



The Peninsula Naturalist

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Newsletter of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

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PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

When I attended my first Peninsula Field Naturalists meeting a little over two years ago for the presentation Common Owls of Southern Ontario, little did I know that I would find myself standing at the front of the room as club President to announce the commencement of the January 2013 meeting.

I was born and raised in the Niagara Region and have always had a keen interest in science and the natural environment that surrounds us. Ducks on the Niagara River, trilliums at Louth Conservation Area and family hikes in Firemen's Park never grow old. There is always something new to find. A sought-after bird species, a new trail and the unforgettable sighting of your first flying squirrel. This is what enjoying nature is all about and I believe the Peninsula Field Naturalists can continue to advocate, educate and participate in the conservation of natural resources and green spaces in the Niagara Region.

Our members have a vast knowledge of the local flora and fauna and from the field trips I've participated in, I can see they are more than willing to share their wisdom. The web site has had some interesting links added to it. Our facebook page is active with interesting posts and comments from members as well as some of our guest speakers. If you're on facebook, check out our club page. Social media will act as an added stimulus to the younger crowd but as I observed while assisting on a recent owl prowl, good old nature viewing is effective in attracting their attention. The trick is to keep them occupied and coming back. There are many

distractions in the 21st Century but with a bit of work, I'm confident our members and current board can draw in new members.

I'm looking forward to leading the club for the next two years.

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NEW PFN BOARD

At the PFN's November 2012 AGM, the following were elected:

President – Bob Highcock

Past President – John Potter

Vice-President – (vacant)

Secretary – Wendy Bradley

Treasurer – Donna Murphy

Membership - John Potter

Director-at-Large –

John Black

Roman Olszewski

Jean Hampson

Carol Horvat

Bryan Joule

We acknowledge, with thanks, the long service terms of Don Minchin (Treasurer) and Brian Calvert (Membership & Outings). Another Director & a Vice-President would be welcome.

TREASURING NATIVE PLANTS OF NIAGARA

The PFN meeting in November 2012 will be memorable for at least three reasons: First, it included an excellent presentation by Kasia Zgurzynski on native plant species; Second, it was our Election night; and Third, it was Dessert Night (always a favorite).

Kasia Zgurzynski graduated as a horticulturist from the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, has worked at Niagara College and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, and is an advisory member of the Board of Malcolmson Eco-Park. Her talk to us centred on the point that ecosystems in our modern world are under destruction or threat of destruction, which needs to be confronted.

The health of an ecosystem can often be assessed by counting the organisms in streams and lakes, and understood by studying floral and faunal inter-relationships. A preliminary principle is that 'keystone species' are necessary to maintain a balanced ecosystem. Rachel Carson has postulated that a long colonization period precedes a balance in an ecosystem, and the location of species gives clues about their key survival factors. The disappearance of habitat, caused by human activities, is the main reason for stress on the survival of native species. Alien plants in a new location may lack competition and may spread rapidly, compared to native plants. As an example of a 'keystone species', Kasia commented that Oak trees support much insect life, which many birds rely on, for protein.

Ecosystems may be naturally occurring or may be constructed for specific purposes. When citing some examples of ecosystems and their 'keystone' or typical species, Kasia mentioned:

(A) Plants of Wet Places: Marsh-marigold, Turtlehead, Rattlesnake-master, Joe-Pye-weed, Marshmallow Hibiscus.

(B) Woodland Species: Black Cherry, Hackberry (rare but seen by some members along Welland Canal, etc.), Jewelweed, Tuliptree, White Oak (butterflies & moths), Eastern Red Cedar.

(C) Prairies: Blue Vervain, Big Bluestem (used

by First Nations people), Compass-plant, Dense Blazing-star (seen at Malcolmson Eco-park), Foxglove Beardtongue (seed as food for small mammals).

Kasia also suggested that (D) Biodiversity Corridors can be created, using suitable 'keystone' species to allow for plants and their insects/birds to pass more easily from one area to another. This is the equivalent of planting tree corridors between woodlots for animal traffic (such as deer or wild turkeys).

In summarizing her talk, Kasia pointed out that home-owners can plant some suitable 'keystone' native varieties in their gardens to attract insects & birds, and that these plant species can be sourced by using the Internet to locate websites, such as: www.ecologyart.com, where seeds of native species can be obtained.

NECROLOGY

The Peninsula Field Naturalists Club lost three well-known members in the year 2012. We will be poorer for the passing of these three folks, but will remember their various talents in the Club, and be grateful that we enjoyed their friendship for a while.

Dora Young passed away on May 23, 2012. Her cheerful chuckle and her bantering with Rick was a fixture of every outing or inventorying foray. Her door was always open to friends, and the kitchen probably held fresh-baked cookies.

Margarete Kormendy left us on October 29. She had an eye for detail and was always encouraging us to look for the distinguishing characteristics of flowers and plants. With the plant study group, we learned to sketch as well as to observe.

Robert Layton departed on November 27, after a full life as a soldier, a teacher, a librarian, and a family man. Bob was a true environmentalist, and a gentleman of many talents. He was always up for a good conversation.

ST. CATHARINES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 16, 2012

The Peninsula Field Naturalists held their Christmas Bird Count on December 16, 2012. It was a cloudy drizzly morning and partly cloudy in the afternoon. Temperatures ranged between 5°C and 11°C.

We tallied 85 species, the highest number of species since 1995. This was above average for the count (75.9 average over the last 30 years). We tallied 18,424 individuals, which is below the average of 23,949. A very mild fall resulted in some lingering birds with many of the feeders empty due to the availability of wild food and lack of snow.

Many thanks are due to all the participants. The results show that everyone on the count contributes to the success of this count. Also a big thank-you to Mary and John Potter for organizing this year's count and round-up party. A great big THANK YOU to everyone who helped set up, clean up and brought very yummy food to the round-up. It was very much appreciated.

The big surprise of the count was an American Pipit (1). This is a first record for this count. We also recorded a second record for the count, Thayer's Gull (1) and a third record for the count, Northern Shoveler (7).

This year we had record high counts of Ring-necked Ducks (44), Double-crested Cormorants (133), Bald Eagle, tied (3), Tufted Titmouse (31), Carolina Wren (34), Winter Wren (8) and Common Redpoll (222).

Second highest counts were recorded for Canada Goose (3176), Wild Turkeys (91), Great Blue Herons, tied (10), Red-bellied Woodpecker (60), and Red-breasted Nuthatch (30). A third highest count was recorded for Hooded Merganser (110).

The lowest count records were tallied for Common Merganser (20) and American Crows (77).

This year we had 51 participants (listed below).

Participants: Brian Ahara, Rhonda Armstrong, Manley Baarda, John Black, Peter BonEnfant, Peter Booker, Paul Chapman, Sue Chapman, Barb Charleton, Paula Clark, Trevor Cornfield, Carl Damude, Janet Damude, Don Dimond, Elaine Dimond, Rob Dobos, Philip Downey, Chris Escott, Denys Gardiner, Lynda Goodridge, Jean Hampson, Bob Highcock, Jack Homer, Linda Homer, Carol Horvat, Marcie Jacklin, Nabil Khairallah, Nabila Khairallah, Rob Kuret, Irene Kiers, Natalie Kiers, Kara Kristjanson, Dean Laar, Win Laar, Cody Law, Don Mills, Gisele Mills, Roman Olszewski, Kayo Roy, Joyce Sankey, Karin Schneider, Tim Seburn, Hayley Shephard, Dave Smith, Nancy Smith, Pat Smith, Roy Sorgenfrei, Chris Street, John Stevens, Tom Thomas, Rick Young.

THE BIRDS

Total individuals	18,424	Total species	85
Snow Goose		1	
Canada Goose		3176	
Mute Swan		21	
Gadwall		2	
American Black Duck		31	
Mallard		590	
Mallard x American Black Duck		1	
Northern Shoveler		7	
Northern Pintail		7	
Ring-necked Duck		44	
Greater Scaup		13	
Lesser Scaup		1	
White-winged Scoter		54	
Long-tailed Duck		350	
Bufflehead		72	
Common Goldeneye		103	
Hooded Merganser		110	
Common Merganser		20	
Red-breasted Merganser		196	
Unspecified waterfowl		18	
Ring-necked Pheasant		4	

Wild Turkey	91	American Pipit	1
Red-throated Loon	11	Cedar Waxwing	47
Common Loon	4	Snow Bunting	183
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	4
Horned Grebe	1	American Tree Sparrow	293
Double-crested Cormorant	133	Field Sparrow	1
Great Blue Heron	10	Song Sparrow	11
Bald Eagle	3	Swamp Sparrow	2
Northern Harrier	4	White-throated Sparrow	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Cooper's Hawk	8	Dark-eyed Junco	674
Red-tailed Hawk	119	Northern Cardinal	228
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	31
American Coot	8	House Finch	218
Bonaparte's Gull	38	Common Redpoll	222
Ring-billed Gull	1038	Pine Siskin	34
Herring Gull	473	American Goldfinch	435
Thayer's Gull	1	House Sparrow	1598
Glaucous Gull	1	Unspecified birds	20
Great Black-backed Gull	86		
Unspecified Gulls	11		
Rock Pigeon	786		
Mourning Dove	976		
Eastern Screech-Owl	10		
Great Horned Owl	2		
Snowy Owl	1		
Belted Kingfisher	7		
Red-bellied Woodpecker	60		
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1		
Downy Woodpecker	112		
Hairy Woodpecker	12		
Northern Flicker	28		
American Kestrel	41		
Northern Shrike	1		
Blue Jay	229		
American Crow	77		
Horned Lark	2		
Black-capped Chickadee	442		
Tufted Titmouse	31		
Red-breasted Nuthatch	30		
White-breasted Nuthatch	43		
Brown Creeper	9		
Winter Wren	8		
Carolina Wren	34		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	23		
Eastern Bluebird	64		
American Robin	124		
Northern Mockingbird	58		
European Starling	4332		

A cheer for Marcie for organizing the CBC once again, and providing the data for this report!

DOUBLE DELIVERY FOR JANUARY

At PFN's January meeting, those who braved the rainy-icy weather heard two presentations.

Our first speaker, Barry Porter, Exec. Director of the Niagara Restoration Council, discussed the NRC's recent efforts in replanting in Short Hills PP, and their upcoming project involving naturalizing Fort Erie's municipal drains, for which the PFN wrote support letters for grants.

The second offering, by John and Mary Potter, was a slide-show and talk about their 2-month motor/camping trip to Yukon and Alaska, along with Ken and Betty Oka. The route included the Alaska Highway; Dawson City; side-trip up the Dempster Hwy and 3 days in Denali Nat. Park. Critters seen included moose, bison, Dahl sheep, Stone sheep, elk, caribou, black bear, grizzly bear, sea lions, hump-back whales and, of course, Bald Eagles. A wealth of plant species, some of which grow in Ontario, were shown in the photos. One highlight, on Manitoulin Island, was a flock of nearly 200 Sandhill Cranes. One downer was a 7-inch night rain in Wisconsin.

Duck Count 2013 Niagara

Location SPECIES	50- Vict	Vict PWW	PWE- NOTL	Total	NOTL- Falls
Common Loon					
Pied-billed Grebe					
Horned Grebe					
Red-necked Grebe					
Double-crested Cormorant		45		45	
Tundra Swan				0	
Trumpeter Swan				0	
Mute Swan		4	1	5	
Snow Goose				0	
Canada Goose	1003	32		1035	40
Wood Duck		1		1	
Green-winged Teal		1		1	
American Black Duck	1	6		7	1
Mallard	102	232	40	374	30
Northern Pintail				0	
Northern Shoveler				0	
Gadwall		2	4	6	
American Widgeon		2	2	4	22
Canvasback				0	2
Redhead	12	7		19	
Ring-necked Duck				0	
Tufted Duck				0	
Greater Scaup	1857	29	100	1986	50
Lesser Scaup				0	
Scaup(sp)	2			2	
Harlequin Duck		1		1	
Long-tailed Duck	13008	63	400	13471	567
Black Scoter			1	1	
White-winged Scoter	2666	5	31	2702	53
Surf Scoter	14		2	16	
Common Goldeneye	1516	105	292	1913	60
Bufflehead	228	95	346	669	20
Hooded Merganser				0	6
Common Merganser		3285	160	3445	
Red-breasted Merganser	1176	633	640	2449	52
Ruddy Duck				0	
American Coot		11		11	
Red-throated Loon				0	
King Eider				0	
Unknown				0	

The participants in
the 2013 Duck
Count were:

John Black, Peter BonEnfant, Drew Campbell,
Paula Clark, Philip Downey, Blayne Farnan, Jean
Farnan, Lynda Goodridge, Jean Hampson, Bob
Highcock, Carol Horvat, Marcie Jacklin, Carol
O'Shea, and John Stevens. Congratulations to
this hardy crew!!

PFN SPRING OUTINGS

This list includes planned outings up until the printing of this newsletter (not all PFN specific) – others may be added later. Walks may be cancelled due to bad weather, so phone the contact if in doubt. Bring insect repellent in warmer weather; tuck pantlegs into socks to foil ticks. Carpool if/when possible.

10th ANNUAL MAPLE SYRUP FEST Saturday, March 9, 2013, 10:30 a.m.

Meet at the Short Hill P.P. Roland Road parking lot for a winter walk, followed by a pancake lunch at White Meadows Farms. John Potter 905-892-2566.

ANNUAL PENINSULA HAWKWATCH

Friday, Mar. 29, 2013. All day from 9:00 a.m. Beamer Conservation Area south of Grimsby on Ridge Road. A fine opportunity to see many species of raptors, learn their identification, and meet birders from all over. Especially good for beginners.

Bob Highcock & Jean Hampson 905-688-1260.

GEOLOGY+ EARLY WILDFLOWERS AT LOUTH CONSERVATION AREA.

Sunday, April 14, 2013. 1:00 p.m. unless informed otherwise. Parking off Staff Road west of Rockway. Bring cameras, bins, curiosity and good footwear.

Brian Calvert 905-892-6267.

NIAGARA GLEN – with NORFOLK FIELD NATURALISTS.

Saturday, April 27, 2013. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at the Picnic Pavilion at Wintergreen Flats on the Niagara Parkway. Alan Ladd from Norfolk Field Naturalists will lead the walk. Bring a lunch and wear good footwear – paths rocky!
Brian Calvert 905-892-6267.

WILDFLOWERS AND GEOLOGY AT WOODEND CONSERVATION AREA.

Sunday, May 5, 2013. 1:00 p.m. Meet at the Front Gate of the parking area (it may be locked). Possibility of some nice photo opportunities on this excursion.
Brian Calvert 905-892-6267.

MALCOLMSON ECO-PARK BIRDING WITH BARB.

Tuesday, May 14, 2013. 8:30 a.m. - to noon. Barbara West will lead this tour – usually a good site for warblers and other migrants – don't forget your binoculars.
Barbara West 905-935-5339.

BIRDING SHORT HILLS PROVINCIAL PARK.

Saturday, May 18, 2013. 8.30 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Wiley Road entrance to Short Hills P.P. Barb West will lead this birding excursion which should be easy travelling, barring rain. Warblers, Towhees, Hummingbirds possible.
Barbara West 905-935-5339

PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS ANNUAL PICNIC/BBQ

Saturday, June 8, 2013, 10:00 a.m. (Rain date June 9).

We may see Bluebirds, Purple Martins, and more at the Minchin estate.

Hosts: Don and Sue Minchin 905-562-1953. Directions: from St. Catharines, drive west on Reg. Road 81 to 11th Street Louth, turn left (south), then right onto Robbins Avenue, continue to #2288 Robbins Ave. at the end of the road.

Views of the 2012 CBC Round-Up - R. Young



CLUB END-OF-SEASON MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 6:00 PM

POTLUCK DINNER AND EX-TREASURES SILENT AUCTION

**Members with surnames A-L please bring first course;
surnames M-Z bring salads or desserts;
Everyone bring cutlery, cups, plates
Also, please bring ex-treasures for the Auction.**

Set-up helpers please arrive at 5:30 pm



The Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

A non-profit organization started in 1954 with the objectives to preserve wildlife and protect its habitat, to promote public interest in and a knowledge of the natural history of the area, and to promote, encourage and cooperate with organizations and individuals having similar interests and objectives. Affiliated with Ontario Nature and Nature Canada .

P.O. Box 23031, RPO Carlton, St. Catharines, ON. L2R 7P6

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The Editor welcomes written articles or artwork on any natural history topic. Please submit typed reports on paper or by email to: **jmpotter@talkwireless.ca**. Colour photos (jpg) accompanying articles are welcome. All pieces of artwork will be accepted. New ideas and constructive criticism are welcome.

Editor: John Potter

Assistants: Mary Potter, Kay Smith

- please send submissions by email to the above address
or mail to the Club's postal address

Deadlines for submissions 2013:

February 4; April 7; October 6