The Peninsula Naturalist

Newsletter of The Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club

Volume 261

SPRING 2026

New Members

- Austin Daly
- Isabel Fairfield
- Tony Fairfield
- Lara Fluri
- John Goodger & Pat Anderson
- Deanna Loucks
- Leslie & Paul MacPherson
- John Roynon

Please tell your family and friends about PFN. We love new friends and new members!

Upcoming Meetings

- All monthly meetings are in person at Bethany Community Church, 1388 Third Street Louth, St Catharines at 7:00 pm.
- September 28 - Keith Dieroff - NIAGARA PENINSULA HAWKWATCH
- October 26 - Jean Hampson & Bob Highcock - EXPLORING COASTAL COLOMBIA
- November 23 - Bruce Mackenzie - GRIMSBY WETLANDS

Upcoming Outings

- Firemen's Park/Mewburn Rd Recreation Area - Saturday, October 17 @ 9:30 am.
- Woodend Conservation Area/Bruce Trail - Sunday October 25 @ 9:30 am.
- In Search of the Purple Sandpiper - Sunday November 8 @ 9:30 am.
- Dufferin Islands - Sunday November 15 @ 9:30 am. Paid Parking.

A Message From the President

It has been a busy year so far for me. Now that I think about it, every year is busy. Working from home keeps me occupied during the day, Monday to Friday. Yard work and household chores seem never-ending. Club duties are more enjoyable, but social media posts and Mailchimp campaigns still take time.



Red Knots at Port Dalhousie East Pier. © Jean Hampson

One thing that keeps me at peace, especially during the work week, is submitting a daily checklist on eBird. It's a challenge, but even noting birds seen on a morning walk through the neighbourhood can be a list. As of this article, my checklist streak stands at 2030 days. That's approximately 5.5 years of submitting a daily checklist.

Now the trick is to maintain the streak. I don't plan on retiring anytime soon, so I'm set with my morning walks. And this fall we will have some great club outings scheduled—some new ones and some favourites. Not only will I keep my daily submission alive, but I'll also contribute to the Peninsula Field Naturalists Hikes project on iNaturalist. Stay tuned for our fall schedule. I'm looking forward to it.

Bob Highcock, President



President Bob. © Jean Hampson

SC CBC 2025 *by Jean Hampson & Bob Highcock*

The Peninsula Field Naturalists held their annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 14, 2025. Throughout the day, skies ranged from sunny to cloudy. Temperatures stayed below freezing during the count, and the ponds and creeks were frozen.

Thank you to all the participants who assisted with the count, as well as Sharon Wilson and Carla Carlson for allowing access to their properties.



At the Twenty Trail in Jordan. © Bob Highcock

A special thank you to Paul and Sue Chapman for their contribution to the St. Catharines CBC over the years. Paul and Sue covered the same area between Regional Rd 81 and 8th Avenue and 9th Street and Victoria Avenue since the mid-80s. We are saddened to share that Sue Chapman passed away on November 30, 2025. Sue was an active member of the Peninsula Field Naturalists for over forty years and enjoyed birdwatching, walks in the countryside, and annual visits to Point Pelee. Sue and Paul travelled extensively, including every Canadian province and territory, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia, and river cruising throughout Europe. Sue particularly enjoyed the Arctic. Members of the PFN and the St. Catharines CBC compilers will greatly miss Sue.

High counts were recorded for Cackling Goose (2), Trumpeter Swan (33, up from 25 in 2024), and Eastern Screech Owl (17).

Winter Wren was the only count-week species.

For this year's count, we had 36 participants as follows: Amanda Anstice, Lisa Bacon,

Zhianna Bacon, Sarah Biancaniello, John Black, Joan Burns, Carla Carlson, Shirley Chambers, Paula Clark, Mary-Lou Davidson, Philip Downey, Christopher Escott, Michael Goode, Jean Hampson, Bob Highcock, Shannon Hingston, Myra Kennedy, Mike Kershaw, Terri Kershaw, Nabil Khairallah, Nabila Khairallah, Laurie King, Olivia King, Sandy McCutcheon, Joan Preston, Karin Schneider, Tim Seburn, Bill Smith, Ken Smith, Nancy Smith, Roy Sorgenfrei, John Stevens, Tom Thomas, Diana Werezak, Rick Werezak, Elizabeth Yates.



Pine Siskin. © Jean Hampson



Paula Clark at Jordan Harbour. © Bob Highcock

Cackling Goose	2
Canada Goose	4,639
Mute Swan	18
Trumpeter Swan	33
Tundra Swan	2
Gadwall	39
American Black Duck	4
Mallard	136
Canvasback	3
Redhead	39
Ring-necked Duck	29
Greater Scaup	11
Surf Scoter	1
White-winged Scoter	89
Long-tailed Duck	7
Bufflehead	60
Common Goldeneye	289
Hooded Merganser	28
Common Merganser	48
Red-breasted Merganser	155
duck species	8
Wild Turkey	24
Double-crested Cormorant	1
Great Blue Heron	1
Northern Harrier	6
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Cooper's Hawk	6
accipiter species	4
Bald Eagle	9
Red-tailed Hawk	58
Ring-billed Gull	28
Herring Gull	56
gull species	11
Rock Pigeon	273
Mourning Dove	573
Eastern Screech Owl	17
Great Horned Owl	3
Short-eared Owl	5
Belted Kingfisher	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	52
Downy Woodpecker	55
Hairy Woodpecker	7
Northern Flicker	10
Pileated Woodpecker	2
American Kestrel	11
Merlin	2
Northern Shrike	1
Blue Jay	321
American Crow	34
Common Raven	6
Horned Lark	38
Black-capped Chickadee	115
Tufted Titmouse	4
Red-breasted Nuthatch	9
White-breasted Nuthatch	28
Brown Creeper	16
Carolina Wren	17
Golden-crowned Kinglet	6
Eastern Bluebird	18
American Robin	382
Northern Mockingbird	6
European Starling	3,714
Cedar Waxwing	7
Lapland Longspur	2
Snow Bunting	205
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
American Tree Sparrow	206
Dark-eyed Junco	1,059
White-crowned Sparrow	40
White-throated Sparrow	37
Song Sparrow	4
Northern Cardinal	197
Red-winged Blackbird	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	12
House Finch	118
Pine Siskin	5
American Goldfinch	161
House Sparrow	713
Total number of species	**74**
Total number of individuals	**14,325**

The World's Biggest Telescopes *by Ken Smith*

The more we learn about this beautiful world we live in, the more we appreciate how lucky we are. Scientists are helping us learn more about our universe by continually building more sophisticated instruments, particularly in the field of astronomy. The PFN learned all about these new instruments during our January meeting when Philip Downey taught us about the biggest telescopes in the world.



Philip size comparison with a telescope. © Philip Downey

First, Philip gave us a great explanation about the different types of telescopes. Philip then took us on a tour of giant telescopes around the world. We learned about how they work and what they've helped to discover.

During Philip's talk, we learned that Canada helped to build the guidance system for the James Webb Space Telescope. Philip also taught us about the Vera C. Rubin Observatory, which has been imaging the entire sky every three nights since 2024. This will help astronomers look for changes in the night sky, such as moving objects and stars that change in brightness. The unbelievable amount of data generated requires human volunteers to help search for these changes. If you are interested in volunteering, visit the Zooniverse website.



Radio Telescope. © Philip Downey

Thanks to Philip's presentation, the PFN has gained a new way to appreciate the night sky, fostering a deeper connection and admiration for the universe around us.

Land-based Learning in the Yukon *by Bob Highcock*

At the February 2026 PFN meeting, Katie Bristow, Sustainability Program and Outreach Coordinator at Niagara College, spoke about her experience in the Yukon. The Indigenous Education Program invited Katie to travel to northwestern Canada with ten students in October 2024.



Yukon scenery. © Katie Bristow

The group was greeted by a large amount of unexpected snow and a temperature of -20° Celsius. During her trip in the Yukon, Katie visited the cities of Whitehorse and Carcross. Carcross has one street, and they truck in water.

Highlights of the trip included a medicine walk, viewing carvings, learning about the clan systems and hearing a Killer Whale story. At the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, they helped build a fence. The group also visited the Carcross Desert, which is not a true desert, but dunes formed from sand and silt deposited by glacial lakes at the end of the last ice age. Strong winds then blew the exposed deposits into dunes.

Other activities included a 5-kilometre hike with sled dogs, planned before the snow arrived, a medicine bog workshop, and a visit to a historic hot springs site. The Northern Lights were observed only one night.

We were told that climate change has influenced northern life, altering ceremonies and migration routes/timing.



Indigenous totem. ©Katie Bristow

Members enjoyed an interesting presentation with beautiful scenery and stunning photos, and Katie told us they plan to return to the Yukon in late summer or early fall.

Niagara Parks Fights Back Against Invasive Species *by Ken Smith*

Like the horror novel The Day of the Triffids, Niagara is being invaded by plant species that can take over our parks and conservation areas. Corey Burant, a wildlife ecologist with Niagara Parks, visited us at the PFN to explain the problem and the steps they are taking to fight back.

Niagara Parks has the honour and responsibility of protecting the Niagara River corridor, which contains 400 million years of geological history and a high concentration of rare and endangered species.



Garlic Mustard. © Bob Highcock

Mr. Burant emphasized that early detection of invasive insects and plants, before they become established, is one of the keys to success. Niagara Parks regularly monitors citizen science apps like iNaturalist for invasive species, so we can all help by snapping pictures of plants and insects.

The staff at Niagara Parks carefully plan where to plant resilient native species in areas where they are best suited. Fewer bare patches of soil leave less room for invasive species to move in.

Niagara Parks Fights Back Against Invasive Species *continued*

Removing invasive species can upset some members of the public who don't realize the greenery was harming rather than helping. The PFN was excited to learn from Corey that Niagara Parks has used goats to remove invasive species. When they brought in goats, it helped attract local press attention to the issue facing parks and conservation areas. Goats make great press agents.

Although invasive species is a concerning topic, Mr. Burant delivered a fun and interesting presentation. It was great to learn about Niagara Parks' measures to address the problem and how we could help as well.



Purple Loosestrife.
© Bob Highcock

FLAP: Protecting Birds from Window Collisions *by Ken Smith*

Bird collisions with windows are the second-biggest killer of birds, next to outdoor cats. In response to this issue, concerned citizens created FLAP Canada (Fatal Light Awareness Program) in 1993. It was the first organization of its kind. Since its inception, about 50 similar organizations have been created elsewhere. Barry Coombs, a FLAP director, visited the PFN to explain how FLAP is helping to reduce deaths from collisions.

FLAP brings injured birds to rehabilitation centers. They also track bird deaths from window strikes so we can accurately estimate how often these events occur and which building designs are the worst offenders. They also have a program called BirdSafe, which provides expert assessments for building and home construction and renovations.

© FLAP Canada

FLAP has done a lot to draw attention to bird window collisions. In 2024, FLAP member Patricia Seaton Homonylo won the Bird Photographer of the Year with her photo of 4000 dead birds killed by window strikes in Toronto arranged in a pattern. Every year FLAP creates a layout of dead birds to highlight the issue. Margaret Atwood, a FLAP supporter and volunteer, helps produce and promote the layout display.

Barry has suggestions for bird lovers who want to help. Volunteers can report bird collisions at the FLAP.org website. The FLAP website also offers suggestions for making your home windows safer for birds. Concerned bird lovers can also go to the FLAP website and sign their petition asking the Ontario government to adjust the building code to adopt a bird-friendly building standard.

Outing to Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site *by Bob Highcock*

On a cloudy Saturday morning, 16 PFN members and friends attended a nature hike at the Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site on the Niagara Escarpment in St. Catharines. This was the club's first walk for the fall outings schedule.



Black Swallowtail. © Jean Hampson

For two hours, we walked the trails at the former quarry and municipal landfill that became a naturalization site for environmental education and recreation after the landfill closed on January 1, 2002. We observed a variety of birds, insects, and flowering plants.

Of the 26 bird species observed, highlights included Hooded Merganser, Chimney Swift, Great Blue Heron, Northern Flicker, Eastern Warbling Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, Chipping Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat.

Insects found included Monarch Butterfly (larva and adult), Black Swallowtail, Common Ringlet, Isabella Tiger Moth (larva), Large Milkweed Bug, Small Milkweed Bug, Common Eastern Bumble Bee and Black Blister Beetle, a first for the Peninsula Field Naturalists Hikes iNaturalist project.



Monarch Butterfly. © Jean Hampson



Large Milkweed Bugs. © Jean Hampson

Flowering plants included Hairy White Oldfield Aster, Common Milkweed, Common St. John's Wort, White Sweet Clover, White Snakeroot and Hawkweed Oxtongue.

Thanks to all who attended and to members who contributed to our iNaturalist project.



PFN Members. © Jean Hampson

Heartland Forest Outing

by Jean Hampson



Hen of the Woods Fungi.
© Jean Hampson

On a beautiful, sunny morning on September 27, 2025, club members explored Heartland Forest in Niagara Falls. After observing some Midland Painted Turtles in the ponds basking in the twenty-degree weather, we explored the woods. We encountered Mallards, an Eastern Phoebe, a White-breasted Nuthatch, a Red-bellied Woodpecker and multiple Blue Jays. One of the most interesting finds was a Spined Micrathena, a lovely spider species. We then walked along the boardwalk and observed insect species such as dragonflies, craneflies, and tree crickets. We admired the bat maternity tower but unfortunately did not encounter any bats. Heartland Forest is a great place for kids of all ages to explore!



Tree Cricket. © Jean Hampson



Spined Micrathena Spider.
© Jean Hampson

Forty Mile Creek Outing

by Jean Hampson

On October 18, 2025, Club members explored the Forty Mile Creek Park. The park follows Forty Mile Creek from Lake Ontario to Ontario Street in Grimsby. At the lake, we observed waterfowl such as Canada Geese, Mallards and a Wood Duck. Travelling down the trail, we were treated to the sight of many small songbirds such as both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Gray Catbird and White-breasted Nuthatch. White-throated Sparrows crisscrossed the trail, and three Common Ravens flew over us. We admired the newly replaced footbridge that guided us to the southern loop of the trail where we caught glimpses of a Hermit Thrush and heard the song of a Carolina Wren. We crossed back and admired the native trees and plants that had been added recently. We took one last look at the Lake before completing our hike. It was a lovely day for a fall walk.



Gray Catbird. © Jean Hampson



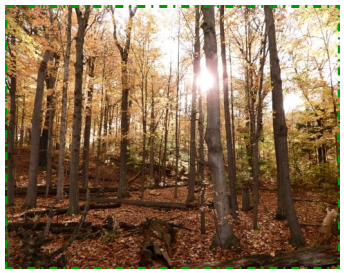
Golden-crowned Kinglet.© Jean Hampson



The group on the bridge.
© Jean Hampson

Terrace Creek, Shorthills Outing

by Jean Hampson



Sunshine through the trees.© Jean Hampson

On October 26, 2025, a small group of us walked from Pelham Road to the Terrace Creek trail and ultimately reached the Terrace Creek Falls. The weather was beautiful, and the Fall colours were at their peak. The waterfall itself was merely a trickle, but the walk was still worthwhile. We found fungi, had some good conversation, and got some exercise.



Terrace Creek. © Jean Hampson



Unknown fungi species.
© Jean Hampson

Outlet Collection and NC Ponds Outing

by Jean Hampson

Our PFN outing on April 4 took us to two well-known pond complexes located very close to each other. We first checked for waterfowl at the ponds located behind the Outlet Collection of Niagara. This stormwater-retaining pond is a great marsh area, but since we've had a rainy spring so far, the water level was quite high. We saw a male and female Gadwall and a pair of Canada Geese. Northern Flickers were calling, and we spied a Brown-headed Cowbird.

At the Niagara College Ponds, ducks were much more abundant. We observed two Wood Ducks among the Mallards, 40 Buffleheads, 70 Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Redheads. We also saw three Pied- billed



Hooded Mergansers. © Jean Hampson



Bufflehead. © Jean Hampson

Outlet Collection and NC Ponds Outing *continued*

Grebes and an American Coot. The Tree Swallows were roosting in the trees at the edge of the ponds, and with them was our first of the year Northern Rough-winged Swallow.

All in all, a good start to our Spring birding.



Northern Rough-winged Swallow.
© Jean Hampson

Swayze Falls Hike *by Barb West*



Swayze Falls © Bob Highcock

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, after several rainy days before the walk, I was concerned the trails might be too muddy to navigate. As it turned out, they weren't too bad. We were lucky to observe a diverse range of birds: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue Jay, Eastern Phoebe, Broad-winged Hawk, Tufted Titmouse, American Goldfinch, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Cardinal, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, Turkey Vulture, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and we heard a Carolina Wren. Some early wildflowers were out: Purple Violet, Spring Beauty, Trout Lily, and Lesser Celandine. In the reptile department, we found a little Northern Redbelly Snake. We weren't allowed on the viewing platform at the falls because some boards were broken, and it was closed off.



PFN Members ready to hike . © John Goodger

Wildflower Walk at Louth Conservation Area *by Jean Hampson*



Red Trillium. © Jean Hampson

Our annual outing at Louth Conservation Area is always interesting because, depending on the weather, we are never sure which Spring ephemerals will be in bloom when we arrive. This year has been cool so far, so the Trilliums were in peak form, but we found only one Jack-in-the-Pulpit. The Mayapple plants had full, glossy leaves, but the buds were still tightly closed. We found lovely big patches of Canadian Wild Ginger, Dutchman's Breeches and Wild Leek. Blue Cohosh and Early Meadow Rue bordered the trail. Sixteen Mile Creek was running well, so Louth Falls was looking beautiful. Walking atop the limestone path, I was pleased to see more Walking Fern than I have seen here in the past. We were also pleased with the great turnout for this outing, which included additional guests and people we had met at the Niagara College Bioblitz. Everyone enjoyed visiting this jewel of our Conservation Areas.



Walking Fern. © Jean Hampson



Dutchman's Breeches. © Jean Hampson



Canadian Wild Ginger. © Jean Hampson



Members looking at the waterfall. © Bob Highcock

The Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club

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2026 Executive

President ~ Bob Highcock

Vice President ~ Carol Horvat

Secretary ~ Jean Hampson

Treasurer ~ Doug Gillard

Membership Secretary ~ Barb West

Directors ~ Mary-Lou Davidson

~ Ken Smith

~ Don Stevenson

Non-Executive Positions

Newsletter Editor ~ Lorraine Brown-Joyce

Webmaster ~ Adrian Lawler

The Peninsula Field Naturalists' Club is a non-profit organization started in 1954 with the objectives to preserve wildlife and protect its habitat, to promote public interest in and a knowledge of the natural history of the area, and to promote, encourage and cooperate with organizations and individuals having similar interests and objectives. We are affiliated with Ontario Nature and Nature Canada.

Currently, our meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month from September to April (except December) at Bethany Community Church, 1388 Third Street Louth, St Catharines. We may offer various popup outings around the Niagara area. Please check our Facebook page for more information.

The Peninsula Naturalist newsletter is published twice per year, in Spring and Fall. Submissions for the next newsletter should be received by the end of March or September for publication.

Club members are encouraged to send in articles, photos, stories, observations and outing reviews to penfieldnatsnews@gmail.com. Material accepted may be edited and will be used subject to space allowances.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club or the Editor.

Thank you to all the members who volunteer their time to our club and also to those who make submissions to make our newsletter fabulous!

In Closing… enjoy some photos of nature.



Red-headed Woodpecker pair at Morgan's Point. © John Goodger



Yellow Trout Lily. © John Goodger



Cerulean Warbler. © Jean Hampson



Wilson's Phalarope. © Jean Hampson



Downy and Red-headed Woodpeckers at Morgan's Point. © John Goodger



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail. © Jean Hampson