

# THE QUINTE NATURALIST

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

## *SPRING*

Yes, it's "just" a pussy willow. No, it's not a species at risk. Yes, it's common along the



Bayshore. The "flowers" are really catkins, a flower cluster with no petals. They might be part of your spring bouquet but otherwise there seems to be nothing remarkable about pussy willows.

Pussy willows have male and female plants. You need both for fertile seeds. The silvery hairs are not flowers. They trap the sun's heat on cold early spring days to protect the hidden developing buds.

They are a very important plant for pollinators. With the flowers appearing before even the earliest spring ephemerals like hepatica or trout lily they are extremely important for the earliest emerging bees and flies. These insects are attracted not by beautiful flowers but by the abundant strongly scented nectar.

Take a closer look at the pussy willows on the Bayshore. They're worth it.

*Photo: John Lowry in iNaturalist*

The catkins on the previous page were male proven by the yellow pollen grains. The picture below shows the female catkins. Unlike most plants that are pollinated by the wind pussy willows are pollinated by the early emerging insects. In more natural areas the plants provide for moose, deer, muskrats and ruffed grouse.



*The picture is from the Wikipedia page about pussy willow. It was taken by a Quebec resident using the pseudonym Silk666.*



*Jason King took this photo of skunk cabbage in the Tweed area.*

Obviously one factor limiting the ability of plants to bloom early is the snow on the ground. As shrubs pussy willows flower above the snow. Another benefactor of early emerging insects, skunk cabbage solves the problem in a different way. It generates its own heat of 21 degrees Celsius or more to melt the snow. The skunk cabbage flower seen above consists of a purplish or reddish hood called a spathe protecting a knob-like spadix which is composed of many petal-less flowers.

The plant got its name from its rotting meat odour which attracts flies and carrion beetles which pollinate it.



# CLUB NEWS

## BOSTON PIZZA FUNDRAISER



Like George and Elizabeth, seen above, several QFN members took turns acting as greeters at Boston Pizza on April 24. On Mondays BP supports local non-profit organizations by letting members meet diners at the door. The greeters welcome the diners, talk about their organization and receive a cheque for 10% of the take exclusive of alcohol.



To the left Denice accepts a cheque for \$476.42 from Stephanie Colson, Boston Pizza manager. Obviously the evening was a success.

Thanks to the organizers, greeters and diners. Kudos to Boston Pizza for showing this support for the Quinte area. We appreciate their help.

# OUTING - WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7



A Note from Catherine Baier

On Wednesday, June 7th at 9:30 QFN is having an outing at Beaver Creek which is located approximately 11 km north of Marmora. This spot is located in the Hastings Wildlife Junction, a 25000 hectares area that is part of the Land Between and Algonquin/Adirondack corridor.

At Beaver Creek there are two trails, one is 2.7 km and the other is approximately 2 km. Our guide will be Luke Ridgway, the Program Coordinator of Large Landscapes at The Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Only QFN members may attend these outings for insurance purposes. Membership is \$25 for an individual and \$40 for a family.

An email with additional details will be sent out to participants once a group has been confirmed. Please contact us if you wish to join us. <mailto:Cat.baier@gmail.com>



A2A

Algonquin to  
Adirondacks  
Collaborative

## NEW TREASURER

At the April 10 executive meeting the board regretfully accepted Mike Shaw's resignation as treasurer. Mike saved us at a time when there was general reluctance to accept the job and guided our financial fortunes through the vagaries of the Covid lockdown. Thank you, Mike, for a job well done.

The executive board has appointed Dan Guenther as our new treasurer. Dan moved to the Quinte area a couple of years ago. He is a former member of the Toronto Ornithological Club with a long-standing interest in nature and also has management experience and a masters degree in Forest Conservation. The job will be in good hands.

## MEMBERSHIP

Quinte Field Naturalists have come out of the COVID lockdown stronger than ever. Membership Secretary Nancy Stevenson announced that QFN now has 106 members. It's a very active membership. As you can see in this newsletter club members are busy with many projects.

Welcome to new members who have joined in 2023: Cheryl Anderson, Terry Boyd, Evan, Stewart, Tom and Helen Britton, David Craig, Don Craighead, Eli Drummond, Sherry Gamble, Lee Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton, Karen Hill, Andrea Kingsley, Doug Knutson, Colleen Lang, Greg Parsons, Jose Mendoza, Pat Peterson, Danielle Reddick, Rosie Reid, Roderick and Elizabeth Rolston, Elliott Royle, Sheila Stene, Douglas Taylor, and Beth Wylie.

## SOCIAL CONVENER

Nancy Stevenson has agreed to take on the additional role of social convener. I'm sure she would appreciate some help when it's time to plan next year's dinner. Thank you, Nancy.



***Red Columbine is an excellent native plant for a wildflower garden. Its delicate flower is attractive and the plant is not invasive. Hummingbirds and insects with long tongues love it and pollinate it. Insects without long tongues cheat. Look for small holes in the spurs at the top where an insect has cut a hole so it can enjoy the nectar, free. Photo by John Lowry in iNaturalist.***





### **BELL CREEK WILDFLOWER WALK**

The spring wildflower walk in the area known as Hanley park in the Bell Creek watershed was obviously a success. Many happy faces in the picture above showing a group of the participants. It would be a shame to lose such a diverse and popular natural area. Photo by Lori Borthwick.

Hanley park wildflowers clockwise from upper left Blue Phlox (John Lowry), Bloodroot (John Lowry), Canada Anemone (Jason King), Marsh Marigold (Lori Borthwick), Large-flowered Bellwort (Lori Borthwick) Mayapple (John Lowry)





## EARTH DAY WALK – APRIL 22

Members of the Quinte Field Naturalists and friends dodged raindrops on Earth Day to walk the city's new Shirley Langer Trail, an eastward extension of the Bayshore Trail. We celebrated the marshland's denizens by carrying pictures of turtles, snakes and frogs. We drew attention to the importance of marshlands as part of a healthy ecosystem and to the Ford government's destructive environmental policies.

The Belleville Marsh is currently a Provincially Significant Wetland but if reassessed under Bill 23 it would lose that status and the protection against development it affords. In addition, previous changes that weakened the Endangered Species Act mean many wetland inhabitants, including Species at Risk, would no longer be protected even if designated threatened or endangered.



### ***Marsh Citizens***

***Least Bittern (photo by Kyle Blaney) is a designated threatened species resident in Quinte cattail marshes.***

***American Bullfrog (photo by Jason King) is North America's largest frog. It is identifiable by the large tympani (eardrums)***

## ANNUAL DINNER

Our annual dinner on May 18 was a sellout. Seventy-five people enjoyed either a chicken or vegan buffet dinner at the Foxboro Emmanuel United Church. It was a chance to catch up with old acquaintances and make new friends.



After dinner we moved to the sanctuary to hear a presentation by Merilyn Simonds, the author of *Woman, Watching: Louise de Kiriline Lawrence and The Birds of Pimisi Bay*.

Louise de Kiriline Lawrence led a remarkable life. Born in Sweden she spent World War I as a Red Cross nurse in a prisoner of war camp in Denmark where she met her first husband. He was Russian and Louise accompanied him when he returned to his homeland to fight the Red Army. He died in the revolutionary war.

In 1927 Louise emigrated to Canada and settled in Bonfield in the North Bay area. When the Dionne quintuplets were born in 1934 Louise served as the head nurse caring for them for a year. Finally, she moved to a cabin on Pimisi Bay on the Mattawa River where she began her career as an ornithologist and writer.

Her dedication and attention to detail in her research is evidenced by her study of the red-eyed vireo. She devoted a day to counting the number of times her subject sang. The total was 22,197. She was widely recognized for her work by the most respected ornithologists in North America.

In her talk Simonds also talked about other women who published important studies and deserve recognition for their ornithological work in an era when they were denied many opportunities available to males in the same field.

It was an excellent presentation.

The success of the evening was due to the efforts of many. Elizabeth Churcher and Denise organized the dinner. Nancy Stevenson managed ticket sales. Lori Borthwick and John Lowry ran the silent auction while Bernd and Catherine Baier and others collected items for the auction.





## Quinte Field Naturalists

**Cans, cans wherever they may be. We are gathering them to raise funds for the Nature Conservancy of Canada**



The Quinte Field Naturalists are collecting alcohol containers in order to cash them in for the deposit.

We accept aluminum cans – beer, alcohol and even pop cans. We also accept bottles, both glass and plastic – wine and liquor bottles. We can even cash in the cardboard alcohol containers.

In 2022 we raised \$1,525.00 which we donated to the Nature Conservancy of Canada to help purchase and protect natural areas in this region.

Our goal for 2023 is \$2,000.00

Our collection deadline is the end of November so the monies can be donated on Giving Tuesday, thereby effectively doubling the donation.

If you would like to contribute contact John Lowry at 613-962-5232 or email him at

[johnslowry18@gmail.com](mailto:johnslowry18@gmail.com)

**John has collected over \$1,000 already.**

## PLANT SALE



## PLANT SALE

In John Lowry's photo, you see the QFN plant sale open and ready for business. On Saturday, May 20 it

rained but the weather just seemed to encourage people to come out to buy garden plants and native wildflowers. At the end of the day sales totaled over \$3800. A nice sum to be used to support Belleville's tree planting initiative.

Greg Parsons decided we needed a plant sale. His enthusiasm for the project was catching and made it possible for him to recruit several other QFN members. Together this group organized a very successful Saturday event. Thank you, Greg, for such a fantastic project.

## LITTA TRAPS – Volunteers Needed

Last year QFN participated in a special day organized by Belleville's Green Task Force to publicize the importance of pollinators. This year's event on Saturday, June 24 is designed to explain the city's Litta Trap program which QFN also supported. The traps are set in storm sewers to capture trash and plastic litter larger than 5 mm. and keep it out of the bay.

QFN has been invited to have a table again to highlight our organization and projects that we are working on. We are also hoping to assist with the city's display by adding something visually interesting about the issues of single use plastic which the litta traps were designed to reduce.

Anyone who is able to staff the QFN table or who has ideas for the single use plastic part of the city display, please contact John Lowry.

<mailto:johnslowry18@gmail.com>





In April Catherine and Bernd Baier joined a crew organized by Kelly Wallace of Think Turtle to make life safer for Belleville's turtles. Turtles were known to nest in a parking lot



***The northern map turtle is common in the bay and the Moira River. It received its name because the lines on the carapace resemble the contour lines on a topographic map. Photo by Lori Borthwick.***

which was about to be asphalted. For turtles this is a plus because they will no longer be tempted to wander around a parking lot putting them at risk of being run over. Of course, the minus is that they lose a potential nest site.

The Think Turtle crew stepped in to solve the problem. The parking lot owners and the City of Belleville supported the idea of creating a safe alternate nesting site nearby. We hope the turtles appreciate the effort and make use of the new site.



# GOOD NEWS FROM TWEED

Birds love sewage lagoons. The plants and micro-organisms which flourish in the nutrient rich soup attract both resident species and migrants. Birders love sewage lagoons because that's where the birds are. The Tweed sewage lagoons are no exception. Since 2016 birders have recorded 162 species at the lagoons.

Several months ago the Tweed council closed access to the road where it was possible to view the lagoons. Many naturalists lamented losing the opportunities to view and photograph many species and to contribute data to citizen projects such as eBird and iNaturalist.

Elizabeth Churcher made arrangements for Mayor Don DeGenova and a councillor to attend a meeting of the Tweed Horticultural Society where Kyle Blaney gave a presentation with emphasis on the importance of the lagoons. The following day a group of QFN members and local naturalists made an appeal to the council to provide access to the lagoons.

At the council meeting Elizabeth Churcher and Andrea Kingsley spoke about the lagoons as a place where people could



***A semipalmated plover contemplates which culinary delight it will sample from the Tweed sewage lagoon. Several of these tiny shorebirds stop at the lagoons in May and June to rest and eat on their long trip north to their tundra nesting area.***

***The killdeer below is a close relative of the semipalmated plover. It is larger and has 2 black neckbands rather than one.***



study and enjoy birds. Sewage lagoons are also a tourist attraction for birders and photographers. With appropriate access available they can be an economic benefit to the community.

Tweed council was convinced. They await legal advice on what implications granting access may have for council. We are hopeful that the Tweed sewage lagoons will soon be open again for wildlife viewing.



***Killdeer (left, photo by Joe Bartok) are famous for their broken wing routine. Hoping that predators will regard them as an injured bird and easy prey they draw potential threats away from their nests.***

***The size of the dunlin flock (lower left, photo by Tom Wheatley) attests to the importance of sewage lagoons as a place where shorebirds can stop to feed and rest during migration.***

***Keith Gregoire took the picture of two dunlins on the right. All pictures were taken at the Tweed sewage lagoons.***



# CALENDARS

## IS SPRING OVER?

Calendars and clocks are human inventions and thus imperfect. They do help us live our daily lives. The calendar tells us what day the dentist appointment is and the clock tells us when to be in the chair. In the longer term the calendar enables us all to know when to celebrate a wedding or hold a victory party. We divide the year into four seasons. A recent newsletter from World Wildlife Fund noted that the Anishinaabe see five seasons, dividing spring into early and late periods. The point is our perception of the number of seasons is subjective. Nature does not have seasons; it has a cycle of constant change to which we respond. Gordon Lightfoot captured this reality in his song *Pussywillows, Cattails*.

*Pussywillows, cat-tails, soft winds and roses  
Rain pools in the woodland, water to my knees  
Shivering, quivering, the warm breath of spring  
Pussywillows, cat-tails, soft winds and roses*

*Catbirds and cornfields, daydreams together  
Riding on the roadside the dust gets in your eyes  
Reveling, disheveling, the summer nights can bring  
Pussywillows, cat-tails, soft winds and roses*

*Slanted rays and colored days, stark blue horizons  
Naked limbs and wheat bins, hazy afternoons  
Voicing, rejoicing, the wine cups do bring  
Pussywillows, cat-tails, soft winds and roses*

*Harsh nights and candlelights, woodfires a-blazin'  
Soft lips and fingertips resting in my soul  
Treasuring, remembering, the promise of spring  
Pussywillows, cat-tails, soft winds and roses.*

You can hear Gordon sing the song here (scroll down)

<https://rippleeffects.reviews/2010/07/25/pussywillows-cattails-soft-winds-and-roses/>