

# THE QUINTE NATURALIST

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

## MARCH

### CAN BIRDS AND HUMANS CO-EXIST?



*Quinte Field Naturalists*

*Lecture Series*



**Monday, March 25, 2019**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Sills Auditorium**

**Bridge Street United  
Church, Belleville**



Urbanization, forest fragmentation, agricultural practices. Trent University Biology Professor and passionate avian ecologist, Erica Nol, will discuss her research into song bird conservation and the impacts of humans on birds in the settled landscapes of southern Ontario.

*All welcome (donations appreciated) ..... Refreshments are served*

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*Please renew your membership if you haven't done so already.*

# DOOMED

**YOU ARE DOOMED** to miss our annual dinner and Wayne Grady, well-known author and naturalist unless you purchase your tickets by March 30. There are no ticket sales at the door because the church must know ahead of time how many dinners to prepare. It's a chicken buffet dinner with a Vegetarian/Vegan option. Tickets are \$28 and can be purchased at the March meeting or by contacting Sharron and John Blaney – 613-962-9337.

## OUR NEXT OUTING

**Saturday, March 30** – Meet Tom Wheatley by the Golden Jet in Zwicks Park at 8:30 a.m. You will scan the hundreds of waterfowl which gather under the Bay Bridge until they disperse to nest. From there Tom will lead the group to another birding hotspot, Twelve O'Clock Point at the west end of the Bay of Quinte. There is often a different mix of waterfowl here. Do dress warmly. The pier at this end of the Murray Canal extends almost half a kilometre into the bay. The outing will end about noon.

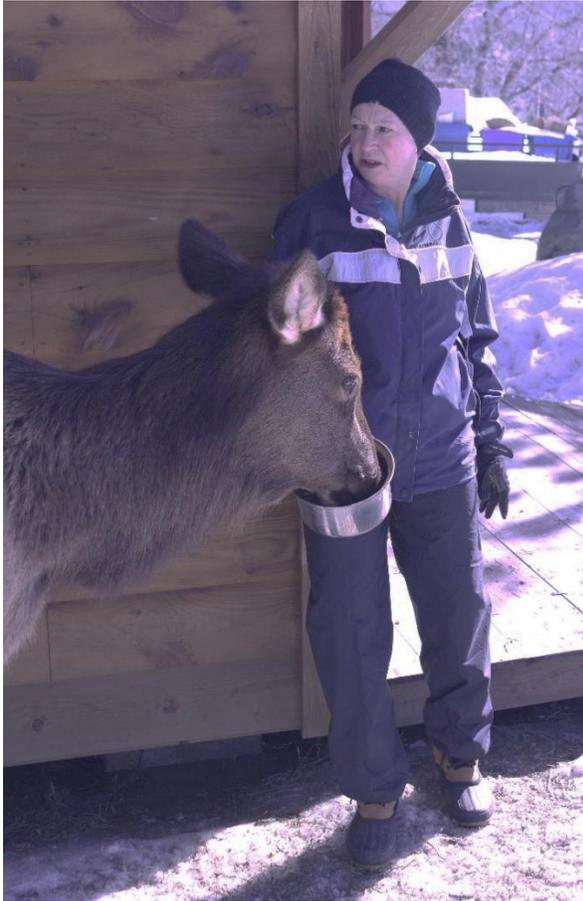


*In the spring the bright orange bill of the male common merganser makes a striking completion to its green and white plumage.  
Photo by Tony DeGroot.*



It will soon be time for mourning cloaks to emerge. They overwinter as adults under bark or woodland debris. Unlike most butterflies they may live for a year as adults with the yellow edges of their wings gradually fading to white. Watch for them on woodland trails even before spring ephemerals start to bloom. Photo by Jason King in iNaturalist.org.

# ELK OUTING REPORT



***One of the elk was an orphan which became so used to Lanna that she can feed it by hand. Photo by John Lowry***

about the elk, whose home territory is adjacent to her property, and she willingly answered questions from the group members.

The members were treated to a close up visit with a healthy herd of elk, comprising approximately 30 individuals -- including bull elk (with their antlers still intact), cows and yearlings. The elk were busy feeding and members were able to approach within 20 – 30 feet.

By John Lowry

Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup> dawned bright and sunny as nine members of the QFN met at the Lowes parking lot in Belleville. The group headed north for the destination, the residence of Lanna Minnie, on the Colbourne Road just south of Bancroft to view a herd of wild Elk.

Lanna greeted the group outside her home where it was a balmy 3 degrees Celsius. Lanna was knowledgeable and passionate



***Photo by Sharron Blaney***



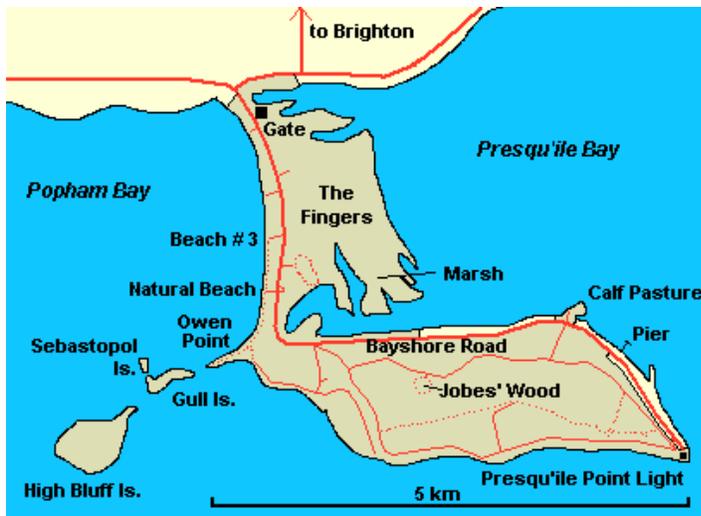
Elk or wapiti are one of the largest species within the deer family and one of the largest terrestrial mammals in North America. The elk are present south of Bancroft because of the 'Elk Restoration Project' (1998-2001) which saw elk captured in Elk Island National Park in Alberta shipped to several locations throughout Ontario. The local release took place in January 2000 and the herd has survived and prospered. (Elk were also released in the Lake of the Woods district, along the north shore of Lake Huron and in the Nipissing and French River areas as well.)

## PRESQU'ILE OUTING

By John Lowry

Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup> dawned bright and sunny with cooler temperatures, particularly when not sheltered from the persistent wind. The gathering point for this outing was Zwicks where eight members set off for Presqu'ile Provincial Park, under the leadership of Tom Wheatley, to attend the annual 'Waterfowl Weekend' festival. Our turnout would eventually total 10 members.

Enroute, a brief stop was made at Alyea Road to check out the waterfowl in the fields south of Wellers Bay then it was on to Presqu'ile.



Presqu'ile Provincial Park is a 'Natural Environment' park within the Ontario provincial park system that consists of a limestone island connected to the mainland by a sand spit, also known as a tombolo. Presqu'ile Bay, surrounded by a provincially significant wetland, is an important stop over point for migrating birds along the 'Michigan Flyway'. Thousands of swans,

geese and ducks stop in the sheltered areas of the bay to rest and feed before moving on to nesting grounds further north and west.

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***The protected, relatively shallow waters of Presqu'ile Bay provide the nutritious fuel waterfowl need to complete their flight to their nesting area. Species with different habits are often found together in the bay. The redhead, in the background here, is mainly a prairie nester. The bufflehead, like the closely related common goldeneye, nests in cavities in trees in the boreal forest. Photo by Kyle Blaney***

The group stopped at 3 locations to view the waterfowl – the government dock, Presqu'ile Point and Calf Pasture. With the aid of scopes and binoculars the group sighted 43 different species, including Mute and Tundra Swans, Canada Geese and a good selection of ducks, including Redheads, Goldeneyes, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads and Ring-necked ducks.

There were also two quick stops to view the interesting ice 'volcanoes' along the park's southern shoreline as well as an impromptu stop in the forest to view assorted birds present there, such as Cedar Waxwings, Chickadees and both Downy and Hairy woodpeckers.



***The patterns and colours of the canvasback make it almost a twin for the redhead. The shape of its head is distinctive and the colour on the back is much lighter resulting in the name "canvasback." It nests in the west. Photo by Kyle Blaney***

The members enjoyed burgers and sausages at the Lighthouse museum courtesy of 'The Friends of Presqu'ile Park' as well as a quick stop at the Birdhouse Nature Store located just outside the park's entrance.



***Ice volcanoes are formed when waves force their way up through an ice shelf or slush. Water and slush are ejected and freeze to form the cone.***

# WORKING WITH NCC

If you want to work closely with nature and don't mind getting your hands dirty and your muscles a little sore the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Nature need help maintaining the properties they own. Last fall some members of the QFN joined a



*John Wilson and Denice Wilkins (red coat) are busy getting a close-up view of the Napanee Alvar. Pia Kaukoranta between them is a Senior Development Officer with NCC. Photo by John Lowry.*

volunteer crew working on NCC's property on the Napanee Alvar.

Amanda Tracy, NCC's coordinator of conservation biology for Central Ontario is planning more clean-up on the Camden East property. Unfortunately the proposed date is April 27 which conflicts with a QFN outing to The Land Between. The event is not listed on the NCC website yet so that may change. Watch your email for more information when it is available.

# FOR NATURE NERDS

Do you enjoy outings to see elk in north Hastings or ducks at Presqu'île but would like to go one step further and do actual nature studies of local wildlife? QFN is partnering with Quinte Conservation to work on inventories of species on their properties other than developed conservation areas. You can choose your subject or subjects of interest. You can concentrate on any living group which you would like to know better whether it be birds, wildflowers, ferns, butterflies, dragonflies, spiders, moss, etc. You can choose to learn more about a specific habitat such as woodland, field or granite barren. We're in early stages of this project so watch for more information. Contact John Blaney if you are chomping at the bit and want to start this spring.

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# SAVING BIRD'S LIVES

By Denice Wilkins

## Save Money, Save Lives and Give Us Your Ideas to Save More!

Why put strings or white squares on windows? All together now, "To Save Bird Lives!" If you haven't been to see the installation of these bird saving window treatments at the Quinte Conservation Office or the Frink Centre, it is worth having a look and considering



***A QFN crew hard at work making the windows at the Quinte Conservation office safer for birds.***

applying them to your windows. Remember, due to sheer numbers, it's at our homes and other low-rise buildings where about 90% of the bird deaths occur. Just one death a year at your home, multiplied by the number of houses in Canada alone, adds up to millions of deaths annually.

From QFN's work at Quinte Conservation and the Frink Centre, we have a few rolls of marking tape left over that we are offering for sale. Because we

purchased in bulk, we saved on volume and shipping so we can pass that savings on to you. The price is \$16.50 a roll, which covers 16 square feet of glass. Direct from the company, one roll would be \$15.99 plus tax and shipping.

We're also looking for ideas of other public buildings where we could apply the bird saving window treatments? They must be buildings where volunteers on ladders can reach the windows to do the work. And that's the rub! There are several places we know of that are a problem but the glass is so high it would require hiring professional installers, which is cost prohibitive for our budget. Let us know if you have ideas.

Contact Denice to purchase marking tape or to offer suggestions.

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# Turtle ICU (Incubation Care Unit / nest protector) RECALL!!

By Denice Wilkins

If you, or anyone you know has purchased a Turtle ICU, new research has determined that it needs a slight modification. Please read on.

Last June John and I were delighted to discover a Snapping Turtle had once again laid her eggs on the turtle beach we created next to our pond. We immediately put the ICU on the nest to protect it from hungry predators. After about 2 weeks I took the ICU off the nest because research had determined that by that time the smells which attract the predators would be gone, and the nest would be safe. In September however, when the eggs should have soon been hatching, we were very dismayed to find the nest had been predated! Rather than seeing a small exit hole about the size of a toonie where the hatchlings emerged, wizen eggshells lay all about the dug up nest.

That incident led me to discover new research that has shown that nests are vulnerable to predators at any time up and until the hatchlings emerge. And our nest was unfortunate proof!! Much more research needs to be done, but it's possible that the smell of fluids released during hatching or the smell of rotting undeveloped or unfertilized eggs, may be what is attracting predators. Sounds could be another possible cue. It's been reported that some hatchlings vocalize within the nest cavity after hatching. Whatever the cue, instead of leaving the ICU on a nest for only two weeks, it's best to leave the nest protector on till the hatchlings emerge. But that necessitates creating a way for them to escape the cage that has protected them. Answer, cut a notch 2 inches (5 cm) wide and 1 inch (2.5 cm) high in the middle of two sides of the ICU. For Snapping and Blanding Turtles, leave the ICU on the nest till you see the exit hole in late August to late October. If it is a Painted Turtle nest, hatchlings usually spend the winter in the nest so leave the ICU on until the following Spring.

One Turtle ICU can save 20-60 Snapping Turtle eggs, 6-11 Blanding's Turtle eggs or 3-14 Painted Turtle eggs. All 8 turtle species in Ontario are declining in numbers. Using a turtle nest protector saves baby turtles and has a positive impact on Ontario turtle populations!

If you need help creating exit holes in your ICU please contact Denice at 613-478-5070 or [denicejohn@live.ca](mailto:denicejohn@live.ca).

Here is the best way my husband, John, found to make the exit holes in the ICU.



1. With the ICU screen on the ground and wood facing up, measure a 5cm wide section in the middle of one side of the ICU.



2. Using an electric skill saw set at a depth of 2.5 cm, make many cuts within the 5cm section.



3. Keep sawing out the small sections until it leaves an exit hole 5 cm wide and 2.5 cm high.

4. Do the same thing on the other side of the ICU.

5. Set the ICU out with screen on top and the newly-cut hole at ground level so that the turtles are able to get out.

<p><b>Golden Wing Birding</b></p> <p>Birding Tours in the Bay of Quinte Region with local birder Tom Wheatley</p> <p>goldenwingbirding@outlook.com goldenwingbirding.ca</p> 	<p><b>Visit Tom's website and browse his accounts of birding in southeast Asia. His checklists include some stunning photos.</b></p>
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**YOUTH SUMMIT** On the weekend of September 20-22, in Geneva Park near Orillia on Lake Couchiching, Ontario Nature will host the Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Environmental Leadership for high school students from across the province. Recently QFN has sponsored Jacob Smith from Napanee and Robert Ormston who became an advocate for the banning of neonicotinoids to benefit native pollinators. It's a chance to meet students who share an interest in nature and to develop leadership skills. QFN pays all fees so the student's only expense is travel to and from Orillia. We ask that students submit a letter to <mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com> telling us something about themselves and why they would like to attend this event. Watch next month's newsletter for details such as deadlines. <https://ontarionature.org/events/youth-summit/>

**A BELATED HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR MARION FISHER.** Marion recently celebrated her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. She now lives in a senior's home in Ottawa and reports that she still enjoys hearing about club activities. Marion was one of a small group of determined naturalists who shepherded QFN through the 1950s when it was in danger of folding. Marion has continued her support of QFN by turning a birthday tradition on its head. She has given us a generous gift to continue our work. Thank you, Marion!

*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 pm, 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.*

<b>President</b> George Thomson 613-478-3205	<b>Past President</b> Wendy Turner	<b>Vice-President</b> Jessica Spooner 705-875-4643
<b>Recording Secretary</b> Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407	<b>Corresponding Secretary</b> Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205	
<b>Treasurer</b> Sarah Kennedy	<b>Publicity/Environmental Officer</b> Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070	<b>Membership</b> John Blaney 613-962-9337
<b>Newsletter</b> John Blaney 613-962-9337	<b>Outings</b> John Lowry 613-962-5232	<b>Social Convener</b> Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – April 15, 2019  
Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com) a