



# The Quinte Naturalist

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

# January



THE FALL  
AND RISE  
OF THE  
BALD EAGLE



in Prince Edward County

Quinte Field Naturalists

7:00 p.m.

Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church (Bridge Street entrance)

Monday, January 22, 2018

Join guest speaker Terry Sprague as he describes the reasons behind the decline in Prince Edward County of the Bald Eagle and how this majestic bird is now making a comeback. After an absence of 70 years as a nesting bird in Prince Edward County, it is once again nesting here.

Discover where the Eagles nested this past season (you'll be surprised), where they nested historically, some of their habits, and what has been done to encourage them to nest in the County.

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Join the Owl Prowl. See Club News on Page 2.*



## CLUB NEWS

**MEMBERSHIP** It's time to renew your QFN membership for 2018. You can pay by cheque or cash at the January meeting or you can send your dues to our treasurer, Doug Newfield. Dues are \$25.00 for an individual or \$40.00 for a family.

Quinte Field Naturalists  
c/o Doug Newfield  
161 Thrasher Rd.  
R.R.#1  
Plainfield, ON  
K0K 2V0

**ANNUAL MEETING** – A short part of the January meeting is set aside for the 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. Our treasurer will also present the annual budget (page 3). The budget includes a small amount to sponsor a film at Docfest where we can publicize the QFN, and donations to the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre and Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre.



*One of our feederwatchers sighted a Carolina wren like this one on Christmas Bird Count Day, December 27. One had been seen in 2013 during count week (the three days before and after count day) but this was a first on a count day.*

*Photo by Tony deGroot*  
<http://www.tonydegroot.com/>

**OWL PROWL** – We'll be going on an owl prowl on Sunday, Feb. 4.

Meet in the Lowe's parking lot on the Millennium Parkway to car pool at 7 p.m. We'll be driving from point to point but dress very warmly because we will be spending considerable time standing in the snow. The outing will end about 10 p.m. As always, an owl prowl comes with a warning. There can be many reasons why owls do not respond to a call. There are no guarantees.

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**QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION**

	<u>Budget 2017</u>	<u>Actual 2017</u>	<u>Budget 2018</u>
<b>Revenue</b>			
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	
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$3,620.00</b>	<b>\$6,542.62</b>	<b>\$4,160.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
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
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$3,974.00</b>	<b>\$4,719.48</b>	<b>\$4,420.00</b>
<b>Total Revenue minus Expenses:</b>	<b>(\$354.00)</b>	<b>\$1,823.14</b>	<b>(\$260.00)</b>

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



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



***Northern Shrikes have been found on all sixteen counts.  
Photo by Tom Wheatley***

It is cold, minus 29 Celsius at 8 a.m. Doesn't matter. It's Christmas Bird Count Day so dress warmly and get out and count birds. Twenty-four QFN members and friends did just that.

With Quinte in the midst of a spell of such cold weather I was fairly pessimistic about what counters would find. With only the swiftest water unfrozen it seemed likely that waterfowl would be sparse. My prediction was that we would be fortunate to tally 45 species never mind our 15 year average of 49. Very wrong.

Counters recorded 62 species, our second highest total ever and only one less than the high of 63 achieved in 2014. I predicted that no species would be found in high numbers. Wrong again. Seven species were found in record numbers and two more were added to the count day list. I had suggested that our total number of individual birds would be low. Not quite as wrong but still wrong. The total of 6517 birds was lower than the average of 6717 but well above the 3685 low in 2003.

The good numbers were probably the result of several factors. It was a clear day with good visibility and fairly light winds. Many skilled counters have covered the same areas for a number of years and know where the best feeders and sources of natural food are. With deep snow that's where birds congregate.

We must thank Tom's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wheatley who vacated their house while a group of enthusiastic birders took over for a pizza-fueled compilation. A good way to end a very successful Christmas Bird Count.



***After sixteen years some trends in local bird populations are becoming clear. When we reported our first two red-bellied woodpeckers in 2004 the Ontario CBC manager requested a rare bird form. For the eighth consecutive year this species appears on our list. We now expect it.***

***Photo by Ian Dickinson.***

**<https://photobirding.smugmug.com/>**

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## BELLEVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Number of Species – 62 (Previous median – 50, Previous Maximum – 63)

Number of Individual Birds – 6517 (Previous Median – 6717)

**#YRS** refers to the number of years the species was found during previous counts.

\*Species has occurred on all 16 counts

\*\* Species new on count day but previously found during count week (cw)

\*\*\* Species new to count

**Species in red** – Species found in record numbers, previous record in brackets.

SPECIES	TOTAL	#YRS	SPECIES	TOTAL	#YRS
*Canada Goose	99	15	Peregrine Falcon	2	3
Mute Swan	2	7	Northern Shrike	2	15
Tundra Swan	1	3	*Blue Jay	388(361)	15
American Black Duck	2	13	*American Crow	130	15
*Mallard	347	15	Common Raven	15(14)	12
*Common Goldeneye	10	15	Horned Lark	15	4
Hooded Merganser	1	8	*Black-capped Chickadee	593	15
Common Merganser	4	10	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	11
Great Blue Heron	1	3	*White-breasted Nuthatch	51	15
Ruffed Grouse	5	13	Brown Creeper	6	12
Wild Turkey	60	12	**Carolina Wren	1	cw
Bald Eagle	2	6	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	13
Northern Harrier	4	11	Eastern Bluebird	33(17)	7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	14	Hermit Thrush	1	1
*Cooper's Hawk	4	15	*American Robin	387	15
*Red-tailed Hawk	37	15	*European Starling	1533	15
Rough-legged Hawk	3	4	*Cedar Waxwing	3	15
Herring Gull	2	14	Lapland Longspur	4(1)	1
*Rock Pigeon	695	15	Snow Bunting	45	14
*Mourning Dove	656	15	Yellow-rumped Warbler	6	4
Eastern Screech Owl	3	5	*American Tree Sparrow	220	15
Great Horned Owl	2	6	Song Sparrow	4	13
Snowy Owl	1	2	White-throated Sparrow	4	10
Red-bellied Woodpecker	9(6)	11	*Dark-eyed Junco	412	15
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5(1)	1	*Northern Cardinal	57	15
*Downy Woodpecker	59	15	Red-wing Blackbird	72(9)	7
*Hairy Woodpecker	23	15	Brown-headed Cowbird	3	2
Northern Flicker	7	11	*House Finch	40	15
Pileated Woodpecker	8	13	Purple Finch	3	4
*American Kestrel	5	15	*American Goldfinch	160	15
***Gyr Falcon	1	0	*House Sparrow	262	15



## NATURE TIDBITS

**THE TABLES ARE TURNED** – Most naturalists believe that cats should be kept indoors because they kill so many birds. Earlier this month a Florida birder posted a story illustrating another reason cats should be kept indoors.

Our neighborhood is full of raptors. We have recorded birds like Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel and Broad-winged Hawk I named Kevin (after the bird from Up) who comes down here every winter. 2 days ago, a Red-shouldered Hawk caught a cat and he ate it. I named him “Killer.” This is the first time I have ever seen a hawk kill a cat and eat it.



**NESTING SEASON BEGINS** – On Dec, 28 retired Algonquin Park naturalist, Ron Tozer, reported the following:

*This week's extremely cold temperatures seemed at odds with evidence of breeding activity by White-winged Crossbills in the Park. A male was observed feeding a*

*female (“courtship feeding”) near the Old Airfield, and three or four males were singing along Spruce Bog Boardwalk, on December 24. Craig Benkman (in The Birds of North America, 1992) reported that this crossbill breeds during three main periods of the year which coincide with maximum availability of conifer seeds. In Algonquin, records indicate breeding in summer and fall (July to November), winter (January to March), and spring (March to June)*

**MOTHER DOING WELL** - Piping Plover 064, the mother of the 3 chicks born at Presqu'ile in 2016, has been spotted in Florida! A post on the Facebook page 'Florida Banded Bird Re-sightings' says she was found in Howard Park, north of St Pete/Clearwater, which is about 140 miles north of Ft Myers.

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## PLEASE SUPPORT THIS ONTARIO NATURE CAMPAIGN

If you are a member of Ontario Nature you should have received this note from Caroline Shultz, Executive Director. Please support the campaign to get the governments of Ontario and Canada to meet an international commitment to protect at least 17 percent of our lands and inland waters by 2020, in accordance with a target set under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

*Countries with less wilderness and greater population density have met the 17 percent target. With Ontario's vast wilderness and enormous freshwater holdings, we have a special obligation. We can do this.*

*Not only is it the right thing to do, the returns are significant. Studies suggest that, for every \$1 invested in conservation and parks agencies, Canadians get a \$6 economic return. Protected areas will safeguard our economic and ecological future – especially in northern and rural parts of the province.*

*A November 2017 poll found that 87 percent of Canadians support the UN goal of 17 percent protection by 2020. We know it's the right thing to do and it's within our grasp.*



**Photo by Ian Dickinson**

*Protected areas are the cornerstone of the diversity of life on Earth. [By signing the declaration](#), you will be part of a movement demanding governments meet their protected areas targets, and respect Indigenous responsibilities and rights.*

Follow this link for more information and to sign the declaration.

<https://protected-places.good.do/OntarioNature/declaration/>



## BIRDS USE THEIR BRAINS TO STAY WARM

By Terry Sprague

Originally published in the Tweed News  
January 11, 2012

Through the centuries birds have evolved some ingenious ways to keep from freezing to death in the winter months. We have all seen small birds like chickadees fluff their feathers, essentially almost doubling their overall size. The fluffing exercise creates air pockets that keep the birds warm. The more air spaces, the better the insulation.

Some birds even shiver as a short term adjustment to the cold. It increases heat production, converting muscular energy into heat for the short term, but that energy must be replaced soon. To maintain their high metabolic rate birds seek out foods high in energy, some birds filling their crop with food to be digested overnight, just as darkness is falling. Others become torpid, lowering their metabolic rates to conserve energy overnight, not unlike the hibernation of some mammals, different only in that it is short term, rather than the death like trance some mammals sink into for the winter.



Birds huddle, bury themselves in snow, seek shelter, or eat voraciously before retiring. All techniques that have evolved over hundreds of years of trial and error. They have it down to a fine art. Conserving what heat they have manufactured through eating, then holding it in, hoping it will take them through another day or night.

However, do birds possess the intelligence to recognize sources of artificial heat and take advantage of it when it is present? Birds roosting in the sun would seem to suggest they do recognize warmth from outside sources. We have probably seen starlings on a chimney seemingly soaking up the warmth that rises with the smoke. Some researchers believe though it is not the warmth the starlings are enjoying but rather utilizing the smoke as a tool to rid themselves of parasites, much the same way as some species employ “anting.” Smoke bathing, it is called. Another column sometime.

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Why they are sitting up there on the chimney may be open to argument, but other



observations would seem to indicate that birds do take advantage of situations that come their way. According to my files, one observer from Picton a few winters ago looked out her window early one morning before full light to see a mourning dove cozy up to rock in the middle of a heated bird bath. When this observation was mentioned in an Internet listserv

bird report that evening, a resident of Toronto e-mailed that he routinely sees this behaviour in mourning doves on winter mornings and evenings, sometimes with two or three birds at one time. Another Toronto resident reported that very often doves will sit on the edge of the bird bath with their rumps hanging over, or actually in the water.

Without trying to be coarse or funny, is it possible that birds enjoy the same sensual comfort as humans do when they invest in heated easy chairs and seat warmers for their vehicles? Does warming the behind provide more of a pleasurable experience than, say, warming the feet, or head or some other part of their anatomy?

Mourning doves might very well prove to be a good case study, as it wasn't too many decades ago that this species routinely migrated, and winter sightings were rare. It was only after corn growing in the province became more popular that winter sightings of mourning doves increased, now that there was a food source to hold them here. They still have not adapted to winter temperatures, as noted when some doves appear with frozen toes after periods of extreme temperatures. Perhaps they do appreciate warmth as we would in front of a volcanic wood stove. In Wisconsin, one observer witnessed two mourning doves in a heated bird bath that had gone dry. They weren't bathing for the water had evaporated - they were sleeping, presumably basking in the heat still being generated by the heater. So much for the derogatory term "bird brain."

Meanwhile back in Toronto, the fellow who e-mailed observed, "Whatever else lowering their rumps in the water may do for them, it does seem to relax and stimulate their digestive systems, leading to much more frequent cleaning of the birdbath!"

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## COMING EVENTS

**Thursday, January 25 – 7 pm – Black Bear Biology, Behaviour, Population and Trends in Ontario**, Colin Higgins, OMNRF presented by the Hastings Stewardship Council. Huntington Veterans Community Hall, Ivanhoe, 11379 Hwy 62. Entry \$5.

**Tuesday, January 30 – 7 pm – Prince Edward County Field Naturalists Members Night.** Members give short presentations of their choice. Bloomfield Town Hall.

**Sunday, February 4 – 7 pm – QFN Owl Prowl.** See page 2 for details.

**Thursday, February 15 – 7 pm – Ancient Forest Organization and the Plight of the Hemlocks**, Mike Henry, Ancient Forest Exploration and Research. Details as of Jan.25.

**Friday, February 16 to Monday February 19. Great Backyard Bird Count.** The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages birdwatchers of all ages. You can count for as little as 15 minutes on a single day. See the web site for details. <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

**Monday, February 26 - 7 pm. Of Roads and Wildlife.** Dr Ryan Danby, School of Environmental Studies, Queens University. QFN's February meeting. Don't forget to bring items for the Treasure Table.

*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.*

<p><b>President</b> George Thomson 613-478-3205</p>	<p><b>Past President</b> Wendy Turner</p>	<p><b>Vice-President</b> Phil Martin 613-922-1174</p>
<p><b>Recording Secretary</b> Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407</p>	<p><b>Corresponding Secretary</b> Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205</p>	
<p><b>Treasurer</b> Doug Newfield 613-477-3066</p>	<p><b>Publicity/Environmental Officer</b> Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070</p>	<p><b>Membership/Mailing</b> Karina Spence Unlisted</p>
<p><b>Outings/Newsletter</b> John Blaney 613-962-9337</p>	<p><b>Social Convener</b> Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337</p>	

Next Newsletter Deadline – February 10, 2018  
Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com)

