



# 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 Donna Fano

Ironically the spring migration edition of *North American Birds* arrived on January 12, the day of our first real winter storm and the day Donna Fano took this picture. The magazine provides an area by area summary of the weather and noteworthy bird sightings in all of the western hemisphere north of South America for March through May 2011.

Since this winter could be characterized as either the “Late Winter” or The Off and On Winter” it got me wondering how last winter could be described. Off I went to find my copy of the magazine covering the winter of 2010-2011.

According to the editor, in Ontario the 2010-11 “winter came in like a lion and persisted throughout the entire period, with the exception of a brief mild spell at the New Year.” Birding highlights included puddle ducks, particularly northern pintails, arriving during the January thaw, good numbers of Bohemian waxwings and a moderate invasion by common and hoary redpolls. Quite different than 2011-2012.

What used to be called “global warming” is actually rapid climate change with quick and sometimes extreme shifts in weather both annually and daily. We may just have to get used to it.

**SEE CLUB NEWS ON PAGE 2**

## To-night's Speaker

**Devin Turner**

### **Nesting Studies of Songbirds in the Arctic**

Devin is a member of QFN and a graduate student. All through university he has made it a point to spend his summers working in different parts of Canada but lately his heart has been in the Arctic. Those who heard Devin's previous presentation know that he is an excellent speaker who mixes reports on research with personal anecdotes in a manner which holds your interest. We are pleased to have him back.

### **LOCAL SIGHTINGS**

It seems to be a fairly good year for snowy owls. Five can be found regularly at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Most sightings are either from Owen Point or on Presqu'ile Bay. Singles have been seen near North Beach Provincial Park and east of Millhaven. There are likely others.

Bald eagles are now regular winter residents at Presqu'ile and along the lake shore east to Kingston. Closer to home watch for the red-tailed hawk which is often seen lurking in the area of City Hall on Front Street. Also check any gulls you happen to see. Birders are also finding the odd white-winged gull, both Iceland and glaucous (check your field guide) around open water.

*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.*

<b>President</b> George Thomson 613-478-3205	<b>Past President</b> Wendy Turner 613-966-1518	<b>Vice-President</b> Frank Hiebert 613-968-5825	<b>Secretary</b> Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205
<b>Treasurer</b> Norma Broadbear 613-962-6667	<b>Environmental Officer</b> Stewart Murray 613-966-7196	<b>Membership/Mailing</b> Marge Fisher 613-968-3277	<b>Refreshments</b> Sharon Blaney 613-962-9337

**Outings/Newsletter**  
John Blaney - 613-962-9337  
Next Newsletter Deadline - February 10, 2012  
Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

## OUTINGS

### MUDPUPPY NIGHT



Yes, we're finally going to do it. Weather permitting we will set out on **Friday, January 27** for Oxford Mills in eastern Ontario. The event starts at about 8 p.m. but I would suggest getting there a little early. The drive is over 200 kilometres one way. It can be a frustrating experience to keep a group of cars together over that distance so we will meet in the village of Oxford Mills.

From Belleville drive east on 401 to exit 721. From there drive north on highway 416 toward Ottawa. The Mudpuppy Night website gives directions which are easy to follow from 416. Take Exit 28, to County Road 44. At the end of the exit ramp turn right (onto County Rd 44 northbound) then take the first left onto Beach Rd. At the end of Beach Rd. turn right, onto Crozier Road, and once in the village turn left towards the Brigadoon Restaurant, and there you are. Park along the street, or in the lot behind a little log building east of the dam (if it's not snowed in).

Remember to dress very warmly. Fred gives the following instructions: "Bring the brightest lights you've got, be sure the batteries are fully charged, and the highest boots you've got." He adds, "Afterwards we retire to the [Brigadoon Restaurant](#), to drink coffee, eat desserts, and talk about Mudpuppies and everything else!"

## THE NATURE OF QUINTE

### SURVIVOR: BELLEVILLE

The feeders in our small backyard have a few regular customers this year. Among that group mourning doves arrive early and stay late. With their soft, subtle colours they are beautiful birds but their habits are less attractive to many among the human species. In a word, if we are prone to anthropomorphism, we would call them lazy. It works for them, of course. That's why there are so many of them. When I look out the patio door and see four or five still occupying the sunny perch where they settled an hour ago it's still hard to stifle disapproving thoughts. Even worse is the one bird which eats and then sits in the small hanging platform feeder adding essence of mourning dove to the mix. This individual has probably hit upon a good survival tactic as the feeder is covered by a squirrel baffle but he (I believe that most women would actually insist on this pronoun here) is definitely an affront to our sanitary standards.

Another less frequently seen visitor is a mature sharp-shinned hawk, obviously in the prime of life. She loves the mourning doves' "lazy" habits. *Birds of North America Online* states that in its hunting this raptor is "secretive, opportunistic" and "relies on surprise." Recently our neighbourhood sharpie gave a demonstration.

On a beautiful crisp mid-January Saturday afternoon I rounded the corner of the garage not thinking of anything in particular. Sharron might say not thinking at all but that's another story. A frenzy of mourning doves took to the air as a winged shape swooped out of a neighbour's yard and into the midst of the frantic doves. One panicked individual headed straight for my face with the hawk in pursuit. All three of us took evasive action. I ducked; the dove veered to the right; the hawk hit the dove but then made a sharp correction in course to avoid hitting me.

The dove got the worst of the encounter. It flopped to the ground near my feet, holding one wing at an awkward angle. Now I had a moral dilemma. It's my firm belief that we should interfere as little as possible in natural processes. Yes, I do understand that implicit in my maintaining bird feeders is a contradiction of that principle. Still, I don't remove a cowbird egg from a yellow warbler's nest. That would perpetuate a line of yellow warblers not good at dealing with cowbird intrusions. I do leave young birds and animals where they are found because the parents are undoubtedly nearby and better able to handle the situation than I am. On the other hand here was an individual in distress. It was obviously in shock and making no effort to fly.

I decided to let nature take its course at least for a while. An hour later the dove was obviously alive but had not changed position. Callously I forgot about it until I returned from watching a lacklustre Belleville Bulls effort against the Brampton Battalion later that evening. The dove was gone. There were no tracks in the snow to indicate that a neighbourhood cat had taken it. There were no signs of a struggle with a returning sharp-shinned hawk.

The next morning a mourning dove with some feathers projecting at an odd angle sat in the platform feeder. In my mind at least it was the survivor of the Saturday attack. Now it's time to clean and disinfect the feeder.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Considering that this season's Christmas Bird Count was the tenth in our current series of official counts our results were quite remarkable. Total species set a new record at 56 and including 1 count week species (species seen during the 3 days before and after count day) tied the record for count day plus count week at 57. Over the ten years of the count we have found 85 species and 2 more count week species.

In the table below giving the results of our CBC new species names are printed in red. If the number tallied is a new high the number is printed in red. There are five species new to our count and including these five eighteen species were at new highs.



*Typical adult Iceland gulls look much like ring-billed or herring gulls with the black at the tips of the wings absent or much reduced. Second winter birds are more truly white-winged gulls.*

Canada Goose	3285	American Kestrel	7	Common Raven	5
Mute Swan	45	Merlin	1	Black-capped Chickadee	541
Tundra Swan	2	Ring-billed Gull	260	White-breasted Nuthatch	43
American Black Duck	3	Herring Gull	117	Brown Creeper	1
Mallard	321	Iceland Gull	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2
Greater Scaup	3	Great Black-backed Gull	20	American Robin	726
Ring-necked Duck	2	Rock Pigeon	1427	European Starling	1965
Bufflehead	9	Mourning Dove	356	Cedar Waxwing	1068
Common Goldeneye	1503	Eastern Screech Owl	2	American Tree Sparrow	92
Hooded Merganser	27	Barred Owl	cw	Song Sparrow	8
Common Merganser	22	Short-eared Owl	1	Swamp Sparrow	3
Red-breasted Merganser	4	Belted Kingfisher	1	Dark-eyed Junco	201
Ruffed Grouse	5	Red-bellied Woodpecker	4	Snow Bunting	42
Wild Turkey	22	Downy Woodpecker	34	Northern Cardinal	30
Common Loon	1	Hairy Woodpecker	15	House Finch	158
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Northern Flicker	7	American Goldfinch	276
Northern Harrier	1	Pileated Woodpecker	4	House Sparrow	76
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Northern Shrike	4		
Cooper's Hawk	4	Blue Jay	178		
Red-tailed Hawk	37	American Crow	301		



*Quinte birders would not be surprised to learn that CBC statistics show a significant increase in the number of Canada geese and ospreys since 1966 but did you know that hooded mergansers show a similar increase?*

an international scientific research study to determine the state of our avian population. It is conducted according to a protocol established so that methods are consistent across all of the western hemisphere north of South America and from year to year. Unfortunately science costs money and despite their green words governments in their budgets demonstrate that the science of ecology is seldom near the top of their agenda. To be useful CBC statistics have to be compiled, analyzed and published so that other researchers can make use of them. Your \$5.00 payment is part of your contribution to citizen science.

## **ANOTHER COUNT**

Obviously I enjoy these surveys of natural phenomena. That's why I participate in CBCs, marsh monitoring, owl counts and other projects. In mid-January Terry Sprague and I take part in the Mid-winter Waterfowl Survey. In 2002 an organization called Long Point Waterfowl initiated this survey. It includes the American and Canadian sides of Lakes Ontario, Erie and St. Clair and the rivers connecting these lakes. Terry and I cover the open water from Trenton to Point Petre on the second Sunday in January each year. We count the species and number of all waterfowl we see and note any other interesting sightings such as the 2 bald eagles and the glaucous gull we found near Wellington this year. In this survey as in the CBC the open water resulted in at least one unusually high numbers: mute swan 39, trumpeter swan 1, tundra swan 75, Canada goose 10,582, mallard 345, American black duck 58, greater scaup 56, long-tailed duck 886, white-winged scoter 3, common goldeneye 138, bufflehead 36, red-breasted merganser 10, common merganser 9, American coot 1, unidentified duck species 100.

A number of factors produced these high numbers. The main factor was the unusually warm December which left almost every bit of water unfrozen so waterfowl and gulls were abundant. We had a few more counters than usual and with no snow those counters were able to walk into places that might have been inaccessible in a year with snow. We were fortunate also in that among our numbers were professional biologists and wildlife experts as well as some very skilled amateur birders.

A question which arises every year is "Why do we have to pay to participate in the Christmas Bird Count? Participants in the CBC may tramp around in all kinds of weather because they enjoy it but is there any other point? In fact the CBC is part of



*Obviously winter counts are of no use to determine the status of migrants like the Canada warbler. Statistics from breeding bird surveys and banding station records help biologists with that task.*

## HELP SAVE AN IMPORTANT BIRD AREA

Cheryl and Myrna Wood have waged a long and vigorous battle against the proposal to put wind turbines in the path of hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. It is important to register our concerns because if Gilead is successful another company has agreements in place which will enable it to start the environmental review process to erect more wind turbines in other parts of the IBA. Cheryl Anderson of the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists has sent the following email to PECFN members but it is worth reprinting here.

As you know the Gilead Industrial Wind Turbine Project at Ostrander Point has been posted to the Environmental Registry for public comment. The deadline for comments is **February 2, 2012**. Myrna Wood is working on a comprehensive comment which will be submitted on behalf of the club.

Shannon McNeill  
Senior Project Evaluator  
Ministry of the Environment  
Operations division  
Environmental Approvals branch  
2 St Clair Ave, W.  
Floor 12A  
Toronto Ontario, M4L 1L5

Comment may also be submitted online at the Environmental Registry site . Be sure to quote the **EBR Registry Number: 011-5239** (<http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/>)

Here is some information to help you with your submission:

Gilead proposes to erect 9 wind turbines in the Ostrander Point Crown Land Block on the south shore of Prince Edward County. Ostrander Point is part of the Prince Edward County South Shore Important Bird Area (IBA).

This IBA has been designated globally significant under the congregatory species category and nationally significant under the threatened species category. During spring and fall, the geographical and habitat features of the peninsula that forms Prince Edward County act as a funnel for birds on migration. There is no other location on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario where densities and abundance of migrants are known to compare with those at Prince Edward Point.

### Migration

The Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO) sees more birds than any other migration monitoring station in Ontario. Approximately ¾ million birds are observed at 1 km of shoreline at Prince Edward Point per year. Estimates have indicated that approximately 12 million birds migrate in the spring and fall through the eastern Ontario area from Presqu'île in the west to Wolfe Island in the east.

Experts from Environment Canada and Nature Canada have indicated that Ostrander Point is a bad place for wind turbines because of the numbers of song birds and raptors that are known to migrate through the area. Data from the Wolfe Island turbine installation shows approximately 7 times bird mortality than other North American projects. The main reason for this is the number of birds that use this migratory corridor.

**Species at Risk**

The IBA was designated also as a refuge for Species at Risk. Many species at risk have been documented using Ostrander Point: Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow’s Sparrow, King Rail, Black Tern, Bobolink, Whip-poor-will and Blanding’s Turtle are a few. The proposed mitigation measures are only to purchase other habitat for the Blanding’s Turtle and to fund a study of the effects of turbines on the Whip-poor-will. No mitigation for other species has been mentioned in the studies.

**Habitat**

Ostrander Point contains provincially significant wetland areas, and globally rare alvar habitat.

Below is the contact information of the relevant government ministers. We suggest that you copy your comment to them and to our local MPP. Thank you in advance for taking the time to do this.

Hon. Jim Bradley Minister of the Environment <a href="mailto:minister.moe@ontario.ca">minister.moe@ontario.ca</a>	Hon. Christopher Bentley Minister of Energy <a href="mailto:cbentley.mpp@liberal.ola.org">cbentley.mpp@liberal.ola.org</a>
Hon. Michael Gravelle Minister of Natural Resources <a href="mailto:mgravelle.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org">mgravelle.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org</a>	Todd Smith MPP Prince Edward – Hastings <a href="mailto:toddsmithco@pc.ola.org">toddsmithco@pc.ola.org</a>

**EVEN MORE CLUB NEWS**

**TREASURE TABLE**

Don’t forget the Treasure Table at our February meeting. Bring treasures you no longer need or want so that others can purchase and enjoy them. On a personal note I would just like to add that brownies, cookies, fudge, etc. qualify as treasures.

**NEW MEMBER**

Welcome to Andrea Dart who has joined us since our last meeting.

**ANNUAL MEETING**

The January meeting is our annual meeting. The business portion of the meeting is short but you will be voting on the attached budget and other matters. Your membership dues are also due. You don’t need to fill out the form on page 10 if you are already a member but do please pay by check to make our treasurer’s life easier.



*Qunte Field Naturalists - 2012 Budget*

<b>OPENING BALANCE</b>	1019.56	1019.56	1952.65
	Budget 2011	Actual 2011	Budget 2012
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Annual Dinner	1125.00	1155.00	1000.00
Baillie Birdathon	110.00	140.25	110.00
Bank Interest	0.10	0.19	0.15
Coffee/Tea Fund	75.00	79.30	75.00
Donation Box	45.00	139.80	75.00
Membership Fees	900.00	1015.00	900.00
Treasure Table	110.00	287.50	150.00
Subtotal Revenue	2365.10	2817.04	2310.15
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>			
<b>INCLUDING OPENING BALANCE</b>	3384.66	3836.60	4262.80
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Annual Dinner	675.00	630.00	600.00
Bird Studies Canada	20.00	15.00	30.00
Insurance (Liability and D&O)	500.00	486.00	500.00
ON Membership	75.00	75.00	75.00
Hall Rental	200.00	200.00	300.00 (DD)
Newsletter Duplicating	50.00	60.99	65.00
Newsletter Mailing	25.00	13.11	25.00
Trifold Duplicating			70.00
Awards	60.00	0.00	100.00
Speakers	400.00	323.34	400.00
Ontario Nature Youth Conference			150.00
Donation to HPELT-Miller Reserve			50.00
Discretionary Donations			200.00
Miscellaneous	50.00	80.51	200.00
			50.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	2055.00	1883.95	2815.00
<b>CLOSING BALANCE</b>	1329.66	1952.65	1447.80
Actual Closing Balances for:			
	DEC 31/07	574.11	
	Dec 31/08	358.65	
	Dec 31/09	615.28	
	Dec 31/10	1,019.56	
	Dec 31/11	1,952.65	

## 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