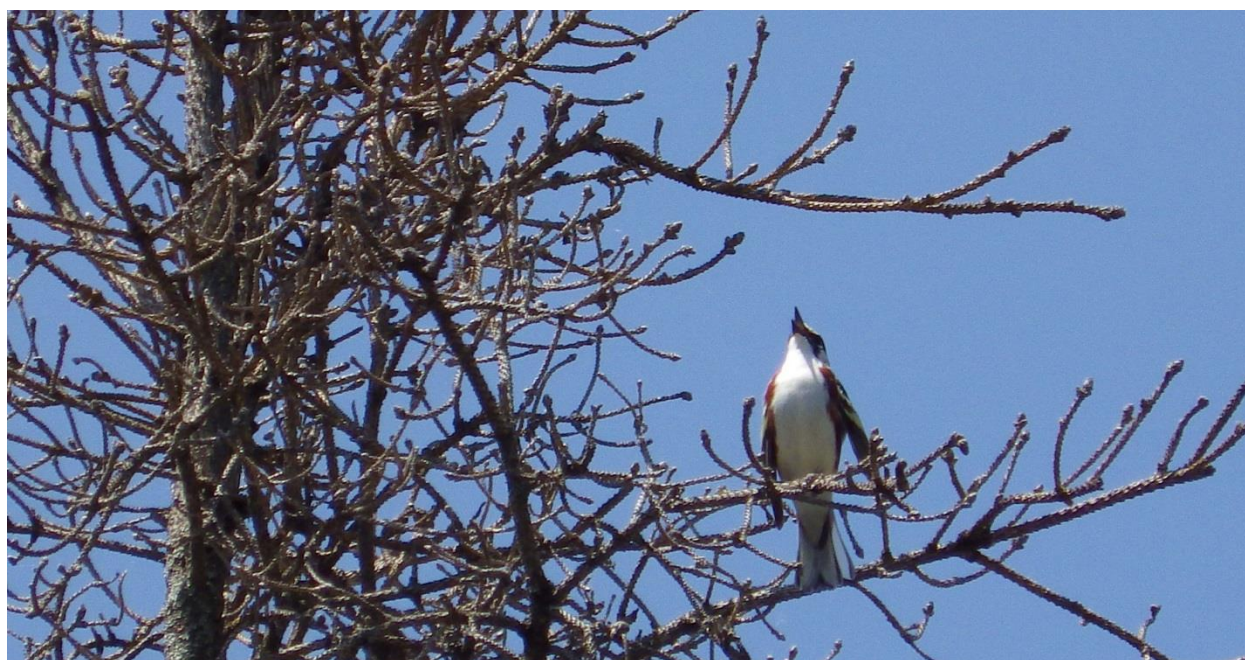


BIRD WING FIELD OUTING

May 27, 2014

Field Outing

The first field outing of the spring/summer incorporated two venues, a walk through beautiful Laurier Woods to find spring wood warblers and other spring species, and a gathering on Main Street West to view the Chimney Swifts dive gracefully into the chimney they return to year after year.



It was windy during the walk through Laurier Woods, and although that kept the mosquitoes more or less at bay, it also kept many birds at bay. Still, good views of the American Redstart, the Veery, the Swamp Sparrow and eight or nine Cowbirds sitting together in a tree by the parking lot. Also seen were the Chestnut-sided Warbler (above), the Yellow Warbler, the Pileated Woodpecker, a lone male American Goldfinch, and Tree Swallows. Heard were the Hermit Thrush and the White-throated Sparrow.

And, of course, heard and seen were the many Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds. We can get so excited when the first Red-winged Blackbirds arrive in the spring, but we quickly become blasé about them when we see them by the dozens in cattails everywhere. Still, some were well worth paying attention to as they sat atop the cattails in the glow of the setting sun, the bright red of their wings contrasting against the warm wheaten colour of the cattails.



Causing everyone to ooh and ahh were the two Canada Geese and their four goslings out for a stroll on the trails, just as we were. Nothing like goslings to get one interested in the ubiquitous Canada Goose.



When there are not many species to be found, the focus is on those species most of us see many times. That is not such a bad thing, because we are liable to dismiss the common bird in favour of the newest migrant or the species we have not yet added to our list. Interesting for those of us who do a lot of birding were the reactions of three newcomers. It reminds us to remember how it was when we first discovered a Veery or a Swamp Sparrow.

But the greatest excitement was reserved for newcomers and members alike when we watched the Chimney Swifts fly near the Main West chimney, then away from the chimney, then back again, back and forth from 8:50 pm onwards, gathering in numbers more and more until at about 9:12 pm, the first 150 descended quickly one by one down the chimney. A few minutes later, about another 100 or so arrived and descended. Couldn't find a better show in North Bay that night!



Baillie Birdathon

Only two teams entered the Baillie Birdathon this year. But what teams they were, tirelessly searching for species from dawn to dusk and yet having enough energy at the end of the day to close down a donut shop, the way some close down the bar! On one team were Dick Tafel, Lori Anderson and Renee Levesque. On the other team, Fred Pinto and Marc Buchanan.



Both teams were highly competitive, one getting up to more dirty tricks than the other to throw their competitors off.

For example, at the Warren Lagoon to which Fred and Marc arrived first, Marc was about to call the other team over to see a Sora (*photo at left by Fred Pinto*), but Fred put a stop to that, and although Marc gloated afterwards that they saw a Sora and it was right there in plain view, Dick and Lori and Renee must have grown weary for they did not see a Sora, much to their later chagrin.



After eating their take-out supper from MacDonald's in Sturgeon Falls while driving and constantly scanning, Dick's team got back their incredible energy and off they drove to a McIntyre Street residence. They needed a House Wren and a Hummingbird and whatever else they could get that was not on their list. But spirits started lagging again when they were admonished by the owner of the property that they should have come earlier in the day as Fred and Marc did, not when the birds were ready for their night's sleep. This admonishment, on top of not seeing any birds at his place, was enough to deflate anyone, but when they were told that Fred and Marc saw a Golden-winged Warbler, they felt they had no chance of winning, that the game was over for them. Then, what to their wandering eyes should appear, but a House Wren and a Hummingbird and two Chimney Swifts!

The sighting of the Chimney Swifts eliminated the need to stop at the building on Main Street West and gave them time to get to Dreany Lake to hopefully hear the Whip-poor-wills. Still, a Golden-winged Warbler! And then to have the owner of the property tell them that there were many around his place that day. Many Golden-winged Warblers, when even to see one in this area is of some note? Pretty suspicious. Could Fred or Marc have told the owner of the property to say they saw a Golden-winged Warbler in hopes of having the other team spend way too much time looking for a bird that wasn't really there?



In their despair that Fred and Marc were winning, Dick's female team members bemoaned the fact that they did not even find a Great Blue Heron. So, on their way to Hwy 17 to look for the American Woodcock and the Whip-poor-will, Dick gave it one last chance and drove along Memorial Drive just in case. He said to look in the sky because the herons would be flying to their roosting spot for the evening. Maybe Dick looked skyward, but Lori and Renee stared with mournful hope through the passenger windows and behold, another miracle – a Great Blue Heron just sitting there on a Lake Nipissing rock near Amelia Park, as if waiting for them!

Then with some hope in their hearts, it was off to Mirimichi Road to listen for an American Woodcock that Dick said he had heard a few times on his way home. But no Woodcock was heard and so with time running out, off they raced to Dreany Lake to hopefully hear the Whip-poor-wills. After driving round the trailer park twice, the owner arrived at the driver's window in her golf cart to find out what was going on. However, when she saw Dick, her face lit up and she said, "Oh, Mr. Tafel, and what can I do for you?" After Dick charmingly explained, the owner took them to the best spot to hear the Whip-poor-wills. They got out of the car and almost immediately Dick, who isn't known for his hearing ability, heard them, but not Lori or Renee. Dick was so flabbergasted that he yelled at Lori and Renee, "You mean you can't hear that! Come on! You must hear that!" But they didn't, perhaps because Dick, no longer as charming as he was with the owner, was yelling at them in utter shock. However, to Dick's relief, they both eventually heard. (Two of the competitors have to see or hear the bird for it to count as a sighting, hence Dick's consternation.)

Then, with 4 minutes left, it was back to Mirimichi to see if they could hear the American Woodcock. As soon as they stepped out of the car, Lori and Renee amazingly heard not only the American Woodcock, but also Whip-poor-wills. It took Dick a little bit longer to hear them, perhaps because this time Lori and Renee were yelling at him, "Can you not hear that?" They could have saved themselves a

trip to Dreany Lake had they only been a bit more patient and stayed at Mirimichi in the first place. But hindsight is always 20/20.

Dick's team got to the donut shop precisely at 9:30, the competition end time and the time they were to be there to meet up with Fred and Marc who, by the way, were 10 minutes late. They arrived gloating at having seen Black-bellied Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones and other birds Dick's team had not seen. It seemed obvious Fred and Marc were going to win, what with the Golden-winged Warbler they supposedly saw. **BUT, Dick's team chalked up 94 species seen and 8 heard, for a total of 102, and Fred and Marc, 94 species in total seen and heard**, proving among other things that three pairs of eyes are better than two, although they did have the help of Chris Sukha to locate the Black-bellied Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones which was probably breaking a rule; that getting many of the common and obvious species is better than a few rarities; and that two women and one man are more effective than two men. (For the record, Fred and Marc did not see the Golden-winged Warbler!)

There is supposed to be a cuckoo clock that the winning team is awarded, but no one knows where it got to. Something has to be done about that! If anyone knows where it might be, please contact Dick.

The Birdathon is a fun event and those who participate do not need to search all day. Maybe next year, we should consider having teams which take part all day and teams which take part only half a day, with each having a winner. But more importantly, it is for a worthy cause, to raise awareness and funds for Bird Studies Canada for bird research and conservation. **If anyone hasn't donated money to Fred, it is not too late. You can donate online by Googling, Fred Pinto's Personal Page for Bird Studies Canada.** A third of the money raised goes to Laurier Woods, a local birding hot spot for wood warblers in particular.

Owl Survey results

The results of these late-night owl prowls will be highlighted in the next Bird Wing Summary.

Whip-poor-Will

Bird Studies Canada is encouraging volunteers to listen for the Whip-poor-will in suitable habitats and report their observations to eBird Canada. **Bright moonlit nights between June 5 and 13, leading up to the next full moon, will be best for hearing Whip-poor-wills.**

The Ontario Whip-poor-will Project, launched in 2010 to investigate where in Ontario Whip-poor-wills still occur, is now complete and results will be used to direct research into the decline of populations in Ontario.

Bird Bash

May's Bird Bash results should now be posted on the Nipissing Naturalist Web Page. As Dick indicated in his May's Bird Bash summary, 138 species were seen among 22 observers. The next Bird Bash is to be held on **June 21-22.**

Loggerhead Shrike



The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has reconfirmed that the Prairie subspecies of the Loggerhead Shrike is **Threatened**, and its eastern counterpart in Ontario and Quebec is **Endangered**. For those going on the Nipissing Naturalist Club outing on June 14 to the Carden Alvar near Orillia, you may get to see the Loggerhead Shrike. Apparently there is a pair nesting in Cameron Ranch, just north of the cattle pens, and a pair opposite Bluebird Box #10 on Wylie Road.

Bird Wing Outing

The next Bird Wing outing is on **Tuesday, June 24**, Quebec's National Day. Perhaps we will hear the White-throated Sparrow singing, *Baisse tes culottes, Frederic, Frederic*. **Meet, as always, at the North Bay Visitor's Centre at 6:30 pm.** Field location is yet to be determined, but Dick will inform all well ahead of time.

Text: Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe or BWS, although with some dropping of the W in this summary.

Photos: Renee Levesque, except Sora by Fred Pinto

