

The Quinte Naturalist

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

January Round-up



CONGRATULATIONS

BELLEVILLE

Little noticed during the Christmas rush was a Dec. 23, 2021 press release from the city council announcing that the city's application to be recognized as a Bee City had been accepted. The recognition requires that the city take concrete action to protect pollinators and their habitat.

The press release is reproduced on page 2.

Press Release - Belleville – Dec. 23, 2021

The City of Belleville has been named the newest **Bee City** by Bee City Canada, an organization created to inspire cities, towns, First Nations, schools, businesses and other organizations to take action to protect pollinators. They offer programs which recognize communities and organizations that are taking steps or are committed to future initiatives to help pollinators.

Bee City Canada commended Belleville on their habitat initiatives which included reduced mowing to pollinator gardens along city trails, the creation of 2.75 hectares of pollinator habitat along the Shirley Langer Trail and for collaborating with Quinte Conservation to provide seedlings for residents to plant on their property. They were also impressed with the City's commitment to adding signage to Belleville's pollinator habitat to educate residents about the importance of pollinators.

“Having Belleville officially declared as a ‘Bee City’ by the Bee Cities Canada organization is a terrific way to end what has truly been a remarkable year for parks and open spaces in the city,” said City of Belleville Green Task Force Chair, Councillor Chris Malette. “The members of the Green Task Force, with the enthusiastic help of our environmental services and operations staff and the talented and dedicated crew of gardeners, planners and maintenance crews with our parks department have made great strides in not only creating some of the most beautiful parks and gardens in the city's history, but we're making great inroads in helping create and perpetuate sustainable, eco-supportive city greenspaces. We're very excited to see what 2022 brings in the way of helping grow our gardens and greenspaces in a way that helps pollinators to thrive and the planet to benefit as a result.”



Bumble bees are some of our most important local pollinators. They are in decline because of habitat loss, pesticide use and the mechanization of agriculture. There are a few species of bumble bee in Quinte. The most frequently found is the common eastern bumble bee seen above. Photo taken by John Lowry and posted in iNaturalist.

CLUB NEWS



Carolina wrens are at the very northern edge of their range in Quinte. They are non-migratory and milder winters are allowing them to extend this range northward. Occasional colder winters with deep snow do cause a decline in numbers locally. This bird has taken up residence in Foxboro where Tom Wheatley took this photograph.

Executive Meeting – Your executive had a three and one-half hour Zoom meeting on January 22. We will meet again on February 17. George’s term as president ended in January so the board will proceed as a committee with a rotating chair. We do not have the resources to continue with all our current activities. For at least the next few months there will be no meetings so that we can continue with our advocacy work and other projects. You will receive more information very soon if you have not already. We would appreciate your comments about this.

Because George is no longer president future advocacy letters will be signed by the Corresponding Secretary on behalf of the entire board.

The board welcomed two new at large members. Robert Ormston has been a club member for several years. He has completed his university program and now works for Quinte Conservation. He is coordinating a citizen science project which involves QFN cooperation with QC. Lori Borthwick is active in the Green Party and her experience there will be a real benefit to us.

We will be developing a new by-law to recognize the reality that many meetings are now held virtually rather than in-person.

Tweed News – Elizabeth and George approached Tweed council to request that they join the Partners in Climate Protection Program. Belleville council is already considering joining the program which advises member municipalities on methods of fighting climate change and reducing local carbon emissions. Tweed council responded positively and will consider next steps. Thanks to Elizabeth and George for working on this initiative.

Nature Conservancy of Canada – John Lowry has been a one-person committee volunteering for and co-ordinating QFN participation in various NCC projects.

He spent a day scattering grass and wildflower seeds at the NCC Brighton Wetland property to which we contributed a few years ago. It was exciting to learn that significant additions to the property are planned both to the east and the west.

More recently John contacted other QFN members to join the NCC in a hike to view a portion of newly acquired NCC lands called Hastings Wildlife Junction between Marmora and Bancroft. Composed of thousands of hectares of extensive interior forests and wetlands the Hastings Wildlife Junction was donated by a single individual. For more information see page 13.

Coffee Sales – Denice reported that through QFN’s appeal Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory sold 65 bags of coffee and raised \$350 in profit and supported fair wages for coffee growers in Nicaragua and a small, St. Thomas, ON coffee roasting business. Of course by buying this coffee you are supporting bird research and helping to save bird habitat in Nicaragua.

Note that Kathy Felkar will not be selling this coffee in the future. PEPtBO will make an announcement in the spring with new arrangements for bird-friendly coffee.



During the past 40 years red-bellied woodpecker numbers increased dramatically in southwestern Ontario. Their expansion into Quinte has been slower but it is no longer unusual to see them. Robert Ormston found this bird in Trenton in December.

John Lowry's Report on a Personal Project

It has been a very good year for my beer can fund raising efforts and all of it went to local land acquisition efforts by several organizations or similar local projects.

I collected

7,033 beer cans
897 alcoholic bottles
4,319 pop cans

Total cash value of returns -- \$849.00

The donations paid out were a total of \$1,400.

Nature Conservancy of Canada -- \$1,050 - (monies directed to Hazel Bird, McMahon Bluff, Napanee Plain, Brighton Wetland and the Hastings Wildlife Junction)

South Shore Joint Initiative -- \$175

Friends of Sandbanks Park -- \$50 - (monies directed to the dune boardwalk project)

Ontario Nature -- \$50 - (monies directed to the Sydenham Nature Reserve)

Rideau Waterway Land Trust -- \$50 - (monies directed to the Warren Nature Reserve)

Friends of the Napanee River -- \$25 - (monies directed to the Helen Hutchison Nature Reserve)

Coupled with donations strategically made on 'Giving Tuesday' (November 30th) my donations were boosted by \$700 for a grand total of \$2,100.--- not bad for a year's efforts



Contact John if you would like more information about this project.



Frink Centre – Ted Pordham and Marie Clark are keeping feeders at the Frink Centre supplied with seed. Once again this year **Thrashers** have given us a break on the price of the seed. If you are in **Thrashers** to buy your own feeder supplies or a plant to brighten a winter day be sure to thank Michelle on behalf of QFN and the birds at the Frink.

SIGHTINGS

As winter progresses and natural food supplies dwindle you may notice new visitors at your feeders. That's certainly the case for Denice Wilkins at her home in the wilds of the GTA (Greater Tweed Area). On one spectacular day in January she excitedly announced that pine grosbeaks had visited her feeders. In the afternoon of the same day she even more excitedly reported that a bobcat had walked through the yard.

Here's her report from this past weekend:

0 Bobcats outside my window yet this weekend but I am getting 4 Turkeys on a regular basis if you count 4 days in a row regular. I've only ever had them walk by the feeders maybe once a year and not even stay . Three come together and one comes alone and keeps holding up one or the other of his feet. I got corn for them but if they don't come soon after I put it out, the bluejays and squirrels get it all. If I try to go out while they are here, or even just toss some corn from the door, they fly away. Feeding the birds has become a full-time job! :o) I've got lots of corn out there now and hoping they will come back as they usually come twice a day.

Kyle Blaney lives in Cannifton. The security camera at the back of the house doesn't normally show many mammals other than house cats and rabbits. Recently an opossum also made an appearance. Now established in Quinte they are an interesting addition to our local wildlife. They don't seem to have a major impact on other local wild species and they serve a useful purpose as a clean-up crew and tick consumers.



Often on the weekend when neither of us is otherwise occupied Kyle and I will tour the local area looking for the target birds for our ebird lists. On January 23 avian pickings were slow but we did spot this individual on Potter Settlement Rd. north of Tweed. My impression is that since we moved to Quinte over 40 years ago porcupine numbers have declined. The reappearance of fishers may explain this trend. On this topic it seems necessary to repeat the old joke. How does a porcupine make love? – Very carefully. Photo by Kyle Blaney



For the past two years a pied-billed grebe has been spending the winter in the open water beside the Picton Marina. Local birder Rick Szabo submitted this picture to eBird.



Red foxes are frequently reported this winter. One member of the Bayshore Trail family even showed up in a large picture on the front page of the Intelligencer on Feb. 8. Robert Ormston captured this one for iNaturalist on Dec. 19 near Carrying Place



Dale Smith submitted this photo to eBird after he found these two long-eared owls in a private woodlot in PEC.

THE GREAT NURDLE HUNT

by John Lowry

In late October, on a cool but sunny day, an intrepid band of volunteers were to be found scouring the sands of Outlet beach at Sandbanks Provincial Park searching for nurdles. Nurdles, you say? If you are wondering what on earth is a nurdle, you wouldn't be alone. The overwhelming majority of Canadians have likely never heard of nurdles.

But that is something Rochelle Byrne, founder and executive director of 'A Greener Future,' an environmental non-profit agency, is hoping to change. She is working to raise public awareness of what nurdles are and their impact on the environment.



***Rochelle Byrne, founder and executive director of the environmental non-profit agency 'A Greener Future', holds a small vial that volunteers used to help collect nurdles, a form of plastic pollution, along Outlet beach at Sandbanks Provincial Park on October 28th.
(John Lowry photo)***

In a short presentation before the volunteers hit the beach with sieves in hand, Rochelle explained that nurdles are tiny plastic pellets that are melted down by manufacturers to produce new plastic products. Because of their tiny size the pellets are easily lost and end up being washed into our streams, rivers and eventually Lake Ontario.

Once in our aquatic systems the nurdles pose two distinct hazards. The small pellets resemble fish or amphibian eggs and so are often ingested either purposely or accidentally by both fish and shorebirds. The pellets are indigestible and end up clogging the stomachs of the creature that ingests them. Dead shorebirds have been found with their stomachs literally packed with nurdles and other small fragmented pieces of plastic, something that sadly results in their dying from starvation.

Additionally, Rochelle explained, the nurdles themselves can attract and absorb toxins which then means that these toxic tidbits are contaminating the waters of Lake Ontario. And that is a matter of concern because Lake Ontario is the source of drinking water for over 9 million people. Additionally, when the pellets are consumed by fish for example the toxins are then transferred to the fish itself.



A batch of nurdles, small plastic pellets used in the plastics manufacturing industry, that are often found making their way as pollution into Lake Ontario and pose a threat to fish and wildlife. (Photo - courtesy of 'A Greener Future')

The group of 10 volunteers accompanied by several Greener Future staff members spent the next five hours roaming up and down the beach in search of not only nurdles but other bits of plastic pollution. By days end the team had collected 2,184 pieces of plastic which included 265 nurdles. The plastic trash included everything from water bottles and more frequently their caps to plastic straws and small pieces of broken plastic from a variety of sources. A further 186 nurdles had been collected from the beach earlier in the week by organization member Nicole Henderson when she was scouting out the location.

The volunteer event is all part of 'A Greener Future's effort to raise awareness of plastic pollution in Lake Ontario. Founded in 2014, the organization works with local communities to promote environmental preservation through organized litter cleanups (under the auspices of the "Love Your Lake" program), educational programs and other events. The use of volunteers is a core aspect of the organization's work.

The vast freshwater inland seas that are the Great Lakes are an ecological wonder and are surrounded by millions of human inhabitants who rely on the lakes for amongst other things drinking water, sewage disposal as well as for recreational purposes like fishing, swimming and boating. Just as importantly the lakes are home to a wide variety of creatures and plants including over 40 species of fish and innumerable bird species (both as a migratory stopover and as seasonal residents).

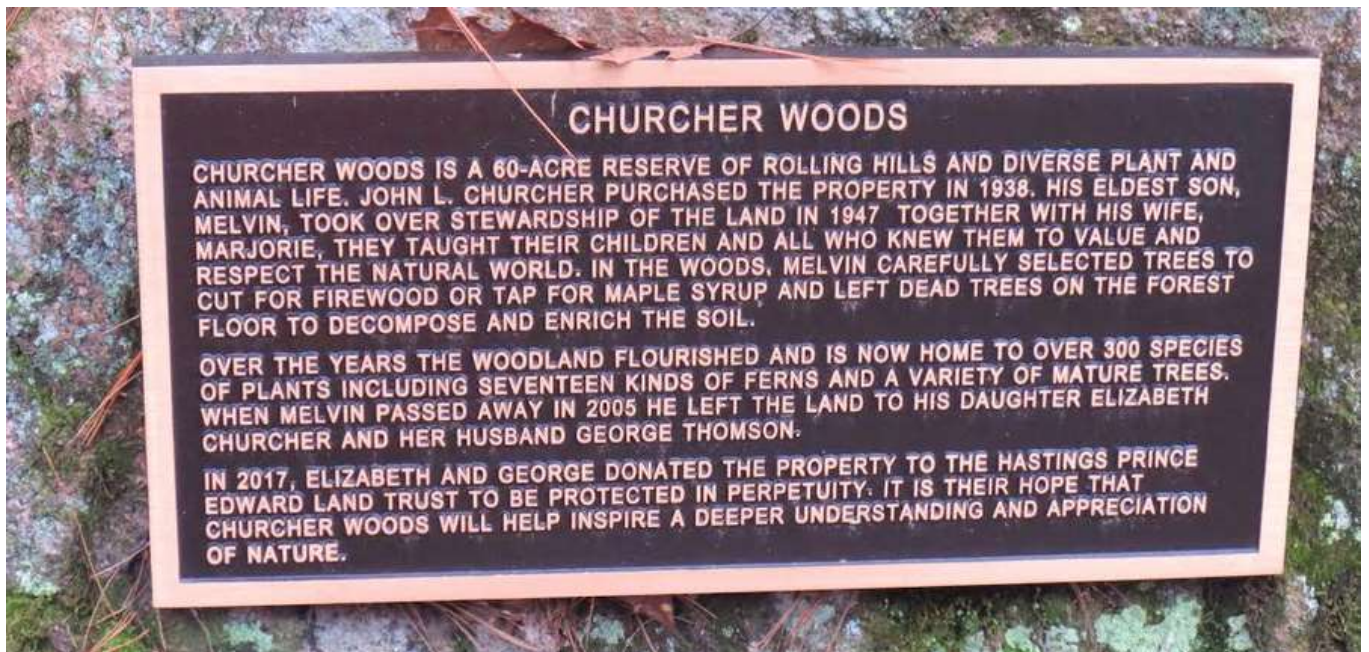
Rochelle's hope is that someday we will find the lakes free of not just nurdles and other plastic pollution, but pollution altogether.

OUTINGS

Report and pictures by Ted Pordham



Nov. 20 - We had an excellent outing on Saturday to the Bancroft area--Eagles Nest (The road up was being closed on Sunday) , Churcher Woods, Egan Chuttes PP and of course lunch out at Cafe BC, very good. It was a long day but really worth it. Many thanks to Catherine and Bernd Baier for organizing and their helpers George T., Elizabeth C. and Terry from the Bancroft FN group (he also joined us on that elk viewing a couple of years ago) who assisted with our stop at Egan Chuttes.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Belleville CBC – 27 December 2021

A hardy group of 24 birders and 3 feeder watchers endured the frigid cold (-10 to -5) and grey skies to record 62 species (Average 63). Nine additional species were seen during Count Week, for a Belleville CBC record total of 71 species. Warm temperatures in the days leading up to the CBC kept the Moira River at Spring Season high levels and much of the eastern end of the Bay of Quinte open, with good numbers of Waterfowl and Gulls. Total individuals were 10331 (Average 7000/ Max 12,768 in 2011) . Introduced species accounted for 32% of the total; Rock Pigeon 612 (6%), House Sparrow 50 (0.05%) and Starling 2640 (26%).



Every year 150 – 200 mallards pack into a small patch of open water at South Foster Park on Belleville’s Bayshore Trail. By combing through the mob you can sometimes find 1 or two individuals of a different species. That’s just what Andrea Kingsley did to find this pair of wood ducks for the Christmas Bird Count. The male is obvious. The female with a white teardrop-shaped eyering is just to his left.

Nine birds seen during Count Week only: Red-necked Grebe, Iceland Gull, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Great Horned Owl, Coopers Hawk, Song Sparrow, Carolina Wren and Belted Kingfisher (despite all the open water on Count Day).

Other Noteworthy species seen on Count Day include an American Coot (2nd record, 2003) associating with Mallards in the Moira River south of the Bridge Street bridge, 2 Wood Duck, Northern Pintail male, 2 Greater Black-backed Gulls, Glaucous Gull (up to 4 on the Bay in previous days), 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Peregrine Falcon on the

Courthouse, 4 Horned Lark, 3 Hermit Thrushes, 3 Pine Siskin, 3 Eastern Screech Owls, 2 Barred Owls and 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers.

New high counts (New/Previous); Double-crested Cormorant (5/1), Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tied 7/7), Common Raven (30/16), Hermit Thrush (3/2), Dark-eyed Junco (551/470), Bald Eagle (10/4).

New low counts; Just one species, House Sparrow, was at an all-time low (50) (ave.228/ High 508).



Male house sparrows like the bird on the left are fairly easily identified. (Photo: Keith Gregoire) The female on the right has no outstanding fieldmarks and tends to cause birders some difficulties. (Photo: Kyle Blaney) The species was introduced in New York in the early 1850s to control insect pests with great success. However, numbers have been declining in North America and its original European home for the past few years. It's believed that the cause of this decline is probably partially the result of modern farming practices which have reduced invertebrate species fed to nestlings.

We added White-crowned Sparrow (2, at two separate locations) and a Red-necked Grebe to the Cumulative total of 102 species seen on all Belleville CBC Counts. The Red-necked Grebe was seen in the open water of the Bay in the days leading up to Count Day.

Notable misses include: Great Blue Heron, Ruffed Grouse, Common Loon, Snowy Owl, Winter Wren, Swamp Sparrow and Common Redpoll.

A big Thank you to everyone involved in making the 2021 Belleville CBC a success.

Tom Wheatley
Belleville CBC Compiler

HASTINGS WILDLIFE JUNCTION



Hastings Wildlife Junction, ON. Photo by Birchbark Media.

Located in southern Ontario, this 5,000-hectare project is the critical next step to lessen the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss

From the NCC Website

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has an amazing opportunity to protect and care for 5,000 hectares (12,000 acres) of significant forests and wetlands south of Bancroft, Ontario. Located at the junctions of the Algonquin to Adirondacks and The Land Between corridors, a project of this magnitude and ecological significance is staggeringly rare in southern Ontario. The property's features provide essential ecosystem services and will help slow the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Quick facts

- **Location:** Hastings County
- **Habitat type:** forests, wetlands, rivers, creeks
- **Size:** 5,000 hectares (12,000 acres), part of a larger 8,000-hectare (20,000-acre) goal
- **Shoreline:** 86 kilometres
- **Species:** wide-ranging mammals, like eastern wolf, black bear, moose, pine marten, successfully reintroduced elk, and several species of rare birds and turtles

The Hastings Wildlife Junction boasts extensive interior forest with an astonishing 98 per cent of natural cover, significant rivers and wetlands. The natural area is adjacent to 30,000 hectares (74,131 acres) of Crown lands that have been specially designated as enhanced management areas.

Over the last 150 years, many species and habitats in Canada have been declining. This decline has been more dramatic in southern Canada, especially southern Ontario. This is where much of the province's population is located and where there is a long history of settlement and related agricultural, urban and industrial land uses.

Development pressures are on the rise in the area. In 2021, Bancroft, the business and recreational hub for North Hastings County, was named best spot to buy real estate in Canada by *MoneySense*.

The area's significant biodiversity and ecosystem benefits, as well as the growing threat of development in this area, make this land a critical step in landscape-scale conservation in southern Ontario.

For more information about the Hastings Wildlife Junction, NCC's plans and how to donate toward the \$3.2 million needed for the project visit the NCC website.

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/ontario/featured-projects/hastings-wildlife-junction.html>



Two Ontario Bird Species at Risk found in the area of this project. Cerulean warbler on the left. (Photo: Terry Mcburnie, eBird). Canada Warbler on the right. (Photo: Josiah Vandenberg, eBird)

DON'T FORGET

Don't forget to consult and "Like" the Quinte Field Naturalists Facebook page. Catherine and Bernd do an excellent job in maintaining the page. Have seen tracks in the snow and wonder what made them? The February 7 post has a chart to help with identification.

Don't forget to check Terry Sprague's website. Beautiful pictures and a place to see and post sightings of unusual winter birds. <https://naturestuff.net/web/>

Don's forget to take part in the 25th Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 18 – 21. Join this worldwide citizen science project to document the world's birds. Last year birders reported 6572 species on over 332,000 checklists. Totals locally were Prince Edward County – 78 species, Hastings – 64 species. Information on the website where you can register for a webinar to help with bird identification. <https://www.birdcount.org/>

*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.
General meetings are not held currently.*

President	Past President George Thomson 613-478-3205	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 and Bernd Baier 613-478-3319
Lori Borthwick	Board members John Lowry	Robert Ormston

Next Newsletter Deadline –February 25, 2020
Please send submissions to sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com