



The Quinte Naturalist

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is affiliated with Ontario Nature, a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research.

February



Of Roads and Wildlife

Dr. Ryan Danby

From his research on the 1000 Islands Parkway Queen's Professor, Dr. Ryan Danby, will document the harm roads do to biodiversity. He will also explain how we can minimize their ecological impacts.

7:00 p.m.

Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church (Corner of Bridge and Church Streets)
Bridge Street Entrance

Monday, February 26, 2018

Sunday, February 25. Mary Thomas interviewed our speaker, Dr. Ryan Danby, on *Newsmaker Sunday* on CJBQ. You can hear the interview through the *Newsmaker Sunday* archive on the CJBQ website.

<http://www.cjbq.com/newsmaker.html>

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Don't forget the Treasure Table

CLUB NEWS

MEMBERSHIP It's time to renew your QFN membership for 2018. You can pay by cheque or cash at the February meeting or you can send your dues to our treasurer, Doug Newfield, 161 Thrasher Rd., R.R. #1, Plainfield, ON. K0K2V0. Dues are \$25.00 for an individual or \$40.00 for a family.

ANNUAL MEETING – Because our January meeting was cancelled a part of the February meeting will be set aside for a very short annual meeting. Executive positions are for two years and this is an election year so members will be asked to vote on a slate of candidates presented at the meeting. Nominations from the floor are also welcomed. Our treasurer will also present the annual budget (page 9).



*What's this bird?
Photo taken by Richard Beardon at
Algonquin Park and posted on the
Ontario Birds Facebook page.
Answer on page 8.*

TREASURE TABLE – The Treasure Table is a fundraiser to help us carry out our commitment to work for nature education, conservation and research. Please bring treasures of interest to naturalists to the meeting. These could include books, magazines, equipment for nature study, crafts, foods, etc. Please mark the price on all items.

Don't have anything to share right now? Visit the table to find the special item you have been looking for.



BOSTON PIZZA offers an opportunity for local organizations to raise funds. We need volunteers who can spend 30 minutes to help. On March 5th, members of QFN in shifts of 30 minutes welcome guests to the restaurant, briefly mention that Quinte Field Naturalists are the greeters for the evening and give a quick description of the club if asked. Boston Pizza then donates 10% of the profits minus alcohol to the club during the three hours our representatives are there. It's easy. Contact Denice to volunteer. Phone 613-478-5070 or email denicejohn@live.ca. Why not come for a pizza that night also?

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Don't forget the Treasure Table

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



***What's this bird?
Keith Gregoire took this photo at
Barcovan during the GBBC.
Answer on page 8.***

Thanks to those of you who sent in your results as requested. The original plan was to add up some numbers to show how much we contributed to the project but there was just too much information to make that practical. Members of the Quinte Field Naturalists did the club proud during the four days of the GBBC. Nine of the 37 recorders in Hastings were QFN members while 4 of 10 in Prince Edward County were from the club.

In Hastings Tom Wheatley with 39 species topped all other recorders. Many of us concentrated on our own feeders so we reported the regular winter birds like juncos, chickadees, nuthatches and downy woodpeckers. Information like this is still important to show the numbers of these species and to make it possible to track long-term changes.

Members did report some very interesting sightings in Hastings. Peter Fuller had a snowy owl within walking distance of his front door. Gerry and Denise Doekes just had to step outside their house north of Marmora to hear a calling northern saw-whet owl. Also in the Marmora area Tom Wheatley identified 20 trumpeter swans spending the winter in the Crowe River. At Barcovan, where there is already open water, Keith Gregoire found 2 redheads, a white-winged scoter and a northern pintail among the 300 or so mute swans.

In The County Pamela Stagg headed the list. She recorded a turkey vulture, an unusual winter bird which is one of 4 spending the winter in Picton. Terry Sprague's 33 red-winged blackbirds were an unusually high number for the winter. Kyle Blaney's single snow bunting may have been the only one recorded by anyone in The County.

As of noon on Saturday world-wide birders were still entering checklists. The totals at that point were over 160,000 checklists showing well over 25,000,000 individual birds of more than 6100 species. Naturalists made a fantastic effort to document the planet's bird life. We can be confident that we did our part.

OUTINGS

Owling. We are approaching the time of year when migrating birds become the focus of birding. Also having had to cancel two owling trips because of the weather I'm hesitant to make a third attempt but it remains a possibility so watch your emails.

Presqu'ile Waterfowl Weekend, March 17-18. March is the month when waterfowl



What's this bird?

There are enough details in this picture to make the bird identifiable. No idea? Doesn't matter. Volunteers at the Presqu'ile Waterfowl weekend will help.

Answer on page 8.

return. In fact many have already arrived. On Thursday Fred Helleiner wrote "*In sharp contrast to last week, there is plenty to write about as spring birds have arrived at Presqu'ile Provincial Park, which is THE place to be to see hordes of waterfowl.*" Unfortunately at this point we don't have a leader to organize a trip. We need a

volunteer. Please contact John Blaney if you can help. (sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com or phone 613-962-9337) As noted below there will be expert birders there so the leader's job is simple. Organize a meeting place and lead the way to the park.

The web site for the weekend gives the following information: *With Spring comes the return of tens of thousands of ducks, geese and swans to Presqu'ile Bay - one of the greatest natural areas for birders on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Presqu'ile Provincial Park offers easy access to viewing stations to view up to 25 different species of waterfowl that arrive each spring to rest and feed here before moving on to nesting areas further north and west.*

Note

The bridge over the west end of the Murray Canal is closed for repairs. If driving from Prince Edward County you can get to Presqu'ile via the bridge at 12 O'Clock Point or the Bay Bridge to Belleville. From there you travel on Highway 2 or 401 to Brighton and the park.

Scheduled activities and spotting scopes with volunteer birders to assist are available from 10 am to 4 pm daily. Cost: (is) a nominal \$10.00/vehicle park entrance fee. Seasonal and Annual park passes also honoured for entry.

YEAR OF THE BIRD

What's special about this year? Why have National Geographic and the Audubon Society joined by over 100 organizations recognized 2018 as The Year of the Bird? It is the centennial of the passage of the Migratory Birds Treaty Act by the United States. With this act the US officially implemented a convention to protect migratory birds which Canada had implemented a year earlier with the Migratory Birds Convention Act.



***What's this bird?
Answer on page 7***

Each month this year naturalists are asked to take a specific action to protect the world's birds. For January we were simply asked to sign into the program. You can still do that by following this link <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/year-of-the-bird/> and clicking "Count Me In." For February the challenge was to take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count. Many QFN members have done that. Once you have signed in you will receive an email describing the challenge for each month. It's an easy way to help birds and a great excuse to get outside and enjoy nature.

WHY BIRDS MATTER

Birds are fascinating and inspiring. They enhance our communities and our lives.

Birds also provide essential services such as pollinating plants, dispersing seeds and helping control insects.

And birds are very important indicators of change. Studying birds is a great way to understand the overall health of ecosystems and the environment.

The decline of a single species is a tragedy in itself but it can also indicate larger causes for concern. Monitoring and early detection of bird declines is critical in determining priorities for conservation action.

Monitoring and conserving bird populations and their habitats supports a healthy environment for every living thing – including us.

From the Bird Studies Canada website.

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MIGHTY MITES

by Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson
First published in the Tweed News, Jan. 25,2017

Those of us who are old enough may remember a cartoon character called “Mighty Mouse”, back in the day. George recalls that he once, a long time ago, possessed some Mighty Mouse comic books. The central character, Mighty Mouse, was a miniature superhero, who got himself and several others out of many a jam.

Today, we both revel in observing and reading about the real-life adventures, indeed, even the very survival, of some miniature superheroes of the avian world, especially as their heroic exploits revolve around survival in sub-zero winter days and very long, frigid winter nights or their exhausting pilgrimages to and from distant lands.

We marvel at the wonders of human technology and are spellbound by these great accomplishments. While we stick to the basics, questioning whether we should take another plunge, we are surrounded by folks “on their devices”. Our timidity and, perhaps procrastination, is not a reflection of disrespect for advances in the world around us but rather a response that emphasizes both our priorities and our inability to pack one more thing into a very busy schedule. There’s no denying the comfort derived from a GPS that



**What’s this bird?
Answer on page 8**

reveals the exact location when driving in unfamiliar territory. The convenience of texting, tweeting and taking photos with phones that are always close at hand can result in greater efficiency and safety at work or when exploring unknown territory. --- And what about drones that are probing the mysteries of our solar system? Will we find life on other planets?

--- But, on this incredible planet Earth, our forever home, we are surrounded by wonders of Nature, by a tremendous assemblage of plants and animals. The Human species just has to learn to live on terms that are compatible with the planet. After all, planet Earth provides our life-support system and an incredible array of life --- fellow beings living their lives along with us. Every species is an integral link in the whole complex maze of life. The diversity of life and the system itself are



Even non-birders can recognize a male goldfinch in breeding plumage.

inseparable! --- And some aspects of the lives of many of these creatures approach the miraculous.

Just this morning, January 12, we found a little Goldfinch perched on our Nyger seed feeder. As we approached, the little feathered mite did not move so we edged our way closer and closer to our friend. Our guess was that she might be stuck in the mesh of the feeder but we soon discovered that we were wrong. Just as George cupped his hand around her, she flew to the Lilac shrub nearby. Perhaps she was feeling weak after the cold night or maybe she was an older bird who needed more rest. We left her in peace on her perch. Later, when we made our rounds to check, she was gone. We hoped she would continue her little life.



In winter the male goldfinch wears subtler, softer colours. Watch closely at your feeders. Already many are showing signs of developing the brighter summer plumage.

American Goldfinches weigh in at a hefty 11-14 g (0.4 to 0.5 oz). They, along with several other tiny winter songbirds, must eat enough during the daylight hours to survive the frigid January nights. The calories they take in during the day are just about burned away as dawn approaches. They are joined in their survival ordeal by other small song birds like Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Nuthatches and many more.

It is no stretch to say that the strategies these Mighty Mites use to survive, and the fact that they do survive, are in the miracle realm. They are in the same category of wonders of the natural world as the ability of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to return to

the previous year's exact location of a sugar-water feeder, before the feeder is put out the next Spring. --- And remember, the Hummingbird has just returned from Mexico or Costa Rica! We, and probably many of you, have had the experience of seeing the Ruby-throated Mighty Mite, weighing in at 2.8-4.5 g (0.1 to 0.2 oz) circling and probing for nectar around a phantom feeder in early Spring. Not only does the little fellow (males arrive first) know the exact GPS location of the feeder, but he has remembered it from last Summer,

after a long, round-trip flight. Humans require satellites to determine exact locations. How can we not marvel at the feat of this tiny bird's brain?

The little songbirds who survive our harsh winters and those tiny avian wonders that brave the challenges of migration inspire us and fill us with admiration. Their courage, their tenacity and their perseverance in the storm of life must be admired. Even with explanation, the survival of these little feathered creatures is still almost miraculous. As we peer out the window on a blustery winter day and observe tiny birds struggling to get enough food to live through the night, we give thanks for and applaud the meaning that they bring to our lives. If these Mighty Mites can endure such great adversity and continue to face the next day, sharing what our beautiful planet has to offer, we, too, must strive to respect and care for all life.



Answers to What's This Bird

Page 2. You can't really tell from the picture but this is a very small bird. A small bird with brown streaking and patches of yellow in the wings and tail is a pine siskin. This nomadic species travels in flocks in winter looking for areas where the coniferous seeds are abundant.

Page 3 Obviously a duck. It looks a little like a female mallard but the head is a soft buffy brown with no other marks and the bill is grey. It's a northern pintail, possibly a young male in winter plumage but I'm out on a limb and willing to be corrected.

Page 4 Another waterfowl and it's a tough one. The first clue is the back of the head; it's shaggy. That's a trait of mergansers so we're down to three possibilities. Hooded has a brownish body so that leaves two possibilities. Common mergansers show a definite division between head and body colours. In red-breasted mergansers the two colours tend to blend together. It's a red-breasted merganser. (Thanks to the American Birding Association quiz for this picture and analysis.)

Page 5 Here's another small bird with brown streaks and patches of yellow. This one is showing why some birders call it a butter butt. It's a yellow-rumped warbler. Despite the fact that it's the most frequently seen warbler during migration its song fools me every year.

Page 6 It's a hawk flying overhead but once you know the field marks the identification is easy. The same shape as a red-tailed hawk so it's a buteo. The large black patches on the wing clearly identify this bird as a rough-legged hawk. A visitor from the arctic it is known to breed in this province in only a tiny corner of northern Ontario near Hudson Bay.

QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION

	<u>Budget 2017</u>	<u>Actual 2017</u>	<u>Budget 2018</u>
Revenue			
Annual Dinner	55 \$1,540.00	65 1,792.00	60 1,680.00
Baillie Birdathon	130.00	386.25	130.00
Bequests		1,000.00	
Coffee/ Tea Fund	150.00	188.40	150.00
Donation Box	250.00	532.97	300.00
Membership Fees	1,300.00	2,135.00	1,600.00
Treasure Table	250.00	464.00	300.00
Turtle ICU's Sold		44.00	
Total Revenue:	\$3,620.00	\$6,542.62	\$4,160.00
Expenses			
Annual Dinner	\$969.00	\$1,170.00	1,080.00
Insurance (Liability and D&O)	590.00	578.88	590.00
Ontario Nature Membership	89.00	83.00	89.00
Association Membership in HPLT	50.00	50.00	50.00
Newsletter Duplicating	65.00	0.00	65.00
Recording, Postage & Envelopes	50.00	42.12	60.00
Trifold Duplicating	125.00	123.17	200.00
Speakers	550.00	495.00	550.00
Hall Rental	400.00	400.00	400.00
Bank Charges	36.00	36.00	36.00
Documentary Film Festival	50.00	50.00	50.00
Turtle ICU's Expense		21.79	
Bird Seed for HR Frink Centre	200.00	31.63	200.00
Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre	600.00	600.00	300.00
Bird Saver Project		727.72	250.00
Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre		300.00	300.00
Miscellaneous	200.00	10.17	200.00
Total Expenses:	\$3,974.00	\$4,719.48	\$4,420.00
Total Revenue minus Expenses:	(\$354.00)	\$1,823.14	(\$260.00)

Prepared by:
 QFN Treasurer Doug Newfield
 on Jan 13, 2018

ON SALE NOW

Quinte Field Naturalists' annual dinner is an event you should not miss. Mark your calendars for **April 23, 2018**. The venue is St. Mark's United Church in Cannifton. There will be a delicious buffet dinner featuring comfort foods such as chicken pot pie, macaroni and cheese, baked beans and salads plus apple or lemon pie for dessert or fruit salad for the diet conscious. The speaker will be author and nature lover Peri McQuay, from Westport. Her books include "The View from Foley Mountain", "A Wing in the Door: Life with a Red-Tailed Hawk" and "Singing Meadow: The Adventures of Creating a Country Home". Tickets are \$28 and **must be purchased by April 10** to let the church know how many dinners to prepare. See Doug Newfield at the QFN meeting or call 613-477-3066 to arrange purchase. Punch available at 6:00 p.m. with dinner to follow.



Our next meeting. March 26 – Small Wetlands with Big Impacts

Vernal pools provide critical wildlife habitat. Learn about the features of these temporary wetlands, and which species rely on this unique ecosystem from Emma Horrigan, Conservation Science Coordinator for Ontario Nature.

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association, an affiliate of Ontario Nature, is a non-profit organization sponsoring nature education, conservation and research. It was founded in 1949 and incorporated in 1990 and encompasses the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward. The Quinte Field Naturalists Association is legally entitled to hold real estate and accept benefits. Quinte Field Naturalists meet on the fourth Monday of every month from September to March (except December), 7:00, Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church, 60 Bridge Street East, Belleville. In April we hold our annual dinner at an alternate time and location. New members and guests are always welcome.

Bring a friend.

President

George Thomson
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613-922-1174

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Next Newsletter Deadline – March 15, 2018

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com

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