

# *The Quinte Naturalist*

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

## *October*

### **A Review of October's Events and Sightings**



Turkey Tail (Photo by John Lowry) is a common type of bracket fungus found throughout the Quinte area. October is a particularly good time of year to find many types of fungus in our area. No one really knows how many species we have locally. There may be thousands, most microscopic. Pictures in this newsletter show larger fungi found locally during our most recent two Octobers.. Their common names are descriptive, imaginative, colourful and sometimes even disgusting. Pictures are all from iNaturalist. Some contributors to iNaturalist don't use their real names on their accounts so you will see some attributions to pseudonyms.

## *Our Next Meeting*

**Topic:** "Shifting Paradigms - The Past, Present and Future of Wildfires".

**Featuring:** Dr. David McLagan, Queen's University professor and Governor General Award winner

Dr. David McLagan is the Project Leader of the Fire, Earth, Water, Air Contaminant Biogeochemistry Lab (FEWA Lab) and Assistant Professor of Geological Sciences and Geological Engineering and the School of Environmental Studies at Queen's University. He gained a PhD. from the University of Toronto and in 2023 Dr. McLagan won a Governor General's Innovation Award in Canada for the passive air sampler he developed, tested, and then commercialized during his PhD work.

David will present some of the fundamental aspects of wildfires and then describe how Canadian's complex history of fire in energy production and wildfires has led us to where we are today. 2023 was a record year of wildfire that burned almost 2.5x more area than in any other year. He will then look to where we are heading with the hope that 2023 will remain an anomaly and not a new normal.

**Monday, November 20, 2023**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Centennial Secondary School  
160 Palmer Road, Belleville, ON**

Parking is on the side of the school by Harder Drive. When facing the school, go to the door that is the furthest left. Enter. The entrance to the cafeteria on the left.

**Cost:** FREE! (Donations appreciated from non-members.) Better yet, join the club and become a supporting member! (\$25 single; \$40 family) It's your support that allows us to bring you these programs and engage in the environmental projects we undertake. Thank you!!

There will be treats! But please bring your own beverage as we don't have access to a kitchen.



## ***Project FeederWatch***

Would you like to be able to tell a hairy woodpecker from a downy woodpecker or a house finch from purple finch? Joining Project Feederwatch will give you access to online resources showing you how to do that and identify other feeder clients.

The project is also simple enough for primary school students to participate either at home or at school. You record how many of each species you see in a few minutes each week. The number of species will not be overwhelming. Each week at our feeders we usually see 8 to 10 species. Even over a whole season we seldom tally 20 species.

Your reports will become part of a database supporting research into the effects of climate change, habitat loss and disease. Since the project began in 1986 hundreds of scientific articles have been published using project data.

For more information and to join Project FeederWatch follow this link.

<https://feederwatch.org/>

***FeederWatch has started. Photo credits blue jay, John Lowry; white-breasted nuthatch, Kyle Blaney; red-bellied woodpecker, Jason King***

## ***QFN General Meeting – Oct. 16, 2023***

We are still in need of a marketing convener. The tasks can be performed by either an individual or group with skills or a desire to develop skills to publicize QFN and our activities. The tasks include making sure that newspapers and radio stations are notified of meetings, preparing press releases from information provided by our committees and increasing our presence on social media. If you are interested in all or any part of the job please contact any member of the executive.

We are in good shape financially with about \$9000 in the bank with an additional \$6000 to come as reimbursement for money spent for the Shirley Langer Trail tree planting.

Greg Parsons gave a report on the Oct. 10 tree planting, Catherine Baier updated us on the activities of the Beaver Subcommittee and John Lowry reported that the total value of beer, alcohol and pop cans collected has already surpassed the annual goal. More information about these projects follow this report.

In his presentation Jonathan Balcombe shared his enthusiasm for bats. His vast knowledge of the subject allowed him to speak in a relaxed, conversational way with injections of subtle humour. Pictures of “cute” bats convinced many of the cuteness of the species but probably not all in the audience.

Jonathan was completely convincing in his debunking of several myths. Bats are not blind but they can operate in the dark using echolocation. Bats are not flying mice; they are more closely descended from treeshrews, more closely related to primates than rodents. Bats do not suck blood. Only 3 of the world’s over 1400 bat species consume blood and they lap it. Many bats eat fruit or nectar and act as pollinators. Like many other animals bats can carry rabies but the risk to humans is slight. Do be careful of bats out in daylight or in unlikely places like your lawn. Bats don’t want to get caught in your hair any more than you want them there. Concluding statement. **“Bats are totally cool and awesome.”**



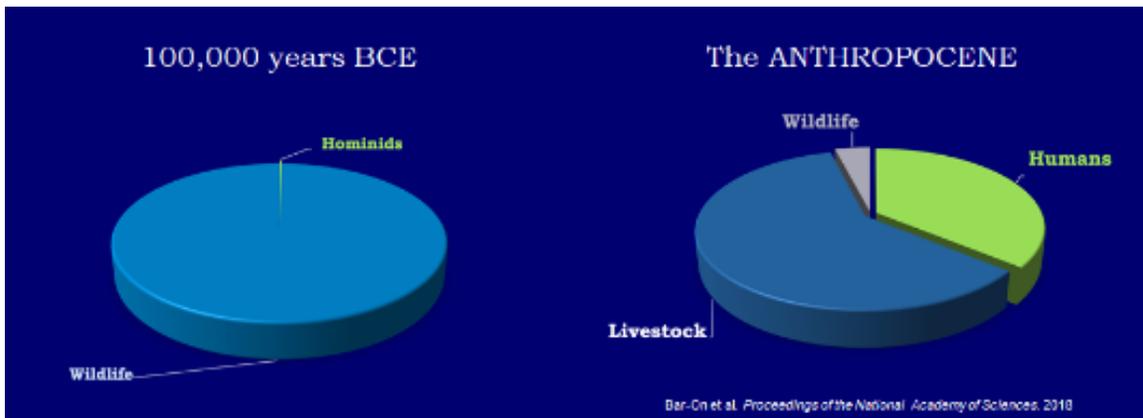
*Google “cute bats” and you will get dozens of pictures of bats being cute and useful.*

# Bats: Myth and Reality

By Catherine Baier

At QFN's October 16 meeting, Jonathan Balcombe provided an interesting and informative presentation on bats. Jonathan is well versed in the world of bats as his studies include a MSc from Carleton University where he investigated bats eavesdropping on the echolocation of other bats to locate insects. Jonathan's PhD (University of Tennessee) field work showed that Mexican free-tailed bat mothers can recognize their pup from voice alone.

Jonathan also discussed the threats to bats, one of which is the white nose fungus syndrome though he emphasized that the greatest threat to bats is the loss of habitat. Jonathan shared some slides that highlighted the massive loss of wildlife habits from the expansion of animal agriculture.



<p><b>ANIMAL AGRICULTURE</b></p> <p>83% all agricultural land</p> <p>18% of the calories we consume</p>	<p>Converting plant protein into animal protein (meat) is FAR LESS EFFICIENT than eating plant protein directly.</p>
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## ***Canadian Bat Box Study***



Catherine provided some information about a bat box study that she and Bernd are participating in that is conducted by the Canadian Wildlife Federation along with the Wildlife Conservation Society and Trent University. The purpose of this study is to take an in-depth look at bat box use and their internal microclimate to investigate the effect these structures have on bat physiology, survival and reproduction. As temperatures are increasing, the goal is to determine the gold standard for bat boxes and to move away from poor ones that may do more harm than good.

Participants in the study are asked to periodically monitor the number of bats using their bat boxes, to install temperature loggers in the boxes that are provided by CWF, and to report any instances of bats that are experiencing problems.

Catherine and Bernd have been participating in the study for three years and have found that the extreme temperatures that we have been experiencing during the summer have put the bats at risk. In the late afternoon during hot spells of continuous days of 30 plus degrees bats were observed hanging outside their boxes and some dead bats were found. At this point they put up four more bat boxes, on different sides of their house to allow the bats to move to their box of choice depending upon the temperature. Bats are extremely temperature sensitive and since the addition of the boxes, no more dead bats were found. It is obvious that the standard recommendation of south facing bat box placement to allow 6-8 hours of sun is not what the bats need during times of hot temperatures. Hopefully, as a result of this study, more information will be available to provide safe dwellings for Canadian bats.

The following link to will provide information on bats and how to participate in the study.  
<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/explore/bats/?src=signature>

## Cash for Cans

By John Lowry

The response from the members of the Quinte Field Naturalists in collecting alcohol containers (beer cans, wine bottles etc) and pop cans has been TREMENDOUS!! We have surpassed our initial goal for this year, but, like the old saying, the more the merrier!!

The deadline for this year's collection is fast approaching -- once cashed in and totaled I donate the monies to the Nature Conservancy of Canada on Giving **Tuesday, November 28th**, so that the monies are matched by a sponsor. Thereby our contribution is effectively doubled.

If you have containers to donate, please feel free to contact me ( [johnslowry61@gmail.com](mailto:johnslowry61@gmail.com). 613-962-5232), drop them off at my residence (32 Bradgate Road, Belleville) or bring them to our meeting on November 20th.

### PLEASE NOTE

Bottles must be alcohol containers and cans must be aluminium. No soup or other tin cans please.

Deliver your collection to John before Nov. 28 so that he has time to cash it in. So far funds total over \$3,000. Let's help John reach \$3,500.

Thanks to John for his work on this very successful project.



Left. Orange Jelly Spot by Jason King.

Right -Chicken of the Woods by John Blaney



## ***Shirley Langer Tree Planting – A Community Affair***

Story and pictures by Dan Guenther



***Students (l to r) Victoria, Lisa and Colton with their teacher, Stephanie Byrne from St. Theresa Catholic Secondary School take a brief break to pose for the photographer.***

The Quinte Field Naturalists, Tree Canada, the Belleville Home Building Centre, Bayview Home Hardware, Quinte Conservation, the City of Belleville, Belleville Fire Department, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and St. Theresa's Catholic Secondary School, along with members of the community, all braved the cool fall weather to plant a diverse selection of native plants, shrubs, and trees at the head of the Shirley Langer Trail in Belleville. The contingent from St. Theresa's was especially large and brought a youthful exuberance, which energized the whole group. It was a fun event with approximately 70 participants, made possible by a generous grant from Home Hardware. Professional tree planting instructions were provided, and a lot of fun was had learning this new skill. Many hands made light work as the entire site was planted and mulched in just over an hour!

Take a moment this fall to visit and enjoy the trail. Pin cherries, cottonwoods, and white cedar trees are interspersed with nannyberries, dogwoods, and asters. In a few years



***QFN member Greg Parsons (Orange vest) was one of the main organizers of the event. Here he gives instructions to just a few of the participants.***

time, this old scrubby field will soon grow into a diverse forest. Nesting boxes were donated by Wild Birds Unlimited, which will provide homes for chickadees, wrens, and other birds as this forest grows.

Planting trees in urban settings is very important. Pockets of greenery provide home to wildlife, help store carbon dioxide, and beautify our neighbourhoods. Natural habitat is particularly key along shorelines. Wildlife need shelter while they drink, migrating birds use these areas as the first places to rest and

feed after crossing the water, and shoreline plants protect against water and storm damage.

This is the first tree-planting coordinated by the Quinte Field Naturalists. Others are in the works, and fund-raising continues. Please keep your eyes and ears open for the next event, lend a hand, and help naturalize our city and build our community.



***COLLARED EARTHSTAR BY LORI BORTHWICK***



***SHAGGY PARASOL BY ROBERT ORMSTON***

## ***Belleville Beaver Conflict Update***

By Catherine Baier

At the October 23<sup>rd</sup> QFN membership meeting, Catherine gave a summary of QFN's efforts to persuade the Belleville council to amend their current wildlife/trapping policy in order to change its focus from trapping and killing beavers to nonlethal approaches when there is a perceived conflict situation.



*PHOTO BY LESLIE O'ROURKE*

In April, 2023 QFN recommended to the council that nonlethal beaver management mitigation measures would best meet the council's goal of coexistence with wildlife. In order to provide a more sustainable and cost efficient management plan QFN also recommended the hiring of a qualified beaver management professional to assess and address any potential conflict areas.

The Belleville Council did not respond to QFN's recommendations so on July 28 QFN presented a deputation to the Green Task Force to clarify its position and to offer support. Representatives from the Highland Waters Metis Council, Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre and The Humane Society of Hastings Prince Edward also attended the deputation to read statements supporting QFN's recommendations.

The Green Task Force is meeting on October 27 to decide whether to recommend to the council that they follow QFN's recommendations. Chris Malette, chair of the GTF, has agreed that Skip Lisle, an internationally renowned beaver management expert, be invited to attend the meeting via conference video to provide more information.

We are hoping for a positive response from the GTF that would benefit Belleville residents, the beavers, and the wetlands. It would also be good economics for the town of Belleville as the solutions would last for decades if put in place by an experienced professional who understands beavers. Importantly the upfront cost would be spread over many years.

## ***QFN Executive Board Zoom Meeting – October 23***

### **Decisions**

**Annual Dinner.** After considerable discussion the board decided to offer both a vegan option and a meat option at next spring's fundraising dinner. In our advertising we will use the following wording:

*To reduce the environmental impact of this event we are offering a plant-based option in addition to a meat based one. This is a great opportunity to try a delicious plant-based meal and help the planet.*

**Tree Planting.** We will hold another plant sale in the spring and seek an agreement with the city to stage another tree-planting event. Please contact Greg Parsons or Dan Guenther if you would like to help with this event.

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***Above: Wolf's Milk by David Bree***



***Above: Dog Sick Slime Mold by David Bree***



***VELVET FOOT BY KYLE BLANEY***

## **Christmas Bird Count**

Birds Canada stresses the importance of the annual Christmas Bird Count:

***Started in 1900, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is North America's longest-running Citizen Science project. People in more than 2000 locations throughout the Western Hemisphere participate in the CBC each year.***

*The information collected by thousands of CBC volunteer participants forms one of the world's largest sets of wildlife survey data. The results are used by conservation biologists, environmental planners, and naturalists to assess the population trends and distribution of birds.*

**Wednesday, December 27** is the day for the QFN count. Groups of counters will spend the day combing through assigned areas to find as many birds of as many species as possible. The count is suitable for counters of all skill levels. Each group will be led by at least one skilled counter.

If you don't feel up to a full day in the field you can be a feeder counter and never leave the house if you live within the count circle.

Interested birders please contact Tom Wheatley [bellevillecbc@outlook.com](mailto:bellevillecbc@outlook.com).



*EASTERN BLUEBIRDS ARE ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY ON A CBC. PHOTO BY  
KYLE BLANEY*

## ***QFN Outing to Beaver Creek Property***

Photos by Ted Pordham  
Story by John Lowry

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, members of the Quinte Field Naturalists (QFN) had the opportunity to visit a Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) property just north of the village of Marmora which is one parcel of the newly acquired 'Hastings Wildlife Junction.'

Leading the tour of the Beaver Creek property, which is located along Shanick Road, was Luke Ridgway, Large Landscape Program Coordinator for NCC. Luke,

who was accompanied by several other NCC employees, led the members along an old logging road deep into the scenic property.

The Beaver Creek property is just one of a large cluster of properties that make up the Hastings Wildlife Junction. This conglomerate of properties, totalling over 10,000 hectares in size, sits astride the junction of the Algonquin to Adirondack and the Land Between corridors. The properties were officially acquired in the summer of 2023 and are part of a two-part deal to preserve one of the largest conservation acquisitions in local history.



***CREEKS AND RIVERS IN HASTINGS JUNCTION ARE VITAL IN MAINTAINING WATER QUALITY FLOWING INTO LAKE ONTARIO IN THE MOIRA AND TRENT RIVERS***



***BOTTLE GENTIAN LOVES THE ACIDIC SOIL AND SHADY CONDITIONS IN HASTINGS JUNCTION FORESTS.***

The properties of the Hastings Wildlife Junction were once used for logging and mining. The land was acquired through the collaboration of the NCC, Kruger Products and other donors.

Although all land acquired by NCC is private, some sections of the Hastings Wildlife Junction will be open to the public for low-impact recreational use. As an example, the NCC has developed a walking trail at their Railway Creek property, located along the Bannockburn Road, and which is also part of the Hastings Wildlife Junction.



*BEAR'S HEAD TOOTH BY ROBERT ORMSTON*



*CONIFER MAZEGILL BY LORI BORTHWICK*

## Avian Sightings

It wasn't all slimy and moldy in October. In October you get an interesting mix of birds. Follow photos clockwise from the top right. Photographers names are in brackets. Some birds are just passing through between their nesting areas in the north and their winter residences further south. White-crowned sparrows (Jason King) and long-billed dowitchers (Kyle Blaney) are in this category. Some residents linger before heading south like eastern phoebes (Andrea Kingsley) and this chipping sparrow (Jason King) already in winter garb. Our winter residents are also starting to arrive. Snow bunting (Andrea Kingsley) and common redpoll (Jason King). Among these arrivals and departures our year-round residents are still here. Pileated woodpecker in the centre (Rick Beaudon) Note: All pictures were not taken in October but all species were found in October.



## ***Mary Oliver – Song for autumn***

Not too long ago our grand daughter introduced me to the nature poetry of American poet Mary Oliver. Oliver's poetry tends to be contemplative, focussing on the quieter aspects of nature not the spectacular colours we associate with the season.



*PHOTO BY DAVID WHELAN IN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS*

Don't you imagine the leaves dream now  
how comfortable it will be to touch  
the earth instead of the  
nothingness of the air and the endless  
freshets of wind? And don't you think  
the trees, especially those with  
mossy hollows, are beginning to look for  
the birds that will come—six, a dozen—to sleep  
inside their bodies? And don't you hear  
the goldenrod whispering goodbye,  
the everlasting being crowned with the first  
tuffets of snow? The pond  
stiffens and the white field over which  
the fox runs so quickly brings out  
its long blue shadows. The wind wags  
its many tails. And in the evening  
the piled firewood shifts a little,  
longing to be on its way