

The

# Orchid



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## *Bulletin of the Peterborough Field Naturalists*

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Know • Appreciate • Conserve Nature in All its Forms

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*Eastern Meadowlark ~ Photo submitted by Enid and Gord Mallory  
~ Lily Lake, Peterborough*

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*Spotted Salamander ~ Photo submitted by Luke Berg  
~ Birchview Road, April 13*



*Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
~ Photo submitted by Luke Berg, Peterborough, April 23*



*Osprey on nest  
~ Photo submitted by JB Jaboor, Drummond Line, April 27*

### Welcome New Members!

**Trina Fitzgerald and Maeve Nocera**

**Linda Williams**

**Stacey Crough, Rachel and Audrey**

## Coming Events

<p>Sunday Mornings to May 25</p> <p>Spring Wildlife Walks</p> <p>8:00 a.m.</p> <p>Ptbo Zoo North Parking Lot</p>	<p><b>Spring Wildlife Walks</b></p> <p>Our popular Spring wildlife walks continue until Sunday, May 25th, unless otherwise advertised. Most walks will start at 8:00 am and we will normally carpool from the Peterborough Zoo parking lot on Water Street. Outings generally last about three hours. Bring some change to donate towards gas costs and bring binoculars if possible. In most cases the leaders will confirm the destination on the day.</p> <p>Leaders:</p> <p>4 May – Drew Monkman 11 May – Martin Parker 18 May – Jerry Ball 25 May – Tony Bigg</p>
<p>Wednesday May 14</p> <p>7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Ptbo Library</p>	<p><b>Monthly Meeting: Understanding the Eastern Wolf</b></p> <p>The talk will focus on the relationship among wolves and coyotes in North America and examine the future of wolf conservation in Ontario.</p> <p>Linda Rutledge received her PhD in Environmental and Life Sciences at Trent University, where she is currently a researcher and lecturer in the Biology department. Linda leads the Eastern Wolf Survey: a research project that uses noninvasive sampling methods to survey persistence and dispersal of eastern wolves in southern Ontario's Provincial Parks, including Frontenac, Bon Echo, and Kawartha Highlands, among others. Find out more at <a href="http://www.easternwolfsurvey.ca">www.easternwolfsurvey.ca</a> or follow the research project on Twitter @EastWolfSurvey.</p>
<p>Saturday May 17</p> <p>10:00 am</p> <p>Trent Nature Area</p>	<p><b>Joint Outing with the New Canadians Centre</b></p> <p>In a joint venture with the New Canadians Centre, families of new Canadians have been invited to explore local habitats with the help of PFN members. Can you help people who are new to Canada become familiar with local nature: spring flowers, birds, tracks and signs? You do not need to be an expert! This is largely a social outing and possibly a chance to recruit some new members. We will meet at the junction of Armour Road and Nassau Mills Road, by The Cabin burger bar, for a one hour exploration of nearby Trent University Nature Areas. If you have spare binoculars that can be lent to participants, please bring them.</p>

## Coming Events continued

<p>Sunday June 1</p> <p>7:30 a.m.</p> <p>Sobey's Parking Lot, Lansdowne Street West</p>	<p><b>Carden Plain Important Bird Area (IBA)</b></p> <p>An all-day visit to the Carden Plain, an unusual alvar habitat that is home to an abundance of rare grassland bird species, butterflies and plants. Jerry Ball will guide us through this globally rare habitat is only 65km from Peterborough. The trip offers the chance of seeing such birds as the Loggerhead Shrike, Golden-winged Warbler, Osprey, Black Terns, Sedge Wren, Yellow Rail, Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Towhee and Brown Thrasher. Bring some lunch, water and binoculars.</p>
<p>Wednesday June 11</p> <p>7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Ptbo Library</p>	<p><b>Monthly Meeting: An Introduction to the Native and Wild Bees of Ontario</b></p> <p>This presentation will give an overview of the native bees found in Ontario, their natural history and interesting habits, and will give tips on identifying several types of bees and other insects that mimic bees, using photographs and drawings. Helpful resources for learning how to identify bees will also be presented.</p> <p>Susan Chan is an advocate for native pollinators and is the author of A Landowner's Guide to Conserving Native Pollinators in Ontario. She has an academic background in agriculture (McGill University) and education (U.W.O.), including a Master of Science degree in pollination biology from Guelph University. Susan is manager of the Native Pollinators Program at Farms at Work and the Rusty-patched Bumble Bee Project. She is an active gardener, beekeeper, and lover of local food.</p>

## PFN Junior Field Naturalists (ages 5-12)

<p>Sunday June 1</p> <p>1:30 p.m.</p>	<p>This activity will be part of the "Yellow Fish Program", in partnership with Meredith Carter from the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority. Learn about stormwater management in Peterborough as we help to improve the health of the creek that runs along Medical Drive. Come dressed to plant shrubs and learn what a healthy shoreline looks like. If possible, wear rubber boots, dress for the weather, and bring a pair of work gloves if you have them. We will meet at the Foodland parking lot at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and Medical Drive. For more details closer to the date, please visit the PFN website.</p> <p>See everyone soon! ~Neil</p>
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## Other Events of Interest

<p>Saturday May 3 9:00 am to 11:00 am</p> <p>Westdale United Church</p>	<p><b>Annual Plant Sale - Peterborough Horticultural Society</b></p> <p>The PHS is hosting its annual sale of plants grown by local gardeners. Westdale United Church is located at 1509 Sherbrooke Street West, on the south side, just west of Woodglade Blvd.</p>
<p>Saturday May 3 9:00 am to 11:00 am</p> <p>Jackson Park Playground, top of Monaghan Road</p>	<p><b>Jane's Walk: The Treasured Trees &amp; Old Growth Forest of Jackson Park</b></p> <p>What makes a heritage tree? How old is old growth? Join urban forest ecologist, Chris Gooderham, on a tour of Peterborough's greatest stand of white pine, maple, cedar, and hemlock. We'll walk through the oldest grove of trees in the heart of Jackson Park, and examine soil conditions, typography and ecosite transitions along the way. We'll also explore the proposed path of the parkway bridge through the Jackson Creek valley. Let's get out and enjoy it while it lasts. Walk will be approximately 1.5hrs duration on uneven ground and on hiking trails, making several stops.</p>
<p>Saturday May 10 10:00 am to 3:00 pm</p> <p>Markham Civic Centre</p>	<p><b>Native Plant Sale – Markham, ON</b></p> <p>The North American Native Plant Society is holding its annual sale of wildflowers, ferns, grasses and sedges, as well as trees and shrubs. Our sale showcases hundreds of native species and introduces thousands of native plants into GTA gardens. See our displays and chat with knowledgeable experts to help you make the right choices for your planting project. All plants come from ethical growers and are locally sourced. Visit <a href="http://www.nanps.org">www.nanps.org</a> to see the plant list. For more info email <a href="mailto:info@nanps.org">info@nanps.org</a>.</p> <p>Location: Markham Civic Centre, 101 Town Centre Blvd, Markham (Warden &amp; Hwy 7).</p>

### PFN Officers and Directors

President	Martin Parker	mparker19@cogeco.ca	745-4750
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Special Projects	Lynn Smith	smithfam@nexicom.net	944-5599

### Other Volunteers

Ecology Park Feeders	Sean Smith & Don Finigan	745-4750
Orchid Diary	Tony Bigg	652-7541
Orchid Mailout	Michelle and Emily Young	
Orchid Editor	Marla Williams	874-5653
Jr. Naturalists	Neil Fortin	292-6185
Miller Creek Management Area	Jim Cashmore & Jim Young	
Ad-hoc on Lily Lake Planning	Jim Cashmore, Jim Young, Lynn Smith, Martin Parker	
Local Planning Committees	Jim Cashmore	



## ORCHID SUBMISSIONS WANTED

Deadline for submissions for the June 2014 issue: **Friday, May 23**

Send submissions to Marla Williams via email: [orchid@peterboroughnature.org](mailto:orchid@peterboroughnature.org)  
or post mail to: **PFN, PO Box 1532, Peterborough ON K9J 7H7**

## Window on a Wetland

Article and photos submitted by Enid Mallory

*April 3, 2008: Two deer cross the lake from west to east leaving tracks deeply indented in the soft ice. The ice breaks and they fall in but both manage to get themselves out onto the shore. From behind our binoculars we cheer.*

*April 3, 2006: I go down to the little skating change house built by a neighbour, with a small granddaughter in rubber boots hoping to see otters. When they appear in a break in the ice, very close and curious, we watch them pop up and down and listen to their chirping language. It starts to rain and a clap of thunder frightens them. The close one runs across the ice to the other one and they both dive in and are gone.*

We live behind windows that overlook Lily Lake on the edge of Peterborough. In the early 1900s the Portland Cement Company dug marl here for their plant in Lakefield. Jackson Creek flowed in and made Lily Lake. Swamp lies to the west. On the east side of the lake a creek flows in and thick stands of cedars dance a ballet on a windy day. Beyond the cedars stout barns and farmhouses dot the hills. On a high meadow, elk butt back and forth. A rail trail crosses the south end of the lake and already at 7 a.m. there are hikers on it.

This idyllic scene will change. To the east four farms will become a massive subdivision. 2800 residential units, roads, schools and stores will mean years of disturbance, blowing soil, muddied creek, silt flowing into the lake, noise of construction. Enough to make a coyote take to the hills and a bird on the rail trail take to the wing and fly away.

Where urban meets natural or agricultural, on the city's edge, is an area of utmost importance, a space that can be lost or found. But it must be found and seen for what it is, before it's lost to development.



Far-seeing pioneers have given Peterborough a city oasis known as Jackson Park. The old C.N.R. track, now a rail trail and part of the Trans-Canada Trail, leads from the city into the Jackson Creek wetland and past Lily Lake. It may be worth considering what we have seen and heard here and what it is that we may lose.

Lily Lake has its own calendar. In July and August it draws greenery around itself and weeds grow to the surface where the marl diggers left ridges. Young geese and ducks form lines and explore the shallows. At sunrise in September and October flocks of geese rise with great commotion to fly over the crimson and gold of the swamp. Migrants appear on the lake and along the rail trail, a loon reluctant to leave the Kawarthas, white-throated sparrows that will stay several weeks, hermit thrush resting and feeding in the shrubs.

Otters come in November and December breaking through the thin ice and climbing up on it to eat their fish. When the ice is over six inches (measured by drilling a hole near shore) we can skate and ski.

Spring begins and the first birds come back. A pair of hooded mergansers cavorting in open water at the edge, wood ducks with their saucy green, black, red and beige markings outlined in white. The northern harriers come at the beginning of April. One year we watched the male perform aerial acrobatics over the swamp. Somewhere a brown female was watching him but we could not see her, only the male soaring upwards with the sun on its white body and black wing tips, stalling in the sky to plummet down, then up again in that exuberant springtime sky-dance meant to impress a female harrier but entrancing us as well.

On the lake the cast changes daily as mergansers, scaup, scoter, loons and ring-necked ducks move north. Green herons fly over the lake. A blue heron fishes near shore. An osprey dives for fish. Along the rail trail in May we watch yellow warblers, hear the "witchety witchety" of the common yellowthroat, glimpse the jerky flight of a kingfisher, see baby beaver, gray catbirds, rose-breasted grosbeak. An M.N.R. employee rides his bike out from Jackson Park and hears and sees three times as much which he reports on the Birding Hotline. In late May Baltimore orioles arrive in orange and black splendour. Farther west we can watch meadowlarks and bobolinks, grassland birds which are threatened as farmland disappears.

Here we have a natural corridor with woodlands, wetlands and wildlife habitat intact, which has been named by MNR a Provincially Significant Wetland. To designate such an area, scientists evaluate biological, social, and hydrological components and look at special features such as rare species and quality of wildlife habitat. How will this special area be affected by the development beside it? Can we influence municipal, regional and provincial policy enough to ensure that this unique area is protected and wildlife still finds its place here?



We have kept hit-and-miss notes over the years on the wildlife seen. In January, 2005 there was an irruption of great gray owls to our area when vole populations crashed in the northern boreal forest. We looked out first thing in the morning (Jan. 24) to see a heavy shape in a low cedar, head down looking and listening for mice while the rising sun made an aura of gold along its head and back.

*Tuesday, Jan. 25, we pull the curtains and see the owl fly in front of the window and land on our clothesline pole. I rush out to the garage and carefully, quietly open the back door enough to insert the lens of my camera. Gord is not far behind me but he collides with four wine bottles set out for today's recycling. They roll and crash together, then reverberate for what seems an eternity of sound. It is all I can do to keep from laughing out loud. The owl however seems not to care. No sense of humour?*

Neighbours phone to share sightings. Deer along the rail fence, wolves or coyotes crossing on the ice, a red fox leaping for mice in the field. On the Rail Trail hikers, bikers and skiers alert each other to wildlife: beavers in an open pool in March, a pileated woodpecker in the swamp, a tundra swan on the lake or a rare glimpse of a bittern. Children find the eggs of snapping turtles, hatched or raided by racoons, and the marks where beaver drag trees across the trail to their lodge.

Is there a green vision for our cities? As the province designates small cities as growth areas in an effort to protect the countryside from sprawl and protect agricultural land, cities must value the green corridors that run through them, often along rivers, and they must embrace the green corridors along their edge and hold onto their diversity.

Is there a green vision for Peterborough? Few cities have such a significant natural area of lake, waterway, wetland and woods with a Trans-Canada Trail providing easy access to their citizens. This can be our Ottawa Green Belt, our New York Central Park, our Everglades Boardwalk. OK, the scale is smaller. The importance is not.

Each morning as the sun rises beyond the barns and hills and sends light across the cedars to unroll the mist from the lake, I wonder if city council really knows what we have here. I want to shout, "Widen the protective green space that surround the lake and borders Jackson Creek and the rail trail."

For every city as we grow, and grow we must, we need a vision and citizens prepared to push that vision. Every tree that is not cut, every inch of soil that is not developed, helps to keep a special natural place intact.

For Peterborough let's make sure that ten, twenty, one hundred years from now, we will still have a Lily Lake, a Jackson Park, a Rail Trail, a Provincially Significant Jackson Creek Wetland and a wide enough green buffer zone around and along it to keep it viable.

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## Notes from a Swan Sighting

Article and photos submitted by Emily Pettypiece

Don and I headed off to the Rattray Marsh near Oakville with our daughter to see what we might find on a lovely but cool Easter Sunday. A pair of swans was feeding on one side of a boardwalk bridge and then headed under the bridge toward a pond close to the lake when they stopped and started to pay attention to one another. We wandered closer to them as others had stopped to watch them. The sun was in the right spot for pictures which was nice.



We had just reached where they were when the male gently pushed the female below the water and I just started taking pictures. I have a whole sequence of events but felt these two photos said it all.



They started a preening session which seemed to go on forever and I have a shot video of that. It was one of those moments in nature you don't get to see too often, let alone take pictures. They were entirely wrapped up in the moment as if no one else was around.

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## Blue Jays, Purple Finches, Sapsuckers, Hummingbirds and More

Submitted by June Hitchcox, Courtesy of the *Apsley Voice*

Thanks so much for your emails – we all learn a lot from the experiences of others. Here is one from Ian, who retired this past winter with his wife Edith, to their cottage on Chandos Lake near Apsley, north of Peterborough. They enjoy watching the birds that come to their feeder. “Wow, do we ever get a lot of Blue Jays visiting. A dozen at a time. Is that normal for the winter around Apsley? I have never seen so many. They eat the little black sunflower seeds but go nuts for peanuts.”

Most Jays are year-round residents – a few do migrate farther south. Having enough proper food to generate body heat is crucial – oily black sunflower seeds and peanuts hearts which have been chopped up are 2 of the richest in oils – wonderful food for the Jays, especially with the harsh winter we have just had. It would not take long for one Jay after the other to find that feeder – birds keep an eye on each other. Ian also sent coloured photos of birds slightly smaller than House Sparrows - a soft rosy-pink - to be identified. They are Purple Finches.

At the time of writing, Ian saw a hungry chipmunk out already and heard Goldfinches singing – a sure sign that spring was on its way. Hope your hummingbird feeders are out by now. Sapsuckers return in April and open up their holes to feed on tree sap. Hummingbirds, exhausted by their long flight from the south, arrive shortly after. There is not much food for them at that time so they try to survive on the sap from the Sapsucker holes. They certainly love to find a full Hummingbird feeder – saves their life in a lot of cases. They would tap on our cottage window when the feeders were empty, begging us to fill them up!

Recipe: Thoroughly clean & rinse the feeder. In a pot, put ¼ cup white sugar + 1 cup of water - stir; bring to a boil; cool; fill feeder. Do not add red food colouring – it deforms their young such as crossed-over bills, deformed limbs, etc. The feeder is red and that is all that they need. Fill well-washed and rinsed feeders. Please keep those emails coming! Happy birding!

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# Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter

Submitted by Paul Elliott

Here are some shocking figures:

Only 7% of 5-11 year olds in Canada and 4% of 12-17 year olds meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children and Youth, which recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

70% of 13-20 year olds report spending less than an hour outdoors per day (including hanging out with friends and travelling from one place to another).

(Source: *Are we driving our kids to unhealthy habits?* Active Healthy Kids Canada (2013)).

What can be done about this?

Ontario has taken a step in the right direction this year with the launch of the Ontario Children's Outdoor Charter. The aim of the charter is to get children outside more and enjoying nature. It is intended to make parents, schools, youth groups and any other organizations with an interest in the well-being of children think about the benefits of immersing them in nature-based experiences. It is hoped that it will raise the awareness of families, communities and decision makers across the province of the personal and societal benefits of connecting children with nature. The ultimate success of the initiative will be seen when increasing numbers of young people choose to adopt sustainable behaviour and take action to protect biodiversity.

The charter identifies twelve experiences that it believes all children in the province are entitled to as part of their childhood:

Following a trail	Swimming in a lake	Camping under the stars
Paddling a canoe	Harvesting something to eat	Playing in the snow
Observing plants and wildlife	Exploring a park	Building an outdoor fort
Going fishing	Visiting a farm	Creating an outdoor adventure

The PFN can be proud of our long history of providing such opportunities by supporting our Junior Field Naturalists.



More information on the charter can be found at: [www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca](http://www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca).

## From the Archives: 'Belted Kingfisher' by Doug Sadler

From 'The Orchid', May 1966, Volume 13, Number 6

Cockscomb kingfisher,  
One-stripe ranker,  
Busied with household duties  
Under the eyes of a two-stripe mother;  
In and out of the topknot-tousling tunnel  
Under the over-reaching bank -  
No time to comb your hair?

River-bank Squatter -  
Fishing rights enforced  
On half a teeming mile;  
Nothing to do but note the current  
And the tell-tail gleams of silver,  
Catching what and when you wish -  
No time to smooth your locks?

Self-styled sentry  
Of the stream bank,  
One eye on the wavelets,  
The other swiveling all which ways'  
Clumsy-looking, rapid buzz-bomb,  
Two stroke rattle speeds you on -  
No time to part your curls?

**President's Note:** This is just one of the poems which have appeared in past issues of The Orchid. Submissions of nature-themed poems are most welcome in future issues.

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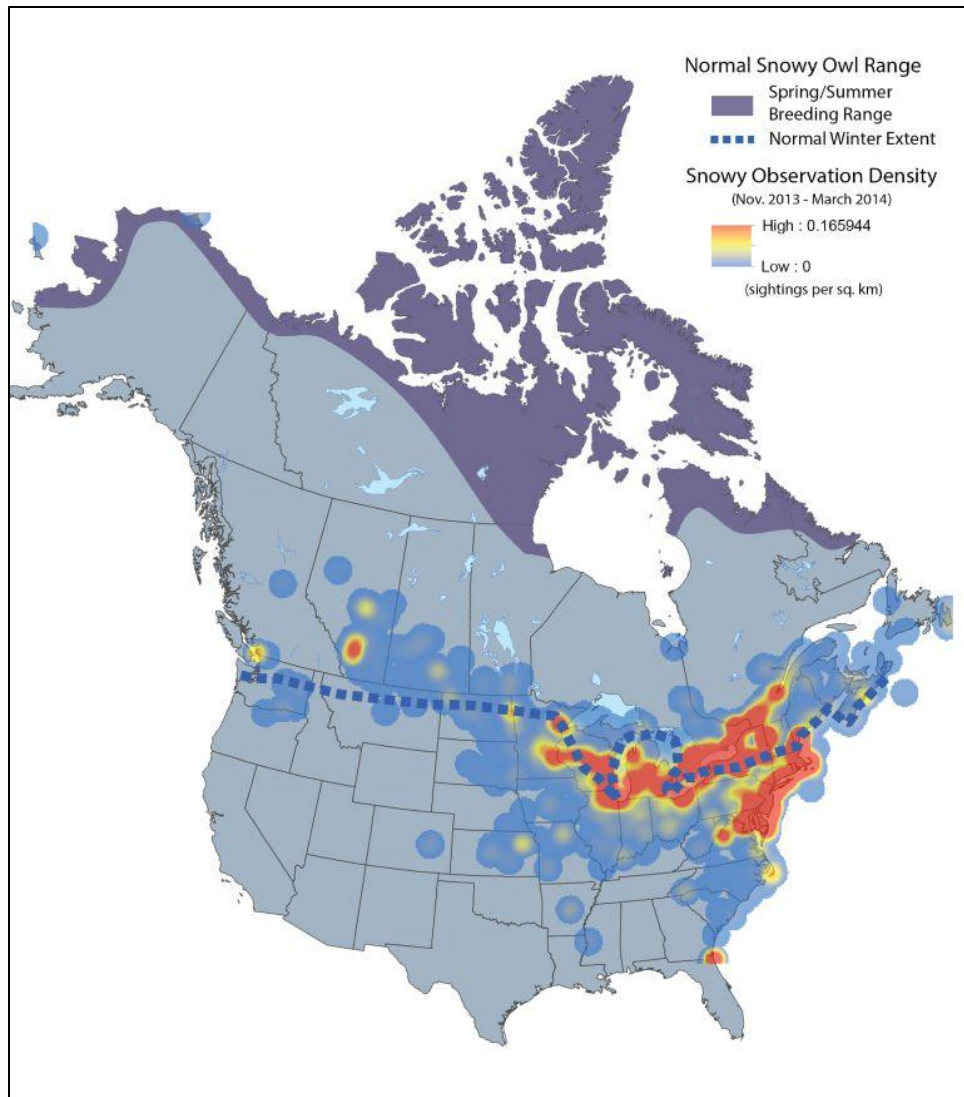
## An Arctic Vortex? The Snowy Owl Irruption of 2013/2014

Article and images submitted by Marnie Benson

Snowy owls, (*Bubo scandiacus*) normally live their lives on the tundra of the high Arctic and are rarely seen by the casual observer. But every once in a while, for reasons which are not fully understood, snowy owls come flooding down from the north in a phenomenon known as an **irruption**. Birdwatchers in Canada and the northeastern U.S. are sometimes treated to occasional sightings every few years, but once or twice in a lifetime a mega-irruption occurs, when snowy owls show up much further south, and in vastly greater numbers, than usual.

This past winter, 2013-14, was one such extraordinary event, with the largest irruption in the Northeast and Great Lakes regions seen in four or five decades. Snowy owls have been delighting bird watchers along the  
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east coast as far south as Florida, and even on Bermuda! Here in the Peterborough area we were treated to at least six owls which remained in the relatively same areas for months. Figure 1 shows a map demonstrating the tens of thousands of snowy owl sightings (e-Bird) between November 2013 and March 2014. Note the high concentration of sightings along the Great Lakes and Atlantic coast, well south of their usual winter extent.



*Figure 1: e-Bird Snowy Owl Sightings, November 2013 to March 2014*

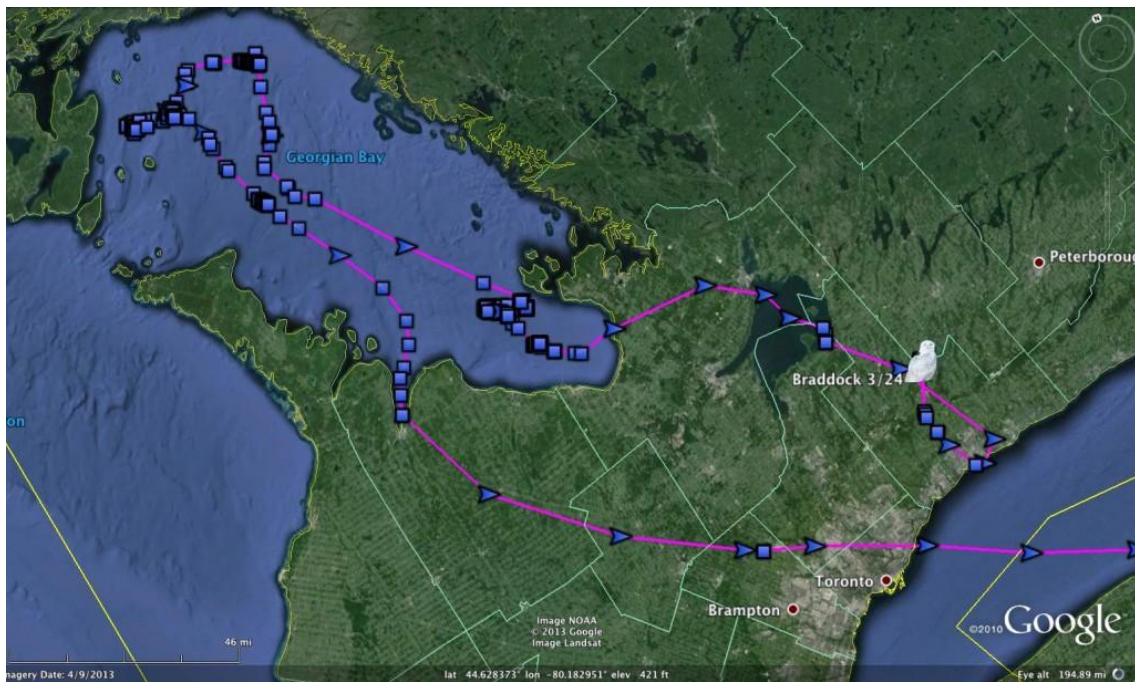
### Project SNOWstorm

As the magnitude of this year's irruption became clear, a number of veteran owl researchers in the northeastern U.S. started mobilizing a response, launching **Project SNOWstorm**. Researchers captured 22 snowy owls between Dec. 2013 and March 2014 in various locations stretching from Minnesota to Maryland, and fitted them with solar-powered GPS-GSM transmitters, to track their movements. These transmitters record locations in three dimensions (latitude, longitude and altitude) at programmable intervals as short as every 30 seconds, providing unparalleled detail on the movements of these birds, 24 hours a day. The transmitters are programmed to download data every three days, when within range of a cell tower.



Along with the collection of samples for toxicology, genetic and other health testing, this data on snowy movements will aid researchers in understanding where the birds are coming from; how far and how fast they move across the landscape during the winter; what kinds of habitats they're using, and how that differs from daytime to darkness; and what threats they face while here in the south, including what their fate may be following a big irruption.

The folks at Project SNOWstorm have been publishing regular updates on the owls they have been tracking at <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>. The site offers a vast array of incredible information as well as numerous maps (see Figure 2 for an example) showing the movements of individual owls under study.



*Figure 2: Example of individual Snowy Owls under study*

### Why do these irruptions occur?

These snowy invasions are thought to occur because of variations in cyclical prey and predator populations in the Arctic, but the exact dynamics still leave many questions, which the SNOWstorm researchers hope to answer. With unusually high lemming (snowy preferred prey) populations in the arctic this summer, breeding success was very high. Large numbers of young owls competing for limited food may explain why so many snowies came south this winter. Project SNOWstorm researchers have indeed found that these arctic visitors are almost exclusively juvenile owls, lending further support to this theory.

Another big story of the winter of 2014 was the “Polar Vortex”, an arctic cold front which brought heavy snowfall and record breaking low temperatures to much of Canada and the U.S. east of the Rockies for an extended period of time. Some scientists blame loss of sea ice and other effects from climate change for this weather phenomenon, though the true cause remains unclear. It is an interesting coincidence that weather patterns from the arctic ventured south in a similar pattern to the snowy owls, making some wonder if there is a connection.

While most of our snowy visitors have begun their long journeys north and the tagged owls will soon be out of transmitter range, it will be very interesting to see what data is available should any of the tagged owls

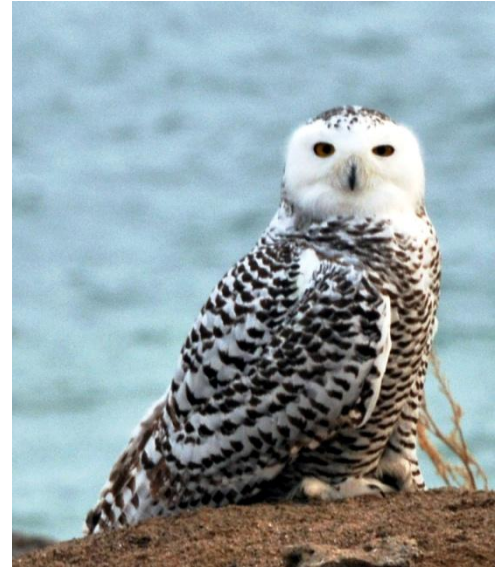
return south next winter. Ultimately the information collected has already been truly valuable in helping us understand the habits and needs of this beautiful creature. Be sure to check out the Project SNOWstorm website for all the details: <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>.

Figure 1. Heat map showing the density of snowy owl observations (red areas - very high density) between November 2013 – March 2014, as well as normal summer and winter extents.

Figure 2. Movements of snowy owl “Braddock” between March 18-24, 2014, capturing a remarkable 919 km journey across Lake Ontario, around Georgian Bay, and south across the Lake to U.S. shores again. (©Project SNOWstorm and Google Earth)

SOURCES: Map created by Marnie Benson at Fleming College, with base layers projected to Lambert Conformal Conic. Species range map courtesy of BirdLife International and NatureServe (2013); Sightings - <http://ebird.org>; Project SNOWStorm - <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>

*Snowy Owl ~ Photo submitted by Dave Milsom  
~ Cobourg Harbour, December 2013*



## PFN Outing Report – Spring Wildlife Walk - April 13, 2014

Submitted by Walter Wehtje and Dave Milsom

Spring has been a long time coming this year. The weather may not have seemed very promising on Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, but more than 25 people were eager to go birding in the misty conditions hoping to see some sign that migration was underway. With such a large group, wet conditions and high water, we decided to bird the Lakefield campground and marsh. This site offers a nice variety of habitats, including open water, tree canopy and a large cattail marsh. It proved to be a good decision, as the shoreline of Katchewanooka Lake was still ice-coated, concentrating large numbers of waterfowl along its edges.

Upon arriving at the beach parking lot, we immediately heard a Purple Finch singing away from Gordounstown Island. There was also a pair of scaup just offshore. They sparked a lively debate on the identification criteria for Greater vs. Lesser Scaup. In such cases, it's best to settle on scaup sp. Also seen from the beach were several Pied-billed Grebes, a Common Loon in full alternate plumage, multiple Ring-necked Ducks, several Common Mergansers and many (Herring and Ring-billed) gulls. As we walked northwards along the edge of the peninsula two Ospreys circled above us, and we had a flock of Tree Swallows overhead. Among them was a single Barn Swallow, a first of the year (FOY) for many of us.

We came to the north point of the peninsula and used the several spotting scopes to scan the lake. This resulted in nice views of two Red-necked Grebes, at least one Belted Kingfisher and for the sharp-eyed observers, several Double-crested Cormorants. As an indication of how frozen the water is farther north, we counted at least six Great Blue Herons standing on the lake ice, waiting for warmer weather. However, the local Bald Eagle pair was already on their nest, with both birds visible in their white pine across the lake. It was here that we also began to see large numbers of waterfowl. Most common were Ring-necked Ducks, followed by Buffleheads and Canada Geese.

As we were scanning the ducks we were pleasantly surprised to hear Sandhill Cranes calling. We were even more pleased to watch the pair fly across the lake from west to east. This species does breed in the county, but it's always a good day when you get to see them. Returning to the ducks, all three mergansers were there, but it was the presence of several dabbling duck species reminding us of spring's return. While diving ducks, such as goldeneyes and mergansers, only need open water that lets them chase their prey, dabbling ducks feed on the surface, or in shallow water. Seeing the first American Wigeon or Green-winged Teal of the season is a nice reminder that winter is finally on the way out.

Other spring species were the multiple singing Song Sparrows, with each male eager to define and defend a territory from his rivals. Red-winged Blackbirds were also active, flashing their bright-red epaulets for all to see. Once we began walking towards the lookout tower on the southwest side of the peninsula, the local pair of Northern Harriers was spotted. Initially difficult to see, the male proved to be most cooperative, flying off his perch to chase away some crows that came too close to his territory. We may have been wondering if winter would ever end, but the birds weren't doubters.

After a quick and relatively unproductive scan of the marsh from the observation tower, we headed back to the parking lot. On our way we heard an Eastern Phoebe, a White-breasted Nuthatch, and a Brown-headed Cowbird. We also found a very cooperative Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, as well as a nice Yellow-rumped Warbler (another FOY for many of us). Back at the parking lot, some of us had to head out, but a few of the diehards headed off to relocate (successfully) a Great Egret that had been seen for several days just east of Peterborough. Overall, it was a very enjoyable early spring day, with more than 40 species seen, and everyone getting good looks at most of the species.

#### **Final notes submitted by Dave Milsom:**

We departed Lakefield and drove along the Otonabee River, spotting several more ducks enroute. At Douro 9th Line we found a Great Egret reported earlier by Tony Bigg. Nearby were 2 Blue-winged Teals. As we viewed the teals, a Northern Goshawk flew over. Returning along Douro 8th Line, in a pond at the foot of a hill, was a group of Canada Geese. Out of the flock waded 2 Greater Yellowlegs, the FOY for most of the group.

*Great Egret ~ Photo submitted by Luke Berg  
~ 9<sup>th</sup> Line Douro, April 16*




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## **Support the PFN Lottery**

### **Submitted by Martin Parker**

Earlier this year Bill Snowden donated to the PFN a limited edition framed print titled 'Amid the Trilliums' by Joan Tovey. The original painting was chosen for the cover of the Buckhorn Fine Art Festival catalogue. The framed print was donated to be used for a fundraising initiative by the PFN.



The Board has decided to sell raffle tickets on the print. The proceeds of the raffle will be used for youth and for public education in nature in the Peterborough Region. The cost of one raffle ticket is \$2.00, with a limit of 1,000 tickets printed in accordance with the approved Lottery Licence M666089.

Tickets will be available for purchase at the May and June meetings of the PFN, and at most of the field outings. The draw will take place at the regular June meeting of the PFN. Directors will have tickets for sale as well.

There will be three second-place prizes, each consisting of a copy of the excellent PFN publication 'Nature in the Kawarthas'.

Please consider purchasing a ticket, or tickets, and support the youth and public education initiatives of your Peterborough Field Naturalists!



## *The Orchid Diary*



Compiled by Tony Bigg 705-652-7541 [tanddbigg@sympatico.ca](mailto:tanddbigg@sympatico.ca)

### ORCHID DIARY - March 30, 2014 to April 29, 2014

As usual at this time of the year the number of reports increases rapidly. For this reason only the first report for each species is included in the diary - unless the species is rare or otherwise newsworthy. The first reports of butterflies have been noted and although they seem late this month the dates do in fact match those of last year.

- Mar 30 A group from the PFN travelling Scriven's Rd found the male **Snowy Owl** 400m north of Cty Rd 2. With the owl was a small flock of **Snow Buntings** and two **Horned Larks**. Scott McKinlay found a first year **Iceland Gull** on Little Lake with some **Herring Gulls**. He also saw three **Red-necked Grebes** on the Otonabee River in Lakefield near the arena, and three **Great Blue Herons** between the north and south ends of Peterborough. Two **Trumpeter Swans** were seen by Tony Bigg near the beach in Lakefield.
- Mar 31 An **American Coot** was seen by Tony Bigg swimming in Lakefield by the beach. Ken Rumble heard a **Barred Owl** calling near Ford Crescent in Cavan.
- Apr 01 A **Killdeer** was heard calling by Ken Rumble in the Highland Park Cemetery, and from Little Lake Cemetery he saw two **Merlins**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Common Goldeneyes**, **Buffleheads**, **Common Mergansers**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Hooded Mergansers**, and a **Long-tailed Duck**. **Eastern Bluebirds** were reported by both Toni Sinclair (Six Foot Bay Rd, Buckhorn) and Jerry Ball (Scriven Rd).
- Apr 02 Carrie Sadowski heard her first **Song Sparrow** singing in her yard on the 7th Line of Smith. Jerry Ball saw two **Sandhill Cranes** on Nicholson Rd, a **Horned Lark** at Mathers Corners, and **Pied-billed Grebe** and **Wood Ducks** at Young's Point. From Little Lake Ken Rumble reports **Belted Kingfisher**, **Song Sparrow**, and increased numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** and **Hooded Mergansers**. Also at Little Lake Drew Monkman added five **Tree Swallows**, an **Osprey**, and three **Redheads**, King Baker added two **American Wigeons**. Ernie Basciano photographed a **Pied-billed Grebe** and saw a **Great Blue Heron** 'ice fishing' at the Lake. Tony Bigg had **Purple Finches** at his feeder.



- Apr 03 At 8:05 pm Dave Milsom saw and heard an **American Woodcock** behind his house on Scollard Drive. An **American Coot** was seen by Tony Bigg near the beach in Lakefield. Drew Monkman saw four **Killdeer** on Scriven Rd.
- Apr 04 Tony Bigg had a pair of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** at his feeder, and on the TCT between Base Line and David Fife Line he had **Rusty Blackbirds**, and a **Northern Harrier**. Jerrey Ball found an **Eastern Phoebe** on Kents Bay Rd and two **Trumpeter Swans** at Mathers Corners.
- Apr 05 A **River Otter** was seen in the Otonabee River south of Lakefield by Tony Bigg. Jerry Ball saw an **Eastern Meadowlark** on Scriven Rd. At Mather's Corners Luke Berg photographed three **Cackling Geese**, two **Trumpeter Swans**, two **Northern Pintails**, and two **Green-winged Teal**. Bill Crins photographed a first year **Iceland Gull** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** by the Bensfort Rd Landfill.
- Apr 06 A PFN Sunday morning walk lead by Jerry Ball to the south of the county found over forty species of birds that included three **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**, **Ospreys**, **Northern Pintails**, **Killdeer**, **Horned Larks**, **Eastern Meadowlarks** and **Green-winged Teals**. A separate OFO group led by Dave Milsom added a pair of **Blue-winged Teal** (also seen independently by Tony Bigg) and **Lesser Scaup** on the Otonabee River south of Lakefield.
- Apr 07 Amongst many other birds in her garden Erin McGauley saw a **Merlin** and a **Golden-crowned Kinglet**. Jerry Ball noted a **Common Loon** at Young's Point and a **Wilson's Snipe** on the 9th Line of Douro just south of Cty Rd 4. Three **Horned Grebes** were reported by Ken Rumble on Little Lake.
- Apr 08 **Fox Sparrows** appeared at Jane Bremner's feeders in Douro-Dummer beside the Indian River.
- Apr 09 On Cty Rd 44 Jerry Ball had a **Northern Shrike** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk**.
- Apr 11 Bill Snowden had a **Fox Sparrow** in his yard. Scott McKinlay heard his first **Spring Peeper** in the woods near his house in Cavan, and Dave Milsom heard **Chorus Frogs** behind his house on Scollard Drive. A Bonaparte's Gull was seen on Little Lake and reported by Petrborough County Birds Database.
- Apr 12 Don Sutherland saw a **Midland Painted Turtle** basking on the cattail mat along the east side of the still ice-covered north cell of the Lakefield Sewage Lagoons. The turtle was surprisingly agile and scuttled into the small area of open water between the ice-edge and the cattail fringe. At the time (1:00 P.M.) it was mostly overcast (75%), calm and with an air temperature of 13 C. In the early morning Tony Bigg saw a **Great Egret** in the flooded field in the south-east corner of the junction of Cty Rd 4 and the 9th Line of Douro. Tony also had two **Sandhill Cranes** calling and flying over the Lakefield Marsh. Bill Crins had a late **Snow Bunting** at Mathers Corners. A **Chipping Sparrow** was found by Iain Rayner on the Parkway Trail, Barnardo Park. Drew Monkman reported the first butterfly of the spring, a **Mourning Cloak** in his garden on Maple Crescent.
- Apr 13 A PFN Sunday morning outing led by Walter Wehtje included the sighting of **Double-crested Cormorants**. Luke Berg saw a **Northern Goshawk** soaring over the 9th Line of Douro just north of Division Rd. Don Sutherland heard **Chorus Frogs** at two locations on Division Rd and near South Dummer. In a driving rainstorm with thunder and lightning, Luke Berg, Gary Berg, and Dave Milsom travelled Birchview Rd and Camp Line Rd late in the evening, looking for salamanders and other herps on the road. They counted 44 **Blue-spotted Salamanders**, 25 **Yellow-spotted Salamanders**, 9 **Red-backed Salamanders** (2 lead-backed forms), 20 **Wood Frogs**, c. 150 **Spring Peepers**, 4 **American Toads**, 15 **Northern Leopard Frogs**, 12 **Pickerel Frogs**, and 2 DOR **Gray Tree Frogs**. A **Golden Eagle** was photographed by Iain Rayner near the junction of Old Norwood Rd and Sweeney Line.

- Apr 13 contd A pair of **Canvasbacks** was seen by Don Sutherland on Rice Lake at the base of Aspodel 5th Line. An **American Bittern** was seen by Scott Gibson on the 7th Line of Smith.
- Apr 14 Spending the morning birding, Tony Bigg found eight species of sparrow – **Song Sparrow**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **American Tree Sparrow**, **White-throated Sparrow** (all in his garden in Lakefield), **Swamp Sparrow**, **Fox Sparrow** (both on Lynch's Rock Rd), **Savannah Sparrow** (Douro 3<sup>rd</sup> Line south of Cedar Cross Line), **Vesper Sparrow** (TCT between Blezard & Cameron Lines). Also on the TCT were **Winter Wren**, **Rusty Blackbird**, more **Fox Sparrows**, and a **Cooper's Hawk**. Other sightings were two **Cackling Geese**, many **Northern Pintails**, a pair of **Greater Scaup**, **Green-winged Teals** – all at Mather's Corners, a **Blue-winged Teal** on Blezard Line just south of Elmhurst Rd, and a pair of **Northern Shovelers** on Douro 8<sup>th</sup> Line north of Nassau Rd.
- Apr 15 Sean Smith heard a **Field Sparrow** singing near Dafoe and Armour Rds.
- Apr 16 A **Hermit Thrush** was found by Tony Bigg in the Lakefield Park near the tennis court.
- Apr 18 A **Pine Warbler** was in Tony Bigg's backyard - they breed in the white pines opposite his house, in the Lakefield College grounds. Tony also saw/heard a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in the Lakefield Park. A **Glaucous Gull** was seen on Little Lake by Daniel Williams.
- Apr 19 Between 2 and 4 pm Luke and Gary Berg drove the 9th Line of Douro/Drummond Line. Highlights were three **Virginia Rails** on Drummond Line about 200m N of Hwy 7. The rails were in a scrubby swamp, mainly filled with alder, and only called after they played the tape a couple times. There were two **Lesser Yellowlegs** with eleven **Greater Yellowlegs** on the 9th Line of Cty Rd 4 in a flooded field on the west side of the road. Mather's Corners had a pair of Gadwall, and there was a **Common Raven** at the dump. The same flock of yellowlegs were seen by Tony Bigg at 8:03 am. Tony also saw a **Broad-winged Hawk** flying alongside Hwy 115 west of the Cty Rd 28 junction. Two **American Pipits** were seen/heard by Don Sutherland flying over the Lakefield Sewage Lagoons.
- Apr 20 The PFN Sunday morning outing generally circling Buckley's Lake, saw 56 species of birds including **Brown Thrasher**, **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, **Barn Swallow**, and **Eastern Towhee**. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** responded to tape at White Valley Rd and Bass Lake Rd for Luke Berg. He also heard a **Great Horned Owl**.
- Apr 21 Jerry Ball saw **Gray Comma** and **Eastern Comma** butterflies on Hubble Rd.
- Apr 22 A **Northern Waterthrush** was heard by Don Sutherland calling by the rail trail north of Trent University.
- Apr 23 Toni Sinclair had an interesting encounter with a **Moose** by her home near Buckhorn - "This morning I got a call from a neighbour who said a moose was looking in her window at Scotsman's Point Resort. When it left through the bush, it crossed our firelane (40) and I got a few photos. Either a youngster, or a female (no antlers). It certainly wasn't shy - I left when it started walking toward me! Gone now, I think." Later - "Well, I thought it was gone. However, an hour later I set off for a walk with the dog, and the moose was standing in the bush close to our house. The dog naturally started barking at it, both of them had their hackles up, and then the moose started walking toward the dog. Camera still in my pocket, I got more pics. I backed up to a neighbour's house with the moose following. Soon there were 7 people and 2 dogs all near it, and the moose as calm as could be. He wasn't interested in the apples that were offered. I have no experience with these creatures. Is it normal for them to be so tame? It didn't appear to be sick or mangy, or even confused. When he got bored with us, he slowly wandered away".
- Apr 23 A **Bank Swallow** and a **Palm Warbler** were seen by Luke Berg in the Trent Wildlife Sanctuary.

- Apr 24 Erica Nol and Chris Risley saw a **Blue-headed Vireo** on Johnston Drive south of Hwy 115. Tony Bigg saw a **Spring Azure** in Lakefield Park. At Miller Creek CA Iain Raynersaw/heard an **American Bittern** and heard a **Sora**.
- Apr 25 Luke Berg had a **Common Gallinule** respond to a tape and then swim into view at the Fairbairn St marsh. A **Beaver** was seen by Tony Bigg in the Lakefield Marsh.
- Apr 26 Luke Berg had a flyover **White-winged Crossbill** in the Trent Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Apr 27 Sheila Collett had a **Palm Warbler** in the Little Lake cemetery. The PFN Sunday morning outing led by Martin Parker saw a **Purple Martin** at the park in Hiawatha. Tony Bigg saw a **Cliff Swallow** in a mixed flock of swallows just south of Lakefield on the Otonabee River.
- Apr 28 A **Peregrine Falcon** circled over Luke Berg's house near Parkhill and George Sts. Paul Frost had a **Spotted Sandpiper** on Ireland Drive in Peterborough.
- Apr 29 A pair of **Caspian Terns** was seen by Luke Berg on the canal by the Trent Wildlife Sanctuary.



*Tree Swallows ~ Photo submitted by Luke Berg ~ Otonabee River above Lock 25, April 17*





# PETERBOROUGH FIELD NATURALISTS

[www.peterboroughnature.org](http://www.peterboroughnature.org)

## membership application form

Memberships may be obtained by mailing completed form and cheque to Peterborough Field Naturalists  
PO Box 1532, Peterborough, ON K9J 7H7

### CONTACT

Name (s):		Home Tel:	
		Work Tel:	
Address:		Receive Orchid by:	<input type="radio"/> snail mail <input type="radio"/> e-mail <input type="radio"/> both please
		Email(s):	

### MEMBERSHIP TYPE & FEE SCHEDULE

Please make cheques payable to *Peterborough Field Naturalists*

1. Single Adult \$25 ☐      2. Single Student \$15 ☐      3. Single Child\* (age 5-12) \$10 ☐

4. Family (couple or family with children\*) \$30 ☐

\*Please give the name(s) and age(s) of the children you wish to be enrolled in the PFN Junior Naturalists

Name	Age*	Name	Age*

### MAIN INTERESTS

<input type="radio"/> Birds	<input type="radio"/> Butterflies/insects	<input type="radio"/> Botany (Wildflowers/trees/shrubs)	
<input type="radio"/> Astronomy	<input type="radio"/> Aquatic Life	<input type="radio"/> Geology	<input type="radio"/> Field Trips
<input type="radio"/> Hiking	<input type="radio"/> Conservation	<input type="radio"/> Other (specify)	

I (name \_\_\_\_\_) am knowledgeable in the following areas \_\_\_\_\_ and would be prepared to

☐ lead an outdoor session      ☐ give a presentation      ☐ prepare an article for The Orchid

### I am interested in the following:

☐ Joining the PFN Executive      ☐ Sitting on research or conservation committees      ☐ Working on field projects  
☐ Helping with refreshments at meetings      ☐ Please have a member of the executive call me

### AGE GROUP

This information helps us to understand the needs of our members. If a family membership, please check for each adult

<input type="radio"/> Under 20	<input type="radio"/> 20-29	<input type="radio"/> 30-39	<input type="radio"/> 40-49	<input type="radio"/> 50-59	<input type="radio"/> 60-69	<input type="radio"/> 70-79	<input type="radio"/> 80< over
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### DONATIONS

Membership fees cover the general operating costs of the club while other sources of revenue are needed to fund special projects such as ecological restoration. You can assist the club by making a donation to help further our work in such areas. The PFN is a registered charity and issues receipts for income tax purposes. All donations are gratefully received and any member of the executive will be happy to speak to you concerning the use of such funds.

### LIABILITY WAIVER

In consideration of the Peterborough Field Naturalists (PFN) accepting this application, I hereby for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever release and discharge the PFN, their officers, directors, servants and agents from any liability whatsoever arising from my participation in PFN activities, whether by reason of negligence of the PFN or its representatives, or otherwise. I affirm that I am in good health, capable of performing the exercise required for field trips or other activities in which I participate, and accept as my personal risk the hazards of such participation. As a member of the PFN and/or as a parent/guardian of a member under 18 years of age, I have read and understood the above, and accept its term on behalf of all of my underage children.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_