

# *The Quinte Naturalist*

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

## *Spring Round-Up*

*A Summary of some of the events and sightings during Spring*



Photo and caption by John Lowry.

***The 1994 Bell Creek study states that "the Bell Creek Corridor represents a locally unusual diversity of habitat due to a variety of geomorphological features, soils, water and micro-climatic effects." I am certainly finding this to be the case.***

# CLUB NEWS

**The Future of QFN** – Good news. It looks as though we are weathering the Covid storm.

Membership Secretary, Nancy Stevenson, reports that we have 84 members.

Mike Shaw has kept our financial records current so that we have been able to budget responsibly.

Lacking a candidate for president we decided to operate with an executive committee with the presidential jobs split among various people. So far this system seems to be working.

Our energetic advocacy for nature-related causes continues. Elizabeth has listed the advocacy letters sent on page 4.

Denice continues to answer requests for turtle ICUs. Recently I noticed 2 new ones on Moneymore Rd. by Parks Creek. Denice has also served a term as a director representing Ontario East on the board of Ontario Nature.

John Lowry works hard to save many natural areas with special emphasis on the Bell Creek watershed in Belleville's east end. See his article about North Hanley Park on page 15.

Catherine and Bernd Baier have organized outings enjoyed by members. Reports begin on page 11. The Baiers also keep the QFN Facebook page up to date. Recent posts give information about how to help our at-risk turtle species.



**Jason King is our go-to guy for help with iNaturalist. This photo of northern blue flag is one of his almost 15,000 submissions documenting 1665 species. A remarkable commitment to citizen science.**



**Purple Pitcher Plant is one of our few carnivorous plants. Another of Jason King's finds in the Tweed area.**

Ted Pordham and Marie Clarke also the bird feeders at the Frink Centre filled.

In addition to her work with the Green Party Lori Borthwick has been following an exhausting schedule. She has watched meetings of Belleville's Planning Advisory Committee and city council. She was invited to a dinner with Belleville's Green Task Force. This gave her an opportunity "to bend Councillor Malette's ear" about the need to preserve natural areas in the city. She organized a Butt Blitz team which finished third nationally. Lori herself finished fourth nationally among individuals picking up 27,666 cigarette butts. John Lowry finished third with 29,339. Counting and picking up that many butts requires real commitment.

Lori has also initiated a Facebook page called *Belleville Marsh Protectors*. You can help by sending pictures and images to her at [lborthwick@sympatico.ca](mailto:lborthwick@sympatico.ca). She will add them to the page.

Several members make regular contributions to citizen science projects. All that's lacking is meetings where we can talk to people, share our experiences and hear interesting speakers. If Covid lessens its impact that omission will be remedied in September. Jonathon Balcombe, author of *Superfly* and *What a Fish Knows*, has agreed to speak.

***In his posts for iNaturalist Jason King doesn't restrict himself to birds. Many forms of life are found among his iNaturalist records. His picture of a chalk-fronted corporal fascinated me because the wings are so transparent that he veins appear to be drawn on the wood and not part of the body.***



## **Advocacy Letters**

### **November 2021- April 2022**

Advocacy Letters have been written to all levels of government on many topics.

#### Topics

- ✓ Support the protection of wetland habitat, forested areas and biodiversity in the east end of Belleville (the Belleville Marsh part of which is located on the Bakelite Property, Hanley Park, Bell Creek watershed, the Blessington Creek Marsh); support environmentally friendly development only
- ✓ Recommend to the City of Belleville that a new Environmental Impact Study of the Bell Creek watershed be undertaken
- ✓ Support the implementation of the 2007 Endangered Species Act and oppose the provincial government's changes which contribute to habitat destruction and imbalance in the natural world
- ✓ Encourage the Municipalities of Quinte West, Belleville, Deseronto, Centre Hastings, Marmora & Lake, Tweed, Township of Madoc and the Township of Stirling-Rawdon to consider becoming a member of the Partners for Climate Protection. An oral presentation was prepared and presented to the Municipality of Tweed.
- ✓ Compliment the City of Belleville about their intent to implement the "Let It Grow" campaign and to take steps to become a 'Bee City'.
- ✓ Support the continued existence of Nellie Lunn Park in the Municipality of Wollaston;
- ✓ Protect individual species such as Caribou and Black Ash
- ✓ Support the creation of a Conservation Reserve along the south shore of Prince Edward County; urge Minister Piccini to create National Marine Conservation Area
- ✓ Provide input to the Federal Government's Emissions Reduction Plan, following COP26
- ✓ Urge Provincial Government to include provisions that would reduce bird collisions with buildings in the Ontario Building Code
- ✓ Urge Federal Government to enforce the 2019 standards that were established for no dumping in Marine Protected areas
- ✓ Collaborate with the City of Belleville in an application to obtain funds for the purchase of 17 litter traps

## **Congratulations to George Thomson and Elizabeth Churcher**

George and Elizabeth have received the **Nature Education Award** from Ontario Nature. Every year our parent organization gives awards to individuals and groups which have made major contributions to nature and conservation in Ontario. ON's official reasons for giving this award is copied below the picture.

Thanks to Andy White for preparing the necessary nomination form.



*Ontario Nature Education Award. Following award-winning careers as science teachers in Hastings County, they have gone on to tirelessly volunteer in their community, inspiring and educating people of all ages to advocate for conservation. Churcher and Thomson reside on a 100-acre farm in rural Tweed that they converted into a nature reserve.*

# Tweed Naturalists Receive Ontario Nature Education Award

Author of the article:

[Luke Hendry](#)

Originally published in The Intelligencer, June 20, 2022 • Used with Permission



*Tweed couple Elizabeth Churcher and George Thompson are the 2022 recipients of the Ontario Nature Education Award. The pair, above framed by goldenrod, at Potter's Creek Conservation Area in Belleville, are involved in many community projects. Photo by Luke Hendry*

## **Conservation comes naturally to Elizabeth Churcher and George Thompson.**

The Tweed residents are this year's winners of the Ontario Nature Education Award for their efforts to promote conservation and share their knowledge. It was one of 10 Ontario Nature awards presented this month.

The retired teachers are very active members of the Quinte Field Naturalists, local volunteers, and fascinated by nature.

Denice Wilkins, a fellow Quinte Field Naturalist and past Ontario Nature board member, presented on Monday a framed photo to the couple in an informal ceremony at Potter's Creek Conservation Area in Belleville.

She said it was for their efforts to "successfully help people understand the natural world," furthering conservation work

In a later interview, Wilkins described both Churcher and Thomson as inspirations who are always willing to help.

"Not only are they such great teachers, committed dedicated naturalists extraordinaire, they do all kinds of citizen-science projects," she said.

"They are two of the kindest, most generous, most gentle, thoughtful people that I know. "They are so committed to the environment," said Wilkins. "Nature needs all the help it can get right now."

Andy White led the naturalist group's effort to nominate Thomson and Churcher.

"They are the first ones I call when I have a question about a species identification or an interesting sighting," he said.

"And we don't know the answers," joked Thomson.

"So I call up Terry Sprague," White quipped. Sprague, a well-known Prince Edward County naturalist, was among Monday's crowd.

Thomson and Churcher said their many projects and dedication to furthering conservation education are simply extensions of their great love of nature. Neither senior expected provincial recognition.

"It's pretty overwhelming," said Thompson.

"It's very humbling to think what we have done is meaningful to others," added Churcher. "Our goal was to support the natural world. In doing that we have touched the lives of so many people" who have developed their own appreciation for nature, she said.

Toronto native Thomson earned bachelor's and master's degrees in botany before teaching science in Toronto and at Belleville Collegiate Institute and Vocational School and Quinte Secondary.

Churcher grew up on a farm east of Bancroft. She and Thomson donated 60 forested acres of her family farm to the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust; it's now Churcher Woods, a nature reserve.

She earned an undergraduate degree in biology at Trent University and taught Grade 7/8 science for 17 years. She then became a principal and administrator and earned a master's and doctorate in education. She worked in Bancroft, Belleville, Bayside and Marmora.

Immersed in nature throughout her life, Churcher said she does not view gardening as work, but as a place to enjoy learning.

"The garden is a place to study and experiment," she told Monday's dozen or so listeners. "I see a whole ecosystem before me."

The couple are in their seventh year of writing the "Naturally" column for The Tweed News. George is a past president of the Field Naturalists; as corresponding secretary, Churcher has penned advocacy letters.



*Every year American redstarts nest very near the spot in Potter's Creek CA where Luke Hendry took his picture in the above article. It's a common breeder in Quinte woodlots. This tiny warbler weighs slightly more than a toonie but may migrate as far as Colombia or Venezuela. Tom Wheatley photographed this bird at the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory.*

# OF NOTE LOCALLY

Napanee birder Kurt Hennige also received recognition from Ontario Nature. Many of you



will recognize Kurt from his years working to preserve breeding sites for the endangered loggerhead shrike. But his efforts to protect birds extended over 50 years. Ontario Nature noted that they gave him the “ **Ontario Nature Natural History Award** for his tireless efforts to protect wild birds in Ontario. **Hennige** has participated in surveys and studies to establish data records for many species and deepen our knowledge of the natural world.”



Local provincial parks like Presqu'île and Sandbanks are so popular that you now must make a reservation even for a day visit. Conservation Areas like Quinte Conservation's Potter's Creek (above) with its 7 km of trails or Lower Trent's Sager CA (right) with its observation tower offering spectacular views are much better options. Visit the websites for information about all local conservation areas. There are many. Lower Trent -



– <https://ltc.on.ca/conservation>  
Quinte - <https://www.quinteconservation.ca/en/outdoor-spaces/outdoor-spaces.aspx>

## Protecting Lake Ontario: A National Marine Conservation Area Initiative

The graphic features a dark grey background on the left with white text. On the right, a circular frame shows a duck splashing in water. Below the title, the date and time are listed, followed by a 'REGISTER NOW!' button.

WEBINAR: PROTECTING  
LAKE ONTARIO

*A National Marine  
Conservation Area  
Initiative*

JULY 26 @ 12PM EST

REGISTER NOW!

Join us on **Tuesday July 26th, from 12 - 1 PM EST** to learn about a very important initiative to advance the establishment of new National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs) in the Great Lakes, starting with Lake Ontario.

You can read more about the importance of protecting Lake Ontario in Nature Canada's recently released case for protection report titled **["Protecting the Lake of Shining Waters: The need to establish a National Marine Conservation Area \(NMCA\) in Lake Ontario"](#)**.

# OUTINGS

Thanks to Ted Pordham for the pictures and text

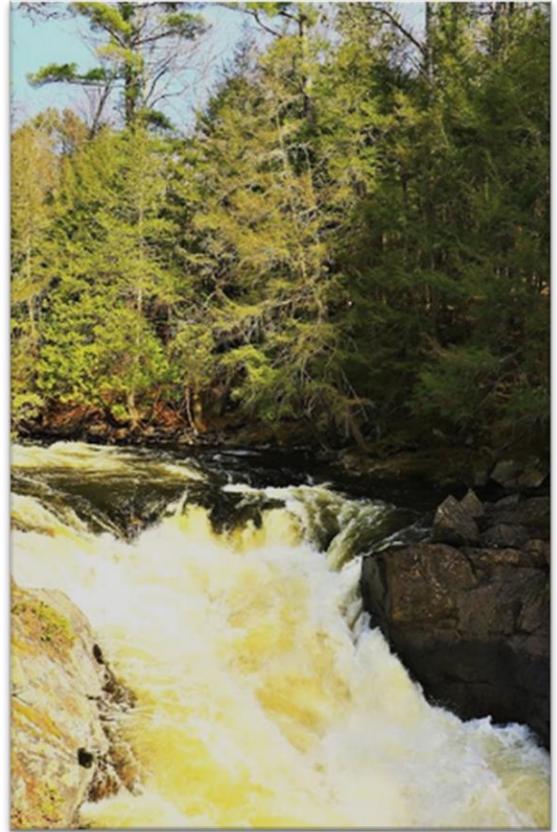
Thanks to Catherine and Bernd Baier for organizing another wonderful QFN outing to the McGeachie C.A. and the Gut C.A. . We got a history lesson from Terry Bradt, Bancroft FN, before we started the McGeachie trail. This really is a lovely conservation area. Terry also showed us his hidden stump, the remains of a pine or cedar felled improperly many



years ago. Then lunch gave us a rest as well as a good meal

The Crowe River did not disappoint us as it roared through the Gut C.A. south of Coe Hill. With water levels high at this time of year, it was a spectacular display.

Thank you so much to Catherine and Bernd again and we look forward to the next outing.



## Potter's Creek Outing

On June 20th nineteen QFN members went on an outing to Potter's Creek. Robert Ormston, an employee of Quinte Conservation and a member of the QFN executive, gave a tour of the area. He highlighted some of Quinte Conservation's projects such as a pollinator garden and a rain garden. He provided information on different plant species that were planted and discussed how they are beneficial for pollinators.

At end of the end of outing Denice Wilkins, QFN's Ontario Nature representative, presented Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson with the Ontario Nature Education Award. All members of the QFN executive were in attendance to witness the presentation of this prestigious and well deserved award. Bravo Elizabeth and George!



***Our Guides – Brooke Godden  
and Robert Ormston***



***The outing was well-attended***



***Appropriately Elizabeth and  
George received their award in a  
natural setting***

## A Trip to The County

Thanks to Catherine Baier for this report.

**On May 24th eleven QFN members attended an outing in Prince Edward County at Massassauga Point Conservation Area and Beaver Meadow Wildlife Management Area. It was a very enjoyable full day event with a luncheon stop at The Bean Counter Café in Picton.**



***View from the lookout at  
Beaver Meadow Wildlife  
Management Area***



***Part of the group on one  
of the numerous trails at  
Massassauga C.A.***



***A dedicated naturalist and  
photographer kneeling in  
a bed of poison ivy.***

## Desirable Side Effect of Zen Window Curtain Treatment

By Marie Clarke



Before “covid” we decided to install Cord Zen curtains to help prevent – or at least reduce - the chance of bird window collisions. They were installed on two larger living room windows. The result was positive, fewer collisions.

We have, however, had two window visitors- an unexpected side effect. Last summer, a Gold Finch decided to land on a hanging cord and seemed to be looking in through the glass, moving his head from side to side. It was delightful!

This spring, the visitor was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. This window is closer to the feeder and he jumped over to the cords and installed himself, tapping repeatedly on the window. He

repeated this several times before deciding there was nothing of interest to see in my living room.

I wonder who I will get next year!



## The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry. American Naturalist

## Chalk One up for Mother Nature

*This article by John Lowry was published originally on Terry Sprague's website*

*All photos by John in Hanley Park North*



***Red Columbine***

I have long included myself in the ranks of those who seek solace in the deep woods. I find sanctuary in the splendours of the forest. They are my refuge from the hectic pace of the modern world. And to seek out these oases of natural beauty and tranquility I would not hesitate to drive some distance, for instance to places like Vanderwater Conservation Area or even the more distant Algonquin Provincial Park.

So imagine my pleasant surprise to discover recently, as a lifelong resident of east end Belleville, that one such little known sanctuary existed literally minutes from my front doorstep.

Just to the east of Haig Road there exists a strip of land that was once the farmstead of the Hanley family. The land was purchased speculatively by a real estate developer in the 1970s and allowed to go fallow. While the pasture fields have re-wilded naturally, it is apparent from aerial photos taken in the 1940s that what we now call the Maple forest had already been in existence for some time.



***Marsh Marigold***

Fast forward to today and the entire property has been sub-divided into three parcels by subsequent owners with the intention of developing it for residential purposes. The southernmost parcel, Parkville Greens, has recently been stripped of most of its natural vegetation and is currently being developed.

But it is the northernmost parcel, Hanley Park North, which is the subject of this article. The property is 34.3 hectares in total and a significant portion of this is made up of Provincially Significant Wetlands that are part of the Bell Creek Swamp Wetland complex.

The crown jewel of the tract is the 3-hectare mixed hardwood forest located on the banks of Bell Creek, in the southeast corner of the property. An informal survey revealed that the woods contains over 80 larger older trees of which at least 50 appear to be well over 100 years or older. One truly magnificent White Oak towers above the forest and with a girth of 130 cm (50 inches) is likely well over 200 years old



***Marsh Marigold***

While the overwhelming majority of the trees are majestic Sugar Maples, the species list also includes White Oak, Basswood, Shagbark Hickory, Ash, Red Oak and White Pine.

The beauty of this small patch of forest is the fact that it has remained very much largely undisturbed by the hand of man. There is evidence that the maples may have once been tapped for their syrup but other than that the woods have been left alone. Scattered throughout the forest are large snags and the forest floor shows plenty of examples of fallen trees being recycled back into the soil.

And one only has to walk the well-worn trails in April to witness a glorious display of spring ephemerals . A carpet of Bloodroot, White Trilliums, Trout Lilies, Virginia Spring Beauties, Mayapple, Wood Anemone, Violets and Wild Blue Phlox greets the visitor.



***Early Blue Cohosh***

In January 2021 the owner of Hanley Park North submitted their initial proposal to the City of Belleville's planning department, a plan which if it had been approved would have seen the maple forest clearcut for a townhouse development.



**Red Trillium**

However, largely in response to concerns raised by a citizen advocacy group called 'The Friends of Bell Creek', a revised proposal was submitted in March of this year that would see the development scaled back from 156 units to 103 and, most significantly, offers to withdraw any development completely from the maple forest, preserving it in its entirety.

So in the frenzied race to develop any "underused green space" that is currently gripping the Quinte region it would appear that at least in this one instance, Mother Nature is

leading by a nose, and perhaps, just perhaps, the many living things that call this beautiful forest home may have been granted a reprieve.

***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**

Vacant

**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

**Board members**

Lori Borthwick

John Lowry

Robert Ormston

Please send submissions to [sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com](mailto:sharronjohnblaney@gmail.com)