



# The Quinte Naturalist

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

## JANUARY

### LIFE LESSONS FROM THE ARCTIC



*Quinte Field Naturalists*

*Lecture Series*



**Monday, January 28, 2019**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Sills Auditorium**

**Bridge Street United  
Church, Belleville**

*(corner of Bridge & Church Street)*



Illustrated with his superb photographs, Kyle Blaney will regale us with stories of adventure - camping from Belleville to Alaska, exploring the Bering Sea coast and sailing from Nunavut to Greenland.

*All welcome (donations appreciated) ..... Refreshments are served*

It's time to renew your membership so this issue is devoted to letting you know all the things the club does. Support your club so that we can continue to work for nature year round. Bring your checkbook.

Memberships (\$25 for a single, \$40 for a family) and tickets for the April Dinner (\$28)

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*The pictures in this issue show some of the species seen on the Christmas Bird Count.*

## • *January Is Membership Month!*

By Denice Wilkins

Please renew or start your QFN membership and help us support Nature in your neighborhood!!

Here's what memberships in QFN meant we could accomplish in 2018.

- \$2000.00 contribution to the Nature Conservancy towards the purchase of the Brighton Wetland, a 231 acre area with 2.5 km of undeveloped Lake Ontario shoreline.
- \$1000.00 contribution to the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy towards the purchase of the Hudgin-Rose property, a 76 acre area of alvar, grassland and wetland habitat in the PEC South Shore Important Bird Area.
- 7 meetings with educational programs presented by expert speakers on a variety of environmental and natural history topics.
- 7 informative QFN newsletters delivered to your in-box.
- Your name as a member gave weight to 10 letters sent to government regarding environmental issues such as climate change, neonicotinoid pesticides, the need to maintain the Environmental Commissioner, the ill-conceived idea of hunting Cormorants and many more.
- \$350 given to sponsor a student to attend Ontario Nature's Youth Summit designed to encourage future environmental leaders.



The female hooded merganser with her fashionable hairdo and her mate with his striking outfit make this small waterfowl one of my favourite species. They nest in cavities in trees, usually on the Canadian shield but also in Quinte. They eat mainly small fish, crayfish and aquatic insects. A small number often spend the winter in the river right in downtown Belleville. Photo by Ian Hearn on ebird.

- Bird Friendly Marking tape installed at the H.R. Frink Conservation Area and Outdoor Education Centre, in addition to an informative plaque explaining the purpose of the markers and encouraging homeowners to protect birds from window strikes at their homes.
- We also provide the seed for Frink Centre bird feeders and make sure that they are maintained.
- 25 Turtle ICUs (Incubation Care Units nest protectors) built for map turtle research by the Friends of Kingston Harbour.
- Work and research began to create a demonstration Butterfly Garden for Belleville.



***Somehow the American robin's orange breast appears much brighter in the snow. The number of robins that stay through the winter is determined by the food supply, almost completely made up of berries and other fruit. This winter CBC counters found only 3. The record is 1113 found in 2016. Photo by Jackson Rudkin on ebird.***

None of this would be possible without your support. Please renew your membership for 2019!! Nature needs you now more than ever!

### *Shifting Baseline Syndrome*

One of the greatest difficulties in understanding changing ecological conditions is what's known as shifting baseline syndrome. Lacking experience or knowledge of these ecological conditions, each generation accepts as normal the conditions in which they are living. A species may be declining but without data we are left discussing a series of incidental anecdotes which prove merely that our memories are fallible. We may believe that a wetland or woodlot is important but we need to know what forms of life live there so that we know if our efforts to preserve it have been successful.

One of the most important ways to remedy shifting baseline syndrome is citizen science. That's why QFN promotes citizen science and members mention it so often. QFN members participate in citizen science projects such as ebird, Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, Marsh Monitoring, Great Backyard Bird Count, Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, and many others. Try one. Accompany someone to see how a project works. Involve the children. Make nature a lifetime interest.

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## *Christmas Bird Count*



***Belleville CBC counters at work. Photo by Tina Sawicki***

By Tom Wheatley

The Belleville CBC was held on December 27 under partly sunny skies and negative temperatures with virtually no snow on the ground. Twenty-eight savvy participants tallied an above average 58 species including Northern Goshawk, 5 Barred Owls and 2 Peregrine Falcons, the latter species having returned to their winter perch on the new Belleville Courthouse. An above average total individual count of 8239 birds, of which 27% were introduced species (House Sparrow, Starling, Rock Pigeon and Mute Swan). Count week birds included Snowy Owl and Song Sparrow.

The compilation was held at a pizza joint where calories were inhaled and tall tales exhaled.

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Gull and Waterfowl numbers were down with the exception of Mallard 695 (avg. 386) and Canada Geese 2072 (avg. 1026) which took advantage of the remaining open water in the Moira River and the Bay of Quinte.

Additional notable lows may have been due to the locally poor crop of Cedar berries: Starling 742 (average 1440), Cedar Waxwing 116 (202), Myrtle Warbler 0 (3.5) and Robin 3 (295)

New record highs: Bald Eagle 4 (previous 3), Raven 16 (14), RWBL 45 (9), Cardinal 81 (62), WB nuthatch 130 (110), RB nuthatch 9 (5), Pine Siskin flock of 75 (8), Red-bellied Woodpecker 7 (6), Downy Woodpecker 74 (68), Hairy Woodpecker 35 (32), Bluebird 25 (17) and Pine Grosbeak 43 (tied 43).

Just outside the CBC Circle during Count Week, and not added to the totals, eBirders found Rough-legged Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Brown-headed Cowbird and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

A special thank you to John Blaney for organizing the Belleville CBC for so many years and assisting me with my first CBC as Compiler.



***Bald eagles have now occurred on the Belleville Christmas Bird Count for 6 consecutive years. Environmental laws such as those banning DDT do have a positive ecological effect. Photo by Kyle Blaney***



Tom also writes a blog every month for the Bay of Quinte tourism website. <https://bayofquinte.ca/tourism/>. Under #BOQ BLOG click on “The Great Outdoors.” In his January 15 blog titled “Birds to Look for in Quinte” Tom gives more information.

Of course while you’re at it don’t forget to check Terry Sprague’s website <http://naturestuff.net/site/> for a weekly update of bird sightings. Also under “Organizations” you will find a link to QFN and an archive of our past newsletters.

## *Correspondence*

Elizabeth Churcher has the formidable task of preparing advocacy letters to governments to remind them of their responsibility to develop and enforce policies protecting our air, water and natural heritage. She has been particularly busy in the past couple of months. As affiliates of Ontario Nature we support their campaigns and also comment on relevant local issues. Some recent examples follow. Even though the official comment period has ended individual letters to local representatives and the relevant government ministers can still be effective.

### **Protected Places**

During the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 Canada and many other nations agreed to protect at least 17 percent of lands and inland waters by 2020. In Ontario currently 11% is protected. Time is growing short. With Ontario Nature and all its affiliates we supported a letter to the governments of Ontario and Canada urging them to meet this commitment. The text of the letter with reasons for the need to achieve this goal can be found in our section of Terry Sprague's website under "Organizations" <http://naturestuff.net/site/> .

### **Independent Environmental Commissioner of Ontario**

In 1993 the Bob Rae government created the office of Environmental Commissioner as part of the Environmental Bill of Rights. The commissioner is chosen unanimously by the members of the legislative assembly. Reporting directly to the legislature the commissioner is not controlled by the government of the day. It is the job of the commissioner to report annually on the government's compliance with the Environmental Bill of rights. The government is not required to follow any suggestions but publicity gives them strength. Both Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments have found it necessary to explain themselves and even make some changes. Currently any two Ontario residents can ask that a government action be reviewed if it seems necessary to protect the environment.

... governments have found it necessary to explain themselves

The Ford government intends to eliminate the office of Environmental Commissioner and transfer much of the responsibility to the Auditor General. As a result the government would be left to analyse its own performance and immerse any critical findings in the murk of bureaucratic processes.

We have joined Ontario Nature and other organizations opposing and pointing out why such a change is undesirable.

### **Cormorant Hunt** (Maybe more of a rant than a report)

Whatever you may think about cormorants and the need for a cull it's hard to deny that the provincial government's proposal has all the characteristics of a bad joke.

First, the season for cormorant hunting is to extend from March 15 to December 31. Why bother with any closed season? You'll look a long time before you find a cormorant in Ontario between January 1 and March 14 anyway. The dates extend through the nesting season so nestlings will be left to starve. Hunters can not only kill cormorants they can torture the birds before they die.

...the characteristics of a bad joke

Each hunter is allowed to kill up to 50 cormorants a day with no possession limit. Why would anyone want to possess more than 50 dead cormorants or even 5 dead cormorants?

Cormorants are to be declared game birds. Other game birds are eaten. Unable to find any recipes for roast cormorant the geniuses who came up with this plan decided that hunters should be allowed to let dead cormorants spoil. There's a vague reference to requiring hunters to retrieve and "dispose" of the carcass. Looked at more closely even that vague proposal is suspect. Two hunters could set out in a boat to shoot up a cormorant colony. The average adult cormorant can weigh up to 2 kilograms. Those two hunters might wind up with almost 200 kilograms of dead cormorants. They just might need a bigger boat.

...we are seeing an old political trick

My suspicion is that we are seeing an old political trick. Propose something which goes far beyond what you really want to do. Ask for public comment. After the inevitable outraged reaction propose a "compromise" and claim that you have listened to the people. Of course the compromise is what you originally wanted to do.

We have to comment even if we are just being played as patsies. Ontario Nature, QFN and many other organizations submitted their opinions before the January 3 deadline. We await the compromise.

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## **Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act**

Let's end this review of just some of the correspondence Elizabeth had to prepare with some positive news. Ontario Nature says this on its website:

*The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced that the provincial government will be removing Schedule 10 from Bill 66. The schedule 10 "open-for-business" by-laws would have overridden protections for water, natural heritage and farmland in municipalities across Ontario.*

*This is a major victory for land, people, water and wildlife across the province. The government said that it removed Schedule 10 after it heard from you, the people of Ontario. Ontario Nature's members and supporters stood alongside community groups, municipal leaders, environmentalists, farmers and other citizens to make sure the government heard our voice. Together, we rallied and sent a loud and clear message that clean water and sustainable development are core values to Ontarians and are not negotiable. By removing Schedule 10, we didn't just save the drinking water, farmland and natural heritage of the Greenbelt and surrounding areas – we saved it in every municipality across Ontario.*



**Golden-crowned Kinglet.** A few of these energetic dynamos are found on most Christmas Bird Counts. Photo by Kyle Blaney.

**Common Redpoll.** This Arctic wanderer appears in large flocks in only some years. They're here this winter. Watch for them in fields and at your feeders. Photo by Tom Wheatley.





**QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION**

Prepared by: QFN Treasurer Doug Newfield

January 28, 2019

		Budget 2018		Actual 2018		Budget 2019
<b>Revenue</b>						
Annual Dinner	55	\$1,540.00	52	\$1,456.00	55	\$1,540.00
Baillie Birdathon		130.00		236.25		200.00
Coffee/ Tea Fund		150.00		120.75		150.00
Donations		250.00		390.85		250.00
Boston Pizza Fundraiser		0.00		676.82		325.00
Membership Fees-Family		600.00		760.00		600.00
Membership Fees-Single		700.00		1,025.00		900.00
Membership Fees-Organizations		0.00		50.00		50.00
Treasure Table		250.00		325.75		175.00
Turtle ICUs Sold		0.00		520.00		0.00
<b>Total Revenue:</b>		<b>\$3,620.00</b>		<b>\$5,561.42</b>		<b>\$4,190.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Annual Dinner		\$969.00		\$864.00		\$880.00
Bank Charges		36.00		(148.43)		(112.43)
Insurance (Liability and D&O)		590.00		578.88		590.00
Ontario Nature Membership		89.00		83.00		89.00
HPELT Membership		50.00		50.00		50.00
Hall Rental		400.00		400.00		400.00
Newsletter Duplicating		65.00		58.25		65.00
Trifold Duplicating		125.00		132.78		150.00
Postage & Envelopes		50.00		0.00		50.00
Recording Secretary Expense		0.00		24.13		30.00
Speaker's Honorarium		550.00		375.00		875.00
Speaker's Expense		0.00		56.84		n/a
Speaker's Organization Donations				550.00		300.00
Ontario Nature Youth Conference		0.00		350.00		350.00
Bird Saver Project		0.00		195.53		
NCC Land Purchases (Brighton Wetlands)		0.00		2,000.00		500.00
HPELT Donation (Hudgin-Rose Property)		0.00		1,000.00		
HR Frink Centre Bird Seed		200.00		212.26		250.00
Documentary Film Festival		50.00		50.00		50.00
Miscellaneous		800.00		34.21		300.00
Turtle ICU Expense		0.00		174.82		0.00
<b>Total Expenses:</b>		<b>\$3,974.00</b>		<b>\$7,041.27</b>		<b>\$4,816.57</b>
<b>Total Revenue minus Expenses:</b>		<b>(\$354.00)</b>		<b>(\$1,479.85)</b>		<b>(\$626.57)</b>
<b>2018 Speaker's Organization Donations:</b>						
CPAWS Wildlands League Donation		225.00				
HPELT Donation		225.00				
OFAH Donation		100.00				

## **QUINTE FIELD NATURALISTS ANNUAL FUND RAISING DINNER**

Fabulous Buffet Dinner with Vegetarian/Vegan Option

Including punch, rolls and choice of desserts; coffee and tea

Wednesday, April 10

Emmanuel United Church, Foxboro

Tickets: \$28 per person. On sale at the Monday, January 28 QFN meeting.



This is a delicious meal followed by a presentation from one of North America's most acclaimed science and nature writers, Wayne Grady. Drawing from his award-winning book, *The Great Lakes: The Natural History of a Changing Region*, Grady will present a snapshot of this vast region of contrasts - hub of industry, resting spot for billions of



migrating birds, home to 40 million residents and shoreline to immense untamed forests. Accompanied by stunning photographs, he will speak about what the Great Lakes are today, how they are being affected by climate change and what we must do in the future to preserve their natural beauty and importance. A book signing will follow.

*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.*

**President**

George Thomson  
613-478-3205

**Past President**

Wendy Turner

**Vice-President**

Vacant

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613-962-9337

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Sharron Blaney  
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Next Newsletter Deadline – February 15, 2019

Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com)

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