



The Quinte Naturalist

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

September



Part of the pollinator garden established in the Cold Creek Conservation Area in the rural municipality of Mono, north of Orangeville.

One of the hottest summers on record gave us a sample of what climate change may establish as the new normal. The heat didn't stop club activity. There are several important stories. A pollinator garden like the one above cannot be established on municipal land in Belleville. Also club members need to take action to prevent a crisis in January 2020. There's good news too. Read on for information about club projects and outings.

The Friendly City Not So Friendly to Pollinators

In July a dozen or so QFN members and friends met to discuss the possibility of establishing a pollinator garden. It was to be a demonstration project to educate more people about the importance of pollinators and show what could be done to help them. After a considerable amount of work a committee put together a proposal and presented it to the city. We were turned down. The city's insurance company was concerned about the possibility of a bee sting leading to a law suit.



The Lakefield Horticultural Society has added a bee nesting home to their pollinator garden

The decision seemed paradoxical. In southern Ontario most municipalities have the same insurance company. Nevertheless, fourteen communities in southern Ontario ranging in size from Mono, north of Orangeville, with fewer than 10,000 residents to the city of Toronto have declared themselves to be Bee Cities and have proudly publicized the fact. This designation requires a long term commitment to promote habitat for pollinators, to educate the public about their importance and to celebrate pollinators. Twenty schools across Canada including Stirling Public

School have been designated Bee Schools.

Currently we are considering proposing either a wildflower garden or a butterfly garden. We want the city to be ecologically friendly.

For more information about the Bee City program visit the web site of Bee City Canada.
<http://www.beecitycanada.org/>

Treasure Table

This year our annual Treasure Table will be held in November. Collect nature themed items, books, ornaments, preserves, pickles, crafts, in fact anything that you no longer need or want and someone else might want. Declutter, recycle and come prepared to look for stocking stuffers or something for yourself. Funds go to support one of our many projects.

Club Outings for Club Members

Saturday, Sept. 29, 9 a.m. Donna Fano has a long-time interest in the colourful fungi of our area. They come in many shapes and sizes. Don't believe fungi can be beautiful? Recently I visited the Frink and took the pictures on the right. Bring your camera and join Donna for a 1 ½ to 2 hour stroll through the Frink Centre. Meet at the **Frink Centre on**



Thrasher Road. On Highway 37 travel about 6 km north of Highway 401. There is a large Ontario sign indicating a right turn to the Frink Centre. About 100 metres further there is a large green sign indicating Thrasher Road where you turn. On Highway 37 if you get to the bridge over the river you have gone too far.

Spontaneous Outings. Occasionally a special opportunity will arise or a club member will find something or hear something that they would like to share with the rest of us. When that happens we will hold a spontaneous outing, previously unscheduled, on short notice. The outing to the pannes at Sandbanks is an example. Only club members will receive notification of these outings by email.



Monday, Nov. 5. Mark this date on your calendar. Boston Pizza generously allows local organizations like QFN to host an evening and greet patrons at the door. Last time we hosted we received \$319 as 10% of the evening's receipts, \$25 in donations and a chance to publicize the club. We'll need volunteer ambassadors at the door. Don't worry if you are a new member. You will have a partner who has enjoyed the club for several years. Of course you can also support this fund-raiser by dining at Boston Pizza that night. Ten percent of your bill will come back to the club.

Brighton Wetland Saved



In the spring this sign appeared on the Brighton wetland situated across Presqu'ile Bay from the park.

The property consists of 231 acres with 2.5 kilometres of undeveloped Lake Ontario shoreline habitat. The area hosts up to 25 species of waterfowl and nesting habitat for

rare birds such as least bittern and king rail. During migration it is an important rest and refueling stop for thousands of waterfowl. At risk turtle species are also found there.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada had raised large sums but had only one month to find another \$200,000 to qualify for a loan to complete the sale. Quinte Field Naturalists donated **\$2,000**. Many other local individuals, businesses and agencies donated what they could. NCC now owns this significant natural area to preserve in perpetuity.

Tom's Successful Fund-Raiser



Golden-winged Warbler, a nesting specialty of The Land Between. Photo by Tom Wheatley

Fifteen local property owners invited QFN member and Hastings leading ebirder, Tom Wheatley, to survey their properties for nesting birds during the month of June. In exchange for this complimentary service, the property owners made donations to several local environmental organizations including the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and QFN.

Among the species Tom found were three provincially-threatened species in The County (Barn Swallow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark) and three species of Special Concern in Hastings (Golden-winged Warbler, Wood Thrush, Eastern Meadowlark).

Frink Centre Project

Last June 29 several club members and friends installed the bird saver window treatments on classrooms at the H.R Frink Conservation Area and Outdoor Education Centre. Look for the sign below next time you visit the Frink. For information about why this program is so important visit the FLAP website <http://www.flap.org/>

Why are there small white squares on our windows?

Photo by Kyle Blaney

Photo by Tony deGroot

To save birds' lives!

The problem is ...

birds don't see glass. They see only the reflection of surrounding trees and sky and think they can fly right through. In Canada alone, research concluded that as many as 42 million birds die every year by colliding with windows. The vast majority of these deaths occur at our homes and other low-rise buildings.

The solution is ...

making glass visible to birds, so collisions are prevented. Environmental studies have proven that uniformly applying visual markers to the outside of windows, save birds' lives!

For more information on how you can make your home or office windows safer for birds, visit: Birdsafe.ca/preventing-collisions-home

The bird saving window treatments at the H.R. Frink Centre were a gift from the Quinte Field Naturalists.

[@QuinteFieldNaturalists](https://www.facebook.com/QuinteFieldNaturalists)

Background Photo and Poster by Donna Fano

Quinte Field Naturalists' Board Needs YOU!

QFN is governed by a collaborative Board whose members share the responsibility of planning and implementing the actions and programs of the organization. For any group to remain viable, new members are required regularly to fill the roles that are no longer occupied by outgoing volunteers. Presently, QFN knows that three key roles will be vacated in January 2020. We wish to act **NOW** to ensure continued success of this great organization in the future. Any member interested in joining the Board **NOW** to be mentored in one of the positions available should contact George Thomson at 613-478-3205 or e-mail elizchurche@hotmail.com.

Positions Available

President

The President's duties include preparing agendas, presiding at Board and membership meetings and dealing with ongoing issues as they arise. Holding a minimum of three Board meetings annually is important.

Vice-President

The Vice-President is responsible for becoming familiar enough with the details of the organization to be able to perform all of the duties of the President in the President's absence. To that end, the President and Vice-President work collaboratively so that the Vice-President is able to develop an understanding of all of the organization's tasks. It is expected that the vice-president will succeed the president.

Treasurer

The Treasurer develops the annual budget using input from the Board as well as knowledge of the organization's finances. Throughout the year, the Treasurer manages the business of QFN. Tasks include collecting, recording and banking money, monitoring bank statements and paying all expenses. Financial reports are presented at all membership and Board meetings.

You don't need to be a nature "expert" for these positions. We have had executive members who have worked for Ontario Hydro, who taught English, who farmed, who worked for business or industry. What they all had was an interest in nature and a desire to foster the club's goals to further nature education, promote conservation and support research.

Avoiding Snakebites: A Guide to Co-existing with Snakes!

By Matt Ellerbeck (A.K.A The Snake Man) Snake Advocate & Conservationist

Many club members will remember Matt as The Salamander Man who spoke to the QFN a few years ago. His passion for his subject was evident. Matt has another persona. The Snake Man. He approaches this subject with equal passion. Note: Comments and pictures within a text box like this one are completely the responsibility of the editor.

Snakes are among the world's most misunderstood and feared creatures. However, the horrible reputation that snakes have is not deserved.

Snakes will not make unprovoked attacks on people. When a person comes in contact with a snake, the animal's first instinct will be to rapidly flee the area and find shelter. If the snake doesn't do this, it may just stay perfectly still to try to blend in with the surroundings.

Even if the snake is captured, it may still not resort to biting – proof of its gentle demeanor. The snake has several harmless tactics it can resort to as an alternative to biting. The snake may hiss, make mock strikes with a closed mouth, or flail around to try and escape. This is the snake's way of saying, “Just leave me alone!”

An account of the true nature of snakes can be found in a study done by University of Georgia Professor Dr. Whit Gibbons. The following excerpt from Dr. Gibbons' study speaks for itself:

All the snake species tested have had the same initial response to human presence. If given the opportunity, they escape--down a hole, under a ledge, or in the case of cottonmouth snakes, into the water. Escape is even the standard behaviors of enormous diamondback rattlesnakes, which will immediately disappear if they have enough warning before they think a person can reach them. The snakes just want us to leave them alone.

Snake bites on humans usually only happen when someone is deliberately trying to provoke or harm a snake, and the animal bites purely in self-defense. According to NC State University, almost 80% of snake bites happen when someone is trying to capture



An Eastern Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), these non-venomous snakes are often confused with rattlesnakes due to their superficial resemblance. Milk Snakes are widespread across Ontario. Photo provided by Matt Ellerbeck

or kill the snake. All these facts show that snakes are not aggressive or evil animals. If you provoke and capture a wild animal, what can you expect but to be bitten since the animal is going to try to defend itself?

The key to being safe around snakes is to simply leave them alone. Sometimes hikers and campers will encounter a snake when the animal is out basking in the sun or foraging for food. When startled, the snake may slither rapidly towards the direction of shelter (like a burrow or under a rock). When the snake darts suddenly, it may give the illusion that it is chasing after you. This is not true though. Sadly, people's anxiety in such a

situation only fuels the belief that the snake was pursuing them.

It is also important to remember that most snakes are completely harmless. In fact, only around 13% of all snake species are venomous. Of this small number, even fewer are equipped with venom that is strong enough to seriously harm a human being.

If a venomous snake does bite a person, often no venom is injected into the bite. This is called a dry bite. Snakes have venom first and foremost as a means to quickly subdue their prey. The venom also helps the snake digest its meal, as it aids in breaking down the prey internally. This is important as snakes do not chew their food but swallow it whole. As humans are too big for snakes to eat, they will not want to waste their precious venom on us.



Massasauga Rattle Snake (*Sistrurus catenatus*), Ontario's only venomous snake. It is found primarily along the Georgian Bay and Bruce Peninsula. Photo provided by Matt Ellerbeck

If the snake does inject venom, proper medical treatment and anti-venom can usually save the person's life.. Ontario is home to just one species of venomous snake, the Massasauga rattlesnake. It is a shy species that prefers to avoid people. There have only been two fatalities in Ontario linked to snakebite ever, and in both cases the victims did not receive appropriate medical treatment which almost certainly would have saved their lives.

It is very easy to co-exist with snakes, especially since they do many useful things for people. First of all, snakes are great controllers of rodents like rats and mice. Without snakes, rodent populations would surge and these creatures would destroy crops, affecting our food supply. Rodents also spread harmful diseases which can seriously affect our health. Snakes are great at hunting rodents because they can crawl into small burrows and other areas that rodents use as shelters. These places are too small for other predators to get into.

Snakes also help stop the spread of Lyme disease. According to a study conducted through the University of Maryland, a single Timber Rattlesnake eats up to 4,500 ticks a year! Small rodents often carry the bacteria (genus *Borrelia*) that produces Lyme Disease. When ticks bite these rodents, they can later drop off and then spread the disease to humans or pets. Luckily, snakes prey heavily on rodents, and

The eastern garter snake is the snake you are most likely to see on a warm autumn day. They vary a lot in colour and pattern but almost all will have three yellow stripes.

Some people are disconcerted by the snake's never-blinking eyes. They appear to have no eyelids. The truth is that snakes do have "eyelids" which are made of a modified transparent scale. Their eyes are always closed. Examine a snake skin closely and you will see that the scale over the eye is shed along with the rest of the skin.

Why do snakes shed their their skin? In this respect they are no different than us. They just shed their skin all at once while we shed our skin cell by cell all the time.

Late in the fall you may see what seems to be a parade of this species. They are on their way to a communal hibernation site called a hibernacula.



then in turn the ticks attached to them! Therefore, snakes are extremely useful to people, as they help stop the spread of this disease.

Furthermore, snakes are saving the lives of countless numbers of people every year. Snake venom is being used in the medical field to treat all sorts of serious ailments like heart and stroke disease, cancer, Parkinson's, blood clots, and many more.

Despite these benefits, countless numbers of snakes are killed by fearful people every year. We must look past our fear and ignorance and see snakes for what they really are - interesting creatures that play very important roles in the eco-system. A fear of snakes can be a learned behavior, so we must learn not to pass our irrational fears onto our children but teach them to respect wildlife.



Hurricane season brings a humbling reminder, that despite our technologies, most of nature remains unpredictable.

Diane Ackerman, American poet, author and naturalist

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 pm, 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, 2018

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com