

The Blue Bill

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

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

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President's Page

Hugh Evans

After a warm fall, winter has caught up with us. To mid-February, we have had more snow than usual. The first winter storm in mid-December gave us high winds and about 30 cm of snow. This set a record in that the Kingston Christmas count was cancelled for the first time: wise decision. Keen birders had the compensation of participating in other area Christmas counts. Unusually mild weather in early January melted the snow. The winter then produced a succession of heavy snowfalls to the point where it is hard to find where to put the snow when shovelling. The depth of snow allowed the squirrels to jump onto my backyard feeder, bypassing the guard that had worked previously. I managed to defeat them by shovelling over 25 cm of snow from the area around the feeder.

The executive has adopted a privacy policy for the Kingston Field Naturalists; it is published in this issue of the Blue Bill. It is a simple statement to assure members that private information the club holds is secure and will not be divulged to any third party.

The development of a wind farm on Wolfe Island is being monitored by the club. The principal concern is the potential impact the wind turbines could have on wildlife. The point man on this is Erwin Batalla. He responded to the Environmental Review Report by commenting on setbacks from sensitive areas and potential for kills of birds and bats. Erwin has organized monitoring of

raptor movements and populations on the island. Raptor numbers have been recorded for many years during Christmas counts. New data are being collected for each of the four count areas on the island to provide a baseline for comparison with future data.

The Queen's University Biology Station (QUBS) award will be given for the first time this spring to a student studying conservation science or natural history at QUBS. The present value of the award is \$675. The club hopes to grow the endowment to increase the size of the award. An ideal opportunity to do just this has arisen. An anonymous donor has issued a challenge: the donor will match up to \$7500 donated to the KFN for the endowment received by June 2nd, 2008. More details on the challenge will be included in the March newsletter and on the KFN website.

The Nan Yeomans bequest which was given for the juniors has been renamed The Nan Yecmans Young Naturalist Fund. Donation for the juniors/teens and income received from their activities will be added to the fund. Income from the fund will be used to support their activities.

By the time you receive this Bluebill, signs of spring should be upon us. It will be great to welcome back early spring migrants and to see the first spring wild flowers peaking above the ground.

Hugh Evans

Kingston Field Naturalists Privacy Policy

The Kingston Field Naturalists is a private non-commercial non-profit club interested in a wide variety of natural history topics. The objectives of the club are:

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

The privacy of our members is important to us. The KFN Membership Secretary maintains a membership list containing personal information (address, phone number and e-mail address) of all members. This list is available only to the membership secretary and the volunteers responsible for mailing club publications. The membership list is not sold or exchanged and is only available to individual members of the executive for specific purposes.

The KFN has Junior and Teen groups. The Junior and Teen membership lists containing personal information of junior and teen members are acquired by the Chair of the Junior Naturalists. The Junior and Teen Naturalist lists are confidential and used for the operation of the Junior and Teen groups. The Junior and Teen membership lists are maintained by the Membership Secretary.

The KFN website provides information on club activities. It is freely available and contains no personal information. There are external links on the website which are maintained solely for the convenience of users. The operation and content of such third party websites is beyond our control and we do not endorse in any manner whatsoever or accept any responsibility for content or other material that may be contained on such websites, the use of such websites, or the products or services advertised on or sold through any such websites.

The KFN operates an action alert system to inform members of important conservation and environmental issues. A list of members who have agreed to be informed by e-mail is maintained by the Membership Secretary. This list is confidential.

Yearly List of Birds – KFN 2007

Ron D. Weir

There were 270 species of birds seen during 2007 within the circle of 50 km radius centred in MacDonald Park, Kingston, compared to the 27 year average (1980-2006) of 280; the lowest since 1988. This is the 5th year in succession that the total has declined. The distribution over the past 27 years is given in the following table.

Table 1: Annual total bird species for the Kingston area 1980 to 2007

Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total
1980	278	1990	279	2000	282
1981	277	1991	281	2001	285
1982	276	1992	281	2002	287
1983	282	1993	293*	2003	282
1984	285	1994	283	2004	280
1985	271	1995	280	2005	278
1986	277	1996	285	2006	274
1987	279	1997	283	2007	270
1988	270	1998	283		
1989	273	1999	278		

No new species was added to the list which stands at 372. Rarities reported during 2007 include Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Great Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Black Vulture, Cackling Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Gyrfalcon, Willet, Red-necked Phalarope, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Northern Wheatear, Yellow-breasted Chat, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Dickcissel.

Other good finds among those species not seen every year were Barrow's Goldeneye, Sandhill Crane, Marbled Godwit, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Forster's Tern, Black-backed Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Kentucky Warbler, Summer Tanager. Among the species missed were both species of eiders, Hudsonian Godwit, Red Phalarope, Boreal Owl, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, and White-winged Crossbill.

The following list contains the date of first occurrence during 2007 with the observers' initials. Where KFN or NLB appears, then more than 3 observers of the Kingston Field Naturalists or North Leeds Birders, respectively, were present. It is noted that just south of our 50-km circle at Montario Pt., N.Y., Nick Leone found both Pomarine Jaeger (1) and Black-legged Kittiwake (2) on 29 Oct 07. These are excluded from the list.



Species	Date	Obs	Species	Date	Obs
Red-throated Loon	24 Jan	BMD	Northern Shoveler	15 Mar	RTS
Pacific Loon	4 Nov	KFN	Northern Pintail	7 Jan	KFN
Common Loon	7 Jan	KFN	Green-winged Teal	7 Jan	KFN
Pied-billed Grebe	27 Jan	BMD	Canvasback	1 Jan	PJG
Horned Grebe	7 Jan	KFN	Redhead	1 Jan	KFN
Red-necked Grebe	1 Jan	KFN	Ring-necked Duck	1 Jan	KFN
Eared Grebe	28 Nov	KFN	Greater Scaup	1 Jan	KFN
Dble-cr Cormorant	3 Jan	KFN	Lesser Scaup	1 Jan	KFN
Great Cormorant	2 Oct	VC	Harlequin Duck	7 Jan	OW
American Bittern	22 Apr	BW, RDW	Surf Scoter	7 Jan	KFN
Least Bittern	20 May	KFN	Wh-winged Scoter	7 Jan	KFN
Great Blue Heron	1 Jan	KH	Black Scoter	1 Jan	KH
Great Egret	9 Apr	CH	Long-tailed Duck	1 Jan	KFN
Cattle Egret	6 Nov	JA	Bufflehead	1 Jan	KH
Green Heron	28 Apr	BRp	Comm. Goldeneye	1 Jan	KFN
Bl-cr Night Heron	25 Mar	RDW	Barr. Goldeneye	12 Feb	OW
Black Vulture	14 Jun	IS	Hooded Merganser	7 Jan	KFN
Turkey Vulture	10 Mar	JB	Comm. Merganser	1 Jan	KFN
Gr. White-fr Goose	25 Feb	BR	Red-br Merganser	1 Jan	KFN
Snow Goose	3 Jan	KFN	Ruddy Duck	1 Jan	KFN
Canada Goose	1 Jan	KFN	Virginia Rail	4 Feb	KH
Cackling Goose	16 Sep	VPM	Sora	2 May	BR, VPM
Brant	7 Jan	KFN	Common Moorhen	25 Apr	VPM
Mute Swan	7 Jan	KFN	American Coot	1 Jan	KFN
Trumpeter Swan	7 Jan	KFN	Sandhill Crane	4 Apr	CG
Tundra Swan	1 Jan	KFN	Osprey	29 Mar	PJG, BR
Wood Duck	11 Mar	VPM	Bald Eagle	1 Jan	KH
Gadwall	7 Jan	KFN	Northern Harrier	1 Jan	KFN
Eurasian Wigeon	1 Jan	KFN	Shp-shinned Hawk	1 Jan	KFN
American Wigeon	1 Jan	KFN	Cooper's Hawk	16 Jan	BRp
Amer. Black Duck	1 Jan	RKE	Northern Goshawk	21 Jan	MCh
Mallard	1 Jan	KFN	Red-should Hawk	17 Feb	KFN
Blue-winged Teal	3 Apr	BR, JHE	Brd-winged Hawk	25 Apr	NLB
Red-tailed Hawk	1 Jan	KFN	Wilson's Snipe	26 Mar	CG
Rough-legd Hawk	1 Jan	KFN	Amer. Woodcock	23 Mar	KFN

Species	Date	Obs	Species	Date	Obs
Golden Eagle	21 Jan	JHE	Wilson's Phalarope	1 May	BRp
American Kestrel	1 Jan	KFN	Rd-necked Phalarope	19 Aug	JHE, RDW
Merlin	17 Jan	NLB	Little Gull	24 Apr	RTS
Gyr Falcon	24 Jan	NLB	Bonaparte's Gull	1 Jan	KH
Peregrine Falcon	1 Jan	KH	Ring-billed Gull	1 Jan	KFN
Rng-neck. Pheasant	17 Jan	PJG	Herring Gull	1 Jan	KFN
Ruffed Grouse	6 Jan	PJG	Iceland Gull	3 Jan	KFN
Wild Turkey	18 Jan	KFN	Lesser Black-b Gull	2 Dec	KH
Blk-bellied Plover	13 May	VPM	Glaucous Gull	18 Jan	VPM
Am Golden-Plover	12 May	WR	Great Black-b Gull	1 Jan	KFN
Semipalmat Plover	3 May	AA, TB	Caspian Tern	4 Apr	RKE
Killdeer	10 Mar	JHE, RDW	Common Tern	3 May	OW
Greater Yellowlegs	5 Apr	KFN	Forster's Tern	4 May	RTS
Lesser Yellowlegs	28 Apr	PJG	Black Tern	1 May	BRp
Solitary Sandpiper	5 May	RTS	Rock Pigeon	11 Jan	VPM
Willet	29 Sep	JHE, RDW	Mourning Dove	1 Jan	PJG
Spotted Sandpiper	26 Apr	KH	Blk-billed Cuckoo	17 May	RTS
Upland Sandpiper	24 Apr	KH	Yel-billed Cuckoo	11 May	JHE, RDW
Whimbrel	22 May	BRp	East. Screech-Owl	2 Jan	PJG
Marbled Godwit	1 May	JHE, VPM	Great Horned Owl	1 Jan	KH
Ruddy Turnstone	17 May	KFN	Snowy Owl	1 Jan	KFN
Red Knot	31 Aug	VPM	Barred Owl	23 Mar	GB
Sanderling	28 Aug	BRp	Long-eared Owl	1 Jan	KFN
Semipalm. Sandp.	14 May	RTS	Short-eared Owl	1 Jan	KH
Least Sandpiper	2 May	VPM	N. Saw-whet Owl	1 Jan	KFN
Wh-rumped Sandp.	6 May	VPM	Comm Nighthawk	19 May	KFN
Baird's Sandpiper	7 Aug	RKE	Whip-poor-will	1 May	VPM
Pectoral Sandpiper	1 May	OW	Chimney Swift	30 Apr	EB
Dunlin	4 May	JHE, VPM	R-t Hummingbird	5 May	RTS
Stilt Sandpiper	15 Jul	EB	Belted Kingfisher	1 Jan	KFN
Buff-br. Sandp.	14 Sep	MC	Red-head Wdpeckr	24 May	AS
Short-billed Dow.	11 Jul	KH	Red-bel Wdpeckr.	16 Jan	VPM

Species	Date	Obs	Species	Date	Obs
Yel-bel Sapsucker	27 Jan	JHE	Tufted Titmouse	3 Dec	K&AS
Dow. Woodpecker	1 Jan	PJG	Red-br Nuthatch	3 Jan	MCh
Hairy Woodpecker	1 Jan	PJG	White-br Nuthatch	1 Jan	KFN
Bl-backed Woodp.	25 Apr	AW	Brown Creeper	4 Jan	KH
Northern Flicker	3 Jan	KFN	Carolina Wren	16 Jan	VPM
Pileated Wdpckr	14 Jan	VPM	House Wren	24 Apr	RTS
Olv-side Flycatcher	13 May	RTS	Winter Wren	27 Mar	EB
East Wood-Pewee	9 May	RTS	Sedge Wren	19 May	KFN
Yell-bel Flycatcher	17 May	KFN	Marsh Wren	25 Apr	NLB
Alder Flycatcher	23 May	RTS	Golden-cr Kinglet	3 Jan	KFN
Willow Flycatcher	21 May	BRp	Ruby-cr. Kinglet	4 Apr	RKE
Least Flycatcher	5 May	MC	Bl-gray Gnatcatcher	29 Apr	KFN
Eastern Phoebe	26 Mar	BRp	Townsend's Solitaire	27 Feb	VPM, BR
Ash-thrted Flyctchr	8 Oct	DO	Northern Wheatear	13 Sep	GS et al.
Gr-crstd Flycatcher	29 Apr	KFN	Eastern Bluebird	23 Jan	BRp
Eastern Kingbird	1 May	KH	Veery	5 May	MC
Loggerhead Shrike	30 May	KH	Gry-chked Thrush	15 May	RTS
Northern Shrike	1 Jan	KFN	Swainson's Thrush	8 May	JHE, VPM
Yel-throated Vireo	6 May	BMD	Hermit Thrush	3 Feb	KH
Blue-headed Vireo	27 Apr	JHE, RDW	Wood Thrush	29 Apr	JHE, RDW
Warbling Vireo	30 Apr	KFN	American Robin	3 Jan	KFN
Philadelphia Vireo	10 May	VPM	Gray Catbird	5 May	RTS
Red-eyed Vireo	12 May	KFN	N. Mockingbird	7 Jan	M&JJ
Gray Jay	21 Feb	H Sills	Brown Thrasher	20 Apr	BRp
Blue Jay	1 Jan	PJG	European Starling	11 Jan	VPM
American Crow	1 Jan	KFN	American Pipit	18 Jan	JH
Common Raven	3 Jan	KFN	Bohem Waxwing	17 Oct	RTS
Horned Lark	10 Jan	JHE	Cedar Waxwing	13 Jan	EB
Purple Martin	10 Apr	J&BM	Bl-winged Warbler	5 May	RTS
Tree Swallow	14 Mar	BRp	Gold-wng. Warbler	4 May	JHE, VPM
N. Rough-wing Sw	20 Apr	BRp	Tennessee Warbler	6 May	KFN
Bank Swallow	1 May	BRp, KH	Orange-cr Warbler	15 May	RTS
Cliff Swallow	29 Apr	KFN	Nashville Warbler	26 Apr	RTS
Barn Swallow	4 Apr	KFE	Northern Parula	5 May	RTS

Species	Date	Obs	Species	Date	Obs
Blck-cap Chickadee	1 Jan	KFN	Yellow Warbler	27 Apr	RTS
Chestnut-s. W.	8 May	RTS	Henslow's Sparrow	9 Jun	KFN
Magnolia Warbler	7 May	RTS	Nelson's Sharp-t. S.	28 Sep	BRp
Cape May Warbler	5 May	RTS	Fox Sparrow	14 Jan	RTS
Bl-thr Blue Wrblr	5 May	KFN	Song Sparrow	1 Jan	KH
Yell-rumped Wrblr	16 Jan	VPM	Lincoln's Sparrow	5 May	MC
Blk-thr Grn Wrblr	23 Apr	RTS	Swamp Sparrow	11 Apr	BR
Blackburnian Wrblr	6 May	KFN	Wht-thr Sparrow	10 Jan	JRowe
Pine Warbler	22 Apr	KFN	Wht-crowned Spar	21 Jan	KFN
Palm Warbler	23 Apr	GP	Dark-eyed Junco	1 Jan	PJG
Bay-br Warbler	9 May	SA	Lapland Longspur	21 Jan	KFN
Blackpoll Warbler	9 May	RTS	Snow Bunting	1 Jan	KFN
Cerulean Warbler	10 May	LM	Northern Cardinal	4 Jan	EB
Black-and white W	25 Apr	RTS	Rose-br Grosbeak	28 Apr	RTS
American Redstart	8 May	JHE, VPM	Indigo Bunting	8 May	JHE, VPM
Ovenbird	5 May	RTS	Dickcissel	5 Oct	TC
Nrthn Waterthrush	23 Apr	RTS	Bobolink	4 May	JHE, VPM
Louis Waterthrush	22 Apr	KFN	Rd-wngd Blackbird	4 Jan	EB
Kentucky Warbler	9 May	RTS	East Meadowlark	20 Jan	KFN
Mourning Warbler	10 May	JC	Rusty Blackbird	15 Feb	VPM
Comm Yellowthrt	6 May	KFN	Common Grackle	17 Jan	KFN
Hooded Warbler	11 May	RTS	Brown-h. Cowbird	17 Feb	JC
Wilson's Warbler	9 May	RTS	Orchard Oriole	9 May	RTS
Canada Warbler	10 May	EB	Baltimore Oriole	4 May	JHE, VPM
Yel-breasted Chat	9 May	DO	Pine Grosbeak	1 Nov	BMD
Summer Tanager	13 May	RTS	Purple Finch	8 Jan	MCh
Scarlet Tanager	5 May	RTS	House Finch	1 Jan	KFN
Eastern Towhee	12 Apr	RTS	Red Crossbill	2 Dec	GP, SP
Amer Tree Sparrow	1 Jan	KFN	Common Redpoll	28 Oct	KFN
Chipping Sparrow	4 Apr	BRp	Hoary Redpoll	12 Dec	TC
Clay-col Sparrow	7 May	KH	Pine Siskin	6 Jan	EB
Field Sparrow	4 Apr	BRp	Amer Goldfinch	1 Jan	PJG
Vesper Sparrow	4 Apr	KFN	Evening Grosbeak	15 Oct	RTS
Savannah Sparrow	31 Jan	M&JJ	House Sparrow	11 Jan	VPM
Grsshppr Sparrow	8 May	BRp			

Table 3: Contributors for 2007

S. Angle	M. Conboy (MC)	H. Knack	I. Shanahan
A. Antony	B.M. Dilabio	V.P. Mackenzie	A. Simmons
J. Aubertine	R.K. Edwards	J&B McMahan	G. Smith
E. Batalla	J.H. Ellis	L. Miller	R.T. Sprague
G. Beckwith	P.J. Good	D. Okines	B. Weir
T. Bigg	C. Grooms	G.&S. Paul	O. Weir
J. Bolsinger	J. Haig	B. Ripley	R.D. Weir
T. Carrolan	C. Heffernan	B. Rowe	A. Whitehorn
J. Cartwright	K. Hennige	W. Ruddock	KFN
M. Chojnacki (MCh)	M&J Jaques	A.&K. Scott	NLB
V. Clark			

Kingston Teen Field Naturalists Trip to Explore a Drumlin

Matt Mooney

On December 8th 2007 the Teen Field Naturalists took a trip to the H.R. Frink Centre for a hike and to learn about a drumlin. In attendance they had Matthew, Anne, Linden, Adam, Adrien, and Adrian. While on their hike the Teens saw and discussed:

- Snow fleas
- White and Red Cedar trees ; Black Cherry trees; Balsam Fir trees; White Pine trees
- Raccoon tracks; Fisher tracks; Rabbit tracks ; Squirrel tracks; Grouse tracks; Deer tracks
- White-breasted Nuthatches; Chickadees; Cardinals

In addition we talked about the formation and locations of drumlins. After lunch the Teens traveled down to the south side of the property and took a walk along the boardwalk through the marsh.

Kingston Teen Field Naturalists Trip to the Owl Woods

Linden Noble

On January 12th, the Teen Field Naturalists went to the Owl Woods on Amherst Island to look for owls. The weather was nice and there wasn't any snow on the ground, just some puddles. On the way to the Owl Woods we stopped at a graveyard to look for owl pellets. We found some and looked through them. We found interesting things including bones and rodent skulls. We also stopped on the shoreline and looked at Tundra Swans, Mallard Ducks, Common Goldeneye, a Black Duck and even a Bald Eagle. We also had a good view of a Harrier hunting. Led by Kurt Hennige we went in to the Owl Woods in search of owls. We stopped at a feeding station on the way and fed Black-Capped Chickadees and saw a Downy and Hairy Woodpecker and a White-Breasted Nuthatch. After some searching, we finally found a Long-eared Owl and a Sawhet Owl. Before heading back to the ferry, we discussed the ethics of bird-watching and about stressing birds.

Wildlife Study: Entertaining and Mysterious

Terry Sprague

We have in our yard just outside my office window, what could be referred to as a "fleet" of bird feeders. At last count, including the heated bird bath, it was 28! Every year it seems the number grows. As someone who derives part of his living from studying animal behaviour, and sharing that information during interpretive events and in columns, I feel justified investing dollars in anything that serves to improve my mind. Anyway, my wife says it's okay, claiming that my mind can always use improving.

What I have found fascinating during those times when I break away from my computer screen, and stare out the window for solace, has been the mystery of bird behaviour. For example, Feeder Number 27, obtained a month ago, was a fancy suet bar holder, shaped and coloured like the head of a sunflower. As I recall, I paid a fair amount for it, even with it being on sale. What bird would not gravitate to a sunflower head? Well, none in my yard it seems, as it surely has been dangling from a tree branch for four weeks, and nary a bird has ventured near it. Meanwhile three other suet bar holders, even one where birds must dangle upside down to reach the suet, are busy with woodpeckers, chickadees and even a blue jay who has adopted the knack of clinging by one toe to feed from the awkward position.

At times, the action outside my window is mayhem as birds crisscross back and forth from feeder to feeder, all stations receiving at least some attention. As I study the clientele even more closely, I see food preferences, but I also see feeder preferences, even with individuals within a species that I have been able to identify because of the sex of the bird, or something as innocuous as a misplaced feather.

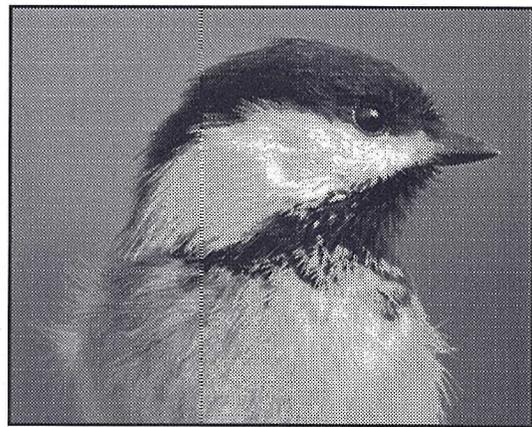


Photo by Dave Bell of Belleville

One chickadee identified by a broken tail feather, clearly prefers a sunflower seed feeder encircled by a wire squirrel guard, zipping through the tiny spaces in the wire mesh to reach the feeder in the middle. One day when I did not wish to spend any more time staring at words on a screen, I watched this chickadee off and on for much of the day. At no time did it stray from using its favourite feeder. Yet, the following day there it was, totally ignoring the previous day's feeder, and now making

repeated trips to an inexpensive plastic gazebo-shaped feeder.

What causes these behaviour changes in birds, and what stimulates them into making these choices? What is going on in their little brains? My extensive library on wildlife offers no explanation, and we are left to assume that birds make these decisions for no other reason except to provide variety in their lives.

A Belleville area resident e-mailed me some weeks ago to share his observations, not on feeder selection, but the manner in which birds feed. He noted that chickadees use the snap and run technique, spending no time at all on the feeder, other than what is required to grab a seed. The finches, he notes, are all leisurely diners and prefer to stay put on the feeder. Blue jays, he observed, stay put to fill their craws, quickly emptying a feeder. They are nervous feeders, and unlike the chickadees and finches, are very sensitive to human appearance.

However, just when our observations conclude that there appears to be a lot of intelligence at work out there, a single junco trying to squeeze through protective chicken wire around a red cedar that it could easily fly over, casts some doubt. Sometimes it is nothing more than instinct at work, such as the red squirrel who darts into a wood-duck nesting box that I have filled with peanuts, instinctively knowing he must salt this cache away somewhere, for

tomorrow this bountiful supply may run out. He does not know that I have a standing order for peanuts at Picton Farm Supply, and there is always a 50-pound bag "squirreled" away in the house. So he consumes a few peanuts, then dutifully carries off several pounds a day, burying each one individually in mounds of snow and under exposed leaves. The blue jays took only five minutes to catch on to this routine, following the squirrel in hot pursuit, and quickly digging up every peanut as it is buried, but the squirrel toils on.

It is a failing perhaps not peculiar to the human race, to think of ourselves as a centre about which the rest of the universe revolves - the dominant being alone in its ability to reason and think things out. In our interpretation of animals' actions, we must be cautious not to substitute our own minds for theirs. The study of animal behaviour is a fascinating field, and still poorly understood. Is it really necessary that we probe into the very psyche of the wildlife we enjoy? Isn't it enough that wildlife can be entertaining and mysterious, and be content with that?

As Tweed area nature filmmakers, John and Janet Foster, say, "The best ending to a wildlife story, is a mystery."

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Kingston and Area Christmas Counts

Ron D. Weir

A return to more normal winter weather during December and January marked the Christmas Count Period 14 Dec 07 to 5 Jan 08. Falling and blowing snow, freezing conditions and significant snow cover plagued all the local Counts and affected the results adversely. The shallower sections of Lake Ontario were frozen, as were still waters away from the Lake. The only open water along the Rideau Canal and Cataraqui River was at locks and places where water

tumbled over falls, which included Kingston Mills and Chaffey's Lock. For the first time in 60 years of counts, dangerous weather forced the cancellation of the Kingston Count.

Shown below in Table 1 are selected statistics for the local counts. Table 2 contains the species totals for the past 15 years. The Kingston totals remain at the plateau of an average 103 species since no count could take place.

Table 1: Statistics on Individual Counts in 2007 for the Kingston Area

	14Dec Delta	15Dec Pr Ed. Pt.	16Dec Kingston	19Dec Westport	26Dec 1000 Isl.	28Dec Rid. Fry	28Dec Amh. Isl	29Dec Napanee
Species	40	65	-	34	60	46	54	51
Birds	3,569	12,501	-	2,275	8,999	3,431	9,782	4,989
Participants	17	13	-	25	23	17	25	15

Table 2: Seventeen-year Comparison with 17-year Average (* Count not done)

	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	91-06 avg
PE Pt	61	61	64	61	76	67	64	61	80	61	72	58	82	71	76	71	65	66
Kingston	95	96	113	99	101	97	106	104	107	102	111	109	103	103	103	104	*	103
Westport	37	55	50	46	36	48	45	41	49	44	54	47	*	*	*	52	34	46
Napanee	44	46	42	52	52	56	51	38	58	49	50	56	51	58	50	56	51	50
1000 Isl.	61	55	74	58	53	57	54	56	68	56	61	51	61	57	60	64	60	59
Amherst Is.	51	47	51	n/a	54	57	66	57	51	58	71	60	53	36	64	54	54	55
Rideau. Fy.	39	39	37	36	29	40	45	41	36	37	42	38	37	35	47	54	46	36
Delta										38	37	40	38	43	38	48	40	35**

Table 3: Comparison of the Top Counts in Ontario for 2003 to 2007

Count	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1. Blenheim/Rondeau	100	103	111	108	100
2. Long Point	110	98	105	106	109
3. Kingston	103	104	103	104	Cancelled
3. Point Pelee	94	91	103	94	98
5. Hamilton	101	102*	100	101	103
6. Toronto	89	89	91	102	81
7. Fisherville	95	82	90	75	75
8. Niagara Falls	98	95	90	92	?

The detailed species list for the local area Christmas counts is presented in Table 4. Where record numbers of individuals occurred, the number is underlined. The entry CW designates a sighting within the count week, which is defined as three days before and three days after the count day.

Table 4: Kingston Area Christmas Counts 2007

Count	14Dec Delta	16Dec P E Pt	17Dec Kingstn	20Dec Wstprt	26Dec 1000 Is.	28Dec Rid. Fy	29Dec Amh Is.	30Dec Napnee
Common Loon	1	-	-	-	7	1	3	1
Horned Grebe	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Great Blue Heron	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Canada Goose	-	<u>4873</u>	-	-	672	3	540	190
Brant	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	-
Mute Swan	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trumpeter Swan	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Tundra Swan	-	99	-	-	-	-	46	-
Wood Duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gadwall	-	7	-	-	-	-	747	15
American Wigeon	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-
American Black Duck	8	297	-	2	31	9	640	20
Mallard	93	3352	-	-	468	32	671	210
Northern Pintail	-	5	-	-	-	-	130	-
Green-winged Teal	-	2	-	-	9	-	1	-
White-winged Scoter	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-

Count	14Dec Delta	16Dec P E Pt	17Dec Kingstn	20Dec Wstprt	26Dec 1000 Is.	28Dec Rid. Fy	29Dec Amh Is.	30Dec Napnee
Belted Kingfisher	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Red-bellied Woodp.	-	4	-	-	4	-	1	3
Yellow-b. Sapsucker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Downy Woodpecker	25	21	-	22	50	28	25	22
Hairy Woodpecker	17	20	-	41	38	31	19	12
Northern Flicker	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Pileatd Woodpecker	CW	6	-	9	21	5	-	1
Northern Shrike	3	2	-	2	4	5	6	8
Blue Jay	220	183	-	296	287	275	158	74
American Crow	71	162	-	45	199	125	7	174
Common Raven	37	1	-	13	30	11	-	5
Horned Lark	-	8	-	-	2	-	5	3
Bl-capped Chickadee	266	218	-	473	598	530	185	226
Tufted Titmouse	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Red-brstd Nuthatch	2	-	-	1	3	-	-	-
Wh-brstd Nuthatch	14	26	-	46	100	44	31	37
Brown Creeper	2	3	-	-	4	2	-	2
Carolina Wren	-	-	-	-	CW	-	2	-
Golden-crnd Kinglet	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
American Robin	-	7	-	-	5	-	1	-
European Starling	163	645	-	119	1440	278	1178	1016
Bohemian Waxwing	55	-	-	-	60	60	-	28
Cedar Waxwing	110	15	-	62	171	-	-	-
Eastern Towhee	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Tree Sparrow	66	165	-	55	145	44	73	99
Song Sparrow	-	2	-	-	2	1	2	-
Wh-throat. Sparrow	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Dark-eyed Junco	44	207	-	32	110	20	17	99
Lapland Longspur	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Snow Bunting	141	143	-	32	311	48	852	CW
Northern Cardinal	7	19	-	6	31	28	19	9
Rd-wingd Blackbird	-	-	-	-	6	1	4	4
Rusty Blackbird	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Grackle	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

Count	14Dec Delta	16Dec P E Pt	17Dec Kingstn	20Dec Wstprt	26Dec 1000 Is.	28Dec Rid. Fy	29Dec Amh Is.	30Dec Napnee
Br-headed Cowbird	2	-	-	-	-	-	6	15
Pine Grosbeak	169	7	-	CW	112	16	-	12
Purple Finch	-	3	-	-	-	4	-	-
House Finch	1	6	-	6	24	6	49	54
Red Crossbill	-	-	-	CW	-	-	-	-
Common Redpoll	271	63	-	264	310	399	122	256
Hoary Redpoll	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
Pine Siskin	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Goldfinch	53	102	-	94	207	120	93	193
Evening Grosbeak	-	-	-	18	-	1	-	-
House Sparrow	135	55	-	54	278	154	113	286
gull (sp)	-	(1)	-	-	(22)	-	-	-
Total Species	40	65	-	34	60	46	64	51
Total Individuals	3,569	12,501	-	2,275	8,999	3,431	9,782	4,989

The Truth About Snake Bites

Matt Ellerbeck

Few animals are as feared, hated, and misunderstood as the snake. Some people hate snakes so much that they kill them on sight. However, people truly have nothing to fear from these animals. Snakes are generally docile and timid creatures that try to avoid conflict. Snakes will not make unprovoked attacks on people. When a person comes in contact with a snake, the snake's first instinct is to rapidly flee the area and find shelter. If the snake doesn't do this, it may just stay perfectly still to try to blend in with the surroundings. If the snake is captured, it may still not resort to biting - proof of its gentle demeanour.

The snake has several other tactics as

alternatives to biting: it may hiss, make mock strikes with a closed mouth, or flail around. A further account of the true nature of snakes can be found in a study done by University of Georgia Professor Dr. Whit Gibbons. The following excerpt from his study speaks for itself:

"All the snake species tested have had the same initial response to human presence. If given the opportunity, they escape--down a hole, under a ledge, or in the case of cottonmouths, into the water. Escape is even the standard behaviour of enormous diamondback rattlesnakes, which will immediately disappear if they have enough warning before they think a person can reach them.

Most rattlesnakes vibrate their tails and most cottonmouths sit with mouth open when a human comes near. Even some non-venomous snakes vibrate their tails. These displays are merely warnings not to tread on them. They are not aggressive attack measures. The snakes just want us to leave them alone."

Snakes bites on humans usually happen when someone is severely agitating and harassing the snake, either when cornering it or provoking it. According to NC State University, almost 80% of snake bites on people happen when someone is trying to capture or kill the snake. These facts show that snakes are not aggressive or evil animals. If you provoke and capture a wild animal, what can you expect but to be bitten since the animal is going to try to defend itself? Looking at things perceptively, if you went and grabbed a 'cute and cuddly' little chipmunk off a tree it would certainly bite and scratch you. Snakes are no different. If you leave the snake alone it is almost impossible to be hurt by one!



The other people bitten are those who accidentally step on a snake in the wild. These bites can be easily avoided if care is taken to be aware when hiking in natural areas and to watch your step. Never stick your hands or feet under rocks, crevices, boards, woodpiles, or anything else you think might act as cover for snakes.

Most snakes are harmless. Only around 13% of snake species are venomous. Even fewer are equipped with venom that is strong enough to seriously harm a human being. If a venomous snake does bite a person, there is a good chance that the snake doesn't even inject venom. Snakes have venom first and foremost to subdue their prey. Since snakes don't have arms to hold onto their prey, a means of subduing their food is necessary. The venom also helps the snake digest its meal. When the venom is injected, it helps to break the prey down for the snake since snakes don't chew their food, but swallow it whole. We are too big for snakes to eat, so they will not want to waste their venom on us.

If the snake does inject venom, proper medical treatment and anti-venom can usually save the person's life. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, only about 0.2% of people bitten by snakes in United States die from the bite. Similar stats apply to Australia, which is home to over 60 kinds of potentially venomous snakes. It is estimated to be even less in Europe. Ontario is home to only one species of venomous snake: the shy Massasauga

rattlesnake, found primarily in the Georgian Bay area. According to Parks Canada, two people in Eastern Canada have died from a Massassauga bite; neither received proper treatment. These bites could have been avoided. If you encounter a snake, walk around it, give it plenty of space and leave it alone.

It is easy to co-exist with snakes, and they do many useful things for people. Snakes are great controllers of rodents like rats and mice. Without snakes, rodents and some insect populations would sky-rocket and destroy crops, affecting our food supply. Rodents also spread diseases which could seriously affect our health. Snakes are great at hunting rodents because they can crawl into small burrows and other areas rodents use as shelters. These places are too small for other predators to enter.

Secondly, snakes save the lives of millions of people every year. Snake venom is used in the medical field to treat serious ailments like heart disease & stroke, cancer, Parkinson's, blood clots and more. Despite this benefit, countless snakes are brutally killed every year by people! There are over 60 species of snakes listed on the World Conservation Union's Red List of Threatened Species.

We must look past our fear and ignorance and see snakes for what they really are: interesting creatures that play important roles in the eco-system. A fear of snakes is inherent, so we must learn not to pass our irrational fears onto our children. It is an awful thing to live in fear. When we look past our fear we can then see the snake as a friend, not a fiend.

Before the Leaves

Terry Fuchs

Last spring I moved into the cottage I rent by the season at Upper Beverley Lake a few weeks earlier than usual. Normally I arrive in time for the Victoria Day weekend. This year's early arrival offered me a deepened perspective of the cottage surroundings. With the trees not yet in leaf when I settled in, I was able to see farther into the woods behind the lake, both from my canoe and from the roads. I know and revel in the benefits of leafless trees from the hiking that friends and I do on the Canadian Shield north of Kingston during the fall, winter, and first month

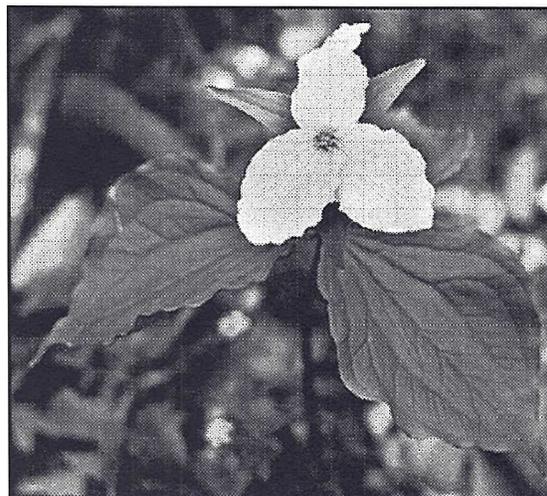
of spring. Commonly, November is considered bleak and desolate, but for us it is the beginning of the season when the countryside lies open and expansive; the veil of leaves only inches from your nose all summer is now thick and crackling underfoot. Its departure reveals vistas of distant ridges, rocky humps and domes, and glittering blue slices of beaver ponds and lakes. To avoid the blackflies we schedule our hiking to finish the first weekend of May, but even without pestering bugs the leaves' density robs the land of visible orientation and depth.

The novelty of seeing far down long clear aisles among the trees made me wide-eyed. During the first days the wind blew hard from the north, scooping the lake into white-capped waves. In place of the rustle of quivering leaves, the wind's sound was the whistle and low howl of it scraping bare branches. After supper it was calm. From the canoe, hugging the cattails fringing outcroppings of lichen-spattered rock, I could see through the trees to tiers of ledgy ridges. In the slanting, dappled sunshine snowy white trilliums nested in trios of green sepals above matching, outsized leaves, and the tiny balloons of dutchmen's breeches appeared to float in the air.

I picked out the neglected path above the shore that led to a spring seeping from the rocks. Decades ago, some cottagers had used it as a source of drinking water. By the time I found it, it was just a trickle being piped into a galvanized metal box. For years I had been unable to locate the path's entrance, since thickets of seedlings and saplings had taken over in the wake of the harvesting of most mature maples. Now I could identify its course and spot remembered landmarks such as the trough that cows browsing the woods once drank from and the evaporator that Henry Judd, a farmer who lived up the hill from my cottage for nearly ten decades, had used for sugaring in the spring. Like the spring box, both were galvanized and still grey, but the evaporator pan's rim was scabbed with rust. Mr. Judd had always boiled in the open air, with the long, shallow pan propped on a hearth of rocks. In an

average year when he was young, he and his parents and nine siblings produced three hundred pounds of maple sugar, which they stacked in bricks in a corner of the upstairs landing of their farmhouse. It saved his mother from having to buy store sugar until December.

One evening I canoed across the lake to take in a spring spectacle I always look forward to; it is usually still visible when I move into the cottage near the Victoria Day weekend. Just back from the shore the land climbs abruptly in a slabby, near-vertical cliff. Crevices and little ledges pock and corrugate its face. The wide, sloping crest is woods, with grass among the trees as green and even as a freshly mowed lawn. The slope tilts the summit into view from out on the lake, and on this evening it was massed with the trilliums I had paddled over to see. They flowed from the rear of the crest to the brink. Where the cliff's sheerness had a little grade, they poured over the lip like snowdrifts, ramps and tongues of white spilling down the rock.



At the base they spread in a long scarf along the narrow, swampy band of

shore above the waterline. From the canoe I could see them jostling and swaying overhead, ruffled in the breeze. At sunset the crowns of the bare trees above them, in shadow, looked bleached and ghostly; in the succeeding twilight, canopies of blossoms on a half-dozen wild plums stood out like smoke. I thought I picked out the boulder-choked fissure that, after a few days of rain, brims so tumultuously that it can be heard as a faint, distant cataract from the dock at my cottage. In the summer I have paddled across the lake toward the loudening clamour of plunging water until I figured I was opposite the cleft where it sluiced down the rock, but have never even glimpsed a flash of the torrent through the leaves.

Walking the road I had vistas into depths of forest that, in a couple of weeks, would be much less penetrable. Seen from on foot, with me fully vertical and almost among the tree trunks crowding the road's edge, the woods had more immediacy than when I was sitting in the canoe separated from them by even a few feet of water. Bare, the trees loomed starkly, more solidly than when decked out in their summer frippery. In leaf they were lighter, airier, luminously green in the sun with an almost internal light from each leaf; stirred by breeze, the leaves trembled as though on the verge of flight. The broad ridge that the cottage road struggles up toward the township road was strikingly obvious through the woods, a gloomy, moss-plush ruck of shadowed stone. Below it, deeply filigreed fern fronds shot up lushly from the earth like electric-green skeletons. Beneath the

trees wildflowers swam in and out of watery sunlight: the frilly white, bugle-shaped, and the red, star-like varieties of trilliums; pale yellow dutchmen's-breeches strung on shepherd's-crook stalks; tall, cloak-like leaves that would enfold bloodroot flowers; bladelike, brown-mottled dogtooth violet leaves, dense as porcupine quills, the drooping, bell-like buttery flowers small and isolated amid the sea of leaves.

The wood east of the cottage road is sandwiched between it and the township road. Across the cottage road, behind the sheds and outhouses, the forest gives way to individual trees, lilac and snowball bushes, raspberry canes, and sun-shot brakes of weedy elms. Past the cottage enclave's boundary, the township road is flanked by timber on both sides; branches reach across the gravel, sagging with leaves by late May, and in the summer deerflies seem to congregate in the cave of shade. Beyond a rail fence, I noticed plain wooden rungs nailed to a stout bole, perhaps access to a tree fort, I thought, if not a deer stand. The limb supporting the fort or platform had broken off, only the thin end of it snaking into view.

Beyond the tunnel through the woods, forest was intermittent and on the lake side of the road. I passed trees that had been drowning for a few years now in a flooded hollow. The opaque water was pewter grey, with drifts of equally grey scuzz already viscous on it. In two weeks some of these trees would leaf, less thickly than their dry-shod counterparts, a mist of gauzy pale green among bare branches--enough foliage,

however, with their full-canopied neighbours, to turn the water inky with reflections.

In most places the trees hugged the fence lines, a brushy ribbon between the road and the abandoned fields I could see through bare branches. It was a tangled mix of maples and young oaks, spindly elms, staghorn sumac, slender ironwoods, moosewood, pin cherries and chokecherries, snarled with coils of wiry wild grapevine. As seedlings they had likely escaped the plough and mower when the fields were cultivated. Long unused even for pasture, they were rank with heavy thatches of bright, stooped grass and weeds. From a Frost gate or a gap in the fence, fading ruts wound toward woodlots at the back of the lush meadows. Trilliums blossomed in the attenuated sunlight beneath the fencerows, perky, wedding-dress white blooms on tall, sturdy stems. Small colonies of dutchmen's-breeches bowed above clusters of feathery leaves, and nubby mats of dogtooth violet leaves speared through last autumn's decay. On the opposite side of the road, the fields dropped away sharply to valleys bristling with treetops, then the land rose again toward a distant highway, where occasionally I could see the white gleam of a farmhouse.

More prevalent than sightings of far-off houses, more ubiquitous than the wildflowers under the brush, was the trash beside the road and in the ditches. Trash defies the seasons, seemingly riding with indiscriminate buoyancy on top of weeds and brush, wind-banked autumn leaves, and snowdrifts; a plastic

shopping bag I saw rumped in the dirt might as easily wind up snagged on a tree branch, flapping in the breeze like an oversized, synthetic leaf. The chip bags, cardboard soft-drink and coffee cups, the beer cans and juice bottles, styrofoam take-out food containers, and squashed plastic pop and water bottles tossed from car windows (I seldom see any one walking the road) constituted a tawdry museum of our society's refreshment tastes and lazy habits. Even more obvious, beside a flat stretch of road, was a disused impromptu dump, from the days before municipal landfills were available or convenient. The leaves' absence exposed hundreds of rusted tin cans half-buried in beds of dead leaves, crowned by a few cast-iron stoves flaking rust. For a tipping spot level with the road, it seemed relatively benign. When I used to walk another township's road where I owned a cottage, I would pass a steep cutbank at the bottom of a hill. From the road's edge I could look down on heaps of discarded appliances and bedsprings and window frames smashed and scattered through the trees.

This practice of informal wayside disposal was not restricted to locals. In the forest behind our row of cottages junk was plentiful: forty-gallon drums, more cans and bottles if you looked closely or poked a toe through the duff. They were relics of an era when the cottagers preferred to heave their garbage up into the trees rather than cart it home at the end of a weekend. From what I used to pull out of the lake bottom just offshore, apparently they sometimes just as casually flung it into

the water. Fifteen years ago it took my young nephew and me only a few discouraging minutes one July afternoon to fill two large garbage bags from the woods behind my cottage. The chrome-and-vinyl highchair, almost covered by fallen leaves when we dragged it out, would not fit into a garbage bag.

Over the next week or two, as trees and undergrowth leafed out and sightlines

into the woods started to shorten and shrink, even some of the rubbish might at least be hidden from view. By the third week of May the forest would be completely transformed; like sails on schooners, foliage gives trees majesty and grace. But even before then, with a breeze gusting up one afternoon, I would suddenly realize that, instead of the rush of air sweeping bare limbs, I was hearing, for the first time that season, the shiver of leaves.

Wood Duck Box Clean-out, Helen Quilliam Sanctuary

Heather Zilstra

Yet another successful Teen Naturalist Field Trip! The members who attended on February 9 2008 were Adam, Adrian, Alison, Dillon, Heather, Matt, Phoebe, and the leaders, Anne Robertson and Mike Evans. We would like to thank Mike for joining us on the trip. We travelled to the wood duck boxes at the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary using snowshoes, which were effective because the snow was quite deep. All the gear we needed, including a 10-foot ladder, had to be hauled around the three ponds we visited. The weather was fairly mild, around 0 degrees C, but it snowed lightly for the entire trip. We were lucky enough to spot a beaver and an otter in the same pond, (Sucker Lake) which was exciting. Other animal signs included many deer tracks, and what we identified as coyote tracks.

Six boxes that were checked were cleaned out, and refilled with wood shavings.

Betty Hughes Pond

- 91 - 06 - paper wasp nest, not used by wood ducks
- 91 - 07 - replaced box, and put up predator guard
- 91 - 04 - tree had fallen over, box was recovered and removed

Long Pond

- 91 - 03 - acorns, not used by wood ducks
- 91 - 09 - put up predator guard, wood shavings had some down, paper wasp nest

Bog Pond

- 91 - 11 - tree had fallen over, box was recovered, shavings had some down feathers mixed in
- 91 - 10 - 15cm wasp nest, stripy, dull feathers
- 91 - 05 - repaired predator guard, possible starling nest made with grass, 10cm depression.

Winter Season 1 Dec 07 to 29 Feb 08

Ron D. Weir

This winter marked a return to more normal weather with heavy snow and significant cold that froze most of the open water in the vicinity of Kingston. A fierce winter storm on 16 Dec 07 forced cancellation of the Kingston Christmas count, the first cancellation in 60 years. The cold during December forced lingering birds southwards and the deep freeze of 3 Jan 08 gripped the area through to the close of the season driving out most waterfowl. Northern finches appeared in numbers and both species of waxwings made a good showing.

Raptor numbers were high on Wolfe Island during most of the period, including significant concentrations of Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls, but Snowy Owl numbers were modest. Amherst Island was nearly devoid of raptors, presumably in response to low numbers of meadow voles.

Species Account:

Common Loon - to 6 Jan (1) Howe I., SD; very scarce after 8 Dec.

Horned Grebe - to 6 Jan (2) PEPT & Cressy, KFN.

Double-crested Cormorant - to 5 Jan (2) PEPT, JHE, RDW.

Great Blue Heron - last bird 28 Dec (1) Hill I., KR.

Canada Goose - numbers sharply declined after 6 Jan 08 as the freeze deepened.

Mute Swan - peak 6 Jan (19) Kingston and along Bath Road, KFN.

Tundra Swan - peaks 6 Jan (188) Kingston, KFN, few after this date.

Wood Duck - last one Dec 30(1) Napanee, KFN.

Long-tailed Duck - peak 6 Jan (12,325) PEPT., JHE, RDW.

Ruddy Duck - 1 Dec to 6 Jan (1) Kingston (Elevator Bay), KFN.

Osprey - Dec 12-17 (1) Adolphus Reach, RTS, late bird.

Bald Eagle - 29 birds in December; peak of 65 birds 5-6 January, Kingston, KFN.

N. Harrier - great decline in numbers on the offshore islands after 2 Dec, KFN.

Northern Goshawk - 3 during December, Kingston, KFN.

Red-tailed Hawk - peaks 4 Dec (40) PEPT (passage migrants) OW, KH; 5 Dec (20), 26(17) Wolfe I., JHE, VPM, J&BM.

Rough-legged Hawk - peaks 27 Dec (45) Wolfe I., BMD et al., 26 Jan (46) Wolfe I., KFN.

Golden Eagle - 16 Dec (1) PEPT area, RTS.

Merlin - 5 during December and 3 during January, Kingston, KFN.

Peregrine Falcon - 30 Dec (1) Napanee, KFN.

Killdeer - last ones 1 Dec (3) Bath, KH.

Lesser Black-backed Gull - 2-9 Dec (1 imm) Kingston (Elevator Bay), KH et al.

Iceland Gull - few all winter at the Violet dump, KFN.

Glaucous Gull - few all winter at the Violet dump, KFN.

Snowy Owl - peaks 3 during December and 7 during January on Wolfe I., very scarce on Amherst I., KFN.

Barred Owl - irruption south of breeding area into the Kingston city, 10 during December and 10+ during January, KFN.

Short-eared Owl - peaks 5 Dec (14), 27 Jan (12) Wolfe I., KFN; scarce on Amherst I.

N. Saw-whet Owl - 16 Dec (1) Westbrook, JR; 27-28 Dec (1) Amherst I., KFN.

Red-bellied Woodpecker - 15 during December, KFN.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 6 Dec (1) Kingston, JHE.

Common Raven - peaks 14 Dec (37) Delta, 26 (30) Hill I. area, KFN.

Tufted Titmouse - 3 Dec to 8 Jan (1) Bath feeder, KS, AS et al.

Red-breasted Nuthatch - present but in low numbers, Kingston area, KFN.

Amer. Robin - peak 21 Dec (100) Dorland, BRp, VPM.

Bohemian Waxwing - excellent numbers, widespread in the Kingston area throughout December and January.

Cedar Waxwing - excellent number and widespread as per the Bohemian Waxwing.

Yellow-rumped Warbler - last birds 21 Dec (2) PEPT, BRp, VPM.

Eastern Towhee - 29 Dec (1) Amherst I., KFN.

Pine Grosbeak - widespread Dec to Feb, peaks 14 Dec (169) Delta, 26 Dec (112), KFN.

Purple Finch - very scarce.

Red Crossbill - occasional sightings.

Common Redpoll - very common, peak flocks 12 Dec (500) Wolfe I., TC; 29 Jan (500) Camden East, PJG.

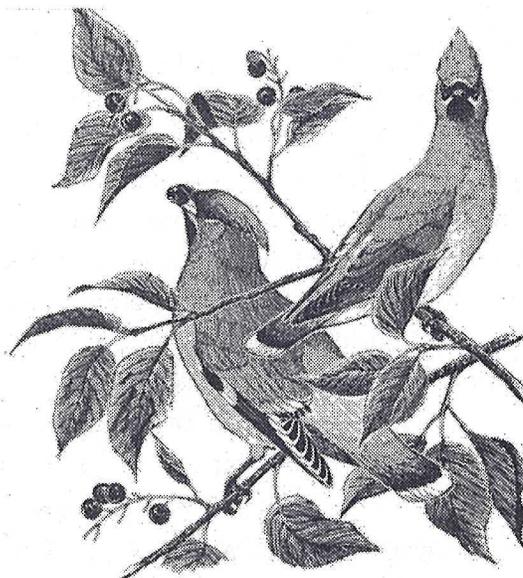
Hoary Redpoll - 12 Dec onwards, a few birds mixed with large flocks of common Redpolls.

Pine Siskin - 3-21 Dec (20 in all) Bath, PEPT, Kingston, KFN. Virtually none after this date.

Evening Grosbeak - 7 Dec onwards, small flocks mostly in the Bedford Mills and Westport areas, a few in Kingston.

Contributors:

T. Carrolan, B.M. Dilabio, J.H. Ellis, P.J. Good, K. Hennige, Kingston Field Naturalists 3+, V.P. Mackenzie, J&B McMahon, North Leeds Birdwatchers 3+, B Ripley, K. Robinson, A Scott, K. Scott, R.T. Sprague, O. Weir, R.D. Weir



Gwaii Haanis National Park Reserve

Hugh Evans

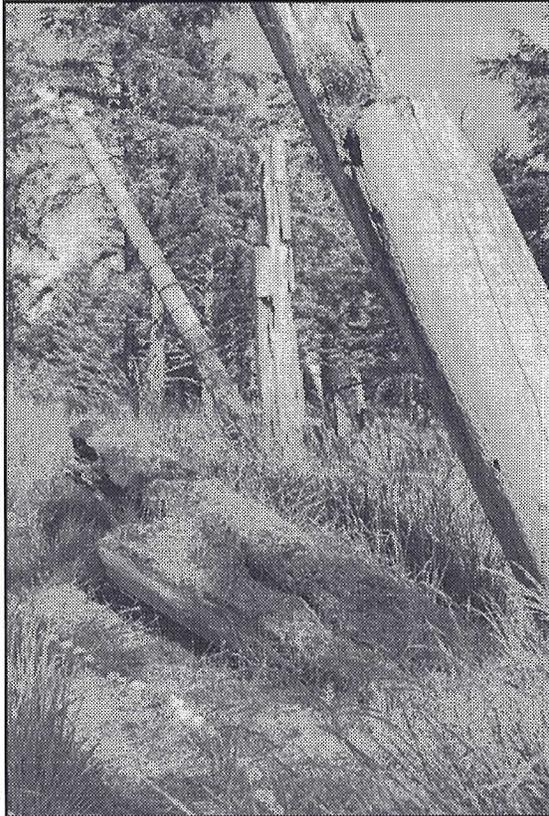
Last August I visited Gwaii Haanis National Park Reserve in the Queen Charlotte Islands, also known by the Haida name Haida Gwaii. Gwaii Haanis is located at the southern end of the Haida Gwaii, with most of the 1500 square kilometre land area on Moresby Island, but it comprises over 400 islands in all. As it is accessible only by boat or floatplane, I was fortunate to have eight days on the Island Roamer, a 23-metre sailing vessel. We traveled the full length of Gwaii Haanis right to the southern tip at Cape St. James. To board the vessel required a ride on a school bus over a logging road starting from Sandspit, where I arrived by air from Vancouver. The road, which winds through the forested interior of Moresby Island, showed many signs of logging activity but was deserted, as the west coast loggers were on strike.

When the thirteen other passengers and I arrived at Moresby Camp at the end of a long inlet, the crew of four were busy preparing the Island Roamer. We had a chance to explore the area and were treated to a good view of a flock of Black Turnstones feeding on the shore below the high tide line and calling to each other. After getting settled in our cabins and a safety talk from the skipper, we had lunch as we motored down the inlet. Although not yet in the park, the scenery was spectacular and we had a view of several one-thousand-metre peaks still covered with patches of snow.

That afternoon the vessel anchored off Skedans, the first of a number of traditional Haida villages we were to visit. At each of these sites there is a watchmen's camp where several members of the Haida nation stay to supervise and protect the area. None of the traditional villages is now occupied, and the remains of poles and longhouses are in various states of decay. It is the decision of the Haida nation that the remains return to the earth and the only measures to preserve them is to cut away lush growth to allow air to circulate and slow the decay. The watchmen stem from the Haida tradition, when the villages were occupied, of having watchmen stationed above the village to look out for possible attack. They are often represented on top of poles by three human figures wearing conical hats. Each visitor received an impression representing the watchmen at Skedans and at other villages.



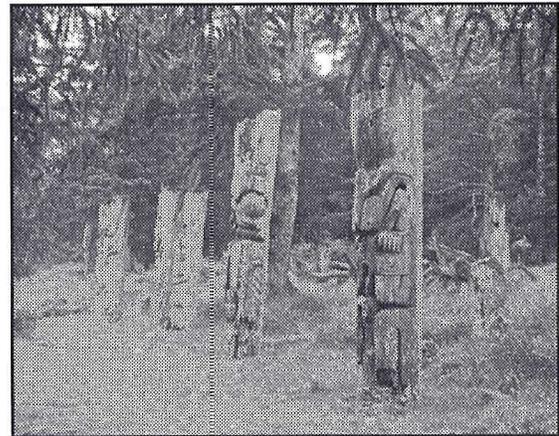
To get on shore we had to climb into a Zodiac and once there waded up the beach. The watchmen who act as guides and interpreters do an excellent job of explaining the significance of the artifacts. Some of the poles at Skedans are leaning and many are on the ground where they decay quickly.



The watchman leading our group explained the meaning of the remains of figures on the pole lying down. The decay was so far advanced it was hard for me to see the figures. White shells mark the path visitors were asked to stay on to avoid damaging the site. The poles with a cutaway at the top are mortuary poles where a bentwood box containing the remains of a chief would be placed. The leaning pole in the background is a memorial pole; the 13 rings represent the number of potlatches

the chief held in his lifetime and are clearly an indication of his importance.

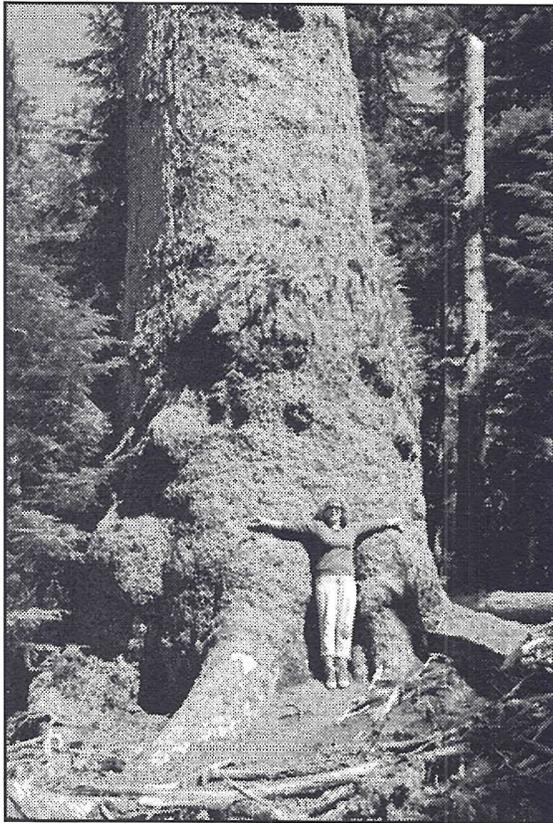
The villages were laid out along the shore of a sheltered beach where canoes could be pulled out. The memorial poles and mortuary poles were located above the beach, and behind them were the longhouses. The most impressive remaining poles I saw were at Sgang Gwaay on Anthony Island near the south end of Gwaai Haanis. Sgang Gwaay was designated a world heritage site in 1981. The west side of Anthony Island is exposed to the open Pacific Ocean. Sgang Gwaay is on a sheltered beach on the east side.



The picture shows some of the mortuary poles and a few standing remains of the longhouses in the background. After most of the population of Sgang Gwaay died of European diseases, in the late 1800s the remaining inhabitants moved to Skidegate on Graham Island. The site has deteriorated since then and it is a continuing job to cut back the lush growth to keep it open.

Windy Bay, located on Lyell Island just east of Moresby Island, was the site in

1985 of a protest by environmentalists and the Haida nation against clear-cut logging. The protest resulted in the establishment of Gwaii Haanis National Park Reserve where logging is not allowed. Although there must have been some logging in the past as one can stumps in the forest, there has been no clear-cutting that I could see. It was fascinating to walk among the old-growth western hemlock, western red cedar, Sitka spruce trees and the lush undergrowth. Of particular interest was a huge Sitka spruce four metres in diameter and many hundreds of years old. Its top was impossible to see through the surrounding growth.



In addition to allowing easy movement through Gwaii Haanis, the Island Roamer provided an excellent platform

for viewing marine life. On several days we saw a feeding frenzy of Pacific White-Sided Dolphins and Humpback Whales.



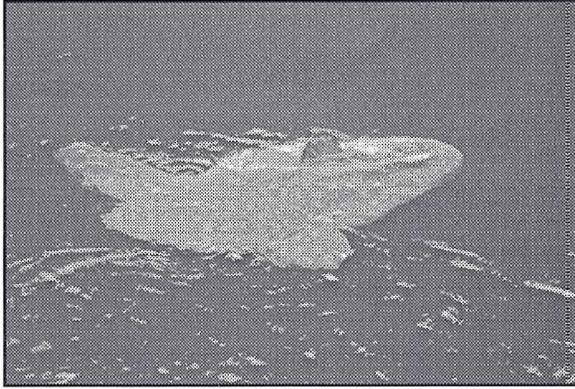
The dolphins were chasing food near the surface of the water and seemed indifferent to our presence. For a while the sea was alive with them and then suddenly they were gone. The whales did not come as close to the boat but surfaced frequently in all directions. I only succeeded in photographing their tails as they slipped below the surface.



Another interesting encounter with Humpback Whales was our passage through a narrow channel accompanied by a mother whale and her calf. They kept abreast of us a hundred metres away for several kilometres.

One of the strangest creatures in the sea is the Mola Mola or Ocean Sunfish. They

were seen lolling near the surface in open water and in sheltered coves. The ones we saw were up to two metres long and basically white in colour. They have a short tail and rather large fins.



Other strange creatures are By the Wind Sailors. They are about 5 centimetres long and look like they are made of clear plastic. They float on top of the water and have a fin sticking straight up that allows the wind to push them along the surface. We encountered many of them on the calm surface of the Pacific well off shore. While out in the Pacific

we had good looks at Sooty Shearwaters, Northern Fulmars, a Black-footed Albatross and a flock of Red-necked Phalaropes.

Although most of the time was spent on the water, we saw a number of land animals while afloat. Black Bears were seen scavenging along the shore at low tide. A family of River Otters scampered over the rocks at the edge of a small island. Sitka Black-tailed Deer were seen at various locations. They are not native to the islands and were introduced in the 1880s. The deer are now a pest as they overbrowse the undergrowth and considerable effort is underway to cull them.

The opportunity to learn about the Haida by visiting their traditional villages and viewing the abundant wildlife was most enjoyable. It was made more so by living in the comfort of the Island Roamer.

King of Fishes: Natural History of Lake Ontario's Atlantic Salmon

Mark Conboy

There is a wealth of fascinating natural history going on beneath the waves. The Kingston region is alive with fish, but for whatever reason, remarkable species in our local waters go unnoticed: the primitive bowfin (*Amia calva*), the unlikely longnose gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*), and the gigantic muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*) are just three examples of the fantastic diversity of unique fishes in our watershed.

The Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) is a fish story in itself; anglers call it the King of Fishes. Famous Maritimes salmon rivers are known to most of us, but that Atlantic salmon was once part of Lake Ontario's native biota is not. It once schooled in abundance throughout Lake Ontario and was the dominant predator in that pre-colonial ecosystem. Unfortunately the salmon was extirpated in the late 1800's. It now swims again thanks to extensive

reintroduction efforts in several tributaries on both sides of the border. Here, I take a historical perspective on the natural history of Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario.

Today's Great Lakes are a shadow of their former selves. All of the historically abundant native fish species have declined and are being replaced by other native, invasive or introduced species. Much of the ecosystem's dynamics have been altered in the past two and half centuries: tributaries have been dammed, the planktonic community irreversibly changed, water temperatures are on the rise and pollution continues to threaten. A survey of Lake Ontario in the sixteenth century would have found around 100 species of fish, about 20 of them quite common. They ranged in size from tiny emerald shiners (*Notropis atherinoides*) to enormous lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*). Atlantic salmon and lake trout (collectively, salmonids) along with burbot (*Lota lota*) were the top predators. They fed on abundant lake herring (*Coregonus artedii*), whitefishes and ciscos. Many species, including salmon, migrated seasonally to tributaries for spawning (Smith 1995).

Lake Ontario salmon have a very different life history than their Maritime cousins. *Salmo salar* from the Atlantic coast are anadromous, meaning that they are born in freshwater and migrate to saltwater later in life. They return as to freshwater years later as adults to spawn. The salmon of Lake Ontario were probably exclusively freshwater residents and did not migrate to and

from the ocean. Fishes that engage in exclusively freshwater migrations are called potamodromous. Salmon are just one of many species that do this in Lake Ontario; the Bay of Quinte's famous walleye are another example.

In Lake Ontario salmon breeding took place in some forty different tributary rivers and creeks. Phylopatry among salmon species is so strong that once a stream has been established as a spawning ground it will be returned to indefinitely by each successive generation of salmon. The natal streams have several distinctive features. There needs to be available cover such as sunken logs, boulders and overhanging banks, so salmon can rest out of the current, and hide from predators such as northern river otters (*Lontra canadensis*). The riverbed must be coarse gravel, as small spaces between stones harbour the eggs and keep them from drifting downstream and being lost.

Adult salmon would ascend tributaries in autumn to spawn. A female prepares a redd, or simple nest in the substrate by sweeping the gravel with her tail to remove fine particles of silt and create a slight depression. She selects a location that is well oxygenated and not liable to freeze over the winter. An accompanying male fertilizes the eggs once they are laid in the gravel. After the spawning process is complete the female re-covers the redd. The eggs usually do not hatch until spring, and the larval fish, called alevins, remain in the nest for a few weeks. During this time they rely on nutrients absorbed

from the yolk sac that is attached to their underside. Once they emerge from the redd as parr, they begin to grow aggressively. The parr may stay at their natal sites for one to seven years depending on the population, after which time they transform into smolt and migrate downriver to Lake Ontario. For the next one to three years the salmon consume whitefish in the open lake. Some fish called grilse return to their natal rivers at one year old. Most fish return as adults after three or more years of pelagic life. Each adult salmon goes back to spawn in the same river it hatched from.

Just how they find their way back to their spawning grounds after years of absence remains to be determined, though evidence suggests they smell their way home! In sea-run Atlantic salmon, adults do not always die after spawning; some return to the ocean soon after spawning, others remain in the rivers all winter and return to sea in the spring. Over-wintering salmon are called kelts. Some adults make multiple migrations to spawn a second or rarely, a third time in successive years. It is unknown if repeat spawning was common in Lake Ontario or if kelts remained in the tributaries all winter.

Lake Ontario salmon resembled anadromous salmon in their sea-run form: silver underneath, and bluish above, without a pronounced hooked jaw or kype. Potamodromous forms typically attain smaller sizes than their anadromous cousins and Lake Ontario is no exception. The largest sea-run fish weigh in at over 30 kg. By comparison,

freshwater forms require a large supply of forage fish to grow beyond 3 kg. In Lake Ontario, fish weighing over 20 kg are known from anecdotal records, but the historical mean for fish caught in the Lake Ontario basin was probably about 2.5 kg. The largest salmon caught in recent times weighed a respectable 11 kg.

Freshwater forms of Atlantic salmon are distributed throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. Populations of these so-called landlocked salmon are found in Labrador, Newfoundland, Quebec, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New York and Maine. Russia, Sweden, Finland and Norway also have native landlocked fish.

Land-locked and sea-run salmon are not two different species, as some older accounts suggest. The common ancestor of all Atlantic salmon, whether from freshwater, saltwater, Europe or North America, farmed or wild, appeared about 2 million years ago. The divergence of the two forms in the Great Lakes probably didn't begin until about 11,000 years ago. To complicate matters, not all land-locked salmon populations are descended from the same "freshwater ancestor". Individual freshwater populations were segregated independently as glacial melt-waters drained away and lakes became isolated by receding water levels and uplifting landmasses. Each lake or river that contains (or contained) naturally occurring freshwater salmon represents a form of the species with distinct adaptations to local conditions; such

that Atlantic salmon from Lake Ontario were unlike salmon from anywhere else. Each population is what conservation biologists refer to as an evolutionary significant unit. Each unit is genetically distinct from all other freshwater salmon, and as units go extinct, so too do their unique genes. Scientists are now realizing that the real meaning of biodiversity is not species richness, but rather genetic richness and that it is important to ensure the continued survival of as many populations as possible.

In the context of glacial melt-waters, one can imagine how a population of salmon could become isolated in a remote lake. But Lake Ontario has a direct outlet to the Atlantic via the St. Lawrence River. How did Lake Ontario's salmon become "land-locked," if there was no barrier keeping them there? Salmon could have left Lake Ontario, but in doing so they would have to run through rapids on the St. Lawrence – which a salmon could easily do.

The real obstacle was to salmon that attempted to *return* to the lake. Several large sets of rapids on the St. Lawrence are massive enough to keep most salmon from ascending into Lake Ontario. Therefore salmon that left the lake would be permanently out of the gene pool (no pun intended). Eventually the genetic predisposition for seaward migration would be "weeded out" of the population. A similarly barrier, Niagara Falls, effectively blocked salmon from reaching any of the other Great Lakes.

Salmo salar flourished as part of the Lake Ontario ecosystem for several thousand years. Anthropogenic influences starting around the time of European settlement are cited as the chief reason for the extirpation of our endemic salmon. Over-exploitation of fish stocks probably played a small part of the story in the species' decline. Habitat destruction in the form of dams and increased sedimentation from unenlightened agricultural practices took the greatest toll. Mill dams, sometimes many on the same river, blocked access to headwater spawning areas. Siltation due to soil erosion caused by land clearing for farms and forestry would have smothered riverbeds with mud, covering the gravel needed for egg survival. As trees were cut along the river banks, shade was removed and streams became too warm for salmon. Swamps and marshes were drained, causing river levels to fall to the point that salmon could no longer navigate them. Until recently the ultimate cause of extirpation remained uncertain.

Some researchers now suggest that the final blow against Lake Ontario's salmon was dealt by the humble alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*). The alewife is a small forage fish that is often preyed upon by salmonids. It plays a major part in the food-chain dynamics of the present-day Great Lakes, where reintroduced salmon consume it regularly. Alewives invaded the Great Lakes around 1860 (or earlier), from the Atlantic Ocean via the Erie Canal. Since that time they have established themselves as one of the dominant small

fishes. The pristine Lake Ontario ecosystem contained no alewife, and whitefish were the salmon's primary prey. But as alewife began to figure more prominently in the salmon's diet, it led to serious health problems for the lake's top predator. A diet focused on alewife and the more recently introduced rainbow smelt (*Osmerus mordax*); results in thiamine (vitamin B1) deficiency in adult salmon. Alewife and smelt contain an enzyme that breaks down vitamin B1 resulting in an anorexia-like condition. Starved females cannot produce viable eggs (salmon eggs require high concentrations of thiamine), so hatching success in the few streams that still allowed for spawning would have been too low to sustain the population.

Today the Atlantic salmon is once again swimming in Lake Ontario, but now it is joined by several other salmon species introduced from the Pacific coast, in part to help reduce alewife and smelt numbers. These introduced salmon, specifically Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), increase mortality of Atlantic salmon in experimental release streams where both occur. Chinooks prey on young

Atlantics, and the two species may even be hybridizing. Introduced rainbow trout or steelhead (*O. mykiss*) also cause significant mortality to parr and eggs in spawning streams. There remains the thiamine deficiency caused by non-native forage fish in Lake Ontario. Though its permanent return to the lake ecosystem is not yet a sure thing, provincial and state governments as well as private organisations are working to re-establish a stable, self-sustaining salmon population. With a little luck, naturalists and anglers can look forward to someday sharing Lake Ontario indefinitely with the King of Fishes.

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2008 Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory: Kingston Region

Ron D. Weir

The Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory was carried out throughout North America during the first week of January. Twenty-two observers surveyed the Kingston region from Mallorytown Landing west to Prince Edward Point. The specific sections covered from land were: the St. Lawrence River from Mallorytown Landing to Ivy Lea; Hill Island to Gananoque; Howe Island; Wolfe Island; Cataraqui River; Rideau system; Amherst Island; Kingston waterfront from Treasure Island to Collins Bay; Bath Road from Collins Bay to Glenora; Hay Bay (frozen); Waupoos peninsula; and Prince Edward Point. From the air, the sections covered were: the St. Lawrence River from Ivy Lea to Kingston; offshore sections of Wolfe and Amherst Islands; the offshore islands and adjacent areas of Waupoos and Prince Edward Point; and the Bay of Quinte.

Participants were Erwin Batalla, Hugues Bonin, Marty Burke, Sharon David, Bruce DiLabio, Joel Ellis, Hugh Evans, Peter Good, Barb and Chris Heffernan, Paul Mackenzie, Bea and Jay McMahon, Annette Mess, Paul O'Reilly, Shirley and Gerald Paul, Bud Rowe, Ken Ross, Alex Simmons, Jennie Versteg, Ron Weir. The results shown in Table 1 below were forwarded to Ken Ross of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). The CWS staff flew over the Kingston area and located some waterfowl beyond the access of the ground

observers; these sightings are included in Table 1. The sightings of Bald Eagles from the land observers are also included in Table 1.

The cold wintry conditions of late December froze much of the St. Lawrence River, Cataraqui River and the Rideau system. Many bays around Howe Island, Wolfe Island and Amherst Island were also frozen. The weekend of the census saw overcast conditions and temperatures around the freezing point and some brisk winds. The visibility was fair.

The results of the survey for all of the Lake Ontario sites within Canada are collated by Mr. Glenn Coady of Toronto and are were not available in time for this edition of the Blue Bill. Areas surveyed along Lake Ontario from east to west were Kingston, Quinte, Presqu'ile, Port Hope, Durham, Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara.

- **Ivy Lea = Mallorytown Landing west to bridge, Hill Island, to Gananoque**
- **Kingston Waterfront = Treasure Island to Lemoine's Point**
- **Bath Road = Collins Bay to Glenora Ferry**
- **Hay Bay = south shore Hay Bay (frozen)**
- **Waupoos = NE peninsula of Prince Edward county**
- **PEPt = SE peninsula of Prince Edward county**
- **Bay of Quinte (frozen)**

Table 1. Waterfowl Summary for Kingston 6 January 2008

Species	Rid.R. Cat.R.	Ivy Lea	Howe Isl.	Kingston	Amh. Isl	Wolfe Isl.	Bath Rd..	Hay Bay	Waupoos	Pr.Ed. Point	Bay of Quinte	Totals
Comm. Loon	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Horned Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
DC Cormorant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Canada Goose	15	325	23	145	175	160	377	-	1,071	432	-	2,683
Mute Swan	-	-	-	3	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	19
Trump. Swan.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tundra Swan	-	-	43	2	48	41	62	-	22	13	-	188
swan (sp)	-	-	-	-	-	191	6	-	44	27	-	311
Gadwall	-	-	-	125	580	3	-	-	60	-	-	768
Amer. Wigeon	-	-	-	30	2	-	1	-	1	3	-	37
Black Duck	6	96	18	67	376	697	278	-	123	106	-	1,767
Mallard	15	195	44	802	881	377	2,650	-	691	165	-	5,820
N. Pintail	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	4
Green-w. Teal	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
(dabblers)	61	-	-	-	20	80	-	-	-	-	-	161
Redhead	-	-	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	70
Ring-n. Duck	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Greater Scaup	-	-	-	2,200	43	11	-	-	60	25,075	-	27,389
Lesser Scaup	-	-	35	41	3	-	-	-	-	43	-	122
scaup (sp)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Surf Scoter	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	3
Wh-w. Scoter	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	408	-	411
scoter(sp)	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Long-t. Duck	-	-	1	2	21	40	7	-	20	12,325	-	12,416
Bufflehead	-	2	-	4	232	135	30	-	505	360	-	1,268
Com Golden.	-	1,238	74	123	771	911	175	-	835	712	-	4,839
Hooded Merg.	-	-	2	28	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	36
Comm. Merg.	-	1,861	236	297	120	1,312	25	-	40	757	-	4,647
Red-br. Merg.	-	-	24	5	5	31	15	-	35	225	-	340
merganser (sp)	145	-	1,358	369	830	407	406	-	-	-	-	3,515
Ruddy Duck	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Amer Coot	-	-	-	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
divers	-	-	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	5,000	-	5,080
Totals	243	3,717	1,859	4,330	4,201	4,398	4,012	-	3,508	45,688	-	71,955
Party hours	3	7	3	5.5	8.5	9.5	3.0	0.5	3	5	0.5	48.5
Number of observers	2	4	2	4	3	4	3	1	2	2	1	28
Bald Eagle	-	19	11	0	1	30	2	0	1	1	0	65*

*Bald Eagle: 33 adults, 32 immatures

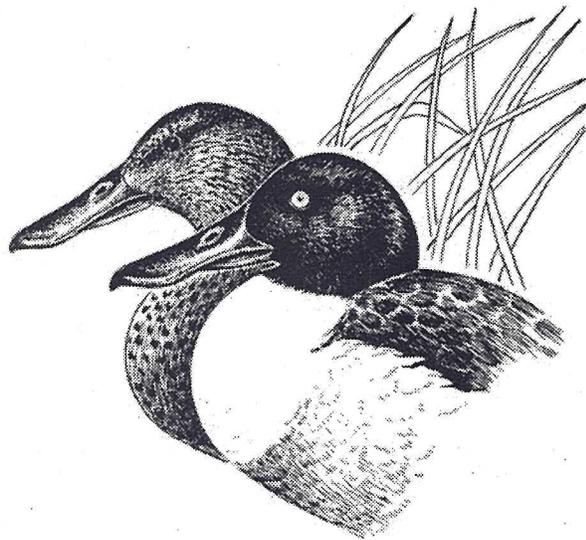
Notes on Natural History No. 41, April 11, 1960

Helen R. Quilliam

For a time it looked as though our spring migrants would never get back, but with the warmer weather and thaw on March 28th and 29th they began pouring in. When they did come they were faced with a formidable amount of snow and ice. Although the occasional Robin, Cowbird and Meadowlark were reported during the winter the arrival of these birds in number was much delayed, as was that of the Red-winged Blackbirds. Nineteen new species of birds all arrived within a few days at the end of March and beginning of April. A few of these came a little earlier than they usually do. This phenomenon has been noticed before where there as been a long protracted period of cold weather which has been holding back regular migrants. Some of the birds not due at that time seem to be caught up in the stream and come along with the ones which are late.

Perhaps the most spectacular arrivals were the ducks. Their number built up rapidly on the Cataraqui River, whose channel was gradually widening until now almost all the ice has gone. All the ducks that are usually seen on the river have now arrived. Scaup or Blue Bills outnumber by many thousand all other species. There are a few ducks which never seem to come into the Cataraqui River: Oldsquaw and the Scoters. They seem to prefer the larger expanse of the lake or perhaps the food they find there is different. In any case the Scoters are usually not seen until May.

The best duck of the season on the Cataraqui River has been the Shoveller. There are several pairs. In former years we have not seen them until May and then on the more marshy streams. In any case they are never common here. They nest mostly in the west and Northwest, although a few breed south of Lakes Erie and Ontario. They have been extending their range of recent years. A pair was found breeding last year near Ottawa and member of the Kingston Nature Club found a pair that showed all signs of nesting on Wolfe Island last year. We can hope that they will become regular nesters in this territory for they are beautiful ducks.



The bills of the Shovellers distinguish them from all the other ducks. It is larger and at the end spreads into a rather spoon-like shape. Whereas the surface-feeding ducks all have comb-

like teeth or lamellae, those of the Shoveller are the most highly specialized, and in addition the roof of the mouth and tongue are supplied with sensitive nerves of touch and taste. This adaptation enables them to strain their food which they take from the surface of the water, taking into their mouths all the tiny particles in the water and sifting out any which are not wanted. They can also sift bottom mud through this remarkable bill. In the first days of their arrival here they were to be found along the edges of the ice and occasionally moved up on to the broken edges where they appeared to find food in the slush of the ice. The male has a brilliant green head like that of the Mallard but its flanks and belly are a lovely chestnut color. The female in her coloring might be mistaken for a female Mallard except for her very different bill.

When the Woodcock began to arrive there were few places suitable for them out in the woods and fields. They need patches of soft wet ground near streams where they probe for their food with their long bills. This year they had to search for places where the snow was receding and the ground not too frozen. The result was that there were several reports of Woodcock feeding near houses. Mrs. J. R. Henderson watched one feeding beside her house for two days and appearing to be very successful in finding plenty of worms and grubs. There were other reports from gardens and the first Woodcock reported was found on a veranda. Very soon these birds will be taking up their courtship stations and one of the pleasantest things in the spring is to go out at dusk to hear and watch the courtship flight of the Woodcock.

