

Warm winter weather affects our furry friends, too

By Samantha Cantelon

People might not be aware of is how this warm weather is affecting the environment and wildlife.

According to Environment Canada, the area received 57.4 centimetres of snowfall in January 2011.

In January of 2012, the snowfall was an estimated 12.4 centimetres. These snowfall amounts show how mild this winter has been.

This warm weather is creating a sense of confusion for animals that usually hibernate or fly south for the cold winter months. Not only is this weather disorientating animals, it is affecting the water levels that we rely on for spring, said Terry Murphy, the general manager for Quinte Conservation.

"Normally we count on the amount of snow melting and that water running into rivers and filling up the ground water supplies, but now we're concerned that if we don't get enough snow in the north and spring rain, we could have a really dry summer," said Murphy.

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*Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre director
Sue Meech*

jay may have population declines because of the impacts from southern competitors and pathogens brought on by warm weather, she said.

"Many species are limited during winter for energetic reasons, so warm temperatures tend to remove this limitation. This can lead to higher survival in winter and higher reproduction in spring because of improved body condition," said Kowalski.

The Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in Napanee, which has been in operation for 20 years and helps, rehabilitate animals that have been abandoned, or injured.

"With the warm weather, the water temperatures are warming and the water levels are falling, which in return is causing more botulism cases, which we typically get during the warm season, but now we are getting it throughout the year," said Sue Meech, director and volunteer at the wildlife centre.

"Global warming is affecting animals in a dramatic way and confusing them with their hibernation rituals," Meech said.

"As the human population grows, it's far worse a problem than global warming. People should stop breeding," she said.

"Kingston is moving out and they're taking up wetland, and driving animals to the point of extinction."

"Global warming is killing the animals up north mostly the polar bears and seals and stuff, but down in this neck of the woods it's people that are killing the animals and the birds."

Jolanta Kowalski, senior media relations officer for the Ministry of Natural Resources, said, that species like white-tailed deer, fishers and wild turkeys are benefiting from the warm weather because they expend less energy staying warm and travelling when snow is low.

Animals like the wolverine, marten and gray



Photo by Samantha Cantelon

Sue Meech, director and full-time volunteer at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in Napanee, shows off a kestrel. The centre adopted the bird after being in the zoo for 16 years. The kestrel will be used as a "foster mom" in the spring when baby kestrels are usually brought in.

'Yellow jackets' not as visible as they want to be

By Samantha Cantelon

The city of Belleville's recently launched a program known as the Volunteer Response Team or the "Yellow Jackets," but some people seem to be unaware of what exactly this team is doing and where they are.

"The only yellow jacket that I have seen is the one that I own and wear to work on a daily basis, and I'm not a member of any yellow jacket organization," said Richard Belanger, owner of Scalliwag Toys located on Front Street.

"We have been down there, so its possible they haven't seen us. We plan to be more active moving forward, but realis-

'Lots of the volunteers within this team have full-time jobs and families, so when possible they go out downtown with their bright yellow jackets.'

Const. Rene Aubertin

tically they're all volunteers so it's when they can," said Matt Palmer, who is one

of the team's lead volunteers.

According to Rene Aubertin, constable and community policing liaison officer, during the month of December, volunteers were downtown approximately 14 hours and in January about 26 hours.

"Lots of the volunteers within this team have full-time jobs and families, so when possible they go out downtown with their bright yellow jackets," said Aubertin.

The team is committed to being the eyes and ears for Belleville police in the downtown area. They are responsible for talking with storeowners about any issues as well as helping people walking on the streets of Belleville.

"All of the jackets and t-shirts were fundraised through the community policing group," said Aubertin. "The response team also carries with them a first aid kit and reports back to the police about any issues being brought up by citizens."

"The Belleville response team is one aspect of the community that greatly enhances Belleville police services by providing additional eyes and ears on our downtown core, enhancing the relationship between Belleville police service responses from the businesses downtown as well the community at large," said the chief of police, Cory McMullan.

SAY OutLoud gives gay youth an outlet

Thriving organization meets weekly to offer support to its members

By Manuela Garay-Giraldo

Belleville's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) youth group SAY OutLoud is thriving and organizer Eric Hargreaves says it is mainly through the power of word of mouth.

There are approximately 30 members who currently show up on a regular basis to the group's weekly meetings. This is a significant increase over the 12 members who were attending the group at this time last year.

"I don't really know how it happened, but I'm happy it did," said Hargreaves. "We were questioning whether the group needed to continue, since most of the kids who were coming were in college and they don't really need that much help socializing."

According to Hargreaves one major factor that seems to have helped the group increase its numbers is that GSA groups were implemented in a few high schools in the Quinte area. Not all were successful, however young people learned through teachers and friends that a GSA group in Belleville exists.

"GSA groups in high schools are so important, even if the group is not successful and doesn't have a high attendance rate," said Hargreaves.

"Having them present creates a sense of safety in the school. It sends a message that bullying gay teens will not be tolerated and it significantly decreases violent homophobic incidents."

Many teachers at different high schools in the Quinte area have become aware of SAY OutLoud and directed students to the group.

"We have a mom that car pools and brings the kids home after the meetings, so that they can stay in town after school," said Hargreaves. "She even provides meals every second week."

The group meetings consist of three parts. The first is a 'check in', when those attending share one good thing and one bad thing they have experienced throughout the week. The second part is eating a free meal provided by the organizers. The final part of the meeting is a discussion on the different issues gay youth are facing today.

For Emma Khun, 18, a member since January, the best part of the meeting is the social aspect.

"I like that I get to meet new people that I wouldn't normally talk to," said Khun.

The group brings youth from all over the Quinte area together.

"We have kids who come from Belleville, obviously, but also Trenton, Stirling even Frankford," said Hargreaves.

Hargreaves said he believes that many factors came into play and the success of the group cannot be pinpointed to one specific reason.

"They talk about the tipping point, that when an idea has enough momentum it just keeps rolling," said Hargreaves.

"I don't know what brought that tipping point, word of mouth probably, but we are very happy to have the results we have."

The group meets every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. in downtown Belleville. Visit www.sayoutloud.ca or contact Hargreaves at 613-689-5141 or through e-mail at eric@sayoutloud.ca.

Will the sap be running?

Producers worried about spring production

Warm weather and little snowfall may affect tapping

By Rhea Munroe

With lots of warm weather and very little snowfall, maple syrup producers are wondering what tapping season will bring for them this year.

Since it's been such a warm winter, some producers say they have started to tap early because the sap is running sooner than expected.

Frank Haveman, owner and operator of Bata Maples Sugarbush in Frankford, explained that the ideal daily conditions for the sap to run are around -5C during the night and 5C during the day, a process referred to as freeze and thaw.

"In the fall, the sugar is stored in the roots, and in the spring, it heads back up to the buds," said Haveman.

Todd Leuty, maple syrup specialist for the Ontario ministry of agriculture, food, and rural affairs, said the sugar is converted and stored as starch and acts as food for the trees during the fall and winter season. By late winter, the freeze and thaw activates the enzymes and it is converted into sucrose. The root pressure pumps it back up the tree and it becomes food for the buds.

"Producers don't follow the calendar; they follow weather predictions to deter-



Photo by Rachel Psutka

John Nyman and his son Shea, six, show off the lines they will tap into their maple trees sometime in the next few weeks. The warmer weather this winter will likely negatively affect the amount of maple syrup produced by farmers like Nyman.

mine when the sap will flow," said Leuty.

Haveman predicted that it won't be the best of syrup seasons because of the warm weather.

John Nyman, owner and operator of JC Nyman Farms in Picton, said it's hard to tell what will happen with tapping season.

"We really have no idea yet. We really haven't ever had a year like this to compare it closely," said Nyman.

"Nature could decide that this could be another perfect year and we'll have ideal conditions and have a great season," he said.

Nyman said, however, that the conditions are great for working in the forest.

"You can take your mitts off and get something done and not freeze to death."

"It's not a usual or normal season. There's been (little) snow cover in southern Ontario and the soil could dry out. We need lots of moisture in the soil," said Leuty.

Producers said they are worried about the uncertainty that maple syrup season will bring. Despite the ideal working conditions, Nyman said he would much prefer traditional winter weather.

Nyman also expressed his concerns about global warming - that climate change will soon have a major affect on where maple trees can thrive and produce sap.

"It takes a 1,000 years and tons of data to see a change in the climate," said Leuty. However, he said that they are being cautious about the change in the climate that has been determined so far.

He is predicting a northward shift of sugar maples and areas where tapping will be done in the future.