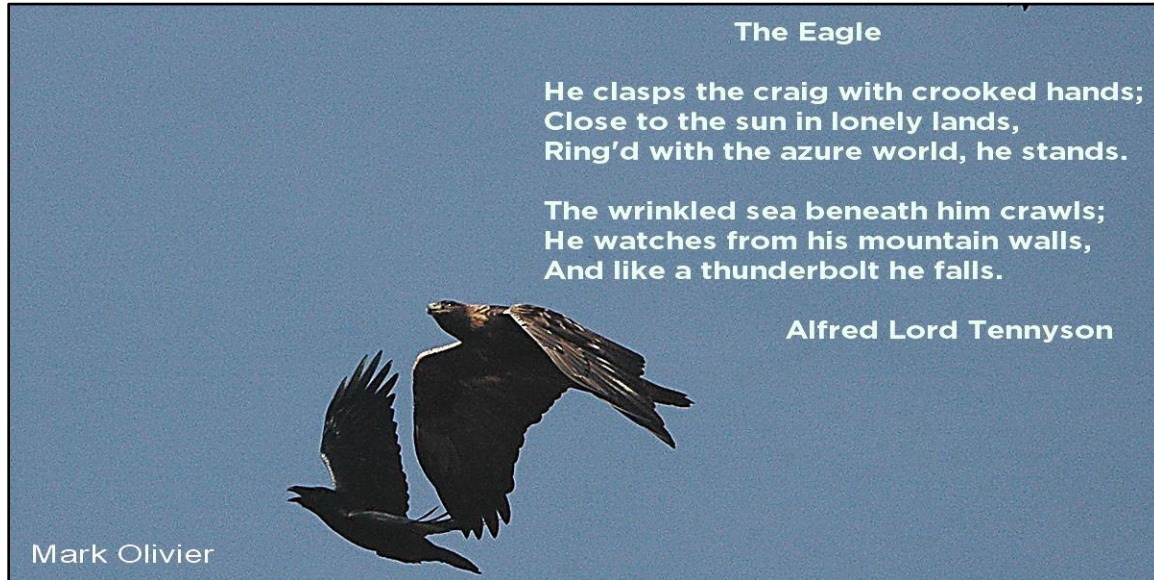


## BIRD WING MEETING

March 22, 2015



**Birds Seen in March:** Many of the birds seen in March were the same as seen in February. There is not a lot of variety during a cold winter such as we have had. However, there were some different species seen and some interesting stories to be told.

Probably the most exciting raptor find were the six Bald Eagles, two of them adult, and the two Golden Eagles seen by Dick Tafel on the Ottawa River in Mattawa behind the Lion's Club. Not often a Golden Eagle is seen in our area. In the Tennyson poem above, Tennyson captures a small but majestic event in just six vivid lines.



A Merlin (above) was seen by Ray and Matt Walter in Thibeault Terrace. Despite the frigid temperature and the snow, Matt, consummate photographer that he is, ran out in his stocking feet to capture it on camera, proving that birding is truly an extreme sport!

A Northern Goshawk was seen by Renee Levesque behind her house in the Cedar Heights area and by Gary Sturge on Hummel Road. Gary sees the Goshawk frequently in this area when he takes his dog there for a run. Others have not been as successful seeing it on Hummel Road despite their stake-outs, so the best bet if you want to see one is to go with Gary. The same applies if you want to see a Black-backed Woodpecker on Stillaway Line!

A Rough-legged Hawk (below) continued to be seen in the Powassan area.



Kaye Edmonds was the first to find a female Red-breasted Merganser in amongst the many Mallards and the few Black Ducks in the small area of open water on Trout Lake behind the Green Store. Since this unusual find, many other birders have seen it in the same spot. Because the Great Lakes froze this winter due to the extreme cold, many mergansers were pushed out of the Great Lakes and made their way inland to the few areas that were not frozen. There were many inland merganser sightings throughout Ontario this winter.



Common Mergansers (below) were seen by Matt and Ray near Bonfield, and one Trumpeter Swan was seen by them in Restoule.



Ken Gowing, who always has an interesting story to tell, usually involving mice, had his best story yet. He has a Barred Owl, named Bart (below), coming to his feeder regularly and stealing the suet balls he puts out for the Woodpeckers. It was getting quite costly replacing the suet balls daily, so Ken caught some of the many mice that scurry around on his property, froze them and fed them a bit at a time to Bart to help him get through our very cold winter. But what to do when he ran out of frozen mice? Necessity being the mother of invention, Lori Anderson came up with the idea that cat food could replace the frozen mice. However, not just any old lump of cat food was

good enough for Bart, but rather cat food that Lori shaped to look like mice! Was wise old Bart fooled?

Absolutely not! Although he ate the cat food in the shape of mice, given a choice, he preferred the real McCoy. Since Spring, Bart has gone back to hunting for himself.



Ken also had a Northern Saw-whet Owl at his feeder on one occasion. The Snowy Owl continued to be seen at Lori's, and on Purdon Line in Powassan and at Peddler's and Brule in Chisholm Township.

A House Sparrow (below) was seen by Gary at his place. One was reported on ontbirds beside the Subway shop in Mattawa, but not found by those who subsequently looked for it there. And in case there is concern that Kaye's White-throated Sparrow did not make it through cold March, it continued to come to her feeder, as did the Dark-eyed Juncos at Matt's.



Redpolls continued to be seen and in large numbers at Ken's and Dick's. Ken reports exactly 107 in a flock at his place and Dick reports approximately 150 in his flock. In amongst Dick's flock was an elusive American Goldfinch one week and an elusive Pine Siskin the next.

A flock of about 100 Bohemian Waxwings were seen by Matt in Thibeault Terrace; a Northern Shrike and a Ruffed Grouse were seen by Ken; Pine Grosbeaks were seen by the Doug Pattersons; a White-breasted Nuthatch was seen by Marc Buchanan; Mourning Doves were seen by Gary; Snow Buntings continued to flock to Lori's, with the Lapland Longspur back amongst them; and a Northern Cardinal was heard by Renee at Sweetman's Gardens.

Other birds seen were the Black-capped Chickadee; the Red-breasted Nuthatch; all four species of the woodpecker; and the American Crow and Common Raven. Matt has a leucistic Common Raven in his area, one with a prominent white band under its throat. Renee had a leucistic Common Raven at her feeder last winter and well into the spring. She saw it briefly in the fall, but hasn't seen it since. It wasn't as obviously leucistic as Matt's, having only a couple of white feathers on one of its wings.

The main sign of spring during the cold month of March were the arrival of the Herring Gulls (see next page). Stew Greig saw some on Lake Nipissing close to the shore where there was

some melting. One was also seen at Trout Lake and some at the landfill site in Powassan. Since our meeting, many more Herring Gulls have arrived, as well as many Ringed-bill Gulls.



**Great Backyard Bird Count:** Nearly half of the world's possible bird species were reported this year during the four-day Great Backyard Bird Count and participants from more than 100 countries submitted a record 147,265 bird checklists. This despite the fact that parts of the United States and Canada experienced bitter cold and snowy weather. For those who braved the cold, the GBBC data will help scientists better understand the impact of the cold on bird populations.

The winter of 2013-14 was a huge irruptive year for the Snowy Owls and GBBC reports for 2015 also show a surge in Snowy Owl sightings, though the frequency of reports is about half of last year's. A year after a large invasion is often referred to as an "*echo flight*."

The most surprising information as a result of February's Great Backyard Bird Count is that a Eurasian species, the Brambling (seen at right), made the Top Ten list of the most reported species. This marks the first time a Eurasian species has made the top ten. Since November, the Brambling has been seen on the West Coast, in Montana, Wyoming, Washington State and Ontario, as we know



from our sighting of it at Vic Rizzo's last November. However, the Brambling's appearance on the top ten list can be traced to one checklist from Germany, a list reporting a flock of approximately one million birds. Up to three million Bramblings have been known to gather at that particular site.

The top ten **most numerous** species reported were:

Snow Goose (seen below)

Canada Goose

Brambling

European Starling

Mallard

American Coot

American Robin

Dark-eyed Junco

Red-winged Blackbird

American Goldfinch



And the top ten **most frequently reported** species were:

Northern Cardinal

Dark-eyed Junco

Mourning Dove

Downy Woodpecker

Blue Jay

American Goldfinch

House Finch

Tufted Titmouse (seen at right)

Black-capped Chickadee

House Sparrow



In North America, California submitted the most checklists, with Ontario coming in eighth and once again, the only province to make the top ten list. Outside of United States and Canada,

India once again submitted the most checklists. In total, 143,000 bird watchers around the world participated in this year's GBBC.

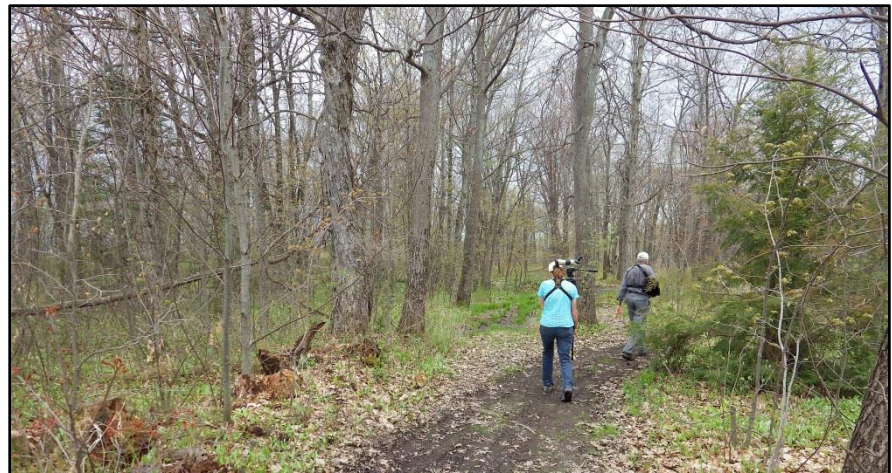
**Species At Risk:** Environment Canada is developing a recovery strategy for three threatened species: the Olive-sided Flycatcher, the Canada Warbler and the Common Nighthawk. A recovery strategy is defined by Environment Canada as *"a planning document that identifies what needs to be done to stop or reverse the decline of a species."* The public is invited to comment on the plan **by May 11, 2015**, after which Environment Canada will review the comments and integrate them as appropriate. The final version of the planning document will be posted on the Species at Risk (SAR) Public Registry. For more information on the recovery planning documents and species at risk, visit the SAR Public Registry at <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca>.

You can submit your comments online or email them to [SARRegistry@ec.gc.ca](mailto:SARRegistry@ec.gc.ca).

The Canada Warbler is Bird Studies Canada's logo and Bird Studies Canada, along with Environment Canada, Nature Canada, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and others, is helping prepare a hemisphere-wide conservation plan for this species. More than 80 percent of the global population of the Canada Warbler breeds in Canada and since 1970, about 75 percent of the population has disappeared.

**Great Canadian Birdathon:** The Baillie Birdathon name has been changed this year to the Great Canadian Birdathon. But the goal remains the same: to raise money to support bird research and conservation. Anyone can participate. Pick any day in May and get out and count the number of species

seen for as many hours as you can in that day. It doesn't matter if you can't bird from 6 AM to 10 PM as some hardy birders do. The idea is to get donations, big or small, then get out, look for birds and find as many species as possible during your hours out. (At right is a photo of Dick and Lori, who



along with Renee, won last year's Birdathon for spotting the most species – this despite Dick's bad shoulder, Lori having to carry all the heavy equipment, and Renee having to stop to take photos!)

First, though, you must register at

<http://birdscanada.kintera.org/faf/help/helpEventInfo.asp?ievent=1129177&lis=1&kntae1129177=2C392ABC103A424399A1F1A8E8D857C9>

You can either register online by clicking *Register Here* on the left-hand side of the above page or register by mail by printing off the registration sheet under the heading *Printable Sheets*. You can set up a donation page online or print a donor sheet and collect the money, making sure you get the names and addresses of all who donate. Money donated is to be sent to Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and BSC will issue tax receipts to all those who donate over \$10.00. BSC will also provide a percentage of the money you raise to a designated club or group dedicated to environmental conservation. If you raise between \$1.00 and \$5,000.00, your designated club or group will get 25% of the amount raised, and if you raise \$5001.00 or more, your designated club or group will get 50%.

We are asking Nipissing Birders to consider donating their portion to **Nipissing Naturalist Club** to help raise \$5,000.00 needed to help fund a plaque to be erected by Ontario Heritage Trust at Pimisi Bay near Mattawa to honour Louise de Kiriline Lawrence. de Kiriline Lawrence who lived in a log home at Pimisi Bay won the prestigious John Burroughs medal, awarded yearly to an author of a distinguished book of natural history. de Kiriline Lawrence won it in 1969 for her delightful book, *The Lovely and the Wild*. She was the first Canadian to do so. Other winners you might be familiar with are Ernest Thompson Seton, Rachel Carson, and Roger Tory Peterson.

de Kiriline Lawrence wrote other books: *Mar, A Glimpse into the Natural Life of Bird*, the tale of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; *To Whom the Wilderness Speaks*; *The Loghouse Nest*; and a poignant biography, *Another Winter, Another Spring: A Love Remembered*. As an internationally renowned naturalist, de Kiriline Lawrence contributed extensively to *Audubon*, the National Audubon Society magazine, and was an elective member of the American Ornithologists' Union. She certainly deserves an Ontario Heritage Trust plaque and what better place to have it than near her log nest she loved so dearly.

On the registration form, you must indicate the name, as well as the mailing and email addresses, of the club to which you wish a portion of your money raised to be donated. You must also indicate the president's name.

If you wish to donate to Nipissing Naturalist Club, the address is 2163 Pearson Street, North Bay P1B 6V2. The email address is [nipnats@gmail.com](mailto:nipnats@gmail.com), and the president is Fred Pinto.

At our meeting it was thought that a club or group had to be a registered charity and so Friends of Laurier Woods was selected as the club because it is a registered charity. However, it is not the case that the group or club be a registered charity, only that it promote environmental conservation. Because Bird Wing is part of the Nipissing Naturalist Club, it would be preferable you indicate Nipissing Naturalist Club as your choice. If you prefer Friends of Laurier Woods, please contact Dick or Fred for the required mailing and email addresses. Fred is also the president of Friends of Laurier Woods.

Any questions concerning Birdathon can be directed to Kristine Dobney, Bird Studies Canada, at her email address, [kdobney@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:kdobney@bsc-eoc.org).



Dick brought to the meeting a lovely Common Loon carved recently by John Ducharme, age 92, and also an avid birder. This carving may be auctioned at a future date to also raise money to go towards the plaque.

**Friends of Laurier Woods:** This year marks the 25th anniversary of Laurier Woods (seen below on March 21, 2012, when the temperature was in the 20's). Tickets to the annual general meeting and dinner on **Thursday, April 30**, can be purchased from Fred or Dick for \$25.00. This event will be held at 406 Wing, 406 First Avenue, starting at 6 PM. The guest speakers are Stefan and Anne Board of Board's Honey Farm.



Monthly walks and talks from May through to December have been planned to take place at Laurier Woods to celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> year. These are as follows:

- May 2 - birds
- June 6 - glaciation
- July 4 - aquatic insects
- August 1 - wild edibles and wild-crafting
- September 5 - seedless plants
- October 3 - geology
- November 7- investigating tracks and signs
- December 5 - history of Laurier Woods

In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Louise de Kiriline Lawrence Nature Festival will be held at Laurier Woods on **Saturday, August 15**.

Lori suggested that the Friends of Laurier Woods' brochure be placed at the Chamber of Commerce for visitors who want to know where to bird in our area. Fred informed us the Chamber does have brochures; however, he will check to see that they are prominently displayed for spring and summer visitors.

**Nocturnal Owl Survey:** A reminder that the Owl Prowl is to take place any night during the month of April. Please see February's Summary for details for those who want to participate but haven't done so before. By the time this summary gets distributed, some will have completed their prowling. Please email your sightings and stories to Renee in time for the May summary.

**British Columbia Breeding Bird Atlas:** The BC Breeding Bird Atlas will be officially launched this spring and will be available free and online. Very few atlases are available free and online, so this decision by the BC Atlas Publications Committee is quite significant. Some data have already been posted in a pre-publication soft launch at <http://www.birdatlas.bc.ca/>

More than 300 species of birds, including the Stellar's Jay, seen below, breed in British Columbia and 65 of these species do not breed anywhere else in Canada. In addition, British Columbia holds the majority of the world population for several species.



**SongbirdSOS and The Messenger:** For those who did not see *SongbirdSOS* when it aired last month on CBC, you can view it online at <http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes/songbirdsos>

Kevan Cowcill brought to our attention that there is also a film in production, *The Messenger*, “a visually thrilling ode to the beauty and importance of the imperiled songbird, and what it will mean to all of us both on a global and human level if we lose them.” Enough funds were raised by April 7 to finish the film, but you can still make donations and get exciting gift packages based on the amount you donate, from as little as \$10.00 to as much as \$10,000.00. Some gift packages have already been sold out, so if you are interested, please visit *The Messenger* website <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-messenger--3> as soon as possible to make a donation and to learn about the film.

**Birds of Arizona:** Dick was on holiday in Arizona in late February and early March at a time when the Western Bluebirds (below) and the White-crowned Sparrows were gathering in large numbers to migrate north. Seeing hundreds of even common birds massing together to migrate is truly spectacular.



Other birds seen by Dick were the Bridled Titmouse; Bushtits, plain grey birds constantly on the move; Red-shafted Flicker with its bright red under its wing; Townsend's Solitaire rarely seen with more than one other bird; Yellow-billed Cuckoo, once seen here by Dick many years ago just before it hit his window and died; three western wrens, the Bewick's, the Rock and the Canyon; two phoebes, the Say's and the Black; Red Crossbills in amongst the Ponderosa Pines south of Grand Canyon; Gila Woodpecker; Lesser Goldfinch; Mountain Chickadee; Gambel's Quail; and Cassin's Finch, similar to our Purple Finch.

Also seen by Dick were two species of hummingbirds: Anna's (below) and Magnificent. Always a joy to see a hummingbird and in another month we should see our Ruby-throated. Another tiny bird Dick saw was the Verdin. It is an active songbird only 4.5 inches in length and found only in the arid regions of southwestern United States and Northern Mexico. It is one of the smallest passerines in North America and the only North American member of the pendulinit family.



Species with which we are more familiar that Dick saw included the Northern Mockingbird (below); American Robin; Yellow-rumped Warbler; Chipping Sparrow; Dark-eyed Junco, although the Oregon sub-species; Cedar Waxwing; Brown Creeper; Red-winged Blackbird; and Great Blue Heron. Seeing a species in another part of the world with which we are familiar is like running into a friend in another part of the world.



In the various lagoons and a park lake were Buffleheads; American Coot; Cinnamon Teal (below); and Neotropical Cormorant, smaller than our Double-crested Cormorant.



Check out some of these birds in your bird book. Well worth a trip to Arizona someday, not just for the birds, but also for the scenery of red rocks and large, deep canyons. Best known is the Grand Canyon (below), one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Arizona has a desert climate, mild winters and hot summers. But despite its aridity, 27% of Arizona is forest and contains the world's largest stand of Ponderosa pines.



**Bird Bash:** The next Bird Bash will be held over a 24 hour period **weekend of April 25 and 26**. Many more spring birds will be here by then, so should be a good bash.

**Bird Wing Meeting:** Although this Bird Wing meeting unexpectedly took place on the second floor of the North Bay Public Library, the next meeting will be held in its regular spot, the auditorium of the library on **Tuesday, April 22**. This will be the last indoor meeting of the season. From May through to August, field trips will replace the indoor meetings.

*Spring would not be spring without bird songs, any more than it would be without buds and flowers. Theodore Roosevelt*

*Text: Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe, with thanks to Dick Tafel who on proofing the text and photos noticed two grievous errors. (subsequently corrected, of course)*

*Photos: Renee Levesque unless otherwise indicated on the photos, with special thanks to former Bird Wing member, Mark Olivier, who now lives in Algoma District.*