



The Quinte Naturalist

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

January



Photo by Konchog Norbu

This is one of the three great gray owls seen regularly near Ottawa. In our area barred owls have appeared in significant numbers but there have been no great grays. The yellow irises distinguish the great gray from the barred owl which has all black eyes. In place of the bars on the neck of the barred owl the great gray sports a more formal white bow tie.

My original idea for this page was to whine about my problems scheduling club outings lately and plaintively ask, “Why does Mother Nature hate me?” Then one morning this week as I was filling the bird bath I heard one of the neighbourhood cardinals try a few notes of his song. He decided it was not quite time to burst into song but he was a reminder that the days are already noticeably longer than they were a month ago. So even though Mother Nature might be feeling a little testy there’s promise of a sunnier mood ahead.

Mind you she has reason to feel a little testy and more than a little abused. We’ve deluded ourselves into thinking that there is such a thing as a free lunch, or in this case energy production free of any impact on the ecosystem. We think that all we have to do is label something green and it will do minimal ecological harm.

We’ve forgotten that before we start tinkering with the ecosystem we should make sure that we are doing as little damage as possible. The fragmentation of a natural ecosystem and putting species at risk in greater danger are not “green” activities even if they are performed in the belief that the results will be “green.”

The latest example of this human blind spot is the current Ontario government belief that wherever you put wind turbines they are “green.” As a result the provincial government has become an enabler of ecological destruction rather than a promoter of green energy. See pages 5 to 7 for an explanation.

KEEP THE GREEN IN GREEN ENERGY

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Unless otherwise noted all articles are written by the editor.

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

DONNA FANO

BIRDS AND FLORA OF BELIZE



Join us for a Central American vacation. I've seen some of Donna's pictures. Belize is definitely on the list of places I want to visit.

OUTINGS

All right. I didn't put my whining about bad luck with club outings on the front page. But I've been saving it so here it is.

December 2 with its full moon was a perfect night for owling. At least that's what the weather channel said. There may have been a full moon. There may have been two full moons or even three. Whatever there was there was hidden beyond the thickest overcast sky of the year. Even so Norma Broadbear had the same foolish hope I did so we set off for Baptist Church Road. We

The Quinte Field Naturalists Association, an incorporated 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), 7:30, 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
613-478-3205

Treasurer

Norma Broadbear
613-962-6667

Outings/Newsletter

John Blaney - 613-962-9337

Past President

Wendy Turner
613-966-1518

Environmental Officer

Denice Wilkins
613-478-5070

Vice-President

Frank Hiebert
613-968-5825

Membership/Mailing

Marge Fisher
613-968-3277

Secretary

Elizabeth Churcher
613-478-3205

Refreshments

Sharon Blaney
613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – February 10, 2013

Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

reached the first stop and got out of our cars to play the CD and listen for owls. We turned off the car lights and it was ...dark. I don't mean the usual night darkness. I mean the dark when you step inside your bedroom closet and close the door. Nothing responded to the owl calls. We packed up and moved to the second stop. Again we got out of our cars and it was ... dark and drizzling. Nothing responded to the calls. We took a vote. The unanimous decision was to go home.

December 13 was a moonless night, perfect for observing the spectacular show put on by the Geminid meteor shower. There was a spotty overcast sky but large clear patches near the horizon seemed to promise better viewing conditions. I waited for the other eager meteor watchers in the parking lot at the Foxboro Foodland store. It seemed I had established a weather-related reputation and Norma had learned her lesson. There were no other eager meteor watchers. Undaunted (well, maybe a little daunted) I set out for Pancake Hill.

As I waited on the summit for the skies to clear because the anticipated cloudless patches had disappeared the occasional pickup truck would stop. The driver would ask if I needed help and then drive off with a bemused expression after I had explained what I was doing. As it got later even the pickup trucks stopped going by. I went home.

December 27 was Christmas Bird Count day. At about 6 a.m. the phone calls started. "The rural roads haven't been plowed." "I can't get out of my driveway." "Are we really going out in this?" CBC postponed. Go back to bed.

January 4. The day of the rescheduled CBC. Guess what. See page 4.

NEXT OUTING

There were two possibilities for our next outing. Rescheduled owling or mudpuppy night rescheduled from last year (another weather-related cancellation). You probably thought or at least hoped that the above long tale of woe ended weather-related whining. Hah! Weather conditions in early January created water conditions which made mudpuppy viewing unsatisfactory. The cold conditions lately have discouraged any scouting for owls because experts advise against owling when the temperature goes below -15. I hope to be able to announce the next outing at the January 28 meeting but whatever the decision you will be notified by email of the outing in February. There will be an outing even if we have to go to the corner of College Street and Cannifton Road and count pigeons in the pouring rain.



Apparently I'm not the only cranky one this month. This groundhog does not wish to be disturbed on February 2. To support his protest phone 1-888 -GOPHERS (467-4377).

BELLEVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Even before dawn on the day of the rescheduled Christmas Bird Count, one thing was clear. The weather was satisfactory only in comparison to that on the original Christmas Bird Count. The wind was blowing at what seemed like gale force. Snow was drifting. Most people would have seen it as a day to stay indoors but not our bird counters. Although the number of birds is down because blowing snow limited visibility counters did find a very respectable number of species

There were some misadventures. Tom Wheatley's report covered east Belleville. Two notations are noteworthy. "9:10 - harbour and waterfront – slight breeze, vehicle hit by flying recycle bin." and "9:30 – south end George St. ... observer spattered with sewage spray." Kathy Felkar's group slid into the ditch near Massassagua Point. They called a tow truck which immediately slid into the ditch itself. On the bright side while waiting for further assistance they did see both a golden-crowned kinglet and a hermit thrush. I, as your savvy veteran of numerous CBCs, stepped in a snow-covered hole a half hour into the count and twisted my knee so badly that I couldn't walk for the rest of the day and am still in physiotherapy.

Covering the Big Island section of the count circle Terry Sprague felt a need to justify his total of 4 species. "In my defence, there was zero visibility in both crossroads. In fact, had I not had a 4 X 4, I would not have been able to make it through one spot on Allison Road and Caughey Road was totally impassable until the plough appeared. . And that was with the snowplough doing the roads several times while Nola and I (does the dog count as a birder?) were out this morning. Despite my best efforts in avoiding the snowplough, I met him no fewer than four times! Really wild out there with little visibility and not much moving about."

BELLEVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – Jan. 4, 2013 (47 Species)			
Canada Goose	41	Downy Woodpecker	21
American Black Duck	3	Hairy Woodpecker	6
Mallard	318	Pileated Woodpecker	1
Common Goldeneye	6	Northern Shrike	1
Hooded Merganser	3	Blue Jay	85
Common Merganser	1	American Crow	75
Wild Turkey	50	Common Raven	6
Northern Harrier	1	Horned Lark	21
Cooper's Hawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	238
Red-tailed Hawk	23	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5
American Kestrel	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	21
Merlin	1	Brown Creeper	1
Ring-billed Gull	2	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3
Herring Gull	4	Hermit Thrush	1
Rock Pigeon	705	American Robin	167
Mourning Dove	405	European Starling	509
Barred Owl	1	Bohemian Waxwing	55
Red-bellied Woodpecker	6	Cedar Waxwing	45
		Unspecified Birds	
		Accipiter species	1
		Hawk species	2
		Gull species	3
		Sparrow species	1
		Finch species	50
		TOTAL BIRDS - 4633	

WHAT IS AN IBA ANYWAY?

The controversy concerning the construction of 9 wind turbines at Ostrander Point in Prince Edward County has raised awareness that the south shore of the County is an Important Bird Area (IBA). What is an IBA? Why is it important?



The IBA program is administered worldwide by Birdlife International, a partnership of non-government conservation organizations in over 100 countries. The program is intended to conserve birds and their habitats and to work towards the sustainable use of natural resources. In Canada a partnership of Bird Studies Canada and Nature Canada promotes and coordinates the program.

In order to be designated as an IBA a candidate site must meet at least one of a set of scientifically defensible criteria. These include holding a significant number of an endangered species, holding a species that has a restricted range or requires a specialized habitat or holding exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species.



The Prince Edward County South Shore IBA is significant for a number of reasons. Offshore flocks of long-tailed ducks have been estimated to be as large as 150,000 birds, 7.5 percent of the world population. Flocks of white-winged scoters have been as large as 15,000 or 1.5 percent of the world population. Large flocks of other waterfowl also winter here. Onshore in the fall raptor numbers are impressive. Daily maximums have been estimated to be as high as 1,000 broad-winged hawks with other diurnal raptors also achieving significant numbers. Prince Edward Point is also well known for the number of northern saw-whet owls which pass through. Smaller land birds achieve similar impressive numbers during migration. In addition three species at risk, least bittern, king rail and black tern nest within the IBA.

The IBA is important not just for birds. Bats which may be even more subject to kills at wind turbine sites than birds also migrate through the area. The IBA contains significant habitat for snakes as evidenced by the dozens and dozens found dead on the road in the late spring. Numbers of a threatened reptile species, Blanding's turtle, also live and breed in the IBA.



Like all IBAs the Prince Edward County South Shore IBA has great ecological value. Birds are indicators of the ecological health of areas which mediate cycles of water, carbon and other essentials of life which humans place under great stress. Economically IBAs attract birders who spend money for food, accommodations, fuel and the arts and crafts produced by local people.

The IBA program is the result of work by non-government groups worldwide. Governments are under no obligation to accept it or even take note of it. The Ontario government has chosen to pay little attention to the reasons for the designation of the Prince Edward South Shore Important Bird Area. In fact it has also chosen to ignore the reports of bird and bat kills from the Wolfe Island Important Bird Area which is very similar to the south shore.

Field work and calculations done by a consulting firm hired by the turbine company on Wolfe Island showed it to be possibly the deadliest wind plant in Canada. Using figures in the consulting firm's report Nature Canada calculates that the per turbine casualty rate is seven times the industry average. IBAs with large numbers of migrating birds passing through are just the wrong place to put wind turbines.



The map above shows approximately 60% of the eastern end of the land portion of the south shore IBA.. The light green line shows the route of the access road and underground cables in Gilead's Ostrander Point project. The green dots are the locations of the wind turbines.

Lurking in the wings is another wind project by a company called White Pines. The pink line shows its proposed routes for access and underground cables. The red dots represent its proposed turbine locations. The area outlined in teal is the Land Trust's new Miller Family Nature Reserve. It's obvious that while the Ostrander Point project is bad for migrating birds the addition of the White Pines project would turn a migration corridor into an obstacle course.

You may remember that a few years ago Bruce Ripley from Kingston counted the number of dead snakes he found on Babylon Road (the straight part of the pink line on the map). Sharron and I repeated his route several days later and had results similar to Ripley's. In both cases on a route which would be taken only by birders and the few residents on the road there were over one hundred snake carcasses, most fresh enough to show that they had been run over in the previous day or two. Now add the trucks carrying gravel for the access roads, parts for the

turbines, cables and workers. In addition add sightseers both during the construction and after construction is completed. As they say on TV, “But wait, there’s more....” Bring in equipment to dig trenches and lay the cables. It’s not hard to imagine the impact on snakes, turtles and the amphibians which live in the wetlands and cross the roads or use them for basking in the sun.

BUT WAIT THERE’S EVEN MORE



Photo Ontario Wind Resistance

This picture was taken near Fisherville, near Lake Erie south of Hamilton, on Saturday, Jan., 5, 2013. A crew, with the approval of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), is removing one of the 58 active bald eagle nests in Ontario. Behind closed doors, OMNR granted permission to remove the nest on Dec. 31 specifying that the work had to be done by Sunday, Jan. 7. They did not publicize the grant until it was posted on the environmental registry very late on Friday, Jan. 4. Less than 24 hours later the nest was gone. On Monday, Jan. 8 a spokesperson for the OMNR was quoted as saying, “Bald eagles have been known to have alternate nests within their territory.” I sense a note of uncertainty. The reason for all this subterfuge? A wind turbine is to be erected about 60 metres from the former nesting site.

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CLUB NEWS

Our annual meeting is conducted as the business part of our January meeting. You will be asked to vote on the budget found on the next page and a slate of officers. Please consider joining the executive even just as an observer. It's an excellent chance to learn about our club and to inject new ideas into club activities.

Membership fees are due. \$25 individual or \$40 for a family. Please help our treasurer keep careful records and pay by check. If you pay by mail you can use the form appended to this newsletter.

February is the month for the **Treasure Table**. Bring previously enjoyed treasures and books. Crafts, baked goods and anything else you think could be of interest to other members is welcome. The instructions are, as usual, put a sticker with the expected price on the item and please no garage sale rejects.



The annual dinner is scheduled for Monday, April 15. Tickets will be on sale for \$25 at the February meeting. The speaker is Michael Runtz so we expect a sell-out. Runtz lectures on Natural History at Carleton University. He is such a dynamic speaker that every year over 2000 people sign up for the televised version of his lectures. He is the author of several books illustrated with his own award-winning photographs which present our natural heritage in a form accessible to everyone. He has won numerous awards for his work including an Outstanding Service Award from Ontario Nature.

One of the students we sponsored for Ontario Nature Youth Summit last fall has sent us a letter to thank us for our support. It is appended to this newsletter. We hope to meet him at a future QFN meeting.

NEWS FROM THE PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY FIELD NATURALISTS



Nature Canada, Ontario Nature, and Environment Canada agree. Ostrander Point is the worst possible place for wind turbines. Help the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists win their appeal to the Environmental Tribunal. Please donate now, and spread the word. We have only a short time for our campaign, or this precious resource will be lost forever. For more information, or donate with PayPal at [Save Ostrander Point](#).

Visit the PECFN website for further information about their fight to save Ostrander Point.

http://naturestuff.net/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=137

Dear Quinte Field Naturalists,

My name is Robert Ormston, I am fifteen years old (in grade ten) and I go to Bayside Secondary School, and I am in the French immersion program.

I would like to accept the sponsorship, and I very much appreciate it. The youth summit was a great experience once again (this was my second year attending) and I hope there are many future summits. I have really enjoyed the summits because they have given me a chance to meet other people who are also interested in nature, conservation, and environmental protection. I enjoyed the variety of workshops, presentations and activities they had at the summit, and I learned many new things from them.

One thing that I found particularly interesting was a presentation we had about reptiles, where the person presenting talked about how long turtles can live. He said that the turtle species we have in Ontario can live 200-250 years, and 400 years for snapping turtles! I had no idea they could live that long before then, so that was a very interesting fact for me. Because turtles take a long time to mature, their populations do not grow very quickly, so if more than the natural number die in a single year, it can very quickly wipe out the population. So it is very important to take their life cycle into consideration when developing land and creating hunting regulations. Otherwise, they could be very easily killed off by humans.

I also learned that peregrine falcons experience as much as 25 "G's" of force on a turn! I find that incredible. It's sad that they were almost wiped out by the use of DDT, which ruined their eggs. On the other hand, it's very fortunate that DDT was prohibited, and these birds were saved by being introduced into cities, which had tall skyscrapers, a good substitute for the cliffs and bluffs they naturally lived and nested on. Another thing I enjoyed about the summit was (as I said) meeting people who were also interested in nature, conservation and environmental protection. It was very encouraging to know there are lots of other people with these same interests. I made friends with quite a few people at the summit as well, and got to know most of the people who went there. I also re-united with some old friends and people I had met the previous year, and that was a great experience as well.

The workshops and presentations at the summit were fun and interesting. Some of them were very hands on, and others were more like presentations, but they were all very good. I think my favourite hands-on workshop was "bird box building" (the bird boxes were for wrens to be specific). We got to work with partners to build the boxes. A presentation I particularly enjoyed was the one where Simon Jackson talked about how he created the "Spirit Bear Youth" organisation, which was created to help protect the spirit bear and its habitat in British Columbia. His story was very inspiring.

To sum things up, I had a really great time at the summit and I hope to go again. Once again, I very, very much appreciate it that you are willing to sponsor me, and I would like to thank you very much !

Sincerely, Robert Ormston

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

*To save trees and money we distribute our newsletter by email where possible.
We do not share your email address with any individual or organization.*

Membership Category

Please pay by cheque. It makes life much easier for our treasurer.

- Single (\$25.00)
- Family (\$40.00)
- Organization/Corporation (\$50.00)

Please note: Memberships run from January to January.

Membership Information

You can join the Quinte Field Naturalists by submitting the completed application form with a cheque made out to the Quinte Field Naturalists at a monthly meeting or by mailing the cheque and form to:

Quinte Field Naturalists
43 Parkdale Dr.
Belleville, ON
K8P 2P3

Jan 28/13

QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION

OPENING BALANCE:	\$1,952.65	\$1,952.65	\$2,084.60
	<u>Budget 2012</u>	<u>Actual 2012</u>	<u>Budget 2013</u>
Revenue			
Annual Dinner	\$1,000.00	\$900.00	\$1,000.00
Baillie Birdathon	110.00	200.75	110.00
Bank Interest	0.15	0.22	0.20
Coffee/ Tea Fund	75.00	97.03	75.00
Donation Box	75.00	145.00	75.00
Stewardship Council for Youth Summit		300.00	0.00
Membership Fees	900.00	1245.00	1100.00
Treasure Table	150.00	261.50	200.00
Total Revenue:	\$2,310.15	\$3,149.50	\$2,560.20
Expenses			
Annual Dinner	\$600.00	\$572.28	\$600.00
Bird Studies Canada	30.00	20.00	0.00
Insurance (Liability and D&O)	500.00	513.00	570.00
ON Membership	75.00	75.00	75.00
Hall Rental	300.00	400.00	400.00
Newsletter Duplicating	65.00	0.00	65.00
Newsletter Mailing	25.00	45.88	50.00
Trifold Duplicating	60.00	44.07	60.00
Awards	100.00	76.32	0.00
Speakers	400.00	361.00	400.00
Ontario Nature Youth Conference	150.00	450.00	300.00
Association Membership in HPLT	50.00	50.00	50.00
Donation to HPLT - Miller Property	200.00	200.00	0.00
Donation to Ostrander Point Appeal Fund		200.00	200.00
Documentary Film Festival			100.00
Miscellaneous	50.00	10.00	0.00
Total Expenses:	\$2,605.00	\$3,017.55	\$2,870.00
Total Revenue minus Expenses:	(\$294.85)	\$131.95	(\$309.80)
CLOSING BALANCE:	\$1,657.80	\$2,084.60	\$1,774.80
Actual Closing Balances For :			
Dec 31/09	\$615.28		
Dec 31/10	\$1,019.56		
Dec 31/11	\$1,952.65		
Dec 31/12	\$2,084.60		

QFN TREASURER: Norma Broadbear/Doug Newfield