



The Quinte Naturalist

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

April



Photo by Kyle Blaney

It was April Fool's Day. Believing that I was no fool when I read that April was National Frog Month my reaction was a skeptical "Yeah. Right. You can't fool me." Well apparently I don't need any help to be a fool. April really is National Frog Month, at least in the United States.

It's unclear who declared "National Frog Month" but every American seems to accept it. One website even said "National Frog Month is celebrated in April" as though it was perfectly natural to

devote a month to these amphibians. It's actually not a bad idea. Frogs are an important indicator of ecological health and in April we hear them near our wetlands. I'm declaring this to be Quinte Field Naturalist Frog Month.

Scattered through this newsletter you will find pictures of the species of frogs found in our area such as the bullfrog shown above. As long as 15 cm it's our largest frog. Its back may be olive green or brown or any shade in between. The picture gives you a good view of the bright yellow throat. Particularly at this time of year male green frogs also have a bright yellow throat and it can be difficult to tell the two species apart. For a fairly easy way to tell which species you are seeing go to page 5.

The bullfrog gets its name because its jug-o'rum call is supposed to be similar to the roar of a bull. Frogs will be a feature on our outing (see page 5) but we are very unlikely to hear any bullfrogs because they aren't active until May and often don't start to claim territories until June or even July.

You can also participate in a very easy citizen science project called Frogwatch. It's suitable for naturalists of every age, including kids. On the website there's information about the program, including a 152 page book of resources for K to 8 teachers. <http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/>. Terry Sprague can also provide more information.

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

MICHAEL RUNTZ

ONTARIO'S NATURAL HISTORY

Monday, April 15

6:00 p.m.

St. Columba Presbyterian Church

Corner of East Bridge and Farley

You must already have a ticket for this event. We are completely sold out.
We are fortunate this year that Michael Runtz has agreed to enliven proceedings with what is sure to be an entertaining presentation. See the next page for Terry's comments.

LOOKING BACK.....April, 1972

Submitted by Terry Sprague

Our April meeting concludes our indoor gatherings for this season. It is our annual dinner at Eastminster United Church, Herchimer and Bridge Streets, on Monday, April 24, 1972, at 6:30 p.m. Tickets: \$2.25 from members or at the Quinte Book Shop. The speaker is Mr. Jim Ives, Conservation Officer with the Department of Lands and Forests for Prince Edward County. His photography is highly recommended and he is illustrating his talk with slides. A good dinner and enjoyable evening is assured, so come and bring your friends.

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), 7:30, 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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613-478-3205

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Refreshments

Sharron Blaney
613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – September 10, 2013

Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

NATURAL HISTORY – UNQUENCHABLE CURIOSITY

By Terry Sprague



“The greatest professor at Carleton! But be prepared to look like a maniac while writing the exam because you will be laughing during the whole time.....because of the puns and jokes he puts into the exam!” says someone on a Rate My Professors website who took his course at Carleton University.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Professor Michael Runtz for a few years. We have birded together and we have had a few beers together at the Barley Room Pub in Picton. His

energy is infectious and his enthusiasm for nature knows no bounds. I learned too late three years ago, that if you do a 24-hour Birdathon with Michael though, expect to be in the field for a full, straight 24 hours.

And so it was that I spent two days reading his most recent book and relived some of that same enthusiasm and passion for nature. Titled quite simply, “Natural History”, his most recent endeavour, however, is no simple book. It delves into the private lives of both plants and animals in a way that will have you laughing out loud throughout its over 300 pages as you learn things that you never knew before.

Right off the bat, he answers the question of what natural history really means on the first page of the introduction. “To put it simply, it is the study of all living things with which we share this planet.”

With that out of the way, he launches into the subject with 10 chapters on how plants and animals survive, obtain their food, reproduce, and avoid being a meal for something else. Far be it from being a book that requires the reader to be mentally psyched up to struggle through scientific names and complicated descriptions, the book is filled with the same kind of Runtz humour that his students have come to enjoy at Carleton University. Any technical terms that have been sprinkled into the text, and there are a few, seem to roll off the tongue easily and are interspersed with spontaneous afterthoughts. “Incidentally, the ability to predict the severity of winter by the width of the bands on a woolly bear arose solely from someone’s wild imagination.”

Throughout the book, you will be smiling at Michael’s trademark humour, but all of it comes to a head when you read the chapter on the “patrons of putrefaction” where Michael escorts the reader through carcass decomposition and the insect life that makes it happen. “.....you will witness a carnival-like scene with cyclonic motion everywhere. Blow Flies dance across the

hide, dropping eggs as quickly as they flit. Maggots briefly poke their heads up through small openings as if to summon curious passersby. Rove and Carrion Beetles scurry across the swollen beast.....small parasitic wasps zip in and out, seeking hosts in which to lay their eggs. Many of the visitors are coupled in nuptial embrace, inspired by the feast that awaits their young. There is no mourning to be found at this wake; the atmosphere is rife with ravenous feasting, and uninhibited orgies erupt across the carcass.”

The above chapter can be topped only by the 30 pages, complete with photographs, that have been devoted to the subject of reproduction. Speaking of which, the book is generously sprinkled with about 500 full colour photographs, taken by the Seeley’s Bay author over his many years of being a prolific writer, a professor, an interpretive naturalist at Algonquin Provincial Park, and host of his television program, “Wild By Nature”.

In this age of insatiable curiosity about the natural world around us, this book will have you furiously jotting down tidbits of information as I did when I read through its pages. Did you know that Field Crickets have ears on their front legs and Praying Mantids have only one ear and it lies between their legs? That Walking Stick sex can last for days, the males keeping the female from mating with other males by securing her with special handcuffs? That crab spiders use cryptic behaviour, not webs for encountering prey?

Michael’s wit continues, even on sombre subjects. On predators getting old, he states, “When a predator is injured or ill, or becomes too old and slow to chase down a meal, there are no soup kitchens or seniors’ homes waiting to help.”

Michael Runtz is unquestionably the David Attenborough of this country and of this decade with his unlimited storehouse of knowledge and his ability to segue the contents of this book together in a way that will have you reading this book several times to catch points you may have missed the first time through.

As one of his students put it, “What a wonderfully crazy man!” If only every person could be as passionate and “wonderfully crazy” in their pursuit, enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the natural world around us. Michael’s books, columns, TV programs and personal appearances have long been an inspiration to me, and we are so fortunate to have him so close by that we can tap into this knowledge.

Natural History. 2012. Michael Runtz. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. 310 pages. \$49.95. ISBN 978-0-7575-9672-8

Spring Peeper



You will have trouble finding a spring peeper because they are so small. Their “peep” however is so loud that if the chorus is nearby the sound can be deafening. They are one of the first frogs to start calling in the spring. The frog in the picture is fully grown so if you find a very small frog with a dark X on its back you have been lucky enough to find a peeper.

CLUB NEWS



Images from Toronto zoo/Adopt-a-pond
The call of the green frog (above) sounds like a single plucked banjo string. The green frog can be differentiated from the bull frog (below) by the ridges which run down each side of its back.



© 20



Photo by Kyle Blaney

The mask makes the wood frog easy to identify. Its call, heard very early in the spring, sounds like a duck quacking.

MEMBERSHIP – If you haven't already paid for your membership this year please give Doug Newfield a cheque at the annual dinner or mail one to him. The mailing address is 161 Thrasher Road, R. R. #1, Plainfield, ON K0K 2V0. \$25 Individual, \$40 Family.

PINKLETINKS AND LAUGHING OWLS – They're called pinkletinks around Martha's Vineyard but we've got lots of them also. On **Sunday, April 21** we'll watch and listen for pinkletinks, other anurans (frogs and toads) and owls in Thurlow ward and north into the Land Between. It's an evening outing involving very little, if any walking. Meet behind the Shell station at the Quinte Mall at **7:30 P.M., Sunday, April 21**. Dress warmly.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS – The many habitats at the Frink Centre provide a chance to see a wide variety of local plants, birds, herps (reptiles and amphibians) and mammals. We'll make wildflowers the focus of our trip so bring your field guides and your camera. **Meet behind the Shell station at the mall at 8:00 a.m.** or at the Frink Centre at 8:30 on **Saturday, May 11**. It's muddy so wear boots.

BIRDING FESTIVAL – Don't forget the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory's annual Birding Festival from May 11 to 20. Come celebrate the return of migratory birds heading north to their nesting grounds in more than 1.3 billion acres of boreal forest. Birding hikes, workshops and a Boot Camp for Birders are all part of the fun. Bird-friendly coffee and refreshments will be served in the Hospitality Tent. More migratory birds are seen at Prince Edward Point than anywhere else on the north side of Lake Ontario. This point of land is on a major flyway and provides an area for birds to rest and feed on their way north from southern United States, the Caribbean and Central and South America. See the website for more information <http://www.peptbo.ca/>.

BIRDATHON – Years ago our longest-serving president, Hugh Watson, started the tradition of supporting the Baillie Birdathon to raise money for conservation. Money raised now is divided among the QFN, the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and Bird Studies Canada. Please support our efforts. You can make a pledge at the annual dinner or by contacting me directly (613-962-9337, john.blaney@sympatico.ca). You can use the pledge form near the back of this newsletter to collect pledges, including your own. You can also support the QFN team, the Quinte Herons on the Baillie Birdathon website. Simply go to the Bird Studies Canada website <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/>. Click on “Sponsor Participant” then enter my name (John Blaney) in the appropriate spaces. Click on “Next” and you will see the rest of the instructions. If you are planning to encourage us to work harder by pledging a certain amount per species found you need to know that our goal is 115 species in a 24-hour period (our record is 111 species).

Do you want to be part of the Team? You can join us for either part or all of the birdathon. We don't claim to be a competitive team so we do not even try to bird for 24 hours straight but we do a fair amount of walking. We will conduct our Birdathon during the week of May 13. The actual day, starting time and meeting place will be determined by weather so if you are interested let me know and I'll keep you informed.

ONTARIO NATURE YOUTH SUMMIT SPONSORSHIP

The Ontario Nature Youth Summit is an annual event hosted by the Ontario Nature Youth Council. It brings together about 100 young people from high schools across Ontario to learn about the variety of life in our province, ways to protect it and how to live sustainably on our planet to ensure that it is preserved for future generations. It is an exciting week end filled with a dynamic keynote speaker, compelling and interactive workshops, hiking, campfires and good conversation with other youth who have similar interests.

In 2013, Quinte Field Naturalists are committed to sponsoring two young people in Grades 9 – 12 for this event by paying the registration. Registration includes the cost of accommodation, food, workshops and activities but each participant is responsible for his/her transportation to and from the Summit.

What is the 2013 Youth Summit theme? Biodiversity & Green Solutions

When will the Summit occur? September 20 – 22, 2013

Where will the Summit occur? YMCA Geneva Park on Lake Couchiching near Orillia, Ontario
Students wishing to apply for sponsorship to attend the Youth Summit should submit their applications to Sharron Blaney by June 8th, 2013.

Application Forms can be found on Terry's website under “Organizations”:
<http://naturestuff.net/site/>

For more information Phone: 613-962-9337

E-mail: john.blaney@sympatico.ca



Photo by Kyle Blaney



Photo courtesy State of Connecticut

LOOK ALIKE SOUND ALIKES

Field guides may imply that it's fairly easy to tell the northern leopard frog (above) from the pickerel frog (below) but that's not necessarily the case. The colours may be more similar than these pictures suggest. The leopard frog's spots are roundish and arranged randomly. The pickerel frog's are squarish and are arranged in two or three fairly parallel lines down the back. The pickerel frog is uncommon whereas the northern leopard frog is found in a wide variety of habitats, often far from water. The call of the leopard frog may sound like a finger rubbed on a wet balloon or a low snore followed by several grunts. The call of the pickerel frog is very simple, just a long, low snore.

The question is whether any civilization can wage relentless war on life without destroying itself, and without losing the right to be called civilized.

Rachel Carson

NatureWorks at Presqu'ile 2013

Submitted by David Bree

These courses fill up quickly ... so book early. The modest workshop fee of \$15 per person, \$35 per family, includes free Park entry! Workshops are suitable for children over 10yrs. Confirm dates and make reservations at 613 475-1688 extension 2. More details at www.friendsofpresquile.on.ca

Migration Mania - Saturday, May 4: 8am - 2pm

Yellow, green, indigo, orange streaking across the sky and into the new leaves of the trees in Presqu'ile! It can only mean one thing: Spring Migration! We welcome the returning tropical birds and they come here in droves during April and May. Noted Park naturalist Ian Shanahan will help us sight them. If you are new to bird life in the Park -- or want to sharpen your skills -- come for the spotting, and the tips on how to find these dazzling gems by sight and sound. Participants would be expected to bring their own binoculars.

Aerial Warfare: Dragonflies and Damselflies - Saturday, June 15: 9am - 3pm

Meet the fighter aircraft of the bug world! Deceptively pretty but murderously accurate, even without radar. The world of dragonflies is aerial combat at its best. Find out how these flying jewels emerge from their watery nursery to transform into four - winged wonders. At this time of year we hope to catch a variety of species in the different habitats around the park. Meet these colourful insects in the company of one of Ontario's keenest odonatists David Bree.

The Invaders!

Saturday, September 14 - full day

Come and see the invaders of Presqu'ile and how they might be conquered. Invasive species: bugs, plants, crustaceans, fish, and others move into stay with us and eviction can be tough. Learn about the successes of biosurveillance, biocontrol and the actions of humankind. Your leader, Matt Ireland, is a specialist on marshland habitat. Classroom and field sessions included.

FREE! Nuts to you!

Saturday, October 5 – half day

We can't let squirrels and chipmunks have all the fun so come and collect the cones, seeds and nuts we need to renew our Presqu'ile woodlots. Energetic volunteers harvest the fall crop and prepare seedlings for winter hardening in our nursery and greenhouses. A casual, non-strenuous affair where many hands can gain on our furry friends. Morning or afternoon, all ages. Please pre-register.

Mushroom Madness

Sunday, October 6 - full day

What's going on in the dark, dank soil beneath us? It's the fungi kingdom fruiting and we'll classify over 100 Presqu'ile varieties. With Park biodiversity staffer Phil Careless you'll learn to separate a 'picker' from a 'kicker' in the magic world of mushrooms. Great photo opportunities too!



A Brush with Nature

Sunday, October 13 - Morning: level 1; Afternoon: level 2

Back by popular demand this Fall watercolour painting course, taught by Andrew Hamilton, a noted nature painter, will leave you awash in nature's loveliness, using just three basic colours. All materials supplied, including a mat for your masterpiece. New this year: take either level 1 in the morning or level 2 in the afternoon, or join both. Stunning artistic transformations promised. Great for kids! Inquire about the special fee for both sessions.



TWO SMALL FROGS

Grey Tree Frog



The chorus frog calls early in the season. It sounds like a thumb being drawn over the teeth of a comb. The tree frog like the chameleon can change its colour from grey to light green. Its call, a short trill, can be heard in late spring and early summer. Note the toe disks which enable it to cling to vertical surfaces.

Western Chorus Frog



Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

*To save trees and money we distribute our newsletter by email where possible.
We do not share your email address with any individual or organization.*

Please pay by cheque. It makes life much easier for our treasurer.

- Single (\$25.00)
- Family (\$40.00)
- Organization/Corporation (\$50.00)

Please note: Memberships run from January to January.

Membership Information

You can join the Quinte Field Naturalists by submitting the completed application form with a cheque made out to the Quinte Field Naturalists at a monthly meeting or by mailing the cheque and form to:

Doug Newfield
161 Thrasher Road
R.R. # 1
Plainfield, ON
K0K 2V0

