



The Blue Bill

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

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President's Page

Erwin Batalla, Past President

The last of the May bird walks, the Spring Round-up, the preparation for the BioBlitz: these are all signs that spring is almost over. The leaves came out early this year and locating the warblers was a little difficult, but we did get to enjoy beautiful flower displays on the Little Cataraqui trail. Chokecherries, apples and hawthorns were competing to have the largest number of white flowers.

Spring also brings renewal to the executive. My two years' term is over and Hugh Evans is stepping in as our new president. It has been a pleasure to serve with the current executive. They are a great group of dedicated naturalists who are always willing to help with our projects. I thank them for their support.

Two new members are joining the executive this year: Gaye Beckwith and Howard Bridger, both as members-at-large. We congratulate them for making this commitment and hope that they will eventually consider chairing some of the committees.

Chris Grooms, who was a member-at-large for a few years, has agreed to take on the position of vice-president on a try-out basis. Chris continues to be the driving force behind the implementation of the management plan at Amherst Island. Our property is once again hosting good numbers of Wilson's Phalarope, and the Purple Martins have just returned to occupy the old and new nesting boxes.

Two members have left the executive this year.

Bob Sachs was in charge of the phone line that supplied information about rare birds and about Club events. When the Club decided to have an information phone line in 1997, Bob was the obvious

choice. Over the years, he recorded hundreds of messages about such memorable birds as the Rufous Hummingbird in Kingston East and the Tricolored Herons on Amherst Island. We always looked forward eagerly to the weekly change in the message that would signal the arrival of a new and exciting bird. After a while, Bob also began to transcribe the information for the Internet and the weekly sightings appeared on Ontbirds or were e-mailed directly to a list of members. This fall, we decided to separate the two functions of the Information Line. The bird sightings are being recorded and disseminated electronically by Peter Good. The information about upcoming events and about points of contact in the executive is on the telephone line managed by John Critchley. This year, Bob steps down as the only voice of the Rare Birds Alert for the Kingston region. We thank him for the nine years of service on the executive.

Fiona Poland is stepping down as chair of the education committee. She had kindly agreed to hold that position for Shirley French who was out of the country this past year. Fiona has been volunteering for the KFN for many years. Over the past year, she organized the Science Fair judging and worked with Chris Grooms on the scholarship fund. She also undertook to compile an index of *The Blue Bill*. We have not indexed our quarterly publication for several years and this excellent document (which is now available on our website) should be a great help to locate that special article about plants for hummingbirds or the list of flowering dates of shrubs. John, Fiona's husband, helped with this project (as well as bailing us out with an impromptu lecture in September!). We wish all the best to both of them.

These two members are characteristic of the executive as a whole. They take on new projects, come up with new ideas, stay enthusiastic about our continuing work and get the support of their family. Spouses are either soon enrolled directly on the executive or given tasks at the meetings. My case is no exception. Alexandra has been an executive member before and she continues to help the Club, whether as organizer of the May dinner or auditor of the

financial statements with Larry McCurdy. I thank her for all her help over the past two years and thank the executive and members who have made this period very enjoyable.

I hope that you have a wonderful summer and hope to see you at some of the new summer field trips (looking for dragonflies and butterflies) organized by Kurt Hennige this year.

Erwin Batalla

The Annual Search for a Pond

Hugh Evans, President

Finding a home is a vital activity when it comes time to nest. I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when a pair of mallards showed up in my Collingwood Street back yard, looking for a suitable pond. They decided to try out my birdbath, which, as you can see, was a bit small for their needs.

After about 15 minutes, they flew off, presumably looking for more open spaces. The quality of the photograph suffers from the need to take it through my back window as I did not want to scare the ducks off.



Kingston Field Naturalists 2005–2006 Annual Report

Conservation Committee

Elaine Farragher

Committee members this year included Elaine Farragher (Chair) and Sharon Critchley, who was of great assistance, advising on planning issues and alerting the Chair to impending events. The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Central Cataraqui Region Natural Heritage Study was represented by Carolyn Bonta with Sharon Critchley as alternate. Carolyn Bonta was also the KFN's representative to the Kingston Wetlands Working Group. Erwin Batalla, President, reviewed all letters sent on behalf of Kingston Field Naturalists and covered the development of wind turbines in the area. Members assisted by writing letters in response to Action Alert requests. Only issues on which action was taken during 2005-2006 are reported here.

Local Planning Issues

Draft Official Plan Amendments:

A letter was sent and a statement was presented at a Planning Committee meeting in July 2005, requesting that natural heritage features be added to the requirements necessary before development can proceed.

Cataraqui West:

A new Cataraqui West Secondary Plan, now in its concept plan stages, was commented on in a letter to the senior planner. A Planning Committee meeting was attended and a statement read urging the city to acquire as public open space the woods at the western end of the property, east of the Collins Creek wetland.

Butternut Creek:

A letter was sent to Wendy Tse, Senior Planner, requesting that more care be taken to protect the floodplain of the creek during construction of the new Greenwood Development and supporting the preservation of the woods at the south end of the development.

Princess Street/Gardiners Road development:

Information was gathered by Sharon Critchley on the proposed development of highrises and a retirement dwelling at the southeast corner of Princess Street and Gardiners Road, and a letter was sent commenting on its potential impacts on the western branch of Little Cataraqui Creek and protesting the lack of proper signage.

Site Alteration Bylaw:

A letter was sent to Summer Valentine, city planner, supporting the proposed Site Alteration Bylaw, but pointing out that the bylaw will not apply to lands under CRCA jurisdiction. A letter was also sent to Stephen Knechtel of CRCA requesting that the upcoming review of regulations in May 2006 close this gap in wetland protection.

Tree Bylaw:

A statement was presented at the November 24, 2005 meeting supporting the development of the bylaw but requesting some changes to make it more effective.

Bridge/Road Issues

Mitchell Creek:

A letter was sent (then later withdrawn) over Erwin Batalla's signature requesting that an Individual Environmental Assessment be undertaken and expressing support of South Frontenac Township's preferred option for replacement of the bridge (keeping the height low). Plans are proceeding to rebuild the bridge at the greater height, although South Frontenac Council has contracted to produce an additional environmental assessment.

Taylor Kidd Boulevard Extension:

An open house on the westerly extension of Taylor Kidd Boulevard was attended and a comment letter was sent.

Provincial Issues

A letter was sent in March 2006 by Erwin Batalla urging the Provincial Government to update the Endangered Species Act. An Action Alert was sent to members in response to Bill 11 which would allow the use of motorized vehicles in Ontario's wilderness parks.

Pesticide Reduction

In response to indications that Council may again be prepared to allocate the necessary funds, an Action Alert was sent to members to urge Kingston City Council to reactivate the Ad Hoc Committee on Pesticide Reduction. Unfortunately, the Budget Committee did not address the issue, no funds were allocated, and the issue has not appeared on Council's agenda.

Wind Turbines

Two wind farm projects held open houses this year. The small project on Carruthers Point at the mouth of the Little Cataraqui was presented to the public on June 22. John and Sharon Critchley attended and wrote to the consultants expressing the need for a monitoring of bird and bat mortality and for a protocol for shutting down a turbine with excessive mortality. The wind farm project on Wolfe Island has gone from 13 turbines to 86 turbines. It has received the go-ahead from the province. Two open houses were held with the change in consultant for this project. We have written to the new consultants to remind them of our concerns about impact on the wetlands during the construction phase and impact on birds and bats during operation of the turbines. We are also suggesting that a shut-down protocol be included in the Environmental Screening Report.

Kingston Wetlands Working Group

KWWG held one meeting in the spring of 2006. This is the final season of the Urban Streams Buffer Project, funded by EcoAction, which has the goal of establishing vegetated buffers along

urban streams in Kingston, Gananoque and Brockville. The KWWG is now in the early planning stages of organizing a Wetlands Open House for October 2006. This event, consisting of workshops, activities and seminars, will be open to the public and will highlight the importance of wetlands in the Kingston area.

Cataraqui Region Natural Heritage Study Advisory Committee

The committee met in winter 2006 to review the draft Natural Heritage Study (NHS) document. This document will be revised and presented again to the Advisory Committee, as well as to the public, in May 2006. Following a final review, the NHS will be presented to City Council.

Field Trip Committee *Kurt Hennige*

During 2005-2006, a total of 15 field trips were held. Places visited included Bell's Swamp, Prince Edward Point, Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, Mill of Kintail, Lost Bay Nature Reserve, Amherst Island, Sandbanks Provincial Park, Thousand Islands and Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Trip leaders were Jackie Bartnik, Erwin Batalla, Peter Good, Chris Hefferman, Kurt Hennige, Paul Mackenzie, Bruce Ripley, Bud Rowe, Alex Scott, Don Shanahan and Terry Sprague.

May Bird Walks

Eight walks were conducted by KFN birding experts along the Little Cataraqui Valley Lands Trail at 6:30 AM and 6:30 PM on each Wednesday in May. These walks were open to the public. Leaders included Erwin Batalla, Mike Evans, Ken Edwards, Kenneth Edwards, Chris Grooms, Kurt Hennige, Gerald Paul, Shirley Paul, Bud Rowe and Paul Mackenzie.

Spring Round-up—May 21-22, 2005

The annual 24-hour spring birding competition, in which teams compete to find as many species of birds as possible, was coordinated by Ron Weir. Scores were tallied at the potluck supper at the residence of Marian and Joel Ellis.

Fall Round-up—November 5-6, 2005

The annual fall ritual brought together teams in a race to find as many species of birds as possible in 24 hours. Again, lists were compared and winners declared at the potluck dinner hosted by Marian and Joel Ellis.

Christmas Bird Count Dates

Saturday, 17 December: Prince Edward Point, Joel Ellis

Sunday, 18 December: Kingston, Ron Weir

Monday, 26 December: Thousand Islands, Ken Robinson

Wednesday, 28 December: Rideau Ferry/Smith Falls, Jean Griffin

Thursday, 29 December: Napanee, Ann Brown and Joe Percy

Friday, 30 December: Amherst Island, Janet Scott

Nature Reserves *Mike Evans**Helen Quilliam Sanctuary*

The ongoing dispute with our neighbour is finally resolved. South Frontenac Township Council wrote to the KFN requesting that we remove the structures built on our property as they are not permitted under local zoning by-laws. The KFN informed the owner of the neighbouring property of the Township's request by a letter written by our lawyer. We were later given to understand by our lawyer that the structures would finally be dismantled. At the Sanctuary clean-up, it was confirmed that the structures had been removed. We are grateful to the Township for pursuing this matter. These structures on our property were built without building permits and contravened zoning regulations. If the KFN had removed the structures as instructed by the Township, we would likely have been sued by the neighbour claiming squatter's rights.

The sign at the south end of the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary was removed by vandals early last summer. Fortunately, it was found by a member on the

roadside south of the sanctuary. It had suffered considerable damage but this has been repaired and the sign has been re-erected.

Amherst Island property

Providing water for the cattle grazing on the KFN's Amherst Island property was fraught with difficulties last summer. Thanks to the efforts of a number of KFN members, Chris Grooms and George Vance in particular, the system was kept running despite several setbacks, including a damaged wind generator as a result of a wind storm.

The system is being readied for this summer's grazing season. Two improvements are being considered. One is to replace the six plastic troughs with a large concrete trough. The second project will be to add a higher wattage solar generator and to install an alarm system using a microprocessor which will alert the KFN to system malfunctions by means of a cell phone.

There is to be a clean-up of the property on Saturday, 22 April, involving the Juniors, and several Purple Martin houses will be erected on the following day. The houses were purchased thanks to funding obtained from the TD-Canada Trust Friends of the Environment and Community Fund of Greater Kingston. The KFN is indebted to Chris Grooms for spearheading the application for these funds on the Club's behalf.

Stewardship

The KFN has signed a 25-year agreement with the Ontario Heritage Foundation to manage and monitor the new 100-acre John Edward Greenwood Sanctuary. The property lies west of the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary and is accessed by the so-called Greenwood Trail which runs westwards from County Road 19 through our property and that of our neighbours. A management plan will be written for the new property and annual reports will be submitted to the Foundation.

Of the other properties monitored by the KFN, a visit was made to Roziland Island on Eagle Lake in August and a report submitted to The Nature Conservancy. The Lost Bay property was the site of last summer's BioBlitz, which resulted in a comprehensive survey of the flora and fauna of the area. The Club is indebted once again to Anne Robertson for organizing this event.

Volunteers will be needed to help in monitoring activities this summer. Please contact the President or the Nature Reserves chair if you are interested in helping.

Publicity & Newsletter *John Diemer*

Members received a monthly newsletter that informed them of Club activities and interests, including monthly meetings, field trips, special activities, and conservation matters.

To inform the public about the Club and its activities, the monthly meetings are advertised in the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and in *Kingston This Week*. The only special activities advertised as open to the public were the special bird walks held on Wednesdays throughout the month of May.

Our ad was placed in the *Kingston Whig-Standard's* Spring and Fall Activity Guides and in the City of Kingston's Spring and Fall Leisure magazines, and we also had a booth at the City's Spring Leisure Showcase to publicize our Club and activities.

Membership *John Critchley*

KFN's current adult membership includes 18 Life members and approximately 312 adult memberships, half of which are individual memberships and half of which are family memberships. There are also 52 junior and 8 teen memberships. Members will notice that their mailing label indicates the type of membership and the expiry date.

The system of sending out personalized renewal notices is working very well. The majority of members are renewing their membership before the end of the fiscal/membership year and receive their Membership Cards with the May Newsletter. For those who do not renew in time, a second renewal reminder (yellow) is included in the May Newsletter. These renewal notices form part of the hard copy audit trail necessary for tracking payment of membership fees so it is important to return them.

John Critchley also prepares all mailing labels and thanks the volunteers Audrey Brown and June Fitchett who fold and mail the newsletter, as well as Norma Graham who mails *The Blue Bill* and on occasion does double duty for the combined mailing of *The Blue Bill* and the newsletter.

Junior Naturalists *Anne Robertson*

This year, fewer members registered in the Junior program for a variety of reasons. Fifty-one registrants enjoyed a mixed program of meetings and field trips, and the numbers did not drop off as much as usual after Christmas. More advertising has taken place this year and we expect the number of registrants to rebound in the fall to a maximum of 80 members. We had a total of 15 indoor meetings and, due to very poor weather conditions, only four field trips instead of the planned six.

Topics this year included Loons, Spiders, Grass, Preparing for Winter, Eyes, Squirrels and their Friends, Astronomy, Seeds Above the Snow, Ducks, Snakes, and Ecological Footprints, as well as the usual May Bird Walk and our Wild Food Picnic—the 22nd! The annual Orientation and the Seasonal Craft meetings rounded out the 15 indoor meetings.

Discussion near the beginning of each meeting encompasses a challenge, a nature note, the mystery guess and trivia on the subject of the meeting. We

then separate into smaller groups for more hands-on activities, crafts and games on the topic of the day.

Our four field trip destinations were Murphy's Point Provincial Park in the fall, Amherst Island for owls, Presqu'ile Provincial Park for ducks, and Amherst Island again for the spring clean-up. This year, the clean-up was held for the first time on the KFN property on Amherst Island, whereas traditionally we have cleaned up the roadside at the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary.

Due to smaller numbers, we only had three subgroups this year, and due to pressure of other activities, we assigned to each group three or more leaders who rotated the leadership roles. We thank the following eleven leaders for their interest and patience: Krista Gordon, Madelyn Iler, Coral Mason, Amanda Mathys, Rebecca Mezciems, Rebecca Spaulding, Adrienne Powell and, nearer Christmas, Rowena Day, Alex Gerber, Alexander Makin and Patti Phillips. As for the past 25 years, Diane Lawrence has been a wonderful source of inspiration and backup in my absence. Thank you all!

Two prizes were presented this year: the Nan Yeomans prize for a nature journal and the Roland Beschel prize for a summer project on a natural history topic with an emphasis on observation. The Stirrett Scholarship for participation in a nature camp was not taken up this year. The Nan Yeomans prizes were awarded to Jeremy Arnold, Mackenzie Arnold and Kara Gooding. The Roland Beschel prize was awarded to Peter Griggs and Chrissy Schreiner with Heather Evans.

Our Christmas collection this year went to support the boreal forest initiative of the World Wildlife Fund Canada with an understanding that this would help Woodland Caribou, wolves and bears and as well as their habitats. A total of \$50.00 was collected.

A letter signed by most Juniors was sent to Minister of Natural Resources, The Honorable David Ramsey, in January, asking for the expansion of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park to protect important Woodland Caribou habitat.

We all continue to learn a lot and enjoy sharing our interests in various topics of natural history in various ways at various levels.

Teen Naturalists Anne Robertson

This small group of eight members this year (plus three more after Christmas) had a trip each month to enjoy various aspects of nature. Assistance from members of the adult club as guides and role models is always appreciated.

In September, two Teens helped clean up Meyer Woods, a property of the Land Conservancy for Kingston Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, followed by a picnic lunch and a walk with Conservancy members looking especially at the various tree species denoting different forest types. This helped in developing a baseline inventory of the property.

In October, seven Teens went owl banding at the Prince Edward Point Observatory. We listed plant and animal species identified before dark, and were involved in the banding of 38 owls before midnight. It was a memorable trip.

In November, four Teens visited Presqu'ile, ably led by Ian Shanahan who taught us about the Presqu'ile land forms and found many bird species for us. We practiced sketching gulls in various positions and estimating their numbers at the beach, and learned the abbreviations for the bird species we saw. We were especially pleased when Ian found a late Northern Parula (NOPA) for us.

For the December meeting, we met indoors to learn some bird identification using bird skins.

Our next trip was in January, when four Teens helped clean out the Wood Duck nest boxes at the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, helped by Mike Evans who took two damaged boxes to mend. Eggs were found in two boxes and these were measured to determine the species—Wood Duck or Hooded Merganser, probably the latter.

The February trip was cancelled due to inclement weather, but in March, four Teens were able to do some birding and learn how to use a scope with Bruce Ripley on Wolfe Island. We were pleased to see some spring arrivals as well as a couple of Snowy Owls for a total of 26 species.

The April night hike was cancelled due to heavy rain.

We are now looking forward to a good turnout for the Baillie Birdathon in May, and this will be followed by the annual canoe trip and possible involvement in the 2006 BioBlitz in June to finish off the year.

Rambles

Anne Robertson

Twenty rambles were held from April 2005 to March 2006, with an average of 14 people attending out of 47 different members who went on at least one ramble. The maximum number of participants was 17 in June, and the minimum three in November, when a planned Amherst Island trip ended up indoors with participants examining a variety of owl specimens. These numbers are very similar to those of last year.

Rambles went as far west as the Menzel Nature Reserve north of and between Napanee and Belleville, as far north as Rock Dunder (now protected by the Rideau Waterway Land Trust), and as far east as Grass Creek Park.

Many thanks are due to the members who led rambles in my absence, including Joan Worsfold and Karen Stinson and Erwin Batalla (three rambles).

The accumulated information of the variety of members participating and the number of new participants is stimulating for us all. Eighteen years of rambles and still going strong!

Guest Speakers

Hugh Evans

The speakers for the Kingston Field Naturalists general meetings for 2005–06 are listed below.

September: John Poland on "A Comparison of the Canadian Arctic and the Antarctic"

October: Mark Badham, Geological Sciences, Queen's University, on "The Fossils of the Kingston Region"

November: Martin Edwards on "Penguins and Albatrosses"

December: Members' Night—Members' slides

January: Raleigh Robertson and biology students Jen Foote, Dominique Potvin, Matt Reudink, Susie Crowe and Emily McKinnon on "The Queen's University Biological Station: Black-capped Chickadees, Redstarts and Golden-winged Warblers"

February: Bud Rowe and Kurt Hennige on "The Birds of Ecuador"

March: Lisa Sealock, Toronto Metro Zoo on "The Adopt-a-Pond Scheme"

April: Matt Ellerbeck on "Save the Snakes 101: A Presentation on Snake Conservation"

May: Ree Brennin on "Belugas: Management of Ancient Whales in a Modern World"

Ontario Nature Representative *Jacqueline Bartnik*

The fall regional meeting was held at Vankleek Hill District Nature Society near Alexandria, Ontario. Among topics discussed were the Alfred Lagoon and Bog, the importance of good commun-

cation is among organizations, and how to create a win-win outcome in order to protect the environment.

Forty packages of Ontario Nature's Christmas cards were ordered this year. All but seven packages were sold, and all previous years' cards have been finally sold.

The spring regional meeting will be held in May in Roblin, Ontario. The KFN will host the meeting, with Kurt Hennige as the guest speaker. (See full report in this volume of *The Blue Bill*.) Thanks to Anne Robertson's work, Ontario Nature has published a manual and guidelines on how to attract and create Youth/Teen Naturalist groups.

The Blue Bill***Susie Rance***

The Blue Bill has seen another year of excellent contributions—reports, articles, observations, musings and highlights—from KFN members of all ages as well as others, covering such ground as reports of Club projects and activities, important data, issues of local concern, accounts of travels near and far, and thoughtful observations of nature. Norma Graham has once again been kind enough to look after the mailing of *The Blue Bill*. The editor encourages all Club members to submit contributions related to nature in the year to come. They are always welcome, and their variety in subject, style, length and scope ensures that there is something in each *Blue Bill* for everyone.

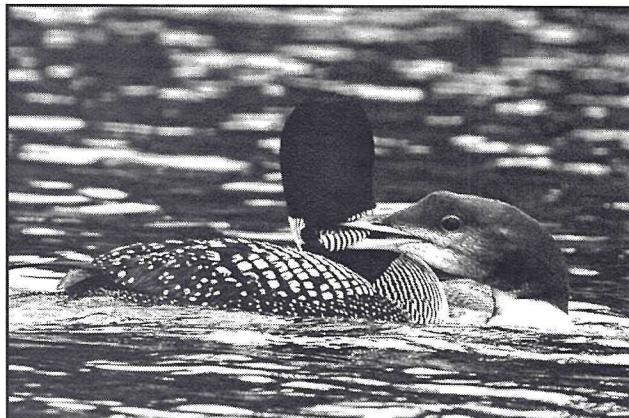
Big Salmon Lake Loon Behaviour

Will Ruddock

The Common Loon is a feature of our northern lakes and a symbol of our natural heritage. Its beautiful summer plumage and its haunting call, which carries so far on the wind, have contributed to its romanticization in the Canadian consciousness. It is easy to be drawn to these birds, yet quite often it is difficult to get to know them. In many areas of the province, the birds are shy and change their behaviour if approached, quickly distancing themselves from people and remaining wary of the fact that they are not alone on the water. Not far from Kingston, however, are tremendous opportunities to observe loon behaviour up close and with less impact on their activity.

Big Salmon Lake, in Frontenac Park, is a short drive from Kingston and is accessible by car. It is a small lake, comfortably navigable from one end to the other by canoe in about two hours. There are few side bays and only a few islands, at the northeast end of the lake. The lake is quite busy with boating activity from the start of May, when the fishing season starts (I have counted up to 15 boats already on the water by 6 AM), and it continues with high levels of recreational camping and paddling.

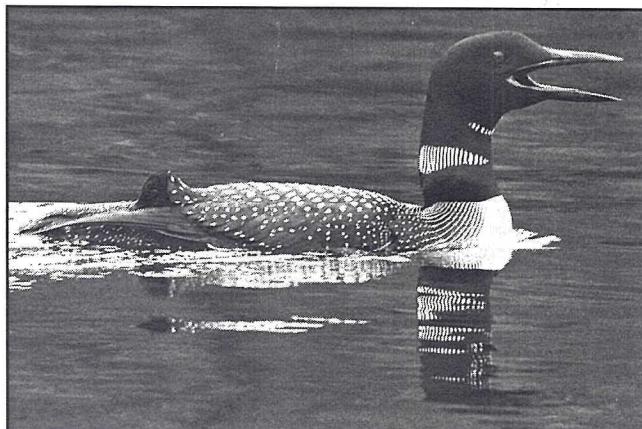




For the past several years, the lake has supported two pairs of nesting loons. These loons, given the level of background human activity, have had to accommodate their level of comfort in order to survive and reproduce. Therein lies the special opportunity to see what one might not otherwise see. In a canoe or kayak, drifting with the waves, it can be thrilling to watch this common but compelling bird's performance of life.

Nesting

It is best not to approach loon nesting sites by water, as this disturbs the birds. There is a trail around Big Salmon Lake, and, if lucky, one can observe a nest from land, an approach that does not seem to be as disruptive. Loons nest on elevated tufts in swampy areas close to shore. The reflected black and white of a quietly nesting loon is a peaceful contrast within otherwise buzzing swamps.



Chicks

After a 26- to 31-day incubation, loon chicks hatch and quickly take to water with the adults. These tiny balls of fluff initially hide near shore but later may be seen riding the back of an adult. With time and some patience, one can observe adults bringing fish to feed the chick. As the juvenile grows and becomes a more independent fisher, it can become somewhat petulant with the adults. By late July, one can spend an afternoon watching the juvenile following an adult around, the young bird mewling and nipping at the chest and neck of the adult, presumably trying to get a work-free meal.



Fishing

Loons frequent a number of shoals in the lake and will spend hours fishing in these small areas. They seem to deflate, lying flush to the surface of the water as they float between dives. On rare occasions, the action rises to the surface and one can see a fish quickly rotated in the beak and dispatched whole.

Sleeping

With a little bit of stealth, one can get close to a pair with their heads tucked in for a nap out on the water.

Courtship

In spring, loon courtship may be observed. I have mistaken this in the past for surface fishing behaviour, because the loons may execute a series of shallow dives. Head-dipping is another component of the courtship: the birds come close together and alternate head movements. This can seem rather endearing if one anthropomorphizes the suggestiveness of the motions they make. It may be followed by a series of splashing dives. From an elevated vantage point, their rapid and nimble underwater movements could be seen as flashes of white in the green water. The loons in the photograph below had just finished such a cycle, and took turns drying their wings.



Fighting

Here ends any further romanticization of the Common Loon. Males can be very territorial and may fight to the death. Years spent listening to loons communicating on quiet summer nights and grouping together at the end of summer create a solemn but peaceful image of loon social structure. This image was recently shattered when my attention was caught by some splashing in the distance. Two loons had locked beaks, and for minutes proceeded to hit each other with their wings. The apparent loser began to swim away on the surface, only to be chased over a distance of at least a kilometer until the pair disappeared behind an island. This behaviour came as quite a surprise to me, but left a broader understanding of this bird of contrasts.

Of course, the loons are not alone on Big Salmon Lake. A day trip can also include a visit to an osprey nest at the top of a pine tree, sightings of beavers trailing ferns to their hut, Pileated Woodpeckers in flight over the lake, Great Blue Herons standing on the shore and Sandhill Cranes riding the drafts overhead. Most captivating, however, are the loons, and our observations allow us a glimpse of deft dives, quavering laughter and the more gritty side life on the water.

Photos by Will Ruddock



14 May 2006 Prince Edward Point Field Trip Report

Ron D. Weir

Twelve members of the KFN set out from Kingston on this Mother's Day and were joined by two other members at Prince Edward Point. A brisk cold northeast wind prevailed with partial cloud and a temperature that rose from 9°C to about 19°C. Migrant birds appeared in small groups among the trees within the National Wildlife Area where birding was very pleasant. The number of birds was such that the new

members of the group had an opportunity to see most of the finds. The list of 109 species is shown below. Seven of these were only seen at the Amherstview Sewage Lagoon by some of the group en route back to Kingston. Omitted from the list is the Peregrine Falcon that was seen by some of those working at the Banding Station at Prince Edward Point.

Common Loon	3	Blue-headed Vireo	1
Double-crested Cormorant	500	Warbling Vireo	4
American Bittern	1	Philadelphia Vireo	1
Great Blue Heron	10	Red-eyed Vireo	2
Green Heron	1	Blue Jay	20
Turkey Vulture	6	American Crow	15
Canada Goose	20	Common Raven	1
Gadwall	8	Horned Lark	2
American Wigeon	4	Purple Martin	3
Mallard	12	Tree Swallow	220
Northern Shoveler	1	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	10
Green-winged Teal	2	Bank Swallow	2
Lesser Scaup	12	Cliff Swallow	30
Surf Scoter	5	Barn Swallow	115
Long-tailed Duck	20	Black-capped Chickadee	10
Osprey	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3
Northern Harrier	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	House Wren	6
American Kestrel	1	Ruby-crested Kinglet	6
Ruffed Grouse	2	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2
Killdeer	9	Veery	1
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Wood Thrush	6
Upland Sandpiper	1	American Robin	50
Wilson's Snipe	1	Gray Catbird	6
Ring-billed Gull	20	Brown Thrasher	6
Herring Gull	8	European Starling	75
Caspian Tern	2	Cedar Waxwing	4
Black Tern	15	Blue-winged Warbler	1
Rock Pigeon	10	Nashville Warbler	6
Mourning Dove	50	Northern Parula	5
Chimney Swift	1	Yellow Warbler	150
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	Chestnut-sided Warbler	15
Belted Kingfisher	2	Magnolia Warbler	10
Downy Woodpecker	2	Cape May Warbler	3
Northern Flicker	5	Black-throated Blue Warbler	4
Least Flycatcher	10	Yellow-rumped Warbler	75
Eastern Phoebe	2	Black-throated Green Warbler	4
Great Crested Flycatcher	2	Blackburnian Warbler	4
Eastern Kingbird	5	Palm Warbler	1

Bay-breasted Warbler	1	Swamp Sparrow	2
Black-and-white Warbler	6	White-throated Sparrow	25
American Redstart	6	White-crested Sparrow	6
Ovenbird	2	Northern Cardinal	2
Northern Waterthrush	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	10
Mourning Warbler	1	Indigo Bunting	1
Common Yellowthroat	6	Bobolink	4
Wilson's Warbler	1	Eastern Meadowlark	12
Canada Warbler	1	Common Grackle	50
Scarlet Tanager	8	Brown-headed Cowbird	15
Eastern Towhee	12	Orchard Oriole	1
Chipping Sparrow	15	Purple Finch	6
Clay-colored Sparrow	4	Pine Siskin	3
Field Sparrow	6	American Goldfinch	20
Savannah Sparrow	4	House Sparrow	10
Song Sparrow	20		

Birdwatching Field Trip and Birding Tips for Teens on Wolfe Island

Kenneth Lockwood

On Saturday, 11 March, 2006, the Teen Naturalists went on a birdwatching trip to Wolfe Island. As well as for the pleasure of the experience, this trip was intended to teach us some tricks to successful bird watching.

On the trip we had four Teens—Amy Hanes, Katie Schriner, and Kenneth and Joshua Lockwood—as well as Anne Robertson and Bruce Ripley, an expert in the field of birdwatching. We took the 9:30 AM ferry to the west side of Wolfe Island. The weather conditions were pleasant: a temperature of 10°C, light winds and clear skies. As we drove along, heading west towards Reeds Bay, we kept a list of all the birds we had seen, and the girls also took a list of all the things we had seen that *looked* like birds, from a plastic Great Horned Owl on a post to a picture of a Great Blue Heron painted on a wall.

The first time we stopped (which is shown in the picture), Bruce showed us how to set up and use scopes. One of the first things we noticed was the large number of Red-winged Blackbirds. They were everywhere! As we went along, we stopped any time we saw any new birds

or good bird habitat. Bruce was incredibly good at this. He pointed out the two Snowy Owls we saw and helped us identify numerous other species we were unsure about. As well as birds, we also saw several White-tailed Deer, which were the only wild mammals we saw on the trip (not including ourselves). By the end of the trip at 1:45 PM, the Teens had seen a total of 19 different species of birds and Bruce had seen 25. Among some of the more notable species we saw were the Red-tailed Hawk, the Rough-legged Hawk, and the Horned Lark. On the behalf of the Teens, I would like to thank Anne Robertson and Bruce Ripley very much for making this trip possible. We all enjoyed it very much.



Amherst Island Nature Reserve Receives Stewardship Funding

Chris Grooms

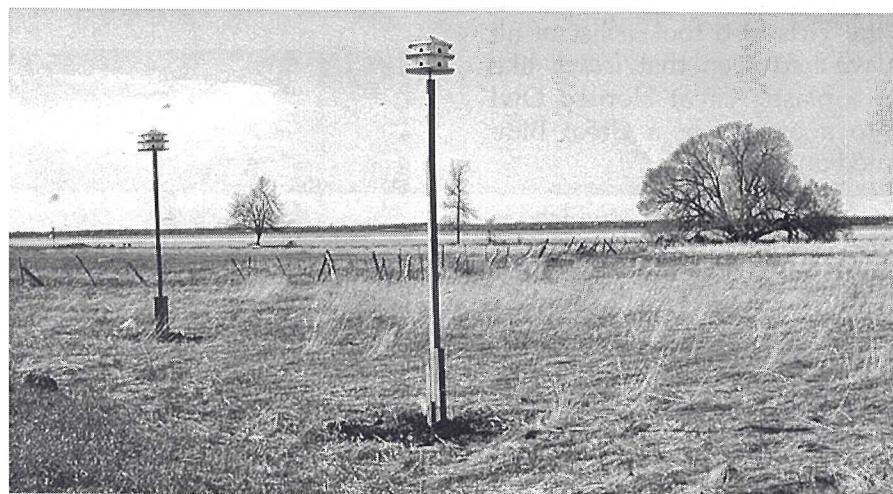
The Kingston Field Naturalists Club continues its efforts to steward its 200-acre nature reserve on Amherst Island in Lake Ontario. Projects completed recently or underway include an expansion of the Purple Martin nesting platforms from two to six, improvements to the solar-powered cattle watering system, and the rebuilding of some boundary fencing.

Purple Martins have nested for nearly 20 years in two wooden boxes at the south end of the reserve. Club members replaced these weather-beaten boxes with new ones in 2005. With the addition of four new aluminum boxes in the middle and north areas of the property, martins will now be able to expand and colonize those parts of the reserve and the habitat found there. On 28 May 2006, use of the boxes by Purple Martins at both at the original site and at the northern site was confirmed, making this project a success.

This nature reserve protects several habitat types, including grassland, wetland with mud flats, isolated gravel bars, rocky shoreline and Great Lakes coastal marsh. Over 200 species of birds are documented for the site, which is part of a globally significant Important Bird Area. The grassland on the reserve is maintained through cattle grazing,

which also provides a rental income to help with nature reserve expenses. Cattle are fenced out of the lake and wetlands, so drinking water is provided to them from a well, pumped by a solar-powered watering system. The system on this remote site needs monitoring and must be made as reliable as possible to ensure that the cattle have a dependable supply of water. Improvements planned for this system will include a concrete water storage trough and an alarm system that will notify the Club by cell phone of system failure.

The Club recently received generous funding and support for these projects and would like to thank the organizations and businesses participating in the improvement efforts. The Kingston Field Naturalists gratefully acknowledges funding received from TD-Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation for the bird boxes, and funding received from the Community Foundation of Greater Kingston for the water system improvements. Further support in terms of materials is anticipated or has been received from Renewable Energy of Plum Hollow, Anchor Concrete and the Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council.



Two of the new Purple Martin boxes erected on the KFN's Amherst Island Nature Reserve in May 2006

Wolfe Island Field Trip Report

Joe Benderavage

On the frosty Sunday morning of 2 April, 2006, I caught the 7:15 ferry to Wolfe Island in time to join a group of about a dozen hikers, led by Paul MacKenzie. Before we had even left the dock, a Double-crested Cormorant and a Common Loon in flight were sighted over Kingston harbour.

During a brief rendezvous after disembarkation at Wolfe Island, a Tree Swallow, House Sparrow, and a Starling were sighted. We departed to traverse the island and from the highway we saw Red-tail Hawks, grackles, and many Red-winged Blackbirds.

We saw a magnificent Snowy Owl atop a telephone pole, and pulled over for a closer look. Farther on, we glimpsed Eastern Meadowlarks, Killdeer, an American Kestrel, and Great Blue Herons. A diminutive Savanna Sparrow was puzzled out from a background of interlacing bare tree branches, but a Horned Lark fearlessly crossed the road in front of us after we had stopped to admire it.

Visual confirmation that a nest seen in distant trees in fact belonged to a Red-tail Hawk was made when the bird was seen in the nest. An American Robin, a Mourning Dove, and more European Starlings were seen, as was another, but more remote, Snowy Owl. Sounds of Snipe winnowing were discerned, but the birds themselves were shy and evasive. A Song Sparrow, a Rusty Blackbird, and Northern Pintail Ducks passed under our cognizance before other Snipes were more fully appreciated binocularly.

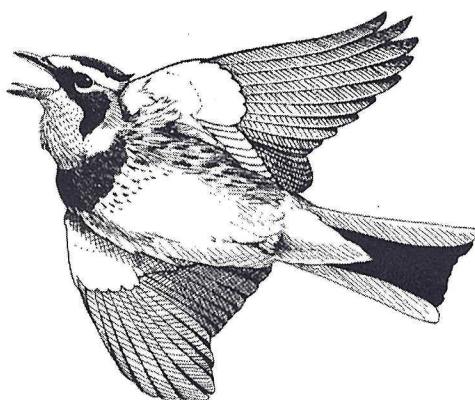
Greater Yellowlegs, with its curious bobbing motion, was watched at length. Large flocks of Canada Geese were seen, both in flight and resting on the ground. A distant coyote shambled along on its morning constitutional.

A Green-winged Teal was reported, as was a group of five Lapland Longspurs in flight. Two of them had landed upon a fence post, but I could discern no more than a dark lump there. A Savannah Sparrow engendered much interest, and so did a White-tailed Deer family of three. We also saw a Brown-headed Cowbird.

When we drew closer to the waters of the lake, we saw Bonaparte's Gulls, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, an Eastern Phoebe, and a Song Sparrow. A Northern Harrier was reported. Later, Red-breasted Mergansers, American Wigeons, Common Goldeneyes and a circling Turkey Vulture were noted. Greater Scaup were reported, as was a Downy Woodpecker.

A flighty Golden-crowned Kinglet stood in contrast to a sociable Black-capped Chickadee. A Swamp Sparrow was heard but never seen. Brown Creepers were both heard and seen.

We crossed the island to a southeastern bay. There, Ring-necked Duck, Redhead Ducks, and American Black Ducks were seen, and a Dark-eyed Junco was heard but not seen.



List of Species Observed

Mammals

White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>

Birds

Cormorants	Phalacrocoracidae	Bunting/Sparrow Family	Emberizidae
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auratus</i>	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Loons	Gaviidae	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
Wading Birds	Ardeidae	Swamp Sparrow	<i>Melospiza Georgiana</i>
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Ducks/Geese/Swans	Anatidae	Blackbird Family	Icteridae
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>
Northern Pintail Duck	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>
Redhead Duck	<i>Aythya americana</i>	Woodpecker Family	Picidae
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Larks	Alaudidae
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Swallows	Hirundinidae
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Chickadees	Paridae
New World Vultures	Cathartidae	Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapilla</i>
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Creeper Family	Certhiidae
Accipiters	Accipitridae	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia Americana</i>
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Thrushes	Turdidae
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
True Falcons	Falconidae	Kinglets	Regulidae
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>
Plovers	Charadriidae	Starlings And Mynas	Sturnidae
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferous</i>	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Scolopacidae	Scolopacidae	Tyrant Flycatcher Family	Tyrannidae
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Old World Sparrows	Passeridae
Gulls	Laridae	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus Philadelphia</i>		
Pigeons and Doves	Columbidae		
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		
Owls	Strigidae		
Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>		

A Visit to the Scuttleholes is an Adventure

Terry Sprague

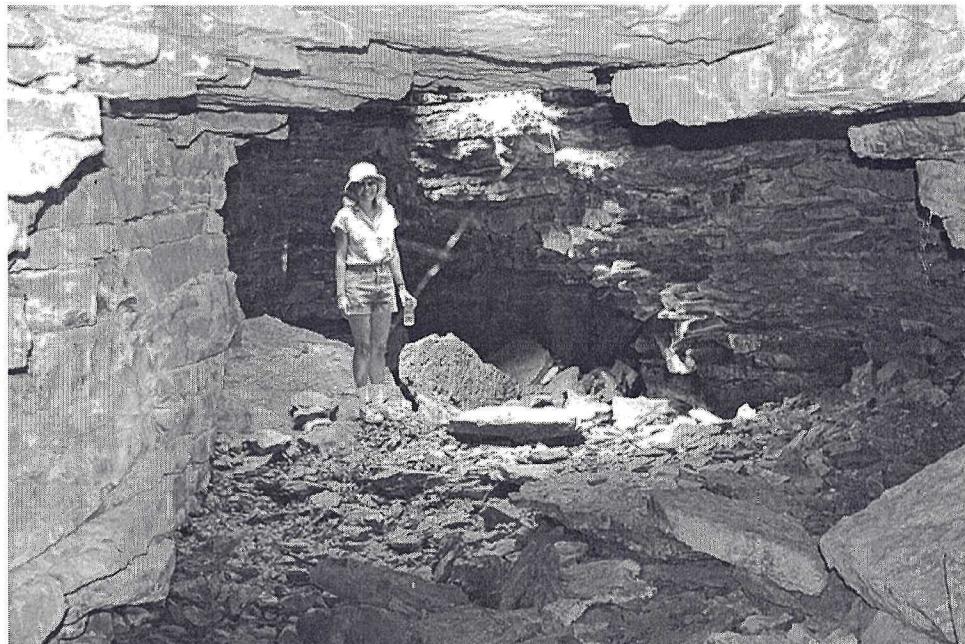
Although the limestone rock of the Quinte area may not be as appealing to some as Canadian Shield country, it has produced at least one interesting geological phenomenon. This column has touched in the past on the interesting plant communities that may be found on alvars in this area.

Lake-on-the-Mountain is another example of a limestone rock formation. While stories abound on how this lake was formed, from volcanoes to meteorites to massive glacial whirlpools, there is a theory now that has been more or less accepted over the years. Lake-on-the-Mountain is actually a collapsed doline, caused from under-ground springs over thousands of years seeping through the crevices of the limestone and gradually dissolving the rock below the surface, eventually causing the upper surface to collapse and creating the lake as we know it today.

There is evidence, too, just north of Belleville of how limestone rock can get eaten away over the centuries. Known locally as the Scuttleholes, these

geological formations are located along the Moira River, at Latta. The topography that has been created by the Moira River is known as a karst, and has resulted from centuries of water flow carving a pattern through the limestone rock. And while a karst is created through extensive chemical weathering of the limestone as water dissolves the carbonate-rich bedrock, a karst can manifest itself in a number of rather odd formations. The karst can take the form of small escarpments, rock pillars, and circular sink holes to limestone pavement that exhibits a peculiar pock-marked surface characterized by numerous cracks and irregular holes.

The karst at Latta has revealed itself as underground drainage, caves and caverns. I had the pleasure of exploring this unique area of the Moira River one day last summer with a hiking group, as we walked, scrambled and clawed our way over rock formations normally awash with torrents of water in the spring. In several spots, the Moira River flows along, randomly splitting and heading into different directions, then



Belleville resident Lynda Williamson in a small cave at the Moira River
Photo by Terry Sprague

suddenly stopping in an enormous accumulation of driftwood, logs, branches and debris. The river during low level percolates through the limestone to emerge elsewhere, where it continues on its way with no further impediments.

In addition to the spectacular geological formations, a number of interesting plant species may be found. Common Hackberry, typically a Carolinian species, grows everywhere. We found three different species of sumac—our familiar Staghorn Sumac, the similar Smooth Sumac, and one right at the parking lot which doesn't even resemble either of the two species, Fragrant Sumac, which can go unnoticed as it creeps along the ground.

The limestone cracks in the spillways, flooded in spring but dry on our visit, contained a number of interesting species including Spreading Dogbane, Flowering Rush, Eastern Cord Grass, Cardinal Flower, Fringed Loosestrife and, yes, lots of Purple Loosestrife struggling for existence in the exposed cracks in the bedrock. Amazing, when you consider the harsh conditions, with some of these wildflowers poking up through the cracks in the rock, fighting for moisture in the same spot where, earlier, enormous quantities of water surged.

There is even an orchid species known as Ladies' Tresses, which is also at home here. But by far the most interesting plant we found was Hairy Wild Rye Grass, not to be confused with the more common Wild Rye. We don't know how this particular species, scientifically known as *Elymus striatus*, found its way here to the Scuttleholes, but it is reputedly the only location in all of Ontario where this species can be found.

We took time to explore one small cave left behind by the surging waters of past centuries. The Scuttleholes are not to be confused with the famous network of underground Moira Caves. They are farther upstream and I have been in them too, with the Toronto Caving Group, but not for very long, as caves and I do not get along very well. But

this single cave, present in the Scuttleholes area, is large enough that one can easily enter it without feeling claustrophobic. Kids play in there all the time. In fact, from above, the cave could easily go unnoticed were it not for a large circular hole in the roof of the cave beside the trail. Certainly not a place you want to go jogging after dark, as that first step is a big one.

The Scuttleholes at Latta are an amazing geological feature of the Moira River. In some places, there are enormous slabs of limestone rock, some weighing several tons, and yet these were shifted into their tedious positions by the force of the spring rush of water. It is difficult to imagine this same area being dry in a few weeks, with plants bravely putting on their best show of colour wherever they can find cracks sufficiently wide enough, and a few kernels of soil for their roots to grasp on to. Yet, as one walks on this dry riverbed of colour, you only have to cast your eyes a little higher to see ropes of dead grass wound tightly around the disfigured bushes to appreciate the depth of water and its force at other times of the year.

Plan to visit the area sometime, and do a little exploring on your own. You should be guided in, though, and while you can't really get lost, the maze of channels and small limestone escarpments and heavily vegetated areas can make the return hike to the parking lot a bit challenging if you should lose your way.

From the 401, take Highway 37 for 12 km and turn right onto Hoskin Road. Take Hoskin Road 1.5 km to a stop sign and turn right onto the bridge over the Moira River. Follow Scuttleholes Road for about 2.4 km to a small unmarked parking lot on the left, just past Civic #464. The site can also be reached by taking the exit off 401 at Shannonville Road and driving north to Scuttleholes Road, and heading west to the parking lot.

Terry Sprague is a naturalist, freelance writer and KFN member who lives in Prince Edward County.

Ostello
Cathy

Ryan

Scuttlehole Rd 563 Wanda

Hoskin

Gad Middlefield
Sprague Lee

Spring Season—1 March to 31 May 2006

Ron D. Weir

Migration was not spectacular, although as usual there are some excellent records. Unusually warm conditions towards the end of March and early April saw the early arrival of several species, two of which were record early. Subsequently, for April and early May, the migrations lagged behind the norms, but picked up during the latter half of May, probably a better scenario for the survival of the birds.

Rarities during the period included Eared Grebe (6th ever in spring), Great Egret, Sandhill Crane, Little Gull, Lesser

Black-backed Gull, Forster's Tern, Great Gray Owl, Varied Thrush, Hooded Warbler, Lazuli Bunting (new for the list).

Record Early Arrivals:

Lesser Yellowlegs – Mar 30 (1) Kaiser Rd, *fide* RTS (7 Apr 91 & 86)

Ruddy Turnstone – Apr 29 (1) Amherst Island, SG, BM (4 May 04)

Record Late Departures:

Eared Grebe – May 20(1) PEPt, KFN (4 May 76)

Species Account:

Eared Grebe – May 20 (1 ad) PEPt, KH party

Red-necked Grebe – Apr 15 (3) PEPt, *fide* RTS; 22 (6) Sydenham Lake, G Beckwith

Great Egret – May 14 (1) Arden, DH; 31 (1) Amherst I., VPM

Cattle Egret – May 5 (1) Amherst I., B Rowe, VPM

Brant – weak flight May 6 to 27 with about 330 birds, Kingston, KFN

Canvasback – Mar 26 (450) Sillsville, JHE, RDW

Surf Scoter – May 9 to 21 (11 in all) PEPt, KFN

Black Scoter – May 17 (1) PEPt, NLB; 20 (1) PEPt, KH *et al.*

Long-tailed Duck – peak Apr 11 (11,000) South Bay, *fide* RTS

Red-breasted Merganser – peaks Mar 13 & Apr 11 (2000) South Bay, KFN

American Coot – May 18-31 (1 pr, appear to be nesting) Amherstview Sewage Lagoon, JHE *et al.*

Sandhill Crane – Apr 6 (1) Elginburg, EB; 14 (2) Amherstview, T Howson; Apr ? (1) Wilton, CG

Bald Eagle – Mar (24 records), Apr (1 record), May (1 im) Kingston area, KFN

Red-shouldered Hawk – Apr 21 (21) & Apr 30 (17) Kingston, JHE, RDW. Two of the survey routes.

Peregrine Falcon – migrant May 2, 21 & 23 (singles) PEPt, *fide* RTS; 21 (1) north of Kingston, KH *et al.*

Chukar – May 7(2) Wilson Rd., H Evans, probable escapes

Black-bellied Plover – May 15 to 31 (30 in all) Kingston area, KFN

Semipalmated Plover – May 8 (1) Amherst I., BRp to Jun 1 (28) Amherst I., KFN

Lesser Yellowlegs – Mar 30 (1) Kaiser Rd., Prince Edward, *fide* RTS; peak Apr 27 (12) Odessa, KH

Whimbrel – May 27 (1) Amherst I., BRp *et al.*

Ruddy Turnstone – Apr 29 (1) Amherst I., SG, BM to Jun 1 (30) Amherst I., PJG, JHE, KH

Red Knot – Jun 1 (35) Amherst I., PJG, JHE, KH

Semipalmated Sandpiper – May 31 (60) Amherst I., VPM

Short-billed Dowitcher – May 27 (2) Amherst I., BRp *et al.*

White-rumped Sandpiper – May 21 (1), 27 (1) Amherst I., KFN

Pectoral Sandpiper – from Mar 30 (1) Kaiser Rd., *fide* RTS, earlier than usual

Dunlin – Apr 14 (6) Amherst I., RKE, earlier than usual

American Woodcock – Apr 30 (ad with young) Chaffeys Lock, BMD

Little Gull – Apr 13 (3), 16 (3), May 3 (2) PEPt, *fide* RTS; May 20 (1) Amherst I., KFN

Bonaparte's Gull – peaks Apr 11 (3000), 12 (1000) PEPt, KFN; 26 (2500) PEPt, *fide* RTS; 27 (2000) Amherst I., PJG

Iceland Gull – Apr 13 (1) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Lesser Black-backed Gull – May 20 (1 in 2nd yr) PEPt, KH *et al.*; 21 (1 in 3rd yr) Amherst I., JHE *et al.*

Forster's Tern – early arrival Apr 14 (1) Amherst I., RKE

Black-billed Cuckoo – from May 17 (1) Camden East, PJG

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – from May 12 (1) Gananoque, KH

Snowy Owl – peak Mar 11 (10) Amherst I., M Bowman; peak Apr 2 (3) Wolfe I., KFN, one remaining May 30, EB

Great Gray Owl – May 7 to 9 (1) Bellrock, Mr. Spear

Long-eared Owl – Apr 29 to May 20 (nest, ad on eggs) Kingston, VPM *et al.*

Short-eared Owl – Mar 4 to Apr 29 (18 sightings) KFN, peak Mar 5 (8) Amherst I., *fide* BRp

Red-headed Woodpecker – May 4 (1) PEPt, B Rowe, VPM, only one

Northern Flicker – peak Apr 12 (95) PEPt, KFN

Least Flycatcher – peak May 24 (60) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Loggerhead Shrike – Mar 3 (2) onwards, Newburgh, KH

Northern Shrike – Mar 27 (1) Hay Bay, BRp, last one

Common Raven – Mar 16 (ad on nest) Gould Lake, KFN & Quilliam Sanctuary, KFN

Brown Creeper – peak Apr 12 (75) PEPt, KFN

Gray-cheeked Thrush – peaks May 26 (2), 31 (50) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Swainson's Thrush – peaks May 25 (50), 26 (45), 27 to 31 (20 daily) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Varied Thrush – Mar 2 (1) Verona, J Griffin, RVFN

Northern Mockingbird – Apr 5 (1) Amherstview, BRp to May 27 (6 in all)

American Pipit – Apr 4 (1) Amherst I., BRp to May 17 (15) Camden East, PJG

Bohemian Waxwing – Mar 2 (6) Camden East, PJG, 7 (25) Sydenham, KFN, Apr 12 (25) Clinton, BRp

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D. Hunter
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KFN (3+)

Blue-winged Warbler – May 4 onwards (9 in all), PEPt, KFN

Orange-crowned Warbler – May 1 to 24 (5 in all) PEPt, KFN

Magnolia Warbler – peak May 24 (300) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Black-throated Blue Warbler – peak May 24 (25) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Yellow-rumped Warbler – peak May 11 (250) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Black-throated Green Warbler – peak May 24 (70) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Blackburnian Warbler – peak May 24 (70) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Bay-breasted Warbler – peak May 24 (50) PEPt, *fide* RTS

Cerulean Warbler – peak May 27 (20) Opinicon, BRp *et al.*

Mourning Warbler – peak May 28 (7) PEPt, JHE, RDW

Hooded Warbler – May 11 to 31 (5 netted and banded) PEPt, *fide* RTS; 13 (1 male) Kingston, EB

Clay-colored Sparrow – May 9 to 28 (11) 3 sites at PEPt, KFN

Henslow's Sparrow – May 22 (1) Perch R., EB *et al.*

Lazuli Bunting – May 23 (1 male netted and banded) PEPt, *fide* RTS (photo)

Orchard Oriole – May 4 to 28 (10), Amherst I., PEPt, KFN

Baltimore Oriole – peak May 11 (140) PEPt, *fide* RTS

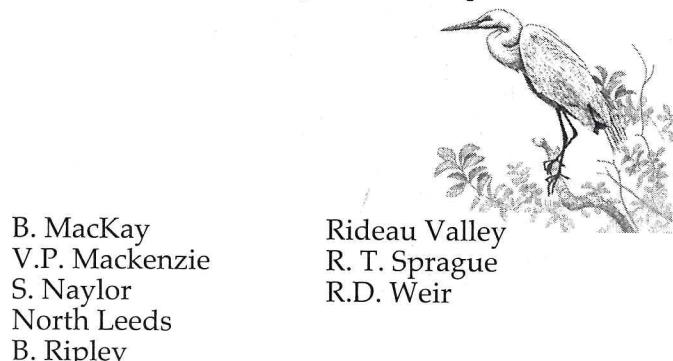
Red Crossbill – Apr 12 (8) Clinton, BRp

Common Redpoll – last flocks Mar 23 (7) Kingston, SN

Hoary Redpoll – Mar 4 (1) Elginburg, EB

Pine Siskin – Apr 22 to May 14 (22 in all) Kingston area, KFN

European Goldfinch – Apr 20 (1) Sandhill Road, M. Breslow, probable escape



The Poplar Trees in the Cheese Factory Yard

Terry Fuchs

On the southeast corner of the intersection where I turn from the paved road onto the gravel that leads to the cottage, poplars grow in front of the page wire fence at the edge of a field. Presumably seeded by the large grove billowing like a rustling green cloud from the ditch of a creek bed across the pavement, the clump of trees is wide enough now to conceal the concrete slab on the rise beside the highway. As I reach the intersection—or wait to turn if cars are approaching in the opposite lane—I usually glance at the trees, trying to spot even a corner or an edge of the slab. All I see, however, are the smooth, yellowy green trunks and shivering leaves, the tall weeds folded over on themselves.

Until the last few years, whenever I made the turn, the concrete pad was in full view, unlikely as a dance floor among poplar sprouts trying to match the weeds in height. I had been told that it was the foundation of a cheese factory, a relic of an era when scores of cheese factories dotted this county, along roadsides and at intersections, on the outskirts of villages and hamlets. This particular one burned down in 1954, just a few years after the railway that shipped its cheese to market went out of business, and was never rebuilt. In subsequent decades all of them closed, as corporate-owned creameries and dairies bought them for their government-regulated milk quotas and consolidated production in cities. Some of the empty buildings were converted into houses or welding shops, still identifiable by their unaltered trademark roofs, whose eaves had extended over the docks to shelter teams and wagons while the farmers unloaded their cans of milk, but many were demolished or condemned by abandonment to become dark hulks that sprang eerily into late-night car headlights along overgrown back roads.

Trees, of course, love such a vacuum. I bought my cottage in 1989, thirty-five

years after the cheese factory had been razed. Its foundation slab, fringed by weeds and grasses, was still obvious above the angle of the intersection. Across the highway the poplars thronging the creek banks were already long mature, the silvery undersides of their breeze-stirred leaves flipping up when rain threatened. For years, every time I turned the corner or rode my bike along the side road, I saw the slab; even the rusty mouths of the pipes embedded in the concrete for drainage were still visible. Occasionally I would prop my bike on its kickstand and walk up to investigate more closely, and it was then I might notice the poplar shoots sprouting among the shin-tall weeds that tickled my bare legs and my feet in their sandals. From the highway or the road the stems of the little trees were almost beneath the level of my awareness, just a flutter of brighter green splotching the sun-browning grass.

I did not register any marked progress in their growth for years. One spring, however, I abruptly realized that the concrete pad had disappeared behind a curtain of spindly trunks and quivering leaves. It seemed that overnight the stalks had lunged skywards, thickening and leafing out, clusters of suckers at their bases snapping taller, as though some critical mass of energy—not necessarily height—had been achieved that launched them into an astonishing spurt. In a brief time the foundation slab had gone from being a distinctive and constant landmark to invisibility. When I reached the end of the gravel on my city-bound trips Sunday night, my truck's high beams had ghosted over the concrete's pallor. Now they illuminated only a row of trees, picked out of the depths of darkness like startling figures. It was poplar sleight of hand.

The railway that ceased operations before the cheese factory burned had served it from a waiting room a few hundred yards down the gravel road.

Early every day, ninety-pound rounds of cheddar in circular wooden boxes had been stacked on the railroad platform. The original backers of the line in the late nineteenth century had intended it to reach all the way from Brockville, on the St. Lawrence River, to North Bay, on Lake Nipissing, but these grandiose plans never materialized and the tracks stopped fifty or sixty miles to the northwest at the lakefront village of Westport. Although connections were available in Brockville to the national railroads, this one began and ended within the boundaries of a single county. For a quarter or fifty cents, youth from the farms along the gravel road and the highway took the train to the Saturday-night hockey games in Brockville.

Across the gravel road from the waiting room, the tracks ran through a wooded dip below the field behind the cheese factory, but most of the route lay across exposed fields. An elderly farmer neighbour of mine who lived down the gravel road from our cottage lane recalled one blizzardy day when the Brockville-bound train steamed out of the shelter of those trees and rammed into a hilly range of snowdrifts that the wind had banked across the tracks. His grandparents' kitchen overlooked the fields and woods, and he and his brothers and sisters stood in its cook-

stove warmth in their overalls and socks and watched the immobilized train from the window. Smoke still trailed from its stack and was swallowed among the churning snowflakes like the smoke they could see from other farmhouse chimneys out the window. The inky black locomotive with its coal tender, the snow-plastered freight and passenger cars, and the caboose's stepped roof were a solid skyline against the whirling expanse of white. The male passengers climbed down from the coaches to investigate and sank to their hips. Like draft horses, some floundered up to the farmhouse to ask my neighbour's grandmother if she could make sandwiches for the women aboard the train, and she was left without any bread for her own family's meal, but wouldn't see the stranded travellers go hungry. Once word got around about the train's predicament, men and older boys converged on it from all over the neighbourhood. They carried any type of shovel they could put their hands on, wide-bladed snow shovels, narrow-bladed manure shovels, stubby coal shovels, long-handled spades for turning gardens or digging post holes, because they knew the railway would pay for digging out the train in cash, that scarcest of commodities in a farmer's life then.



The locations of the railroad and the waiting room, as well as the cheese factory, are marked on a 1953 topographical map I have, but the sole evidence of any of them remaining on the ground is the cheese factory foundation pad, which I assume I could still find behind its screen of poplars. The spot where the waiting room once stood is now in a field rippling in season with broad, overlapping soybean leaves. The building itself—literally just a square-sided room where passengers could wait out of the rain and cold on benches built against the walls—was sledded down to the lake one winter after the railway's demise. Recognizable by its steep, pagoda-like roof, it is now the kitchen of a cottage five doors to the south of mine.

The corridor of trees where, for well more than a half century, the train built up speed leaving the waiting room and slowed approaching it filled in with the exact abruptness and timing of the poplars concealing the cheese factory slab, even though the trees in the woodlot are mainly slower growing maples. I travel down the gravel road towards the rail line site much less often than I turn in the opposite direction to head to the cottage. However, not many years ago whenever I straddled my bicycle at it for a few moments out of curiosity, the right-of-way was plain, although the rails and ties had been lifted. It angled off through the woods, a tunnel swimming with watery green and yellow light and blotchy shadows, the sunshine making the fringes of leaves along the opening almost translucent. Today, even pacing the road in the vicinity, I cannot identify the right-of-way in the wall of trees that confounds me. The second-growth forest appears completely uniform. The sagging page-wire fence between it and the road, with its garlands of wild grape and borders of bittersweet, is intact. Like the cheese factory foundation, the right of way persisted for close to fifty years and then seemingly was overgrown in a blink.

About a mile from the intersection, towards Brockville, the highway climbs a

long hill. When I bicycle up it, in my middle-aged legs and lungs it feels at least as long as it is, but biking down is a swooping, exhilarating glide, a gift of ease. Either way, up or down, riding my bike or driving, I try to look across the valley to the hill where my elderly neighbour and his father before him farmed for almost a hundred years. Both the valley and the opposite slope bristle with forest that, from the particularly succulent hay I have been told used to grow in the valley, could not have been there then. I often think I have missed the farm, but then its structures come into sight. Only the peak of the barn roof, a corner of the house, and the wheel of the windmill poke through the foliage, and I suspect even they would be hidden if the field southwest of the house wasn't kept cut by the farmer who now owns the property for its hay, as he had been doing on a lease when the old man died on his ninety-seventh birthday.

On a stiflingly hot July afternoon almost fifteen years ago I sat on a straight-backed kitchen chair in the house yard, while under a maple tree the nonagenarian reclined on a rusty bedspring with a ragged quilt for a pad. I heard the sticky whine of tires on the highway across the valley and felt the breeze blowing steadily over the hilltop, even more refreshing than beneath the trees in my yard down on the lakeshore. By then he was in his mid-nineties, long retired, and living on his goat's milk, the eggs from his hens, and his old age security. (He once asked me why the government gave him so much pension; he told me he couldn't spend the interest on the money.) A hen perched on his chest. His dog was curled up beside him on the bedspring and the goat stood untethered at its foot. A black rat snake coiled loosely in the grass underneath.

Except for the field leased out from year to year for its hay, the rest of his fields and pastures were grown up in sumac and prickly ash, thick right to the cedar rail fences and the banks of the clear, tea-coloured creek through the fields behind the barn. (Eventually, after a long,

winding course, joining other tributaries along the way, this stream drains into our lake's north end.) The overgrown front field abuts the gravel road just across from our cottage lane. Because of the sumac, though, even less of the farm buildings is visible from the road's proximity than from the distance of the highway. The peak of the barn roof just looks bigger because closer, the spaces in the windmill from missing vanes gape as it creaks around. Once the sumac leaves droop scarlet in October and flutter down, the grey barn walls show, and the legs of the windmill, and one gable end of the house. The sunshine and then the moonlight in their daily and nightly rounds will glint on the shiny steel chimney.

Along the gravel road in both directions from the cottage lane, most fields are no longer cultivated. Cattle are rotated around some of them, but except where a lot has been severed for a modern elevated bungalow, the others are being overrun by the prickly ash and sumac. Even the pastures where cattle are sporadically grazed are often tufted by sprawling clumps of ground juniper that the cows thread their paths among. Looking closely from the roadside, you might see a cellar hole, or a low, chipped concrete foundation hedging a rectangle of stony, weedy ground, or a glimpse of a stacked-rock foundation in a fold of overgrown hills. Most of the old buildings are long vanished, usually burned down by chimney fires on the coldest winter nights, or short circuits from milking machines in the poorly wired barns, or, more recently, vandals.

My farm neighbour's house sits empty, painted, in decent shape the last time I walked up there a few years ago, although the yard where we had sat under the tree was lush with unmown, chest-high hay. Above it I could see only the tops of the fence posts and the wooden pump handle, levered to its maximum reach, the way he had left it the winter he died, to keep the leathers in the water and prevent them from freezing. Another vacant house just up

the road from his is derelict. Its paintless weathered walls lean, the wedge of the collapsed roof is inverted through the first-storey ceiling, the glass in the downstairs window frames has been smashed out cleanly, and the wallpaper dangles in tatters, exposing crumbling plaster and laths.

Seeing the foundations and the tumble-down barns, hearing stories of farm families peddling eggs to the cottagers, shoehorning a cow into the back seat of a car to take her to the fair, bringing their tractors to tow a cottager's car mired in the lane during spring thaw, holding a farewell picnic at the lake for their young men going off to the First World War, I feel wistful about a nearly lost way of life. By the end, the surviving families were sometimes reduced to an ageing bachelor son, like my neighbour, living alone in a farmhouse that had held eight or ten siblings in their youths. At night, only a decade or two from the end of the twentieth century, rooms were still lit by coal oil lanterns. Long-time cottagers who as kids gravitated to the old-timers remember sooty kitchen walls hung with blackened pots and double-barreled shotguns, and sleeping over on straw mattresses in upstairs bedrooms that hadn't been used for decades.

As youngsters themselves, how could these grizzled farmers ever have foreseen ending up on their own in rundown houses that looked out on barns with shaggy, ancient hay bursting from rickety lofts or fields being transformed into thickets and tangles of sumac and prickly ash? Their neighbours were farm families like their own. During the grain harvest, when the custom thresher made its circuit of the country roads, they all shared their labour freely. In winter, if a man's wife was pregnant, he would be scrupulous about breaking out the snowdrifts in front of his farm with his horse and cutter and he could trust his neighbours on the doctor's route to be the same. Orderly fields were planted in crops or, unless the season was dry, thick with hay that surged like waves before the gusts of wind. Fresh milk intended

for production at the cheese factory had to be delivered early, by eight o'clock. Even before the wagons of milk cans filed under the canopy for the milk to be unloaded, weighed, and checked for its butterfat content, the factory routine had

already begun. On the railway platform a short distance down the gravel road from the intersection, the morning's shipment of duly aged and boxed cheese rounds was waiting for the first Brockville train of the new day.

Report on the Ontario Nature Eastern Region Meeting—May 6, 2006

Jacqueline Bartnik

As a member of Ontario Nature, Kingston Field Naturalists is part of a united voice for the protection of Ontario lands and wildlife. My responsibilities as the KFN representative for Ontario Nature include keeping the executive up to date on Ontario Nature activities, communicating to Ontario Nature our concerns about local issues, completing paperwork required by Ontario Nature, and attending the twice-annual regional meetings. On May 6th, 2006, the Kingston Field Naturalists hosted the Ontario Nature eastern regional meeting, a report of which follows.

Turnout for the meeting was low, with representatives of eight of the twenty member groups attending. Ontario Nature Network eastern regional coordinator Tracy Moore was unable to attend. Tracy's responsibilities include supporting member naturalist clubs, providing educational and conservation information, keeping clubs current about local and provincial legislation, and facilitating networking and partnerships among the member groups.

In the morning, the naturalist group representatives presented reports, summaries of which follow.

Friends of Salmon River (Frontenac/Lennox and Addington area—Gray Merriam) have approximately 100 members. They are in the process of doing an environmental assessment of the area, are working to identify important areas and areas of concern,

and are creating trails. The group supports the movement opposing the expansion of the Richmond landfill site.

Upper Ottawa Valley Nature Club (Deep River Area—Ray Metcalfe) now owns 100 acres of land, with the possibility of acquiring another 900 acres. This property was formerly partly property of Atomic Energy of Canada and partly a ski trail. It is now designated as a woodland/forest sanctuary and is protected. The Club is having difficulty getting a property tax reduction, and is looking for help with accounting and legal problems.

Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club (Eleanor Zurbrigg and Frank Pape): This is the Club's tenth year of the FalconWatch program. Fletcher Wildlife Garden received the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects' environmental protection and education award. A nature photo contest, whose theme was Nature Trails, was held. The Club is looking at a new proposal for light rail transport in Ottawa. The Alfred Bog organization has been able to disband as it met its mandate and the bog is now protected by law. Management of the bog has been given over to Ontario Parks, with ten or fifteen landowners left to sign the agreement.

Quinte Watershed Clean-Up expressed concern about raptors in its area. The group is also involved in the Deloral clean-up and in monitoring the Richmond landfill site, and hosted a snow festival. Regulations on the use of cosmetic pesticides had not yet been

passed for the area. The group had a tour of the water treatment plant and are working on shoreline protection and industrial development on sensitive land.

Rideau Valley Field Naturalists (Eric Wilson) are concentrating on protecting wildlife around the Perth area. The group is having difficulty with insurance and liability. It is working with school boards to educate the next generation on protection of wildlife.

Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists Club's Cliff Bennett (Ontario Nature's Eastern Ontario Regional Director) received an award for his years of work in protecting wildlife in the region. The Club received another Trillium grant for education purposes. A group called Citizen County is involved in maintaining the trails in the area. The MVFN are in the process of creating a brochure on canoe trips in the area.

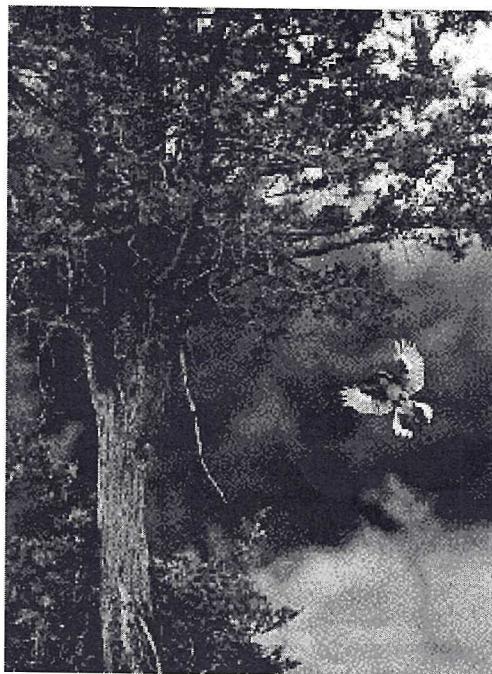
One individual without a club designation voiced her concerns about the realignment of Highway 62, Moira Lake and Upland Forest which may be part of an alvar.

Kingston Field Naturalists (Jackie Bartrik) reported on our Club's field trips, rambles, youth trips and speakers during the year, and discussed the projects the Club has undertaken, including the Christmas Bird Count and the work on the Amherst Island property and at the Helen Quilliam sanctuary.

Ontario Nature president Steve Hounsell then presented the organization's projects. Ontario Nature, currently with 144 member groups, is greatly concerned about getting stronger legislation on the endangered species act, greater provincial legislation on the Greenway corridor, and better laws regarding the use and operation of ATVs. The 2006 youth essay contest was a success, with over 150 entries submitted from across the province, as

was a land use planning workshop which was well received. A gala will be held at the Royal Ontario Museum on November 14th; more information will be posted on the Ontario Nature website. Executive Director Caroline Schultz then outlined initiatives in progress, which include work on the Greenway protection proposal and a push to include wetland legislation in all municipalities' official plans, including that of Kingston.

To close the meeting, Kurt Hennige of the Kingston Field Naturalists presented a video about the endangered Eastern Loggerhead Shrike. The video was very informative, as it illustrated how vital it is to gain the support of the farmers and landowners in this bird's breeding grounds, and emphasized the great need for stronger endangered species legislation. Following the presentation, Kurt led an excursion to a site at which Loggerhead Shrikes could be seen. Some of the birds were visible from the road, even without binoculars. I would like to express my thanks to Kurt Hennige for giving the group the opportunity to see these rare and lovely birds.



Eastern Loggerhead Shrike
Photo by Chris Grooms

Teen Naturalists Take Part in Baillie Birdathon

Heather Zilstra

The Teen Naturalists have had another exciting field trip. We completed the Baillie Birdathon on May 13-14, meeting new people, going to many places, and seeing lots of birds! The members who took part were Katie, Amy, Kenneth, Joshua, Rebecca, Heather, and, of course, Teen leaders Anne Robertson and Diane Lawrence. We saw a total of 86 bird species, including Grasshopper Sparrow, Whip-poor-will and Great Horned Owl, which was higher than our goal of 70 species. And the grand total of pledges raised, which will go to Bird Studies Canada, was \$806!

The first places we went to were the Amherstview lagoons and the Newburgh grasslands, where Bruce Ripley helped us identify many species including the rare Eastern Loggerhead Shrike. Next, we headed off to Anne's cottage near the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, where Mike Evans was there to guide us.

We then headed back to Anne's cottage to get some sleep, which was not a lot

(we went to sleep at about 11 PM and woke up at 4:30 AM). Erwin Batalla and Alexandra Simmons were there waiting for us at 5 AM at the gravel pit, where we heard and almost saw the Virginia Rail. We had a very good view of a Red-shouldered Hawk on the phone wires. They also took us to Canoe Lake Road where we found a number of species, including a Barred Owl. Next on our list was Opinicon Road, where Floyd Conner was our guide. He took us to many locations, including the Queen's Biology Station for some hot chocolate and other birds. It was raining at this time, and we all got very wet. One of the interesting birds we saw was the Eastern Bluebird, along with many others.

The Teen Naturalists would like to thank all the wonderful birders who helped us during the Baillie Birdathon, as well as the generous friends and family who sponsored us. We had an excellent time and are all looking forward to the upcoming BioBlitz.

Following is a list of the 86 species seen on the Birdathon.

Common Loon	Black Tern	Purple Martin	Cerulean Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Rock Pigeon	Tree Swallow	Black-and-white Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Mourning Dove	Bank Swallow	American Redstart
Canada Goose	Great Horned Owl	Black-capped Chickadee	Ovenbird
Wood Duck	Barred Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Waterthrush
Gadwall	Whip-poor-will	House Wren	Common Yellowthroat
American Wigeon	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Scarlet Tanager
Mallard	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Eastern Bluebird	Eastern Towhee
Northern Shoveler	Downy Woodpecker	Wood Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Hairy Woodpecker	American Robin	Grasshopper Sparrow
Common Merganser	Northern Flicker	Gray Catbird	Song Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Pileated Woodpecker	European Starling	Northern Cardinal
Osprey	Eastern Phoebe	Golden-winged Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-shouldered Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Red-tailed Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Northern Parula	Red-winged Blackbird
Merlin	Loggerhead Shrike	Yellow Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Ruffed Grouse	Yellow-throated Vireo	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Common Grackle
Wild Turkey	Warbling Vireo	Blue Jay	Brown-headed Cowbird
Solitary Sandpiper	Red-eyed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Spotted Sandpiper	Blue Jay	Pine Warbler	Purple Finch
Least Sandpiper	American Crow		American Goldfinch
Wilson's Snipe	Common Raven		House Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull			
Herring Gull			

May Bird Walk at Lemoine Point

Joe Benderavage

At 6:30 PM on 10 May 2006, Kurt Hennige and Chris Grooms led a Wednesday evening May bird walk through trails starting from the north parking lot at LeMoine Point. The group of 17 hikers saw a Northern Oriole, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tree Swallow, Tree Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, female American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, and Pileated Woodpecker. We heard the calls of Downy Woodpeckers and of Yellow Warblers. An Eastern Grey Squirrel was observed, and different plants were noted, such as Spring Beauty and Serviceberry.

On higher ground of the trail, near a wet area, Killdeer were seen, and so were Barn Swallows, a Song Sparrow, Common Starlings, Common Grackles, and, in a tree up ahead, one male and two female Cowbirds. The next small tree further ahead along the trail held

two male Bobolinks, which have black front and white back. Many opportunities to observe them through a 20X spotting scope were available, for the sunlight had now grown into extraordinarily rich and mellow evening light.

A few exceptional sightings were made of a Merlin in flight, an Eastern Meadowlark resting in a field and observed in the spotting scope, a Great Blue Heron, a Yellow Warbler, and a Grassland or Savannah Sparrow. As twilight gradually became more obtrusive, the sounds of an Ovenbird and a Wood Thrush were perceived in a downslope wooded area. After a lengthy wait, the cagey Ovenbird was finally sighted through the scope, and the bird walk ended on a note of accomplishment.



Bobolink
Photo by Joe Benderavage

Spring Round-up 2006

Ron D. Weir

The Kingston Field Naturalists' 49th Spring Round-up took place from 1500h Saturday 20 May to 1500h Sunday 21 May, 2006. Observers experienced the widest range of weather ever seen on a Spring Round-up. Saturday was overcast with showers and a very strong west wind and a high temperature of 10°C, although the wind chill lowered this significantly. By midnight, skies cleared, which provided some good conditions for finding owls. By dawn Sunday, skies became overcast again, and the very strong winds shifted to become southwest. Heavy rain arrived around midday with the onset varying by a few hours between the westerly and easterly sectors of our circle. Snow, sleet and hail fell during the afternoon, and temperatures dropped rapidly from a high of 13°C to 3°C. In the light of the wintry conditions, it was difficult to decide if the large concentrations of warblers, vireos and flycatchers seen Sunday on Amherst Island and Prince Edward Point had come from the south or from the north, as though they reversed their migration.

The final tally of species was 188, which is below the 33-year (1973-2005) average of 199. In view of the weather, this is not a surprise. Areas visited included the following: Wolfe Island; Amherst Island; Amherstview Sewage Lagoons; Bath area; Camden East; Canoe Lake Road and surrounding areas; Opinicon Road and surrounding areas; Bedford Road and surrounding areas; Collins Bay and its watershed; Desert Lake; Kingston City areas, to include Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Areas; Newburgh; Prince Edward Point; Waupoos Peninsula; Wilton Creek, Morven; Sydenham area; Hay Bay area; Napanee area.

One new species—Eared Grebe—was added to the cumulative total that now stands at 287 species. For a complete tally of the Spring Round-ups from 1960 to 1991, see *The Blue Bill* 39 28-36 (1992). For 1992 to 2004, see *The Blue Bill* 39 44-49 (1992), 40 125-131 (1993), 41 48-53 (1994), 42 63-70 (1995), 43 70-74 (1996), 44 60-66 (1997), 45 49-54 (1998), 46 81-89 (1999), 47 58-63 (2000), 48 52-59 (2001), 49 90-96 (2002), 50 40-44 (2003), 51 47-52 (2004), 52 42-48 (2005) respectively.

Unique species added by each party were the following: Greater Scaup by Party #1; Greater Yellowlegs by Party #2; American Bittern, Black Duck, Bald Eagle, Merlin, Little Gull, Willow Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow by Party #3; Eared Grebe, Redhead, Surf and Black Scotters, Hooded Merganser, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-bellied Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Barred and Saw-whet Owls, Olive-sided and Alder Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Vireo, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Louisiana Waterthrush by Party #4; Northern Pintail, Rough-legged Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Purple Finch by Party #5; Horned Grebe contributed by "others," grouped as Party #7.

In addition to the first-ever Eared Grebe, noteworthy finds were the Peregrine Falcon, of which there were two different birds by two parties in widely separated areas; Little Gull; and the fifth occurrence of Lesser Black-backed Gull, one of which was in its second year of life and the other in its third year.

Participants were invited to the home of Marian and Joel Ellis for the potluck supper and the species tabulation. Thanks are due to Marian and Joel for being such kind hosts.

The *Art Bell Trophy* was won by Party #4 for the highest species total of 163. This award was inaugurated in 1992 to commemorate the memory of Art Bell, who was a life-long member of the KFN and a keen participant in the Spring and Fall Round-ups since their inception. The *Purple Vulture Award*, which is the unflattering papier-mâché model, possibly representing some underworld creature, was won by the runner up Party #3 with 153 species.

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

Party #1	Al Treganza, <u>Shirley Treganza</u>						
Party #2	<u>Alex Scott</u> , Karen Scott						
Party #3	<u>Joel Ellis</u> , Peter Good, Kathy Innes, Paul Mackenzie, Bud Rowe, Ron Weir						
Party #4	Lynn Bell, Chris Grooms, <u>Kurt Hennige</u> , Bruce Ripley, Mike Runtz						
Party #5	Pauline Hockey, Bea McMahan, <u>Jay McMahan</u>						
Party #6	Hugh Evans, Mike Evans						
Party #7	Others: Hugues Bonin, David Okines, Terry Sprague						

Species	Party Number							Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	
Common Loon	3	4	10	25	1	x	x	40
Pied-billed Grebe	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	5
Horned Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Eared Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Double-crested Cormorant	-	6	3500	2000	400	x	x	4000
American Bittern	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
Great Blue Heron	5	6	14	10	10	x	x	45
Green Heron	2	-	-	-	2	x	-	5
Turkey Vulture	15	-	21	15	9	x	x	60
Canada Goose	50	200	380	180	150	x	x	960
Mute Swan	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Wood Duck	-	2	5	3	-	x	-	8
Gadwall	2	100	30	40	12	x	-	184
American Wigeon	-	15	12	15	6	x	-	48
American Black Duck	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Mallard	25	100	60	60	34	x	x	280
Blue-winged Teal	-	4	4	6	-	x	-	14
Northern Shoveler	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	3
Northern Pintail	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Green-winged Teal	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
Redhead	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	3

Species	Party Number							Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	
Greater Scaup	-	-	7	10	6	x	-	23
Lesser Scaup	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	6
Surf Scoter	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
White-winged Scoter	-	-	12	80	-	-	x	92
Black Scoter	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Long-tailed Duck	-	-	20	30	-	-	x	50
Bufflehead	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	4
Hooded Merganser	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Common Merganser	-	-	12	6	3	x	x	21
Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	30	100	2	-	x	135
Virginia Rail	2	-	2	20	-	-	-	24
Sora	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
American Coot	-	1	1	1	-	x	-	1
Osprey	-	5	6	3	2	x	-	16
Bald Eagle	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Northern Harrier	-	-	3	3	1	x	-	7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	-	3	1	1	-	x	5
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	-	-	3	-	x	-	3
Broad-winged Hawk	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Red-tailed Hawk	-	2	2	3	2	-	x	9
Rough-legged Hawk	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
American Kestrel	-	4	-	2	-	x	-	6
Merlin	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Peregrine Falcon	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	-	-	1	-	-	x	-	2
Ruffed Grouse	-	2	3	4	-	-	-	9
Wild Turkey	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	5
Black-bellied Plover	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	4
Semipalmated Plover	-	-	2	2	2	x	-	6
Killdeer	-	20	22	25	10	x	x	77
Greater Yellowlegs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lesser Yellowlegs	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Spotted Sandpiper	1	4	15	10	6	x	-	36
Upland Sandpiper	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	4
Least Sandpiper	-	6	15	20	14	x	-	55
White-rumped Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Dunlin	-	-	1	1	4	-	-	6
Wilson's Snipe	2	1	6	8	1	x	-	18
American Woodcock	-	-	12	14	-	-	-	26
Wilson's Phalarope	-	-	18	7	15	-	-	40
Little Gull	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Ring-billed Gull	20	100	120	80	260	x	x	580

Species	Party Number							Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	
Herring Gull	-	6	40	120	10	-	x	176
Lesser Black-backed Gull	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Great Black-backed Gull	-	-	10	2	1	x	-	13
Caspian Tern	-	1	7	25	5	x	x	38
Black Tern	100	100	65	37	-	x	-	100
Rock Pigeon	50	10	3	50	43	x	-	156
Mourning Dove	50	200	30	300	32	x	x	600
Black-billed Cuckoo	-	2	1	1	-	-	1	5
Eastern Screech-Owl	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Great Horned Owl	-	-	1	7	-	-	-	8
Barred Owl	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	6
Long-eared Owl	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Whip-poor-will	-	-	8	18	-	-	-	26
Chimney Swift	-	-	3	25	-	-	-	28
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	-	2	4	-	x	x	10
Belted Kingfisher	2	1	2	5	3	x	-	13
Red-bellied Woodpecker	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Downy Woodpecker	1	1	1	3	2	-	x	8
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	-	3	-	x	x	7
Northern Flicker	-	3	14	10	9	x	x	36
Pileated Woodpecker	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	5
Olive-sided Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	-	1	1	1	-	-	x	3
Alder Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Willow Flycatcher	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Least Flycatcher	-	1	10	4	-	-	x	16
Eastern Phoebe	1	10	8	3	2	x	x	24
Great Crested Flycatcher	5	1	5	5	7	x	x	23
Eastern Kingbird	11	4	20	25	18	x	x	78
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Yellow-throated Vireo	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	4
Blue-headed Vireo	-	-	8	6	-	-	x	14
Warbling Vireo	4	20	10	10	1	-	x	45
Philadelphia Vireo	-	-	4	-	-	-	x	4
Red-eyed Vireo	10	10	11	20	1	x	x	52
Blue Jay	20	4	14	20	8	x	x	66
American Crow	40	50	50	100	14	x	x	254
Common Raven	20	-	-	5	2	x	1	28
Horned Lark	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	12

Species	Party Number							Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	
Purple Martin	15	1	4	40	-	x	-	60
Tree Swallow	250	200	350	700	250	x	x	1750
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	20	100	25	60	20	-	x	225
Bank Swallow	20	10	20	20	-	-	-	70
Cliff Swallow	20	20	25	200	10	-	x	275
Barn Swallow	250	100	125	100	50	x	x	625
Black-capped Chickadee	20	4	13	25	4	-	x	66
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
White-breasted Nuthatch	-	1	1	1	1	x	-	4
Brown Creeper	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Carolina Wren	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
House Wren	2	10	12	20	2	x	x	46
Winter Wren	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	5
Sedge Wren	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	5
Marsh Wren	-	1	4	30	-	x	-	35
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	-	-	2	1	1	-	x	4
Eastern Bluebird	-	5	-	3	2	-	-	10
Veery	-	1	1	6	-	-	x	8
Swainson's Thrush	-	-	2	1	1	-	x	4
Wood Thrush	1	20	5	15	8	x	x	49
American Robin	200	100	120	500	110	x	x	1030
Gray Catbird	1	20	26	60	16	-	x	123
Northern Mockingbird	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
Brown Thrasher	1	1	8	40	3	x	x	53
European Starling	200	1000	60	800	75	x	x	2135
Cedar Waxwing	-	-	10	10	-	-	-	20
Blue-winged Warbler	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Golden-winged Warbler	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	8
Tennessee Warbler	-	1	10	4	-	-	x	15
Orange-crowned Warbler	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Nashville Warbler	-	1	27	2	1	-	x	31
Northern Parula	-	-	12	2	-	-	x	14
Yellow Warbler	3	100	150	400	84	x	x	737
Chestnut-sided Warbler	-	2	13	30	4	-	x	49
Magnolia Warbler	-	6	20	5	6	-	x	37
Cape May Warbler	-	-	6	4	1	-	x	11
Black-throated Blue Warbler	-	-	10	4	1	-	x	15
Yellow-rumped Warbler	-	-	55	80	23	-	x	158
Black-throated Green Warbler	-	2	15	30	2	x	x	49
Blackburnian Warbler	-	-	20	5	-	-	x	25
Pine Warbler	-	-	1	5	-	x	-	6

Species	Party Number							Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	
Palm Warbler	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	2
Bay-breasted Warbler	-	-	10	8	3	-	x	21
Blackpoll Warbler	-	-	6	4	-	-	x	10
Cerulean Warbler	-	-	2	3	1	-	1	7
Black-and-white Warbler	-	1	8	20	1	-	x	30
American Redstart	-	5	12	15	3	-	x	35
Ovenbird	3	1	4	10	7	x	x	25
Northern Waterthrush	3	1	1	5	-	-	x	10
Louisiana Waterthrush	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Mourning Warbler	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Common Yellowthroat	4	6	40	15	2	x	x	67
Wilson's Warbler	-	-	6	2	-	-	x	8
Canada Warbler	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	4
Scarlet Tanager	1	2	10	30	-	-	x	43
Eastern Towhee	-	2	20	15	13	x	x	50
Chipping Sparrow	3	6	30	100	82	x	x	221
Clay-colored Sparrow	-	-	5	1	1	-	x	7
Field Sparrow	1	-	10	4	2	x	x	17
Vesper Sparrow	-	-	1	2	-	6	-	9
Savannah Sparrow	-	1	15	60	1	-	x	77
Grasshopper Sparrow	-	-	1	1	-	x	-	2
Song Sparrow	16	10	35	120	14	x	x	195
Lincoln's Sparrow	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Swamp Sparrow	8	1	8	20	-	x	x	37
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	16	20	2	-	x	38
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	6	6	4	x	x	16
Northern Cardinal	3	2	1	8	1	x	-	15
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	6	47	35	4	x	x	95
Indigo Bunting	1	-	4	10	3	-	x	18
Bobolink	20	50	18	15	18	x	x	121
Red-winged Blackbird	250	1000	60	200	x	x	x	1600
Eastern Meadowlark	4	6	10	12	15	x	x	47
Common Grackle	200	100	50	400	48	x	x	800
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	20	13	15	140	-	x	190
Orchard Oriole	-	-	3	1	-	-	1	5
Baltimore Oriole	14	50	40	80	24	x	x	210
Purple Finch	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
House Finch	-	6	1	12	6	-	-	25
American Goldfinch	20	20	26	30	18	x	x	114
House Sparrow	40	100	4	25	-	x	-	169
Party Total	63	88	153	163	99	71	-	188
Participants	2	2	6	5	3	2	3	23

Snakes in Trouble!

Matt Ellerbeck

I will begin bluntly: snakes are in trouble! Over 60 species of snake are now listed on the World Conservation Union's "redlist" of threatened species, and all of these snakes could be facing global extinction. Canadian snakes are also suffering. There are now 19 snakes listed as a Species at Risk under the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. This is well over half of all the snake species in Canada. Two of these snakes are now extinct in Canada (extirpated) and more of these snakes could also be facing extirpation. There are many other threatened and endangered snakes all over the world, and certain of these species are thought to be extinct already.

There are a few main contributing factors to snakes becoming endangered. The main factor is probably habitat loss. The destruction of natural habitats through contraction and urbanization takes a huge toll on snakes. Once the snakes have lost their habitat, they are forced to move into places inhabited by humans. This puts the snakes in very real danger. Almost all surprise encounters between snakes and humans end with the snakes being killed needlessly.

Habitat loss is also a huge problem for snakes that live in climates with cold winters. In the winter, snakes hibernate (sometimes in huge numbers) in dens known as hibernacula. When these dens are destroyed, due to construction, for example, the snakes may be left without a winter shelter and they may freeze to death and die. If their original hibernaculum is not accessible, the snake may take up refuge in a basement, infiltrating through a broken window or cracked foundation, once again putting the snake in danger of coming into contact with humans and thus in danger of being killed.

Direct persecution due to fear and ignorance is another contributing factor to snakes becoming endangered. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard people say that they have killed a snake that they saw in their yard. However, the greatest example of the needless persecution of snakes is the event called the rattlesnake round-up. Rattlesnake round-ups are festivals held throughout the US during the active seasons of snakes. During these "festivals," people hunt and kill as many snakes as they can. Gasoline may be poured down burrows in which the participants believe snakes may be hiding, killing any snakes and any other animals in the burrows, and contaminating the earth. Other snakes are decapitated. Although exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that over 30,000 rattlesnakes are killed every year in the US during rattlesnake round-ups.

There are other examples of people going out of their way to kill snakes. Some people who see a snake on the road (where it has gone to soak up heat) will swerve intentionally to drive over the snake. It is estimated the tens of thousands of snakes die on the road every year worldwide.

So why are people killing snakes? The main reason is probably fear. Many people simply do not like snakes and associate them with being evil or dangerous. In fact, a very small number of snakes pose a danger. Of the approximately 3,000 kinds of snake in the world, about 400 are equipped with toxic venom which can be potentially dangerous to people. However, most snakes—including venomous ones—are very secretive and try to avoid people. Furthermore, snakes have venom first and foremost as a way to subdue their prey and as part of their natural digestive process (snakes don't chew their food, so their venom breaks it

down). Their venom can be used for defense as a secondary function. Proof of this is the number of people who are bitten by venomous snakes but receive "dry" bite (a bite from a venomous snake in which no venom has been injected). Most snake bites happen when someone is trying to capture or kill a snake and the snake is merely defending itself. Snakes do not go out of their way to harm humans. But, although most people have never had a negative experience with a snake, the same can certainly not be said about us!

The final factor contributing to the death of snakes is money. Hundreds of thousands of snakes are killed every year for their skin and for snake products. Many more snakes are captured for the pet trade, including critically endangered snakes like the San Francisco Garter Snake. People who want to buy pet snakes should make sure their pet was bred in captivity.

Many of these pet snakes end up dead. Over 60,000 Ball Pythons (one of the most popular snakes kept as pets) die in the US every year due to improper care by their owners.

All of these factors make for an astounding number of snakes being killed, either directly or indirectly, by humans. This is in sharp contrast to the good things snakes do for us. For example, snake venom is being used in the medical field to treat ailments such as heart and stroke disease, cancer, blood clots, and more. Snakes also help control rodent populations. Without snakes, rodents would spread more disease and destroy more crops, affecting both human health and the food industry.

We can all play a role in educating others about the good things snakes do and their value to ecosystems. Together we can make a positive difference for Nature's most misunderstood creature!

To learn how you can help snakes, please see <http://www.savethesnakes101.tk>.



A Cloudy May Bird Walk

Joe Benderavage

It was a cloudy, cool Wednesday evening when we gathered at the head of the Rideau Trail in Kingston on May 17, 2006 to begin our birding venture. Leader Kenneth Edwards, sporting a tape of birdcalls and a 20X-60X spotting scope, remarked that it was the first quiet evening since the this year's annual May bird walks had begun a few weeks earlier. In the overhead canopy of deciduous tree branches, a fleeting glimpse of a Yellow-rumped Warbler, and sightings of Northern Orioles were promulgated, and a Barn Swallow was seen on high. We heard the call of an unseen Wood Thrush. We also heard such raucous cawing of Crows that we assumed they were harassing a Great Horned Owl, but we saw none of the principal actors.

At the swamp, though, that changed. We noted the presence of Eastern Kingbirds, several Canada Geese, and many Red-winged Blackbirds, males and females, while we twelve hikers lined up, one deep, on the narrow boardwalk. When our leader played a tape of birdcalls, we noticed movement in the reeds, followed by the appearance of a Virginia Rail. It moved toward the tape recorder. When the recorder was passed hand over hand to the end of the lineup, the Rail dutifully followed,

parallel to the mechanical sound it heard. Everyone saw the bird at relatively close range.

Farther along, Dryad's Saddle Fungus, also called Pheasant-back Fungus, one of the first fungi of spring, was seen in the woods. Along a railroad spur, a Great Blue Heron was seen silhouetted against the western sky. Cinquefoil and Barren Strawberry plants were sighted. By chance, I had focused my binoculars on a Red-Winged Blackbird in flight, skimming the tops of the marsh reeds, and providentially saw it make a perfect three-point landing with two feet and a beak to grasp the swaying reed as the bird landed on it. Perhaps that was part of its courtship ritual.

A Common Yellowthroat responded to recorded birdcalls by voicing its own song, but remained out of sight for all but a few members of our entourage. A roosting Great Horned Owl, perhaps seeking refuge from Crows, was finally seen in the spotting scope. It was later chased by a Sharp-shinned Hawk. A Mourning Dove was seen, and the excursion ended to accolades from Chorus Frogs, which were right at home in the cool weather as they can tolerate freezing temperatures.

List of Species Seen:

Amphibians

Treefrog Family
Chorus Frogs

Hylidae
Pseudocris triseriata

Birds

Wood-Warbler Family
Common Yellowthroat
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Blackbird Family
Red-winged Blackbird
Northern Oriole

Parulidae
Geothlypis trichas
Dendroica coronata
Icteridae
Agelaius phoeniceus
Icterus galbula

Swallows	Hirundinidae
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Thrushes	Turdidae
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>
Jays and Crows	Corvidae
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Owls	Strigidae
Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
Tyrant Flycatcher Family	Tyrannidae
Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>

Ducks/Geese/Swans	Anatidae	Plants	
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Rose Family	Rosaceae
Rails	Rallidae	Barren Strawberry	<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>
Virginia Rail	<i>Rallus limicola</i>	Common Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla simplex</i>
Wading Birds	Ardeidae	Fungi	
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Polypore Family	Polyoporaceae
Accipiters	Accipitridae	Dryad's Saddle	<i>Polyporus squamosus</i>
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>		
Pigeons and Doves	Columbidae		
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		

Winter Season—1 December 2005 to 28 February 2006

Ron D. Weir

The overall impression is that the winter was easier than usual, perhaps because of the more frequent but not severe freezes and cycle of thaws. This allowed more over wintering birds to survive than is the norm. Snowfall amounts were less than usual. However, not long after the waterfowl survey on January 8,

ice formed on inner Lake Ontario and drove waterfowl in search of open areas. Rising numbers of voles on Amherst and Wolfe Islands helped sustain the overwintering Snowy Owls and some Short-eareds appeared there later in the period. Winter finches were in low numbers throughout the period.

Species Account:

Pacific Loon – Dec 18 (1) Wolfe I., RDW
Common Loon – to Dec 30 (1) Howe I., SD
Horned Grebe – Dec 5 (50) PEPt, KH, BRp, then to Jan 8 (1) PEPt, KFN
Red-necked Grebe – to Jan 8 (3) Kingston, Feb 8 (1) near Gananoque, KFN
Great Blue Heron – latest Jan 9 (1) L. Opinicon, ST
Turkey Vulture – Feb 2 (1) Kingston, F Bauder
Cackling Goose – Dec 18 (1) Wolfe I., GFV, RDW
Tundra Swan – peaks Dec 18 (244), Jan 8 (843) Kingston, KFN
Wood Duck – to Jan 8 (1 male), Collins Bay Creek, KFN
Black Duck – peak Jan 8 (2466) Kingston, KFN
Redhead – peak Jan 8 (3551) South Bay, JHE, RDW

Long-tailed Duck – peak Jan 8 (25662) PEPt, KFN
Common Goldeneye – peak Jan 8 (7119) Kingston, KFN
Barrow's Goldeneye – Dec 18 (1 male) Wolfe I., GFV, RDW; Jan 8 (1 male) PEPt, JHE, RDW
Bald Eagle – peak Jan 8 (50) Kingston area, KFN; Jan 2 to Feb 12 (74 records)
Golden Eagle – Dec 21 (1) Millhaven, AB, 30 (1) Napanee, C Gryska, Jan 28 (1) Opinicon, KH
Gyrfalcon – Dec 18 (1 white), Wolfe I., MR et al., Feb 24 (1 white) Kingston, BRp
Thayer's Gull – Dec 26 (1) Collins Bay, VPM, close study
Iceland Gull – peak Jan 30 (14) Millhaven, KH
Lesser Black-backed Gull – Dec 14 (1), 26 (1) Kingston, MR, KFN; Jan 21 (1) Kingston, BRp, Feb 28 (1) Wolfe I., KFN

- Glaucous Gull** – Dec 26 to Feb 19 (30)
Kingston, KFN

Snowy Owl – Dec 1-31 (27) between Wolfe I. and Amherst I., KFN; peak one day tallies Feb 4 (12) Wolfe I., BMD, Feb 23 (10) Amherst I., KFN

Great Gray Owl – Dec 18-31 (1) near Seeley's Bay, D&N Kelly, 28 (1) Kingston RKE

Short-eared Owl – Feb 11 (15) Amherst I., CG, 27 (5) Wolfe I., JHE, BR

Yellow-breasted Sapsucker – Jan 12 (1) Napanee, EB, OW, unusual winter occurrence

Carolina Wren – Dec 1-31 (5) Kingston feeders, KFN; Jan 2 to Feb 14 (3) Kingston, KFN

Eastern Bluebird – Dec 18-26 (24)
Kingston, South Bay; Jan 26 to Feb 23 (14)
Kingston, KFN

Bohemian Waxwing – Dec 17 (21), 24 (1)
PEPt, 29 (1) Napanee, KFN

Field Sparrow – Jan 8 (1) Wolfe I., BMD

Savannah Sparrow – Dec 18 (1) Wolfe I., KFN, 22 (1) Gananoque airport, VPM, 29 (1) Napanee, KFN

Le Conte's Sparrow – Dec 18 (1) Wolfe I., MR et al. (photo)

White-crowned Sparrow – Dec 29 (1)
Napanee, KFN

Pine Grosbeak – Dec 8 (few) Camden East, VPM, BR, 29 (13) Napanee, KFN; Jan 22 (10) Canoe Lake, KFN

Purple Finch – Dec 6-26 (8) Kingston feeders, KFN; Feb 8 (25) Camden East, PJG, only ones

Red Crossbill – Dec 18 (4) Kingston, H Bridger

Common Redpoll – fairly common all winter with flocks to 75 birds

Pine Siskin – Dec (53), Jan 29 (34)
Kingston, Camden east, KFN, only ones

Evening Grosbeak – Dec 14-21 (7)
Kingston, EB, KFN; Jan 11 (12) Bedford Mills, NLB

Contributors:

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KFN 3+
P.J. Good
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B. Ripley (BRp)
B. Rowe (BR)
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R. Sachs (RS)
S. Treganza

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Notes on Natural History, No. 419, May 29, 1968

Helen R. Quilliam

Today will have been the last of our spring bird walks. This year they have been better attended than ever before, probably for two reasons: a different time of day and a most interesting place.

Instead of the walks all being scheduled for early morning, two of them took place in the evening as an experiment. It was quite easy to see that evening was the popular time. In future years, then, we will concentrate on the later hours.

I think, however, I can confidently predict that some of those who get their first taste of birdwatching in the evenings will in time join those avid few who find the sights and sounds of early morning to be well worth the trouble of getting up a little earlier than usual.

The dew lies undisturbed, spiders' webs stretching from bush to bush are unbroken, and the sounds of daytime have not yet begun to intrude on the bird

song, which is in any case at its height in the early morning.

There was another reason why the walks were a success this year, and this was their locale. It was the first year of being able to use the completed trail along the Little Cataraqui. The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority has designed this as a walking trail and as such it is excellent, but it is also the best kind of nature trail.

In fact, any good walking trail automatically becomes a good nature trail, but because of diversity of habitat some can be quite superior to others.

It is hard to imagine where another trail could have been made which, in so short a space, traverses so many different types of landscape. This feature makes it particularly valuable to students or observers of natural history.

We start off on the trail with some open fields on one side and on the other a thick hedgerow, both situations which you will find are used by different sorts of birds. The fields have been planted with shrubs whose fruit is attractive to birds, and, as these grow, one will be able to study the effects of plant succession on the birds that occupy the territory.

The path takes us through a thick growth of willows and alders before it becomes a wooden catwalk through the swamp, where vegetation in early spring is still not very high and does not impede the view.

Then an upland field of scrubby brush gives way to another catwalk, this time over marsh that is entirely cattails. Last of all, we get to the higher ground of Squaw Point where we find ourselves in a woodland of tall deciduous trees with a few pines sprinkled about. Even here all is not uniform because in wet hollows there is thick underbrush.

Because of this diversity, I suspect that, if a complete list of all the birds seen during the five walks this spring were made up, we would find it to be well over 100. Some of these birds, of course, would be birds of

passage and would pay the briefest of visits only.

Because of its location beside the lake and the diversity of its habitat, it offers an excellent resting place following a crossing of Lake Ontario. Under certain weather conditions, this creek area with its fields, swamp and trees becomes a haven for tired birds and at the same time a birdwatcher's paradise.

The diversity of habitat also provides homes and food for a variety of resident birds. In the fields we have such species as Killdeer, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows, and the hedgerow will make a safe retreat for Chipping and Song Sparrows. Catbirds and Brown Thrashers will find plenty of nesting places in the scrubby sections. Swamp Sparrows are heard from the swamp and Yellowthroats nest in the alders bordering the water. From the cattails, Long-billed Marsh Wrens sing as they go about building their nests in the cattails. The Great Horned Owl nests in the larger trees.

Woodpeckers can make holes for their nests and a Great Crested Flycatcher catches insects from a high perch. Rails and ducks inhabit the wet places and on occasion a Marsh Hawk can be seen quartering the marsh.

The bird walks have not been the only activity along the Little Cataraqui this spring. One of the schools has been conducting walks there. Only if the younger generation can see the reasons for preserving such a place near a city will there be more such places set aside in the future.



