

## BIRD WING OUTING

August 25, 2015

***Bird Wing Outing:*** Our mission during our Bird Wing outing on August 25 was to see a **kettle** of Common Nighthawks. Alas, it was not to be. Instead we saw a **kettle** of Turkey Vultures on Hwy 17, a **murder** of American Crows at Cache Bay, and a **team** of ducks, also at Cache Bay, away in the distance, too far to make out what they were. Laura Chowns heard a Common Nighthawk at Cache Bay and some of us thought we saw one at the Sturgeon Falls Museum on Fort Road, but thought only puts a feather in the ground and thinks a bird will grow. In other words, it doesn't count!



While the group (**above photo by Kaye Edmonds**) was looking and hoping and praying, Gary and Connie Sturge sat on their deck in the Powassan countryside sipping wine and, as Gary poetically reports, watching a kettle of Common Nighthawks, “sixteen of them at all levels, high and low, zooming, pivoting, nearly crashing, all in an effort to catch a dragonfly. This acrobatic massacre went on for about 30 minutes, a once in a lifetime viewing. Where once there had been dozens of dragonflies, there were now four.” For nine consecutive evenings, Gary watched the Common Nighthawks devour the dragonflies until few of the latter were left. Whether he and Connie drank wine during all those evenings remains unknown.

We could have saved ourselves a trip had Gary only informed us, but then we would have missed the other kettle, the murder and the team. (By the way, a team of ducks refers only to ducks in flight, not ducks on the water. For ducks on the water, the term used is **paddling**.) And we would not have met Vernon Buckle, visiting from Forteau, Labrador. Vernon, a birder and

eBirder, met Dick Tafel one day in Laurier Woods and Dick invited him along on our outing to Cache Bay. We were also privileged to have two other special guests, the young Turcotte girls.

Vernon reports that he enjoyed his North Bay visit. Although he was on vacation with his family, he still managed to get a lot of birding in. Not only did he visit Laurier Woods, but all the lagoons and the Canadore College Trails. Vernon speaks highly of Laurier Woods, but no wonder when that is where he managed to add seven species to his life list and saw about 28 species there in total. Five of his “lifers” are a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (fall one seen below), a Canada Warbler, a Veery, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Brown Creeper.



Before I leave the **kettle** of Common Nighthawks, I must also report that subsequent to our outing, Angela Martin, on September 2, saw at least 100 of them along Hwy. 64. Now there’s calling the kettle black! Angela reports that was the most nighthawks she had ever seen at once.

To give the other species seen during our outing their due, we saw four Caspian Terns, three Black Terns, six Common Terns, a couple of Great Blue Herons, a couple of Osprey, a Wood Duck and two Blue-winged Teals. Some of us also saw a Cooper's Hawk and a Wilson's Snipe (seen below).



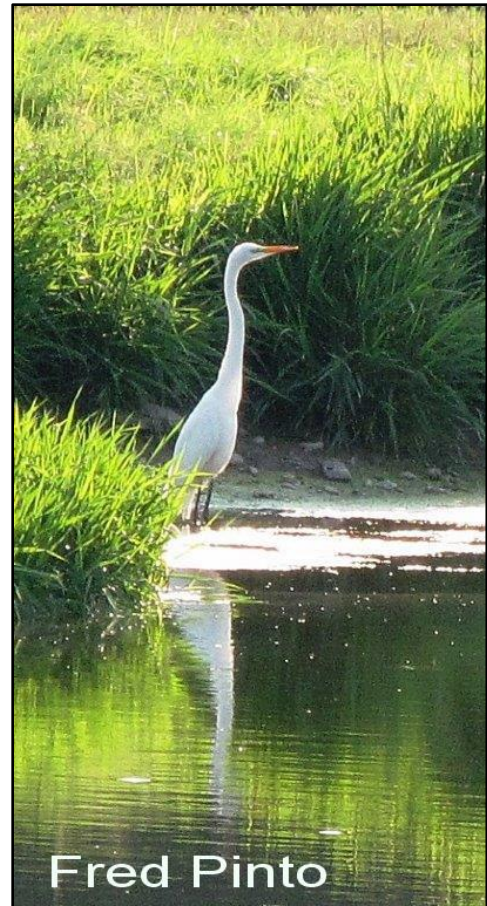
Despite not accomplishing our mission, it was, nevertheless, a fun evening, ending with more frivolity at Tim Horton's in Sturgeon Falls. No nighthawks and no wine, Gary, but great guests and hot chocolate!

**Birds of August:** In addition to the above-mentioned birds, Dick reports that 106 species were seen during the Bird Bash over the last weekend of August. The rarest find was that of Fred Pinto and Marc Buchanan, a Great Egret they saw at the Powassan Lagoon in the early evening of August 30. (Photo at right)

A number of shorebirds was spotted at the lagoons, most notably the Powassan Lagoon where Renee Levesque and Dick saw a White-rumped and a Baird's Sandpiper (seen below), as well as Pectoral Sandpipers.

Lesser Scaups have started to arrive; Sandhill Cranes and Canada Geese are gathering in fields; and Bonaparte Gulls are to be found at Lake Nipissing and the Callander Lagoon (see photo on top of next page). Fall is on its way!

Most species of ducks were seen, as was the Common Loon, the Double-crested Cormorant, the American Coot still at the Warren Lagoon, and the Pied-billed Grebe, not heard during the outing to Cache Bay, but subsequently seen there by Dick and Renee.





Hawks not previously mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter include the Bald Eagle, the Merlin (see photo at right of a young Merlin) and the American Kestrel, the latter seen almost everywhere along country roads.

Flycatchers were in evidence: a Wood Pewee, Least and Great-crested Flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Kingbird.

Vireos included the Red-eye, the Blue-headed (see top of next page) and the Warbling.

Swallows included the Tree and the Barn.

A Golden-crowned Kinglet was seen by Brent and more should soon be spotted, if not already spotted.

American Robins, Veerys and a Swainson's Thrush were seen, the latter by Dick.

Eastern Bluebirds were seen by Chris Sukha.

Cedar Waxwings were everywhere.





Eleven species of warblers were noted, Wilson's Warblers among them (see photo below). In fact, some have said they have seen more Wilson's this year than in previous years.



All five common species of sparrows were seen, as well as the House Sparrow seen by Fred and Marc.

Other species included the Brown Thrasher, not seen as frequently it seems as in other years, but seen by Kaye Edmonds during the Bird Bash; Gray Catbird; Scarlet Tanager seen by Dick; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Bobolink; Brown-headed Cowbird; Purple Finch; Evening Grosbeak found by the Boxwells; Dark-eyed Junco seen by Fred and Marc; Pine Siskin still at Renee's feeder; Ruffed Grouse seen only during the Bird Bash by the Sturges; Mourning Dove; American Goldfinch; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Red-breasted Nuthatch; American Crow; Common Raven; Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle and European Starling, all of them starting to mass in large groups; and the Blue Jay, once again making its noisy presence well-known, after its relatively quiet July.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbirds:** The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is now migrating south. The males left first, some in early August, followed by the females. What hummers you see now are probably the juveniles. As they head south to Mexico, Central America and even Florida, they look for stopover rest spots where they consume lots of nectar daily to give them strength and energy to continue on their migration. They seem to prefer red and orange flowers, both garden and wildflowers, like Jewelweed. Keep your garden flowers growing and your feeders full, even into October. We have been known to see some late migration hummers into October. Hummers spend 80% of their day perching, using that time to rest and digest.

**Culture Days in Corbeil/Northern Arts Festival Ontario:** Be sure to attend this festival in Corbeil on September 25, 26, and 27, particularly as Bird Winger, **Matt Walter, will be displaying and selling his art work.** In addition to taking pictures of birds, Matt draws and paints birds. There are lots of activities during the three days, although seeing Matt and his art work are most important. Check out all the activities at: <http://eastferris.ca/event/culture-days-in-corbeilnorthern-arts-festival-ontario-program-2015/2015-09-25>.

**Hilliardton Marsh:** As reported in July's Bird Wing newsletter, Nicole Richardson and Chris Sukha returned to Hilliardton Marsh in mid-August to continue the banding of birds there. Renee and her husband, John Levesque, had an opportunity recently to spend some time at Hilliardton, and although there were no birds to be banded during their first visit, the next day, there were plenty of warblers and sparrows, including a Lincoln's Sparrow.

Nicole reports she recently banded an American Kestrel (below left, **courtesy of Nicole**), as well as a couple of Sharp-shinned Hawks (below right, also **courtesy of Nicole**). When asked how the hawks reacted, Nicole said the male was fine, but the female squawked a lot. Hmmm...



Both Nicole and Chris will continue banding for the rest of the season, until approximately mid-October. Nicole will be returning to Nipissing University in her second year of studies, but will drive up to Hilliardton for four days of banding, tagging Fridays and Mondays onto the weekends. This will relieve Chris from banding during that time.

Owl banding at Hilliardton begins on September 25.

Check out the September 3 *The Nugget's Community Voices* for an article by Bill Steer on bird banding at Hilliardton.

**Nicole, as reported in July's newsletter, will be talking to us during the September 26 Bird Wing meeting at the North Bay Public Library about her internship experience banding at Hilliardton Marsh and her job this summer in New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island through Bird Studies Canada, surveying high altitude birds, the Bicknell's Thrush in particular.** Nicole has some great photos to accompany her talk.

Chris spent a week in Newfoundland this summer and reports he particularly enjoyed seeing the Gannet. During the Bird Outing, Marc also spoke of his delight at seeing hundreds of them in Newfoundland.

**Next Bird Bash:** Already it is time for the next Bird Bash – over a 24-hour period the weekend of **September 12 and 13.**

**Bird Wing Meeting:** The first indoor Bird Wing meeting for the season takes place at the **North Bay Public Library Auditorium on Tuesday, September 22, beginning at 6:30 p.m.** Come hear Nicole Richardson talk about her Hilliardton Marsh banding experiences and her surveying of high altitude birds on the east coast.

Text: Renee Levesque, with special thanks to Gary Sturge

Photos: Renee Levesque, unless otherwise indicated

*Summer's lease hath all too short a date.*

Sonnet 18, William Shakespeare