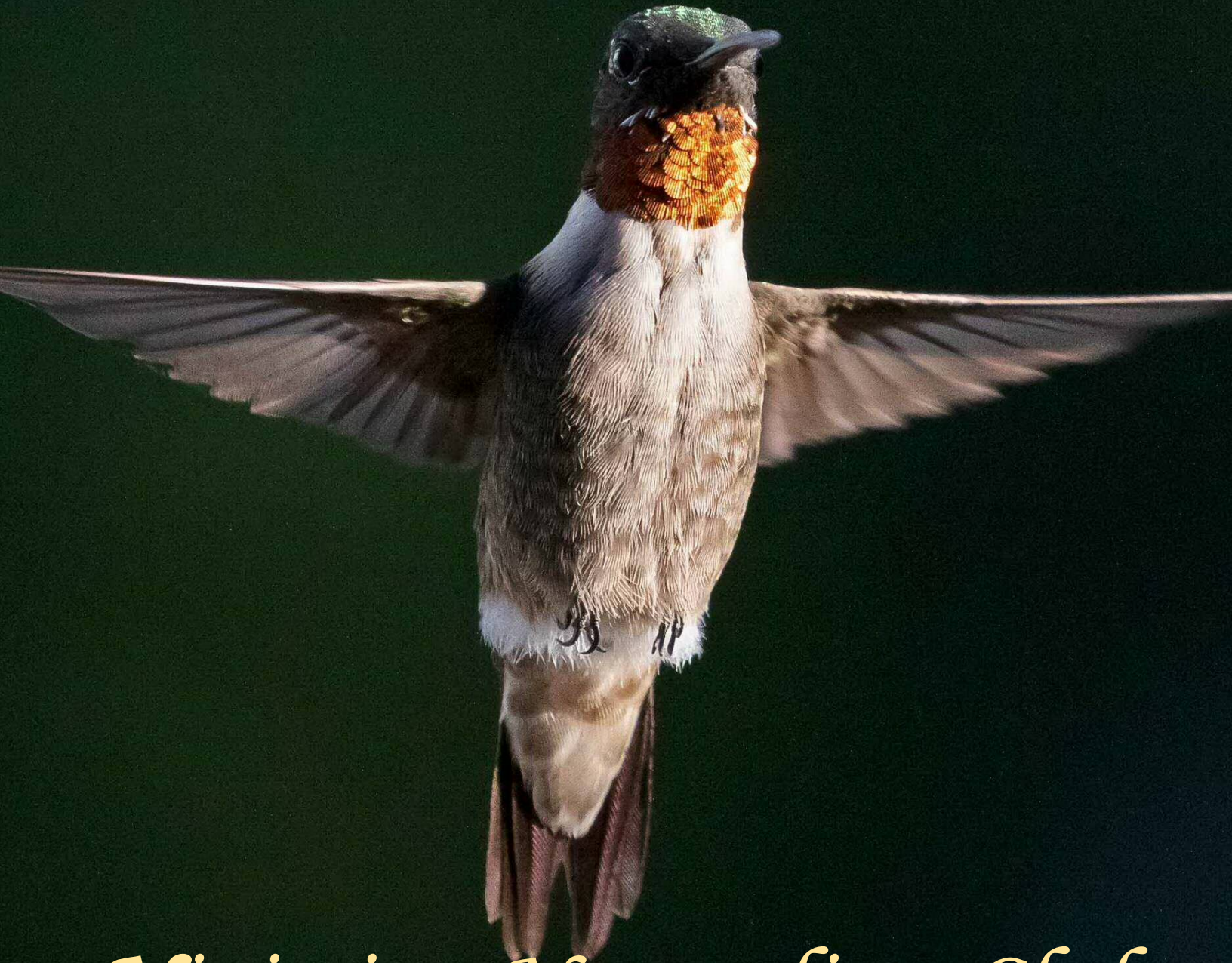


Bird Wing Report



Nipissing Naturalists Club
August 2019

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Bird Wing outing

After days and days of sun and little to no rain, August's Bird Wing Outing found the day to be overcast with rain on and off. It had more or less stopped raining by the time we gathered at Northgate to make our way to Cache Bay. There in the ballpark we met up with Therez Violette, the one time each year we get to see Therez, a loyal Bird Winger nevertheless.

It was probably not the best evening to see birds and it wasn't. But when there are not many birds, you delight in what you do see and our main delight was seeing Canada Geese and American Crows – I kid you not! Not just one of each, but about 150 geese at Cache Bay – in the water and in flight – and hundreds in flight over Levac Road. Also seen flying at dusk over Cache Bay were about 300 American Crows, about 50 of which had been seen earlier on the road and in the trees and shrubs of the Cache Bay ballpark. (A murder of crows was also seen flying across Cache Bay in 2017, a few of them shown in the photo below. I did not get a photo of them this year.)



Renee and Paul Levesque

Also seen were a lone Mallard; a lone Wood Duck; a Common Loon; a Double-crested Cormorant; a Turkey Vulture; 2 or 3 Osprey, one or two adults hunting and a young Osprey now quite big, but still with white spotting on its upper wings and

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back (more on the Osprey following this article); about 20 Ring-billed Gulls; possible Herring Gulls further out in the Bay; 2 Caspian Terns, one of which had a late-night snack in its mouth, and one shown at right; a Red-eyed Vireo; and a female American Redstart.

No Common Nighthawks on Levac Road were seen this year as they were last year, nor were Trumpeter Swans seen – and had seemingly not been seen in this area since the spring. In fact, Cache Bay boathouse people who notice the swans year in, year out have approached those of us who bird regularly at Cache Bay asking if we have seen the swans since the spring. Where is L95 aka Ava pictured below on the trailer park dock over the Thanksgiving weekend last year in a photo taken by Therez?



Renee Levesque



Therez Violette

Two Common Nighthawks were seen at Warren Lagoon by Dick, Chris Sukha and me during the August Bird Bash, and Dick and I were surprisingly startled by one along the Sturgeon Museum trail, a trail that continues to be in very rough shape and impassable without boots

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for the last few metres before reaching Lake Nipissing.

Perhaps because of the high water levels in Lake Nipissing at Cache Bay, especially during spring's breeding season, those of us who bird regularly at Cache Bay did not see or hear as many marsh birds as other years. Although we saw some Black Terns, we saw more one day at Warren Lagoon than at Cache Bay; we only occasionally saw or heard the Pied-billed Grebe and only one at that; we did not see or hear a Sora, a Least Bittern or an American Bittern; and it took us many weeks before we saw a Green Heron.

Once out canoeing at Cache Bay, I did see one Marsh Wren, but usually on this canoe trip, I see and hear many. That canoe trip yielded only one Black Tern upset at our intrusion. Other years, we have seen many adults and young all practically dive-bombing us as we made our way through the marsh. And the Common Gallinules, no luck until August 28, a day after our outing, when Buddy Myles spotted an adult. A few days later, on September 1, out I went and saw one juvenile and a day later, Dick Tafel saw two juveniles.

As darkness fell, we made our way to our usual after-Cache Bay-outing drinking spot – Tim Horton's in Sturgeon Falls. Therez told us she comes to this spot only once a year and that is with us after our outing. (Therez and Mary Marrs, two of the participants, are pictured at right.)



Renee Levesque

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What cannot be foreseen

During the afternoon of Sunday, August 11, I happened to be at Cache Bay and saw two young Osprey in their ballpark nest. Over the years, many birders and non-birders have watched the Osprey with delight arriving every spring at Cache Bay's ballpark to occupy their messy nest atop one of the light fixtures.

Two eggs are usually hatched each year. Often both young Ospreys make it, learn to fly and hunt and migrate, and sometimes only one does. I have not known both young to not make it, but that may have happened some years.

I was happy to see the two young seemingly doing well that Sunday afternoon. Like many others, I had been following their progress since they were hatched. Below is a photo I took of the two young ones and a parent on July 10 when both young were only recently hatched.



Then Therez Violette emailed me to tell me that on that Sunday when the wind picked up, one of the young Osprey had fallen from its nest, injured itself, and was taken to Wild at Heart Wildlife Rescue Centre in Lively.

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By August 19, it seemed that the young Osprey, reported to be bright and alert, would make it and would be returned to the Cache Bay area, perhaps within days. On her Facebook page, one of the rescuers, Therese Brunet, reported that the young Osprey "is starting to stand and appears to be recovering from her injuries. She is being fed and is drinking. The plan now is to let her mature and heal. Once ready and all goes well, she will be released. Positive news all and all."

A couple of days later when I was again at the ballpark and saw the one parent and one young, I wondered if they would be surprised to see the other young Osprey return as it surely would in a few days. So with all this, you can imagine what a great shock it was when Therez emailed me to tell me it had died.

During our Bird Wing outing to Cache Bay on August 27, we happened to run into Therese Brunet, a Cache Bayite who has a boat house where we were birding. Therese told us she was driving by the ball park that Sunday when the young Osprey blew into some hydro wires. She took the Osprey, whom she named Chance, home and went on Facebook to ask for help. Her request was answered by Jackie Burns of Sturgeon Falls. Therese met up with Jackie in Sturgeon and on Monday morning, Jackie took Chance to Wild at Heart Wildlife Rescue Centre in Lively. (The photo at right was taken after Chance was rescued after her fall. Not sure if the photo was taken by Therese Brunet or Jackie Burns.)

But despite the earlier positive news, later that week Chance died either from anxiety or from internal injuries.

This story is an upsetting one, especially for all of us who kept a look-out for the parents from the time they arrived at the ballpark and then watched their two hatchlings mature, but it must be particularly upsetting for Therese and Jackie.

On a more upbeat note, Therese told us there is an Osprey nest on Blueberry Island in Cache Bay with two young who are doing well, and the two young that occupied the Pinewood Park/Lakeshore exit nest also seemingly did well.



- *Renee Levesque*

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Falcon and hawk were stars of LKL Festival

During the Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival on August 17, Luke Thomson, Thomson Bird Control, displayed his hawk, a Harris's Hawk, and his falcon, a cross between a Peregrine Falcon and a Gyrfalcon.

The Harris's Hawk (right) is a two-year-old male and, as Fred Pinto reports, "has talons as sharp as razors!" The Gyr/Peregrine cross, called Caspian, is an 11-year-old male and has been used for breeding purposes.

In November 2018, Luke spoke to Nipissing Naturalists Club about the ancient art of falconry and about how hawks and falcons can be used to disperse or deter nuisance birds.



In the photo below, Fred is wearing a Harry Potter hat, not because he must wear an actual Harry Potter hat while holding a Harris's Hawk, but because he should wear



a hat in case the hawk flutters off his glove and lands on his head. (In case you are wondering, there was a Harry Potter display at the festival. Dorothy deKiewiet brought the hat and Kaye Edmonds amused the kids with Harry Potter rock-painting.)

- *Renee Levesque*



Stories from the field

I don't know if you have ever noticed August Blue Jays, but in the world of passerines, they are certainly outstanding when they moult, more so than other birds – American Robins a close second. Maybe we notice these two species the most when they moult because they tend to spend quite a bit of time in our yards in August.

My Blue Jays, that is the ones that come to my yard, were not as obviously moulted as last year's, maybe because the weather was much hotter last August. But **Steve Pitt's Blue Jays** were outstanding again this year and he captured some great shots of one showing off its peanut meal.



As Steve humorously reports, “August is the warmest month and that's why if a Blue Jay has to go Yul Brynner, it will pick this time of year. My chickadees and nuthatches are looking pretty scruffy as well. It looks kind of comical but I've seen worse climbing off Air Force One.”

Steve also took a series of photos of the two young Ospreys in the Pinewood Park/ Lakeshore Exit nest in which one is eating what Steve believes is a catfish while

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the other looks on. Steve again humorously reports, “The two young 'uns didn't fight over it. One ate the fish while the other one patiently waited for the next uber-eats delivery.” One of these photos is below.



Dave Rooke was birding along Waltonian Drive near where he spends the summer at his vacation trailer on Seguin Beach. (The rest of the year he lives and birds in Waterloo.) On August 11, Dave was out looking for a Northern Parula, a warbler he had not yet seen this year in the Parry Sound District. There were many warblers passing through at that time, so Dave stood in the one spot for quite a while trying to catch them all when what to his wondering eyes should appear but a little warbler all golden and gray, a Golden-winged Warbler. It was a female without the distinctive black markings of the male.

A Golden-winged Warbler is a rare sighting in our area, but interestingly enough, last August, Dave also found a Golden-winged Warbler in the same area, although at his Seguin Beach trailer park. **That one was a male and Dave was able to get a photo of it (next page).** Amazing he even got a photo because when he saw it,

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he did not have his camera with him. He had to run back quite some distance to his trailer and grab his camera, but with luck still on his side, there it was in the same general area. Some days later, Dave showed a couple of us the exact spot he saw it, but by then it had long gone. Still, we saw where it was if that counts for anything!

That same August of 2018, 11 days later, Sonje Bols also saw a male Golden-winged Warbler at Lake Nosbonsing Narrows and got a photo of it. And that same year in May, one was seen on River Road by three birders, one of whom was Jeremy Hatt, a regional eBird reviewer for Chatham-Kent County.



An eBird exploration shows a Golden-winged seen in the Powassan area in 1993 and three sightings in NE Parry Sound District in June and July 2004 by Martin Parker.

By the way, Dave did not find the Northern Parula that day. Not sure if he has since.

- *Renee Levesque*

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Snowball returns with 14 dance moves

You may recall that starting in September 2017 many of us took turns reading *Birdology* by Sy Montgomery, a best-selling author who, according to her website, has been chased by a gorilla, embraced by an octopus, undressed by an orangutan and loved by a pig named Christopher Hogwood.

In *Birdology*, Sy writes wonderful, vivid personal accounts about hens, hawks, hummingbirds, Homing Pigeons, American Crows, Cassowaries and parrots. One of the parrots that became famous when the YouTube video from 2007 went viral is Snowball, the dancing male cockatoo, owned by Irena Schultz.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utkb1nOJnD4>.)



Irena Schultz

Snowball to my attention.

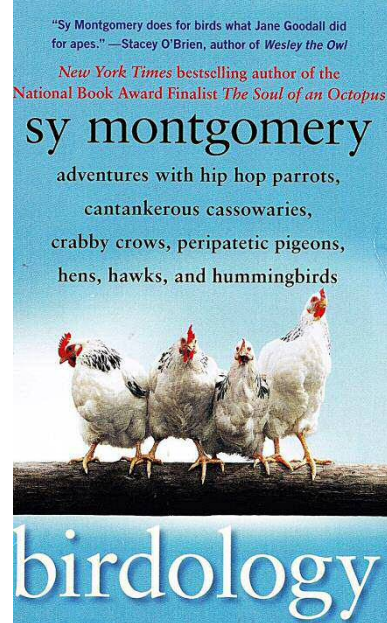
- Renee Levesque

Because Snowball has an ability to spontaneously move to a beat, something that was once thought only humans could do, scientists have been studying Snowball for the last 10 years. Recent studies show that not only can Snowball move to a beat, but he can also invent and perfect new dances all on his own and can even adapt his dance movements to changes in the music's tempo. Other animals are able to sway to music, but, unlike Snowball, they can't keep a beat unless they've been trained to do so. Snowball has not been trained nor has he been given rewards for his moves.

Scientists have now isolated 14 individual dance moves and 2 combinations, all of which emerged through social interactions with humans. These social interactions are what scientists plan to study next, to determine if the context affects how Snowball dances and how much he dances. In other words, how are his moves when he dances in isolation, with others or with just the camera in the room.

To see all 14 dance moves and the names of these moves, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMjr8MsBlqo>.

Thanks to Grant McKercher for bringing this update on





There is nothing so iconic during Canadian summers like the call of the loon as darkness descends. And there is nothing so delightful than to see a baby loon on its mother's back, and then the same young one swimming on its own but fed by its parents until it eventually learns to dive for food. The three photos on this page are by Buddy Myles (one on back), Steve Pitt (one young Talon Lake loon) and Dick Tafel (two young Trout Lake loons).



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Links to articles

You will want to read this interesting article about a pair of Wisconsin loons raising an orphaned Mallard chick:

“For many people vacationing in the lake-filled woods of Northern Wisconsin, the haunting cry of the loon is the sound of summer. About 4,000 of the black-and white birds nest in the state by May or June and it’s not uncommon to find fluffy gray loon chicks riding around on their parents’ backs. But researchers counting loon chicks recently found something unusual during their rounds: Instead of a gray chick they found a fluffy yellow mallard chick perched on the back of a loon. And even stranger, the loons have continued to raise it as their own throughout the summer.” - *Jason Daly, smithsonian.com, July 26, 2019*

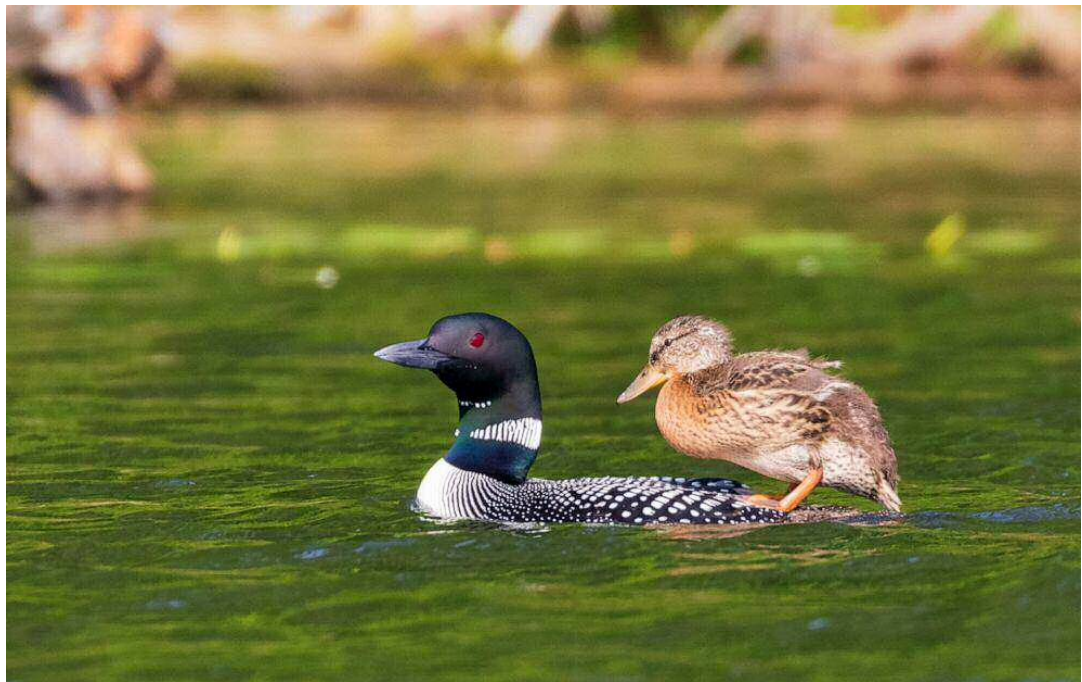
To read more, see:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/empty-nester-loons-adopt-mallard-chick-northern-wisconsin-180972736/#jUZiXdQW03jYoFsH.99>.

The photo at right is by Linda Grenzer

from an article dated July 30, 2019, found on mentalfloss.com, <https://mentalfloss.com/article/592273/loon>

[s-adopt-baby-mallard-duck-in-wisconsin-lake](https://mentalfloss.com/article/592273/loon-s-adopt-baby-mallard-duck-in-wisconsin-lake), entitled “A Pair of Loons in Wisconsin Adopted a Mallard Duck...”, written by Ellen Gutoskey.



On a sadder note is the story about a destructive hailstorm that lashed regions near Billings, Montana, on August 11, killing more than 11,000 waterfowl and wetland birds. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2019/08/21/montana-hailstorm-slaughters-birds/>.

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Upcoming events

Bird Bash: Not sure if you will see this report by the September Bird Bash dates of **September 7 and 8**, but you will certainly see it long before the October Bird Bash slated for the weekend of **October 5 and 6**.

Bird Wing Meeting: September means we are back indoors. The library renovations are still not completed as far as I know, so stay tuned for the location and any other pertinent information, although the date is **September 24, starting at 6:30 p.m.**, no matter where we meet.



Joel Trick, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wikimedia

One topic to be discussed at the September meeting, brought to our attention by Dan Burton, birder from Muskoka, is the possibility of organizing a group to look for Kirtland's Warblers (left) northeast of North Bay **during the period of October 8 to 13**. These dates and locations are based on this warbler's fall migration route seen in the video,

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/03/watch-tiny-geolocator-map-rare-birds-round-trip-migration>.

You will see from the video that during fall migration, starting on September 23, the Kirtland's Warblers leave Michigan, cross Lake Huron, then head east over Ontario, with a concentration northeast of North Bay, before heading south to the Bahamas.