



The Quinte Naturalist

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

JANUARY



We found over 1000 robins on the Christmas Bird Count. See pages 2 and 3.



Monday, Jan. 23 – Spiders of Ontario - Tom Mason, retired Curator of Invertebrates for the Toronto Zoo, will introduce some of our common spiders, as well as explain their significant role in the ecosystem and the importance of learning more about this understudied group of animals.

Feb. 27 Algonquin's Natural Beauty - Tony and Kathy deGroot

BELLEVILLE CBC RESULTS, DEC. 27, 2016

Here are the complete results for this year's Christmas Bird Count. The numbers in brackets represent the number of years out of 15 in which the species was found.

Canada Goose (15)	1274	Unidentified gull species	5	Brown Creeper (12)	6
Mute Swan (7)	7	Rock Pigeon (15)	726	Eastern Bluebird (7)	12
Wood Duck (1)	1	Mourning Dove (15)	640	American Robin (15)	1114
American Black Duck (13)	2	Barred Owl (6)	1	European Starling (15)	3075
Mallard (15)	463	Belted Kingfisher (6)	3	Cedar Waxwing (15)	24
Northern Pintail (1)	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker(11)	5	Snow Bunting (14)	110
Common Goldeneye (15)	91	Downy Woodpecker (15)	38	Am. Tree Sparrow (15)	203
Unidentified duck species	10	Hairy Woodpecker (15)	29	Chipping Sparrow (3)	1
Common Merganser (10)	537	Hairy/Downy Woodpecker	1	Dark-eyed Junco (15)	470
Ruffed Grouse (13)	7	Northern Flicker (11)	10	White-thrtd Sparrow (10)	6
Wild Turkey (12)	60	Pileated Woodpecker (13)	1	Song Sparrow (13)	1
Great Blue Heron (2)	2	unidentified woodpecker sp.	1	Unid. sparrow species	1
Northern Harrier (11)	2	American Kestrel (15)	6	Northern Cardinal (15)	37
Sharp-shinned Hawk (14)	4	Merlin (10)	1	House Finch (15)	155
Cooper's Hawk (15)	1	Peregrine Falcon (3)	2	Purple Finch (4)	15
Unid. accipiter species	1	Northern Shrike (15)	1	Pine Siskin (8)	1
Bald Eagle (6)	2	Blue Jay (15)	133	Amer. Goldfinch (15)	240
Red-tailed Hawk (15)	26	American Crow (15)	284	House Sparrow (15)	131
Ring-billed Gull (14)	65	Common Raven (12)	10		
Herring Gull (14)	59	Bk-cappd Chickadee(15)	661	Count Day Species	56
Glaucous Gull (4)	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch (11)	3	Further Count Wk Species	1
Great Black-backed Gull (2)	8	Wh.-breasted Nuthatch (15)	86	10903 Birds Counted	



Photo by Ian Dickinson

Cedar Waxwings are an annual favourite on Christmas Counts. Although none were seen on the count Bohemian Waxwings are in the area. They are a little larger and greyer and they have a rusty red spot under their tail. A few days ago there was a flock of more than 200 in Marmora.

On the morning of Dec. 27 twenty-seven birders set out to work off any after effects of Christmas overindulgence by spending the day looking for birds. At home 6 feederwatchers supplemented their efforts. At the end of the day it was obvious that it had been one of our most successful CBCs.

While we didn't add any species to our 15-year list we did find 2 species, wood duck and northern pintail, on count day which had previously been found only during count week. Count week refers to the three days before and the three days after the actual count day. It allows researchers using the continental statistics to see what species were present. We don't record numbers for species found only on count week days because only numbers on a single day, count day, are used in population studies.

The total number of birds seen wasn't a record but 10903 birds does represent only the second time the count has exceeded ten thousand. During our 15 counts we have seen a total of 97 species on count day with the snow goose seen during the 2015 count week being species 98. For real statistics nerds it should be noted that we hit the one hundred thousand birds mark for total birds counted this year, 109,587 in 15 years to be precise.

We set record totals for several species. The numbers in brackets are the previous high totals. Common Merganser 537 (347), Ruffed Grouse 7 (6), Glaucous Gull 2 (1), Belted Kingfisher 3 (1), American Robin 1113 (676), European Starling 3075 (2527), Dark-eyed Junco 470 (358).

The compilation was a bit of a raucous party as the compiler was thoroughly roasted for a typo which resulted in American Cow being on the checklist. However the food was good and for that we can thank Elizabeth, Bernadette, Denice, Keith and especially Sharron who stayed home to get everything ready.

ANTICIPATION

**Photo and Story by Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson
First Published in the Tweed News, January 18, 2017**



George Fills the Feeders

As the weeks pass and the days lengthen in January, we begin to look forward to the Spring. We don't want to wish our lives away: indeed, we have a motto that we hold close to our hearts --- "Enjoy and get the most out of every day!". Over the first part of this month, we've experienced a variety of weather, some cold windy, gray days and some even colder, sunny days with clear blue skies. While the crisp, bright days beckon us to the outdoors

for brisk winter walks, the dark, gusty days invite us to curl up with a good book and a cup of coffee. --- And it is the opportune time to catch up on all of those indoor jobs that have been neglected during gardening season.

Whatever the weather, there is a twinkle in the back of our minds, a spark that is beginning to flicker, a sense of anticipation, of looking forward to the transition days that usher us from Winter to Spring. Soon the birds that migrated south will begin to come back to us: in fact, the return of the first ones, the harbingers of Spring, is only a few short weeks away. In early February, our excitement is kindled with our first glimpse of Horned Larks resting in a snowy field.



Photo by Ian Dickinson

In the depths of January, arguably the true and central Winter month, howling winds and gusting blasts of snow agitate our auditory senses

It's Time to Watch for Horned Larks

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but, all the while, we are filled with hope, anticipating the return of bird song in February. Our avian guests sing for various reasons and we can look forward to the birds who now are often silent at our feeders, serenading us with song in the weeks to come. Our Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinals will fulfill our expectations with their romantic chorus as they re-establish or make new pair bonds. Do they really know that Valentine's Day is approaching?

In a very real way, our bird friends at our feeders prime us for the many migrant species soon to come in February, March, April and May. We delight in watching their forms, colours and behaviours. --- But wait! --- Did I just see a Robin or a Bluebird? --- Yes, some of our Spring birds are already with us. As winters become milder and more open with climate change, some species that we traditionally view as returning in the Spring are spending the winter here in increasing numbers. On December 27th, we took part in the annual Belleville area Christmas Bird Count. On that day, as we searched for and recorded every bird in sight in an area just north of Belleville, we personally saw about 100 Robins and 4 Bluebirds. The Robins were feasting on the abundant crop of Wild Grapes. Being able to switch from a diet of earthworms and insects to fruit enables both species of birds to remain with us when the temperatures drop, as long as they are not too severe.

As we wait and watch, the absence of beautiful music provides an opportunity for us to appreciate the rich and varied colours that birds display at our feeders. The crimson napes of the male Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers which flash brightly in the sunlight, the spellbinding flashy red nape and crown of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, the brilliant blue of the Blue Jays, the delicate, buffy sides of the Black-capped Chickadees, the elegant soft orange wash on the underparts of the Red-breasted Nuthatch, the subtle gold-brown of the Goldfinches and the blazing red and attractive buff-brown of the Cardinal pair all thrill us. Yes, there are many reasons to celebrate as the wind sweeps the snow across our fields and the drifts grow higher and higher. --- But we must never brush aside reality. Accompanying this cloak of beauty is a very real life and death



Photo by Tony deGroot

Unlike its white-breasted cousin the red-breasted nuthatch prefers coniferous trees.

struggle for some species to survive through the bitterly cold January nights.

Just as compelling as the fashion parade of our feeder guests, is their fascinating behaviour. The undulating, noisy flight of the woodpeckers announces their arrivals and departures. In and out, they come and go visiting the suet feeders, the sunflower feeder, the peanut feeder and occasionally they take their turn on the platform of the mixed seed feeder. Not far away from them, tiny chickadees are working hard to re-fuel as they peck open sunflower seeds while holding them against a branch with one of their feet. Using a different strategy, nuthatches jam the seeds into bark crevices to secure them in place while cracking them open with their beaks.



Photo by Kyle Blaney

The American Tree Sparrow is sometimes known as the “Winter Chippy” but note the spot on the breast and the generally reddish plumage.

While many of our visitors prefer the same food, there always seems to be a time and place for everyone at the feeders. We love to watch how one bird will give way to another at a patch of seeds on the snow --- how Mourning Doves yield to the Blue Jays and how everybody retreats when our resident Crow pair arrives. For the most part, harmony prevails. It almost seems that the birds have an understanding with one another that will enable them all to live together and survive. The scene seldom changes dramatically. We look for the more timid Cardinals near dawn when the night shift of

the Cottontail Rabbits has ended, and near dusk, when the curtain again is being drawn. In bitterly cold days, though, when more food is required, these beautiful birds are present throughout the day, feeding on the snowy ground with Juncos, Mourning Doves and Tree Sparrows. Together, they are a glorious reminder of how peace can be achieved in our world.

The winter birds provide us with continuity of bird life through the year, linking the time of Autumn departures with our Spring days of rejoicing, as one species after another returns. Their presence lifts our spirits on cold, gray, forlorn days. --- So, let's enjoy each day in January! Let's take some winter walks and revel in our winter birds and other animals. - -- And let's take pleasure in anticipating what is to come!

CLUB NEWS

Annual Dinner. The tickets for our Annual Fundraising Dinner, being held on April 24th, will be on sale starting at the January meeting. Tickets are \$28 per person. The guest speaker will be Robert Alvo, author of "Being a Bird in North America" He will share highlights from his book which brings its subjects to life on the page with a blend of humour and science. You may also call Doug Newfield, 613-477-3066 and arrange for tickets.

Treasure Table – Our February meeting is also Treasure Night. Bring treasures to the meeting to contribute to this fund-raiser. They can be edible, literary or anything else that someone might find useful or decorative. No garage sale rejects please. Please attach a label with price on the item. Prices are generally bargain basement level.

Outing – Our January 21 trip to Algonquin had to be postponed because of the weather. It is now scheduled for Saturday, January 28, weather permitting. Details and confirmation of the trip will be in an email later in the week.

Correspondence – To support Ontario Nature and other organizations we often send letters to the appropriate officials. The full text of these letters can be found in the QFN section of Terry Sprague's website.

Nov. 12 – Addressed to Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, expressing concern about the government's "Wetland Conservation Strategy for Ontario." We support the premier's pledge to reverse wetland loss by 2025 but doubt that the proposed strategy will accomplish this. To make the pledge effective we request clear targets to achieve a net gain in wetland area, enhancement of protections for wetlands identified as significant and earmarking of funds for wetland evaluation, securement and restoration.

Dec. 29 – Addressed to Glen Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, asking that there be intensive management interventions in Ontario's cap and trade system. A system managed by industry sequestering carbon in purchased and manipulated "offsets" will impact the province's biodiversity. Ecosystems such as forests, wetlands and lakes are more valuable as natural carbon sinks.

Please "Like" QFN on Facebook

And visit Terry's website for all the latest news on nature
in the Quinte Area - naturestuff.net

QFN 2017 Membership Reminder

Membership fees are now due for 2017. Please bring cash or a cheque to the meeting.
Single membership - \$25. Family membership - \$40.

You may also send your cheque (made out to Quinte Field Naturalists) to:

Doug Newfield
161 Thrasher Rd
RR#1 Plainfield ON
K0K 2V0

Why buy a membership?

- ✓ Hear entertaining speakers on natural history and environmental topics.
- ✓ Learn what you can do to help nature.
- ✓ Attend field trips with knowledgeable leaders.
- ✓ Receive up-to-date or last minute information about club activities.
- ✓ Support club projects such as turtle ICUs and seed for Frink feeders.
- ✓ Support environmental documentaries at the annual Docfest.
- ✓ Comment on and provide support for local, provincial and national environmental groups and causes.

Your membership will increase the power of our voice in the local community and the province and help to provide important information to our members and the general public.

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, 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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613-478-3205

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Next Newsletter Deadline – February 10, 2017

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com

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