

The Quinte Naturalist

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

OCTOBER

BEST PLACES TO BIRD IN ONTARIO



Quinte Field Naturalists

Lecture Series



T. Sprague photo

Monday, October 28, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Sills Auditorium

Bridge Street United Church, Belleville

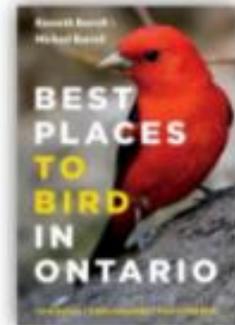


Photo courtesy M. Burrell

From his brand new book, biologist and professional birding guide, Mike Burrell, will take us on an avian tour of some of his favourite spots to enjoy the province's birding.

All welcome (donations appreciated) Refreshments are served



CLUB NEWS



Monday, Nov. 4. It's our day to act as hosts for the evening at Boston Pizza in return for 10% of the evening's receipts. Last year we received a total of \$375. We'll need volunteer ambassadors at the door. Don't worry if you are a new member. You will have a partner who has been a member for several years.

Of course you can also support this fund-raiser by dining at Boston Pizza that night. Let someone else do the cooking and support QFN. Ten percent of your bill will come back to the club.

Monday, November 4th, between 5 to 8 p.m. Boston Pizza, 180 Bell Blvd, Belleville (just to the west of the Quinte Mall)



On October 19 Donna Fano led an outing to the Frink Centre to find and identify the myriad of fungi which appear in the autumn. Here are a few:



*Clockwise from top right
– Turkey Tail, Lemon
Drops, Orange Jelly,
Pluteus Amirabilis*



YOUTH SUMMIT

QFN sponsored two students to attend Ontario Nature's Youth Summit last September. The summit is a weekend event designed to increase participants' knowledge of the environment and biodiversity and to enable them to become environmental leaders in their own communities. Clarissa Duthie, one of the sponsored students sent us the following letter:

Dear Quinte Field Naturalists,

I just wanted to say THANK YOU SO MUCH for giving me the opportunity to attend the Ontario Nature 2019 Youth Summit. I was interested in the summit because of my love for nature and exploring, hiking, and learning new things. My name is Clarissa Duthie. I am seventeen years old and have been camping, cottaging and exploring the outdoors my whole life. I live and attend high school in Aurora, Ontario and work summers in the Natural Heritage Education department at Presqu'ile Provincial Park in Brighton, Ontario.



Clarissa obviously loves turtles.

I was interested in the summit when I heard about it from my boss, and a co-worker who is involved with the youth council.

Now, I must admit, the day I got there, I was crazy nervous because there were so many new people, however after meeting my roommate, and meeting more people at dinner, I soon realized that we were all there because we all had something in common. We all love nature and wanted to make a difference in our communities. The weekend spent at Geneva Park was filled with many opportunities to network, learn new ways to have an impact on something we are passionate about, and try new things. On Friday night, Scales Nature Park gave a presentation all about turtles and snakes. And let me tell you, turtles are by far my favourite animal, so I was ecstatic. Afterwards, we had the opportunity to hold the snakes and turtles which I thought was the best thing ever!

On Saturday, we had the opportunity to attend multiple workshops. I participated in one called “Bringing on Biodiversity.” This workshop was to promote and help us get started on planning Ontario Nature’s newest campaign. I got to begin planning my own campaign; what to plant in gardens around my community, promoting it, how I would get people involved, etc. This opened my eyes and made me think about how biodiverse Aurora really is and how it could improve. I left this workshop feeling inspired and wanting to



A few of the over 100 enthusiastic students who attended the Youth Summit.

make a difference in my community, so I am hoping to plan and run a campaign, in Aurora, in the spring. I also participated in other workshops such as Medicinal Plants of Ontario (Learning how to use different plants found everywhere for medicinal purposes), VertaBlitz Showdown (using iNaturalist), Wild about Birds, and Be the Change (A group discussion all about Sustainability).

This Summit was a really positive experience and I learned so many new things. Such as how youth, like myself, can make changes in our communities, and how we can help raise awareness about nature and how humans are impacting the environment. I met so many inspiring people through our networking forum and through the workshops. Thank you again for sponsoring me!

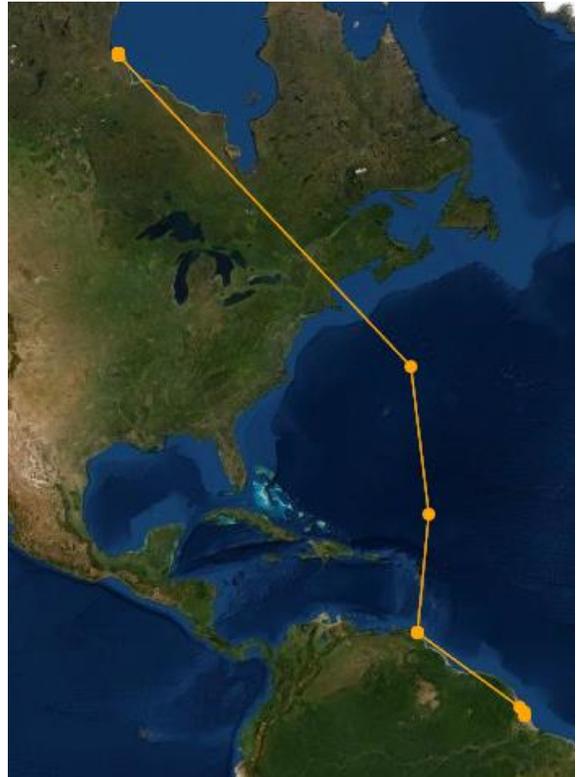
Sincerely,

Clarissa Duthie

TWO MORE QFN PROJECTS



Long time QFN member Marion Fisher recently made a substantial donation to the club. With Marion's approval we decided to use the money to support Dr. Erica Nol's project to track migrating whimbrels. Dr. Nol sent this map showing the route "our" whimbrel took this year from near Churchill, Manitoba to Brazil. Dr. Nol believes that the bird will stay at this location in northeast Brazil for some time.



*Blue Jay at a Frink feeder.
Photo by Kyle Blaney.*

Much closer to home we have begun our annual maintenance of the bird feeders at the HR Frink Outdoor Education Centre. Doing this helps us to fulfill our mandate to assist the public and students to appreciate nature. Please let John Blaney know if you are available to help with this project by filling the feeders. It also gives you a chance to see some of our winter birds at close range and to get pictures if you are a photographer. We supply the seed. **Thrashers Garden Centre** is assisting with the cost of the seed. Be sure to thank Michelle when you visit Thrashers to purchase seed for your own feeders. They will also be selling Christmas trees later in the season. Of course if you want to help with a donation or by giving us some black oil seed that's always appreciated. Just see me at a meeting.

WINTER FINCH FORECAST

By Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson

Reprinted with permission from the Tweed News, October 23, 2019

To avoid confusion references to other articles in the Tweed News have been edited.

Autumn with all of its beauty is marching onwards. Each morning, as we scan the surrounding landscape, we witness an altered scene --- sometimes a colour change, sometimes a different behaviour and sometimes an entirely different player. We are getting to the time of year when we start to see our 'Winter Birds' visiting the feeders. The consumption of bird seed is beginning to escalate! Black-capped Chickadees recently



***White-breasted Nuthatch at a
Frink feeder***

have been visible at the black oil sunflower feeders, flying back and forth in their familiar rotations between the feeders and the nearby sheltering shrubs. Just a second is required for them to grab the seed and then they are off to the safety and comfort of concealed branches where they crack their treasures open and enjoy the snack. White-breasted Nuthatches, too, have been appearing more frequently at the feeders over the past few days, seemingly appreciative of the peanuts and sunflower seeds. --- And the Red-Winged Blackbirds who are passing through the Tweed area are stopping to sample what we have to offer in the food line.

On this beautiful October 14th day, our attention is diverted from writing to peering out the window. Our thoughts are drifting to the re-appearance of Winter finches. Who will join us as the cold creeps into our midst? Of course, throughout the Summer and into the Autumn, we regularly have enjoyed the presence of the American Goldfinch. But the Goldfinches that will visit the sunflower and nyger feeders through the coming winter likely are not our summer friends. As 'our' Goldfinches drift south, they are replaced by ones from farther north: these new arrivals will be our Winter Goldfinch regulars.

What else can we look forward to? Here's this year's "Winter Finch Forecast" based on the research of biologist Ron Pittaway, who summarized his findings and predictions in



Purple Finch. Compare with the House Finch on the next page. Photo submitted by Elizabeth and George.

the September 14th, 2019 publication, "Ontario Field Ornithologists". He bases his hypotheses on seed crop availabilities. Ron suggests that this will not be an irruption, or flight year, for finches in Eastern Canada because of the abundance of seed crops in the north, including most conifers, birches and other trees. Spruce cones, filled with nutritious seeds are present in large numbers across the Boreal Forest in Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland.

So who goes where? Everyone has a favourite food! Pine Grosbeaks will stay in the northern breeding grounds because of the plentiful Mountain Ash and birch seed crops. Purple Finches, who usually migrate south of Ontario for the Winter, likely will remain with us in larger numbers than normal, feasting on the bounty of cherry, apple, elm and Red Cedar. When they stop at our feeders, they'll be looking for black oil sunflower and nyger seeds!

--- And what about those birds with the interesting and unmistakable bills, the crossbills? Currently, Red Crossbills are widespread in the Canadian East and will be expected throughout the Winter where there are rich cone crops offering a mixture of spruce, hemlock, larch and pine seeds. White-winged Crossbills feed on native conifers with small cones. Their favourite flavours are White, Red and Black Spruce but they also enjoy snacks from the Hemlock tree.



Our red winter finches can be a challenge to identify. This Pine Grosbeak has 2 very prominent wingbars and is almost as large as a robin. Don't stop looking for winter finches because of Ron's report. Recently QFN members Gerry and Denise Doekes found 3 at Meyersburg south of Campbellford. Photo by Kathy deGroot

Will those cheery little birds with the red cap mounted on their foreheads choose to join us this year? We are referring to redpolls. Most Common Redpolls probably will stay in the north because of abundant alder, birch and spruce seed crops. They may travel

south to Algonquin Park, but likely not further. There is a strong likelihood, too, that Hoary Redpolls will stay in the north. If you happen to be privileged to view a flock of Common



Red crossbills don't show any significant white plumage. Photo by Christoph Moning

Redpolls when you are out exploring, examine the birds carefully. Intermingled with them may be one or more Hoary Redpolls.

We may have to savour last Winter's memories of Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks at our feeders. Pine Siskins likely will be attracted to the bountiful White Spruce seed crops of central and northern Ontario. And Evening Grosbeaks probably will winter in

the north because of good conifer and deciduous seed crops.

Despite the suggestion of a paucity of finches in our midst this Winter, it's always good to have some nyger seed on hand. We can't forget our Goldfinches and we forever can live with the promise that Mother Nature has surprises in store for us!

Researcher Ron Pittaway generously has extended his predictions to include three non-finch songbirds, the Blue Jay, the Red-breasted Nuthatch and the Bohemian Waxwing. Because we are blessed with very good to excellent crops of Beechnuts, Hazelnuts and Red Oak acorns, there is a good possibility that we will see large numbers of Blue Jays in our area and perhaps at our feeders.



House finches are almost always found near urban or suburban areas. Colour is not a good identifier as it can vary with diet. House Finches have brown breast streaking while it is red in Purple Finches. Photo by Tom Wheatley.

The Red-breasted Nuthatches whom we were thrilled to host daily throughout last Winter, too, will be a cherished memory for at least a season. They will stay north because of the abundance of spruce and fir tree seed crops. Similarly, we can expect many of the Bohemian Waxwings to remain in the north feasting on the berry crops of the Mountain Ash which are scattered across the Boreal Forest. Keep a watchful eye, though: some



Bohemian Waxwings probably will wander south, attracted by berry crops on European Mountain Ash, ornamental Crabapples and Buckthorn.

The thought of fewer finches this year should never leave us despairing. It's wonderful that they have a plentiful supply of food and don't have to expend as much energy migrating over long distances to find it. Let's think of this situation as an

Bohemian Waxwings are a little larger than Cedar Waxwings. The other most obvious differences are the rusty colour under the tail and the white in the wings. The belly is gray in Bohemian Waxwings and warm yellow brown in Cedar Waxwings. Photo by Evan Lipton in eBird.

opportunity to explore farther afield. A visit to Algonquin Park will be well worth it this Winter! Feeders at the Park's Visitor Centre are a great place to see Winter finches. With the exception of pines that do not have large supplies of seeds this year, most of the favoured cone crops of finches will attract these birds to the Centre's feeders. In addition the Spruce Bog Trail located at km 42.5 and the Opeongo Road at km 44.5 are two of the best spots for finches, Canada Jays, Boreal Chickadees, Spruce Grouse and the Black-backed Woodpecker.

As always, birds form a central part of our life experience. All through the year, watching birds brings us pleasure, and the changing cast just adds more zest! --- So, watch for the Winter finches: it will be interesting to see which ones do visit our area. And, of course, we'll be on guard for all of the species that come our way. Each songbird, finch or not, shares its own special beauty and story with us.

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

At regular intervals from November to April, thousands of FeederWatchers count the kinds and numbers of birds at their feeders, then submit their observations to Bird Studies Canada. This information helps scientists study winter bird populations.

Project FeederWatch participants receive a full-colour bird poster and calendar, a FeederWatch Handbook and Instruction Book, access to the data entry portion of the FeederWatch website, and the chance to contribute to a continent-wide bird research project.

Project FeederWatch is a joint program of Bird Studies Canada and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In Canada, you must be a member of Bird Studies Canada (BSC) to participate. BSC membership benefits include a subscription to BSC's Monthly [Latest News](#) e-newsletter, four issues a year of [BirdWatch Canada](#) magazine, free participation in any of BSC's volunteer programs, and a charitable tax receipt for the full amount of your membership.

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 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 – November 15, 2019

Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com