and flying south vanished into the mist. My heart sank as the remaining birds put down briefly on rocks close to the shoreline then took off again.

My intention was to read the alphanumeric codes some birds carried on flag tags attached to their legs. Unless some roosted nearby, I would have no opportunity to do so. Relocating scattered flocks roosting in the mist was not likely. Finally, the remnants of the original flock found a patch of grassy shoreline to their liking and landed amidst a smaller group of Hudsonian Godwits. Gradually the birds tucked their bills under their mantle feathers and went to sleep.



This meant that I would wait for two or more hours until the tide began to recede and the mist would hopefully dissipate. The knots would slowly wake up, begin feeding and with luck allow me to get close enough to read their flags through my spotting scope.

I was huddled near the shoreline at the base of Longridge Point on southwestern James Bay; a 40 minute helicopter ride north of Moosonee, part of a six-person crew led by Mark Peck of the Royal Ontario Museum and sponsored by the ROM, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the World Wildlife Fund.

Our two-week Species at Risk survey targeted the endangered *rufa* subspecies of the Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*. One of six subspecies of *C. canutus*, numbers of *rufa* have declined significantly in recent years. This trend has been seen in their wintering grounds which include Tierra del Fuego (southernmost Argentina and Chile) and western Florida, as well as at key staging areas in Delaware Bay (Delaware and New Jersey). Breeding Red Knots spread widely across the Canadian High Arctic are almost impossible to census. However as southwestern James Bay is a significant southbound staging area for Red Knots, the re-sighting of tagged birds and the acquisition of baseline information such as number and origin of migrants, duration of stay and resource utilization add important pieces to the *rufa* puzzle.

For some reason Red Knots, when roosting, usually tuck in the leg carrying the flag. Occasionally, shuffling birds would reveal the presence of a coloured flag: orange for Argentina, red for Chile, lime for Delaware Bay and white for Canada. Once the country where the birds had been banded was established, the next challenge was to use a spotting scope to read the alphanumeric characters on the flag. Often, this had to be done backwards, looking past other birds' legs or in stages. (The bird in the picture below carries an orange flag with the letters ENH.) Re-sightings of birds already observed became more abundant as the trip wore on.



With band information, it could be established that a bird tagged in Argentina in March 2006 and re-sighted at Longridge in July 2009 had travelled at least 105,000 km via the Western Atlantic Flyway in the interim (assuming a one-way trip of 15,000 km from Tierra del Fuego to the Canadian Arctic). As adult Red Knots are usually rather long-lived (seven years), many of the flight distances thus determined for birds weighing from 135 to 200gm fill me with a sense of awe. Red Knots can't swim, yet large segments of their epic flights are done over the Atlantic.

Thanks to the generosity of Moosonee residents Paul Rickard and Peter Wesley, we were able to forsake our tents and stay at a comfortable Cree goose-hunting camp on the edge of the spruce forest at the base of the point.



Sedge meadows between camp and the Bay offered the songs of Nelson's and Leconte's Sparrows in addition to calls of Sandhill Crane families and Yellow Rails. Hearing a pair of agitated Yellow Rails having a "click off" ten feet away from your feet is most amusing. Mosquitoes were abundant, as were Deerflies and relatives. Black Bears were seen daily for the first week of our stay. One bear raided our cooking cabin and ate or trashed everything it could reach except a can of a very popular Canadian brand of coffee. The raid required us to leave a guard at camp every day until the bears finally got the message.

Though the Red Knots were usually found in flocks (eventually exceeding 1000 birds in the study area), tracking them involved encountering other shorebirds (24 species in total). Hudsonian Godwits were abundant and Whimbrels were found in good

numbers. A few Marbled Godwits and Short-billed Dowitchers were seen and Ruddy Turnstones and Pectoral Sandpipers were present in most groups. Early in the trip, a Curlew Sandpiper was seen briefly near a flock of Red Knots. The constant clamoring of both yellowlegs quickly became a part of the area's soundscape.



With two tides a day, our schedule was organized around the times for high tide. This usually involved two outings a day, with early starts some days and twilight sorties on others. As we walked to and from study sites, we saw vast rockscapes some of which contained 400 million year-old "curling stone-like" Paleofavosites fossil corals. We also saw blooming Mastodon Flowers, Arctic Daisies, the unique rosettes of Maritime Bluebells, Beluga Whales, a Black Guillemot, a family of Northern Shrikes and, most improbably, a singing Henslow's Sparrow. About camp, eighteen species of dragonflies were seen and included northern specialties such as Sedge, Zig-zag, Variable and Subarctic Darners.

On one of our final days, while calculating where to wait out the knots' siesta, I realized that once again the creeping tide had just about cut me off from a dry walk to the shoreline. Moving quickly, I just made it back without getting wet boots. As I watched the knots tuck in backed by the relentless rock and watery expanse of James Bay, I thought of the many other spectacular landscapes where, since 2003, professionals and amateurs alike had tagged approximately 7000 *rufa* Red Knots with alphanumeric codes. Our group's sighting of close to 200 tagged birds was a productive yield that would help in the management of this vulnerable group of birds.

Birders in the Kingston area should watch for tagged Red Knots in the spring. **If you see a flag tag, record its colour and try to get the alphanumeric code from the flag.** If possible, because it will probably be raining or blowing, it's best to designate an observer and a recorder. Practice and patience also helps. For any band combinations, the website <http://report.bandedbirds.org/Search.aspx> allows one to contribute to the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Database and get immediate information about the bird in question.

Acknowledgements:

*Thanks to Mark Peck for leading a great expedition and for providing information for this article. Thanks also for the hospitality of Paul Rickard, Peter Wesley and the Moose Cree First Nation. Finally, thanks for a myriad of things to Sarah Hagey, Rod Brooks, Ken Abraham and the staff of the OMNR Moosonee office*

## KFN's 60th Anniversary Outdoor Breakfast

*Rose-Marie Burke*

The morning of September 27, 2009 didn't look too promising for a celebratory outdoor event. As part of the KFN's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, it was planned to have an outdoor breakfast at the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary in the tradition of gatherings in years past. As I got into my truck in the dark early morning, it was cold and raining, and I was bemoaning that if I hadn't committed to helping with the set-up, I would probably have just crawled back into my nice warm bed. We packrats, however, live for such events. It would justify the hoarde of folding tables, kettles, campstoves, camping cookware, water bottles and other gear piled high in the back of my pickup truck.

The sky slowly brightened and the rain tapered off as I neared the Sanctuary, and I was cheered by the sight of a white-tailed deer and ruffed grouse at the side of the road near the gravel pit. I was soon joined by other volunteers. Chris Grooms and Anne Robertson arrived with tent shelters, and with the help of Janis Grant we managed to put up a tent/tarp shelter that would provide a dry area in which to cook and serve breakfast. More people steadily arrived, many wearing brightly coloured rain gear that stood out on this cloudy day, highlighted against the fall colours beginning to show autumn's splendour. While arrangements were being made for the breakfast set-up,

several people set off on early walks to seek out birds, plants and whatever interesting things could be found along the trails.

As kettles of boiling water were being poured into old drip-style coffee pots, Darren Raynor, our resident chef, set to the task of frying up breakfast. With Alexandra Simmons' help there were soon trays of hot sausages and golden pancakes being served to the crowd of 39 people that was gathering. Real maple syrup was available for the pancakes, as well as a batch of blueberry topping Anne had made from a recipe given to her by Betty Gray. The rain stopped and the skies became a bright overcast, allowing people to sit outside the shelter. As we relished our meal we enjoyed having the opportunity to socialize.



Bottles of sparkling apple cider, donated by Connie Gardiner, were broken open, and we drank a toast to KFN's 60 years. A cake, baked and decorated by Anne Robertson, added to the feast.



Chris Grooms and Anne Robertson thanked volunteers for helping to organize the event, and members who came out to celebrate. Faith Avis, our Honourary President, was coaxed into speaking to the crowd about a bit of

KFN's history and reminiscing about past gatherings. More reminiscences were made by KFN members, including happy events like the dedication of the sign and renaming of the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, and sad ones such as the memorials for Betty Hughes and Helen Quilliam.

Having eaten a good meal and enjoyed good conversation, many members headed out for more walks along the trails. The cleanup began, kettles of water were set to boil for more coffee and tea and the washing of dishes. The tents were dismantled, gear was once again loaded into vehicles. As the groups of wanderers returned and enjoyed a last cup of coffee or tea the skies began to darken again. As the last pieces of gear were cleared away and the remaining cars pulled away, the rain returned. It was as though Nature itself had cooperated in allowing this gathering of people dedicated to the preservation of the natural environment to enjoy our celebration.

## **A Guide Book to Knowing your Neighbours: Living in Harmony with Nature**

*Anne Robertson*

In June 2009, the Faculty of Education at Queen's University hosted a UNESCO Conference on Peace Sustainability. In celebration of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, the conference was organized around the idea of presenting a collection of practical ideas and initiatives from all walks of life fostering a culture of peace. Participants from across Canada came to Kingston to share their projects in a

day-long event with six themes: social and economic inventions; health; the arts; education; science and the environment; and social justice and governance

In the spirit of promoting the idea of children and the environment, our Junior Field Naturalists created a children's booklet entitled "A Guide-book to Knowing your Neighbours: Living in Harmony with Nature".

The introduction to the booklet says: "All creatures need food, water, shelter, air and space to live successfully, just like us! How can we live peacefully with other species who live here too?" The activity booklet is filled with information about how we can do just that. It begins with 'planting for wildlife', and goes on to highlight considerations for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and insects. Designed for youth, games, puzzles, riddles and activities which require children to use the background information are included on each page. Each section includes checklists of species children might see and encourages them to record and celebrate their sightings.

Anne Robertson, the Co-ordinator of the KJN presented our "gift" to an auditorium of appreciative educators and community members from as far away as B.C. Her words are included, along with a description of the booklet, on a DVD made to highlight all the "gifts." This has been presented to UNESCO for international distribution.

The world around us is filled with natural wonder, intrigues youngsters and fosters their curiosity. Children learn from nature and that connection can guide them for rest of their lives.

The KFN has a sixty-year history of supporting public interest in nature and in the protection and preservation of wildlife. The KFN sponsors the KJN to promote and support interest in natural history in youth. The program follows

the school year and includes indoor and outdoor activities. A variety of natural history topics are investigated every year from ferns to fossils, from birds of prey to bats.

Conservation and advocacy aimed at understanding and protecting our natural world are also covered. Junior Naturalists have taken part in road and trail clean-ups, building and erection of birdhouses and bird feeders, planting of evergreens in reforestation projects, using shrubs to reduce streambank erosion, and Maram grass to stabilize beach dunes. They have made murals and banners, posters and postcards, models and magnets highlighting issues affecting wildlife and their habitats. These have been hung in museums and at conferences, in stores and on household fridges, all with the aim of helping others know about the issues and learning more about the world around them. Every year a "penny" collection is made to protect a hectare of habitat, or a kilometre of migratory flyway or to adopt an endangered species in a faraway location, showing that we are all connected.

Much as worldwide statistics are showing, the largest percent of our membership resides in an urban setting. Although we are blessed in our region to have conservation areas and parks and nature reserves the KFN has protected, we want to highlight to our youth that we share our natural environment with many species, and that we do so even in our own backyard or the park across the street.

The activity booklet "A Guide Book to Knowing your Neighbours: Living in Harmony with Nature" was created to help our keen young naturalists become aware, appreciate and understand the natural world around them. Our Juniors had fun with the materials in our booklet and we offer it to UNESCO in hopes that other youth groups can use the ideas to create a booklet highlighting the species in their own backyard, and celebrate the wonders of nature along

with us. Hopefully we will realize we can live in harmony with our neighbours, including the feathered and furred ones, all around the world!

*Diane Lawrence was instrumental in the idea and follow through on this project. She spent many hours designing and implementing the booklet so we could use it with the Kingston Junior Naturalists. Thank you Diane for all the hard work.*

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## Autumn Season 2009 August 1 - November 30

### *Ron D. Weir*

Most of the period was noteworthy for arid conditions, with rainfall amounts below normal levels accompanied by warmer temperatures. At the close of the season, snow still had not appeared in Kingston and waters had not frozen. The level of Lake Ontario in the Kingston area was slightly above normal, which may have restricted the habitat available to migrant waders. During August, September, and October, on many clear nights, large numbers of songbirds were heard passing over Kingston.

Rarities include Glossy Ibis, White Ibis (1<sup>st</sup> ever), Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling goose, Harlequin Duck, Hudsonian Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Forster's Tern, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

A very strong flight was noted for four species: Tundra Swan, Redhead,

Common Nighthawk, Swainson's Thrush.

### Latest Ever Departures

Yellow-breasted Chat: Oct 16 (1) PEPT, DO. (was 68 Sep 30)

### SPECIES ACCOUNT

**Red-throated Loon:** Aug 23 (1), Nov 8 (2) PEPT, KFN.

**Common Loon:** peaks Sep 20 (60) Main Duck I., MC; Nov 4 (55) Amherst I., KFN; Nov 8 (155) Kingston, KFN.

**Horned Grebe:** peak Nov 8 (159) Kingston, KFN.

**Red-necked Grebe:** Oct 25 to Nov 8 (15 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Least Bittern:** Oct 12 (1) Kingston, MC, VRowker

**Great Egret:** Aug 23 (7), 26(1) Amherst I., KFN.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** last one Oct 25 (1) Amherst I., KFN.

**Glossy Ibis:** Oct 26 (1 ad) Narrow's Lock Leeds, J. Wimperis (photo)



**White Ibis:** Oct 6 (1 juv) PEPT, BR (1<sup>st</sup> ever for the Kingston area)

**Turkey Vulture:** peaks Oct 6 (250) 16 (100), PEPT, BR, VPM.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Sep 16-23 (1) Wolfe I., BH, RS.

**Snow Goose:** Oct 7 (11) Wolfe I., BH; Oct 20 to Nov 8 (up to 13 birds) Kingston, KFN.

**Canada Goose:** peaks Oct 7 (6300) Wolfe I., BH; Nov 8 (22,000) Kingston, KFN.

**Cackling Goose:** Sep 16 to Nov 4 (17 in all) Wolfe I., BH, RS, at least 11 different birds Oct 7 (11).

**Brant:** peak Oct 13 (1000) Amherst I., BMD.

**Tundra Swan:** peaks Nov 4 (232), Wolfe I, BH, JP; Nov 8 (385) Kingston, KFN.

**American Wigeon:** peak Nov 4 (1800) Wolfe I., BH, JP.

**Canvasback:** Nov 4 (25) Wolfe I., BH, JP.

**Redhead:** peak Nov 4 (16,000) Wolfe I., BH, JP

**Ring-necked Duck:** peak Nov 4 (4000) Wolfe I., BH, JP.

**Harlequin Duck:** Nov 8 (1) PEPT, KFN.

**Long-tailed Duck:** peak Nov 8 (12,000) PEPT, KFN.

**Ruddy Duck:** Oct 21 to Nov 8 (16 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Sandhill Crane:** Oct 19-24 (up to 3) Kingston, EB *et al.*

**Osprey:** last one Nov 8 (1) Kingston, WS Andrews.

**Bald Eagle:** Sep 21 to Nov 30 (40 in all), KFN.

**Northern Harrier:** peak Sep 20 (45) Wolfe I., JHE, RDW.

**Northern Goshawk:** Oct 12 to Nov 4 (6 in all) Kingston area, KFN.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Nov 4 onwards.

**Golden Eagle:** Oct 29 (1 im) Kingston area, LN, MC.

**Merlin:** Aug 30 to Nov 10 (48 in all), Kingston area, KFN.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Aug 31 to Nov 10 (16 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Black-bellied Plover:** Aug 30 to Nov 8 (46 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**American Golden Plover:** Sep 12 to Oct 13 (10 in all), KFN.

**Semipalmated Plover:** adult arrival on Jul 26; imm. arrival on Aug 30, KFN.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Aug 7 to Nov 22 (110 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Aug 7 to Oct 19 (155 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Aug 7 to Sep 8 (15) Kingston, KFN.

**Hudsonian Godwit:** Oct 4 (1) Amherst I., JHE, RDW.

**Red Knot:** Aug 26 to Sep 6 (3 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Western Sandpiper:** Sep 6 (1 juv) Kingston, RDW.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Aug 23 to Sep 21 (5 in all) Kingston, KFN, weak flight.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Aug 23 to Nov 8 (24 in all) Kingston, KFN, weak flight.

**Dunlin:** Sep 21 to Nov 8 (135 in all) Kingston, KFN, normal flight.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Sep 6-18 (4 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Sep 12 (1) Amherst I., JHE, RDW.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Sep 13 to Oct 4 (31 in all) Kingston, KFN.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** Sep 13-21 (30) Kingston, KFN, strong flight.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Sep 30 (1 ad) PEPT, DO.

**Forster's Tern:** Oct 1 (1) Wolfe I., BH.

**Snowy Owl:** Nov 4 onwards, KFN.

**Common Nighthawk:** very heavy passage with the peak Aug 22 (1000+) near Kingston, T Norris; last birds Sep 4 (23) Rockport, J Haig.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** last one Oct 16 (1) Camden East, PJG.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Oct 26-28 Battersea, M Roncatti.

**Tufted Titmouse:** Nov 10 (1) Wilstead near Kingston, LN, MC; Nov 8 (1) Kingston city, O Koroluk; Nov 12 (1) Bath, G Gault.

**Carolina Wren:** Aug 24 (1) Kingston, H Evans.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** peaks Oct 13 (250+) PEPT, BMD.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** night flights Sep 15/16 (300 per hour x 6 hours = 1,800); Sep 23/24 (720 per hour x 6 hours = 4,320), Sep 28/29 (40 per hour x 6 hours = 240) Kingston, RDW.

**Swainson's Thrush:** night flights Sep 12/13 (600 per hour x 6 hours = 3,600); 13/14 (1200 per hour x 6 hours = 7,200); 15/16(1,500 per hour x 6 hours = 9,000); 23/24 (5400 per hour x 6 hours = 32,400); Sep 28/29 (200 per hour x 6 hours = 1,200) Kingston, RDW.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** Nov 8 (18) Kingston, KFN.

**Prairie Warbler:** Sep 4 (1) Kingston, M. Runtz.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** Oct 16(1) PEPT, DO. (latest ever).

**Summer Tanager:** Nov 8 (1) PEPT, KFN, casual in autumn, 6<sup>th</sup> ever in post-nesting season.

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** Sep 21 (1), Amherst I., BMD; Oct 3 (3) Amherst I., MH Edwards, K Hennige

**Fox Sparrow:** peak Oct 13 (35) PEPT, BMD.

**White-throated Sparrow:** peaks Oct 13 (500), Oct 4 (250) Kingston, KFN.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** peak Oct 13 (200) BMD.

**Purple Finch:** present throughout the period in small numbers.

**Common Redpoll:** Nov 20 onwards, small flocks.

**Pine Siskin:** Sep 7 onwards, widespread in small numbers.

**Evening Grosbeak:** Oct 26 (4) Bedford Mills, LN, MC (only sighting).

*Contributors: E. Batalla, M. Conboy, M. Ch B.M. Dilabio, J.H. Ellis, P.J. Good, B. Holden, V.P. Mackenzie, L. Nuttall, D. Okines, J. Plazier, B. Ripley, R. Stamp, R.D. Weir Kingston Field Naturalists 3+*

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## KFN Outings November 2009

### **Belle Park Ramble**

**3 November**

*Joseph Benderavage*

At Belle Park near downtown Kingston, we achieved reasonable quietude and relief from the roar of Montreal Street traffic within five minutes of leaving the parking lot. On a field trip dominated

by a dearth of landbirds but a plethora of ducks, we 14 hikers, led by Paul Mackenzie, also took notice of our floral surroundings. After hearing and identifying a Dark-eyed Junco, and sighting an Osprey's nest, we set to work being curious about things rooted in soil, but our discoveries of Panicle Asters, Buckthorn shrubs and White

Poplar trees were forgotten whenever a White-breasted Nuthatch or Chickadee would appear and steal the scene.

How could poor dried-up Curly Dock, or fallen leaves from Bur Oak and White Oak trees stand a chance against even the shyest Pied-billed Grebe, let alone squadrons of Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, American Black, and Northern Pintail ducks?

After we skirted the edge of Belle Park Fairway, we found that the attraction of a Heart-leaved Aster would prove to be no match for the spectacle of a Herring Gull clumsily gorging on carrion fish in midstream Great Cataraqui River, offshore from Belle Island. And, were there any of the younger crowd with us (which there weren't), they might readily have envied the spiky arrangement of head-feathers on the four probably female Bufflehead diving ducks feeding at the opposite shore.

Plants reclaimed centre stage when we filed away from the domain of ducks, and into the world of twig and leaf. A bracket fungus called Artist's Conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*) was prominent upon a tree trunk. Among Tall Goldenrod seen alongside the path, we noticed several had galls on their stems, and inside each gall a tiny insect had sequestered itself until spring. A grove of Hawthorn shrub was visible, with merely scant reminder of its previous crop of berries. Farther on, Bur and Red Oak trees were seen, as well as Staghorn Sumac. The locally ubiquitous alien Garlic Mustard was apparent here, too.

Hybrid Poplar, Weeping Willow, Manitoba Maple (Box Elder) trees, and another invasive exotic, Japanese Knotweed shrub are worth mentioning.

The hike ended as a flock of a dozen House Sparrows whirled among the trees round about the parking lot.

## **Wolfe Island Field Trip**

**22 November**

*Erwin Batalla*

Eight KFN members met at the ferry terminal at 8:15 a.m. A change to the loading configuration left us scrambling for parking spaces, but we all managed to get aboard. During the crossing, many Common Loons were noted. Upon arriving, we divided into two groups and while Kurt and his group went over their Short-eared Owl survey route, we proceeded along the north-west shore of the island. Near Sand Bay, we spotted a Greater Yellowlegs.

After the two groups reunited at Reeds' Bay, we observed a very large flock of Canada Geese, one Ring-necked Pheasant and a small group of Turkeys at the cemetery at the southern end of the island. While they paid their respects to a recent Thanksgiving casualty, we observed a magnificent white-tailed deer buck sauntering in front of Button Bay. Finally, after scanning a large raft of Redheads, we returned to the ferry terminal. Only eight raptors were observed, all of them east of highway 96.

## Snowstorms and January Thaws

*Terry Sprague*

"Blizzard of '77."

"Excuse me," said the gentleman after I startled him as he and his wife stared in wonderment at several white cedars along the boardwalk at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. They had not heard me come up behind them as they tried to imagine what unseen force had caused the cedar trunks to be contorted in such bizarre shapes.



*Terry Sprague sits comfortably in the elbow of a white cedar at Presqu'ile PP*

It was the blizzard of the century, I explained, not so much in terms of the amount of snow, but its weight - hard and crusty, so solid that I was able to drive my garden tractor over its surface without breaking through. Suddenly the reason for the bent cedars became evident. Over 30 years ago, these were mere saplings, and the weight of the snow had forced their weak stems to the ground where they remained horizontal for some two months, until the snow surrendered to the spring temperatures. In an effort to regain their dignity, the cedars did their best to curve upwards, but the weight of the snow was too much and part of the

trunk remained permanently bent as the more flexible younger growth recovered and aimed skyward.

We have seen this bizarre shape at Frontenac Park too, along a canoe portage between Birch Lake and Little Salmon Lake. We wonder if that tree suffered a similar fate, or was it something else? At Presqu'ile, the explanation is easier, as shortly after the storm I witnessed the damage done to these trees along the trail. Similar elbowed trees can be found at Sandbanks PP, where damage to white cedars was extensive. We have not had a storm since to compare, although the sleet storm of 1998 was a runner up.

These twisted trees are stark reminders of how weather patterns change from year to year, and even from day to day. Weather records I maintain on my home computer show a completely different story one early December day a few years back when a visit to Prince Edward Point produced numerous species of wildflowers in bloom with even a dusting of last minute blossoms on a wild apple tree on the Point Traverse corner and a small bouquet of lilacs, all brought on by incredibly warm temperatures during that week.

A friend who was at Point Traverse during the same period another year, remarked that the area may not have been the most forbidding spot in the County to be, but it was certainly among the top two, as he related stories

about snow squalls, icy winds and the area devoid of any sign of life. No lilacs or apple blossoms appeared in this man's journal!

As a one-time weekend reporter for a local daily newspaper, I attended many a Santa Claus parade and I can recall one memorable day snapping pictures in a steady snowfall, in contrast to another year during the same period when Picton basked in summer-like temperatures and people wore T-shirts and shorts. I even remember a row of Honda Goldwing touring bikes lined up in front of the post office.

Are weather systems really changing or do many of us simply forget from year to year? Some of us can certainly remember when winters were more severe than what they appear to be now. When snow arrived in late November or early December, one could almost count on it hanging around until spring, with the traditional "January thaw" taking some of it away.

Some of us smile when hearing old-timers talk about walking through snow up to their waist, but many of those recollections reflect the fact that one did not see a snowplow until it was absolutely necessary. There was no need as traffic wasn't the impatient, demanding lot that it is today. There wasn't anything so important that it couldn't wait until the plow had a chance to make its rounds. Today, we moan and groan if the roads department doesn't keep the roads in a perpetual sea of salt. Some motorists today seem to think they have the right to drive as fast

in poor weather as they do in summer weather. One only has to drive the major highways every morning to witness this, as cars refuse to slow for weather conditions, happily overtaking cars in blinding snow and fog.

But some of those stories of years past are true. There was more snow, and it lasted longer. We have all seen old black and white photos of cars navigating through tunnels, high banks of snow on either side. "Snow up to the tops of the telephone poles" is not just a figment of someone's overzealous imagination. There are photos to support it, although admittedly, telephone poles were not the massive high poles they are today.

Even with advancements in snow removal over what our ancestors had available, many roads remained blocked for several days during the infamous Blizzard of '77, requiring heavy duty snow blowers to come in from CFB Trenton. Our own road was plowed to our driveway, no further. My wife and I watched amazed as the local snowplow, a huge multi-wheeled industrial maintainer with tire chains, made several attempts at ramming the huge drifts, accomplishing little except leaving behind a perfect imprint of the huge plow blade. Throughout the day, there was a parade of curious motorists, who turned around in our driveway, but not before taking a photo of someone cheerfully posed in front of this high wall of compacted snow.

If nothing else, the experience bound the neighbourhood together as unexpected overnight guests were commonplace -

we even had one. After this year's rains, we can only imagine what winter might bring, if the same moisture continues. Then again, I may have spent a half-day mounting the snowblower on the garden tractor for nothing.

Terry Sprague is a naturalist, free-lance writer and KFN member who lives in Prince Edward County. See his website at [www.naturestuff.net](http://www.naturestuff.net).

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## A Flat-out Birding Day with Rockjumper

*Martin Edwards*

On September 18 Rainer and I were in Northern Cape Province of South Africa. We set off at 0515 from Niewwoutville towards Brandvlei, intending to go on to Pofadder and then to Springbok. We found the Karoo Long-billed Lark and Sclater's Larks before noon.

After a short while we had a flat left rear tire. We had fun putting the pieces of the crank for the jack together, put on the spare tire and continued on. I commented that it was a good thing we weren't having to assemble the funny pieces in the dark.

Within half an hour we had another flat tire! It was the spare. In the next 10 hours we saw no other vehicles. We were out of range of Rainer's cell-phones. His GPS showed that we were over 100 km line-of-sight away from any place that might have cell phone reception. So we started to drive towards Pofadder (120 km by road) on the flat tire. After 15-20 km the rubber had almost worn out; bits began slapping the wheel-well and pieces came off the inside of the wheel well. The roads were all washboard type gravel, and 20 km/h was as fast as we could go. The road surface produced

continuous 'hammering' on the rapidly deteriorating remains of the tire.

The tires were steel-belted radials so it was tricky to try to cut loose 'belting' with a tiny pair of scissors I had in my luggage. Rainer walked to at least three farm houses which were unoccupied. So our chance of using their radios faded! When we got the last of the tread off the flat we drove optimistically on the wheel rim! We got another 45-50 km before the rim collapsed, the brakes seized, and we landed on the end of the axle. Still no cell phone reception.

It was now dark so we put the other flat tire back on and drove on! The tread lasted for another 25 km. It was fascinating to see gravel being thrown over the car and landing in the light of the headlights. We were back on the last rim and saw one vehicle whose driver said we were 35 km from Pofadder. We crept into Pofadder and parked by the hotel, which was closed! Rainer made several phone calls and we slept in the car from 2330 to 0330 when a magical crew arrived and produced and installed a spare wheel and tire. They led us the 150 km to Springbok and we checked in at 0530! Rainer got us new cars and the trip went on!

## History of the KFN 2000-2009

*Erwin Batalla*

This year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Kingston Field Naturalists (originally the Kingston Nature Club). Histories of the KFN were written on our 5<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, as well as on the occasion of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists conference in Kingston in 1982. This article describes the activities of the KFN over the past ten years. During this time, we partnered with organizations to protect several important sites; saw our membership increase significantly after having been constant for almost a decade, saw our conservation activities multiply under the leadership of far-seeing chairs of the Conservation Committee; and continued acquiring data about the environment, including intensive surveys at ten Bioblitzes. Our objectives remain to “protect, preserve, educate”.

Between 2000 and 2006, membership in the KFN was constant at about 300 individual and family memberships. In the past two years, this figure has increased to about 350. The increase in population and changing demographics of the Kingston region and continued interest in the environment are likely contributing factors. This is consistent with the interest shown by the general public when a bear (or elk!) strays into the more densely-populated areas of the region. John Critchley has been membership secretary over the entire period covered here, and his dedication

to the position is exceptional. He has maintained careful records and was instrumental in a review of membership expenditures, which resulted in revised membership fees and the creation of a new category of member (Young Adult) in 2006. This enabled us to place the KFN in a more stable financial position by applying sustainability principles to our own activities.

While adult memberships grew, the number of Juniors and Teens declined from a high of 80 Jrs. and 21 Teens in 2000 to 50 Jrs. and 6 Teens in 2006. Anne Robertson, with the help of Diane Lawrence and many others, continues to work tirelessly on the best junior program in Ontario. Diane received the Richards Education Award in 2008 from Ontario Nature. The exploding range of activities available to children makes it difficult to maintain the numbers of Juniors. This is a worrying trend and we continue to explore ways to encourage the next generation of field naturalists. Chris Grooms recognized this long before he became our current president, and proposed the establishment of a scholarship to encourage fourth-year Biology students to carry out Natural History work at the Queen’s University Biology Station. The membership responded to the appeal to raise funds for this scholarship, and with the help of a matching contribution by an anonymous donor, we delivered \$33000 to Queens. This fund also

commemorates our past honorary president, Bob Stewart, who was taken from us in 2006. Several articles in the Blue Bill (vol 53, no 3) reminded us of the many contributions Bob made.

We reached out to members through the internet. Our website at <http://www.kingstonfieldnaturalists.org> was started by Sharon David in the late 1990s and received an award for its design. It has since expanded and is a principal source of new members. It is also the location for the electronic BlueBill. Introducing this feature in 2009 reduced our environmental footprint and freed up funds used for printing and mailing the Quarterly Journal.

The Teens have continued to participate in alternate years in the Baillie Birdathon and consistently raise significant funds. On the passing of Nan Yeomans, a fund to support Juniors' involvement in the artistic appreciation of nature was created. With new media like digital photography available to capture impressions of the outdoors, children can develop their artistic talent. Adults have also embraced the depiction of nature and we have enjoyed the result at the December general meetings. This year, Carol Seymour and Rose-Marie Burke with the help of many others organized our first KFN sponsored art exhibition.

Anne Robertson did not limit herself to work with the young over the past ten years. She led about 200 rambles over that time. She is the organizer of the Bioblitz, during which about 75 dedicated members spend 24 hours at a

site (typically 100 acres) trying to inventory all living organisms. While there is a long history of KFN members participating in surveys sponsored by provincial or national organization, the Bioblitz is Our baby. This has seen us visit sites in all parts of the Kingston region at private properties, conservation areas and nature reserves. As well as an important documenting activity, it has bolstered our contact with other conservation-minded organizations and individuals.

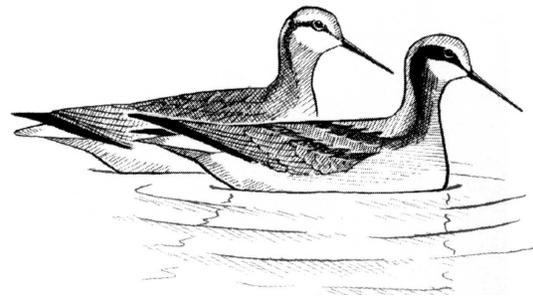
Two Bioblitzes were at sites being acquired by a conservation organization from a private owner. The Elbow Lake property was acquired by the Nature Conservancy of Canada from the Hewlett-Packard Corporation. Many KFN members contributed financially to this purchase. The Lost Lake property (part of the Bayview Bog) was acquired by the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority from the estate of the late Judge Henderson. In that case, the KFN noted that the Bayview Bog had been identified as a significant habitat in our region since the club's founding. We dug deep in our reserves and contributed \$44000 towards this acquisition. We contributed to other purchases of land by the CRCA (Muttart's: \$5000 in 2000, Parrotts Bay: \$5000 in 2004, Owl Woods: \$10000 in 2001), and recently to the enlargement of the Lost Bay Nature Reserve. The generosity of our members, both in time and money, has been incredible throughout the years.

The KFN remained involved with some of these newly-protected areas by

monitoring their environment. This was a deliberate change of direction for the club. In 2000, an *ad hoc* Properties committee, chaired by Anne Robertson, was formed to review the activities of the club in property acquisition. As a result, members of that committee went on to form the Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington Land Trust and the executive of the KFN decided to seek to acquire property only near our existing reserves on Amherst Island and the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary (HQS). In 2005, we were approached by the Natural Heritage Trust of Ontario to become the stewards of the Ted Greenwood Sanctuary, a property which is nearly adjacent to the HQS. Mike Evans, Nature Reserve Chair at that time, negotiated an agreement that will have us monitor this property until 2030. When a sign was erected at the entrance leading to the property, the HQS was the site of a moving ceremony remembering a great lover of nature, Ted Greenwood, as we have before remembered Helen Quilliam, Betty Hughes, Art Bell and others.

We continue to take pride in our two nature reserves. Over the past ten years, we made significant changes to the Amherst Island property. We fenced the lake side of the property, built a solar-powered watering system and installed several Purple Martin houses. We continue to collaborate with Ducks Unlimited and participated financially in an upgrade of the control structure in the man-made ponds. All of this would not have been possible without the work of Chris Grooms, George Vance, Mike Evans and Jay McMahan. George

Vance received the W. W. H. Gunn Conservation Award in 2004 from Ontario Nature. At the HQS, we continue to maintain the trails and the habitat as undisturbed as possible. We have coped with some vandalism and the illegal cutting of trees on our property and succeeded in having a structure built on our property without our knowledge removed. Without the vigilance of members living near our reserves, it would be difficult to maintain these two properties and the nesting population of Wilson's Phalarope on Amherst and Blanding's Turtle at HQS just to name two very special species.



KFN members continue to collect Natural History data. We conducted fall and spring bird round-ups, Christmas Bird Counts in the Kingston, Napanee, Delta, Amherst Island and Prince Edward County and Lake Ontario Winter Waterfowl Surveys, all compiled by Ron Weir with timely summaries in the Blue Bill. We took part in the second Breeding Bird Survey of Ontario. These data were included in the new edition of Ron Weir's **Birds of the Kingston Region** published in 2008. We also shared our bird observations through the internet. Bob Sachs began disseminating our weekly bird

observations electronically in 2000 and Peter Good continues to do so today. We participated in surveys of Red-shouldered Hawks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Chimney Swifts and Short-eared Owls.

In recent years, we advanced knowledge of butterflies and dragonflies in our region. Bruce Ripley and Kurt Hennige compiled summaries of observations of Butterflies and Odonates respectively, which were published in the Blue Bill. Several species were documented for the first time in our area. We also monitored wetlands and recorded flowering dates for plants as part of provincial programs.

To encourage these species to continue to thrive in our region, the Conservation Committee worked to protect their habitat. The chairs of that committee have commented on proposed residential developments at Cataraqi West and at the Little Cat, on the quarry at Mellon Lake and on wind turbines projects on Wolfe Island, Amherst Island, Prince Edward County and Kingston. They have encouraged protections of wetlands within the Kingston Wetlands Working Group; they have asked for mitigation at construction projects on highway 401, at Mitchell Creek and on Counter Street and Centennial Drive; they have supported tree and pesticide bylaws for the city of Kingston. As well as reacting to proposals, the committee has been proactive and Sharon Critchley spearheaded the report on the Little Cataraqi area which evaluated the environmental significance of the area in

the southeast of the penitentiary farm. This earned her the CRCA Foundation Conservation Award in 2005. With foresight and perseverance, this committee has given us the tools to comment intelligently and rationally on future development proposals.

Over the last ten years, we have had five presidents. Sid Andrews, Bud Rowe, Erwin Batalla, Hugh Evans and Chris Grooms. Sid has moved out west but remains a life member of the club. The other four can often be found shoveling crushed stone on the Amherst Island property or setting a tent at the Bioblitz or taking part in a bird round-up. They are definitely a hands-on group. Surrounded by an outstanding executive that includes members like John Critchley, Rose-Marie Burke and Anne Robertson who have been serving for the entire decade, these presidents cannot help but make our club the successful organization that it is.