

## Bird Wing Outing Report May 2019

*By Renee Levesque; photos as indicated*

Some photos in this report are from Wikimedia Commons. I don't usually have as many non-member photos for the Bird Wing reports, but they are photos of birds we don't often get to see as well as we did this spring and I wanted to show what they look like to those who didn't get an opportunity to see them. The shorebirds were too far away for decent photos and two warblers refused to hang around posing for photos!

**Outing:** Seven of us met at Laurier Woods on the morning of May 28. It was sunny and relatively mild, a good morning for a walk through the woods to find wood warblers and other species. And find them we did!

Warblers seen were: Wilson's (right), Ovenbird, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Magnolia, female Blackburnian, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped and female Canada.

Three lucky birders who wandered off on their own got to see the Blackpoll (photo shown later in this report) and the Black-throated Blue (below).



*Sarah Wheelan*



*Gary Chowns*

Flycatchers seen were:  
Least, Eastern Phoebe and Great Crested.

Sparrows seen were: White-throated, Song and Swamp.

Woodpeckers seen were: Pileated and Northern Flicker.

Thrushes seen were: Veery (below), Swainson's and American Robin.

Other species seen were:

Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Brown

Thrasher, Evening Grosbeak and Ruffed Grouse.

And because it would not be right to leave them out, more common species seen were: Ring-billed Gull, Turkey Vulture, Red-winged



*Renee Levesque*

Blackbird, Common Grackle, Blue Jay, American Crow and Black-capped Chickadee.

**Nocturnal Owl Survey:** Although the Nocturnal Owl Survey took place in late April, I am still waiting for two reports. I won't name the two people who haven't sent me their reports yet, but those I did receive reports from were Gary Sturge, Oriana Pokorny/Sarah Wheelan, and Marc Buchanan. I cannot declare the winner of the trophy or report on the results until the two missing reports are received. Now that convocation is over and he has an honorary doctorate, one of the reports should be forthcoming soon; and with all the rain these days, maybe farming isn't in the cards and time can be spent writing the report.

**American Woodcock Singing Ground Survey:** The American Woodcock Singing Ground Survey was conducted in May by Gary and Connie Sturge and Matt Procnier. Gary reports they officially heard 4 American Woodcocks and 1 unofficial woodcock. It is unofficial because it was heard out of the vehicle window between official stops, but not at the actual stop.

**Great Canadian Birdathon:** The Great Canadian Birdathon, along with the Christmas Bird Count, is one of the highlights of our birding season and a great deal of fun. Once again two teams entered, competing for a beautiful trophy. It would be nice to have more teams, so do consider entering next year. As long as two people see the bird, you don't have to be present for the full 24 hours. We went from 1:00 p.m. on the Saturday to 1:00 p.m. on the Sunday, but that doesn't mean we stayed up all night and it doesn't mean you have to be present for all those hours as long as two people see the bird. One team finished on Saturday by 10:00 p.m., the other team, by 9:00 p.m. We were all up and at 'em by 6:00 a.m. the next morning.

Saturday it rained on and off most of the day, but that did not deter us dedicated birdathoners. Sunday was a sunny, spring day. (We have had SOME of those!)

Dick Tafel's team, comprised of team members Lori Anderson, Jackie Manella and me, once again won the trophy with 103 species seen and 11 heard. Marc Buchanan's team comprised of team members Sarah Wheelan, Grant and Shirley McKercher and Oriana Pokorny saw 84 species and heard 3.

The highlights for Dick's team took place in two areas – Powassan Lagoon and Veuve River Road, both areas the other team decided to bypass. At the lagoon, three of us – Lori, Jackie and I - saw a lovely Cerulean Warbler (above) – a rare find for our area. Unfortunately, Dick missed seeing it! We tried to re-find it for him, but we could not linger for long, it being a Birdathon.



*Mdf - Own work, Wikimedia Commons*

It wasn't the only warbler at the lagoon. We saw there almost every warbler there is, including a great view of the Blackpoll (right), a warbler we sometimes don't get to see without some trouble. But this time it was sitting there waiting for us as we pulled up to the lagoon cells. At first glance, I thought it a Black and White, but then Dick excitedly yelled, "It's a Blackpoll!", and upon closer inspection with our binos, we saw that indeed it was a Blackpoll!



*Cephas - Own work, Wikimedia Commons*

Marc's team also saw many warblers and they certainly were there to see in Laurier Woods and along Cranberry Trail. It was along Cranberry Trail close to 8:00 in the evening that our team saw both the male and female Bay-breasted, except for Dick yet again! He needs to stick closer to the women-folk!!

The warblers were easier to spot and find this Birdathon compared to other years. Spring arrived late, as did the warblers; the leaves weren't fully out on the trees – some trees were still in the budding stage; and the black flies and mosquitoes hadn't yet arrived, enabling us to manage the wood walks easily.

We also got great views of the Scarlet Tanager (left) at Powassan Lagoon and we saw one the next day in Laurier Woods.

A flooded farmer's field at the end of Veuve River Road offered shorebirds up in beautiful breeding colours – a Hudsonian Godwit (rare in our area), Ruddy Turnstones (one pictured below), Black-bellied Plovers, American Golden Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, a Least Sandpiper, and a Killdeer or two. Hundreds of Ring-billed Gulls, some



*Renee Levesque*

Bonaparte Gulls and 3 Caspian Terns completed the picture.

(Others later headed out to this field – I was there at least 5 times – and additional species seen were a Red Knot, rare in our area and pictured at the top of the next page, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlins and three Laughing Gulls, the latter seen only by Michael Arthurs. Unfortunately the Laughing Gulls, another rare find in our area, were not there the next day. One of my five viewings was



*Hans Hillewaert, Wikimedia Commons*

particularly awesome in the true sense of the word – three of us saw the sky blacken with approximately 300 shorebirds, about 250 of them, Black-bellied Plovers.)

The other team also elected not to search on Saturday night for the Whip-poor-will and the American Woodcock, both of which were heard by our team. The American Woodcock was heard in three places, the main spot being Laurier Woods by the parking lot, and the Whip-poor-will was heard at Dreany Lake, although not heard by Dick. Not sure if the other team saw any Chimney Swifts, but Dick's team did not have to go to Main Street West to see them because we saw 4 or 5 at Powassan Lagoon, our first stop of Saturday's Birdathon.



Red Knot, Hans Hillewaert, Wikimedia Commons

This luck saved us considerable time!

The species Dick's team missed, but Marc's team saw, were the Green Heron, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Broad-winged Hawk, Downy Woodpecker and Pileated Woodpecker.

Surprisingly, neither team saw an Eastern Bluebird, but a nice blue bird seen by Dick's team was the Indigo Bunting (left) on Alsace Road.



Angela Martin

**Breeding Bird Survey and the Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program:** Both the Breeding Bird Survey and the Marsh Monitoring Program are being conducted again this year by Paul Smylie. I hope to go with Paul on his Breeding Bird Survey later on in June, as does Jackie Manella. Results of both surveys will be highlighted in September or October's newsletter and in Bird Wing reports when results become available.

**Nightjar Survey:** The Nightjar Survey, held between June 15 and July 15, to count the number of Eastern Whip-poor-wills and

Common Nighthawks will be conducted the week of June 17 by Gary and Connie Sturge and Matt Procnier on the same route they had last year. Results will be in next month's Bird Wing report and in September or October's newsletter.

**From the Field:** And speaking of nightjars: Gary Chowns notified Dick and me of a Common Nighthawk (right) resting in a tree in Laurier Woods. We received notification while we were looking at shorebirds on Veuve River Road,



Gary Chowns

and because we had not seen nighthawks during the Great Canadian Birdathon, to see one especially during the day resting in a tree was a treat. I had never seen one in the day at rest and was anxious to get its photo. So we drove carefully back – I was going to say rushed back but thought better of that – got to Laurier Woods, couldn't find it, called Gary on my cell phone, he directed us to the exact spot and there it was – well camouflaged, but there.

*Pam Handley* informed me that on her and Pete's 57<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in May, they were rewarded with three colourful birds at their suet feeders – the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, the female Baltimore Oriole and the Indigo Bunting. It is amazing what birds know, even birders' anniversaries!!

And speaking of orioles, *Gary and Connie Sturge* have had their share! In May, they had 5 Baltimore Orioles (one pictured at left) in their Powassan area yard, three males and two



*Gary Sturge*

females. Gary lost no time in putting out oranges for them, although they seemed to prefer the hummingbird feeders. Two remained to nest near their property. How fortunate for the Sturges!

*Buddy Myles* also had a Baltimore Oriole at his place in Verner, attracted there by oranges and grapefruit he had out to attract the orioles. *Steve Pitt* had a female Oriole (below) in his Lake Talon yard, attracted there by the hummingbird feeders. Steve reports his Lady Baltimore vandalized his hummingbird feeders by ripping off the yellow grates. Some of us have seen and heard the male Baltimore singing his heart out at his usual place near the Veuve River bridge. Seems more orioles were seen this spring at various places than usual.

And if that wasn't wonderful enough for Gary and Connie to have so many Baltimores at their place, they were also the lucky recipients of the rare-for-our-area Orchard Oriole, as was Buddy in Verner. See June's

issue of Nipissing Naturalists Club's newsletter for an article on the Orchard Oriole and these enviable sightings: <https://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>. (The article also features Buddy's photo of the Orchard.)

*Connie and Gary* have also attracted about 12 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to their 6 feeders!!!



*Steve Pitt*

*Janet and Lloyd Sparks* have a pair of American Bitterns near their place by Wolfe Lake. The bitterns even performed their courtship ritual right on the Sparks' property in front of their home!

And speaking of courtship rituals, in my yard, I had a Common Grackle perform his ritual (at right), puffing up his brilliant dark colours that glisten in the sun. The female did not seem to pay him much attention, but I was impressed and she must have been too because the pair are nesting near my property.

*Steve Pitt and his wife* went to the Azores for a vacation in May. It was not a birding holiday, although Steve saw some birds. He got a nice photo of the cute little Chaffinch (below) and was fascinated by the many Cory Sheerwaters he saw while on a whale/dolphin sea excursion.



*Renee Levesque*



During May, Laurier Woods was a temporary home to at least 11 Solitary Sandpipers. Rather ironic considering they are solitary, but they were migrating through and in migration, there is strength in numbers. Those of us who spend considerable time in Laurier Woods during May, like Kaye Edmonds, Dick, the Turcottes, the Chowns and me, no doubt saw one (pictured below) if not all eleven.



*Renee Levesque*

One beautiful early spring evening in May, *Peter Ferris*, my husband John and I went out with Peter in his jeep to view the heronry off Birch's Road. We were rewarded with seeing 5 nests, two on the same tree, one above the other, 3 Great Blue Herons, with one in the nest. The photo on the next page shows the female being fed by the male. Peter recently reported that only two of the nests are occupied, a steep decline from a few years ago when all five nests were occupied, and that both nests now have chicks.

*Steve Pitt*



www.pjferrisphotography.com

**Morgan Walker:** Further to the article about Morgan Walker's carving of a Ruffed Grouse in June's issue of *The Woodland Observer*, don't forget to see this intricately and delicately carved grouse on display at Alex Dufresne Gallery, 107 Lansdowne Street East, Callander. **The show continues until June 22**, on which date Morgan will be on hand to answer questions and paint a pheasant's tail he carved.

**Bird Bash:** The next Bird Bash will take place the weekend of **June 22 and 23**. I will send a reminder prior to the Bash.

**Bird Wing Outing:** The next Bird Wing outing will be held on **Tuesday, June 25**, starting at **6:30 p.m.** Meet in the former Sear's parking lot – now the current Urban Planet parking lot. It is the parking lot directly in front of this store, the parking lot where we have met for outings for the last year without any problems, except during the

Birdathon. I will send a reminder with details prior to the outing.

I wish to congratulate Dick, as we all do, on his receiving an honorary doctorate at Nipissing University's convocation on June 13. In his speech, Dick did not fail to make mention of birds. In fact, it would have been surprising if he had not mentioned birds. Some Bird Wingers wondered if you wore your bird hat, Dick!!! (For the record, he didn't.)

Congratulations, Dr. Dick.



Sandra Edwards