

BIRD WING MEETING

October 23, 2014

The second fall meeting of Bird Wing was held on October 23, 2014, in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library. Topics discussed were as follows:

Mike Burrell, Leading Ontario Birder: The Bird Wing group has invited Mike Burrell, a leading and well-known Ontario birder, to speak about birds and eBird at our meeting on Tuesday, November 25,



in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library, starting at 6:30 p.m. (Photo of Mike taken by Erica Barkley, courtesy of Burrell Birding.)

Mike, a passionate believer in eBird, will talk about why eBird is important and how we, as citizen scientists, can help by entering our bird sightings on eBird. He will demonstrate to those who aren't yet eBirders how to navigate their way through the site to enter their sightings.

For those who keep records of sightings but have never entered those sightings on eBird, Mike can show how this data can be entered quickly if it has been kept digitally, for example, on Excel. **So please bring with you to the meeting a copy of your digital data and Mike can show you how to enter it onto eBird.** Mike was sent some of the Gould data entered onto Excel by Fred Pinto, as well as the pdf files of the records Judge Gould kept from the 1940's to the early 60's. (Thanks to Kevan Cowcill for

sending the Bird Wing Scribe the Excel records and the pdf files.)

Mike became serious about birds when he was 15 and hasn't stopped being serious about them since. He studied biology at Trent University, where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree, and then went on to get his Masters of Science in Forestry at the University of Toronto.

Mike has worked for Long Point Bird Observatory; several private environmental consulting firms; the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and currently as the Ontario Important Bird Areas Program Coordinator with Bird Studies Canada. Mike and his brother, Ken, another leading Ontario birder, as well as their father, Jim, conduct high-quality birding tours. Check out their website at <http://burrellbirding.ca/> for more information about Burrell Birding.

Mike also maintains a blog, *Nomadic Naturalist*, about his adventures. If you haven't yet checked it out (it was mentioned in last month's summary) give it a look at <http://mikeburrell.blogspot.ca/>.

Mike is very involved with the Ontario birding community. He served for several years as contributing editor for OFO News (Ontario Field Ornithologists) and spent a three-year term as a voting member on Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), serving as chair for one of those years. Since 2009, Mike has volunteered as Ontario eBird coordinator. This position has added to his knowledge of the intricate patterns of abundance and distribution of Ontario's birds.

Birds Seen During October: Some interesting species were seen in October. These include a Peregrine Falcon seen by Gary Sturge in mid-October at the Powassan Lagoon where it has been seen since the spring; a Merlin also seen by Gary and Connie Sturge in the Powassan area on October 22; a Northern Goshawk seen by the Doug Pattersons in Mattawa (photo below by Lori Anderson); Northern Harrier seen by some; and Red-tailed Hawks migrating through on their way south and seen by many.



Until mid-October, Ken Gowing was still hearing and seeing American Woodcocks doing their springtime peenting and aerial display.

The one Ross's Goose that arrived this autumn on its migration south was seen by many. It hung out with numerous Canada Geese in various fields in North Bay and Callander (photo below). It is rare to see a Ross's Goose here, whether it was a hybrid or not, and rarer to see it than the Snow Goose – which has not been seen here yet despite making an appearance at Osprey Links last fall. The Ross's Goose is like a small Snow Goose, but stubbier, with a shorter neck and a rounder head. It breeds in the Arctic, as does the Snow Goose, but is less common in the Arctic than the Snow Goose.



Dick Tafel saw a flock of migrating Lapland Longspurs, songbirds of the Arctic Tundra, in a field at the NipMac Club at the end of Cranberry Road. At first glance, these birds seem to be sparrows, but instead of hopping along in the grass, they slide along. In the fall their features are not as prominent as they are in the breeding season, the males lacking the distinctive black face outlined with white. Longspurs get their name from the long claw on the hind toe of each foot.



Another sparrow-like bird seen was the American Pipit (seen above), also an Arctic bird migrating through. It is mostly seen here along shores and Renee Levesque saw a flock of ten at Sunset Park. Pipits bob their tails as they walk and they walk briskly as opposed to hopping. They too have long hind claws, as do the Horned Larks seen by Lori Anderson. They are called Horned Larks because of the two small black “horns” on their heads, although these are not always noticeable. They are also a bird that does not hop, but rather walks.

A late Palm Warbler was seen at Sunset Park in mid-October by Renee, Dick and Lori Anderson.

Nicole Richardson reported seeing a Black-backed Woodpecker (seen at left) on the Nipissing/Canadore trails. Like the Three-toed Woodpecker, the Black-backed also has three toes. It stays here all year, preferring burned-out trees two years later. Lori’s broken-beaked Hairy Woodpecker has returned to her yard and from Lori’s *now and then* photos seen below, you can see that although its bill remains broken, it seems better than it was last year. Nice to see it alive and back! Pileated Woodpeckers were also seen by some.



Nicole also saw a female Spruce Grouse on the Nipissing/Canadore trails.

Dark-eyed Juncos, White-crowned Sparrows and Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen by most. The Pattersons had Evening Grosbeaks coming to their Mattawa yard. Some saw Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, American Goldfinch and Mourning Doves.

American Robins were migrating through and some large flocks were seen. Dick commented on many having a very dark brick-red breast. On the other hand, Renee saw another leucistic American Robin, her second this year, and along with the leucistic European Starling she saw in September, that makes three leucistic birds she has seen this year.

Therez Violette has had a male Northern Cardinal visiting her feeder regularly since mid-October (see Therez's photo below). Vic Rizzo has had two males in his yard.



Ducks seen by many and ducks to watch for as they migrate through are Common Mergansers, often in large flocks of up to 500; Hooded Mergansers, usually found in small ponds; Ring-necked Ducks; Lesser Scaup; Bufflehead; and Common Goldeneye. Long-tailed Ducks were seen by some at the Powassan and Callander lagoons, and the Wood Duck was seen by Lori in a pond near her place.

Unfortunately, the water levels at the lagoons have been quite high this fall, with little in the way of mudflats for the shorebirds. Most shorebirds have already migrated through our area, but we may still see the Golden Plover and the White-rumped Sandpiper if we are especially lucky.

Project FeederWatch: Project FeederWatch, which begins on November 8, 2014, and goes to April 3, 2015, is a winter-long survey of birds that visit backyard feeders during that time frame. The data obtained through Project FeederWatch help scientists track broad-scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

To take part in this project, participants watch their feeders for as much or as little as they want over two consecutive days as often as every week. If you can't participate every week, participate as you can, but keep the same two consecutive days. Changing your days will only bias the data. For instructions see: <http://feederwatch.org/about/detail-ed-instructions/#choose-count-days>.

You must be a member of Bird Studies Canada to participate. An annual membership at Bird Studies Canada is \$35.00. You can join online at: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/shopping/membership.jsp>.

Kerrie Wilcox is Canada's Project Leader. If you need assistance or have questions and you can't find the answer online at the Bird Studies Canada, Project FeederWatch website, you can contact Kerrie at: kwilcox@bsc-eoc.org.

Based on the 2013-14 season, the top ten birds seen in Ontario were: Black-capped Chickadee; American Goldfinch; Dark-eyed Junco; Mourning Dove; Downy Woodpecker; Blue Jay; Northern Cardinal; European Starling; Hairy Woodpecker; and White-breasted Nuthatch.



In *Birdwatch Canada*, the Fall 2014 edition, in the article *Project FeederWatch, Trends and Highlights from the 27th Season*, Kerrie Wilcox quotes Renee Levesque who wondered why, with such a harsh winter, the juncos bothered staying (see photo above). Fewer birds and less variety of species were noted this past winter across Canada, probably because of the extremely cold and snowy winter. The national birds-per-station weekly average was 42, a record low. The long-term average is 51.

Christmas Bird Count: The Christmas Bird Count takes place for one day during the period from December 14 to January 5 and, as usual, we have elected to have it on the first date possible, **Sunday, December 14.** Because Brent Turcotte no longer wishes to be count compiler after holding this position for many years, **Lori Anderson will do the count compiling this year.** Bird Studies Canada and Audubon have been informed of the change.

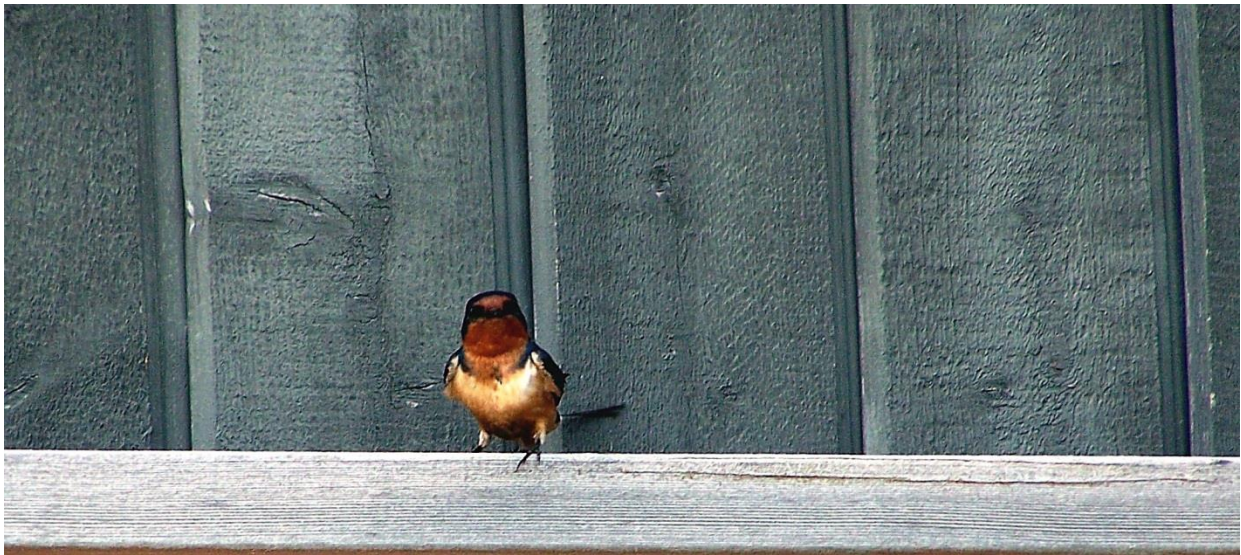
The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen science survey in the world. This year marks its 115th year. It takes place throughout the Americas and provides critical data on population trends. In North Bay, there are 8 routes, each with a route leader and partner, and each route within a 15-mile radius of North Bay. The count can also include feeder watchers as long as they are within the 15-mile radius. If you are interested in being a feeder watcher or joining any of the leaders for their count, please contact Dick Tafel. (Photo below is of Dick and Paul Smylie searching Black-backed Woodpecker, to no avail, during the 2013 Christmas Bird Count.)



Aerial Insectivore: Bank and Barn Swallows: As of this summer, the Bank Swallow has been listed as Threatened in Ontario. It has declined by 4.7% annually over the last 40 years. Bird Studies Canada will be developing a recovery strategy for Bank Swallows in Ontario to help guide Bank Swallow conservation.

Barn Swallows have also declined in Ontario, by more than 65% over the last 40 years. Some potential threats include: availability of flying insects; loss of nesting because of changes in agricultural practices; competition for nesting sites from other species; and reduced nesting success because of mites and blowflies. Barn Swallows nest in barn sheds, bridges and culverts, and nest in both suburban and rural areas while foraging over open fields and ponds. Since 2012 Bird Studies Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) have been deploying artificial nesting structures, with mixed success, and would like to erect additional structures to continue their evaluation of whether these structures will

help increase the Barn Swallow population (seen below). Anyone interested in hosting a nesting structure can contact Kristyn Richardson, stewardship biologist, at krichardson@birdscanada.org or at 519-586-3531, ex. 127.



Bird Populations, North America: According to *The State of Birds 2014*, a report prepared by the U.S. Committee of North American Bird Conservation Initiative, 230 bird species are currently endangered or at risk of becoming so without significant conservation help. On the other hand, where there have been strong conservation investments, bird populations are recovering. The committee used several programs to obtain their data, including the Christmas Bird Count which shows one how important this count is.

On the Yellow Watch list are the following shorebirds we usually or sometimes see here: Lesser Yellowlegs; Short-billed Dowitcher; Dunlin; Hudsonian Godwit; Pectoral Sandpiper; and Semiplumbed Sandpiper. These species are on the watch list because there is a small global population of these species which tend to concentrate in small threatened habitats during migration.



Also on the Yellow Watch List are the following birds we also see in our area:

Olive-sided Flycatcher; Wood Thrush; Canada Warbler; Bobolink; and Evening Grosbeak (seen above). Some who were at the bird banding demonstration during the Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival at Laurier Woods may recall that Bruce Murphy had to quickly release the Canada Warbler after he banded it because it is on the watch list.

International Hawk Migration Week: To raise awareness of hawks and hawk migration, the Hawk Migration Association of North America sponsored a hawk counting week, from September 20 to 28, during which time the number of migrating hawks, eagles and vultures were counted at ten sites throughout Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. This was the first year the count was held. The number tallied was 1.2 million raptors among 29 raptor species. The most raptors seen were Broad-winged Hawks (seen at right) since the count took place at the peak of their migration. Other high counts were Sharp-shinned hawks, American Kestrels, Turkey Vultures and Mississippi Kites.



Treasurer's Report: Gary Sturge reported there is \$270.56 in our account. Gary collected some Bird Wing fees of \$5.00 per member, so by next month the amount in the account should increase. A reminder that to join Bird Wing, it costs \$5.00, in addition to the Nipissing Naturalist Club annual fee of \$20.00. Fees are due by January 2015, but because Bird Wing fees are collected separately and by Gary, not by Nipissing Naturalist Club, the \$5.00 fee can be given to Gary anytime now. You don't have to wait until January unless you so choose to.

Bird Bash: The next Bird Bash will take place the weekend of December 6 and 7. As always, please submit results to Dick Tafel by the evening of December 8. The results of the recent Bird Bash weekend of November 1 and 2 should soon be posted on the new Nipissing Naturalist Club website: <http://www.nipnats.com/>. It would appear Dick's important data charts have not yet been transferred from the old site, although his narratives are there up until August 2014. At this stage, there is no direct link to Bird Wing, so to find the Bird Wing Summaries and the narrative Bird Bash results, click on Newsletters and Downloads and then scroll down until you see Bird Wing Meetings followed by Bird Bash results. We understand Kelly Major continues to work on the web page, fine tuning it and taking into consideration suggestions made.

Next Bird Wing Meeting: Come out to the next Bird Wing meeting on **Tuesday, November 25, 2014, at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library.** As indicated in the first item in this summary, the speaker is Mike Burrell, well-known Ontario birder, who will talk about birding and eBirding.

Text, Renee Levesque

Photos, Renee Levesque unless otherwise noted

A bird does not change its feathers because the weather is bad. (Nigerian proverb)