



The Quinte Naturalist

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

September

New Meeting Time (7 P.M.)

During the last year or two our meetings have been running later and later. Many of our speakers come from out of town and have a long trip home. In an effort to allow everyone, especially our speakers, to get home earlier we will start our meetings at 7 p.m. this year. Meetings will still be held in Sills Auditorium, Bridge Street United Church.



New meeting time. It's also a new season. The Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory started its fall banding season on August 18. Owl banding was scheduled to start on September 20 if the weather was appropriate.

The observatory encourages visitors but asks that you are careful not to disturb the birds or the work of the banders and volunteers. Please don't approach the nets as birds may struggle and injure themselves. Please don't try to talk to the bander or scribe during busy times. Most of the time they are happy to discuss their work and birds. Banding in appropriate weather can be seen during the first six hours after sunrise but birds are most active between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. The best time to see owl banding is between 8:30 and 10:30. There is no banding if it is too wet or windy but you can phone 613-476-5801 to check ahead.

Bander Stephane Menu summarizes daily sightings and writes a weekly blog with his thoughts on how migration is progressing on the website. Don't just take my word for it. The new website has lots more information. <http://www.peptbo.ca/>

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER

DONNA FANO

BIRDS AND FLORA OF BELIZE



Join us for a Central American vacation. I've seen some of Donna's pictures. Belize is definitely on the list of places I want to visit.

Outing for Members

AUTUMN IN THE COUNTY – We'll start our tour of the west shore of the County at Sandbanks Provincial Park. First we'll investigate the waters off the site of the former Lakeshore Lodge to see if red-necked grebes are as numerous as they used to be. This stop will be followed by a walk to West Point to check on possible migrants. Then we'll hike the Sandbanks Dune Trail to investigate the world's largest freshwater baymouth barrier dune system. Fall wildflowers such as New England aster, grey goldenrod and fringed gentian are all in bloom. After lunch we'll head for Point Petre. If it's a sunny day raptors should be circling overhead.

Saturday, September 28. Meet beside the playground in **Zwicks Park at 8 a.m.**

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

Doug Newfield
613-477-3066

Outings/Newsletter

John Blaney - 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – October, 2013

Please send submissions to john.blaney@sympatico.ca

Past President

Wendy Turner

Environmental Officer

Denice Wilkins
613-478-5070

Recording Sect'y

Bernadette Hymus
613-962-7926

Membership/Mailing

Marge Fisher
613-968-3277

Corresponding Sect'y

Elizabeth Churcher
613-478-3205

Refreshments

Sharron Blaney
613-962-9337

SUMMER SIGHTINGS

Between the end of April and the end of September there are few activities planned by the Quinte Field Naturalists. That may seem odd because those months include spring migration, spring wildflowers, nesting season; it's the time of year when nature is at its most active. However it is certain that our interest in nature doesn't wane during the late spring and summer months. Several people reported interesting sightings and noted trends over the past summer.



Photo by T.A. Mapes

WE had no sooner wrapped up the regular QFN season at the annual dinner than information about the first interesting sighting arrived in my inbox. It came from T.A. Mapes. He lives north of Highway 7 outside the area covered by the QFN but he does occasionally send reports of what has visited his yard.

Notice the bird on the right in the photo. It has the white throat and streaked back of the white-throated sparrow beside it but the breast and head are marked quite differently than the white-throated sparrow on the left. The bird is a hybrid white-throated sparrow/dark-eyed junco.

A search of the internet turns up other photos of similar hybrids but seldom do they so clearly show the colours and patterns of the parent birds.

NOT to be outdone QFN member Tom Wheatley sent a photo of the leucistic robin in the photo on the right in mid-June. Leucistic robins are a little more common but in this case Tom found two in the same area of northeast Belleville. Furthermore the homeowner where Tom found the bird said that it had nested in the previous year and this year produced young with some patches of white. Starlings probably killed the nestlings. Tom speculates that there may be multiple generations of robins with at least some leucistic markings. Leucism is inherited but the number and location of the white feathers varies. The reduction in pigment leaves the feathers weak and more prone to wear. Some leucistic birds may not find mates. "Splat" as Tom has named this bird was more fortunate.



Photo by Tom Wheatley



Photo by Tom Wheatley

NOT all noteworthy sightings are of natural oddities. Sometimes we find a species that we know is present but not often seen. That was the case for black bears this year. Tom also reported a bear on the Hastings Heritage Trail just north of Springbrook Road. Shortly after Tom's sighting Sharron and I walked south from the Springbrook Road on the same trail. Sharron preferred to walk south as she was not as enthusiastic as I was about seeing a bear. Naturally on our return trip a bear did cross the trail a couple of hundred metres ahead of us. Less amusing was the bear seen in Stirling. I

have no idea whether it was the same bear or not but a wild animal as large as a bear in a residential area is not a good thing.

THERE were actually three QFN events during the summer months. Of course the birdathon is an annual event, and is covered in a separate article. The scheduled visit to the Frink Centre on May 11 was pleasant as a hike in the Frink always is. More noteworthy was the hike called spontaneously for the last Saturday in July to check the trumpeter swans on a small lake near Ivanhoe. There has been some debate about whether this species occurred historically in southern Ontario but there is no debating the success of the introduction in recent times. Trumpeters do spend the winter locally in open water and last summer there was a breeding pair with young on this lake. Had they raised young this year?



Photo by Tom Wheatley

When we first arrived at the lake there was only one swan present. Not a good sign. Before long a second bird flew in to join it. While there was no sign of any young we were treated to the ceremony which trumpeters go through when a pair re-unites. Loud trumpeting was accompanied by wings flapping and alternately bobbing heads. It's hard not to be anthropomorphic about a scene that looks so much like greetings exchanged between an affectionate couple.

If you look closely you will see a yellow wing tag on the bird on the right. The number on the tag is J84. Records indicate the bird is male, hatched in 2011 in the Burlington area. You will occasionally see birds or animals wearing tags or coloured bands on their legs. These are important tools used by biologists to learn more about the species involved. If you see a bird or animal wearing identification markings keep a record. You can either send the information to the research facility involved or give it to your executive. We will see that the proper people are notified.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS

Raccoons hardly qualify as a notable sighting, not even in our backyard in the city. Often during the summer a family of raccoons comes marauding. Usually a parent accompanies them but this year it was two young raccoons which were a little older than usual and travelling without Mom.

About 3:30 one July night we were awakened by the sound of bottles rattling in the garage. Carelessly I had left the back door open beside the garbage pail. I hurried downstairs. There was Rocky Raccoon browsing in the garbage he had spilled. I shouted at him to “Get out of there.” In the manner of every defiant teenager, human or raccoon, he turned his back on me and continued to rummage in the garbage. Repeated threats and miscellaneous noises produced no results.

As a last resort I reached over and tugged his tail. What does a teenage raccoon do when you pull on its tail? It turns around, looks you right in the eye and with all the disdain it can muster and as clearly as if it has uttered the words says, “Yeah. What do you want?” It then returns to rummaging in the garbage.

After another tug on his tail Rocky shrugged his raccoon shoulders and went and hid under the trailer which is stored in the garage.

Meanwhile Rocky’s less assertive sibling had climbed up on a shelf near the big door at the front of the garage where it proceeded to knock as much as possible onto the floor. I went around to the front, opened the big door and stepped aside. Rocky’s litter mate scurried by my feet and climbed a tree in the front yard.

After shutting the big door I returned to the back door where Rocky was peering out from beside the garbage door. By this time the other culprit was crying loudly, no doubt advising Rocky to run for it. Rocky took this advice and ran.



With my manhood verified by this victory over nature I shut the door and returned to bed.



Upon reflection it occurs to me that tugging on the tail of a wild animal while it eats its lunch may not be the best idea I’ve ever had. In my defense I wish it noted that it was a small raccoon and I had been wakened in the middle of the night.

QFN Receives Grant from Hastings Stewardship Council

by Denice Wilkins

One night this past June, while I was out looking for turtles laying eggs, I got an idea – Turtle ICUs (Incubation Care Units) – a 2 foot square frame of 2x4 and hardware cloth to protect turtle nests from predators. The nest protective covers themselves aren't new (although I racked my brain to come up with the catchy name) but my idea was how to get people to use them.

If everyone who has a resident turtle that annually lays eggs on their property had one, a huge number of nests could be protected. Given all of our busy lives, I figured that while many people would be happy to use the covers, they would be much less likely to make time to build one themselves. So, hopefully, if we build it, they will.....use it! I convinced the QFN board this was a good idea, wrote the grant and last Monday a check for \$500 was presented to the QFN by the Hastings Stewardship Council for the production of 50 Turtle ICUs. The money will be used to purchase the materials necessary to build the units as well as to print an information leaflet to accompany them. John Brogee, shop teacher at Centre Hastings Secondary School, has agreed to have his students make the ICUs either as part of his class or as part of their Community Service Hours. The ICUs will be sold for more or less cost, about \$15 each. As an added bonus, since the unit only needs to be employed to protect a turtle nest for 10 days to 2 weeks immediately after laying, it can double as compost sifter at other times of the year! They make a great Christmas gift! We need you to help us to get them into the hands of landowners who can become turtle

midwives and help ensure more young turtles survive to waddle their way to the water next fall.



Photo by Kyle Blaney

She may look ugly to us but like most Ontario turtles snapping turtles are a species of special concern. She needs our help.

QFN members participate in many projects such as Marsh Monitoring, Christmas Bird Counts, Baillie Birdathon, Woodcock Surveys, Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, Nocturnal Owl Surveys and ebird. Denice identified a need which is not met by any existing program and designed a project. She describes her work in this article.

From time to time I'll ask some of you to write a short article describing your work. I hope that you will be willing to share your experiences.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Highlights of the June 10 Executive Meeting: The complete meeting minutes will soon be found on Terry Sprague's website. You will find the Quinte Field Naturalists by clicking on "Organizations." <http://naturestuff.net/site/>

The experiment which reduced the terms of the executive to one year in the hopes of attracting more volunteers was not successful. Executive members found that it required about a year to learn the requirements of a position. At the January Annual Meeting you will be asked to vote on a proposal to return to the former two-year terms.

Kathy Felkar and Mike Burge will sell bird-friendly coffee at each meeting.

Treasurer Doug Newfield stated that we are within \$50.00 of meeting the funding goal outlined in the budget presented in January.

One hundred species were found on the birdathon. We raised over \$500.00.

Membership Coordinator Marjorie Fisher reported that we now have 59 members including 16 family memberships and 27 singles.

No applications have been received for financial support to attend the Youth Summit in September.

September 17 Executive Meeting

We are investigating possible alternate venues for the Annual Dinner in April.

John will set up a Facebook page for Quinte Field Naturalists. (Any suggestions or help would be appreciated.)



Frink Centre Boardwalk

Photo by Kyle Blaney

John will contact Paul Taylor at the Frink Centre to determine if there is a bird checklist for the centre. If there is not John will compile a preliminary list and report on how best to proceed if we wish to make this a QFN project.

We are looking for a display board which can be used to advertise QFN at community events. Can any members donate or locate one for us?

OSTRANDER POINT

Cheryl Anderson posted this report on the website for the campaign against wind turbines at Ostrander Point. Consult the website for complete information - <http://www.saveostranderpoint.org/>

As expected, both Gilead Power and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) have submitted counter-appeals of the Environmental Review Tribunal's (ERT) decision to support the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists appeal of the initial MOE approval of Gilead's wind turbine project at Ostrander Point Crown Land Block. Both counter-appeals are based on the assertion that the ERT made errors in law in their decision.

The ERT based their decision on the presence of the Blanding's turtle at the site and the fact that the proponents did not present evidence that would disprove serious and irreversible harm to the population at Ostrander Point. The proponents now say that the serious and irreversible harm test applies province wide and that it was the responsibility of PECFN to prove that the project would cause serious and irreversible harm to the turtle population province wide. They also assert that the Tribunal erred in not recognizing the provisions of the Species at Risk Permit issued to Gilead.

The MOE asserts that the size and density of the Blanding's turtle population, the potential effects of traffic and poaching are unknown. These issues were the responsibility of the Ministry of Natural Resources to establish before issuing a permit to "kill harm and destroy" an endangered species or before approving the project.

It's horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment.

**Ansel Adams
American Photographer
1902-1984**

The counter-appeals are against the ruling by the ERT. It is the interpretations of the ERT that are in question, not the evidence presented by PECFN's

witnesses. This case is unique in Ontario. It questions Renewable Energy Act regulations, and their interpretation by the ERT and the intent of legislation which removes the right of development determination from local municipalities. As such, it is important that we continue the fight.

Gilead and MOE have thirty days to submit further material to the Court after which PECFN will have a further 30 days to respond. We will be working with our lawyers to develop our defence of our Tribunal victory.

Both proponents request that the case be heard at Divisional Court in Toronto and Gilead is requesting that costs be assessed against PECFN.

MUSHROOMS OF HASTINGS COUNTY

Learn about the underground world of fungi

Donna Fano will give a presentation on October 17, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm at Eastminster United Church. \$3.00 per person. Hosted by the Belleville Association of the Deaf.