



PECFN NEWSLETTER

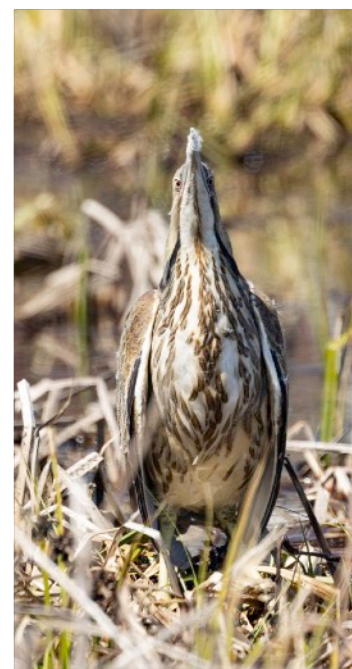
website: pecfieldnaturalists.org

info email address: pecfninfo@gmail.com.

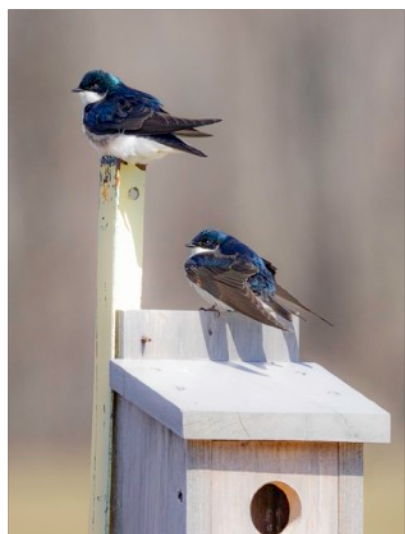
April 2023

What's Inside?

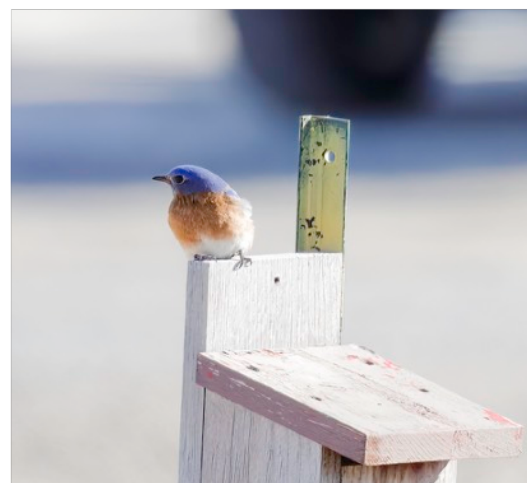
- p. 2 PECFN members meeting April 25: Bloomfield town hall: A2A
Adirondacks to Algonquin
- p. 3 Quinte Museum tour April 28: A Tale of Whales
- p. 4, 5 PECFN Advocacy: PPS by Paula Peel
- p. 6 Spiritual Nature of Plants outing: June 4
- p.7 Swift Watch
- p. 8 Spring Birding Festival: May 12 - 15
- p. 9 Macaulay Mountain Tree Identification outing with Tim Gray : March 1
- p.10 Mudpuppies outing: Feb. 12
- p. 11 Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas: by Joanne Dewey
- p. 12, 13 A journey into the Past: House Sparrows by Terry Sprague
- p. 14 South Shore Joint Initiative
PECFN Members' Night: June 27



American Bittern at
Hubbs Creek
photo Dale Smith



Tree Swallows and Bluebird on
nest boxes purchased from
SSJI
photos Dale Smith

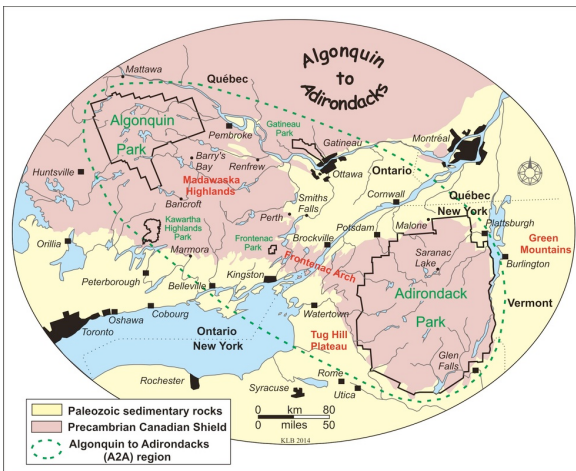


PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS

PECFN MEMBERS' MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 7 PM
IN PERSON AT THE BLOOMFIELD HALL

EMILY CONGER PRESENTS: THE ADIRONDACKS TO ALGONQUIN (A2A) — ESSENTIAL LINK IN THE GREAT EASTERN WILDWAY

The Algonquin to Adirondacks region (A2A) encompasses Algonquin Park in Ontario and Adirondack Park in New York State and the lands and waters connecting them. It is unique for its huge variety of soil types, giving it the greatest biodiversity of vascular plants in Canada. A2A is unique as a major north-south migratory route for terrestrial species and an essential part of the **Great Eastern Wildway**.



Map Courtesy of Ken Buchan.

But the A2A region is fragile and is particularly under threat from inappropriate development. In the Frontenac Arch part of A2A, where the greatest biodiversity occurs, only 4.1% is under protection. Other major threats are climate change and invasive species.

The A2A Collaborative works with its 50+ partners to address these threats and to reconnect this fragmented landscape. We support and foster projects supporting healthy, connected wildlife habitat.



Emily Conger has been involved in environmental issues since the late 1970s and continues to work on environmental, peace, and social justice issues with a variety of groups. Emily joined the A2A board in 2000 and served as president of the organization from 2002 to 2016. She is now A2A's secretary.

**Please join us in person on April 25.
All are welcome!**

PECFN MEMBERS OUTING

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, AT 10:30 am

***Join us for a guided tour of
the Quinte Museum of Natural History
99 Dufferin St, Trenton***

DIVING DEEP: A TALE OF WHALES THROUGH TIME
Explore this awe-inspiring new exhibit and learn about the evolutionary journey of these ocean giants. Featuring life-sized whole skeletons.



Register with PECFNinfo@gmail.com

Cost: \$8.00 per person. Numbers are limited, so register early!

Meet in the Museum's parking lot at 10:15 am

**Advocacy Article on the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS)
by Paula Peel**



On April 6, 2023 the provincial government published a draft copy of the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) on the Environmental Registry (ref. # 019-6813). The document is open for public comment until June 5, 2023.

The PPS sets out the government’s policies on land-use planning in Ontario. Specifically, the PPS contains provisions that ensure that planning and development is done in a way that advances the provincial interest, which is focused on building 1.5 million new homes in Ontario over the next decade. The new PPS is an important tool in the government’s toolbox to get those homes built, most importantly by making more land available for housing.

The following article outlines some of our concerns with the new PPS. For those of you who may be short on time we have provided a summary of the 5 main points:

- (1) The incomplete posting puts those of us who wish to respond in a double bind;
- (2) The posting does not state how the PPS will affect the Natural Heritage section of the County’s Official Plan;
- (3) The PPS removes protections we have placed in our Official Plan for Prime Agricultural Land, protections that were put in place in part to protect the County’s second largest industry;
- (4) The PPS removes the one severance for rural properties we have put in our Official Plan to protect our water supply as we are a particularly drought-prone region and our aquifers are highly vulnerable, according to Quinte Conservation;
- (5) We should respond with a comment as the government is clearly worried about environmentalists and their reaction which is probably why they are releasing the proposed changes to the PPS in separate postings.

There’s lots about the new PPS to criticize, starting with the commenting process itself. The PPS that is posted for public comment is incomplete as the natural heritage component apparently isn’t done. According to the document: “Once proposed policies and definitions are ready for review and input, they will be made available through a separate posting. . .ERO #019-6813 will be updated with a link to the relevant posting once it is available.”

In other words, by the time the natural heritage section is completed and posted for public comment, the commenting deadline for the rest of the PPS will be over! The decision that the government made to go ahead with two separate postings on the PPS with different commenting periods, instead of waiting until a complete document was ready, is a bad decision, if not an abuse of public trust in the ERO process. For one thing, it’s unreasonable to put natural heritage in a bubble like this as if natural heritage has nothing to do with anything else in the PPS. For another, unfairness is built into the process as any comment that is submitted now that concerns natural heritage will presumably not be accepted for consideration. The hitch is that the exact same comment submitted later, after the natural heritage section is posted for public comment, is no more likely going to be considered if it brings in other sections of the PPS. How could it be considered? The PPS (minus the Natural Heritage section) will be closed to public comment by then.

A “double bind” is defined as a situation in which a person is confronted with two irreconcilable demands or a choice between two undesirable courses of action. This is exactly what this is. It’s abundantly clear, for example, that the County’s Natural Core Areas and Linkages will be directly impacted by a provincial policy that encourages the construction of new homes in rural areas including on prime agricultural land. After all, rural areas make up the vast majority of Natural Core Areas. But any comments that address this issue will come to nothing as the natural heritage section is the section of the PPS that deals with natural core areas and linkages, and this section is not open for comment at this time. This is where the double bind comes into play: comments that are

Cont’d next page

Cont'd from page 4. submitted at the appropriate time, i.e., when the natural heritage component is finally released in a separate posting, will not be considered either if they're connected in any way with other parts of the PPS. By this time, the commenting period on the PPS will be closed and final decisions on the content of the rest of the PPS have been made - or are about to be made - by the Ministry.

The question is whether this has been done intentionally. Holding back the natural heritage section for now would make perfect sense if the government wants to limit criticism from environmentalists. Obviously, it's hard to comment on natural heritage policies you haven't even seen yet. A tactic like this also has advantages if the government has big concerns about blowback from the public, for example if the government is walking back on prior commitments to protect natural features and areas for the long term. Holding back the natural heritage component for now and releasing it at a more opportune time (and perhaps with a shorter commenting period) could be a proactive move to avoid the kind of controversy and public outcry that occurred last fall with Bill 23. Whatever led to the decision to go ahead without the natural heritage section, this much is clear: holding back this section has already limited peoples' ability to respond and comment.

Biodiversity is a case in point. Section 2.5 of the PPS on Rural Areas in Municipalities notes the importance of biodiversity, i.e., "healthy, integrated and viable rural areas should be supported by. . .conserving biodiversity and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature." It would be helpful if the PPS gave more clarification on this, for example on what a "healthy" rural area is as opposed to an unhealthy rural area. We would also like to know how the government envisions "healthy, integrated and viable rural areas" with respect to Natural Core Areas. Another question is how biodiversity will be conserved in "healthy, integrated and viable rural areas". There are many questions but we will have to wait for answers until we actually see the new section of the PPS on natural heritage. The problem is that when the time does come, and we've had an opportunity to review it, the PPS, including section 2.5 will no longer be "on the table" for public comment.

However, there are already signs in the policies of the new PPS that biodiversity will not be conserved as rural lands including agricultural areas are opened up for new housing development. The PPS gives the green light to residential development on rural land, including lot creation and multi-lot residential development as site conditions are suitable. It also permits up to two additional units in prime agricultural areas as well the creation of new residential lots on prime agricultural areas to a maximum of 3 new lots on an existing lot or parcel of land.

As we've seen before, what the government says about biodiversity and what it actually does (or in this case, doesn't do) to conserve it are two different things. There is no telling what impact all this new housing in rural areas will have on biodiversity and on our watershed and infrastructure but communities may not be able to do much about it. The PPS states, for example, that: "Official plans and zoning by-laws shall not contain provisions that are more restrictive than policy 4.3.3.1 (a) except to address public health or safety concerns". We are wondering if the government is saying in so many words: "don't even think about using Official Plans and zoning by-laws to protect watersheds and natural features like woodlands and wetlands and species at risk."

The new PPS mentions the impacts of a changing climate. But it also conveniently ignores the fact that "building and construction sector accounts for 39% of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, most of which is concentrated in middle/high-income countries." The government's new PPS encourages new home construction in rural areas but fails to take into account the impact of construction trucks transporting materials, bulldozers, excavators, cranes, etc. travelling back and forth, often over long distances, to reach building sites that are located in rural areas. Over time this could turn into thousands of trips that could easily have been avoided by locating new builds in urban areas, what we call Settlement Areas in our Official Plan. Moreover, with the proposed changes new rural homeowners will be forced to travel long distances in order to access amenities and services which are only offered in urban areas. Instead of finding ways to mitigate impacts of climate change, the government is setting up conditions for more CO2 emissions.

These are only a few concerns of many. The new PPS is full of ill-thought-out policies like this. If anyone reading this is still motivated at this point to submit a comment, all things considered it might be better to submit it before the June 5 deadline rather than wait for the ERO posting on natural heritage. Even if your comment is ignored, there's always some value in commenting. After all, the government to their embarrassment received over 29,000 comments on its Greenbelt Plan that were overwhelmingly in favour of leaving the Greenbelt alone, which they promptly ignored. What if the government had received no comments at all?

The Spiritual Nature of Plants

JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL PEC FIELD NATURALISTS &
COUNTY GARDEN CLUB MEMBERS' OUTING TO CLOYNE

with Tawny Stowe, Woodland Priestess

Sunday, June 4, 1 to 4 pm

Our afternoon will begin with an introduction to the Commemorative Indigenous Medicine Wheel at Barrie Community Hall, planted in 2022 by the Land o' Lakes Garden Club, with the teachings, guidance, and leadership of Tawny Stowe.



Tawny will then lead us through a workshop about the spiritual nature of plants, using plants from the Medicine Wheel.

Tawny Stowe is a Métis business owner working on the traditional unceded lands of the Anishinabeg peoples now known as Arden, Ontario. She is a steward of land and resources, which allows her to embody her role as the Woodland Priestess, helping folks return home to themselves and their children through a (re)connection to the Earth.

Meet at Barrie Community Hall at 12:45 pm.

Address: 14225 Hwy 41, Cloyne

Cost: \$25 per person

To register:

Gerry.Jenkison@icloud.com (PECFN members)

LiseFBois@gmail.com (Garden Club members)

Swift Watch



We're gearing up for [National Roost Monitoring](#)! On the evenings of May 20 (optional), **May 24, May 28, June 1, and June 5**, we encourage our members to observe chimneys so we can monitor the number of swifts using roosts in Canada, to help track population trends and guide species conservation efforts.

We meet in Picton at dusk during the summer and enjoy an hour with interested fellow members watching for swifts entering the chimneys of various businesses and homes. Please email PECFNinfo@gmail.com if you'd like to join us.

Spring Birding Festival

Friday, May 12th – Monday, May 15th

The Spring Birding Festival is just around the corner, and it promises to be an unforgettable four-day event that all nature enthusiasts will enjoy. From May 12th – 15th, this festival offers a variety of activities that will delight both seasoned birders and those who are new to the hobby.

What to Expect:

- There will be expert guides leading birding walks, providing the perfect opportunity to spot some of the most beautiful and possibly rare birds in the area.
- There will be banding demonstrations.
- Opportunity to learn about bird identification techniques – tools and advice will be provided!
- Also there will be free expert Tent Talks throughout the day, giving you the opportunity to hear from leading bird experts and researchers.
- Tent talks include topics such as:
 - What is e-bird and how to use it
 - Bird ID strategies and ‘cheat sheets’
 - Birding for Beginners: And so much more.....

For Families:

- There will be a kid’s corner where children can participate in bird-themed activities and crafts.
- And if you are looking for a special way to celebrate Mother’s Day, don’t miss the Mother’s Day ‘Bird and Brunch-in-a-Box’ event where you can enjoy lovely light brunch while taking in the beauty of the birds around you.

Attending the Spring Birding Festival is an opportunity to connect with nature, learn new skills, and have fun!

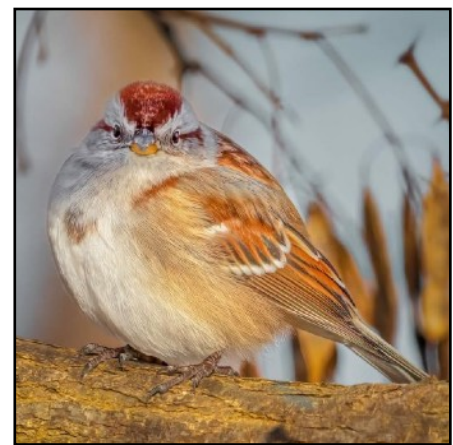
For more information and to register for any of the outings/events, please go to the PEPtBO website: <https://peptbo.ca/> and click on the **Programs and Events** tab.



Cedar Waxwing
photo Scott Farquarson.



Northern Cardinal
photo Scott Farquarson.



Chipping Sparrow
photo Scott Farquarson.

Past events: PECFN MEMBERS' OUTING: March 30



Macaulay samples table



PECFN Outing Group at Macaulay Conservation Area

photos *Gerry Jenkison*

**IDENTIFYING TREES IN WINTER AT MACAULAY MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION AREA FOREST WITH TIM GRAY
March 30**

When identifying trees, most of us start with the leaves. But for half the year, deciduous trees have none. So we were delighted to welcome Tim Gray to lead this outing through the magnificent forest on Macaulay Mountain.

Tim is a long-time friend of PECFN. Before retiring, he worked for 30 years with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, subsequently with Trees Ontario, and then with Forests Ontario. He was a familiar face and presenter at Trenton Woodlot Conferences, which many of our members attended over the years.

By 10 am, our start time, Tim had already set up a table of twig samples to prepare us for what we would encounter on the walk. Looking at the position of buds on Tim's samples, we were able to identify Maples (genus *Acer*), Ash (genus *Fraxinus*), and Dogwoods (genus *Cornus*). Leaves and branches of all these trees are arranged on opposite sides, whereas leaves and branches of other trees are arranged alternately. (Yes, there's always an exception! *Cornus alternifolia* — the beautiful Pagoda Dogwood — is the only *Cornus* with alternate leaves. We encountered several.)

After his demo, Tim led us through trails on Macaulay Mountain, where we were able to test ourselves on what we'd just learned as well as absorb many more details about winter tree ID. Tim also pointed out how to differentiate trees by bark colour and patterns. His enthusiasm and love for trees is infectious, and we all enjoyed the walk greatly, despite inhospitable March weather.

For summer, we're hoping to line up a PECFN outing to Tim's own property north of the County. In addition to his woodlot, he's raised native trees from seeds, including the uncommon Sassafras and Kentucky Coffee Tree.. Stay tuned for details.

Gerry Jenkison

Past Mudpuppies Outing Feb. 12

On February 12th Lori Borthwick and John Lowry of the QFN traveled with some members of the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists (PECFN) to Oxford Mills (NE of Brockville) for the chance to see some Common Mudpuppies (*Necturus maculosus*). The group was met by Fred Schueler and Aleta Karstad of the Bishop Mills Natural History Centre who were in Oxford Mills to release some mudpuppies into Kemptville Creek.



photos: John Lowry



From back left:
Nancy and Bill
Pennell (new
members who
came on the
outing) front:
Sheila Kuja, Lori
Borthwick, back:
Fred Schueler,
Aleta Karstad, Paul
Catling, Brenda
Kostiuk
Photo: John Lowry

The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas -3

The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas is a volunteer-based project to map the distribution and abundance of Ontario's approximately 300 breeding birds. Data from the previous two Ontario Atlases have provided enormous contributions to bird and environmental conservation over the last 40 years. Data collection for Atlas-3 started in 2021 and will be no exception – this project will put Ontario at the leading edge of bird knowledge in North America.

Did you know that you can help the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas???

Yes, you can help! You do not have to be super birder. You do not need to take on a whole 10km square. You do not need to do point counts. BUT you can provide breeding bird evidence from your backyard, your walks, your neighbourhoods, your drives.

While some people are covering “squares” they cannot be everywhere all the time and may miss observations of birds that are there in their squares. You can help!!

To help you need to register. Go to birdsontario.org (Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas). Press “get involved” and register.

Once you have registered when you sign in “General Atlassing - submit data” should pop up. The first thing you need to do is find the square that you are reporting on. Zoom in on the map. You have to zoom in a lot!! But eventually you should find your location. This will give you the square number in red. For Prince Edward region it should read 18TUP__ with two more numbers.

I like to put the map on satellite as you can really zoom in and see where you are. You then fill in the area on the left side of the screen. Clicking your location on the map will give you the latitude and longitude automatically. Don't forget there is a box for checking if birding was not your primary purpose. I have seen lots of things while gardening or driving from A to B or going for a walk with a friend and I note that I am not giving a complete checklist of all birds identified. Press continue. A list of the bird species expected in the area will appear and you can enter the number of individuals you saw and the breeding evidence (BE) you saw. If you are not sure about the breeding evidence then go back to the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas home page. Press on Tools and Resources, then Coding Sheets then Breeding Bird Evidence and match what you have seen to one of the evidence codes.

Don't forget to press submit at the end. You are done and the birds and the atlas thank you!!!

If you are interested to see what has and has not been seen in your square, remain signed in and click on EXPLORE then ATLAS DATA SUMMARY. You should now be able to see how. Region 20 (Prince Edward) is doing along with the rest of Ontario. If you click on 20. Prince Edward you can see the breeding bird evidence for the region thus far. If you want to see the results of a specific square you can fill in ATLAS SQUARE with your square and press GO. You will see results for your square and see the gaps and how you can help more.

Hope this helps and is not overwhelming. Enjoy the birds and remember your observations help!

Joanne Dewey



White-breasted Nuthatch.....SSmith.

A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST: by Terry Sprague.

An interesting look back;

HOUSE FINCH *Carpodacus mexicanus*
(from an article written in the early 1990's)

Not only is this a fairly recent arrival to Prince Edward County and one of my favourite members of the finch family, but if any species exemplifies the change that has taken place at Macaulay Mountain since 1970, it is certainly this species. Coincidentally, the purchase of Macaulay Mountain almost coincides with the arrival of this species in the province of Ontario.

The date was August 27, 1972. Several members of the Kingston Field Naturalists were having a good day birding at Prince Edward Point, at the southeastern tip of Prince Edward County. Purple Finches were everywhere, the raspberry coats of the males striking against a backdrop of Shagbark Hickory and Ironwood. Their numbers suggested an autumn movement of the species through this popular migration point.

The less spectacular brown females were also around, their white eyebrows offsetting the heavy sparrow-like streaking. Suddenly a somewhat different female came into view, this one lighter in colour with finer streaks and lacking the white line through the line which readily identifies a female purple finch. Dr. Ronald Weir, a chemical engineer at Kingston's Royal Military College and author of the recently published *Birds of the Kingston Region*, and veteran birder Helen Quilliam were also on hand this day and identified the bird as a female House Finch, the first ever for the province of Ontario.



photo *Elena Petricich of Ottawa*

Little did they know as they recorded the details of their discovery and headed back to Kingston, that in less than 20 years the House Finch would be among the most abundant guests at bird feeding stations along the northern shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

The story of the phenomenal spread of this species began in 1940 when cagebird dealers in California sent a small shipment of House Finches, caught in the wild, to dealers in New York City for sale as "Hollywood Finches." Since this was a flagrant violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service promptly put an end to it. The birds were released on Long Island, where they proceeded to pair up and multiply. Within a few years, sightings began to occur up and down the eastern seaboard, and home owners were captivated by these colourful exotics. After their initial Ontario appearance at Prince Edward Point, residents along the Lake Erie shoreline were delighted when their first individual turned up four years later.

With habits similar to those of the House Sparrow, these new arrivals began popping up in towns and villages all along the lakeshore. By 1978, they were nesting at Niagara-on-the-Lake. It wasn't until 1980, however, that the population literally exploded in Kingston. Hundreds of reports flooded in from bird feeder watchers, curious about these new arrivals. Nests were turning up on vine-covered buildings, in ornamental evergreen trees, under eaves, and in hanging flower pots. The scattered breeding pairs during that first year or two at Kingston had expanded to over 250 breeding pairs by 1985. By 1988 an estimated 1,000 pairs of House Finches had nested within the Kingston area.

Meanwhile in Prince Edward County, individuals began appearing at feeding stations in 1982, and nesting was confirmed the following year. By 1990, the species had expanded to rural neighbourhoods with flocks of 25 to 250 converging on bird feeders.

Today their expansion continues unabated. Sightings of House Finches were made on a daily basis during the Macaulay Mountain study, and the species likely nests there in suitable areas. Studies during the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, from 1981 through 1985, indicated that breeding evidence was heaviest in the Niagara Peninsula and Toronto area, although breeding has been confirmed all along the shoreline of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and extending east along the St. Lawrence River, with sightings as far north as Marathon, near Thunder Bay.

cont'd next page

Continued from page 12

The Ontario Bird Feeder Survey, conducted by the Long Point Bird Observatory at Lake Erie, revealed that 32% of all Ontario bird feeders enjoy the presence of House Finches. If we leave the northern region out of the picture where the species is still pretty much of a rarity, then we can safely say that close to 50% of the feeders located within the House Finch's common range are frequented by this species. Using this same formula, there are about 4.74 House Finches per feeder with higher percentages in the Niagara/Toronto area.

Their soft expressive notes are a happy contrast to the harsh, irritating chirping of the House Sparrow, their song full-throated and as natural as the rippling of a mountain brook. Bird feeder operators find that House Finches prefer the smaller black oil sunflower seed over the larger, striped sunflower seed.

Niger seed, imported from Africa and Asia and sold commercially at most feed mills which specialize in mixed bird feed, is another favourite. Offering this in a silo type feeder specially designed for niger seed will guarantee results. Those who offer these two foods and abundance of water during the summer months can be sure of one or two pairs of House Finches remaining to nest in some obscure corner of the premises.

Will the House Finch one day push the aggressive House Sparrow into oblivion? Somehow I doubt it, although the House Sparrow in the East has been undergoing a long period of decline ever since the automobile replaced the horse. When we add such factors as disease, predation, and changing agricultural practices, it is easy to see that the House Finch is just one more adverse factor. With similar nesting habits, the House Finch will certainly be giving the House Sparrow a run for its money. With his cheery warble and a colour that glows like a flash of sunset through a summer shower, many anticipate its reign as a welcome change.

Terry Sprague



Photo: *Janyce Mann of Crofton*

Terry will be giving his next presentation to PECFN via Zoom on November 28.

South Shore Joint Initiative



South Shore Joint Initiative has new merchandise! Visit https://www.ssji.ca/shop_online to view and purchase the 2023 T shirt with a Monarch life cycle drawing by PECFN's Gerry Jenkison, a useful bucket hat with SSJI logo and the first "tree towel" with PECFN's Agneta Sand's drawing of the iconic Point Petre Red Oak tree. All funds go to support the work of SSJI to save our South Shore.

Membership Night is coming up on Tuesday **June 27**. This is your opportunity to tell us about what you have seen on your rambles around the world. All forms of communication are welcome- photo albums, collections, or power point presentations.. We hope that many people will present, so please try to keep your presentation to 10 -15 minutes. Please let us know in advance. You can email us at PECFNinfo@gmail.com

