

BIRD WING MEETING

North Bay Public Library

November 25, 2014

The week of November 24 turned out to be quite an exciting week in North Bay. On November 25, Mike Burrell, renowned Ontario birder, spoke about eBird to an audience of approximately 40. Then on November 25, a Brambling was seen on Vic Rizzo's property on McIntyre Street West. Unfortunately Mike left North Bay around 8:30 AM, just hours before the Brambling was seen.

Mike Burrell and eBird

Mike's primary goal is to get as many participants as possible, both recreational and professional bird watchers, to enter their bird sightings on eBird - a real-time, online checklist program that contributes to science and conservation by providing data on bird abundance and distribution.

The screenshot shows the eBird Canada website interface. At the top left is the eBird Canada logo with a bird in flight. To the right is the Bird Studies Canada logo. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: Home, Submit Observations, Explore Data, My eBird, and Help. Below the navigation bar are links for Sign In or Register as a New User and Translate to: English | Français. The main content area features a large green heading "Welcome to eBird Canada" with the tagline "Birding in the 21st Century." Below this is a "News and Features" section with a sub-heading "Introducing eBird Targets—Explore the possibilities" dated 3 December 2014. The text describes the launch of eBird Targets, a tool for creating prioritized lists of birds in a region. To the right of the text is a photograph of a bird in flight. On the right side of the page, there are logos for eBird partners in Canada, including Bird Studies Canada and Regroupement Québec Oiseaux. At the bottom right, there is a section titled "Top checklist submissions for current month by county/district" with a list of counts: Kenora -- 393, Frontenac -- 261, and Niagara -- 236.

eBird was launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society in the U.S, and in 2006, the eBird Canada portal was launched. Although the initial response to eBird was slow, after 2006 when eBird began offering tools, products, incentives and information to birders, there was a dramatic rise in the number of checklists submitted. By March 2012, participants reported more than 3.1 million bird observations across North America.

Tools and incentives include keeping a personal bird record and viewing data using interactive maps, graphs and bar charts, available in English and French, as well as Spanish, and in a couple of months to make it even easier to add photos to bird records, participants will be able to add them without first embedding them.

In 2011, eBird went global and on August 8, 2012, logged its 100 millionth observation. eBird shares these observations with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists and conservation biologists.

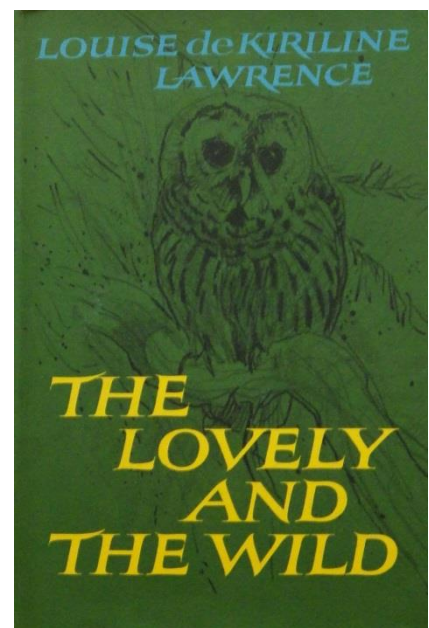
eBird data are securely archived daily and data is disseminated to anyone via the eBird website and other applications developed by the global biodiversity information community, such as the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) which integrates observational data on bird populations across the western hemisphere. In turn, AKN feeds data to international biodiversity data systems, such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). In this way, contributions to eBird increase our understanding of bird abundance and distribution throughout the planet.

Once they register for free by providing their email address, birders simply enter the date they went birding, where they went birding, the length of time they went birding and how they went birding, after which they fill out an itemized form indicating the species and number of birds seen.

The sections to complete are fairly self-explanatory. By slowly playing around with the various links and tools, you can figure out more and more as you become familiar with eBird. You don't have to learn everything all at once. Start with entering your sightings and go from there as time and patience allow. You will find that one of eBird's strengths is its flexibility.

Automated data quality filters review all submissions before they enter the database and experts review unusual records flagged by the filters. If experts note anything unusual, you will get an email from them asking you for additional details or a photo.

It is hoped that Mike's talk and his showing us how to use eBird will increase eBird participation in Nipissing. Mike was pleased with the number of enthusiastic people who attended. He was also well-pleased with his gift, *The Lovely and the Wild*, by Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, "presented" to Mike by Dick Tafel. (The word "presented" is in quotation marks because Dick forgot to bring the book, but as Mike was



staying at Dick's home for the night, he was given the book then.)



Louise de Kiriline Lawrence was the first Canadian to win the prestigious John Burroughs Medal for natural history writing for *The Lovely and the Wild*. (This medal was won in 1952 by Rachel Carson for *The Sea Around Us*. Ms. Carson is probably best known for her controversial environmental classic, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962.)

The Brambling



Dick Tafel was notified by Vic Rizzo in the late morning of November 26, just a few hours after Mike had left, that there was a strange bird in his yard, a bird Vic initially thought might be a Linnet. Dick then contacted Renee Levesque to ask her to come over to Vic's with her camera. It took a while for the bird to show, but once seen it was quickly identified as a Brambling, a lovely Eurasian finch that was loosely associating with the Evening Grosbeaks, about 35 of which were seen that afternoon. The Brambling is casual during migration to southern Alaska and accidental south to Canada and the Northwestern United States.



Renee took photos of the Brambling and posted the sighting on Ontbirds. For the next two days, many birders from all over Ontario, from Montreal and Detroit, and local birders, descended on Vic's yard and, for the most part, respected his property and his wishes.

A transplanted Irishman from County Cork now living in Grimsby told the story of how he had twice gone into Niagara-on-the-Lake, a half an hour away, to see the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, which was making the Ontbird headlines at the same time as the Brambling, and each time, he did not see the bird. But when he drove all the way up to North Bay on November 27, he was immediately rewarded with good viewings of the Brambling. Now that's northern hospitality for you!

Thanks to Vic for sharing the news and putting up with the many birders. To show our appreciation, the Bird Wing group gave Vic a thank-you card and money for the purchase of bird seed.

Renee completed the rare bird report for the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The Brambling has not been seen in Ontario for 20 years and this sighting was only the 8th in Ontario. The previous seven sightings are:

November 12 to 18, 1980, in Brampton

October 23 to 26, 1983, in Atikokan

February 20 to April 11, 1991, near Port Hope

October 4 to 7, 1991, in Atikokan



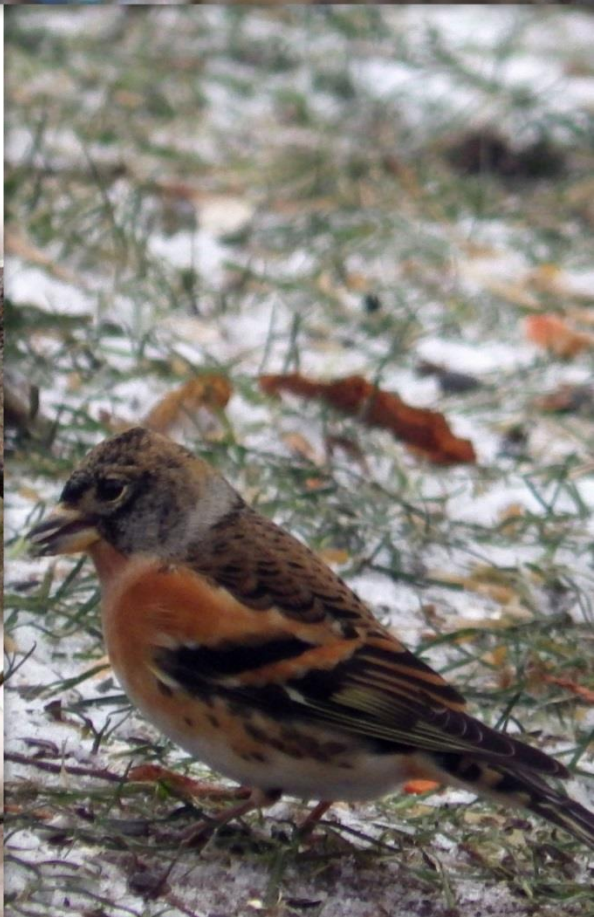
Nicole Richardson



Marc Buchanan



Nicole Richardson



November 12, 1993, in Dorland (Oxford County)

December 24, 1993 to April 14, 1994, in Hungry Hollow (Middlesex County)

April 18 to 20, 1994, in Black River (Kenora District)

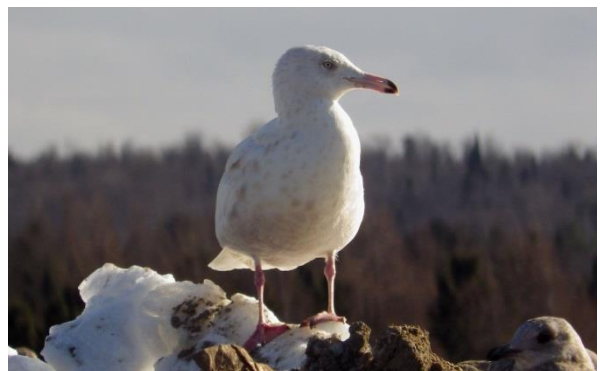
You can view Renee's photos taken from inside Vic's house through his glass door at the OFO Checklist Gallery at <http://www.ofo.ca/gallery/checklist/subfamily/62/species/455>. You will also see Sandra Horvath's photos there. She is a wonderful photographer, as you will know from seeing her bird photos on the OFO website and on eBird. She and Frank Horvath, also familiar from the OFO website, got to Vic's on November 27 to see the Brambling and it was nice to be able to put faces to names.

Merrick Landfill Site Visits



There were two visits to the Merrick Landfill Site in November, on November 15 and 29. Gulls are difficult to identify because many are three- and four-year gulls. Each year their plumage is somewhat different than the year before until they reach their more identifiable adult plumage. What also makes identification difficult is that some gulls are sub-species of other gulls, and as Fred Pinto learned at the recent workshop he attended in Niagara Falls, Kumlien's Gull is a subspecies of Iceland Gull, but also shares some characteristics of the Thayer's Gull. So no wonder one sometimes needs to pore over photos and field guides and even go to gull school before being able to make a positive identification – and even then!

Our two trips to the landfill site initially yielded thousands of Herring Gulls, but only about 200 by month's end; 20 or so Ring-billed Gulls initially, but none by month's end; Glaucous Gulls (seen at right),



as many as 20 by month's end; Iceland Gulls, at least 3 by month's end; and Great Black-backed Gulls, 5 or 6 by month's end. There is also the possibility that a Thayer's Gull was seen, although the majority opinion is that it was actually an Iceland (Kumlien's), 2nd winter.

In addition, the trips yielded up to 7 Bald Eagles, 2 adults, the rest juveniles (seen at right); some American Crows; and many Common Ravens, up from 30 at the beginning of the month to about 200 or so by month's end.

Staff at the landfill site is very accommodating and deserve our thanks, as does Dick for arranging the trips and taking us there.



Birds of November and December

Because of Mike's eBird talk, we did not get a chance to report on the birds we saw during November, nor the birds we can watch for during December.

Based on eBird and Ontbird reports, Lori Anderson and Brent Turcott have each seen a Snowy Owl, Lori on Chiswick Line and Brent near Amelia Park.

American Tree Sparrows are around and Lori has a White-throated Sparrow (seen below) still coming to her yard. What is interesting about this is that last year at this time, she had a White-crowned Sparrow in her yard, keeping warm on her Christmas lights. Dick also recently had a White-throated Sparrow in his yard.



Common Redpolls are also around, as are American Goldfinch, Blue Jays, Gray Jays (see top of next page), Black-capped Chickadees, White and Red-breasted Nuthatches and all three woodpeckers, the Downy, the Hairy and the Pileated. Black-backed Woodpeckers must be somewhere, although I do not know if anyone has recently reported seeing one since Nicole Richardson saw one on the Canadore/Nipissing trails a few weeks back. After the recent landfill site visit,

we did go looking for one, but to no avail.

Birds to also watch for are the Ruffed Grouse and Spruce Grouse.



Grosbeaks include the Evening and the Pine. At Sweetman's Gardens, you should see at least a couple of Northern Cardinals and some Bohemian Waxwings, the latter reported during the Brambling stake-out. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was also reported during the Brambling stake-out and when the Brambling didn't show after a couple of days, some thought that perhaps it became the victim of the Sharpie. Also watch for Bald Eagles, Northern Goshawks and Rough-legged Hawks.



There don't seem to be many Pine Siskins around, although some have seen them and Renee saw one earlier in November on McIntyre Street West (seen at left).

With much ice cover on the lakes, there may not be many ducks to be found other than Mallards, Blacks, Common Mergansers, Common

Goldeneye, and perhaps Hooded Mergansers. The Common Loon may also still be around.

Project Feederwatch

Although Project Feederwatch is underway, you can still register until the end of January at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/pfw/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=index>. Also check out tips and an explanation on registering for this worthwhile project at <http://www.homehardware.ca/en/index/home-experts/mark-cullen.htm>. While at this site, be sure to click on **Birding 101** at the bottom of the page for an interview with Mark Cullen, gardening expert, and Jody Allair, Biologist and Educator, Bird Studies Canada.

Christmas Bird Count



North Bay's annual Christmas Bird Count is on Sunday, December 14. Teams are in place to cover the seven designated routes within a 15-mile radius of North Bay. However, if you live within a 15-mile radius, you can report on your feeder and yard birds seen that day. If you are interested in the latter to help in this important count that began in North America in 1900, **please contact Lori Anderson, Christmas Bird Count Compiler, by email at lori.anderson58@hotmail.com , or by phone at 705-724-5780.**

If you are in doubt as to whether you are within a 15-mile radius, Lori can advise you.

Other Important Dates

1. **Great Backyard Bird Count:** This annual four-day event takes place **February 13 to 16, 2015**. More about this in January's summary.
2. **Bird Bash:** December's Bird Bash took place on December 6 and 7. January's will take place over a 24-hour period on **January 17 and 18, 2015**.
3. **Membership:** A reminder to those who have not yet paid their annual \$5.00 Bird Wing fee to Gary Sturge, treasurer, please do so at January's meeting. Also a reminder that your Nipissing Naturalist Club membership fee of \$20.00 is due in January.
4. **Bird Wing Meeting:** There will be not be a Bird Wing meeting in December because the fourth Tuesday of the month is Christmas Eve, but there will be the Christmas Bird Count to make up for that lack. The next Bird Wing meeting will be on **Tuesday, January 27, 2015, at 6:30 PM, in the auditorium of the North Bay Public Library**. Lori, our resident expert on Snow Buntings (seen at right), will tell us all about the Snow Bunting presentation given by



Rick Ludkin of the Snow Bunting Network during the annual Hilliardton Marsh dinner that Lori and Ken Gowing attended in New Liskeard on November 7, 2015.



Text: Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe

Photos: Renee Levesque unless otherwise indicated