

# *The Quinte Naturalist*

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

## *Early Spring Review*



Two of the most popular citizen science projects in the world are eBird and iNaturalist. Millions of people all over the world keep records of their findings while at the same time contributing data for biological research. Every day, when you first open the websites, you are greeted with one of the best pictures in the records. This morning eBird presented this picture of a red-breasted nuthatch by a birder named Tom Devecsoni but it could just as easily have been a picture of an orange-breasted green-pigeon from Sri Lanka. There's no danger of any of my pictures appearing here. The only real requirement is that the subject of the picture is identifiable. Unless a bird is rare no picture is even required in eBird.

# CLUB NEWS

**Membership Dues.** Please renew your membership if you have not already done so. You may have received a phone call reminding you of the many things your club does. Below you will see more information about club activities which have continued during the restrictions resulting from Covid. You will be supporting all of these initiatives and more.

\$25 single, \$40 family. Etransfer to [gfnnature@gmail.com](mailto:gfnnature@gmail.com). In the message box please include your name, names of family members and your preferred email address.

You can also mail a cheque with the completed application form from page 14 to:

QFN Membership

Nancy Stevenson

341 Cannifton Rd. N.

POB 17

Cannifton, ON

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New members please complete the Membership Form on the last page of this newsletter and send it with a cheque to the above address or pay by etransfer and send the necessary information to Nancy Stevenson [nlsriver@gmail.com](mailto:nlsriver@gmail.com).



***Bald eagle numbers are growing in the Great Lakes area. Few nest in Quinte but it's no longer unusual to see one in winter. One appeared in front of the Wellness Centre on Cannifton Rd. a few times this winter. Andrea Kingsley photographed this one near the Glenora ferry dock.***

## Executive Meeting

The Executive Board held a Zoom meeting on Feb.17. Catherine Baier chaired the meeting. We discussed several topics.



*Brown creepers are unobtrusive little birds which can be hard to find even though some are with us year-round. They forage by spiraling up a tree probing for insects, spiders and their eggs. They build nests behind pieces of loose bark. Photo: Jason King*

**1. Annual General Meeting** -As we are not currently holding in-person meetings because of the fluid Covid situation and also going through some organizational changes the AGM is postponed until September.

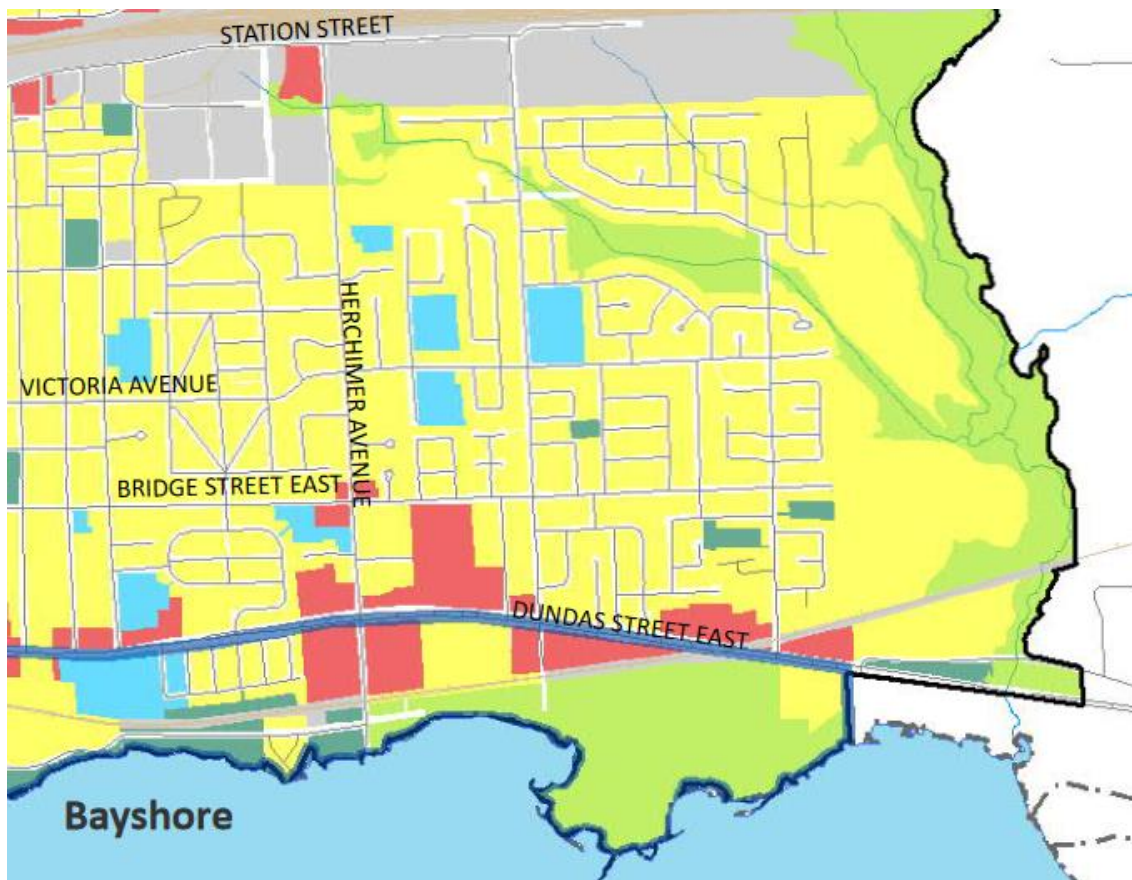
**2. Partners for Climate Protection Program –** As you may remember this is the network of over 400 Canadian municipalities who share the goal of fighting climate change and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Board members have been lobbying area municipalities to commit to these goals and take advantage of the resources which the program provides. In Belleville the council has approved participation in the Climate Protection Program. Prince Edward County council has decided to participate in the program. Congratulations to John Lowry for his lobbying efforts and to Elizabeth Churcher for the convincing letters she wrote.

**3. Tree Planting Initiative –** John Lowry is investigating the possibility of our partnering with Belleville in a tree-planting project. Funding assistance from Home Hardware may be available. This may be an autumn project.

**4 Nellie Lunn Park –** This park is a 100 acre, off-the-beaten-track wilderness area south of Coe Hill. In 1981 the owner gave the area to the township to be used for recreation purposes. Woolaston Township council is proposing to sell the property and put the funds toward the construction of a new fire hall. Many local residents calling themselves Friends of Nellie Lunn Park oppose the sale because the park provides trails for hikers and dog walkers with no vehicles. John Lowry has been lobbying the council in support of the Friends group. There is some indication that these efforts may be successful in saving the park. Keep your fingers crossed.

4. **Cassidy Block** – The Cassidy Block is a very large Conservation Authority property just southeast of Stoco Lake. QFN is partnering with Quinte Conservation in creating an inventory of species found there. There are a variety of habitats there including a small lake, other wetlands, a mature deciduous woodland and bits of alvar.
  
5. **Bell Creek Watershed** - The Bell Creek watershed east of Haig Road is shown in green on the right side of the map below from the city's new official plan. Much of the area shown in yellow near the end of Bridge Street is undergoing considerable residential development. It contains the mature woodland known as Hanley Park North which local residents wanted to see preserved. Trails in the area are used by dog walkers, hikers and cyclists.

There is reason for optimism. John Lowry has written an article explaining his enthusiasm for the woods and the reason for that optimism. John's photographic skills are evident in his pictures accompanying the article. You can read the article and view the wildflowers soon to bloom on Terry Sprague's website. Here's the link. <https://naturestuff.net/web/a-tale-of-hanley-park-north/>



# CITIZEN SCIENCE

**Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program – Volunteer Opportunity** - The Marsh Monitoring Program is actually two programs, one to monitor amphibians and one to monitor bird populations in local marshes. Like many people I have combined the two in the marsh I monitor at the Frink Centre.

I am ready to give up my route at the Frink Centre to spend more time on other projects, particularly the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (see next article).

The Amphibian Survey is very easy. You receive recordings and a guide to the calls of the 13 species of frogs and toads found in the Great Lakes basin to accustom you to what you may hear. Over the years I have heard only 7 species at the Frink marsh. There is an 8<sup>th</sup> species, wood frog, but it doesn't occur in the marsh so you don't count it. At each of the 3 Frink stations you listen for 3 minutes, record the species you hear and estimate at which of 3 levels of abundance they are calling.

For the Bird Survey you play a recording and listen for responses from the target birds: least bittern, sora, Virginia rail, pied-billed grebe and either common gallinule or American coot. You also record any other birds you may see or hear and recognize during the survey time.

If you are at all interested, let me know:  
sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com.

If you want I will help and even accompany you for the first trip or two. I love the Frink and do not want to see this important source of data abandoned.



*Virginia rails respond readily to the recording you play on your route. It's one species you are guaranteed to find at the Frink. They are extremely tolerant of your presence as you stand still on the boardwalk. I have even had one with young walk across my feet. Tom Wheatley photographed these two at the Frink Centre.*

**Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas 3 – Assistance Requested** – The atlas is a 5-



*We live on the northern edge of orchard oriole habitat so I was particularly pleased to find a pair probably nesting in my atlas square last year. I hope they return so that I can confirm nesting. James Kinderman took this photo in Wisconsin and posted it on eBird.*

year project (2021-2026) to document the breeding birds. The data collected allows biologists to develop a better understanding of bird life in Ontario and to track changes from the previous two atlases for the periods 1981-1986 and 2001-2006.

The province is divided into 10 by 10 kilometre squares. For such a massive effort volunteer participation is essential. Each square is assigned to a volunteer birder who records nesting evidence through the five years of the project.

The approximate boundaries of my square stretch from Rossmore to Foxboro to Wallbridge to the CN rail crossing on Aikens Road. Let me know about any probable nests I can check and record information using the required protocol. If the nests happen to be outside my square I will report your findings to the proper person. [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com).



*Pileated woodpecker is another species I'm looking for in my atlas square. Rick Beaudon found this fellow checking out a nesting cavity on Elmwood Dr. Unfortunately this is outside my square. QFN member Keith Gregoire is recording nesting data in east Belleville.*

If you would like more information about the atlas or to register as a volunteer go to the website <https://www.birdsontario.org/>

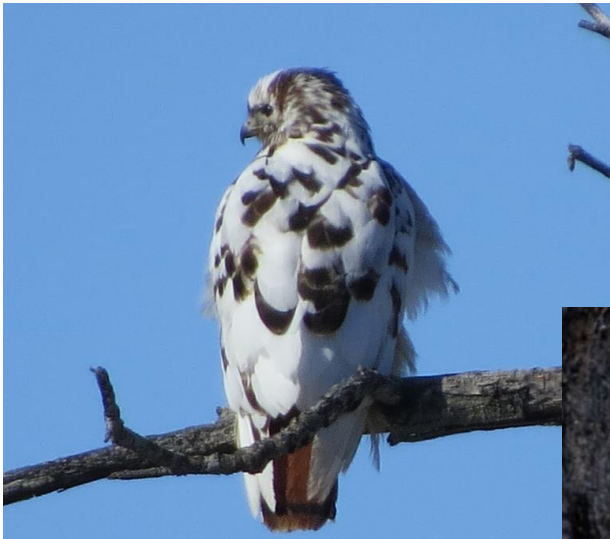


*Turn about is fair play. Rick found this song sparrow stretching it out in Potters Creek Conservation Area which is in my square.*

**Project Feederwatch and Avian Flu** – We've participated in this project for 20 years so migrants and neighbourhood birds check our yard as a matter of course. Local nesters such as downy woodpeckers, black-capped chickadees and white-breasted nuthatches appear on most lists. Winter visitors such as dark-eyed juncos assume there will be food here. Red-winged blackbirds and purple finches stop for a day or two on their way to their final destination. Your feeder clients may very well be different.

Feederwatch is an enjoyable citizen science project but we do need to be aware that our yards are part of a much larger ecosystem. An outbreak of Avian flu has spread into the area.. Poultry are particularly susceptible so large enclosed commercial operations and free range flocks are at risk. As of April 12 three flocks, one in Prince Edward County had been affected. The disease can spread to humans although this is fairly rare. People in close contact with birds or a highly contaminated environment are the most likely victims.

There is some debate among experts about the need to take down feeders. Although the disease has been detected among 34 species, particularly waterfowl, few of the affected species are likely to patronize your yard. As Feederwatch ends in April it is logical and wiser to stop feeding birds now. Let them disperse and reduce the threat.



*Tom Wheatly found this leucistic red-tailed hawk near Blessington last February. There is some debate over whether such colour abnormalities are genetic or the result of environmental factors.*

*Paul Jones posted this picture of a yellow-bellied sapsucker (below) on eBird. I should be able to find this species in my atlas square because nestlings call loudly and incessantly. The species plays an important ecological role because so many insects are attracted to the sap wells it creates on tree trunks.*



# **BUTT BLITZ**

## **- VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

This project Lori describes below is already well underway but you might still be able to help. For more information click on the link provided below or contact Lori. [lborthwick@sympatico.ca](mailto:lborthwick@sympatico.ca).



Lori sent this note about the Butt Blitz: *I have volunteered to lead the Belleville (and area) Cigarette butt blitz for the month of April. The idea is to pick up 5000 cigarette butts thru the month of April with a volunteer team and the butts are sent to Terracycle to be recycled. More information is here:*

<https://www.agreenerfuture.ca/the-butt-blitz>

*I think this is a good opportunity to highlight the issue, once again, of single use plastic litter, in addition many people are unaware that cigarette butts contain plastic and are one of the leading sources of microplastic pollution in waterways around the world. My hope is to increase awareness of the issue and also to gain some traction to have cigarette butts included in the federal ban on single use plastic. It seems much more likely to be able to get cigarette manufacturers to change their process to exclude plastic than to get every smoker to properly recycle their cigarette butts.*

Thank you, Lori, for taking this initiative.



***The yellow dandelion-like flowers growing on roadsides in early spring are coltsfoot. Leaves will not appear until later after the flowers have matured. Coltsfoot was introduced by European settlers because of its reputation as a cough suppressant. This use is discouraged now because of the danger of liver damage and some evidence that the plant may be carcinogenic.***

***In any event coltsfoot is evidence that spring has begun. Photo: John Lowry***



# OUTINGS

## THE QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS HAD FEEDING THE CHICKADEES WELL IN HAND AT OWL WOODS

Catherine Baier sent these pictures and report on a recent outing:

*We had 11 participants on the outing to Amherst Island. We were highly entertained by the friendly chick-a-dees. Sadly no owls were spotted but perhaps our equally friendly group was too chatty. We walked 3.74 km to and around Owl Woods and took a short road trip around the south shore of the island. Then we had a nice lunch in Bath before returning home. A fun day.*



**Special Earthday Outing** – Join QFN and the Friends of Bell Creek for a walk in Hanley Park North, an old-growth woodland right in the city. Easy walking but there may be wet places. See why this woodland is so special

Meet at the east end of Victoria Ave. past Haig Rd., on **Friday, April 22 at 4:00 p.m.**

# EARLY SPRING RAMBLE

By Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson

Reprinted with permission from the Tweed News, Apr. 19, 2017

The sun is shining brightly and the birds are singing in full chorus. It would be interesting to hear the words associated with their lively melodies. With warm light rays invigorating us on this April 10<sup>th</sup> morning, perhaps we can capture some of the true meanings and feelings of Spring as it permeates our surroundings. Yesterday, the temperature approached twenty degrees, radiating warmth and energy to all living things. We only



***Can anything in nature match the intense blue of a tree swallow in spring plumage?***

***Photo: Andrea Kingsley in iNaturalist.***

have to look around to witness daily changes. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, the Tree Swallows perched on the hydro wires along our lane caused us to cheer and the Bluebirds which had returned before that date, began to entertain us by collecting nesting materials from our lawn and gardens. Very early that same day, about 12:30 a.m., a Snipe serenaded us with its haunting territorial song. --- And we must not forget the cheery Phoebe who welcomed us to the new day with its familiar call. We were thrilled to discover that this gentle, little flycatcher has decided to take up householding on a strong log beam in the driveshed.

Today, as we looked outside, we noticed that the grass seemed greener than it was yesterday. With so many hints of change and renewal, it's time to go explore. We headed eastward down through the fields and into the valley where we stopped to enjoy the little creek that is bubbling vigorously through our property right now. Water from higher ground to the west is filling this tiny stream, at least temporarily, and providing moisture to sustain life. Our close scrutiny of the creek revealed no evidence of Marsh Marigolds yet --- but we'll return a little later. We know that it won't be long until this flower with its striking golden petals will decorate the marsh and stream. Marsh Marigolds, in the big Buttercup family, like to keep their feet moist so they grow in wet soils and in shallow standing water or gently flowing streams.

Leaving the marshy area, we walked along the field edge, all the time searching for the Eastern Meadowlark who was treating us to his rich music, “See-You-In-Summer”. Recognizing that he was singing from a higher point, we looked up and finally captured a glimpse of him in our binoculars. Taking a closer look, we saw him sitting on a small Butternut Tree and we paused to appreciate his beauty. His yellow breast reflecting the morning sun and highlighted with the black V chest marking is a fashion statement that would cause anyone to stop and take notice. The only possible words to describe the hue of the Meadowlark’s yellow breast is “Meadowlark yellow” --- it is a beautiful and unique variation of lemon yellow.

With great anticipation, we finally entered our woodlands. One of the reasons that we had decided to explore the forested area was to look for the first signs of Trout Lily leaves and flowers. In early Spring, these leaves and flowers come up from corms that grow on rhizomes which spread through the forest soil. We discovered that it’s just a little too



***George and Elizabeth call their farm Hepatica Hill.***

***Photo: Tony and Kathy DeGroot Photography***

early for the Trout Lily to have pushed through the dried leaves on the woodland floor but we continued our adventure, knowing that nature always has something in store for us. Mother Nature has never failed to capture our interest with one surprise after another!

As we ambled along, stepping over moss-covered rocks and walking around trees and saplings, an accent of white caught our eye. Down among the leaf litter, a single Hepatica flower, white in colour, bravely lifted up about 2 inches above the brown leaves. --- So Hepatica has won the race to be the first Spring ephemeral in flower in our little woods this year. Further on, we encountered a couple small clusters of flowers of this same member of the Buttercup family, only this time, washed in a delicate mauve hue. As we

looked down in admiration, movement in the leaf litter caught our eye. It was a medium-sized Garter Snake winding its way through the leaves, searching for an insect meal.

Scanning the hilltop with our binoculars, we discovered another Spring plant making its appearance on the forest floor. The sturdy green shoots of the Wild Leek, a member of the Onion family, were growing up through the leaf litter. Although it will not flower until summer, the leaves of this wildflower join the Hepatica almost every year in announcing that Spring has arrived in our woodland. Both of these plants as well as all of the early Spring ephemerals that will soon join us are taking advantage of the abundant sunlight reaching the woodland floor, as there are no leaves yet in the canopy.

As we stood, drinking in the beauty on the first hints of Spring on the forest floor, a largish dark butterfly attracted our attention. This butterfly, rich maroon with a yellow band on the trailing edges of the wings, was fluttering around the sunny side of the big American Beech trunk. When it landed, we were able to appreciate its beautiful dark maroon colour which contrasted nicely with the light gray bark of the Beech, giving an opportunity for a photo (pictured below). The Mourning Cloak, a member of the big Brushfoot family, is one of the few butterflies to overwinter in the adult stage, secreting itself in protective places, such as under loose bark of trees.



Time had passed so quickly and we needed to turn in the direction of our home. On the way, we encountered another Eastern Garter Snake, fresh from hibernating below the

frost line, deep in the crevices of limestone. He or she wasn't as nervous as the one we met earlier on our walk, so George was able to snap a close-up photo. Somewhere nearby in the background, a Northern Flicker was reminding us of his presence with his punctuated calls.

We left the woods by the lower gate and walked back into the fields, refreshed as we always are by an adventure in our Natural World. What we see and learn on such simple walks help us to develop a strong bond with Nature and build a solid foundation upon which we can continue to grow in our daily lives. These experiences offer an alternative, comforting perspective for dealing with the day's events. We need the Natural World much more than we can realize --- the Natural World is part of all of us and we are just as connected to it as are the Hepatica, the Beech Tree, the Mourning Cloak, the Meadowlark and the Garter Snake. The routine tasks of the afternoon, the interactions that we had with people, everything about that day, seemed so much more beautiful after we had immersed ourselves in Nature. ---And that evening, the first music of Spring Peepers calling from the pond offered a perfect complement to our "Early Spring Ramble".

***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.***

***Meetings have been temporarily cancelled for the duration of the Covid threat.***

|   |  |  |                                |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Past President</b><br>George Thomson<br>613-478-3205 | <b>Corresponding Secretary</b><br>Elizabeth Churcher<br>613-478-3205 | <b>Recording Secretary</b><br>Sharron Blaney<br>613-962-9337 |                                |
| <b>Treasurer</b><br>Mike Shaw<br>613-967-1055           | <b>Publicity/Environmental Office</b><br>Vacant                      | <b>Membership</b><br>Nancy Stevenson<br>613-779-9407         |                                |
| <b>Newsletter</b><br>John Blaney<br>613-962-9337        | <b>Outings</b><br>Catherine & Berndt Baier<br>613-962-9337           | <b>Social Convener</b><br>Vacant                             |                                |
| <b>Members-at-Large</b>                                 |  |  |                                |
| Lori Borthwick<br>613-391-9335                          | John Lowry<br>613-392-5232   | Robert Ormston<br>613-392-3679                               | Denice Wilkins<br>613-478-5070 |

Next Newsletter Deadline –May 15, 2022  
Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com)



## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address**

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**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**

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 cash or a cheque made out to the Quinte Field Naturalists at a monthly meeting or by mailing the cheque and form to:

Quinte Field Naturalists c/o Nancy Stevenson

341 Cannifton Rd. N.

POB 17

Cannifton, ON

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