



Kingston Field Naturalists

February 2021

KFN

A registered charitable organization and a member of Ontario Nature
Box 831
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 4X6

KFN Website
and links to other sites:
[https://
kingstonfielddnaturalists.org](https://kingstonfielddnaturalists.org)

Blog: [http://
kingstonfielddnaturalists.
blogspot.com](http://kingstonfielddnaturalists.blogspot.com)

Facebook:
[https://www.facebook.com/
Kingstonfielddnaturalists](https://www.facebook.com/Kingstonfielddnaturalists)

Membership Inquiries:
Kathy Webb
kw2 at queensu.ca

Meetings are normally held at 7:30 pm on the third Thursday of each month.
Social starts at 7:00 pm.

Please **see page 4 to learn how you can contribute to the social time picture show.** Telephone users should contact Carolyn Bonta (613-531-4578) for the meeting ID and passcode.

Thursday 21 January 2021 our speaker will be Dr. Anne Gunn, one of Canada's top caribou scientists

Dr. Gunn lived, worked and conducted research on caribou and muskox in the NWT and Nunavut for over 30 years. She is still actively involved in caribou management efforts, working with both government and Indigenous organizations. Her talk will focus on climate and the circumpolar decline in caribou populations.

Thursday 18 February our speaker will be Dr. Elizabeth Gow, University of Guelph and Birds Canada: Assessing the impacts of domestic cats on Canada's wildlife

Domestic cats live in our homes as our pets, but they also hunt wildlife, capturing billions of animals a year worldwide. This presentation will show how Dr. Gow is working with a variety of groups interested in cats to help reduce the impact of cats on wildlife, and better the lives of cats and people. The talk will also show how this research is being designed to capture sneak peeks into the lives of unsupervised domestic cats by using state-of-the-art camera systems and tracking technologies.

Dr. Elizabeth Gow is a behavioural conservation ecologist. She is a past *Liber Ero* postdoctoral fellow (a fellowship program that trains and supports young conservation leaders in Canada). She currently works as a scientist at Birds Canada and runs a research program at the University of Guelph, where she is an Adjunct Professor. Her research focuses on understanding where, when, and how migratory bird populations are declining. She uses innovative tracking devices and technologies to follow birds, and bird predators. One of the current focuses of her research is on understanding the impacts of cats on wildlife in Canada.



This Snowy Owl, named **Simcoe**, was fitted with a small solar-powered GPS recorder/transmitter last February on Amherst Island. She left Amherst Island on 30 March 2020 and returned 22 December 2020. See page 5 and 6 for a map of her travels and more information about Project SNOWstorm.

Photo: R. McCabe/Project SNOWstorm, used with permission.

Rambles, Field Trips, and other outings

All trips will proceed ONLY if COVID restrictions allow.

Please check the KFN website.

RAMBLES are slow walks to notice nature in all its forms.

To join a Ramble you must **register with Anne** (613-389-6742 or [nature.anne at sympatico.ca](mailto:nature.anne@sympatico.ca)) to get details of the meeting location. **Limit 10 participants per leader.** Cancellation, if necessary, will be sent to those who have registered. Ice and or mud possible; grippers and/or hiking poles recommended.

Please do not join us if you have COVID contacts. **Masks will be worn.**

Tuesday 16 February 9:30 to 11:30 am Deer Reserve near Murvale Creek

Tuesday 2 March 9:30 to 11:30 am Trail along branch of Little Cataraqui Creek

FIELD TRIPS

TO BE RESCHEDULED: Car-Birding Portsmouth Harbour to Lemoine Point

Leader: Jenny Newton ([jennyn1434 at gmail.com](mailto:jennyn1434@gmail.com)) The distance may hardly be 12 km, but this stretch of waterfront boasts many excellent vantage points over a diversity of habitats. New to Kingston and new to birding, Jenny shares her favourite local route. Join her on a tour of where to go, where to park, and what to look for throughout the seasons. This month, keep an eye out for resident red-tailed hawks and bald eagles, winter waterfowl such as long-tailed ducks and red-breasted mergansers, and possible passerines such as snow buntings and northern shrikes. The emphasis of this trip will be on birding locations – an ideal orientation for new or out-of-town KFN members. Members with mobility issues are especially encouraged to participate on this outing, as our tour and birding will take place entirely from our vehicles. Walkie-talkies will be provided to allow communication between participants. Please email the trip leader to register; those without email can call the KFN Field Trips Coordinator at 613-531-4578. The number of vehicles will be limited for safety, so register early! Meeting location will be disclosed upon trip registration. It is anticipated this trip will take approximately 1.5-2 hours.

Monday 15 February (Family Day Event) 10am to 12noon Prowl for Owls at Lemoine Point

Leader: Erwin Batalla ([simbat at bell.net](mailto:simbat@bell.net)) Amherst Island and Wolfe Island may be well-known for owls, but you don't have to leave the mainland to see these majestic birds. This walk is open to the public and especially welcomes families. As with any natural wildlife-viewing, owl sightings are not guaranteed. However, volunteers are busy scouting the area and hopefully the owls they have located will make an appearance for our group. Please email the trip leader to register; those without email can phone the KFN Field Trips Coordinator at 613-531-4578. Meeting location will be disclosed upon trip registration and the number of participants will be limited as per current COVID restrictions.

Saturday to Sunday 27 to 28 February Field Trip to Algonquin Park

Leader: Anthony Kaduck ([kaduckintransit at gmail.com](mailto:kaduckintransit@gmail.com)) Maximum number of participants: 11 plus leader.

An overnight trip to Algonquin Provincial Park to look for winter specialties. This is mainly a birding and bird photography trip but if we are lucky, we might catch up with American Marten or even a moose. Target birds are Evening Grosbeak, Canada Jay, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill and White-winged Crossbill. Spruce Grouse should start becoming more active at this time of year. The elusive Black-backed Woodpecker is always possible.

This trip is contingent on two factors – whether the COVID situation is sufficiently under control to make an overnight trip feasible, and whether the birds have returned to the Park in sufficient numbers to make it worthwhile. (This has been an irruption year and at the moment most of the target birds are present in very small numbers.)

A decision will be taken in the first week of February. Watch the website and the next newsletter for further information.

JUNIORS

MEETINGS

Unfortunately, we are still unable to plan indoor meetings.



Family Field Trips

**Saturday 23 January 2021 Nature in Winter
CANCELLED**

**Saturday 27 February 9:00am to 1:30 pm
Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area**

Cancellation, if necessary, will be emailed a week ahead. Please register to receive details and exact meeting place by Thursday 25 February (613-389-6742 or n8ture.anne at sympatico.ca).

TEENS



**Saturday 16 January 2021 Animal Tracking
CANCELLED**

Saturday 13 February 9:00am to 1:30 pm

Wood Duck nest box cleanout at **Helen Quilliam Sanctuary** with Gaye Beckwith. Details a week ahead. Register by Thursday February 11 please (613-389-6742 or n8ture.anne at sympatico.ca). Cancellation, if necessary, will be emailed a week ahead.

Club News and Updates

Welcome to new members: Michael Arthurs, Lorin Russell, Anna Karen Galati, Shawna Rousseau, Sharon Charbonneau, Christina Odho & family, Richard Lott, Maureen Buchanan, Amy Kay & family, Patrick Luk, Annette Buchkowski, Aaron Zimmerman & family, Karen Alexander, and Les Jones.

Zoom meetings Update

The Zoom link for the 21 January general meeting will open at 7 pm. From 7 to 7:30 we will be showing photographs submitted by members, short presentations and a list of up-coming and/or delayed events. The meeting, featuring our guest speaker, will commence at 7:30pm. Members are encouraged to post recent interesting observations in the Zoom chat box at any time during the meeting.

If you have any observation pictures that you would like to show, please send them to Ken (rkfe at queensu.ca) by Wednesday 20 January.

No computer? Don't miss the meeting: Join our monthly meetings by telephone! Contact Carolyn Bonta (613-531-4578) 1-2 days in advance of a meeting to obtain the Meeting ID and Passcode. Then dial 1-647-374-4685 and follow the Zoom instructions. Press *6 to mute/unmute and *9 to raise your hand. Note: Long distance charges may apply.

KFN Executive Nominations 2021-2022

At our Annual General Meeting in April members will have the opportunity to elect or re-elect members to the Executive. As our constitution requires, a Nominating Committee has been chosen by the Executive. Alexandra Simmons, Paul Mackenzie and Anthony Kaduck are tasked with preparing a list of nominees for the AGM, which will take place on 15 April.

So far at least one position will be open. If you would like to volunteer to serve on the Executive, or would like to recommend another member, please contact one of the committee members:

Anthony Kaduck – kaduckintransit at gmail.com

Alexandra Simmons – simbat at bell.net

Paul Mackenzie – mackenzp at queensu.ca

Other meetings only a Zoom away

Winter Speaker Series via zoom

Friends of the Salmon River and Friends of the Napanee River, with support from Hastings Stewardship Council, are presenting a winter speaker series. All events are free and will be recorded and made available on a YouTube link following the event.

On Tuesday 26 January the speaker will be Mark Boone, Senior Hydrogeologist for Quinte Conservation, talking about the growing trend of droughts in the Napanee region. For more information on this and other speakers, and to register, go to <http://friendsnapaneeriver.ca/>

The South Shore Joint Initiative (in Prince Edward County) has announced that the Ontario Government has begun the process to designate the Point Petre Provincial Wildlife Area and the Ostrander Point Crown Land Block as a new conservation reserve! In November SSJI held a zoom meeting "What is a Conservation Reserve?" The meeting can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNJUrYZbscw>.

"Terry Sprague in conversation with Pamela Stagg" will be presented on 18 January; more information on this and other talks, and registration here: https://www.ssji.ca/south_shore_events

Kingston Christmas Bird Count

The 73rd Kingston CBC was held on Sunday 20 December 2020. The Christmas circle is centred on the tip of Garden Island and covers the entire west end of Wolfe Island and all of Kingston from Collins Bay in the west to the tip of Howe Island in the east; it extends north of Hwy 401 to include the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and Kingston Mills. The weather on count day was miserable with temperatures near zero, strong winds and a mix of rain and snow all day. There was very little snow cover, the small inland bodies of water were mostly frozen and the main lake was open and rough. There were 52 participants in the field and a record number of 136 feeder watchers! The participants in the field spent their day covering 860 km of territory on foot or by car, while the feeder watchers spent a total of 275 hours observing their yards.

A near record low of 79 species was tallied, with 4 more species added during "count week." This was the second worst result in over 30 years, second only to last year's record low of 69, and was significantly below the 20 year average of 99 species. There were only 24,211 individual birds tallied, approximately half of the 20 year average of 49,119. The feeder watchers contributed 5 species that weren't seen in the field: Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Carolina Wren and Common Grackle. The large number of feeder watchers likely resulted in the maintenance of good numbers of some of the feeder birds. There were no new species recorded this year so the cumulative total number of species seen in the Kingston CBC since 1988 remains at 181. Notable sightings on count day included: Killdeer (2nd report in 20 yrs), Wilson's Snipe (3rd report in 20 yrs), Hoary Redpoll (2nd report in 20 yrs), White-winged Crossbill (5th report in 20 yrs), Tufted Titmouse (6th report in 20 yrs). There were several continuing highs (Mute Swan, American Crow, Common Raven) and many notable lows and misses. A full checklist of historical and current results is available on the Audubon CBC website (count code ONKG): <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/CurrentYear/ResultsByCount.aspx>.

Tyler Hoar's "Winter Finch Forecast" (<https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2020>) indicated that this looked to be a flight (irruption) year for several winter finches in the East. Accordingly, we saw the following birds in our area this year: Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll and a White-winged Crossbill. The Red-breasted Nuthatch, another irruptive species, was also seen in high numbers this year.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE PARTICIPANTS WHO MADE THE COUNT A SUCCESS!

Kathy Webb, Kingston CBC Compiler

Project SNOWStorm

Project SNOWStorm is one of the world's largest collaborative research projects focusing on Snowy Owls. It is staffed by a largely volunteer team of scientists, banders and wildlife veterinarians. It is funded entirely by tax-deductible donations from the public.

One of the important aspects of Project SNOWStorm's research is to understand the winter ecology of Snowy Owls. In the past seven years they have tracked more than 90 Snowy Owls. They are also investigating Snowies at airports and the health and environmental risks to Snowies.

Stella is a young Snowy Owl that was tagged on Amherst Island in January of 2018. She has not returned to Amherst Island, but instead has wintered in the area of southern Manitoba/Saskatchewan.

Simcoe, an adult female Snowy Owl, was tagged last February on Amherst Island. She left Amherst Island at midnight on 30 March 2020 and arrived at the southern shore of James Bay by 6 AM on 4 April. Not bad for a journey of about 1000 km! The concentration of GPS points

that she recorded in June and July shows that she nested east of Hudson Bay along the Kovik River. During that period, she rarely strayed more than a few hundred meters from her nest site. From August to November she wandered around the eastern shore of Hudson and James Bay, before heading south again on 13 December and arriving on Amherst Island on 22 December.



Used with permission from Project SNOWStorm

Simcoe and Stella were tagged since the wind farm began operating on Amherst Island. Project SNOWStorm wants to compare their movement data to those from a number of Snowy Owls tracked on the island prior to the turbines' construction. This information should help to understand to what degree, if any, industrial turbines alter the behavior of this species, which prefers landscapes with wide, unbroken horizons.

Check out more fascinating information on **Project SNOWStorm** and Snowy Owls at projectsnowstorm.org

(AND, if you are missing an international travel fix, check out **Movebank**, a free, online database of animal tracking data hosted by the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior.)