

# THE QUINTE NATURALIST

*The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is affiliated with Ontario Nature, a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research.*



## **BELLEVILLE'S PIGEON CONTROL OFFICER HAS ARRIVED**



*Photo by Kyle Blaney*

See page 2

# PEREGRINE FALCON

It wasn't too many years ago that sighting a peregrine locally was a big event for a birder. By the 1970s they were seldom seen in Quinte. DDT and other pesticides had had a devastating effect on their breeding success. Numbers have rebounded since the ban on DDT. During the past decade one or two birds have set up shop in downtown Belleville almost every year in the winter. They find the pigeons easy pickings and delicious.



*Photo by Tom Wheatley*

“Our” bird this year is a juvenile. We know that because so much of its plumage is brown, not the slate grey colour of last year's adult bird seen to the left. That's an advantage for a youngster. When they start roaming after leaving the nest all adults recognize that they are not a challenger for nesting territories and allow the young bird safe passage.

Because this year's peregrine is a juvenile it raises some interesting questions. You'll notice that both birds are sitting on what is a favourite perch at the same place on the south side of the courthouse. That particular spot has been chosen almost every year by every bird. Why? Is it because it's warmed by the morning sun and it's similar to the cliffs where peregrines nest in the wilderness?

It doesn't seem likely that the parents showed their young the location. I don't know of a nest in the Quinte area. On the other hand birders often don't report the location of nests because unscrupulous people steal nestlings to

sell to falconers. Maybe there was a nest nearby in Quinte. It would have been noticed on any of the city's taller buildings but on the other hand, both Prince Edward County and Hastings have sheer cliff faces which could have been chosen.



*Photo by Joe Bartok*

Whatever the answers to the questions watch for panicked flocks of pigeons being chased by one of nature's most spectacular aerial acrobats. The silhouette of an airborne predator with pointed wings and able to manoeuvre better than a jet fighter strikes fear in the hearts of many small creatures. A silhouette like that in the picture to the left proves that Belleville's Pigeon Control Officer is on the job.

## **CLUB NEWS**

### **Outings**

The 2020 Belleville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place on Monday December 28th. This year we will count birds as usual, but teams will need to practice social distancing by traveling in separate vehicles. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Birds Canada (formerly known as Bird Studies Canada) has advised participants not to have an end of day compilation dinner, but rather email in their sightings.

If you are interested in participating this year, either by joining a birding group or being a feeder watcher, please contact local CBC Compiler Tom Wheatley at [wheatleytom@hotmail.com](mailto:wheatleytom@hotmail.com) or 343 645 6345.

## Frink Centre Feeders – A Question

For the past few years we have been filling the bird feeders at the Frink Centre. We have not started the program yet this year because the demand for black oil seed led to Thrashers exhausting their stock. Michelle tells me that it will be mid-November before there is a new shipment of seed and it will be more expensive.

For many of the younger students who visit on a school field trip the feeders are a highlight. They get off the bus and rush to see the chickadees, nuthatches, blue jays and red squirrels which are enjoying a reliable food supply. Adults and children also sometimes stop to watch at other times.

School trips are not being run this year. Should we maintain the feeders this winter when seed becomes available? Let me know what you think. [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com).

## PROJECT FEEDERWATCH



*This Cape May Warbler was one of our more unusual feeder birds in the past 20 years. Unfortunately it should have been in the West Indies and it perished on a bitter New Year's Eve. Photo by Kyle Blaney*

I can still see a three-year-old boy getting up at 6 a.m. on winter mornings to watch the redpolls arrive for a breakfast of seeds scattered the previous day. That early interest in nature led to a career, 7 summers as an Algonquin Park naturalist where Sean met his wife and 2 grandchildren for us.

Kyle, was slower to become a birder but he now spends much of his spare time travelling to photograph birds. If we have an unusual bird at our feeders Kyle will probably visit with camera in hand. How will Project Feederwatch enrich your life? Try it.

<https://feederwatch.org/>



*Birds like this Magnolia Warbler nest in our area and benefit from being able to spend the winter in forests where biodiversity-friendly coffee is grown in Central America. Photo by Andrea Kingsley in eBird.*

**Enjoy coffee? Looking for a gift for that special teacher or delivery person? Need stocking stuffers? Buy now! Your support is needed!**

As many of you know, selling Biodiversity-Friendly coffee is an important, sustainable fundraiser for Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO). To support this campaign Kathy Felkar has sold this delicious, small-batch roasted coffee that grows under the Nicaraguan rainforest for the past 7

years. SHADE grown coffee farms protect bird habitat for our wintering migrants. All profits support the PEPtBO migration monitoring station. With few fundraisers this year, your support would be greatly appreciated! With funds raised, this Fall PEPtBO paid a living wage to two young banders and upgraded a lot of equipment.

**Biodiversity-Friendly Coffee is \$18 for a 400 gram bag. Choose between:**

**Dark Roast bean or filter ground**

**Medium Roast bean or filter ground**

**Espresso bean**

**Decaf filter ground.**

**You can pick up your coffee in Belleville or Tweed. Other arrangements are possible. Email Kathy at [kfelkar@xplornet.ca](mailto:kfelkar@xplornet.ca) to place an order before December 1. Please include number of bags, type of coffee and how you would like to pay - cash, cheque written out to PEPtBO or etransfers to [kfelkar@xplornet.ca](mailto:kfelkar@xplornet.ca).**

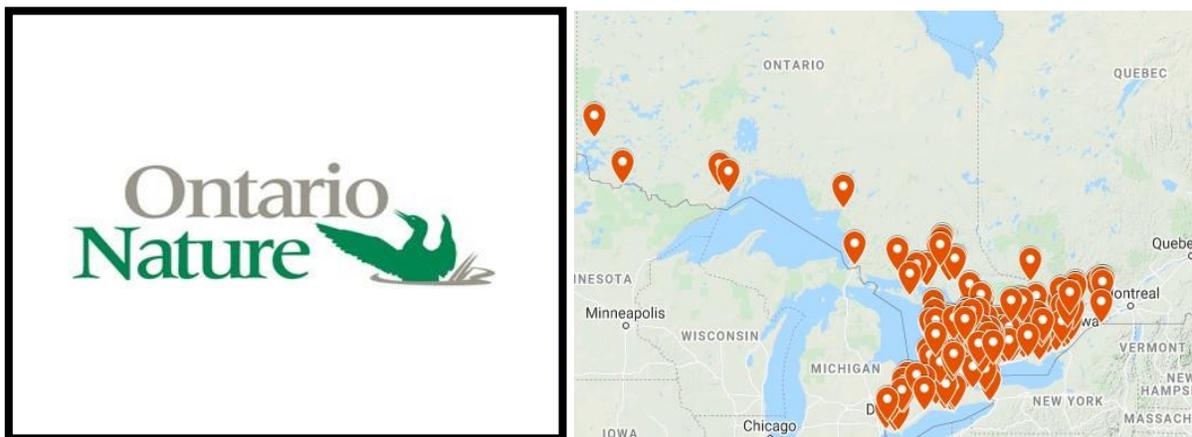
Thanks in advance for supporting PEPtBO and helping protect vital rainforest habitat, You will also be supporting a method of farming which has been shown to control soil erosion and run-off into waterways, improve carbon sequestration and provide natural pest control.

# YOUTH SUMMIT

Every year QFN sponsors a student to Ontario Nature's Youth Summit for Mother Earth. Like so much else this year the format had to be changed from a September weekend gathering at Couchiching Park in Orillia to a series of virtual meetings. Jay Solomon was this year's student.

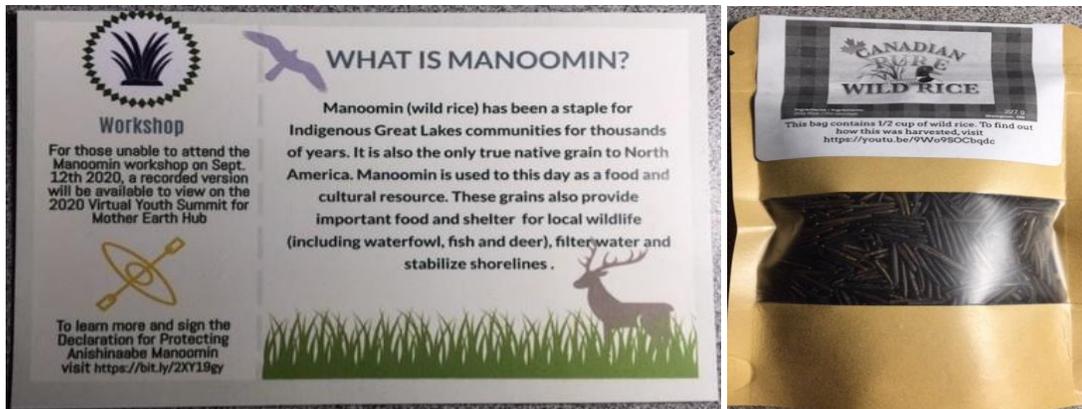
Article By Jay Solomon

On August 22nd, 2020, Ontario Nature began its annual Youth Summit for Mother Earth, which is an activity open to anyone between the age of 14 and 20 across Ontario. However, gathering restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year made the in-person event impossible. So, Ontario Nature and event partners made the decision to re-imagine its annual youth summit, and hold it virtually. I speak for many youths when I say that it was a huge success! As a high school student in Belleville, I was one of few youth in our surrounding area who had the privilege to attend this event.



Over 11 years, the Youth Summit has engaged youth from 214 communities across Ontario. Throughout this year's summit, I had the chance to explore different parts of the connection between nature and the Indigenous peoples, in the past and in the present times. The focus of the summit was not to teach us about topics such as preserving natural vegetation or reducing our carbon emissions; it was to help us understand the importance of the relationship between Indigenous culture and the environment. I had the chance to participate in an event about biodiversity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, meet Elders and admire their traditional dances, and

learn about manoomin (man-oh-min), a nutritious staple for the Anishinaabe people.



*Manoomin fact card and wild rice © Jay Solomon*

Furthermore, this event was geared towards educating youths who want to be involved and promote change. Having a passion and determination to accomplish something is very powerful, and despite being young adults, we can make a difference in society. In a small group, I learned about TakingITGlobal, an organization that gives young people a chance to work on a project or idea that they have planned. With funding and guidance, anybody interested is given the opportunity to make their ideas come to life. Meeting a member of TakingITGlobal and hearing other guest speakers talk about the importance of youth being involved were some of my favourite parts of the Youth Summit.

Above all, this summit helped bring together a diverse group from Ontario that had never met but shared a common interest, which was learning about Mother Earth. Meeting elders and community leaders helped boost our understanding at different activities, as we had an expert at each and every workshop! On top of that, the choice of workshops that we could attend were amazing, as there was always something that interested me.



*(Photos from 2019 Youth Summit © Chloe Jakob, Noah Cole)*

I am extremely grateful that the Quinte Field Naturalists were willing to sponsor me to attend this event, as it was a terrific and memorable experience. I would recommend that anyone with an interest in nature, Indigenous history, or youth leadership, participates in the Youth Summit! I am looking forward to spending some time working with the Quinte Field Naturalists, and implementing a few ideas that I learned from Ontario Nature.

Big thanks go out to Christine Ambre, Jackie Ho, Ontario Nature, the Youth Council, the Youth Circle for Mother Earth's Coordinating Circle, the Indigenous Environmental Institute at Trent University, Plenty Canada, and Walpole Island Land Trust for helping to run this event. Hopefully I have the chance to attend the Summit next year!



### **Watch for these birds in the Bay of Quinte in November and December.**

*Common Merganset by Keith Gregoire*



*Common Goldeneye by Rick Beaudon*



# BUZZARDS KNOW A GOOD THING WHEN THEY SEE IT

*By Terry Sprague*

*First published in The Tweed News Oct. 23, 2013*



A vulture known as Sarcophagus MacAbre was the undertaker in Walt Kelly's comic strip "Pogo."

Residents down our way always get a chuckle whenever they see turkey vultures circling above Shire Hall, Picton's municipal office. "Whatever does this mean?" they will snicker. Other kettles of vultures have been noted circling above nursing homes and the local funeral home. While these chosen locations always provide a few smiles every year, many of these turkey vultures are doing what other vultures and birds of prey often do - simply hanging loose, enjoying the autumn thermals that rise above the town. They are not looking for slow moving persons, or those who are not moving at all!

If you think there have been more turkey vultures around in recent years, you are not alone. Others have noticed the increase too. Some believe it is no more than a breeding range expansion that other southern birds like cardinals and mockingbirds have been experiencing in recent decades. Others attribute the increase to the availability of food - in the case of the turkey vultures - rotting flesh. If you are a vulture that thrives on disgusting things that are dead, then today's roadsides offer up a smorgasbord of delectable fare. Also increasing is its southern counterpart, the smaller black vulture. Several black vultures turn up in Ontario every year as the species expands its range.

Vultures are the vacuum cleaners of the bird world, much the same as gulls, some species of hawks, and other scavengers. And we thank them for their interest, as it still boggles the mind as we drive today's highways and wonder how some animals manage to survive as a species at all, the roadside carnage is so great. Do turkey vultures eat turkeys, I keep getting asked? Only if the turkey is already quite dead, I always respond. Turkey vultures are so-named because of their naked head and neck which resembles that of a turkey.



***Look for the grey and black pattern on the wings to identify Turkey Vultures. Photo by Kye Blaney.***



***Black Vultures show a different underwing pattern. Photo by Lindsay Story in eBird.***

The story of the turkey vulture in eastern Ontario is quite interesting. Early ornithologists in eastern Ontario never saw this species in our area as it was restricted to the extreme southwest of the province until the late 1800s. It wasn't until 1944, ironically the year I was born, that the first one was seen on Main Duck Island, a 900-acre island located some 20 km from the mainland in Lake Ontario. Five years later, the first one occurred in the Kingston region, and prior to 1982, there had been only three sightings of turkey vultures at Presqu'île Provincial Park.

Today, the story is much different. At this time of the year, as kettles of hawks surge along the south shore of Prince Edward County in their effort to migrate south while avoiding the open waters of Lake Ontario, they are often joined by kettles of turkey vultures. And there is no dearth of them now. Kettles

numbering several hundred float lazily along the shoreline with the hawks, rocking and swaying along like ships on a rolling sea. At Prince Edward Point, in Prince Edward County, there are numerous records of kettles numbering 500 or more being seen in late September and through October as this graceful bird of the air makes its way to better feeding grounds before winter sets in. On September 30th, 2001, 500 were counted during a hawk flight that included six species of hawks. In late October several years ago, one observer watched in amazement as 15 species of raptors flew over Prince Edward Point, one kettle comprising fully 1,000 raptors of eight species. Five hundred of these were turkey vultures. And on October 15th, 2005, 650 vultures were counted among 15 species of hawks. In examining over 35 years of data, the numbers clearly show a steady climb from just a dozen or so in the 1970s, to kettles routinely numbering over 100 in recent years.

As a migrant, turkey vultures are numerous; as a summer resident they are less frequently seen, but sightings still numbering many dozens on a typical day are common. Obviously, they are nesting in our region, but where? Certainly their nests are not turning up with the same frequency as individuals seen in flight during the summer months. One of the first indications of a nest I found was a broken egg in a manger of a dilapidated barn in the South Bay area of Prince Edward County. Other sightings around eastern Ontario indicate that turkey vultures routinely seek out drafty, old barns where access to hay mows may be obtained. However, old barns are a rapidly disappearing feature of our landscape. In the Kingston area, vultures have been found nesting on granite outcroppings. Other sources say they build no nest, but rather, lay their eggs directly on the ground, precipitous cliffs, hollow stumps or in caves.

So if you should see a turkey vulture circling above your house, it doesn't mean you should keep moving to verify that you are still breathing; it is simply one of many hundreds of vultures that are seeking out something less active in a relatively new breeding range.



***These five snow geese decided to hang out in the Moira River in Cannifton. It's unusual to see these geese in Quinte. If you go as far east as Lancaster near the Quebec border you will find flocks of 50,000 or more during migration in October and November. Photo by Kyle Blaney.***

***The Quinte Field Naturalists Association, an affiliate of Ontario Nature, is a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research. It was founded in 1949 and incorporated in 1990 and encompasses the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward. The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is legally entitled to hold real estate and accept benefits.***

***Quinte Field Naturalists meet on the fourth Monday of every month from September to March (except December), 7:00 pm, Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church, 60 Bridge Street East, Belleville. In April we hold our annual dinner at an alternate time and location. New members and guests are always welcome.***

***Bring a friend.***

<b>President</b> George Thomson 613-478-3205	<b>Past President</b> Wendy Turner	<b>Vice-President</b> Vacant
<b>Recording Secretary</b> Vacant	<b>Corresponding Secretary</b> Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205	
<b>Treasurer</b> Mike Shaw 613-967-1055	<b>Publicity/Environmental Officer</b> Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070	<b>Membership</b> Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407
<b>Newsletter</b> John Blaney 613-962-9337	<b>Outings</b> Vacant	<b>Social Convener</b> Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline –October, 15, 2020  
Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com)