



The Quinte Naturalist

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

November



On a day in January 1996 an estimated 15,000 white-winged scoters were found in the waters off the south shore of Prince Edward County. This total represents 1.5% of the global population and is one of the reasons why the south shore is recognized as an Important Bird Area.

Aging pipelines, wind turbines in Important Bird Areas, predatory pets, pesticides killing the very pollinators on which we depend. Reading this issue of *The Quinte Naturalist* might lead you to conclude that we just don't care about the environment. Across Ontario citizens are demonstrating to make the public and politicians aware of the hazards in the Line 9 pipeline proposal. The Prince Edward County Field Naturalists are taking the provincial government to court to try to force it to recognize the importance of IBAs. Kind people and the Quinte Humane Society are working to establish homes so that housecats are safe. Many people are circulating petitions to put pressure on governments to take better care of the environment. The picture is not all bleak.

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

Dr. Barry Frost
Wildlife Preservation Canada

Camouflage, Mimicry and Biomimicry

Monday, November 25, 2013 – 7:00 p.m.



Life Imitating Life! Queen's University professor, Dr. Barrie Frost, will illustrate how & why animals have evolved to exhibit these fascinating phenomena & how human engineers are copying them.

Don't forget the **Christmas Bird Count** on Friday, Dec. 27. If you want to participate and haven't told me already please contact me. If you live within the count circle (12 kilometres from Belleville City Hall) you can also be a feeder watcher. Please let me know if you are interested.

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

George Thomson
613-478-3205

Treasurer

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Outings/Newsletter

John Blaney - 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – October, 2013

Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

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LOCAL NEWS

Demonstration at Our MP's Office

by Penny Vance



Photo Courtesy Donna Fano

Six QFN members, George Thomson, Donna Fano, Elizabeth Churcher, Denice Wilkins, John Wilson and Penny Vance protesting proposed changes to Line 9 on Saturday, November, 16.

A group of six of us from Tweed, five being members of Quinte Field Naturalists, joined others protesting, in the main, the potential use of a 38 year old pipeline called Line 9 to transport Tar Sands bitumen which has been liquified with cancer causing chemicals such as benzene and toluene to allow it to flow. Environmental Defence in its write up about the material described it as "liquid sandpaper" and thus more liable to precipitate spills. The pipeline begins in Sarnia and goes to Montreal. It crosses streams and rivers emptying into Lake Ontario and goes along the St. Lawrence potentially menacing streams such as all the rivers in the GTA including the fragile Rouge River ecosystem soon to become a national park. Our local Moira is also crossed by Line 9. The

material is unlike crude in that it does not float but sinks to cover the bottoms of the waterways. I believe this would be much more difficult to clean up! I learned of the protests online from an organization called "Lead Now." Over thirty environmental organizations were involved and protests took place in 130 locations across Canada that day. We had about forty participating in front of Daryl Kramp's office in Belleville. Anyone interested in becoming involved is encouraged to write to their MP and/or MPP.

Follow-Up to Penny's Report

Line 9 crosses under the Moira River from just north of the Canniff Mills Estates subdivision on the west side of the Moira to just south of the intersection of Canniff Rd. N. and River Rd. on the east. It crosses the Trent River about halfway between the western ends of Johnston and Harrington Roads. The Salmon River crossing is just south of the Wyman Road bridge. If you would like more information it can be found on the Environmental Defence website <http://environmentaldefence.ca/enbridgestarsandspipelineplan> and the Enbridge website <http://www.enbridge.com/>. When writing to your MP use the address *House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6*. No stamp is necessary. Let me know if you want the address of your MPP. Each one is different but I have an easy source of information. (613-962-9337)

If you are getting tired of hearing about Ostrander Point imagine how Myrna Wood and Cheryl Anderson and their Committee must feel. Recently Myrna said, "This will be the second Christmas in a row taken up by a legal case forced on us by our governments' lack of protection of our Important Bird Area." Cheryl sent the update on the right last Monday.

MOE – Ministry of the Environment

ERT – Environmental Review Tribunal

APPEC – Alliance to Protect Prince Edward County)

For a link to a petition urging Premier Wynne to honour the decision of the Environmental Review Tribunal visit
www.saveostranderpoint.org

Ostrander Point Appeal Fund

by Cheryl Anderson

On December 20, 2012 the Ministry of the Environment approved Gilead's plan to install 9 Industrial Wind Turbines at Ostrander Point on the County's South Shore. Prince Edward County Field Naturalists appealed that approval to the Environmental Review Tribunal - and won. Both Gilead and the MOE have counter appealed the ERT ruling to the Divisional Court. The counter appeal must be based only on legal errors in the Tribunal decision.

Friday, November 15 was the deadline for both parties to submit their information. Now PECFN has one month to analyse what has been submitted and respond. PECFN has appealed the Tribunal error in not recognizing the harm the project will cause migrating birds. APPEC is also counter appealing the decision. And of course, PECFN has asked for costs to be assessed. True to form, Gilead has asked for costs to be assessed against PECFN. It is clear that both Gilead and the MOE are trying to force us into a situation where we cannot continue to fight due to the excessive legal expense.

In the meantime both the South Shore Conservancy and CanWEA (Canadian Wind Energy Association) have applied for and been granted intervener status in the Divisional Court hearing. January 21-24 are starting to look like very busy days.

The upshot of all this appealing and counter appealing is that it is costing a lot more money than was originally thought. Fortunately Eric Gillespie is patient and will wait for his payment. Also exceedingly fortunately, Myrna Wood is spending day after day at her computer analyzing documents and researching other Tribunal decisions to help Eric and Natalie Smith in their preparations for January.

PECFN has paid off the legal bills to the end of April and has started to make payments on the bills that go to August. Of course, more bills are piling up as we continue to work on Saving Ostrander Point. Our most recent fund raiser is [Winter Arrangements](#). These beautiful outdoor or indoor natural decorative arrangements are available to order from Sheena Kennedy. For more information go to: <http://www.saveostranderpoint.org/fundraiser-winter-arrangements/>

We continue to be grateful for the support of all the members of PECFN, all the donors from across the County and all the friends who are working hard to help us Save Ostrander Point.

QFN and the Prince Edward County South Shore IBA

Twelve members of the Quinte Field Naturalists joined Mike Burrell for a trip to the IBA. Because of Mike's expert eyes and ears the group found 43 species. Of these 43 species 19 were species of waterfowl. At one point Mike estimated that a flock of long-tailed ducks swirling like midges east of Timber Island contained 8,000 birds. It's flocks like this that qualify the south shore as an IBA.

Actually the flock of 8,000 ducks is a proverbial drop in the bucket compared to the numbers that will be feasting from the waterfowl pantry in the shallow waters along the south shore during the winter. There are strict criteria for an area to qualify as an IBA. The data required to meet these criteria are gathered and analyzed by several organizations. Birdlife International, a global alliance of non-governmental conservation organizations in 121 nations, oversees the program worldwide. Bird Studies Canada and Nature Canada are co-partners. In Ontario Mike, on behalf of BSC, is the new caretaker coordinator of the provincial network. Each IBA needs a local volunteer caretaker to watch over and protect it. Last year the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory became Ontario's first Important Bird Area Caretaker.



Photo by Kyle Blaney

Long-tailed duck

concentrations of long-tailed ducks. Counters found high counts of about 37,700 in both 1996 and 1997. That represents almost 2% of the world population. The record was set on April 17, 2000. Counters estimated that there were 150,000 long-tailed ducks in the waters of the IBA. That's 7.5% of the global population.

Birdlife International now calls IBAs Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas because preserving an IBA also preserves mammal, reptile, amphibian, insect and plant species. That is certainly the case for this IBA.

We were very fortunate to have Mike as our leader on this trip. He is moving to Kingston but there is a good chance that he may be able to lead a trip to the Napanee Plain IBA where loggerhead shrikes nest next year.

In 2001 the IBA was recognized because of the concentrations of three species of congregatory waterfowl which winter offshore. The number of white-winged scoters like the one pictured on the first page is nationally significant. Two other species occur in numbers which are globally significant. Counts are done by recognized experts with experience estimating bird numbers. Counts of greater scaup provide an average of about 10,000 birds with one memorable day in

January 1995 producing 39,000 birds, over 5% of the global population. Even these numbers are overshadowed by the

CATS: TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH

Several months ago a beautiful, fragile-looking smoky grey cat named Bella seemed to be dividing her time between our yard and our next door neighbour's yard. At least her name is Bella now. I have no idea what her name was originally or even if she had a name. Certainly it was obvious she did not have a home.

Because we encourage birds in our yard we try to discourage cats. Bella refused to be discouraged. My next thought was to catch Bella and take her to the Humane Society. She refused to be caught. A chance conversation with our next door neighbour seemed to provide a solution. She convinced me that the Humane Society shelter was not a good option. As an alternative she was feeding Bella in her garage and providing a bed in the hopes that our visitor could become a house cat. Eventually these efforts were successful and Bella actually became an affectionate house cat. Our visitor was christened Bella. She now had both a name and, at least, a temporary home.

The story doesn't end here. Our neighbour took Bella to be spayed, dewormed and given Advantage protection against fleas. The next problem was finding Bella a new home. Our neighbours already had three cats. This did not seem like a safe place to introduce a very small cat. We phoned a couple of friends who are cat lovers but they already had cats and were not anxious for another. An appeal on Facebook was equally unsuccessful.

If you saw an article about the Quinte Humane Society shelter in the *Intelligencer* last month you know that our neighbour was right. According to the article the shelter was already overrun with cats. Shelter staff were caring for over 300 cats many of which had to be kept elsewhere at temporary sites. Sometimes as many as 40 more cats a day might come in. While the shelter wouldn't have turned Bella away there really was no room for her.

We'll never know where Bella came from. Was she abandoned? Was she mistreated and ran away? Did her owner let her roam in the mistaken belief that cats must be allowed to roam? Why would anyone do any of these things to a family member? Outdoor cats live much shorter lives than indoor cats. Two or three cats have been killed by cars within sight of our house over the years. Outdoor cats may also be attacked by other cats, raccoons, foxes or coyotes. They contract fatal diseases, get lost, stolen, poisoned; they suffer during severe weather conditions.

Bella is representative of a significant problem for wildlife as well. This problem extends well beyond Quinte. Before she found her new home Bella may have existed on handouts or on neighbourhood chipmunks and probably birds as well. She is not unique.

During the past four years Environment Canada scientists have done extensive research to produce the first ever estimates of bird mortality from human-related sources. They published their eye-opening findings in an online journal called *Avian Conservation and Ecology*. Approximately 269 million birds die and 2 million nests are destroyed annually in Canada as a result of human-related causes. Human structures such as electricity lines, residential and commercial buildings and wind turbines are all scenes of fatal collisions. However by far the single largest human-related factor in bird deaths is cats. Feral and pet cats probably kill about

100 million birds per year in Canada. The researchers estimate that 40% of this total are killed by pet cats allowed outdoors and 60% are killed by feral cats. Bella narrowly escaped membership in this horde of unfortunate feral felines.

For Bella the story ends happily. Her temporary home has become a permanent home. She's a tough cat. She is learning to co-exist with her housemates. She's a smart cat. She recognizes a good thing. Recently she bolted out through an open door. Realizing her mistake she immediately bolted back in.



Bella at ease in her new home

Photo courtesy Shirley Rogers and Joe Salottolo



A NOTE FROM THE KINGSTON FIELD NATURALISTS

Ontario's bees are dying in massive numbers due to the pervasive use of neonicotinoid pesticides on our agricultural field crops. These chemicals leach into soils, groundwater and waterways, and can persist for years, killing not only bees, but other pollinators, aquatic insects, amphibians and birds.

Join Ontario's beekeepers and their agricultural, environmental and scientific partners in urging Premier Wynne to ban neonicotinoid pesticides in time for the 2014 planting season. See the online petition at <http://www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/save-ontario-s-bees-ban-the-use-of-neonicotinoid-pesticides>.

STUDY INTO MYSTERIOUS CROW DEATHS

Mel Humphrey sent in this report of the study. It may be apocryphal.

Researchers for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority found over 200 dead crows near greater Boston recently, and there was a concern that they may have died from Avian Flu.

A bird pathologist examined the remains of all the crows, and to everyone's relief confirmed the problem was definitely not Avian Flu.

The cause of death appeared to be vehicular impacts. However during the detailed analysis it was noted that varying colours of paints appeared on the birds' beaks and claws.

By analysing these paint residues it was determined that 98% had been killed by impact with trucks while only 2% were killed by an impact with a car.

MTA then hired an ornithological behaviourist to determine if there was a cause for the disproportionate percentages of truck kills versus car kills.

The ornithological behaviourist very quickly concluded the cause.

When crows eat road kill they always have a lookout crow in a nearby tree to warn of impending danger.

They discovered that while all the lookout crows could shout "Cah," not a single one could shout "Truck."



KFN members found an American white pelican like the one on the left last Monday. It was near the mouth of the Napanee River between Napanee and Deseronto. According to *Birds of the Kingston Region* the species is an occasional wanderer from the west. The sighting is a reminder that it's always worth checking any large white bird carefully just in case it's not one of the three swan species which occur locally.

Photo by Frank Kirby