

The Woodland Observer

Newsletter of the Nipissing Naturalists Club

www.nipnats.com

September 2020



Double Rainbow – Callander Bay – August 8, 2020

Grant McKercher

From the Editor

Welcome back from our summer break! Despite our on-going social restrictions, I hope that everyone had the opportunity to take advantage of some of our wonderful summer weather and get outdoors to commune with nature. Many members were active honing their nature photography skills as evidenced by the entries to the Spring Photo Contest. We will be voting

on-line in the next week or so and announcing the winners later in the month. Thanks to Keith Pearson for organizing the contest and on-line voting. Be sure to vote for your favourites!

Although the Club will not be able to resume face-to-face meetings and activities just yet, the Board of Directors is planning to survey members for any ideas about what we can do as a Club to keep the membership engaged and connected. In the meantime, we will continue to organize on-line Zoom meetings and presentations to bridge the gap.

In this month's Woodland Observer I have highlighted some of the activities of the Club over the past few months, including the on-line presentations in June, and the preliminary results of the Bat Monitoring Project. In addition, there are two special articles on raptors – one on the “Bald Eagles of Callander” by Kaye Edmonds and Fred Pinto, and the other on “Saving Sam”, the story of an osprey rescue by Ingrid Bajewsky.

I'm always looking for members' nature observations, photos and stories for inclusion in the Woodland Observer. Please forward any submissions to me at: grant.mckercher705@gmail.com. *Editor*

Meetings and Club Activities

On-line Presentation – 9 June 2020

“An Overview of Bird Migration”

Dr. Rachel Sturge, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Toronto

Rachel Sturge gave a talk about bird migration that started with a historical perspective. Ancient Greeks believed that swallows and larks hibernated in lake sediments, like snapping turtles, and inexperienced fishermen who pulled them out of the lakes risked accidentally killing them. They also believed that other birds transformed between the seasons. For example, they believed that Black Redstarts became European Robins in the winter.

She discussed the benefits and costs of migration, including the fact that Blackpoll Warblers fly over the open ocean for 90 hours during migration, which is the equivalent of a human running a 4-minute mile for the same amount of time! We learned about the different environmental cues that birds use to migrate, including the fact that birds can sense geomagnetic fields and that Indigo Buntings learn to use star constellations by watching the night sky during their first few months of life.

The talk ended by discussing some of the migratory record holders. Bar-tailed Godwits travel 11,000 km nonstop during migration, Bar-headed Geese fly over Everest, and Arctic Terns travel from the arctic to the Antarctic and back every year. A 30-year-old Arctic Tern will have flown over 2.4 million km in migration alone over its lifetime!

On-line Presentation – 11 June 2020

“The Crow and the Snake: A modern tale of the Mariana Crow population decline in Guam and Rota”

Dr. Nandadevi Cortes Rodriguez, Assistant Professor
Department of Biology, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York

The [Mariana Crow](#) is a critically endangered species due to the spread of invasive species, human persecution and habitat destruction. Dr. Rodriguez presented on research done on the islands of Guam and Rota.



Mariana Crow

Wikipedia Commons



Invasive Brown Tree Snake
Wikipedia Commons

On-line Presentation – 16 June 2020

“White-nose Syndrome in Bats”

Dr. Craig Willis

Dr. Willis gave an informative presentation about the effects of [white-nose syndrome](#) (WNS) and its on-going major impact on North American bat species since its accidental introduction from Europe in 2006. From the epi-centre in New York it has now spread across the United States and much of Eastern and Central Canada.

We heard that there are over 1400 different bat species world-wide, with an amazing diversity of adaptation (likely related to their ability to fly). They are worth billions of dollars to the agricultural industry as a result of eating insects and other pests, and also their involvement in pollination of some crops (e.g. tequila).

2010 saw a massive die-off of bats in North America from the cold-tolerant *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* fungus responsible for WNS. Millions of bats were killed in what is regarded as one of the most rapid decline in mammalian species known. More than 20 species have now been infected. Individual animals die from a combination of dehydration, increased arousal frequency during hibernation, and subsequent starvation. As a consequence, previously common species as the Little Brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) are now threatened in central Canada and other parts of North America.

Various treatment strategies have been investigated, including providing extra fluids (not successful), treating the bats’ wings with a protective bacterium (29% effective), and providing warmer roost boxes. The latter strategy was helpful in improving the reproductive success of bats



Little brown bat affected by white-nose syndrome.
Wikipedia Commons

that survive WNS. Research continues on how to increase the reproductive potential and heritable traits that will increase resistance to the fungus. On-going studies, such as the bat monitoring project done by the NipNats, also contribute important knowledge of local and regional bat ecology that informs conservation planning (see below).

Reference: Willis C. [Conservation Physiology and Conservation Pathogens: White-Nose Syndrome and Integrative Biology for Host-Pathogen Systems](#) Integ. Comp. Biol. 55(4):2015;631-641.

For more information on how you can help, go to: BatWatch.ca

Bat Monitoring Project – Our 5th Year!

McConnell Lake Road

Official monitoring of bats in the NipNats survey area (McConnell Lake Road) was completed with the retrieval of the monitor units during the third week of June. Thanks very much to the volunteers who helped with deploying and retrieving equipment, driving transects, and analyzing the data, all among the swarms of bugs! – Mark Fredette, Rebecca Gauvreau, Alex Gomm, Fred Pinto, Katie Tripp, Rick Tripp, and Sarah Wheelan.

Preliminary data, analyzed by Rebecca Gauvreau at Fri Ecological Services, shows the number of “passes” recorded by individual species of bats during the deployment of the monitors. It appears that Station 4 was the most active this year. (*Big Brown – EPTFUS, Eastern red - LASBOR, Hoary LASCIN, Silver-haired – LASNOC, Eastern small footed – MYOLEI, Little Brown – MYOLUC, Northern myotis – MYOSEP and Tri-colored – PERSUB*).

	EPTFUS	LASBOR	LASCIN	LASNOC	MYOLEI	MYOLUC	MYOSEP	PERSUB
Station 1	-	-	194	344	-	10	-	-
Station 2	-	-	9	100	-	4	-	-
Station 3	2	-	268	390	-	8	-	-
Station 4	64	7	266	516	-	71	-	-

Lake Talon

After the formal bat monitoring survey was completed in the McConnell Lake Road area, Mary Marrs deployed one of the monitoring units out at her camp on Lake Talon. She had some interesting findings according to the data analyzed by Rebecca.....

“You had quite a few bats again this year! It looks like Big Brown, Little Brown, Eastern Red, Hoary, Silver-haired and Tri-colored bats for sure. There were a few random Eastern small footed auto ID’s and similarly Northern myotis, but they could be misidentifications. See the table below for number of passes during the week you had it deployed.”

EPTFUS	LASBOR	LASCIN	LASNOC	MYOLEI	MYOLUC	MYOSEP	PERSUB
189	15	567	1955	1	189	4	151

North Bay Waterfront

Another monitor was deployed at the NipNats Waterfront Garden from August 9-13th. Rebecca was excited to see that there were tri-coloured bats present and the Waterfront too (although Lake Talon seems to be a hotspot for them this year).

EPTFUS	LASBOR	LASCIN	LASNOC	MYOLEI	MYOLUC	MYOSEP	PERSUB
2	-	119	98	-	18	-	2

For more information about Ontario bats click on this link:
[Ontario Nature – Bat Guide](#)

Submitted Articles

New Neighbours in Our Town: Bald Eagles of Callander

Photos by Kaye Edmonds

Text by Fred Pinto



Photo 1

K. Edmonds

Kaye Edmonds noticed Bald Eagles bringing in branches to rebuild a 2-year-old previously unused nest in Callander in March 2020. You will notice that the eagle is carrying a white Pine branch with green foliage (*Photo 1*). Several birds of prey use green boughs for their nest. It is not known why they do so, though it may serve as an insect repellent, attractant for the mate, or as a sign that that nest is occupied.

Kaye would spend close to 80 hours over the next 4 months photographing and observing the eagles, their young, and people (*Photo 2*) who came to see them.



Photo 2

K. Edmonds

Bald Eagles are easily disturbed by human activity. So, we were unsure at the beginning of the spring if the pair seen rebuilding the nest right in Callander would actually use this nest or abandon it before the eggs were laid or hatched. We were excited to see that the nest was actually used, and the parents were incubating eggs.

Kaye decided that she would not post her photos of the nesting eagles on social media in order to reduce the number of people who might potentially visit and disturb the birds during this vulnerable time.

Bald Eagle populations were in decline during the 19th and 20th Centuries due to human persecution, destruction of the natural habitat in Canada and the United States, and due to the use of persistent insecticides in the 1950's and 1960's. These long-lived insecticides bio-accumulated in wildlife and resulted in high concentrations in apex predators. The high concentrations in the tissues of birds of prey resulted in eggshells that were weak and prone to breaking before the young hatched. By the end of the 1960's the use of persistent pesticides was banned or restricted in Canada and the United States. Also, protection of raptors from human persecution improved in the 1970's and onwards after passage of Endangered Species legislation in the USA and Ontario.

Beginning in the 1970's attempts were made to restore populations of raptors starting with Peregrine Falcons and then Bald Eagles. The restoration methods involved collecting eggs from nests within 15 days of being laid so that the female would lay new eggs that she would then incubate. The collected eggs were incubated by brood chickens until they were about to hatch; the eaglets were then reared in hack boxes where the human caregivers could not be seen. The eaglets were then taken to areas that were deemed to be suitable habitat; here they were raised in their hack boxes until they were ready to fly. Bald Eagles usually return to their natal territory. This means that areas with suitable habitat for Bald Eagles were not being colonized, and hence the need to move young eagles to these areas before they could fly.

The population of Bald Eagles has seen a steady increase in the Nipissing area (*Figure 1*). They are now seen all year round in our region.

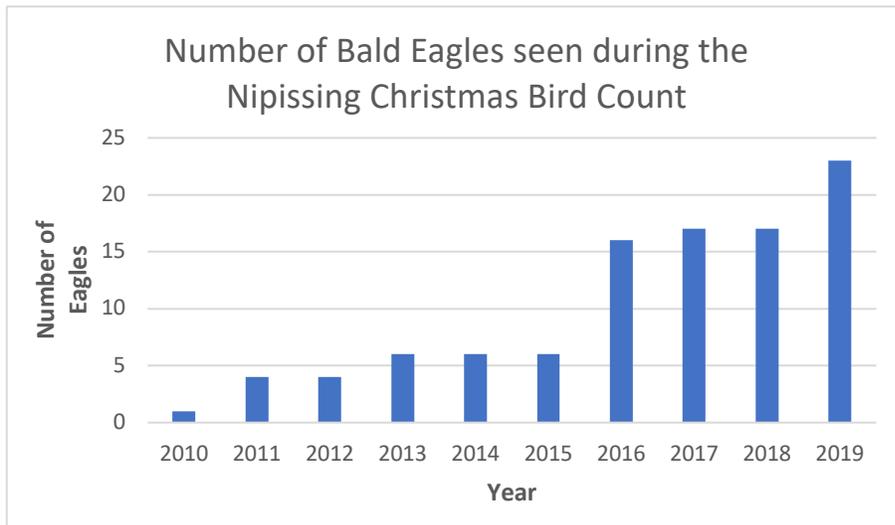


Figure 1

Thirty-five days after the first egg was laid in the Callander nest, it hatched. Three days later the second egg hatched.

Eaglets usually weigh around 85 g at birth, which is about the weight of 14 Canadian loonies. They are covered with grey fuzz when they hatch. At this stage the eaglets stay low in the nest



Photo 3 – June 4 K. Edmonds

making it difficult to observe and photograph them from the ground. Eaglets grow fast and eat a lot. From their initial 85 g they will grow to 3.5 to 5 kg in about 8 weeks when they will start to fly. During this time each eaglet will eat about 125 kg of flesh. By June 4 the grey fuzz was being replaced by dark brown feathers (*Photo 3*). The eaglets are fed by the parents until they are about 3-4 weeks old (*Photo 4*). After about 3 weeks the eaglets are able to better regulate their



Photo 4 – June 26 K. Edmonds

body temperature, and the parents can leave the nest for longer periods of time.

Sibling aggression, called the Cain and Abel Syndrome, is common in birds of prey; the larger eaglet may kill the smaller sibling. This behaviour is thought to be a survival adaptation for birds of prey that improves the survival of at least one young during times of food shortages. Kaye was on the lookout to see if this would happen to the pair in Callander. Luckily, she did not witness this survival-driven event, and both young fledged successfully.

As the day when the eaglets would take flight approached, the weather warmed up and they were exposed to the hot rays of the sun during the day. The only fluid they got was from the food that they ate. They were only seen being fed fish by their parents.



Photo 5 - Jul 23 K. Edmonds

Once the eaglets were able to feed themselves the parent would give a call when approaching the nest with food; that would attract their attention or wake up the young. The adult would then drop the fish and fly off soon after (*Photo 5*). The parents were also seen bringing in pieces of wood and sticks at various times. It is speculated that this freshens up or rebuilds the nest that can become loose due to high winds. A few days before the young flew off from the nest area, the parents were seen blocking them from returning to the nest (*Photo 6*). July 28 was the big day when both eaglets flew off. Since then, both eaglets and parents have been observed flying around Callander and foraging on the Bay (see photos below).



Photo 6 – Jul 26 K. Edmonds



One recently fledged eaglet makes an awkward approach to the nest but makes a successful landing! - July 29

Photos by G. McKercher



Bald eaglets

Photo by Keahrra Blanchfield

On August 8th Jordy Carr also had a visit from the eagle family. The pair of eaglets landed on her lakeside deck on the shore of Callander Bay and were soon fed a fish by one of the adults.

Saving Sam

By Ingrid Bajewsky

On the afternoon of July 19, 2020, I thought the only things I'd be rescuing were my tomato and pepper container plants that were launched halfway to Oz by a rogue gust of wind that hit as a thunderstorm passed through our area. Little did I know, I'd soon be involved in a much more important rescue.

While the storm was still making its way through the area we received a text from a friend/neighbour, John Hyatt, who has a cottage on Victoria Island, at the mouth of Callander Bay ... the top of one of the large pines on the island had snapped off in the storm. Those familiar with the area know that that tree has had an osprey nest at the top of it for as long as anyone can remember. The active nest, with two young osprey, was now in the water, 15 m below.

Lightning, which accompanied the storm, prevented John from getting into the water for almost half an hour. In the meantime, my husband, Eric Mattson, and I arranged to get a boat ride to the island. Just as we arrived John was pulling one dead bird out of the water from under the tree. The other was, miraculously, still alive and now safe in a laundry basket onshore.



The young osprey waiting onshore as John Hyatt (left) and Eric Mattson (right) work on setting in place the makeshift nest. Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky



Sam the osprey.

Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky

I've had some bird rescue experience and knew that its best chance at survival lay in parental care. The best idea we could come up with was to fabricate a 'nest' using a Tough Box storage tote with holes in the bottom for drainage and a bed made out of twigs. *Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge* in Pefferlaw and an ornithologist friend, who I contacted through Facebook, confirmed that we were on the right track. The baby had been partially submerged for about half an hour so while the guys worked on the 'nest' I set to drying the bird off and keeping it warm.

One of the parents and the baby were communicating with each other during the two hours we worked on getting them reunited. The problem we faced was that we couldn't get the makeshift nest high enough into a tree. It seems counterintuitive but birds can have a difficult time flying down into an unfamiliar space. If you watch an osprey land it hovers like a helicopter before finally touching down. We hoped for the best but knew we had to find a way to raise the 'nest' Tony Hummel, an arborist, agreed to come the next day to put the 'nest' at the top of what remained of the pine.

Young animals need a steady supply of food. Unfortunately, the young bird would not take the fish I offered it. We let it be for a few hours, hoping the parents would bring it food. They never did. That evening I pureed some pickerel and used a large syringe to put some of it into the bird's beak (this is where my bird experience really came in handy). It was during that evening check-in that more bad news was revealed. Because the bird had perked up a bit, I noticed that its wing was injured, probably broken. We left the bird in the 'nest' that night still hoping that the parents would find its way to their baby to feed it so it would get through the night. With a broken wing however, we knew that it would not survive without some help.



The top of the pine tree on which the osprey nest had been built, now in the water. The black 'Tough Box' is the makeshift nest. We wanted to keep the baby in view of the parents but as a result we couldn't get the makeshift nest high enough up into a tree. Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky



The young osprey in its makeshift nest. Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky

By some miracle, the osprey, now named ‘Sam’ by one of John’s children, was still alive the next morning. I called *Shades of Hope* again and they agreed to take Sam into the refuge if we could drive her* to Pefferlaw, 3 hours south of Callander. As if Sam hadn’t endured enough, she now faced the stress of a three-hour car ride.



The following morning Mark Hyatt (left) assists Ingrid Bajewsky (right) to retrieve Sam so that she can be taken to *Shades of Hope* Wildlife Refuge.

Photo credit: Rhonda Hyatt

The team of doctors at *Shades of Hope* set to work immediately to get Sam stabilized and put a splint on her wing.



Sam receiving care. After being stabilized and x-rayed it was confirmed that the wing was broken. Because Sam was not stable enough to put under anesthetic, they decided against surgery to put pins in though it had been considered as an option.

Photo credit: Shades of Hope



Shades of Hope intake office. While I was there the phone rang constantly and 3 other animals were brought in. *Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky*



Sam sporting a splint to set a broken wing.

Photo credit: Shades of Hope

Ten days after we dropped Sam off, she was still not eating on her own, suggesting that she was not really ‘trying’ as hard to survive as they had hoped. Sam did however perk up the day they put her into an outdoor day pen. One month later and Sam is still fighting.

Sam will have to be able to fly ‘perfectly’ after she has healed in order for this to be a success. Sam is stable, being fed and well cared for by the amazing team of rescuers at *Shades of Hope*. Sam is not out of the woods and has a long road to recovery, but we are not giving up hope! There is also hope for future generations of osprey as neighbours report seeing osprey carrying branches to the island.



Sam’s first day in the outdoor day pen. The move outside put some life back into Sam. *Photo credit: Shades of Hope*



Sam the Osprey. Photo credit: Ingrid Bajewsky

* Without DNA testing there is no way to actually know if Sam is male or female.

Ingrid Bajewsky

P.S. Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge does not receive government funding, relying solely on donor contributions to care for and rehabilitate THOUSANDS of animals every year. It's an incredible organization run by capable professionals and volunteers. Please consider making a donation in honour of the care they are giving Sam and all the other animals currently in their care. Visit their website, shadesofhope.ca, or find them on Facebook.

Calendar of Events

Video conference (Zoom) talks for Nipissing Naturalists September 2020

Date	Start Time	Speaker	Topic	Comments
8 Sept 2020	19:00h	Bill Crins	<p>“Biodiversity in Eastern Australia”</p> 	The speaker will summarize levels of diversity in parts of Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania, and show some of the habitats and species in these areas, including plants, birds, mammals, herps, and invertebrates.

15 Sept 2020	19:00h	Brent Turcotte	“My Journey with iNaturalist”	Brent will describe how to use the <i>iNaturalist</i> app that can be used on both Android and iPhones. For information on iNaturalist click: https://www.inaturalist.org/
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Other Announcements/Information

Request for Autumn Photos!

Tourism North Bay is currently working on a Fall Colour Hiking article to be posted on Northern Ontario.travel. They are looking for **fall colour photos of Otter Lake**. If you have any and are willing to have them used to advertise hiking in the region, please email your photos to:

Trevor Beard

Marketing Coordinator | Tourism North Bay

Email: trevor@tourismnorthbay.com



“Come Walk with Me”

In July, my wife Shirley and I met up with the two intrepid cross-Canada trekkers, Sonja Richmond and Sean Morton as they passed through our area. As you may recall, they are walking across the entire Great Canadian Trail (24,000 km) from east to west to inspire people of all ages to connect to nature on a regular basis. Although focusing on birding as a connection to nature, they also emphasize other outdoor activities and participation in citizen science projects through organizations such as iNaturalist and eBird.

They had hoped to be able to walk personally with interested people along their journey, but the pandemic unfortunately has limited this important interactive part of the trip (at least for now). Nonetheless, it was great to speak briefly with them at the Eagles’ Nest Gas Bar on Highway 17 as they stopped for some refreshments on their way to Sturgeon Falls, Noelville, and Sudbury. You can still follow their progress at:

www.comewalkwithus.online.

Editor

MEMBERSHIP FEE ANNOUNCEMENT

Great News!

In addition to the regular annual membership we are pleased to again offer *2-year memberships*.

This is a time limited offer only for memberships renewed or purchased **between October and the Club's Annual General Meeting in January 2021.**

The cost of membership will be discounted, saving you money, and it will simplify administration for the Club as well.

	1 Year	New 2 year
Single membership	\$ 20	\$ 35
Family membership	\$ 30	\$ 50

So, take advantage and renew ASAP, saving on your cost and continuing your membership in this great club dedicated to nature and its enjoyment.

Renewal for Bird Wing can also be included with your NipNat renewal. Cheques can be sent to our Club Treasurer, Connie Sturge at 547 Hwy 543, Powassan P0H 1Z0 or an e-mail transfer can be sent to sturge@sympatico.ca.



Board of Directors 2020

Fred Pinto, President fredpinto1@gmail.com	705-476-9006
Rick Tripp, Vice-president	Louise Simpson
Connie Sturge, Treasurer	Katie Tripp
Oriana Pokorny, Secretary	Irene Kasch
Sarah Wheelan, Website	Keith Pearson
Matt Procnier	Grant McKercher

Past Presidents

Dick Tafel	Ted Price	Steph Romaniuk
Angela Martin	Greg Boxwell	Jeremy St. Onge

Bird Wing

Dick Tafel, Chairman rtafel@sympatico.ca	705-472-7907
Gary Sturge, Treasurer	
Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Coordinator	

Monthly Bird Wing and Bird Bash reports are sent to members by e-mail and posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website: <https://www.nipnats.com/bird-wing/bird-wing-meetings-outings/>, and <https://nipnats.com/bird-wing/bird-bash-reports/>.

The Woodland Observer

The Club's newsletter, *The Woodland Observer*, is published electronically September to June, and sent to members by e-mail and posted in date order on the Nipissing Naturalists Club's website: <https://nipnats.com/newsletters/>.

Grant McKercher, Editor grant.mckercher705@gmail.com 705-499-5577

Contributors to this issue: Ingrid Bajewsky, Keahra Blanchfield, Kaye Edmonds, Grant McKercher, Fred Pinto, Rachel Sturge

Membership Fees

Annual Nipissing Naturalists Club membership fees are:	Single	\$20.00
	Family	\$30.00

There is an **additional annual \$5.00 membership fee for Bird Wing** which meets the fourth Tuesday of each month from 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

This membership fee can also be paid to the Treasurer of the Nipissing Naturalists Club.

Nipissing Naturalists Club is a member Ontario Nature:
<http://www.ontarionature.org/>.

