

# Bird Wing Report

April 2024



## Birding Events

**Project FeederWatch:** Project FeederWatch has now ended, so for all who participated, make sure you get your sightings in. The format was changed this year, but I did not particularly care for it. I preferred the more streamlined former method of collecting data, but understand some of the changes are geared towards gathering additional data. There were many emojis to choose from and I am not a big emoji person.



*Kevan Cowcill*

**Laurier Woods Bird Walks:** Once again as he has for years, Dick Tafel will lead a **bird walk every Saturday morning in May from 10:00 am to noon**. This is a public walk, but Bird Wing members often attend. **The first walk takes place on May 4**. Warblers have not arrived in any great numbers yet, but you will be sure to see the Yellow-rumped Warbler and perhaps the Pine Warbler (left) – and maybe others. You might also hear the American Bittern, recently heard there by Dick Tafel and Fred Pinto.

**Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas-3:** Grant McKercher, our Regional Coordinator of Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, will be holding a refresher meeting/ outing for those continuing with atlassing and for those who haven't yet taken part but would like to. It will be held on **Sunday, May 12, starting at 10:00 am, at Black Forest Park** – not the mountain range in southwest Germany – but the park off Hwy. 11 North, a park where many of us have not been

bird watching. The park is about 1 km from Cooks Mill Road/ Roy Drive. Best to slow down after passing these roads because the entrance to the park can be difficult to see. After Grant leads us through the Atlas protocol, we will go for a walk on the trail

**Bird Bash:** May's Bird Bash takes place **the weekend of May 25-26**. If there were quite a few species this past weekend, there will certainly be more towards the end of May!

**SwiftWatch:** The Chimney Swifts, long-distant migrants from South America, will soon be arriving and Grant who helps with the counting of swifts will let us Swifties know when they

have arrived – usually by mid-May or so and for over a month at least. Keep this amazing swift event in mind – as amazing as the Eras Tour.

The swifts are seen best entering the church chimney at Vincent de Paul Church on Wyld Street in North Bay – from the parking lot at the back of the church.

**Bird Wing Outing:** May begins the Bird Wing outings until September and even then, because attendance at September’s meetings tends to be low, we are thinking of having an outing instead of a meeting in September. Because it gets dark earlier by late September, it would be held during the day, either on the fourth Tuesday of that month or, if preferred, on a Saturday.

**Let me know what you think of switching from a meeting to an outing.**



*Chimney Swift Conservation Project*



*Renee Levesque*

May’s outing will be held the morning of **Tuesday, May 28, from 10 am to noon,** as it has for the past few years to take advantage of the many birds seen at that time of the day. Location will be determined later, although in recent years it has been through Laurier Woods.

Reminders will be sent to all above events, but mark the dates on your calendars nevertheless.

- *Renee Levesque*

## Bird Wing meeting, April 23, 2024

*By Renee Levesque with input from Ken Gowing; photos as indicated*

I was not able to attend the in-person meeting at 176 Lakeshore Drive on April 23. Many others were not able to attend because of the weather – and some because of work – so not many attendees. Nevertheless, I hear it was a good meeting. Ken Gowing took it upon himself to take notes for me. Thank you, Ken. I have royally proclaimed you my scribe-in-waiting.



*Yellow-rumped Warbler, Renee Levesque*

Some who wanted to attend the meeting mailed and texted me to tell me they had so wanted to hear Garry Waldram talk about the birds he saw during his two Costa Rica trips, one last November and one this past March. However, in May's Bird Wing Report, I will post the link to his YouTube video, along with a short write-up by Garry.

I understand that we agreed to reprint 100 copies of the booklet, *Seasonal Checklist of the Birds of North Bay and Area* as is, for approximately \$250.00, but also look to into the possibility of a revised electronic version. Dick Tafel will look after the printing details of the booklet.

Some in attendance who had completed their surveys reported on the owls they saw during their Nocturnal Owl Surveys. Once I receive the numbers from all teams, I will publish them in May's Bird Wing Report.

### **Birds seen in April**

I will do my best based on Ken's notes to itemize members' birds seen in April, but it's much more difficult to add colour to what surely may have been some animated discussion about the birds seen.

**Lori Anderson:** On April 18, a Red Crossbill feeding its young – nice Atlas-3 sighting, Lori! Lori reports that in a large pine tree near Graham Lake by her place both adults were feeding seeds they removed from the cones to at least one young crossbill.

**Breaking News on the Red Crossbill from Lori:** “On April 25, just a few trees away from the original sighting, I discovered two immature Red Crossbills in a small deciduous tree – a good

tree for viewing. Soon two more immatures and an adult male joined them! That makes a family of six! I am so happy about this. It will probably be a once-in-a-lifetime experience to see this species with young on the farm. The young are now pretty much full size, with a fairly well-grown tail. I did not see the adult feeding them today, but the male was looking out for them.”

It certainly was a good winter for Red Crossbills! Also for Pine Siskins, with half a dozen or so still around at my place.

Lori also saw the fierce Merlin with its shrill call and fast wing beats, and she has no doubt seen the American Kestrel, as have others. There seem to be many of them around this spring. Dick and I saw two mating on a wire on the road to the tower in Cache Bay.

And I can't leave Lori without mentioning that she has also seen many Eastern Meadowlarks on her farm. They are grassland birds that like to sing their flutelike song from exposed perches. If you don't see them in meadows and pastures, listen for their song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pDVFUxG5Vk>.



**Dick Tafel:** The parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird (at left) and the handsome Blue-winged Teal, which tends not to arrive until after the Green-winged Teal of which there have been many at the lagoons and at Cache Bay. Dick saw three Brown-headed Cowbirds jauntily striding together at the elk farm on Rainville Road and the two Blue-winged Teals, a male and a female, in a creek on Veuve River Road.

**Garry Waldram:** The Winter Wren, a tiny songbird with a fervent song with its babble of trills, warbles and tinklings. Garry's second bird was the Northern Harrier, one many of us who live or travel through farm country have no doubt seen by now.

Garry also saw one of the first shorebirds to arrive, the Killdeer. He saw it in Bonfield and Dick saw three on Purdon Line and one at North Bay's government dock. I am sure others saw one too. Because the Killdeer is **our first shorebird to arrive, it has the honour of being on the cover of this month's report.** (Photo by Renee Levesque.)

The Killdeer is a slender plover you will find on green lawns and golf course and in ball parks, although despite its preferring dry habitats, it is quite the good swimmer. It is very distinctive with its warm tawny colour, long tail, long wings and two black breast bands. (Downy juveniles have only one breast band.) In flight, its tail shows a rusty colour, a colour you will also notice when it does its broken wing display to distract predators. If you don't see the Killdeer, you will certainly hear its loud and plaintive *kill-deer*.

**Grant McKercher:** Our first flycatcher of the season, the Eastern Phoebe, and the colourful Wood Ducks. The phoebe has arrived in Cache Bay at all its normal spots. It is always comforting to find birds back in their usual places.

Grant also surprisingly saw the White-winged Scoter (right). In Grant's words, "There was a flock of eight swimming about 100m offshore in front of our house, and when they took flight, the dark, heavy-set bodies and prominent white wing patches were quite striking! I had not seen so many at one time here before, and all so close to shore." It was a very fortunate sighting for Grant because usually we don't get to see scoters in the spring, but rather in the fall,



*Stephen O'Donnell*

although I do recall one spring day when Dick and I saw a White-winged on Lake Nipissing at the end of Queen Street. It was my very first sighting of one and I was thrilled.

**Kevin Telford:** The first warblers of the season, the Pine Warbler and the **Yellow-rumped Warbler (photo at top of this article)**. Always very special when warblers arrive! (Dick also saw a Pine Warbler at his feeders, and Dick and I saw a Yellow-rumped at Cache Bay.)

**Fred Pinto:** The Brown Creeper and the patriotic White-throated Sparrow with its *Oh sweet Can-a-da, Can-a-da, Can-a-da* song, although some have now shortened their song to *Oh sweet Can-a, Can-a, Can-a* – but certainly not the one singing in my yard. It still sings the full song! In fact, I think it may even have added a fourth *Can-a-da*. **Listen closely and let me know if you hear any singing the shortened version.**

The White-throat is Sue Gratton's favourite sparrow and one of mine, as well as the little Chipping Sparrow. For me it is the White-throat's song that makes it my favourite. Every time I

hear it, I am reminded of growing up near Elliot Lake, a time when I didn't know one sparrow from another, not even the name of the White-throat, but its song is "forged in the smithy of my soul." (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce)



Renee Levesque

**Ken Gowing:** Ken saw Sandhill Cranes at Lori's farm and the *peenting* American Woodcock (photo at left) at his place. I am sure others have heard the woodcock by now, especially those doing the Nocturnal Owl Survey, but I think Ken was the first. It is also back again this year on Cedar Heights Road, an area we often used to go to after April's meeting. I don't know whether it has yet been heard at Laurier Woods. The group was to go to there after the meeting to hear it, but the weather prevented that outing.

**Katharine MacLeod:** The iconic Common Loon and the small Bufflehead with its odd-shaped large black and white head – large relative to the duck's small

size. (Its head colouring always reminds me of nuns' habits.) Many were seen in the lagoons and at Cache Bay and I am sure other places.

**Faye Oei:** Faye texted me her two birds, the recently arrived White-crowned Sparrow on its way to the far north. We should see them coming through on their migration north sometime soon, usually in early to mid-May. Faye, like Garry, also saw the Winter Wren, a bird she says follows her around with its song when she walks through the woods behind her house. Oh to be so lucky! Photo of one singing at right.

**Barbara Lee:** Faye also texted me Barbara's two birds – the Osprey and the Purple Finch. It was so great to see the Ospreys back on their nest at the Cache Bay ballpark. They are also back at the Callander/Lakeshore Road exit, back at Surgeon River and back on Hwy 11 north before Hwy 94 near the insulation sign, the former beer sign. Dick and I also saw three, perhaps four, vying for a nest of sorts near the corner of Hwy 17 East and Gauthier Road.



Stephen O'Donnell

(The Poirier Road nest where one was injured and subsequently died last year is no longer there. And the Sturgeon River pair were seen by us, not in their nest usually seen from Quesnel Road, but from Fort Road – and not in or near a nest that we could see.)



*Sue Gratton*

**Nate Lee:** Nate’s bird also via Faye is the Hairy Woodpecker. He also saw the Purple Finch. Hard not to miss the Purple Finch (photo at left), a misnamed bird because it is really not purple, but more an outstanding raspberry red. But no matter, its beautiful song is rich and bubbling. The male and female both sing. In the past, Faye, Sue and Rick Tripp have mentioned the many at their feeders. I usually have no more than four, but this year, the numbers exploded to 10! And with that number, they can be a pretty aggressive little bird, often displacing the regulars from the feeder.

**Sue Gratton:** Broad-winged Hawk (photo below) which flew over her house the morning of the meeting and a Barred Owl calling repeatedly in her yard on April 14. The Broad-winged Hawk is usually one of our last hawks to arrive here, so it’s good to know we can now watch for it. I am sure we all look forward to finding out what owls were seen and heard during the Nocturnal Owl Survey.

Just the other day as I was writing this report, I got called away by Oriana Pokorny to come to the pond at Nipissing University to see 10 Greater Yellowlegs around what is currently a very shallow pond. While we were there, a Belted Kingfisher and a Broad-winged Hawk caused some excitement! Oriana later saw the Broad-wing catch a fish in the shallow water, after which it sat in a tree eating it. I didn’t know Broad-wings ate fish, but I looked it up and, sure enough, on occasion they do.

Sue also saw the Northern Flicker, a woodpecker that seems to be everywhere these days. I recently witnessed a pair of female flickers doing their territorial dance. It was very fascinating to watch and the first time I had seen this. One was on one branch of a small tree, the other on another branch immediately beneath it and when one did a dance, the other then did the same dance immediately after. This continued for a good 5 minutes until



*Renee Levesque*

they were joined by a third female. Then, some squabbling broke out and all three flew off.

I don't know if Sue saw a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker yet, but they are very active in my area and I am sure others have seen them.

**Renee Levesque:** Greater Yellowlegs (photo at right) and Chipping Sparrow, my favourite little sparrow who always nests in my yard or very close-by. (I helped one with a lower mandible problem get through a very cold winter one year.)

It was a nice surprise to find two Greater Yellowlegs on April 14 on Osprey Links and then two days later to see four in a large field pond on Rainville Road. (Interestingly, although the pond was large and swimming and feeding in it were a Northern Pintail, a couple of Wigeon, a couple of Mallards and some Green-winged Teal, as well as a couple of Canada Geese, a few days later, even after all the rain, the pond had drained.)

I also want to mention seeing Red-headed Ducks, three of them, two males and a female, at Warren Lagoon. Like the Brown-headed Cowbirds, some ducks lay their eggs in other ducks' nests. "Redheads are perhaps tops in this department. Their targets include other Redheads, as well as Mallard, Canvasback, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler,

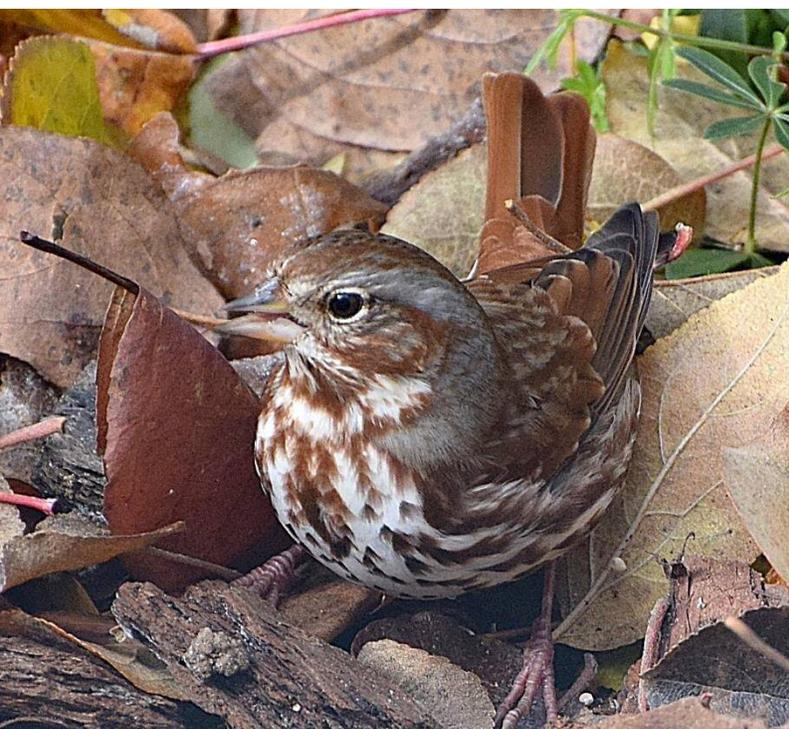


Renee Levesque

Ruddy Duck, American Wigeon—even Northern Harrier." (From *All About Birds*.)

Other sparrows include the handsome Fox Sparrow I saw the other day, my first this year (photo at left). Whether more will come or not, I don't know. Someone at the meeting also saw/heard a Swamp Sparrow and I know Lori has seen Savannah Sparrows at her farm. I continue to have many American Tree Sparrows at my feeders.

**Other birds Mentioned:** After we make mention of our two birds, other birds usually get a mention. At this meeting, these were: Great Blue Heron, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Evening



Renee Levesque

Grosbeaks, and a good number of Dark-eyed Juncos.

The other shorebird seen or heard besides the Greater Yellowlegs, the Killdeer and the American Woodcock is the Wilson's Snipe (photo below). Some have heard its winnowing song, a song David Thoreau describes as an eerie tremolo, fading like twilight, then rising again to haunt distant parts of the sky.



*David Rooke*

## Seeds and Cones

**Bank Swallows:** In *Ontario Birds*, December 2000 issue, there is an article by Tianna Burke entitled “Predation of Bank Swallow nestlings by Ring-billed Gull and Common Grackle”. The Bank Swallow, a colonial bird, breeds along vertical banks – natural ones on ocean coasts, lakes, rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands, as well as artificial ones made by sand and gravel pits. (Photo of a Bank Swallow by its burrow at a sand pit near Sundridge is at right.)

Predators of Bank Swallows include birds, mammals and snakes. Known birds are American Kestrels and Merlins, but Tianna interestingly observed Ring-billed Gulls flying along the burrow height and grabbing a nestling waiting to be fed at the burrow’s edge. Tianna also observed on video a Common Grackle using a similar method.



Renee Levesque

I emailed Tianna to ask if anyone else had reported any predators like gulls and grackles, and she informed me that she hasn’t heard of anyone continuing this study or looking further into predation of Bank Swallows by avian predators; however, she heard from some pit operators who witnessed similar behavior by Common Ravens. So be on the look-out for unusual predators of Bank Swallow nestlings and let me know and I will pass it on to Tianna.

**Common Gallinule:** Also in the December 2020 issue of *Ontario Birds*, I was reading about the capture and banding of Common Gallinules. They were captured “at 14 wetlands using dip nets and spotlights at night from late August until mid-September 2012 to 2017 as part of the airboat banding program in Ontario.” One of the wetlands was Cache Bay. In 2014, one adult and four juveniles were captured and banded there. (Cache Bay was not used any other year during the program.) On July 20, 2014, before the program began, I heard one gallinule during a canoe trip with Dick Tafel and John Levesque. I saw many more during the ensuing years, nine times between late August and September, the months of the program, nine times in October and six times in May.

The most gallinules captured and banded consistently across the years from 2012 to 2017 was at Mud Lake near Pembroke. Mud Lake is accessible primarily by canoe or boat.

**Solar Eclipse:** Greg Jaski watched the partial solar eclipse from his mother's backyard on Premier Road. He noticed some interesting wildlife behaviour. A Pileated Woodpecker that was only 5m away stayed there for a good ten minutes and very interestingly, an abundance of honey bees landed on everyone and on all of Greg's camera gear.

I watched the eclipse in its totality in Cornwall along the St. Lawrence River where there was not a cloud to mar our view from beginning to end. A Song Sparrow singing a somewhat different song than our Song Sparrow stayed near us most of the day, singing fairly constantly. (Its photo is at right.) It sang once just before totality and then went quiet as the sky darkened to pitch black. I did not hear it sing again by the time we left. As the moon began to block the sun more fully, a Ring-billed Gull flew to a structure behind us for the first time all day and although I am anthropomorphizing here, seemed somewhat confused. As it got darker, three other gulls met up with it and all four flew together down the river. Seven Double-crested Cormorants that had been content to swim and dive for food in the river up until it began to get dark did the same, as did eight Canada Geese. It was as if they were all off to roost for the night. I did not see them return before we left. (Incidentally, we saw Jupiter and Venus in the southwest sky during totality.)



*Renee Levesque*

**Trumpeter Swans:** Many times when I am at Cache Bay scoping for ducks, a member of the public asks if I am seeing or looking for the swans, meaning Trumpeter Swans which are known to be seen in Cache Bay, usually in the spring and late summer or early fall. Swans are just one of those birds, along with Bald Eagles and Pileated Woodpeckers, that seem to excite the general public, and why not? All three are magnificent birds that can be seen fairly up-close and all three photograph well. As many of you know, I have written extensively over the years about Bev Kingdon and her Trumpeters, especially Ava. Lori Anderson recently sent me a particularly heart-warming video of two Trumpeters that is more than worth the watch:  
<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en/video/sewouA6n?playlist=oLRZ3mum>.

**Ed's Bluebird/Tree Swallow Houses:** Ed Rowley and Katherine Byers have farmland on Birchgrove Road West near the south shore of Lake Nipissing. Ed reports that April 13 “was cleaning day for our five bluebird houses. Although no bluebirds occupied the bird houses, Tree Swallows seemed to like them, and I am happy to report that all five houses were occupied last year. A quick clean-up, and they are now ready for new occupants this year!” Ed's photo before clean-up is at right.



Ed Rowley

Ed makes his own birdhouses out of 1” rough-sawn red cedar. He states, “They are very solid, much more solid than anything available in a store. If anyone is interested in the plans that I made, I am more than willing to share them.”

**Dick's Naturalist's Diary, 1984:** Dick Tafel loaned me his *The Robert Bateman Naturalist Diary* for 1984. After leafing through it to see if there were any juicy bits – there were none – I read about all the birds Dick saw in April that year. Interestingly, they were all the same birds we are seeing this year. At that time, Dick didn't indicate the number of each of the birds he saw, so I was not able to determine from his journal if he was seeing as many or less that year than this year.

**Blue Jays:** In recent weeks, I often heard a distant call that sounded somewhat like a hawk, but couldn't make out what hawk it was. So I used Merlin and Merlin reported it was a Northern Goshawk. Because it is a great hawk to see, I spent much time trying to find it, but to no avail. Then one day last week, I heard the call very nearby and although Merlin once again reported it to be a goshawk, I was positive it was a Blue Jay. It then dawned on me – it was a Blue Jay mimicking a Northern Goshawk! Blue Jays may not be the best of all the mimic birds, but they are mimics and are known to mimic hawks – not only the Northern Goshawk, but the Red-shouldered, the Red-tailed and Cooper's, as well as Osprey, owls, eagles and other birds.

In last month's report there was a photo by Steve Pitt of a Blue Jay with its feet in the air like a pair of antlers. (Photo at right to refresh your memory.)

Remarkable even for these intelligent Corvid birds to also physically imitate other wildlife!! (Possible caption on photo: “Hey, Bluey, I made like a deer and grew antlers!”)

-Renee Levesque



Steve Pitt

## Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas update, Region 29, North Bay

*By Grant McKercher, Regional Coordinator*

We are now in year four of the five-year Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project and are gearing up for this year's peak season - **May 24-July 15 in our area**. We have made good progress in the number of squares that have had coverage: 47 of our 61 squares have observation data so far! However, although we have some observations in these 47 squares, only 13 have complete coverage so far.

Some of the squares are challenging to access (no roads!), but there are a number that are more easily accessible, and would provide important data for the Atlas. If you are interested in doing some atlassing in some of the less well-covered squares, I can direct you to where we have gaps in coverage, both for whole squares and for specific species.



*Ruffed Grouse courting, Renee Levesque*

The goal of the Atlas is to have as many squares as possible assessed with a minimum coverage - this means 20 hours of field observation during the peak season over the 5-year duration of the project, as well as 25 point counts (traditional or audio recordings).

For those of you who have assigned squares that are complete or near-complete, please let me know if you would like to do some atlasing in other squares and I can direct to where we have gaps in coverage.

Point counts are a way to determine the relative abundance of a species in an area and augment the information we gather on breeding evidence. Doing these counts requires some expertise in identifying birds by ear. For those of us who are less experienced or confident in our aural identification skills, we can still do point counts using a digital recorder. The recordings are reviewed over the winter months by expert birders who have been contracted to interpret the audio recordings, with the results being added to the Atlas database for each square. **If anyone is interested in doing some 'digital' point counts, let me know and I can loan you one of the recorders to use in the field.**

For more detailed information and resources, including how to submit your observations on the website or with the NatureCounts app, check out the Atlas website at [www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org).

Thanks to everyone for all the great work done to date in the North Bay area! Don't hesitate to contact me by email at [gmckercher@mac.com](mailto:gmckercher@mac.com) or by phone at 705-499-5577 if you have any questions or need assistance.



*American Robin nesting, Steve Pitt*

## Do NOT feed the birds

Linda Conway brought to my attention that the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) in Burlington and Hamilton discourages feeding of birds on RBG property. I believe signs (pictured at right) went up telling the public NOT to feed the wildlife, including birds, at least a couple of years ago. In an article dated February 2024, Jennifer Dick, Interpretation Specialist and Barb McKean, Education Director, RBG, explained why you cannot feed birds in RBG's nature sanctuaries.



Some seed mixes are not beneficial for Ontario native species and if birds fill up on these seed mixes, they won't get all the nutrients for their required high energy diet. In addition, seed mixes also introduce possible new invasive plants. At the RBG, as a result of bird seed left behind, plants like millet have been found growing along the trails.

Like birds, squirrels and chipmunks also use bird seed to supplement their diet and this could result in less foraging for their natural food, affecting the distribution of natural seeds and nuts. Over the long term, this could change the structure of RBG's landscape.



Charles J. Sharp, Wikipedia

RBG is home to many species at risk – Wood Thrush (photo at left) and Blanding's Turtle, for example. There are those who think that leaving birdseed along the trails is helping the birds. Instead, it feeds not just the squirrels and the chipmunks as previously stated, but also predators like skunks, opossums and raccoons. These predators don't just eat birdseed, but also eat turtle and bird eggs and young, possibly resulting in the further decline of the rare species. And if that isn't enough, in the small areas around the bird-feeding hotspots, there could be a high concentration of animals, leading to stress, aggression and the spread of disease. (From *All About Birds*: The Wood Thrush is included on the Yellow Watch List for birds most at risk for extinction without significant conservation actions to reverse declines and reduce threats. It is one of the most prominent examples of declining forest song birds in North America.)

Jennifer and Barbara end their article with "By not introducing food into RBG's nature sanctuaries, you support a healthy natural balance in RBG's habitat for all."

Gives us something to think about in terms of our local nature trails!

**Note:** Controlled backyard feeding of birdseed does not carry the same risks, but spilled seed can attract animals – in some areas bears - and a large congregation of birds increases the risk of disease. Feeders should be washed regularly and it is best not to feed birds in the warmer months, from May through to October in our area, when birds are capable of finding their own food and when natural food is available.

## Bird of the year for OFO

In 2023, Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) launched its first Bird of the Year program. During the summer of that year, the OFO Board chose grassland birds, field-nesting birds in steep decline, as its theme for 2024.

The initial list of grassland birds given by the OFO Board included 10 birds and through online voting by OFO members was narrowed down to three species – Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and Upland Sandpiper. I recall voting for the Bobolink out of the ten species. And at the OFO Convention in Peterborough in 2023, the Bobolink was the winner, becoming the first OFO Bird of the Year.



*Stephen O'Donnell*

Why did I vote for the Bobolink? It was a tie in my mind with the Eastern Meadowlark, but I see and hear the Bobolink more frequently, and although I do very much like the Upland Sandpiper with its musical “wolf whistle”, we rarely see it in our Nipissing District. (I have seen it twice in our area – sitting on top of a post on Stewart Road in West Nipissing on June 9, 2018, and in the grassy field beside Warren Lagoon on May 25, 2016. Long-time Nipissing birders have probably seen it a couple more times in the area.)

Bobolinks are seen throughout most of Ontario. I recall my first time seeing one in Port Rowan behind the Birds Canada offices. And like the first of every bird, I was quite excited. In Nipissing, I saw my first one in Warren.

The breeding male is quite the decked-out bird, the only North American bird with a white back and black underparts, as if it's wearing a tuxedo backwards (photo on the previous page). Its buffy or straw-coloured patch on the back of its neck adds some colour to its outfit! This patch becomes more of a whitish colour by midsummer. The female during breeding season couldn't look much different with its patterned buffy or light brown colour overall. All fall birds (photo below) basically resemble the female, although juveniles are more prominently yellow underneath.



*Renee Levesque*

During the breeding season, Bobolinks are found in grasslands and farm fields and are often heard more than seen. Listen for their bubbling, complex song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N32LdaoHoJw>.

In late summer, look for them in large social flocks. I often see them at that time at Verner and Warren Lagoons. They migrate early so be sure to look for them before they do – from mid to late August.

The OFO illustration, a flying adult male, that represents this distinctive grassland bird was drawn by Alessandra Kite and is seen at the top of the page.

- *Renee Levesque*