THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

JANUARY 2018

NIPISSING NATURALISTS CLUB

From the editor:

A lone sparrow stays behind for the new year

Late December turned very, very cold and every morning I waited anxiously for the Chipping Sparrow to make an appearance, a sparrow that should have migrated with its flock but for whatever reason stayed put. Such a little sparrow. (Seen at right with a Red-breasted Nuthatch.) I hope it makes it through the winter. It is joined in our yard by quite a few other birds, as well as a couple of Red Squirrels, one Black Squirrel and at least one deer, if not more. The deer come at night and empty one of the feeders and eat all the ground seed. On the cover of this month's newsletter is a buck that paid us many visits late last fall and one is back in our yard this winter. (See bottom of next page.)

January's brisk, cold and often bright days are represented in a collage of the colour white following "From the editor". Grant McKercher contributed the photo of the two Ross's Geese and a neighbour, the Ermine. Last year for February's issue, I put together a collage of "found hearts", hearts found in nature – in rocks, in snow and in plants. For this February in honour of Valentine's Day, I may put together a collage of the colour pink, **so send me your photos of pink seen in nature and I will see what I can do.**

There is much about birds in this issue – Trumpeter Swans, including a short update on Ava; a book review by Grant McKercher on *Birds Art Life,* although not a book strictly about birds; King Penguins, following up with the third of the four penguins Franco Mariotti mentioned during his November presentation; and three birds seen during the late fall – the Snowy Owl, the Snow Bunting, and the Red-bellied Woodpecker, with all three still being seen now that it is winter. **A reminder again that if you see anything you think others would be interested in, please let me know what you saw and a photo if possible but not necessary. Also, book reviews on any nature topic are welcome.** Grant's review will give you an idea of length and content.

Larry Dyke writes about the last Laurier Woods guided walk of 2017 - the topic, the Canadian Shield, a fitting end to our 150 years of Confederation. These popular walks start up again in May with Dick Tafel who will once again take us on bird walks for at least the first three Saturdays of that month.

One of the great adventurers of the club, Peter Ferris, writes about another of his solo canoe trips, this time along Manitoba's Berens River. **All adventure stories, big and little, are very welcome, so be sure to email me yours.**

The Science Festival held in November at Nipissing University proved to be a great success. With Louise Simpson at the helm, our Club promoted the Motus Wildlife Tracking System. Following the festival, we learned we will be able to proceed this year with the installation of it.

Congratulations to all the winners of the photo contest – Kaye Edmonds, Grant McKercher, Eric Mattson and Fred Pinto. Their photos will be featured in February's issue of *The Woodland Observer*; they also can be seen on our website and Facebook pages, thanks to Sarah Wheelan's video.

A fitting prelude to another four seasons of nature activities is our Annual General Meeting, held again at the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority. Details are inside this issue, **as well as a request for donated items for the silent auction that follows the AGM**

Renee Levesque, editor
rlevesque1948@gmail.com

WHITE

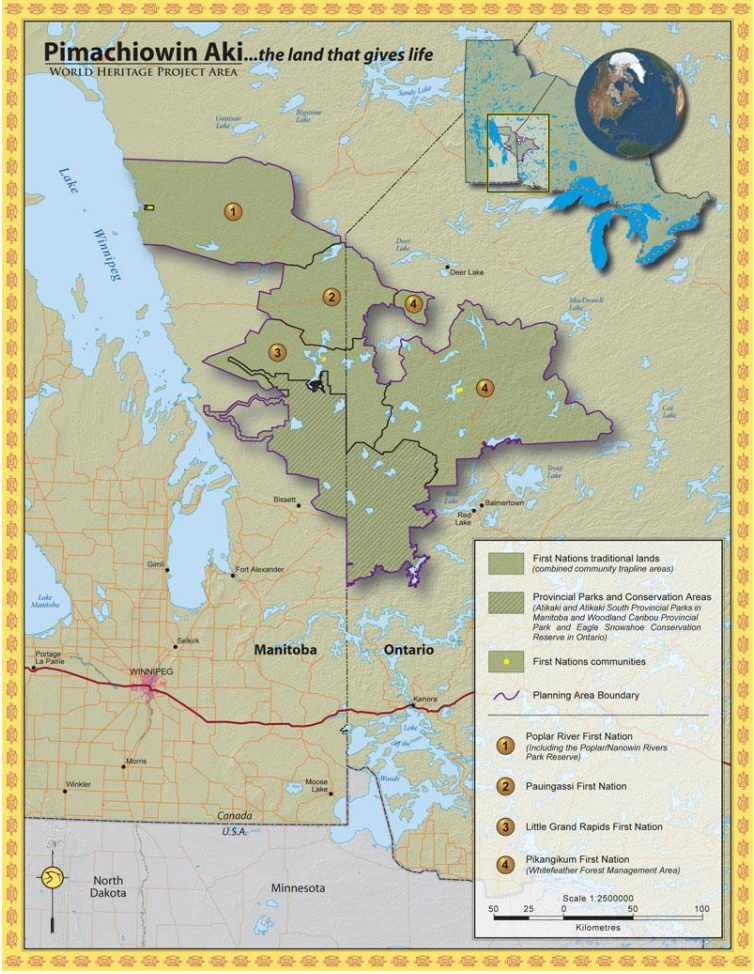
Journey through a boreal wonderland

Text and photos by Peter Ferris

In August 2017, I was fortunate to take another canoe trip in Manitoba, this time along the Berens River, one of several free-flowing major rivers – the others being Bloodvein, Leyond, Pigeon and Poplar – that have their headwaters in an immense area of subarctic boreal forest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It is a pristine area known as Pimachiowin Aki, "The Land that Gives Life".

Pimachiowin Aki is a candidate for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The partners supporting the Pimachiowin Aki nomination bid include the Manitoba and Ontario Governments and four First Nations: Bloodvein First Nation, Little Grand Rapids First Nation, Pauingassi First Nation and Poplar River First Nation. If approved, it would be one of a very few UNESCO sites to recognize both natural and cultural values. The nomination bid sums it up well: "The Pimachiowin Aki partners share a vision of the World Heritage Site as an ancient, continuous and living cultural landscape in which the Anishinaabeg, the forest, waters, fish and wildlife, and all other beings are understood and safeguarded as one living entity. The landscape and all its tangible and intangible values are celebrated and shared for the benefit of the partner communities, for visitors and for all humanity."

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER



My journey started with a two-day drive to Winnipeg where I picked up some supplies and organized my equipment. I then drove to Matheson Island on Lake Winnipeg from where Clinton Whiteway, owner-pilot of Kitchi Island Airways and Outposts, flew me to Family Lake at the headwaters of the Manitoba portion of the Berens River. From there, I immediately headed downstream toward my ultimate destination – Berens River First Nation on Lake Winnipeg.

The Berens River, seen below, flows through beautiful and unspoilt country characterized by Jack Pine and spruce forests, open rock and granite outcrops, lush lichen, moss carpets and rich wetland areas. The Manitoba portion of the river is a pool and drop system of lakes interconnected by sections of whitewater. The river features a total of 52 rapids and falls, narrow cuts, overhanging ledges, stretches of placid water, numerous back channels and hidden coves. Along the route there is clear evidence of hunting, fishing and ceremonial activities by the Anishinaabe who have called the area home for thousands of years.

The Berens is one of the more remote rivers in Manitoba, an appealing choice for canoeists or kayakers seeking a wilderness experience that is relatively accessible and affordable. In the

modern age there has been some logging closer to Lake Winnipeg, but other industrial activities have been largely absent. At least for now, the Berens retains its essential wild nature.

At the height of the fur trade era, the Berens was lined with trading posts. Today there are a scattering of cabins, hunt camps and three First Nation communities along its route, including Pikangikum First Nation on Pikangikum Lake on the Berens River, Ontario portion; Little Grand Rapids First Nation on Family Lake, Manitoba; and Berens River First Nation at the mouth of the Berens River on Lake Winnipeg.

I did not see any caribou or bears on this trip as I had the previous summer while canoeing the Hayes River. This disappointment was compensated for by a rare encounter with a Wolverine swimming across the river (left). And, of course, I did see Moose, Mink, Beaver, Otter, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, Sandhill Cranes, Belted Kingfishers, Canada Geese, as well as various ducks and shorebirds. I did not encounter any other canoeists and the only people I met were a father and son who had flown in to do some fishing on one of the lakes accessible from the Berens River.

Part of the joy of paddling a river is scouting rapids (below) and deciding whether they are runnable, mentally charting a course through them, evaluating the odds for successful completion and assessing the potential for recovery in case of a mishap. On this trip, I was fortunate not to have any serious accidents. Except for taking on some water while running Manitou Rapids and having to pull ashore to empty the canoe, I avoided any serious miscalculations.

The thrill of scouting and navigating challenging rapids was balanced by periods of quiet observation and reflection on more tranquil sections of the river and by the physical demands of portaging my gear around falls and unrunnable rapids**.** While many people find portaging to be pure drudgery, I welcome the

opportunity to stretch my legs and discover photo opportunities not available from the canoe. Nevertheless, I am always happy when the canoe is once again in the water, loaded and ready for the next leg of the trip.

Possibly the best time of day is pulling ashore to establish camp for the night (below). On the Berens, it was easy to find good campsites and some of them were extremely picturesque. Once the tent is up, the canoe flipped over on shore and all gear protected from rain, there is a sense of security and satisfaction that is hard to describe. It is a feeling of self-reliance coupled with a sense of just being in the world with no pressures to compete, succeed or achieve.

A canoe journey for me is always both an adventure and a spiritual journey, and my travel on the Berens was no exception. In our day-to-day lives, it is easy to feel that our existence is immersed in or even dominated by a vast system of technologies, institutional structures and the incessant demands for constant economic growth. A journey by canoe on a river through pristine wilderness allows me to renew and deepen my sense of connection to natural rhythms and other creatures. Always I am reminded that we are fundamentally children of nature and need that

connection to be whole.

While canoeing the Berens River, I was again reminded of the development pressures that are threatening our remaining wilderness areas. As I neared Berens River First Nation on Lake Winnipeg, I was startled by the intrusive sounds of heavy machinery and remembered that an all-weather road is being constructed to allow better connections between remote First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

While the goal of Pimachiowin Aki as a world heritage site is a beautiful vision that I hope will materialize, I couldn't help but wonder what new development pressures will grow from the creation of this new transportation corridor.

At the end of my trip, I paddled through the very centre of the community of Berens River First Nation until I finally arrived at the Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship Office on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. I visited with staff there for a few hours while I waited for the floatplane to fly me back to Matheson Island where I had left my vehicle.

The Berens is a river that allows many opportunities for discovery. I hope to paddle it again one day.

Note**: Map is from **http://manitobawildlands.org/maps/080623Pimachiowin%20Aki.jpg**. You can learn more about the Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO nomination bid by visiting **http://pimachiowinaki.org/.

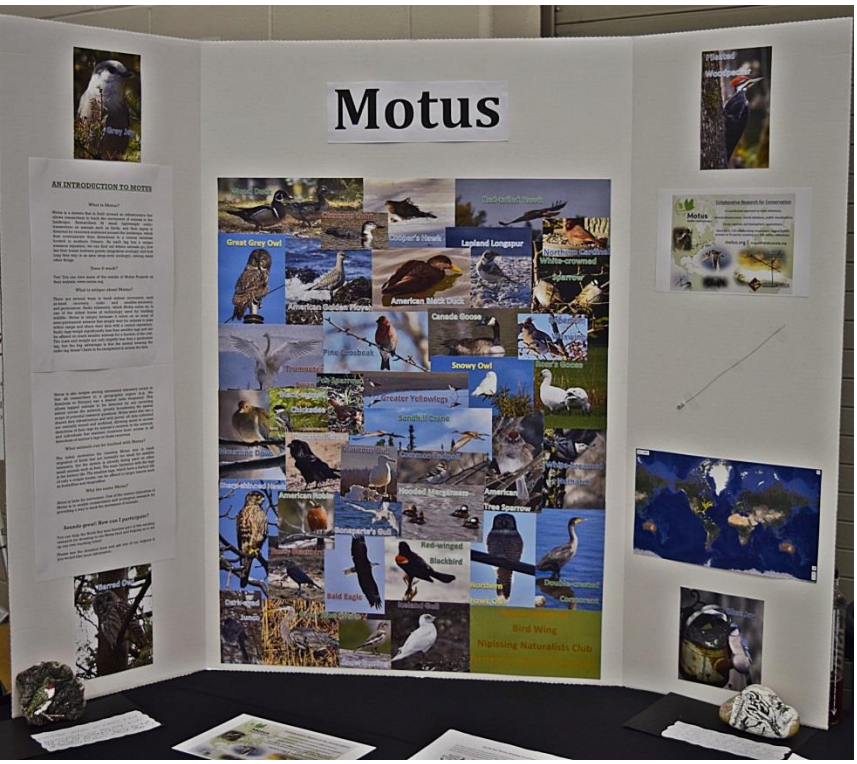
Motus is a go following successful Science Festival

Renee Levesque

By Louise Simpson

On Saturday November 18th, Nipissing Naturalists Club had a booth at the first annual North Bay Science Festival, held at Nipissing University. Despite a fairly heavy snowfall in the morning, turnout was good with approximately 390 people attending throughout the event.

The focus of the booth run by Louise Simpson, Sarah Wheelan and Kaye Edmonds (above) was the Motus Wildlife Tracking System and the aim was to educate members of the community about the technology involved in and the benefits that come from wildlife tracking, as well as to raise public awareness of our fundraising campaign.



Renee Levesque

There was a computerised demonstration of bird migration routes, with our volunteers showing people how to operate the Motus website and data. The booth also contained a sample of the tags used by Motus to track birds, a map of station locations, some informational posters and a collage of birds that can be found in our area in the fall and winter months, using the great photos provided by Bird Wing (seen at left). Many people stopped by to learn about

Kaye Edmonds

Motus and to ask questions, including two individuals asking our help in identifying an owl sighted near the university from photos on their cell phones – turned out to be a Barred Owl.

As the Science Festival was a free family-oriented event, Kaye Edmonds also ran a wonderful children's activity, teaching children how to paint various bird species onto rocks, with some of her own beautiful artwork as examples (seen above). This proved very popular, with over 40 children taking part and Kaye running out of rocks by the end of the day. This made going home much lighter than arriving!

The Science Festival was a great event and Nipissing Naturalists Club was honoured to be a part of it. All the volunteers had fun meeting everyone and sharing information about the club, as well as getting to check out all the wonderful interactive displays put on by the other exhibitors. We were also delighted to welcome some new members.

In other good news, shortly after the Science Festival, we met our fundraising goal for the Motus station! This means the project has the go-ahead and we can now begin planning for installation in 2018. Thank you to everyone who donated their time and money to the fundraising campaign. We are excited for the project to begin.

We would like to specifically thank the following organizations, companies and individuals for donating to the fundraising effort:

North Bay Hydro - $4,000 (in kind) for the pole and installation
Mati Sauks - $1,000
Greater Nipissing Stewardship Council - $1,000
Nipissing University - $1,000
North Bay Lions Club - $500
Rebuilt Resources - $500
Marc Buchanan - $100
Fred Pinto - $100
Grant McKercher - $100
Lyn Ingham - $100
Kaye Edmonds - $30
Lori Anderson - $25
Steph Romaniuk - $25

Sarah Wheelan

Interesting late fall finds

By Renee Levesque

Snowy Owl: Everyone, even non-birders, gets excited when the regal-looking Snowy Owl pays a visit to our area. This fall the first ones seen, as far as I am aware, were on November 22 on Gravelle Road in Calvin Township, seen by Ernie Frayle, and on November 23 at Sunset Park, seen by Kaye Edmonds and as pictured below**.**

The Snowy Owl is native to the Arctic regions of North America and Eurasia where it nests. But in winter it can be found south throughout many parts of Canada and Eurasia. It likes treeless places, wide-open spaces and rolling terrain with high points of land where it can sit to survey its domain with its extraordinary vision. For obvious reasons, it likes a good view. From its vantage point, it hunts rodents, small mammals, waterfowl and other birds, mainly in the winter. On its breeding grounds, it relies primarily on Lemmings and other rodents. When its hunting is done, it can sit and wait patiently, so if you see one sitting on a post, it may still be there hours later. It is considered a diurnal owl, meaning it

Kaye Edmonds

hunts day and night. It needs 7 to 12 mice a day to meet its food requirement and can eat more than 1600 Lemmings in a year!

The official bird of Quebec and in the running for Canada's national bird when we thought we might get a national bird, the Snowy is a large owl, one of our largest owl species. The male is almost pure white as seen in the photo on page 4 in the collage highlighting the colour white; the female's white feathers are barred with dark brown; the immature male resembles an adult female; and the immature female is heavily barred, as in Kaye's photo above. The plumage of the Snowy Owl is very thick, consisting of a dense layer of down, overlaid with thick insulating feathers over its entire body, including its legs and talon feet. Its eyes are yellow and its bill, also covered by feathers, is black.

Because of population fluctuations in its prey species, the Snowy Owl is forced to relocate in the winter to where it can find food. In 2011/2012, there was a mass migration of Snowy Owls south, but an even larger irruption in 2013/2014 during which time Snowy Owls were reported as far south as Florida and Hawaii.

The Snowy Owl is considered to be a common bird in steep decline, meaning it is not on the watch list but is rapidly declining throughout its range.

Snow Bunting: I believe Kaye was the first to spot the Snow Bunting this past fall, again at Sunset Park, after which a few of us saw some there, and others, like Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, saw them in large flocks in Chisholm Township.

Renee Levesque

Like the Snowy Owl, the Snow Bunting is a bird of the Arctic tundra. In fact, it is the most northerly recorded passerine in the world and breeds not just in the high Arctic of North America, but also on Ellesmere Island, Iceland and the higher mountains of Scotland, Norway, Russia, Greenland and Siberia.

We see the Snow Bunting in our area in its non-breeding plumage, as seen in the photo at right, when it migrates from the Arctic to northern temperate zones to winter in open fields and along the shores of lakes and oceans. The male returns to the Arctic in early April and the female 4 to 6 weeks later. The male, whose song pattern is unique to him, starts singing as soon as he reaches his breeding ground and stops once he finds a mate. Song is very important to breeding Snow Buntings. The female chooses her mate based on his song rate. Because his rate is limited by his foraging needs, a male that sings more

frequently clearly demonstrates that he is quite successful in foraging and that translates into an ability to effectively care for his partner and their young.

There is such a difference in plumage between the breeding and non-breeding male that they are hardly recognizable as the same bird. And because we don't get to see the breeding male here, I was quite excited to see one in his immaculate white and jet black plumage when I was in Iceland's arctic Grimsey Island in June a few years back.

Renee Levesque

The Snow Bunting nests deep in cracks and cavities of rocks heavily lined with moss, grass, fur and feathers to keep the eggs and the nestlings warm against the cold rocks. The female remains on the nest for most of the incubation period, further keeping the eggs warm, and while incubating, she is fed by the male. She does not lay her eggs until the temperature is above 0 degrees Celsius. The eggs hatch in 10 to 16 days and the young are ready to fly in another 10 to 17 days. Pictured at left is a juvenile Snow Bunting on Grimsey Island.

A ground-dwelling species, the Snow Bunting eats insects in the summer and grasses, weeds and sedges mainly in the winter. The young are fed primarily on insects.

Like the Snowy Owl, the Snow Bunting is a common bird in steep decline, but " it is just as important to keep common birds common as it is to prevent extinction in rare birds."

Red-bellied Woodpecker: We are very familiar with the Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, all quite prevalent in our district. But most of us rarely get to see the Red-bellied Woodpecker which has made some inroads into our area from its more southern habitats in eastern Canada and the U.S. In fact, the Red-bellied is primarily a bird of the southeast. It likes swamps and riverside woods. The first time I saw a Red-bellied was a few years back in the Florida Everglades. It is a long way from there to here, but the Red-bellied has extended its range north to Canada, becoming a common species in eastern woodlands, forests and backyard feeders. However, it is only within very recent years that it has made its presence known here, and even then, only a few have been seen, primarily in the fall and winter. (Ken Gowing did see one at his feeder in April 2017, and there are a couple of reports of April sightings in South River in 2001.)

For the last 3 years or so, I know of two Red-bellied Woodpeckers that were seen for a good part of the winter, one at Mary Young's feeders in Corbeil and one at Gary and Luanne Chown's feeders in North Bay. But this fall and winter, three or four have already been seen. The first reported sighting was in

early November by Lori Anderson who had for a time being a female at her feeders in Chisholm Township. And then on November 26, **Kaye Edmonds** reported one at her feeders **(below right)**, one that has been coming for suet and peanuts almost on a daily basis. It is the same for **Mary Ann Kenrick** who lives not far from Kaye. Her female Red-bellied **(below left)** may be the same one that is at Kaye's and if so, this Red-bellied has access to a bonanza of food because both women have well-appointed bird feeder yards. And then during the Christmas Bird Count on December 16, Lori and Ken Gowing saw a male in Pinewood Park subdivision.

The Red-bellied is a very pretty woodpecker, and although you may think it doesn't have a red belly, it actually does. It is just that it is concealed by gray feathers and not very visible. Because the male has a red forehead, cap and nape, there is a tendency to want to call it a Red-headed Woodpecker, but that is a different species of woodpecker altogether, one with a crimson head. The Red-bellied Woodpecker's red is very pale in comparison, but it has a lovely sheen to it. The female does not have a red cap, but does have a red nape and red around her bill.

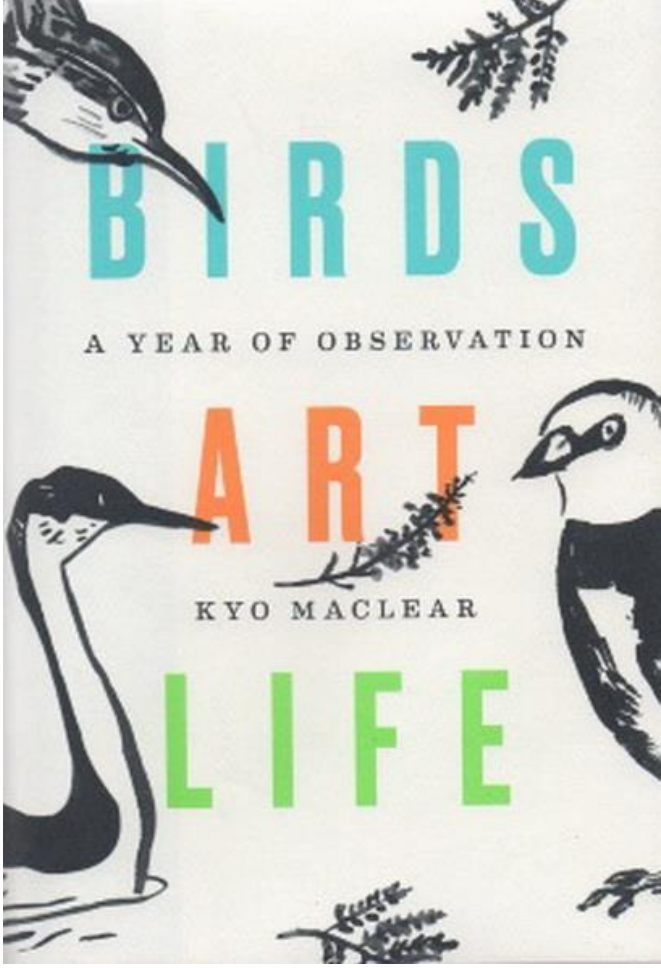
The Red-bellied eats mainly insects, but also acorns, nuts and pine cones. It nests in dead hardwood and pine trees, in dead limbs of live trees and in fence posts. Usually, a pair will excavate a cavity each year, frequently making a new one beneath the one from the previous year.

Although not common to our area, the Red-bellied Woodpecker's population is stable and perhaps increasing slightly.

Sources: All About Birds, Cornell Lab Ornithology; Audubon Field Guide; National Geographic; Wikipedia.

Book Review

By Grant McKercher



Birds Art Life
Kyo Maclear
Canada: Doubleday, 2017

Birds Art Life is a memoir by author Kyo Maclear who was experiencing a 'creative depression' while coping with the stresses of caring for her ailing father (celebrated war correspondent Michael Maclear), raising her own family and working as a writer.

Maclear reads about a musician who is experiencing a similar crisis of creativity and who finds comfort and inspiration in urban birdwatching in Toronto. Although not a birder herself, Maclear is intrigued by the musician's story. She contacts him and asks if he would take her for a 'bird walk'. And so begins a year of birding in the company of the musician.

But the book is not so much about birdwatching as it is about the human condition - how nature and small things can be grounding and emotionally healing during times of stress, anxiety and self-doubt.

Although birds are the common theme throughout the book, the author touches on a wide range of topics related to our lives in this hectic modern world – love, family relationships, aging and mental health. Maclear puts these into a broader context beyond her own personal experiences by exploring themes from the viewpoint of famous artists, writers and philosophers.

Maclear offers many insightful observations throughout the book that made me stop and reflect on their relevance to my own circumstances. Some of my favourite parts were the essays on "Smallness – On the satisfactions of small birds and small art….", and "Waiting – On the frustrations and unexpected rewards of waiting…for birds and inspiration."

"The birds tell me not to worry, that the worries that sometimes overwhelm me are little in the grand scheme of things. They tell me that it's all right to be belittled by the bigness of the world. There are some belittlements and diminishments that make you stronger, kinder."

Editor's Note: *Book reviews dealing with all aspects of nature are welcome. Please send submissions to rlevesque1948@gmail.com.*

The King Penguin

Franco Mariotti

By Renee Levesque

In November's issue, I wrote about two of the penguins Franco Mariotti spoke about during his October presentation to club members, the Adélie and the Chinstrap. This month, I will focus on another of the penguins Franco mentioned, the King Penguin, a handsome and elegant penguin.

Only the Emperor Penguin is larger and bulkier in size than the King. The King is 70 to 100 cm (28 to 39 inches) in height, about 22 to 56 cm (9 to 20 inches) shorter than the Emperor. The King's plumage is similar to the Emperor's, only the King has the more vivid and striking plumage – bright orange-gold on either side of its neck and orange in the upper part of its chest (see photo below). Although both species have colourful markings along their lower mandibles, the King's is orange and the Emperor's, pinkish.

King Penguins are found in the South Atlantic and breed on the sub-antarctic islands dotted around the northern reaches of Antarctica, on the Falkland Islands and on South Georgia where the largest colonies are found. Colonies are occupied year-round either by adults or by chicks, and because the chicks need to be fed throughout the winter, King Penguins are restricted to ice-free areas.

Liam Quinn, Wikimedia Commons

The King Penguin's average age for breeding is around six years. It remains monogamous only while raising a chick. Very few mate with the same partner the following breeding season. When ready to mate, the male gives a trumpet-like call, stretches his tail and raises his bill. It breeds from November to April and it

takes up to 13 months from the laying of the egg until the chick is ready to go to sea. Because of the length of time from laying to fledging, the King Penguin has only 2 chicks every 3 years.

Watercolour by Marc Buchanan, with a nod to photographer Andrew Peacock

Unlike the Adélie and the Chinstrap, the King Penguin does not build a nest of stones. Instead, it incubates its single egg under its belly on top of its feet. Here the egg is sheltered and kept warm by the flap of its abdominal skin, known as a brood patch.

Incubation lasts approximately 55 days and both parents share in the incubation in shifts of 6 to 18 days. Once hatched, the chick spends time balanced on its parents' feet to keep it warm and sheltered. Again, both parents take part in this, alternating every 3 to 7 days. While one guards the chick, the other forages for food, sometimes making a trip of up to 400 km in search for it. During the time one parent is at sea foraging for food, the chick must wait a considerable time to eat. The guarding phase lasts for about 40 days, after which the chick is able to keep itself warm and protected from predators by forming a crèche with the other chicks. (See photo bottom of next page.)

The chicks are left alone when the adults return to sea during the winter and are rarely fed during this period. They have to survive on their own in often severe conditions, including blizzards. They are kept alive by depleting their fat reserves. Their parents do return from time to time to feed them, usually once every 4 to 6 weeks, but it can be up to 3 months. During these intervals,

the chicks lose 50% of their body weight. They cannot go to sea until they lose their fluffy brown down, an excellent insulator on land but not in the water.

The King Penguin returns to the site where it was born to breed and does so throughout its life. (In the 19th century, the brown woolly-coated chicks were thought to be an entirely different species. See photo at right.)

The diet of the King Penguin consists of small fish and squid. It relies less on krill than the Adélie and the Chinstrap. An expert swimmer and diver, the King Penguin generally dives down to 50 metres (164 feet), but will go as deep as 300 metres (984 feet) when food is scarce.

Predators of the King Penguin are primarily giant petrels and skua species, both of which take chicks and eggs, and Leopard and Fur Seals that take adult birds at sea. Orcas may also hunt King Penguins. The Snowy Sheathbill and the Kelp Gull scavenge for dead chicks and unattended eggs.

Liam Quinn, Wikimedia Commons

The King Penguin population is estimated at 2.23 million and growing.

Sources: Arkive; British Antarctic Survey; Cool Antarctica; and Wikipedia.

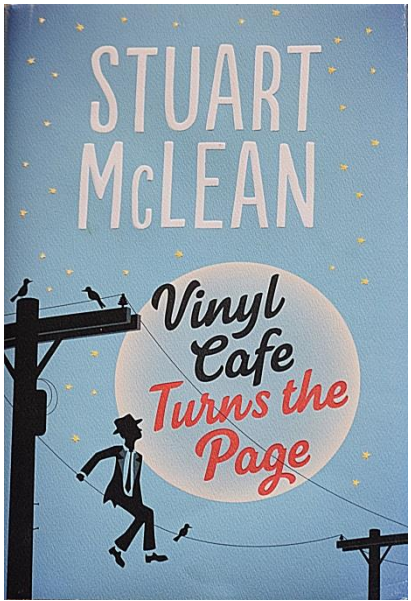
Butterfly austral, Wikimedia Commons

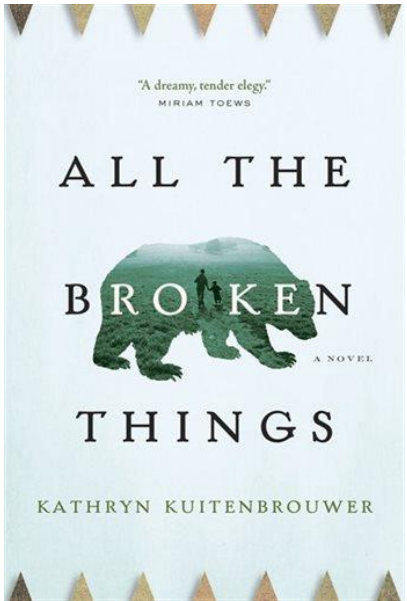
Going, going, gone!

Following the Annual General Meeting on January 9, we will hold a silent auction to raise funds for the Club. It is always a fun event and one usually comes away with something one wants – or alternatively doesn't come away with something one wants because someone else bid higher! So if you really really feel you want or need something, make sure you bid high.

Books are popular items to donate, but donations can be anything you think someone might enjoy**. They do not have to relate to nature.** Did you get a gift for Christmas you want to re-gift? Well, the auction is a good place to which to re-gift it. (I am not a fan of changing the noun gift to a verb, but there you go. Sometimes it is just convenient!)

Fred Pinto is donating some books, one of which is *All the Broken Things*, finalist in the 2015 Toronto Book Award. I am also donating some books, one of which is *Vinyl Café Turns the Page* by Stewart McLean, and another of which is a signed copy of Jane Goodall's book, *Harvest for Hope*, both of which I had planned to donate last year, but unfortunately I did not make it to the AGM. Kaye Edmonds, well, she always comes through with an item or two she made, like the rock painting and bird house shown above. And once again, Paul Smylie's prints from his paintings, one of which is shown at left, will be for sale at $15.00 each.





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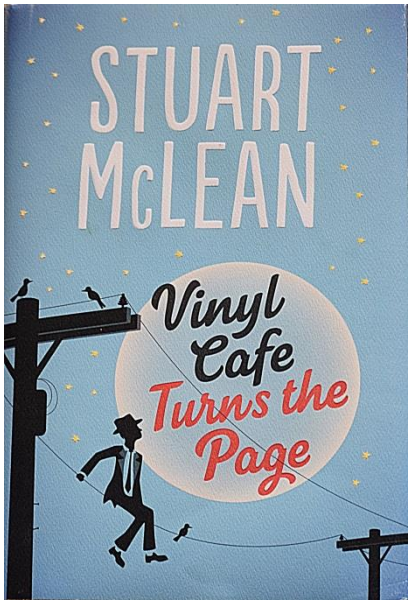
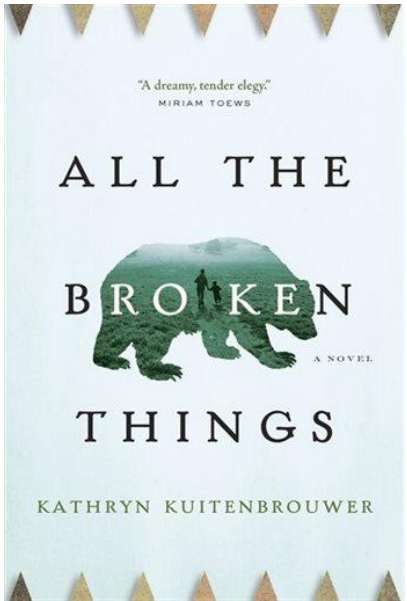




More Swan Songs

By Renee Levesque

On October 31, Stephen O'Donnell spotted three swans on Lake Bernard, two Trumpeter Swans and one Mute Swan, the latter not a common sighting in these parts and the first time Stephen has seen a Mute on Lake Bernard. (During the spring and summer, some of you may have seen a pair of Mute Swans on a pond on Memorial Park Drive in Powassan. However, I believe these Powassan residents are not wild swans.)

The two Trumpeters Stephen saw had wing tags, numbers E12 and K03. (Photo below) I reported Stephen's sighting and the wing tag numbers to Bev Kingdon and Kyna Intini of Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration and Kyna was able to report their history. There is something very special and rather exciting in finding out where a bird has been – hence our interest in establishing a Motus Wildlife Tracking System in North Bay.

Stephen O'Donnell

On November 10, Kyna saw Stephen's Trumpeters at LaSalle Park in Burlington where they will probably spend the winter. Both had been banded as adults at LaSalle Park – E12, a male, in January 2008, and K03, his mate, in February 2013. In 2012, they had two cygnets.

Kyna reports it is not known where the pair nest and there are not a lot of sightings of them, other than at LaSalle Park during the winter months. However, Kyna has some information of their wanderings and basically they have both been seen in and around Georgian Bay, including Sturgeon Bay in the Pointe au Baril area. This is a staging area or a stopping point for Trumpeters before they migrate to their winter destination. At least 50 Trumpeters were there by mid-November and it may be that E12 and K03 flew from Lake Bernard to Sturgeon Bay before heading to LaSalle Park. Interestingly, however, as of November 27, K03 and E12 were no longer at LaSalle, but they may have returned there in December once winter set in with a vengeance.

There seems to have been many Trumpeter Swan sightings this past fall in our area. Greening Bay Cottages in Callander reported on their Facebook page that there were two adults without wing tags in Greening Bay on October 19, and Lynn Barner who lives in the same area reported two there on October 22, presumably the same two adults.

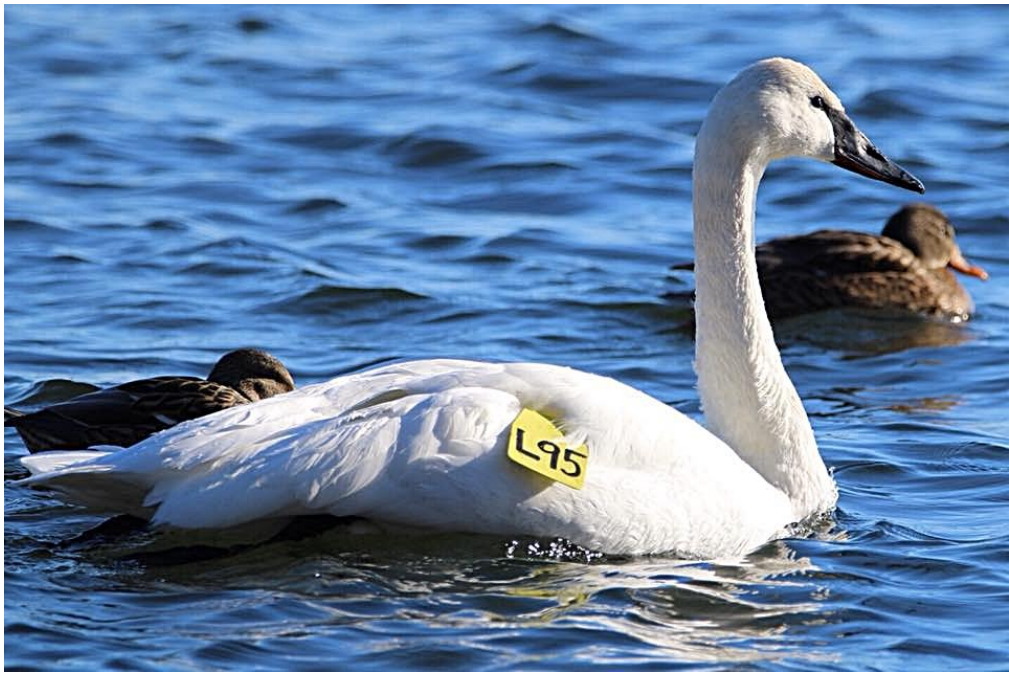
On November 2, a friend of Stephen's spotted a pair with two cygnets on Lake Bernard. They too did not have wing tags. During the November Bird Bash on November 5, Dick Tafel and I saw an adult without a wing tag and a cygnet at Cache Bay, and on November 11, Grant McKercher saw an adult pair without wing tags on Callander Bay. Then on November 22, Dick saw nine more Trumpeters, four at the mouth of the Sturgeon River and five on Lake Nipissing off Marleau Road, Sturgeon Falls. All nine were adults and one had a wing tag, but unfortunately the number could not be read.

And now for those who read the story of Ava that appeared in October's issue of *The Woodland Observer*: Bev reported that as of November 17, Ava was at Sturgeon Bay. Ava is the swan that captured much public attention since her story was told. To have survived lead poisoning because of the care she received at the Centre Wildlife Care facility in Pennsylvania is truly remarkable. As Julie Kee, also with Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration, puts it, "Not many birds that get lead poisoning get a second chance."

On November 28, while still at Sturgeon Bay, Ava's wing tag (L95) that had been lost was replaced by Laurel Ironside, licensed bander with Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration. And on December 13, Ava was back at LaSalle where her journey began five years ago! (See photo below of Ava with her replaced wing tag.)

For those who would like to see Ava while she was recuperating at Centre Wildlife Care, you can watch a video with Robyn Graboski, Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator. She was interviewed for "Wildlife Wednesday", a television program from WTAJ in Pennsylvania: http://www.wearecentralpa.com/central-pa-live/wildlife-wednesday-ava-update/174411793.

Editor's Note: *Thanks to Kyna Intini for providing information on the whereabouts of the Trumpeters Stephen O'Donnell spotted on Lake Bernard and to Kyna and Bev Kingdon for keeping me informed of Ava's (L95) whereabouts.*



Amanda Kerr

Rock with an age

Kaye Edmonds

By Larry Dyke,
Formerly Research Scientist, Geological Survey of Canada and
Assistant Professor of Geology, Queen's University

On December 2, sixteen geologically-minded participants took part in the Laurier Woods hike, sub-titled "What is the Canadian Shield?'. The weather cooperated wonderfully: Most of the late November on-again off-again snowfalls had melted by the time of the hike.

Those who took part in last year's November hike may recall we were not able to locate the elusive pegmatite. This time we found it, thanks to my good friend Gillian's willingness to pinpoint it with me immediately before the scheduled outing. I wanted to make absolutely sure I did not lead participants on another futile quest!

Everybody has heard of the Canadian Shield. In a sense, our vast region of lakes, rapids, and pink, red, black, often banded hard crystalline rock is what made Canada. It is home of the beaver that bankrolled the Hudson Bay Company and led explorers to all corners of the country. But geologically, the Canadian Shield is only one of several thickened expanses of the Earth's crust that underlie much of the continents. In fact 'shield' is a geological term for any part of the Earth's crust that has been thickened by plate tectonic processes to form the foundation of the continents, what we call 'continental crust'.

In the earliest stages of Earth's history, the only kind of crust was 'oceanic crust'. The mantle, the incandescent, plastic, gradually flowing layer below, developed huge convection cells that moved and are still moving the crust. Where upwelling mantle reached the base of the crust and then moved laterally, spreading ridges formed, producing new oceanic crust.

Pegmatite, Kaye Edmonds

Inevitably, spreading crust would encounter crust spreading from another direction, forcing one of the two segments downward, back into the mantle. The location of downward forcing is called a subduction zone. The subducted crust, returning into the mantle, melts, with the resulting magma rising back into the crust to solidify as rock bodies called plutons, or breaking out on the surface to form volcanoes. Either feature contributes to a thickening of the crust, beginning the transition from oceanic to continental.

On our hike, we stopped at the first outcrop encountered on the trail system, found on the way across a wide cattail marsh. This is a granite gneiss, the term gneiss indicating a metamorphic rock with pronounced banding, probably derived from a sedimentary rock. This outcrop is typical of most of the rock exposed in Laurier Woods and likely represents a very thick accumulation of sediment that built up from the erosion of terrain raised by crustal thickening. A series of thickened crustal segments, like mini-continents, were forming and moving toward the already existing shield about 1.2 billion years ago. By 900 million years ago, the part of the Canadian Shield between North Bay and Kingston had been assembled.

A pegmatite is an igneous rock exhibiting very large crystals, as pictured above. These crystals form during the last stages of the cooling of a pluton where contraction permits residual fluids, including water as super-heated steam, to accumulate in fractures. The water promotes molecular diffusion, enabling the growth of large crystals.

We found the pegmatite in Laurier Woods (close to the Purple Trail just before it exits the Conservation area onto Old Callander Road) and noted the large quartz, feldspar and mica crystals. Also abundant in the immediate vicinity are garnets, dark reddish spots in the gneiss, as shown below. The garnets signify further metamorphism, perhaps a stage in the metamorphism that accompanied the suturing or welding together of each thickened crustal segment.

Our quest successful, we returned to the main entrance, several of the participants noting the diversity of natural phenomena that even this relatively small land area presents. But underlying it all is the Canadian Shield foundation, rock with an age that is really beyond comprehension.

Garnets, Kaye Edmonds

As the pegmatite and garnets finally cooled and a new episode of mantle upwelling initiated the break-up of the assembled continent about 600 million years ago, all of western Canada, including British Columbia and Yukon, did not even exist. All even slightly complex forms of life had yet to appear.

Upcoming events and speakers

On **Tuesday, January 9, starting at 6:00 p.m.,** our Annual General Meeting takes place in the lower boardroom of the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority, 15 Janey Avenue, North Bay.

It starts with a pot luck dinner, so bring food to share, a plate and utensils. The dinner is followed by our annual meeting, highlighting our accomplishments and activities during 2017, after which there will be a silent auction.

Shannon Kelly with Cheetah, photo courtesy of Shannon

On **Tuesday, February 13,** our first speaker of the New Year will be Shannon Kelly, a third year honours specialization biology student at Nipissing University, who will talk about Big Cats and Elephants.

Shannon spent the month of August in South Africa where she volunteered at a sanctuary called Glen Afric, near Pretoria, caring for and improving the living conditions of these big animals.

THE WOODLAND OBSERVER

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Monthly Bird Wing reports are sent to members by email and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website, https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/. Here you will find in date order monthly Bird Wing reports; monthly Bird Bash reports; Year-end reports; and Christmas Bird Count reports.

The Woodland Observer is published electronically each month from September to June and sent to members by email and posted in date order on Nipissing Naturalists Club website, https://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/.

Editor: Renee Levesque: rlevesque1948@gmail.com

Contributors this issue: Marc Buchanan, Kaye Edmonds, Peter Ferris, Shannon Kelly, Mary Ann Kenrick, Amanda Kerr, Renee Levesque, Franco Mariotti, Grant McKercher, Stephen O'Donnell, Fred Pinto, Louise Simpson and Sarah Wheelan.

Membership Fees

Annual Nipissing Naturalists Club membership fees are: single $20. 00; family $30.00.

There is an **additional annual $5.00 membership fee for Bird Wing** which meets the **fourth Tuesday of every month in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.** This membership fee is paid directly to Bird Wing.

Nipissing Naturalists Club is affiliated with Ontario Nature: http://www.ontarionature.org/.