



# The Quinte Naturalist

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

## **FEBRUARY**



*A pair of common redpolls at Elizabeth and George's feeder*

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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. Do you know where the “Amazon of the Trent” is?

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

**7:00 Everyone Welcome**

## Feathered Feeder Friends

By George Thomson & Elizabeth Churcher

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In early February, the daylight is getting noticeably longer and the sun is setting in the west a little later. Daylight has been increasing two to three minutes per day since December 21<sup>st</sup>, the Winter Solstice and the first official day of Winter. With persistent cold temperatures and more light, the supply of food at our bird feeders is disappearing more and more rapidly.

Project FeederWatch, our major citizen science survey at this time of year, will be our focus. According to the calendar definition of winter, this season of chilling temperatures and a covering of ice and snow is officially only six weeks old but the actual day to day weather can belie the calendar dates. Winter bird visitors arrive and depart according to food availability in places often hundreds of kilometers north of our area. In turn, food availability is often dependent on weather conditions in the previous growing season, especially as we think of the seed and fruit crops set by plants.

Project FeederWatch involves recording the maximum number of birds of each species seen at our feeders at any one time in a two consecutive day period every week from November to the first of April. Maximum and minimum temperatures for the two days are noted, precipitation is logged and snow depths and conditions --- crusty, icy, patchy --- are documented. All of these details help to explain the number of feathered guests that we can enjoy from our kitchen window.

A review of the data that we have collected at our feeders during Project FeederWatch from 2008 to 2014 inclusive reveals some very interesting information about the variety and number of species that benefit from our supplemental feeder food supply. The birds can be categorized as regularly occurring or irruptive species. Irruptive species are those that appear sporadically, according to the reliability of the food supply wherever they happen to be. Such species are Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, Cedar & Bohemian Waxwings, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak and Snow Bunting. More regularly occurring species are Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinal, European Starling, House Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Red & White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy & Hairy Woodpeckers and Wild Turkey.

The most prominent irruptive species among the birds that are congregating at our feeders this year is the Common Redpoll, a member of the family Fringillidae which

includes Finches and Hawaiian Honeycreepers. This small seed-eating bird which sports a dark bib, pink breast with brownish stripes and beautiful rich, red cap surprises us with its arrival each year.

In 2008-09, we waited patiently until January to catch a glimpse of them and then they graced us with their presence for three months. The following year, we searched daily with great anticipation for these fascinating little birds but to our disappointment, they did not come. Our consolation was that there must have been an abundant supply of seed elsewhere to meet their needs. You can well imagine what an exciting day it was in mid-January, 2011 when we caught our first glimpse of Redpolls after their twenty-two month hiatus from our



*Photo by Kyle Blaney*

*Unlike redpolls the red-breasted nuthatch is a regular winter visitor. Although the calls our two nuthatch species can be confusing. The all red breasted and white eyeline make it easy to distinguish this species from its white-breasted cousin.. It prefers coniferous trees while the white-breasted nuthatch is found in deciduous woods.*

feeders. Their presence for over three months in 2011 reassured us that they had not forgotten our hospitality, but the following year was again met with disappointment. Only on one day, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012 did they stop to say, "Hello". In the 2012-13 season, we celebrated the coming of Redpolls in November and they were a source of joy for almost six months, not leaving until April's sunshine eventually lured them northward.

This year, one of our great Christmas gifts was the appearance of a flock of about fifty of these feathered friends who continue to entertain us daily. From the information just discussed, you have probably concluded that our Common Redpoll is predictably an unpredictable winter visitor, a classic irruptive species. How long they will stay, we do not know but we enjoy their presence each day they choose to be with us. When they leave us, they will travel northward to their breeding ground, the tundra regions, where they live in low shrubs, dwarf spruce, willow or alder. While they are still in the Tweed area, you can look for them in open fields, roadsides and feeders. Take some time to search for these little birds and experience the pleasure that we derive from observing bird life in Tweed's natural surroundings.

## QFN Member Photo Galleries

In an earlier email to members I mentioned the display from the Photo-Nat Club in the Quinte Mall. The photos of three QFN members were featured in that display. They are indeed talented photographers. This month the work of Kathy and Tony deGroot is featured.



*Photo by Kathy deGroot*

Kathy managed to catch an image of this inquisitive pine marten as it focused on her. There's always an element of luck in a great image like this but the photographer must also have highly developed skills. Both the equipment and the photographer must be ready. Kathy had to anticipate where the animal would appear, to understand what makes such a striking portrait and to possess the patience and persistence to achieve this result.



*Photo by Tony deGroot*

*Winter at Wellington Harbour*

If it weren't for the caption you would assume that this picture was taken in Canada's arctic. It conveys the cold and bleak nature of many winter days in the Quinte area. At the same time it reminds us that however cold and bleak it may be it can also be peaceful and strikingly beautiful.

I encourage you to visit Tony and Kathy's website. <http://www.tonydegroot.com/>. It contains far more than their photo galleries although those alone are remarkable. They have taken many canoe trips in Algonquin Park and these are documented in words' pictures and videos. If you are tired of winter sit back and watch one of their slide shows. "Nature's Promise – the Coming of Spring" or "The Waltz of the Puffins" will cheer you up. Be sure that the sound is on.

Next month we'll feature Gilles Bisson. Other talented QFN photographers will appear in later months.

**Pamela Stagg, last month's speaker is also a respected and widely known botanical artist. Her work will be part of The Joy of Spring, a botanical painting exhibition at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in London, UK this March. Congratulations.**

# *The Naturalist's Calendar*

## **Monday, Feb. 23**

**QFN's regular meeting.** Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church. 7:p.m.  
See page 1

## **Tuesday, Feb.24**

**Prince Edward County Field Naturalists meeting.** Bloomfield Town Hall. 7:00 p.m.  
QFN member Kyle Blaney will speak on "North American Photo Stories." Kyle will show his favourite photos, discuss where they were taken, and talk about the process that led to their capture. Kyle has been incredibly lucky to travel all over North America.

## **Friday, Feb.27 – Sunday, March 1**

### **Belleville Downtown Docfest**

QFN is partnering with the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust to sponsor *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*. It's a controversial film which argues that large environmental organizations are failing to address the problems resulting from large scale factory farming. This film will be shown at the CORE Centre (the former Corby Library building) 2:15 pm, Friday Feb. More than 50 films will be shown during the 3-day festival. More information on Facebook.

## **Monday, March 2**

### **Be a citizen scientist for the Bay of Quinte**

Quinte Conservation Authority Office, 2061 Old Highway 2.

The [Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan](#) is hosting the Community Wildlife Monitoring Program presentation by Terry Sprague. You can be a citizen scientist for the Bay of Quinte by volunteering as a Marsh Monitor. Marsh Monitors help us learn about the health of our wetlands by observing for birds and frogs. Join Terry for the Community Wildlife Monitoring Program presentation. Learn how you can volunteer as a citizen scientist.



There are two programs - you can choose one or do both. FrogWatch Ontario is great for kids due to its simplicity. The Marsh Monitoring Program is more extensive and includes birds and frogs.

For more information contact Terry Sprague at 613-848-4549, [email](mailto:tsprague@kos.net) tsprague@kos.net.or Nature Stuff [website](#).

### **Thursday, March 5**

#### **Ontario's Important Bird Areas and Ebirds**

Hastings Stewardship Council Winter Speaker Series, Huntingdon Veterans Memorial Hall, 11379 Hwy 62, Ivanhoe. \$5

Mike Burrell, Ontario Important Bird Areas Coordinator for Bird Studies Canada, Canada's leading science-based bird conservation organization will speak on citizen science projects for the birds including eBird, Christmas Bird Counts, Project Feederwatch, Breeding Bird Atlases and more

### **Saturday, March 7**

#### **Surviving Winter**

Lower Trent Conservation Authority "Hike with Us!" Series. Meet at the Seymour Conservation Area parking lot on Highway 30 south of Campbellford. 10 a.m.

Join Ewa Bednarczuk to embrace winter as you learn how wildlife adapt and thrive in challenging conditions.

### **Saturday, March 14 and Sunday March 15**

#### **Presqu'ile Waterfowl Weekend**

With spring tens of thousands of ducks, geese and swans return to Presqu'ile Bay - one of the greatest natural areas for birders on the north shore of Lake Ontario. Presqu'ile Provincial Park offers easy access to viewing stations to view up to 25 different species of waterfowl that arrive each spring to rest and feed here before moving on to nesting areas further north and west. Volunteers will be present with telescopes to help you find and identify the waterfowl.

### **Thursday, March 19**

#### **Stories from the Wild**

Hastings Stewardship Council Winter Speaker Series, Huntingdon Veterans Memorial Hall, 11379 Hwy 62, Ivanhoe. \$5

For more than forty years, John and Janet Foster have been telling stories about Canada. The beauty of Canada's landscapes, the diversity of wildlife, and their own passion for wild places, is what they have always shared with television audiences, and in their public slide shows. In this new presentation, they are once again storytellers. They will share more recent, and personal stories drawn from wildlife encounters on their rough old farm in Hastings County, and from recent adventures they've had in some of their favorite locations - Algonquin Park, the Maritimes, and among the icebergs around Newfoundland.

### **Monday, March 23**

#### **Saving Our Living Dinosaurs**

QFN Meeting - *Saving our Living Dinosaurs* presentation by the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre, Monday March 23 @ 7:00pm at the Bridge Street United Church (Sills Auditorium) in Belleville



Recently a jackalope, long thought to be extinct, was spotted in Yellowstone Park.

*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.*

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Next Newsletter Deadline – March 10, 2015

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com

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*Don't forget items for the Treasure Table. Please mark a price on each item.*