



The Quinte Naturalist

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

APRIL



We can enjoy the brilliant colours of the wood duck, the courting dance of the sandhill crane and the haunting song of the hermit thrush because of a law passed in 1917. That year the Canadian government passed the Migratory Birds Convention Act. The act



contained provisions to protect migratory birds and their eggs and nests. In the previous year the US and Canada had negotiated the Migratory Birds Convention. Our law and the 1918 American Migratory Birds Treaty Act put this agreement into force.

Since 1917 there have been many laws and regulations in both nations expanding on species and situations not covered in the original act. Many responsible corporations and small businesses now take measures to mitigate the effects of their activities on birds. Some work closely with conservation organizations to develop effective means of protecting birds.

Certainly our laws for bird protection are far from perfect both in their provisions and their enforcement. They are not completely toothless however. In 2010 Syncrude was fined \$3 million when 1600 ducks died after landing in one of their tailings ponds in Alberta's tar sands. In 2015 a New Brunswick company was fined \$750,000 when 7500 birds died after flying into a burning flare at their gas facility.



Oil-covered duck from the Syncrude tailings pond.

These prosecutions provide a strong contrast with the approach which the Trump administration has taken. The US Environmental Protection Agency will no longer prosecute such "incidental" bird deaths. Only purposeful killings such as shooting a whooping crane would be prosecuted. When the law is interpreted in this way BP would not have been held liable for the deaths

of close to a million birds after the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

With protection of birds weakened to this extent in the United States it is doubly important that we get it right in Canada.



Weather delayed banding at the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory this year but it will soon look like this. Please be generous in your support of the observatory through the Birdathon. It is not financed by any government and except for the bander is run by volunteers. It is one of 27 banding stations gathering data about Canadian migratory birds.

Go Birding in May and Support QFN



You are sure to see a few black-throated green warblers during the Birdathon. Photo by Ian Dickinson

Join us for the 2018 Great Canadian Birdathon. Choose any day in May, get some sponsors and go birding and support bird conservation and QFN. Funds raised are split among QFN, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and Bird Studies Canada.

1. To register as an individual go to:

www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon/ (select Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory as the organization to which some of the funds will be directed –

PEPtBO shares these funds with QFN).

2. Or join one of the teams ('Taking Terns' will be birding in the Quinte area) – the team will organize a route and help you register:

Contact Peter Fuller (petefullz@gmail.com or 613-968-4643) and he will connect you with one of the teams that fits when you're available.

If you can't join us for the Birdathon please consider sponsoring us (donations receive a tax receipt): Click one of the following links:



American Redstart. Another likely sighting. Photo by Tony deGroot

Peter Fuller and 'Taking Terns' team: <https://www.canadahelps.org/me/6xGAZfv>

Tom Wheatley's team: Tom's birdathon will be on May 13 from 5 am until noon. Contact Tom at wheatleytom@hotmail.com, or Peter for details. To sponsor Tom go to <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-anada/p2p/birdathon/page/tom-m-wheatley/>

Early Spring in the Land Between

Date: Saturday April 28, 2018. See next page for meeting place and time.

Alert: It will be on the leading edge of “black fly season” so don’t forget to bring repellents, head nets, etc)

Easy hike on narrow cottage gravel roads, total of approx. 7km divided into 2 parts if you do not wish to hike the entire distance. Vehicular traffic is minimal, as it is not really cottage season yet, for a lot of cottage owners. (but please, always make yourself aware of vehicles anyway)



Common loons love the many small lakes found in the Land Between. Photo by Kyle Blaney



Red-shouldered hawks frequently nest in the Land Between in Hastings County.

From the parking area, we will complete a return hike of 3km. stopping at a viewing area of the lakes, to check for water birds (ducks, herons , loons, etc), then on to check a marsh, to check for rails, ducks, listen for and identify bird calls. We will be alert for the calls of Merlin, and Red- shouldered hawk (known to nest in the area) Then back to the parking area.

From there, we hike Buttermilk Lane, looking for birds, all the way to another marsh and check for water birds, listen for and identify bird calls, identify frog calls, be alert for mink, muskrat, beaver, river otter.

Some raptors will still be in migration, we will be on alert for that as well.

Don’t forget to bring your spotting scopes and binoculars.

Note, no washroom facilities available on site.

CLUB NEWS

APRIL OUTING – Early Spring in the Land Between – Join Gerry Doekes to explore his corner of this important but little-known ecotone (See page 7). On Saturday, April 28 meet in the Lowe’s parking lot at 8 am or the Valumart parking lot in Marmora at 8:45. From there we will drive a little north of Marmora to the site. We will finish about noon.

Note: Because spring is late this year we may have to change this outing. Watch your email for more information closer to the date.



Watch for Dutchman’s breeches in the woods beside the road as you travel to the PEPtBO banding station. Photo by Kyle Blaney

OWLING UPDATE – It turned out to be third time is the charm rather than 3 strikes and you’re out. On the evening of April 8 the owls were spectacularly cooperative. In just 5 stops we got responses from and actually saw all 3 of the species which regularly nest in Quinte. A pair of barred owls, a pair of great horned owls and an eastern screech-owl all made an appearance. We were unsuccessful in relocating the northern saw-whet owl found on the earlier scouting trip but very happy with what we did find.

More Club News on next page

MAY OUTINGS – Traditionally a Birdathon is our May outing. This year you can choose from several. May is one of the best months for birding in our area (100+ species in one day are not unusual). Register as an individual or join one of the great teams. Any skill level is welcome and there are great prizes! **Contact Peter Fuller** (petefullz@gmail.com or 613-968-4643) and he will connect you with one of the teams that fits when you’re available. See page 3 for more information.



Blue phlox lines the road as you get closer to the banding station. It grows in shade to semi-shade and is a good addition to a wildflower garden. It’s attractive to long-tongued pollinators such as butterflies. Photo posted in iNaturalist by Jason King



A CENTURY OF INTEREST IN NATURE – Those of you who have been club members for several years will remember **Marion Fisher**. Recently we received word that she had celebrated her 100th birthday. According to our current membership list Marion became a QFN member in 1962 but I suspect that she had been a member well before then through some lean membership years. Currently Marion lives in a retirement residence in Ottawa but she remains interested in the club and enjoys the newsletter. Happy Birthday, Marion.



A YOUNGER NATURALIST – You met William Tomlinson at our March meeting. He is the grade 6 student from Queen Elizabeth School who brought his science fair project and explained it to us. A winner at his own school William advanced to the Quinte Regional Science Fair at Loyalist College on April where he continued his success.

William's awards included best in grade 6, best in the junior division at the fair and the Albert College Grade 6 Life Sciences award. Of course, at each of the presentations the audience was entertained by his imaginative title for his study of parasitoids, *The Evil Geniuses are Coming, and They Aren't Human*.



ENCOURAGING YOUNG NATURALISTS – Last month's newsletter asked members to encourage secondary school students with an interest in nature to apply to Ontario Nature's **Youth Summit**. As sponsors we pay all student fees for a local student attending this weekend experience except travel expenses. We require anyone applying for this bursary to submit an essay of about 300 words introducing themselves and explaining their interest in

nature. Two students are considering registration but have not made a final decision. We are still inviting applications. See this website for information about the Youth Summit.

<https://ontarionature.org/events/youth-summit/>.

WHAT IS THE LAND BETWEEN?

From The Land Between Website: <https://www.thelandbetween.ca/>

When traveling in Ontario, you will encounter large ecosystems such as the St. Lawrence Lowlands, the Canadian Shield, and the Boreal Forest. But what lies between these areas? At the edge of an ecosystem is what ecologists call an “ecotone”: an area of transition containing elements from the ecosystems it borders, but having features that are entirely unique.



The Land Between is an ecotone – a region between the Shield and Lowlands stretching across south-central Ontario from Georgian Bay to the Frontenac Arch. It runs parallel to, but just north of Highway #7. This landscape is less rugged than the near-north, but not as flat and arable as the south.

Look further and see the landscape undulating in patterns of low to high and wet to dry. It has an abundance of glittering small lakes, rivers, and wetlands between open granite ridges and limestone plains, few roads, small dispersed communities, and scattered farm lands between shaded woods.

This landscape has the highest percentage of shorelines, the only rock barrens in the province, large populations of reptiles, overlapping species ranges. What you are seeing is The Land Between! Rare alvars and savannahs, fens and meadow marshes are found here.

It is a meeting ground and at the northern limit for many species such as White Oak, Woodchuck, Chorus Frog and the Common Crow. At the same time, it is the southern limit for other species such as Grey Wolf, Moose, River Otter, American Raven, and the Common Loon. Unique species mainly associated with The Land Between include Five-lined Skink, Ontario's only lizard, Golden Winged Warbler, Whip-poor-will, and majority populations of rare turtles, reptiles and amphibians.



Golden-winged warblers are likely to stop at Prince Edward Point on their way to The Land Between.

The resources and diversity of the region provide key services and shelter today that may be vital in the future. However, the limited soils, with abundant shores, and starker climate make the region extremely sensitive and disturbance here is far-reaching and long-lasting.

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 Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407		Corresponding Secretary Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205
Treasurer Doug Newfield 613-477-3066	Publicity/Environmental Officer Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070	Membership/Mailing Jessica Spooner 705-875-4643
Outings/Newsletter John Blaney 613-962-9337		Social Convener Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – September 15, 2018
Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com