

# localnews

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## LIVING

# Did you hear about that . . . ?

Readers share their tales and photos from a year of getting very close to nature

This week, I'd like to continue with my list of interesting sightings and anecdotes that readers have sent along over the past year. I have also included several interesting photographs that people have been kind enough to send along, as well.



**DREW MONKMAN**

### OUR CHANGING SEASONS

#### APRIL

On an Easter weekend hike through Petroglyphs Provincial Park, **Andrew Lipscombe** came across a young eastern hog-nosed snake. Like many Ontario snakes, this is a species at risk.

- In an attempt to trap raccoons that were digging up his lawn, **Bob Hardill** inadvertently trapped a Virginia opossum! Later, on July 23, Judy Raymond found a dead opossum near the medical centre on the Bridgenorth highway. Opossums are moving increasingly northward.

- In mid-month, **Janet Flinn** reported that for the past six years she has had the same black-capped chickadee coming to her cottage feeder on Chemong Lake. She knows this because the bird has a white head. "I have to assume that it's the same bird, but that seems odd for a chickadee!" said Janet.

- On April 16, **Lynne Kemp** of Peterborough wrote: "This afternoon with the wind came beautiful red admiral butterflies. They were everywhere and still this evening they are continuing to entertain us. I have never have seen so many butterflies in one place." As Lynne describes, an unprecedented tidal wave of millions of red admirals poured into Ontario that day.

- Later in the month, several people reported eastern towhees at their feeders. **Brenda Ibey** wrote that one "was pecking like a chicken under my bird feeders, looking for a few scraps. Then a rabbit ran after him and he flew away!" David Quist of County Rd. 19 described his bird as having "an impressive jump-and-kick motion, thrusting both feet to move leaves and reveal food."

- On April 20, **Serena Formenti** of Indian River had a mysterious visitor at her feeder. "Today, I saw a bird that looked like a tufted titmouse. It had a crest like a cardinal but it was grey." Titmice almost never occur in Peterborough County but anything is possible.

#### MAY

- On May 1, **Sean Smith** of Ashdale Cres. sent along this entertaining email. "Last night, our front yard hosted a beaver. It decimated my carefully cultivated dandelion blooms and grasses, rested underneath my car, and then climbed up a cement block and actually sniffed our front door - despite our no solicitation policy! Also, the red fox kits which denned near Thomas A. Stewart high school appear to have 'fledged'."

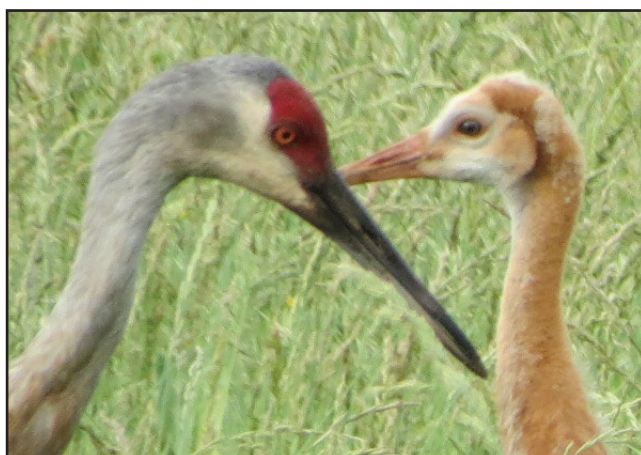
- On May 4, **Mitch Brownstein** and **Liliana Perez** had an impressive seven red-breasted grosbeaks at their feeder.

- On May 19, **Sheelagh Hysenaj** reported seeing a Blanding's turtle, a species at risk, basking on the shoulder of the Jack Lake Rd. Two days later, Sheelagh also reported a white-winged scoter and an increasingly rare luna moth.

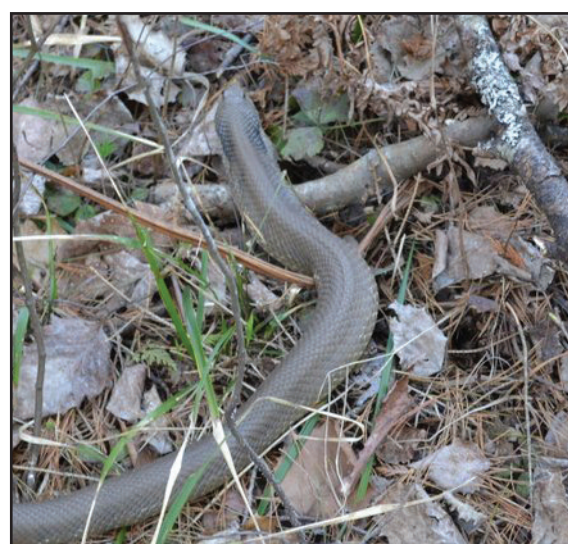
- On May 26, **Gwen McMullen** and



**MARLENE STAMLER** Special to The Examiner



**GARY AITKENS** Special to The Examiner  
Among the unusual and interesting sightings reported to Drew Monkman during 2012 were a merlin (top photo), a pair of sandhill cranes (above) and an eastern hog-nosed snake.



**ANDREW LIPSCOMBE** Special to The Examiner

**Catherine Crowe** saw two giant swallowtail butterflies. One was at Crowe's Landing on Stony Lake and the other at Warsaw. 2012 was definitely the year of the giant swallowtail, a species that never used to occur this far north.

- At month's end, **Brooke Bays** of Fox Rd. near Omemee had a rare visitor. "Tonight, at about 7 p.m., we were out feeding the stock and saw an adult cattle egret hanging out in one of the pastures with the horses." This is another southern species that occasionally wanders northward.

#### JUNE

- On June 2, **Gwen Forsyth** had some interesting sightings at the Lakefield Marsh. "The trumpeter swan we saw on May 25 was feeding with the geese today. This time he was close enough to see his tag (J84). I checked the Trumpeter Swan Society's website and found out he's one of the 10 cygnets hatched at Sturgeon Lake last summer. We also saw a great egret."

- **Jamie Austin** submitted a number of bear reports in June. "This morning, I spotted a black bear on County Rd. 8 where it meets the Indian River in Douro. This evening, I saw another large bear, this time with two very small cubs. It was on 4th line in the town of Douro."

- On June 9, **Greg McLeod** of Peter-

borough had a memorable experience. "Tonight, I walked the Parkway Trail, east of Chemong Road. There was the most amazing show of fireflies I have ever seen. There may have been over a thousand! It was a perfect night. The air was completely still and there wasn't another person on the path."

- On June 11, **Beth McMaster** of Peterborough commented on the sad state of the cedar trees. "So many of us have been noticing the browning and general deterioration of the cedars this spring. I was showing some friends that if you shake the branch of a cedar, a swarm of tiny white moths flies out. I guess the leafminers have evolved into the adult stage!"

- In late June, **Catherine Paradis** spotted a locally-rare black-crowned night heron at Beavermead Park. "I flushed it from the water's edge into a tree on the other side of the creek. I could clearly see the grey and black body, the plumes on the head, and the yellow legs."

- **Gary Aitken**, who lives on the 7th Line of Smith Ward near the Miller Creek Conservation Area, was entertained all month by sandhill cranes. He watched the two adults and one chick foraging in the field, directly behind his house. "This is the second year that we've been fortunate enough to have these lovely birds so close to us," Gary wrote.

#### JULY

- **Nancy Harrison**, who lives near Indian River, reported thousands of bees coming in the evening to the maple and elm trees near her house. According to local bee expert Glen McMullen, elms can attract bees by emitting sugar and alcohol compounds when the trees are stressed.

- **Katherine Darwin** of Farrier Crescent reported seeing an albino common grackle in her north end yard. This bird was seen over several weeks and created a bit of a stir in the neighbourhood!

- On July 4, **Carolyn Hyslop**, who lives on Demers Rd. near Young's Point, emailed me. "We are so excited to have a nest of yellow-bellied sapsuckers in a cavity of one of our aspen trees. The hole is perfectly round and situated just right so I can see the feeding ritual. These little ones are quite noisy!"

- In mid-July, **Blair Hamilton** of Pigeon Lake made some interesting caterpillar discoveries. "I have fenced off a part of my lawn where I discovered numerous American lady caterpillars on some pussy toe plants. I also have my first black swallowtail caterpillar on the dill and parsley I planted. Finally, I saw a hummingbird clearwing moth caterpillar on one of my arrow-wood shrubs. What a beauty!"

- The merlin, a small falcon, has

become a fairly common bird in Peterborough. On July 13, **Marlene Stamler** wrote: "We have recently noticed a trio of merlins in our backyard in East City. They are feasting on local birds on the neighbor's roof! I was able to get some great photos." **Mike Barker** of Algonquin Blvd. also reported a pair of merlins that nested in his next door neighbour's pine tree. They fledged three young and all were flying around the neighborhood for a month.

- In mid-July, **Rob Welsh** reported two common nighthawks flying over Gilchrist Bay on Stony Lake. This is noteworthy because nighthawks have declined drastically in the last 20 years.

“All spring, I have had three or more green herons and a pair of long-eared owls flying around my house on Douglas Rd. in Warsaw. The owls have returned for the past three years to nest. They make a lot of noise . . .”

Mark Anderson, Warsaw

- **Mark Anderson** had some interesting visitors. "All spring, I have had three or more green herons and a pair of long-eared owls flying around my house on Douglas Rd. in Warsaw. The owls have returned for the past three years to nest. They make a lot of noise, starting just before dusk and continuing through the night. It just about drove my wife and me nuts while trying to sleep, but since we found out what was making the noise, we have become accustomed to it now and enjoy it. The second year that we had the owls, we witnessed the three young ones learning to fly in our backyard. It is something I will never forget."

- On July 18, **Cathy Niergarth** saw two moose swimming across a bay near her cottage on Anstruther Lake.

- On July 20, **Susan Sackrider** saw a Pandorus sphinx moth. "It is nearly all green and quite beautiful," she said. This moth is closely related to the hummingbird clearwing moth which nectars at flowers like a hummingbird.

- On July 26, **Randy Hayes** of Ennismore made a disturbing discovery. "I live about a mile up from the causeway. There is a hydro pole at the four-way stop and we have watched a pair of osprey raise two chicks this summer. In the last few days, they have been standing up, flapping their wings and, I presume, getting ready to leave the nest. The mother was always with them, watching over them, while the male would be fishing for them. Then, on Monday afternoon, we had the largest hail I have ever seen. Naturally, I feared for the birds. After the storm, I took a drive down to the causeway and, to my shock, the nest was completely gone. The two adult birds were circling around the bare hydro pole. I could find no sticks from the nest. I'm sure that many others have noticed them gone." What happened to the baby ospreys remains a mystery.

(I will conclude readers' sightings of 2012 next week.)

Drew Monkman is a retired Peterborough teacher and author of *Nature's Year: Changing Seasons in Central and Eastern Ontario*. He can be reached at [dmonkman1@cogeco.ca](mailto:dmonkman1@cogeco.ca). Visit his website and see past columns at [www.drew-monkman.com](http://www.drew-monkman.com)