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

Hugh Evans

In spite of the unusually warm fall, the arrival of winter cannot be far away. As I look out my window at the Norway maple in my neighbour's yard, I can see it still covered with leaves although they are now bright yellow. The hard frost this morning assures the leaves will soon be covering the ground. Another sign of the season is the return of the neighbourhood birds to my feeding station, which I reestablished in the beginning of October. As I live in town, the most numerous species is the house sparrow but fortunately there are a good number of others: chickadees, house finches, cardinals, mourning doves and white-breasted nuthatches to name a few.

A number of interesting events took place on the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary this fall. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve conducted a survey of the vegetation, soil and rock types in several plots within the sanctuary. This is part of a survey conducted on private and public land within the Frontenac Arch area. The KFN have received a detailed inventory of the information collected on our property. Mary Greenwood from Darwin Australia donated approximately one hundred acres of land adjacent to the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary to Ontario Heritage. A sign erected a few hundred meters along the trail through the sanctuary to the Greenwood Property was dedicated at a ceremony on a beautiful day in September. Members of the Greenwood family, Barbara Heidenreich of Ontario Heritage and members of the KFN executive attended the ceremony. Monitoring of the Greenwood Property for Ontario Heritage will be a responsibility of the KFN.

At the KFN general meetings over the past year there has been a variety of interesting topics for the presentations. This is due to the efforts of Chris Grooms, our vice-president, and in part to the talent available in the Queen's Biology Department. This fall the talks have included a discussion of turtle conservation complete with live turtles, the conservation status of the North American White Sturgeon along the west coast and a presentation on macrophotography complete with impressive photographs, followed by a field trip the next week to demonstrate insect photography. Last spring and winter we heard about the status of the Monteverde rain forest, polar bears, the importance of the boreal forest as a nursery for Ontario songbirds and the recovery of the bald eagle.

A new feature at the general meetings this fall is a slide show, which runs for twenty minutes before the meeting begins. The shows have been created by Gaye Beckwith and include photographs and announcements of KFN activities. ***So far he has used mainly his own photographs, but he would welcome contributions from anyone who has photographs they would like to show.***

Ron Weir has almost finished preparing the text of next edition of Birds of the Kingston Region. It will bring up to date data on the birds of the area from the edition published in 1989. We look forward to having the new edition available some time next spring.

By the time you receive this issue we will be into the holiday season when we can participate in one or more of the Christmas Bird Counts in the area. I wish you Season's Greetings and all the best for the New Year.

Hugh Evans

Fall Roundup Nov 3-4 2007

Ron D. Weir

The 41st KFN Fall Roundup took place between 1500h Saturday Nov 3 and 1500h Sunday Nov 4. Participants numbered 32. During Saturday, sun and cloud made the birding very pleasant with light winds and a temperature about 15 °C. The overcast night produced occasional light showers during Sunday morning, with temperatures varying from 3°C to 12°C and no wind. The calm water of Lake Ontario made for easy viewing to find waterbirds.

A total of 125 species was realized, which is above the 37-year 1970-2006 average of 120. The cumulative total remains at 237 species. Noteworthy finds included Pacific Loon, 7th record; Eared Grebe, 4th record; Sandhill Crane, 2nd record; Solitary Sandpiper, 3rd record; Ruddy Turnstone, 7th record; Red Knot, 2nd record. Record high counts of individual species include 821 Common Loons, 9 Barred Owls and 5 Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

Species unique or special to parties are:

Party # 1:	Blue-winged Teal, Solitary Sandpiper.
Party # 2:	Eastern Meadowlark shared with party 3.
Party # 3:	Sharp-shinned Hawk.
Party # 4:	Pacific Loon, Wood Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Bohemian Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler.
Party # 5:	Bald Eagle, Little Gull.
Party # 6:	Sandhill Crane, Northern Goshawk, Long-eared Owl.
Party # 7:	Short-eared Owl.
Party # 8:	Black Scoter, American Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Pectoral Sandpiper, Lapland Longspur.

Totals in the following table have had known duplications removed so that the total individuals for a species may not equal the sum of the contributions from each party. The results provide a reasonable estimate of the numbers of birds found. The composition of the parties and the sites visited are given before the table. Following the count, birders met at the home of Marian and Joel Ellis for the potluck supper. Marian and Joel were again great hosts and a warm thank-you is extended for their continued hospitality. The assembly of the species list after dinner was greeted with enthusiasm.

Party #1	Faith Avis, Marg Benson, Pauline Hockey, Winnie Smith, (Kingston area including Cartwright Pt., Grass Creek, Rideau Trail; Wolfe I., Elevator Bay and surroundings, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons).
Party #2	Lynn Bell (Elevator Bay, Parrott's Bay, Bath Road to Adolphustown, Hay Bay, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, Napanee).
Party #3	Erwin Batalla, Betsy Beckwith, Gaye Beckwith, Rose-Marie Burke, Alex Simmons, Hugh Evans, Darren Rayner, Al Treganza, Shirley Treganza, (Elevator Bay, Belle Island, Wolfe Island).
Party #4	Joel Ellis, Peter Good, Kathy Innes, Paul Mackenzie, Bud Rowe, Ron Weir, Catherine (Prince Edward Pt., Amherstview Sewage Lagoon, Kingston area, south shore Hay Bay, Sillsville, Morven Creek).
Party #5	Gerald and Shirley Paul (Kingston area including Elevator Bay, Little Cataraqui Creek wetlands and Rideau Trail, Dupont Lagoon, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons).
Party #6	Alex Scott and Karen Fleming (Bath area, Amherst I., Amherstview Sewage Lagoons).
Party #7	Sharon David (Howe Island).
Party #8	Bruce Di Labio *et al.*
Party #9	Miscellaneous observers: Kathy Creber, Marion Ellis, Kristin Keeley, Nittaya Mackenzie, Terry Sprague, Owen Weir.

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS									
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	TOT
Red-thr. Loon	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	4
Pacific Loon	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Comm. Loon	x	1	12	415	2	7	75	316	-	821
P. B. Grebe	x	-	2	43	-	-	-	-	-	45
Horned Grebe	-	-	2	585	-	5	-	108	-	700
R.-n. Grebe	-	-	-	7	-	1	-	1	-	9
Eared Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
D-c Cormorant	x	-	x	33	1	2	20	19	-	85
G. Bl. Heron	x	1	5	5	1	1	1	2	-	16
Tur Vulture	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	4
Snow Goose	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	11
Canada Goose	x	2000	x	4400	7500	5000	180	222	x	17,080
Brant	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Mute Swan	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Tundra Swan	x	-	10	15	-	-	-	-	-	25
Wood Duck	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Gadwall	x	2	x	360	1	50	-	86	-	370
Eur. Wigeon	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1
Am. Wigeon	x	50	x	725	1	30	-	48	-	755
Am. Bl. Duck	x	2	x	65	1	1	10	50	x	129
Mallard	x	200	x	1150	1	200	67	85	x	1,302
Bl.-wing. Teal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
N. Shoveler	x	-	x	65	1	-	-	-	-	66
N. Pintail	x	10	x	50	1	3	-	17	-	81
Gr.-wing. Teal	x	20	x	57	1	30	-	21	-	78
Redhead	x	-	5	10	-	-	-	2	-	17
R.-neck. Duck	x	-	x	6	1	-	1	40	-	48
Greater Scaup	x	200	x	50,000	1	x	2	65	-	50,265
Lesser Scaup	-	-	-	160	1	x	-	41	-	202
Surf Scoter	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	18	-	23
W.-w. Scoter	x	-	1	500	-	-	-	1	-	503
Black Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	12
L.-tailed Duck	-	-	8	1760	-	-	-	1	-	1,769
Bufflehead	x	20	x	380	1	100	51	51	-	482
C. Goldeneye	-	-	x	36	1	-	25	40	-	102
Hooded Merg.	x	2	x	16	1	-	-	8	-	25
Comm. Merg.	x	2	x	35	1	20	26	7	-	90
Red-br. Merg.	-	-	x	500	1	50	5	1050	-	1,600
Ruddy Duck	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	6
Amer. Coot	x	10	x	275	-	50	-	38	-	325
Sandhill Crane	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Bald Eagle	-	-	-	-	1 im	-	-	-	-	1
N. Harrier	x	10	x	-	-	3	2	2	-	19

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS									
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	TOT
S. S. Hawk	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Coop. Hawk	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
N. Goshawk	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Red-sh. Hawk	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Red-tail. Hawk	x	4	x	13	4	5	16	3	-	47
R.-legged Hawk-		2	x	4	-	2	-	3	-	12
Amer. Kestrel	x	1	3	1	1	2	-	1	-	10
Merlin	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	3
R.-n. Pheasant	1	1	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	5
Ruffed Grouse	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	3
Wild Turkey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Bl.-bell. Plover	-	-	6	-	1	3	-	7	-	17
Am. G. Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Killdeer	-	-	5	7	2	-	-	2	-	16
Gr. Yellowlegs	1	-	5	-	1	-	-	1	-	7
L. Yellowlegs	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Sol. Sandpiper		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
R. Turnstone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Red Knot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Pec. Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dunlin	-	-	6	30	-	6	-	-	5	47
Wilson's Snipe		-	-	1	14	-	-	-	-	15
Little Gull		-	-	--	1 im	-	-	-	-	1
Bonap. Gull	x	20	x	60	1	200	-	22	x	303
R.-billed Gull	x	50	x	285	1	100	460	90	x	985
Herring Gull	x	1	x	35	1	20	5	87	x	110
Gr. Bl-b. Gull	-	-	2	6	1	1	2	5	x	17
Rock Pigeon	x	10	x	325	1	20	5	5	x	365
Mourn. Dove	x	50	x	110	1	50	65	2	x	260
E. Scr.- Owl	-	-	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	5
Gr. H. Owl	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	4
Barred Owl	-	-	2	4	-	-	1	2	-	9
L.-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	7
S.-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
B. Kingfisher	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
R.-b. Wpecker	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	5
Do. Wpecker	x	-	x	7	4	6	7	1	1	28
Ha. Wpecker	x	1	x	2	1	3	5	2	-	16
N. Flicker	x	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Pil. Wpecker	1	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	2	8
N. Shrike-	1		-	4	-	1	-	-	-	6
Bl.-h. Vireo	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Blue Jay	x	25	x	46	1	200	46	7	x	326
Am. Crow	x	30	x	75	1	100	220	2	x	428

SPECIES	PARTY NUMBERS									
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	TOT
Common Raven	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Horned Lark	x	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	-	9
B.-c. Chickadee	x	10	x	90	1	200	32	22	x	354
R.-b. Nuthatch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
W.-br.Nuthatch	x	2	x	9	8	20	6	2	-	49
Brown Creeper	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
G.-cr. Kinglet	-	-	x	6	-	-	5	5	-	17
R.-cr. Kinglet	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	7
H. Thrush	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Am. Robin	x	200	x	750	200	500	16	6	-	1672
Eur. Starling	x	100	x	100	1	1000	32	102	x	1334
Am. Pipit	x	-	x	10	-	1	-	8	-	21
B. Waxwing	-	-	-	1	-		-	--	-	1
C. Waxwing	-	-	x	630	-	-	7	1	-	638
Y.-r. Warbler	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
A. Tr. Sparrow	x	10	x	54	1	50	18	2	-	137
Ch. Sparrow	x	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Fox Sparrow	-	-	2	30	-	6	-	-	-	38
Song Sparrow	x	-	3	5	1	2	-	3	-	15
Sw. Sparrow	x	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	30
White-thr. Sp.	-	-	2	15	1	10	-	2	-	30
White-cr. Sp.	-	-	6	-	-	2	-	2	-	10
D.-e. Junco	x	20	x	530	1	200	24	7	x	786
Lap. Longspur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Snow Bunting	x	12	x	4	-	x	-	124	-	143
N. Cardinal	x	2	4	11	4	x	3	-	x	27
R.-w Blackbird	x	500	x	700	1	2000	42	50	x	3290
E. Meadowlark	-	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Rusty Blackbird	-	-	2	3	6	-	-	-	-	11
Comm. Grackle	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Br.-h. Cowbird	x	-	x	3	-	1	-	-	-	6
Purple Finch	-	-	1	12	-	-	-	1	-	14
House Finch	x	-	2	88	15	20	8	3	-	136
Comm. Redpoll	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	1	-	13
Pine Siskin	-	-	-	10	-	-	7	-	-	17
Am. Goldfinch	x	15	x	65	1	100	75	8	x	255
Eve. Grosbeak	-	-	-	60	-	-	-	2	-	62
House Sparrow	x	-	x	22	1	50	3	4	x	80
TOTAL SPECIES	60	42	84	90	54	62	46	80	24	125
PARTICIPANTS	4	1	9	7	2	2	1	1	5	32

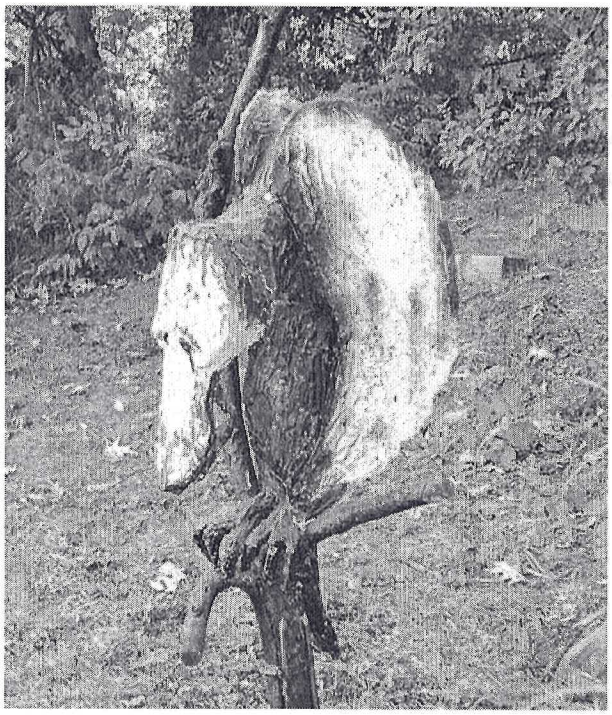
The Fate of the Purple Vulture

Paul Mackenzie

At our 45th University of Western Ontario Medical Class Reunion banquet in London, Ontario on September 29, 2007 I returned the Purple Vulture to its creator with the following speech. Because Dr. Smith, a retired Ear Nose and Throat specialist, is now very hard of hearing despite hearing aids, I gave him a paper copy.

"The Purple Vulture was a creation of Dr. Dave Smith, classmate and ENT specialist. It was donated to me with much fanfare at a Class Reunion, the 30th, in 1992 I believe. I think it was meant to elevate my pride at a time before birding became the most popular and respectable leisure activity in the English-speaking world.

I tried to find an appropriate use for it. First as a decoration in my wife's painting room, to inspire her creative imagination. Unfortunately, in our house I do not make all the final decisions. Displaying it in the labour and delivery lounge at KGH was not acceptable to the nursing staff, who seemed to lack a certain artistic appreciation.



Finally I had an idea. The Kingston Field Naturalists had struck a trophy for the team that wins our biggest birding events of the year: the Spring Roundup in May and the Fall Roundup in November. The winners are the team that finds the most species in a 24-hour period.

We decided to present the Purple Vulture as the prize to the second-place finishers. We have done this for these many years. Repairs and restoration have been lovingly carried out by the Ellises to prevent the vulture from total collapse. The worst possible outcome was to be second place and have to accommodate the despised PV for 6 months. So much so that some teams refused to take home the prize. Ron Weir describes it in our publication, the Blue Bill as "that very ugly papier mache model representing no living creature currently on this earth.

The Kingston Field Naturalists completed 50 years of Spring Roundups and the trophy for the winner needed to be replaced. It was

also time to do something about the fate of the vulture. Vultures may live about 30 years and the vulture is only 15 but euthanasia was out of the question, given the paucity of life in the carcass. I am returning it to its rightful place beside its creator who resides in London Ontario. Here Dr. Smith is your infamous bird. Let there be no second opinions as to its fate."

After the festivities, I saw Smith lugging the creature to the trunk of his car, and I felt a tinge of guilt and regret

Eastern Loggerhead Shrike 2007 Season Update

Jessica Steiner and Kurt Hennige

Wild Population

We saw an encouraging increase in the wild loggerhead shrike population this year, with 24 known pairs producing at least 87 young.

Seven wild pairs were found in Napanee, and 6 of these fledged at least 31 young. This is the lowest number of pairs recorded in the area since recovery work began, but productivity and breeding success were higher than previous seasons. Wild population monitoring in Napanee this season was again strongly supported by nearly 20 volunteers, many of them KFN members, who participated in the "Adopt-A-Site" program. This program is essential in providing continuously strong survey coverage of shrike habitat in the Napanee area.

Twelve pairs were found in Carden this season (up from 7 pairs in 2006), all successfully breeding and producing at least 51 fledglings, which likewise is an increase in productivity over the last couple of years. In addition, 1 pair with at least 2 fledglings was confirmed in the Pembroke area, but there were reliable reports of 3 breeding pairs in this area. There was a reliable report of 3 shrikes (at least one adult with a juvenile) spotted in Dyer's Bay - exciting news, as there has not been a confirmed case of breeding in Grey-Bruce counties since 2002. More good news came this fall with confirmation of a pair having bred in Smiths Falls this year, raising at least 2 young. It was thought that shrikes had disappeared from this area, making this a remarkable discovery.

With the release numbers exceeding 100 in 2006, staff anxiously awaited the results of their efforts this year and they weren't disappointed! Five shrikes released in 2006 were spotted along migration routes and on breeding grounds this year – a huge milestone for the program. One of these was seen in Ohio in March, making it the first band recovery outside of Canada for the program. Two were males that successfully bred with wild females in Carden, producing at least 7 fledglings between them. The remaining two were single birds seen in Carden, and around the field breeding enclosures in Dyer's Bay. The return of 4 release birds to the

breeding grounds represents a 3.6% juvenile return rate, comparable to that seen in other small migratory songbirds – a testament to the fitness of our release birds.

Field Breeding and Release

The captive population was also productive this year. Field staff cared for 23 pairs at our Carden and Dyer's Bay field breeding sites. In Carden, 9 of 13 pairs successfully bred and in Dyer's Bay, all 10 pairs were successful. This year, one of 6 pairs kept at our Ingersoll facility fledged young, and these were released in Carden. Five additional pairs at the Toronto Zoo did not produce any young this year. Six young were considered genetically important and were retained for the captive population. In total 94 young were released over July and August in Ontario this year, which is slightly down from 2006. Due to funding constraints, we were forced to limit breeding to some extent this year, something we were loathe to do as it is contrary to the goals of the program. If we had not been required to take this action, we anticipated surpassing last year's release numbers.

Once again, this season would not have been possible without all the hard work of our dedicated field interns, volunteers and local landowners. Their passion and commitment make these important milestones all the more reason to celebrate!

An Update on Program Funding

As you may have heard on the CBC on September 20th, the federal government has imposed severe budget cuts on Environment Canada (EC) including a recent freeze to wildlife programs that impacted the shrike recovery program funding. In 2007, cuts forced a reduction in breeding and release activities, though Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC) was able to successfully release 94 juveniles (down from the 111 released last year).

The future of the captive population and related recovery activities (wild population monitoring, habitat stewardship/restoration activities, public outreach and research) are in jeopardy beyond March 2008. EC has indicated that it cannot continue to fund the maintenance of the captive population beyond this year and Species At Risk program staff are working on developing contingency plans as to how to divest themselves of the 120 captive shrikes.

In late August WPC learned that EC would be able to provide only $100,000 from their Operations and Management stream of funding and an additional $50,000 through their Grants & Contributions stream of funding, out of the $172,000 required to complete a pared-down season. WPC was successful securing the remaining $22,000 for maintaining the captive population from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Species At Risk Stewardship Fund. These budget cuts came on top of previous cuts to the Canadian Wildlife Service. Not only is the future of the shrike recovery program at risk, but the future of the over 500 species at risk of extinction in Canada is also looking grim.

Wood Fires and Christmas

Terry Sprague

I had the pleasure one day last year of participating in the Twelve Days of Christmas presentations at a local museum. I was the Four Calling Birds. However, there were only three of us - specimens of a great horned owl, a great gray owl, and a tiny saw-whet owl, but four, if one chose to include me. In keeping with modern technology though, the songs came not from my mouth, but from the speakers of my laptop computer.

When I arrived, the fireplace already contained a crackling fire. There is something calming and spiritual about an open flame in a fireplace. This one was particularly soothing, for above it hung an iron pot, occasional wisps of steam finding an exit from beneath the lid. Moose stew, I was told. I had a sample of it later in the evening, along with some hot cider that simmered away on yet another stove in the next room.

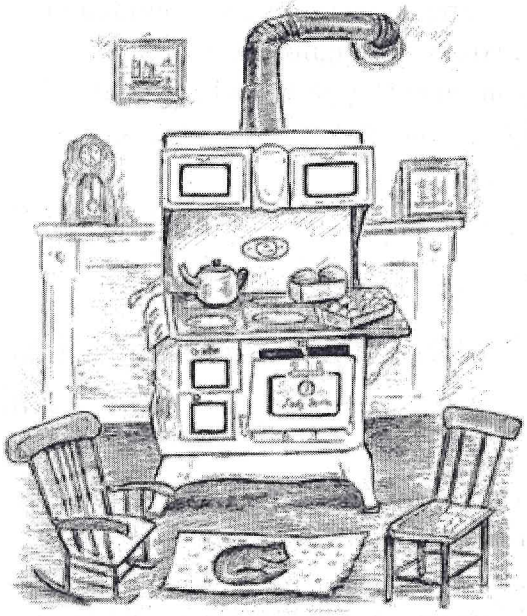
I already knew that Macaulay House volunteers had a wood fire burning somewhere, for I smelled the aroma of the smoke the moment I stepped out of the car. Back in earlier times, it was a belief that a person was judged by the colour of the smoke that rose from the "chimley", as my grandmother used to say. If wood was hastily gathered and not left to cure properly, the smoke hung thick and heavy, but smoke from hardwood that had been dried properly would corkscrew into the air in a gray-purple plume. Wood smoke spiraling naturally from a hand crafted chimney will one day become as difficult to find as coal scuttles and pokers, as outdoor wood-burning furnaces increase in popularity for those who prefer wood as a fuel, with others condemning the natural odours of the countryside, including wood smoke, with increasing distain.

For those of us who grew up in rural areas though, the smell of wood smoke curling out of a chimney brings back memories of hearth and home. And it did for me that evening at this museum as my mind drifted back to the days when my parents relied on wood to heat the farmhouse. The wood stove was always considered the heart and soul of the rural home, and indeed it was at our home. The old Findlay "Oval" woodstove stood between the kitchen and the livingroom, and the table was thoughtfully positioned within just a few feet of it where its volcanic heat would warm our backs as we ate dinner.

The wood stove was the centrepiece and performed numerous functions. The reservoir at the far end of the stove kept warm water available for any occasion. There was no need to plug in a kettle for coffee or tea, as there was always a kettle of water boiling furiously on the back burner, a secondary use being to provide humidity to the otherwise dry winter air. The oven, when not occupied by a Christmas turkey, always

contained two or three round hardhead stones. These were used as bed-warmers, and on cold nights one would be wrapped in a towel and placed under the covers at the foot of the bed. I well remember one city friend who stayed overnight quickly glancing in my direction for some kind of comfort when my mother asked him if he would like a stone in his bed. He soon found out what it was all about when he climbed into bed and his bare feet touched the red-hot object under the covers. It was surely a night to remember as he was also awakened the next morning by my mother "shaking the grates" on the wood stove below the bedroom, a noise that could wake the dead as it reverberated through the stove pipes that passed through his bedroom. At other times, when our feet were numb after working outside in the cold all day, the oven would serve yet another purpose. With the oven door fully open, all one had to do was pull up a chair, and rest their feet on the inside of the oven door. All that was needed to make the scene complete was a cup of hot chocolate and a copy of The Family Herald.

All wood stoves stood off the floor on decorative curved legs, providing enough space for the family dog or cat to crawl under and sprawl out as they drank in the heat. The top portion of the stove held a warming closet where food could be kept hot if we were a little late in getting the farm chores done for the day. I remember the stove containing a bewildering array of little dampers and drafts and tiny doors, some of which we never used, but they all served some purpose. One in particular leading directly to the firebox could be lifted easily, into which our visiting neighbour could flick his cigarette ashes as he pulled up a chair to the one end of the stove.



A short clothesline behind the stove held damp wool socks at one end, and the day's wet dish cloths and towels at the other end. For twelve months of the year, the stove was busy multi-tasking. During the summer months, the top of the stove would be covered with newspapers, and served as a summer workstation.

Fond memories indeed. Although memories of hand-splitting cord upon cord of wood every winter also stand out, and the hideous task of cleaning stove pipes, the memories of sitting around the woodstove on cold winter nights are priceless. At this season of the

year, the atmosphere of the wood stove took on a special meaning as the Christmas tree was decorated and the annual tradition of hanging decorations took place. Somehow those memories can't be replicated today as we plug in the electric kettle, and turn up the thermostat. However, it took just one evening at a museum, surrounded by a mixture of delightful aromas and volunteer staff in period costume to bring it all back.

May I take this opportunity to wish all KFN members a very Merry Christmas, and the wish that everyone in 2008 experiences the best checklist ever of flora and fauna.

Terry Sprague is a naturalist, free-lance writer and KFN member who lives in Prince Edward County. See his website at www.naturestuff.net .

Sketch of wood stove courtesy of: http://www.nova-scotia-cottage-rental.com/nova-scotia-recipes.html

Kingston Field Naturalists 2007 Yearly Summary of Odonata

Kurt Hennige

There were 78 species of odonates reported in the Kingston Area during 2007. Ten species were new to the Kingston area. The area covered for this summary is a 50-km radius semi-circle centred at 44 deg 12 min North and 76 deg 29 min West. The northern limit of the circle is located in the Westport area and the southern limit is represented by the international border with the United States. The circle extends from the Rockport area in the east to the Marysville area in the west. The circle contains the southern portions of Frontenac and Lennox and Addington Counties, as well as a portion of southwestern Leeds County, the extreme southeastern tip of Hastings County and a small portion of eastern Prince Edward County.

The number of odonata species reported increased to 87. Large gaps still exist in our knowledge of the diversity and distribution of odonates in the Kingston area.

For a list of species thought to occur in our area, please consult the Checklist for Damselflies and Dragonflies of Kingston, available from the KFN Website at
http://www.kingstonfieldnaturalists.org

FIRST SIGHTING	LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	OBSERVERS
07/05/2007	Tetragoneuria canis	Beaverpond Baskettail	K.H
08/05/2007	Tetragoneuria spinigera	Spiny Baskettail	K.H
09/05/2007	Leucorrhinia hudsonica	Hudsonian Whiteface	K.H
10/05/2007	Cordulia shurtleffi	American Emerald	K.H
11/05/2007	Ischnura verticalis	Eastern Forktail	K.H
12/05/2007	Anax junius	Common Green Darner	K.H
13/05/2007	Basiaeschna janata	Springtime Darner	K.H
11/05/2007	Gomphus spicatus	Dusky Clubtail	K.H
13/05/2007	Libellula quadrimaculata	Four-spotted Skimmer	K.H
13/05/2007	Leucorrhinia intacta	Dot-tailed Whiteface	K.H
14/05/2007	Ladona julia	Chalk-fronted Corporal	K.H
23/05/2007	Tetragoneuria cynosura	Common Baskettail	K.H
23/05/2007	Enallagma cyathigerum	Northern Bluet	B.Rp
23/05/2007	Didymops transversa	Stream Cruiser	B.Rp
23/05/2007	Enallagma boreale	Boreal Bluet	B.Rp
24/05/2007	Dorocordulia libera	Racket-tailed Emerald	B.Rp
24/05/2007	Coenagrion resolutum	Taiga Bluet	K.H
26/05/2007	Leucorrhinia glacialis	Crimson-ringed Whiteface	M&C. S
27/05/2007	Calopteryx maculata	Ebony Jewelwing	K.H
29/05/2007	Erythemis simplicicollis	Eastern Pondhawk	K.H
29/05/2007	Plathemis lydia	Common Whitetail	K.H
29/05/2007	Libellula pulchella	Twelve-spotted Skimmer	K.H
30/05/2007	Arigomphus furcifer	Lilypad Clubtail	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Leucorrhinia frigida	Frosted Whiteface	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Gomphus exilis	Lancet Clubtail	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Leucorrhinia proxima	Belted Whiteface	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Nehalennia irene	Sedge Sprite	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Lestes inaequalis	Elegant Spreadwing	K.H&B.Rp
30/05/2007	Ischnura posita	Fragile Forktail	K.H&B.Rp
04/06/2007	Enallagma civile	Familiar Bluet	K.H&B.Rp
04-Jun	Libellula luctuosa	Widow Skimmer	K.H
06/06/2007	Nannothemis bella	Elfin Skimmer	B.Rp
06/06/2007	Libellula incesta	Slaty Skimmer	B.Rp
06/06/2007	Celithemis elisa	Calico Pennant	B.Rp
06/06/2007	Pachydiplax longipennis	Blue Dasher	B.Rp
07/06/2007	Somatochlora kennedyi	Kennedy,s Emerald	M.R
07/06/2007	Epitheca princeps	Prince Baskettail	M.R

07/06/2007	Enallagma geminatum	Skimming Bluet	M.R
09/06/2007	Lestes vigilax	Swamp Spreadwing.	M&C. S
10/06/2007	Cordulegaster obliqua	Arrowhead Spiketail	K.H
11/06/2007	Argia moesta	Powdered Dancer	K.H
12/06/2007	Enallagma exsulans	Stream Bluet	K.H
12/06/2007	Macromia illinoiensis	Swift River Cruiser	K.H
12/06/2007	Arigomphus cornutus	Horned Clubtail	K.H&B.Rp
12/06/2007	Cordulegaster maculata	Twin-spotted Spiketail	B.Rp
12/06/2007	Nasiaeschna pentacantha	Cyrano Darner	B.Rp
12/06/2007	Aeshna canadensis	Canada Darner	B.Rp
13/06/2007	Calopteryx aequabilis	River Jewelwing	K.H
14/06/2007	Chromagrion conditum	Aurora Damsel	K.H
17/06/2007	Enallagma antennatum	Rainbow Bluet	M.R
18/06/2007	Enallagma signatum	Orange Bluet	K.H
18/06/2007	Celithemis eponina	Halloween Pennant	K.H
19/06/2007	Enallagma ebrium	Marsh Bluet	B.Rp&K.H
20/06/2007	Lestes eurinus	Amber-winged Spreadwing	B.Rp&K.H
20/06/2007	Hagenius brevistylus	Dragonhunter	B.Rp&K.H
20/06/2007	Lestes dryas	Emerald Spreadwing	B.Rp&K.H
24/06/2007	Epiaeschna heros	Swamp Darner	K.H
26/06/2007	Enallagma vesperum	Vesper Bluet	B.Rp
27/06/2007	Stylogomphus albistylus	Eastern Least Clubtail	K.H&B.Rp
27/06/2007	Nehalennia gracillis	Sphagnum Sprite	B.Rp
27/06/2007	Enallagma carunculatum	Tule Bluet	B.Rp
01/07/2007	Enallagma hageni	Hagen's Bluet	K.H
03/07/2007	Lestes unguiculatus	Lyre-tipped Spreadwing	K.F.N
03/07/2007	Lestes disjunctus	Northern Spreadwing	K.F.N
06/07/2007	Dromogomphus spinosus	Black-shouldered Spinyleg	K.H
10/07/2007	Aeshna tuberculifera	Black-tipped Darner	B.Rp&K.H
10/07/2007	Sympetrum obtrusum	White-face Meadowhawk	B.Rp&K.H
21/07/2007	Tramea lacerata	Black Saddlebags	B.Rp
29/07/2007	Perithemis tenera	Eastern Amberwing	M&C. S
31/07/2007	Aeshna umbrosa	Shadow Darner	K.H
11/08/2007	Boyeria vinosa	Fawn Darner	K.H
21/08/2007	Lestes congener	Spotted Spreadwing	M&C. S
23/08/2007	Aeshna constricta	Lance-tipped Darner	K.H

28/08/2007	Lestes forcipatus	Sweetflag Spreadwing	B.Rp
12/092007	Aeshna eremita	Lake Darner	B.Rp
12/092007	Pantala flavescens	Wandering Glider	B.Rp
12/092007	Pantala hymenea	Spot-winged Glider	B.Rp
02/10/2007	Stylurus notatus	Elusive Clubtail	B.Rp&P.M

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KFN = Kingston Field Naturalists (3+ observers)

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Ontario's Saltwater Coast

Mark Conboy

From June 30 to July 15, 2007, my wife Philina English and I visited Ontario's saltwater coast to study the bird life of the region. Our objective was twofold: 1) research breeding behaviour in Smith's longspur as part of Philina's master's project; and 2) assist a Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) crew with an assessment of *interior* Canada goose nesting success. Our study site was a 36 km^2 zone of coastline, tundra and treeline in the vicinity of Burnt Point Creek in the Hudson Bay portion of Polar Bear Provincial Park. This is brief account of our observations.

Vastly under studied and seldom visited, Ontario's saltwater coastline is a rare destination for even the most adventurous naturalist. It is well worth the expense and effort of getting there, for it is starkly beautiful and wonderfully isolated. Between Fort Severn in the northwest and Moosonee in the southeast, there are only a handful of small communities, mines

and fishing lodges. The land is flat, wet and windswept. The abundant wildlife is more arctic-like than one might expect so far south. The weather is, well, changeable. This is a land shaped by winter wind, held together by permafrost, and given life by an abundance of freshwater.

Our base camp at Burnt Point Creek was situated 70 km east of the remote Cree community Peawanick on the Winisk River. Camp was a collection of three buildings constructed and maintained by the MNR as part of ongoing goose population studies. The kitchen, sleeping quarters and an outhouse were surrounded by a barbed-wire electric fence for protection against curious polar bears that frequent the region in summer. A panoramic view of the surroundings would have revealed: the treeline about three kilometres south; icy Hudson Bay equidistant north; and to the east and west endless flat tundra, ponds, and fens. Lone tamaracks and stunted clumps of spruce stood as lonely sentinels against an often grey sky.

The only access to Burnt Point Creek is by air; more specifically a Twin Otter equipped with tundra tires for landing without a runway. Heading out from Timmins on June 30, we flew to Moosonee where we stopped to collect supplies. Airborne again over the Moose River, we continued northward to touch down one last time at Attawapiskat for additional fuel. Two-and-a-half hours out of Attawapiskat we were circling over the camp's cabins: man-made specks amid an array of meltwater ponds and snowdrifts. The pilot selected a flat gravel ridge book-ended by small stands of stout spruces to set down on, and did so with remarkable ease.

The half-day flight was over the third largest wetland complex on Earth: the Hudson Bay Lowlands. It encompasses 324,000 km^2 of bog, fen, boreal forest, lakes and rivers. Flying over the wetlands from top to bottom (they extend from south of Moosonee and along the Hudson Bay coast as far west as Manitoba) gives you a striking picture of this forlorn place. Except for the compact rivermouth villages, such as the now infamous Kashechewan, there is utterly no sign of humankind. Rather, the eye is drawn to the great rivers like the Albany, the Attawapiskat, and the Sutton that flow languidly into Hudson and James Bays, bringing with them silt carried by spring runoff. The silt feeds the inland sea ultimately giving life to runs of speckled trout, vast pods of Belugas and large herds of harbour, bearded and ringed seals that inhabit the these waters.

From above, the landforms were striking. There were patterned fens that form with the slow movement of water down a slight gradient producing washboard-like striations. Immense flat peatlands break up the spruce. The nearer we got to the northern coastline, the more the forest deteriorated into isolated shrub islands on a tundra expanse of lichen and sedge; eventually it disappeared altogether. At the coast, wide beaches of sand and pebble sloped gently into Hudson Bay. Behind the beaches a surprising amount of

driftwood was arranged in parallel ranks: trees washed down rivers to the sea, and swept ashore in summer storms. Ponds, mudflats and fields of succulent grasses mown short by geese lay between the beaches and willow scrub at the tundra's edge.

Unloading two weeks worth of food and field equipment from the Otter, we noticed just how late spring is in coming to the Hudson Bay coast. Camp was roughly the same latitude as Edmonton. For me this was a useful comparison because I had spent three previous springs in northern Alberta. There the aspens would be in nearly full leaf by now, the first butterflies emerged from winter hibernation and some warblers singing on their breeding territories. But in Polar Bear Provincial Park the willows were barely in bloom. It would be a week yet before we would see the first Lapland rosebay or white mountain-avens in bloom. Despite the lack of green, newly-arrived migrant birds were singing and displaying all around.

Though Philina and I had come to work primarily with the obscure northern sparrow, Smith's longspur, we also assisted with the MNR's study of Canada geese. Ontario has two distinct and somewhat disjunct populations of Canada geese. Breeding all through the Hudson Bay lowlands is the subspecies *Branta canadensis interior*. Its slightly larger, slightly darker southern counterpart, called the temperate Canada goose[1], breeds in southern Ontario. The *interior* race is not as small or dark as the rarer cackling goose (*Branta hutchinsii*). Temperate Canada geese do not breed on the Hudson Bay coast, but nevertheless can be found there in the breeding season as molt migrants. Molt migrants are non-breeding birds that migrate to Hudson Bay to eat and molt on the fertile coastal plain.

One of the most significant differences between the sub-arctic *interior* race and southern Ontario's temperate race is a behavioural one. Ganders among our larger southern geese are well-known defenders of their nests, sometimes driving away predators the size of red foxes. It may surprise many readers to learn that the *interior* race is far less aggressive, and readily flies at any sign of danger. Save for a couple of ill-tempered mother geese, there was no nest defense practiced at all. This behaviour is not easily explained, as it seems to limit nesting success. We witnessed their nests being depredated by parasitic jaegers and herring gulls. No doubt the red and arctic foxes in the area took their fair share too.

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[1] ***I have not included a trinomial scientific name for the so-called temperate Canada goose because it is actually of mixed genetic origin and does not really qualify as a distinct subspecies. Branta canadensis canadensis, maxima, moffitti, and interior may all have contributed to the temperate Canada goose gene pool through successive reintroduction efforts beginning in 1930 (Lumsden 1988 and Abraham 2005).***

The MNR study protocol necessitated covering the 36km² site on foot to locate each and every Canada goose nest we could. As each nest was discovered we counted and marked the eggs. Each day we monitored the nests and upon hatching, tagged nestlings with a metal tab on a toe web. Traditional bands cannot be used on fledglings because their legs are too small. Later in the season a second crew would return to band and capture as many geese as they could, at which point the web tags serve the useful purpose of knowing the entire life history of each goose from the day it hatched.

Within hours of hatching, young Canada geese are capable of leaving the nest, walking, running precariously and swimming. They can even dive and do so instinctively when approached by a gull, jaeger or human. I timed a dive lasting just over one minute. When they do resurface, usually below an overhanging shrub, they appear perfectly dry, thanks to their impervious yellow down.

Male Smith's Longspur *Mark Andrew Conboy*

Philina and I were at Burnt Point Creek to investigate the unique breeding system of Smith's longspur (*Calcarius pictus*). Instead of going into detail about our research, I will elaborate more on the natural history of the species.

Smith's longspur is rarely encountered in Ontario. It winters in the central United States, but during migration it may occur as a stray east of its usual prairie flyway. There are records scattered from Thunder Bay to southwestern Ontario, and even a single record for Kingston at the Amherstview sewage lagoons in 1973 (Weir 1989). It is not an uncommon breeder at Burnt Point Creek, and if it is as abundant across its long but narrow range in Ontario there should be several thousand pairs. Typically *Calcarius pictus* is said to be restricted to tundra adjacent to the treeline where stunted larches and spruces grow. However, at Churchill, Manitoba, we also found the species in large open fens several kilometres south of the treeline surrounded by boreal forest. How many fens further south in Ontario hold Smith's longspurs waiting to be discovered?

We arrived on the coast at about the time the Smith's longspur did, which is up to two weeks after their cogener the Lapland longspur. Lapland longspurs do not breed at Burnt Point Creek (though they did in the recent past), and most had left by the end of our two-

week stay; but not before we could see their flight display which is sometimes given near the end of migration.

Smith's longspurs maintain territories in wet fen-like conditions with a few scattered trees. The dominant ground cover is sedges and grasses with dwarf birch and lichens on the raised hummocks. An important feature of the longspur's habitat is elevated sand and gravel ridges. These are ancient beach ridges which typically run parallel to the coastline and are now far from the receding waters of Hudson Bay. They are being left high and dry not because Hudson Bay is losing water, but because the land is gaining height. With the melting of the glaciers at the end of the last ice age, an immense weight was been lifted off the land. Relieved of this burden, the land is now rebounding upward. Aside from the abundant savannah sparrows, longspurs were one of the few songbirds in these wetlands. We were disappointed not to find any Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows in the area.

Smith's longspur has a novel breeding system. Indeed its strange mating arrangement is known from only a few other species: the dunnock and accentors of Eurasia and possibly the Bicknell's thrush. It is estimated that about 90% of all passerines are socially monogamous despite high frequencies of extra-pair copulations (cheating on their mates) being found in many species. Smith's longspurs have a totally different system in which one female will mate with multiple males and one male will mate with multiple females. This is called polygynandry. At first this may sound polygamy. But polygamy involves only one male mating with two or more females. Similarly, polyandry is one female involved with two or more males. But for Smith's longspurs it's multiple males and multiple females involved in a complex mating system! It is therefore possible to see two males and a female feeding young at each nest, in total cooperation with one another. They display no territoriality and often forage for insects and seeds together while away from the nest site. When the nestlings finally fledge, the brood is divided among the adults so that each of male and female care for one or two young.

There is really no good explanation in the literature for why this peculiar mating arrangement should occur. Colour banding studies such as Philina's (pers. comm. 2007) and that of Briskie (1993) leave many questions unanswered. One suggestion is that cooperative males could be brothers who are helping to raise each other's progeny. As Richard Dawkins points out in *The Selfish Gene* there is good genetic reason to help raise your "nieces and nephews" which is essentially what would be the case here[2]. Until he appropriate genetic analysis is completed, we can only speculate as to

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[2] ***Brothers potentially share ½ of their genes with each other. An uncle and niece/nephew potentially share ¼ of their genes with each other. Since the "goal" of evolution is to perpetuate genes (Dawkins 1976) it makes sense to "invest" in your relatives. This is a controversial view in evolutionary theory and has been for several decades.***

what the evolutionary advantage to polygynandry in Smith's longspurs is.

Though Smith's longspurs are highly interesting birds, there are many others that deserve mention. Sharing the extensive wet tundra with the longspurs were legions of shorebirds. Aside from our four breeding species, shorebirds in the Kingston region are merely ephemeral migrants. We see them on beaches and in sewage lagoons, but they are on their way someplace else and preoccupied with feeding. Polar Bear Provincial Park is a major breeding area for charadrids. The coastal beaches are another important staging ground for species headed further north. Least sandpiper, short-billed dowitcher, Wilson's snipe, dunlin, Hudsonian godwit, stilt sandpiper and whimbrel are all common breeders inland. Along the coast one could expect to find nests of killdeer and semipalmated plover. Semipalmated, white-rumped, Baird's and pectoral sandpipers all stop to rest and feed in the rich back-beach ponds among red-necked phalaropes, sanderlings and American golden-plovers, all on their way to the arctic.

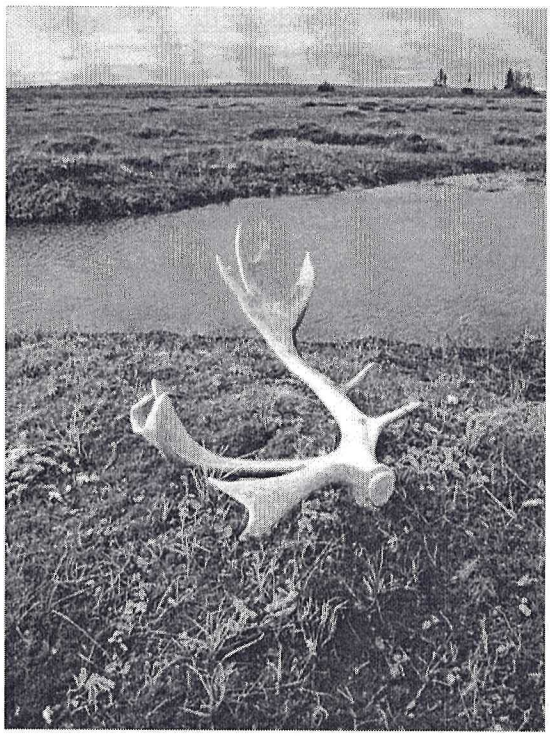
Observing the displays and hearing the varied vocalizations of shorebirds is a special treat. Among the most notable is the aggressive mobbing behaviour of Hudsonian godwits. Godwits react to approaching threats in a very proactive manner. They typically sneak off of their well-concealed nests while the naturalist is some distance away. Suddenly alarm cries emit from all around as several godwits proceed to mob the intruder. Sometimes half a dozen birds descend on the perceived threat, some coming from great distances away. They effectively drive away merlins, jaegers, gulls and ravens.

Willow ptarmigan were abundant this year. We found at least five nests, all by accident. Like other gallinaceous birds, ptarmigan go through boom and bust cycles, this year happened to be a *great* one. They are dopey to such a degree that I caught one with my bare hands! Other arctic specialties were rough-legged hawk, parasitic jaeger, Arctic tern, long-tailed duck, Pacific loon, red-throated loon, golden eagle, common redpoll, Harris' sparrow, snow goose and tundra swan.

Ice held on in Hudson Bay for the duration of our trip, sometimes as close as 100 m from shore. The incumbent ice and shallow water made viewing sea mammals all but impossible. Spotting even a harbour seal was challenging. No polar bears came ashore during our visit, which was a mixed blessing. No Belugas, orcas, or bowhead whales were seen either. Later in the summer we moved on to Churchill, Manitoba, where sea mammal viewing is easy and productive, and I recommend that location over Polar Bear Provincial Park in June and July.

The lack of marine mammals was more than made up for by the small herds of caribou that were seen daily. One morning we watched a pair of white wolves chase caribou within 300 m of us. They disappeared into the distance before we could know the outcome of the hunt. The wolves illustrated one of

the true rewards of going north: many animals, even those that still experience local hunting pressure, are practically fearless of humans.



A shed woodland caribou antler lies beside a tundra pool. Philina English

Both arctic and red fox can be seen. Unfortunately the two arctic foxes we saw were dead. As evidenced by their white pledge they had died during the winter. Locating one of their enormous den complexes in a sand dune was a special treat. The old rearing site had 12 entrances. The "yard" was littered with wings and skulls of waterfowl. There was also fur of mammals, probably hare. Arctic hare were rare this year, but can no doubt be abundant.

Ontario's saltwater coast deserves attention from naturalists because it is a piece of the arctic right here in our own province. A visit to Polar Bear P P is highly recommended. There is much to learn and discover throughout this remote landscape. Thankfully, much of the coast, tundra and treeline forest is protected within the confines of our largest Provincial Park.

Finally, I would like to offer some tips for visiting Ontario's northern limits. Hip waders are essential for any travel on foot in the northern Hudson Bay lowlands. Do not skimp, purchase a pair of resilient neoprene ones. In June/July at least, prepare for temperatures ranging from -10°C to +30°C, snow, rain, and bright sunshine. You must have some sort of protection against polar bears. A 12-guage shotgun with ¾ inch slugs and noisemakers is the standard in the north. Bear attacks are rare but entirely possible since polar bears seem to very have little intrinsic fear of humans. But don't worry too much about bears, you'll probably feel far more threatened by the clouds of mosquitoes and bulldog flies that emerge on warm days.

Mark Andrew Conboy is a member of the Kingston Field Naturalists and is pursuing a Master's degree in Biology at Queen's University

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KFN Teen Field Trip: My Hike to the Depot Lakes Bog

Aaron Kennedy

Today (September 15) I went to a bog with the Kingston Teen Naturalists. After about an hour's drive from Kingston, we hiked into the bog. We learned all about different plants, wetlands and some birds. We also learned that there are fewer animals in bog water because there is less oxygen for them to breathe.

My favorite part was discovering and eating wild cranberries. The pinkish berries tasted bitter and the red ones tasted sweet! We also looked at sphagnum moss with magnifiers to distinguish parts of the plant.

Other plants seen were: black spruce, tamarack, cranberry, bog cotton, leatherleaf, pitcher plant.

Hikes with Anne are really, really fun but this hike was the best because it was my first Teen hike

Summer Season – 1 June to 31 July 2007

Ron D. Weir

Weather for the reporting period was normal, but the precipitation was below the norm. The favourable weather conditions from late May throughout the period prompted early nesting and early fledging for many species.

Species Account:

Great Egret – Jun 8 (1) Elginburg, E. Batalla.
Black Vulture – Jun 14 (1) Joyceville Road, I. Shanahan.
Eurasian Wigeon – Jul 16 (1 male) Howe I., J. Cooke.
Canvasback – Jul 14-17 (1) Amherst I., H. Evans, A. Simmons.
Bufflehead – Jul 17 to Aug 18 (1 female) Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, KFN.
Common Merganser – Jul 17 (1 female + 5 young) Amherst I., KFN.
Ruddy Duck – Jul 19 (1) Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, B. M. DiLabio.
Greater Yellowlegs – Jul 5 onwards Odessa, P. Good.

Lesser Yellowlegs – Jul 8 onwards, peak Jul 29 (250) Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, P. Mackenzie, B. M. DiLabio.
Solitary Sandpiper – Jul 15 onwards, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, E. Batalla.
Sanderling – Jul 24 onwards, PEPt, *fide* Sprague.
Pectoral Sandpiper – Jul 15 onwards, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, E. Batalla.
Short-billed Dowitcher – Jul 15 onwards, Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, P. Mackenzie.
Wilson's Phalarope – last sighting Jul 29, Amherst I., B. DiLabio.
Red-headed Woodpecker – Jun 15 (1) Hamburg road, K. Scott; Jun 9(1) Cape Vincent, KFN; July (1) Simcoe I., *fide* P. Good.
Common Raven – June, nest fledged 5 young, Gananoque, J. Haig.

Autumn Season - August 1 to November 30 2007

Ron D. Weir

The first three months of the period were marked by very dry conditions, which continued from the summer period. Lake Ontario in the Kingston area was at a low level not seen in several decades. Clear nights during August and September permitted heavy migration under ideal flying conditions for the birds, and birders saw the fallout on some of the mornings after the flights as the birds were grounded.

October and the first part of November were warmer than usual. The first snow appeared during late November, but it did not last long on the warm ground. By the close of November, temperatures became normal. Arctic and boreal forest finches appeared in numbers during October and November.

Rarities include Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Great Cormorant, Great Egret, Cackling Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Willet, Red-necked Phalarope, Black-backed Woodpecker, Northern Wheatear (4th ever), Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Latest Ever Departures

Broad-winged Hawk: Nov 19 (1) Kingston CG (84 Nov 13)
Olive-sided Flycatcher: Sep 29 (1) Amherst I. JHE, (RDW 73 Sep 26)
Eastern Phoebe: Nov 22 (1) Cape Vessey *fide* RTS (72 Nov 12)
Golden-winged Warbler: Oct 8 (1) Kingston DR (94 Sep 21)

Species Account

Red-throated Loon – Oct 16 (1), 21(5), Nov 4 (1) PEPt., KFN; Nov 4 (3) Amherst I., BMD.
Pacific Loon – Nov 4 (1) PEPt, KFN.
Common Loon – peaks Nov 4 (316) Amherst I., BMD; Nov 4 (400) PEPt, KFN.
Pied-billed Grebe – peak Nov 3 (45) Kingston, KFN.

Horned Grebe – peaks Nov 3 (200) PEPt, RC *et al.*; Nov 3 (108) Amherst I., BMD, 4 (585) PEPt, KFN.
Red-necked Grebe – peak Oct 28 (40) PEPt, KFN.
Eared Grebe – Oct 28 to Nov 3 (1) PEPt, VPM *et al.*
Great Cormorant – Oct 2 (1) Wolfe I., V. Clark, photo.
Great Egret – Aug 5 (3) Amherst I., BMD; Sep 16 (1) Napanee, RTS.
Black-crowned Night-Heron – peaks Sep 12 (18) Amherst I., WR; Sep 23 (25 mostly immas.) Amherst I., JHE, RDW.
Turkey Vulture - peaks Oct 14 (120) PEPt, *fide* RTS; Oct 17 (100) Wolfe I., BMD.
Snow Goose – Oct 14 onwards (56 in all); peak Oct 17 (28) Wolfe I., BMD.
Cackling Goose – Sep 16 (1) Kingston harbour, Oct 7 (1) Kingston east VPM.
Brant – Oct 9 (25) Adolphustown VPM, B Ripley; 24 (70) Amherst I., PJG, EB.
Tundra Swan – Oct 13 onwards, peaks Nov 16 (60) South Bay, VPM, 17 (100s) Wolfe I., J&B McMahon.
Eurasian Wigeon – Oct 29 to Nov 21 (1 male) Kingston, B. Ripley *et al.*
American Wigeon - peak Nov 4 (755) Kingston, KFN.
Canvasback – Sep 23 (1) Amherst I., B. Young, only record.
Ring-necked Duck – peak Nov 5 (3,801) Kingston, KFN.
Greater Scaup – peaks Nov 4 (50,000+), 17 (25,000 +) PEPt, KFN.
Surf Scoter – Oct 21 to Nov 4 (29 in all) PEPt, KFN.
White-winged Scoter – peaks Oct 17 (300), Nov 4 (503) PEPt, KFN.
Black Scoter – Sep 20 to Nov 4 (29 in all) Kingston area, KFN.
Ruddy Duck – Aug 12 onwards, peak Oct 24 (30) Sillsville, VPM, B. Ripley.
Northern Harrier – peaks Sep 13 (65), 30 (52), Oct 17 (17 (43) Wolfe I., KFN.
Sharp-shinned Hawk – peak Sep 12 (125) PEPt, RTS.
N. Goshawk – Aug 22 to Nov 16 (10 in all) weak movement, Kingston area, KFN.
Red-tailed Hawk – peak Nov 16 (110) PEPt, VPM.
Rough-legged Hawk – peak Nov 13 (29) Wolfe I., EB.
Golden Eagle – Nov 16 (1) PEPt, VPM, only one.
Merlin – Aug 31 to Nov 4 (34 in all), Kingston area, KFN.
Peregrine Falcon – Aug 21 to Nov 29 (9 in all) Kingston, KFN.
Black-bellied Plover – Aug 7 to Nov 20 Kingston, KFN.
American Golden Plover – Sep 1 to Nov 4 Kingston, KFN.
Semipalmated Plover – Aug 14 to Nov 1 Kingston, KFN.
Greater Yellowlegs – Aug 1 to Nov 4 Kingston, KFN.
Lesser Yellowlegs – Aug 1 to Nov 4 Kingston, KFN.
Willet – Sep 29 (1) Amherst I., JHE, RDW.
Whimbrel – Aug 26 (1), Sep 6 (1), 7(1) Amherst I., KFN.
Ruddy Turnstone - Aug 31 to Nov 4 (9 in all) Amherst I., KFN.
Red Knot – Aug 31 to Nov 4 (10 in all) Amherst I., KFN.
White-rumped Sandpiper – Aug 31 (1), Sep 23 (3) Amherst I., KFN.
Baird's Sandpiper – Aug 7 to Sep 24 (18 in all) Kingston, KFN.
Pectoral Sandpiper – Aug 19 to Nov 4 (only 19 in all) Kingston, KFN.

Dunlin – Sep 9 to Nov 4 (120+ in all) Kingston, KFN.
Stilt Sandpiper – Jul 15 to Aug 12 (12 in all) Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, KFN.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper - Sep 14 (1) Wolfe I., MC.
Short-billed Dowitcher – Aug 5 to Sep 9 (46 in all) Amherstview Sewage Lagoons, KFN.
Red-necked Phalarope – Aug 19 (1) Amherst I., JHE, RDW.
Little Gull – Aug 19 (1 im) Amherstview Sewage Lagoon, JHE, RDW; Nov 3 (1 im) Kingston, G Paul.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo – Sep 23 to Oct 21 (4 in all) Amherst I., PEPt, KFN.
Long-eared Owl – peak Oct 16 (12) Amherst I., VPM, B Rowe.
Short-eared Owl – Oct 13 to Nov 18 (several) Amherst I., KFN.
Black-backed Woodpecker – Oct 31 (1 male) Charleston Lake PP, C. Robinson.
Eastern Kingbird – peak Aug 5 (15) Amherst I., BMD.
N. Shrike - Oct 18 onwards, Amherstview Sewage Lagoon, VPM.
Blue Jay – peaks Sep 25 (3000), 26 (2000) PEPt, *fide* RTS.
Black-capped Chickadee – moderate movement, Oct 17 (100), 18 (120) PEPt, *fide* Sprague.
Red-breasted Nuthatch – light movement Aug 18 to Nov 4 (22 in all) migrant sights, KFN.
Carolina Wren – Oct 24 (1) outer Montreal St., JHE; Aug 1 to Nov 30 (10 Cartwrights Pt., KFN.
Northern Wheatear – Sep 13-15 (1) Wolfe I., G. Smith *et al.* (4th ever).
Gray-cheeked Thrush – night flights Sep 8/9 (60 per hour x 3.5 hours), Sep 20/21 (200 per hour x 6 hours), 22/23 (75 per hour x 4 hours) Kingston, RDW.
Swainson's Thrush - night flights Sep 8/9 (720 per hour x 3.5 hours), 20/21 (1,800 per hour x 6 hours), 22/23(1,500 per hour x 4 hours), 26/27(2,400 per hour x 6 hours), Kingston, RDW.
Northern Mockingbird – Nov 16 (1) PEPt, VPM, only one.
Bohemian Waxwing – Oct 17 (1), Nov 4 (1) PEPt., KFN; Nov 18 (12) Elginburg, EB.
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow – Sep 28 (1), Oct 1 (2), 5(1) Amherst I., B Ripley, PJG, VPM.
Fox Sparrow – peak Nov 4 (38) PEPt, KFN.
Pine Grosbeak – Nov 1 onwards, widespread in small flocks.
Purple Finch – present throughout the period.
Common Redpoll – Oct 28 onwards, widespread in small flocks.
Pine Siskin – Sep 11 onwards, widespread in flocks up to 60 birds.
Evening Grosbeak – Oct 15 onwards, widespread in flocks up to 100 birds.

Contributors:

E. Batalla	M. Carboy	R. Collins
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Kingston Field Naturalists 3+

Elusive River Turtles

Matt Ellerbeck

The Great Cataraqui River is a fascinating and complex ecosystem that is home to a myriad of interesting species. Personally, I find the most interesting of these are its secretive river turtles, better known as Northern Map Turtles (Graptemys geographica). These turtles have a preferred habitat of slow-moving rivers or large lakes, unlike the other turtles in the Kingston area which prefer marshy wetlands. They can attain a carapace (top shell) length of over 11 inches in the larger females. This makes them the largest turtles (next to the snappers) in the Kingston Area. The males are much smaller, usually only reaching 6 inches. The larger size of the females helps the turtles accommodate more eggs, which will help their reproductive success.

Map Turtles are fascinating not only because of their size and majestic beauty; but also because Canada's Map Turtles are at the northern limit of their range. These turtles range throughout the Eastern United States; in Canada they are only found in Southeastern Ontario and Quebec.

Map Turtles add to their intrigue by being very elusive. Little is known about aspects of their lives such as mortality rate, population density, and reproductive success, so are all in need of further study. Map Turtles are very timid; one will be hard-pressed to get close to one. The slightest disruption sends them fleeing out of sight, usually from basking spots back into the safety of the water.

Sadly, this interesting species is federally listed as a Species At Risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, under the designation 'Special Concern'. This means it is a species that may become a threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats. This makes seeing one that much more memorable. During the summer of 2007 I was very fortunate to see over 80 Map Turtles in the space of one week along Belle Park and Belle Island on the Cataraqui River. The turtles in Belle Park basked on logs close to shore. One log held 10 turtles, with several others on nearby logs. Communal basking helps turtles by producing a line of sight in all directions to watch for approaching threats.

Turtles are best viewed with binoculars to avoid startling them. The turtles on Belle Island basked on large rocks just off the shoreline. When startled they all fled into the water for cover. However, patience on my part proved useful as minutes later several turtles warily poked their heads out of the water to investigate. They must have still sensed me, because none of them returned to bask. My observations were more than a personal fulfillment, as the numbers were sent into the local conservation authority, Ontario Turtle Watch, and the Ontario Turtle Tally.

"The Amazing Monarch" & Butterfly Summary 2007

Bruce Ripley

Every year in late May and early June, the first Monarch butterflies (Danaus plexippus) of the season appear in the Kingston region. The eastern population of Monarchs is probably the most well-known species of butterfly in our area, because many people know of their ability to migrate thousands of kilometres to wintering grounds in the mountains of central Mexico. We wonder how an insect which weighs only 0.5 grams and seemingly so delicate in structure can make such a journey, often with many obstacles both natural and man-made, along the way.

Monarchs have been observed flying as high as a kilometre above the ground. Severe weather conditions, pesticides, herbicides, loss of habitat on wintering grounds and traffic along a vast maze of roadways across the continent are a few factors affecting the success of a long migratory journey for the Monarch, as well as many other species of migratory wildlife. Maybe butterflies are tougher than we think! If that isn't amazing enough, here are some other interesting facts about the Monarch.

The majority of Monarch butterflies we see in the spring are not the same individuals we observed the previous fall. The Monarchs that leave our area in the fall migrate to the mountains in central Mexico. Upon their return in the spring, these individuals migrate to the southern United States where the females lay their eggs and die. It is the newly-emerged adults which we see here in the spring. Only on rare occasions will a Monarch make the entire return trip.

Monarchs in our area have two or three broods during the summer. Adults from each brood except the last brood of the season, lay eggs to produce another generation. Because of temperature change and shortened daylight hours, the adults of the last generation of the season (the great or great great grandchildren of last fall's adults) do not lay any eggs that year and instinctively know to migrate south to the wintering grounds. The summering Monarchs in our region have a lifespan of roughly two to three weeks while the migratory Monarchs can live up to nine months. Truly amazing!

Of the 89 species of butterflies on the Kingston checklist, a record high 75 species were recorded for 2007 with one new species added to the list. The big news of the year was multiple records of Giant Swallowtails (Papilio cresphontes).

Both adults and larvae (Orange Dogs) were observed, with most of the sightings coming from Prince Edward Point in Prince Edward County, one at Lemoine Point and one near Cranberry Lake. With sightings just outside our 50 km circle these past few years, it was just a matter of time before these impressive southern butterflies would

be seen here and possibly become a regular sight in our region.

Giant Swallowtail Caterpillar

Other good sightings include two Common Buckeyes (Junonia coenia) at Prince Edward Point and a colony of Bog Coppers (Lycaena epixanthe) discovered during the KFN odonate field trip on a bog near 2nd Depot Lake. Other notable sightings include Aphrodite Fritillary (Speyeria aphrodite), Harvester (Feniseca tarquinus), American Copper (Lycaena phlaeas), Hoary Elphin (Callophrys polios), Henry's Elphin (Callophrys henrici), Juniper Hairstreak (Callophrys gryneus), Little Glassywing (Pompeius verna) and Crossline Skipper (Polites origenes).

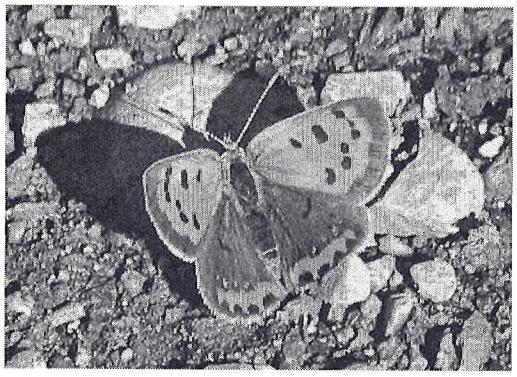
If you have any interesting or possible rare sightings of butterflies or a photo of a butterfly you would like identified, e-mail me at ripley@kingston.net or phone at 613-384-6392.

Reported Butterfly Sightings For 2007

Scientific Name	Common Name	Numbers Recorded
Epargyreus clarus	Silver-spotted Skipper	4
Thorybes pylades	Northern Cloudywing	92
Erynnis juvenalis	Juvenal's Duskywing	18
Erynnis icelus	Dreamy Duskywing	1
Erynnis lucilius	Columbine Duskywing	25
Ancyloxypha numitor	Least Skipper	11
Carterocephalus palaemon	Arctic Skipper	11
Thymelicus lineola	European Skipper	>100
Hesperia leonardus	Leonard's Skipper	12
Hesperia sassacus	Indian Skipper	23
Polites themistocles	Tawny-Edged Skipper	64
Polites mystic	Long Dash	9
Polites origenes	Crossline Skipper	3
Polites peckius	Peck's Skipper	5
Pompeius verna	Little Glassywing	7
Wallengrenia egeremet	Northern Broken Dash	96

Poanes hobomok	Hobomok Skipper	41
Poanes viator	Broad-Winged Skipper	12
Anatrytone logan	Delaware Skipper	18
Euphyes vestris	Dun Skipper	64
Amblyscirtes vialis	Common Roadside Skipper	10
Papilio polyxenes	Black Swallowtail	18
Papilio cresphontes	Giant Swallowtail	10
Papilio glaucus	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	3
Papilio canadensis	Canadian Tiger Swallowtail	13
Pieris oleracea	Mustard White	2
Pieris virginiensis	West Virginia White	8
Pieris rapae	Cabbage White	>100
Euchloe Olympia	Olympia Marble	8
Colias philodice	Clouded Sulphur	>100
Colias eurytheme	Orange Sulphur	>100

Aphrodite Frittilary



American Copper

Feniseca tarquinus	Harvester	3
Lycaena phlaeas	American Copper	3
Lycaena hyllus	Bronze Copper	3
Epidemia epixanthe	Bog Copper	12
Satyrium acadica	Acadian Hairstreak	3
Satyrium calanus	Banded Hairstreak	13
Satyrium caryaevorum	Hickory Hairstreak	1
Satyrium titus	Coral Hairstreak	1
Satyrium liparops	Striped Hairstreak	1
Callophrys gryneus	Juniper Hairstreak	16
Callophrys henrici	Henry's Elphin	4
Callophrys niphon	Eastern Pine Elphin	10
Callophrys polios	Hoary Elphin	1
Everes comyntas	Eastern Tailed Blue	19

Celastrina ladon	Spring Azure	11
Celastrina neglecta	Summer Azure	12
Glaucopsyche lygdamus	Silvery Blue	>100
Speyeria aphrodite	Aphrodite Fritillary	2
Speyeria cybele	Great Spangled Fritillary	17
Boloria bellona	Meadow Fritillary	3
Boloria selene	Silver-bordered Fritillary	2
Chlosyne harrissi	Harris Checkerspot	8
Euphydryas phaeton	Baltimore Checkerspot	2
Phyciodes cocyta	Northern Crescent	26
Phyciodes tharos	Pearl Crescent	1
Polygonia interrogationis	Question Mark	12
Polygonia comma	Eastern Comma	9
Polygonia progne	Gray Comma	9
Nymphalis vaualbum	Compton Tortoiseshell	8
Nymphalis antiopa	Mourning Cloak	44
Nymphalis milberti	Milbert's Tortoiseshell	6
Junonia coenia	Common Buckeye	2
Vanessa atalanta	Red Admiral	85
Vanessa cardui	Painted Lady	2
Vanessa virginiensis	American Lady	25
Limenitis arthemis	White Admiral	39
Limenitis archippus	Viceroy	11
Enodia anthedon	Northern Pearly-Eye	23
Satyrodes appalachia	Appalachian Brown	2
Satyrodes eurydice	Eyed Brown	80
Megisto cymela	Little Wood Satyr	78
Coenonympha tullia	Common Ringlet	>100
Cercyonis pegala	Common Wood-Nymph	>100
Danaus plexippus	Monarch	>100

Contributors

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www.monarchwatch.org

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Macro Mission: Amherst Island

Gaye Beckwith

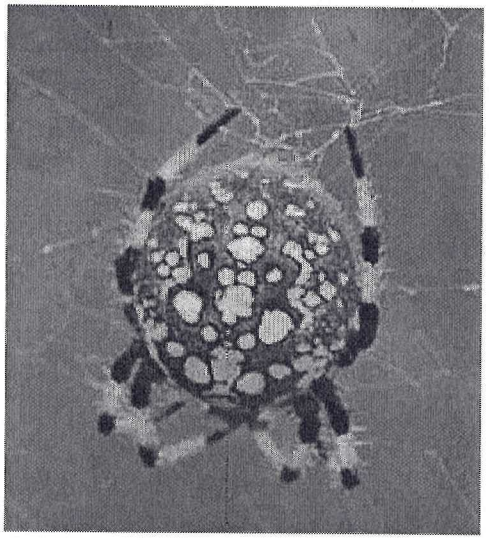
Pictures by Gaye. Beckwith and Janis Grant

Usually a trip to Amherst Island means looking for birds, be it in the Owl Woods or on the KFN property. However, a recent visit to the island opened my eyes to many beautiful little creatures clinging to leaves, rocks, and stems.

On Tuesday, September 25, 2007 a group of 10 KFN members were led to Amherst Island to see and photograph many of these tiny bugs, beetles, ants, caterpillars, etc. Equipped with a variety of cameras and levels of expertise, our group followed Dr. Ken Edwards to the KFN property to see what we could find. This was a follow-up to Dr. Edwards' very interesting slide show the week before at the monthly KFN general meeting where he showed many of his beautiful close-up shots of insects.

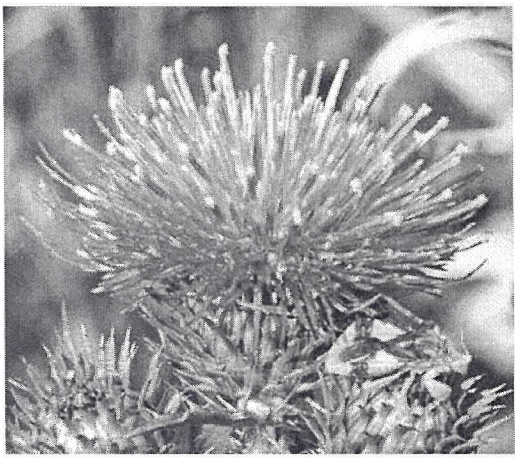
While most of us had a camera and perhaps a macro lens, Ken was very well outfitted. Included around his neck were cameras and lenses, tripods with revolving heads, flash attachments and a neat snake-like gadget used to hold a plant steady to ensure an in-focus shot. Additional equipment included an umbrella for shading the subject and keeping dry, reflectors to add light on a dark subject, and sugar water to attract insects to a plant.

Along with demonstrating his techniques for finding and



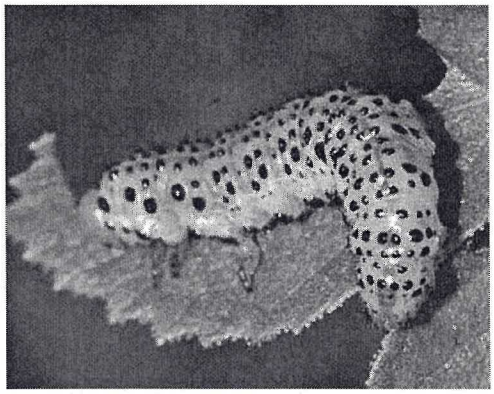
photographing spiders, bugs, butterflies and such, Ken offered many tips for getting really close-up shots: assume

every plant has a small creature somewhere, you just have to find it; a macro lens with 1:1 aspect will allow you to move in very close to stationary subjects; using a macro spacer between the camera body and a regular lens will give you the same effect as a more expensive macro lens - spacers on a larger mm lens (for example: 200 mm) will allow you to obtain a close-up image while remaining well back from a



shy subject; use the histogram on your digital camera to get the best lighting read; mid-teen F-stops are best for getting good light and decent depth-of-field; squeeze-handled tripods allow the user to move the camera in and out to attain the best focus; and shopping E-Bay or sites like Arthur Morris...Birds as Art for the best deals in used equipment.

A big thanks to Dr. Edwards for sharing his expertise and time with the group. I hope my wife enjoys the macro lens I've ordered for her for Christmas. I can hardly wait till she gets it.



Dr. Edwards recommended the following books to help improve your macrophotography.

1. For macrophotography itself: "**Macrophotography...Learning from a Master**" by Martin and Loaec, published by ABRAMS

2. For editing photos: "**Photoshop for Nature Photographers**" by Anon and Grey, published by SYBEX

3. For insect identification: "**Field Guide to Insects of North America**" by Kaufmann and Eaton, published by HOUGHTON AND MIFFLIN

Forecasts of Northern AvianVisitors for Winter 2007-2008
with permission from Ron Pittaway

Foreward by Alexandra Simmons

In recent weeks, members have received comments and questions regarding the presence of handsome boreal birds such as Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks in local backyards with crabapple and mountain ash trees. These species are irruptive and their local abundance varies greatly from year to year. Each winter, Ron Pittaway of the Ontario Field Ornithologists prepares a "forecast" of the likelihood of southward movements of finches and other species that breed in the North.

Ron worked as park naturalist in Algonquin Provincial Park and retired from 22 years with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in 2003. He uses his knowledge of the each species' food preferences and reports on these crops from contacts in the field to predict whether we will be lucky enough to be see these colorful visitors.

This issue's reprint of Notes on Natural History by Helen Quilliam is on the same theme, because it contains observations of Pine Grosbeaks that irrupted here in the winter of 1963-64.

Ron has given permission to reprint here his **Winter Finch forecast**, (which first appeared after the September Blue Bill went to print), many aspects of which have already proven accurate. Recently he added an **update** on other Boreal species such as Owls which gives us an idea of what we can look forward to after the "official" start of winter.

WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2007-2008 (15 September 2007)

This winter's theme is "finches going in three directions" depending on the species. Some finches have gone east and west or both, while others will come south.

Most coniferous and deciduous trees have very poor seed crops in much of Ontario and western Quebec. The exception is northwestern Ontario such as Quetico Provincial Park, Dryden and Lake of the Woods, where there are good crops on some species. However, north of a line from the top of Lake Nipigon to Manitoba the crops are generally low in the boreal forest.

This will be a quiet winter for most (not all) winter finches in Algonquin Provincial Park, in contrast to last winter's bumper seed crops and abundance of finches. Most of last winter's White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins departed Ontario this past summer. They probably went either to eastern or western Canada or both where there are bumper cone crops. Type 3 Red Crossbills, which were abundant in Ontario last winter, have probably returned to their core range in western North America. White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins will not be irrupting south out of Ontario as

they do in some flight years, because most have already gone east and/or west. However, other winter finches such as Pine Grosbeaks, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and redpolls are irrupting or will irrupt southward out of northern Ontario. See individual species accounts for details. In addition I comment on other irruptive passerines, such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch, whose movements are linked to cone crops. Also included is a comment on northern owls.

INDIVIDUAL FINCH FORECASTS

Pine Grosbeak: This grosbeak will irrupt south of the breeding range because crops on native mountain-ashes (rowan berries) are generally poor in northeastern Ontario and across the boreal forest. However, crops are good in northwestern Ontario west of Lake Superior. Pine Grosbeaks should wander south to Lake Ontario and perhaps farther in search of crabapples and planted European mountain-ash berries, which have average crops in southern Ontario. Watch for them at feeders where they prefer sunflower seeds. After irruptions, Pine Grosbeaks return north earlier than other northern finches. Most are gone by late March. Buds form a larger part of their winter diet when mountain-ash crops are poor.

Purple Finch: Most Purple Finches will migrate out of Ontario this fall in response to the low seed crops. Currently, Purple Finches are migrating south through southern Ontario. Very few or none will stay behind at feeders in southern Ontario.

Red Crossbill: The Red Crossbill complex comprises 9 sibling Types, possibly full species, which have different call notes, and different bill sizes related to cone preferences. At least three Types occur in Ontario. Type 3 (smallest bill) prefers small hemlock cones (and spruce cones) in Ontario. The hemlock Type 3 was abundant last winter, but is presumed absent now from the province because hemlock produced few or no cones in 2007. Type 4 (medium sized bill) is adapted to white pine cones. White pine cone crops are fair to good (but spotty) in northern Ontario. Currently, small numbers of Type 4 Red Crossbills are present on the "east side" of Algonquin Park (heavy crop on white pine) and probably elsewhere with extensive white pine forest. Algonquin's east side pine forest is accessible from Highway 17 west of Pembroke. South of Algonquin white pine crops are poor to none. An infrequent presumed Type 2 Red Crossbill is associated with red pine forests.

White-winged Crossbill: This crossbill moves back and forth across northern coniferous forests searching for new cone crops. Most White-winged Crossbills left Ontario this past summer. They will be scarce or absent in Ontario this winter. They presumably went either west to bumper spruce and fir cone crops in Alberta and British Columbia, and/or to Atlantic Canada, which has large cone crops on spruce and balsam fir, particularly in Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. White-winged Crossbills

are currently common in Newfoundland and western Canada.

Common and Hoary Redpolls: There will be a big flight of redpolls into southern Ontario and bordering United States. Seed crops on white birch, yellow birch and alder are very poor in most of Ontario. Expect redpolls at bird feeders this winter. Far northwestern Ontario has a good white birch crop so redpolls may be common there.

Pine Siskin: Similar to the White-winged Crossbill, most Pine Siskins departed Ontario this past summer, presumably attracted to huge spruce and fir cone crops in Alberta and British Columbia and/or to big spruce and balsam fir cone crops in Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island and probably elsewhere in the Atlantic Provinces. Some of the very few siskins that remained in Ontario are now wandering south with sightings of usually only ones and twos in southern Ontario. Large southward irruptions occur when cone crop failures span much of Canada. Very few siskins will visit feeders this winter in southern Ontario.

Evening Grosbeak: This grosbeak will irrupt south of the boreal forest this fall because tree seed crops are generally very poor in northeastern Ontario and western Quebec. In recent weeks scattered birds have visited feeders in southern Ontario. Beginning in the early 1980s the Evening Grosbeak declined significantly as large outbreaks of spruce budworm subsided. The larvae and pupae are eaten by adults and fed to nestlings. Expect Evening Grosbeaks at bird feeders in southern Ontario and northern United States, but not in the large numbers seen during the 1970s.

OTHER IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES

Red-breasted Nuthatch: They have been moving south since mid-June presumably because of the poor cone crop in central Canada. Almost all Red-breasted Nuthatches will depart Ontario's boreal forest by late fall and left the province. Some will be at feeders in southern Ontario, but they will be very scarce in Algonquin Park. Algonquin Christmas Bird Counts (32 years) show a biennial (every two years) high and low pattern, with some exceptions.

Bohemian Waxwing: The poor crop of native mountain-ash (rowan berries) in much of northern Ontario will cause Bohemians Waxwings to wander south and east this winter. Watch for them eating buckthorn berries and crabapples in southern Ontario. The mountain-ash crop is better west of Lake Superior with a big crop around Kenora at Lake of the Woods.

Blue Jay: A strong flight is expected this fall. The beechnut crop is zero and the acorn crop on red oak is only fair to good (aborted in some areas) in central Ontario. Soon thousands of jays will be migrating southwest along the shorelines of Lakes Ontario and Erie, exiting Ontario south of Windsor. This winter there will be far fewer Blue Jays in Algonquin Park and at feeders in central Ontario.

Gray Jay and Boreal Chickadee: They are moving in northeastern Quebec east of Tadoussac along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. These movements could extend to southern Ontario and northeastern states.

NORTHERN OWLS

Small mammal populations were abundant this summer in northern Ontario, presumably increasing after the big seed/berry/fruit crops in 2006. However, crops this year are very poor in much of the north, partly caused by cold weather and snow in late spring that froze the buds and flowers of many plants. In early August, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources biologists on aerial surveys noted many raptors near James Bay including 15-20 Great Gray Owls, Short-eared Owls (common), Northern Harriers (common) and scattered Rough-legged Hawks. If small mammal populations crash this fall, then Great Gray Owls, Northern Hawk Owls and Boreal Owls will move, possibly southward into areas accessible by birders. Northern Saw-whet Owl numbers are linked to red-backed voles (a forest vole) in Ontario. There is the possibility that this vole could decline soon because it often cycles with deer mice. The huge population of deer mice in central Ontario is declining rapidly now because of poor seed crops this summer, particularly sugar maple samaras, which they store for the winter. If red-backed vole numbers decline as they often do in association with deer mice, there will be a strong flight of Northern Saw-whet Owls this fall.

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Plant) and Alan Wormington (Point Pelee). I thank Michel Gosselin, Jean Iron and Ron Tozer for reviewing the forecast. Ron Tozer also provided information from his upcoming book on The Birds of Algonquin Provincial Park.

OBSERVATIONS - EARLY NOV

We are experiencing the biggest winter finch irruption since the "superflight" of 1997-1998, when many boreal finches went well beyond their normal ranges. The cause is the largest tree seed crop failure in a decade across more than 3200 km (2000 mi) of boreal forest from Saskatchewan into Quebec. Today in Toronto, I had a Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and Purple Finches migrating along the shoreline of Lake Ontario. Boreal winter finches are being reported in many areas of southern Ontario and the United States, where some species such as Pine and Evening Grosbeaks haven't been seen in years. There is no telling how far south this "superflight" will go and how many finches will remain in Ontario this winter. Stock your feeders.

BOREAL BIRDS ONTARIO-UPDATE WED NOV 21

Don Sutherland of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) tells me that the abundant meadow vole population last summer in the Hudson Bay Lowlands has almost certainly crashed. OMNR biologists did not see meadow voles in October and early November in areas where they were abundant in August. Newton (2006) states that microtine crashes often happen quickly following high populations.

OWLS: The high small mammal populations last summer in central and northern Ontario meant that most owls had an excellent breeding season with abundant prey to feed growing young. Note that most northern forest owls are rarely if ever affected by cold temperatures and deep snow unless they are starving. Small mammal populations (mainly voles) drive their breeding, abundance and movements.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: A red-backed vole (preferred prey in Ontario) and deer mouse crash likely account for the very large flight this fall with hundreds recorded at banding stations.

Boreal Owl: I'm not aware of any Boreal Owl sightings this fall in Ontario, but the heavy flight of Saw-whets and low vole numbers suggest some may come south. Boreal Owls can take larger prey than Saw-whets such as Northern Flying Squirrels. Two Boreal Owls have been banded so far this fall at L'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac northeast of Quebec City on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. The observatory is situated along the migratory route of the Boreal Owl. This cyclic owl often moves only short distances so it is best monitored by northern observatories.

Great Gray Owl: One was seen on 19 November near Peterborough in central Ontario and another possible recent sighting in Muskoka. The crash of meadow voles (preferred prey in

Ontario) in northern Ontario may cause more to show up farther south. However, Great Grays have the uncanny ability to find areas with high vole densities. They stop moving when they find abundant voles.

Barred Owl: They are moving, with several reports along north shore of Lake Ontario, away from their normal habitats. This movement is likely linked to a crash of red-backed voles, deer mice and other small mammals in the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Forest and southern Boreal Forest.

OTHER SPECIES

Northern Shrike: The big southward movement this fall probably resulted from the meadow vole crash in the boreal forest. Although Northern Shrikes eat small birds; they are mainly a vole specialist in winter. Birds are a buffer and form a greater proportion of Northern Shrike prey when voles are scarce.

Boreal Chickadee: Indicators of a small movement include Bob Knudsen's report yesterday from Sault Ste. Marie to Ontbirds, a flock of 13 seen recently by Erwin Meissner near Massey west of Sudbury, and a report from Stephen O'Donnell of more sightings than usual near Sundridge north of Huntsville. A few may get as far south as Lake Ontario. Boreal Chickadees prefer thick conifers especially spruce. Listen for their husky calls among flocks of Black-cappeds, which had a significant southward movement this fall.

Common and Hoary Redpolls - Subspecies: This year's big flight is providing an opportunity to study two subspecies of the Common Redpoll and perhaps two subspecies of Hoary Redpoll. Check website of Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station in Toronto at www.ttpbrs.ca for recent photos of two subspecies of the Common Redpoll (flammea and rostrata) and photos of a Hoary Redpoll (subspecies exilipes). They call the rostrata subspecies the "Greenland" subspecies of the Common Redpoll, but the common name used in most of the literature for rostrata is "Greater" Common Redpoll. The name Greenland Redpoll was normally restricted to the nominate subspecies hornemanni of the Hoary Redpoll. Sibley (2000) adds to the confusion by using Greenland for the northern subspecies of both Common and Hoary Redpolls. I suggest not using Greenland Redpoll because it is now used for the subspecies both species. In fact, both rostrata Common Redpoll and nominate hornemanni Hoary Redpoll have extensive breeding ranges in Canada so why even mention Greenland, which is misleading.

The "Southern" Common Redpoll (flammea) is the commonest redpoll in southern Canada. It breeds as close as northern Ontario. The "Greater" Common Redpoll (rostrata) breeds on Baffin Island and Greenland. The "Greater" Common Redpoll is normally a winter visitor in small numbers. Rick Poulin (reported by Pittaway 1992)) banded hundreds of redpolls in the 1980s near Ottawa and found "Greater"

Common Redpolls more common than Hoarys during some winters.

The "Southern" Hoary Redpoll (exilipes) breeds in the low Arctic south to extreme northern Ontario. It is the usual Hoary seen in southern Canada in winter. "Hornemann's" Hoary Redpoll is the rarest redpoll in southern Canada. It breeds in high Arctic Canada and Greenland. Classic adult males are very large and overall much whiter with less streaking on the sides, and immaculate undertail coverts. Adult males have less pink with some having a mere trace of a pink suffusion on the breast. Not all redpolls will be identifiable to subspecies or even species, but most individuals can be distinguished with considerable confidence.

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Notes on Natural History No. 224, February 17, 1964

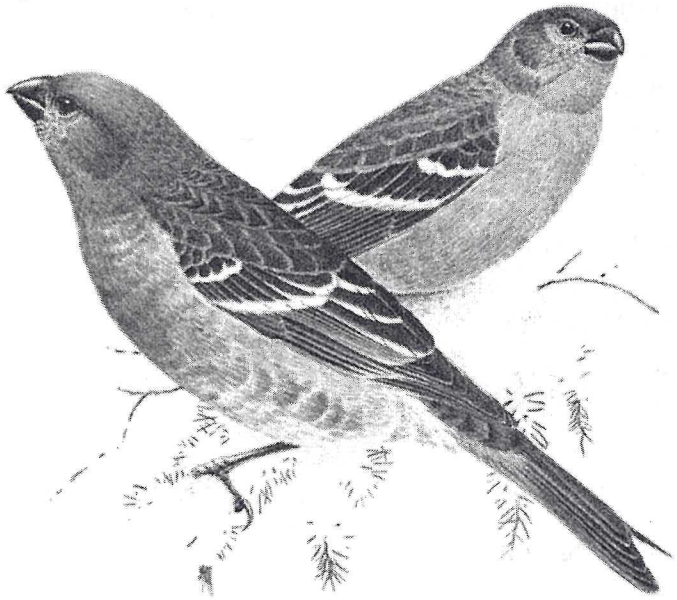
Helen R. Quilliam

This has been a particularly good winter for pine grosbeaks. The last winter in which there were a number was the winter of 1961/62 but even then there were not very many. In fact it has been years since they have been as common as they have been this winter. They are still another of those winter finches which are so erratic in their movements - purple finches, pine siskins, redpolls and crossbills. All these birds are well equipped to stay during the coldest of winters in their nesting places in the north but they must be assured of an ample food supply. When that supply fails they visit us in flocks.

Because of this, winter birdwatching can be almost more exciting than that in the summer. There are few surprises then. Our resident birds come back with regularity and in mid-summer it is

almost unknown for there to be a strange bird in the area. Spring and autumn of course is another time when it is possible to see unusual birds in the area but then it is because they have strayed off course during migration or been blown into our area by some really big storm such as a hurricane.

These winter finches add a great deal of spice to our field trips. We always feel that when a particular species is here we must see it as often as possible because it may be some years before it comes back again. It is not only members of the finch family which visit us every now and then in the winter. The three-toed woodpeckers are still another example of birds which occasionally come down from the north. We all look forward to a winter when there are plenty of snowy owls about. Last winter was famous for its hawk owls and this was such a rare event that it may be years and years before it is repeated.



We are getting used now to invasions of evening grosbeaks but pine grosbeaks are still an uncommon sight here and perhaps never will grow to the proportions of the invading flocks of evening grosbeaks.

Pine grosbeaks are just about the same size as evening grosbeaks but except for the males are rather sombre birds. The males have rosy heads with the red extending down on to the breast. There is also a flash of red on the rump. The females, however, might belong to different species so unlike are they. Most of the plumage is grey and in place of rosy head and breast they have dark yellow heads and a yellow patch on the rump. Some will be seen which have rather more orange than yellow on the heads and rumps and these are the young males. Both sexes have two white wing-bars on each wing.

In flocks of pine grosbeaks one sees few of the bright males. There may be only one or two in a flock of ten to twenty of the grey and yellow birds. This is because the males are rather slow about changing their feathers to the brighter colors. The young birds of both sexes during the first winter are almost indistinguishable, the males being only a little more orange than yellow. And it is no use hoping that as spring grows near we will see more of the brilliant males because they will nest this first year before changing their feathers. They do not assume the brilliant plumage of a mature male until after the

first nesting season. Because it takes them so long to get their full colors the mature males in a flock are always outnumbered by the drabber birds.

Nevertheless, the sight of a flock of pine grosbeaks feeding quietly in the tops of trees is a pleasing sight. In nature even the muted colors are so perfectly blended and matched that they are beautiful.

Pine grosbeaks live in the summer in the northern spruce forests. Here beechnuts and the seeds of all the conifers are their special favorites. When they visit us in the winter they seem equally fond of a number of things. They may be found in an apple tree which has clung to its fruit. They will work over the apples lying on the ground or still on the tree to get at the seeds inside. One year we found them eating the berries of the swamp holly. They like the fruits of the mountain ash but often the cedar waxwings have eaten all of these before the grosbeaks get a chance at them. The seeds of sumac and ash are popular and if the evening grosbeaks have left any keys from the Manitoba maples they will eat these. Often also they take spruce buds and buds from some of the hardwoods. At times they feed very quietly and at others call to each other with their very musical mellow whistles.

They did not arrive this year as early as the crossbills which made their first appearance at the end of October. Most of these have moved on southwards. The first pine grosbeaks were not discovered until about mid-December but ever since then there have been flocks about. We hope that they will linger well into the spring until they change places with the birds returning from the south.