



The Quinte Naturalist

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

September



Photo by Kyle Blaney

The summer of 2012 will be remembered for some of the hottest and driest weather on record. Anyone with air conditioning undoubtedly found it running more this year than ever before. Lawns turned brown and many trees showed signs of stress as leaves shriveled and turned brown.

Two flycatchers from distant places provided bookends to this record-setting season for local birders. In mid-April a scissor-tailed flycatcher made Demorestville the destination of choice. The scissor-tailed flycatcher is the state bird of Oklahoma. This state is the centre of its

limited breeding range which is located completely west of the Mississippi River. It is a wanderer and has been recorded about 60 times in Ontario

During the last week of August a thick-billed kingbird spent a few days at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. This bird was an Ontario first and only the third known in Canada. It's a Mexican bird which would normally occur no further north than a corner of Arizona or New Mexico. At Presqu'ile it set up shop for a few days near the Calf Pasture where it flew forays from the tops of favourite trees to snatch yellow jackets out of the air. Explanations for the occurrence of this bird were purely speculation. While some thick-billed kingbirds in the northern part of its range do migrate most remain resident in one area year-round. Most explanations theorized that the bird's internal GPS system had malfunctioned. Unfortunately it also seemed unlikely that this bird would find its way home.



Photo by Dave Furseth, 2005 in South Dakota

SEE THE ADDENDUM PUBLISHED SEPARATELY FOR TWO IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS CLUB MEMBERS WILL VOTE ON AT THIS MEETING

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

BILL BICKLE

GRIZZLIES OF THE KHUTZEYMATEEN



We are very fortunate to have Bill Bickle as our first speaker this year. He is a local award-winning photographer whose specialty is wildlife photography. His most recent exhibition was at the Colin Edwards Art Gallery in Bon Echo Provincial Park. The description of his presentation on his website explains why all naturalists will enjoy this month's speaker.

Each year, for a month straddling May and June, the grizzly bears of British Columbia's Khutzeymateen Inlet gather to eat fresh sedge grass on the estuary and at the mouths of several rivers along it. This remote and pristine 96,000 acre inlet, Canada's only grizzly bear sanctuary, slices through imposing granite mountains for twenty miles. When the bears come down to feed, the mountain tops are still draped in winter snow down to waters edge in places. Beyond the wet sedge meadows are valleys, one of the planet's few remaining temperate rain forests. This remote piece of wilderness offers a stunning verdant backdrop to observe and photograph wild grizzlies as they interact with one another, as they have for millennia.

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.

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Next Newsletter Deadline – October 10, 2012

Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

OUTINGS

Saturday, September 22. As Elizabeth mentioned in a recent email Quinte Field Naturalists are hosting Ontario Nature's East Fall Regional Meeting for naturalist clubs in eastern Ontario at the Frink Centre. George Thomson will lead a hike in the Frink Centre beginning after the meeting business is concluded about 2 p.m. Meet the group near the classrooms if you wish to join this hike.

Saturday, October 20. Details of this outing have yet to be determined. I will send out an email during the week of October 15 with more information. If you are interested in this outing but do not have email you can phone me that week for the details. 613-962-9337.



Wednesday, Oct. 10. Meyers Pier. The *Ontario Explorer* the new MNR fisheries assessment vessel will be docked at the pier. This is not a QFN event but might be of interest to members.

3:30 – 8:30 The public are welcome to come aboard.

6:30 – 8:30 You can review and comment on the progress that the Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan has made in rehabilitating the bay. Staff from all three levels of government will be available to talk to the public.

7:00 Opening ceremonies and Back to the Bay award presentation.

Remember to visit Terry's site, Nature Stuff at <http://naturestuff.net/site/>

SUCCESSFUL BIRDATHON

Thanks to our very generous supporters your birdathon team raised over \$600. The proceeds are divided among the QFN, the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and Bird Studies Canada so all three organizations benefit from this generosity.

It was a different kind of birdathon. Because of my surgery I was not ready for a day of birding in May during migration so we headed out on June 9. At this late date almost every bird we saw was a local nester. It was also a short day for a birdathon. After about five hours the rest of the team took pity on me and all declared themselves tired and we called it a day at about 2 p.m.



Considering these factors you might expect a very low total for this year's birdathon. In fact we were very pleased to identify 75 species. The most unlikely find was probably the American pipits. In Ontario pipits nest only as far south as the shores of Hudson Bay. The two birds we saw at this relatively late date were almost certainly non-breeders.

Thanks again to all who contributed. Your birdathon team, Sharron Blaney, Elizabeth Churcher, George Thomson, Tom Wheatley, John Blaney

2012 Birdathon Results

Double-crested cormorant	Ruby-throated hummingbird	House sparrow
Mute swan	Belted kingfisher	American pipit
Canada goose	Northern flicker	American goldfinch
Wood duck	Pileated Woodpecker	Yellow warbler
Mallard	Eastern wood-pewee	Chestnut-sided warbler
Blue-winged teal	Willow flycatcher	Ovenbird
Great blue heron	Least flycatcher	Common yellowthroat
Least bittern	Eastern kingbird	Song sparrow
American bittern	Blue jay	Swamp sparrow
Turkey vulture	American crow	White-throated sparrow
Osprey	Common raven	Savannah sparrow
Bald eagle	Red-eyed vireo	Grasshopper sparrow
Northern harrier	Warbling vireo	Chipping sparrow
Red-tailed hawk	Cedar waxwing	Field sparrow
Virginia rail	American robin	Vesper sparrow
Common moorhen	Gray catbird	Eastern towhee
Wilson's snipe	Brown thrasher	Scarlet tanager
Spotted sandpiper	European starling	Rose-breasted grosbeak
Killdeer	Marsh wren	Northern cardinal
Ring-billed gull	House wren	Indigo bunting
Herring gull	Tree swallow	Red-winged blackbird
Black tern	Purple martin	Eastern meadowlark
Rock dove	Barn swallow	Common grackle
Mourning dove	Black-capped chickadee	Brown-headed cowbird
Chimney swift	Horned lark	Boblink

RANDON THOUGHTS ON LONGEVITY

By Terry Sprague

August 2nd was my father's birthday. If he were still alive, he would have turned 105. As it was, he lived to the age of 96, passing away one night, not many days after receiving a clean bill of health. As I wrote in my book about the farm, he just wore out from years of milking cows, picking stones off fields, stumbling over clumps of clay, and worrying about the price of fertilizer and seed.

The only thing to have failed him in his final days was his mind. On previous visits that final year, he was still worried about his cows and if I was making out okay with the farm work. He had forgotten that we had all retired from farming some 28 years earlier, but I carried on with every conversation as though we were still there rounding up the cows for their nightly milking, combining grain and baling hay. That he was happy in his final days was paramount. I would like to think that his final thoughts as he passed away that night were not about the nursing home in which he spent his final days, but about the farm that he loved so dearly.

I would also like to think that his longevity, as well as my mother's, can be attributed to their love of the outdoors and building up an immunity to things that bring many of us to our knees today., like allergies which were unheard of, drinking unpasteurized milk, and drinking water that was not treated with reverse osmosis, carbon and ultraviolet radiation. We never got the flu. Hadn't heard of it, although my father often spoke about the "grippe," merely the forerunner I guess, of today's flu. We seldom got colds. Anything worse than a cold was merely a bad cold.

Farming, despite its setbacks like this summer's drought, is a good life and I am convinced that farmers have a much healthier lifestyle than some of us pampered folk today. Spending much of my time outdoors, leading interpretive hikes and studying nature, has allowed me to extend that healthy lifestyle, and I would like to think that those who register for my events are better for it. Certainly there is no stopping some of them. A few of them are well into their 70s and 80s and have no issue at all with 12 km hikes. For them, it is just another day of hiking, somewhere different.

Lifestyle factors do have a profound impact on health during late adulthood. We have all heard the commercials – exercise strengthens the heart and reduces the risk of heart disease. However, no one in our group to my knowledge lifts heavy weights or runs marathons. Simply, they adopt a regular routine of walking. It serves to strengthen bones, improves coordination and it has been shown that people who walk regularly have fewer accidents and injuries. It is pretty sad when you see someone get in their car to deliver a bag of garbage to the curbside! And those who read my colum regularly already know that the bane of my life are the able-bodied who park in handicapped zones and sprint into the grocery store. And don't even get me started on the absurdity of drive-throughs. Walking promotes blood circulation, oxygenates the brain and improves our memory (I may have some work to do there!). It is also an effective prevention of cancer.

Once we stop moving and grooving, we start to decline. We came into this world with a purpose and to be an active doer, not just a viewer. An active lifestyle is the key to our longevity, to our

mental and emotional health, to a sound body, and to a more joyful and peaceful spirit. We become energized, awakened and mentally uplifted. It rejuvenates and revitalizes, motivates and empowers. It's a kick start from the sluggishness of early morning and connects us with our inner rhythms. American author and poet, Henry David Thoreau, once said, "Walking is a blessing for the whole day." Just the delight of movement is enough to refresh us for the entire day, and that connection with nature makes it complete.

On days when I have to leave early for a guided hike somewhere, it is refreshing to see men and women of all ages out walking, some of them quite purposefully, along rural roads, sidewalks in town, campgrounds, trails, everywhere. It is exercise without expensive memberships, and spirituality as close as your backdoor, free for the taking. A time for mind purging and welcome inspiration. One does not have to walk far to realize the benefits. I walk five kilometres every day in the winter, fewer kilometres in the busy season, since walking during the operating season is already part of how I make a living. It's a matter of divesting oneself from the mindset that early mornings are somehow offensive and that it is, in some perverse manner, impossible to get underway until we have had that third cup of coffee, or that it's too hot, too cold, or too windy or too wet. As someone from Napanee said to me one time, "There is no such thing as bad weather – just inappropriate clothes for the weather."

My father routinely left his tractor in the back forty, and walked home across several fields for lunch (we called it dinner). At the time I thought it was rather silly since the tractor could have brought him home more easily. Perhaps he was subconsciously aware that this was a peculiar habit was beneficial to his health. I am looking forward to seeing him again one day so I can thank him, but I am also hoping that it won't be for at least another 30 years.

LOOKING BACK September, 1973

Members met in the Corby Public Library. Mystery birds associating with some common terns at Sandbanks turned out to be little gulls. It was mentioned that Terry Sprague's book on the birds of Prince Edward County (1969) did not list them. (The species first turned up three years after the publishing of the book.) There was also another mystery. A Boeing 707 from CFB Trenton arrived home after an around the world trip of 13 days. When the maintenance crew removed the inspection panels from the wings a nest containing a young grackle was found. The bird was fed and looked after for a few hours, then released that evening. How it entered the enclosed wing was a mystery, as was its ability to survive frigid temperatures at 35,000 feet.

2012: THE SUMMER OF THE INSECT

For me every season every year has its own unique character defined by the species which are to be particularly noteworthy. The character is usually quite subjective as it depends on what I happen to see and experience. For me these past few months have been the Summer of the Insect. If you spent much time outdoors during the hot weather you've seen a parade of colourful insects.

RED ADMIRAL



Photo by Hubert J Steed, posted on pbase.com

The parade began in early April with the appearance of red admiral butterflies. It was the hottest March on record in the United States. In southern Ontario April temperatures were close to average or above average every day with a high of 26 set on the 16th. Hundreds of thousands of red admiral butterflies headed north from the southeastern United States into Ontario. Glenn Richardson, president of the Toronto Entomologists' Association estimated their numbers as 20 times higher than usual.

These butterflies are common and easily recognized. The adults are nectar feeders and may very well appear in your garden. They lay their eggs on nettles and two or even three generations can be found every year. Very occasionally one will overwinter in Ontario but most that are born in August head for the south. There doesn't seem to be any one overwintering site as there is with monarchs.

GIANT SWALLOWTAIL



Soon Giant Swallowtails started appearing, even becoming common. A few years ago they were virtually unknown in the Quinte region. This year if you visited a park or conservation area or even your backyard you were almost certain to see at least one. Their wing span of up 16 cm. and the bold yellow triangle on the upper side of their outspread wings makes them unmistakable.

I have yet to find any of the caterpillars of this species but there are sure to be more than a few. In Florida these caterpillars are sometimes known as "orangedogs" because of their preference for orange trees or any other member of the citrus family. We are "privileged" in the Quinte area to have an abundance of a northern member of the citrus family, prickly ash. Look closely at any bird droppings you see on this plant. It may be a camouflaged giant swallowtail caterpillar.

If you do find one and happen to touch it you may get an interesting and possibly unpleasant reaction. The caterpillar may erect an orange, horn-like organ known as an osmeterium. This is a scent organ which will emit a pungent, ammonia-like odour.

EBONY JEWELWING

As the season progressed butterflies passed the baton to the odonates, damselflies and dragonflies. Ebony jewelwings are elegant damselflies common in the Quinte area. The male has a metallic blue-green body which shimmers and seems to change colour as he flies through the

filtered sunlight. The females have duller bodies but their smoky-coloured wings with white spots which glint in the sunlight give them their own beauty.

It was a particularly good year for this species in the Quinte Conservation Area. Early in the summer there were hundreds along the trail beside Potters Creek. As long as you don't make a sudden movement they are much more approachable than most members of their family. As the season progressed their numbers dwindled, probably as a result of predation by other residents of the conservation area such as bats, robins, blue jays, red-winged blackbirds, leopard frogs, and green darners among others. Fortunately many of their shelter plants such as cattails also grow along Potters Creek. A bonus if you visited the conservation area in late August was a luxuriant stand of another shelter plant in full bloom, joe-pye-weed, beside the bridge over the creek.



HALLOWEEN PENNANT



Photo by Bob Yukich, Toronto Entomologists Association

The dragonfly side of the odaonata was well represented by Halloween pennants this year. Some people compare them to butterflies and their habit of clinging to the end of a blade of grass or other vegetation and waving in the breeze makes pennant an appropriate name.

They are another species which seems to be expanding its range northward. Previously they were present but not common in Quinte. This year for the first time that we can remember they appeared in our yard and we often saw individuals elsewhere. In mid-July we found a spectacular congregation of Halloween pennants.

Driving the back roads not far from Point Petre we stopped to identify a bird. I've forgotten what the bird was but the stop gave us a few minutes to look around. There was the odd dragonfly along a dry ditch on one side of the road. On the other side there were two fields. Dragonflies patrolled both fields or rested on seed heads of grain. Scanning the field with the telescope I could see that every square metre contained at least 1 and often 2 or 3 Halloween pennants.

The parade continues into autumn of course as many dragonflies such as green darners and butterflies such as monarchs travel through Quinte on their way south. The summer of 2012 certainly reminded me that birds are not the only beautiful and interesting creatures living all around us.

Please send any pictures you may have of QFN activities to either me (john.blaney@sympatico) or Terry (tsprague@kos.net).