



The Quinte Naturalist

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



November's Speaker – Dr. Jeff Bowman



Bobcat or Lynx?

Mon., Nov. 27. 7:00 p.m. Sills Auditorium, Bridge St. United Church

Bobcat and Lynx - A Tail of Two Ontario Wild Cats

Senior Research Scientist with MNRF Wildlife Research and Monitoring Section, Dr. Jeff Bowman, will share his findings from years of field studies on these two elusive felines. And, yes. "tail" is supposed to be spelled that way. Come to hear Dr. Bowman to find out why.

CLUB NEWS

Members are reminded that the QFN has its own web page which is kept updated regularly with photos, notices of meetings, and other news. It is here where you can find all the newsletters archived back as far as 2012. Also posted are the minutes from each meeting as well as any QFN correspondence that has been sent out. There is also a link on the web page that will take you right to the QFN Facebook page. The QFN web page is hosted on the NatureStuff website at <http://naturestuff.net/site/> . When the home page comes up, simply click on "Organizations" from the Main Menu at the top of the page, then scroll down to the Quinte Field Naturalists link.



Frink Fall Festival. At the Frink Fall Festival on Sunday, 22 October George Thomson and Tom Wheatley staffed "Ask the Naturalist" sites. Maya Navrot of Quinte Conservation was one of the organizers of the day. Shown in the picture from the right are Maya, Tom, George and some guy who spent the time just wandering around.

Christmas Bird Count. Our annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Wednesday, December 27. Teams of counters spend the day in an assigned area recording all the bird species and their numbers. Please let John Blaney know if you would like to participate. This will be the sixteenth consecutive year that we have joined thousands of counters in North and parts of South America to contribute our data to aid the health of our bird populations.

January Outing. The owling expedition originally scheduled for the worst stretch of weather this fall was postponed. After the new year members will receive an email with a date and further information.



January Meeting. - Mon., Jan. 22, 2018 - The Fall and Rise of the Bald Eagle
Renowned local naturalist Terry Sprague, will tell of the disappearance and return of this majestic bird as a nesting species in Prince Edward County.

Our meetings are always on the fourth Monday of the month.

Terry Says ...

If you are on Terry Sprague's mailing list you will find "NatureStuff Updates" in your email inbox every Sunday. Terry describes three current issues or events and provides links to the relevant places on his web site. Links may become inactive as the information on the web site changes so don't wait too long before checking links that particularly interest you. Here are two items from last Sunday's message:

1) This week's Environmental Rant has been submitted by Evonne Potts and deals with a controversial development named Johnston Point, a proposed gated waterfront housing development on Loughborough Lake north of Kingston that is directly located inside what is designated provincially protected habitat. The posting of a proposed benefit permit is perfect proof that our Endangered Species Act is ineffective, and worst, that it misleads the public into believing that there really is protection for species at risk. Sad to say, there is no protection. Click the link below:



The five-lined skink, Ontario's only lizard, which is "protected" by the Endangered Species Act occurs at Johnston Point. (Photo by Tony deGroot,)

<http://www.tonydegroot.com/>

http://naturestuff.net/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1665&Itemid=28



The eastern whip-poor nests both in the IBA and at Johnston Point.

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

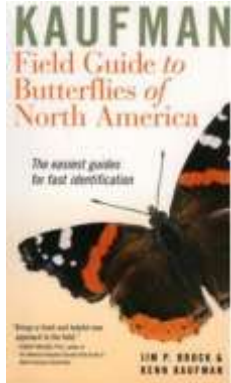
2) The Prince Edward County South Shore Important Bird And Biodiversity webpage on the NatureStuff website has been updated to include a descriptive birding map of the entire IBA showing all roads and the types of habitat associated with each road, as well as locations of the wetlands, Little Bluff Conservation Area, and the Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. Click the link below to access The Prince Edward County South Shore Important Bird And Biodiversity webpage (new map is at bottom of page):

http://naturestuff.net/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2199&Itemid=69

What's In a Name?

by Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson
First published in the Tweed News, Nov. 11, 2015

What is the name of that butterfly that is still fluttering about on November 4th? Picture yourself walking along a trail through the woods with us. It could be the Trans-Canada Trail through Tweed, a beautiful picturesque pathway that surrounds you with a huge number of living things. You might venture down the same route a week or even months from now and encounter a number of different species. Of course, some of the individuals, like various kinds of trees, would be there every time. They are the conspicuous members in the structure of the woodland ecosystem and are dominant players affecting the lives of many other organisms. As the seasons change, their appearance may be altered, but they remain steadfast while other participants come and go. During our walk, we naturally want to know the names of the different mushrooms, plants and animals that we meet. This curiosity about the natural world is a large part of being human. We love to categorize and name things, from car and truck makes and models, to clothing styles, to the trees and birds that capture our attention in the forest as we stroll along.



In 2015, we are well equipped with numerous devices to help us as we explore our natural world. We have the benefit of field guides, hand lenses, binoculars, I-phones and tablets. --- But imagine yourself walking down the same trail in the year 1900. You would have none of these aids to assist with identification. Lists itemizing your discoveries would be populated with common words such as mushroom, fern and woodpecker. --- And you could not go home to search the internet for more detailed identification. These restrictions, however, did not stop people from naming plants and animals. The universal need to know, to categorize, to name, prevailed and it resulted in the invention of “common names” for living things. Without a refined process, the same species of plant or animal was often given several common names, even in one locality, and other labels in distant locations.



While attaching specific labels to specimens in the early 1900's was almost impossible, the process of naming had been initiated years before. A Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, who lived from 1707 to 1778, invented the binomial, or two-name, system to ease the burden of differentiating one type of living thing from another. The first of the



two words, the Genus name, is always capitalized and it gives a label to the grouping that includes two or more related species. It is somewhat like our last name that links us to our aunts, uncles and cousins. Sometimes, the genus includes only one species, as in the group, *Homo sapiens*, to which we belong. The second word, never capitalized, is the species name

which refers to a particular living organism such as a Beech Tree or a Red Fox. --- And in respect of all of you grammarians out there, we must mention that 'species' is both singular and plural.



There is a very slight chance that a chipping sparrow may appear at your feeder in the winter. In the winter it lacks the central dot usually seen in the tree sparrow's breast. The cap is tan rather rusty. Note the prominent white wing bars of the tree sparrow and the rusty rather than black eyeline. Tree sparrows also often occur in flocks, associating with dark-eyed juncos.
<https://feederwatch.org/learn/tricky-bird-ids/>

The binomial names are derived from Greek and/or Latin and are standardized across the world so that, when people at any location on our planet read or hear the binomial or scientific name of an organism, they know or can look up the individual species. Let's examine the names of two of our bird feeder visitors, the Tree Sparrow (shown in the picture at the top) whom we enjoy in the winter months and the Chipping Sparrow who is a warm weather guest. The genus *Spizella*, derived from the Greek 'Spiza' or 'finch' and the Latin 'ella' or 'small', includes both of these lively feathered friends, telling us that

they are closely related. The Tree Sparrow's second name is 'arborea' meaning 'tree' while the Chipping Sparrow's defining label is 'passerina' connoting 'little sparrow'. Now you have a choice! When you see that small, chestnut-capped bird perched in a tree in the winter, you can impress your friends with its official common name, American Tree Sparrow, or its scientific name, *Spizella arborea*. The option for the Chipping Sparrow, which is quite similar in appearance but resides with us only in warm weather, is *Spizella passerina*. Why bother with those Latin and Greek names which very few of us can

remember? George scores high in this domain while Elizabeth drags her feet but makes no apologies! It's only the binomial or scientific name that shows the relationships between species and is sure to be known all over the world.

So, with aids in hand, we are stepping out into the treasured warmth of this beautiful November day to discover the name of that butterfly that is still searching for a tasty snack in the broccoli florets and those persistent Johnny Jump-up & Lamium flowers. Naming living things, of course, is only the first step: next comes more exacting knowledge about how they live and relate to others. These deeper understandings help us to develop an appreciation of them as fellow passengers on planet Earth, an appreciation that is vitally important in these times of decreasing biodiversity. Let us continue to walk together and be intrigued by the beauty and value of what nature has to offer right here in the Tweed area.

Winter Finch Forecast

In his annual winter finch forecast Ron Pittaway reports that there is a bumper cone crop in northern and central Ontario. That means that most of these birds won't travel further south than Algonquin Park but they may be abundant there. A weekend winter trip to the park and its Visitor Centre might be in order. Common redpoll (right) by Kathy deGroot. White-winged crossbill and evening grosbeak by Tony deGroot.



Walking the Frink

This is one of a series describing short walks in the Quinte area to observe nature. They are intended to be introductions to these trails. Do your own walks to see what else you can find. I welcome information about your sightings and photographs or drawings of what you see.

A few years ago I stood there in the midst of one of my occasional sneezing fits. After about the eighth respiratory explosion there was a sudden agitation in the branches over my head. A great horned owl could stand it no longer and had departed to a quieter spot to continue his nap. With experiences like this how can you not love the Frink Centre?

Undoubtedly most QFN members need no introduction to the H.R. Frink Education Centre. Its variety of habitats from an upland beech-maple-hemlock forest to a silver maple swamp to a marsh plus others just offers too many opportunities to experience nature to ignore. My choice for this walk was the site of this earlier incident along the Drumlin Trail.



The winter wren is a tiny bird, smaller even than its cousin the house wren. Its small size, colour and behavior make it hard to spot. In fact, if you do see one you may mistake it for a mouse. It scurries around under tangles of fallen trees and branches foraging for spiders and insects. Any attempt to remain anonymous ends in the spring and summer when the males sing. It's hard to believe that such a small bird can produce such a long intricate song. One author says that the male sings "with remarkable vehemence." The species is not common in this area and is seldom seen in the winter. Click this link for more information, a recording and a video.
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Winter_Wren/id

The woods are often quiet this time of year. Aside from troops of chickadees and their companions there are few sounds except for the wind in the trees. The overall effect is calming and conducive to a meditative walk.

I did have target birds in mind. Great horned owls do sometimes roost in the tall hemlocks. Some years barred owls take up residence near the trail. This is also the area where winter wrens may be found.

The walk starts on the north side of Thrasher Road between the classroom and the washroom. Be sure to stop to see what's patronizing the bird feeders. In winter it can be a good site for purple finches. Quinte Field Naturalists supply the seed and Doug Newfield keeps the feeders filled with occasional assistance from other QFN members when he is not available. Lately I've seen few species there but numbers will increase when snow covers the ground and birds have more trouble finding natural food.

Follow this trail to the top of the hill where the trail forks. There is a resident pair of pileated woodpeckers in this area so watch for them. The trail circles the drumlin so both forks are part of the Drumlin Trail. I chose to continue and turn right at the next intersection. The leafless trees allowed views of the river all along this section of the trail but there was no activity there until a great blue heron arrived. In the spring there will be Baltimore orioles.

I continued on this trail until the third turn to the right which is the return route. That's the one that doesn't require a steep climb to the top of the drumlin. Along this trail section I was looking down on the silver maple swamp. This is the haunt of the winter wren. If there it chose to remain hidden but the downy woodpecker, chickadees and white-breasted nuthatches were enjoying the feast of insects, spiders and their eggs. American robins were scattered through the territory trying to decide whether they would stay for the winter or move on. Both options have their risks.

I didn't find my target birds. That doesn't mean that I didn't enjoy the walk. The variety offered by the Frink Centre will always make it one of my favourite places to spend time in nature.

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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Next Newsletter Deadline – January 10, 2018

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com