

## Bird Wing Outing

June 28, 2016

*Text Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe; photos Renee Levesque unless otherwise indicated.*

**The Outing:** We went looking for Le Conte's and Vesper Sparrows, but did not find either. We spent a good half hour or more looking for Le Conte's on River Road to no avail, then ran out of time to get to the known Vesper Sparrow spot. We also made a stop at Dreany Lake Park to listen for the Whip-poor-wills, but the owner of the park told us we were too early, that they were now singing around 10:00 p.m. We didn't stay.

But we saw and heard plenty of other birds. The highlight was at Powassan Lagoon watching young Tree Swallows (adult right) sitting on a branch crying out for food and



being fed by their exhausted parents. Other birds seen at Powassan Lagoon were three Bank Swallows, Savannah Sparrows, American Goldfinch, an Eastern Meadowlark, Canada Geese and their goslings, Wood Ducks (seen below) with their young and Mallards with their many young. (The upper southern cell is/was being worked on and is/was completely dry. This does not bode well for returning

shorebirds, some of which have already begun their southern migration.)

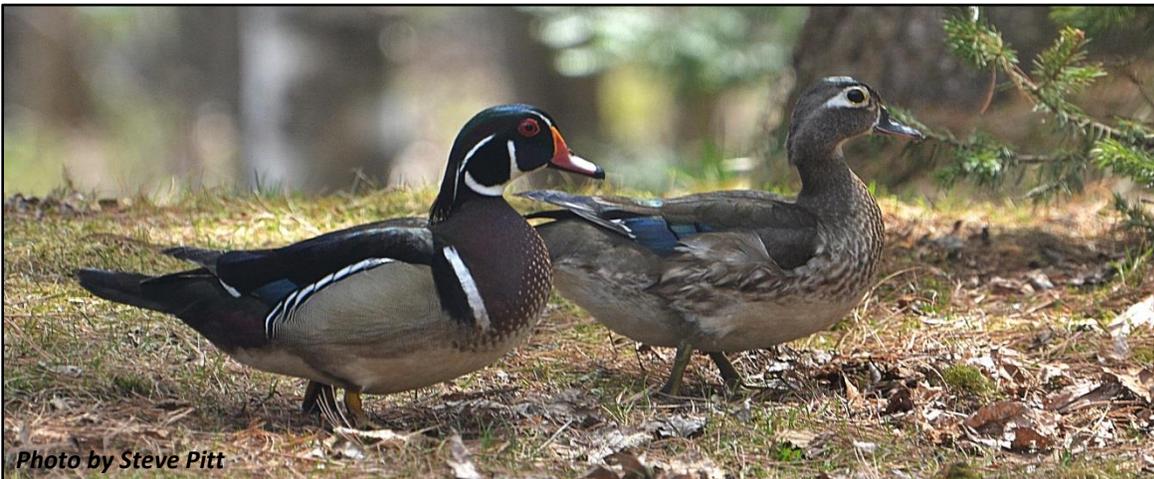


Photo by Steve Pitt



Then it was down Hills Siding Road where the highlight was seeing a Moose (above), to say nothing of many, many Snowshoe Hares which others in the party insisted on calling rabbits. (One still had its white feet.) But this was a bird outing and so the bird highlight on Hills Siding Road was hearing the ethereal song of the Hermit Thrush. Thrushes are renowned singers, but the Hermit Thrush with its flutelike song stands out among the thrushes and almost rivals that of the Common Loon. There is a spiritual quality to both songs and fortunate you are to hear both at the same time in the setting sun.

Other birds seen or heard on Hills Siding Road were the Brown Thrasher on a lawn with a couple of American Robins; Ovenbird; Swamp Sparrow; Red-wing Blackbirds; Common Grackle; Blue Jay; and the woodpeckers, Hairy and Northern Flicker. We also heard the Veery (seen at right), another thrush with a haunting song, although its song is more metallic, a downward spiralling song with a variation of *veer* notes.



Photo by Kevan Cowcill

And on River Road, despite no Le Conte's and no Sedge Wrens, we did see many Bobolinks (seen at right), many Swamp Sparrows, a Common Yellow-throat, a Northern Harrier and an adult Bald Eagle. We tried, as we always do, to see if the Yellow Rail that Laura Turcotte found there a few years back had returned, but to no avail. And as seems to happen every year while looking for Le Conte's on River Road, we had yet another beautiful sunset, this one more spectacular than the others with its blood-red sky.

**Cache Bay Osprey:** Sad news.

Therez Violette informed me that during the high winds on the Summer Solstice, June 20, the Osprey nest at the Cache Bay ballpark fell and the two nestlings died as a result. The parents are rebuilding a nest on another light post using the twigs of the old nest that fell to the ground. On June 26, I saw one of the Ospreys in the new nest, and then later that morning, during a Cache Bay canoe trip, there it was, soaring as seen below.

Mike Burrell, Bird Studies Canada, informed me it is too late for the Ospreys to re-nest, and Mike suspects that what they are doing by rebuilding is getting a head



start on their nest for next year. Mike informed me that Ospreys typically lay one egg every 2 to 3 days, after which incubation takes 37 days, followed by another 50 to 55 days before first fledging. Therefore, even if eggs were laid immediately after the new nest was built, it would be into October before they would start fledging, and that would be much too late. *The Birds of North America Online* species account states Ospreys will re-nest if the nest is lost early, that is in the first 1 to 3 weeks of incubation.

Stewart Greig informed me that a nest near his place on Lake Nipissing also got toppled by the same high winds. After the wind storm, I checked out the nest by the Lakeshore Drive exit off Hwy. 11 and, thankfully, it remained intact.

### **Eastern Blue Birds:**

When I mentioned to Gary Sturge that we failed to see any Eastern Blue Birds (right) near his place in rural Powassan during our Birdathon, he told me, as only Gary can, this story about the blue birds that visited his property: *“Well they visited and visited and just wouldn't commit. Know the kind - either take the bird house or leave because I'm not changing it. They built their nest and stood guard for couple of weeks, then*



*left in the night without paying their rent or even a thank you! I've seen him a couple of times since – out without her. Goodness knows what he's up to!!”*



**Birdathon:** See the Nipissing Naturalists Club's July issue of *The Woodland Observer*, page 15, for details and outcome of the Birdathon whose participants were Dick Tafel, Lori Anderson, Brent Turcotte, Renee Levesque, Grant and Shirley McKercher, Marc Buchanan and Sarah Wheelan. You will surely want to know who was on the winning team and to learn their winning strategy. And perhaps you might even consider participating in a team of your own next year. The July newsletter can be accessed on our website at: <http://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>.



**Chimney Swifts:** And while on the website and the July issue of *The Woodland Observer*, see page 22 for the results of the SwiftWatch conducted by Grant McKercher at the Main Street West chimney (left) and April McCrum at the McIntyre Street West chimney.

**Orioles:** Those who attended the February 2015 meeting of Bird Wing will recall Gary and Connie Sturge's daughter, Rachel Sturge, talking to us about her work on the Orchard Oriole complex and the relationship between the Orchard Oriole and the Fuertes' Oriole of

Mexico. If not, or if you didn't attend that meeting, you can read about it in Rachel's own words in the February 2015 issue of the Bird Wing report, also found on our website at:

<http://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/bird-wing-meetings-outings/>. Another oriole is the Bahama Oriole, one of the rarest birds in the Bahamas, which has now been separated into its own species as a result of Dr. Sturge's work for her doctorate. You can read about this oriole in thebahamasweekly.com at:

[http://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/local/New\\_Research\\_on\\_Rarest\\_Bird\\_in\\_the\\_Bahamas48925.shtml](http://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/local/New_Research_on_Rarest_Bird_in_the_Bahamas48925.shtml)



Closer to home, many have now seen our Baltimore Orioles (above) and if you haven't, they are usually found in West Nipissing in the Veuve River bridge area at Laplage and Rainville Roads.

**Fledglings:** Many birds have now been fledged and it is a joy to watch the parents teach their young to sing, to fly and to feed themselves. Although fledged, for the

first while the fledglings cry their hungry hearts out for their parents to feed them. Early in June, I watched the European Starlings feed their fledglings (left) and **Kaye Edmonds** watched the **Common Grackles** feed theirs (right).



In my yard and immediate area, it seems there have been three American Robin nest failures and recently a fourth nest has just been built in our front yard spruce tree. American Robin eggs are raided by Blue Jays, American Crows, and squirrels. I found two nests on the ground, the eggs broken, and one nest abandoned.



**Common Loon Chicks:** Most Common Loon chicks have now hatched and small chicks can be difficult to see. Bird Studies Canada reminds boaters that the chicks are vulnerable to predation, especially if separated from their parents – which can happen when boaters approach too closely, **even in small, quiet watercraft. If you see loons or any water birds while boating this summer, slow down and steer clear.**

**Bird Bash:** The next Bird Bash takes place over a 24-hour period during the weekend of **July 30 and 31.**

**Bird Wing Outing:** The next Bird Wing outing takes place **Tuesday, July 26.** Meet at the (former) **Visitors' Centre at 6:30 p.m.** Details will follow from Dick Tafel prior to the outing.

See **Bird Sign of the Times** below. So far no need to report the male Indigo Bunting for violating by-law #97-68.

Bird Sign of the Times



**NO  
DUMPING  
ALLOWED**

**BY-LAW #97-68**