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Our Beautiful Common Redpoll



On the Watch
June Hitchcox

This month, I will follow-up on the Ron Pittaway / Jean Iron forecast re. which species we may see this winter because of their food is abundant, here is my Redpoll article from January, 2015 on Redpolls - both Common and Hoary - to sharpen us all (me too) to be prepared to recognize them.

Redpolls are found globally – all the way around the world’s arctic tundra. The only time that we see them is when their arctic food crop has been poor and they must fly south to look for food in order to survive.

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Health Initiatives to cut Smoking

Is this on your 2018 Wish List?

Help is available from Peterborough Public Health.

Quitting smoking is the single best thing you can do to improve your life and health. You can quit smoking forever with planning, some new skills, motivation and support.

Even if you slip up, don't stop trying to quit!

It's well-known that quitting smoking may improve the length and quality of your life. When you give up cigarettes, your body starts to renew itself as early as the first day of quitting. You may live longer and reduce your chance of developing heart disease, cancer, breathing problems, and infections. Even those who have developed smoking-related problems like heart disease can benefit. Compared to continuing to smoke, people who quit smoking after having a heart attack may reduce their chances of having another heart attack by as much as 50%. By quitting, you will also lower the chance that people around you will have health problems from second-hand smoke.

See your health practitioner to get behavioural counselling and access to five weeks of cost-free Nicotine Replacement Therapy.

According to Ron Pittaway's forecast, this is one of those years – more than the usual number of these Finches should move to Southern Ontario because growth was poor in the arctic where they live on seeds of birch, tamarack and alder. With luck, this winter we will see this attractive, energetic little bird, smaller than a House Sparrow with a blackish chin and a jaunty, red cap on its forehead.

“Poll” means more or less “head” and that is where it gets its name – Redpoll – meaning “Red Head”. Its back is streaked; the breast has tinges of pinkish-red. In flight, watch for its deeply-undulating flight pattern and listen for its “chet-chet-chet” call as it keeps in touch with its group. They have a remarkable ability, as do some other species, to increase their feather-mass by 50%, by fluffing their feathers to trap air to double their insulation against the cold outside air as well to reduce loss of their own body heat by a third. Not only that, they bury themselves in the snow, out of the wind, to retain additional heat. Because of these smart moves, if there is enough food, they are able to stay in the arctic year-round.



Look for Common Redpolls in open fields, woodlands and at bird feeders (Niger seeds are their favourite). Often, they can be seen hanging up-side-down to get at the seeds. They are very social birds – sometimes as many as 100 in a flock, along with a few of their cousins, the Hoary Redpoll. They have a very trusting nature and can become quite tame, so please keep an eye out for their safety.



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