



# The Quinte Naturalist

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

## JANUARY



*Photo by Kyle Blaney*

This Cape May warbler was the star of this year's Christmas Bird Count but he was only one of the six species that had never been found on any count day in the previous twelve years of official counts. See page 2 for complete CBC information.

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### **JANUARY 24. SPEAKER – PAMELA STAGG A WALK ON THE WET SIDE**

Noted artist, radio host of *The County, Naturally* and naturalist, Pamela Stagg will take us on a virtual hike to explore the benefits and inhabitants of our wetlands.

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## 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

It's a bit misleading to call this our thirteenth Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Quinte Field Naturalists have a long history and results for Belleville counts from 1969 to 1972 are available on the Audubon Society's CBC website. There were also many informal counts between 1972 and 2002 when we reinstated the official count. This is the thirteenth count in the current cycle.

Andy Tanas photographed this barred owl in the sector his group was covering. This was a particularly good year for owls as can be seen in the table below. They were also unusually cooperative. Barred owls are primarily nocturnal but are occasionally active in daylight. Several other owls called in the predawn darkness without any prompting from prerecorded sounds.



| 13 <sup>th</sup> Annual Belleville Christmas Bird Count – Dec. 27, 2014 |      |                         |     |                         |      |
|---|------|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------|------|
| Canada goose  | 3541 | Merlin                  | 3   | White-breasted Nuthatch | 110  |
| Mute swan   | 29   | **Peregrine falcon      | 1   | Brown Creeper           | 7    |
| Tundra swan   | 4    | Ring-billed gull        | 88  | Golden-crowned kinglet  | 7    |
| American black duck   | 20   | Herring gull            | 575 | American robin          | 46   |
| Mallard   | 449  | Iceland gull            | 3   | European starling       | 1162 |
| *Northern pintail   | cw   | Great black-backed gull | 21  | Cedar waxwing           | 14   |
| Greater scaup   | 21   | gull spp                | 187 | *Cape May warbler       | 1    |
| *Lesser scaup   | 1    | Rock pigeon             | 743 | American tree sparrow   | 70   |
| *White-winged scoter  | 12   | Mourning dove           | 360 | Song Sparrow            | 2    |
| Bufflehead  | 1    | Great horned owl        | 8   | Swamp sparrow           | 2    |
| Common goldeneye  | 292  | *Snowy owl              | 1   | White-throated sparrow  | 3    |
| Common merganser  | 160  | Barred owl              | 5   | Dark-eyed junco         | 250  |
| Red-breasted merganser  | 5    | Red-bellied woodpecker  | 2   | sparrow species         | 2    |
| duck species  | 40   | Downy woodpecker        | 68  | Snow bunting            | 6    |
| Ruffed grouse   | 3    | Hairy woodpecker        | 32  | Northern cardinal       | 28   |
| Wild turkey   | 68   | downy/hairy woodpecker  | 3   | Red-winged-blackbird    | 1    |
| Double-crested Cormorant  | 1    | Northern flicker        | 1   | House finch             | 14   |
| *Great blue heron   | 1    | Pileated woodpecker     | 12  | Common redpoll          | 5    |
| Bald eagle  | 3    | Northern shrike         | 1   | American goldfinch      | 131  |
| Northern harrier  | 3    | Blue jay                | 194 | House sparrow           | 201  |
| Sharp-shinned hawk  | 2    | American crow           | 120 |                         |      |
| Cooper's hawk   | 3    | Common raven            | 14  |                         |      |
| Red-tailed hawk   | 36   | Black-capped chickadee  | 636 |                         |      |
| American kestrel  | 1    | Red-breasted nuthatch   | 5   |                         |      |

cw- Species seen during the period either 3 days before or 3 days after count day but not seen on Dec. 27 (Count week)

\* New species on the count

\*\* Peregrine falcon seen in a previous year during count week but not on count day

In many ways this count was the most successful QFN count ever. We found a total of 63 species compared to a previous high of 56 in 2003. Of the species located 6 had not been found on any previous count and a further 11 species were seen in record numbers. Counters tallied 9490 birds. This number was exceeded only by the 12,767 found in 2011, another year when several species were present in record numbers.



White-winged scoters are large sea ducks weighing almost 50% more than mallards. They are unusual on a Belleville CBC because they winter on large expanses of open water rather than the small pools which would normally be the best available in our count circle in December.

It's not surprising that the majority of the species new to the count are reliant on open water. Mild temperatures in the days before December 27 meant that only the smallest and shallowest ponds were ice-covered. The snowy owl hanging out on an island in the bay was a nice find but not unexpected as it has been another snowy owl winter. The Cape May warbler is another story.

The warbler was not unexpected. This particular bird had been appearing daily at our feeders since November 22. True to form it visited on count day when my group stopped for lunch.

According to *Birds of the Kingston Region* migrants of this species are usually gone by the end of September with the latest bird seen recorded for November 27, 1983.

This species nests primarily in the boreal forest and winters in the West Indies and Caribbean coastal areas of Central America. It's a spruce budworm specialist in summer. In winter it relies on fruit and nectar. Everything we know about the species suggests that it shouldn't be here. Why did it decide to stay here? We'll never know but the decision was almost certainly fatal. The picture on page 1 was taken on December 31. That was the last time we saw it.

**The earth is not a mechanism but an organism, a being with its own life and its own reasons, where the support and sustenance of the human animal is incidental. If man in his newfound power and vanity persists in the attempt to remake the planet in his own image, he will succeed only in destroying himself—not the planet. The earth will survive our most ingenious folly.**

**Edward Abbey (1927-1989)**

## QFN NEWS



It's January so it's time to renew your membership. The fee is unchanged this year, \$25 for an individual membership and \$40 for a family. In addition to the meetings with interesting speakers, outings and the newsletter membership funds help pay for our educational activities. Check the budget included with this newsletter and the notes from the executive meetings to see where your money goes. Please also assist the treasurer and pay by cheque.

Marjorie Fisher reports that we now have 69 members plus one organization on our rolls.

**Welcome to new members Meloney Beens, Doreen Clark, Christine Forsyth, Ray Foster, Christine Sanchez, Eric and Lynn Sewell, Karina Spence and Paul Gagnier.**



The January meeting is our annual general meeting. The executive serve a two year term and this is not an election year so the main order of business is the budget.

### EXECUTIVE MEETING



Your executive met on January 19. The complete minutes will be posted in our section of Terry's website later but several decisions are worth mentioning.

We now have a Facebook page. It is very much a work in progress but we encourage members and friends to visit it for QFN information and to post pictures and comments about what they have seen in nature. Bernadette and John will work to improve its appearance and to make it an effective addition to Denice's work to advertise the club.

The Frink Centre bird checklist is available at club meetings, the Quinte Conservation office and the Frink Centre. Its location at the Frink Centre is difficult to find so we are working to ensure that it can be more easily found by visitors.

*(Club News continued on next page)*



Photo by Kyle Blaney  
Ironically it has taken thirteen years for a great blue heron, QFN's symbol, to appear on a Christmas Bird Count.

We will participate in the festivities on April 18 to celebrate Terry Sprague's retirement.

George and Elizabeth gave in-person input to the public meeting in Kingston regarding the reduction in the use of neonicotinoids to benefit pollinators. As could be expected the proposal is controversial. While a complete ban would help beekeepers it would have a serious, possibly detrimental effect on farmers growing corn and soybeans. Not all farmers are opposed to restrictions on neonicotinoid use but they are asking for help to change to more environmentally friendly practices.

*(Still more club news on the next page. We've been busy.)*

***The disappearance of plant and animal species without visible cause, despite efforts to protect them and the irruption of others as pests despite efforts to control them, must, in the absence of simpler explanations, be regarded as symptoms of sickness in the land organism. Both are occurring too frequently to be dismissed as normal evolutionary events.***

**Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) , A Sand County Almanac**

Denice has had 25 more turtle Incubation Care Units (ICUs) made. She will contact other local naturalist groups to expand outreach for this project.

Denice reported that only one film in this year's Docfest has a theme relevant to QFN's mandate. *Cowspiracy* claims that corporate agricultural interests are the main cause of environmental degradation and that environmental organizations don't want to tackle them because they want to maximize their donor base. The executive will investigate further before making a decision regarding sponsorship. The item has been included in this year's budget.

## TO THE RESCUE



For years Terry Sprague carefully saved and organized QFN newsletters and other records. He got tired of storing the boxes and passed them on to John Blaney. Sharron got tired of having them around and Marjorie Fisher saved the day and the tranquility of the Blaney household. She collected these records and others from former QFN executive member Ruth Weber and took them

to the Archives of Belleville and Hastings County in Caniffton.

Marjorie's record of items now in the archives includes newsletters going back to 1954 as well as minutes and scrapbooks from the same period and circulars and bulletins from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature) for the period 1947 to 1952. The archivist was very happy to receive information about such a long-lived community group. The records will be available for consultation after the archivist finishes cataloguing them.

As requested by the Archives Marjorie also wrote an overview of the QFN to accompany the records. That overview included the following paragraph about our origins:

*The Quinte Field Naturalists Club was founded on January 16, 1952. A local committee of the Ontario Field Naturalists from the Entomology Laboratory at Bleeker and Dundas Streets in Belleville met with the Belleville Brown Thrasher Nature Club to form the Quinte Field Naturalist Club. An executive was chosen and the public invited to join the club through an article in the local newspaper. Meetings were held the first Monday of each month, usually at the Entomology Laboratory.*



Northern Pintails nest world-wide in northern regions. There are occasional nesting records in the general area but we usually see the species only during migration. In any event it was a very nice addition to the count week list on the Christmas Bird Count.

## *The Naturalist's Calendar*

**Tuesday, Jan. 27 – Members' Night - Prince Edward County Field Naturalists  
7:00 Bloomfield Town Hall**

Everyone welcome.

**Thursday, Jan 29 - Michael Runtz – Beavers: The Most Powerful Animal in the World.**

Michael Runtz is one of Canada's most highly respected naturalists, nature photographers, and natural history authors. Professionally, Michael has worked as a naturalist in Canada's national and provincial parks, and has performed numerous biological surveys, including one on the rare Peregrine Falcon.

**\$5.00 HUNTINGDON VETERANS MEMORIAL HALL, 11379 HIGHWAY 62, IVANHOE  
7 P.M. - 9 P.M. COFFEE AND COOKIES PROVIDED**

**Thursday, Feb 12 - Tyler Wheeldon - Coyotes in Prince Edward County**

Tyler Wheeldon is a PhD candidate at Trent University. His presentation summarizes some preliminary findings from a 3-year coyote study conducted in Prince Edward County. This will include discussion of territory sizes, social organization, movements (includes animations), genetics, morphology, survival and reproduction. The presentation will attempt to address the issue of why coyote populations persist despite intensive harvest by humans.

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7 P.M. - 9 P.M. COFFEE AND COOKIES PROVIDED**

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### *QFN February Meeting*

**Monday, Feb. 23 –Ewa Bednarczuk – Natural Wonders of the Trent River Valley**

What are they? Where are they? Discover these areas off the beaten track with Ewa, the Ecology and Stewardship Specialist at the Lower Trent Conservation Authority. These are some of her favourite places and they soon will be yours too.

**Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church, 60 Bridge Street East.**

**7:00 Everyone Welcome**



The February meeting is Treasure Table Night. Bring those items you no longer have space for or edible treats so others can buy and enjoy them. Books, crafts, ornaments, etc. Please put price tags on your donations. Money raised provides the funds to maintain Quinte Field Naturalists and enable us to fulfill our mission of raising environmental awareness and helping others enjoy nature as much as we do.



### Reflections in Retirement on a Career in “Nature Stuff”

Terry Sprague, the pied piper of nature will be the speaker at our annual dinner on **Monday, April 27.**

Now semi-retired, Terry will look back on his career and share some of the stories and misadventures he has collected during his years on the trail.

Tickets will be on sale beginning at the January meeting. Seats will be limited so you'll need to get your tickets before we make them available to the general public.

\$25 per person, vegetarian option available.

*The Quinte Field Naturalists Association, an incorporated 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.*

**President**

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**Past President**

Wendy Turner

**Vice-President**

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Marjorie Fisher  
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613-962-9337

**Refreshments**

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Next Newsletter Deadline – February 10, 2015

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