

BIRD WING OUTING

July 22, 2014

Field Outing:

Once again the weather didn't completely cooperate – some rain and generally overcast conditions, with the occasional sunburst – but off the hardy went anyway, first to drive round and round the Pro-Cathedral looking for the Peregrine Falcon Fred Pinto saw during the previous weekend's Bird Bash. At one dizzying point, we decided that perhaps Fred mistook the fake owl in one of the upper windows for the Peregrine Falcon. After one final tour of the Cathedral, we gave up and headed down Memorial Drive where we saw about 50 Mallards and over 200 Ring-billed Gulls.



Next it was on to Sunset Park where we saw two Common Goldeneye, two Tree Swallows, one Spotted Sandpiper and a number of Mallards, including two or three mothers with their chicks in tow, lit up by the sun now low in the sky.



Then it was the Callander Lagoon, where the highlight was three Least Sandpipers in flight. When they landed at the lagoon, we sent Brent Turcotte to the very edge of the lagoon to flush them out, but despite Brent's bravery, they did not show themselves again. In addition to the ubiquitous Mallards and Red-winged Blackbirds were two Common Goldeneye and 19 Canada Geese, some seen below, but at Lake Nipissing. Two Killdeer were spotted on the golf course across the way and one Blue Jay was heard.



A walk was now in order, and although Dick Tafel wanted to walk along the Cranberry Trail, we voted in favour of the nearby and less dense Kate Pace Trail in hopes of avoiding getting bitten alive by mosquitoes. We walked for 40 minutes, seeing along the way two Common Yellowthroat Warblers; four American Robins; six Common Grackles; one Downy Woodpecker; one Northern Flicker; one Turkey Vulture; two Red-winged Blackbirds; and two female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

On the way back into the city, a Great Blue Heron flew overhead.



American Woodcock Singing-ground Survey:

The goal of this survey, which began in 1968, is to:

1. determine woodcock abundance
2. estimate woodcock population trends in eastern North America
3. provide a major source of information used annually to set woodcock hunting seasons
4. examine the effects of weather, landscape change and other factors in woodcock population abundance

The lead institution and database custodian for this survey is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Other organizations which assist are Environment Canada, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and Bird Studies Canada.

Permanent roadside counts are used to survey singing males. This year in Ontario, 82 routes were run. Participants have 10 stops, one every 0.6 km., with each stop 2 minutes in length. The number of woodcocks heard at these stops making their nasal, buzzing call, known as *preenting*, is then noted. The route must be completed within 38 minutes and only the number of woodcocks that *peent* is recorded, not the flight song nor the number of *peents*. The survey begins 22 minutes after sunset on a clear night and 15 minutes after sunset on a ¾-overcast night. In Central Ontario, the survey must be completed between April 25 and May 16.

Results of the survey show that the number of American Woodcocks in Ontario has declined by 0.09% per year between 1968 and 2014. However, there was no significant change in population between 2013 and 2014, or in the last decade.

This past spring, Gary and Connie Sturge participated in their first American Woodcock Singing-ground Survey. Their route was on Hwy 534 near their home. They recorded six American Woodcocks during their 10 stops, and heard three between stops, but these could not be counted. As a matter of interest only, they also heard two Barred Owls. Gary reports that between the owl survey, in two of which he and Connie were participants, and the woodcock survey, they had some great birding experiences in the dark!

Kathy Jones, Volunteer Coordinator, Bird Studies Canada, informs me there are several available routes near Lake Nipissing. If interested in volunteering to be a participant for one of these available routes next spring, you can contact Kathy by email at: volunteer@birdscanada.org.

Midsummer Mute Swan Survey:

Through ONTBIRDS, Barb Campbell sent an email stating that the Canadian Wildlife Service and partners are collecting data for the 2014 international coordinated Midsummer Mute Swan Survey. The data

collected during this survey will be used to assess abundance, productivity and distribution throughout Ontario and elsewhere in eastern North America. Although there will be a number of aerial surveys conducted along major shorelines and marsh complexes, ground observations during the month of August from inland locations are needed to increase the effectiveness of the survey. Participants are to note swan locations and the number of adults, cygnets and broods observed at each location. Counts of Trumpeter Swan are also wanted. For more information, contact Barbara.Campbell@ec.gc.ca.



The Mute Swan (above) is not native to North America and is considered an invasive species outside of Europe and Asia. The swans were brought to North America in the late 1800s by European settlers to adorn parks, gardens and estates. Since then, feral populations have established and flourished, with the largest populations occurring along the U.S. Atlantic Coast and in the lower Great Lakes Region of Ontario and the U.S. Population and distribution of the Mute Swan are steadily increasing and with this comes an increased risk to native wildlife, wetland habitat and even people. Mute Swans can live up to 20 plus years. They have large appetites, have few natural predators, remain for 3 to 4 seasons a year, have large families and are very aggressive when breeding and brood-rearing. This aggressive behaviour, which includes physical attacks, can injure or kill intruders and exclude other species, such as the Canada Goose, Mallards and Common Loons, from nesting and feeding areas. They have also caused serious injury to people and pets.



The Mute Swan may also impact breeding success and population recovery of the Trumpeter Swan (left), Canada's largest native swan, whose numbers remain relatively low since they recently came back from near extinction.

The above information on the Mute Swan is from Environment Canada's

Mute Swan, A Non-native, Invasive Species in Canada.

Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival:

The first annual Louise de Kiriline Nature Festival, organized by the Nipissing Naturalist Club, will be held at Laurier Woods and Nipissing University on **Saturday, August 23, 2014**. A number of activities and presentations will take place at Laurier Woods in the morning, from 8:00 am to noon, and Nipissing University in the afternoon, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.



Birding events include:

1. A bird banding demonstration by Bruce Murphy to take place from 8:00 am to noon at the Brule Street entrance of Laurier Woods. (Above photo is of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet being banded at Hilliardton Marsh, near Englehart and New Liskeard, where Bruce regularly bands birds.)
2. A talk with a walk at Nipissing University on the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. The world's very last Passenger Pigeon, named Martha, died at the age of 29 on September 1, 1914, at a zoo in Cincinnati, Ohio. Martha's species went from about 5 billion birds to zero in a space of 50 years. We still have a lot to learn from Martha a hundred years after her death.
3. Also at Nipissing University, Dr. Rachel Sturge will be talking on how habitat shift can affect breeding success, with particular emphasis on the habitat loss in Manitoba of the Savannah Sparrow.
4. As well at Nipissing University, Dr. Nandadevi Cortes-Rodriguez will be discussing neotropical orioles, comparing the genetic and ecological variation between two sister species of orioles.

Migrating Shorebirds:

Shorebirds begin their southern migration from northern Canada in late June and migration continues well into the fall. The Spotted Sandpiper, observed during this month's Bird Wing outing and seen on the following page, began its migration in early July. Generally, the first shorebirds to leave their breeding grounds are those that didn't breed, followed by adult females, then adult males and finally juveniles. Juveniles remain up to a month longer to give them a longer time to accumulate fat reserves for the arduous southward journey ahead. Most shorebirds make the remarkable journey from their Arctic breeding grounds to Central and South America, with stops at key staging areas along their

migration route. These stopping spots are critical for successful migration, providing food resources to enable the shorebirds to replenish their energy and fat reserves to continue on their journey.



There are five key stopover areas in North America that support an enormous concentration of shorebirds, up to 1.5 million birds arriving and departing over a three to four-week span.

Shorebirds, such as the Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs (Greater seen below) and the Least Sandpiper, have now begun to arrive in our area on their migration south and the best locations to view them are at the various lagoons in Verner, Warren, Callander and Powassan.



Bird Bash:

The Bird Bash results from July, delayed because Dick was attending a family reunion in Europe, should be made available soon. The next Bird Bash will take place **weekend of August 30th**.

Bird Wing Outing:

The next Bird Wing outing will take place on **Tuesday, August 26th. Meet in the parking lot of the Visitor's Centre at 6:30 pm.** The outing locations will be announced by Dick at a later date. This is the last Tuesday field outing of the year, so be sure to participate.

Text and Photos, Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe

A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

(Chinese Proverb)