

The Blue Bill

Quarterly Journal of the Kingston Field Naturalists



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Cover photo: "This is my best look." Yellow-bellied Sapsucker poses for the paparazzi. (Anthony Kaduck)

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1 President's Preliminaries

by Ken Edwards

Spring is in the air! Unfortunately, so is COVID-19. Consequently, the timeline for a return to indoor activities remains uncertain but I am hopeful that the end is in sight. Meanwhile, outdoor activities are slowly returning to normal. It is easy to check what events are coming up by going to the KFN website or checking the newsletter but if you want to have events automatically entered into your digital calendar it is now easy to do that. Just go to the "meetings and events" page on the KFN website, choose the type of activity you are interested in then scroll to the bottom of the page and click "subscribe to calendar." The events will be added to your Google Calendar or iCalendar, depending on what operating system you are using on your computer.

In October of 2021 Ontario enacted "ONCA," a new legislation governing not-for-profit corporations. The KFN will need to revise the constitution and by-laws to ensure compliance with the legislation. We have three years to complete the process but John Donihee has kindly agreed to begin the work now. We don't anticipate significant changes that would be noticeable to the general membership. We will keep our members informed as the process proceeds and eventually bring the changes to a general

meeting for ratification.

Good news for our already healthy finances: the Managed Forest Plan for the Sylvester-Gallagher reserve has received approval from the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. This will decrease the taxes on this newly acquired property by about 75%. Special thanks to Paul Mackenzie and Stewart Hamill who did the required work for the KFN.

Year two of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas 3 is here. Regional Coordinator Mark Read will be giving us an update at the March general meeting. If you haven't yet become involved and want to know more go to birdsontario.org for more information.

The KFN Conservation Committee, headed by Chris Hargreaves, has been closely following the proposed inner harbour cleanup as well as other conservation concerns in our area. If you are interested email info@kingstonfieldnaturalists.org and we will put you on the contact list for conservation issues.

Enjoy your spring!

2 Kingston Region Birds—Autumn 2021 (Aug. 1 to Nov. 30)

by Mark D. Read

The KFN reporting area is centred on MacDonald Park, Kingston and extends for a radial distance of 50 km. An interactive map showing the KFN circle is available on the website. If errors are noted or significant observations omitted, please contact me and I will update accordingly. We also encourage you to submit **all** sightings, so that a better understanding of our region's birdlife can be achieved. Members already using eBird can very easily share their sightings with the username 'Kingston FN'. Alternatively, please email or phone me directly with your sightings (markdread@gmail.com / 613-217-1246). Please note the total below includes the following species that remain unconfirmed until accepted by the Rare Birds Committee: **Razorbill, 6 Nov, Amherst Island; Razorbill, 8 Nov, Wolfe Island; Razorbill, 10-11 Nov, Howe Island; Little Blue Heron, 6-15 Sept,**

Kingston; Western Kingbird, 9-12 Sept, Amherst Island; Northern Wheatear, 15 Oct, Kingston.

In total, **247 species of bird** were recorded in our region during the reporting period, a decrease of 12 over last year's autumn total. All observations were obtained from ebird.ca – 17.72% of which were shared with the KFN account – a declining statistic. In total, 546 observers logged 6346 checklists, equating to 83,754 sightings, slightly down on last year. COVID-19 continued to have impacts but for most of this period restrictions were somewhat eased. As usual, an impressive number of individual birds (971,426) were recorded, though many of these were, of course, the same birds seen on subsequent days. A huge thank you goes out to every observer, without whom our understanding of bird distribution would

be far more limited. Unfortunately, only observers with sightings in the current report are noted below.

The autumn of 2021 was fairly normal weather-wise, though November remained mild. With nothing outstanding predicted in the winter finch forecast for 2021/22, it must be said that we were not surprised at the general lack of winter finches. Water levels were again a bit higher than typical (is there a 'typical' anymore?) and this affected shorebird habitat though Amherst Island still produced its share of good birds. An arrival of Razorbills along the St. Lawrence and into Lake Ontario treated several patient observers with their due rewards: the only confirmed sighting of this species in the area was back in 1984 when one was shot by hunters on Wolfe Island - at the time, it was the 4th Ontario record. Here are the highlights of autumn 2021:

Snow Goose: It was another poor season for this species. The first returning bird was reported at Cape Vincent (NY), on 12 Oct (Anon). Of the remaining 5 observations, the highest count was also from New York, where 15 were seen at Dexter on 23 Oct (Anon).

Brant: There were just 2 reports: 360 birds were seen at Tibbett's Point, NY, on 22 Oct (StK), and 75 were seen at Gananoque on 2 Nov (BMDL).

Cackling Goose: The first observation of this species (5) came from Parrott's Bay, on 28 Sept (NiB). A high count of 18 came from farm ponds near Napanee on 7 Nov (JPR).

Mute Swan: Numbers of this invasive species continue to increase in our area with an estimated high count of 500 at Bayfield Bay, Wolfe Island, on 14 Aug (AnK).

Trumpeter Swan: A high count of 27 was received on the relatively early date of 28 Sep at Brownville, NY (MiW). In total, 157 reports were logged, including with evidence of breeding.

Tundra Swan: The first returning birds (6) were seen at Button Bay, Wolfe Island, on 30 Sep (MDR). A high count of 300 birds was made at Point Peninsula, NY, on 24 Nov (LaC, SaT).

Blue-winged Teal: There were 171 observations this season (compared with 134 in 2020 and 43 in 2019), with a high of 100 at Perch River, NY, on 27 Aug (MaF, DaH). The last bird of the season was seen at Little Cataraqui Creek CA, Kingston, on 12 Nov (PhH).

Canvasback: It was another poor season, with the first noted at Cataraqui Bay, Kingston, on 22 Oct (GeP). The

majority of the records came from Bayfield Bay, Wolfe Island, where 20 were noted on 14 Nov (AnK).

Redhead: A high count of 8000 came from Bayfield Bay, Wolfe Island, on 27 Nov (AnK).

Ring-necked Duck: This year's high count of 500 came from Bayfield Bay, Wolfe Island, on 11 Oct (AnK).

Black Scoter: There were just 2 records this season: 1, Tibbett's Point, NY, 22 Oct (StK); and 4, Prince Edward Point, 24 Oct, (PaJ).

Ruddy Duck: It was a reasonable year for the species with 46 records. A high count of 46 came from the traditional staging area of Hay Bay on 6 Nov (JPR).

Ring-necked Pheasant: There were 30 observations, all but 4 coming from the US. The 4 Ontario records all came from Amherst Island, with a high count of 4 seen on 2 Oct (BMDL).

Pied-billed Grebe: An impressive high count of 47 was noted at Bayfield Bay, Wolfe Island, on 15 Sept (AnK).

Horned Grebe: The first bird of the season was seen near Prince Edward on 16 Sept (PaJ). A season high of 34 was made on Amherst Island on 10 Nov (BMDL).

Red-necked Grebe: There were just 10 sightings this season, with high counts of 2 apiece at Prince Edward Point on 24 Oct (BER) and Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island, on 12 Nov (EDB).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: A late bird was seen at Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island, on 2 Nov (KFN).

Common Nighthawk: Numbers were again lower than previous years though a high count of 45 birds at Gananoque on 17 Aug must have been quite the sight (GaU).

Sandhill Crane: There were 27 records this season - an increasing trend - though no big migrating flocks were seen this year. High counts of 9 apiece came from Camden East on 23 Oct (BLB) and Yarker on 12 Nov (TAN).

American Golden Plover: There were just 6 reports this autumn; the first bird was seen at Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island on 15 Sept (ShJ) with the last at the same location on 8 Oct (AIM).

Whimbrel: There were 2 reports: 1 on 15 Aug at Amherst Island (ShJ), and 1 near Prince Edward Point on

3 Sep (PaJ).

Hudsonian Godwit: a single bird was seen at Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island, 19 Sept (KJH).

Ruddy Turnstone: There was just 1 record this season; a lone bird at Reed's Bay, Wolfe Island, on 12 Oct (AnK).

Stilt Sandpiper: There were 30 records this season, way more than the usual handful, though some were long-staying birds seen over several days. A high count of 4 birds came from Amherst Island on 2 Sep (KeR).

Baird's Sandpiper: The first was seen on the early date of 6 Aug at Amherstview Sewage Lagoons (KJH). A high count of 3 birds came from Perch River, NY, on 24 Aug (AIB).

White-rumped Sandpiper: 1-2 birds were seen at Martin Edwards Reserve, Amherst Island, from 8-24 Oct (KFN).

Pectoral Sandpiper: There were 43 records this season, comparable to last year. Eight birds were seen together at Perch River WMA, NY, on 17 Aug (JSB).

Long-billed Dowitcher: A lone bird was at Wilton Creek 6-9 Sept (BER), with another at Perch River WMA, NY, from 8-15 Oct (ChW, DrW).

Red-necked Phalarope: An immature bird was seen at Amherstview Sewage Lagoons on 7 Sept (ChH). Another bird was seen at Perch River WMA, NY, on 27 Sept (JSB).

Little Gull: There were 3 reports: An adult was at Henderson Bay, NY, 10 Sept (JSB); an immature bird was at Prince Edward Point, 7 Nov (PaJ); and an adult was at Sillsville, 11 Nov (BER).

Iceland Gull: an immature bird was seen at Landon Bay, Gananoque, on 15 Nov (BMDL), with another immature at Prince Edward Point on 23 Nov (PaJ).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: An adult was seen at Wartman-Patterson Park, Kingston, on 4 Oct (DCRB); and an adult and 2nd year were seen on Howe Island on 9 Nov (GeP).

Glaucous Gull: The first (and only) bird of the autumn was seen at Prince Edward Point 1-7 Nov (PaJ).

Red-throated Loon: There were about a dozen records, mainly singles, but 2 were seen on Howe Island on 9 Nov (GeP).

Least Bittern: There were 6 autumn records with the last coming from the George Merry Wetland, Kingston, on 12 Sept (RoD, DaH).

Cattle Egret: As many as 6 birds were seen at Perch River WMA, NY, 4-18 Nov (StK), with 1 at Newburgh, 14 Nov (BLB).

Black Vulture: a single bird was seen at Westcott Beach SP, NY, 25 Sept (BrM).

Osprey: The last bird of the year was seen on 27 Oct at Odessa (BrL).

Golden Eagle: There were 23 records this season, the majority of which came from Prince Edward Point where a high count of 6 birds was made on 1 Nov (PaJ).

Northern Goshawk: There were 6 reports during the season.

Red-shouldered Hawk: The last record of this species was from Prince Edward Point on 22 Nov (PaJ).

Broad-winged Hawk: The last report of this species came from Prince Edward Point, where 3 were seen on 19 Oct (RiS).

Rough-legged Hawk: The first bird of the season was seen on Amherst Island on 8 Oct (JoC). A high of 19 was seen there on 21 Nov (JPR et al).

Snowy Owl: The first bird of an average season was seen on Amherst Island on 16 Nov (BMDL).

Long-eared Owl: A single bird was seen at Prince Edward Point on 17 Oct (PaJ).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Unfortunately, we again have no data from Prince Edward Point this year, though banding did take place as normal (without visitors). eBird reports do suggest some good results with 27 banded on the night of 1 Oct (PEPtBO).

Red-headed Woodpecker: The majority of the 17 reports came from Prince Edward Point but 3 were seen at Frontenac Provincial Park on 7 Sep (DCRB).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: There were 17 records this autumn with the last being noted at Bedford Mills on 8 Sept (MEC).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: There were an impressive 54 records this year (not as high as last year's 99, but higher than the 15 of 2019). About half of the records

came from Prince Edward Point.

Loggerhead Shrike: The last sighting of birds (2) from the known breeding location of Napanee Limestone Plain IBA was on 16 Aug (TMW).

Northern Shrike: The first of the season was seen at Sand Beach CA, Amherst Island, 8 Oct (ShJ).

Tufted Titmouse: There were 15 records this season compared to the 35 of last year (and 3 of 2019). The majority came from the US side of the circle where 3 were seen on 9 Oct at Henderson (AmC).

Carolina Wren: There were 123 widespread observations this season, compared to the 38 of last year and 7 the year before. This must surely be a genuine range expansion – hopefully the 3rd Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas will tell us more.

Northern Mockingbird: A single bird was seen at Button Bay, Wolfe Island on 11 Oct (MDR), with another at Napanee Limestone Plain IBA on 13 Oct (SkF).

Grey-cheeked Thrush: An impressive 38 records were received this season. About half of these records came from Prince Edward Point where 10 were noted on 18 Sept (NiB).

Evening Grosbeak: There was just 1 report, of a single at Button Bay, Wolfe Island, on 13 Nov (MDR).

Common Redpoll: There were just 15 records received; most were seen coming through Prince Edward Point where 17 were noted on 23 Nov (PaJ).

White-winged Crossbill: There were 5 reports, 4 of which came from Prince Edward Point where the high of 4 was noted on 19 Oct (PhM).

Pine Siskin: There were 77 records, the majority from Prince Edward Point where a high count of 38 was noted on 20 Oct (PhM).

Lapland Longspur: There were just 3 reports this season, the first (and high count of 2) were reported from Russell Road, Lansdowne, on 14 Nov (BMDL).

Clay-coloured Sparrow: Two birds were reported: 1, Amherst Island, 4 Sept and 1, Millhaven, 30 Sept (both KJH).

Yellow-breasted Chat: A great record was the sighting of a bird, photographed in downtown Kingston, on 13 Oct

(WeD).

Rusty Blackbird: The largest flock of the season (680) was seen at Perch River WMA, NY, on 8 Oct (DrW, ChW).

Orange-crowned Warbler: There were 33 records this autumn, with the first seen near Millhaven on 10 Sept (KJH). The last sighting was at Prince Edward Point on 20 Oct (JoB).

Connecticut Warbler: A single bird was seen at Prince Edward Point on 26 Sept (PaJ).

Mourning Warbler: Five of the 10 records came from Prince Edward Point.

Prairie Warbler: A single bird was seen Chaumont Barrens Preserve, NY, on 7 Aug (BrH).

Other species observed during the reporting period: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper, Sanderling, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Short-eared Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Horned Lark, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Purple

Martin, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, European Starling, Grey Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, American Pipit, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Snow Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Baltimore Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Blue

Warbler, Palm Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting.

Observers: Bonnie L. Bailey (BLB), Nick Bartok (NiB), Erwin D. Batalla (EDB), Alan Belford (AIB), John Blaney (JoB), Jeffrey S. Bolsinger (JSB), Amy Canough (AmC), Larry Chen (LaC), Mark E. Chojnacki (MEC), Joël Coutu (JoC), Dianne Croteau/Richard Brault (DCRB), Wendy Dawes (WeD), Rosanne Dawson (RoD), Bruce M. Di Labio (BMDL), Skyler Freeman (SkF), Mark Fitzsimmons (MaF), David Harrison (DaH), Phil Harvey (PhH), Kurt J. Hennige (KJH), Bruce Hoover (BrH), Christine Hough (ChH), David Howe (DaH), Sherri Jensen (ShJ), Paul Jones (PaJ), Steve Kelling (StK), Andrea Kingsley (AnK), Brenda Leduc (BrL), Alex Mediros (AIM), Phillip Mercier (PhM), Brian Miller (BrM), Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN), Todd A. Norris (TAN), Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO), Gerard Phillips (GeP), Mark D. Read (MDR), Bruce E. Ripley (BER), Kenneth Ross (KeR), Jon P. Ruddy (JPR), Rick Szabo (RiS), Sarah Toner (SaT), Gary Ure (GaU), Mike Wasilco (MiW), Chris Wood (ChW), Drew Weber (DrW), Tom M. Wheatley (TMW).

3 Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (2022): Kingston Region

by Mark D. Read

The Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory (MWWI) is carried out throughout North America. In Canada, a coordinated ground survey of Lake Ontario typically takes place on the first Sunday during the period 6-12 January. Typically, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) offshore aerial data is then added to the shoreline ground counts to form the final Lake Ontario count. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the aerial survey was again not conducted this year. These data get added to the other lower Great Lakes to form the Ontario contribution to the Mississippi Flyway totals. These numbers are then used in waterfowl management decisions on a continent-wide basis (habitat restoration, research direction, bag limits etc.).

An impressive 37 observers (18 on Amherst alone) surveyed the Kingston region, all the way from Ivy Lea to Prince Edward Point and the Bay of Quinte, as well as north along the Rideau Canal towards Westport. In total, these observers logged nearly 44 hours of effort. The day was pretty foul to say the least, with the following comment from one of the Amherst Island participants sum-

ming it up: "Horrible weather – freezing rain, icy roads, strong winds from the west-southwest (60 to 70 km/h)." Visibility was, however, generally good. Most of the inland waterways were frozen, as was the north shore of Wolfe Island and the Bay of Quinte. Lake Ontario itself remained open. Participants were Cheryl Anderson, Deb & William Barrett, Erwin Batalla, Sally Bowen, Richard Brault, Mark Chojnacki, Dianne Croteau, Sharon David, Stephanie Davison, Bill Depew, Ken Edwards, Sharen English, Dayle Gowan, Chris Heffernan, Kurt Hennige, Paul Jones, Anthony Kaduck, Stephen & Alison Kendall, Laurie Kilpatrick, Fred Lemire, Bonnie Livingstone, Richard Lott, Judith & Robert Mackenzie, Linda Nuttall, Nancy Pearson, David Pickering, Mark Read, Martin Roncetti, Janet Scott, Kathy Showalter, Michael Steeves, Kathy Webb, Peter Waycik, and Elana Zanetti. Sincere thanks go to all participants.

Table 1 shows results of the ground survey for the Kingston area. In total, 26 632 individuals were counted of 21 species (compared to 23 132 individuals of 23

species last year). Expected dabblers such as the long-staying Green-winged Teal (and potentially Northern Shoveler) were missed on the day, as well as diving species such as Lesser Scaup. The invasive Mute Swan continues to expand its range with strong numbers (943) recorded in the area. Likewise, Trumpeter Swans are doing well, with a solid count of 116 individuals. Twenty-five Bald Eagles were reported compared to the 35 of last year, though still short of the 52 seen in 2019. Since this species relies somewhat on ice cover concentrating food sources, these numbers do make sense in that in 2019, Lake Ontario was frozen, in 2020 it was open, and in 2021 it was partially frozen.

These results were then submitted to the Lake Ontario compiler (Glenn Coady) who then returned the overall data found in Table 2. Areas surveyed along Lake Ontario from east to west were Kingston, Quinte, Presqu'île, Port Hope, Durham, Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara.

As noted by Glenn,

"Participation both in terms of number of counters and party-hours approach our all-time best once again. That is very gratifying indeed. Please extend my thanks to all of your count team members for their dedication to the project.

The count was again very successful with 40 species tallied, tying the second best total achieved in three other years, but shy of the incredible 42 species reported last year.

Therefore, there were few unexpected missed species. No route or sector turned up a King Eider, a species we find somewhere most years. Another disappointment was a male Tufted Duck which was reliable for a couple of days at Frenchman's Bay in Pickering, but it got frozen out of the bay the day before the count and was not relocated

on count day.

The highlight of the day, and a new species for the count, was the group of three Razorbills seen on the Niagara Falls sector in Lake Ontario off Niagara-on-the-Lake, the first Alcid species ever seen on the count.

Other species reported from a lone route/sector included: the two Horned Grebes seen off Humber Bay Park West in Etobicoke; the lone Greater White-fronted Goose seen on Sunnyside Beach in Toronto; the single Snow Goose seen in Frenchman's Bay in Pickering; the five Wood Ducks seen at the north end of High Park's Grenadier Pond in Toronto; and the adult male Barrow's Goldeneye seen off the mouth of Lynde Creek in Whitby.

Record high counts were recorded for three species: Trumpeter Swan, Mute Swan and Northern Shoveler. With prolonged population control efforts at the west end of the lake, Mute Swans have shifted to the east end of the lake, where greater than 80% of the birds are occurring in the three easternmost sectors.

For the second year running it is nice to see that numbers of American Black Duck have rebounded to more than twice their record low numbers of 2018 and 2019.

Another notable species is the Long-tailed Duck which has seen a strong decline in numbers from those encountered a decade ago.

Bald Eagle numbers were about average for the past decade."

Next year's ground survey is scheduled to take place on **Sunday 8 January**. Please contact mark-dread@gmail.com if interested in taking part. In particular, we are looking for someone to take over the Quinte/Belleville route.

Table 1: Ground survey results for the Kingston area.

	StL	HI	WI	King	AI	Bath	CP	Bv	PN	Rid	Totals
Cackling Goose	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Canada Goose	1110	2310	4354	1440	93	1645	4	-	85	98	11139
Mute Swan	309	204	82	175	123	15	17	-	-	18	943
Trumpeter Swan	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	114	116
Tundra Swan	-	1	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Gadwall	-	2	-	94	-	-	-	-	-	-	96
American Wigeon	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	5

	StL	HI	WI	King	AI	Bath	CP	Bv	PN	Rid	Totals
Mallard	349	187	29	512	64	65	16	-	308	5	1535
American Black Duck	19	22	4	20	-	-	5	-	14	-	84
Northern Pintail	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Redhead	-	-	40	30	-	-	5	-	-	-	75
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	104	-	-	-	-	-	-	104
Greater Scaup	-	2	140	18	24	-	3041	-	-	-	3225
White-winged Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	-	451	-	-	-	451
Long-tailed Duck	1	1	-	-	10	-	6605	-	-	-	6617
Bufflehead	-	-	-	-	3	-	345	-	-	-	348
Common Goldeneye	7	9	120	49	120	173	278	-	-	-	756
Hooded Merganser	-	29	-	25	1	-	-	-	-	1	56
Common Merganser	443	116	56	209	61	30	-	-	-	2	917
Red-breasted Merganser	1	3	46	72	7	7	9	-	-	-	145
Common Loon	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Species = 21	9	12	12	15	10	6	11	-	3	6	26632
Bald Eagle	4a	1a,2i	1i	4a,2i	-	2a,1i	2a,3i	-	-	2a,1i	25

Key: **StL** = 1000 Island Bridge west to Howe Island; **HI** = Howe Island; **WI** = Wolfe Island; **King** = Treasure Island to Collin's Bay; **AI** = Amherst Island; **Bath** = Amherstview to Glenora Ferry; **CP** = NE and SE peninsulas of Prince Edward County from Glenora ferry to Cressy, Waupoos, Black Creek, South Bay and on to PEPT; **Bv** = Belleville north and south shores of Bay of Quinte east

to Hwy 49 and west to (but not including) Trenton; **PN** = Bay of Quinte east of Hwy 49 bridge, including Picton, Napanee and Hay Bay; **Rid** = Kingston Mills north to Jones Falls, and including Bedford Mills. For **Bald Eagles**, 'a' indicates an adult, 'I' is an immature and 'x' is unknown/unrecorded.

Table 2: Results of ground surveys for Lake Ontario by region (east to west).

Species	Kingston	Quinte	Presqu'île	Port Hope	Durham	Toronto	Hamilton	Niagara	Total
Red-throated Loon	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4
Common Loon	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	4
Pied-billed Grebe	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3
Double-crested Cormorant	-	-	-	-	-	2	118	15	135
Razorbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Tundra Swan	15	4	-	-	-	3	-	-	22
Trumpeter Swan	116	20	12	-	-	222	126	-	496
Mute Swan	943	522	529	2	8	443	54	3	2504
Canada Goose	11139	830	654	2460	1847	20004	2398	548	39880
Cackling Goose	2	-	-	-	-	7	2	-	11
Green-winged Teal	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	-	11
American Black Duck	84	115	28	63	21	253	100	32	696
Mallard	1535	293	11	1124	485	7768	4329	400	15945
Northern Pintail	2	-	-	2	-	12	4	-	20

Species	Kingston	Quinte	Presqu'île	Port Hope	Durham	Toronto	Hamilton	Niagara	Total
Northern Shoveler	-	-	-	-	-	1	154	-	155
Gadwall	96	-	-	-	2	369	116	9	592
American Wigeon	5	-	-	-	-	41	2	-	48
Canvasback	-	-	-	-	-	6	172	1	179
Redhead	75	-	340	-	-	3428	90	234	4167
Ring-necked Duck	104	-	-	-	-	3	55	-	162
Greater Scaup	3225	27	939	37	2495	9835	3159	376	20093
Lesser Scaup	-	1	-	-	-	20	20	-	41
Harlequin Duck	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	3
Long-tailed Duck	6617	764	2165	168	133	12226	5207	5191	32471
Black Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	4	7
Surf Scoter	-	-	-	-	-	15	117	25	157
White-winged Scoter	451	-	29	1	-	119	1947	2011	4558
Common Goldeneye	756	151	500	363	519	3554	2688	1885	10416
Bufflehead	348	2	50	32	124	908	268	44	1776
Hooded Merganser	56	-	-	-	-	33	143	-	232
Common Merganser	917	-	5	36	19	524	2406	515	4422
Red-breasted Merganser	145	17	52	100	785	1248	1021	696	4064
Ruddy Duck	-	-	-	1	-	2	12	-	15
American Coot	-	-	-	-	-	6	77	-	83
Scaup sp.	-	-	15	-	-	9	-	-	24
Scoter sp.	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Duck sp.	-	-	680	-	114	2	800	-	1596
Swan sp.	-	-	12	-	3	-	-	-	15
waterfowl sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	194	194
Total Birds	26632	2746	6025	4389	6555	61098	25596	12191	145232
Total Species	21	12	13	13	11	38	30	20	40
Participants	37	1	6	2	5	23	25	13	89
Party-hours	39.25	8.5	12	7.5	22	61.25	24	12.8	126.05
Bald Eagle	25	1	1	1	-	6	11	5	44

4 Kingston and Area Christmas Bird Counts

by Kathy Webb

The 122nd Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was successfully completed in this region despite continued restrictions due to COVID-19! All CBCs take place within a fixed 24 km diameter circle on a single day between December 14 and January 5 (<https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/christmas-bird-count/>). The

Kingston count always falls on the first Sunday within that time frame: the recent count took place on Sunday, December 19, 2021 and the next count will take place on Sunday, December 18, 2022. Kingston's first CBC was held in 1948. Other CBCs established within the KFN birding area include: Moscow (1964, not run 1994-

2015), Westport (1964), Napanee (1965), Thousand Islands (1974), Prince Edward Point (1977), Amherst Island (1990), Delta (2000), Gananoque (2014) and Frontenac (2015). Thank you to the coordinators/compiler of this year's local counts: Kathy Webb and Bill Depew, Kingston; Jeff Brady, Moscow; Wendy Briggs-Jude, Westport; Kurt Hennige, Gananoque and Napanee; Josh Van Wieren, Thousand Islands; Dale Smith, Prince Edward Point; Janet Scott, Amherst Island; Jim Thompson, Delta; and Carolyn Bonta and Michael Johnson, Frontenac.

All counts were conducted in a COVID-safe manner and complied with public health guidelines. Field surveys typically started with some early morning owling and continued through until dusk, while feeder watchers spent variable amounts of time watching their yards/feeders during the day. A total of 254 birders in the field and 158 feeder-watchers took part in the ten counts within the KFN birding area. They contributed a cumulative total of approximately 950 hours of birding, drove close to 3500 km and walked almost 400 km to tally 102 615 birds and 106 species. As always, the continued efforts of everyone involved in the local counts are greatly appreciated.

Table 3 shows some statistics for the ten counts held within our area. Participation was highest for the Kingston, Amherst Island and Frontenac circles. Over one hundred backyard feeder watchers took part in the Kingston CBC again this year, with a good number in the Westport and Frontenac counts as well. Temperatures hovered at or below zero degrees Celsius for most of the local counts with a general lack of significant precipitation except for the full day of snow endured in the Frontenac and Prince Edward Point counts. For most counts, there was little snow cover and little ice on the main large bodies of water. However, shallow and inland bodies of water were mostly frozen, thereby impacting the diversity and numbers seen in several counts.

Table 4 provides species counts and averages over the last 15 years. On average across counts, the number of species seen this year was quite similar to the average over the previous 15 years. The number of species seen in most counts was near or better than in the past 15 years except for Kingston and Prince Edward Point which were lower by five and seven species, respectively. Although better than the previous four years, the number of species and the total number of birds seen in the Kingston count were below the 20 year averages of 98 and 48 119, respectively (Figure 3).

Table 5 contains a breakdown of species for each count as taken from the Audubon website (<https://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>). The abbreviation 'CW' indicates a species was seen during 'count week,' consisting of the 3 days before and after the actual count day. An interesting statistic not included in the table is the combined total number of species across all counts within the KFN birding area. This year, 106 species with an additional three count week species were seen. This shows the great diversity of species that can be found during the winter in this area.

Count day highlights included: Greater White-fronted Goose (Kingston), Brant (Amherst Island), Barrow's Goldeneye (Prince Edward Point), Pied-billed Grebe (Kingston), Horned Grebe (Kingston), Turkey Vulture (Frontenac, Thousand Islands), Red-shouldered Hawk (Napanee), Glaucous Gull (Gananoque, Napanee), Northern Saw-whet Owl (Napanee, Amherst Island), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Kingston, Napanee), Peregrine Falcon (Kingston, Napanee, Amherst Island), Tufted Titmouse (Gananoque, Thousand Islands), Winter Wren (Delta), Marsh Wren (Amherst Island), Carolina Wren (Kingston, Thousand Islands, Westport), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (Kingston), Hermit Thrush (Kingston, Moscow), Brown Thrasher (Gananoque), Yellow-rumped Warbler (Napanee, Prince Edward Point, Thousand Islands), Chipping Sparrow (Thousand Islands), White-crowned Sparrow (Gananoque, Napanee), Swamp Sparrow (Kingston), Eastern Towhee (Kingston, Napanee), Rusty Blackbird (Gananoque), Common Grackle (Delta, Moscow). Notable count week species included a Golden Eagle (Prince Edward Point), Northern Mockingbird (Kingston) and Red Crossbill (Thousand Islands).

Continuing high counts common to a few CBCs were found for Mute Swans, Bald Eagles, American Crows, Common Ravens, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Dark-eyed Juncos. Some record high counts in the Kingston circle included six Sharp-shinned Hawks, nine Eastern Screech Owls, 13 Northern Flickers, ten Hermit Thrush (Figure 1), and 82 White-throated Sparrows. The large number of backyard feeder watchers in the Kingston count resulted in good numbers of birds that come to feeders such as woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals (Figure 2), Blue Jays, Dark-eyed Juncos, House Finches and American Goldfinches.

Amherst and Wolfe Islands are well known for their owl and hawk populations. All of the Snowy Owls seen in the area this year were on either Amherst Island (21) or Wolfe Island (12). Short-eared Owls were also primarily on Amherst Island (19) and Wolfe Island (11) but one

was also seen in the Napanee count. Likewise, all of the Rough-legged Hawk sightings this year came from the islands. Respectable numbers of Wild Turkeys were seen on Wolfe Island in the Kingston circle as well as further north in the Frontenac and Westport circles.

Snow Buntings were seen in low numbers this year and only 5 Horned Larks (three in Kingston, two in Gananoque) and no Lapland Longspurs were seen. Low numbers were also found for Tundra Swans and many other waterfowl. In addition, gull counts were generally low.

Tyler Hoar’s “Winter Finch Forecast” (<https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2021-2022-by-tyler-hoar>) indicated that this was not going to be a flight (irruption) year for winter finches in the East. Accordingly, we saw few Purple Finches, Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls and no Evening or Pine Grosbeaks in our area. The only Crossbill was a Red Crossbill seen during count week in the Thousand Islands circle. However, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Blue Jays whose movements are often linked to those of the boreal finches continued in high numbers this year.

Further information regarding count dates and locations can be found on the Bird Studies Canada website (<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/>).

To view or download current or historical results from any location, please visit the Audubon website (<http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>).



Figure 1: Hermit Thrush. (Paul Martin)



Figure 2: A Northern Cardinal partaking of a “cold cereal breakfast” during a feeder watch. (Grant LeDrew)

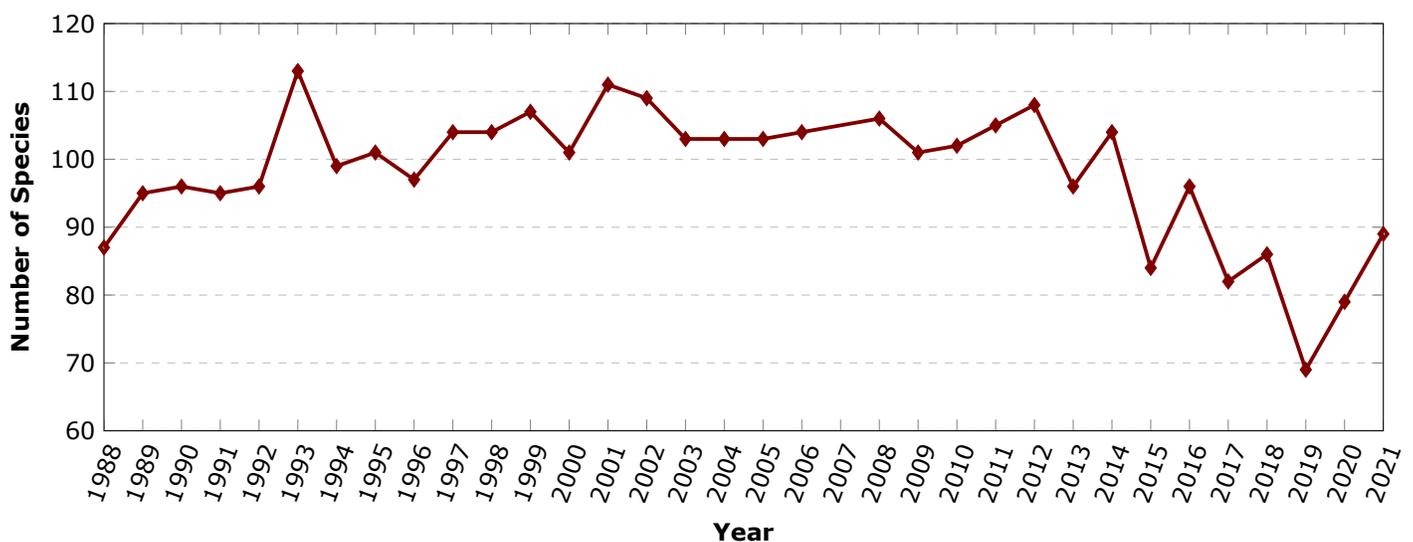


Figure 3: The number of bird species seen in the Kingston CBC since 1988.

Table 3: Overall statistics for the Kingston area 2021 Christmas Bird Counts

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS
	19-Dec	15-Dec	27-Dec	16-Dec	18-Dec	30-Dec	15-Dec	22-Dec	18-Dec	02-Jan
Species	89	48	66	60	57	57	43	63	50	37
Birds	37609	3497	18166	9424	9038	4168	3788	11099	3730	2096
Participants: field + feeder	60 + 103	14 + 16	16 + 7	21 + 6	28 + 1	34 + 4	17 + 0	17 + 4	35 + 13	12 + 4
Low °C	-11	-3	-12	12	0	1	-2	4	-5	-10
High °C	-1	3	-5	17	1	2	14	4	3	-2
Wind, km/h	5-10	Calm	5-15	32-94	0-2	7-11	4-8	5-50	10-13	0
Snow depth, cm	5-10	0	2-6	0	0	0	0	3-6	0-5	10-16
Rain/Snow	None	Light rain pm	None	None	Snow am/pm	None	Light rain pm	None	Snow am/pm	Light snow am/pm
Sun/Cloud	Clear	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

ONKG = Kingston; **ONWE** = Westport; **ONNA** = Napanee; **ONTI** = Thousand Islands; **ONPE** = Prince Edward Point; **ONAI** = Amherst Island; **ONDE** = Delta; **ONGQ** = Gananoque; **ONFR** = Frontenac; **ONMS** = Moscow.

Table 4: The number of species found since 2006, with the average over the previous 15 years (*no count held)

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS
2006	104	52	56	64	71	54	48	-	-	-
2007	*	34	51	60	65	54	40	-	-	-
2008	106	36	57	55	63	57	42	-	-	-
2009	101	33	60	50	55	56	42	-	-	-
2010	102	37	59	63	55	57	40	-	-	-
2011	105	51	59	54	69	69	38	-	-	-
2012	108	47	58	55	70	61	44	-	-	-
2013	96	39	51	55	63	54	41	-	-	-
2014	104	42	66	55	74	74	41	56	-	-
2015	84	44	66	59	61	51	46	63	37	-
2016	96	39	59	64	64	50	44	74	37	36
2017	82	55	60	63	80	53	41	51	49	40
2018	86	52	53	63	69	63	36	55	49	*
2019	69	42	59	56	51	54	38	53	38	37
2020	79	44	65	66	63	63	47	66	55	36
2021	89	48	66	60	57	57	43	63	50	37
Average	94	43	59	59	64	58	42	60	45	37

Table 5: KFN Area Christmas Bird Counts 2021

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS	Total
Greater White-fronted Goose	1										1
Brant							12				12
Cackling Goose	4		1								5
Canada Goose	7728	234	10430	4117	729	1222	730	4767	191	113	30261
Mute Swan	331	2	40	177	190	77	2	252	CW		1071
Trumpeter Swan		64		13			10	1	5		93
Tundra Swan	159							2			161
Tundra/Trumpeter Swan	42										42
swan sp.	10			5							15
Gadwall	134			14				14			162
American Wigeon	12			2							14
American Black Duck	221	5	4	5	2	8	4	23	1		273
Mallard	2104	382	297	221	284	152	122	165	94	2	3823
Northern Pintail	3										3
Green-winged Teal	12										12
Redhead	50				870	3					923
Ring-necked Duck	253										253
Greater Scaup	6114				402	110					6626
Lesser Scaup	117	39	1								157
White-winged Scoter	1				41						42
Long-tailed Duck	966		2		3425	1					4394
Bufflehead	185		30	1	147	22	15	93	5		498
Common Goldeneye	589	30	117	151	320	385		19			1611
Barrow's Goldeneye					2						2
Hooded Merganser	169	115	CW	53	21	12	57	48	63		538
Common Merganser	790	299	294	51	44	47	134	174	194		2027
Red-breasted Merganser	1265		18	19	80	6		51	2		1441
merganser sp.	18								30		48
duck sp.	112							4			116
Ruffed Grouse	3	5	2	2	2	1	2	3	9		29
Wild Turkey	283	157	63	11	18	38	48	65	178	45	906
Common Loon	3	1	1				4				9
Pied-billed Grebe	2										2
Horned Grebe	1				CW						1
Double-crested Cormorant	4				7	9					20
Great Blue Heron	2	1	1			1					5
Turkey Vulture				1					1		2
Northern Harrier	37		2	2		35		1			77
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6										6

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS	Total
Cooper's Hawk	6		2	1		2		4			15
Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk									1		1
Golden Eagle					CW						CW
Bald Eagle	30	7	5	21	6	6	7	23	10	1	116
Red-shouldered Hawk							1				1
Red-tailed Hawk	47	6	27	10	8	26	10	27	12	5	178
Rough-legged Hawk	15		3	5		26		2			51
accipiter sp.									1		1
buteo sp.	3			1							4
American Coot	6										6
Ring-billed Gull	140	17	30	34	78	11		72	70	3	455
Herring Gull	244	1	70	400	55	1	8	279	81		1139
Glaucous Gull			1		CW			1			2
Great Black-backed Gull	2		11	1	3				3		20
gull sp.	5		1	12	22				3		43
Rock Pigeon	842	95	305	176	99	99	206	297	115	47	2281
Mourning Dove	714	126	572	60	52	215	127	225	134	132	2357
Eastern Screech Owl	9		1					2			12
Great Horned Owl	1		1		CW			1			3
Snowy Owl	12					21					33
Barred Owl	2	1					1	CW	3	1	8
Long-eared Owl						5					5
Short-eared Owl	11		1			19					31
Northern Saw-whet Owl			1			1					2
owl sp.	1										1
Belted Kingfisher	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		7
Red-bellied Woodpecker	23	8	4	14	6	7	17	14	8	6	107
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4		2		CW			CW			6
Downy Woodpecker	125	40	35	33	5	21	38	31	36	8	372
Hairy Woodpecker	24	38	11	20	3	3	25	14	19	11	168
Northern Flicker	13		2	2	2			1			20
Pileated Woodpecker	13	7	2	10	4	2	9	4	11		62
woodpecker sp.	2								5		7
American Kestrel	6		7	2	3	1		6	CW		25
Merlin	5		2		1	1		1			10
Peregrine Falcon	1		1			1					3
Northern Shrike	3	1	2		1	3		2	1		13
Blue Jay	356	227	349	85	88	156	285	193	248	98	2085
American Crow	795	40	366	131	56	55	53	163	80	88	1827

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS	Total
Common Raven	58	40	37	35	9	30	40	59	45	31	384
Horned Lark	3							2			5
Black-capped Chickadee	1225	341	286	451	167	122	261	286	467	142	3748
Tufted Titmouse				8				3			11
Red-breasted Nuthatch	60	4	5	1			5	10	7	7	99
White-breasted Nuthatch	246	82	55	75	29	34	60	56	99	21	757
nuthatch sp.									1		1
Brown Creeper	4	3	1	3	1			2	2		16
Winter Wren	1	1			CW		1		3		6
Marsh Wren						1					1
Carolina Wren	5	1		2							8
Golden-crowned Kinglet	40		7	2		1	1	10	4		65
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3										3
Eastern Bluebird				4	5		30	7		6	52
Hermit Thrush	10									1	11
American Robin	257	22	125	11	121	33	158	28	104	202	1061
Brown Thrasher								1			1
Northern Mockingbird	CW										CW
European Starling	7952	617	2972	2497	759	809	917	2681	553	176	19933
Cedar Waxwing	5	60	21	28	376	12	34	24	10	274	844
Snow Bunting	213		176		30				1	65	485
Yellow-rumped Warbler			3	1	6						10
American Tree Sparrow	154	23	154	34	9	46	45	111	82	68	726
Chipping Sparrow				3							3
Dark-eyed Junco	728	149	682	184	289	22	141	439	352	266	3252
White-crowned Sparrow			1					1			2
White-throated Sparrow	82		27	8	2			13	2	9	143
Song Sparrow	19		5	3		1		6	3	1	38
Swamp Sparrow	3				CW						3
Eastern Towhee	1		1								2
sparrow sp.	36			4	1				4		45
Northern Cardinal	203	17	32	23	8	14	34	36	20	12	399
Red-winged Blackbird	15	1	4	6			1	5	8	1	41
Rusty Blackbird								2			2
Common Grackle							1			1	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	3			2				4			9
blackbird sp.					1						1
House Finch	358	5	211	2	22	18		88	55	13	772

	ONKG	ONWE	ONNA	ONTI	ONPE	ONAI	ONDE	ONGQ	ONFR	ONMS	Total
Purple Finch	20	6	4	6			12	1	4	22	75
House/Purple Finch									1		1
Red Crossbill				CW							CW
Common Redpoll	11	15	2	CW	8				14	8	58
Pine Siskin	5	21					1			16	43
American Goldfinch	456	125	133	109	92	77	91	122	216	117	1538
finch sp.					12				2		14
House Sparrow	235	15	105	58	14	124	40	57	55	17	720
passerine sp.	6									60	66
bird sp.									1		1
Total species	89	48	66	60	57	57	43	63	50	37	106
Count week species	1	0	1	2	7	0	0	2	2	0	3
Total individuals including 'sp'	37609	3497	18166	9424	9038	4168	3788	11099	3730	2096	102615

5 Articles

5.1 Biodiversity of Campeche, Mexico

by Shirley French



Figure 4: Male Ringed Kingfisher (*Megascops torquata*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)

One of the few advantages of our COVID-19 situation has been the opportunity to invite guest speakers from outside our Kingston region. On November 18 KFN's speaker, Jesús Vargas Soriano, gave us a presentation on the biodiversity of Campeche, Mexico. Even though Jesús's research while at Queen's University and back at his home has been to focus on the endemic Yucatán Wren,

he nonetheless had a lot of information on the diverse mammals, reptiles and amphibians living in Campeche. He is also very active in engaging youth to learn about birds and other wildlife. KFN members expressed an interest in potentially visiting the area where Jesús lives and works. Here is a description of what one can expect on a trek not far from the city of Campeche. The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve is the world's second largest tropical forest and site of an ancient Mayan City. This UNESCO World Heritage Site has 350 bird species and 100 species of mammals on record.

"The mist covers the path; it is impossible to see beyond five meters. At the end of this thick white sheet, the reward awaits us, a marsh full of birds! Herons (white, green, blue, and tiger heron), anhingas, cormorants, jacanas, moorhens, owls, kingfishers, swallows, trogons, pigeons, jays, flycatchers, warblers, and the majestic osprey. After an hour and a half of enjoying their colors, sounds, and flight, there is no doubt that birdwatching is the most enlivening experience. Following our journey, we arrive at a small Mayan archaeological site, near the city of Campeche. It is hidden in the sub-humid tropical forests of the Yucatán Peninsula. Some days we are so fortunate to see a bird so rare in Campeche (Black-

throated Blue Warbler), that all the mosquito bites are forgotten when greeted with the thrill of seeing this bird. At mid-morning the count is almost 60 species observed! Undoubtedly 'birding' is at its finest at this time of year because in addition to watching local birds, we have migratory birds here to rest and feed. At this time of year, the weather is also very comfortable and to top this experience we include a rich breakfast, along with a menu of turkey sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, and coffee in the middle of the tropical forest. It is a luxury that we give ourselves from time to time in life. To finish, we visit an organic garden where they plant and harvest coriander, a succulent, aromatic herb. When I return home, I will have one thing on my mind: let's do it again, there are more routes to discover." **(Jesús Vargas Soriano, Universidad Autónoma de Campeche)**

Imagine the Black-throated Blue Warbler nesting in the Kingston area and then migrating south where it could have been seen by bird watchers in Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. If you take a look at eBird's spectacular abundance maps under 'status and trends' this warbler migrates south, mainly to Cuba, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic and then, a moderate number of birds move over to the Yucatán Peninsula for January through to March. This wood warbler is an "uncommon resident" around Kingston (Weir, R., 2008, *Birds of the Kingston Region*), but I have seen at least one Black-throated Blue Warbler (male) in the deciduous forests within the Kingston birding radius. Next spring, I hope to see more of this little wood warbler, with a greater appreciation for its migration feats. This is only one example of the interconnectedness between our environment and a bioserve 4100 km away.



Figure 5: Jesús Vargas Soriano with youth at a wildlife education event (pre-COVID-19). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)



Figure 6: Male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)



Figure 7: Male Green Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle Americana*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)



Figure 8: Male Gartered Trogon (*Trogon caligatus*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)



Figure 9: Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)



Figure 10: Male Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga peetchial*). (Jesús Vargas Soriano)

5.2 Memories of Peter Good: a KFN Stalwart

by Paul Mackenzie



Figure 11: Peter erecting a sign at the HQS in 1990. (Paul Mackenzie)

Peter Good passed away on Nov 25, 2021, at age 75. He was a longstanding member of KFN who will be greatly missed. Thanks to those who submitted comments including Marian Ellis, Ron Weir, Mike Evans, Kurt Hennige, and Erwin Battala.

Stalwart is defined as loyal, reliable and hardworking. Peter fits this description very well. Gentle is another adjective his many friends at KFN use in describing him.

Peter was a teacher and it was fellow teacher Art Bell who started Peter Good and Joel Ellis looking for birds. Peter quickly became good at spotting and ID. In fact he and Joel found a Three-toed Woodpecker on their first Moscow CBC with Art Bell. A lifer for both, and a memory he often

recalled. During his many birding years he did Breeding Bird Survey Routes, participated in the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, and was a team member on many spring and fall KFN round-ups with Ron Weir, Kathy Innes, Joel Ellis and me.

Peter used to join with Joel Ellis, Bud Rowe and me on birding trips to Prince Edward Point and Amherst Island. I recall the time he picked out a Townsend's Solitaire among hundreds of robins and the time he found a Yellow-breasted Chat near the lighthouse at the Point. It was always good to have Peter as he shared great home-made chocolate-chip cookies.

Peter led many fall trips to Amherst island in shore-bird season, and led an OFO trip there in 2001. He assisted Kurt Hennige in doing surveys for Short-eared Owls, Bobolinks and Meadowlarks on Amherst Island.

Peter was a coordinator for many activities, including some KFN Christmas Bird Counts, spring and fall Roundups, Regional Coordinator for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas in 1981 and for the Ontario Mammal Atlas in 1991. He also sent out the weekly local rare Bird reports from 2007 to 2011.

Peter was a frequent volunteer for KFN, responding (like George Vance) to many requests for work on KFN properties. This included the yearly April trail sweep at the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, and a lot of work on Amherst

Island with fencing, erecting a pit latrine, joining Erwin's spring and fall work parties to fill and empty the troughs for the cattle, starting and disconnecting the water pump and responding to pump alarms on what is now the Martin Edwards Reserve. Peter helped erect the Purple Martin boxes and the big signs that Lynn Bell made for the Martin Edwards Reserve and the Sylvester-Gallagher Reserve.

He had very active bird feeders at the home he renovated near Camden East. One winter a Lark Sparrow frequented the feeder and he and Jane welcomed many visiting birders. He would show us Screech Owls in the owl boxes he had put up in the woods there. Evidence of hard work

is how Peter transformed the shallow alvar habitat into a magnificent vegetable and flower garden, and had flower-cutting events with donations to Hospice Kingston. A very successful KFN Bioblitz was held on his property in 2009 and he has been a member of the Bioblitz Committee led by Anne Robertson ever since.

As the years go by we lose more and more longstanding members. However they are replaced by others and the KFN membership keeps gradually growing. The club needs more people like Peter who are willing to dedicate time for the various tasks that make KFN so successful. He is now at peace, perhaps between reincarnations.

5.3 Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve

by Jackie Bartnik



Figure 12: Barred Owl seen on the Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve. (Jakob Mueller)

August 29, 2021. Ontario Nature (ON) invited all of us to visit their new reserve called 'Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve.' I happily said yes as it was a wonderful thing to do during COVID-19. Gananoque Lake Reserve became ON's 26th nature reserve in February of 2020. Thanks to generous contributions from our members and several supporters (including Ottawa Naturalists), ON was able to permanently protect this 147 hectare (358 acre) property. This reserve is located in Eastern Ontario within the 'Frontenac Arch' which is a geological wonder. The 'Frontenac Arch' is a corridor between Algonquin Park (Ontario) and Adirondack State Park (New York State), approximately 400 km. This area is Canada's richest biodiversity region and it includes several species at risk (over 25 and counting).

The day was organized with several walks: three in the morning and two in the afternoon. In the morning, there was an early bird walk lead by Kathy Webb and Bill Depew (KFN members). The other two morning walks were a reptilian/amphibian/insect walk or vegetation (trees/shrubs) habitat walk. I registered for the vegetation habitat walk which gave us a quick overview of the upland forest and lowland forests – 185 acres of hardwood forest including towering hickory, oak, elm, maple and several species of spruce, white pine and other coniferous trees. There was visible damage due to the LDD Moth but many trees had already started re-growing leaves and needles. It was wonderful to see a young healthy endangered Butternut. During the hikes, we heard and saw Cerulean Warblers, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Scarlet Tanager and owls to name a few birds.



Figure 13: Bottle Gentian. (Jakob Mueller)

We all brought our lunches and ate them quickly so we

could join the afternoon walk. In the afternoon, I joined Jakob Mueller who lead the reptilian/amphibian/insect walk. He said his love of this natural world was thanks to Anne Robertson and the KFN teen group. 173 acres of provincially significant wetland is protected on this reserve. This wetland is home to an amazing collect of species including fish, frogs (Western Chorus Frog), turtles (Blanding's Turtle), plants, and insects. Jakob is called 'the Snake Whisperer.'



Figure 14: Jakob Mueller, the Snake Whisperer, holding a snake. (Jackie Bartnik)

At this time, Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve is not ac-

cessible as there are currently no trails on the property. Unfortunately, the property is closed to the public; unless, ON are hosting an event or if one gains permission.



Figure 15: Healthy young Butternut. (Jackie Bartnik)

5.4 Exploring the Backyard: Winter on the Northern Boreal Plain

by Carolyn Bonta

In early January, I moved to Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, a town of about 2500 residents located near the Alberta border and close to Wood Buffalo National Park. Upon arrival, I was greeted by average temperatures of -22°C and six hours of daylight. Not that the sun shone very often – most winter days were overcast with snow flurries.

The first two weekends in town were spent exploring by foot. Although the snow was a half meter deep, numerous snowmobile paths criss-cross the local woodlot and I followed these in my explorations. Fort Smith is within a northern extension of the Boreal Plain [see Figure 1], where the landscape is flat and tree cover is

dominated by White Spruce (*Picea glauca*), Jack Pine (*Pinus banksiana*), and poplar (*Populus balsamifera* and *P. tremuloides*). Damp areas support Tamarack (*Larix laricina*) and Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*), while White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*) are not uncommon. Deep in winter, the woods are generally quiet. I often walk or snowshoe for hours without hearing more than the croak of a raven, the creak of the trees, of the sharp chatter of a Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*). However, on most outings I was treated to brief encounters of mixed-species flocks of passerines, including redpolls (*Acanthis* spp.), Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees (*Poe-*

cile spp.), and Pine (*Pinicola enucleator*) and Evening grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*). On occasion, the drumming of a woodpecker would entice me off-trail in search of the individual, my snowshoes sinking deep in the dry, powdery snow. Sometimes the sound was tracked to a Pileated (*Dryocopus pileatus*), Hairy (*D. villosus*), or Downy (*D. pubescens*) Woodpecker drilling into a tree; on more exciting occasions I was treated to a Black-backed (*Picoides arcticus*) or an American Three-toed Woodpecker (*P. dorsalis*). These latter two species were a treat for many reasons: first, they are rarely encountered in southern Ontario; second, I had never previously seen an American Three-toed Woodpecker; and finally, they are fascinating to watch. Both species differ from our more familiar woodpeckers physically having three toes rather than four and they also differ behaviourally in their foraging strategy. The *Picoides* woodpeckers eat bark beetles of dead and dying trees, the Black-backed Woodpecker preferring burned areas, where they devote considerable time to feeding from the same tree. First, they flake the bark and glean insects beneath; then they drill and dig into the bark for beetle larvae. I could spend hours watching these woodpeckers, if it weren't for late day temperatures dropping into the minus 30s! Once back in town, I occasionally encountered small flocks of Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombicylla garrulous*) feeding on the fermenting berries of ornamental shrubs, but there were always ravens overhead, en-route to their evening roost.

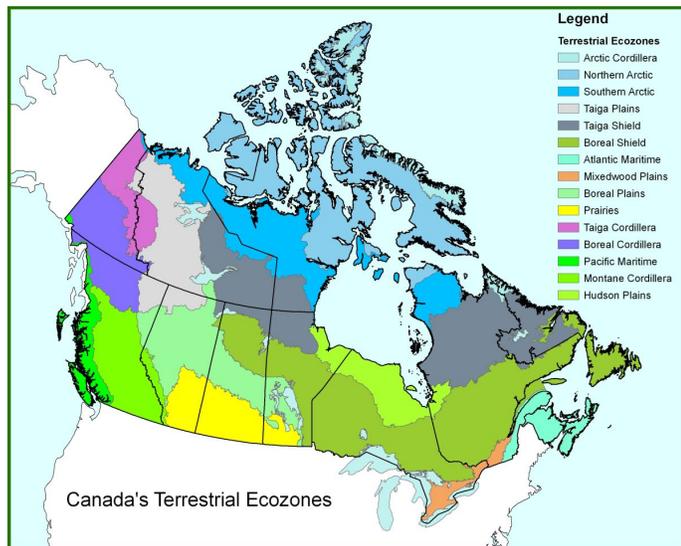


Figure 16: Map of terrestrial ecozones in Canada. Fort Smith is within a small northerly projection of the Boreal Plains ecozone shown in mint green. (Government of Canada)

During the week, I taught Freshwater Fisheries for the Environment and Natural Resource Technology Program (ENRTP) at Aurora College. As a COVID-19 precaution,

most of the course was delivered virtually but I was granted several exemptions to teach in-person. Two of these classes were particularly notable: our dissection lab and an afternoon of ice fishing.



Figure 17: Students exploring the external and internal anatomy of freshwater fishes of the Northwest Territories. (Carolyn Bonta)

There was some pre-lab stress when I discovered that all the fish in the ENRTP freezers were headless, intended for food rather than study, requiring that I reach out to members of the community to source a reasonable diversity of fishes. Several phone calls and trips around town later, I managed to obtain six species – from a twelve-pound Inconnu (*Stenodus leucichthys*) temporarily borrowed from a team of sled dogs to a diminutive one-pound Goldeye (*Hiodon alosoides*) – in time for the lab. The dissection laboratory was the first opportunity for the second-year students to round-up in-person for a practical, hands-on exercise. Everyone had a great time exploring the external anatomy and internal organs of their fish and other species in the room. One student even found a parasite within the eye tissues of his Lake Whitefish (*Coregonus culpeaformis*)! Given the host species and tissue, we guessed the parasite was a trematode. We marveled at the fishes' tiny, two-chambered hearts relative to the size of the oxygen-extracting gills. Some specimens had intact swim bladders – the gas-filled chambers that help a fish maintain buoyancy – that stood out prominently below the spine. We carefully extracted the otoliths. Often referred to as "ear bones" but more appropriately called "ear stones" (the mineral composition of otoliths is akin to rock rather than bone). These structures are part of a fish's inner ear and assist with detecting vibrations and navigating in the aquatic environment. The coolest thing about otoliths is that they grow incrementally over the lifetime of the fish and offer the most accurate (albeit

lethal) means to both age fish and identify fish to species. The level of enthusiasm and laughter in the lab that afternoon could never be matched in a virtual classroom.



Figure 18: Early morning (07:00 on 14 February) sunrise over the Slave River downstream of the Rapids of the Drowned. (Carolyn Bonta)

The following week, the class headed out to the Slave River where a local Metis sustenance fisher hosted us at his ice fishing hut. There, he guided the class with ice fishing tips as they relate to the life history of fish species in the river, shared stories from his career as a wildlife officer, and demonstrated a wealth of natural resources knowledge that the students absorbed with enthusiasm. Splitting off the Peace River just west of Lake Athabasca (Alberta), the Slave River flows due north to Great Slave Lake. The Slave River flows gently except for where it traverses a 26-kilometre stretch of Canadian Shield. Here, the slow-moving waters transform into four sets of formidable rapids – Cassette, Pelican, Mountain, and Rapids of the Drowned – that present the only challenge to navigation between Lake Athabasca and the Arctic Ocean. The rapids also present a barrier to fish migration, with diversity decreasing substantially upstream of the Rapids of the Drowned. On this particular day, we fished from holes at two depths – nine feet in a shoreline eddy and 36 feet where the river bottom drops suddenly – and a few students were fortunate to catch a fish: Burbot (*Lota lota*, also called Loche; the only species of freshwater cod) and Walleye (*Sander vitreus*). Although skunked in her own fishing, the class instructor was generously gifted with two fish to take home for dinner.

With increasing daylight came more time to invest in exploring further from home. I borrowed a pair of cross-country skis and began to explore trails that pushed deep into the boreal forest of Northern Alberta. One early-

morning pre-dawn outing, I was treated to a Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) calling under clear, calm skies. As the sun began to rise, casting a pink and orange hue on the snowy landscape, I caught sight of five Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) flitting ghost-like among the willows of a nearby wetland. Apart from squirrels, the only other mammal I encountered directly was a fox but tracks in the snow spoke volumes to the diversity of furry life in the boreal forest. From large prints left by Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*; also called Timber Wolf) and Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), to smaller tracks of Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) and Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*), to the tiniest footprints of mice and voles emerging from their subnivean corridors, I was certainly not alone in the forest!



Figure 19: Ptarmigan tracks. (Carolyn Bonta)



Figure 20: A wolf followed my ski trail from the previous day. (Carolyn Bonta)

As my two-month teaching contract nears an end, I'm squeezing in as much outdoor time to enjoy the longer

days, milder temperatures, sunnier daytime skies, and clearer nights – some decorated by the Northern Lights. While still relatively quiet, the boreal forest is beginning to wake up from the long winter: chickadees and Pine Grosbeaks are singing and setting up territories. Canada

Jays are singing, too, but are already paired and preparing to nest within the coming month. It won't be long before other birds migrate to join them but by then I'll have made my journey back to Ontario with hopes of one day returning to the northern boreal plain again.

5.5 Wildlife Photography Tips #11—Camera Settings for Bird Photography

by Anthony Kaduck

One of the challenges of working with current DSLR and mirrorless camera bodies is the bewildering variety of options they present. What should one do when faced with the myriad of possibilities embedded in the basic camera controls for ISO, metering, shutter speed, aperture, and autofocus modes, much less the arcane stuff buried in the custom menus (53 options in my particular camera of choice)? Isn't there a one-size-fits-all setup that will let us get on with the business of photographing birds?

Well, yes and no. Readers of this series will know that I advocate learning how to control the basic functions of the camera, and particularly the big three of ISO, shutter speed, and aperture. In the most recent article I also explored the importance of understanding and applying autofocus modes. These are functions that you may need to adjust multiple times over the course of a day out, and in my experience an ability to understand these and balance between them is one of the keys of creating good images.

So there is no single answer that works in all situations. However a quick scan through the internet will turn up a number of articles proposing the "right" setup for bird photography, by which they mean the recommended baseline settings to use most of the time. This is a good approach, and (needless to say!) I have my own recommendations. This article provides a set of good choices for standard settings, and capsule explanations for why these are recommended.

In order to confirm whether they were good ones I decided to test them during the KFN field trip to Algonquin Park by sticking as closely as possible to my recommended settings throughout the trip. The captions to the images accompanying this article will note the settings used, including any deviations from the recommended ones. A Nikon D850 camera body and a NIKKOR 500mm f/5.6E PF ED VR lens were used throughout.

First things first

Before anything else on a photography expedition:

- ensure you have a freshly charged battery (carry more than one if you use a mirrorless or bridge camera)
- check that your lens and eyepiece are clean
- confirm that your strap is secure
- insert a clean memory card
- check your dioptre adjustment. This device adjusts the eyepiece so that it shows a crisp image allowing for the vagaries of your eyesight. It is normally something that you set and forget, but once in a while it needs adjustment either because you accidentally nudged the control wheel, or, sadly, because your eyesight has deteriorated a bit. Focus on an object with well-defined edges, at least 10 m away, and look to see whether the image in your viewfinder is crisp and clear. If not, make small adjustments until it is.



Figure 21: Dioptre adjustment wheel. (Anthony Kaduck)

Set and forget – Make these adjustments once and change them by exception

Image file format. **Raw.** I use 14-bit lossless raw.

To recap article #4 in this series, trust me on this – you won't be able to consistently get great results with JPEG.

Colour profile. **Standard.** If the option is available, **set sharpening to 4 or 5** to counteract the tendency of digital images to be slightly soft.

The basic option is Standard, but there are also settings for Portrait, Landscape, Vivid, Neutral and Monochrome. In principle you should start out with standard and adjust in post-processing. If you are a Lightroom user be aware that regardless of which setting you choose, Lightroom will ignore it and show you an image in the Adobe colour space, which is more like Neutral. If you prefer your camera's Standard setting you can go to the Develop module/Profile and choose the profile you want.

Camera mode: Choose one of **either shutter priority, aperture priority, or manual** and stick with it until you have mastered it.

Programme mode, Shutter priority, aperture priority or manual? See articles #8 and 9 in this series. For the record I use Manual mode exclusively.

High ISO Noise Reduction: **Off**

Like it says on the tin, this function attempts to reduce noise when creating images at high ISO by applying a de-noising algorithm. High ISO noise is a real problem, but one that is better dealt with in post-production using de-noising software

White balance: **Auto**, or even better **Natural light Auto** if this option is available.

If you are shooting in Raw you really don't need to worry about white balance – you can easily change it during post-processing. So Auto is the way to go. If you shoot JPEG then you might want to explore how to adjust white balance in specific situations.

Monitor mode: **Highlight display**

You can set the LCD monitor on your camera to show a histogram or a highlight display (a.k.a. "blinkies") that blinks to show areas that are overexposed. See article #1 in this series. I find the blinkies setting very helpful in avoiding overexposure of white or light-coloured birds,

not to mention scenes that include snow.



Figure 22: White-winged Crossbill. 1/1000, ISO 220, f/7.1. (Anthony Kaduck)



Figure 23: Canada Jay with tracking antenna. 1/1000, ISO 250, f/7.1. The fuzziness in the image is a result of losing focus lock when the perched bird jumped into action. (Anthony Kaduck)

Release priority: AFC Continuous: **release + focus**. AFC Single: **focus**

This function allows you to decide whether you want your camera to capture an image any time you press the shutter, or only when the image is in focus. The choices are:

Release. An image will be captured every time you press the shutter release.

Release + focus. Photos can be taken even when the camera is not in focus. This seems like a bad choice, but in actual use you will find that (a) images are sometimes

in focus even if they don't meet the camera body's standards (such as an identifiable focus point), and (b) sometimes a slightly out of focus image is better than none at all (e.g. the Canada Jay photo). Note that in continuous mode the frame rate slows for improved focus if the subject is dark or low contrast.

Focus + release. Similar to the above option, but in this mode priority will be given to focus for the first shot in each series, after which the camera will maximize frame rate for the rest of the series. This might be useful in an unusual situation where you know the bird is not going to move.

Focus. Images can only be captured when the camera believes they are in focus, as shown by the in-focus indicator.

Test and adjust – Change these adjustments dynamically during the course of a shoot



Figure 24: Blackish Nightjar in Colombia. 1/640, ISO 16,000, f/5.6. (Anthony Kaduck)

Auto ISO: **On**

The base ISO of your camera (usually ISO 100) will, all things being equal, give you the best images. All things are not equal though: high ISO speeds allow you to capture images in less than optimal light. The trade-off here is that high ISO numbers also introduce noise.

In search of the best images you would ideally make an informed choice about the ISO you are prepared to accept, but in bird photography you need to be prepared for the unexpected. One of the ways you can hedge your bets is Auto-ISO. With this enabled the camera will consider your shutter speed and aperture and then adjust

ISO within a user-defined range in order to get a correct exposure.

Auto ISO range: **ISO range 100-1600**

The key here is to set an appropriate range to work with, and also know how to quickly switch to manual. A range of 100-1600 is a good starting point. If your equipment is good and light conditions are poor consider going for an upper limit of 3200, but be aware that the camera will tend to default to higher ISOs more often than not. If it's a once in a lifetime record shot in the gloom then switch to manual ISO and go for broke (noting that if it is completely dark you won't be able to autofocus anyway). I would rather have my grainy shot of a Blackish Nightjar shot at ISO 16,000 than no shot at all.

Minimum shutter speed: **1000**, but consider conditions (i.e. available light). Good shots are sometimes available at slower speeds.

If a correct exposure cannot be achieved by auto-adjusting ISO, the camera will next try to slow down the shutter speed. You can control the extent to which it does so by setting a minimum shutter speed. Remember that even perched birds tend to make rapid movements, so you will set to make the minimum shutter speed at a high enough speed to counteract this. See article #2 in this series.



Figure 25: Black-backed Woodpecker. 1/1000, ISO 1600, f/5.6. (Anthony Kaduck)

Autofocus mode: **Continuous**

This is the best autofocus mode for tracking birds, but ensure you know how to change modes quickly – see article #10 in this series for more on this topic.

Autofocus Area mode: Dynamic 9 point or Group

Dynamic 9 point or Group are my typical starting points. Learn how to switch quickly. If you are visiting an area with birds flying over wide-open spaces, such as Wolfe or Amherst Island, use Group or d9. In the more closed-in environment of Marshlands or Lemoine Point CAs, Group or Single may be better.

Metering: Point

Matrix metering is better if you want the bird and its environment to be properly exposed; point (a.k.a. centre-weighted) is the best way of ensuring that the bird itself is properly exposed.

Shutter release mode: Continuous low (Cl)

See article #2 in this series. The options relevant to bird photography are Single (S), Continuous Low (Cl), Continuous High (Ch), Quiet (Q), and Quiet Continuous (Qc). Because birds are prone to rapid, unpredictable motion I recommend staying at Cl and being prepared to switch to Ch. Or stay at Ch and deal with the need to delete many images, carry extra cards, and being looked at askance for continually running off sustained bursts of rapid fire. "Spray and pray" is not a good look. Use Q or Qc in areas where wind noise is low and/or birds are close. (Quiet reduces maximum frame rate to 3fps on the D850).



Figure 26: Purple Finch. 1/1000, ISO 1000, f/6.3. (Anthony Kaduck)

Shutter speed: 1/1000, 1/1600 for birds in flight

Here I am talking about the shutter speed you set when starting a day's birding, as opposed to the minimum speed setting for Auto-ISO mentioned above. 1/1600 is

a good starting point if you want to photograph birds in flight. Otherwise 1/1000 or even 1/800. When light conditions dictate you can and should go slower, but be prepared to delete a lot of blurred shots.



Figure 27: Common Redpoll. 1/640, ISO 720, f/5.6. I risked a slower shutter speed because the bird was perched quietly. (Anthony Kaduck)

Lens Switches**Focus switch: A/M**

The usual options are Autofocus (A), Manual focus (m) and A/M (autofocus with the ability to manually override).

Focus limiting: Limit

Often there will be a switch that toggles between the full focus range and a setting that limits close focus. A typical marking would be **Full/Limit** or **Full/8m - ∞**. The idea of the limited focus setting is that the lens will achieve focus faster if it doesn't have to cycle through the full range of possibilities. For most uses you should start off with focus limit enabled, but note that places where birds can be close (e.g. Marshlands CA) you might want to start out in Full.

Vibration Reduction: Off

Typically there are three options: Off, Normal, and Sport. Normal is the most-used option; Off is used when the camera is fixed to a tripod or when the shutter speed is higher than 1/1000; Sport allows a bird in flight to be more easily tracked. If you follow my recommendation and keep your shutter speed above 1/1000, the Off is the best option. But... if you find yourself in low light and need a lower shutter speed be prepared to switch quickly

to Normal.

Finer adjustments using Custom Settings

Read up about these in your camera manual if you want to fine tune your photography. For reference, all of the accompanying photos were shot using these options.

Long exposure noise reduction: **Off**

This function is primarily of interest for landscape or astral photography, where long exposures are common.

Active D lighting: **Off**, but be prepared to switch to **Normal** for high contrast scenes

This is a Nikon technology that optimizes high contrast images. It aims to restore shadow and highlight details that might be lost when strong lighting increases the contrast between bright and dark areas of the image. I have not experimented a lot with this function, but I had Active

D-lighting set to Normal during the Algonquin trip.

Focus Tracking with Lock-On: **Blocked Shot AF Response – 4 (delayed), Subject Motion – erratic**

This function allows you to select the length of time your camera will ignore an intruding object that blocks your subject. For our purposes this comes into play when tracking a bird in flight. A delayed response means that the focus will remain on your subject rather than immediately jump to the blocking object.

Develop your own starting settings

Over the course of your photography journey you can refine your personal baseline settings that work well in most cases and can be adjusted as required. But for best results you have to continually evaluate whether these settings need to be adjusted. The more that switching modes and adjustments becomes second nature, the better your chances of getting the shot you want.



Figure 28: Evening Grosbeak, 1/000, ISO 280, f/6.3. (Anthony Kaduck)

5.6 Using GPX files on a Smartphone to Avoid Getting Lost While Hiking

by Ken Edwards

The KFN Nature Reserves Committee, spearheaded by Gaye Beckwith, has produced an excellent PDF format map of the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary (HQS) which can be downloaded from the KFN website. The map includes details of the trails and a brief history of the person(s) each was named for. The trails are very well marked but it is rough Canadian Shield terrain requiring the trails to have many twists and turns. If you are watching your footing and miss a marker it is still possible to get disoriented and lose your way.

This article will assist you in learning how to turn your smartphone into a GPS device so that you can download a GPX file from the KFN website and use it to tell you exactly where you are on the trail at all times.

Safe Hiking

When using a GPS to navigate it is advisable to have a hard copy map and compass with you for safety. Smartphones can run out of charge, malfunction at the most inconvenient time or, my favourite, fall and break! The area's cell phone coverage is spotty so should NOT be relied upon. If you are hiking alone make sure someone knows where you have gone and when you are expected to return. Running a GPS program, constantly, while hiking may dramatically decrease the phone's battery life so I always carry a portable "power bank" in my backpack.

What is a GPX File?

GPX is the format used by most GPS devices to map trails. You can create your own files while hiking or even plot one on the Google Earth app and then convert it to a GPX. In this article we will focus on how to take a file of HQS trails, produced by Gaye Beckwith, and load it into a GPS smartphone app.

The GPX for the HQ Sanctuary contains information such as the name of the trail, length of the trail, the length of time it took the creator to hike it as well as elevation data. A linear graph of the elevation change over the course of the hike allows you to easily see how many steep climbs and descents there are, an indication of the difficulty of the trail.

GPS Works When There is No Cellphone Coverage!

The great thing about GPS is that it does not require cell

phone reception. In order for your phone to access information from the ge positioning satellites it simply requires access to the sky. As long as you have downloaded topographical maps onto your phone you can see exactly where you are. If you haven't downloaded the map data for that area you will see only the trail and a blinking cursor. You will still know if you straying from the trail as the cursor will leave the dotted trail line. That will keep you from getting lost at HQS but if hiking where you don't have a loaded trail you will only see a blinker on a white background. Not much help!

What App is Best?

There are many GPS apps for both Apple and Android devices. They may primarily target hikers, fishermen or exercise fanatics, to name a few. If you plan to use the app only in Canada then I would recommend the **Topo Maps Canada** app. This free app allows you to download topographic maps for anywhere in Canada. It also has many trails pre-loaded. In the vicinity of HQS you will automatically have trails loaded for Frontenac Provincial Park and Gould Lake Conservation Area.

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Purchase a smartphone!
2. Install a GPS app from the app store. If you are planning to use Topo Maps Canada you will need to enter the exact name in the search function or you will be given a list of "pay for" apps only.
3. Open your GPS app and download the topographical maps for the vicinity of HQS.
4. Go to kingstonfieldnaturalists.org click on Conservation>Nature Reserves>Helen Quilliam Sanctuary and click the link for the GPX file download. The file is hosted on the KFN Google Drive. You will be asked if you want to download the file. Click "download." Don't worry if you see nothing but coding text.
5. Go to your file folder, locate the file called "June 2nd" and click on it.
6. Open the file with your GPS app. The exact steps to do this vary with the device you are using. For an iPhone, when you first click on the file you will

get many lines of text; don't panic! Look for the little box with an arrow pointing up. Click on this and you will see a list of app icons. Choose your GPS app and you are good to go.

Having difficulty?

Email info@kingstonfieldnaturalists.org for help.

Enjoy your hike!

6 KFN Outings

6.1 Snow Goose Prowl (November 27, 2021)

by Gary Hillaby



Figure 29: Some of the 2000 Snow Geese observed near Lancaster. (Peter Waycik)

The weather for the day was sunny with cloudy periods and the temperature was -6°C . Our stopping points along the St. Lawrence were very open, exposing us to an abundance of windchill. Unbeknownst to me was the fact that this area had an early winter storm blow through it the previous evening. The storm made most of the secondary roads sheets of ice.

Our first port of call on our St. Lawrence route was Iroquois, Ontario. We had 14 participants that made up a convoy of five vehicles. The birds were sparse until the eastern entrance of the Long Sault Parkway. This entrance is more out of the wind and the waterfowl were gathering in larger numbers. Some of the waterfowl we saw were Buffleheads, Common Goldeneye and Ring-necked Ducks. We continued along Highway 2 until Lancaster. We broke for lunch in the parking lot of the Glen-garry Cheese store, north of 401.

I learned that luck plays a big part in our wildlife excursion especially when you are targeting one species. The

strange thing is we experienced something good happening as a result of COVID-19.

I was standing outside the cheese store because of the five person COVID-19 limit inside the store. Peter Waycik was discussing alternative return routes with me, looking for the elusive Snow Geese, when a lady exiting the store overheard Peter and asked if we were looking for Snow Geese. She explained she just saw a flock five minutes down the road. Our convoy "mounted up" and proceeded to the said location. There they were, a flock of over 2000 snow geese in all their glory. The field was close to the access road and elevated above the field. We had an excellent vantage point to observe and photograph the flock. After several minutes we piled back into our cars and headed for home.

I am already thinking about next year's trip!

A special thank you to the drivers and to all the participants. It always enhances the experience when we do it together.

6.2 Ramble to Collins Creek (December 7, 2021)

by Jackie Bartnik

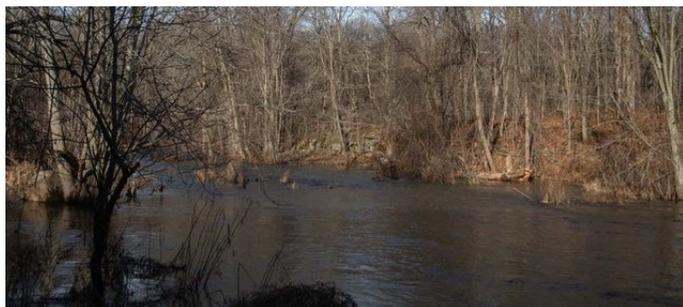


Figure 30: Collins Creek in spate. (Janis Grant)

On a cool cloudy day nine brave souls met at McCullough Park. This area is home to Collins Creek which flows to Collins Bay in Lake Ontario. As a result there are a lot of different habitats on this trail. We started with an explanation about trees and shrubs in this part of Canada. This park has both native and planted trees. Anne explained the acronym MAD DOG as this helped us remember which trees and shrubs have opposite branches – 'M'aple trees, 'A'sh trees and 'D'ogwood trees (do not grow this far north) and 'DOG'wood shrubs. We then examined the different shape of the leaves in the park – red and white oak, poplar, elm, etc.

We then took the trail on the side of the park to avoid the large flooded area from the rains from the day before. As we walked we noticed Black Cherry trees, American Beech trees, Shagbark Hickory, Ironwood, Blue Beech, Eastern Red and White Cedar, White Pine, Nannyberry, Grey Dogwood, and Riverside Grape to name a few.

6.3 Little Long Lake Road Ramble (January 4, 2022)

by Jane Revell

On January 4, eleven participants went to Little Long Lake Road for an enjoyable ramble. The weather was cloudy with the temperature rising to around 0°C which was a welcome respite from the previous day's frigid temperatures. We walked down this road to where we could see down Eel Bay to Sydenham Lake and also walked down a lengthy driveway belonging to a club member. Anne provided interesting information and showed everyone examples of the following plants: Hemp Dogbane, Speckled Alder, Bracken and Sensitive Ferns, Queen Anne's Lace, White and Red Pines, American Beech, Basswood and we had a look at the cones from Balsam Fir, spruce

and Eastern Hemlock trees. We also saw numerous animal tracks which Anne identified as fox, Coyote and White-tailed Deer. Anne explained the difference between the appearance of squirrel and rabbit tracks. Birds were not overly abundant on this ramble but we did see some: Mourning Doves, Black-capped Chickadees, a White-breasted Nuthatch, a Downy Woodpecker and eight Common Ravens pursuing a Bald Eagle.

As it was a December walk, we noticed all the seeds and dead remains of several wild flowers and grasses. Anne gave us an explanation about the galls on the golden rod. The goldenrod grows them to protect itself from the flies or wasps that lay their eggs on the plant.

We also noticed several types of fungus for example: turkey tail, artist's conk, several boletes, *Amanita* sp., but most were hit by frost so they were hard to identify.

As we continued our walk, Janis made us stop because we had gotten to an area where there were several birds on the ground. The trail was close to backyard feeders and the birds were very busy eating. Janis noticed that the American Robins were singing, so we listened to this wonderful sound. It was unusual to hear this sound in December. We saw Downy Woodpeckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, American Robins (15), American Goldfinches and Mallards in the stream.

We wandered further down the trail noticing dead logs and the ground was getting very wet. We started lifting up dead logs, looking for salamanders but we found only sleeping wasps and more fungi so we put the logs carefully back. We tried to get to the end of the trail but the creek was very full and everything was flooded so we turned back to go to our cars after an hour and 57 minute walk. The weather held up for us and it turned out to be a great day.

It was great to see some new members of the KFN out on this ramble. It was a pleasant walk on a well-maintained road – a good time was had by all.

6.4 Amherst Island Field Trip (January 5, 2022)

by Gary Hillaby

Our group assembled at the ferry docks with great anticipation of what the island could show us. While waiting for our shuttle, we saw a Bald Eagle working the shoreline.

The convoy of vehicles was small but manageable. The skies were overcast and winds were moderate. Temperature was hovering around -6°C and flurries were forecast for mid-afternoon. I had hoped to be finished our outing before the flurries started up.

With walkie-talkies in hand, the plan was to circumnav-

igate the island so we headed in the direction of Martin Edwards Reserve. We stopped to admire the new out-house at the reserve.

We saw twenty-nine species including a variety of hawks and even saw a small flock of Snow Buntings. We were just about at the end of our outing when we finally found two Snowy Owls. Thanks to eagle-eye spotting of Jane and Janis. A great day overall – though it is hard to ever have a bad trip to Amherst Island.

6.5 Ramble on the K&P Trail from Cordukes Road (January 18, 2022)

by Gary Greer



Figure 31: Ramble group shot. (Gary Greer)

The ramble followed the K&P Trail starting at Cordukes Road, heading East to Jackson Mills and returning via Bur

Brook Road. We had experienced a significant snowfall on the previous day, and the trail was covered in 30 cm of beautiful fresh snow. Anne Robertson led the snowshoe group of ten hardy members as we broke trail and enjoyed the beauty of the Canadian winter. Anne reports that this is the first Ramble in 15 years with all members on snowshoes. The day was wonderfully sunny with temperatures around -10°C and little wind.

The trail follows the former Kingston and Pembroke Railway line. The K&P was established around 1871 to develop lumber and mineral resources in Eastern Ontario, eventually laying 180 km of track between the two cities (Wikipedia). It is hard now to imagine the challenge that the workers faced in creating this pathway through the wilderness of the Canadian Shield. The need for the railway declined over time and by the 1950s sections were being abandoned, with the last section (Tichborne to Kingston) closing in 1986. Many sections of the railbed have been developed as multiuse trails.

Heading East from the parking lot at the intersection of Cordukes and Bur Brook Roads, the trail descends gently to the northeast before entering a large, sweeping curve to head south. This is all designed to reduce the grade for trains in this hilly area. The half kilometre downhill section of the trail here proved this day to be a very sunny walk through mainly deciduous forest. At the bottom of the hill, the forest opens out into farmland before coming to Jackson Mills at Bur Brook Road again. The group then followed Bur Brook Road to return to their cars.

The fresh snow offered a great opportunity to explore animal tracks along the trail. The fine-grained snow recorded delicate detail of the animals that had passed, as we saw in the mouse tracks in the accompanying photo. Even the tail was quite evident, indicating that it was one of the species of long tail mouse in the area.



Figure 32: Mouse track. (Gary Greer)

Both American Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) and Eastern Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) were observed and had created plentiful tracks. Other animal tracks included White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) and a possible Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).



Figure 33: Squirrel track. (Gary Greer)

Anne led us in appreciating some of the rich plant life along the trail. In many places deciduous trees with some leaves withering but still attached on mainly younger

branches were noted. Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) and Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*) were observed along the trail. Some trees will retain leaves into the winter, including oak (*Quercus* sp.) and the American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) in a process called marcescence (University of Illinois). Blue Beech is also known as American Hornbeam and is another member of the Betulaceae or Beech family. The wood of the beech is dense and strong, and was used by early settlers for bowls and plates (The Arboretum – University of Guelph). Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*) also keeps parts (during the winter), but in this case the “keys” or “samaras,” not leaves, are the parts remaining over the winter.

A shrub which is easily identified in the winter is Common or European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). This invasive species was introduced in the 1880s as an ornamental shrub and continues to discourage the native Alderleaf buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*) as well as other native species (Ontario’s Invading Species Awareness Program). In winter the many black berries on the branches make this easier to identify.

Other observed plant life included many Black Cherry trees (*Prunus serotina*), Riverbank Grape (*Vitis riparia*) and the stalks of Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). The attractive Purple Loosestrife is indigenous to Europe and Asia, and was accidentally introduced to North America in the early nineteenth century as a garden plant. The plant is highly invasive, crowding out native species and two European leaf-eating beetles, *Galerucella calmariensis* and *G. pusilla*, were released in 1992 to control it.

Anne also showed us the fruiting parts of the Basswood (*Tilia americana*), which can be identified even in winter. The fruit is attached to a bract or “wing” for dispersal. The wood of the Basswood tree is soft, and used for making boxes and furniture, as well as carving decoys. In the spring you can make whistles out of Basswood branches!

There is abundant Prickly Ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*) along the trail. It is the only member of the citrus family in Canada and can be identified by the very wide base where each thorn attaches to the stem. It can also be quickly identified by walking into the shrub. This shrub is a host for the caterpillar of the Eastern Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) which has expanded into our region in recent years. Also found on a number of trees and shrubs was the Black Knot canker (*Apiosporina morbosa*), which is a fungal pest of shrubs and trees, especially fruit trees (Ministry of Agriculture).

It was a good day for birds, and the group spotted

12 species. Particularly exciting to see were two Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) in the stream at Jackson Mills, around 20 American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), and an American Tree Sparrow (*Spizelloides arborea*) that was at a feeder on Bur Brook Road. Other species included Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*), Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*), White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*), and Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*).



Figure 34: Basswood fruiting parts. (Gary Greer)

Descending the hill, we came to a long outcrop of predominantly limestone (a sedimentary rock) that has been exposed in creating the rail bed. This is called the Gull River formation and is made up of limestone (also called micritic limestone or micrite). It is around 450 million years old, formed in a geological era called the Ordovician Period. At that time our area was covered in an ocean, and very likely closer to the equator. The deposits of untold numbers of plankton in this ancient sea formed layers of mud rich in calcium carbonate. These muds compressed and solidified over millions of years creating layers tens of metres thick in many locations. The Ordovician Period was a time of great diversification of life, leaving many fossils of the life forms that had hard bodies. While the fossil record contains many species of primitive fish, molluscs, and arthropods (including the famous trilobite), there is little evidence left of those with softer bodies. One of the layers we examined appeared to contain the remnants of small burrows left by unknown creatures in the mud of this ancient sea.

At the bottom of the hill the rail line follows an extended,

gentle curve. The dense shrubs along this section are a great place to see Grey Catbirds during the warmer months. About halfway along the curve there is a plaque pointing out an outcrop of Canadian Shield rock. This is a metamorphic rock outcrop from the Grenville formation. The limestone rock we looked at earlier was deposited on top of the rock of the Canadian Shield. The Grenville consists of rocks that have been subject to intense heat and pressure, becoming soft and more pliable. Around a billion years ago, the collision of continents formed a mountain range. Imagine that once where we now stand, a mountain range like the Rockies existed. The continents float on the Earth's mantle, so when mountains are pushed up, surface rock is also pushed deep into the earth where there is tremendous heat and pressure, creating the new metamorphic rock. Over millions of years the mountains erode and the deeper rock layers float back to the surface. So the shield rock in our area represents the deep roots of an ancient mountain chain. Our outcrop here is called an "outlier" because it is surrounded by the younger limestone rock, and isolated from the rest of the shield in our area.

In total the group rambled for two and a half hours on this gorgeous day and were very grateful to Anne for her kindness and leadership.

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6.6 Ramble to Bayview Bog/Lost Lake (February 1, 2022)

by Joan and Dick Worsfold



Figure 35: Hermit Thrush. (Kathy Webb)

On Tuesday, February 1, 18 participants gathered on Taylor Kidd Blvd. to spend the morning at the Bayview Bog/Lost Lake property across the road from the Amherstview Sewage Lagoons. Most people were wearing snowshoes and the weather was pleasant. We walked 1.13 km each way and the temperature was -10°C . Since about a foot of snow had fallen a few days before, we had to dig down through the snow to try to find some of the typical plant species of this area.

This land was donated in 2019 by the McKeown family to honour their grandmother who had graduated from Queen's University in 1916. It is currently under the stewardship of Cataraqui Conservation.

The area is unique among wetlands around Kingston. Adjacent to low lying limestone plateau with alvar characteristics is a depression containing several different types of wetland. At the core of marshy and swampy stretches lies the bog where standing water forms Lost Lake. This is enclosed by areas of fen from which only a small amount of water drains which makes it very wet and nutrient poor. This type of acid wetland is very unusual where limestone forms the underlying bedrock and, due to the acidity, has a typical vegetation of acid loving plants as well as insects and small animals.

Much of the area would be inaccessible during warmer months but we were able to walk on the frozen but slushy lake and explore the perimeter. Fens develop over thousands of years and once destroyed are unlikely to reform. We are fortunate to have this special gem in our area.

We walked along a network of trails which were fairly narrow until we came to the frozen lake and then worked our way back. The first part was a plantation of White Pines but this transitioned into more mixed vegetation. Some of the trees observed were Bitternut Hickory, Shagbark Hickory, Red Oak, White Oak, Red Maple, Black Maple, Black Spruce, Balsam Fir and Tamarack. We observed that some specimens of some species had a tendency to retain their leaves during the winter – a phenomenon called marcescence (thank-you Gary Greer). This occurs in trees which are sexually immature and that have not yet formed flowers. It occurs when the abscission layer which normally develops in the fall fails to form completely, so that the leaves continue to receive nutrients. We couldn't positively identify a few trees from their bark and need to go back when they have foliage.



Figure 36: Interesting specimen? (Gary Greer)

We also saw a lot of Eastern Red Cedar which is a type of juniper. This species has separate male and female plants and many were bearing berry-like fruits. Many plants also had Cedar-Apple Rust galls. We found some patches of Shining Sumac which appeared to have been eaten by something. We also found several acid loving plants including goldthread which has bright yellow roots and strawberry-like leaves, Labrador Tea (with its hairy under-leaf surface), Leatherleaf and Bog Rosemary. We looked for pitcher plants around the lake but the snow was fairly deep and we didn't find any though they were seen on a subsequent visit. Other plants included Marsh Fern, Sensitive Fern, bittersweet vine (with fruits), Red Osier Dogwood and Elecampane.

We also saw some invasive species such as European

Common Reed and Purple Loosestrife.

The birds that were recorded by Kathy Webb and Janis Grant were: 3 Mallards, 1 Mourning Dove, 1 gull sp., 1 Red-tailed Hawk (*borealis*), 1 Downy Woodpecker (Eastern), 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, 2 Blue Jays, 13 Black-capped Chickadees, 1 White-breasted Nuthatch, 23 European Starlings, 1 Hermit Thrush, 58 American Robins (especially high numbers and appeared to be feeding on unidentified berries), 2 Dark-eyed Juncos, 1 White-throated Sparrow.

It was a most enjoyable day in an area we hadn't visited before. Thanks Anne, for once again leading us.



Figure 37: White-throated Sparrow. (Kathy Webb)

6.7 Teen Naturalists Duck Box Research (February 12, 2022)

by Everett Bark

On February 12, James, Ryan, Hazel, Everett, and our leaders Anne and Lesley went to the The Meyer Woods property of the Land Conservancy for KFLA to clean the wood duck boxes, observe what kind of animals the box had been used by, and fill them with clean shavings. We met at the duck reserve at around 9:30 am and planned on leaving by 1:15 pm. When we arrived, we packed the needed gear to clean the boxes and record the info into our bags. Once we were done with that we started to walk to the first box. It surprisingly only took us about ten minutes to get there even though the ground was covered with snow and ice. Once we arrived we set down our gear and lowered the wood duck box with a rope. In the box, we found broken eggshells from a Hooded Merganser and a nest from a Common Grackle. This meant that the box nesting outcome was successful. The box was in good condition. The predator guard was present, and the height of the bottom of the box was between six and ten feet. After we recorded what we saw, we put in new shavings, put the box back up, and headed to the second box. We also observed an otter above the ice, for a few seconds, before it went back into the water.

When we went to the second box we had to be a bit more careful where we walked. This was because where we were going, the ice was a bit thinner because of the current. When we got to the second box, we did the same thing as the first and lowered it. Inside the box, we found that it had been used by both a Hooded Merganser and a Wood Duck. There were also acorns in it that had most likely been brought in by a squirrel. We found an un-

hatched wood duck egg inside. We were able to break it open and inside there was a dead mature wood duck duckling. We don't know exactly why it didn't hatch but it might have been because the wood duck had laid its egg too late in the season or that the squirrel had chased out the mother before the egg hatched. The bottom of the box was between three and six feet high. The predator guard was still present. The condition of the box was good.

The third and final box was on the other side of the pond behind a beaver dam. When we were walking over to the dam we were able to see where the otter had gone under the ice. Even though we didn't get to see it again, it was still very interesting to see the spot where he escaped to safety. To get to the third box, we had to leave the ice to get around the dam. While we were walking around the dam we also found a live porcupine. It was sitting in a small crevice in a rock wall. It appeared that it had been there for a while since there was a lot of droppings from the porcupine in the crevice. Near where the porcupine was sitting we found a lot of small chewed branches from eastern hemlock that the porcupine had been feeding on. Once we got back onto the ice we had to be careful where we went, again, due to the current underneath weakening the ice layer. When we got over to the third box we found that a Heron had made a nest in a tree beside the box. When we opened the box we found that it had been used by a Hooded Merganser. Its nesting outcome was successful. The height of the bottom of the box was between three and six feet above the ice and the predator

guard was still present. The condition of the box was good. Inside the box, we found some kind of fiber. It looked like hair but we didn't know how that would have gotten into the box. Once we were done cleaning out the box and recording information, we put the box back up and started to head back to the cars.

When we started to walk back to the cars we decided to take a quicker route and instead of going back around the dam and going back to the part of the path that we went off the first time, we instead decided to head further down the part of the pond we were on. This led us to a part of the path that was closer to our cars. As we were walking, we saw a part of the ice that had remained attached to the shore and cracked as the pond water level had gone down exposing a cross section showing the thickness of the ice.

We estimated that the ice was around eight inches thick. When we got back onto the trail we found a snow bug, that we think was a snow scorpionfly. When we got back to the cars we packed up our things, ate our lunch, and wrote down what we observed from that day before leaving at around 1:15 pm.

We all had a great time on this nature adventure because it was interesting to see some different wildlife in the area and it was fun to investigate which animals and birds use the boxes in the summer. It was unfortunate that we didn't get to see the fourth box, due to the two hour hike required to get to it, but the other three boxes we saw were very intriguing and made for an enjoyable excursion.

6.8 Ramble to Cataraqui Cemetery (February 15, 2022)

by Janis Grant



Figure 38: Anne and Nancy Spencer measure a European Larch. DBH (diameter at breast height) suggests tree is over 150 years old. (Gary Greer)

The day, which started at -15°C , was clear and cold. A hardy group of 16 KFN members met at the cemetery's administrative office where parking was provided. Everybody was warmly dressed and those who had them wore their ice grippers to ensure they wouldn't fall on the very icy paths.

As she has done since COVID-19 began, Anne introduced everybody and asked the 3 questions: Do you feel sick, have you tested positive for COVID-19 and have you been outside of the country in the past 3 weeks? With answers of "no" from everyone, we started off through the cemetery's extensive grounds (91 acres) to identify trees in winter and to look for birds and other animals that might

be about. Janis Grant kept an eBird list for the group and was delighted to receive observations from all participants.

Anne kept us moving at a steady pace which helped to keep everybody warm. The ground was mostly snow covered but crusted due to recent freezing and thawing. This made it difficult to see animal tracks although we were entertained by both grey and red squirrels as the day warmed up.

On our walk, Anne pointed out features on specific trees that help us identify them in winter. Of particular interest were the following seven species.

European Larch (*Larix laricina*) has deciduous needles that grow in bunches on the ends of short or dwarf shoots. Not surprisingly (with needles in bunches) these trees are in the pine family though a different genus. The ends of the branches often bear single needles. The short shoots may bear needles or a male cone or a female cone. The female cones of this species are about 5 cm long compared with the native Tamarack which has cones about 2 cm long.

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*). Another alien tree with drooping branches. The needles, borne singly, are four-sided and will roll between your fingers. Each needle grows from a peg on the branch which remains when the needle falls leaving a knob on the twig as is easily seen on

spruce Christmas trees with their knobby branches. Native lore tells us these needles survive the cold weather by expunging water from their cells which increases the concentration of the contents. This lowers the freezing temperature. The water between the cells can freeze without killing the leaf. There were many cones to inspect and we noticed the difference in the shape and texture of the cone scales of this species compared to White Pine.



Figure 39: Kentucky Coffee Tree with seed pods. (Gary Greer)



Figure 40: One pod with seeds of Kentucky Coffee Tree. (Gary Greer)

Kentucky Coffee Tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) This tree is also planted here. It is native further south in Ontario. The outstanding feature of this tree is the enormous size of the doubly compound leaves (petioles may be up to 1 m long). Some petioles were found with scars of the branch attachments to which the five (or so) pairs of leaflets are attached for a total of about 70 leaflets per leaf. The fruit, a pod, was seen later on another tree. Trees with many large pods attached are particularly noticeable at this time of year. Some animal had been feeding on the fallen pods and left a large scat of mostly undigested seeds. (Photo of scat with undigested seeds by Shirley French). Shirley

reports: A tea was made from the leaves and pulp and used as a laxative. Early settlers used the seeds as a substitute for coffee. CAUTION! The seed and pods contain the alkaloid, cysteine, which may be neutralised in the roasting process. Shirley suggests perhaps the animal was desperate for a meal, needed a laxative or the sweet pulp was too tempting! At the same location White-tailed Deer tracks were observed and we concluded this was a possible forager.



Figure 41: Scat with undigested seeds. (Shirley French)

Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) This is a native species amongst so many aliens! Eastern Hemlock tree leaders bend over at the top making them recognisable from a distance. The single needles are small and flattened, paler on the backs and smaller towards the tip of the twig. It has small cones (1 cm to 2 cm).

Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*). The Black Walnut has compound leaves and some petioles (leaf stems) of this species were also found. We looked at the leaf scars on the twigs sometimes described as a monkey face – the eyes being formed by the vascular bundle scars (note the Butternut is related to the Black Walnut and has a similar leaf scar but with a pad of hairs above it, sometimes referred to as the moustache of the monkey face. We looked at the bark and then tried to spot other walnut trees nearby. Later a nut was found chewed open by squirrels so now we could see the convoluted inside.

English Yew (*Taxus baccata*) Yew trees were planted in cemeteries in Europe possibly to keep the cattle away as the needles are poisonous to cattle and horses (but not to Moose, elk and deer). The tradition of planting yew in cemeteries carries on. The needles of yew are very sharp

pointed. The fruit or aril has a red fleshy covering which is edible though the seeds are poisonous.



Figure 42: Fruit of Amur Corktree. (Gary Greer)

Amur Corktree (*Phellodendron amurense*). A native of China this tree was found in the Chinese section of the cemetery. The tree is dioecious meaning the male and female flowers are on different trees. Despite the fact that this tree was covered with fruit, we were unable to locate a male tree nearby. Perhaps our native birds have not adapted to feed on these fruits. The berry contains five hard, flattened seeds.

We spotted nine species of birds plus three unidentified gulls. The birds were the usual suspects found commonly in Kingston during the winter. They included more than 20 Black-capped Chickadees, two Northern Cardinals, two Blue Jays, three American Goldfinches, one Feral Pigeon, three White-breasted Nuthatches, one European Starling, two American Crows and three Common Ravens. There is beautiful habitat for birds in the cemetery with several mature groves of mixed tree species. We found a nest made of pine twigs which could have been built by a Red-tailed Hawk.

Our satellite tracker showed that we walked 3.2 km during a two hour, ten minute circuit of the main paths. By the time we returned to the parking lot, the temperature had climbed to -7°C . We were all warmed by the exercise, lovely day and what we had learned about these interesting, exotic trees.



Figure 43: Nest. Possibly Red-tailed Hawk. (Gary Greer)

6.9 Field Trip to Algonquin Park (February 18-20)

by Christine Hough

Winter weather can often be a little challenging and unpredictable when it comes to field trips, especially when travelling to Algonquin Park. Our group consisted of five individuals, two of whom are experienced birders. A heavy snowfall the night before delayed the departure and bad road conditions on Hwy 401, particularly the transport trailer “parked” in the right-hand lane, really jangled the nerves. However, weather and road conditions improved once we were travelling north and the group arrived at the east gate of Algonquin Park in the early afternoon. After checking into our accommodations, we headed out to Opeongo Road. Weather conditions

were fantastic, sunny and quite a bit milder (-9°C) than predicted. The birds definitely got the memo that we were arriving and did not disappoint. As soon as we stepped out of the cars we were greeted by Canada Jays who were quite happy to pose for close-up photos and dine on raisins. A Piliated Woodpecker announced its presence before flying over and of course the Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays and even a couple of Common Redpolls joined us. We set out on a walk and within no time we spotted White-winged Crossbills high up in the Spruce trees.

The next stop on our adventure was The Spruce Bog Boardwalk. No birds greeted us here and after almost completing the entire trail, all we had seen was one Black-capped Chickadee. Fortunately, at the end of the trail we spotted a group of individuals all peering up into a spruce tree and low and behold they were looking at a Spruce Grouse. This bird was intent on getting nestled in for the night and was not going to accommodate photographers. We finished off the walk spotting another Black-capped Chickadee and seeing two Common Ravens in the parking lot. All in all a fantastic day and for two of us, three new lifers.



Figure 44: Participants in the Algonquin Field Trip. Janis Grant, Rick Lott, Mary-Jean McIntyre, Christine Hough. Missing from the photo Anthony Kaduck. (Anthony Kaduck)

Why waste time sleeping when you can go out looking for birds in windy and -15°C weather? Before sunrise and without coffee, we were driving back to Opeongo Road. Contrary to the weather forecast, it was not cloudy and so in the early morning light we were able to see Evening Grosbeaks, White-winged Crossbills and Common Redpolls, along with the common Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, a Red-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpecker. We were a little startled when a Ruffed Grouse flew up from the ground and landed in a nearby tree. However, in return it posed nicely for some good photographs.

After breakfast, it was off to the Visitor Center and again the visitors did not disappoint. Here, along with birds we commonly see in the Kingston area in winter, were Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls and for the first time for some of us, Pine Grosbeaks. The cold and wind drove us inside several times to warm up, but despite this, standing on the platform overlooking all the

birds was worth it and provided a great opportunity to get a really good look at each bird, not to mention some great photographs.



Figure 45: White-winged Crossbill (male). (Christine Hough)



Figure 46: Pine Grosbeak (male). (Christine Hough)

From the Visitors Center we wanted to investigate the Logging Museum and Trails, as there had been an earlier report of a Black-backed Woodpecker sighting. However, despite walking over 2 km, all we saw were Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees and a single Canada Jay. So after lunch we decided to return to the Spruce Bog Boardwalk with the aim of finding the Spruce Grouse. Well, the grouse did not co-operate and never made itself visible but, to all our delight we spotted a female Black-backed Woodpecker. This bird was so busy flicking off bark from a Red Pine that it never paid any attention to us and we were able to get quite close to observe the bird and get a few good photographs. For the less experienced birders in the group, the day yielded two new lifers and we all

returned to our accommodations very content with our findings.

On the last day of the trip we returned to the Visitor Center for one last viewing before driving back to Kingston. While we did not see any additional new birds, it was a lovely way to end our adventure. From everyone's perspective we came to appreciate that birding in Algonquin Park comes with freezing fingers and toes, but the delight of finding birds not commonly seen in Frontenac County is well-worth it. In particular for two of us on this trip, getting five lifers in two days is something that will not be forgotten soon.



Figure 47: Black-backed Woodpecker (female). (Christine Hough)

6.10 Family Day on Wolfe Island (February 21, 2022)

by Erwin Batalla



Figure 48: Participants got a good look at a Snowy Owl through several scopes brought by organizers and others. (Peter Waycik)

A group of 30 eager KFN members gathered at the ferry terminal at 8:45 am. Four of the more than a dozen cars had children on board and the mood was upbeat as we boarded the 9:00 am ferry to Wolfe Island.

On the island, we moved quickly towards the north-south main thoroughfare, Hwy 95. We drove south to the intersection with Reeds Bay Road. The communicator crackled with excitement as a Snowy Owl was spotted on a telephone pole on Reeds Bay Road. We stayed far away, and everybody was able to look at this immature female, a

large bird with a lot of dark markings. She flew down to the ground for a short period but returned to her perch. We turned west onto Reeds Bay to have a closer look. We stopped about 100 meters from the owl. We were looking at it again when a car from the opposite direction caused her to fly away. The wide white wingspan was spectacular.



Figure 49: Rough-legged Hawk. (Peter Waycik)

After this early encounter, we went along to several of the usual spots but could only find a plethora of Rough-Legged and Red-tailed Hawks. We also noted an American Kestrel and a Northern Harrier. The group was entertained by the antics of a Muskrat in the ditch along 8th line.

We returned to Kingston on the noon ferry. A pair of Bald Eagles welcomed us back to the mainland. A beautiful day with a beautiful owl sighting.



Figure 50: Snowy Owl. (Peter Waycik)

7 Reader Contributions

7.1 Nature Poetry

by Rick Bortolotti

And A Love Song (for A.)

Do you remember this morning
after the fog lifted
and you showed me
sunlit dew be-jewelled webs
and the honeysuckle?

Untitled

she
asked
me once
to
write a poem
about
the moon
and
the
pines

Walking

Back when
I wanted more
not knowing here
is enough, quantity
a distraction
a 1/4 mile path walked a thousand times now 18" higher
snow under shoe
a new forest
at least by view



Kingston Field Naturalists

Objectives

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

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

Nature Reserves

The KFN owns properties that are designated as nature reserves.

Helen Quilliam Sanctuary at Otter Lake

A 217 hectare (536 acre) property of mixed forest located in the Canadian Shield in the Township of South Frontenac accessible to members through a trail system.

Martin Edwards Nature Reserve

A 100 hectare (247 acre) property of fields and marshland located on the southeast shore of Amherst Island.

Sylvester-Gallagher Nature Reserve

An 80 acre (32.4 hectare) parcel of forest and grassland, adjacent to the Martin Edwards Nature Reserve.

Conservation and Education

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

Be a Contributor!

This edition of the Blue Bill could have contained your article, photo, nature sketch, report, puzzle, quiz, conundrum, cartoon, or other contribution (if it did, many thanks)!

Submission Guidelines:

Submit the **text of your article** in Word, Open Document Format (.odt), or Plain Text.

If your article includes a **table**, send it as a separate document in Excel, Open Document Format (.ods), or CSV even if it is contained in your text document.

Send images as separate files (e.g. png, jpg, gif) even if they are included in your text document. Please "attach" them to the email.

Crop images to show the subject and ensure they are a **minimum of 1000 px** wide for a column width photo and 2000 px wide for a page width photo.

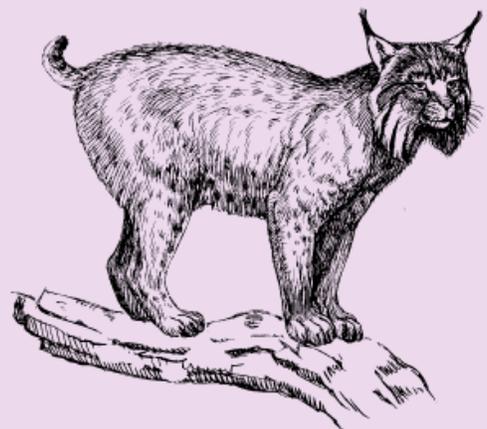
Include a **caption and credit or attribution** for each image.

Verify common and scientific names with an up-to-date curated resource such as iNaturalist.ca.

Send submissions to the editor:

editor@thebluebill.ca

by the first of the month of publication (i.e., March 1, June 1, September 1, or December 1).





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