

THE QUINTE NATURALIST

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



While there is a remote possibility that we still might see the odd snowflake we can definitely say that it's spring now. May offers unlimited possibilities to enjoy nature. Local woods are filled with a profusion of spring ephemerals. For birds Prince Edward Point is the place to be. Most of the pictures in this issue of *The Quinte Naturalist* show just a few of the species you may see in your rambles. Local photographers took these photos and posted many of them on eBird or iNaturalist to verify sightings in the Quinte area. There's much beauty in our local nature.

Articles in this issue were written by local naturalists or feature their accomplishments. As a board member of the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory, Peter Fuller has submitted a list of the events of **this year's Birding Festival, May 11-20.** (Page 2) Click on the link for full information. John Lowry, our Outings Coordinator, is offering **three outings in the next three months** . (Page 6). You can **support** PEPTBO, QFN, Bird Studies Canada and Peter through the birdathon. You can also **go birding with one of the Birdathon teams.** (Page 5)

Unfortunately there is more negative news this spring. Caroline Shultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature has issued a press release. Spring also initiates milkshake season. Sarah Kennedy, our treasurer has some comments about this frosty treat and a local business. Let's end on a positive note. Elizabeth and George share their enjoyment of one of our common local nesters, gray catbirds. We finish with pictures of two of the more than 20 species of warbler you can find at the point.



Blue-gray gnatcatchers are not common in our area as they are at the northern limit of their range. However, their numbers are increasing in Quinte at a rate of 1.5% annually. They can be found nesting near the observatory. Watch for them on the trail to the lighthouse. Photo by Keith Gregoire.

PEPTBO Spring Birding Festival May 11-20, 2019

6059 Long Point Rd (County Rd 13), Prince Edward ON

Full details, maps and registration at peptbo.ca/sbf.php

All Walks are approx.. 2-3 hr.

Daily – 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Observatory: bird banding, hospitality tent, checklists, sightings board.

Photography contest: Bird Portraits and Birds in Action – details at peptbo.ca

Deadline for entries is May 22, 2019

Big Week in the IBA – May 12-19:

Submit your list of species at the Observatory for prizes. Pick up an entry form at the observatory.

Sat May 11 – World Migratory Bird Day

8 a.m. Walk Traverse Woods with Kathy Felkar and Mike Burge

10 a.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with Brian Joyce

3 p.m. *For the Birds*—book launch reception/awards ceremony/poetry readings. Picton Branch, PEC Public Library (208 Main St. – contact Halliday at the Library: 613 399-2023)

4 p.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with Cheryl Anderson – plastics and birds

Sun May 12

8 a.m. Walk Traverse Woods with Tom Wheatley

10 a.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with Tom Wheatley

12 p.m. Big Week in the IBA starts – Checklist and drop off box at the Observatory

Mon May 13

8 a.m. Prince Edward County Field Naturalists – Birding the County: Sandbanks Park with Yvette Bree

Tue May 14

8 a.m. Guided Trip – Beaver Meadow with Juanita Hummel (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

8 a.m. Prince Edward County Field Naturalists – *Birding the County*: Pt. Petre with Joanne Dewey



Northern flickers have a unique habit for woodpeckers. Because they love ants they often forage on the ground. They are regular nesters here so you will often hear their loud “wicka-wicka-wicka” call. Photo by Joe Bartok.



Black-and white warblers also have a unique habit, at least for warblers. They forage on tree trunks and large limbs to find caterpillars and other insects in the bark, like a brown creeper. Their wispy song is easy to miss. Photo by Ian Dickinson.

Wed May 15

8 a.m. Guided Trip – Traverse Woods with Tom Wheatley (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

8 a.m. Prince Edward County Field Naturalists – *Birding the County*: Hudgin-Rose Property with Sheila Kuja and Amy Bodman

7 p.m. Prince Edward Field Naturalists – *Birding the County*: Marsh Monitoring on the Millennium Trail with Terry Sprague

Thu May 16

8 a.m. Guided Trip – South Shore Grasslands with Juanita Hummel (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

Fri May 17

8 a.m. Guided Trip – Beaver Meadow with Keith Gregoire (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

8 a.m. – Prince Edward County Field Naturalists – *Birding the County*: Pt. Petre with Joanne Dewey



8 a.m. Walk Traverse Woods with Mike Burge and Kathy Felkar

Any time you walk from the observatory to the lighthouse in May watch for white trout lily, also known as white fawnlily. It is a separate species and not just a colour phase of the more-common yellow trout lily or dogtooth violet. Photo by Sean Blaney

Sat May 18

8 a.m. Guided Trip – Traverse Woods with Mike Burrell (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

8 a.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with (TBA)

10 a.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with Ketha Gillespie

11 a.m. At the Observatory – Book signing with Mike Burrell – *Best Places to Bird in Ontario*

4 p.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with Cheryl Anderson

Sun May 19

8 a.m. Guided Trip – Lighthall Wetlands with Peter Fuller (* fee: pre-register online – limited to 10)

10 a.m. Walk from Observatory to the Lighthouse with (TBA)

12 p.m. Big Week in the IBA ends – submit your checklist of species in the box at the Observatory

Mon May 20

8 a.m. Walk Traverse Woods with Peter Fuller

Amenities: Parking, Toilets (Observatory and Traverse Woods), Hospitality Tent (Observatory), Picnic Area, Accessible and Stroller-friendly (walks at the Observatory only), no dogs on walks please

AVOID TICK BITES TO AVOID LYME DISEASE

Now that the warm weather is finally here, ticks are also becoming active. Lyme Disease is spread by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks (commonly called deer ticks). Infected ticks are present in Prince Edward County and the Belleville area.

The best protection against Lyme Disease is prevention. When venturing into forests or overgrown areas with shrubs or tall grass, take the following steps to prevent tick bites:

Wear closed-toe shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and pants; Pull socks over pant legs; wear light-coloured clothes to spot ticks more easily. Use insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin; and do a full-body check for ticks on yourself, children, and pets.

For more information visit the Health Unit website and enter “lyme disease.”

<http://hpepublichealth.ca/>

Go Birding in May and Support QFN

Join us for the 2019 Great Canadian Birdathon. Choose any day in May, go birding, get some sponsors and support the work of bird conservation and the work of QFN. Funds raised are split among QFN, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory and Bird Studies Canada.

May is one of the best months for birding in our area (100+ species in one day are not unusual). Register as an individual or join one of the great teams. Any skill level is welcome and there are great prizes!

To register as an individual go to: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon19/>

(Note: select Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory as the organization to which some of the funds will be directed – PEPtBO shares these funds with QFN)_or join one of the teams – the team will organize a route and help you register:
Contact Peter Fuller (petefullz@gmail.com or 613-968-4643)

If you can't join us for the Birdathon please consider sponsoring us (donations receive a tax receipt):
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon19/page/peter-fuller/>



Join one of Peter's teams. Perhaps you'll be lucky enough to see a real rarity like this scissor-tailed flycatcher which appeared in the spring of 2012. Photo by Kyle Blaney.

QFN Outings for Members

Outing on Tuesday, May 28th, 2019

A Quinte Field Naturalists outing has been organized to join the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Hastings and Prince Edward Land Trust at the

Hudgin-Rose Property

along the south shore of Prince Edward County.

There will be an announcement made AT 11 am about recent conservation efforts on Ostrander Point.

The event will run rain or shine. Light refreshments will be provided.

Those wishing to join us will meet at Zwicks Park West by the Golden Jet at **9:30 am** for the purposes of car-pooling and directions.



This property is part of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's eco-district 6-15 where they are currently concentrating their efforts for acquisition. The ecodistrict stretches from Barcovan in the west to Gananoque in the east. In Quinte the ecodistrict includes all of Prince Edward County and most of the area south of 401.

NCC has identified 19 target species in this area for special attention, 11 plants, 3 reptiles and 5 birds including the threatened least bittern shown here. Photo by Kyle Blaney

Two More Outings

June 1 – come tour the newly acquired Camden East property of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Ecodistrict where Amanda Tracey will give us a tour of this biologically rich alvar habitat

July 18 -- the Quinte Field Naturalists have teamed up with the Lower Trent Region Conservation Authority's Ewa Bednarczak for a journey to the Alderville First Nation's 'Black Oak Savanna' property which has one of the largest intact examples of native tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitat in south eastern Ontario

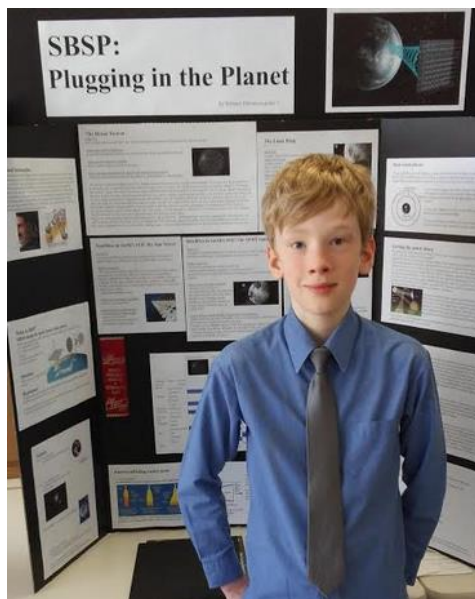
Members will receive an email closer to the events with more information.

Congratulations

William Tomlinson, our youngest member, had a big day at the recent Quinte Regional Science and Technology Fair. He won the Arlyne Gallese Astronomy Prize, a brand new astronomical telescope.



In addition his project, entitled SBSP: Plugging in the Planet, made him one of the only five students out of more than 170 students to earn a trip to the 2019 Canada-Wide Science Fair in Fredericton NB, May 15-17.



SBSP refers to Space-Based Solar Power, the concept of collecting the sun's power in space and distributing it to earth. The advantage of such a system is its superior ability to collect solar energy beyond the earth's atmosphere and darkness during nighttime hours. Its disadvantages include its expense and technological challenges.

Despite its appearance in fiction and video games SBSP is not science fiction. It is being pursued in China, Russia and Japan.

Good luck, William. Let us know how you do.

Some Negative News

Ontario Nature, has issued the following news release:

May 3, 2019

Queen's Park, Ontario – Bill 108, the omnibus bill tabled by the Government of Ontario on May 2, reflects neither the values nor the long-term interests of Ontarians who understand the importance of a healthy environment. Pandering to influential developers, the government is prepared to undermine environmental protections set out in several key pieces of legislation including Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA). It has grossly misled the public, pretending that proposed changes to the ESA would improve outcomes for species at risk. In fact, Schedule 5 of Bill 108, if passed, would delay, limit and/or remove protections for most Ontario's threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

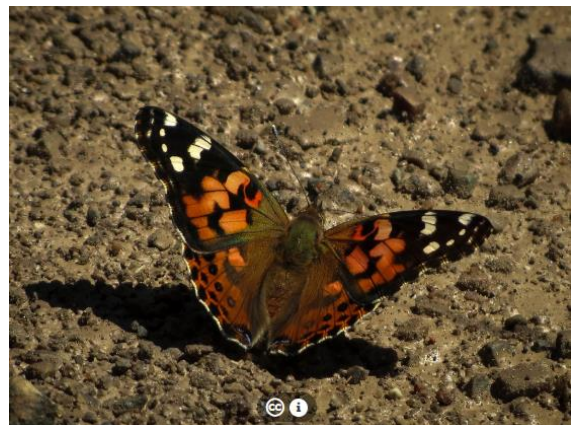
"Schedule 5 would be better named the Extinction Schedule," says **Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature.** **"It's all about pushing aside our most vulnerable plants and animals to make room for sprawling development and unchecked industrial activity. The government is greasing the wheels of destruction."**

One Person's Fight against Styrofoam

Excerpts from an article by Sarah Kennedy

Today one less Styrofoam cup goes to the landfill!!!!

If you hate the idea of getting your Reid's Dairy milkshake or Brain Freeze in a Styrofoam cup like I do there is something you can do about it! Take your own reusable cup with you! Make sure it's the right size for the drink you plan to buy. If they have to measure your beverage in one of their Styrofoam cups before they put in into yours then there is still a wasted Styrofoam cup that could make it to the landfill.



***Migrant Painted Ladies are starting to appear. They will be here until cooler fall weather forces them to move south.
Photo by Jason King***

Here is my story about Styrofoam cups:

My heart was heavy, buying a product that is harmful to the environment goes against what I stand for, and what I teach my Girl Guide unit. I came to the conclusion that I could not in good conscience continue to buy this product, and in so doing telling my daughter that it was ok to be oblivious to the problem we are contributing to. When lo and behold, my daughter points out a sign that says their cups are recyclable! Well that's great! We can all breath a great sigh of relieve, right? Wrong!

I was very skeptical about it as I have been told by some environmentalists that they could not be recycled. So, I called Quinte Waste Solutions myself and this is what they told me. While at this time they do have a buyer for WHITE CLEAN Styrofoam, the best course of action is to NOT USE IT. It is getting harder and harder to find buyers for Styrofoam and if they don't have a buyer for it they will stop accepting it all together... it ends up at the land fill.

HOWEVER, there are other immediate problems with using Styrofoam:

1. Not everyone will take the time to recycle it... it ends up at the landfill.
2. Not everyone will take the time to clean the Styrofoam properly. The recycling depot does not wash it, so if it's in a gooey gross mess they could toss it... it ends up at the landfill.

3. If the recycling bin is contaminated with something that can't be recycled, then everything in the bin will be tossed into the trash... it ends up at the landfill.
4. Quinte Waste Solutions DOES NOT accept BLACK Styrofoam... it ends up at the landfill.
5. The process to make Styrofoam into another product (it will never be a cup again) is NOT friendly to the environment.

Several American cities including San Francisco, Miami Beach, Washington and New York City have banned styrofoam food and drink containers. The entire state of Maine has done the same and other states are planning to follow suit. Even entire nations such as Taiwan have full or partial bans.

"Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans." — Jacques-Yves Cousteau

I asked the helpful clerks at Reid's Dairy if they would put my daughter's beverage into a reusable cup if we brought one with us. They were unsure, however, they took my name and number and told me they would ask their manager about it and have her call me back. As we left I told my daughter that if they answered no to our inquiry, we would not be coming back to Reid's Dairy anymore. This made us both sad, she loves their Brain Freezes' and I want to support a local business.

True to their word, the clerks I spoke to relayed my concern, and a manager from Reid's Dairy did call me back. She told me they would put our drink into a reusable cup if we bring one with us. This makes both Ruby and I happy, and hopefully you too. However, they are still handing out Styrofoam cups to all the other customers. I love Reid's Dairy and want to support them, but I feel this is something they really need to change.

There are so many times when we would like to do something to help the environment but say to ourselves "I'm just one person how can I possibly make a difference?" this is one of those times when you can! Every time people see me and you insisting Reid's Dairy puts our drink into a reusable cup is a time when those people might say to themselves "hey, that's the right thing to do. I'm going to bring my own cup next time"...

Today my daughter and I will go to Reid's Dairy with our reusable cup... one less Styrofoam cup will go to the landfill!!!

"Beautiful Grey"

Story by Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson

Reprinted with permission from The Tweed News, June 21st, 2017



Photo submitted by the authors

Early on a sunny June morning, from the thicket of Prickly Ash down near the south end of East Field, the mewling of a cat drifted to our ears. As we watched, the source of the cat's voice was revealed. An exuberant songbird, about the size of a Robin but slimmer, with a longer tail and bright gray in colour, flew like an arrow from the thicket, low across the field and into another clump of shrubbery.

Our brief glimpse of fleeting gray informed us that we were being entertained by the Gray Catbird. One of his calls, the mimic of the cat's mew, always challenges us to look more carefully. Is that sound really being generated by an avian friend? In our experience, the "mew" call is one of the most frequent vocal expressions of this "beautiful grey" songster. "Songster" here may be regarded as a somewhat relative term. Many may consider the Gray Catbird's song to be in a different

league from the sweet-sounding melodies of such birds as the Robin or the Song Sparrow. His catchy, rustic tune is a series of notes and phrases, rather disconnected and in several different pitches. Also, assorted whistles, mews and whines may be inserted throughout the song. Quite separate from all of these sounds is his distinct call, a rather harsh, scolding cat-like mew that really catches our attention.

The Grey Catbird is in the Mimic Thrush family, a family closely allied with the Thrush family which embraces species such as our Robin, Wood Thrush and Eastern Bluebird. In addition to the Catbird, the Mimic Thrush family includes the Brown Thrasher who breeds in our area and the Northern Mockingbird who raises her family further south. As we tilt our heads upward from the tasks of gardening to listen to the various melodies, we are often treated to several phrases repeated in pairs, the Brown Thrasher's concert which is more musical than the Catbird's. Both species, especially the Brown Thrasher, may incorporate parts of the songs of other birds into their vocal repertoires, helping to explain the family name, Mimic Thrushes.

The colour of the Gray Catbird is a beautiful dark gray, set off by a black forehead and crown, while the undertail coverts are a rich chestnut brown. In the juvenile stage, these birds are brownish grey above, with a lighter crown. Both sexes are alike in colour and pattern. Incidentally, at this point, you may be wondering about the two spellings of "grey" in this article! The "Gray" in the official common name is spelled with an "a" (the American spelling) whereas the "grey" otherwise used, for the colour, is the Canadian (or British) spelling. Such are human foibles.

Our Gray Catbird's preferred home is edge habitat, thickets along the edges of fields, streambanks and residential areas. In preparation for the raising of young in these



Chokecherry is an important food plant for many birds, butterflies and pollinators in general. Photo by Colin Jones

protected surroundings, the male courts the female by chasing her and pausing to sing and strut, with wings lowered and tail erect. He will turn away from her to display his rich chestnut undertail coverts! Having united, Mom and Dad construct a bulky, cup-shaped nest in shrubs 2 to 10 feet above the ground. This structure, made of grass, other green plants, twigs and leaves, and finished with a liner of fine materials, becomes the safe haven of 4 (2-6) blue-green unmarked eggs which Mom incubates for 11-12 days. When the eggs hatch, Dad's life becomes much more demanding as he rushes back and forth with food to sustain the nestlings. The young are fed almost 100 per cent insects, while the adult

birds eat insects and berries: occasionally, their diet consists of over 50 per cent berries. Elizabeth fondly remembers the morning a few years ago when she was struggling to pick her share of red currants while a friendly Catbird rustled the branches on the other side of the shrub, collecting a snack for his family. After 10-11 days, the nestlings fledge and Mom and Dad usually begin the process again. Typically, they raise two broods in one season.

When the time comes in the Autumn, our beautiful grey birds leave the Tweed area for southern climes, travelling to central Panama, Bermuda and the Greater Antilles. Our edge habitats are vacated --- the mysterious mewing fades; the flashes of gray disappear.-- But we know that the loss of these sounds and sights is only temporary. Next Spring, we'll listen to the thickets for the return of our faithful "Beautiful Greys".



Chestnut-sided warbler. Photo by Kathy DeGroot.



Black-throated blue warbler. Photo by Tony DeGroot.

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.

President
George Thomson
613-478-3205

Past President
Wendy Turner

Vice-President
Jessica Spooner
705-875-4643

Recording Secretary
Nancy Stevenson
613-779-9407

Corresponding Secretary
Elizabeth Churcher
613-478-3205

Treasurer
Sarah Kennedy

Publicity/Environmental Officer
Denice Wilkins
613-478-5070

Membership/Newsletter
John Blaney
613-962-9337

Newsletter
John Blaney
613-962-9337

Outings
John Lowry
613-962-5232

Social Convener
Sharron Blaney
613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – September 15, 2019

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com

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