

The Quinte Naturalist

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

Reviewing QFN and Nature in May 2026



It's strawberry season. John Lowry took this photograph on June 5. Woodland Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*). There are other strawberry species in Quinte. See page 15.

QFN News



April 30
Lori and John were at the Parkdale Community Centre promoting the QFN and our efforts to plant native trees, shrubs and perennials in city parks.

May 1 – A1 Plumbing announced that QFN was the winner of the A1 in the Community contest for April. Thanks to everyone who voted for us. The prize is \$500.00 for the Tree Planting Committee and a custom promotional video from Lavender Story Studio.

Click here to see the video:

<https://vimeo.com/1193411489?fl=pl&fe=sh>

May 4 – This was a non-event. The Board was scheduled to meet using Google Meet but the session had to be postponed to June 8 and then again to June 22.

Lori Borthwick did submit a report prior to May 4 explaining how local MPs and MPPs had responded to her letter about the proposed Alto high speed rail line.

Lori's Report

Received replies:

- Prime Minister's office including that they were going to ensure our comments were passed on to the Minister of Transport and Alto planning staff. (I sent an actual letter to the Prime Minister to ensure a response which I received this week.)
- Ric Bresee's office sent a standardized response not specific to our letter.
- Tyler Allsopp's office sent a specific response to our letter .

"MPP Allsopp shares concerns that the potential Alto routes potentially would run through sensitive lands and disturb species habitat, impact property

rights, and disturb agricultural operations and existing transportation routes. He's also aware of the high project costs and the likelihood of barriers to access for residents in our region who would have to travel at length to board a train. These are all issues that he will be raising within the provincial government's caucus and with the Alto project itself.



The Alto line will run within of the corridors shown on the map.

I appreciate the mitigation measures you're suggesting, including elevating the lines, providing opportunities for wildlife to cross the barriers, and establishing buffers for significant features. I will be sure to share this correspondence with MPP Allsopp for his awareness and advocacy."

- MP Chris Malette's office gave a response specific to us.

He met with the Minister of Transport last week to discuss ALTO, and he is still actively seeking input from the community on it, so this is timely and very much appreciated.

Thank you again, and please do keep us up to date on the other work of the Quinte Field Naturalists. MP Malette is a proud and active member of the Environmental Caucus here in Ottawa and is very active on these matters in general. I know we are looking to do some in-riding stuff related to this important work soon too - that is when its not so rainy and muddy out!

(Ed. Note. On February 27 MP Malette issued a statement saying that he opposed the southern route until more information, consultation, and justification were provided. On June 22 the federal government announced that it would consider adding a stop to the line at Kingston on the southern route. This choice sees the 40-60-meter-wide rail right-of-way passing through Belleville's Thurlow Ward. MP Malette commented he supports high speed rail and that the southern route "presents a potential pathway to address" the concerns of "landowners, environmental organizations and local stakeholders" while also enhancing transportation access for communities beyond Kingston, including those in the Quinte Region.")

MP Shelby Kramp-Neumann – No response

May 20 – QFN Annual Fund-Raising Dinner

Elizabeth introduced Mark Raycroft, professional wildlife photographer and wildlife biologist. Mark's focus is to promote understanding of the "giants" of the north (moose, caribou, elk, all bears, big horned sheep, muskox, ..). He co-hosts "Beyond the Wild" podcasts which feature these icons, talks about their natural history and gives tips on the best ways to capture pictures of them in the wild. Mark also conducts "Photo Tours" at various northern locations where different species are prevalent. Through many dazzling pictures, Mark shared his passion for being in the presence of wildlife. If you want to see what you missed go to: <https://www.markraycroft.com/index>



Outings

May 8 – Beaver Meadow Wildlife Area with Dan Guenther



There were 18 participants exploring this area owned by Quinte Conservation. The area was a farm during the early 1900s that grew celery, mushrooms, and sugar turnips. Currently about 330 plants species have been identified there. The visitors were treated to spectacular views of large white trilliums at their peak. Photo by John Lowry.

May 9 – Point Petre



John Lowry and Joanne Dewey led the 30 participants for this hike organized by the South Shore Joint Initiative. Round-lobed hepatica belongs to the buttercup family. It is also known as liverwort or liver leaf because the leaves were said to be the shape of the human liver. A photographer using the pseudonym RDM-NCB posted this photograph on iNaturalist on May 9

May 12 – Vanderwater Conservation Area



Twelve explorers attended this walk at Vanderwater. Vanderwater's almost 16 kilometers of trails travel through diverse habitats. The wild ginger found there is a fascinating plant. You can see the flower at the base of the plant. Small insects like beetles and ants are its pollinators, attracted by an odour of decaying plant matter. Seeds are covered with a nutritious coating attractive to ants which carry the seed back to the nest. After they have consumed the coating the ants discard the seed unharmed where it can germinate at some distance from the host plant. Photo by Patricia Nielsen.

May 20 – Point Anne Bird Walk



All eyes were on the treetops along Manley Drive in Point Anne this past Wednesday as Dr. Keith Gregoire led a group from the Quinte Field Naturalists in search of birds. The early morning venture recorded an astounding 51 species of birds clearly illustrating the amazing biodiversity of the Point Anne region. The walk was very informative and interesting as Dr. Gregoire explained the various bird calls and in some instances was able to point out the bird in question.

May 27 – Tree-mendous Talk and Walk



The second of our Tree-mendous Talks and Walks saw some beautiful weather. Many thanks to Councillor Garnet Thompson and Rowland Cave-Browne-Cave for supporting us in our native plantings at Clifford "Sonny" Belch Park. A truly beautiful multi-use park.



We have allowed alien plants to replace natives all over the country. Our native animals and plants cannot adapt to this gross and completely unnatural manipulation of their environment in time to negate the consequences. Their only hope for a sustainable future is for us to intervene to right the wrongs that we have perpetrated.

Doug Tallamy in ***Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens***

Feeling Nature

A column by Jonathan Balcombe

Intro and Empathic Frogs

I was happy to accept an invitation to contribute articles to the Quinte Field Naturalist newsletter. As this is my first, I want to introduce myself and the theme of this column.

I was born in England in 1959. I inherited a love of animals and nature from my parents. By the time we immigrated to New Zealand when I was three, I was already gazing at insects in our garden and delighting in trips to the zoo. My first career aspiration was to be a hippopotamus. Five years later we arrived in Vancouver via passenger ship. My mother got me a colouring/sticker book of Canadian birds, which occupied me for much of the 3-day train journey to Toronto. The day we arrived I identified my first Canadian bird, a White-breasted Nuthatch shimmying down the trunk of a mature oak, sealing my fate as a lifelong birder.

Fast forward to 1991, when I graduated from the University of Tennessee with a PhD in ethology (animal behavior). I had spent three summers in Texas showing that mother Mexican Free-tailed bats recognize the unique voices of their single pups—which facilitates finding and nursing said pup among millions of others lining the walls of their limestone cavern roosts.

Upon graduation, I moved to Washington, DC to begin a career in the nonprofit animal protection sector. A 2001 encounter with a pair of crows preening each other in Assateague, Virginia, inspired my first book, *Pleasurable Kingdom* (Macmillan 2006), an exploration of positive feelings in animals. That was followed by *Second Nature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), *The Exultant Ark* (University of California Press, 2011), *What a Fish Knows* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), *Super Fly* (Penguin 2021), and a children's book, *Jake and Ava: A Boy and a Fish* (Gryphon Press, 2021). A seventh book, a completed draft tentatively titled *Noble by Nature: From Cooperation to Joy in the Wild*, is scheduled for publication by William Morrow in early 2027.



Science is discovering that frogs, like this bullfrog, have thoughts and feelings

This column's title, Feeling Nature, has dual meaning. First, feeling nature** acknowledges the felt experiences of the other beings on planet Earth. Second, it celebrates the human experience of exploring, appreciating, and understanding the natural world, encapsulating broadly how nature enriches our lives emotionally and through our senses. In future, briefer columns, I will explore these topics, referring both to published studies and personal experiences.

I'll close this inaugural column with a brief example of feeling nature: a study of empathy in frogs. When researchers at Stanford University stressed a random female of a poison dart frog by pinching and poking her then placing her among others of her kind, the resident frogs showed no observable stress response, measured as no change in the stress hormone corticosterone (collected using a non-invasive water-bath technique). But when the stressed frog was returned to her mate, his corticosterone levels rose to meet hers. "The fact the frog only reacts to his partner's feelings, not simply any other frog, means the transfer of distress is not just automated contagion," said one of the study's authors. Apparently, the basic building blocks of empathy are shared widely among animals. It is worth noting that these tiny amphibians are dedicated, monogamous parents who work together to raise their precious young, which in turn favours strong emotional attachments between parents. [source: Jessica Nowicki et al. 2024. Physiological state matching in a pair-bonded poison frog. Royal Society Open Science.]

Scientific discoveries like the frog study give me hope that we may yet look upon our fellow creatures as kin. To protect nature requires that we value it. Not the utilitarian value that views nature as resources to be extracted, but the intrinsic value that fosters a desire to protect and preserve wild spaces.

Jonathan Balcombe

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PLANT BASED FOR THE PLANET

By Susan McCourt

If you had asked me 10 years ago if I would ever consider following a plant-based diet, I would likely have answered “Not in a million years!” But the world had a different plan for me. I met my life partner and fellow QFN member Jonathan Balcombe and my curiosity about his commitment to veganism led me to do some research. And that research led me to make the only choice that made sense to me.

I have been vegan now for almost 7 years and have never looked back. I am amazed at the variety of wonderful meals, treats and snacks that I enjoy, all without meat or dairy! Rather than feeling restricted, I feel like a whole new world of vibrant and diverse flavours, textures, and ingredients has opened up for me.

When forests are cleared to make room for farms and livestock — this happens on a daily basis in some parts of the world — large stores of carbon are released into the atmosphere, which heats up the planet. When cows, sheep and goats digest their food, they burp up methane, another potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. Meat and dairy, particularly from cows, have an outsized impact, with livestock accounting for around 14.5 percent of the world’s greenhouse gases each year. That’s roughly the same amount as the emissions from all the cars, trucks, airplanes and ships combined in the world today.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/dining/climate-change-food-eating-habits.html>



This symbol indicates that a product is vegan-friendly.

Tofu and Veggie Stir Fry in Sweet Ginger Sauce

Recipe by



<https://jessicainthekitchen.com/>

Servings: 4 servings Prep Time: 20 mins Cook Time: 20 mins

Ingredients:

Sweet Ginger Sauce

4 tablespoons soy sauce, or liquid aminos

2 tablespoons maple syrup, or agave

1 teaspoon minced ginger

3-4 cloves of finely minced garlic

1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar

Stir Fry

1 lb block of firm or extra-firm tofu, pressed*, cubed (454g)

pinch sea salt and pepper

2 teaspoons oil, neutral and high smoke point (eg. avocado oil)

2 teaspoons sesame oil

2 heads broccoli, (168g) large stem removed and chopped

1 large carrot, peeled and julienned

2 teaspoons cornstarch + 2 teaspoon water for a cornstarch slurry

(You can also use any of your favourite vegetables – sweet peppers, mushrooms for example)

Instructions:

Stir all the Sweet Ginger Sauce ingredients together and set aside.

In a pan over medium high, add both oils. When hot add in the tofu and 2 tablespoons of the sauce and crisp on each side for about 2-3 minutes on each side, until all sides are crisped up and browned. This helps to infuse the tofu with some sauce while it is cooking.

Season with a sprinkle of sea salt and ground black pepper.

Remove from pan and set aside.

In the same pan, add the broccoli and carrot and toss for about 2 minutes heat. Then add in a few tablespoons of water and cover pan. Allow to steam for about 2 minutes.

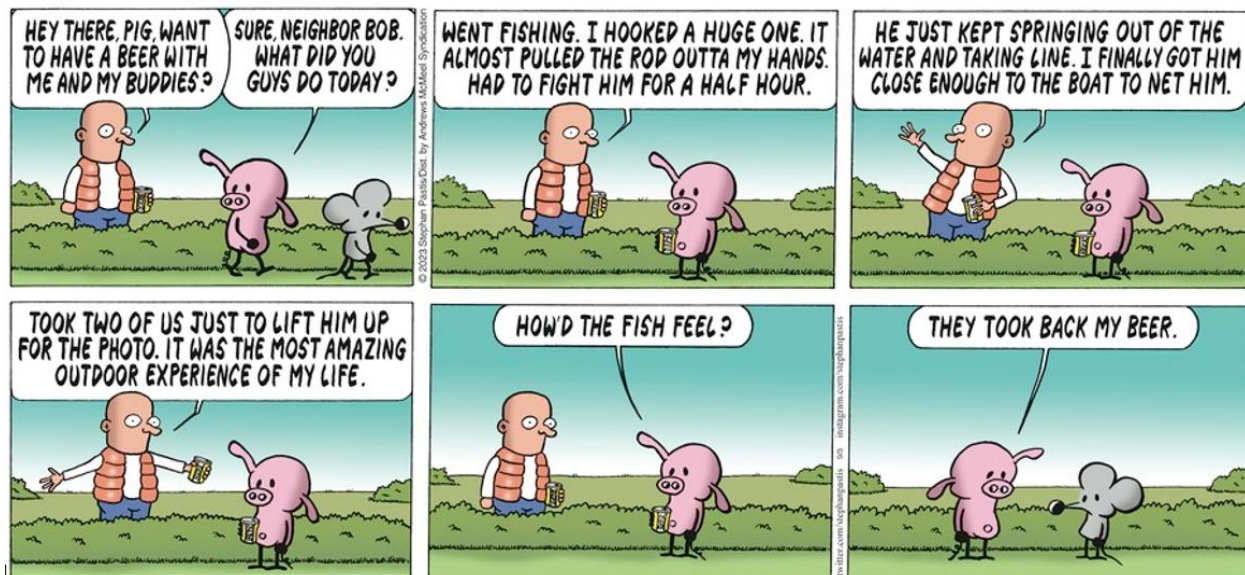
Remove cover, lower heat to medium and add in the tofu and the sauce.

Pour in the corn starch slurry here.

Stir to coat everything in the sauce, then allow to cook for another 2-3 minutes in the sauce.

Remove from heat and top with sesame seeds and chopped scallions. Serve and enjoy!

*To press tofu, simply wrap the block in a clean towel or paper towels, place it on a flat surface, and top with a heavy weight (like a skillet or cans) for 15–30 minutes. Commercial tofu presses are also available.



NESTING *Season*



May to Mid-July

☀️ TURTLES CROSS ROADS ☀️



If you find an injured turtle
please stay with it and call
OTCC / Ontario's Turtle
Hospital immediately at

705-741-5000

MESSAGE SHARED BY THINK TURTLE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE | THINKTURTLE.CA

Cecropia

Big bugs.

What better a marriage proposal gift?

There is none for a six year old boy than the biggest daddy long legs.

Ever.

Captured with tender care a pilfered mason jar once meant for antipasto now its new home

we proposed to each other I think, Tammy and I, it doesn't matter
staring into the spider's glass house lying on our bellies chins veed in our hands
toes bounce tapping on her stoop not knowing we didn't know
the proper care for the symbol of our love.

It was not Triscuits and butter.

Fifty years on Alix calls to me from the end of our backyard

LOOK!!

I go to see, WHAT??

She moves a vine leaf and OH! we say together

it's the most beautiful

it looks like silk

its shape alluring putting anything Hermès to shame not ever thinking it could be, could it?

It is, silk.

And we wonder what could make a perfect brown silk purse and stick it to our fence.

So, maybe not learning a thing

I got out my screw gun

made a birch bark roof for its winter rest



Grumman

All aluminum and steely cold in early spring

Lines sweet in the water though, a surprise

And good for breaking thin ice

To see deer browsing by balsam fir

And white hawk returns another year

Sightings



Not all unusual birds are easy to identify. The trick to finding them is to look closely at all birds and recognize that you are looking at something a little different. The bird on the left spent a few days at Lori and John's feeder near Madoc. It's a summer tanager (photo by John Lowry). It's probably a first-year bird which hasn't yet acquired full adult plumage. On the right is a loon seen by many birders for several days hanging out in the river in front of city hall and at Lion's Park. Notice the very sharp thin beak. You can't tell from the picture but it's smaller than a common loon. It's a red-throated loon which is in non-breeding plumage (Photo by John Blaney).



There are about 30 species of orchids in Hastings County, but yellow lady's slipper has to be one of the most spectacular. On May 29 Tom Wheatly found these plants blooming in the Stoco Fen.

Quinte Strawberries



In Quinte, aside from commercial garden strawberries, there are two other strawberry species and two more species we call strawberry but aren't. The real strawberries are Woodland Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) shown on page 1 and Wild or Virginia Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) to the left (Photo by Sean Blaney). The former often grows in shady woodland edges while Virginia Strawberry favours more open sunny

areas. The visual difference between the species is subtle, having to do with the length of the tooth at the tip of the leaf. The seeds on *vesca* berries sit on the surface.

Virginiana seeds are embedded in small pits on the berry.

Strawberry flowers are white. The two imposters below have yellow flowers. They also can be difficult to tell apart. The Appalachian Barren-Strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*) on the left is a native plant. Its leaflets are rounded with blunt teeth and have a pointed base where they meet the stem. (Photo by Lori Borthwick). Mock Strawberry (*Potentilla indica*) on the right is an Asian species naturalized in Ontario (Photo by Sean Blaney). Its leaflets are rounded where they meet the stem and are more pointed.





Appalachian Barren-Strawberry Sean – 2017



Lori - 2023

Sean – virginia strawberry