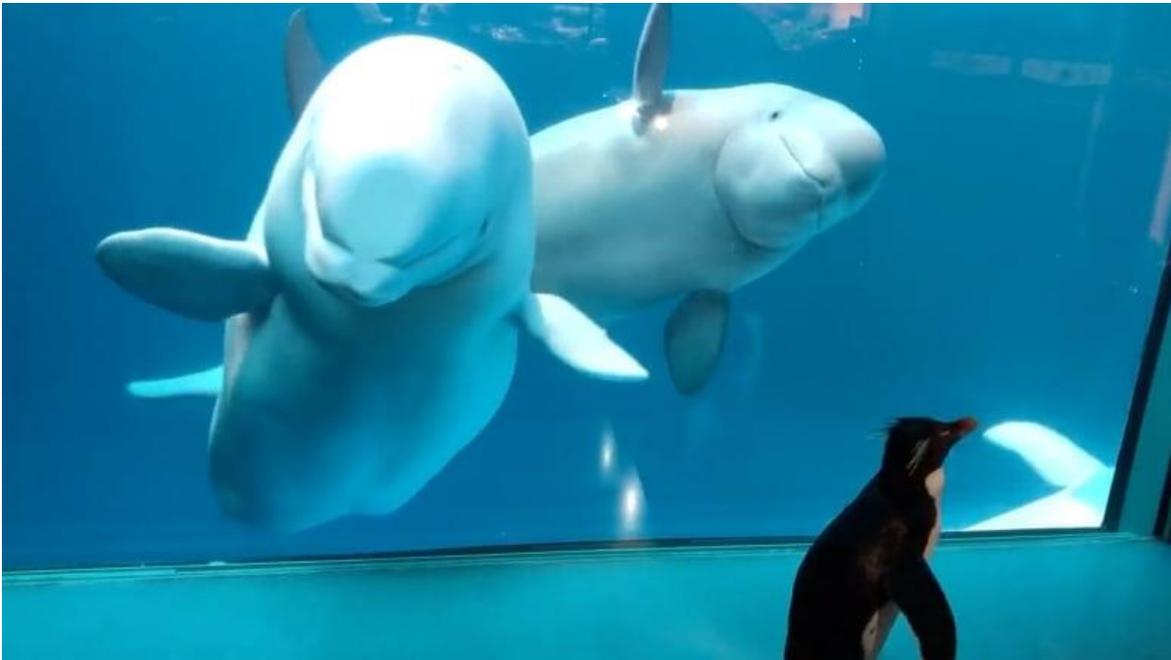


THE QUINTE NATURALIST

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

SPRING



Unless you are an essential worker you have probably spent most of the last month confined to your home. This is especially true if you are a senior like me. For Wellington, the rockhopper penguin at Chicago's Shedd Aquarium, the quarantining of humans meant freedom to tour the Amazon exhibit. Wellington is certainly a senior in penguin terms. At 30 he has far outlived his wild compatriots who live an average of 10 years because of factors both wild and human. The tour was an enrichment program for zoo residents.



CLUB NEWS

Your executive has been busy carrying on with the behind-the-scenes work. Thanks to Denice Wilkins for consulting with everyone and preparing the information for this report.

Just wanted to touch base and let you know the Quinte Field Naturalist board is busy doing what we can to sustain the organization and help wild species and wild spaces while in quarantine. Here's what we have been up to:

Unfortunately, regarding the **QFN fundraising dinner**, given continuing uncertainty we decided it best to cancel the dinner for now. Refund checks will be sent to everyone who purchased tickets.

Our **Facebook** page contains the latest in local wildlife sightings and nature news. Check it out!

John Lowry, our **outings** chair, has lots of possibilities for hikes ready to go as soon as restrictions for outdoor events have been lifted.

We are putting together ideas for **next season's lecture series** so we are ready to roll out the programs when possible.

Turtle ICUs/nest protectors have been built by a wonderful volunteer and are available for sale. We are donating 10 to Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre for their fundraising efforts. Contact Denice if you need one or know anyone who does.

denicejohn@live.ca

In hopes that the **Ontario Nature Youth Summit** will go ahead as planned September 25-27 in Orillia, QFN is looking for a high school student (grade 9-12) interested in developing an understanding of environmental issues and gaining the inspiration and tools to take action in their community. QFN will pay the \$375 full cost of participation. If you know a student interested in applying for sponsorship please contact:

John Blaney

We hope you are able to continue enjoying Nature from your window or your backyard. "We are the Ark" website below, gives you some ideas for steps you can take right now in your own garden/yard/land to help nature in your neighbourhood.

<http://wearetheark.org>

It is our sincere hope that you and your family and friends are safe and well during these unprecedented times, and we hope to be seeing you soon!

QFN SUPPORTS CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

As part of its campaign to reduce the deficit the provincial government has proposed to cut Conservation Authority (CA) funding for flood control by 50%. Developers and others want the government to end the requirement that CAs be consulted in the planning process. In addition, the same group have requested that the mandate of the authorities be limited further. It's hard not to see CAs as being under attack.

The government set up a 45-day public consultation process ending in March to determine public support for their proposal. Ontario Nature responded by writing a letter supporting CAs and asking their member organizations to endorse it. This letter stressed the importance of CAs in protecting, restoring and managing watersheds. Because of its length Ontario Nature's letter is being sent as a separate attachment.

Elizabeth and George wholeheartedly endorsed the letter on our behalf.. Last week Elizabeth received the following letter from Ontario Nature:

Good afternoon,

The letter to Premier Ford regarding the value of Conservation Authorities has been sent in. In the end, we received cross-sectoral support from 112 signatories, including from environmental, agricultural and engineering organizations and businesses. The final letter is attached for anyone who would like to share on your websites or with your networks.

Thank you again for your support on this important issue!

*Best,
Jackie*

Jackie Ho, Protected Places Assistant



WHIM IS RETURNING



Its leisurely time on the mud flats on Brazil's north coast at the mouth of a small river had ended by April 25 of this year. The next few days were spent in travel reaching the Bahamas on April 29 and South Carolina on May 3.

Traditionally the long May weekend is known as the Warblers and Whimbrels Weekend at Presqu'île.

After fattening up they will move on as they are anxious get to the nesting areas. Maybe the geotracker will tell us if our whimbrel stops at Presqu'île.

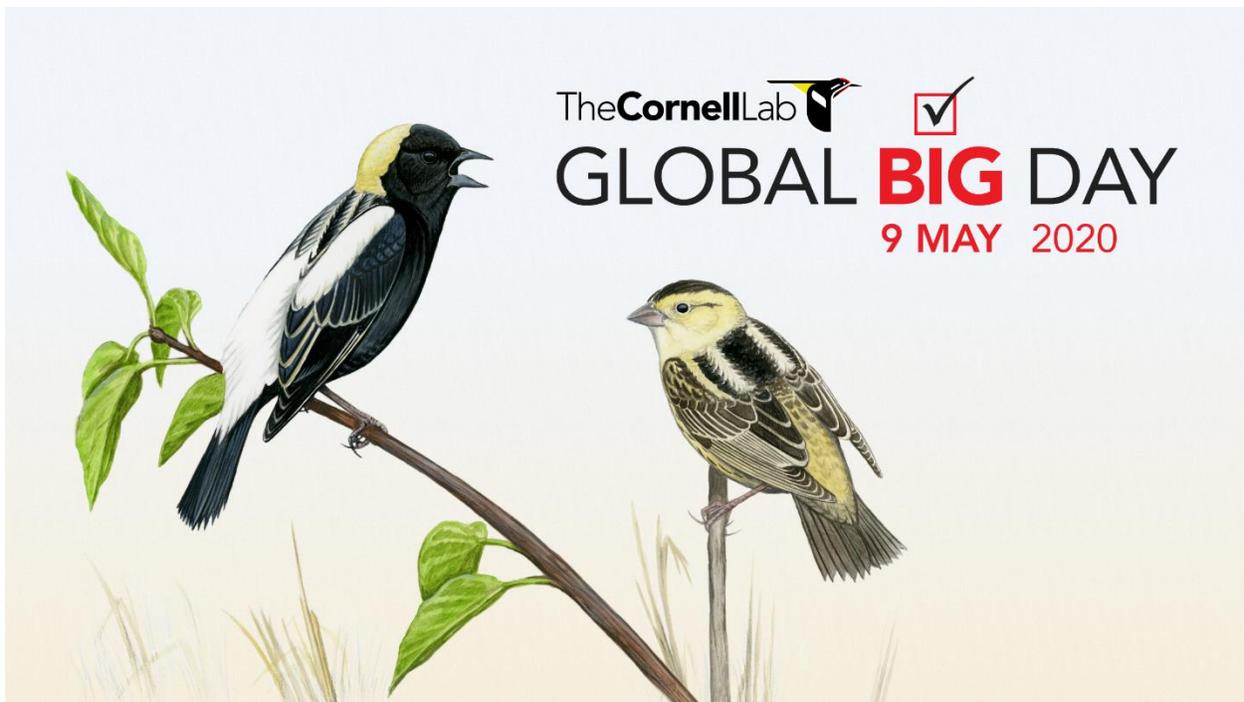
Thank you again, Marion. This really was the gift that keeps on giving.

Last September I told you about our most senior member, centenarian Marion Fisher, who had given Quinte Field Naturalists a gift to assist nature. We decided to give the money to help pay for a bird tracker which could be used by Trent University Professor and Researcher, Erica Nol, and her graduate students. The tracker was attached to a whimbrel near Churchill, Manitoba.

Toward the end of August the bird set out toward the Atlantic as indicated by the orange line on the map. Reaching the Atlantic by August 31 it veered south when it was a few hundred kilometres off shore and headed for Trinidad and Tobago which it reached by September 8. About 3 weeks later it headed for its winter home in Brazil.



Photo taken by Keith Gregoire in Costa Rica in Nov., 2018. Our whimbrel would look just like this.



Every month eBird holds an eBirder of the Month contest. This month's **eBirder of the Month** challenge, sponsored by Carl Zeiss Sports Optics, is all about birding on [Global Big Day!](#) Last year, 35,209 eBirders from 174 countries collected an astounding 92,284 checklists [in a single day](#). Will 2020 be the year we surpass 100,000 checklists in one day? Join us and together we can set a new checklist record! The eBirder of the month will be drawn from eBirders who **submit 3 or more [eligible checklists](#) on 9 May**. Winners will be notified by the 10th of the following month.

All lists can be from your own yard or any site you prefer. It doesn't matter if the same species occur on all lists. You simply spend 10 minutes and count the number of birds you saw. What if all you saw was 1 robin and 15 starlings during 11 minutes? That's a list and counts as one of the three lists you need to qualify. An hour or so later you watched for 10 minutes and saw a robin and 1 sparrow of some kind. You record the robin and 1 sparrow sp. (short for species). That's your second list. You went outside after dark and all you heard was 1 barred owl in 20 minutes. That's your third list. For any researcher making use of your data this establishes that the area probably has suitable habitat for the species in question.

Intimidated by the thought of setting up a free eBird account and entering your data?

Intimidated by eBird. It is easy. The Cornell Lab gives a complete free course in how to use it and its importance. <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/ebird-essentials/>

BIRDING ON THE WEB

I admit it. I'm addicted to the Cornell Lab's web cams. It's May 6 and here's my report on what's going on: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/>

Barred owl nest box in Indianapolis, Indiana. The three chicks are still just balls of fluff but they are now recognizable as barred owls. Even though it's mid-day there is no sign of the adults. I'll have to look up what the adults do in day light. Do they hunt or simply roost somewhere nearby. It does look as though someone dined on a blue jay recently.

Red-tailed Hawk nest on the Cornell campus in Ithaca, NY – Either Big Red or Arthur is on the nest but one chick is sticking its head out from underneath its parent. Does the adult pair share all duties or do only female red-tailed hawks sit on the nest? I'll have to look that up.

Osprey nest in Savannah, Georgia – There are two chicks in the nest but one doesn't look very healthy. It's smaller than its sibling and is constantly laying its head on the sticks in the nest. Oh, look! It just perked up and is walking around in the nest and isn't smaller at all. What's it doing? I'll bet getting rid of that feels better. Hope there was nobody standing underneath. I can hear a great-crested flycatcher in the background and what I think is a Carolina wren. I'll have to review my bird songs on *All About Birds*.

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search>

Royal Albatross nest in New Zealand – Of course it's dark in New Zealand but there must be some kind of light on the nest. I can clearly see one large chick. In the video highlights further down the page there is a clip showing two researchers. My gosh! That chick is so large they have to weigh it in a laundry basket. There are several other clips that look interesting but it's time to move on to the ...

Feeder cam on the Cornell campus – They get many of birds that we do – blue jay, cardinal, grackle, starling, mourning dove, squirrel (everybody has to eat). The feeder is beside a pond so red-winged blackbirds are regular visitors. I did see a tufted titmouse once and a belted kingfisher just flew by. A red-bellied woodpecker just arrived. We don't see them at our feeders. The woodpecker is obviously unhappy with somebody who has perched above him. These webcams are a chance to learn about behaviours as well. There are orange halves out for Baltimore orioles so I'll have to keep checking for them.

IT'S SPRING

We are fortunate in the Quinte area to be able to enjoy the annual cycle of the seasons. The winter snow that has to be shovelled and the spring mud that sticks to our boots are a small price to pay for the captivating sights of juncos at our feeders or the first hepaticas of the year. From their rural home in the Tweed area Elizabeth and George take advantage of what nature has to offer right outside their door.



The article is reprinted with permission from the Tweed News of May 8, 2019. Earth Day in 2020 was on a Wednesday. The rest of the story applies to any day of the week in late April or early May.

Sharp-lobed hepatica. George and Elizabeth have named their home Hepatica Hill. We have two types of hepaticas locally called sharp-lobed and round lobed based on the shape of the leaf. Jason King posted this photo on iNaturalist.

GARDEN + NATURE

“It’s April 22nd. It’s Earth Day! It’s Easter Monday! It’s warm and sunny! Nothing could be more perfect!” Elizabeth chimed. Even a few cloudy intervals would not dampen her spirits. Days like this one stand out in a Spring which has featured variable weather, often cool and rainy. With the first hint of green, we are anxious to get out and putter around in the garden, accomplishing as much as possible while gradually warming up to the serious business of preparing the soil for planting day. We’ve had a very slow start this Spring season, hampered by pools of icy water lying in low areas. It is not pleasant to work in cold, pasty soil that numbs our fingers! --- So, when a day like April 22nd comes along, we are out there, doing what we can and dreaming of days to come.

One of the wonderful rewards of gardening is the connections it helps us to make with the natural world around us. And really, when you think of it, gardening and Nature study, or,



The tricolored bumblebee is one of 16 species of bumblebee found in Ontario. Joe Bartok posted this picture on iNaturalist from the Tweed area.

maybe less formally enjoying the wonders of Nature, have many things in common. After all, in both pursuits, you are dealing with similar components. Plants, of course, exist in both gardens and in Nature. It's just that, with gardening, we are putting some of the plants into the soil either as seeds or as transplants, and tending them, for their production of beautiful flowers or of fruits or vegetables. We cultivate around them, we water them, we add fertilizer, we prune them. In the wilds, the mighty hand of Nature ensures that all of the plants' needs are met. When we gaze out over a meadow decorated

with wildflowers and then allow our eyes to feast on the towering trees of the woodland beyond, we have to admit that Nature is a master gardener!

In Springtime, while we are clipping off the wizened brown stalks that supported last year's blossoms and offered seeds to many animals in Winter or while we are scattering composted manure over the gardens, we are very aware that we are not alone. Throughout the growing season, as we plant, weed, mulch and pick, we meet many of our natural friends. Butterflies and bees visit garden flowers for nectar and pollen, just as they do the wildflowers of the woodlands and fields. We see and hear birds and we capture glimpses of mammals. Cottontail Rabbits hop by; Chipmunks disappear down holes; Red and Grey Squirrels scurry about collecting seeds or nesting materials. They find nutritious food and may secure nesting places in our garden, just as they can in natural areas.

After what seemed like a non-ending cloud and chill hanging over us, April 22nd was a welcome day, in fact, memorable in no small measure for the gifts that it shared with us! Perhaps because we felt somewhat deprived of experiences directly with Nature during the long, cold months, we were ready to celebrate. Being in the garden, where interactions with our natural surroundings seem to be concentrated, really piqued our senses.

As we knelt, George with trowel and Elizabeth with clippers in hand, we were greeted by the year's first Red Admiral Butterfly (pictured) --- first for us, of course, not for some



I wonder if the old name of red admirable might not be better. Photo submitted by Elizabeth and George.

butterfly enthusiasts we know! We paused to admire this creature's strikingly beautiful appearance. His chestnut brown upper surface is tastefully decorated with a diagonal, orange-red band which traverses the forewing and a similarly coloured, trailing edge which accents the hind wing. To add a touch of class, the forewing tips have been dipped in black and then spattered with white dots.

Distracted from the butterfly by a little movement in the grass, our eyes began to follow a Woolly Bear, the Caterpillar of the Isabella Moth. This little, furry fellow had overwintered successfully and now was being energized by the sun's warm rays. --- But we must get back to gardening! Crouching even closer to the soil, we were treated to a mixture of earthy smells, a delightful combination of mineral and fresh humus. George carefully pushed his trowel into the earth, and Earthworms began to emerge. Liberated from their wintering places deeper down, they, too, seemed to be lauding this beautiful day as much as we were. They were numerous and very near the surface, one example of the myriad denizens of the soil world.

Distracted from the butterfly by a little movement in the grass, our eyes began to follow a Woolly Bear, the Caterpillar of the Isabella Moth. This little, furry

Eventually our garden clean-up adventure led us to wetter places where we were dazzled by the brilliant emerald-green moss showing off new spore stalks that stood straight up, bearing the still green spore capsules to a brave height of one inch in this Lilliputian world. Throughout the Winter, this moss would have been evergreen under the snow. Not too far away, another show of greenery shared with us its commitment to renewal and hope for a bright future. As we examined the large, rounded leaves



The adult Woolly Bear or Isabella Tiger Moth does not have the same flamboyant pattern but its muted colours do have some beauty. David Bree posted this picture on iNaturalist.

of the Bergenia, we envisioned spikes adorned with pink blossom which soon will add a welcome early touch of colour to the garden. We admired the Bergenia, a member of the Saxifrage family and relative of garden ornamentals, for its toughness and resilience, and we briefly mentioned our longing to see some of its relatives. We began to question how well they may have survived the icy Winter. Will we be able to enjoy our garden's Astilbe and Coral Bells again this year? Will we see as many Early Saxifrage plants, Bishop's caps and Foamflowers in the wilds? Only time will tell.



I had never heard of Bergenia until I read this article. Perhaps this is the type George and Elizabeth have. It's called elephant ears. Not a native plant but Bergenia is still attractive to pollinators.

Suddenly, our close-to-the-soil reverie was broken by croaking pleas from the sky above us --- bright blue with fluffy white clouds. A Raven was being chased by several Crows and was crying out in protest. As we gazed upward, another distant flier came into our field of vision: this soaring Red-tailed Hawk stood out prominently against the white cloud background.

We were not in a hurry to finish our garden tasks. The summer-like warmth felt good on our necks and the entertainment on the stage kept us enthralled. We moved around the corner to the gardens on the west side of our home where birds flying closer to the ground seem to be happy with our presence. Groups of Tree Swallows were flashing through the air chasing flying insects, and Eastern Bluebirds & Tree Swallows were moving back and forth between Bluebird nest boxes, seemingly in negotiations about who would make claim to each of these nesting havens.

Before we reached the south western corner of our home, a sound from the north beckoned to us, causing us to drop our tools and retrace our footsteps. The loquacious Brown Thrasher had returned to our midst! Then, a rapid retreat as vibrations floated to our ears from the woodlands across our southern fields. We were listening to the booming drum of a Ruffed Grouse. Finally, we shifted to the east and paused in our bird feeding area to observe two handsome Evening Grosbeaks who were making a brief visit

to the Sunflower feeder. Wow! Within a short time, we had witnessed three bird species at our home for the first time in 2019! Definitely a thrill!

As the sun began to set, the air started to chill a little and our stomachs announced the need for some nourishment, we reluctantly headed towards the back door. We felt so good, very relaxed and rejuvenated. Nature had permeated our being. We had renewed acquaintances, reconnected with many forms of life and restored our oneness with the world around us. We had hope for the future, for many more days of warmth and peaceful communion with the life that we appreciate and admire. --- Days in Spring, Summer and Autumn, days in Garden + Nature.



The elegant brown thrasher is a welcome spring arrival. Its habit of saying everything twice makes the song easy to recognize.

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
Recording Secretary	Corresponding Secretary Elizabeth Churcher 613-478-3205	
Treasurer Mike Shaw 613-967-1055	Publicity/Environmental Officer Denice Wilkins 613-478-5070	Membership Nancy Stevenson 613-779-9407
Newsletter John Blaney 613-962-9337	Outings John Lowry 613-962-5232	Social Convener Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337

Next Newsletter Deadline – April. 15. 2020