

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

Annual OFNC Committee Reports for 2023

Awards Committee

The Awards Committee manages the process to annually recognize and thank those Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club (OFNC) members and other qualified persons who, by virtue of their efforts and talents, are deserving of special recognition. In late 2022, nominations were received and evaluated (see awards criteria at <https://ofnc.ca/about-ofnc/awards>), and recommended to the Board of Directors for approval. The awards were announced in January 2023 on the website. Biographies were written for the award recipients for inclusion in the Club's publications and posting on the website. Certificates were presented to award recipients on 1 April 2023 at the in-person annual awards appreciation event at St. Basil's Church. The recipients' names, type of award, and short rationale for recognition follow below.

- Chris Traynor—George McGee Service Award, in recognition of 25+ years of dedicated service with the Birds Committee and its sub-committees.
- Sharon Boddy—Conservation Award for a Member, for community leadership of habitat restoration projects at Carlington Woods and Hampton Park.
- John Sankey—Conservation Award for a Non-member, for conservation efforts to improve local greenspaces, in particular the Hunt Club Creek.

ELEANOR ZURBRIGG, Chair

Birds Committee

The Birds Committee:

- maintained four bird feeders on National Capital Commission (NCC) properties over the winter;
- produced a weekly regional birding report published to the OFNC Facebook site, the ontbirds listserv, and the OFNC website;
- responded to ~30 identification requests and other inquiries from the public;
- provided birders for the OFNC events committee and a Migration Day event;
- responded to a couple of media requests;
- participated in an Ottawa City focus group on the Hintonburg Heritage Pumphouse revitalization;

- began researching a project on a Kirtland Warbler habitat.

The OFNC Birds Committee and the Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais (COO) organized the 103rd Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird Count.

Many long-serving committee members retired from the committee this year, including Chair Bob Cermak whose many contributions are much appreciated. This will need to be a year of renewal.

DEREK DUNNETT, Chair

Conservation Committee

The year began with the supervision of a 4th-year Environmental Science Carleton University student (January–April). Activities focussed on basic winter fieldwork training at numerous sites in and around Ottawa. Methods were explored for surveying biodiversity and associated scientific literature. We similarly supervised a 10th-grade high school student in August.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), which was detected in a grove of trees at Grafton in 2022, was searched for throughout the year whenever Hemlocks were observed in eastern Ontario. A special trip was made in April to the shore of Lake Ontario (Grafton, Kingston); thankfully, no HWA was observed by our group this year.

Our year-long survey of Morris Island Conservation Area was completed, and a summary report submitted to Ontario Power Generation in early December. A number of significant finds were made during this work, with several new records of rare native species being made at the site.

Complete defoliation of American Elm due to the new invasive insect Elm Zigzag Sawfly (EZS) was observed for the first time in Canada this year by our group at Cornwall. We observed the first known occurrence of Rock Elm hosting EZS larvae as well. A presentation regarding the current status of EZS in Ontario will be made in February 2024 at the Invasive Species Centre's Annual Forum.

Survey work by OFNC president Jakob Mueller resulted in the observation of novel shoreline habitat use by Red-backed Salamander along the Ottawa River in west Ottawa.

Committee member Christine Hanrahan observed the spreading invasive species Box Tree Moth for the first time in eastern Ontario at Ottawa in September.

Some apparently new locations for rare native plants were discovered in eastern Ontario by our group in 2023: examples include Maidenhair Spleenwort in west Ottawa adjacent to the Ottawa River, and Yellow Jewelweed in Ontario east of Highway 416 at Williamstown.

Numerous surveys and public education tours were given by our members: notably near McAlpine with the Eastern Ontario Land Trust (two visits), south of Wendover in remote woods with Prescott-Russell forestry staff (Red Spruce-focussed), and near Oak Valley with members of the Society of Ontario Nut Growers (Swamp White Oak-focussed).

OWEN CLARKIN, Chair

Education and Publicity Committee

The Committee has had several members resign this year: Fenja Brodo, Sarah Wray, Dean Beebe, Leo Vander Wouden, Robyn Molnar, and Sheena Parsons. Some have moved away and some have other commitments. We thank them all for their contributions. Fenja has been a long-time member and has finally decided to take a break. We will miss her wisdom and advice.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's Science Fair was again held live this year. Judges from the Science Fair selected four projects, which were each awarded \$100.

Dean Beebe continues as our X (formerly Twitter) administrator. Find it at x.com/ottawafielldnat. Jakob Mueller continues to host a YouTube page for the OFNC—look for it at: youtube.com/channel/UChryjAyoDoz7qnanrVaTJ_w. Sandy Garland keeps our Friends of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden's (FWG's) Facebook page up-to-date—facebook.com/groups/48901132335/. Thanks to Nina Stavlund for our OFNC Facebook page—facebook.com/groups/379992938552/.

Hannah Delion and Robyn Molnar started an Instagram page for the FWG at instagram.com/fletcher.wildlife.garden. Hannah and Gord are adding posts and reels (videos) regularly. The page has over 200 followers as of November 2023.

Our iNaturalist page has exceeded 880 species, 3100 observations, and 185 contributors. It is found at inaturalist.org/projects/fletcher-wildlife-garden.

Gord has made another wildlife quest for Hilda Road. More are planned for next year. Find them at: ofnc.ca/quests. A few "News Flashes" have been posted around the FWG to highlight recent wildlife occurrences, for example, the "Snowberry Clearwing", "Black-crowned Night-Heron", and "Snap-

ping Turtle Attacks Dog in Pond". The latter may have encouraged more people to leash their dogs.

In April, Deb Doherty and Gord participated in the Ottawa Outdoors Adventure Show Held at the Nepean Sportsplex. Sandra Garland along with the Wild Pollinator Partners organized a "pollinator walk" as part of the Jane's Walk events for 6 May. Lloyd, Hannah, Sandra, and I guided people around the FWG. Also in May, Gord Robertson and Deb Doherty hosted a table at the Sandy Hill EcoFair on 13 May as part of the spring Migratory Bird Day.

Hannah Delion and I helped guide a tour of the FWG organized by a pride group on 13 August. Lloyd Mayeda, Sandra Garland, Hannah, and I gave three tours of the FWG to 30 girl and boy cubs from the 24th Ottawa Scouting Group. Deb Doherty with Bird Friendly Ottawa and Ottawa Wildflower Seed Library passed out pamphlets at the Adawe Crossing and at Andrew Hayden Park during the fall Migratory Bird Day. Gord gave a tour for this event at Strathcona & Riverain Parks.

Gord presented to seniors at the Chartwell Rockcliffe Retirement Home on 20 January, 10 March, 5 May, 14 July, and 6 October, on "Birding in Scotland in Winter", "Birding in Florida", "Wildlife in the Galapagos", "Butterflies of Ottawa/Gatineau", and "Birding in Saskatchewan". Gord gave another talk on "Wildlife in Ottawa" at the Beacon Heights Retirement Home on 3 March for World Wildlife Day.

Joan Harrison initiated a project to find Anishnabemowin/Algonquin names for various native trees. She contacted elders at Kitigan Zibi to collate the correct names. So far 44 names have been collected; some are names for multiple tree species. These names will be added to our Flora and Fauna webpages.

With 13 storyboards in the FWG, members of the committee (Sandra Garland, Fenja Bordo, Kaitlyn Sjonnesen, Robyn Molnar, and myself) have created new stories for the various seasons. Thanks to Dr. Jean-Michel Weber and Diane Lepage for checking the French translations. Find these at: ofnc.ca/stories.

GORDON ROBERTSON, Ph.D., Chair

Events Committee

The past year provided a transition out of pandemic constraints and back into normalcy with respect to gatherings. Happily, this included the return of in-person monthly meetings in February at a new venue, which in turn necessitated moving the date of those meetings from the second Tuesday to the second Wednesday of the month. Field trips were numerous and well attended in the spring as the return to normalcy was embraced, but through the summer both leaders and participants became rather scarce as

many people embarked on long-postponed trips and vacations. Numbers returned in September. Digital events persist and are expected to remain a permanent feature, particularly in winter when travel is unpleasant and temperatures are uninviting.

Past committee reports have counted the calendar year, but in order to create consistency with other reports, the below count represents the fiscal year (from 30 September 2022).

In total, the committee coordinated 60 events, including field trips, workshops, presentations for monthly meetings, and digital events. Birding was the most common focus (14) by a slight margin over botany (13). General interest and overall biodiversity was third (10), followed by conservation (nine), mycology (seven), entomology (three), mammals (two), herpetology (one), and astronomy (one).

As always, the committee extends its sincere gratitude to all individuals who lead, presented, or assisted with events.

JAKOB MUELLER, Representative on
the Board of Directors

Finance Committee

This report covers financial matters during our last fiscal year 2022–2023, from 1 October 2022 through 30 September 2023. It also discusses the budget for the current fiscal year 2023–2024.

The primary task of the Finance Committee is to prepare a draft budget for consideration by the Board of Directors. The process stretches from the summer through October each year. First the committee receives suggestions, and estimates of revenues and expenses, from directors and committee chairs. The Finance Committee prepares a draft budget which is then discussed at the September meeting of the Board of Directors. After amendment, it is adopted at the October meeting. Members can see the budget in the minutes of October Board of Directors meetings, which are posted on the OFNC website.

The budget for FY2022–2023 was approved at the Board of Directors meeting of October 2022. The budget for FY2023–2024 was approved at the October 2023 Board meeting. The budget forecasts revenues of \$138 700 and expenses of \$206 913, giving a deficit of \$68 213.

The size of the forecast deficit is of great concern. The Club has a sizeable reserve, so it can sustain deficits of this order in the short term, but not longer if it wishes to remain a going concern. The Board of Directors has directed the Finance Committee to advise it on possible changes to our operations.

The committee began an analysis of the impact of the Ontario *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* on the Club. In order to comply with this law, while at the

same time operating the Club as members wish, we will need to revise our Articles of Incorporation and By-laws. The committee plans to prepare draft Articles and By-laws for approval at the Annual Business Meeting in January 2024.

Committee members for 2023 were Bob Bergquist, Catherine Hessian, Ann MacKenzie, Gillian Marston, Bruce Simpson, and Ken Young.

KEN YOUNG, Chair

Fletcher Wildlife Garden Committee

The summer of 2023 presented some challenges to the volunteers at the FWG. Work teams had to cancel their work sessions due to high temperature/humidity conditions, high atmospheric smoke levels, and several rain days. In spite of these conditions our volunteers continued to maintain the gardens, pathways, and ponds on the property. Many storms left dangerous trees that had to be cleared. We now have a volunteer who is a certified chain saw operator who will facilitate dealing with dangerous trees in the future.

Early in the season we agreed to help a turtle nest protection group and this resulted in several turtle nests being located and covered.

Our excellent team of volunteers continued to plant a variety of native species and remove invasives in the Old Woodlot and surrounding areas. This year a “dead hedge” was added between it and the road to create shelter for wildlife, especially insects.

Our method of planting native species after removing invasives is working well. We also gave Virginia Waterleaf to Friends of the Farm to compete with Dog-strangling Vine around shrubs in the Arboretum. Buckthorn was removed along the west edge of the Old Field, uncovering a new layer of sumacs, a number of serviceberry trees, and a Red Maple.

In the gully, Comfrey removal continues but the end is in sight. New plantings were done in the wet central part of the gully, the sunny north slope and a shade garden started on the south slope. Trees and shrubs were planted on the slope near Prince of Wales Drive. Water flow was encouraged from the intermittent spring on the south slope and the updated culvert crossing Prince of Wales. The forest floor on both sides of the gully were opened up. Tiny short “dead hedges” were constructed.

An arbor has been constructed at the entrance way to the Back Yard Garden.

The Butterfly Meadow group worked on formalizing the paths throughout the butterfly meadow zone by paving them with wood chips and using downed tree limbs as edgings. The hope is that this will clarify where visitors can safely walk without disturbing the plants and compacting the soil.

A small group of volunteers worked in hip waders in the amphibian pond to remove two invasive aquatic plants and to thin the thickening cattail population.

The sightings of a fox, an otter, a Green Heron, a Blanding’s Turtle, an ermine, and a Night Heron added to the longlist of animals, birds, and amphibians that call the Fletcher home.

Two scientific experiments were carried out in the Butterfly Meadow and the Gully by local university scientists to study the interaction of Monarch Butterflies with various wild plants and the effect of temperature on the growth of certain wild plants.

Our annual plant sale was a great success again this year. The plant team used the pre-order, pre-pay, scheduled pick-up format that is labour efficient for the volunteers and convenient for our customers.

Dogs not on leash continue to be a problem in the Garden. Polite requests by volunteers are met with disdain or are ignored. However, an incident in which a dog, not on a leash, entered the amphibian pond and was badly bitten on the leg by a large Snapping Turtle is being used as an example of why dogs should be on a leash while walking through the Fletcher.

The large number of photographers at the Fletcher this summer was interfering with the work of volunteers. Some sections of the Back Yard Garden are now roped off for short periods of time to allow volunteer work to continue.

EDWARD (TED) FARNWORTH, Representative on the Board of Directors

Macoun Field Club Committee

The Macoun Field Club is for kids aged eight to 18; activities take place on Saturdays during the school year. Events were organized by telephone and e-mail, and made known by posting a schedule on the Macoun Club’s home page on the OFNC website.

During this fourth year of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health restrictions were easing. The Committee considered it just barely feasible to resume holding indoor meetings. This was because the federal regulations governing our meeting place permitted seating closer than 2 m apart, provided we wore masks. Masks, however, impaired speech and hearing, and concealed facial expressions; it was hard to feel part of a group. For the sake of safety, we kept the number attending indoors small. This limitation, together with the continuing risk of viral infection, discouraged us from inviting outside speakers. There was a reversal of normal patterns: field trips were consistently better attended than indoor meetings. At the beginning of May, the World Health Organization declared the emergency phase of the pandemic to be over, but some leaders and children have continued to

wear masks on account of being over age 65 or having immunocompromised family members.

Committee members led 15 field trips (mostly to the Macoun Club Study Area in Ottawa’s greenbelt and familiar locations in Lanark County) and delivered presentations at 15 indoor meetings. An account of each event was subsequently posted on the Macoun Club’s home page.

The Macoun Field Club entered its 75th anniversary in the spring of 2023 (the inaugural meeting having taken place on 8 May 1948) and discussions with the Museum of Nature for a celebration in the autumn were begun.

For the first time since 2019 *The Little Bear* (the Macoun Club’s normally annual publication) was produced for distribution at the annual party. It was issue no. 75.

ROBERT E. LEE, Chair

Membership Committee

Club participation includes:

1. Membership which consists of those who pay Club fees, are “Honorary” members, or participate in the “Macoun Club”;
2. *Trail & Landscape* (T&L) Subscribers and;
3. An aggregate called Other which represents individuals and organizations that receive complimentary copies of T&L. The groups are reported separately.

The distribution of Club membership on 30 September 2022 and on 30 September 2023 is shown in Table 1. The slight decrease is consistent with the volatility in membership that the Club experiences from year to year.

TABLE 1. OFNC membership by type.

	2023	2022
Individual	408	434
Family	333	349
Student	13	14
Honorary	23	24
Life	37	39
Macoun Club	17	21
USA	11	11
Other International	1	1
Total	843	893

Members within 50 km of Ottawa comprised 703 of the total membership of 843.

The number of “T&L Subscribers” and “Other” on 30 September 2023 and on 30 September 2022 is shown in Table 2. The numbers do not vary greatly on a year-to-year basis.

TABLE 2. Non-member counts.

	2023	2022
T&L Subscribers	1	1
Other	25	25
Total	26	26

KERRI KEITH, Chair

Publications Committee

The Publications Committee manages publication of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN), T&L, and Special Publications. The committee also advises OFNC with respect to issues relating to research, including managing the research grants program. We published four issues of T&L: 56(4) and 57(1–3) and three issues of CFN: 136(2) [mailing date 12 December 2022], 136(3) [22 March 2023], and 136(4) [21 June 2023]. The CFN Book Review Editor Barrie Cottam stepped down from the committee, and we welcomed new Book Review Editor, Jessica Sims, to the committee. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee continued to conduct its meetings virtually.

This was the 9th year of the OFNC Research Grants program, which the Publication Committee administered. Research grants support field-based research activities that reflect and promote the Club's objectives within eastern Ontario and/or western Quebec, focussed particularly upon the Club's study area. The application deadline for proposals was 15 January 2023. The OFNC Board of Directors decided the final awards (see T&L 57(3):179) based on funding recommendations from a subcommittee of Jeff Saarela (chair), Carolyn Callaghan, and Paul Catling, who evaluated all proposals.

JEFFERY M. SAARELA, Chair

Safe Wings Ottawa Committee

Safe Wings continues to work through evolving changes in how the committee operates while managing the impact of HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza). The continued presence of HPAI requires more interaction with the public and with Environment and Climate Change Canada to make decisions on how to address potentially impacted birds, as well as providing more guidance and support to manage ducklings and goslings.

This year our volunteers documented just over 2000 window collisions (numbers to be confirmed) across approximately 99 species. This includes at least three Species at Risk: Wood Thrush, Canada Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird. And this year the third American Pipit was documented as a window collision victim in Ottawa.

The highest glass collision species in 2023 are (numbers to be confirmed for January reporting as required for permits):

Dark-eyed Junco	131
White-throated Sparrow.....	117
Brown Creeper	104
Golden-crowned Kinglet	96
Nashville Warbler	90

Safe Wings continues to work with Sandy Pines and The Owl Foundation for longer term needs and specialized care. Lily, a window collision victim we sent to The Owl Foundation several years ago, stayed as a foster and this year raised an owlet that Safe Wings rescued from Kemptville this spring.

Rescue

For the second year in a row, Safe Wings Ottawa stepped in to help orphaned ducklings and goslings in the Ottawa region. Over a period of two months between mid-May and mid-July we took in 149 ducklings, seven goslings, and one loonlet. A targeted donation campaign and an interview with CBC Ottawa highlighting the work that we were doing helped bring in additional donations to cover the unexpected costs. A new volunteer, experienced with fostering ducklings, took on the care after the initial quarantine and minimum 3-week period with our rehabber. They did a fantastic job supported financially by Safe Wings!

In addition to those 157 fluff balls, volunteers rescued and transported another 359 birds (representing 74 species) to our rehabilitation facility. Of those, 292 were admitted due to window collisions. Under our new protocol, our success rate (after the first 24 hours) increased to 92%, meaning that over 200 birds were treated and released.

The most common species seen this past year (excluding ducklings of course) were:

Brown Creeper	26
Golden-crowned Kinglet	24
Nashville Warbler	23

We also admitted 11 raptors including a Peregrine Falcon as well as an Eastern Whip-poor-will and an Evening Grosbeak (Threatened species and species of Special Concern).

Outreach

Safe Wings returned to holding an annual public display in 2023, hosting a well-attended Thursday evening display in March at the Museum of Nature. Two years of bird specimens were displayed totalling 2900 birds.

The committee also returned to public events with a total of 18 in-person engagements and one online presentation:

- 11 community engagement and speaking pre-

sentations were conducted, including a Jane's Walk and three World Migratory Bird Day/Earth Day events,

- two media interviews,
- three sessions were held to engage youth in their school or after-school program,
- three events were held in partnership with universities.

Among the university events, of note was a partnership with Professors Rachel Buxton and Deborah Connors of Carleton University, along with CAFES (Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability). Sociology/Anthropology students in a course on community engagement took Safe Wings' mandate of preventing bird-window collisions to four community associations and their communities to ascertain, via survey, awareness of the issue and willingness to take action. Presentations were made to the students as well as to a small public forum. Safe Wings expects the partnership to continue, especially with Professor Buxton who is also working with Safe Wings on data and advocacy issues.

Advocacy

The advocacy committee continued to speak up for birds in Ottawa through outreach with multiple levels of government, universities, and commercial buildings. Safe Wings pressed for enforcement of the updated Migratory Birds Regulations, which now specifically include window collisions. We continued our program of assessing and commenting on new development applications and are happy to report that many new buildings feature bird-friendly materials, although there is a long way to go. We advocated for the City of Ottawa to adopt the proposed High Performance Development Standards, which would include mandatory bird-friendly design, and will continue to do so despite council opting to delay a decision.

Advocacy committee members have been reaching out to organizations with large real estate holdings, such as school boards, and are actively engaged with encouraging them to commit to bird-friendly design for new buildings and major retrofits, as well as retrofitting identified collision hot spots. We have also seen positive change at Ottawa's major universities, with new bird-friendly buildings and major retrofits occurring. We are seeing positive results from our outreach efforts with OC Transpo as well, with the new LRT (Light Rapid Transit) stations using bird-friendly glass, although the existing stations remain a problem.

Overall, we are seeing considerable progress in making bird-friendly buildings more common and

more accepted. We hope to see more progress on enforcement of bird-protection laws and higher adoption of bird-friendly design in 2024.

JANETTE NIWA, Chair

Treasurer's Report 2022–2023

The OFNC ended the 2022–2023 fiscal year with assets of \$1 570 267. The General Fund had a net expense of \$4914 and the FWG Fund had net revenue of \$11 631. These figures compare with the previous year, which had a net revenue of \$8256 for the General Fund and \$15 122 for the FWG. The incredibly successful plant sale continues to generate great returns for a lot of hard work.

Last year we noted that we did not anticipate being able to maintain our revenues in excess of our expenses in the coming years. While there is a deficit in the General Fund this year it is not as much as we had forecast. Our expenses did increase but there were a few offsetting factors that resulted in less deficit than anticipated.

The Club had a very successful trip to Point Pelee in May. Given the number of volunteer hours required to organize these trips, the Board decided to make them a club fundraiser. This year the revenue exceeded the expenses by about \$10 000, thereby helping our bottom line.

Publishing the scientific journal, CFN, is a major contributor to the Club's objectives. However, it costs more to produce an issue than it generates in subscription revenue. In addition, honorariums for the Editors and those producing the journal have increased by about \$3000 per issue as was mentioned last year. This fiscal year only three issues were published compared to the usual four issues per year. This reduced revenue by over \$4000 and costs by about \$17 000. Consideration is being given to ways to reduce the deficit per issue.

Fewer research grants were awarded this year resulting in about \$6000 less deficit. A change in calculating deferred membership also raised the reported membership revenue by about \$4000. The deficit in the General Fund would have been closer to \$40 000 without these variances.

From an administrative perspective, we are always seeking ways to function more efficiently. In May of this past year, we were successful in launching electronic donation receipts, thanks to the tireless efforts of Bob Bergquist. Increasingly money transfers are e-transfers, PayPal, and direct deposits, with cheques used only rarely.

Because the events of this past year will not be occurring in the next fiscal year, we continue to forecast higher deficits and are looking for ways to reduce expenses.

Approved financial statements available online at: <https://www.canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn/article/view/3473/3259>

ANN MACKENZIE, Treasurer