

Bird Wing Outing Report August 2018

By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe, and Contributors, with photos as indicated

Outing:

As we have done every August outing since I have been part of the Bird Wing group, off we went to Cache Bay. The only differences were that we met up half an hour earlier and in the former Sears parking lot. But there were also some differences in terms of species seen.

We expected to see one or two Ospreys (below left) in the ball park, but this year, we had the privilege of seeing four, the parents and two juveniles. We expected to see at least one Trumpeter Swan, but this year we saw three, one being L95 or more



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affectionately and famously known as Ava. We expected to see some Caspian Terns, but we also saw a couple of the smaller Common Terns. We hoped we would see at least one Green Heron, but we saw two. We did not expect to see a Sora (below right), but there one was hiding at the edge of the reeds. We had hoped to see some Pied-billed Grebes as Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing had seen two days prior in the same location, but perhaps by the time we arrived at their side of the Bay, they had already gone to sleep. Too bad because some of us really wanted to see the juveniles.

Other birds seen in the actual Bay were about 380 Mallards – Grant

McKercher counted them – and 23 Double-crested Cormorants, to say nothing of the Ring-billed Gulls flying about.

In Cache Bay proper and in the wooded area near the Bay, we saw three Northern Flickers; a Hairy Woodpecker; one American Crow; about 40 European Starlings; a White-throated Sparrow; two Eastern Phoebes; and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird.



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Kaye Edmonds

Fred Pinto and Grant saw a Merlin (right) near Jocko Point Road on their way to Cache Bay. I will let it count as an outing sighting – big of me, I know!! - even though Dick Tafel, Lori Anderson, Daniel Currie and I did not see it. Nor, of course, did Therez Violette and Monique Beuparlant who joined us at Cache Bay. Always good to see our Sturgeon ladies.

Lori had reported that she and Ken had seen eight Common Nighthawks on Levac Road two days before, so off we headed along Levac, first seeing about 300 Canada Geese in a field along with about 100 sleeping Mallards.

It was getting on to 8:00 p.m. when we spotted a couple of Common Nighthawks (left), only to get out of the car and see upwards of 50! Now that was exhilarating, because I don't think any of us had ever seen that many altogether!

They were feeding above and along the tree line at the back of a farmer's field. (Daniel seems to bring us some luck because we were with him when we saw the Black-crowned Night-Heron in Laurier Woods back in May.)

With high spirits, we adjourned to our usual after-Cache Bay spot, Tim Horton's in Sturgeon Falls, for some witty repartee.

It was good to meet a bit earlier than normal at this time of the year so we were not doing all our birding in the near darkness, and I think the earlier start yielded more species. I know this earlier time was somewhat hard on Dick because he seems incapable of eating his dinner earlier like the rest of us, and so he ate a Subway sandwich and potato chips all the way to Cache Bay and beyond! (Those in our car will know about the potato chips.)

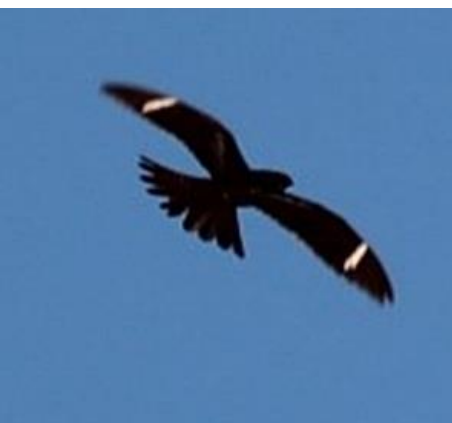
We drove home in the dark, but the almost full Moon of August, known as a Sturgeon Moon, greeted us as we approached North Bay. (at right) It was a fantastic sight and would have been quite the thing to have seen it in Sturgeon!

Uncommon Sightings and Hearings:

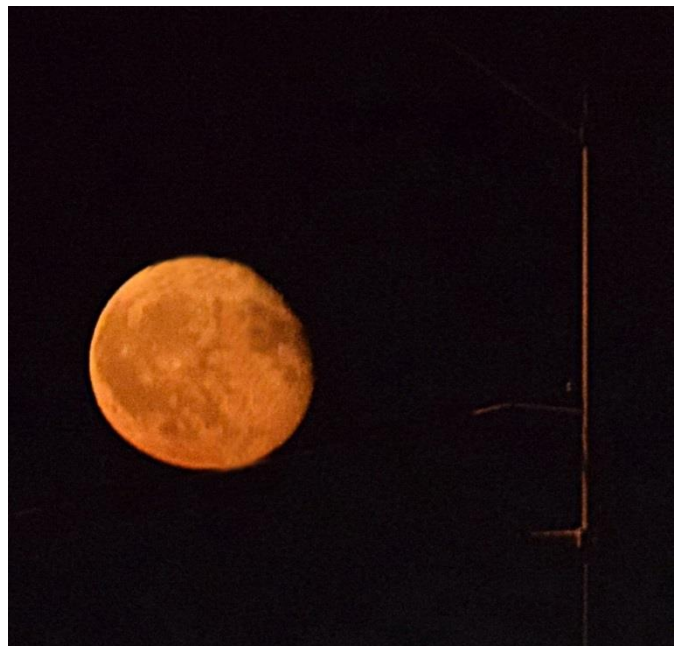
Golden-winged Warbler: Newcomer Dave Rooke, who vacations in our area from May through to September, but who lives in Waterloo the rest of the year, saw a Golden-winged Warbler on August 1 at Sequin Beach on Lake Nipissing's south shore. Dave was walking his daughter's dog when he spotted it with a group of other warblers. He



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Ernie Frayle



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was a bit of a distance from his place, but he ran back as fast as he could and grabbed his camera. Fortunately, the warbler was still there, albeit in another tree near the one in which he saw it. Talk about the luck of the birder! Not often that happens when it comes to warblers. Dave's photo is at right.



Dave Rooke

When I met Dave by email through Katherine Byers – that's another story how that came about - I arranged to meet him and he showed me the tree where he first spotted the warbler. When Dick returned from his beloved Switzerland where he was vacationing with his family at the time of the sighting, I introduced him to Dave and Dave showed Dick the tree too. But alas a tree is not a bird.

Twelve days later, on August 12, Sonje Bols, former Nipissing Naturalists Club Board Member, also saw and got a photo of the Golden-winged Warbler. Her sighting was near The Narrows on Lake Nosbonsing. Some of you may recall there was also a sighting on River Road back in the spring of this year, on May 26.

According to eBird, there have been a few sightings of Golden-winged Warblers in our immediate area over the years, mostly during the years from 2003 to 2005, many by Martin Parker in the Parry Sound District, but within our 50-mile radius, and some by others in the Sudbury District, also within our 50-mile radius.

Dick tells me there was one at Greg Boxwell's many decades back that he saw quite a few times. He also saw one in the Astorville area and heard one at Jocko Point some years ago.

Carolina Wren: Seguin Beach is obviously the place to be or else Dave is plain lucky, but he heard a Carolina Wren there on July 23 and was able to record it for eBird. He did not see it, but



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the recording confirms it was indeed a Carolina Wren and Dave is very familiar with Carolina Wrens, not uncommon in the Waterloo region. Some of you may recall that Kaye Edmonds had one stay in her yard over the winter of 2012-13, seen, of course, by Kaye, but also by me and Dick and maybe others. There is only one other sighting of the Carolina Wren on eBird in our area and that is Martin Parker's sighting at Gary and Luanne Chowns' feeder on March 29, 2008, also seen by Dick and naturally by Gary and Luanne and no doubt by Brent and Laura Turcotte. Photo at the bottom of the previous page was taken by me at Kaye's in January 2013.

Lark Sparrow: A rare bird in our area, a striking Lark Sparrow, was seen by Dick and me on September 3 near Warren Lagoon. We were just leaving Warren Lagoon where we happened upon two Wilson's Phalaropes, and came to the intersection of Rutland Avenue and Laurier Lane when we happened to see a flock of Chipping Sparrows, a Song Sparrow or two and a Savannah Sparrow or two getting grit by the roadside. Also in the same area were a couple of Common Grackles, a juvenile American Robin and a few European Starlings. All common birds, but as birders, one just never knows and so naturally we stopped, binos at the ready, wondering what all the fuss was about. But never did we suspect that we would happen upon a rare bird for our area and a lifer for me! (Dick had seen one at Pelee some years back.)



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Just when we spied an unusual and distinctive looking sparrow, a few cars drove by much to our consternation, causing the birds to fly. We were hoping the bird in question would return and return it did. It was Dick who eventually declared it to be a Lark Sparrow. I put my binos down and quickly brought out my camera hoping to get an ID shot from the car at the very least. I did and that helped us confirm it as an adult Lark Sparrow! (See photo at left.)

The only other sighting of a Lark Sparrow on eBird near us, although outside our 50-mile radius, is one found in May 2009 in the Port Loring area.

I sent the sighting to Ontbirds and Ron Pittaway contacted me to tell me that according to a report in Speirs (1985), there was a sighting in Sudbury in 1973: "A. Badiuk et al observed nesting at Sudbury (2 sterile eggs and 2 fledged young) from July 5-21, 1973." And also in Speirs (1985), John Nicholson saw one in Blezard Valley near Sudbury on May 29, 1974. Both these observations, however, are well outside our 50-mile radius.

Usually annually, there are Lark Sparrow sightings in Southern Ontario, but because the Lark Sparrow is a western bird and quite commonly found in Manitoba, it may have arrived in Warren from Manitoba, or probably from somewhere in the west.

From the Field:

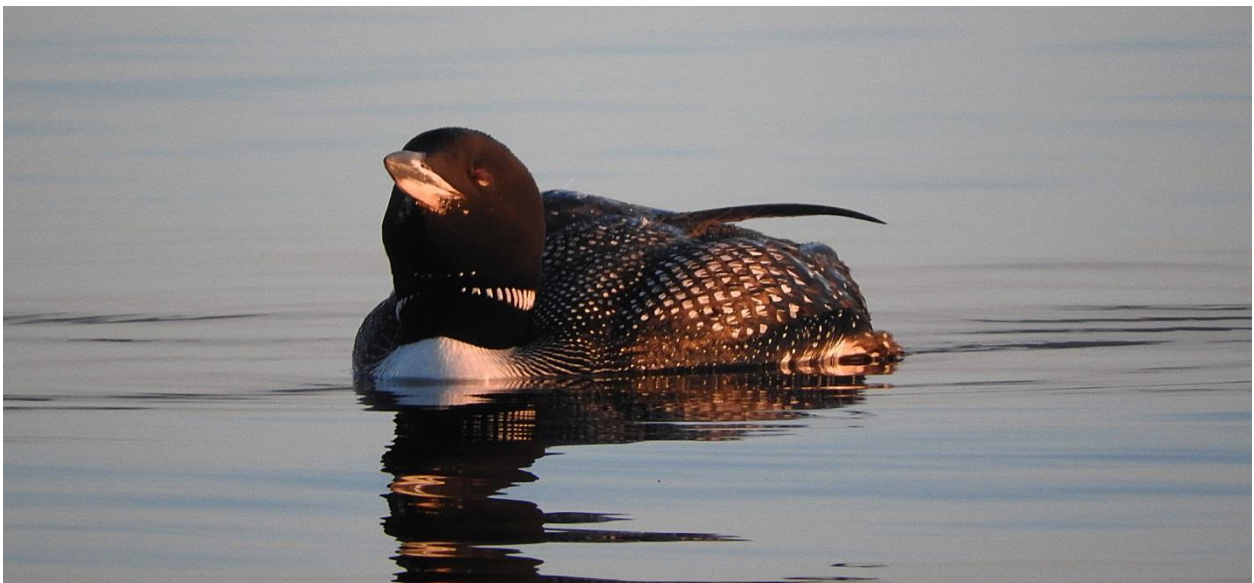
Grant's Common Loon: Following up on the Common Loon Grant McKercher saw in early July with a fishing lure attached to its leg, Grant reports that despite the fact he knows a loon is hard to capture, he and his neighbor, also a doctor who has removed many a lure from humans, made an attempt in early August to capture it and remove the lure. (If you didn't read July's Bird Wing report or forget the story of the loon, see: <https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/bird-wing-meetings-outings/>.)

Regarding the second rescue attempt, Grant reports, "Our next door neighbours located the loon again and so we went out with kayaks and nets to see if it could be captured. But it was still quite capable of diving and eluded us. It seemed to have some damage to its bill, perhaps from worrying at the lure still attached to its right leg. It was, however, able to catch some minnows while we observed it.

"On another positive note, it had a chick with it when first seen in early August, although not seen during the capture attempt. There was another adult loon farther out in the bay, possibly its mate. Maybe the chick will be okay if one parent is still able to look after it."

Then the loon was spotted again in late August and another rescue attempt ensued. Grant reports, "This attempted loon rescue was on August 25. Shirley spotted the bird out in front of our dock about 8:00 p.m., and I went down to have a look. It didn't look as healthy as when previously seen, and when I went to the end of the dock to get some photos, it actually swam towards me, and coincidentally or not, raised the leg with the lure still attached, as if to show me the problem. It seemed weak and lethargic and had a worn bill, again probably as a result of worrying at the lure.

"I was by myself this time but decided to take the kayak out and see if I could capture it. Although I was able to get very close, and it didn't dive, it was still strong enough to swim away whenever I got too close. After about a half hour I gave up the chase. We haven't seen it since then despite two more searches in a powerboat along the shore and around the islands where it had been located previously. A baby loon, however, was spotted in the area just last week, as were three other adult loons."



Grant McKercher

Lori's Wild Turkey: Lori Anderson's Wild Turkey, which you also read about in July's Bird Wing Report, has now successfully hatched 10 chicks! Reports Lori, "On August 19, while travelling to the back of the farm by tractor, I encountered a turkey hen with downy chicks! Not wishing to separate the chicks from hen, I did not come close, but estimated 8-10 chicks. So I checked the nest and sure enough the eggs had hatched. The date would have been August 17, 18 or 19, as we saw the hen on the nest on the 17th.



Lori Anderson

"The photo at left shows only some of the remaining shells – perhaps starlings or grackles picked up some shells. Two remaining eggs were not hatched. There is discrepancy in the original egg count, from 11 to 14 eggs, but egg counts made during the hen's absence were 13 and 14. A second sighting of the hen and chicks as they travelled through a bare patch in the field gave me a chick count of at least 10.

"My neighbour has fed Wild Turkeys the past two winters. I plan to help out this winter by establishing a feed location at the back of the farm. Apparently, with help from deer, they are big eaters!"

Steve's Common Grackle: Steve Pitt spotted a leucistic Common Grackle in his Talon Lake yard in late August and took the photo at right. Steve calls his grackle, Luci The Unique.

Renee's Blue Jays: The Blue Jays visiting my yard this August seemed to have moulted more than usual. I captured two Baldy Beauties having a bath in the photo at the top of the next page below. Steve also had some around his place. I also had in my yard a very noticeable moulting Common Grackle and a very noticeable moulting Veery.



Steve Pitt



Renee Levesque

Peregrine Falcon: Kaye Edmonds spotted a Peregrine Falcon on top of the Pro-Cathedral at least 5 times over the spring and summer months and Dick and I saw a Peregrine Falcon at Verner Lagoon twice for sure and perhaps a third time. Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing may have also seen it at Verner Lagoon, and Dave Rooke may have spotted one at Powassan Lagoon. When Dick and I spotted it at Verner Lagoon, it sat in a dead tree for some time and then decided to have a drink and a bath in the small amount of water there was in one of the lagoon cells, naturally the one to which the shorebirds come. It bathed for some time. We watched it for a good 30 minutes. This was a first for me seeing a Peregrine bathe. Normally I see one sitting high up, watching and then swooping as fast as the eye can see. Not a great photo of it bathing is seen at right.



Doug's Move: Doug Patterson Sr. and Jr. sold their home in Mattawan and moved this summer to Annapolis, Nova Scotia. Quite the move and to a totally different locale. Doug reports, "We bought a house here with a large lot and large trees, especially large pines in the back, so I'm looking forward to bird watching. We already see a lot of goldfinch, a species that I love, so that is great. No feeders out yet though. I'll put some up when the cold weather starts. I'll send a few pictures once I get going and see some interesting birds. I'll be able to see more seabirds at Fundy and there is a large provincial park within an hour of our place.

"Being part of Bird Wing really helped us build our birding skills and made bird loving and watching a big part of our lives."

Doug also tells me Bird Wing members are welcome to visit him if any of us get out that way.

Bird Survey Results:

For the results of the various bird surveys that occurred between May and July, see Nipissing Naturalists Club's September's issue of *The Woodland Observer*. Because we live in an area

with many lakes, I think it behooves one of us to take part in the loon survey. If anyone out there wishes to do so, please let me know. It is not a complicated survey by any means.

September's Bird Wing Meeting:

In September, we return to indoor meetings. Normally meetings take place at the North Bay Public Library, but because of ongoing renovations from September through to the New Year in the lower level, affecting both the auditorium and boardroom, other arrangements for meeting places will have to be made. A locale for September's meeting has been confirmed, but not yet for October or November, so stay tuned for those details. (There is no meeting in December.)

September's meeting will be held on **Tuesday, September 25, at 6:30 p.m. at Laporte's Nursery, 1054 Lakeshore Drive.** During this meeting, the Great Canadian Birdathon and the Nocturnal Owl Survey trophies will be presented and there will be special owl snacks for all who attend. We would particularly like all Nocturnal Owl and Birdathon participants to be there.

Word of the Month:

Continued thanks to Steve Pitt for supplying me with the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary link to words that date their meaning back to birds. And the word this month is **halcyon**, meaning calm or peaceful, as in a halcyon lake, or happy or golden, as in those halcyon days. So how does this fit in with a bird? Well, in ancient times, the word referred to a kingfisher.

“In Greek myth, Alkyone, the daughter of Aeolus, the god of the winds, became so distraught when she learned that her husband, Ceyx, had been killed in a shipwreck that she threw herself into the sea and was changed into a kingfisher, later named *alkyon* or *halkyon*.”

The kingfishers built floating nests on the sea, where they so charmed Aeolus that he created a period of unusual calm that lasted until the birds' eggs hatched.”

This legend prompted people to use halcyon both as a noun naming a genus of kingfisher, like the Belted Kingfisher (at right) whose Latin name is *Ceryle alcyon*, and as an adjective meaning calm.

“While halcyon days once referred to a time when storms did not occur, the phrase now connotes a past time looked back upon with fondness.”

