



## Local Naturalist Receives Prestigious Award



Our own James Kamstra was awarded the Pickering Naturalists Conservation Award for 2018 at their meeting in early December. James is of course well-known to us but his accomplishments may not be to some of you. If I tried to put it all to paper, it would fill pages, but here's a small sampling of what James has done to honour nature and the environment:

- Demonstrated a lifelong dedication to biodiversity enhancement and wildlife protection;
- Conducted ecological surveys of environmentally sensitive areas such as Awenda Provincial Park, Pelee Island & the Severn River;
- Worked to protect threatened

species, by doing field studies and maintaining membership on the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario re: snakes, butterflies & other fauna;

- Actively participated in environmental organizations, such as Durham Environmental Advisory Committee, North Durham Nature & land stewardship councils;
- Gave presentations & workshops and led outings on a wide range of topics (butterflies, dragonflies, moths, herptiles, birds, botany & photography) for nature groups, such as Ontario Nature, Field Botanists of Ontario & many local naturalist clubs;
- Helped lead Outdoor Education trips, including Durham high schools' birding trips to Point Pelee;
- Organized Butterfly Counts for Oshawa (26 years) & Sunderland (23 years), and served as Eastern Canada Coordinator for North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Counts;
- Worked on citizen science projects (bioblitzes, breeding bird atlases, Ontario tree atlas, marsh monitoring, etc.); and
- Led ecotours to educate naturalists on tropical biodiversity preservation in Central/South America for 20+ years, with special focus on Belize.

## *Ontario Nature Youth Summit*



### **Abridged letter re Ontario Nature's Youth Summit sent to sponsoring clubs:**

Thank you for your support of Ontario Nature's 2018 Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership. By sponsoring youth you gave students an opportunity to learn how they can create positive environmental change in their own communities and helped inspire future environmentalists across the province.

To recap, 106 youth from 74 communities across Ontario attended this year's summit.

Of those, a record-breaking 101 youth were sponsored to attend by 71 nature groups, conservation authorities, schools, corporate partners and individuals. This support means a great deal to us and it allows more youth to get involved each year. We had the pleasure of



participating in a wide variety of outdoor activities and educational workshops.

On behalf of the Youth Council and Ontario Nature, thank you again for your support of this great event.

Yours sincerely Trevor Fung, Ontario Nature Youth Council



North Durham Nature sponsored two students this year. Here are their thank-you letters:

**To the North Durham Nature Club:**

Hello! My name is Joshua Humphrey. I am 16 years old and I live in Sunderland. To give more perspective as to who I am, I can say that I go to Uxbridge Secondary School and I enjoy nature, geography and as most kids my age would say, I do enjoy my video games. So to be given this opportunity to go to a camp where many people would also share my interests in nature and geography was a blessing and I am really grateful to you for sponsoring me to go to the Ontario Nature Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership this year!

When I was first told about the camp I was a tad skeptical of if it. Would I really enjoy it or not? I didn't even know anyone that was there, but even before we got on the bus I met so many people that were so inclusive. Even though I was a complete stranger to them we started to talk and really get along with one another. I was surprised by how many people were my age. I found that my favourite workshops were the "Aboriginal Clan System - A 7 Clan Guide to Leadership and Biodiversity" and the "Insights into Leadership" ones because they were taught with a mix of fun and learning which made you feel like you're not only learning but having fun while you learn. Both of these workshops involved a huge amount of teamwork. Another part that I really enjoyed was the networking forum, where we got together in small groups and talked about things to help others to learn. I signed up for "Environmental volunteer, Post-secondary, and career opportunities" because I wanted to see what my options would be when I get out of high school and

beyond. I also signed up for "Event Planning" because I have been a part of planning many events and I wanted to give others some input on what to do to plan a successful event. At the beginning of the camp we were put into colour teams for the great group challenge where we got into our teams to complete in various activities and have fun. It's great because it allows you to get to know a smaller group of people more easily and create a more team-like sense while being with them.

Overall, the thing that you take away from this experience is the friendships and a greater understanding of the natural world around us. It was a great experience and I definitely would recommend anyone to go to this as it can impact your life very deeply. If nothing else, go there for the chocolate milk and hey, you might learn something along the way that you didn't even know that you felt very deeply about. Anyways, I hope that I can go back once again next year and have just as much fun or more! Thank you all deeply from the bottom of my heart and I hope you keep sponsoring people to go to this event. It is amazing.

Sincerely, Joshua Humphrey

**Dear North Durham Nature Club,**

My name is Sasha Latchaev, a 17 year old student of Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill. I would like to thank you for your generous sponsorship. Thanks to your help I had a chance to participate in the 2018 Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership. Within this program we undertook a lot of activities such as nature exploration in Ontario, environmental learning and camping in the great outdoors. I learned a lot of interesting new facts about Ontario's environment and the many unique plants and animals that are

native to this area. I attended workshops where I got deeper knowledge about aboriginal culture, and met a lot of fantastic and enthusiastic youth. Overall, this experience truly changed my perspective on our province and made me appreciate what we have more than ever before.

Thank you once again for the sponsoring me and giving me this opportunity to be one of 100 students participated in the 2018 Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership.

Best wishes, Sasha Latchaev

## *CBC4Kids*

*Story and photos by Jay Thibert*

How do you get the attention of 32 adults and 29 kids on a grey Saturday morning in November? A live Barn Owl will do the trick! This is how our day began at the Friends of Nonquon and North Durham Nature annual CBC4Kids event on November 24.

Debbie Delong, a raptor specialist, brought in Stella, a 20-year-old Barn Owl and had the “rapt” attention of everyone in the room. The children learned about the special features of a Barn Owl that make it a formidable predator and about its special habitat requirements. Please accept our big thank you to Debbie for volunteering her time and for motivating our participants to learn more about birds.



After an indoor session with Stella everyone was eager to be outdoors in search of more live birds. There was snow on the Nonquon trails and the temperature was just above freezing with light winds. Our large group was divided into four smaller groups and were given instruction about how to observe, count and enjoy seeing birds.

The Friends of Nonquon is a group of dedicated volunteers that shared their knowledge and enthusiasm that day. Mostly made up of active and retired teachers they are Bev Thibert, Cara Gregory, Cathy Galberg, Don Farquharson, Greg Moon, James Kamstra, Mike Whitmarsh, Jay Thibert and Terri Pellerin.

In total we observed and counted 13 species and a total of 79 birds on that last Saturday of November. One group was able to see 15 Common Mergansers fly over and

one Pine Grosbeak. Our most common bird was the Black-capped Chickadee and to the delight of everyone they were more than willing to land on a hand in exchange for black oil sunflower seed.



## *Durham Region Butterfly Counts - 2018*

### **DURHAM REGION BUTTERFLY COUNTS IN 2018**

*Story and photos by James Kamstra*

Our morning ended with a report from each group, some hot chocolate and this reading from a book called “Braiding Sweetgrass”, written by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the natural world and in need of a positive message about the world we all share.

“We put our minds together as one and thank all the birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them the gift of beautiful songs. Each morning they greet the day and with their songs remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader and to watch over the world. To all the Birds, from the smallest to the largest, we send our joyful greetings and thanks. Now our minds are one.” (Part of a Thanksgiving Address in the chapter titled “Allegiance to Gratitude”).

Our sightings have been shared with Bird Studies Canada and we hope that a few local families are more curious and thankful for our avian lifeforms.

Two butterfly counts were conducted in portions of North Durham attended by members of Durham Field Naturalists and North Durham Nature as well as other lepidopterous enthusiasts. The Oshawa count extends from the north side of Oshawa to north of Port Perry, while the Sunderland count includes parts of Uxbridge and Brock Townships in north Durham, and part of Georgina Township in York Region. All of the butterfly individuals encountered within a 25 km<sup>2</sup> on the count day were recorded and tallied, similar to a Christmas Bird Count. This was the 24<sup>th</sup> year for the Oshawa count and the 22<sup>nd</sup> year for Sunderland.



Delaware Skipper

A total of 47 species were recorded at Oshawa which is slightly above average. Oshawa had to be postponed to June 30 because heavy rain fell on the original date of June 24. The Sunderland count recorded 49 species which is somewhat lower than the long term average of 54.

Overall numbers of many species were lower than average. The migrant species Red Admiral and American Lady were very low this year, but Monarchs were in good numbers, especially at Sunderland. There it was the third highest count - only 2007 and 2012 had more. Most skippers were present in lower than average except for a few species such as Silver-spotted, Delaware and Dun Skippers. There were no new species or particular rarities on either count and the only record high species was Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on the Sunderland count. This southern species has increased in our area in recent years.



The results of the two counts are shown on the table below and the participants are listed below that.

**BUTTERFLIES OBSERVED ON THE DURHAM COUNTS IN 2018**

SPECIES	Oshawa	Sunderland
	30-Jun	08-Jul
Black Swallowtail	2	12
Canadian Tiger Swallowtail	4	1
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	19	86
<i>tiger swallowtail sp.</i>	20	
Mustard White	11	75
Cabbage White	251	339

Common Sulfur	144	2310
Alfalfa Orange	7	11
Bronze Copper	7	5
Coral Hairstreak		16
Acadian Hairstreak		6
Banded Hairstreak	2	
Striped Hairstreak	1	3
<i>hairstreak sp.</i>		6
Eastern Tailed Blue	5	28
Summer Azure	18	122
Silvery Blue	4	5
Great Spangled Fritillary	28	80
Silver-bordered Fritillary		1
Meadow Fritillary	1	11
Pearl Crescent	27	19
Northern Crescent	411	276
<i>crescent sp.</i>	32	5
Baltimore		191
Question Mark	5	6
Eastern Comma	16	24
Gray Comma	2	17
<i>comma sp.</i>		10
Mourning Cloak	1	22
American Lady	1	
Red Admiral	2	5
White Admiral	54	25
Red-spotted Purple	4	
Viceroy	4	14
Northern Pearly-Eye	56	19
Eyed Brown	40	314
Appalachian Brown		28
Little Wood Satyr	23	7
Common Wood Nymph	14	205
Inornate Ringlet	60	6
Monarch	65	367
Silver-spotted Skipper	50	30
Northern Cloudywing	3	12
Dreamy Duskywing	1	

Arctic Skipper	1	
Least Skipper	18	40
European Skipper	254	150
Peck's Skipper	1	84
Tawny-edged Skipper	7	74
Crossline Skipper	1	15
Long Dash Skipper	35	62
Northern Broken Dash	1	16
Little Glassywing	1	8
Delaware Skipper	16	71
Hobomok Skipper	9	9
Broad-winged Skipper		15
Dion Skipper		11
Dun Skipper	5	195
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>1744</b>	<b>5469</b>
Butterflies / hour effort	42.5	79.5
No. of Participants	11	22
No. of Parties	6	9
Km. on foot	33.5	66.5
Km. by car	217	301
Hours on foot	33.5	61
Hours by car	7.5	7.75
Total Hours	41	68.75

## Participants

Oshawa: Dennis Barry, Susan Blayney, Dan Bone, Margaret Carney, James & Lynda Kamstra, Carolyn King, Steve Laforest, Tom Mason, Maria Prisciak, Jay Thibert.

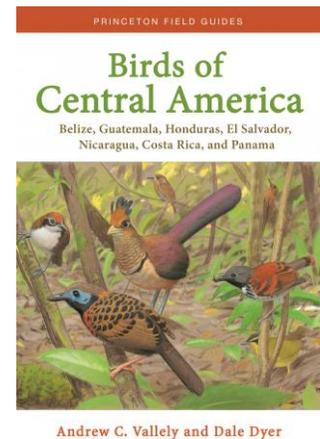
Sunderland: Dennis Barry, Dave Bishop, Susan Blayney, Dan Bone, Margaret Carney, Derek Connelly, Paul & Debbie Harpley, Jim Hopkins, James & Lynda Kamstra, Carolyn King, Steve LaForest,

Craig & Kathryn Lloyd, Tom Mason, Ginny Moore, Dave Paddock, Ed Poropat, Rayfield Pye, Bob & Karen Yukich.

## Book Reviews

**Birds of Central America (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama)** by Andrew C. Vallely and Dale Dyer.

Princeton University Press.  
2018. \$49.50 (softcover). USD.  
584 pages.  
ISBN:978-0-691-13802-2.



Many of us visit Central America with some frequency and I'm sure many of you, as have I, would take time to study the birds in these wondrous tropical settings. My greatest frustration, as I've stated in the past, is trying to find good books that will help me wherever I am, when I travel south of Mexico. Princeton's newest book does exactly that. About 1200 species of birds call these countries home for at least part of the year. Many of them are unique to the tropics, sharing time with North American migrants. Our own birds are well represented in other books, such as Sibley. Many other books simply overlook ours for that very reason – why waste space when other good resources exist? For me, I don't like that attitude so am glad that Vallely and Dyer chose to deal with all birds found in the region, both ours and theirs. To assess the book, I thought I'd look at North American fall warblers to see how the book handled them. Short answer – excellent!

They showed multiple plumages, adult and immature, male and female and spring versus winter. They essentially covered all the bases and did an admirable job. The other group I look at when trying to determine the value of a field guide is flycatchers. They dedicate 24 plates to this complex group - dealing with tropical and migratory species equally well. I looked closely at our species to determine the accuracy and was generally very happy with the outcome. The only one depiction I found to be a bit bright was the Least Flycatcher as they used colours that seemed to approach other greener-backed species too closely.



Great Kiskadee

The others seemed quite accurate and would be helpful to travelling birders. So if they did a good job with migrant species one could conclude they did well on non-migratory ones and the value remains for these species as well.

One thing I liked was that the plates are not cluttered with too many species and the images are well-sized so the readers can actually see the field marks. Also the maps, although smallish are clear and it is easy to see where the species occur and where

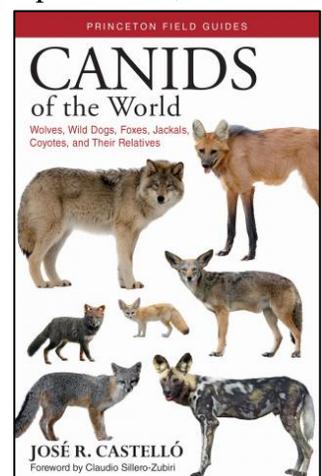
confusing overlaps might persist between similar species.

**Canids of the World** by José R. Castelló. Princeton University Press. 2018. \$29.95 (softcover). USD. 331 pages. ISBN:978-0-691-17685-7.

I find myself more and more fascinated by nature as time goes by, and love to study not just the parent species, but also the various subspecies to learn their behaviour. This book helps me in all these regards.

First of all – it’s not a bird book (!) and secondly they have not taken the easy route and just given the bare bones information many books offer.

Let me explain this a bit. When one looks at a Red Fox in most books, one could expect the authors to tell you that they exist across much of the world and look pretty much the same wherever they are. In this book, the authors take a different tact. They illustrate and describe in detail nine subspecies of the (Western Hemisphere) Red Fox (*Vulpes fulva*), then add 17 more descriptions of the Eurasian Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) - each with detailed accounts of its biology, descriptive features, reproduction, behaviour, habitat, preferred foods, conservation status, all supplemented with wonderful artistic photos of type specimens. Almost every one of these is given two full pages in the book, with text, photos and maps to lead the reader to a fulsome study of these wondrous animals.



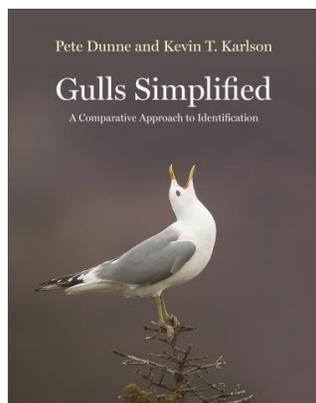


And so they continue with all the known canids of the world and all the identifiable subspecies. This is a must have book for any serious mammologist to have.

**Gulls Simplified** by Pete Dunne and Kevin T. Karlson. Princeton University Press. 2018. \$24.95 (softcover). USD. 208 pages. ISBN:978-0-691-15694-1.

Personally I find gulls really hard to identify. Couple multiple similar species with various variable plumages and the fact that most species have a different plumage for every age class and a different one for summer and winter and sometimes in between. And oh yeah, they hybridize with some frequency. Birders can't rely on where they SHOULD be found to help in the identification as we've recorded European, Asian, and even South American species here in Ontario (!). So it is a tough challenge.

I have several books on the subject and find all fairly hard to use, not because they're



not good, but because they're trying to teach us how to distinguish many confusing and similar species in one book – just too much information.

So why is this book different? Dunne and Karlson are experienced birders and teachers and they've conspired to produce a book that uses comparative features based on simple characteristics. They have chosen to group all gulls into broad categories – Small to medium-sized gulls, hooded gulls, gray-backed & white-headed gulls, large dark-backed gulls and dark horses (rare gulls). Within each of those categories they explain clearly and concisely, using text and photos, how to understand the salient ID features and how to separate species within each group from each other.

In the descriptive sections for each species they separated adults from immatures and discuss the key (simple) ways to tell one species from others. They also use line markers on the photos to show what they mean when they say to look for a feature for ID purposes. This is akin to the lines Peterson used in early editions of his field guides. Hundreds of photos augment the text. All in all, I think this is a job well-done. It may not be the be-all and end-all but it sure is an easier book to use than any others in my library. I think you'll like it and I know it will be useful to the novice or experienced birder.

## *In the News*

### **Firebugs!**

Raptors all over the world regularly can be seen at or near grass and forest fires. Woodpeckers are known to arrive in sometimes large numbers after fires in boreal forests in Canada. Throughout history, scientists presumed their attendance was coincidental and they only

used visual clues (e.g. smoke or altered terrain) to find these food-rich locations. However, scientists in Australia recently proved that some individual Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*), Brown Falcons (*Falco berigora*) and Whistling Kites (*Haliastur sphenurus*) deliberately spread fire by carrying burning twigs and dropping them in unburnt locations. They then attend the new burn site searching for prey! (Source – The National Post).



### **Termites Built Mounds While Rome Burned**

In the Caatinga Region of Brazil, termite mounds are found in abundance. Not really a big deal, except that some of these mounds date back to Roman times and specific colonies are known to contain millions of insects and have persisted for about 4000 years! And if these superlatives aren't enough – it is estimated that 200 million colonies exist in this arid, remote region. (Source – The Associated Press).

### **Exploding Ants**

A story in the Washington Post reports on a new species of ant that uses a unique technique to ward off predators. Not content with stings or bites or sheer numbers to overpower predators, these recently discovered ants (*Colobopsis*

*explodens*), found in the forest of Southeast Asia, kill themselves in defence of the colony. Essentially, when an intruder is encountered, they clamp down on it with their jaws, then contract their abdominal muscles so hard they crack their skin and poisonous yellow goo seeps out. It either kills the intruder or drives it off. Scientists have found at least 14 other species of ants that also commit suicide.

### **One Tough Owl**

In Washington State, a Great Horned Owl was hit by a truck and wedged into its grill, as the truck driver traveled on unwittingly carrying the injured bird. Almost three hundred miles later, the owl was thoroughly doused in a truck wash, still wedged in the grill. Taken to a rehab. centre, its broken wing was set and it underwent physical therapy for a month and was released back into the wild. Wow – what a tough little fella!

## *Nature Quiz*

What am I? I love stinky stuff and can hang on the faintest of wind currents for hours effortlessly riding invisible thermals. I used to be extremely rare in Ontario, and could only be found in the Burleigh Falls area of Peterborough County. But now I am routinely seen across much of the province.



## *Fusion Landscaping Guides*

Durham Region has developed some interesting new booklets that are available free of charge. They are called Fusion books and I just got my first two copies – Fusion Landscaping Guide for Homeowners and Fusion Interiors – Where Style and Conservation Come Together. These are flashy and well-presented booklets that will teach you about environmental ways (focussed on water conservation) to improve your home and your lot. Order your free copies at: <https://www.durham.ca/en/living-here/water-efficiency.aspx>

## *Feeder Watching*

Tis the season to feed birds. Christmas Counts and FeederWatch encourages us to do so, but be careful - there might be surprises out there as Brenda Near found out recently ... yup that's a Black Bear!



## *ROM Wildlife Photography Contest*

So you think you can take great pictures – do you? The ROM Wildlife Photographer of the Year contest returns for a fourth year! Whether you're an amateur or professional photographer, the ROM invites you to share your captivating images of the natural world for a chance to win some amazing prizes and have your photograph on display at the Museum. Open to all residents of Ontario - click the link below to find out about this year's incredible prizes and how to enter. To enter check out:

<https://www.rom.on.ca/en/wildlife-photographer-of-the-year-2018#contest>

## *Answers to Quiz*

It's hard to tell from this photo what kind of bird this is, but assuredly it is a bird. The picture gives few clues except perhaps to indicate that it is a raptor of some kind.

Very few birds have white juvenile plumages, so the combination of the hawk-like bill and the white body feathers lead us to consider hawks and owls and allies.

The beak is the clue here, for it seems to have a hook on the end so we know we're on the right track, but the hook is poorly defined and the bill is broad without signs of any colour on it. The face appears to have few feathers near the base of the beak which is also a good indicator of its identification. Finally, the forehead is poorly defined and doesn't rise above the beak vertically like most hawks and owls.

So our bird is a Turkey Vulture. These little guys were photographed in an old barn in Scugog Twp. a few years ago.



### *Local CBCs*

We will be participating in two local Christmas Bird Counts shortly .. so pls help if you can – in the field or at a feeder.

**Uxbridge Christmas Bird Count will be held December 27<sup>th</sup> – contact Derek Connelly at [ndnature7@gmail.com](mailto:ndnature7@gmail.com)**

**The Beaverton count will be held December 30<sup>th</sup>. Contact John McLean [jmclean@powergate.ca](mailto:jmclean@powergate.ca)**

## *For more information about NDN*

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*Note: All photos and text in this newsletter by Geoff Carpentier unless otherwise stated*

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