



Prince Edward County Field Naturalists

PECFN Newsletter

January 2017

Past Events

Trenton Woodlot Conference November 25th 2016

Dr Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, was the keynote speaker at the 27th Annual Trenton Woodlot Conference. Dr. Saxe presented results from the Environmental Commissioner's 2016 Greenhouse Gas Progress Report, including the government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The report's analysis of what may happen if we don't put a stop to emissions was a scary scenario. Climate change is happening at a faster pace than we ever imagined. Heat in the oceans is generating wilder storms. Dr.Saxe explained that climate change represents a threat to all living things and that normal climate as we have known it, is gone.

The Ontario Government's efforts to cut emissions started with closing coal fired plants and now include a cap and trade system, introduced in the Climate Act. Cap and trade systems are thought to be the most effective means to reduce emissions. Changes in agriculture and afforestation can take more carbon out of the atmosphere. We have about 5 to 10 years to turn things around. Not too long. We can all do something.

After the break, Melissa Spearing, a horticulturist, discussed the topics of restoring forests in a changing climate, the need to collect seed, the northward move of tree species and the importance of conserving trees that are mature and healthy.

Melissa was followed by Steve D'Eon, a Professional Forester, whose talk entitled, "Managing Your Forest in a Changing Climate", emphasized that warmer is not better for forests and discussed how to recognize stress in trees that have been affected by drought.

Lunch was followed by a selection of outdoor and indoor workshops. by Susan Banks

Sandbanks Christmas Bird Count: Dec. 20/16 Many of the top Ontario birders east of Toronto, as well as PECFN members, took part in the Second Annual Sandbanks CBC organized by Tyler Hoar. Due to warmer than usual weather, many birds hadn't migrated further south yet, as evidenced by the thousands of Robins, several Wilson Snipe, American Woodcock and a Sandhill Crane. On the day, 97 species were recorded, with four more seen during the count week, for a grand total of 101 species. Rarely do Ontario CBCs report 100 or more species, thus placing PEC as one of the premier locations for birding, not only during migration but also early winter. by Sheila Kuja.

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Prince Edward Point Christmas Bird Count Dec. 17, 2016

The Prince Edward Point Christmas Bird Count wrapped up with 14,173 birds counted and approximately 79 different species seen.

A lack of ice meant that water fowl were very widespread and periodic snow squalls made it impossible to ID some of the waterfowl spp.

The largest number of any species counted was Greater Scaup at 3,531. Unusual sightings included 1 Ruddy Duck – only one other has ever before been seen on this count - 289 American Robins, 120 Horned larks – a field FULL of them feeding, a flock of 103 Tundra swans, 1 Winter Wren, 1 Red-necked Grebe, 20 Snow Geese, 2 Double-crested Cormorants, 4 Northern Pintail, 1 Iceland Gull, 3 Northern Flickers, 1 Pine Warbler, 4 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 8 Rusty Blackbirds, 2 White-throated Sparrows and what seemed like a never-ending river of Canada Geese that flew over and beyond Area One (Bath Rd and Bay of Quinte). All-in-all it was a great day of birding despite periods of snow. Thanks so much to Pamela Stagg for organizing the count and to Cheryl Anderson for hosting the after-party and, of course, to all of those who took part.

Upcoming Events

Members' Night : January 31st, 7pm Bloomfield Town Hall

This is the night when PECFN members have the opportunity to make a short (15 minutes or less) presentation to the group.

- Ramesh Pooran - **The Night Sky**
- Heather Coffey - **Lichens**
- Cheryl Anderson - **Banding bobolinks on the Miller Family Nature Reserve**
- Rebecca Lamb - **Wild Foragers Society**
- Bert Jenkins - **Sandbanks West Dunes in Winter**

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Terry Sprague: The Community Wildlife Monitoring Program February 28th at 7pm, Bloomfield Town Hall



Terry's talk is about The Community Wildlife Monitoring Program which he has been managing for Quinte Conservation and BQRAP since 2002. He has renewed his contract for yet another year. This coming year will be Season #16. The program involves FrogWatch Ontario which is geared toward families, but the largest component of the program is the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) which Terry manages for the Bay of Quinte watershed.

Additionally, he is also the MMP coordinator for Bird Studies Canada for much of eastern Ontario, from about Port Hope east to Kingston and north to Highway 7. It's an exciting program and in addition to seeking out volunteers (many of whom he obtains through a workshop he conducts in early March at QC) but he averages about 50-60 volunteers that he takes under his wing each year, and provides support to with weekly reminders and guidance during the monitoring season.

He also offers support and workshops for an extension of that program called the Enhanced Marsh Monitoring Program which involves hiring contractors to monitor some of our sentinel marshes around the Bay of Quinte using the MMP protocols. 'We thought he had retired!'

You can see his page on the program on his website at the following link:

http://naturestuff.net/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=43&Itemid=3

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Setting up Base Camp on Saturday.



BioBlitz, June 2016



Recording the correct name on the species list.

PECFN BioBlitz 2017

is scheduled for June 10-11 at the Miller Family Nature Reserve, so write the date in your calendar and please plan to attend.



Learning about the marsh.

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WHITE PINES TRIBUNAL HEARING

The Tribunal has agreed to one more day of oral hearings in Prince Edward County on the White Pines wind project. It will be on Jan 27th 2017, venue to be announced.

After Gilead lost at our Ostrander Appeal they proposed a new remedy – to add gates on their access road. The Appeal Court ruled that the Tribunal’s decision was correct and the project would cause irreversible damage. However, it found that Gilead had not had a hearing for its proposed remedy. The W.P.D. (or White Pines) appeal Tribunal has followed that precedent by automatically scheduling a Remedy hearing. In future appeals it may be that all proponents will be given more than one chance to present its case and appellants, like ourselves, will need to repeat their evidence over and over again.

For some unknown reason this Tribunal decided that the ‘Remedy’ hearing should occur only in written form rather than in oral presentations. Weeks of the Hearing process have occurred behind legal office doors in Toronto. We in the County have been deprived of the information about what W.P.D. proposed as the remedy to the ‘irreversible harm’ which the Panel declared would be caused by their use of our municipal roads on the South Shore.

Experts from both sides have given evidence and been cross examined in lawyer’s offices in Toronto. Over and over the W.P.D. lawyers have stopped their experts from answering the questions that Eric Gillespie asked.

It is puzzling why the Tribunal judges wanted to hide the testimonies from us but the result is that we, who have the most at stake in this case, do not know the information on which they will base their decision.

Hopefully on Jan 27th we will be given an overview of the evidence to date rather than the legal wrangling that the company has used to bury the facts in the past.

Please come to the final day of Hearings if possible. Then we will await a decision.



The hearing will be held as follows:

Date: **January 27, 2017, 10:00 a.m.**

Location: Wellington and District Community Centre, Highline Hall

111 Belleville Street, Wellington, Ontario.

For any last minute changes to the venue or date, please check the Tribunal’s website at: <http://elto.gov.on.ca/ert/hearings/>

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The Story of the Wishing Tree

Once upon a time a magical maple tree grew near West Lake, in Prince Edward County, Eastern Ontario, Canada. At the time, it was said to be the largest maple tree in the world, and the last great maple east of the Rocky Mountains.

An easily recognized landmark, the tree was a meeting place for the Native people of the area. Elders and leaders met under the tree while the tribe gathered nearby preparing food and making temporary camp. The children and youth would play close to the tree, gathering small bits of bark from the ground and tossing them up into the tree. Of the bark caught on a branch or in a nook, then the thrower of the bark was granted a wish - hence the tree's name: the Wishing Tree.

Mohawk and Algonquin peoples met in the shade and shelter of the magical tree. They traded crafts, tools, horses, and food. Seasonally the tribes gathered for feasts and pow-wows, giving thanks for the abundance and creating opportunities for young people to meet their mates. Throughout North America, the Wishing Tree was renowned in many Native Communities as the site of gatherings and celebrations, Tribes also resolved conflicts, negotiated territory, and formed trade agreements at the tree. It is said that in the sixteenth century the Wishing Tree was where local Mohawks negotiated their joining with the Iroquois League.

In the eighteenth century, when European settlers came to the area they, too, discovered the Wishing Tree and met there with Native leaders to trade and negotiate land rights. As the population grew, the path to the tree was widened to accommodate horseback travellers and a larger volume of visitors.

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In the later 1700s, a wave of United Empire Loyalists, fleeing the American Revolution, settled in Prince Edward County. Crossing Lake Ontario, they landed in the area. They stayed because they enjoyed the fertile lands and the island's isolation.

The increased settler population brought change to the area. Native communities moved away into hunting lands that were still fertile and abundant. The settlers built permanent homes and buildings. Increased population also brought increased travel along the path where the Wishing Tree stood. When a road was built to accommodate wagon travel, it was constructed around the tree.

Like the Native inhabitants, the settlers regarded the Wishing tree as a sacred place, a place of peace. Many families traveled to it for family picnics and outings. It was popular with young lovers who would go sit quietly under its lush branches and wish on true love. Almost everyone who came would gather bark, throw it into the tree, and if it stick make a wish.

In the late 1800s, the girth of the Wishing Tree was measured at over eighteen feet. It was documented to be over 160 feet in height, and then estimated to be roughly 670 years old. The Wishing Tree had witnessed many changes: the gathering of Native peoples, the arrival of European settlers, the arrival of the Empire Loyalists, and the gradual departure of the Native peoples. As the residents of the area changed, the Wishing Tree remained - a place of peace and magic.

In 1925, the Wishing Tree was hit by lightning. Local residents trimmed off the damaged branches and limbs in an attempt to save the tree. By this time, the age of the tree was then confirmed to be more than 700 years. In 1953, the Wishing Tree finally died. It was cut to the ground leaving only a massive stump. With the stump exposed, the growth circles of the tree were counted - confirming its age to 731 years.

Do you have a wonderful tree with a history that you would like to share with us? Send us photos and stories of your favourite trees to Facebook under **Awesome Trees of Prince Edward County** and watch for our upcoming Tree Event in the spring.

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Minutes of the Executive Meeting of Prince Edward County Field Naturalists

Picton Library, January 3rd 12 noon to 2pm.

<p>Present: Sue Banks, Amy Bodman, Elizabeth Cowan, Sandra Dowds, Gerry Jenkinson, Sheena Kennedy, Sheila Kuja, Agneta Sand, Myrna Wood</p> <p>1. Approval of the Agenda</p> <p>The agenda was approved as presented.</p>	<p><u>ACTION</u></p>
<p>2. Status Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. (A) Membership Nothing to report. . (B) Treasurer The following balances were reported: PECFN: \$7,885.58 OPAF: \$63.23 (the account to be closed down) PayPal: \$6.10 Butterfly Guide sales: \$120.00 The expenditures approved at the last meeting have been carried out. If Gerry can't find two nice big three-ring binders for Sheena's records, Sheena will need to buy them. MOTION Moved by Amy, seconded by Agneta: THAT if necessary Sheena use PECFN funds to buy two binders. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY	<p></p> <p>SHEENA</p> <p>GERRY</p> <p>SHEENA</p>
<p>Programs</p> <p>(C) Programs Outdoor</p> <p>The Prince Edward Point Christmas Bird Count on Dec.17 had 68 species; the Sandbanks Provincial Park Count on Dec.20 96 species on Dec. 20 plus three more species during the count week making a grand total of 99. One surprising observation was that hundreds of robins seem to be wintering over.</p>	

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Jan.17, 2017 (snow date next day): Joanne Dewey will lead outing to the Owl Woods on Amherst Island. Non-members welcome to participate but will have to sign a waiver.

Indoor programs

Jan. 31, 2017: members' night. Heather Coffey will be the lead speaker, on lichens. Ramesh will give his abridged Night Sky presentation. Cheryl will talk about bobolink banding. Rebecca will discuss edible weeds. Bert will present a short film on Sandbanks.

Feb. 28: Terry Sprague (Community Wildlife Monitoring Program) – confirmed. Sandra will introduce and buy a gift. Amy will thank.

Mar. 28: Gavin North (bees) – confirmed. Amy will introduce. Sue will thank. It was agreed that a Books & Co. gift certificate would be appropriate, to be bought by Sandra.

April 25: Angus Reed (climate change) – confirmed. Amy will introduce, Gerry will thank. Gerry will get cheese and a bottle of wine.

May 30 (AGM): David Okines (birdathoning in the County) – confirmed. Amy will introduce.

Ideas suggested for the fall program were: feathers (Pamela), water (Tim Trustham of Quinte Conservation), Bird Studies Canada's Motus Wildlife Tracking System (<http://www.birdscanada.org/research/motus/>). Sue will ask the Stewardship Council about a speaker on trees.

(D) Fundraising

The Prince Edward County Legal Appeal Fund has been approved and established, so that donations toward preserving the South Shore can be made to it and tax receipts issued.

(E) White Pines Tribunal

Eric is fighting for the right to introduce relevant new evidence (for example, a recent report from the UK finding that mitigation methods have done nothing to protect bats from wind turbines).

SANDRA

SANDRA
GERRY

SUE

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Jan.27 is the one day there will be a public hearing in the County. Myrna will contact APPEC President Orville Walsh about publicizing the hearing, since the secretive nature of the process so far has meant reduced public awareness.

F) Official Plan Review

The final version may now be delayed until March while the issue of agricultural land is dealt with.

MYRNA

(G) BioBlitz

The next committee meeting will be held on **Jan.24** in Miss Lily's back room, at 2:00 p.m. The dates for the BioBlitz itself are **June 10-11**. The best way to get more members involved in helping out might be to approach individuals one-on-one with a specific request.

(H) PEPtBO

PEPtBO has received a \$1,500.00 grant from the Gosling Foundation to celebrate the South Shore: there will be a brochure listing all birding events from early spring to late fall. PECFN will be in the brochure because of its involvement in the Bioblitz, but we could also buy an ad for our other events, including the 20th anniversary celebrations. Amy will ask about deadlines. The importance of an on-line version of the brochure, not just a paper one, was stressed.

AMY

Myrna suggested that PECFN's contribution to the Spring Birding Festival could take the form of five morning walks, one on each weekday, in five selected locations. Amy will pitch this idea to the organizing committee. PEPtBO would like to raise enough money for a long-term endowment

AMY

(I) Ontario Nature

ON has thanked PECFN for its donation.

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(J) Millennium Trail

Amy reported that the County has agreed to pay for resurfacing the portion of the Trail that the “Ontario 150” grant would have covered, to be done over the next three years. The TD Canada Trust “Friends of the Environment” grant application has received initial approval. In the second step of the application, the County upped its request from \$5,000 to \$15,000. If the County gets that grant, all of the funds will be applied towards the wetland sections, for signage and resurfacing with eco-passages.

Amy will consult Tanya again with the idea of contacting Ryan Danby at Queen’s University to look at the sites and see if we could get the university’s involvement in determining and implementing the best solution for eco-passages.

Ducks Unlimited has built a berm to create a remedial wetland just south of the Grange Winery on Closson Road, exactly where the Slab Creek and Hubbs Creek wetland systems meet according to Google Earth. Amy thinks that this new wetland may be enough to get both wetland systems certified as a Provincially Significant Wetland Complex. This should extend Provincially Significant status to Slab Creek. Amy will contact Todd Norris at the MNRF to determine if this is a possibility.

(K) Millennium Trail Native Plant Garden

Amy has blue stem grass seeds, and wondered whether Peter Fuller might help with putting them in plugs for planting, or could use them himself.

(L) Newsletter

The deadline is **Jan. 20**. It will appeal to the members for program ideas and nominations for awards.

(M) PECFN’s 20th anniversary in 2017

Sandra has booked Bloomfield Town Hall for the pot-luck supper on **June 27**. Further discussion of organizing events was postponed.

AMY

AMY

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(N) Tree Committee

There was a good turn-out at the Dec.6 meeting. Sue and Gerry will be making a deputation to Council, stressing the importance of trees to the community, reminding Council of Lenny Epstein's November 2015 motion and of other municipalities' tree policies, and requesting that the Tree Committee be represented on a working committee to shape a new tree policy, along with representatives of Council, County staff and policy, along with representatives of Council, County staff and the community plus a certified arborist. It was pointed out that they need to contact Lenny in good time to ensure they can speak.

SUE/GERRY

It was suggested that a Facebook page would be a less complicated way of setting up and maintaining an archive of heritage trees or "trees of distinction" than a website. Sheena and Amy will ask the tech people at the Library for advice and help. In February they hope to have a booth at Seedy Saturday.

SHEENA/ AMY

(O) Young Naturalists Group

Sheila has contacted Emily Boone of PECI's Environment Club about student involvement in projects such as shoreline clean-up, the BioBlitz and the ON Youth Council. She and Myrna hope to attend a Club meeting.

3. New Business

None.

4. Next meeting

Tues., **Feb.7**, noon to 2:00, in the upstairs public room at the Picton Library.

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