



The Peninsula Naturalist

Newsletter of The Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club

Volume 256
FALL 2023

New Members

- Colleen & Bill Fleming
- Bruce Jones
- Susan Ling
- Linda Milon-Thomas
- Bertha Power
- Myrna Robert
- Melissa Smith
- Please tell your family and friends about PFN. We love new members and new friends!

Upcoming Meetings

- In person meetings are back!
- January 22, 2024 - Jean Hampson & Bob Highcock - The Importance of Sea Ice to the Polar Bears of Churchill, MB.
- February 26, 2024 - George Scott - Niagara Beeway.
- March 25, 2024 - John Black - Antarctica

Upcoming Outings

- Watch for more announcements soon on our website, on Facebook and in your E-mail.

A Message From the President

At the time of writing this message, the Peninsula Field Naturalists have held two club meetings. In-person meetings! It was overdue and I'm pleased the Executive did a great job in finding a new location that meets our requirements. Space for the meeting, a monitor for the presentation, a cantina to prepare the refreshments and a lounge to enjoy them. A person could get used to this.

On a sad note, two people in my life passed away in September. My father-in-law Frank Hampson and former President of the Peninsula Field Naturalists, John Potter.

I will miss telling Frank of the adventures

Jean and I have been on. He loved nature and always asked Jean and me what we found, whether it was on a local hike or a birding vacation further afield.



© Jean Hampson

I consider John Potter a mentor because of his vast knowledge and leadership. He played a part in my decision to stand for President when John was looking to move on to the Past President's position.

Both of these fine gentlemen will be sadly missed and walking to Swayze Falls in Short Hills Provincial Park will bring a smile to my face and peace of mind. I know that both Frank and John would not

have it any other way.

Bob Highcock, President

In Memory of Dr. John Potter 1940 - 2023

On September 22, 2023, PFN member John Potter passed away at the age of 83. John was a research scientist at Agriculture Canada for 35 years in the Department of Nematology. He was widely regarded as an expert in the field and authored numerous peer-reviewed journal articles.



John and Mary at the 2019 PFN picnic. © Bob Highcock

John was a long-time member of the Peninsula Field Naturalists and as a member of the Executive, he served as Director, President and Past President from 2000-2018. For twelve years, approximately thirty-six issues, John was Editor of The Peninsula Naturalist and with the assistance of Mary, he would put the articles together, arrange for printing and take care of distribution by postal mail and e-mail.

memorable presentations to the club including his talk about Owls of Southern Ontario and his trip with Mary to the Yukon. John led the Maple Syrup Walk in Short Hills Provincial Park annually. During the hike, John would point out several species of trees along the trail. The hike was followed by a delicious pancake breakfast and was a favourite outing for many PFN members.

For the annual St. Catharines Christmas Bird Count, Mary and John would arrange for the rental of the North Pelham Youth Hall to hold the Round-Up potluck after the counting was done. Setting up chairs and tables, preparing the kitchen and having warm coffee and cider at the ready were a few of the things they did every year. John and Mary's contributions to the PFN, too many to count, were truly appreciated and in 2021, they were awarded a Peninsula Field Naturalists Life Membership.



At the NPCA Volunteer Awards September 2022. © Della Eckert-Trojan

In addition to arranging for speakers during his tenure as President, John also gave



In Memoriam *continued*

John also served as president of the Niagara Woodlot Association. He was on the Board of the Ontario Woodlot Association and the Owl Foundation. He volunteered with Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park, Niagara Restoration Council and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. He also did an inventory of trees for Niagara Parks. In May of this year, John and Mary were honoured with a tree dedication ceremony for their contribution and commitment to the well-



being of Malcolmson Eco-Park.

John will be greatly missed by the Executive and club members. A memorial donation to the Owl Foundation has been made to honour John's contribution to our club.

May 2023 Tree dedication in their honour. © Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park

A History of Birds and Birdwatchers in Niagara *by Jean Hampson*

Due to a cancellation, it thrilled us to have Marcie Jacklin speak about "The History of Birds and Birdwatchers in Niagara" at our April meeting. Fresh from viewing her 400th Ontario bird (the White Wagtail), she presented an informative chronology of bird-watching records for Niagara.

Indigenous people, explorers and early settlers all recorded seeing enormous flocks of Passenger Pigeons migrating across the area in astounding numbers. Once the dominant species of bird in our skies, with numbers in the billions, Passenger Pigeons were an important food source for early Niagara residents. In 1679, Roman Catholic Priest Father Louis Hennepin recorded sightings of Passenger Pigeons as well as Wild Turkey. Some flocks of these pigeons were noted to be a mile wide, and 300 miles long and would take up to fourteen hours for the entire flock to pass overhead. An 1804 painting of Old Fort Erie shows such a migration scene, including showing hunters shooting at the flock. Incredibly, in Niagara, the last recorded pair to be shot occurred September 5, 1890, and the final young male was shot in Fort Erie in 1891, contributing to the extinction of a species that once was considered eternal.

Well-known Ornithologists travelled to Niagara in search of discovering new species. Alexander Wilson (1766 - 1813) hiked from Grays Ferry, Pennsylvania, to Niagara Falls in 59 days and covered 1200 miles. He described the White-Headed Eagles (Bald Eagles) soaring in the



Bird books and binoculars. Tools of the trade. © Jean Hampson

mists of the falls. John James Audubon noted Great-Footed Hawks (Peregrine Falcons) in Niagara.

As populations were more established on the American side of the Niagara River, nature groups formed there earlier. Mayor of Buffalo, George Clinton (1861) was the first president of the Buffalo Society of Nature and Science. Birding became a more accessible pastime with the development of bird guides and optics in 1918. A group of bird enthusiasts established the Buffalo Ornithological Society in 1929. In 1933 and 1935, Roger Tory Petersen of Bird Guide book fame visited Niagara Falls. The Peninsula Field Naturalists was established in 1954. Many of our club members are not only avid bird watchers but also advocate for nature as a whole, and are also members of the Niagara Falls Nature Club (1966) and The Bert Miller Nature Club (1995). Beardslee and Mitchell wrote 'Birds of the Niagara Frontier' in 1965. John Black and Kayo Roy later published 'Niagara Birds' which covers bird species in Niagara from 1965 to 2010. New technologies have advanced our bird-watching abilities with apps such as eBird, Merlin and iNaturalist. Alerting other birders to an interesting species you have discovered is as simple as pressing a button on your smartphone.

Marcie has contributed much to the history of birding in Niagara and we are indebted to her for her commitment to nature and promoting birding in Niagara.

Great Canadian Birdathon 2023

For the 2023 Birdathon, the Fitzgerald Flickers (Jean and Bob) started their 24-hour tally at 9:42 am on Saturday, May 27 while leading the PFN outing on the Rim Of Africa - Bruce Trail Friendship Trail in Short Hills Provincial Park. During the hike we recorded Canada Goose, Black-billed Cuckoo, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed



Tree Swallow.

by Jean Hampson & Bob Highcock

Cowbird, Common Grackle, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Northern Cardinal and Indigo Bunting. A total of 35 species.

Our next tick was a Red-tailed Hawk soaring over Mountain Locks Park while we were driving through Merritton.

After our lunch break, we drove to Grassie in West Lincoln to try for some grassland birds. From South Grimsby Road 15 we observed Rock Pigeon, Killdeer, European Starling, Northern Mockingbird, Savannah Sparrow and Bobolink. Unfortunately, no Upland Sandpiper appearance.

Our next stop was the Grimsby Wetlands. Here we added Mallard, Ring-billed Gull, Warbling Vireo, Purple Martin,

Great Canadian Birdathon 2023

House Wren, Marsh Wren, House Sparrow and House Finch to the day's list.

Moving further east along the Lake Ontario shoreline, we stopped at Forty Mile Creek. Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Swainson's Thrush and Baltimore Oriole were observed at the creek mouth and along the Forty Mile Creek Side Trail.



Caspian Terns. © Jean Hampson

After a dinner break, we went to Wainfleet. En route, we observed Mute Swans on Lake Gibson. At Derek's Point in Port Colborne, we viewed Great Egret and Osprey. We then met up with Carol and Doug at Morgan's Point Conservation Area to do some birding along the Lake Erie shoreline. We spent just over thirty minutes here and added Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Our main reason for travelling to Wainfleet was for a notable species that is known to occur in the Wainfleet Bog. Driving north on Willson Road from Highway 3, we saw American Woodcocks. Additional birds heard included Horned Lark, Veery, Wood Thrush and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The four of us did not leave disappointed. In total, we heard three Eastern Whip-poor-wills singing from the Wainfleet Bog Conservation Area. At the end of our first 12 hours, we had a total of 71 species.

continued

The next morning we started at the Port Dalhousie East pier and found Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Fish Crow, and Cliff Swallow.



Ruddy Turnstone. © Jean Hampson

We then walked through two municipal parks on the Lake Ontario shoreline in St. Catharines. At Cherie Road Park, we saw Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler. A little further east is Malcolmson Eco-Park. At this eBird hot spot, we added American Redstart and Black-throated Green Warbler to our Birdathon list.

With only 45 minutes left of our Great Canadian Birdathon, we birded at Port Weller East. At Jones Beach, a Great Blue Heron was hunting along the shoreline. We then walked as far as we could on the Port Weller East Pier before the alarm sounded. Birds observed for the count included Northern Parula and Chestnut-sided Warbler.

After 24 hours of birding over May 27 and 28, we observed a total of 86 species, two more species than our 2022 birdathon! We would like to thank everyone for their generous donations to raise funds for bird conservation.

Swayze Falls Hike

by Barb West

Earlier in the morning of March 18, 2023, there had been several snow showers, but by 10:00 a.m., they had stopped. Ten intrepid people turned up to participate in the walk.



Northern Cardinal. © Jean Hampson

Swayze Falls, we walked along the creek to the new pedestrian bridge, where Bob took a picture of the group.

We went back to our cars and some of us decided to go for a pancake lunch. Considering the weather earlier, it turned out to be a good morning.



The group of participants. © Bob Highcock



Swayze Falls. © Bob Highcock

The pathway down to Swayze Falls was either snow-covered, icy, or muddy, so we had to concentrate on where we were stepping. Along the way, we stopped to examine lichen, moss, ferns and opossum tracks. Unfortunately, we did not see many birds. We saw only a couple of Turkey Vultures flying overhead and Jean got a beautiful photo of a male Northern Cardinal. After viewing

Niagara College Annual Bioblitz

by Jean Hampson & Bob Highcock

Back in January of this year, the Peninsula Field Naturalists were invited to take part in the Niagara College Annual Bioblitz on April 15. We were pleased that Katie Bristow, Sustainability Program and Outreach Coordinator at Niagara College contacted our club. We saved the date and looked forward to leading a walk at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.



PFN led Bird ID Hike.

© Bob Highcock

The day of events started early that morning. At 6:00 a.m., Katie led an Early Bird ID Hike. This was followed by a Bird ID Hike at 7:00 a.m. with Marcie Jacklin

representing the Bert Miller Nature Club and Community Voices of Fort Erie. At 9:00 a.m., Owen Bjorgan from Hiking with Owen led a Family Friendly Hike. From 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., Kerry Royer from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority was on site at the ponds for a demonstration on Macroinvertebrates.

Our Bird ID Hike started at 9:30 a.m. Participants met us inside the Niagara College Greenhouse and we headed over to the ponds that are nestled between the

Niagara College Annual Bioblitz *continued*

college's campus and the Niagara Escarpment. With the assistance of Carol and Doug, we led participants around the perimeter of the ponds for almost two hours. We observed twenty-five species, including a Brown Thrasher which was added to the day's species list. Other notable birds seen included the Trumpeter Swan, American Coot, Marsh Wren, Chipping Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow and Brown-headed Cowbird. We submitted several observations to iNaturalist for the 2023 Niagara College Bioblitz project.



American Coot. © Jean Hampson

Dockstader who shared their Indigenous knowledge and teachings.

Later in the day, Margaret Pickles took us on an Insect ID Hike. Not only did we see a variety of insects, but we also saw an Eastern Red-backed Salamander!



American Toad. © Jean Hampson

Throughout the day, Trout Unlimited's Brian Green, Gary Kosinsky and Paul Furminger demonstrated fly-making and fly-casting. Home Depot St. Catharines led a community clean-up in the early afternoon.

It was a great day for a bioblitz and we would be very happy to participate in this event next year.

We were treated to a tasty lunch prepared by staff and students. In the afternoon, we sat for a campfire session with Aria D'alimonte from Indigenous Education and Karl

Niagara Children's Water Festival

by Mary-Lou Davidson



© Mary-Lou Davidson

The Niagara Children's Water Festival ran from April 26 to April 28, 2023, at Brock University. Over 2,000 children were bused in for the 3-day event to learn about the importance of water conservation and protecting our waterways.

with different coloured hair ties showing what kind of duck they were.

We played a game similar to Musical Chairs, but used duck decoys instead. As the ducks disappeared, I pointed out that the ducks



© Mary-Lou Davidson

I represented the Peninsula Field Naturalists, a partner in this program. My topic was bird migration, and the children became Duck Detectives. I showed them a map of duck migration and talked about ducks requiring places to stop and refuel-just like them on a long family drive. They learned about how valuable and crucial the wetlands are and how scientists band ducks when they are moulting and unable to fly to gain knowledge. The children were "banded"



© Mary-Lou Davidson

represented the wetlands and no one wins when they cease to exist. The children were most impressed with the duck whistle I blew to start and stop the running and loved the game.

It was a very loud and noisy three days with boisterous, but happy children. I'm sure they all have a better understanding of protecting and respecting our wetlands. Our hope for the future is with the children.

Wildflower Walk at Louth C.A.

by Doug Gillard

On Saturday, April 29th, the PFN checked out the Louth Conservation Area for wildflowers. The Louth Conservation Area is a 36-hectare parcel of land purchased by NPCA in 1973 and we find it to be one of the best places for spring wildflowers. Originally, Bob and Jean were scheduled to lead this hike, but I offered to assist Jean due to Bob's recovery from his operation. The forecast called for rain all day, but it stopped long enough for our walk. Jean and I pointed out the spring wildflowers and tried to answer all the questions about them from the ten other enthusiastic people who joined us.



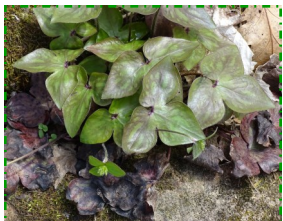
Bloodroot. © Doug Gillard

gumboots when I was a kid; everyone had their names for them. I liked Ken's name for rubber boots, "s*** kickers".

Off we went to find some spring wildflowers and educate a few of our participants unfamiliar with these spring forest beauties. Wildflowers that bloom in April and May are called spring ephemerals. As the sun shines through the leafless canopy, it hits the forest floor and warms the soil. Spring ephemerals take advantage of this excess light with rapid growth and showy flowers to become pollinated, usually by ants.

Carol and I checked out the Louth Conservation Area on Thursday before the rain started and found the bottom part of the trail very muddy. Before we started, I noticed everyone was prepared for the mud with their clean rubber boots and even a few new pairs. A conversation started about what people call their rubber boots. I referred to them as

We saw some Virginia Spring Beauties, which are one of the smallest and earliest spring flowers to bloom. Cutleaf Toothwort, Blue Cohosh, and White Trilliums were in full



Sharp-lobed Hepatica. © Doug Gillard

Wildflower Walk at Louth C.A. *continued*

bloom, along with a few Red Trilliums. Many Yellow Trout Lilies were covering the forest floor, with some in full bloom. Bloodroots are one of the earliest spring wildflowers to blossom and were past their prime. We found patches of Large-flowered Bellwort, but most weren't out in flower yet. The Dutchman's Breeches were flowering beautifully, and we explained to our interested group how they got their name.

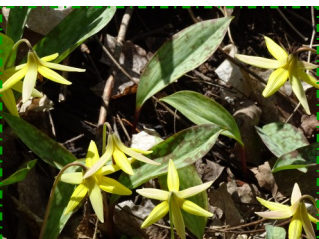


White Trilliums.

© Doug Gillard

question that people asked about this plant. "Why is it called Walking Fern?" The Walking Fern spreads by putting down roots from the tips of its small, slim leaves.

We also found several Jack-in-the-Pulpits. An interesting fact about Jack-in-the-Pulpit is that scientists believe that this plant will evolve to ingest insects which get trapped in the spathe. We found two types of violets, the Common Blue Violet, and Downy Yellow Violets, near the end of our outing. You can't miss the Mayapples in the forest, which are very common in this area, but it was too early to see the white flower. An interesting fact about the Mayapple is that only stems with more than one leaf will flower. The flowering stems will produce a solitary flower where the stems join.

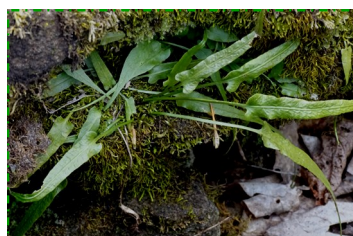


Yellow Trout Lilies.

© Doug Gillard

Everyone on the outing knew about ginger and leeks, so we showed them the wild version, Canada Wild Ginger, and Wild Leeks or Ramps. Several of the Wild Ginger were flowering and everyone got to see the small, dark red flowers hidden under their leaves.

I found a highlight of this area in the rocky section of the last part of our outing. That's where we found a few plants of the Walking Fern between the rocks. It is a rare plant in Ontario, especially in Niagara, and this is the only place that I know of to find this plant. We answered the first



Walking Fern.

© Doug Gillard

To appreciate the beauty of the spring wildflowers, one needs to come every few days to witness the changes that take place in the forest.

Spring Bird Walk at Cherie Road Park

by Doug Gillard

On May 6, we met at Cherie Road Park for our Spring Bird Walk to see what we could see. This time of year, it is a hit-or-miss situation with the spring bird migration. Several conditions can make a good day of birding during the spring migration. The weather during

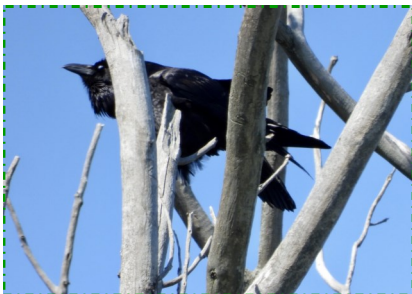


Group gathering to start the walk.

© Jean Hampson

the night before can determine whether the birds want to land to rest and feed in the area where you are birding. So far this year the variety and the numbers of spring migrants we have seen are fewer than we would like. So, sixteen of us set out on a cool sunny morning to see what we could see. Early in the outing, Mike said he had eyes on a woodpecker, so I went over to check it out. As soon as I got my binoculars on it, I knew what it was, a Red-headed Woodpecker. I called back to the others, but it flew, so some people only got a glimpse of it in flight. That was the first time we had seen a Red-headed Woodpecker in this park. That was cool!

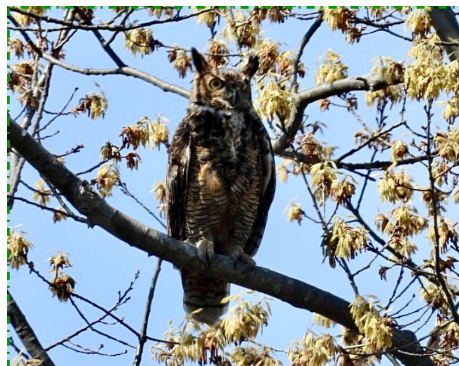
If that was the only highlight of the day, along with the other 47 species that we saw, it would have been a good outing. But the excitement had only just begun. A few minutes later, we looked up to see a Great Horned Owl being chased by four Common Grackles. Melissa turned around



Common Ravens harassing the owl.

© Jean Hampson

and excitedly said that this was the first time she had seen an owl in the wild. That was so cool! I like it when someone on an outing learns something new or experiences something for the first time.



Great Horned Owl.

© Jean Hampson

As we continued to look for spring migrants, we heard more birds harassing something just over the tree line. As we stood there, two Common Ravens, along with other birds, chased the owl into the open, where they landed in the trees. This gave us a chance to get a good look at the birds and an opportunity for some pictures. We felt sorry for the owl because the Ravens were right in his face, harassing him.

The excitement on our outing wasn't over yet. Drawing our attention away from the birds was a seaplane practicing taking off and landing on the calm waters of the lake. That was cool! Not every day you see that.

The next day we were on another outing and before we got started, Phil, who was with us at Cherie Road Park, commented, "It's going to be hard to beat yesterday's outing".

Bird Walk at Malcolmson Eco-Park

by Barb West

Saturday, May 13, was a nice, sunny spring day. Unfortunately, Mary Malcolmson Park is one of those places where one day you can see lots of spring migrants and another day not as many. We usually see several kinds of warblers, but not this year. Our list of sightings included Blackburnian, Black-and-White, Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green and Yellow Warblers. The more common birds that we saw were Gray Catbird, House Sparrow, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee,



Female Purple Finch.
© Jean Hampson

Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, American Goldfinch, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch and American Robin. Some of the spring migrants that we saw were Song Sparrow, Purple Finch, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Red-eyed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo and White-throated Sparrow. We also saw a Great Horned Owl and her three babies in a pine tree. We did not see the Red-headed Woodpecker, but there is always next year.



Scarlet Tanager. © Jean Hampson

Martindale Area Evening Birding Walk

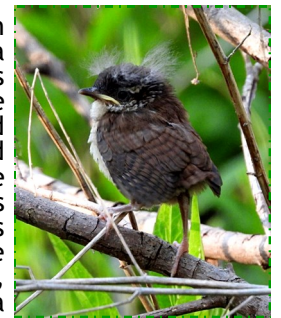
by Jean Hampson

May is prime bird migration time, so the PFN tried to fit in as many bird-watching outings this month as possible. On the evening of Thursday, May 18, we explored a couple of my favourite spots, The Green Ribbon Trail and Francis Creek Naturalization Area. Both are in the Martindale area, close to creeks and Martindale Pond. Usually, we can find an assortment of warblers here, but perhaps the slightly cool



Mute Swan with cygnets. © Jean Hampson

temperature was delaying their return to the area. At the Green Ribbon Trail, we were treated to a sighting of male Baltimore Orioles displaying their stunning orange plumage. The local Mute Swan had a young one in the nest that had probably just hatched. We observed twenty-one bird species here, before heading to the Francis Creek area. Our favourite find here was a family of Carolina Wrens, three cute, fuzzy fledglings and a very protective parent. Coming out on a weeknight was totally worth it for this kind of sighting!



Carolina Wren fledgling.
© Jean Hampson

St John's C.A. Walk

by Bob Highcock

St. John's Conservation Area is located within the Niagara Escarpment and Twelve Mile Creek Valley and was established in 1963. The natural area near Fonthill attracts visitors from across the Niagara Region to enjoy walking along the trails or fishing in the pond.



On the St John's Ridge Trail. © Bob Highcock

May 23 was a cloudy but pleasant evening for our hike. Our group walked sections of all four trails. For a little more than two hours, we explored the Sassafras Stroll, Horseshoe, St. Johns Ridge and Tulip Tree Trails. Twenty-two avian species were observed including the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Great

Crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Veery, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting. It is always pleasing to see one Hooded Warbler, but we were very lucky to hear three and observe two more for a total of five!

Examples of fern species recorded for the PFN iNaturalist project were the Sensitive Fern, Northern Maidenhair Fern, Interrupted Fern, Christmas Fern and Lady Ferns (Genus *Athyrium*).

Flowering plants are much easier to find than some birds. We saw Creeping Foamflower, White Baneberry, Wild Geranium, Mayapple, Large



Jack-in-the-pulpit. © Bob Highcock

White Trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit and the non-native Greater Celandine.

An interesting find on the St. Johns Ridge Trail was a fungal parasite that forms tiny bright orange cups on the underside of leaves of Mayapple. This specimen, though, was found on the

leaves of Skunk Cabbage.

This conservation area offers a unique glimpse of the Carolinian Forest that once covered most of the Niagara Region.



Mayapple Rust. © Bob Highcock

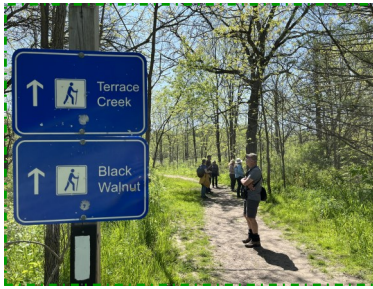


Northern Maidenhair Fern.

© Bob Highcock

Rim of Africa Walk

by Bob Highcock



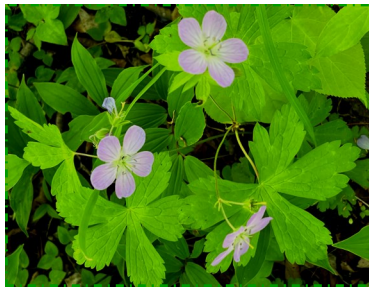
On the trail.

© Bob Highcock

May 27 was a beautiful sunny morning for a club walk on the Rim of Africa-Bruce Trail Friendship Trail. Our group walked along the section of the Bruce Trail at Short Hills Provincial Park, which is twinned with a section of the Rim of Africa Trail in

South Africa. The twinning is a mark of friendship and international cooperation between the two organizations.

As previously mentioned, this trail walk is one of my favourites in Niagara. This year, we walked approximately 1.2 km south along the Friendship Trail/Black Walnut Trail on the western edge of the park from the Pelham Road entrance to the Bluebird Champions' memorial bench. In the spring,



Wild Geranium.

© Bob Highcock

you are sure to find migrating birds and, in the summer, breeding birds such as the Eastern Bluebird, cuckoos and Eastern Phoebe. Butterflies and dragonflies can be found flitting about as well.

We observed thirty-five bird species.

The list of notable species includes the Black-billed Cuckoo, Cooper's Hawk, and Willow Flycatcher. For a complete list, refer to the Great Canadian Birdathon 2023 article in this issue.

You can access the Friendship Trail from many points in the park and I intend to walk the entire 5.3 kilometres one morning soon.



Eastern Bluebird.

© Jean Hampson

Grasshopper Sparrow Outing

by Mary-Lou Davidson



Our leader for the day, Shirley Chambers. © Mary-Lou Davidson

On June 17, Shirley Chambers led a group of enthusiastic birders hoping to see a Grasshopper Sparrow at Welland's Farr Road Canal Banks area. Almost immediately, Shirley spied one, to the delight of everyone.

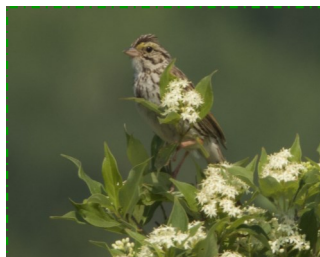
The two-hour hike crossed through some forest, grasslands, the canal, and also a marsh area. In total, we observed twenty-seven species, including the sweet Savannah Sparrow.

One highlight for the day was observing a pair of Osprey soar above us after leaving their perch on one of the

hydro towers.

An interesting addition to hearing the woodland birds was hearing parrots! A nearby home has free-flying parrots but sadly, the Merlin app didn't pick it up.

A big thank you to Shirley, who was very familiar with the area and knew where to look. Some of us had never been there before, so we appreciated a new birding experience-ticks excluded!



Savannah Sparrow.

© Shirley Chambers



Osprey flyover.

© Mary-Lou Davidson

PFN Annual Picnic 2023

by Janet Damude & Bob Highcock

Will it or won't it rain? That was the question before the PFN spring picnic at Burgoyne Woods Park on the evening of Friday, June 23. Those members who took a chance were in luck. Bob and Jean arrived early and were able to find a partially unoccupied pavilion, making our picnic a sure thing.

Plastic tablecloths graced several tables for dining and the delicious-looking display of food. The club purchased most of the food, but members donated some additions.

We had about twenty-four members, old and new, in attendance. A few members helped Carol sort the name tags. That brought memories and laughs. They gave the new members their name tags, and several members examined the nearby flora while others set up the food. All enjoyed renewing old friendships and meeting new



An assortment of sandwiches. © Bob Highcock

members.

Bob welcomed everyone and gave a blessing. We served ourselves and enjoyed the little subs, salad, potato chips and drinks. Dessert was a lovely cake decorated for PFN, including

little birds and a Praying Mantis.

A deer appeared in the field to the west and gradually rambled to the woods to the northeast. It was a great addition to a nature club picnic.

After the wonderful picnic and clean up, fifteen of the attendees went for a short walk



The cake for dessert.

© Carol Horvat

PFN Annual Picnic 2023 *continued*



After dinner walk along the loop.
© Bob Highcock

along the paved loop near the picnic pavilion. Located on the east side of Burgoyne Woods, the loop walk is approximately 1 km long. It is closed to vehicular traffic, which allows for an uninterrupted stroll when observing the native flowers, birds and critters in the park.

Thank you to all the members

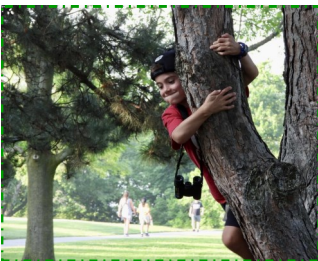
who attended the picnic. We look forward to doing it again in 2024.



Any leftovers?
© Jean Hampson

Annual Ice Cream Outing

On Thursday, June 29, we finished our spring outing sessions with everybody's favourite Ice Cream Walk.



Liam in a tree.
© Jean Hampson

Starting from Jaycee Park on Ontario Street, St. Catharines, we walked through the park, across the pedestrian bridge over Martindale Pond to Rennie Park and into Port Dalhousie. There we enjoyed the object of our quest: ice cream at the Old Port Dairy Bar. This year, we even had our canine friends, Willow, Teddy, and Joey accompany us. In addition to the treats, we also enjoyed seeing

Trumpeter Swans, Eastern Kingbird, Common Tern and nineteen other bird species.



Common Tern.
© Jean Hampson

by Jean Hampson



Bob and Jean with Willow, Teddy and Joey in the background.
© Bob Highcock

It was a very enjoyable evening.

Jane's Walk

The PFN was invited to participate in the Annual Niagara-on-the-Lake Jane's Walk. The walk is named in honour of urban activist and author Jane Jacobs, who at times resided in both New York City and Toronto. She believed that neighbourhoods should support and meet the needs of the people that live there and unique features and landscapes in these urban environments should be maintained. She was particularly opposed to expressways intersecting cities and cutting off neighbourhoods. She believed urban residents benefitted greatly from living in mixed neighbourhoods of residential, commercial and greenspace. After her death in 2006, Jane's Walks have been organized in cities across the world to honour her concepts and legacy. Jane's Walks are all volunteer-run and free to participants.

The NOTL organizers of the 2023 Jane's Walk were looking for a speaker knowledgeable about birds, so I offered to participate. Our first scheduled date unfortunately came with torrential downpours, so we had to regroup and find a new day. August 24 was available



Elizabeth at Steward House.
© Jean Hampson

for most of the originally scheduled speakers and turned out to be a beautiful evening. We all met at the corner of Butler and John Streets in NOTL for an introduction to the evening's walk by co-organizers, Jo-Ann and Kate. Next, Elizabeth spoke about the Steward House, an important building for local Black history. The quite large

crowd of spectators then proceeded up the street to listen to master gardener Mary-Lynn explain the importance of planting native plants in your urban gardens, to help nourish local flora and fauna. Next was my turn to speak about bird migration and how important green spaces and corridors are for tired and hungry migrants. These areas

provide nesting spots for our local bird populations as well. Walking further up the road led us to Butler's Burial Ground, where Rick talked to us about significant



Rick at Butler's Burial Ground
© Jean Hampson

members of Colonel John Butler's family who are buried there. He was quite interested to learn that some of the Butler family descendants were among the crowd, our very own PFN Treasurer Doug Gillard, his brother and nephew. It was a great evening of history and nature and I encourage you all to read up on Jane Jacobs, The Steward and Butler families and also consider participating next year in a Jane's Walk near you.

by Jean Hampson



Jean speaking about bird migration.
© Jean Hampson

Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site Outing

by Doug Gillard

For our first outing of fall, we decided to return to the Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site. The Naturalization Site, which is on top of the escarpment in south St. Catharines, opened to the public on September 28, 2004. It started as an open pit quarry, then became a municipal landfill and has now evolved into the Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site. I'm glad they made the effort to make this place into a naturalized site because it's a beautiful place to enjoy nature.

There was thirteen of us who spent 2 1/2 hours leisurely walking the 3.28-kilometre path around the site, looking for fall migrating birds and any other nature that we could find. We saw 28 species of birds, which included eight migrating warbler species. Thanks to Jean for identifying the fall warblers for us. They can look very different in the fall compared to their colourful spring

plumage. On last year's outing to this site, we saw thirty-seven Turkey Vultures flying over the escarpment. This year forty Turkey Vultures were circling in the same area. We also saw several Monarch butterflies and a few Black Swallowtails.

At the beginning of a club outing, I never know what we may see. Sometimes just getting together with friends and fellow nature lovers and catching up on their summer activities is enough. Seeing fifteen American Goldfinches flitting around the bushes in front of us is enough. Seeing one Indigo Bunting at a distance is enough. Or just seeing one Pied-billed Grebe in the pond is enough. For me, this was enough to make me feel very relaxed and refreshed after our outing at the Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site.

GeoKids Nature Hike

In late September, the Peninsula Field Naturalists helped to lead a nature hike for the GeoKids Club at Cherie Road Park along Walker's Creek. The hike was led by Ken Smith from the PFN, Carla Carlson from Niagara Nature Tours, and Owen Bjorgan from Owen's Hiking and Adventures.

The GeoKids are already experts in all things rock-related, and they were eager to learn about cool nature-related facts as well. Carla and Owen taught the kids (and parents) about some of the interesting plants and trees along Walker's Creek, while Ken pointed out some of the birds in the area. We showed the kids how to use iNaturalist, which is a citizen science app used to record the biodiversity around the world. The GeoKid members could



Black-horned Tree Cricket. © Ken Smith

take pictures of plants, trees, lichens, mushrooms, molluscs, crayfish, and insects. Many scientists use data from iNaturalist to publish research papers.

The GeoKids have recently joined forces with Niagara GeoPark. This is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the fact that Niagara has unique and fascinating geological features. A GeoPark is an area that UNESCO designates as being of international significance. If Niagara was designated as a GeoPark, it would help to preserve some of our most important sites and help people recognize what a great area we live in.

by Ken Smith



Sharp Hornsnail.

© Ken Smith

Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts

St. Catharines Christmas Bird Count	Sunday, December 17, 2023	Contact: Bob Highcock/Jean Hampson bob.jean@sympatico.ca 905-327-5457
Niagara Falls CBC	Wednesday, December 27, 2023	Contact: Marcie Jacklin mjacklin@brocku.ca 905-871-2577
Port Colborne CBC	Saturday, December 30, 2023	Contact: Drew Campbell drewcampbell@roadrunner.com 716-668-0759
Grimsby Peach Tree CBC	Sunday, December 31, 2023	Contact: Chris Motherwell cmtrain@cmotherwell.com
Waterfowl (Duck) Count	Sunday, January 7, 2024	Contact: Phil Downey philip.downey@gmail.com

AGM and 2024 Memberships



Join us on November 27, 2023, at 7:00 pm, for our Annual General Meeting, followed by a presentation by Peter Thoem on The Owl Foundation. It is also our dessert night, so bring a little something to share with everyone and don't forget to bring your own mug as well.

2024 is almost here, and now is a great time to renew

your PFN Membership. There has been a slight increase in price this year, but it's still a great value. A family membership (2+ members at the same address) is only \$40. A Single Membership is \$30 and \$20 for Students or Low-income. A PFN membership makes an excellent gift for your nature-loving family and friends.

The Peninsula Field
Naturalists' Club



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2023 Executive

President ~ Bob Highcock

Vice President ~ Carol Horvat

Secretary ~ Jean Hampson

Treasurer ~ Doug Gillard

Membership Secretary ~ Barb West

Directors ~Janet Damude

~ Mary-Lou Davidson

~ Ken Smith ~ Don Stevenson

Non-Executive Positions

Newsletter Editor ~ Lorraine Brown-Joyce

Webmaster ~ Adrian Lawler

The Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club is 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. We are affiliated with Ontario Nature and Nature Canada.

Currently, our meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month from September to April (except December) at 7:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm) at Bethany Community Church, 1388 Third Street Louth, St. Catharines. We may offer various popup outings around the Niagara area. Please check our Facebook page for more information.

The Peninsula Naturalist newsletter is published twice per year, in Spring and Fall. Submissions for the next newsletter should be received by the end of March or September for publication.

Club members are encouraged to send in articles, photos, stories, observations and outing reviews to penfieldnatsnews@gmail.com. Material accepted may be edited and will be used subject to space allowances.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club or the Editor.

Thank you to all the members who volunteer their time to our club and also to those who make submissions to make our newsletter fabulous!

In closing...

Enjoy the nature around us in photos. Join us on a future walk!



White Trillium at Louth C.A. © Jean Hampson



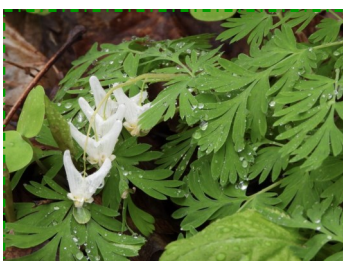
Members walking at Louth C.A.
© Jean Hampson



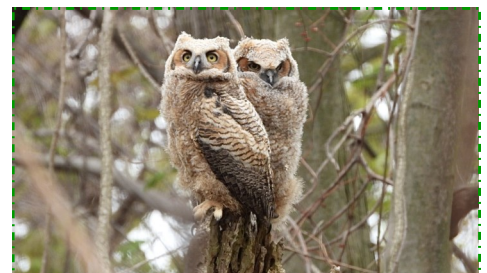
Louth Falls. © Jean Hampson



Red-backed Salamander at Louth C.A. © Jean Hampson



Dutchman's Breeches at Louth C.A. © Jean Hampson



Great Horned Owl fledglings at Malcolmson Eco-Park.
© Jean Hampson