

The Quinte Naturalist

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

November



A November Sky Looms over the Frink Centre Marsh

Photo: Kyle Blaney

CLUB NEWS

Executive Committee Change

For the past several years Denice Wilkins has been one of our most energetic and effective members. She was the originator of the program to construct and distribute turtle nest protectors. She has advocated for and organized the planting of pollinator gardens and the installation of measures to prevent bird collisions with windows on private homes and public buildings. Since 2012 Denice has been our Environmental Officer, keeping us informed of local issues and Ontario Nature campaigns. In 2017 she added publicity to



I'm sure turtles are Denice's favourite animals. She is shown here with one of her turtle nest protectors which are also known as turtle ICUs or turtle incubation care units. Over the years she has constructed dozens which have been sold to provide funds for local organizations such as the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre and Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre. Photo by Connor Robinson appeared originally in QNet News, May 16, 2019.

her portfolio. Most recently Denice has been the Regional Director for Ontario East, representing the interests and concerns of 24 eastern Ontario nature clubs on the Executive Board of Ontario Nature.

Denice is taking a well-earned rest from her official duties. The good news is that she will continue to serve on the QFN Executive Committee as a member at large. No one person can be expected to take on all her former roles. We will need at least 2 people to take on responsibility for publicity and reporting on environmental concerns. Please consider assisting with these tasks.

Thank you, Denice, for your commitment to nature and Quinte Field Naturalists. You have been a major contributor to our club's growth and recognition as a voice for nature. Thank you also for agreeing to carry on as a board member at large. We need your experience and advice.

Advocacy

Thanks to Denice for compiling the information for this article.

Members of our board met with the newly acclaimed mayor of Tweed, Don Degenova, to discuss ideas to promote “Greening Tweed.”

Lori Borthwick organized the local Butt Blitz to raise public awareness of the pollutants in cigarette butts and to remove as many as possible from our environment.

On our behalf Elizabeth Churcher signed on to Ontario Nature campaigns and submitted letters as requested by Ontario Nature.

This year QFN members

have been very active

advocating for nature.

Please join these efforts in

whatever way you can.

Board members researched proposed development on land in the Tweed area designated “environmental protection” which preserves wetland habitat and species at risk. Elizabeth sent a letter to Tweed council urging the restriction of development on such sites.

Board members attended a meeting of Belleville Council where Elizabeth spoke in support of Mayor Mitch Panciuk’s proposal to allocate \$3.15 million to purchase 8.4 acres of Bay of Quinte shoreline habitat.



Joe Bartok photographed this autumn meadowhawk in Tweed on Nov.10. This dragonfly probably died when the temperature plunged below zero but it undoubtedly contributed its genes to eggs which will hatch next year.

Advocate for nature by contributing your sightings to iNaturalist. Your data strengthens efforts to protect species and their habitat. Kyle Blaney photographed this red fox) near Rice Lake recently.



Bill 23

Where to start with Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act? Do I just present the facts or do I say what I really think? Bill 23, the Act to Promote Urban Sprawl, (Oops. It didn't take long for the cat to get out of the bag.) amends 9 other provincial acts and adds one specifically applying to York and Durham Regions. Those two regions contain significant sections of the Greenbelt where large development companies have bought land. It's doubtful that these developers had intended to go into farming and will be upset that Highway 413 will be going through their properties.



To be fair it must be stated that the proposal adds more land to the Greenbelt than it subtracts. Whether this land is of equal ecological value and is not just land already protected remains to be seen. Unfortunately, at this point an image pops into my head. It's an image of little endangered species packing their belongings into little animal moving vans to go from the old section of the Greenbelt to the new. That's ridiculous, of course. They cannot move so easily, if at all. This paragraph began with "to be fair" so it will be concluded in a somewhat similar vein. As we learn more about the ecology of southern Ontario there may be appropriate reasons to change Greenbelt boundaries. Ecology, not money, needs to take precedence in making such changes.



Bill 23 is part of a totally pro-development, anti-environment battering ram which includes the proposed Highway 413 and the strong mayors policy. Changes in municipal governance are being proposed at the very time when municipalities are in the process of inaugurating councillors and mayors and thus losing much of their ability to comment meaningfully. Whether the bill would result in any significant increase in available housing is being hotly debated. Will any increase in housing even increase the stock of housing for lower income individuals and families.?

As you can tell I am not able to treat Bill 23 dispassionately. Elizabeth does manage to comment on the bill in more measured tones. A recent letter she sent to many of our elected representatives expressed QFN concerns, particularly in 3 areas. The following is a summary of her remarks:

One Loss of Conservation Authority Powers. Currently conservation authorities work to mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, and ensure healthy, wholesome recreation activities. Bill 23 would limit them to consider only flooding and hazards, reacting to natural disasters and hazards rather than engaging in watershed planning to reduce the impact of such disasters.

The permitting functions of Conservation Authorities would be limited to merely offering an opinion with the final decision being left to the municipal governments where development interests are much more influential.

When municipalities make the final decision regarding permits planning is done on the basis of municipal boundaries rather than watershed boundaries. The result is that each municipal government makes plans for its own section of a waterway. Conservation Authorities may express an opinion but there is no requirement for municipalities to heed it. The coordinating function of Conservation Authorities is lost.

Policy Changes that Impact Our Natural Surroundings. The proposed overhaul of Ontario's Wetland System would be highly detrimental. The "complexing" of wetlands currently allows adjacent and interconnected wetlands to be considered as a single entity. The result of disallowing this "complexing" is that each component would be considered separately and many would no longer be considered provincially significant despite the significance of the entire complex. The proposal also eliminates the endangered species criterion for declaring a wetland provincially significant meaning more wetlands will lose their status as provincially significant and likely their endangered species as well.



Allowing developers to destroy such natural features as woodlands and wetlands if they create superficially similar features elsewhere or pay a fee is an approach which has been tried elsewhere and failed. Wetlands and woodlands are where they are because conditions are right for them there.

Democracy Undermined. Bill 43 would remove the government's requirement to notify members of the public and organizations such as Quinte Field Naturalists about development plans. The provincial minister would also have the power to override municipal planning decisions and impose development.

Elizabeth's final paragraph in this letter is worth quoting in its entirety:

Quinte Field Naturalists deeply value the biodiversity and quality of life currently existing in the Quinte area. We enjoy many rivers, wetlands, woodlands and other ecosystems in our area, all sharing a wealth of life and resources. We trust that you will consider QFNs recommendations seriously and make decisions that will provide both housing and the continuance of a rich quality of life that is greatly enhanced by the resources of our natural surroundings.

Elizabeth's Recommendations

- Remove Schedule 2 of Bill 23 and changes to the Conservation Authorities Act that limit the ability of Municipalities to enter review and commenting agreements with CAs & those that delegate CA regulations to Municipalities.
- Maintain the wetland evaluation system that currently allows 'complexing' of wetlands.
- Avoid large scale use of wetland & woodland 'offsetting': rather preserve these ecosystems and benefit from the rich supply of resources they offer. Use already designated properties for inclusive, affordable housing.
- Respect and use the 2007 science-based Endangered Species Act to support biodiversity.
- Maintain and promote Green Development standards.
- Continue to use a collaborative decision-making model in which the people that would be most affected by development will have a voice and in which the flora & fauna will be represented and valued for the critical roles they play in the maintenance of a well-balanced web of life.

Other Activities This Year

- Partnered with a Home Hardware on a successful grant proposal to Trees Canada for the funds to plant 5-50mm Red Maple trees in a Belleville park.
- Partnering with the city of Belleville in a funding application for additional Stormwater LittaTraps designed to reduce land-based plastic pollution reaching the Bay of Quinte.
- Partnering with several organizations to work toward establishing a regional Junior Naturalist Club.
- Partnered with Quinte Conservation to remove illegal dump sites on one of their nature reserves.
- Volunteer crew built over 50 turtle nest protectors, most purchased by the Metis Nation of Ontario.
- Established a pollinator garden at Tweed Post Office.
- Partnering with the Heart of Hastings Hospice to establish a pollinator garden at their Hospice House in Madoc.
- Participated in Tweed Community Fair to promote QFN.
- Sponsored a student for the Ontario Nature Youth Summit.
- QFN members assisted the Friends of Sandbanks with a buckthorn removal project at West Point.
- Several QFN members take part in community science projects such as Project Feederwatch, eBird and iNaturalist.

The Tree-Planting Committee requires more members if it is to continue its work. Please contact John Lowry.



While at West Point to take part in the buckthorn removal project John Lowry contributed this image to iNaturalist. The butterfly is one of a group of species known as Holarctic Azures. Rick Cavin, a butterfly expert from Ottawa, was unable to identify the species because this individual is a little worn. Holarctic refers to North America north of Mexico.

Outings

Report Prepared by Catherine Baier



Owl Woods chickadees are always on the lookout for a handout. Photo: John Lowry

In March participants took the ferry to Amherst Island where they hiked into Owl Woods, fed the chickadees and then toured the island by car before having lunch in Bath.

In April we had a full day outing near Bancroft visiting McGeachie Conservation Area and then had lunch at a nearby restaurant before going to the Gut Conservation Area



A trail at Potter's Creek CA is paved for accessibility. Photo: Catherine Baier.

In May the outing was a full day event in Prince Edward County. First at Massassauga Point Conservation Area and then lunch in Picton before walking around Beaver Meadows Wildlife Management Area.

Also in May interested QFN members attended a bio blitz given by Quinte Conservation in the Cassidy Block.

In June there was an outing at Potters Creek Conservation Area where Robert Ormston gave a tour of QC's wetland restoration projects.

In September QFN members went on a hike along Little Mellon Lake to Haley Lake at Sheffield Conservation Area

The last outing for the year was held November 11th at O'Hara Homestead and Conservation Area. Participants walked the numerous trails and were provided with a wealth of information by O'Hara volunteer, Marc Forget, on the geology of The Land Between.



Photo: Catherine Baier



Photo: Catherine Baier

Volunteers have restored and maintained several buildings from the original homestead including a working sawmill. Volunteer Marc Forget gave an excellent guided tour.



A muskrat decided to keep an eye on the visitors. Photo: John Lowry



Project FeederWatch is well underway. We were particularly pleased to see this fox sparrow stop in for a couple of days on its way to the southeastern United States. Photo: Kyle Blaney



All hail the Bar-tailed Godwit!

From the Wild Discovery Facebook page.



This bird is a champion flyer and once again an individual has broken the world record for the longest continual flight. Recently a juvenile godwit, just 5 months old, landed in Ansons Bay in northeast Tasmania. It had been tagged in Alaska and departed there on October 13, 2022 before flying non-stop to Tasmania. Godwits are regular visitors to Tasmania so it's likely that many undertake a similar flight but it's the first time a tagged bird has flown between Alaska and Tasmania. This bird flew a minimum of 13,560 km in 11 days 1 hour, that's an average of over 51km continually for those 11 days. And don't forget there will be no eating, drinking or sleeping during that journey!

Simply unbelievable!

"EVER GREEN"

By George Thomson and Elizabeth Churcher

Reprinted with permission from the Tweed News, December 8, 2021

Taking a leisurely drive along a country road or wandering down a woodland trail at this time of year ultimately culminates in a conversation about the changes in the colours of our landscape. After the Summer blossoms have nodded their fond farewells and many fields have taken on a rusty hue, the shades of green still clothing a number of plants are constant reminders of the persistence of life throughout all seasons.

When we consider a colour that is representative of life on Earth, it is difficult to think of any other colour but green. Green is a hands-down winner! When a molecule called chlorophyll is highly concentrated in the cells of leaves, its presence is announced by the colour green. Chlorophyll is fundamental to life on our planet. Interestingly, it is the only molecule that can be detected from space, giving the green colour to vast parts of our 'home planet'.

Chlorophyll does far more for us, though, than offer beauty to our searching eyes. Chlorophyll is the molecule that enables the process of photosynthesis, the intricate series of chemical reactions that produce the sugar, glucose, from the raw materials of carbon dioxide & water, using the light energy from the Sun. Plants use glucose sugar to build all of the molecules of their bodies --- carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, DNA and many more. It matters not whether the plant is a tiny 1-celled algae or a giant forest tree, the photosynthetic process occurs within it, making plants the basis of all food chains on Earth. Without green plants, we would be very hungry! And, as a bonus, photosynthesis produces oxygen, the breath of life.

Just a few days ago, we pointed our car in a northwesterly direction and soon found ourselves on a trail in a beautiful forest near Marmora. The mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees bordering our pathway and extending their long arms out over our heads offered comfort and relaxation. They were reaching out to help restore us, to assist us in maintaining a balanced perspective after watching the sad details of British Columbia flooding, of pandemic numbers growing, of so many people & other forms of life suffering. Mother Nature is always present to fill us with hope!

When we entered the woodland on this sombre November day, our first glances seemed to be overpowered by the grays & blacks of rocks and the browns of tree trunks. Slowly, our focus changed and we began to see other colours. The light orange wash on leaves

still clothing the American Beech trees caught our eye. Then the greens captured our attention. Everywhere we looked, green prevailed! There were the dark green needles of the Canada Yews, growing in shrub form on the forest floor, and decorating the sides of our pathway, were the overhanging branches of Eastern Hemlock trees. We stopped to examine the smooth, shiny upper surface and the whitish undersides of the Hemlock's short needles. Next, we rubbed our fingers over the much longer, dark green needles of the Balsam Fir. Looking upwards, we saw the long, bunched needle clusters of the



Canada Yew. Photo: Lori Borthwick



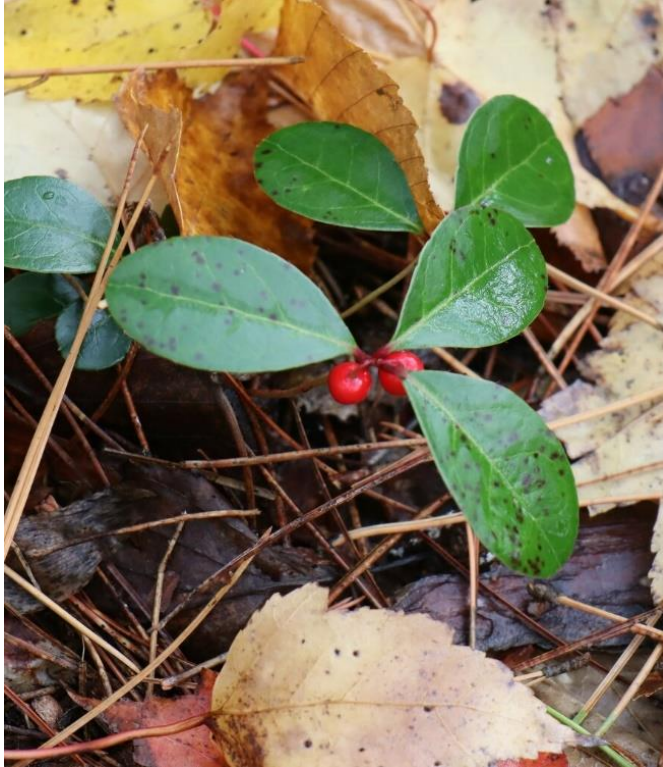
**Reindeer Lichen
Photo: Daniel J Butler**

towering White Pines and the bottle-brush-like needle arrangements of White Spruce. Bathing in the beauty and diversity of our natural world, we found deep peace.

As we stood, experiencing the wonders of the trees, the concept of an enchanted forest came to mind. Another glimpse only served to further enrich us. Many rocks and logs were covered in mosses, presenting a wide range of shades of green, from dark to vibrant emerald. Even the Reindeer Lichen, Cladonia, an early colonizer of bare rock, was pale green because of the one-celled algae growing in

partnership with the fungal filaments of the lichen's body. Moving onwards, led to more discoveries. At intervals along the way, we found colonies of Clubmoss which look like miniature coniferous trees. Clubmoss is not a true moss but a relative of ferns. And then there were the evergreen ferns, the Christmas fern, the Marginal Wood fern and the Rock Polypody (pictured). But there





Wintergreen. Photo: John Lowry

was still more green! Mingled among the fallen leaves were some true flowering plants, like little Wintergreen and Partridgeberry. Their waxy green leaves added to the wonderful display around us. Unable to resist temptation, Elizabeth reached down, picked a red Wintergreen berry and popped it into her mouth. While she savoured the oil of Wintergreen flavour, she recalled many occasions in her childhood when she had enjoyed this refreshing treat.

What will happen to these green messengers of life and hope as the Winter intensifies? Many of these plants will carry on some photosynthesis during more favourable days of Winter, not much maybe, but some. They are representatives of

different parts of the Plant Kingdom, from the algae of the lichens, to the mosses, to the ferns & club mosses, to the coniferous trees & shrubs, and to the flowering plants.



Shining Firmoss. Photo: John Lowry

Together, they stand firmly, reassuring us of the perseverance and tenacity of Nature. Their leaves are evergreen and they help to make the forest and our planet ever green. The green of their chlorophyll gives hope that in the springtime, much more green will clothe our landscapes as many more leaves appear, along with flowers of many colours. The forest and other habitats will revive, come to full life --- "Ever green".

Excerpts from a news release issued by Quinte Conservation in response to Bill 23

In an effort to build 1.5 million homes in Ontario over the next 10 years, the Provincial Government is proposing a series of changes to legislation under Bill 23. This will directly impact Conservation Authorities and their ability to provide science-based watershed advice for the purpose of protecting communities from environmental hazards and preserving vulnerable ecosystems and valuable public green spaces.

Brad McNevin, CAO says, “We want to do our part to help the government meet its housing goal, but the proposed changes outlined in Bill 23 would have many serious, negative impacts to our environment which would contribute to issues with water quality, public safety, increased taxes, and a higher demand for new infrastructure and maintenance.”

More information about Quinte Conservation is available at www.quinteconservation.ca.

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.

President Vacant	Past President George Thomson 613-478-3205	Vice-President Vacant
Recording Secretary Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337		Corresponding Secretary Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205
Treasurer Mike Shaw 613-967-1055	Publicity/Environmental Officer	Membership Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407
Newsletter John Blaney 613-962-9337		Outings Catherine and Bernd Baier 613-478-3319
Board members at Large		
Lori Borthwick	John Lowry	Robert Ormston Denise Wilkins