

The Quinte Naturalist

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

Fall Roundup



Photo: Andrea Kingsley

For many local birders, the bird of the year, a Black-bellied Whistling Duck, spent the afternoon of July 13 at Victoria Park at the mouth of the Moira River,. This species nests no closer than the extreme southern United States but a few appeared in southern Ontario this year. Its wandering ways seem unusual as in most of its range it is non-migratory.

A Black-bellied Whistling Duck really does whistle and sound like a songbird. Unlike most ducks the sexes look alike and pair bonds are semi-permanent. Usually nests are in tree cavities but sometimes it nests on the ground. It qualifies as an odd duck.

CLUB NEWS

QFN Organization - Thanks to the many people who emailed or phoned in answer to my questions in the June *Quinte Naturalist* regarding the future of QFN. Members support the club for a variety of reasons including our meetings, our outings and our advocacy for nature. One person was so committed to the club as to suggest we find a time for afternoon meetings to accommodate those who have difficulty driving in the dark. Obviously there is a great desire for the club to continue. The question is, "How?"

We have about 100 members. Most meetings are attended by 60 or more people interested in nature. There will be significant turnover in the executive in January so it's a good time to consider the best organizational structure to work for nature education, conservation and research. These are our goals listed on the masthead. During my long membership in QFN we have had presidents with a variety of skills. A president may be an activist who advocates strongly for nature. A different president may understand the job as seeing that tasks are delegated with assistance from other board members. In the long run it is club members who make QFN successful. Do we need a president or just a Chair who runs meetings? How do we want to proceed in the new year when George starts his well-deserved retirement? Do we want to organize differently to achieve our goals? Should we explore the possibility of amalgamation with another group? Caroline Schultz, executive director of Ontario Nature, noted that ON even operated for a while without a president. Of course, ON is a much larger organization and has a staff headed by Caroline. One person wondered if a different organizational model would be legal without a major constitutional change because we are an incorporated body. We face some important decisions.

If you have additional comments or ideas please let someone on the executive know.



Audrey Cowan – Long-time QFN member Audrey Cowan passed away on July 28, 2021 at the age of 86. She was a quiet but very loyal member who regularly attended meetings and events. A year or so before Covid restrictions I met Audrey by chance in a local store. I mentioned that I had missed her at meetings. She lamented the fact that she was unable to attend meetings because she could no longer drive after dark. We have lost a faithful member who always enjoyed nature. She has been interred in Oakland Cemetery, Brockville.

Whimbrel Project – You may remember that Jan. 14 of this year, Marion Fisher, our



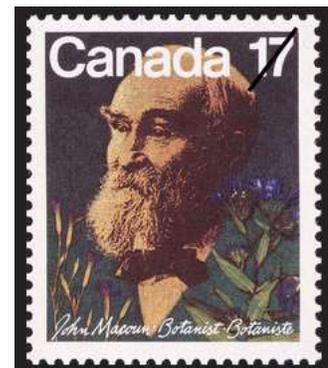
Whimbrel. Photo: Tom Wheatley in eBird

longest serving member passed away in Ottawa at the age of 103. A few years before her death Marion made a donation to QFN which we used to help support a project tracking whimbrels managed by Dr. Erica Nol at Trent University. The project was particularly appropriate because Marion travelled widely and “our” whimbrel travelled from its nesting grounds in the Arctic to its winter home in Brazil. Dr. Nol reported that, even more appropriately, the tracker on our whimbrel was the longest-lasting of any of the devices used.



John Macoun

John Macoun was Canada’s leading field naturalist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Emigrating with his parents from County Down in Ireland Macoun began his botanical career while teaching at **Albert College in Belleville**. Even though self-taught he surveyed



and collected over 100,000 plant specimens across Canada. These formed the basis for the National Herbarium in Ottawa. His recommendations also had a major influence on the route of the CPR through the west.

Macoun’s work was widely recognized with historical plaques in County Down, and Ottawa as well as a Canadian commemorative stamp issued in 1981. When Covid restrictions allow, the Historical Society will be unveiling a plaque at Albert College.

Recently Richard Hughes, president of the Hastings County Historical Society, gave an excellent online presentation on the life of Macoun on September 29. It is available on the society’s Youtube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVg-RT0UgDM>

CANS, CANS, CANS...THERE ARE ALUMINUM CANS LITERALLY EVERYWHERE.

By John Lowry

Which is perhaps not surprising considering that globally the beverage industry uses about 180 BILLION cans every year. Sadly a lot of them end up littering our roadsides and countryside.

And this is not a new issue – Coors was the first company to put beer in aluminum cans way back in 1959, followed by pop drink producers Royal Crown in 1964 and Coke and Pepsi in 1967. The use of aluminum beverage cans has grown exponentially since then. Several years ago I began collecting the cans (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) and bottles and cashing them in.

The most immediate benefit is that it is helping remove some of the trash that is such a blight on our cityscapes and countryside (not to mention our beautiful protected spaces).

The second benefit, though less apparent, is that it is helping minimize the carbon imprint that our addiction to convenient disposable beverage containers is having on the planet. It takes more energy to mine and produce aluminum than any other metal. Producing aluminum from recycled cans takes only 5 per cent of the energy needed to produce new aluminum. And the production of beverage cans is the single largest use of aluminum globally.

The final benefit, which is a matter of personal choice for me, is that any monies that I receive I donate to either the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust or the Nature Conservancy of Canada to assist them as they strive to acquire and protect natural areas in our region. And considering the huge developmental pressures this region is experiencing because of exploding land values, this is a matter that is of more importance than ever before.

So while the amounts of money I am collecting (close to \$600 this year) are not huge, I like to think that every little bit helps. And our dear old planet needs all the help it can get.

(Some statistical information is from “*The World Counts*” <https://www.theworldcounts.com> a website established to create awareness of the many social and environmental challenges the world faces.)



My great-nephew, Owen Zasso, pitches in by helping collect discarded beer cans along a nature trail. Making our natural areas cleaner and greener one can at a time.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Our members contribute large amounts of data to various citizen science projects which professionals use to understand the distribution of many species, population trends of these species and the ecosystems within which these species interact.

BATS – *Catherine and Bernd Baier have chosen the program described below as a citizen science project of particular interest to them. For many people bats are associated with Halloween and the myths attached to them have given bats a bad reputation. As the only mammals truly able to fly they are a particularly interesting and important component of a healthy ecosystem. They are pollinators, seed distributors and consumers of the insects which pester us and harm agricultural crops. To learn more about bats go to Ontario Nature's Bat Guide.*

<https://onnaturemagazine.com/bat-guide.html>

Bernd and I are participating in a three year Canada wide bat box study by Wildlife Conservation Society. Partners in the project are Canadian Wildlife Federation, Trent University, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Christopher Kyle (Forensic Science) and Karen Vanderwolf (PhD Candidate). The study is looking into bat box designs and how appropriate they are for bats in view of the increasingly hot temperatures in Canadian summers. Bats are extremely sensitive to temperature changes and it is becoming evident that bats are becoming stressed by the high temperatures we have been experiencing.



This is a photo of one of our bat houses in the late afternoon in July after a week of above normal temperatures. The bats are obviously stressed and anxious for the cooling evening temperatures. We are now providing the bats with multiple houses in different locations so they can move to more appropriate locations depending

upon the weather conditions. As they need time to trust the safety of the new houses, next year we hope to see fewer instances of their discomfort and sometimes death.

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH – Project Feederwatch is a citizen science project which is, quite literally, so simple a child can do it. You look out the window and count the birds at your feeder. The website has many resources to help you identify the species you see. If you are stuck, you can send a photo or a description or even just phone. My number is in the green box on the last page. If we are both stuck, you just don't report the bird. You can skip a week if you happen to be away at Christmas or some other event.



*Perhaps you will get a red-breasted nuthatch at your feeder.
Photo: Keith Gregoire*

For complete information visit the website. <https://feederwatch.org/>

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – This year's CBC will be the 122nd count since ornithologist Frank M. Chapman organized the first count in 1900. Based in New York, Chapman was able to establish 25 count circles from Toronto to Pacific Grove, California. Two years ago the 25 counts had grown to 2646 counts with 469 of those in Canada. The vast amount of data compiled over the CBC's life has been used in thousands of research projects and reports.

Participants in the count spend the day in small groups finding birds in an assigned area within 12 kilometres of Belleville city hall. If you don't want to spend the day outside you can be a feederwatcher if you live within the count circle. The Belleville count will be on December 27. For more information or to participate contact Tom Wheatley. bellevillecbc@outlook.com.



*Everyone wants to find a snowy owl on their Belleville CBC. It's possible.
Photo: Tom Wheatley*



*Some people are surprised to know eastern bluebirds may be found on a Belleville CBC.
Photo: Kyle Blaney*

BELLEVILLE'S NATURE

Ecology is the study of all life forms in an area and how these organisms relate to one another and their physical surroundings. Naturalists also talk about the ecology of an area referring to how species in an area or “ecosystem” interact. Urban ecology is a study which grew from the realization that what we call “nature” continues to function in urban areas just as it does in the more traditionally studied wilderness and rural areas. This study helps us to understand that cities, like wilderness areas, have a role to play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem, helping to save endangered species and fighting our climate emergency. How is Belleville doing?



Beebalm or Wild Bergamot is an excellent plant for pollinators. Jason King submitted this record to iNaturalist.

During the past few months, I have noticed signs that city officials are becoming more aware of the need for Belleville to develop and keep a healthy urban ecosystem. As naturalists we need to make sure that we show our support for these initiatives.

At its June 28 meeting city council declared a climate emergency. At the same meeting council voted to investigate the Partners in Climate Protection Program for which QFN member John Lowry had lobbied. The program is a network of over 400 municipalities which provides a consulting service to help members fight climate change and reduce local carbon emissions. City representatives recently met with representatives from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and seemed interested in the possibilities.

In July Belleville launched a “Let It Grow” campaign. Certain areas in city parks were not mowed. Staff posted signs with the message “Pardon the weeds, we’re feeding the bees.” When I phoned to let the mayor know that, as a QFN member, I was very happy with the program he also mentioned that there will be pollinator gardens planted beside some city trails

At its October 22nd meeting council voted to join Bee City Canada. Municipalities, educational institutions, businesses and other organizations pledge to do three things. They are to maintain and improve habitat for pollinators, educate the community about the importance of pollinators and celebrate pollinators during National Pollinators Week in June. Bee City Canada provides resources to help members with these obligations.



There is one very jarring note in the city's recent activities. A footpath between the Herchimer St. boat launch and the former Bakelite property used to be a good area for nesting birds and spring peepers and other amphibians in a pond beside the path. This path is to become the Shirley Langer Trail in honour of a former mayor who was also an environmentalist. During the work equipment crushed a snapping turtle, a Specially Protected Reptile under the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.



The first photo shows an area that was filled with plants attractive to pollinators. The second picture shows a section of the trail under construction. Obviously it is much too wide for a walking or even a bike trail. In addition, there is no sign of the barrier usually required to limit runoff from a construction site into a wetland.



I'm afraid it looks very like a road under construction without even the normal precautions to protect the environment, not a nature trail. The activities seem to be totally at odds with the city's own *Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy*. (Photos by John Lowry)

How is Belleville doing in protecting and upgrading its urban ecosystem? It's a work in progress. Despite a significant misstep, city officials have acknowledged the importance of a healthy urban ecosystem. They are starting to put that understanding into practice by implementing a "Let It Grow" campaign, planting pollinator gardens and seeking the advice offered in the Partners in Climate Protection and Bee City programs. That's merely a beginning but it is progress. Naturalists need to let city officials know when we approve what they are doing and to encourage them and expect them to expand these efforts. We need also to make it clear that we expect their practice to match their words.

A healthy urban forest improves the quality of life of City of Belleville residents. Trees, plants and shrubs help clean the air, conserve energy, increase property values, and make Belleville neighborhoods more beautiful and enjoyable. -Page 4. City of Belleville Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy, 2019

MORE THAN A BEAUTIFUL VIEW

By Norma Martin

Norma is a former president of the QFN

The birds shown here nest along Belleville's eastern waterfront.

In the summer edition of NATURE CONSERVANCY CANADA, an article about the research of John Zelenski, professor of psychology at Carlton University, is a call of encouragement for us.

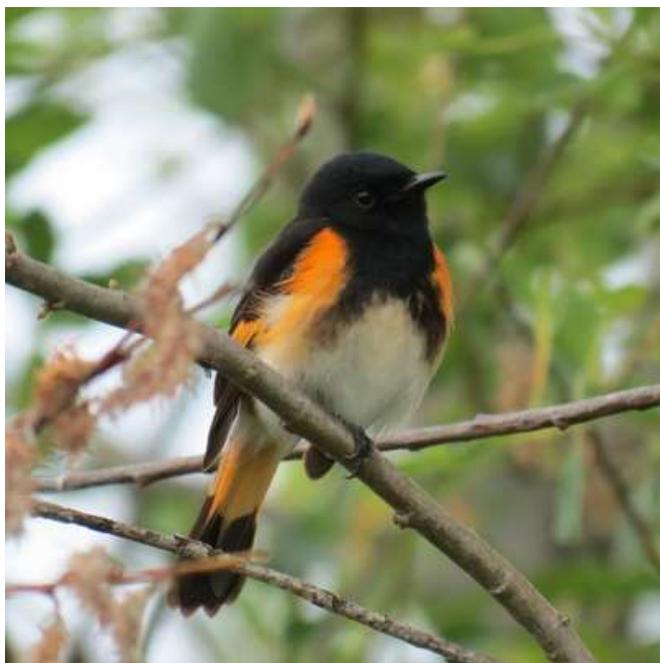
His "research has found that living near green space or water tends to make people happier, resulting in higher satisfaction about where they live, and even making them physically healthier."

The article further states, "A poll



The common yellowthroat is a colourful warbler which you will find nesting in thick, tangled vegetation, usually in wet areas.

Photo: Walter Sliwa, Colborne, ON.



The American Redstart is another bright warbler found in the trees and bushes in the less-manicured sections of Belleville's waterfront. Photo: Cedric Wright, Renfrew,

conducted by ipsos on behalf of NCC in 2020 showed that 94% of people credit nature with helping them relieve the stress and anxiety of the pandemic and more than 85% of respondents said access to nature has been important to maintaining their mental health."

Zelenski maintains, "Many people do know and have insight into how great nature is.....Paying attention to nature in a thoughtful way can offer remarkably immediate results. Sometimes it's just the matter of seeing, or hearing, even smelling, nature and thinking, 'isn't it wonderful?'"

SIGHTINGS

The number of sightings sent to me during the summer and fall coupled with those reported to eBird and iNaturalist are a clear demonstration that QFN members spend a lot of time observing nature. We are contributing data to research projects. We want Quinte to continue to be one of the best places in Canada to live.

MUTE SWANS – From her home in The Anchorage Norma Martin has a front row seat to the cavalcade of waterfowl which appear on the Moira River. She wrote the following article for a newsletter for residents of the building.

This year, we have noticed the large flock of Mute Swans, about 50, at the mouth of the Moira river. They are non-nesting individuals and could be males that do not mature until their third year.

Males are called cobs, females are pens, the young, cygnets.

Mute Swans are native to Eurasia. They are the largest waterfowl in the world and the heaviest flying bird. Because of their appeal they have been widely exported to other continents.

In Ontario, they are strongly conditioned to humans and will nest close to dwellings. A large nest (unused) was built this year a few yards from the George Street Boat Ramp. Their food consists of submerged aquatic vegetation, invertebrates and insects. Their presence can affect the environment by overgrazing and displacing native waterfowl.



Mute and trumpeter swans are about the same size. Note the difference in bill colour and shape. Both species nest locally. Tundra swans are noticeably smaller and appear during migration in local fields and larger water bodies. Visit “All about Birds” for more information about identification and habits. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Trumpeter_Swan/id

**NEW
QUINTE
RESIDENTS**



These two photos illustrate the importance of the observations which we record. QFN member Robert Ormston found these two relative newcomers to Quinte. They are both expanding their range and Robert's iNaturalist entries help to document that expansion.

The Virginia opossum was in Quinte West on July 26. A small number are reported annually and it is probably established locally.

It is the unfortunate fate of this species to look like a large rat. In fact they are not closely related. Opossums are pretty inoffensive. They eat the ticks which carry Lyme disease among many other things.

During the summer Robert put considerable effort into documenting the butterflies and moths of the area. He was rewarded with this European Common Blue on its favourite food, bird's foot trefoil in Riverside Park. It is the first member of the species recorded between Cornwall and Toronto. It's a recent introduction from Europe with the first specimen found near Montreal's Mirabel Airport in 2007.

The European Common Blue seems likely to disperse through southern Ontario fairly quickly. Will it displace native species? Perhaps it will help to control bird's foot trefoil, an invasive plant from Eurasia. Naturalists entering records in iNaturalist will help answer these and other questions.



Debi Butler found this stately great egret roosting with a group in the Calf Pasture at Presqu'île PP. This is another species which has expanded its range into Quinte from south of the border.

After nesting, individuals, particularly the young, disperse and gather in large flocks which roost in trees in wet areas before migrating.



Michelle Hutchison sent this story of one of the regular visitors to her neighbourhood.

I have been “entertained” by the fox that travels the streets of old East Hill. Many days, of late, I have spotted a fox heading north on Foster Avenue early in the day, perhaps around 6. In 45 minutes or an hour later, same fox, heading south usually with a squirrel as a prize. One day, I saw it stop to pick up a recent road kill, so it had 2 prizes to take back to its offspring down near the water treatment plant. I have also seen one of the adults with one of the young, playing, in the “meadow” that is close to the turtle pond at the end of Foster. You would think, with all of the wildlife “below the tracks” that the foxes would hunt there, but maybe the animal residents of the “wharf” are smarter than those north of the tracks.



On May 4 John Lowry photographed these kits playing near St. Paul St. which runs just north of the water treatment plant. They are undoubtedly Michelle’s foxes. Any area left unmanicured can support wildlife. It may not be beautiful by human standards but these foxes see it as home.

ATKINS ROAD- As you travel east on Belleville’s College Street past Cannifton Road you will cross two railway tracks and immediately encounter a fork in the road. Two or three kilometres along the right fork, Airport Parkway, you will come to Atkins Road. Peter Fuller lives nearby. Between his yard and the road running north where he walks regularly, he has compiled an impressive bird list.

His early June report told what birds in his yard were doing. These three species nested there



A pair of Catbirds is nesting and enjoy oranges at the



Lots of young house finches here now (they sample seeds, orange and hummingbird



A yellow warbler spent a day collecting willow catkins.

On October 9, only four months after Peter’s first report, nesting was completed. Many species had already departed and the avian cavalcade south was dominated by sparrows. Peter commented:

The last week along Atkins Rd. has been sparrow city. Earlier this week I had 10 species of sparrow on my morning survey (and still waiting for the first tree and fox sparrows to arrive) Yesterday there were 2 very late grasshopper sparrows posing in the morning sun



NORTH OF 7 – Gerry and Denise Doekes live beside a small lake almost 20 kilometres north of Marmora. It's in the heart of the Land Between, so called because it contains some of the characteristics of Mixed Wood Plains where we live and the more Boreal regions to the north. Species from both regions can flourish in the Land Between. Here are some of the highlights from The Land Between.

May – The season started with a completely unexpected sighting, a black vulture. This smaller cousin of the turkey vulture is another species gradually moving north. In the 1930s it was unusual to see black vultures nesting north of central Virginia. They still don't nest in Quinte but their gradual northward movement has been documented by biologists.

Nesting Season – Many of the species Gerry reported we also find near the bay. Chipping sparrow, rose-breasted grosbeak, eastern whip-poor-will and osprey are all seen nesting regularly in or near Belleville. The blue-headed vireo, yellow-throated vireo and red-shouldered hawk Gerry located are all more common in the Land Between because of the extensive woodlands they prefer in that region. This is likely a result of human-caused deforestation rather than a preference for the climate of the Land Between. In Prince Edward County they are virtually non-existent during nesting season.



A black vulture (above) can be told from a turkey vulture (below) by the light and dark areas of the underwing. James Burk photographed these two birds at Point Pelee last March.



The Sheffield Conservation Area is on Highway 41 about 6 kilometres south of Kaladar. These two pictures were taken there. It's shield country but still well within The Land Between. Tom Wheatley photographed the blue-headed vireo (left) in 2020. Tina Sawicki captured the yellow-throated vireo (right) there a year earlier. Both pictures were included in sightings lists in eBird.



Paul O'Toole – Lemoine Pt – Bird Watching <https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/>

FALL MIGRATION - On October 13 Gerry saw what he expects to be the last warbler he will see this year, a yellow-rumped warbler like the one in the picture above. This year some of the red cedars like this one have so many berries that they appear to be blue rather than green. Yellow-rumped warblers and robins love these berries when other food is scarce. Both are likely to occur on the Christmas Bird Count. (page 6)



Gerry proved his bona fides as a birder by visiting the Marmora landfill where he found a lesser-blacked gull. Most of these gulls nest in northern Europe and Russia but every so often one spends the winter here. Tom Wheatley managed to get three species of gull in this picture from Belleville's waterfront, lesser black-backed gull in the background, juvenile ring-billed gull (left) adult herring gull (right). The myriad of plumages found in the gull family makes identification challenging.



Peptbo continues to sell SHADE GROWN coffee as a fundraiser. It can be purchased at County Sunshine in Picton, The Local Store on the way to Sandbanks (order online for pickup), The Green Root in Rossmore and Stanners Vineyard in Hillier. You can also contact Kathy Felkar at



if you wish to order some of this sustainable, eco-friendly, bird friendly coffee and support Peptbo at the same time! Christmas is coming!

Don't forget to check Terry Sprague's website for all the recent birding news.

<https://naturestuff.net>

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 Vacant
Recording Secretary Sharron Blaney 613-962-9337	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 Catherine & Berndt Baier 613-478-3319	Social Convener Vacant

Next Newsletter Deadline –20, 2021
Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com