



# The Blue Bill

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## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>President's Preliminaries</b> / <i>Anthony Kaduck</i>	<b>33</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>KFN Annual Reports</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1	Field Trips . . . . .	33
2.2	Rambles . . . . .	35
2.3	Conservation Committee . . . . .	35
2.4	Youth Programs . . . . .	36
2.5	Membership . . . . .	37
2.6	Nature Reserves . . . . .	37
2.7	Education . . . . .	38
<b>3</b>	<b>Annual Bird Report 2019</b> / <i>Mark D. Read</i>	<b>39</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Kingston Region Birds – Winter 2019/20 (Dec 1<sup>st</sup> – Feb 28<sup>th</sup>)</b> / <i>Mark D. Read</i>	<b>48</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (2020): Kingston Region</b> / <i>Mark D. Read</i>	<b>53</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Articles</b>	<b>57</b>
6.1	Wildlife Photography Tips #4 / <i>Anthony Kaduck</i> . . . . .	57
6.2	Building a Better Environment Post-COVID: / <i>Carolyn Bonta and Dr. Warren Mabee</i> . . . . .	61
6.3	Exploring the Backyard: Big Adventure on Little Cat / <i>Carolyn Bonta</i> . . . . .	61
<b>7</b>	<b>KFN Outings</b>	<b>63</b>
7.1	Teen Trip to Mitchell Creek (March 7, 2020) / <i>Mackenzie Bailey</i> . . . . .	63
<b>8</b>	<b>Clipped Classics</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Reader Contributions</b>	<b>64</b>

## 2020/2021 Executive

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<b>Immediate Past President</b>	..... Alexandra Simmons
	..... (Anthony Kaduck)
<b>President</b>	..... Anthony Kaduck (Kenneth Edwards)
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<b>Membership Secretary</b>	..... Kathy Webb
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Field Trips Chair	..... Carolyn Bonta
Bird Records Chair	..... Mark Read
Education Chair	..... Shirley French
Conservation Chair	..... Chris Hargreaves
Member at large	..... Janet Elliott
Member at large	..... Martin Roncetti
Member at large	..... Polly Aiken
Member at large	..... Jane Revell

Due to the postponement of the Annual General Meeting, the new executive has yet to be confirmed. Individuals in parentheses are the ones anticipated to be in that position for 2020/2021, and will replace the individuals not in parentheses.

To contact any member of the executive or for general inquiries about the Kingston Field Naturalists, please send an email to [info@kingstonfieldnaturalists.org](mailto:info@kingstonfieldnaturalists.org).

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**editor@thebluebill.ca**

Submissions may be in any format. Equations should be in  $\text{\LaTeX}$ . Please provide captions and credit information for photos.

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# 1 President's Preliminaries

by Anthony Kaduck

*"This will be my last President's Page, as I will be handing over the reins to a new president in April."*

That's how I started my column in the March 2020 Blue Bill. It's been a strange ride since then, hasn't it? I am reminded of the old curse "may you live in interesting times."

As the year rolled around to March we were all looking forward to the great wildlife explosion of April and May: turtles and frogs appearing after their slumbers, the first wildflowers, early butterflies, and waves of northbound birds. And then along came a piece of less welcome wildlife in the form of a novel coronavirus and all our best-laid plans were for naught. Self-isolation and social distancing were added to the dictionary and many of us spent a lot of time indoors without our "green fix."

It has been a tough time for everyone, and especially for those who have lost their income or have been unable to visit relatives and loved ones. On the positive side we have gained a new appreciation for the people who work at the front lines of our medical system – not only the doctors and nurses, but also the public health officials and the overworked and undercompensated cleaners and personal support workers. Let's hope their contributions are not forgotten when the threat of Covid-19 eventually recedes and a "new normal" – whatever that may look like – is established.

From a club perspective, we have officially can-

celled all of our activities until the end of the summer. We were unable to hold the Annual General Meeting in April so there was no chance to elect a new slate of executive members. The plan is to do this at our September meeting. In the meantime Ken Edwards, our Vice-President, will be Acting President and John Donihee has started assuming the duties of Vice-President.

Because we have two members of the executive who needed to step away from their involvement, we used our authority under the constitution to appoint two new members. Jane Revell has replaced Jackie Bartnick as our Publicity member, and Martin Roncetti is starting to learn the arcane arts of website management from Lesley Rudy. So to Jackie and Lesley: thanks so much for all the great work you have done as executive members, and to Jane and Martin: welcome aboard!

Now about that September meeting... It is our plan to restart our monthly meetings at 7:00 p.m. on September 17<sup>th</sup> at the Ongwanada Centre. But as you know, the path ahead is subject to change. So please keep an eye on the KFN website for updates. Hopefully by the time the next newsletter comes out (mid-August) we should have a clearer idea of how the rest of 2020 will play out.

Finally, I would like to say that it has been an honour to be the President of this great club, and I look forward to supporting the new executive team in any way I can as we move forward.

## 2 KFN Annual Reports

### 2.1 Field Trips

Carolyn Bonta

#### Field Trips

This year, Carolyn Bonta took over from Gaye Beckwith as our Field Trips Coordinator.

Since last May the KFN has offered seven field

trips to the following locations:

- May 5, Prince Edward Point, Paul Mackenzie
- May 6-11, Southwestern Ontario, Anthony Kaduck
- July 13, Echo Lake Road, John Poland and Carol Seymour

- August 18, Amherst Island (Martin Edwards Reserve), Peter Good
- September 15, Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, Gaye Beckwith and Erwin Batalla
- October 5, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory, Michael Johnson and Carolyn Bonta
- January 17-19, Algonquin Provincial Park, Anthony Kaduck

Trips are always well attended, with typically 15-20 members participating in local outings and about 9-12 joining multi-day excursions. All of the trip leaders / co-leaders listed above deserve a great deal of thanks for their efforts and expertise. We are grateful for their willingness to lead members to hotspots in the Kingston region and beyond to explore nature in all kinds of seasons and weather.

Due to COVID-19, we unfortunately cancelled our planned spring field trips:

- March 21, Presqu'île Waterfowl Weekend, Gary Hillaby
- March 29, Cataraqui River and Kingston Inner Harbour, Ken Robinson
- April 26, Prince Edward Point, Anthony Kaduck
- April TBD, Tree Frog Farm, Todd Norris

Fortunately, all of these wonderful members – as well as others who had planned trips for May and June 2020 – are willing to offer these trips another year.

The KFN is always looking for members to suggest and/or lead field trips to novel location, so please reach out to:

[FieldTrips@KingstonFieldNaturalists.org](mailto:FieldTrips@KingstonFieldNaturalists.org)

if you have ideas or would like to lead a trip.

Co-leading is also an option, as we seek younger members to take over some of our longer-running trips from older members.

When trips are advertised to the membership, outings with a pedestrian component now include information on walking distance and terrain. These details will give participants an idea of what to expect relative to their physical abilities, and will also ensure that leaders don't have to modify their trips in-situ. Going forward, the KFN will seek to evenly balance short, gentle, or vehicle-based outings with more rugged, active excursions. Also new this year, we are trying to better align our field trip start times and carpool locations with city bus services to ensure every member has the means to participate in our field trips.

### Bird Walks at Lemoine Point

Our annual tradition celebrating spring migration in Kingston continued in 2019 with ten May Bird Walks open to the public:

May 1	6:30 am	Erwin Batalla Gaye Beckwith
	6:30 pm	Darren Rayner Paul Mackenzie
May 8	6:30 am	Sharon David Jane Revell
	6:30 pm	Chris Grooms Darren Rayner
May 15	6:30 am	Kathy Webb Bill Depew
	6:30 pm	Janis Grant Nancy Spencer
May 22	6:30 am	Richard Brault Dianne Croteau
	6:30 pm	Anthony Kaduck Steve Coates
May 29	6:30 am	Paul Mackenzie Erwin Batalla
	6:30 pm	Alexandra Simmons Sharon David

### Round-ups

The annual Spring (May 17-19) and Fall (November 1-3) Round-ups were also organized this year. This event gives individuals and groups of members 48 hours to search and tally bird species in the Kingston Bird Area. Guided birding events associated with the Round-ups included a blitz of the Napanee Plain IBA and birding by bicycle in the Frontenac Forests IBA in Spring, as well as two IBA

waterfowl blitzes and a visit to the Lennox Generating Station property in Fall. This year's Round-ups were, once again, coordinated by Peter Good and Kurt Hennige with Janis graciously hosting a follow-up pot luck in Fall.

### Special Event

On February 17 (Family Day) Erwin Batalla led a group of 65 keen participants, ranging in age from young children to seniors, to Wolfe Island. There, we met up with Mark Read for excellent views of two Snowy Owls that he had located.

### Christmas Bird Counts 2019 Kingston Area

Many of our members coordinated and participated in ten Christmas Bird Counts in our region:

- December 14, Frontenac, Michael Johnson and Carolyn Bonta
- December 15 (rain date), Prince Edward Point, Peter Fuller
- December 15, Kingston, Kathy Webb and William Depew
- December 16, Westport, Wendy Briggs-Jude
- December 19, Thousand Islands, Josh Van Wieren
- December 19, Delta, Jim Thompson
- December 21, Napanee, Kurt Hennige
- December 27, Gananoque, Kurt Hennige
- December 28, Moscow, Bonnie Bailey
- January 3, Amherst Island, Janet Scott

## 2.2 Rambles

*Anne Robertson*

20 Rambles were offered from April 1, 2019 to March 3, 2020. The Ramble set for March 17 was cancelled due to the pandemic.

The following numbers show a rapid increase in participation (greater average participation): brackets indicate numbers in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

61 (34, 58) different people participated through the year with an average of 14 (8, 10) members per Ramble. The maximum number, on the Ramble to Ontario Power Generation Lennox plant, as a pre BioBlitz visit, on May 1 was 22 (13, 17) members. The minimum, 6 (3, 3) participants, to the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary on October 1. The increase in the average number of members at each ramble is significant.

Locations visited this year include Nicholson's Pont, Parrott's Bay, Amherst Island, Collins Creek, Belle Park, Cataraqui Creek (Malabar Drive), Cataraqui Cemetery, Jackson's Mill, Meisel Reserve (MVCA), Cataraqui and K and P trails, Kingston Mills, Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, Frink Centre and private property of Ed Fletcher and Rose-Marie Burke.

Thanks to Rose-Marie Burke and Ed Fletcher for hosting and to Sandra Simmons and Nick Gazendam for leading a ramble.

With encouragement from Peter Waycik, reports of 17 (of 20) Rambles may be found in the Blue Bill where the best sightings are usually listed. Bird lists are regularly submitted to eBird by Janis Grant or Kathy Webb. Species lists are often submitted by Janet Elliott.

The sharing of nature information is enjoyed by everyone as well as the exercise and social side of the outings. We learn from each other as we discover all kinds of wildlife in many great locations around Kingston. Thank you for coming!

## 2.3 Conservation Committee

*Chris Hargreaves*

The Conservation Committee aims to provide a consistent "voice for nature" as Kingston grows and changes, particularly at meetings of the City of Kingston Planning Committee, where projects generally involve local conflicts between developers and neighbouring property owners.

Among our activities over the past year we have:

- encouraged the City to include a requirement for bird-friendly glass in the Density by

### Design report

- supported a motion at City Council to study Wildflower Verges
- challenged the environmental impact report for the proposed next phase of the Purdy Mills development next to the Cataraqui Cemetery
- provided input on the Belle Park Master Plan
- assisted with the Cyanobacteria workshop organized by Shirley French
- co-ordinated informal monitoring of the Barn Swallow Alternative Nesting Structure at the Lemoine Point Conservation Area
- followed reports about the impact of the Ontario government suspending environmental oversight rules as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many thanks Carolyn Bonta, John Donihee, Shirley French, Lesley Rudy, and everybody else who has helped with the activities of the committee.

The Conservation Committee is organized on an informal basis – members receive a monthly report by email, and are invited to respond on any of the topics that particularly interest them, and/or raise new issues. Additional members would be most welcome: just email [hargreavescp@sympatico.ca](mailto:hargreavescp@sympatico.ca) if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

## 2.4 Youth Programs

*Anne Robertson*

We were disappointed not to be able to present all the program as planned for both Junior and Teen groups due to the pandemic. There were no meetings after mid-March.

### Juniors

Just 20 Juniors registered in September. Eight more joined us in January. We divided into only two groups (instead of the usual three groups). Ten indoor meetings were held and just three field trips took place.

Our faithful leaders were Sarah Wallace (6 years), Amanda Tracey (4 years), Lesley Holmes (3 years), Rachel van Dusen (2 years), Kristen Siegel (2 years), Riley Gridzak, Katrina Cantera and Heather Vanderlip. Our leaders just love their volunteer time with the Juniors. The high number of leaders allows for a lot of individual attention and sharing development of materials, presentation and activity times. We are so very grateful for their assistance – without them the program could not run. In addition we thank Kathy Webb for help with membership and Larry McCurdy who looks after the money side of things.

Our twice monthly meeting topics included Special Seeds, Spiders, Fabulous Fall Fungi, Amphibians, the traditional Seasonal Crafts, Arctic Adaptations (hence the coin collection – see below), Urban Ecology, Extreme Weather, Locomotion, and Essential Plants. Only three field trips took place: October and November and then in January. We went to Depot Creek Nature Reserve, Robertson Cottage and Parrott's Bay.

The annual coin collection for wildlife went to help Arctic animals. This year for the first time the adult KFN were invited to add their coins at meetings in January and February with the result that we collected \$285.00 to send to WWF.

T-shirts and hoodies with the Junior logo (a loon with a chick on its back) in combinations of grey and blue were sold.

**Three Summer Project** prizes were presented in fall 2019. Paige Bailey won the Photo Prize, a book about Wild Foods, for a photo essay on the development in a bird's nest. Beckett Robertson won the Roland Beschel Prize, a Field Guide to Insects, for a project photographing insects and the Nan Yeomans prize, another Field Guide to Insects, was won by Everett Bark for a nature diary.

The Stirrett scholarship was not awarded by press time as summer camps were not running.

Despite the lower number of members and shorter program season we had a lot of fun and look forward to next year.

## Teens

Eleven Teen Naturalists registered – the highest enrolment for some years. Seven outings/workshops were held. All but one of these have been written up and published in the December 2019 or March 2020 Blue Bills. We are very grateful to the drivers who joined us for these trips.

In September we had a very windy canoe trip on Little Long Lake into Sydenham Lake with Carolyn Bonta and Mike Johnson. In October we did some cleanup and had a hike at the new property of the Land Conservancy for KFLA with Thom Snowman and Gary Hillaby. November was an overnight trip to the Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre (ELEEC) for a Mostly Mammals workshop. Dale Kristensen helped with this and Mike Johnson accompanied us for part of the time. In December we participated in the South Frontenac Christmas Bird Count with Mike Johnson. Shirley French organised space for our Bird Identification workshop in January and Gaye Beckwith accompanied us to monitor Wood Duck boxes in the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary in February. Our final trip was a snowshoe trip to Mitchell Creek with Janet and Bruce Elliott.

Although this was a shortened season we have a lot of memories and look forward to another good year from September 2020.

## 2.5 Membership

*Kathy Webb*

At the end of the membership year (01-Apr-2019 to 31-Mar-2020) there were 387 adult memberships: 194 Family, 188 Individual and 5 Young Adult members. Of these, 13 were Life and 58 were new memberships. Family memberships are comprised of 2 voting members, bringing the count to 581 voting members. There are also 15 complimentary memberships which receive newsletters and the Blue Bill. Of no less importance, the membership included 27 Juniors, 11 Teens and 8 Junior Leaders.

The ability to retain members and to generate new members is important to the continued success of the KFN. To date in 2020, we have had 213 re-

newals and 40 new memberships. Membership renewal notices and reminders have historically been sent in the mail. To reduce our environmental impact and to save on postage costs, renewal notices this year have been emailed, published in several issues of the newsletter and only sent in the mail to members without email addresses. It is unclear whether the low renewal rate is due to the COVID-19 crisis and the lack of KFN activities or to the lack of mailed renewal notices.

New in the latter half of 2019 was the ability to pay for memberships online ([kingstonfieldnaturalists.org/membership/](http://kingstonfieldnaturalists.org/membership/)). This has now become the preferred method of payment. For the 2020/21 membership year so far, 63% of all memberships have been paid online and 90% of new memberships.

The majority of membership costs are comprised of printing and postage costs for new member packages, annual membership cards, charitable donation receipts, monthly newsletters to those without email addresses, and quarterly issues of The Blue Bill where required.

The Membership Secretary manages the membership database, sends membership renewal notices and reminders, prepares charitable receipts and thank you letters for the Treasurer, distributes the newsletter by email and by post where required, distributes email notices for the electronic version of The Blue Bill and mails printed copies of The Blue Bill.

## 2.6 Nature Reserves

*Erwin Batalla*

### Martin Edwards Reserve (MER) on Amherst Island

We have an agreement that allows a herd of cows on our property. This maintains the reserve as a short grass habitat for nesting birds like Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks and Wilson Phalaropes. The water for the cows is provided by a shore well using a solar-powered pumping system. Richard Brault oversaw the maintaining of the system with cleanups in the Fall and Spring. Also, he cleaned the Purple Martin houses and the control structure



at the ponds. This past summer, the water in the lake was high enough that the well did not require periodic filling.

### **Sylvester-Gallagher Nature Reserve (SGNR)**

Improvements to the existing fence on the eastern boundary were completed under the supervision of Kurt Hennige. Several Tree Swallow houses have been installed on the Reserve. The modern Purple Martin houses on the SGNR and the MER are full to capacity. The sign built by Lynn Bell was erected at the south-east corner of the property. Plans for an opening ceremony at the sign have been postponed twice but are now planned for next fall.

### **Helen Quilliam Sanctuary (HQS) in the Canadian Shield**

Gaye Beckwith has been busy at this property. All the trails have been mapped with a GPS. Some trails have been rerouted. The Faith Avis trail has had the most change and there will be a field trip in the fall to walk along the new path. Also, the Wood Duck boxes in the southwest have been monitored and others throughout the property have been installed and/or repaired. The Managed Forest Tax Incentive for this property was renewed for another ten years.

Several KFN volunteers have helped with these activities. Thank you to everybody.

## **2.7 Education**

*Shirley French*

### **Summer**

- Shirley French gave a workshop to the Eco-Adventure Campers at Elbow Lake on Daphnia during the “Things that move” week of July 15-19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- The Lakes and Trails event in Sydenham took place July 20<sup>th</sup>. Gaye Beckwith and Shirley looked after the KFN booth. The display was about ‘species at risk.’
- The Lennox & Addington Museum coordinator asked for a KFN presenter at their

“Feathered Friends” exhibit. Anthony Kaduck gave a talk on owls Aug 3/19.

### **Fall**

- Anne Robertson gave informative bird walks to grades 1&2, Tuesday, Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> at Frontenac Park. This was part of Loughborough Public School’s “classroom without walls.” Shirley covered the Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, half-day session, grades 1/2.
- Shirley attended the Watershed Canada, Lake Links citizen science/stewardship workshop on Oct. 26 (in Perth) along with two students from Queens. Ideas for a workshop through the KFN were being ‘hatched.’
- On November 3<sup>rd</sup> Carolyn Bonta gave a Raptors 101 workshop at CRCA (Cataraqui Regional Conservation Authority).

### **Winter**

- The “WinterLight” event at the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum took place on Sat., Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> and had 366 visitors. The KFN display topic and subject for the walks, was “winter adaptations of plants and animals along our shorelines and lakes.”
- Carolyn Bonta gave a Christmas Bird Count educational workshop at the Sydenham Library Branch Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- On January 26<sup>th</sup>, Carolyn Bonta will give a Winter Birds 101 workshop at CRCA (Cataraqui Regional Conservation Authority).
- Anthony Kaduck put together a number of birding 101 online/interactive videos for a Senior Citizen group keen to learn about birds. [anthonykaduck.ca](http://anthonykaduck.ca) is a resource website for many topics on birding in Ontario and abroad.

### **Spring**

- Science Fair March 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> cancelled due to Covid-19 pandemic.



- Kingston Frontenac Public Library – KFN presentation online May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, as a weekend event.
- As of May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Blue-green algae workshop online at KFN website > Resources > Blue-green algae workshop
- 20 foldscopes are available for sale from shirleyfrenchka@gmail.com at \$15 each (including LED light and focus slide). Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>, Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> are the dates when foldscope participants will be sharing their 'local bloom phone photos' with Shirley.

### 3 Annual Bird Report 2019

by Mark D. Read

There were 267 species of birds seen within the Kingston Area in 2019, a 50-kilometre radial circle centred on MacDonald Park, Kingston. Most of the records submitted to the Kingston Rare Bird Committee have been reviewed (see below) but two outstanding records from 2019 remain. Despite being seen by numerous observers, we have only recently received documentation of a Cattle Egret seen on Highway 15 in June 2019. In addition, the committee has decided to hold over a record of a Long-billed Dowitcher seen at Kaiser Cross Road in May 2019 while the complexities of identification are addressed. At least 3 additional records (Chuck-wills-widow, Barn Owl, and Spotted Towhee) went directly to the Ontario Birds Records Committee (OBRC) – as they don't publish until August, any updates or corrections will be noted in Vol. 68 No. 2. There are no additions to the 2018 report. Compared with the 39-year average of 278 (1980-2018), 2019 was down on species and sits at fourth lowest over that time frame. It is interesting to note the decreased average in the 2010s compared to earlier decades. Yearly totals for the last 39 years are given in Table 1.

#### Kingston Rare Bird Committee

The 2019 committee comprised Mark Read as Chair, with Erwin Batalla, Mike Burrell, Ken Edwards, Kurt Hennige, Paul Martin and Doug McRae as standing members. In total, they were tasked with reviewing 11 records. All members, including the chair, have a vote. For a species to be accepted, 6 or 7 members must vote in favour. The first round of voting is 'closed,' allowing members to cast an unbiased vote. If a second round vote is required, comments and decisions from the

first round are circulated. Rounds 1 and 2 are conducted electronically but if a third vote is required, members meet in person. At this stage, if a record is still not confirmed, it is left as 'unconfirmed.'

The following records were confirmed by the 2019 committee:

**King Rail:** 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012, Bedford Mills. Gary Bell. Note this record dates from 2012 and therefore increases the checklist total for that year by one to 279. This is reflected in an updated Table 1 below.

**American Avocet:** 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019, Deseronto. Gerry, Denise and Bill Doekes.

**Willet:** 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Kaiser Cross Road. Anthony Kaduck, Kevin Bleeks et al.

**Glossy Ibis:** 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019, Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island. Steve Coates & Paul Mackenzie.

**Black Vulture:** 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2019, Prince Edward Point. Matt Iles & Tom Wheatley. This species has now been removed from the review list.

**Fish Crow:** 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Marshlands CA, Kingston. Martin Roncetti.

**Worm-eating Warbler:** 7<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Garden Island. Chip Weseloh.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019, Wolfe Island. Nick Bartok.

There were also several records added to the 2019 list that would normally be reviewed by the Kingston RBC but were accepted by authorities in New York State or by local eBird reviewers. These include:

**Black-bellied Whistling Duck** (17<sup>th</sup> June, French Marina, Clayton, NY)

**Parasitic Jaeger** (1<sup>st</sup> November, Sackets Harbour, NY)

**Black-headed Gull** (11<sup>th</sup> November, Tibbetts Point, NY)

**Boreal Owl** (19<sup>th</sup> February, Owl Woods, Amherst Island)

**Boreal Chickadee** (5<sup>th</sup> January, Three Mile Bay, NY)

**Henslow's Sparrow** (several records from breeding grounds in NY)

**Yellow-breasted Chat** (29<sup>th</sup> Sep, Amherst Island)

An analysis of the last 10 years was conducted so

that it will now be easier to track which species should be on the review list, and therefore require documentation in any given year. The criterion for this is, "a species that has been recorded 5 or fewer times in the preceding 10 years." This will allow for a yearly update to the checklist to be produced – hopefully this update will be added to the KFN website later this summer. At any time an eBird reviewer may also ask the Chair to distribute a record that they would prefer to be reviewed by the committee. Long-billed Dowitcher is also a review species due to its tricky identification.

**Table 1: Annual total bird species for the Kingston Area 1980 to 2019**

Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total
1980	278	1990	279	2000	282	2010	281
1981	277	1991	281	2001	285	2011	277
1982	276	1992	281	2002	287	2012	279
1983	282	1993	293	2003	282	2013	266
1984	285	1994	283	2004	280	2014	272
1985	271	1995	280	2005	278	2015	264
1986	277	1996	285	2006	274	2016	263
1987	279	1997	283	2007	272	2017	274
1988	270	1998	283	2008	272	2018	270
1989	273	1999	278	2009	281	(2019	267)
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>277</b>		<b>283</b>		<b>279</b>		<b>272</b>

The KFN bird list remains at 381. Good finds, not noted above, include Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Whimbrel, Little Gull, Golden Eagle, Great Gray Owl, Gyrfalcon, and Hooded Warbler.

**Table 2: List of bird species seen in the Kingston area during 2019 with date of first sighting and associated observers.**

Species	Date	Observer
<b>Black-bellied Whistling Duck</b>	17 Jun	NL
<b>Snow Goose</b>	03 Feb	MBo
<b>Ross's Goose</b>	10 Feb	MBr
<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b>	23 Mar	JH
<b>Brant</b>	09 May	EDB
<b>Cackling Goose</b>	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
<b>Canada Goose</b>	01 Jan	JET
<b>Mute Swan</b>	01 Jan	JET
<b>Trumpeter Swan</b>	01 Jan	RR

Species	Date	Observer
Tundra Swan	01 Jan	VPM
Wood Duck	14 Mar	NL
Blue-winged Teal	26 Mar	ZF
Northern Shoveler	06 Jan	CTH, SLD
Gadwall	01 Jan	VPM
American Wigeon	02 Jan	JRB
Mallard	01 Jan	VPM
American Black Duck	01 Jan	JET
Northern Pintail	04 Jan	BER
Green-winged Teal	01 Jan	BGB
Canvasback	01 Jan	VPM
Redhead	01 Jan	VPM
Ring-necked Duck	01 Jan	VPM
Greater Scaup	01 Jan	VPM
Lesser Scaup	01 Jan	NAK
Harlequin	21 Nov	NAK, JET
Surf Scoter	06 Apr	TMW, AB
White-winged Scoter	04 Jan	NAK, MO
Black Scoter	10 Feb	TMW
Long-tailed Duck	01 Jan	RB, AD
Bufflehead	01 Jan	KFN
Common Goldeneye	01 Jan	VPM
Barrow's Goldeneye	26 Jan	MG, MPM
Hooded Merganser	01 Jan	VPM
Common Merganser	01 Jan	JET
Red-breasted Merganser	01 Jan	VPM
Ruddy Duck	19 Mar	JPR
Ring-necked Pheasant	04 Jan	KJH
Ruffed Grouse	01 Jan	PH
Wild Turkey	01 Jan	MEC
Pied-billed Grebe	16 Mar	KJH
Horned Grebe	01 Jan	KJH
Red-necked Grebe	23 Feb	BM
Rock Pigeon	01 Jan	KFN
Mourning Dove	01 Jan	KFN
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	12 May	SED
Black-billed Cuckoo	15 May	GM

Species	Date	Observer
Common Nighthawk	15 May	DGDR
Eastern Whip-poor-will	25 Apr	MVAB, DAS
Chimney Swift	04 May	CJ, DK
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	04 May	MB
Virginia Rail	12 Apr	JSB
Sora	29 Apr	GU
Common Gallinule	24 Apr	TMW
American Coot	01 Jan	NAK
Sandhill Crane	17 Mar	LHB
American Avocet	26 Apr	GDD
Black-bellied Plover	04 May	VPM
American Golden-Plover	03 Sep	MDR
Semipalmated Plover	10 May	CF
Killdeer	14 Mar	MDR
Upland Sandpiper	15 Apr	TMW
Whimbrel	26 May	OFO
Ruddy Turnstone	21 May	NAK
Red Knot	26 May	OFO
Stilt Sandpiper	06 Sep	MJP
Sanderling	26 May	KJH
Dunlin	12 May	MR
Baird's Sandpiper	18 Aug	MJP
Least Sandpiper	10 May	CF
White-rumped Sandpiper	18 May	GM, NM
Pectoral Sandpiper	30 Apr	GU
Semipalmated Sandpiper	18 May	WTD, KAW
Short-billed Dowitcher	18 May	JET
American Woodcock	17 Mar	SK
Wilson's Snipe	29 Mar	KH
Wilson's Phalarope	12 May	MR
Spotted Sandpiper	12 Apr	BCT
Solitary Sandpiper	04 May	DC
Greater Yellowlegs	03 Apr	TS
Willet	15 May	KSB, NAK
Lesser Yellowlegs	06 Apr	GS
Parasitic Jaeger	01 Nov	GS
Bonaparte's Gull	02 Apr	DS

Species	Date	Observer
Black-headed Gull	04 Nov	SK
Little Gull	08 Apr	TMW
Ring-billed Gull	01 Jan	VPM
Herring Gull	01 Jan	JET
Iceland Gull	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
Lesser Black-backed Gull	17 Feb	FH, DT
Glaucous Gull	07 Jan	RKFE
Great Black-backed Gull	01 Jan	JW
Caspian Tern	10 Apr	NLB
Black Tern	06 May	TAN
Common Tern	28 Apr	SM
Red-throated Loon	26 Oct	RKB
Common Loon	05 Jan	BMDL
Double-crested Cormorant	02 Jan	NAK, VPM
American Bittern	12 Apr	JSB
Least Bittern	08 May	NLB
Great Blue Heron	01 Jan	DC, RB
Great Egret	09 Apr	NC
Green Heron	29 Apr	JR
Black-crowned Night-Heron	25 Apr	DC, RB
Glossy Ibis	21 Apr	SK
Black Vulture	15 May	TMW
Turkey Vulture	01 Jan	PW
Osprey	28 Mar	DC, RB
Golden Eagle	15 Jan	AC, JS
Northern Harrier	01 Jan	AG, JP
Sharp-shinned Hawk	01 Jan	VPM
Cooper's Hawk	01 Jan	MAJ
Northern Goshawk	06 Jan	GC, PH
Bald Eagle	01 Jan	JET
Red-shouldered Hawk	26 Jan	EOB
Broad-winged Hawk	17 Apr	MEC
Red-tailed Hawk	01 Jan	KFN
Rough-legged Hawk	01 Jan	AG, JP
Eastern Screech-Owl	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
Great Horned Owl	03 Jan	KJH
Snowy Owl	01 Jan	KFN

Species	Date	Observer
Barred Owl	01 Jan	MEC
Great Gray Owl	28 Oct	KF
Long-eared Owl	05 Jan	LF, KH
Short-eared Owl	02 Jan	WD, JL, DT
Boreal Owl	19 Feb	GC, PH
Northern Saw-whet Owl	02 Jan	VPM
Belted Kingfisher	01 Jan	KJH
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	03 Feb	SK, BS, CW
Red-headed Woodpecker	19 Feb	RB
Red-bellied Woodpecker	01 Jan	DM
Downy Woodpecker	01 Jan	BGB
Hairy Woodpecker	01 Jan	TAN
Pileated Woodpecker	01 Jan	JET
Northern Flicker	01 Jan	RB
American Kestrel	01 Jan	XT
Merlin	03 Jan	VPM
Gyr Falcon	16 Jan	NLB
Peregrine Falcon	01 Jan	AG, JP
Olive-sided Flycatcher	19 May	PRM
Eastern Wood-Pewee	08 May	SJC, DGDR
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	17 May	KH
Alder Flycatcher	15 May	SB, MC
Willow Flycatcher	11 May	BB, RG
Least Flycatcher	03 May	JET
Eastern Phoebe	27 Mar	NLB
Great-crested Flycatcher	29 Mar	KFN
Eastern Kingbird	30 Apr	TS
Yellow-throated Vireo	06 May	PRM
Blue-headed Vireo	19 Apr	MDR
Philadelphia Vireo	16 May	TMW
Warbling Vireo	03 May	JET
Red-eyed Vireo	07 May	TS
Loggerhead Shrike	08 Apr	TMW
Northern Shrike	02 Jan	NLB
Blue Jay	01 Jan	BGB
American Crow	01 Jan	DGDR
Fish Crow	11 May	MJR



Species	Date	Observer
Common Raven	01 Jan	JC
Black-capped Chickadee	01 Jan	JET
Boreal Chickadee	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
Tufted Titmouse	03 Jan	DB, SR
Horned Lark	11 Jan	CTH
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	29 Mar	BA
Purple Martin	11 Apr	KSB, KJH
Tree Swallow	29 Mar	BA
Bank Swallow	20 Apr	EOB
Barn Swallow	08 Apr	KJH
Cliff Swallow	29 Mar	BA
Golden-crowned Kinglet	01 Jan	AG, JP
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
Red-breasted Nuthatch	01 Jan	TAN
White-breasted Nuthatch	01 Jan	KFN
Brown Creeper	01 Jan	KFN
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	28 Apr	MDR
House Wren	20 Apr	VPM
Winter Wren	02 Jan	BMDL
Sedge Wren	21 Jun	RH
Marsh Wren	24 Apr	KGDB
Carolina Wren	12 Jan	PRM
European Starling	01 Jan	TAN
Gray Catbird	03 May	MD, S&GM
Brown Thrasher	12 Jan	JS
Northern Mockingbird	03 Feb	MB
Eastern Bluebird	02 Jan	JR-B
Veery	04 May	TAN
Gray-cheeked Thrush	11 May	NAK
Swainson's Thrush	11 May	CF
Hermit Thrush	23 Apr	RKFE
Wood Thrush	29 May	RH
American Robin	01 Jan	VPM
Bohemian Waxwing	02 Jan	BER
Cedar Waxwing	01 Jan	PRM
House Sparrow	01 Jan	VPM
American Pipit	23 Mar	BS, CW

Species	Date	Observer
Evening Grosbeak	04 Jan	JET
Pine Grosbeak	01 Jan	BER
House Finch	01 Jan	DM
Purple Finch	01 Jan	PW
Common Redpoll	01 Jan	CB
Hoary Redpoll	02 Jan	JET
Red Crossbill	13 Nov	TAN
White-winged Crossbill	03 Jan	WD, JL, DT
Pine Siskin	02 Jan	PRM
American Goldfinch	01 Jan	DGDB
Lapland Longspur	11 Jan	MDR
Snow Bunting	02 Jan	TAN
Grasshopper Sparrow	04 May	MDR
Chipping Sparrow	09 Jan	WTD, KAW
Clay-coloured Sparrow	04 May	MDR
Field Sparrow	28 Jan	BER
American Tree Sparrow	01 Jan	DGDR
Fox Sparrow	24 Mar	SK, BS, CW
Dark-eyed Junco	01 Jan	DGDR
White-crowned Sparrow	01 Jan	NAK
White-throated Sparrow	01 Jan	KFN
Vesper Sparrow	14 Apr	OFO
Savannah Sparrow	18 Jan	DD, DW
Henslow's Sparrow	17 May	JW
Song Sparrow	02 Jan	KJH
Lincoln's Sparrow	08 May	MJR
Swamp Sparrow	01 Jan	PH
Eastern Towhee	13 Jan	DM
Yellow-breasted Chat	19 Sep	KH
Yellow-headed Blackbird	02 May	NB
Bobolink	03 May	MI
Eastern Meadowlark	15 Mar	KFN
Orchard Oriole	05 May	LA, PP
Baltimore Oriole	28 Apr	CH
Red-winged Blackbird	02 Jan	NLB
Brown-headed Cowbird	05 Jan	SK, BS, CW
Rusty Blackbird	20 Feb	KJH

Species	Date	Observer
Common Grackle	05 Jan	BP
Ovenbird	04 May	PM
Worm-eating Warbler	07 Sep	CW
Louisiana Waterthrush	21 Apr	MVAB, DAS
Northern Waterthrush	21 Apr	MI
Golden-winged Warbler	04 May	JB, PM
Blue-winged Warbler	09 May	JET
Black-and-white Warbler	22 Apr	CR
Tennessee Warbler	08 May	MH
Orange-crowned Warbler	18 Jan	IR
Nashville Warbler	02 May	TMW
Mourning Warbler	17 May	MC
Common Yellowthroat	02 May	BL
Hooded Warbler	08 May	JB
American Redstart	05 May	PP
Cape May Warbler	04 May	PL
Cerulean Warbler	08 May	DD
Northern Parula	23 Apr	MI
Magnolia Warbler	08 May	KFN
Bay-breasted Warbler	11 May	CF
Blackburnian Warbler	02 May	LM
Yellow Warbler	02 May	BL
Chestnut-sided Warbler	05 May	PP
Blackpoll Warbler	05 May	JD, AD
Black-throated Blue Warbler	03 May	MI
Palm Warbler	24 Apr	KGDB
Pine Warbler	17 Mar	GS
Yellow-rumped Warbler	10 Feb	TMW
Prairie Warbler	11 May	SK
Black-throated Green Warbler	02 May	JET
Canada Warbler	15 May	DM
Wilson's Warbler	13 May	DDo
Scarlet Tanager	04 May	DC, RB
Northern Cardinal	01 Jan	DGDR
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	02 May	JL
Indigo Bunting	08 May	TS

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EOB – Eastern Ontario Birding

NLB – North Leeds Birders

KFN – more than 3 members of Kingston Field Naturalists

OFO – Ontario Field Ornithologists

Note: Although many hundreds of observers contributed sightings in 2019 only those with observations above are listed here.

## 4 Kingston Region Birds – Winter 2019/20 (Dec 1<sup>st</sup> – Feb 28<sup>th</sup>)

*by Mark D. Read*

The KFN reporting area is centred on MacDonald Park, Kingston and extends for a radial dis-

tance of 50km. An interactive map showing the KFN circle is available on the website. If errors are

noted or significant observations omitted, please contact me and I will update accordingly. We also encourage you to submit *all* sightings, so that a better understanding of our region's birdlife can be achieved. Members already using eBird can very easily share their sightings with the username 'Kingston FN'. Alternatively, please email or phone me directly with your sightings ([markdread@gmail.com](mailto:markdread@gmail.com) / 613-217-1246). Please note the total below includes the following species that remain unconfirmed until accepted by the Rare Birds Committee: **Spotted Towhee, 19<sup>th</sup> November (onwards).**

In total, **128 species of bird** were recorded in our region during the reporting period, 8 down on last year's total of 136 species. The vast majority of sightings were obtained from eBird – 23.2% of which were shared with the KFN account (a declining statistic). In total, 418 observers logged 4254 checklists, equating to 28 427 sightings. Only a few records were received via phone/email/word of mouth, indicating the continuing popularity of eBird ([ebird.org/canada/home](http://ebird.org/canada/home)). As usual, an impressive number of individual birds (583 750) were recorded, though many of these were, of course, the same birds seen on subsequent days. A huge thank you goes out to every observer, without whom our understanding of bird distribution would be far more limited. Observers with sightings in the current report are acknowledged below.

After a cold snap in early December, the winter of 2019/20 was relatively mild with Lake Ontario remaining mainly free of ice, though inland water bodies were, on the whole, frozen over as per usual. The cold snap in December pushed many of our typically good numbers of waterfowl away early and, as this wasn't a finch year, nor very good for raptors and owls, things became rather quiet for the rest of the winter. A Spotted Towhee at Prince Edward Point was a major rarity that entertained for the entire period, though a pair of Northern Mockingbirds at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour were also very welcome. Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Gyrfalcon were other great finds this winter. Here are the highlights for the winter of

2019/20:

**Snow Goose:** There were just 4 sightings of this species over the winter period with a high count of 25 seen near Lyndhurst on 18<sup>th</sup> December (NLB).

**Ross's Goose:** A single bird, found in Bath on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan (WiB) was seen by many observers. It was last seen off Cressy Peninsula, Prince Edward on 20<sup>th</sup> (CrK).

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** What was presumedly the same bird as seen in November was refound at Button Bay, Wolfe Island, on 26<sup>th</sup> December (JRB, MDR). It was last seen 12<sup>th</sup> January.

**Cackling Goose:** All but one record (Cape Vincent, NY) came from Wolfe Island, where high counts of 3 birds came on 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> January (MDR).

**Mute Swan:** This introduced species continues to spread in our area with a high count of 350 coming from the west end of Howe Island on 27<sup>th</sup> December (SJC, JaR).

**Trumpeter Swan:** It was a relatively good year for this species though numbers were generally down due to the amount of open water. This year's high count of 77 came from Lower Brewers Lock on 10<sup>th</sup> February (MaB, CoG). No banded birds were seen this winter.

**Tundra Swan:** Although birds were widespread in December and through the first half of January, only a few were seen through to February. This year's high count came from Wolfe Island on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, where 36 birds were seen (NAK). This is way below the norm for this species.

**Wood Duck:** There were 9 records this winter, with 2 birds seen at Alexandria Bay, NY, on 19<sup>th</sup> December (BiP). The first returning bird was seen on Wiltse Creek on 21<sup>st</sup> February (WTD, KAW).

**Northern Shoveler:** Up to 3 birds were present in Cataraqui Bay in early December, with a lone male hanging out on Hillview Pond through to 15<sup>th</sup> January (EDB).

**American Wigeon:** The last bird of the season

was seen at Ravensview, Kingston, on 5<sup>th</sup> January (VPM).

**Northern Pintail:** As many as 3 birds were present in Cataraqui Bay, Kingston throughout the winter period (KFN) with another 3 still on Wolfe Island on 16<sup>th</sup> January (KSB, KJH).

**Green-winged Teal:** A hardy bird stayed on the river in Sydenham through the winter (BGB), with other birds seen at Invista, Kingston, on 21<sup>st</sup> December (EDB), and Chelsea Road, Kingston on 27<sup>th</sup> February (SED).

**Canvasback:** Most of this winter's records came from Cataraqui Bay, Kingston, with 8 seen there on 3<sup>rd</sup> January (JCG, VPM).

**Redhead:** A spectacular count of 12,000 birds was made at Waupoos, Prince Edward on 14<sup>th</sup> January (RKFE).

**Harlequin Duck:** A female was seen on a couple of occasions in early December at Prince Edward Point (PaJ), with 2 there on 11<sup>th</sup> (RoV).

**Surf Scoter:** A single bird was seen in Cataraqui Bay, Kingston, on 8<sup>th</sup> December (RoV).

**Black Scoter:** The 2 records this winter both came from New York State with 1 at Westcott Beach SP on 14<sup>th</sup> December (JSB), and the other at Cape Vincent on 2<sup>nd</sup> February (JoE).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** Records came from Fishers Landing and Grass Creek SP, NY, as well as Cressy and Prince Edward Points.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** As last year, other than a couple of records from the states, all birds were seen on Amherst Island (KFN).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** A single bird was seen on Amherst Island on 3<sup>rd</sup> January (KFN).

**Horned Grebe:** Birds continued to be seen off Prince Edward Point until mid-January, with a couple of sightings from Amherst Island during the same period (KFN).

**Red-necked Grebe:** A single bird was seen at Prince Edward Point on 9<sup>th</sup> December (PaJ).

**American Coot:** Two birds were seen at Nicholson Point, Amherstview, on 9<sup>th</sup> February (GeP).

**Iceland Gull:** It was a poor year for observations of this species with just 8 records, most from the islands. Two birds were seen together at Verona dump on 14<sup>th</sup> December (TAN).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** There were just two records this year – one at LaFarge, Bath, on 31<sup>st</sup> January (BNC, NEM, GVR), and another at Clayton, NY, on 17<sup>th</sup> February (JaB).

**Glaucous Gull:** There were 15 records this season with birds seen across a wide area (KFN).

**Common Loon:** As usual, a number of sightings were received in December. The last bird of the winter was seen off e Wolfe Island ferry on 31<sup>st</sup> January (MDR).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** The last record came from the Wolfe Island ferry terminal, Kingston, on 12<sup>th</sup> December (PaM).

**Turkey Vulture:** There were 13 records this winter, with a marked increase after mid-February, though it is increasingly difficult to identify 'resident' birds from genuine migrants (KFN).

**Northern Goshawk:** There were 4 records this winter; 1 at Lemoine Point on 7<sup>th</sup> December (PRO); 1 on Bur Brook Road, north of Kingston, on 24<sup>th</sup> December and 7<sup>th</sup> January (PRM); and 1 at Amherstview on 22<sup>nd</sup> January (NiB).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** An overwintering bird was seen on several dates over the winter, often on or near Howe Island Ferry Road, Gananoque. The hybrid Red-shouldered x Red-tailed Hawk was also seen in this area on 27<sup>th</sup> December (SLD, CTH).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** There was a continued improvement in the number of observations compared to previous seasons with 19 records from a number of locations.

**Snowy Owl:** The early season period saw a fair number of birds on Wolfe Island in particular but these soon moved on leaving us with a relatively



poor season, particularly on Amherst Island.

**Long-eared Owl:** It was a poor winter for this species with just 7 records, all but one (2 near Tamworth on 2<sup>nd</sup> February (KJH)) coming from Amherst Island.

**Short-eared Owl:** It was a poor year for this species too, though an observation of 11 birds on Amherst Island on 27<sup>th</sup> December was notable (KeF). There were no reports from Wolfe Island.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** All 6 records (none more than 1 bird) came from Amherst Island.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** A single bird was seen on 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December near Brewers Mills (WTD, KAW), with another near Adolphustown on 6<sup>th</sup> February (BER).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Three birds were seen in Frontenac Provincial Park on 14<sup>th</sup> December (WTD, KAW).

**Gyr Falcon:** There were 10 sightings this winter, all of a single grey adult that moved between Wolfe Island and Cataraqui Bay, Kingston, between mid-December and late-February (KFN).

**Peregrine Falcon:** There were 35 observations this winter, from across the Kingston area.

**Northern Shrike:** There were 79 observations this winter, mainly singles of course, but 2 birds were seen on-and-off at Lemoine Point, Kingston, in late-January/February.

**Tufted Titmouse:** There were several reports of up to 2 birds on Howe Island Ferry Road, Gananoque, during the latter half of February.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** There were 12 records over the winter, with 1 late individual making it deep into winter at Hay Bay where it was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> February (BER).

**Winter Wren:** Compared with the 2 sightings from last winter, the 14 seen this year was great. Two birds were present at Landon Bay on 10<sup>th</sup> February (KAW).

**Marsh Wren:** Both records came from New York

state where 2 birds were seen at Perch River WMA on 13<sup>th</sup> December, and 1 was near Watertown airport on 2<sup>nd</sup> January (both JSB).

**Carolina Wren:** The majority of records came from Cartwright's Point where at least 2 birds are present. Other birds were noted on Howe Island Ferry Road, Gananoque, at Sandhurst Shores, and in Napanee.

**Grey Catbird:** Both reports came from across the border with 1 near Watertown airport on 14<sup>th</sup> December (JSB), and another at Cape Vincent on 2<sup>nd</sup> February (StK).

**Brown Thrasher:** A single bird was seen on several dates over the winter near Emery, Gananoque (JoH) with another seen on Amherst Island on 17<sup>th</sup> (DaK) and 23<sup>rd</sup> February (OFO).

**Northern Mockingbird:** In a great year for this species (perhaps the milder weather was a factor), 2 birds took up residence at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour and were seen throughout the winter period. Other birds were seen at Amherstview, and at Cataraqui Bay, Kingston.

**Hermit Thrush:** There were 19 sightings this winter, from a number of different locations. Two birds were seen on Bur Brook Road, north of Kingston, on 20<sup>th</sup> December (PRM).

**Bohemian Waxwing:** There was just 1 record in our area this winter of a single bird at Lemoine Point on 23<sup>rd</sup> February (KeB).

**Common Redpoll:** In this poor year for winter finches, there was just a single record, of 2 birds, seen on Wolfe Island on 6<sup>th</sup> January (RBDC).

**Red Crossbill:** A single bird was seen near Verona on 7<sup>th</sup> February (TAN).

**Lapland Longspur:** It was a fairly poor year for this species with the majority of records coming from Wolfe Island. A high of just 5 birds was noted on Wolfe Island on 8<sup>th</sup> February (EOB).

**Snow Bunting:** It was a mixed year for this species with widespread observations, but mainly in low numbers. However, a report of 3500 birds

on Wolfe Island on 8<sup>th</sup> February was noteworthy (EOB).

**Field Sparrow:** Two birds were seen at Lyndhurst on 15<sup>th</sup> January (NLB).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** A single bird, found on Amherst Island, was present from 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 20<sup>th</sup> February (BER).

**Savannah Sparrow:** There was just 1 bird seen this winter near Napanee on 30<sup>th</sup> January (KJH).

**Swamp Sparrow:** There were just 2 records this winter; 1 in Kingston on 15<sup>th</sup> December (LeR), and 1 at Marshlands CA, Kingston, on 19<sup>th</sup> December (CoG).

**Spotted Towhee:** This star attraction stayed throughout the winter period at its regular spot at Prince Edward Point.

**Eastern Towhee:** A single bird was seen 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> December near Verona (TAN).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** A late bird was seen on Amherst Island on 17<sup>th</sup> December (JaB).

**Rusty Blackbird:** Observations came from Prince Edward Point, Marble Rock and Wolfe Island, with a high of 7 at Prince Edward on 5<sup>th</sup> January (ToJ).

**Palm Warbler:** A single bird was present at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour, Kingston, 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> December (LuE, MaK).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** There were 36 reports this winter (many of multiple birds), with a high of 9 noted at Gravelly Bay Road, Prince Edward, on 12<sup>th</sup> December (PaJ).

**Other species observed during the reporting period:** Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, American Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Rock

Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Merlin, Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Horned Lark, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

**Observers:** B. Gaye Beckwith (BGB), North Leeds Birders (NLB), Eastern Ontario Birding (EOB), Ken Ball (KeB), James R. Barber (JRB), Nick Bartok (NiB), Erwin D. Batalla (EDB), Kevin S. Bleeks (KSB), Jeff S. Bolsinger (JSB), Jaimie Bortolotti (JaB), Richard Brault & Dianne Croteau (RBDC), Janet Burrows (JaB), Martha Burchat (MaB), William Bradford (WiB), Barb N. Charlton (BNC), Steve J. Coates (SJC), Sharon E. David, (SED), Stephanie Davison (SLD), William T. Depew (WTD), Lucas Eckert (LuE), R. Ken F. Edwards (RKFE), Jody Enck (JoE), Cole Gaerber (CoG), Colin Gaskell (CoG), Janis C. Grant (JCG), John Haig (JoH), Chris T. Heffernan (CTH), Kurt J. Hennige (KJH), Tom Jackman (ToJ), Paul Jones (PaJ), N. Anthony Kaduck (NAK), Steve Kelling (StK), Crystal Kirkman (CrK), Marlene Kraml (MaK), Dale Kristensen (DaK), V. Paul MacKenzie (VPM), Paul R. Martin (PRM), Paul McElligott (PaM), Nancy E. McPherson (NEM), Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN), Todd A. Norris (TAN), Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO), Paul R. O'Toole (PRO), Gerard Phillips (GeP), Bill Purcell (BiP), Mark D. Read (MDR), Jane Revell (JaR), Garth V. Riley (GVR), Bruce E. Ripley (BER), Lesley Rudy (LeR), Ronald Vandebeek (RoV), Kathy Webb (KAW).

## 5 Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (2020): Kingston Region

by Mark D. Read

The Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (MWWI) is carried out throughout North America. In Canada, a coordinated ground survey of Lake Ontario typically takes place on the first Sunday during the period 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> January. Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) offshore aerial data is then added to the shoreline ground counts to form the final Lake Ontario count. These data get added to the other lower Great Lakes to form the Ontario contribution to the Mississippi Flyway totals. These numbers are then used in waterfowl management decisions on a continent-wide basis (habitat restoration, research direction, bag limits etc.).

Nineteen observers surveyed the Kingston region, all the way from Ivy Lea to Prince Edward Point, as well as north along the Rideau to Westport. It was a mainly cloudy day with rain or freezing rain in places and temperatures holding at about 0°C. Visibility was generally good and the majority of waterways were open making this one of the more pleasant counts in recent years. CWS conducted their aerial survey the following week, just a few days after the ground survey. Participants were Shannon Badzinski (CWS), Barb Campbell (CWS), Cheryl Anderson, Sharon David, Stephanie Davison, Bill Depew, Ken Edwards, Peter Fuller, Chris Heffernan, Kurt Hennige, Anthony Kaduck, Bonnie Livingstone, Paul Mackenzie, Mark Read, Martin Roncetti, Janet Scott, Kathy Webb, and Peter Waycik. Sincere thanks go to all participants.

Table 3 shows results of the combined ground and aerial survey for the Kingston area as provided by Kim Bennett (MNRF). In total, 71 640 individuals were counted of 23 species (compared to 69 840 individuals/21 species in 2019, 6362 individuals/20 species in 2018 and 74 739 individuals/25 species in 2017). A poor showing of just 10 Bald Eagles compared to the 52 of last year was somewhat disappointing but indicative of the amount of open water. Local results were then submitted to the Lake Ontario compiler (Glenn Coady) who then returned the overall data found in Table 4. These results do not include any of the aerial data. Areas surveyed along Lake Ontario from

east to west were Kingston, Quinte, Presqu'île, Port Hope, Durham, Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara.

In the following notes from Glenn Coady, he is commenting on the results of the ground survey only so, whereas the entire Lake Ontario ground count for American Black Duck the lowest ever at 299, the aerial survey found 5 times this number on Wolfe Island alone.

As noted by Glenn,

“...contributions have allowed us to provide comprehensive coverage of the entire Ontario shoreline of Lake Ontario for the 31<sup>st</sup> consecutive year and to survey the original routes between Bronte Harbour and Whitby Harbour in the GTA for the 74<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. It has been an amazingly sustained commitment and a substantial contribution to waterfowl conservation efforts to have good numbers upon which to base decisions on from bag limits on hunting to priorities for research dollars and habitat improvement and acquisition.

A quick look at our results will reveal that this year provided exceptional species diversity with 38 species seen which is among the better totals all-time. The original Bronte to Whitby routes combined for a total of 31 species (inevitably down from last year's record 37 species), which is about our average total.

Our lake-wide total of over 108 000 birds counted was about average for the last three winters, but well below other counts for the last decade, and well down from the numbers in the early years of zebra mussel expansion.

Many route leaders commented on lower than usual numbers of dabblers being found this year. The Kingston

region added a new species all-time to the count – a long overdue adult Ross’s Goose. Other highlights were record high counts for Wood Duck and Red-head.

Bald Eagle numbers were way down, but likely just because Kingston birds were shifted from their usual locations providing a one year anomaly.

Yet again for the fourth year in a row we set an all-time record low

count of 299 lake-wide for the American Black Duck – might we see its near disappearance from Lake Ontario as a wintering species within another generation? As recently as 2005 we tallied 4217 birds.”

Next year’s ground survey is scheduled to take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January. Please contact [markdread@gmail.com](mailto:markdread@gmail.com) if interested in taking part.

**Table 3: Combined aerial and ground survey results for the Kingston area.**

	Ivy	HI	WI	King	AI	Hy33	CP	PEPt	Napa	Rid	Totals
Ross’s Goose	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
GWF Goose	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Cackling Goose	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Canada Goose	450	665	24 462	1898	1508	775	3120	850	5328	74	39 130
Mute Swan	83	425	179	145	6	29	-	113	68	10	1058
Trumpeter Swan	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	91	96
Tundra Swan	-	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
Swan sp.	-	5	142	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	147
N. Shoveler	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gadwall	3	7	5	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	56
Mallard	352	166	1452	213	60	50	123	20	149	-	2585
Am Black Duck	25	15	1572	58	25	-	2	-	13	-	1710
Northern Pintail	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Redhead	-	-	100	10	-	50	12 000	-	-	-	12 160
Greater Scaup	-	-	437	571	-	15	235	-	-	-	1258
Lesser Scaup	-	-	7	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	8
Scaup sp.	-	-	4657	-	-	7604	-	-	450	-	12 711
WW Scoter	-	-	6	-	1	-	-	90	-	-	97
Black Scoter	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	12
LT Duck	-	79	282	11	2	45	-	2618	-	-	3037
Bufflehead	-	14	104	2	64	5	-	6	15	-	210
C. Goldeneye	108	404	1303	542	271	194	178	532	593	-	4125
H. Merganser	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

<b>C. Merganser</b>	86	889	2409	274	33	77	20	-	1444	9	5241
<b>RB Merganser</b>	3	5	276	26	162	70	93	6	20	-	661
<b>Merganser sp.</b>	4497	3508	3366	-	-	-	-	3	2060	-	13 434
<b>Duck sp.</b>	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
<b>Species - 23</b>	8	10	20	13	12	12	8	8	8	4	84 336
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	2a, 1i	1a	2a	-	-	-	2a	1	-	1	<b>10</b>

Key: Ivy = Ivy Lea Bridge to RMC; HI = Howe Island; WI = Wolfe Island; King = Kingston (LaSalle to Collins Bay); AI = Amherst Island; Hy33 = Amherstview to Glenora Ferry; CP = Cressy Peninsula and Picton; PEpt = Black Creek to PEpt and South Shore IBA; Napa = Napanee & Hay Bay; Rid = Rideau system north of 401 to Westport, including Bedford Mills. For Bald Eagles 'a' refers to adults, 'i' refers to immatures". Swan sp., Scaup sp. and Duck sp. are not included in the Species Counts.

**Table 4: Results of ground surveys for Lake Ontario by region (east to west).**

Species	King-ston	Quinte	Pres-qu'ile	Port Hope	Durhan	Tor-onto	Ham-ilton	Niagara	Total
<b>Red-throated Loon</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
<b>Common Loon</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
<b>Horned Grebe</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	5
<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
<b>Double-crested Cormorant</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	17	8	27
<b>Tundra Swan</b>	6	3	7	-	-	2	-	11	29
<b>Trumpeter Swan</b>	91	1	-	1	2	112	168	-	375
<b>Mute Swan</b>	256	192	21	4	4	323	31	5	836
<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Ross's Goose</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Canada Goose</b>	9994	1571	34	2037	1176	7402	522	33	22 769
<b>Cackling Goose</b>	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
<b>Wood Duck</b>	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	11
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3
<b>American Black Duck</b>	80	2	15	44	13	106	32	7	299
<b>Mallard</b>	828	74	4	815	11	2354	423	117	4626

Species	King- ston	Quinte	Pres- qu'ile	Port Hope	Durhan	Tor- onto	Ham- ilton	Niagara	Total
Northern Pintail	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Northern Shoveler	1	-	-	-	-	-	66	-	67
Gadwall	57	-	-	-	-	413	42	-	512
American Wigeon	-	-	-	-	-	29	5	-	34
Canvasback	-	-	-	-	-	-	173	2	175
Redhead	12 026	3	24	1	2	1712	277	-	14 045
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	4
Greater Scaup	1258	-	219	97	7196	15 880	456	359	25 465
Lesser Scaup	8	-	1	-	1	27	30	2	69
Scaup sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	107	-	107
Harlequin Duck	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Long-tailed Duck	618	323	747	97	546	10 585	8452	212	21 580
Black Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	6
Surf Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	21	42	-	63
White-winged Scoter	6	3	2	3	1	215	770	47	1047
Common Goldeneye	641	142	254	204	581	3737	2715	283	8557
Bufflehead	16	-	12	22	108	799	253	92	1302
Hooded Merganser	2	-	1	-	-	26	10	-	39
Common Merganser	2675	5	-	10	18	160	191	524	3583
Red-breasted Merganser	184	4	16	24	219	937	218	634	2236
Ruddy Duck	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	5
American Coot	-	-	-	-	-	5	15	-	20
Duck sp.	15	-	50	15	-	5	-	-	85
Mallard X Black Duck	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	7
<b>Total Birds</b>	28 768	2323	1407	3374	9878	44 891	15 028	2337	108 006
<b>Total Species</b>	22	12	14	13	14	31	28	16	38
<b>Participants</b>	19	1	7	3	2	25	19	12	63
<b>Party-hours</b>	31	6.5	20	6.5	12.75	56	17.5	16	110.25
Bald Eagle	8	1	-	-	-	4	4	-	13



## 6 Articles

### 6.1 Wildlife Photography Tips #4

by Anthony Kaduck

#### The Raw and the Cooked – Choosing an Image File Format



**Figure 1:** Rufous-capped Anthrush at ISO 8000. (Anthony Kaduck)

I started this article intending to talk about post-processing – the business of editing your wildlife images. But I rapidly realized that it is too big a subject to deal with at once, so I'm going to break it into manageable chunks.

#### How the Camera Creates an Image

The first stage of the journey requires us to look at what happens when you snap the shutter. In the days of film cameras it was relatively straightforward – light passed through the lens and onto a film of celluloid or plastic. Light-sensitive chemicals on the film reacted to the exposure, producing a negative or a slide.

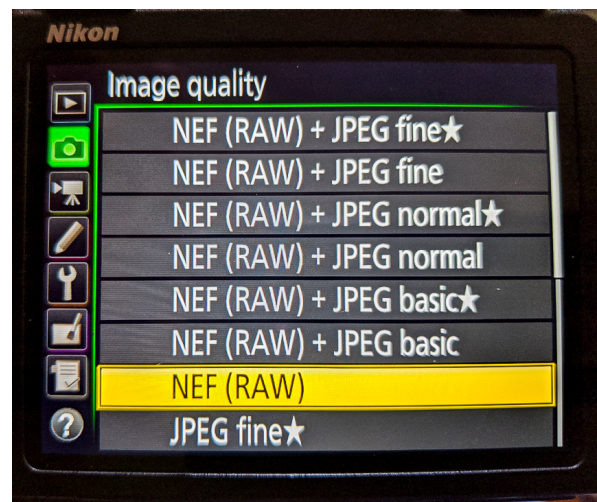
Digital cameras use a different process to capture an image. As photographers we need to have a basic understanding of how this works so we can understand how the different image file formats work.

In very simple terms, in a digital camera the light is focused on a sensor, which is a grid made up of very small photosites. Each photosite contains a

diode that converts light into digital information. In simplistic terms the diode counts the number of photons that fall onto it while the shutter is open, and the circuitry in the photosite converts that information into a numerical value.

In order to provide a digital image that matches the level of detail and colour that the eye can see, a camera sensor needs to contain millions of these photosites. This density of information allows a digital image to be at least as good as an image from a film camera. But it also explains why digital image files tend to be very large. Each of those millions of photosites generates a numerical value expressed as a byte of between 12 and 24 bits. To give you an idea of how that adds up, with my current camera set to the highest resolution the information stored by those photosites totals 62 million bytes of data for a single image.

#### Image Formats



**Figure 2**

The camera's onboard processors convert those digital values into an image file. There are two main formats for an image file – JPEG and Raw. These formats take very different approaches to the challenge of storing all this data. In simple

terms, JPEG transforms data within the camera to produce a finished image, while Raw stores all the information and the user then processes the information at a workstation. Each approach has its pros and cons. I want to briefly illustrate the difference so you can make an informed choice about which format to use.

## JPEG

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) has emerged as the standard format for most photography tasks. For virtually all digital cameras JPEG is the default format, so if you have not been experimenting with the settings menu you are almost certainly shooting JPEG.

The JPEG format was developed to allow onboard compression of digital images. If you recall that figure of 62 million bytes you will see why for many applications there is a need to compress digital images.

Large files are problematic for several reasons:

- They demand large storage capacity on your camera's memory card
- They take more time to write to the memory card, which can limit the number of images you can take in quick succession
- They take up a lot of room on the storage drives of your PC, laptop, or mobile device
- They require a lot of bandwidth to transmit, so websites will be slow to load and sharing is tedious

To avoid these problems the JPEG format compresses the raw information gathered by your camera sensor and then transforms it into a finished image. This image is stored on your camera's memory card.

## JPEG Advantages

For many uses JPEG format is ideal:

- JPEG images are small enough to be easily viewable and shareable.\*

- Virtually all devices and software are compatible with JPEG files.
- The simple image editing software available on your cell phone, tablet or computer is designed to use JPEG images.
- JPEG is supported by HTML, the language used in creating web pages.

*\*Note: JPEG files can be created using different compression levels. Lower compression levels lead to better quality but also larger file size. JPEG Fine Large files are the least compressed (4:1) but therefore the largest. At about 10MB each they are not easily shareable.*

## JPEG Disadvantages

However, there are limitations to JPEG that you should consider. Most of these limitations result from the way the JPEG algorithm compresses the image file size.

The process by which JPEG compresses a file is highly technical bordering on incomprehensible, but in the simplest possible terms it reduces the size of the file by calculating average values for  $8 \times 8$  blocks of photosites (thus each block replaces 64 sets of information with one). It then reduces the level of information about colour. Based on the understanding that humans have difficulty discerning small variations of colour, JPEG looks for areas that have similar hues and replaces these small variations with a single average colour.

This process can result in a much smaller image file, but the key thing to remember about the JPEG conversion process is that once the image is created any information that the conversion algorithm considered unnecessary is lost and unrecoverable.

This is why JPEG is classified as a "lossy" format. As noted, a certain amount of information is discarded when the image is originally created. Moreover, each time you recompress the image, by making a change and then re-saving it, some additional information is irrecoverably lost. And if you crop an image – for example to provide a close-up view – the parts of the image that you cropped out are lost forever.

A further implication of JPEG is that, because it produces a final image, the camera settings in use when the image was taken are “baked in.” If you realize afterwards that you had the wrong white balance or picture control settings for example it may not be possible to correct the image.

## Raw

Raw is a generic term for a file that saves all of the information from an image, with only minimal processing. This information needs to be converted and edited at a workstation before an image is produced. Raw format is not available on all cameras. All modern digital single lens reflex cameras (DSLRs) and mirrorless cameras can shoot Raw, but only a minority of bridge cameras have the capability and point-and-shoot cameras generally do not.

## Raw Disadvantages

There are several disadvantages to shooting in Raw:

- Raw files are big. With the camera set-up I currently use, each image file is about 29MB. So a 64GB card will hold about 1300 Raw files instead of 13 000 JPEGs.
- You need to process your Raw files at home in order to generate finished images. This is time-consuming compared to the instant image generated by JPEG.
- To process the files you need specialized image editing software (though note that you can download free editing software from your camera manufacturer – all the major camera brands provide this).
- Each camera manufacturer has its own a proprietary standard, so for example a CRW file from a Canon camera is not compatible with a NEF file a Nikon generates.
- For Raw files to be printed, shared on a mobile device or posted on the internet you need to create and export a JPEG image.

So why do most professional wildlife photographers shoot in Raw?

## Raw Advantages

**Lossless.** Raw files are lossless. All the information your camera gathered is available to you. Nothing is averaged out or approximated. As an example, an 8-bit JPEG image is limited to about 16.8 million colours, whereas a 12-bit Raw image can show up to 68.7 billion. What this means in the real world is that you will get more even transition between colours, without the possibility of the pixilation that sometime happens with JPEG (remember that JPEG averages out colours into larger blocks).

**Non-destructive.** The adjustments you make in post-processing do not change the original file. All changes are saved in a separate hidden file called a sidecar. So regardless of how much you crop and adjust an image, you always have the original file available. With JPEG every significant change degrades the image, and things that are cropped out cannot be recovered.

**Settings are not baked in.** With Raw you have complete ability to adjust most of the camera settings during post-processing, including exposure, white balance, sharpening, colour gamut, picture control, and contrast.

**Greater dynamic range.** Raw files are typically created in 12 or 14-bit format, compared to 8-bit for JPEG. This may not seem like a big numerical difference, but remember we are looking at a file made up of millions of bytes. The math is somewhat beyond my ken, but the impact is that in each stop of a camera’s dynamic range there is far more information space available in a Raw file. At the bottom end of the dynamic range – areas of deep shadow in a photograph – there are 65 times as many gradations in a Raw file as in a JPEG.

This has important implications for wildlife photographers. We often find ourselves trying to capture images in areas where there is both bright light and deep shadow. Using JPEG, those shadows will tend to be featureless dark blobs, whereas with Raw we will be able to see the same details that our eyes would see.

Moreover, the greater ability of Raw to capture detail in shadow allows us to apply shadow reduc-

tion – a very useful capability that I will talk about in future articles on post-processing.

### Exposure Correction

But perhaps the most striking advantage comes when we shoot images at incorrect exposures. The perfect photographer would never do this, but for the rest of us there will be numerous situations

were we have the camera set up for bright daylight only to have a momentary glimpse of a bird – and typically it's a good one – peeping out of a dark corner.

The higher dynamic range of the Raw format means we can correct a badly underexposed shot in post-processing and end up with a good image.

Consider this example. I deliberately underexposed this shot of an American Goldfinch in my garden. I did this as an experiment, so please ignore the uninteresting composition. The camera took two simultaneous images – one in Raw and one in JPEG Fine.



**Figure 3:** JPEG. (Anthony Kaduck)



**Figure 4:** Raw. (Anthony Kaduck)

The images were very dark – I had to increase exposure by about four stops. But the results are clear. The quality of the Raw image is pretty good: there is full feather detail and the colours look right. The JPEG image on the other hand is dreadful. The colour is over-saturated, green blobs have appeared in the breast and belly plumage, and the whole bird looks flat and dull.

*(n.b. This may not show up well in the black and white print version. I recommend you look at these images on the .pdf version of the Blue Bill or on my website)*

### Recommendations

If you have read this far, you have probably realized that I am a fan of the Raw format. I believe that in wildlife photography the aim should be to produce an image that replicates as closely as possible how the creature (bird/animal/plant/butterfly/reptile) looked in the wild. I have found that using Raw format and carefully post-processing the image gives me the best chance of doing that. And there is an element of craftsmanship involved that I find appealing – I prefer to make my own choices rather than having the camera make decisions on my behalf. I am also

not worried about file size given that hard drive storage capacity has become increasingly inexpensive.

So is there an argument for using JPEG? The fact remains that some very good images have been created using JPEG. You may well decide that you prefer the simplicity and efficiency of JPEG. If so, I would recommend that you use the lowest compression setting: JPEG Fine. This setting creates a 4:1 compression, so the files are still fairly large, but at 4:1 you will not see any of the artifacts or errors that can creep in at higher compression ratios.



(Note: if you want to see the accompanying images at full size all articles in this series are posted on my web-

site: [anthonykaduck.ca](http://anthonykaduck.ca))

## 6.2 Building a Better Environment Post-COVID:

### An Invitation from the Energy & Environment Working Group at Queen's

by Carolyn Bonta and Dr. Warren Mabee

The COVID-19 pandemic – while tragic at many levels – presents an opportunity to rethink the ways in which our society is organized. Responding to the pandemic and 'flattening the curve' has required government, and society, to make massive changes in a very short time. These changes may pave the way for more permanent solutions to some of the most challenging issues of our time, and lead to significant improvements in measures of equity, health, and environmental sustainability. To achieve these improvements, however, we need science-based recommendations to inform policy reform and development going forward.

A group of students and faculty at Queen's University has gathered together to begin to explore ways in which our response to COVID-19 can lead to a better environment. We've chosen to organize our work at the municipal level, recognizing that cities are perhaps the most important element of any plan to reduce emissions and energy consumption, and improve overall environmental stewardship. To develop policy recommendations

that can support the City of Kingston in building back better from COVID-19, we have landed on five key areas on which to focus: transit and commuting, food systems, water management, urban design, and society's strongly increasing reliance on new technology.

At this point we are reaching out to KFN members to let you know about this policy development initiative and to seek engagement from the community. We anticipate holding one or more town hall/workshop events in the coming months, using video conferencing software, in order to allow people to engage more fully in this initiative. If you are passionate about one or more of our focus areas, or would simply like to be kept informed of our activities, we invite you to please contact Project Coordinator Deanna Crossman ([deanna.crossman@queensu.ca](mailto:deanna.crossman@queensu.ca)).

We are excited by this opportunity and look forward to engaging with members of our community!

## 6.3 Exploring the Backyard: Big Adventure on Little Cat

by Carolyn Bonta

As far as adventures go, my land-based neighbourhood explorations are limited to the confines of a 45-acre parcel of scrubby woodland and regenerating field. But across those lands is Little Cataraqui Creek, which opens up a much larger natural area that I frequently paddle between Front Road and Princess Street, including the many little channels in between. Four years ago, I paddled from this stretch of creek to Ottawa, via the Rideau Canal. Last year, water levels were high enough to paddle the Little Cataraqui Creek north to John Counter Boulevard, something I later

repeated on a few occasions but never proceeded beyond there.

When COVID-19 hit in mid-March, the natural area in my neighbourhood suddenly filled with people: Families seeking alternative March Break fun, dog walkers denied access to dog parks, mountain bikers looking for trails to ride, and couples looking for an interesting alternative to walking paved roads. Having lived in the neighbourhood for almost 18 years, I've honestly never encountered so many people on the trails. And as a self-described introvert who has been practicing

“social distancing” long before COVID required it, I was desperate to find a quiet, people-less refuge close to home.

Early April finally brought a somewhat warm, somewhat sunny afternoon. I loaded my solo canoe on its cart and pulled it down the street, along the trails, and to the Little Cataraqui Creek. My mission: Paddle north as far as I could, despite the rapidly-receding spring freshet. I was especially curious to explore the section of the creek north of John Counter Boulevard, and wondered whether I could make it to the reservoir at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area.



**Figure 5:** Looking north up Little Cataraqui Creek somewhere south of the K&P Trail, after crossing yet another beaver dam. (Carolyn Bonta)

As the creek approached Portsmouth Avenue, just south of John Counter, each paddle stroke set off a slew of activity as many large, striped fish darted away in response to the disturbance. Not carp but one of our native bottom-feeders, these were White Suckers en route from Lake Ontario to spawning grounds upstream. I paddled under John Counter and beneath the construction zone for the new overpass, and found the sucker spawning grounds among the shallow, gravelly rapids below the train bridge. I marveled at how such a tiny footprint of habitat can play such an important role in the life cycle of these fish.

From there, the creek meandered lazily through a wide floodplain. I pulled my little canoe over several beaver dams, but didn't see the builders

themselves. The controversial new Purdy's Mills subdivision, with its large homes and tall apartment building, loomed to the west. Yet, to look in any other direction you would hardly have guessed the urban core was so close. Painted turtles basked on flattened cattails while Chorus Frogs and Northern Leopard Frogs called. In addition to the usual early-spring marsh birds, there were some less-often encountered species such as Green-winged Teal and Black Duck. Belted Kingfishers crossed between perches and Killdeer called from a shoreline plateau. The creek's meanders sharpened as the adjacent banks became steeper, and a Phoebe announced my passing under the K&P Trail bridge. Several gawkers paused to watch as I lined my canoe through the shallow water below. Socially distant as I am, I pretended not to notice them.



**Figure 6:** Carolyn and her little canoe. A view to the east in the background, yet pines hide the industrial area along Sir John A Macdonald Boulevard. (Carolyn Bonta)

The culvert under Highway 401 loomed large, and brought me onto Conservation Authority property. At that point, the creek became increasingly shallow with several blockages of debris. After 20 minutes of slowly making my way upstream – walking more than paddling – I estimated there was still a ways to go to reach the reservoir. Satisfied at having made it so close to the creek's headwaters, and beginning to get hungry, I turned around and returned home. I'll just have to return earlier in the season next spring to paddle just a little bit further.



## 7 KFN Outings

### 7.1 Teen Trip to Mitchell Creek (March 7, 2020)

by Mackenzie Bailey



Figure 7: Bubbly Stream. (Bruce Elliott)

It was a cool winter morning on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. At 9:00 in the morning, The Kingston Teen Naturalists gathered together at the Tim Hortons on Sydenham Rd. The attendees on this day were Anne Robertson, and four members: Abel, Damon, Amelie, and myself (Mackenzie). Two other adult mentors (Janet and Bruce Elliott) also accompanied us. We all crammed into two cars and drove off to the Mitchell Creek property of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The focus of this trip was to talk about deciduous trees and identify them in the winter. Also to identify animal tracks, birds and any insects that were out.

Once we got there we all unpacked and put on

some snowshoes which we had brought along with us and started to walk into the woods along a path. As we walked Anne started to quiz us on our knowledge of trees, such as how the leaves stayed on the beech trees in the winter. She also made us taste the shoots of both white and yellow birch trees to help us identify the difference. The white birch shoots were bitter and the yellow birch shoots tasted like wintergreen mint. We also saw a stream that started at an underwater spring that had bits of mica in it. When the sun, that was just starting to come out, hit the water it was very beautiful. This area was officially named by us the “Bubbly Stream.” Tracks in the snow that were observed included, white-tailed deer, coyote, raccoon, squirrel, and probably fisher. Several insect species were observed including snowfleas, winter stoneflies and a woolly bear caterpillar.

At about 12:00 we stopped for lunch on a small bluff with a great view looking over the forest and nearby creek. On our way back we spotted some birds including a Black-capped Chickadee, a Downy Woodpecker and a Blue Jay. Then we headed back to the Tim Hortons for 2:00 where we drank hot chocolate and wrote down the day’s events in our field note books.

## 8 Clipped Classics

*Excerpts from past issues of The Blue Bill*

*Edited by Alexandra Simmons*

### ***From 60 years ago...***

*A summary of spring (March 1 - May 31) bird sightings has appeared in the Blue Bill almost since its inception. Sixty years ago, Helen Quilliam prepared the Spring Birds 1960 article for Volume 7 Number 2 of the Blue Bill. In many ways it resembles our current summary, but listed below are some observations that might surprise KFN members in 2020.*

Pied-billed Grebes came in with a rush on March 28 when there were seven in the Cataraqui River, as well as one found wandering on a road in Red-

dendale. This one was brought to me and I put it into a very small piece of open water along the shore. Almost immediately it began fishing and

within ten minutes had caught seven little fish. At about the same time there were several reports of Pied-billed Grebes coming down on roads in New York State which they had apparently mistaken for patches of open water.

A Turkey vulture was seen at Prince Edward Point on May 15. Fishermen reported that they used to be common there but had not been seen of late years there.

Glaucous Gulls remained late at the city dump. As many as 100 were estimated to be there on April 16 by Art Bell and on May 18 were still to be found. On the other hand, the only Bonaparte's Gull reported was one on April 23 seen by Ken Edwards near Wolfe Island.

On May 22 Martin Edwards and Lew Lowther found an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Phil little also saw an Olive-sided Flycatcher on the same day. These are the first spring records of this flycatcher.

There has been no migration at all of Red-breasted

Nuthatches. The one at Gwen Woods feeding station in February remained until almost the end of April but this is the only bird of this species seen this year to date, May 24.

It has been a better year than usual for Short-billed Marsh Wrens [*Editor's Note: now sedge wrens*]. Many fields are still very wet and on one field in the Gore Road Bush where there were Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows last year, there are Short-billed Marsh Wrens this year.

A Yellow-Throated Vireo was seen by Lew Lowther and Martin Edwards May 22. We have not had a record of this vireo for some years.

Two Connecticut Warblers were found on May 22 (Round-up day). Also on May 22, an unusual total of 8 Mourning Warblers was seen.

Reports of Cardinals continue to come in and it is to be hoped that a breeding pair can be found this year. [*Editor's Note: Northern Cardinal was reported for the first time in the Kingston in 1951!*]

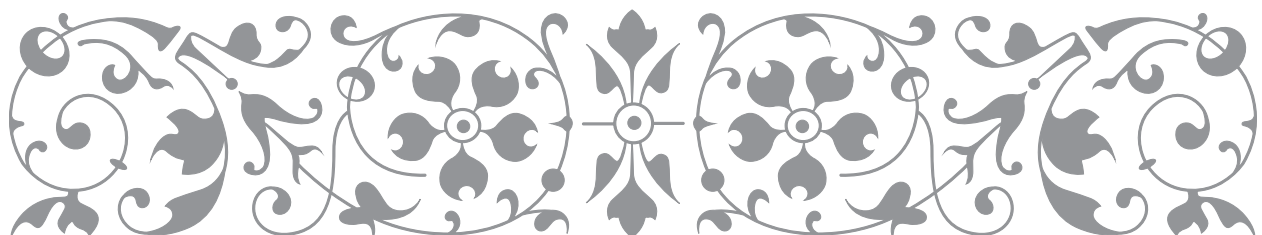
## 9 Reader Contributions



**Figure 8:** Yellowlegs near Wilton Creek bridge. (Gary Hillaby)



**Figure 9:** Golden-winged Warbler, Chaffey's Lock Road, June 1. (John Licharson)



# Kingston Field Naturalists

## Objectives

The Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN) is an active, local club of over 500 members interested in a wide variety of natural history. The objectives of the club are:

- to acquire, record and disseminate knowledge of natural history;
- to stimulate public interest in nature and in the protection and preservation of wildlife and natural habitats; and
- to acquire, receive and hold lands for the purpose of preserving their natural flora and fauna, and to encourage and assist other organizations and individuals to do likewise.

## Nature Reserves

The KFN owns properties that are designated as nature reserves.

*Helen Quilliam Sanctuary at Otter Lake:* A 217 hectare (536 acre) property of mixed forest located in the Canadian Shield in the Township of South Frontenac accessible to members through a trail system..

*Martin Edwards Nature Reserve:* A 100 hectare (247 acre) property of fields and marshland located on the southeast shore of Amherst Island.

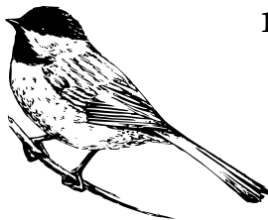
*The Sylvester-Gallagher Nature Reserve:* An 80 acre (32.4 hectare) parcel of forest and grassland, adjacent to the Martin Edward Reserve.

## Conservation and Education

The KFN actively supports conservation efforts. Issues such as park creation, wildlife and habitat protection, and environmental welfare are of on-going concern. The club also makes natural history resources and knowledge available to the community through education programs which include field courses, talks, awards and a loan library.

## Be a Contributor!

This edition of The Blue Bill could have contained your  
article, anecdote, fantastic photo, nature sketch,  
report, puzzle, quiz, conundrum,  
cartoon, or other contribution.



(If it did, many thanks!)

Email The Blue Bill ([editor@thebluebill.ca](mailto:editor@thebluebill.ca)) for more information.



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