

The Quinte Naturalist

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

May



The Colours of Spring. Jason King records the changing seasons with his observations submitted to iNaturalist. Showing spring colours, clockwise from top left – red columbine, silvery blue, downy yellow violet, northern leopard frog.

CLUB NEWS

The Future of QFN and a Question for Members. At a Zoom executive meeting on May 3, we discussed a problem which has been with us for the past few years. George has been waiting for a considerable time to retire as president. We already have two vacancies on the executive (vice-president and social convenor).

One possibility would be to disband the QFN as was done with the Brighton club several years ago. Perhaps we could continue to operate without a president but that would require a significant change in how we operate. Numerous questions come to mind. Would advocacy letters carry as much weight? Who would be responsible to call and chair meetings and make sure that club activities are coordinated? How would members of the media and the public contact us to answer questions about the club and our policies? You can probably think of other concerns.

Please send your suggestions and comments to quintefn@gmail.com or the editor at sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com.

Successful Webinar. There's no doubt the joint webinar with the South Shore Joint Initiative featuring QFN member Kyle Blaney was a success. There were 99 computers signed in which means well over 100 people viewed the presentation. If you missed the event or would like to see it again it is available on the South Shore Joint Initiative Youtube channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHEkmyZrRjQleYWrT_LsswQ.



At the Waupoos Marina on May 23 Kyle Blaney watched this mink emerge from the lake with a rather substantial lunch.

Many Hands and Handouts Make QFN Turtle ICU Project a Huge Success!

Denice Wilkins

QFN's project to build and distribute turtle nest protectors, or ICUs (Incubation Care Units) as we like to call them, began in 2013. In the back of our minds, I think we all thought the project would come to an end in a few years, with everyone in the area who could and would protect turtle nests, having got one. The good news is that the public has become increasingly aware of the plight of turtles and more engaged than ever in protecting them. Thus, happily, demand for ICUs continues.

Over the years, the success of the ICU project is thanks to so very many volunteers and donors. Here are the numerous people and businesses whose support and generosity we are so grateful for this year alone.

Rashotte's Home Hardware Building Centre in Tweed have supported our project for the entire 8 years, donating 2 x 4s and often giving us discounts on the other materials required.

Madoc Home Hardware answered my call this year and donated hardware cloth, screws and staples for 50 IUCs!

With the tremendous increase in lumber costs due to the pandemic, I got a listing of local contractors and put out a call for scrap pieces of 2 x 4.

Brent Jones Contracting (brentscontracting@gmail.com) responded and is now dropping off pieces of 2 x 4 right to my house every week! Neil from **Barrett's Home Improvements** (barrettneil@ymail.com) also donated used wood from a tear down project that would have otherwise gone to the dump. In both cases, we are happy to be repurposing this wood for good!

In February, CJBQ 800 am journalist Mary Thomas, interviewed me for her program Newsmaker Sunday and I mentioned QFN's turtle nest protector project. In April I was delighted to get a call from Allan Morton who was inspired to make building nest protectors a project he could do with his grandchildren – Joe, Estelle, Presley and Ben. They made 8 units during Spring break and plan to do more this summer at the cottage!



Because the northern map turtle bares a fairly close resemblance to the painted turtle many people probably don't realize that it is a very common turtle on Belleville's waterfront. Map turtles can be identified by the serrated edge on the back of the plastron, the slight keel along the plastron and the yellow spot behind the eye. Thanks to the Toronto Zoo Adopt a Pond Species Guide for this image.



Ben and Presley (left photo) and Estelle and Joe (right photo) Hard at Work on Turtle ICUs.

QFN board members Catherine and Bernd Baier have taken on the big job of making and maintaining the major inventory of ICUs. To date they have made over 30 nest protectors and have wonderfully left their tools at the ready to make more whenever needed.

Finally, our greatest thanks go out to the most important people of all, those who care enough about turtles to protect the nests on their property and ensure the hope and promise of a new generation of hatchlings.

Since the beginning, QFN has been proud to donate all the proceeds from the sale of ICUs to help injured turtles at Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre and the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre. So far this year, we have donated \$300 in ICUs to Sandy Pines, as well as \$200 in cash to the OTCC for the construction of their new 10,000 square foot turtle hospital!

QFN's Turtle ICU project is a win, win, win – saving incubating turtle eggs, saving injured turtles and saving trees by repurposing wood scraps!

Please contact Denice at denicejohn@live.ca if you or anyone you know can protect turtles using a QFN Turtle ICU!

Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre - <https://sandypineswildlife.org/>

Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre - <https://ontarioturtle.ca/>

For identification of Ontario's native reptiles and amphibians
<https://ontarionature.org/programs/citizen-science/reptile-amphibian-atlas/species/>

Nature Outings from Catherine and Bernd Baier

Group outings are still uncertain but there are plenty of beautiful places to explore on your own. The following link provides a download guide to nearly 300 conservation areas in Ontario that are open to the public.

<https://ontarioconservationareas.ca>

The following link provides additional information including a map of conservation areas and nature videos.

<https://healthyhikes.ca>



Frink Centre Feeders

Ted Pordham organizes the QFN project to maintain the feeders at the Frink Centre. He sends the following message: *Thank you to Tom Wheatley and Marie Clarke for helping me keep the bird feeders filled at the Frink Center this past winter. We didn't seem to use as much seed this year for whatever reason. It's a good reason to get outside and do something enjoyable. And of course, thank you to **Thrasher's Garden Center** for the help with the cost of the feed.* (Thank you to Ted also for looking after this project.)



Trumpeter Swans at the Frink. Note the colour of the bill and the lack of the large knob seen on the top of the mute swan's bell. Photo by Robert Walker Ormston in eBird.



Common Eastern Bumble Bee, a very important pollinator species. You can find all manner of wildlife at the Frink. Photo by Jason King in iNaturalist.

SIGHTINGS

Send your sightings to either quintefn@gmail.com or sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com.

Don't forget to check Terry's website. <https://naturestuff.net>

Catherine and Bernd Baier have had a white-tailed deer hanging out near their barn with last year's offspring. They expect the yearling will soon be replaced by this year's fawn.

Gerry and Denise Doekes live in the woods north of Marmora so they are very aware of the changing seasons and the accompanying change in wildlife. Their first eastern whip-poor-will started calling in mid-May. Yellow billed cuckoo and yellow-throated vireo have also appeared. Both of these species can be difficult to find.



Yellow-throated vireo. Photo by Kyle Blaney on May 6, 2016 at Prince Edward Point and submitted to iNaturalist.



For the second consecutive year Peter Fuller has had an orchard oriole at his hummingbird feeder.



Eastern grey squirrel. Our yard seems to be a magnet for oddly coloured wildlife.



This isn't a local sighting but it's cuteness score gets it past the editor. Comment by Catherine Baier below.

"I couldn't resist sending this one that my daughter sent me from St. Lazare, Quebec. (As it is Mother's Day weekend) She watched a skunk move 7 babies over a span of 6 hours to a different home. Mother skunks, raccoons, squirrels etc. move their babies from their birthing home to larger quarters usually further away from people so the babies are safer when they become mobile. That will be one tired mother!"



Many people are concerned about the proposed subdivision in the area known as Hanley Park east of Haig Rd in the Bell Creek watershed. While touring the area one group found this blue grey tree frog. According to one expert about 1 in 30,000 frogs exhibit this trait. The animal has a condition known as axanthism, meaning it lacks the yellow pigment necessary to create green. While the frog is a curiosity its presence is more important as an indicator that Hanley Park is part of a functioning wetland ecology. Along with the large oak pictured in a previous edition of The Quinte Naturalist and observations of numerous other species Hanley Park is clearly far more valuable as natural park than as one more subdivision. Photo by Julie Roberts in the Belleville Intelligencer.

Every time I see a mute swan I am reminded of a song from the 1990s recorded by a Canadian rock band called The Northern Pikes. It contains the exceptionally appropriate line, “She ain’t pretty she just looks that way.” While nesting and raising a brood a mute swan is aggressive, driving out native species. A former park superintendent at Presqu’ile once told me that he blamed mute swans for the disappearance of black terns in the park marshes. A mature swan eats up to 4 kg of submerged plants daily. In its foraging it uproots entire plants, reducing food for other species. Over time they will significantly alter Quinte’s wetland ecosystems.

That’s why I was unhappy but not surprised to receive two significant reports of mute swans in the area. Norma Martin alerted me to the presence of almost 50 at the mouth of the Moira. They were probably younger non-breeders. Males, in particular, aren’t ready to breed until they are 3 or even 4. Cathy Lake reported a family near the Herchimer St. boat launch again this year.



Trumpeter and tundra swans are native species. The federal Environment and Natural Resources ministry has declared that mute swans are an invasive exotic species. Trumpeters have been reintroduced into southern Ontario and a few breed locally. Tundra swans nest in the high arctic but pass through Quinte during migration. Images are from the Environment and Natural Resources website.

NEWS



Last September former QFN member Melony Rocco and neighbours decided something needed to be done about the nondescript hillside at the end of Whitley Lane in Trenton. This year they did something. In cooperation with the city they planted a native species garden. In Facebook Melony explained.

I had a chat with our amazing public works department yesterday and the dirt we see is topsoil. The city repurposes and screens the soil from other work sites to save us taxpayers money. To compensate for the sandy component, we have a load of fertilizer and natural mulch coming on Monday.

All our plants are native species and grow wonderfully in sandy, dry conditions. Lower Trent Conservation consulted on the project and recommended the plants you will soon see.

🌻 If anyone happens to have plant markers kicking around, we could use them!

🌻 I have been assured that the footpath is planned for its upgrade for later this year as it is not up to safety code. When I have dates, I will share that information.

A big thank you to Mayor Jim Harrison, Director of Public Works, Chris Angelo, and Supervisor of Parks and Open Spaces, Keeley Biron, for their willingness to listen, spring into action and do all our heavy work. 😊

MEMBERS RECOMMEND

This section of the newsletter is a chance for QFN members to suggest events, TV shows, internet offerings of interest



ZOOM PRESENTATIONS NOW AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE

Dragonflies and Damselflies: Guardians of our Wetlands and Creeks

By Colin Jones, Ontario Provincial Zoologist at the Natural Heritage Information Centre.

This was an excellent zoom presentation hosted by Friends of the Salmon River on February 23rd.

It can still be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/HFj7rlezPSM>

Oliver the Dragonfly, a light hearted meeting with a dragonfly, filmed on Beaver Lake by Don & Julie Joyce

It can be viewed on YouTube at https://youtu.be/2viq5a_lcNQ

Books about dragonflies and damselflies recommended during the presentation by Colin Jones were:

“Damselflies of the Northeast” by Ed Lam

“The Dragonflies & Damselflies Algonquin Field Guide” by Colin D. Jones, Andrea Kingsley

The image above is from *Dragonfly and Damselfly Guide* on the Ontario Nature website. <https://onnaturemagazine.com/odonata-guide.html>

CITIZEN SCIENCE

John Lowry has been using iNaturalist to learn about local plants and compile a list of their locations for himself and other researchers. Here are some of his recent images.



Clockwise from top left: Meadow or Canada Anemone, Herb Robert, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Blue Flag, Philadelphia Fleabane in the centre



SOUTH SHORE IBA BIOBLITZ

JUNE 1 TO JUNE 30



WHAT IS A BIOBLITZ?

EXPERTS AND NATURE ENTHUSIASTS DOCUMENT AS MANY OF THE LIVING ORGANISMS AS POSSIBLE ON A PROPERTY DURING THE BIOBLITZ TIME PERIOD

WHERE?

MAPLECROSS COASTLINE RESERVE (NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA PROPERTY)

WHEN?

ANY DAY DURING JUNE 2021 (DAWN TO DUSK)

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

- REGISTER FOR THE DAY(S) YOU WANT TO VISIT THE PROPERTY.
- DOWNLOAD THE INFOPAK, DIRECTIONS AND MAPS
- EMAIL THE WAIVER TO PECFNINFO@GMAIL.COM
- VISIT THE PROPERTY AND MAKE YOUR OBSERVATIONS
- SEND IN YOUR OBSERVATION REPORT FORM BY JULY 10, 2021

REGISTER AT: BIOBLITZPEC.COM

Because of Covid-19 restrictions, we are unable to have a “typical” BioBlitz, as we have had in the past, conducted over a 24-hour period. But rather than cancel it, as we did last year, we are conducting the event in a somewhat different manner – as a personal bioblitz. We hope QFN members will participate and help us with our survey.

Instead of meeting as usual, with a welcome tent and registration table, meals, scheduled walks and gatherings to observe aquatic organisms or moths, this will instead be a more personal experience, in which you, as an individual, or with a few close friends or colleagues, always practising social distancing protocols, can investigate and document the different groups of organisms that you come across within the Reserve. The time frame will be from **June 1 to June 30**. You can choose the day, time and even if you would like to survey the property on more than one occasion, on your own or with others.

All participants should register on the bioblitz website (bioblitzpec.com) for the MapleCross Coastline Reserve property for insurance purposes, as well as a means of letting us know how many people are at the site at any particular time. There is also a waiver that needs to be acknowledged by sending to the PECFN email (pecfninfo@gmail.com). The information package you can download from the website will have a map of, and to, the area; suggestions as to what you will need to bring and what is available there; forms to be filled in and submitted with your observations. All the observations will be gathered and a report produced. It will be sent in electronic form to each participant who has registered and submitted data for the bioblitz.

Photos, rather than specimens, are the ideal method of identification on the bioblitz. With these techniques, participants don't have to be experts to help with the project but they can make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the site.

The idea of "spreading out" the bioblitz over 30 days, hopefully ensures that we don't have too many people at the site at the same time, since both NCC and PECN are very mindful of adhering to the province's protocol for outdoor gatherings. We'll look forward to resuming our 24-hour bioblitz next year!



You record your sightings in iNaturalist. It's easier than you think. iNaturalist is easy to learn. Just go to this website.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/getting+started>

If you have a problem just call or email me. If I can't answer your question, I know people who can.

Looking forward to our 2021 BioBlitz! We hope you'll register and help us survey this interesting NCC property.

On June 19 Cheryl Anderson from SSJI and PECFN will be leading a South Shore Stroll through the property. You must register for the event with SSJI. If registration is full, perhaps it would be a good idea, NOT to plan to visit during the stroll as parking may be a problem and we do want to curtail the possibility of large groups being unable to maintain social distancing.

“INDIGO BLUE”

By George Thomson and Elizabeth Churcher

Reprinted with permission from the Tweed News, May 31, 2017

Spring is saturated with newness and hope. All around us, Nature’s paint brush is at work, brightening our lives with colour. Our forests and fields are clothed in shades of green and our avian friends are modelling vibrant hues. A Blue Jay lands at the feeder, a Bluebird comes to rest on the clothesline pole and then a Tree Swallow lands on the roof of the bird house that he has chosen for his family. We are drawn to the variety of blue that gives each bird its distinctive appearance. Like many components of our surroundings, colours often defy description. A friend called from Tweed the other day -



-- she had seen a beautiful all-blue bird in her garden --- a male Indigo Bunting. In an attempt to describe its beauty, we turned to the pages of our dictionary to learn that indigo is defined as “deep violet blue”. To this definition, we would like to add “awe-inspiring”.

We all delight in seeing birds of different species, but there is something special about those we see less often and the Indigo Bunting is undoubtedly one of these treasures. Surprisingly, the Indigo Bunting is in the same family, the Cardinal family, as our Northern Cardinal and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The male Indigo Bunting is the only all-blue bird in this part of the world. The closest contender for all-blue colour is

the male Blue Grosbeak, also in the Cardinal family, whose breeding range gets just as far north as the mid-United States. All of these birds are placed in the Cardinal family on the basis of DNA analysis.

You are probably thinking at this moment that the common names of some of these birds brings confusion, and you are not alone. It is rather puzzling that the Indigo Bunting is in the Cardinal family while the Snow Bunting, who visits us in winter, is in the New World Sparrow family. The attractive Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a member of the Cardinal family

whom we are enjoying these days, is more closely related to the Indigo Bunting than to the Evening Grosbeak and Pine Grosbeak who are both in the Finch family. At any rate, the birds all know who they are and where they belong.

The male Indigo Bunting is indeed a beautiful deep violet blue all over, with the wings darker. The colouration of both male and female is structural, produced by the microstructure of the feathers. Some of the wavelengths of light are absorbed by these microstructures and some are reflected to our eyes and to the eyes of other creatures, including other indigo Buntings. In the case of the male Indigo Bunting, the only wavelengths that are reflected to our eyes are those which our brain interprets as the colour deep violet blue. There are no blue or violet pigments in the feathers! --- However, we don't really need the explanation of the interplay between the physics of light and the microstructure of the feathers to appreciate the beautiful colour of the male Indigo Bunting --- it's just there.

The Indigo Bunting is not a frequent guest at our feeders. If we see him once a year from our kitchen window, we feel very fortunate. Sometimes, we capture glimpses of him as we are travelling along the back roads, looking up to the hydro or telephone wires, especially if there are low shrubs under the wires. The nest may be in one of those shrubs. From that perspective, he appears to be a small, sparrow-like bird, black against the sky. Our identification is clinched if the bird moves to where the colour can be reflected to our eyes, or if the male sings his song. Only the male sings! His melody is a series of couplets, high-pitched, forceful and somewhat harsh. Each pair of notes is at a different pitch --- the second pair is harsher than the rest --- "swee-swee zreet zreet swee-swee zay-zay seert-seert".

The habitat of the Indigo Bunting is thick brush, thickets and shrubby fields, areas along the periphery of fields or woodland, typically described as edge habitat. Often there is water nearby. If you wish to attempt to see one of these charming birds, take a stroll or a brisk hike along the Eastern Canada Trail between Rapids Road and Tweed. Year after year, our friends return there to nest and raise their young. While the male may be the more colourful partner, the female selects the nest site and builds the little cup-shaped structure. Anywhere from 1 to 15 feet above the ground in shrubs, vines, brambles or brush, she weaves dried grass, moss, dead leaves, plant stems, shredded bark and snakeskin together and then lines the nest with rootlets, fine grass, feathers and hair. After creating the safe haven, she lays 2-4 pale bluish-white eggs and incubates them for 12-13 days. Both Mom and Dad assist in feeding the chicks a varied diet consisting of a wide range of insects and other invertebrates obtained from the ground or by gleaning

from foliage. They also enjoy fruit such as berries. The young fledge after 9-10 days and the parents usually mate again and raise a second brood while they are with us.

In the Autumn, after the breeding season, the male no longer needs to show off his fashionable coat: he molts to the basic plumage of brown with some blue on the wings, rump and tail. First-year males may be mottled olive-brown and blue or may resemble Autumn adult males, with the blue less intense. The adult female is brown, with a paler, possibly faintly streaked breast and maybe a hint of blue on the shoulder, wings, rump and tail.

As the days shorten and the Summer's warmth gives way to cool fall temperatures, it is time for the Indigo Buntings to leave us and fly south to their Winter home. When we wave good-bye, we know that they have a long and demanding flight to southern Florida, central Mexico, Panama, the Bahamas or the Greater Antilles and we wish them safe arrival to sunny skies. Throughout the Winter as large, soft snowflakes float to the ground here in Tweed, we can still close our eyes and dream of Spring and the return of our beautiful "Indigo Blue".

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
Recording Secretary Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337	Corresponding Secretary Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205	
Treasurer Mike Shaw 613-967-1055	Publicity/Environmental Officer Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070	Membership Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407
Newsletter John Blaney 613-962-9337	Outings Catherine and Bernd Baier 613-478-3319	Social Convener Vacant

Next Newsletter Deadline – June 15, 2020
Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com