**KINGSTON FIELD NATURALISTS**

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT – 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

KFN activities continued apace through 2023-24 and we had another successful year. The hard work and many volunteer hours of our Executive team and KFN members were instrumental in this success.

Financially, KFN remains in a robust position. You will hear the details from Larry McCurdy as he presents the Treasurer’s Report and seeks approval for our 2024-25 budget. We have had the benefit of many years of Larry’s careful financial management for KFN and he is a key member of our Executive team.

Our membership numbers are holding steady, somewhat reduced from the Covid high point, when most of our activities were virtual. We currently have just over 500 members, with another 30 or so juniors and teens, including leaders. For those of you planning to continue as KFN members – please consider volunteering to assist the Executive. We are always in need of new hands and enthusiasm amd you will be welcomed. And we remind you that membership renewals are due now.

Over the fall of 2023, and through to this meeting, we have continued to use zoom and run hybrid monthly General Meetings. Technical challenges arise from time to time, but we do our best without formal IT assistance. Our thanks to Ken Edwards and Christine Hough and Erwin Batalla for their efforts to master the technology and enable members to participate remotely.

Our Vice-President, Christine Hough, will report separately, so I will only say that we had a successful year of General Meetings focussed around an excellent group of speakers, organized by Christine. Her efforts as Ontario Nature liaison and on biodiversity protection initiatives have also been much appreciated.

As you know, KFN is undertaking some corporate reorganization to achieve compliance with the new *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*. We expect to bring this work to closure at one of our Fall 2024 General Meetings. Members will have the opportunity to discuss and vote on any proposed changes to our Constitution.

Our Conservation Committee has had a busy year too, keeping us up to date on a variety of issues ranging from the monitoring of the recent Avian flu outbreak, to concerns about inner harbour remediation and tannery lands development. The Committee assists with advocacy on various matters including local, provincial, and national concerns such as development issues, conservation area proposals, new legislative proposals and more recently, the efforts needed to meet Canada’s biodiversity targets.

In KFN’s Nature Reserves over the last year, we contracted with a new drover to keep cattle at the Martin Edwards Reserve, so we could maintain the grassland habitat for ground nesting birds.  Richard Brault is monitoring the 80% success rate of the Tree Swallow houses on that property and at the Sylvester-Gallagher Nature Reserve.  Kurt Hennige is also overseeing the building of a “quiet zone” for wildlife on the Sylvester-Gallagher Nature Reserve.  We have erected more Purple Martin houses on the island and Kurt reports that they have attracted additional birds.

On the mainland, Gaye Beckwith and his crew have been making weekly trips to the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary in the late Winter and early Spring. This group of about ten volunteers is working to maintain the existing trails and to create a new trail which will be opened to celebrate the 75th anniversary of KFN.

KFN continued its outreach to members and the community with several education programs, and a very successful Bioblitz at Milburn Creek in June 2023.

In addition, between April 2023 and March 2024, KFN regularly hosted rambles and field trips for our members. One of our best attended trips of the year was the outing to Derby Hill, New York. Gary Hillaby says:

“I think every birder needs to make a trek to Derby Hill during a Spring or Fall migration. It’s amazing to see the lead biologist and volunteers identify the birds of prey as they circled high above. The migrating loons were easier to spot because they flew straight as an arrow heading for Lake Ontario.”

Participants were rewarded at Derby Hill with sightings of a Tufted Titmouse and Eastern Bluebirds.  The other highlight of this past year was the field trip to Winchester, Ontario looking for migrating Snow Geese. As Gary noted huge numbers:

“a mega-flock of geese” was seen. The weather was perfect for observing and photography. This flock settled in a cornfield so close that “it felt we were part of their landing. You could see the Blue Morphs on their final approach. We were there to see wave upon wave of geese forming this flock of over 20,000 birds.”

We thank Gary Hillaby for his hard work managing field trips and outing for KFN in 2023-24.

KFN also continues to produce an excellent monthly Newsletter and to publish the quarterly Blue Bill Journal. Citizen science is a key contributor to the conservation and protection of nature, and Blue Bill submissions from members are always welcome.

The invaluable efforts and time of Peter Wacik Editor of the Blue Bill, and Janet Elliott who produces our Newsletter are essential to KFN’s internal communications efforts. You will have noticed the new look and structure to the KFN website – much of this is the result of many hours of Peter’s volunteer time and we owe him our sincere thanks for this work.

Looking forward: this year is the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the KFN. We urge you to take part in one of our 75th Anniversary challenges or just to get outside enjoy nature and celebrate KFN’s contribution to conservation in the Kingston area.

Our 2024 Bioblitz is in the final stages of organization and will take place at Bethel Road, Camden East June 14 and 15, 2024.

Finally. we are hard at work organizing the KFN’s annual May Dinner planned for May 16th, 2024, tickets are on sale now. We hope to see you there.

I close by thanking our Executive members for all their time and efforts over the last year.

**Respectfully submitted:**

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John Donihee

President KFN