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Executive Committee

Co-President/Publicity: Lois
Gillette

dlgill@sympatico.ca

Co-President: Kristen Osborne
kristen.osborne@hotmail.com

Secretary: Satu Pernanen
spernanen@gmail.com

Treasurer: Aart Van Goch
aartvangoch@gmail.com

Programmes: Otto Peter
opeter@rogers.com

Membership: Diane Peter
opeter@rogers.com

Outings : Don Docherty
annanddon@bell.net

Ontario Nature Contact : Maria
Prisciak

Conservation: Rayfield Pye
raypye@interlinks.com

Newsletter: Nancy & John Muzik
john_nancy_m@rogers.com

THE NATURALIST

DURHAM REGION FIELD NATURALISTS
CONSERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION
www.drfn.ca drfn1955@hotmail.com

President's Message



Welcome to 2022! Looks like we are back in the thick of it as far as COVID is concerned! So, it doesn't look good for any in-person, at a venue, DRFN meetings for a while. Glad we can continue to offer our members great programmes via ZOOM. Recognizing our members' need to get out and see nature with like-minded people, we are continuing with outings in keeping with current COVID protocols.

That's enough about COVID! I think we are all getting overly tired of hearing about it.

As I mentioned before, Derek and I set out in 2021 to have a Big Year in Durham Region. We managed to record 155 species. There were 269 species of birds found in Durham Region which were reported to eBird. We did so-so. It was a trial run, right? This year we will try again. It was fun learning how to use eBird and keep tabs on how we were doing. The highlight of the year for us was the Glossy Ibis found at Cranberry Marsh; way out of its range. Primarily it is found along the Atlantic coast south of Connecticut all the way south into Florida. During our stays in Florida, we would see them almost every day around the pond outside our door.

Not only was it fun to find species of birds it was a good excuse to get out and visit Durham's many natural areas. Cranberry Marsh in Lynde Shores C.A. is a favourite. Second Marsh/McLaughlin Bay Wildlife reserve is another. And we can't forget Thicksen Woods Land Trust, great for spring migration birding. Did you know that the DRFN web site www.drfn.ca features a map of Durham Region locating these natural areas and more? On the site, click on "Guide to Natural Areas of Durham Region". You will find the map with the locations of 37 different natural areas and trails you can visit. Below the map are the links to each area's website.

And speaking of the DRFN website if you visited last year, you may have seen that it was "Not Secure". It had more to do with being unsafe to submit your information there. But it also caused some browsers to not allow you to open the site. It has been corrected with the yearly purchase from our service provider of a Security Certificate. Another way to get more money from us? Did not used to be a problem!

Upcoming Meetings

Meetings: last Monday of each month except June-August and December

Time: 7:30 p.m.

*Place: **To be held via Zoom.***

Invitations to the video conference meetings will be sent by Otto Peter with instructions on connecting, via computer, tablet or phone including the URL and access code

January 31 - Marcie Jacklin, "Owls of Southern Ontario"

Marcie will discuss identification features, habitats and how you can help owls.

February 28 - Bruce McKenzie, "The Wetlands of the Hamilton Area"

March 28 - Jeff Bowman, "Flying Squirrels"

April 25 - Paul Laporte, "Woodland Plant Identification"

May 30 - AGM and Members Night

Newsletter Submissions

Please submit your pictures and articles for the Mar. newsletter no later than Mar. 15, 2022. Email all submissions to Nancy Muzik at john_nancy_m@rogers.com

Looking forward to great birding and enjoying nature in Durham Region this year- winter, spring, summer and fall!

Lois Gillette

Future Outings

These are challenging times due to COVID-19. We all embrace nature and long to see our favourite wildflowers, birds, mammals, insects and other wildlife. DRFN will follow the guidance, laws and regulations of Ontario and local municipalities. DRFN will continue offering outings and will ensure social distancing is observed as per our current regulations. We will not car-pool or share optics so bring your own. Bring a mask to be worn if you're within 6' of others.

Saturday, February 26 at 9:00 AM
Frenchman's Bay

Frenchman's Bay is a great place for ducks, gulls and raptors in the winter time.

This year, we'll approach the bay from a different angle by meeting at the west side. From Bayly, drive south on West Shore BLVD then drive east on Beachpoint Promenade to a parking spot. We'll meet at the east end of the traffic circle.

We'll check the trees and shrubbery for overwintering surprises then scan the water and ice. Hopefully, a hungry raptor will appear to augment the ducks and gulls.

Dress for the weather conditions!

Don Docherty

Past Outings

Niagara Gulls, December 4

Neil Gray (article and photographs)

We all met at the Dufferin Islands parking lot at 10:00am (2°C; mild winds; cloudy). It was a small group of 6, of which 5 were from the Durham Region Field Naturalist's club executive (Kristen Osborne [Co-President], Don Docherty [Outings], Rayfield Pye [Conservation; leader of this trip], Nancy & John Muzik [Newsletter Editors]), and one of the latest members to join the club (me!). It should be noted that Kristin Osborne had come down the day before and had scouted out the area for us; kudos for all of your efforts!

Gull watching on the Niagara River in December is an event that many clubs carry out. While I explored the Dufferin Islands area, prior to the group getting together, I met two other field naturalists' groups, plus many individual birders, who were doing the same thing. I should point out, compared to other years, some of the roads in the area have been blocked off, in order to create a controlled one-way system for a Holiday Season Lights Festival and you now have to pay for parking.



We started off looking around the Dufferin Islands looking for terrestrial species, and the Black-bellied Whistling Duck, an accidental which had been in the area for three weeks. This duck is typically found in Florida, Mexico, through to the middle of South America. We found the duck on shore, amongst a number of Mallards, including a domestic Mallard (which is about twice the size of a typical wild Mallard) and a hybrid Mallard (mostly white body). It was huddled down most of the time, trying to

keep warm; when it did stand up, it only used one leg, trying to conserve warmth.

In addition to the Mallards, Hooded Mergansers (see photo below) and Gadwalls were found.

In the trees around the islands, we did get glimpses of a number of terrestrial species, including kinglets. One bird, which has been found on previous DRFN trips in this area was a Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*), but was to no avail on this outing.



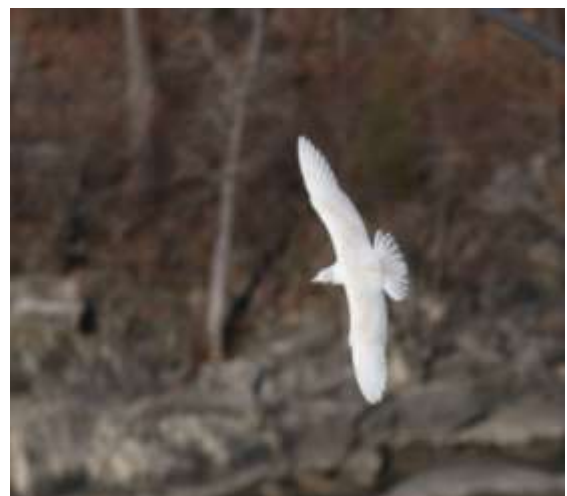
From the Dufferin Islands we walked to the parkway along the Niagara River, above the Falls. There were an amazing number of gulls and we had our first look at several Great Black-backed Gulls, and several more species of ducks, including Common Goldeneye (photo below). In the middle of the river, there is a small island with old cormorant nests, and there was a Herring Gull making itself at home.



We walked further away from the Falls until we arrived at the Control Gates. Just beyond the gates was a very large group of Tundra Swans in the middle of the river. Quite the sight to see. It was here that we also saw our largest group of Buffleheads.

After a quick Tim's lunch, we drove along the parkway through Niagara Falls towards Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Whirlpool. It was here that we found an all-white and very large gull, amongst the largest group of Bonaparte's to be seen that day; it was a Glaucous Gull. This bird was easy to spot, as it is twice the size of a Bonaparte Gull. We also had the other side of the coin, the smallest gull of the day, the Little Gull.

Further along the parkway we stopped across the Adam Beck Hydroelectric plant; Bonaparte Gulls was again the most dominant gull species here. In previous years, when most of the river has an ice covering, this is a popular area for all the gull species and other bird species, as the water that is discharged from the plant is warm aiding in keeping part of the river ice-free, plus fish that pass through the plant usually end up being chopped up, providing an easy food source.



end up being chopped up, providing an easy food source.

We then drove along to a view point just past the Queenston Heights; Black Vultures have been noted on the American side of the river in previous years. We did see one, plus a few Turkey Vultures. By all accounts the Turkey Vultures have migrated south, so why do we find a few laggards – there is a landfill nearby. In that area of the US, organics are not separated out from the bulk garbage, therefore birds come for a free lunch/dinner. In the case of finding a Black Vulture in the mix, it is opportunistic, as the Black Vulture does not have the same high degree of smell compared to a Turkey Vulture, therefore it relies partially on the latter finding the food, and the former poaching it.

For our last stop of the day, we drove into Niagara-on-the-Lake to Queen’s Royal Park, where the Niagara River runs into Lake Ontario, with the goal of finding a Razorbill (*Alca torda*). Well, we did see a few new ducks and a Red-throated Loon for this trip, but no Razorbill.

Even though we did not locate a few of the accidentals that had been noted by others, this was a very successful trip with 34 species noted. The weather held off, good visibility occurred, all is well. To view our list of birds, visit eBird at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/12559> .

67th Oshawa CBC December 19, 2021

The 67th annual Oshawa Christmas bird count had 28 field counters, 17 feeder watchers and found 95 species of birds.

Record high counts: Cackling Goose, American Coot, Common Raven, and Eastern Bluebird.

Count week birds: Turkey Vulture, Ruffed Grouse, and Greater Black-backed Gull

Weather: the low was -6 and the high was -4. We had a north-west wind in the 10 to 20 km range. Snow depth was 5 cms.

Field Counters: Don Docherty, Kristen Osborne, Charmaine Anderson, David and Mary Beth Worthington, Gary Yankech and son, Rebekkah Persaud and friend, Margaret Carney, Dennis Barry, Glenn Coady, Brian Steel, Otto Peter, Diane Peter, Dianne Pazaratz, Joan Ellis, Sam Cameron, Satu Pernanun, Janice Wilton, Brian Henshaw, Simon Henshaw, Tyler Hoar, Mike Ferguson, Peter Hogenbirk, Rayfield Pye, James Kamstra, Greg Moon, Lois Gillett, Derek Gillette, John and Nancy Muzik.

Feeder Watchers: Diane Peter, Dianne Pazaratz, Mike McEvoy, John and Nancy Muzik, John and Dianne McFeeters, Judy Pell, Jackie McBlain, Katrina Dabrowski, Craig McLauchlan, Shirley Penny, Susan, Coral, and Violet Hall, Kristen Osborne, Steve LaForest, and Ted Roffey.

The wrap up meeting was held on Zoom. The data will be entered into the Audubon Society’s website.

Special thank-you to Otto Peter and Kristen Osbourne.

SPECIES	2021	SPECIES	2021	SPECIES	2021
Cackling Goose	7	Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Carolina Wren	2
Canada Goose	4466	Red-tailed Hawk	44	Golden-crowned Kinglet	21
Mute Swan	53	Rough-legged Hawk	1	Eastern Bluebird	14
Trumpeter Swan	18	American Coot	3	Hermit Thrush	1
Tundra Swan	0	Sandhill Crane	21	American Robin	237
Wood Duck	0	Ring-billed Gull	622	Gray Catbird	1
Gadwall	59	Herring Gull	117	Northern Mockingbird	7
American Black Duck	111	Glaucous Gull	1	European Starling	3371
Mallard	1657	Rock Pigeon	751	American Pipit	2
Northern Pintail	9	Mourning Dove	1352	Cedar Waxwing	116
Redhead	48	Eastern Screech Owl	1	Lapland Longspur	1
Ring-necked Duck	1	Great Horned Owl	5	Snow Bunting	21
Greater Scaup	3249	Snowy Owl	1	Eastern Towhee	1
Lesser Scaup	1	Barred Owl	5	American Tree Sparrow	263
Harlequin Duck	1	Long-eared Owl	1	Fox Sparrow	1

White-winged Scoter	5	Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	Song Sparrow	11
Black Scoter	32	Belted Kingfisher	6	Swamp Sparrow	6
Long-tailed Duck	591	Red-Bellied Woodpecker	10	White-throated Sparrow	39
Bufflehead	227	Downy Woodpecker	109	Dark-eyed Junco	625
Common Goldeneye	640	Hairy Woodpecker	29	Northern Cardinal	292
Hooded Merganser	10	Northern Flicker	5	Red-winged Blackbird	8
Common Merganser	50	Pileated Woodpecker	4	Common Grackle	1
Red-breasted Merganser	540	Merlin	2	Brown-headed Cowbird	88
Wild Turkey	35	American Kestrel	2	Pine Grosbeak	0
Red-throated Loon	1	Northern Shrike	4	Purple Finch	3
Common Loon	1	Blue Jay	132	House Finch	164
Horned Grebe	2	American Crow	313	Common Redpoll	34
Red-necked Grebe	1	Common Raven	24	Pine Siskin	2
Great Blue Heron	3	Horned Lark	20	American Goldfinch	405
Northern Harrier	6	Black-capped Chickadee	916	House Sparrow	336
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Red-breasted Nuthatch	72	TOTAL BIRDS SEEN	22582
Coopers Hawk	10	White-breasted Nuthatch	86	TOTAL SPECIES SEEN	95
Northern Goshawk	1	Brown Creeper	3		
Bald Eagle	3	Winter Wren	3		

Rayfield Pye



Northern Mocking Bird by Lois Gillette



Red-tailed Hawk by John Muzik



Snowy CBC by Kristen Osborne



Northern Pintail by Kristen Osborne

Bird Feeder Tour – January 15



Purple Finch with American Goldfinches by Maureen McVarish

We had extremely cold conditions for the outing. Attendees were split into two groups of 10 but a couple of people cancelled the night before and on Saturday morning. The cold temperatures seemed to concentrate birds at the feeders but it was difficult to see them well if your glasses fogged up due to the face mask.

We saw large numbers of Goldfinches, Juncos and Chickadees. Mourning Doves, Crows and Downy Woodpeckers were seen in small numbers. Two feeders had Red-bellied Woodpeckers while

Hairy Woodpecker was seen or heard at two others. A Raven was heard in the Kinsale area.

We added a new feeder in Brougham thanks to the Pickering Naturalists and the home owners. It gave us Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers. In transit to it, some saw an adult Bald Eagle fly with its flat, outstretched wings. A magnificent Red-tailed Hawk was seen near the Brougham feeders. It's a constant threat for local squirrels.

Hopefully, next year will be more normal and we will be able to enjoy viewing without masks and a potluck lunch afterwards.



Red-bellied Woodpecker by Maureen McVarish



Group 1 by John Muzik

Here's the list of birds seen:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mourning Dove | Dark-eyed Junco | American Robin |
| Starling | Black-capped Chickadee | Downy Woodpecker |
| Woodpecker | Hairy Woodpecker | Red-bellied Woodpecker |
| Woodpecker | American Tree Sparrow | White-throated Sparrow |
| Purple Finch | House Sparrow | American Goldfinch |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | White-breasted Nuthatch | Red-breasted Nuthatch |
| Blue Jay | American Crow | Common Raven |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Bald Eagle | |

Don Docherty

Ontario Nature Report

Holland Marsh: No Place for a Freeway

Special lands within the Greenbelt now being eyed for highways and more sprawl. These lands provide our water, clean our air, reduce flooding and grow our food. Most have heard of Highway 413, but there's a sinister, shorter cousin planned to cut through the Greenbelt south of Lake Simcoe – the Bradford Bypass. The Holland Marsh Highway

(Bradford Bypass) – is a 16 km, four to six lane freeway that would cross several watercourses feeding into Lake Simcoe's Cooks Bay and bisect the lake's largest and most important wetland, the Holland Marsh.

Groups organizing against the Holland Marsh Highway are demanding updated studies that reflect current concerns about Lake Simcoe, climate change and biodiversity loss as well as a full investigation of alternatives. But, money talks and the Government of Ontario is not only ignoring these reasonable requests, but is proposing to exempt the highway from the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act. This would fast-track bridge construction, road widening and utility relocation before completing studies required as a condition of the 1997 Environmental Assessment approval.

Please log onto the Ontario Nature website for more details, and to sign the petition.

<https://ontarionature.org/holland-marsh-or-bradford-bypass-blog/>

A Winter Reminder

Remember feeding coyotes, foxes, deer, and other wild animals increases their presence and causes them to lose their fear of people, creating problems for both wildlife and our neighbourhoods.

On frigid winter days, log onto the Ontario Nature website to check upcoming events, read the ON magazine, browse on Facebook (Twitter etc.) for information, or “take action” concerns.

Maria Prisciak

Youth Summit – Thank you note

Dear DRFN Members:

Thank you sponsoring me for the 2021 Ontario Youth Summit. It was very interesting and I learned many new things and had fun. It would have been better if we could have met in person rather than by Zoom. During the session on nature conservation, I learned many new things that I was not aware about. I really enjoyed block 2 when I had a session where we learned about bees and other pollinators. I found it interesting because I learned about the different species of bees in Canada and which ones aren't originally from Canada. I also learned the differences between wasps and bees. I also learned that there are species of flies that look like bees. During the block 1 session I learned about plants in Canada and the uses they have and which ones are edible. I already knew about some of these since my grandfather has shown them to me during walks at the cottage. My block 3 session allowed me to learn many new things about our indigenous peoples and how we need to be allied with them to conserve our environment and biodiversity.

Best Regards
Jamie Nangle

Member's Page

Free Nature Webinars – Submitted by Anne Hide

33 Days with Bears

Wed., January 26, 2022 @ 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Hosted by Royal Ontario Museum, ROM Connects During the summer of 2020, acclaimed photographer Martin Gregus Jr. decided to brave the mosquitoes and document wildlife in Hudson Bay. Through his stunningly intimate images of the complex lives of polar bears, Martin shares the stories behind his winning *Rising Star Portfolio* in the 2021 Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. To register go

to: <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/whats-on/33-days-with-bears>

Sustainability for Healthier Oceans

Wed., February 2, 2022, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Hosted by Royal Ontario Museum, Curator Conversations

Join ROM's Soren Brothers in conversation with Samantha Renshaw of Ocean Wise Seafood, as they explore the small but meaningful ways individuals can make a difference to the world's marine environments. In a changing global climate, discover how each of us can make daily choices, like

choosing sustainably harvested seafood, that help to support our oceans for future generations. To register for this free event, please go to: <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/whats-on/sustainability-for-healthier-oceans>

DIY Seed Series - Canada's Wild Seeds: Growing our Biological Gold
Wednesday February 2, 2022 @ 7 – 8:30 pm

Speaker: Melissa Spearing, professional seed biologist

Host: North American Native Plant Society
Learn some tips and tricks for growing native plants from seed. To register, please go to: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/the-diy-seed-series-canadas-wild-seeds-growing-our-biological-gold-tickets-195097861957>

Rally to Save Carruthers Headwaters -Falmai Page



Environmental Defence Canada asked people to rally to save Carruthers headwaters. The rally was held near MPP Rod Phillips's office on the 27th November. They wanted people to dress for a flood. The best I could come up with was my granddaughter's frog outfit."

I had a surprise when I saw it on the front page of the local paper the week before Christmas!!

Algonquin Christmas Adventure - Carolyn & Aart Van Goch (photos by Carolyn)



Black-backed Woodpecker

Over the holidays we made a hastily planned camping trip to Mew Lake after discovering an opening the night prior. We only had a summer tent, but the weather was ideal and we survived nights of -8° fairly well. In our haste we thought to leave warm meals to supporting the local economy, but discovered there is no such thing on a Tuesday in winter! Regardless, we had a great time – some lovely walks, gorgeous winter scenes, and some exciting animal encounters.



Canada Jay



Marten (*Martes americana*)



Otto Peter

Have a look at who just tried to sneak up on the squirrels under my feeder in our backyard.



And a few weeks earlier in Bowmanville **Brian Reid** took this two blocks from his house

Nature FYI

New research: Redpoll species are all one - Nancy Muzik

New research published in [Nature Communications](#), finds that redpolls aren't multiple species, genetically speaking. Instead, the three recognized species (Common, Hoary, and Lesser Redpoll) are all just one with a "supergene" that controls differences in plumage color and morphology, making them look different. [Bird Watching](#) reported December 9: "A spokesperson for the American Ornithological Society says its taxonomic committee (which decides whether to split or lump bird species) "is open to reconsidering the issue and will do so when a new proposal is submitted." Sorry listers, but soon we will all lose the Hoary redpoll from our life lists.

Identifying Maple Trees by winter/spring Buds – Otto Peter

Many of us take walks in the winter and see bare trees and bushes. Did you know that you can identify most trees and bushes by just looking at the winter/spring buds on its twigs? The attached picture shows the winter/spring buds of our common maple trees.

Sugar Maple

Red Maple

Silver Maple

Striped Maple

Mountain

Manitoba Maple

