

Bird

Wing

Report



## Birds seen during November and late October

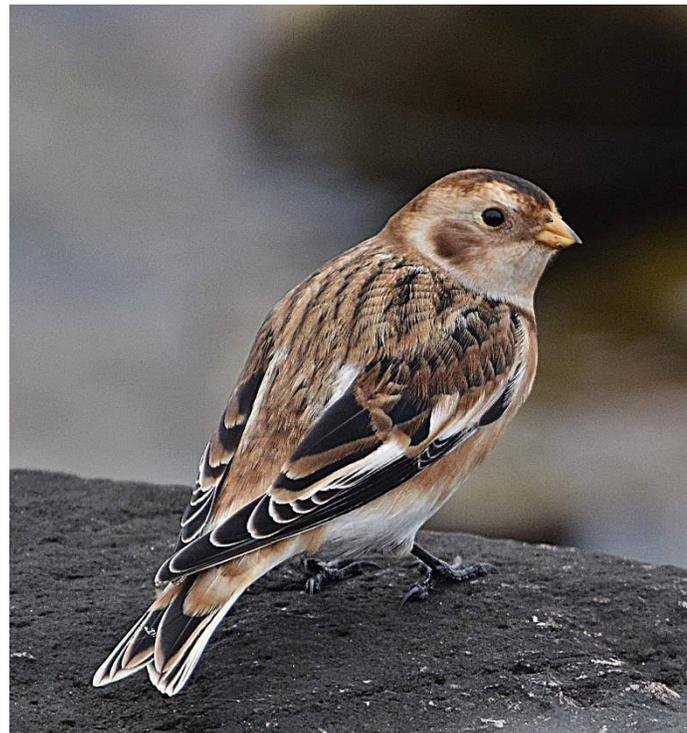
Before I list the species seen by members present at the meeting, attention must first be paid to the number of birders who have seen a Northern Cardinal this past October and November. First off, I must mention **Dorothy Williams whose photo of one graces the cover this month.** And then we have Rick Tripp who still has two around his Callander home; Stephen O'Donnell who had one at his Sundridge feeder; Gary and Connie Sturge who had one recently at their Powassan feeder; Therez Violette who had one at her Sturgeon Falls feeder; Steve Pitt who had one at his feeder by Talon Lake; and Diane Deagle who had one at her feeder in North Bay. And there is also Kaye Edmonds who had one at her North Bay feeder – and one that seems to be continuing. I don't believe I have ever reported as many birders seeing a cardinal in a month.

Now for species seen by members present at November's meeting:

Cindy Lafleur: Downy Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch, both species seen by most of us, including Faye Oei who sent in her sightings by email. Cindy later mentioned seeing a Dark-eyed Junco, as did Dick Tafel who had one in his yard until recently.

Ken Gowing: White-throated Sparrow for a couple of days in late November and three Snow Buntings (photo at right) at the church in Astorville. Renee saw one at the dock in Sundridge; Lori had a flock at her farm, a flock that has increased in number since our meeting; and Dick Tafel had 6 in his Trout Lake home area.

Lori Anderson: Pileated Woodpecker and House Sparrows. Lori later mentioned seeing a Song Sparrow and two American Robins at her place. Gary Sturge also had two, as did Renee. Oriana Pokorny saw one on Campus.



*Renee Levesque*

Connie Sturge: Wild Turkeys and a Bald Eagle on Hazel Glen Road. Oriana reported there is a flock of Wild Turkeys on Campus by the student union centre, and Dick and Renee saw two there as they drove by a few days after the meeting. Connie later mentioned seeing a Merlin. At right is a photo Grant McKercher took of a Merlin bathing in Lake Nipissing in October.



Mary Marrs: Black-capped Chickadees and Blue Jays at her Lake Talon home.

Renee Levesque: Northern Shrike and Pine Siskins. (Oriana reported that she has never seen a Northern Shrike despite the fact they appear at her mother's house often enough.) Renee later

mentioned having a couple of American Tree Sparrows in her yard, as did Gary

Sturge. She also mentioned seeing a Glaucous Gull (photo at left) at the waterfront near King's Wharf, where Dick saw two. She also saw Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneye at King's Wharf.

Dick Tafel: Hooded Mergansers on Trout Lake by his home and a Common Loon at the marina on Lake Nipissing. Dick later mentioned seeing an Iceland Gull and a Common Loon a day



Renee Levesque

before the meeting near King's Wharf. See a great photo of an Iceland Gull by Stephen O'Donnell in the article "Seeds and Nuts" which follows.

Gary Sturge: A lovely flock of about 20 handsome Bohemian Waxwings (photo below) at the same time as a flock of 15 to 20 Evening Grosbeaks at his feeders. Must have been quite the colourful sight! No one else had seen Bohemian Waxwings, but some had seen Evening Grosbeaks. Seemed to be a number of them around this fall.



*Renee Levesque*

Gary later mentioned seeing a Ruffed Grouse in his apple tree and Jim Hasler later mentioned having three greet him on his porch when he opened the door. Imagine that!

Therez Violette: Therez sent in her sightings by email. In addition to the Northern Cardinal, Therez saw Trumpeter Swans, swans also seen by Dick and Renee. They also saw about 50 Tundra Swans in Lake Nipissing off Beaucage Park Road.

Jim Hasler: A Hairy Woodpecker and a Chipping Sparrow. Although it is late for a Chipping Sparrow, Oriana also saw one a couple of weeks prior to the meeting. Jim later mentioned seeing Mallards.

Sue Gratton: I like to mention when a birder has seen a bird for the very first time (known as a lifer), and during November's Bird Bash, Sue saw a Rusty Blackbird for the first time! Good going Sue. For other lifers seen by one of our youngest members, Jeremie Corbeil, see the article, "Seeds and Nuts".

Oriana Pokorny: American Goldfinch in her North Bay yard and Pine Grosbeaks (photo below) at the Campus. Oriana later mentioned hearing and then seeing a crossbill on Campus. The sighting was fleeting and she couldn't make out whether it was a Red or a White-winged Crossbill.



*Renee Levesque*

- *Renee Levesque*

## Seeds and nuts

**Results of the meeting format vote:** Because most of the 26 members who voted wanted some form of Zoom, whether Zoom only, Zoom on alternating months, or Zoom during the winter months, it was decided that to accommodate those who wanted hybrid and those who wanted in-person meetings, we would have **in-person meetings in September, October and possibly November depending on the weather that month, and Zoom meetings only in January and February and possibly March** depending on the weather that month. (For example, if we happen to have one of those beautiful warm late March days, we can meet in person.) **We will meet in person in April and then resume our outings May through to August.** We do not meet in December. Seems most do not want to give up their Christmas plans and festivities to meet about birds and besides, with the Christmas Bird Count plus a Bird Bash in December, there are enough December bird activities.

**Christmas Bird Count (CBC):** Lori Anderson reported that all field surveyors for North Bay's 44<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count are in place for **Saturday, December 17**. Lori will be contacting past feeder watchers and those new feeder watchers who have expressed interest in taking part in this our longest-running (123 years) North American citizen science project.

Thousands of volunteers take part in over 2000 locations throughout the Western Hemisphere, forming one of the world's largest sets of wildlife survey data. The results are used by conservation biologists, environmental planners and naturalists to assess population trends and distribution of birds.



*Renee Levesque*

You can contact Lori at [lori.anderson58@hotmail.com](mailto:lori.anderson58@hotmail.com) if you are interested in taking part in North Bay's count as a feeder watcher. You must live within the required 24-km diameter circle of North Bay. See the diagram of the circle at <https://www.nipnats.com/cbc/> or Lori can let you know if you are in doubt.

**Burk's Falls 46<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count takes place on Wednesday, December 21** and basically covers the area from Burk's Falls to South River. Some of our Bird Wing members who live in the southern tier of our area take part. If you are interested, you can contact Martin Parker at [mparker19@cogeco.ca](mailto:mparker19@cogeco.ca). Martin is away until December 1, so now would be the time to contact him if you have not already done so.

**Donations:** Within recent years, Bird Wing has donated to a wildlife charity of our choice. This year, we agreed to donate \$50.00 each to three charities come January, charities Bird Wing has supported in the past:

FLAP Canada: <https://flap.org/>

Turtle Pond Wildlife Centre, located in Val Caron: <https://www.turtlepondwc.com/>

Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge, located in Pefferlaw, near the southeastern shores of Lake Simcoe: <https://www.shadesofhope.ca/>

The links of each are provided. You can check them out and, if you wish, make a private donation. Each Home page has a link enabling you to donate online. You can also find the addresses of each on the Home pages if you wish to donate by mail.

**Our DVD bird library:** Gary Sturge reported he saw an excellent documentary on woodpeckers on PBS cleverly entitled cleverly *Woodpeckers, The Hole Story*. He has now ordered it for our Bird Wing DVD library. It will be a good documentary to show in March. Other documentaries owned by Bird Wing include *Super Hummingbirds*; *World's Fastest Animal*, about the Peregrine Falcon; and *Identification of Hawks*. Our group has seen the first two, but not the *Identification of Hawks* which would be another good one to show come spring.

**Magazines articles:** In the Winter 2023 *East Ferris Edition*, there are two short articles that are of interest to Bird Wing members.

One is by Catherine Howard on Dick Tafel's 2022 Steve Hounsell Greenway Award, one of Ontario Nature's awards that recognizes outstanding contributions to nature conservation. In Dick's case it was for his role in helping establish Laurier Woods Conservation Area.

The second article entitled "Kids of Our Community" by Sauvée Perron is an interview with one of our youngest Bird Wing members, Jeremie Corbeil, about his interest in bird watching. Jeremie began bird watching in 2021 when he was 10 or 11 years old. That year, he put up a bird feeder and, as result, began seeing some "wonderful birds", like the Evening Grosbeak, a favourite of our young birder. Jeremie mentions he is a member of Bird Wing, that his mentor is Dick, and that his favourite place to bird is Laurier Woods. At the time of the interview this past June, Jeremie had seen 96 species. I believe that is now up to 132! Not bad at all for a 12-year-old.

**Nocturnal Owl Survey:** This year to determine a winner of the 2022 Nocturnal Owl Survey Trophy, we pulled a name from a hat. And that name just happened to be Dick Tafel's despite his not seeing or hearing any owls at all! But he wrote an entertaining report about seeing nothing. It was a good year for Dick. Seems he won many awards in 2022. But if you reach 90 and can still play tennis and pickle ball and still climb fences and walk on uneven ground for miles while carrying a heavy scope to look for birds, you deserve as many awards as you can get!

Oriana Pokornoy, last year's winner, presented Dick with the owl trophy, designed and built by Ken Gowing. The two happy owlers are pictured below.



*Renee Levesque*

(Dick declared in no uncertain terms that this year was his last year doing the Nocturnal Owl Survey of his route miles from North Bay on McConnell Lake Road.)

For next year's winner, we have a formula in place.

To read or re-read the 2022 Nocturnal Owl Reports see:

<https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/reports-and-bird-counts/>.

**Where have all the gulls gone?** Some members of Bird Wing took part in an outing to North Bay's landfill site on November 26, an outing we have had often over the years and an outing that does not disappoint in terms of seeing gulls we tend to only see at this time of the year as they migrate south from the Arctic – the Glaucous Gull and the Iceland Gull (seen at right). But this year, no gulls! Well, no 500 to 1,000 gulls sitting on the dump mounds waiting for us to look at each and every one of them with our binoculars. There were maybe 150 gulls flying, mostly Herring and no doubt some Ring-bills, but no Great Black-backs. For the entire time we were there, not one gull landed – well, maybe one. There were some American Crows, many Common Ravens, about a dozen European Starlings and a handful of Bald Eagles.

We decided to head down to North Bay's waterfront by King's Wharf. Surely the gulls decided to stay there instead. But not a gull in sight except for 5 or 6 Ring-bills. But at least there was a Common Loon and a Common Merganser, the latter a first for Jeremie who accompanied us.



*Stephen O'Donnell*

So where were the gulls? Finally, we found some, about 200, by Silver Beach off Lakeshore Drive, and to Jeremie's delight, within the group were two Great Black-backs (photo below), an adult and an immature, another first for him.



*Renee Levesque*

On our way back from the landfill site, we decided to take a look on Cook's Mill Road to see if the usual Canada Jay was around. It wasn't, but a male Pine Grosbeak was, another first for Jeremie. So for Jeremie a good day! Not often does one see three lifers on a November day, well maybe if one is young enough, one does. For the rest of us, maybe we didn't see any bird we hadn't seen so far this year, but we had some good laughs, were amazed at Jeremie's knowledge of birds – he is obviously not just a lister – and had a great lunch at Tim Horton's despite the incredibly slow service. (I think perhaps Linda Stoner saw the Pine Grosbeak for the first time too. We take joy in others seeing lifers and that is a good thing.)

- *Renee Levesque*



*Renee Levesque*

## **The decline of bird populations**

Dick spoke about the loss of bird populations in far too many species, including some we see in our area, the Evening Grosbeak, the Whip-poor-will, the Chimney Swift, the Bobolink and the Canada Warbler, as well as many shorebirds we see here during their spring and/or fall migration, shorebirds like the Lesser Yellowlegs (seen above), the Pectoral Sandpiper and the Ruddy Turnstone. There are billions of birds fewer today than even 50 years ago! This began quite an animated discussion, demonstrating our concern.

We talk about climate change and the need to protect our lands, our waterways, our insects, our birds and other animals, but many of those in the Bird Wing group feel we need to do more, that we can't just accept this as inevitable. But what can we do?

With approximately a billion birds dying in North America from window collisions each year, on an individual level we can do our best to make sure birds are not dying because we like to attract them to our yards. We tend to think most window collisions occur only in cities with their large glass buildings, but think of all the homes in your area, your town or city, your district, your province, your country and North America and you have a lot of homes with reflective glass windows.

Window and building collisions are the second leading cause of bird deaths. Birds cannot see glass, but they can see through it and can see what is reflected on the glass – sky, trees, plants, even a plant on the other side of the window. They are

attracted to this reflected landscape and fly into windows, often to their death. (Photo of reflective window at right.)

At night, it is artificial light that results in collisions. Many birds migrate at night, navigating their way using the moon and the sun. Bright lights from buildings confuse the birds, pulling them off course.



*kawarthaNow*

Most of us are familiar with FLAP Canada, especially after listening to James Abbot's presentation to us in April 2020. If you would like to review what James, a member of Bird Wing, told us about FLAP Canada and bird window and building collisions see the Bird Wing Report of April 2020, pages 8 to 10, on Nipissing Naturalists Club's website under Bird Wing Reports and Outings.

FLAP Canada's website demonstrates various window coverings we can purchase to help prevent window collisions. See: <https://flap.org/stop-birds-from-hitting-windows/>.



**FLAP Canada**

Lori Anderson and Rose McClelland have found the hanging of ribbons or strings method to be effective. Dick has found the Feather Friendly DIY tape to be effective, a method also approved by American Bird Conservancy and Audubon, as well as FLAP. (Photo at right of this type of window covering.)

And there are other creative ways to help prevent bird collisions. See: <https://flap.org/homeowners-share-creative-ways-to-prevent-birds-from-hitting-windows/>.

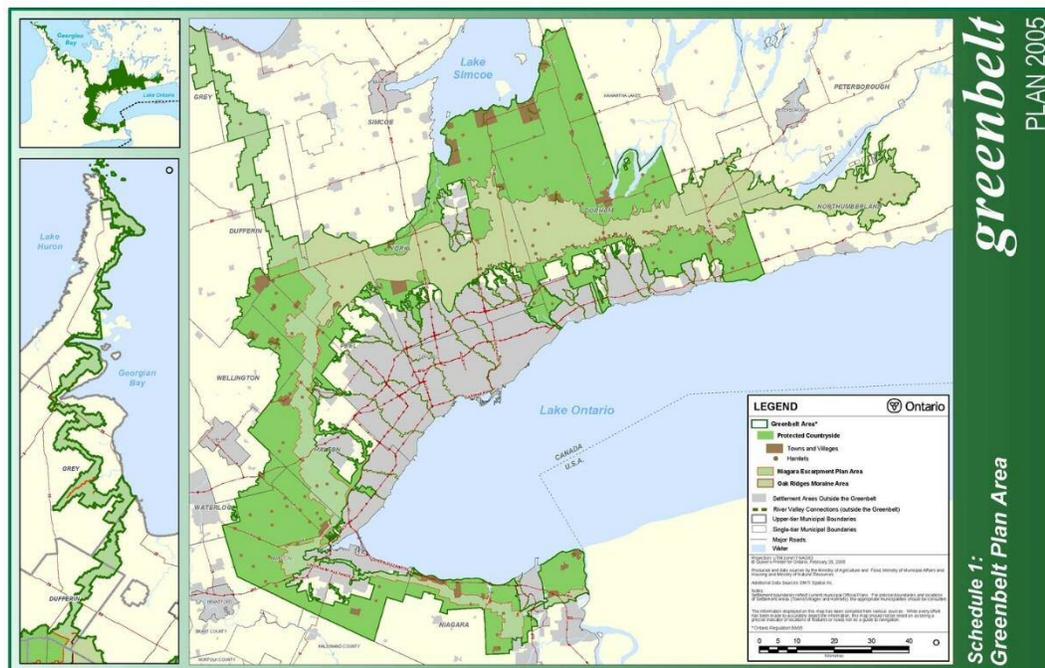
Habitat loss is yet another major threat and currently in Ontario we have Bill 23 looming over us, a bill that greatly weakens environmental protection and diminishes the role of Ontarians in land use planning and decision-making. Read Ontario Nature's Blog, <https://ontarionature.org/bill-23-what-you-need-to-know-blog/>, for more information.

On November 23, thanks to Oriana Pokornoy, I sent members an email outlining the concerns of Bill 23 and what will happen to 7,400 acres to be carved out of the Greenbelt, an area that provided protection for Ontario's farmland and natural heritage, including Significant Wetlands, woodlands and wildlife habitat. (See map of Greenbelt areas at right.)

Please refer to that email for more

information and express your comments accordingly to the Government of Ontario or your MPP. You still have time to respond to two of the major concerns for which **comments will be accepted up to December 30**. Not surprisingly, those who have already sent an email to Vic Fedeli expressing their concerns received the same form letter from him. Still, let him or the Government of Ontario know how you feel.

*-Renee Levesque*



# Critical cavities of the Pileated Woodpecker

The Migratory Birds Convention Act passed into law in 1917, making it the oldest Nature law in Canada. Although it has been amended a few times since then, many of its laws remained outdated and the language vague. For many years now, conservationists have advocated modernizing the language and providing stronger protection for migratory birds to better respond to the current challenges facing them. As a result, the Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022, came into force on July 30, 2022, with the Regulations comprehensively updated or revised.

One of the Regulations prohibits damaging, destroying, disturbing or removing migratory bird nests when they contain a live bird or viable egg. For most nests of the 377 migratory birds, once the chicks have fledged, the nests no longer continue to have conservation value. Most species will build a new nest each year.



However, 18 species reuse their nests and these nests are now protected year round, even when they do not contain a live bird or viable egg and remain protected until they can be deemed to be abandoned.

Most of the 18 species are not in our area, but two are, the Pileated Woodpecker (left) and the Great Blue Heron.

The Great Blue Heron's nest is to be protected for 24 months and the Pileated Woodpecker's for 36 months. Why 36 months for the Pileated Woodpecker's nests while the other 18 species' nests are protected for only 12 to 24 months?

“There is extensive documentation that the Pileated Woodpecker is a keystone species (meaning it has a disproportionately large effect on its natural environment relative to its abundance) for the cavity nesting community. Cavities are a critical and limiting resource for

many migratory birds, both for nesting and for overwinter survival.”

The Pileated Woodpecker, unlike our other woodpeckers, “makes large nesting cavities that are easy to identify and because their cavities are large, they can be used by nesters that lack the ability to excavate their own cavities.”

Over 30 species depend on unused Pileated Woodpecker nests to survive, including the Northern Saw-whet Owl, the Northern Flying Squirrel, and the endangered Little Brown Bat (*Myotis*). The Pileated has three



*Birdwatchingbuzz.com*

cavities: a nest cavity, a roosting cavity and a feeding cavity. Only the nest cavity is protected. It is a large cavity, up to 75 cm (30 in) deep, with an internal diameter of about 20 cm (7.9 in) across. A nesting cavity appears dark because it leads to a hollow chamber.

“The nests of the other 18 species usually reuse their own nests, so a nest that is unoccupied after one or two breeding seasons is indicative of nest abandonment and therefore loses its value for nesting migratory birds.”

As an example, with this new Regulation, if a Pileated Woodpecker abandons its nest in an area where there is industrial activity, the empty nest must be protected and monitored for 36 months, and remain empty during this time frame before it can be disturbed. After this time frame, there are rules that must be followed to officially declare that the cavity can be disturbed.

You can check out more information about the new Regulations by accessing the Government of Canada’s New Migratory Bird Regulations, 2022. The information contained in this article is from those new Regulations, with some from Nature Canada.

- *Renee Levesque*

## 140 years later...

*Excerpted by Renee Levesque*

For the first time since 1882, the Black-naped Pheasant-pigeon, thought to be extinct, was rediscovered in the forests of Papua New Guinea.

A scientific expedition team consisting of local staff at the Papua New Guinea National Museum and international scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the American Bird Conservancy spent a challenging month on the rugged and mountainous Ferguson Island looking for the bird, a large ground-dwelling pigeon with a broad tail, known locally as *Auwo*.



*Doka Nason, American Bird Conservancy*

It was a hunter named Augustin Gregory who lived in the mountain village of Duda Ununa who helped the scientists locate the bird. He told the team he had heard the bird's distinctive calls and had seen it in an area with steep ridges and

valleys. Based on this information, the scientists set up a camera on a 3,200-foot high ridge near the Kwama River above the hunter's mountain village.

Eureka! Just two days before the researchers were to leave the Island, the camera captured the bird walking on the forest floor!

"After a month of searching, seeing those first photos of the pheasant-pigeon felt like finding a unicorn," John C. Mittermeier, director of the Lost Birds Program at American Bird Conservancy and co-leader of the expedition, said in the release. "It is the kind of moment you dream about your entire life as a conservationist and birdwatcher."

It is not known how many Black-naped Pheasant-pigeons are left and because of the rugged terrain, it will be difficult to determine the population. Little is known about the species but scientists believe its population is small and declining.

The finding of the Black-naped Pheasant-pigeon, as is the finding of any lost bird, is a sign of hope that another lost species can be found, maybe even the Ivory-billed Woodpecker!

**Note:** Papua New Guinea, in the southwestern Pacific, "has 5 percent of the world's biodiversity, even though it only covers 1 percent of Earth's total land area. It has more than 20,000 plant species, 800 species of coral, 600 species of fish, and 750 species of birds." And with its 839 known languages, it is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world.

*Information contained in this article is from CNN-Wire & 2022 Cable News Network, Wikipedia and papuanewguinea.travel.*