

# *The* Orchid



April 2022

Volume 68, No. 3

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

## *Bulletin of the Peterborough Field Naturalists*

*Published nine times yearly. Publication Mail Agreement #4005104*

Know • Appreciate • Conserve Nature in All Its Forms



One Last Look at Winter: A Pine Siskin in February. Photo: Laurie Healey

**Inside:** President's Address from AGM  
Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Report  
Book Review: Swampwalker's Journal  
Nature in April - Frog Song and Sky Dancers  
Reports from Winter Tree ID and Wildlife Tracking Outings

## In this Issue:

PFN Coming Events .....	3
Volunteer Corner .....	5
President's Address from AGM .....	6
PFN Board Initiatives .....	7
Outing Report: Winter Tree ID .....	8
Outing Report: Wildlife Tracking.....	8
Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Report.....	9
Nature in April.....	11
Book Review: Swampwalker's Journal.....	12
Steve's Swan Sightings.....	13
Waterfowl Survey Along Otonabee River .....	14
From the Archives: Changes in Status of Birds .	14
Excerpt from Song of the Rolling Earth.....	15
The Orchid Diary .....	16
Poem: Leave Those Beavers Be .....	19
PFN Membership Application.....	20

### Welcome new PFN members!

- Cate & Adam Cooper
- Frances Thomas
- Gregory & Brenda Pulham
- Cindy & Graham Whitelaw



Clockwise from top: Red Squirrel (Don McLeod), Cackling Geese at Little Lake on March 13 (Dave Milsom), Horned Lark off Nicholson Line on March 4 (Cathy Douglas), Sandhill Crane on Duncan Line on March 16 (Cathy Douglas).



## PFN Coming Events

Spring has arrived and after canceling so many outings last year due to COVID-19, we are pleased to be able to offer more opportunities to get together safely outdoors. Group numbers will be kept small, preregistration will be necessary, and carpooling will not normally be arranged. To give equal opportunities to those who receive *The Orchid* later by mail, registration will not begin until April 5. Please do not contact the leaders before that date.

<p>Sunday, Apr. 10</p> <p>8 to 10 a.m.</p> <p>10 participants</p>	<p><b>Lang-Hastings Rail Trail - Part 1</b></p> <p>The LHT offers so many opportunities to see nature up close and enjoy great views of the countryside south of Peterborough. Steve Paul will lead this walk on the Heritage to Nelson section which crosses Indian River and goes alongside a pine forest and a meadow habitat. There will be great chances to see and hear some returning spring birds including Eastern Meadowlark, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe and maybe even the local Ospreys returning to their nesting platform. Be sure to bring your binoculars and dress for the weather of the day. Register by email to <a href="mailto:stevepaul70@gmail.com">stevepaul70@gmail.com</a>. Details on the meeting place will be sent when Steve confirms your spot.</p> <p>Accessibility: Easy 2.8 kms on a flat rail trail</p>
<p>Thursday, Apr. 14</p> <p>7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Zoom Meeting</p> <p>Invitations e-mailed to members</p>	<p><b>PFN Monthly Meeting: Tall Grass Awakening</b></p> <p>Val Deziel will be presenting on the ecological restoration in the Rice Lake Plains. Val Deziel is the Coordinator of Conservation Biology for the Rice Lake Plains/ Lake Iroquois Plain. Val is responsible for conservation planning and land stewardship in the Rice Lake Plains-Lake Iroquois Plain where she works closely with Tallgrass Ontario (Val sits on the TGO Board) and the Mottled Duskywing recovery team. Val completed her Hon.B.Sc. in Restoration Ecology at Trent University/ Fleming College. Val has experience as the Coordinator of Conservation Biology on various wildlife research projects working with provincial governments, universities and First Nations. She joined NCC in 2012 and is now responsible for coordinating and conducting stewardship work in the Rice Lake Plains, including invasive species control, species at risk surveys, prescribed burns, and tallgrass prairie/oak savannah habitat restoration.</p>
<p>Sunday, Apr. 17</p> <p>8 to 10 a.m.</p> <p>10 participants</p>	<p><b>Lang-Hastings Rail Trail - Part 2</b></p> <p>Steve Paul will again lead a walk along the LHT, this time from Keene Rd to Technology Drive and back. This section of the Lang-Hastings Trail travels through two beautiful marshland sections with a deciduous forest in the middle. This mixed habitat is great to see all that spring has to offer with the chance to see lots of returning birds. Be sure to bring your binoculars and dress for the weather of the day. Register by email to <a href="mailto:stevepaul70@gmail.com">stevepaul70@gmail.com</a>. Details on the meeting place will be sent when Steve confirms your spot.</p> <p>Accessibility: Easy walking along a level rail trail. 2.6 km</p>

PFN Coming Events	
<p>Tuesday Apr. 19</p> <p>10 a.m. to noon</p> <p>10 participants</p>	<p><b>Spring Stroll in Millbrook</b></p> <p>Enjoy a 2-to-3-kilometre stroll in Millbrook. Participants will meet at a pre-determined spot in Millbrook. We'll watch for spring migrants and enjoy the beginnings of spring flora and fauna. Be sure to bring binoculars and dress for the weather of the day. To register, contact Marilyn at <a href="mailto:media@peterboroughnature.org">media@peterboroughnature.org</a> after April 5. Rain date April 20.</p> <p>Accessibility: Some hills, therefore easy to moderate.</p>
<p>Sunday, Apr. 24</p> <p>8 to 11 a.m.</p> <p>5 participants</p>	<p><b>Johnston Drive Pond Trail</b></p> <p>This area is a hidden gem few people know exist and provides a great opportunity to see and hear some shy and elusive herons, bitterns and rails. There were 34 species of birds seen on this walk last time it was offered.</p> <p>You will definitely need rubber boots as the trail provides a few crossing challenges. Also, you must be VERY quiet to NOT disturb wildlife. Register by email to <a href="mailto:stevepaul70@gmail.com">stevepaul70@gmail.com</a> Details on the meeting place will be sent when Steve confirms your spot.</p> <p>Accessibility: Moderate difficulty. 3.2 km</p>
<p>Saturday, Apr. 30</p> <p>7:30 to 9:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Kermit's Friends and Timber-doodles!</b></p> <p>The dusk air of the spring carries the mating songs of various species of frogs and the sky dance of the American Woodcock or Timber-doodle. Join Martin Parker for a 2-hour outing to listen to and distinguish between the different species of calling frogs and to listen to the courtship flights of the American Woodcock within the provincially significant Cavan Swamp wetland. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather of the evening. Contact Martin at <a href="mailto:mparker19@cogeco.ca">mparker19@cogeco.ca</a> to register for this outing. The participation limit will be in accordance to Public Health requirements on the date of the outing. Details will be sent to those members who have registered.</p> <p>Accessibility: Easy, walking along a closed roadway</p>
<p>Sunday, May 8</p> <p>8 to 11 a.m.</p> <p>15 participants</p>	<p><b>A Walk on the Hogsback Trail, an Esker near Omemee</b></p> <p>Join Scott McKinlay for a birding and nature hike along the Hogsback Trail on the Omemee Esker. While on our way there, we will be making a couple of stops in the Cavan hills and swamps. The 2.5 km Hogsback trail is hilly and rocky in areas and can be muddy after a rainfall, so wear sturdy footwear. For those who are comfortable with carpooling, we will employ cars at both ends of the trail to ferry our way back to the beginning. Those NOT comfortable with carpooling will need to turn back on the trail at some point. Bring binoculars and wear weather-appropriate clothing. We will be meeting at 8 a.m., west of Peterborough. Contact Scott at <a href="mailto:smckinlay59@yahoo.ca">smckinlay59@yahoo.ca</a> for further details and to register. Please indicate your preference for carpooling or not at that time.</p> <p>Accessibility: moderate to challenging.</p>

PFN Coming Events	
<p>Thursday, May 12 7:30 p.m. Zoom Meeting Invitations e-mailed to members</p>	<p><b>PFN Monthly Meeting: The Niagara Escarpment, A Natural Masterpiece 450 Million Years in the Making</b></p> <p>Beth Gilhespy will be presenting a talk on the natural history and geology of the Niagara Escarpment</p> <p>Beth Gilhespy has been Executive Director of the Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservancy since 2019, an organization that secures funds for Toronto Zoo endangered species conservation programs. From 2017 to 2019 Beth served on the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Between 2004 and 2018 she was Chief Executive Officer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, where she supervised a staff of 18 and oversaw the activities of more than 1,500 volunteers in land preservation and trail management. Prior to her work at the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Beth worked for 15 years in toxic chemical research and management. She holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in physical geography and geology from the University of Guelph.</p>
<p>Note: Recordings of past PFN Zoom meetings can be viewed on PFN's YouTube channel at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAgbbqgr4ujZ16qba23LTQQ">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAgbbqgr4ujZ16qba23LTQQ</a> under the playlist menu.</p>	

## Volunteers Corner

### Call for Outing Volunteers

Sue Paradisis, our outings coordinator, is always looking for more volunteers so please contact her if you are interested. Training is provided and an experienced leader will help until you feel ready to go on your own. She can be reached by phone at 705-559-2061 or email at [sueparadisis@hotmail.com](mailto:sueparadisis@hotmail.com). She's particularly interested in finding someone to do a spring ephemeral flower walk in May.



### Call for Volunteers to Monitor Turtles on Roads this Spring!

Calling all wildlife lovers and nature enthusiasts! Turtle Guardians is recruiting volunteers for our 2022 monitoring session to help turtles cross the road safely during their active season.



Turtle Guardians is a program of The Land Between charity that works to protect Ontario's declining turtle populations while giving local residents opportunities to connect with nature. Turtle Guardians is currently working on a road mortality mitigation project along County Road 32 in Peterborough. This road runs along the Trent-Severn Waterway and borders many wetland complexes where turtles are often seen crossing and are hit by vehicles in high volumes. With the help of volunteers, this project will reduce threats to turtle populations and increase awareness and safety for community members that frequent the area. Volunteer Crossing Guards are needed to monitor areas along this road at least once a week for two hours during key "rush hour" times from mid-May to early October (with a break between late July to early September when turtles are less active on roads).

To register for the Crossing Guards program and the current projects in Peterborough go to [www.turtleguardians.com](http://www.turtleguardians.com) or email [citizensciencetlb@gmail.com](mailto:citizensciencetlb@gmail.com) to learn more!



## **President's Address from AGM Held on March 10, 2022**

**Submitted by Rene Gareau**

Welcome to our PFN Annual General Meeting, which is once again conducted on the Zoom platform for the second year in a row. I hope that you've all had a chance to review the PFN's annual report for 2021 that was included in the March edition of *The Orchid*.

In general terms, these various documents and reports reflect the fact that our activities had to be curtailed once again this past year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. There were fewer outings than we had hoped to have, as some events had to be cancelled. However, the level of participation in our monthly Zoom members' meetings, which featured guest speakers on a wide variety of nature-related topics, was excellent. And as you can see in our financial reports, the PFN continues to be in a healthy financial position, so that's all good news.

Since the onset of the pandemic, your Board of Directors was faced with a number of challenges that our club has never had to deal with in the past. And, as with each one of you, our organization had to adapt to the realities that we were faced with. Your Board of Directors have put a lot of effort into adapting to the challenges that we encountered, in order to keep our organization functional and relevant for all of our members.

There are a lot of numbers to pore through in our various year-end reports, but there's one number in particular that stands out for me personally. You might have expected that the reduction in club outings and other activities would have resulted in a reduction in our membership numbers, but our total number of individual PFN members as of December 31, 2021 was 458. That indicates to me that in spite of the many challenges that we've faced, the PFN today is every bit as relevant and important as it has ever been.

This past year marked the 81st anniversary of the Peterborough Field Naturalists, and we are now entering our 82nd year. If you could have asked the small group of founders of the PFN all those many years ago if they thought their little nature club would still be around some 82 years later in the year 2022, I think they would have been absolutely amazed and proud that the club they had founded was not only still around, but had over 450 members! The club motto that they formulated for us way back then, which is "To know, appreciate, and conserve nature in all its forms", is just as relevant today as it was 82 years ago.

My hope is that in some way, the PFN will continue to help each of you cope with the significant challenges and disruptions that you've all had to deal with due to the pandemic. What we all have in common is that we're all part of a community that loves and appreciates nature. Whether through our monthly members' Zoom meetings featuring a great variety of guest speakers, or through the regular publication of our newsletter *The Orchid*, or through the various outings that we were able to undertake, our over-riding objective this past year has been to help keep you all connected as much as possible to each other, and to nature. I would encourage all of you to continue finding peace and enjoyment within the natural areas that surround us here in Peterborough County.

The highlights of our club's activities and accomplishments over the past year are outlined in the five-page 2021 Annual Report in the March issue of *The Orchid*. Some highlights include:

- We held members' meetings online with a great variety of interesting guest speakers.
- We were able to undertake 23 nature outings.
- We undertook some important citizen science initiatives: two very successful bird counts (Peterborough and Petroglyphs), as well as another successful Petroglyphs-area butterfly count.
- We've made ongoing improvements to our digital presence, with a significant increase in social media followers.

- We continued to advocate for nature by providing our perspective on issues such as the Trent Lands developments and the challenges facing Harper Park.
- We provided our input to the Official Plan Review undertaken by the City of Peterborough.
- We provided donations to the Kawartha Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Canada for their very worthwhile natural area conservation activities.
- We also supported a range of Ontario Nature initiatives aimed at protecting natural areas in our area, and throughout the province of Ontario.

As far as our financial situation is concerned, we continue to be on a very solid footing. I can assure you that your Board of Directors have continued to take our fiduciary responsibilities very seriously. We have also benefited from an Investment Fund and Legacy Fund which were set up with a substantial donation bequeathed to the PFN from the Rhea Bringeman estate years ago. Many of you have made supplemental member donations to our club this past year, and I want to thank our members for their ongoing generous support.

And so, in closing, I can assure you that your PFN Board of Directors has put a lot of effort into adapting to the challenges we've had to deal with, and we'll continue to do so in the coming year. I want to thank each of our directors and all of our dedicated volunteers for their ongoing efforts. And I also want to thank all of you, our valued PFN members, for your ongoing interest and support. We will continue to do our very best to meet your expectations.

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## **PFN Supports Jackson Creek Trail Revitalization**

### **Submitted by PFN Board of Directors**

At the December 2021 board meeting, the Board of Directors approved a donation of \$1,000 to Otonabee Conservation to support their plans to rehabilitate the Jackson Creek Trail from Jackson Park to Ackison Road. This section of the trail is an important link in the TransCanada trail. In response to this donation, Dan Marinigh, Chief Administrative Officer, thanked the PFN for the very generous donation in support of the Jackson Creek Trail Revitalization Project. He stated, "It's great to hear how extensively the membership uses the trail. All the best in 2022."

Funding from these projects is possible due to the generosity of PFN members. Part of the funds are from the PFN Legacy Fund managed on behalf of the PFN by the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough. This Endowment Fund provides an annual grant which the Board has decided will be used for special projects.

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## **PFN's First Virtual Auction a Huge Success!**

### **Submitted by Fiona McKay**

As many of you know, in conjunction with the PFN's virtual Annual General Meeting, and in absence of our live auction table and raffle, the PFN experimented with an online virtual auction this year; the funds of the auction going towards supplementing the PFN's ongoing annual activities, such as producing *The Orchid*, maintaining bird feeders at Ecology Park, erecting trail signs, supporting citizen science projects and more. We set a modest goal comparable to the level of funding usually generated by the raffle and auction table. We are thrilled to report that participation exceeded expectations and, thanks to the support of *you*, our members, we reached over 140% of our goal, generating over \$1,130 in revenue and donations. With this level of support, we are sure to host such auctions again. Thank you to all that participated. We hope you had fun!



## Outing Report: Winter Tree ID Walk on March 5

Submitted by Sam Clapperton

It was a balmy Saturday morning in early March that found 16 participants gathered at Fleming College's Sutherland Campus in pursuit of all things trees. Equipped with enthusiasm and some handy binoculars, the group, led by Trent University students Joel Grandmont, Dawson Wain, and Sam Clapperton, learned the many ways to identify a tree during the winter months. In the absence of leaves above, we looked for other clues, like tree branch arrangement, and tree shape. We examined a tree's bark, finding the long, shaggy plates of ironwood, the crisscrossing diamonds on ash, and the smooth sinuous texture of blue beech. The buds, the group learned, could tell you a lot about what kind of tree it was, like basswood, whose fat red buds stood out against the snow, while those of bitternut hickory reminded us of a yellow highlighter tip. We learned of the many adaptations of white birch, including its white peeling bark, which reflects the sun, preventing damaging temperature fluctuations in the tree during the winter months. The group also found some uninvited residents, like the non-native European buckthorn, a scraggly, haunted looking tree, aptly named for the sharp spine on the end of every branch, as well as a few diseases and pests, like beech bark disease, emerald ash borer and butternut canker. Along the way, we also enjoyed the sounds of a Cooper's Hawk, who flew overhead, as well as both a Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpecker, looking curiously down at us from high in the trees. Overall, it was a Saturday morning well spent, exploring a beautiful area of hardwood forest in good company all around.



Photo: Cathy Douglas

## Outing Report for PFN Wildlife Tracking

By Don McLeod

After a two-year absence from tracking, it was a great relief for PFN members to finally get back to looking for wildlife tracks and sign. Nineteen participants spread out over three outings, observed birds, mammals and found plenty of tracks at the Camp Kawartha Environment Centre (CKEC) on February 27, March 3 and March 4, 2022. This winter has seen more snow than the past few winters and in places it was still knee deep. Weather conditions were generally acceptable for tracking other than a brief snow squall during the outing on February 27. Otherwise, conditions were sunny and cold.



Tracks and trails for Ermine (centre) and Shrew (top right). Photo: Don McLeod

The CKEC bird feeders offered some good birding and also attracted various mammals. Over the three outings, fourteen bird species were observed: Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch. Mourning Dove tracks were found on February 27 and all groups had a chance to view tracks from small birds, likely American Tree Sparrow and/or Dark-eyed Junco.



The most common mammal for both observations and tracks was Red Squirrel. The March 4th highlight observation was a Porcupine sunning itself near the top of a tall Eastern White Cedar. Just prior to that observation we saw Porcupine tracks and trails. The most interesting trail was made by a Shrew which created a distinct set of tracks and tunnels surrounding the CKEC building. There were many trails made by one or more Ermines (Short-tailed Weasel) offering a great opportunity for members to learn about this species. Mammals identified by tracks include Shrew sp, Mouse sp, Red Squirrel, Eastern Gray Squirrel, Porcupine, Eastern Cottontail, Snowshoe Hare, Ermine, Red Fox, Coyote and White-tailed Deer.

## Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding at the Oliver Property Near Nogies Creek in 2021

Submitted by Chris Risley and Erica Nol

Owl banding took place in October and November of 2021 at the James McLean Oliver Ecological Centre near Nogie's Creek on Pigeon Lake. The project, led by Prof. Erica Nol of Trent University, resulted in the banding of 158 Northern Saw-whet Owls and the capture of five saw-whet owls that had been originally



Outstretched wing of an After Second Year (ASY) NSWO, with a mixed pattern of old (light/worn) and new (dark/fresh) feathers. Photo taken October 26, 2020 by Sarah Bonnett

banded at other stations. The total banded (158) was slightly higher than our long-term average of 105 suggesting that this was a good year for the owl population. This was the 22nd year for the owl banding project.

Owls are aged on the basis of feather replacement as seen under blacklight. In 2021, the majority of owls banded were Hatch Year or Second Year.

The percentage Hatch Year (38.6%) and Second Year (37.3%) was very similar. This compares to last year (2020) when Hatch Year made up 72.8% of the owls banded and Second Year made up only 12.5%. The high percentage of Second Year birds observed this year results from the high numbers observed last year as Hatch Year returning north and then going south again. After Second Year (19.6%) and After Hatch Year (4.4%) made up the rest of the owls banded (Table 1).



NSWO photo by Sarah Bonnett

Table 1: Ages of Northern Saw-whet Owls banded in 2021 at the Oliver property.

Age	Hatch Year	Second Year	After Second Year	After Hatch Year	Total Banded
Number	61	59	31	7	158
Percent	38.6	37.3	19.6	4.4	100

Saw-whet Owls are aged by a formula using weight and wing chord measurements. Female owls are larger than males but there is a degree of overlap between the two, resulting in some unknown sexed birds. This year, females constituted 75.9% of all owls banded while males and unknowns were 5.7% and 18.4% respectively (see Table 2). This result is typical of our results from other years. It is not known why so few males are captured. They may not migrate or do not come to the audio lures that we employ for attracting owls to the nets for banding.

Table 2: The sex of Northern Saw-whet Owls banded in 2021 at the Oliver property.

Sex	Females	Males	Unknown	Total Banded
Number	120	9	29	158
Percent	75.9	5.7	18.4	100

The nets were open to catch owls on 27 nights between October 2 (3 owls banded) and November 4 (2 owls banded). Owls were captured and banded on 25 of those nights. The peak of banding was towards the end of October, a little later than average. Sixteen owls were captured on both October 23 and on October 24. The next highest peaks of banding were 14 owls caught on October 16 and 13 owls caught on October 13. Typically, the peak of banding occurs around mid-October. This fall's warmer temperatures may have contributed to the later peak in 2021.

This year five owls were captured that had already been banded but not at the Oliver Property (i.e., foreign recaptures):

924-68487 (Banded on 12 Nov 2020 as ASY F at HBMO near Malden Centre, ON)  
Recaptured at Nogies Creek on 2 Oct 2021.

1124-03502 (Banded on 5 Dec 2020 as HY F near Connersville, IN)  
Recaptured at Nogies Creek on 7 Oct 2021.

924-68454 (Banded on 25 Oct 2020 as HY F at HBMO near Malden Centre, ON)  
Recaptured at Nogies Creek on 22 Oct 2021.

1104-49738 (Banded on 25 Sep 2020 as HY F at Hilliardton, ON)  
Recaptured at Nogies Creek on 24 Oct 2021.

1104-27500 (Banded on 18 Oct 2021 as HY F at PEPBO near Milford, ON)  
Recaptured at Nogies Creek on 24 Oct 2021.



NSWO photo by Carrie Sadowski

Three owls originally banded by us at Nogies Creek were recaptured by other banders:

1014-16061 (Banded on 7 Oct 2020 as HY F at Nogies Creek)  
Recaptured: Ruthven Park near Cayuga, ON by Rick Ludkin in 2021

1104-33537 (Banded on 24 Oct 2019 as SY F at Nogies Creek)  
Recaptured: Long Point, ON: 27 Oct 2021, ASY  
Recaptured: Pennsylvania: 5 Nov 2021

1104-10066 (Banded on 5 Oct 2017 as SY F at Nogies Creek)  
Recaptured: West Virginia: 26 Nov 2017 (Bob Dean, 39.57560 -78.00329)  
Recaptured: Hilliardton Marsh, ON: 6 Oct 2021

It is interesting that our station captures owls migrating in both southwest and southeast directions. Two owls were captured at Nogies Creek which had been banded in previous years in Essex County, Ontario, indicating migration in a south-west direction. A third owl was originally banded in December in Indiana

also to the south-west. Two other owls travelled to the south-east after banding at Nogies Creek and were caught in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

A saw-whet owl originally banded at Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory on October 18, 2021 showed reverse migration. It travelled a distance of about 180 km from Milford, Ontario to Nogie's Creek in six days and was captured by us on October 24, 2021. This is the first case of reverse migration we have had and appears to be very unusual in saw-whet owls.

This year, the number of volunteers allowed to attend and help with banding was reduced due to COVID-19. Only three people including the bander were allowed in the cabin. We wish to thank the nine banders who operated the station and the over 40 volunteers who attended and watched the banding. Thanks also to Eric Sager, manager of the James McLean Oliver Ecological Centre of Trent University, and his family for allowing us to use the cabin and band owls at the property and for visiting during our owl banding operations, and encouraging this work.

## Nature in April

### From the Book *Nature's Year in the Kawarthas* by Drew Monkman

April is the time of amphibian love, when marshes, swamps and woodland ponds reverberate with the calls of countless frogs consumed by a mating frenzy. Salamanders, too, join the fray as they venture over ice, rock and road to make their way back to ancestral breeding ponds. High overhead a snipe flies in wide, reckless circles, its wings creating a haunting tremolo sound. From a nearby thicket, the nasal "beep" of the woodcock is constantly repeated until the bird suddenly launches itself into the air and begins its spectacular sky dance.



Photo of Blue-spotted Salamander  
by Basil Conlin



Coltsfoot. Photo: Aiwok,  
CC BY-SA 3.0 via  
Wikimedia Commons

On an April morning, the chorus of robins, cardinals and Mourning Doves is so loud that you have to get up and close the bedroom window. Forests resonate with the drumming of grouse and the courtship hammering of woodpeckers. Evening Grosbeaks call from overhead as they search out swelling buds on which to feast. On our lakes, we hear yet another April music – the tinkling of black candle ice, the clamour of ice piling up in ridges and the roar of waves rolling under the disintegrating frozen surface. Walk through the forest and your nose will recognize the time of season by the smell of the sodden, thawing earth and decaying leaves. And, for those of us old enough to remember, April will always be synonymous with the smell of grass fires.

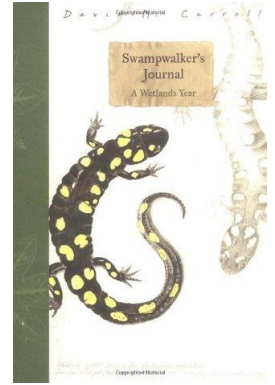
New plant life, too, vies for our attention this month. The yellow flowers of Coltsfoot push forth among roadside stones and debris. Almost overnight, the tree tops appear less open as dormant buds swell and thicken. The flowers of maples, poplars, elms and alder stand out against the grey-brown landscape and provide a foretaste of what is to come; because, more than anything, April is a time of great expectation. In only a few weeks, the explosive growth of buds, flowers, shoots and leaves will totally transform the landscape. The extraordinary surge of life that we see and feel everywhere frees us of our late winter blahs and whets our appetite for the pleasures of May.



## Book Review - Swampwalker's Journal: A Wetlands Year by David Carroll

Reviewed by Marilyn Freeman

At time of publishing in 1999, author David Carroll had visited his favourite wetland spots at the same times for 13 years in a row. Focused on the freshwater wetlands of upstate New Hampshire, his descriptions of flora, fauna, topography and seasons will be familiar to readers in the area of Nogojiwanong/Peterborough, our "land between". Every year at thaw, Carroll headed out to pools, marshes and swamps visiting for as many days and hours as possible until the ice returned.



Swampwalker's Journal is a marriage of poetic prose and keen observation of the natural world as well as beautiful pen and ink artwork. He calls keen observation a "spirit bridge" between the anthropocentric world and the natural world. "I do not look for human meanings out here; one who looks for human meanings in nature will never see nature."

Written in present tense, the walk, following the seasons takes the reader along through vernal pools, marshes, swamps, shrub swamps, ponds, floodplains, bogs and fens. Starting in April he says "April is a waiting month, with extended periods of darkness, cold, and rain, even snow from time to time." But it is also the time of rebirth, of early turtles coming out of estivation, of salamanders seeking mates.

There are interesting lessons to be learned on these walks. For example, when entering an unknown wetland, follow the deer trails. They know where and where not to tread. Other creatures use deer trails as well. Salamanders lay egg masses in deeper pockets, turtles may nest along the edges, garter snakes use them as hunting highways and even plants will make their homes in these linear wetlands.

Wood frog tadpoles are tasty but as they approach metamorphosis their skin becomes toxic. Hawks have learned to "undress" the frog before dining! Turtles are "living solar batteries". They take the energy of the sun's heat with them when they drop back into the numbing water of early spring. With the water at 5.5 °C (42 °F), it is just above 5 °C (41 °F), a marker referred to as biological zero. Below this temperature plant and animal life become dormant.

There are even wetlands within wetlands. Factors such as where, how long and how deeply the water is distributed, water chemistry, microclimates and microtopography create slightly but significantly different environments.

Carroll understands the value of patience and remaining still. At one point he comes face to face with a coyote. A mink runs over his foot. And with the turning of his head he becomes "An inadvertent magician, I have made three hundred frogs disappear."

When reading this book, it is advisable to stay in the "here and now", just like the author during one of his wading expeditions. It's a book to be savoured over time. Read about the spring in the different environments during the spring, read about the summer during the summer etc. Otherwise, the savouring may turn into a glut of observation and information. If it's possible, a book can be too rich!

Carroll is not without a viewpoint. He states that he does not want to overwhelm his readers with laments and tirades but "It is beyond ironic that we can all but never say no to the housing project, shopping mall, hotel, highway, golf course, or expansion of agriculture, but that after the habitat has been fragmented, funds, agencies, and groups can be drummed up to cage the final nests, relocate buckets of eggs and...dump them into encircled habitat remnants. The most direct, simple, and viable solution, to simply leave the place alone, has no place in the debate... 'Wildlife management' is a sorry contradiction in terms. There already is a management plan. It has been unfolding since life's appearance on earth." Ultimately, the human species does not "exist outside of coevolutionary design, the framework of the natural world." This book won the John Burroughs Medal for Best Natural History Book of the Year.

## Steve's Swan Sightings

Submitted by Steve Paul

As mentioned in the March *Orchid* - we have been very fortunate that Trumpeter Swans have stayed local to our area over this past winter. Up to nine swans were seen in February, and as the ice started to recede on the Otonabee River, the swans started to move around as well. Reports continued around Lakefield Marsh, the Lakefield waterfront, near Lock 25, and even around Auburn Reach.



Photo: Steve Paul

On March 5, on a very blustery day on Little Lake, I photographed a pair of Trumpeter Swans hunkered down on the ice, heads tucked under their wings to stay warm. I couldn't see evidence of wing tags or leg bands to identify them. I had a feeling I knew who they were, but I couldn't get any clear views. To get away from the wind, I moved around to observe birds along the Holiday Inn, and north of the train bridge near Edgewater Blvd. Several of us were able to photograph a Lesser Black-backed Gull, which is a nice rarity for our area. About an hour later, a pair of Trumpeters flew in from Little Lake and landed north of the train bridge. Laurie and I watched them swim up along the islands, bobbing up and down feeding along the way. I took lots of photos, but still couldn't identify them. After thinking they would keep swimming north out of view, they turned back and started swimming south in our direction. I started to see flashes of yellow along the left wing of one, indicating a tagged swan. Eventually, she turned and I could clearly see the tag. It was X66 - Sadie!! With only a tag on her left wing - it took me almost two hours to identify her.

Next time you see any Trumpeter Swans in our area - pay close attention and try to get good views along the wings. Patience pays off and you may be able to see our local celebrity swan pair for yourself!

As I have reported in the past - please consider reporting all sightings of Trumpeter Swans that you see. There are many different ways to do this:

- Report using eBird.
- If you are registered for Atlas-3, you can report using the NatureCounts app or the Atlas website.
- Report through the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group (a.k.a. OTSRG). They are easily found on Facebook. Gary Lane and Joy Poyntz are the main data trackers.
- Report through the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre. (Google "Wye Marsh Swan Sightings.")
- Report through the Trumpeter Swan Society. (USA-based but will direct data to the OTSRG).
- You can also report them to me via email, and I will pass that information along.



Photo: Steve Paul

Please send as much detail as possible: date and time, the specific location you saw them (even with GPS coordinates if you have them). Confirmation photos are very helpful as well. If you have any additional questions, or you would like to get more involved with monitoring Trumpeter Swan activity, please reach out to me.



Herring Gull with Trumpeter Swans. Photo: Steve Paul

## Waterfowl Survey Along Otonabee River

Submitted by Susan Chow

On March 23, eighty students from Trent University's BIOL 3380 class [Advanced Ecology] divided into 16 teams and surveyed waterfowl along the Otonabee River from the north end of Lakefield (Hague Blvd) to the south end of Peterborough (Park Street South and Cameron Street). The weather was cloudy at 2 °C, with an east wind blowing approximately 15 km/hr. The results are shown in the table below.

Waterfowl Species	Number of Observations
Bufflehead	237
Canada Geese	295
Common Merganser	43
Common Loon	2
Hooded Merganser	130
Mallard	149
Common Goldeneye	56
Double-crested Cormorant	1
Lesser scaup	9
Northern Pintail	7
Redhead	6
Ring-necked Duck	29

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## From the Archives - Changes in Status of Birds

Submitted by Martin Parker

The oldest known summary of the birds of Peterborough County was written by J. Larry McKeever in 1958 - 'A Check-list of the Birds of Peterborough County, Ontario, Canada'. The status of two species of birds from that report are provided below. Compare to current observations.

### American Robin:

1958 Status: 'Very common summer resident. Arrives from 2nd week in March and departs around end of October depending upon weather. Breeds throughout the County. First eggs laid about May 1st.'

Current Situation: In recent years, American Robins are now regular winter residents with 891 being recorded on the last Christmas Bird Count held on December 19, 2021.

### Eastern Bluebird:

1957 Status: 'Formerly very common and now comparatively scarce although fair numbers seen in migration. Arrives in April and departs in October.'

Current Situation: This species has increased in numbers due to nest box programmes and elimination of long-term insecticides. This past winter, observations of Eastern Bluebirds occurred weekly throughout the southern part of the County.



## Excerpt from *Song of the Rolling Earth* by John Lister-Kaye

*This book is highly recommended by former PFN Board member Don Pettypiece.*

I have to write about the wren because it will out, like the truth. It is a fidget of buff-speckled busyness, a ferment of tiny insistence. It is a spasm of unfettered jubilation. Like rooks and mergansers, it's in too deep. It has fidgeted and spasmed itself into my own inner cave, my cerebral cortex, gone in like a bright stain and stuck. There for good.

Why the wren, you ask? Why this turbulent jot of restlessness? This oh so little bit? Why not the golden eagles that slide high over Aigas on fixed wings, or crossbills, or siskins, or the peregrine falcons whose frantic screamings echo from the walls of the Aigas Gorge? (You think the golden eagle and the peregrine need a better press?) The answer is relativity. Ounce for ounce, trilling milligram for trilling milligram, the wren is more bird than the golden eagle, than the peregrine – than any of the above. From a wren you get more action, more pulse, more volume, more sheer bubbling joy, more cheek, more thrill and more down-right damnable panache than you get from a dozen others put together. The wren nests in your broken drainpipe a yard from your door. It hurls chattering abuse at you from two feet away in a barrow full of rose prunings and checks it out for aphids and scale bugs while you're having your tea. The wren sings like it's busting a gut. The wren has pizzazz.



A close relative of the Eurasian Wren: the Winter Wren. Photo: Cathy Douglas

*[During a long cold snap in the Scottish Highlands, the book's author took home a nest box in need of repair that had fallen from a tree...]*

I was almost back at the house when I fancied I heard a sound. It was the faintest little scratching sound; so faint it almost wasn't a sound at all. It was more of a suspicion attached to a claw. I opened the lid of the box. To my utter disbelief it was crammed with corpses. A mass grave of wrens. When I picked the first one out another came with it, the clenched claws clutching the feathers of the one beneath in a final, defiant clench. I was horrified. How was I going to live without wrens? Was this to be our own awful silent spring?

I ran into the kitchen and tipped the box out on to a tray. There were twenty-one tiny brown bodies on the tray. I had a whole tray full of silent springs. I stood in gutted disbelief, aghast. It was as if a bucket of gross injustice had been tipped out on to the kitchen table. And then... and then, with hope rearing like a stallion inside my breast, one of them moved. A tiny leg extended a hooked claw and scratched hope into the afternoon. In a surge of optimism I gathered the whole lot up in my hands like scooping up a pile of walnuts and dumped them in a china bowl. I thrust the bowl into the bottom of the Aga warming oven.

An Aga has four ovens: one roasts, one bakes, one keeps supper hot while everyone fails to come back from the pub, and the last one, the coolest bottom oven, usually stuffed with drying shoes, resurrects wrens. Which is exactly what it did. In under an hour I had twenty wrens in a bowl, all fidgeting, all shuffling feathers, all treading on each other, all ticking, all looking cross. Now I had the Resurrection in a mixing bowl. From a fistful of feathered walnuts, the Khan Aga had delivered up a ferment of tiny souls. I quickly put a tea towel over the bowl. It ticked like a bomb. I removed the bowl to the warming plate for fear of cooking them.

*Editor's note: There's more to this amusing story – and it's well worth the read – but for now you can rest assured that the wrens eventually made it back to the outdoors and lived happily ever after.*



## The Orchid Diary








A summary of noteworthy observations by PFN members and others in Peterborough County. Information compiled from e-bird, Drew Monkman's Sightings website, PTBO Sightings and individual submissions. Please submit your interesting observations to Martin Parker at mparker19@cogeco.ca or phone 705-745-4750. FOY: First-of-year, LH Trail: Lang-Hastings Trail, NFC: Night Flight Call station which records call notes of birds passing over.

Special Winter Visitors	
<b>Carolina Wren</b> -- Reported in last diary and continuing in Nicholls Oval area by many. Another individual was observed on March 1 at the Mount by Kait Dueck. <b>Fox Sparrow</b> -- One continued to visit feeder near Fraserville area through the period and a second individual visited a feeder in Lakefield through the month. <b>Eastern Bluebirds</b> - reported weekly from various locations in the southern part of the County during the period.	
Feb. 1	<b>Snowy Owl</b> continued to be observed at the Peterborough Airport periodically during period. <b>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</b> in Nicholls Oval area by Marilyn Hubley and others. <b>Hermit Thrush</b> in Trent Nature area by Scott Gibson. <b>Red Crossbill</b> at Jack Lake by Jerry Ball & Martin Parker.
Feb. 2	<b>Red-winged Blackbird</b> in Edgewood Park area by Marilyn Hubley. <b>Common Grackle</b> in the Lakehurst area by Martyn Obbard - continued after period. <b>Eastern Bluebird</b> - 2 in the Allendale area by Pam Martin - other reports periodically from throughout the southern part of the county during February.
Feb. 5	<b>Northern Shrike</b> visited the feeders of Bill Snowdon, Lower Buckhorn Lake. While there, the small birds disappeared. The shrike moved on but returned again on Feb 8. <b>Hermit Thrush</b> by Donald Sutherland along Bartlett Road.
Northern Saw-whet Owl	
On Feb. 6 one was calling in Mike Burrell's yard along 8 <sup>th</sup> Line of Douro and Feb 7 at Jeff Stewart NFC station near Millbrook - additional reports for this location during February.	
Feb. 7	<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b> on the Trent River off the 7 <sup>th</sup> Line of Asphodel by Luke Berg. <b>Two Beavers</b> on Eel's Creek at Northey's Bay Road by Jerry Ball.
American Opossum	
Two Opossum observations were made by Kyle Morrison in the area of Hilliard Avenue -- one dead on the road on February 7 and the second on February 23. Kathy Parker observed a dead one on Reid Street near Hunter Street on March 20.	
Feb. 8	<b>Common Redpoll</b> visited the feeder of Bill Snowdon - first this winter. <b>Golden Eagle</b> by Cathy Douglas & Dave Milsom at Nephton.
Feb. 9	<b>Wood Duck</b> with flock of Mallards at Beavermead Park by Matthew Gavin. <b>Red-winged Blackbirds</b> (2) at south end of Duncan Line by Cathy Douglas.
Feb. 12	<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b> on Trent River off Old Orchard Beach by Donald Sutherland. <b>Turkey Vulture</b> by Ainsley Boyd along Peterborough County Road 3. <b>Pine Grosbeak</b> (3) by Angela Mattos at Skating Oval, Lakefield. <b>Purple Finch</b> - appeared to be an influx - Wendy Hogan had 4 near Apsley, Mike Coyne & Kim Bennett had 3 in Lakefield and Travis Cameron had 6 in Lakefield, Steve Paul had 1 along Keene Road, & Cathy Douglas had 1 in Petroglyphs Provincial Park. <b>Pine Siskin</b> reports: 2 at Apsley by Wendy Hogan & 1 by Iain Rayner south of Lakefield. Numerous reports in days following by many observers from many locations.

Feb. 13	<p><b>Golden Eagle</b> at Nephton Ridge area by Luke Berg.</p> <p><b>Black-backed Woodpecker</b> at Nephton Ridge by Luke Berg.</p> <p><b>Pine Grosbeak:</b> 1 in Champlain Cres. by Chris Risley &amp; Erica Nol, 1 at Nephton Ridge by Luke Berg, and 1 in Beavermead Park by Andrew Brown &amp; Olivia Maillet - additional reports for next few days.</p> <p><b>Purple Finch</b> - Reports by many from Douro area by Bruce Kidd, South Bay of Stoney Lake by Cathy Douglas &amp; Keene Road by Steve Paul - numerous reports in days following.</p>
Feb. 15	<p><b>Short-eared Owl</b> at Peterborough Airport by Luke Berg.</p> <p><b>Hermit Thrush</b> at Otonabee Gravel Pits Conservation Area by Luke Berg.</p>
Feb. 16	<p><b>Hoary Redpoll</b> at Warsaw by Dave Milsom.</p> <p><b>Merlin</b> on Scriven Road &amp; <b>Northern Shrike</b> and <b>American Kestrel</b> at Airport by Jerry Ball, Ken Morrison, Martin &amp; Kathy Parker.</p>
Feb. 17	<b>Winter Wren</b> was spotted by Esther Paszt in the Bear Creek area of the city.
Feb. 20	<b>Hermit Thrush</b> near Cavan by Scott McKinlay.
Feb. 21	<p>Female <b>Wood Duck</b> along Lakefield Waterfront by Andrew Brown &amp; Olivia Maillet - seen by others over next few days.</p> <p><b>Redhead</b> in the vicinity of Lock 19 by Cathy Douglas and others over following days.</p>
Feb. 22	<p><b>Barrow's Goldeneye</b> (female) on river between Lock 25 and Lakefield by Dave Milsom and other sightings over the next few days until March 1.</p> <p><b>Hoary Redpoll</b> in flock of <b>Common Redpolls</b> on LHT between Drummond and Heritage Line by Luke Berg.</p>
Feb. 23	<p><b>Hoary Redpoll</b> in Hague Point Loop, Lakefield by Travis Cameron.</p> <p><b>Tundra Swan</b> on ponds at Peterborough Airport by Tony Barrett.</p>
Mar. 1	<b>Yellow-bellied Sapsucker</b> , 4 <sup>th</sup> Line of Otonabee-South Monaghan by Marilyn Hubley.
Mar. 3	<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b> on river off 5 <sup>th</sup> Line of Asphodel by Luke Berg.
Mar. 4	<b>Hoary Redpoll</b> along Nicholson Road by Laurie Healey.
Mar. 5	<p>2 <b>American Wigeon</b> &amp; 1 <b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b> on Little Lake off Edgewater Blvd by Cathy Douglas &amp; Dave Milsom and others.</p> <p><b>Snowy Owl</b> along Chemong Road by Henrique Pacheco, Kevin Gevaert &amp; Zach Wile.</p> <p><b>Trumpeter Swan</b> was reported by Bill Snowdon in open water between Chemong and Buckhorn Lakes -- lakes starting to open up.</p> <p><b>Great Grey Owl</b> by Jerry Ball near Havelock - being mobbed by Common Raven - not relocated.</p>
Mar. 6	<p><b>Red-winged Blackbird</b> arrived at feeder of Bill Snowdon, Lower Buckhorn Lake - he noted it was five days earlier than last year.</p> <p>On the PFN outing, the participants observed an <b>Otter</b> on the ice at Young's Point - disappeared when a <b>Bald Eagle</b> soared over and 3 <b>Ring-necked Ducks</b> at Lakefield.</p>
Mar. 7	<p><b>Song Sparrow</b> was feeding under Bill Snowdon's feeders - he noted it arrived last year on March 21.</p> <p><b>Eastern Chipmunk</b> - emerged from hibernation with reports from both Al Sippel and Kathy Parker in their yards feeding on scattered seeds.</p>
Mar. 9	<p><b>Sandhill Crane:</b> 1 over Parkhill Road West by Ainsley Boyd &amp; 1 near Lakefield by Iain Rayner</p> <p><b>Turkey Vulture:</b> 1 soaring south along Chemong Road by Zach Wile &amp; Dolan Bohnert. 1 over Jackson Park Trail by Amy Semple, &amp; 2 along Cedar Cross Road, Douro/Dummer by Angela Mattos - sightings daily since.</p> <p><b>Northern Saw-whet Owl</b> - a movement occurred with individuals reported from Millbrook, Lakefield, Otonabee Gravel Pits CA by several observers-- some were calling.</p> <p><b>Gray Catbird</b> on Engleburn Ave by Ben Taylor.</p>



	<b>Northern Goshawk</b> perched on the fence of JB Jaboor in the Campbelltown landing area.
Mar. 10	<b>2 Sandhill Cranes &amp; 1 male Northern Harrier in the Buckley Lake area by Jerry Ball.</b> <b>Cackling Goose:</b> Single birds at Otonabee Gravel Pits CA, Trent River at 6 <sup>th</sup> Line of Asphodel, and Asphodel Beach by Luke Berg. <b>Red-shouldered Hawk</b> at Otonabee Gravel Pits CA by Luke Berg. Numerous reports of <b>Sandhill Cranes</b> from various locations by multiple observers. <b>White-winged Crossbills</b> (2) along County Rd. 20 near Stoney Lake by Patrick Kramer.
Mar. 11	<b>Cackling Goose</b> in flooded field on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Line east of Bailieboro by Kevin Gevaert & Henrique Pacheco - reported at that location by others until the end of the reporting period March 15.
Mar. 12	<b>Cackling Goose</b> (up to 8 individuals) on Little Lake off the Beavermead shoreline by multiple observers - still present in the Little Lake area for a few days.
Mar. 14	<b>Tundra Swan:</b> 5 on river between Lock 25 and Lakefield by Wendy Hogan & Dave Milsom
Mar. 15	<b>Red-shouldered Hawk</b> near Warsaw by Angela Matos. <b>Hoary Redpoll</b> at the Otonabee Gravel Pits CA by Luke Berg.

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### Orchid submissions are encouraged!

The submission deadline for the next issue is Friday, April 22 (Earth Day).

Send submissions to Kathryn Sheridan via email: orchid@peterboroughnature.org

or post mail to: PFN, PO Box 1532, Peterborough ON K9J 7H7

### **Leave Those Beavers Be**

Highlanders know the tale of this picturesque beaver pond  
And its beavers whom the local country folk depend on.  
Time was the road to Haliburton never washed out;  
Thanks to vigilant beavers, there was never any doubt.  
And the old trapper, mindful of water regulation,  
Always left untrapped an active beaver population.  
When the old man died, his sons in disgrace  
Trapped all the colony members, leaving none to replace  
Old, faulty parts of the long dam only a beaver can find.  
Spring's torrents destroyed the dam and road in kind,  
And caused delay to drivers taken far out of their way.  
Beaver ponds see cyclic change as this one shows today.  
A beaver meadow often grows in the newly exposed soil,  
But what a lovely pond restored by ingenuity and toil!

Murray Arthur Palmer, 2020



Photo: Murray Palmer

# Membership Application Form

Memberships may be  
obtained by mailing this  
completed form to:

Peterborough Field Naturalists  
PO Box 1532  
Peterborough Ontario K9J 7H7



**PETERBOROUGH FIELD NATURALISTS**

## Contact Information:

Name(s):

Phone(s):

Address:

Email(s):

I would like to receive The Orchid by (pick one): ☐ Mail Delivery ☐ Email ☐ Both

## Membership type and fee schedule:

**Notice:** Membership fees provide only a small part of the funds required to operate the Peterborough Field Naturalists. Donations from members like you help us offer a diverse range of programming for everyone. Please consider including a donation with your membership so that we can continue to serve you and the Peterborough community. **Please make cheques payable to Peterborough Field Naturalists.** For E-Transfer go to <https://peterboroughnature.org/membership/join-online/>

I have included a donation with my membership fees:

☐ Yes or ☐ No

If yes, amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

1. Single Adult \$30 ☐

2. Single Student or Youth \$15 ☐

3. Family \$40\* ☐

**\* Please give the names and ages of children wishing to enroll in the Junior Field Naturalists:**

Name	Age

Name	Age

## ◀◀◀ New Member Information ▶▶▶

### Main interests:

☐ Natural Environment

☐ Reptiles and Amphibians

☐ Botany

☐ Birds

☐ Aquatic Life

☐ Geology

☐ Insects

☐ Astronomy

☐ Mammals

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### How do you hope to participate?

☐ Outings

☐ Citizen Science

☐ Meetings

☐ Junior Naturalists

## Volunteers are always needed. Are you interested in any of these activities?

☐ Join the PFN Board

☐ Sit on research or conservation committees

☐ Lead an outing

☐ Assist with meetings

☐ Work on field projects

☐ Help with the Orchid publication

☐ Help the junior naturalists

☐ Give a presentation

## Liability Waiver (New and Returning Members):

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 my underage children.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_