

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS

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pecfieldnaturalists.org



PECFN NEWSLETTER

April 2024



photo S Dowds

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**SATURDAY
APRIL 27TH**

4-H TREE SEEDLING SALE

**Starts at 9:00AM
until Sold Out**

\$3.00 each

**At the Picton
Fair Grounds**

Varieties Include;

**Elderberry, Redosier Dogwood, Saskatoon Serviceberry,
Nannyberry, Sycamore, Tulip Tree, White Pine, White Spruce,
White Cedar, Sugar Maple, Colorado Blue Spruce,
Paper Birch, Highbush Cranberry, Winterberry**

IN PERSON: PECFN MEMBERS' MEETING
BLOOMFIELD TOWN HALL, 289 MAIN ST., BLOOMFIELD
7 pm, MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024

Ian Barker: A Peregrination in Patagonia
and Central Chile

Fauna of the maritime coast, steppe, and Andean regions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego will be illustrated in their habitat - Flightless Steamer Ducks, Rheas, Guanacos, and Condors. Then Central Chile, from sea level to 2400 metres in the Andes in 230km - Humboldt Penguins, Moustached Turcas and Mountain Parakeets.



**Photo credit: Ian Barker
Condor**



Ian Barker

Ian is retired from the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, and currently resides in Hallowell. Over the past 15 years he has been photographing flora and fauna of The County, and birds encountered on visits to Manitoba, Texas, California, Europe, South America, Australia and parts of Asia.
<https://ebird.org/profile/NDUxNjY5/world>; <https://inaturalist.ca/people/>

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

The Prince Edward County Field Naturalists are pleased to partner with the Picton Library for the following:

**Field Naturalist and Citizen Science After School Program
For Teenagers 13+
Picton Library, Fridays, May 10 – 31, 3-5pm**

Free Admission, Limited Registration

Teens are invited to join the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and Library Staff at the Picton Library on Fridays in May to learn about Prince Edward County's thriving habitats and the role Citizen Science plays in helping to protect them. We will learn how to use iNaturalist, Seek and Merlin apps. in order to contribute to field research. After a short workshop, we will walk to Delhi Park and put our new skills to the test, observing and identifying plants and habitats – think Pokemon GO but helping environmental science.

Registrants are encouraged to bring their own smartphones/tablets. A few tablets are available from the library. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Please bring sunscreen and hats.

Duration:

- Friday May 10th, May 17th, May 24th, May 31st.
- 3-5pm

For more information please contact Adam Cavanaugh at:
acavanaugh@peclibrary.org

WILDFLOWER WALK

Sandbanks Provincial Park with Yvette and David Bree

Monday May 13, 10am

Sandbanks is more than a beach. Join retired Sandbanks park naturalist Yvette Bree as she explores the park's hidden corners for wild flowers and other spring things. Co-leading this outing will be retired Presqu'ile Naturalist David Bree who is known for his expertise in 'birding by ear'.

A valid park pass will be required to drive into the park. Car pooling opportunities from the park gate may be available. Meet at the main park gate parking lot at 10am.



Yvette Bree

Photos by David Bree



Early Meadow Rue male flowers



Mitrewort



Cut-leaved toothwort

PECFN MEMBERS MEETING,
Monday May 27, 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.

Outing with Terry Sprague,
Thursday, June 6, 10am.

Murphy's Trail, North Potter's Creek Conservation Area

Come explore Quinte Conservation's new Murphy's Trail with Terry Sprague, Prince Edward County's pre-eminent field naturalist. We will walk the 1.95 km trail as well as a 1 km loop through deciduous woods, looking for birds, wild flowers and other spring surprises and delights. The walk will consist of about 4 km of mainly flat walking and will pass through a number of different habitats.

Terry Murphy, for whom the trail is named, was Terry Sprague's boss for a number of years and a great friend.

Terry Sprague and Happy *photo by Mary Gunning*

Please bring a packed lunch and we will end the outing with a picnic at South Potter's Creek Conservation Area.

We will meet at the Murphy's Trail entrance at 935 Moira St. W., Belleville shortly before 10am. Parking at Quinte Conservation costs \$6.00 for a day pass. Alternatively, a season pass for all Quinte Conservation Areas is available for \$60.00. You may purchase an annual pass here: <https://www.quinteconservation.ca/en/outdoor-spaces/parking.aspx>

For those wishing to carpool, please meet at the Wellington LCBO parking lot at 9am.

Please RSVP at pecfninfo@gmail.com so that we know who is coming and if you wish to carpool.
Raindate: Thursday, June 13, 10am.
Binoculars are recommended and please dress for ticks.

North Potters Creek entrance

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS



The Tree Swallows returned to the nesting boxes I purchased for them from the SSJI on April 1st, which was 5 days earlier than in the past two years.
Dale Smith

- Northern Harrier, north of Wellington, 7 April 2024 seen by Al Kuja.
- Wilson's Snipe, west of Allisonville, 6 April 2024 seen by Nancy Fox.

Brenda Kostiuk and Paul Catling

One unusual bird sightseeing relates to the waterfowl migration. On Muscote Bay the duck species normally include thousands of greater and lesser scaup and redhead, with smaller numbers of American wigeon, bufflehead, mallard, common and hooded mergansers, and ring-necked duck. Since not all these species are present each day, Fay and I have to keep watch if we want to enjoy a full range of sightings. On one overcast morning, among the redheads was a **canvasback**, readily identifiable by its size and white rather than gray back. This was our first sighting on Muscote Bay, though we have seen this species elsewhere in the County.

Henri & Fay Garand

More MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

Sights and Sounds on Wellers Bay, Spring 2024

This winter just past was a season of 'yes, buts'. We did not get the privilege of seeing the river otters playing on the ice in the cove this year – are they gone, or just not visible because the ice cover was so erratic? The bald eagles' nest across the bay, which showed activity mid-winter, has recently been completely quiet, but then last week we saw a juvenile bald eagle fly right along our shore. We did not see any snowy owls out on the ice, again, perhaps due to mild weather, but then at the end of March one flew low over our field, right near where we stood.

Cardinals have been visible through the winter, along with house finches, chickadees, and nuthatches at our feeder. Rabbits have continued active, and this week two young deer passed nearby in the field in broad daylight. Outdoors last night the coyotes were howling loudly, very near by. And now the early spring peepers are yielding sound space to the leopard frogs, who are beginning to call.

At ice break-up the sea ducks were busy, with lots of redhead, buffle heads, scaup a few long tails and this year a good number of mergansers of at least two types. At ice break-up on February 21, I was able to witness other animals, humans!, stranded on the ice after emerging from their huts after a day out fishing, only to discover the ice had split and they were a long way from shore, with open water now covering much of the bay. An iceboat and later a helicopter brought them back to land.



Redhead *photo by Dale Smith*

I was disturbed in early March to see a bumblebee and a stunned, pale leopard frog out too soon, but now spring seems to be busting out and truly ready this first week of April. Thankful for the downpour last week, we are hoping for more.

Best of all, yesterday we saw a honeybee on our bloodroot, a 'volunteer' in the garden from some earlier forest life, and today, another honeybee visited the patch. It is heartening to see an essential part of our ecosystem returning this spring.

Marjorie Seguin

More MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS



Cliff Swallows mud frenzy *photo Ian Barker*



Cliff Swallows lighthouse *photo Ian Barker*



Members' Night and Potluck

Monday June 24, 6pm

Bloomfield Town Hall

PECFN will provide the main course,
members should bring either dessert or salad.

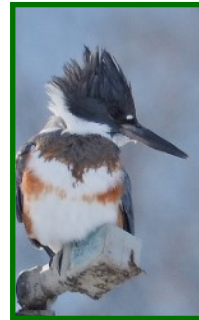
Once every year members have the opportunity to "show and tell" about projects they are involved in, places they have been or subjects they are interested in.

Presentations for Members Night, June 24 , 2024 are:

- David Bree - Dragonflies in the County
- Victoria Taylor - Rain Gardens
- Gerry Jenkison - Little Forest

Birding and Botany: PECFN walk for Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory's Spring Birding Festival

On **May 11, 9am**, PECFN members **Sheila Kuja** and **Amy Bodman** will lead a guided walk along the Traverse Woods Trail entitled: Birding and Botany. The walk will explore not only the plethora of birds that inhabit the Traverse Woods during spring migration and at other times, but also the plants, trees and other aspects of this very unique habitat that supports them. To purchase tickets for this walk, go to: <https://peptbo.ca/sbf24/>



My First Visit to the Bird Observatory

Several years ago when I was a newcomer to the County a Book club friend encouraged me to check out the Bird Observatory during their Spring Birding Festival. I had absolutely no experience with birds, only being able to recognize a few common backyard birds like robins, blue jays and chickadees. I went down the long drive to what seemed like the end of the world, by myself (no husband in tow.) and literally fell in love with Prince Edward Point. I followed some birders and tried to see what they were getting very excited about. I watched some banding demos, and realized that I was discovering a whole new world I had never been exposed to before. I immediately signed up as a volunteer. I learned how to scribe (in those days it was hand written), to extract birds from the nets and so much about birds! Kinglets to Owls, the variety is amazing. But I also met some wonderful birders, fellow volunteers and banders over the years. I encourage anyone who has not been there to make a point of visiting during the festival.

Susan Warrack



MAY 10-12, 2024

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

*GUIDED WALKS



*TENT TALKS

*BANDING DEMOS

*YOUTH DAY

Brought to you by:



With the generous support of:



For information re. PEPTBO's terrific Spring Birding Festival, please go to: <https://peptbo.ca/sbf24/>



a message from the PEptBO website

SPRING BIRDING FESTIVAL

Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory

Friday May 10th - Sunday May 12th

Yes, it is that time of spring – the birds are back!

Please join our friends at PEptBO for their annual Spring Birding Festival as they celebrate the return of the birds and the promise of Spring. For both birders and non-birders alike, this is an event not to be missed. Set against the backdrop of peak spring migration and the natural beauty of Prince Edward Point, the festival offers a unique opportunity for bird lovers of all ages and levels of expertise to experience the wonder of the spring migration.

The focus this year is on the next generation – by listening and learning about how the community of bird lovers can be more inclusive and accessible to all.

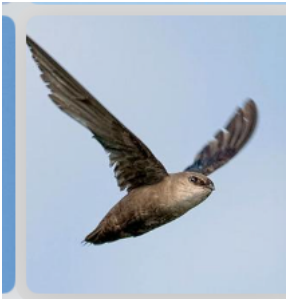
There will be a dedicated youth day with the support of Wellington Rotary. Local students will be bused in to experience nature and learn about birds and bird research and the importance of habitat conservation.

There will be guided bird walks, tent talks, banding demos and interactive activities for kids. Mother's Day features a special Mother's Day walk (for families).

And of course PEptBO 'merchandise', including their wonderful coffee will be available.



Please visit peptbo.ca/sbf24 for tickets and more information.



It's Chimney Swift Season!

Prince Edward County is very lucky to have a population of Chimney Swifts who reside in County chimneys every summer, travelling from their overwintering grounds in South America. Chimney Swifts are aerial foragers who feed on up to a 1000 insects a day and are a **Species at Risk in Ontario**. Their population has declined over 90% since the 1970s. They originally nested in hollow trees of the old growth forest and with the clearcutting of them, adapted to human-built structures: pre 1960s chimneys and rarely, old barns.

As they are unable to walk or perch horizontally, they spend their days flying and then pop into chimneys at dusk where they cling to the side of the chimney like woodpeckers. Unfortunately, many of our old County chimneys are being capped or removed altogether, adding to the population's decline.

SwiftWatch 2024

Since 2012 PECFN has participated in **Birds Canada's SwiftWatch** which monitors local Chimney Swift populations across their Canadian range and identifies the chimneys they use, by counting the Swifts flying overhead and as they enter and exit chimneys.

This year's SwiftWatch will occur on the evenings of **May 18, May 22, May 26, May 30** and **June 3**. We will gather in the parking lot just south of the **Picton Town Hall, 2 Ross Street at 7pm**. This is a great opportunity to learn more about these mysterious birds, who you hear before you see while collecting data to ensure their survival.

If you wish to participate, please contact Amy Bodman at amy.bodman@gmail.com. Many of you signed up to participate at our AGM – we will be contacting you soon!

Special Event: Chimney Swift S.O.S., Monday, June 17, 7pm at the CAPE, 347 Picton Main St.

PECFN is very pleased to be partnering with **Architectural Conservancy of Ontario's PEC branch (ACO PEC)** and the **CAPE** to host "**Chimney Swift S.O.S.**"! The event will focus on the unique relationship between Picton's wonderful heritage buildings and Chimney Swifts. The **CAPE** (the old Picton Legion) has a chimney that Swifts still use.

Chimney Swift S.O.S. will feature a presentation by **Winifred Wake** from **Nature London** who has dedicated much of her life to studying and promoting the protection of Chimney Swifts, a brief talk by **heritage architect Edwin Rowse** on adaptations that can be used to protect chimneys while allowing them to function as Swift habitat, a summary of **SwiftWatch data** presented by **PECFN** and will conclude with an **architectural walking tour of downtown Picton heritage buildings** that have been used by Swifts conducted by **members of ACO PEC**.

To register for this free event, please contact Amy Bodman at: amy.bodman@gmail.com .

Please see below the "**Amazing Facts**" sheet below provided by our great friend **Winifred Wake** and **Nature London** to learn more about this unique and mysterious bird.

AMAZING FACTS ABOUT CHIMNEY SWIFTS

Compiled by Winifred Wake, Chimney Swift liaison, Nature London
August 10, 2023

Introducing London, Ontario's Chimney Swifts in 30 Amazing Facts

- Δ Reside in eastern North America – US and southern Canada.
- Δ Threatened species in Ontario and Canada; population decline 90% since 1970s.
- Δ Enliven summer skies with exuberant chittering and acrobatic flight.
- Δ Often unnoticed, high-flying, widespread across London; heard before seen.
- Δ Nest and roost inside unlined, open-topped, chimneys on pre-1960s buildings.
- Δ One-third known London swift chimneys capped or demolished in last 15 years.
- Δ Among fastest flyers in the bird world (100 km per hour or more).
- Δ Spend far more time in the air than other land-based birds.
- Δ Have amazing maneuverability, and can change directions on a dime.
- Δ Large eyes focus quickly at high speeds and when suddenly entering dark spaces.
- Δ In adverse weather conditions, may go into torpor to save energy.
- Δ Dine exclusively on flying insects, eating one-third of body weight per day.
- Δ Despite small size (ca 21 g), can fly up to 800 km a day while hunting insects.
- Δ Forage at great heights – above buildings and treetops – 20 m to 1000 m or more.
- Δ Capture more than 1000 flying insects a day (up to 12,000 when feeding young).
- Δ Swift food supply shrinking as insect numbers decline (pesticides, habitat loss, etc.).
- Δ When not in air, cling woodpecker-like to vertical surfaces, usually inside chimneys.
- Δ Unable to walk or perch horizontally, as feet not designed for such activities.

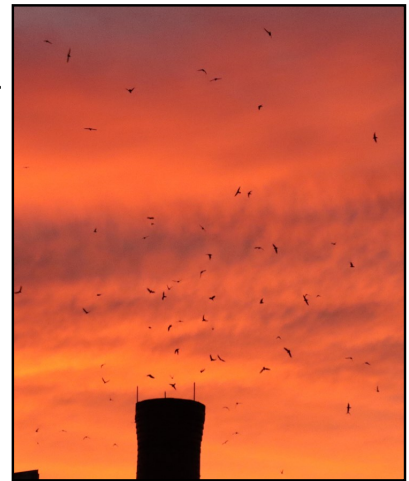
**SPECIES
AT RISK
in Ontario**



- Δ Nest in dimly lit places (once hollow trees, now chimneys, rarely old barns).
- Δ Both parents build and tend nest, usually 2 or 3 m down inside chimney.
- Δ Use saliva to glue tiny twig nest together and to inner chimney wall.
- Δ Pure white eggs incubated 3 weeks; 4 or 5 hatchlings are jelly bean size.
- Δ Ten-day-old nestlings resemble prickly porcupines; eyes open at 14 days.
- Δ At 3 weeks of age, young leave nest, spend 1 week learning to fly inside chimney; fly from chimney at 4 weeks.
- Δ Last North American bird to have wintering grounds found (upper Amazon, 1944).
- Δ While migrating, 100s or 1000s roost together at night in large unused chimneys.
- Δ Annually fly 10,000 km round trip to South America and back.
- Δ One swift can fly 2 million km in a year.
- Δ Can live up to 14 years in the wild, but life span for most is about 4 years.
- Δ Regional First Nations names:
memitigoningwegaaneshiinh or
mizaatigoningwiisii.



Photos: Dave Wake; sketch: Diane Kristensen.



LEARN MORE ABOUT LONDON'S CHIMNEY SWIFTS:

<http://www.naturelondon.com/chimney-swifts-resources/>

Watch for swifts in London, April to September. Happy Swiftling!

Native Plant Sale Sunday, June 2

10am-2pm at Armoury Sq. Picton



Dutchman's-breeches
photo Donald McClure

