

Bird Wing Report

May 23, 2017

By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe; photos as indicated

Laurier Woods Outing: Our first outing of the season took place in Laurier Woods on May 23. It was a morning outing to see as many birds as possible, wood warblers especially, before nesting season. And a successful outing it was in fine weather with nine of us and one dog seeing 36 species in total.

Warblers seen were: many Chestnut-sided; many American Redstart, male and female; many Yellow; many Common Yellow-throat; two Magnolia; two Yellow-rumped; two Nashville; at least three Black and

White; and a couple of Ovenbirds. But the highlights in the warbler family had to be seeing one Black-throated Blue, three Wilson's (left) and two Tennessee Warblers.

The most joyful song of the woods that morning had to be from the Warbling Vireos (right) with their full-throated, rich and melodious song – although there was also the Brown Thrasher with its couplets, another delightful and impassioned springtime singer.

The most interesting sighting was probably actually seeing for the first time this season the Philadelphia Vireo. And the Red-eyed Vireos had



Renee Levesque



Lisa Hackett



Lisa Hackett

returned, seen often, but heard more frequently with their constant singing.

The most endearing sight was the Canada Geese parents with their many goslings, seen below.



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Always great to get a glimpse or two or three of the Veery and the Gray Catbird. We saw and/or heard three of each. Seen also were the Least Flycatcher and the Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

And thanks to Lori Anderson, we saw not one but two Green Herons, each sitting close by, but on different dead trees.

Sparrows seen or heard were Swamp, White-throat and Song.

One Tree Swallow was catching insects over Arum Pond.

The more common birds seen were Mallard, Ring-billed Gulls, Blue Jay, American Robin and American Crow, Common Raven and Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbirds, Goldfinch and last but certainly not least in any way, shape or form, the feisty Black-capped Chickadee.

There may have been one or two species I missed listing, but in addition to this outing, I had been on Dick Tafel's three Saturday morning May Bird Walks in Laurier Woods prior to our Bird Wing outing, and subsequent to the outing, participated in the Great Canadian Birdathon with Dick, Lori, and Brent Turcotte.

Things have a way of blending altogether, although I do try and keep good notes, knowing I will have to write about all events.

Red Crossbills: On May 14, Kaye Edmonds came across a few Red Crossbills on Broule Road in Calvin Township and sent me a photo of one of them (below). It was a surprising find because we don't think of seeing Red Crossbills at this time of the year. We think of them only as winter birds because we more often see them only in the winter, although not many were around this past winter because of the poor cone crop.

I emailed Ron Pittaway, who forecasts finch availability each winter based on the cone crop, to see if he could shed light on Kaye's May sighting. He emailed me back to say he is also not sure what Red Crossbills are doing at this time of the year and forwarded my email to Red Crossbill expert, Matt Young. Matt's response is as follows:

“Cone crops are developing now and come July-August, Red Crossbills will utilize these new crops for a nesting cycle. They really nest in two cycles, not year-round like much of the literature suggests; one cycle utilizing new crops is from July-September, and then a second cycle utilizing the last remaining “bumper” crops is from January-April. So, to answer your specific question, at this time of the year they start moving around to see where the best newly-developed cone crops are.”



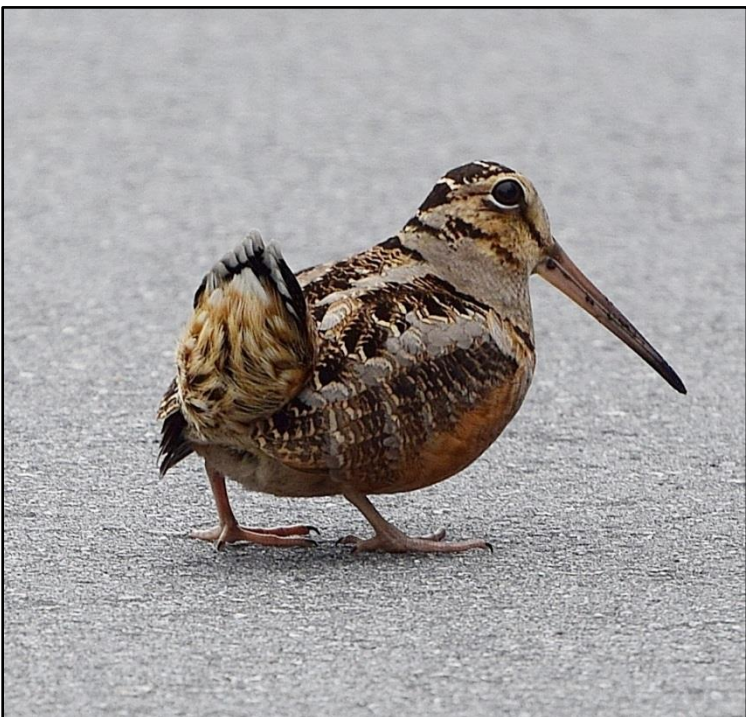
Kaye Edmonds

American White Pelican: In our Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts, we have been fortunate enough this year to have seen some rare birds for our areas. To add to that list, six American White Pelicans (right) were spotted by Scott Clark on April 30 close to the shore of Lake Nipissing near Dutrisac Cottages in Sturgeon Falls. We were alerted to this sighting of Scott's by Therez Violette a week later, and three of us – Dick, Marc Buchanan and I - were fortunate enough to see some of them - at a greater distance than Scott saw them - near one of the stony islets that can be seen from Cache Bay.



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American Woodcock Singing Ground Survey: This survey is conducted each year between May 1 and May 20 by Gary and Connie Sturge. It is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program, in partnership in Ontario with Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural



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Resources.

If others participated in it, please let me know.

The result of Gary and Connie's survey undertaken on May 10 was three American Woodcocks (left), with one Wilson's Snipe, other singing birds, a barking dog and lots of Spring Peepers. Gary reports it was basically an average run for them. It was completed by Gary and Connie in 33 minutes, under the 38 minutes allotted, and

on an ideal night – minus 9 at the start of the survey, 15% cloud cover, no wind and only two cars.

There are ten stops with a listening period of two minutes per stop. Each stop is 0.6 km apart. Only the *peenting* is recorded, not the flight song, and only the number of woodcocks *peenting* is recorded, not the number of *peents*.

This survey does not involve the time commitment required of other surveys, so if anyone is interested in doing this survey next spring, please contact Kathy Jones, Volunteer Coordinator, Bird Studies Canada, at volunteer@birdscanada.org.

Other Surveys:

- Grant McKercher and April McCrum, the SwiftWatch Survey
- April, Renee Levesque and Dick Tafel, the Whip-poor-will Survey
- Marc Buchanan, the Lake Loon Survey
- Paul Smylie, the Great Lakes Marsh Survey
- Paul Smylie, the Breeding Bird Survey

Results of the above will be made available either in future Bird Wing reports or in September's Nipissing Naturalists Club newsletter.

Results of the Nocturnal Owl Survey that took place in April will be sent separately to Bird Wingers or will be in June's Bird Wing report. (I am waiting for Lori Anderson to complete her report to determine who wins the owl trophy. Last year, it went to Lori and Ken Gowing, but I suspect this year, they will not be in contention.) There will also be an article by Paul Smylie on the Nocturnal Owl Survey in June's *The Woodland Observer*, along with a collage of owls seen in our area so far this year.

The Chimney Swifts have returned and if you haven't been out to see them at Main Street West and Foran, better hurry.

Great Canadian Birdathon: Two teams participated in our annual 24-hour Great Canadian Birdathon starting at 1:12 p.m. on Saturday, May 27, and going through to 1:12 p.m. on Sunday, May 28. You may well ask if any of us stayed up for the full 24 hours to see owls and other birds that may go bump in the night. The

answer is no, although the team I was on did stay out to 10:00 p.m. to hear the Whip-poor-wills at Dreany Lake.

One team was comprised of Dick Tafel, Lori Anderson, Brent Turcotte and me; and on the other team, Marc Buchanan, Grant and Shirley McKercher, Sarah Wheelan and Fred Pinto. You may think that the team with five members would win with an extra person advantage, but that was not the case.

Maybe their having five members made us work harder. And maybe their being rather disorganized at the start of the Birdathon, changing their minds as to what vehicle they would use and thus delaying the Le Mans start by 12 minutes was a foreshadowing of results to come.

Our team saw 96 species and heard 14 species for a total of 110 species. Their team saw 86 species and heard 10 species for a total of 96 species. The trophy, a carving of a shorebird, will be presented at the first indoor meeting of Bird Wing in September. As I type this, Ken Gowing is busy (hopefully) making a base for the carving.

In the photo below of two of our team members, the caption should read, “No, Brent, you don’t look for birds with a magnifying glass in a kneeling position.”



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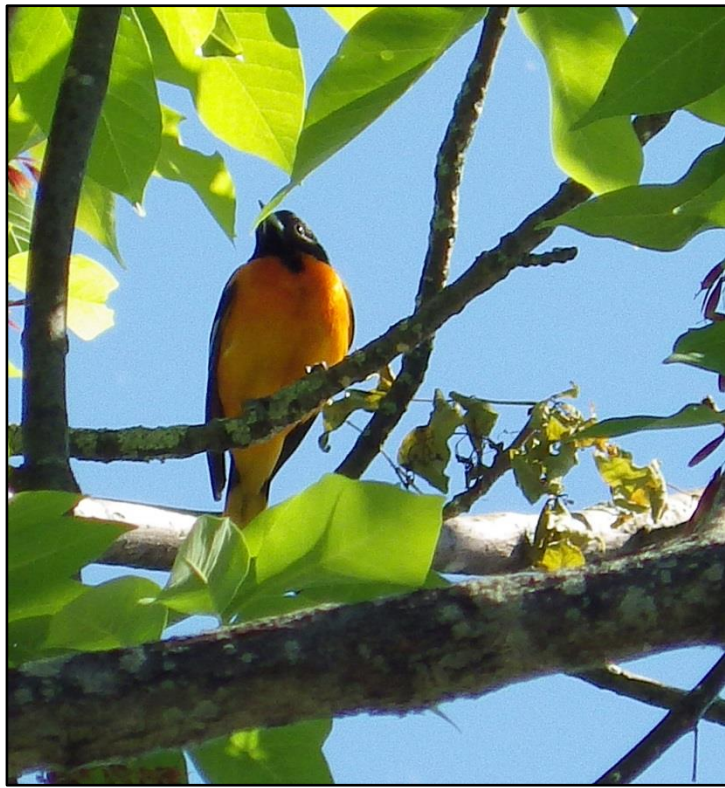
The highlights for our team were seeing two American Bittern looking like sticks in the grass (above) and indeed we thought at first they were just that - sticks! Also a highlight was seeing the magnificently attired male Scarlet Tanager. We spent a good ten minutes or more trying to locate it after we heard it sing. Finally in desperation, we trespassed onto someone's front yard and there it finally was! The male is a talented ventriloquist able to throw his voice many yards away. It has to have that talent or else predators would easily find the nest because it is such a brilliantly coloured bird.

We also vigorously pursued three other species and were so pleased with ourselves that these pursuits were not in vain. Once when we heard a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a Black and White Warbler, we made our way through mosquito-infested bush to see them and gain an extra point. Neither was an easy pursuit. And another time when we kept seeing a bird flitting in the woods, we pursued it in blackfly-infested territory and when we finally got our binoculars on it, for a second we didn't recognize it with its updo, this being the first time this season we had seen the Great Crested Flycatcher.

Seeing a male Baltimore Oriole (right) in its flaming orange and black coat was a delight, as was seeing the Common Nighthawk flying very low, low enough to see clearly the white bars on its wings. (See photo at end of report.)

And we can't forget all the junk food we ate as we motored along, Dick driving, my marking the sightings in our booklet and Lori and Brent with their keen ears listening out the windows.

I did not hear back from the team that did not win as to what their highlights were, so can only assume it was getting the eight species we didn't get: Red-necked Phalarope,



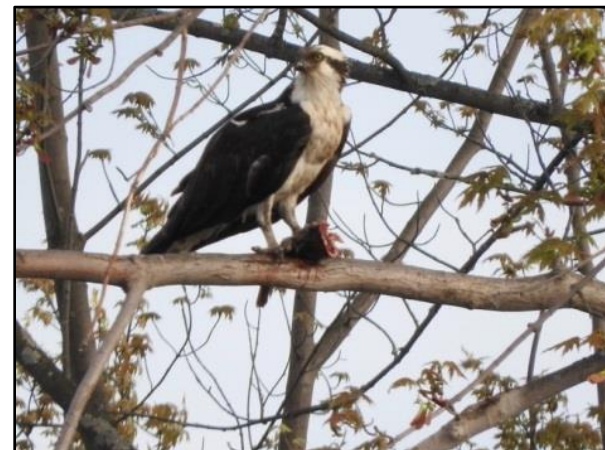
Renee Levesque

Redhead Duck, Northern Pintail (left), Killdeer, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Black-backed Gull, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and best of all, hearing a Northern Mockingbird, a bird not often seen in our area! Maybe seeing an Osprey eating its fish was also a highlight because I received two photos of it,



Grant McKercher

one from Grant (right) and one from Marc. I am sure they must have other highlights, but they seem to be keeping those to themselves.



Grant McKercher

But win or lose, we all got together after the 24 hours and had ourselves a merry lunch full of Birdathon laughter! And that makes us all winners!

If you haven't yet donated to the Great Canadian Birdathon, you can do so by donating directly to Dick Tafel or by making a donation to him online at:

<http://birdscanada.kintera.org/faf/donorReg/donorPledge.asp?ievent=1169312&lis=1&kntae1169312=DC98FCC4453D4AB492C327015BC4E1F9&supId=421518584>.

Bird Bash: Mark **June 24 and 25** on your calendar as the dates for June's Bird Bash.

Bird Wing Outing: The next Bird Wing outing takes place on **Tuesday, June 27**. It too will take place in the morning, so **meet at the former Visitors' Centre at 9 a.m.** for carpooling to the River Road area to look for the Sedge Wren and LeConte's Sparrow, among others.



Bird fly high
by the light of the moon.
-Bob Dylan