

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS

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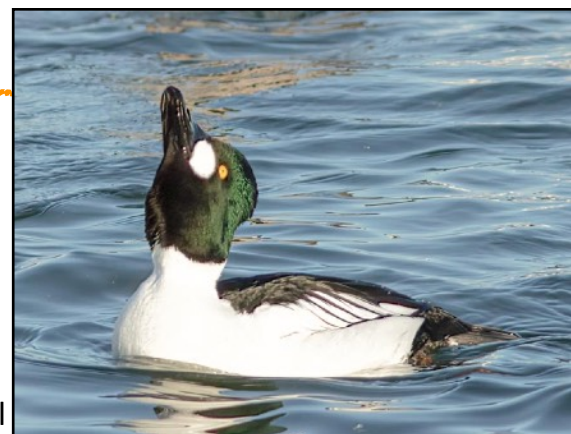
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A family of five Trumpeter Swans made an early appearance in October at the Wellington harbour. Photo by Dale Smith

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An adult, male Common Goldeneye showing off. Photo by Dale Smith

Winter Waterfowl Watch at the Wellington Harbour. Sat., Jan. 27, 1:00 – 2:30

In winter, the Wellington Harbour provides refuge for a variety of waterfowl, often including a number of Trumpeter Swans. We hope to see Trumpeter Swan Nanuuk, whose return to the harbour is always celebrated.

Please join us on **Saturday, January 27 from 1:00 – 2:30** on the dock at the foot of Belleville St (County Rd 2), just south of Main Street Wellington (Hwy 33). We will have a number of scopes set up and people to tell us about what we see.

This is a family friendly event. Dress warmly and bring your binoculars if you have them!

Overflow parking is available at the Lehigh Arena, a block north on Belleville Rd.



An adult male Redhead in breeding plumage.
Photo Dale Smith



An untagged pair of Trumpeter Swans at the Wellington harbour. Untagged, unbanded swans are known as UTUB's.
Photo Dale Smith



K46, Nanuuk, cleared for landing. Nanuuk was hatched in 2012, or earlier, near Midland, Ontario. She arrived back in Wellington on January 4th this winter, one day later than in 2023!
Photo Dale Smith

PECFN MEMBERS MEETING,
JANUARY 30, 2024, 7 PM. VIA ZOOM

JENNIFER GAGNÉ
JOIN ME IN BECOMING A CITIZEN URBAN
FORESTER



Photo : *Chelsea Marcantonio*

We know that the urban forest is essential to wildlife, human health and our economy. Yet, competing priorities and challenges such as development and extreme pest and weather events are making it increasingly difficult to manage the urban forest sustainably. While other municipal infrastructure is planned with the utmost care, why is it that the urban forest, a valuable and renewable 'green infrastructure' typically takes a back seat? In this presentation, we'll look at the steps and indicators in urban forest management planning (the theory!) and what you can do to become a 'Citizen Urban Forester' (the action!). You will have the knowledge and (I hope) drive to advocate for a greener and more sustainable Prince Edward County!

Jennifer Gagné has a master's degree in forest conservation and has worked in conservation and urban forestry for over 10 years. With previous experience in government, not for profit and arboriculture, she currently works as a conservation biologist with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Jennifer lives with her partner and two sons (and her rescue dog, Ringo) in Bloomfield, where they can be found planting native trees or hiking local trails.

PECFN MEMBERS MEETING

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
7PM, VIA ZOOM

PAUL JONES
BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS



Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo *Paul Jones*

Taking bird photos is fun, but it can sometimes be a challenge. If you are interested in pursuing this hobby, or just curious about how it's done, this introductory talk will cover simple tips for finding camera-friendly birds, composing photos, and processing the images for pleasing results.

Please join us for this fast-moving and information-packed presentation!

Prince Edward County resident Paul Jones is retired and spends his days watching birds and photographing wildlife in Prince Edward County. His images have been used for educational and promotional purposes by the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists, the South Shore Joint Initiative, and the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory. They have also appeared in the Picton Gazette.

Prince Edward Point Christmas Bird Count 2023

Twenty-two enthusiastic citizen scientists headed out early December 16th on the forty-seventh Prince Edward Point Christmas Bird Count. The count circle is centered on Waupoos Island in Prince Edward Bay and stretches along the water from Point Traverse of the Prince Edward National Wildlife Area to across the Bay of Quinte near Adolphustown.

For a count day, the weather was good. The early morning temperature was 2C but it warmed to a balmy 8C by afternoon with only light NW winds. There was no snow cover or ice on the lakes and ponds.

Even though the weather was good, the count of only 60 species was below the average of 68. As well, the total of only 8,402 birds counted was well below the average of 31,063. Counts of common water birds like Long-tailed Duck (1,434) and Greater Scaup (1,040) contributed to this low tally as they were starkly lower than their respective averages of 18,505 and 2,931. The thought was that the mild weather has spread the birds out over a wider area making it challenging to locate them to count. Counts of birds at usually productive feeders were very low or non-existent.

Even the usually ubiquitous House Finches and American Goldfinches didn't show up in numbers. Similarly, perhaps because of a poor red cedar berry crop, only 11 Cedar Waxwings were seen. This was well below their average of 180. One Barred Owl was found on count day.

On a more positive note, the tally for Blue Jays, Crows, Ravens, and American Robin were well above the 46-year average. Other species that are not always seen on this count included two Gray Catbirds, two Double-crested Cormorants, and two Turkey Vultures. Red-bellied Woodpeckers (10) and two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were highlights from the Woodpecker family. A count week highlight included a Chipping Sparrow near the wharf at the PEPTNWA.

Thanks to all of the volunteers and especially to the team leaders, Paul Mackenzie, Barry Pinsky, Sheila Kuja, Les Stanfield, Ian Barker, and Tyler Hoar. **Dale Smith December, 2023**

From Gerry Jenkison, PECFN's New President

Hi, everyone, I am honoured to be PECFN's new president and look forward to helping continue our good work.

A bit about me, for those of you who don't know me personally! I have been retired for 10 years and have thrown much of my energy into PECFN and my art. My husband, Don, and I, moved here full-time in 2013, to our old farmhouse on 45 acres close to Closson Chase Winery. Like so much of the County, our fields are on hard, rocky land, except for a beautiful cattail marsh, a hotspot of biodiversity. Together, we've collected a new family of animals and have planted and watered thousands of tree seedlings, some now a respectable 40 ft tall. I am also excited to have planted the County's first Miyawaki forest — a method of rapidly sequestering carbon — and I've converted our flower beds to native wildflowers over the years. We're doing what we can to increase biodiversity here.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming Zoom meetings and outings



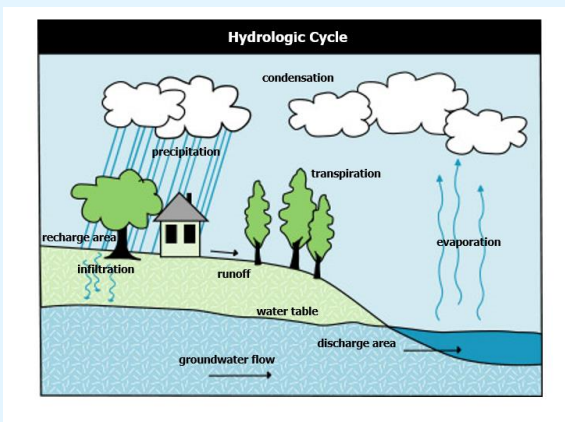
Don and Gerry

“Unraveling the Mystery of Groundwater in PEC”

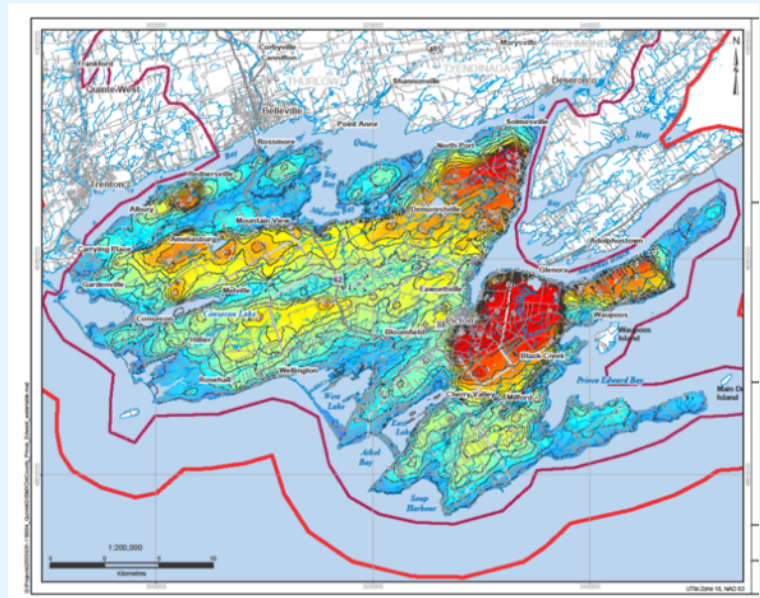
Presented by Mark Boone

Mark Boone is a licensed Professional Geoscientist with more than 30 years of experience in the field of hydrogeology. Mark started his career here in Prince Edward County in the consulting industry landing his first job fresh out of University at a small consulting company. In this career he managed projects related to groundwater supply, waste disposal, land development, aggregate extraction and environmental contamination. Following almost 15 years in this consulting industry Mark became the first regional hydrogeologist at Quinte Conservation under the Quinte Source Water Protection program. His work has included the development of water budgets, studying how groundwater flows in the Quinte watershed and development of plans for the protection of municipal drinking water supplies. Mark’s current work at Quinte Conservation is a continuation of groundwater work but also includes duties related to Regulations Officer (permits) and Risk Management Official as well as other projects related to climate change and adapting to these changes.

Tonight Mark is going to share with us some information about groundwater in Prince Edward County. First off what groundwater is, how much do we have, where can it be found and how does it move throughout the region. Mark will also share with us things that we can do to protect both the quantity and quality of our groundwater.



PEC water cycle



PEC water table

PECFN MEMBERS MEETING,
Tues. April 30, 7pm, Bloomfield Town Hall
Dr. Jeff Bowman

Muskrats, water, and cattails: a story of love and loss.



The muskrat is an iconic species in Canada, valued for both its fur and its integral role in wetland ecosystems, and widely regarded for its perseverance. However, the resilience of this semiaquatic mammal seems to be in question now as increasing evidence points to widespread population declines. I will provide an update on studies from Ontario that collaborators and I have undertaken to better understand the magnitude of this effect, and to begin to identify the causes.

Jeff is a Senior Research Scientist with the Wildlife Research and Monitoring Section of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and also an Adjunct Professor in the Environmental and Life Sciences Graduate Program at Trent University.

He completed his Ph.D. at the University of New Brunswick in 1999, and has been with MNRF since August 2001. Jeff leads Ontario's furbearer and small mammal research programs, and has experience in population and landscape ecology, and landscape genetics. He has conducted research on many species and ecosystems, including work on fishers, martens, lynx, bobcats, wolverines, mink, wild turkeys, flying squirrels, and a variety of bat species.

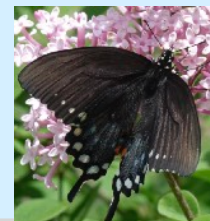


Two new Butterflies for Prince Edward County

... and the surrounding region:

European Common Blue and Spicebush Swallowtail

Paul Catling, Brenda Kostiuk, Tom Mason, John Lowry and Lori Borthwick



New records are exciting and interesting because we want to see what is new, and they beg an explanation. There are two new butterflies for the County. Both of these new butterflies have locally resident populations. In other words, they did not just blow in on abnormal hurricane winds.

The European Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

This small, but spectacular blue butterfly was first seen in Canada in 2005. It is thought that it arrived in the cargo of a plane at the Mirabel Airport and was able to successfully reproduce. One of its most frequently used larval foodplants is the European Bird's-Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) which is common in fields and ditches around Mirabel. Over the last 15 years, it has spread from Mirabel to become common around Montreal, and Toronto with more isolated occurrences at Cornwall, Belleville and Barrie in Ontario, and in the Lake Champlain area of New York State. (iNaturalist, October 2023).

“The Butterflies of Prince Edward County” was published in 2014 but at this time we did not know that the butterfly would spread so quickly. Although we mentioned it, we thought it unlikely to turn up soon (p.5). It did turn up pretty soon, ... 9 years later. We found five of these Blues along a roadside six km east of Rossmore near the entrance to Massassauga Point Conservation Area on 15 June 2023 (Figure 1).

This Blue is one of the most widespread of European Butterflies where it forms a friendly relationship with ants enabling protection from its predators and parasites. It has already associated with similar, but different, species of North American ants.

Males are blue above (Figures 2, 3, 4) and females are brownish or greyish above with orange spots on the wing margins (Figure 4). This new butterfly is very similar to the Karner Blue (page 42 in Butterflies of Prince Edward County). We have noticed that both males and females of the European Blue have a black spot in the basal area of the under forewing (Figure 3. arrow) that is not present in the Karner Blue. The Karner Blue is extirpated in Ontario and the region surrounding Prince Edward County, although present elsewhere in New York State.

Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*)

Caterpillars of the Spicebush Swallowtail feed on Spicebush which occurs around springs in swampy woods between Brighton and Trenton, and possibly in northwestern Prince Edward. This isolated occurrence of the foodplant made the occurrence of this butterfly in the region a possibility, as noted in Butterflies of Prince Edward County on page 29 with illustrations. It was already known from the New York State part of the region but not from the Ontario portion. The first records for the Ontario area are a number of observations from the Trenton area and at Presqu'île, where it has been observed regularly over the past few years by Tom Mason and others. It may not occur at the sites of Spicebush near Brighton, since the very distinctive caterpillars have not been seen there. It has not yet been reported from Prince Edward County.

A warming climate may be part of the explanation for this swallowtail being found in the Trenton and Presqu'île areas. Many amateur and professional entomologists have made observations throughout southern Ontario, and would likely have observed this species, if it occurred in the region previously. It was not indicated for the Trenton area in Butterflies of Ontario published in 2014.

This spectacular butterfly is distinguished by its single row of submarginal pale spots on the forewing and broadly rounded tails (Fig. 5). The immature caterpillars mimic bird droppings, but as they mature, they take on the appearance of a snake or lizard with realistic eyespots and a “forked tongue” (the osmeterium) that can be exposed during an attack (Fig. 6). While these features are displayed, the real head is hidden below.

References

Catling, P.M. 2014. A field guide to the butterflies of Prince Edward County and the surrounding region. Privately produced. 64 pp.

Hall, P.W. 2007. The European Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*: new alien butterfly to Canada and North America. News of the Lepidopterists' Society 49(4): 111, 117. https://images.peabody.yale.edu/lepsoc/nls/2000s/2007/2007_v49_n4.pdf

Hall, P.W., C.D. Jones, A. Guidotti, and B. Hubley. 2014. Butterflies of Ontario. Royal Ontario Museum. 488 pp.

List of figures

Figure 1. European Common Blue, female viewed from below. 6 km east of Rossmore along roadside through Oak-Red Cedar woods near entrance to Massassauga Point Conservation Area, 15 June 2023. Modified from iNat photo 292031037 by P.M. Catling (CC BY-NC).

Figure 2. European Common Blue, male viewed from above. Belleville, 15 July 2023. Modified from iNat Photo 300618288 by John Lowry (CC BY-NC).

Figure 3. European Common Blue, male showing spot (arrow) in basal area of under forewing. Toronto, Sept. 2023. Modified from iNat photo 323173130 by Imoikawa (CC BY-NC).

Figure 4. Female (left with abdomen raised) and male (right) of European Common Blue. Bécancour, Québec. 27 Sept. 2023. Modified from iNat photo 323429667 by Alan Maire (CC BY-NC).

Figure 5. Spicebush Swallowtail from near Trenton. Photo by Tom Mason on 6 June 2022
Figure 6. Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar, Norfolk County, Ontario, 18 July 2018, iNaturalist photo 14496995 by brendanboyd. (CC BY-NC 4.0).

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