

Bird Wing Outing

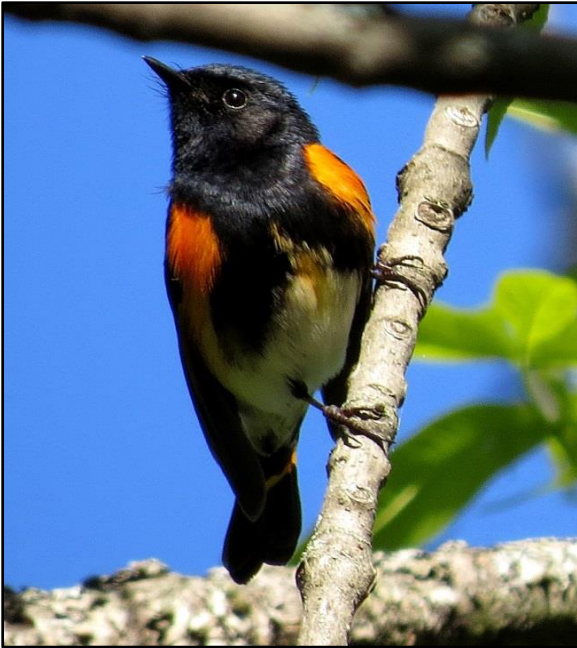
Text and photos by Renee Levesque, unless otherwise specified

1. Outing: Our first scheduled Tuesday outing of the season, led by Dick Tafel, took place on Tuesday morning, May 24, the first morning Bird Wing outing we have had since I joined Bird Wing in September 2012. No doubt a good choice to switch it to the morning for a May warbler walk in Laurier Woods, even if those who work could not join us. But they were able to join in the three May Saturday morning walks held in Laurier Woods and sponsored by the Friends of Laurier Woods. I was on all three walks plus our Bird Wing walk, so am hoping I won't get one mixed up with the other and indicate we saw birds we didn't actually see.

Kevan Cowcill joined us on this walk and his well-trained ear proved to be an asset. He heard the Canada Warbler before we saw it, my first sighting of one this season. He also heard two Eastern Wood Pewees before we saw the one. This was the first time ever I saw one, although I believe I saw one a few days earlier and thought it was a Least Flycatcher. We had a good view of it and **Kaye Edmonds got a great photo** of it, as seen at right. We also heard the Least Flycatcher's *che-bek*.



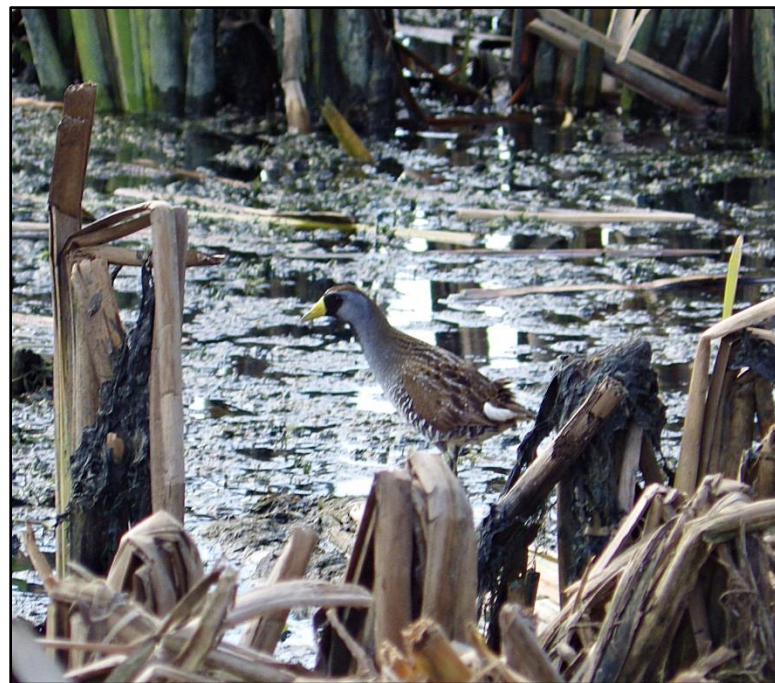
Other warblers seen were the stunning Blackburnian (photo below centre); Magnolia; Yellow; American Redstart (**photo below left by Kevan Cowcill**), Laurier Woods' most numerous warbler, with the Chestnut-sided in second place; Black and White; Yellow-rumped (photo below right); and the rarely-seen, but often heard, Ovenbird.



Lori Anderson and I heard the Sora (photo at right), but I don't think anyone else did. We had heard and seen it on one of the Saturday morning May walks when we lagged behind, and we heard it again, although we didn't see it. Again, we lagged behind while the others were trying to hear or see the Virginia Rail.

Sparrows seen or heard were White-throat, Song, Swamp and Savannah, a great view of the latter on a rock by the first pond.

The Red-eyed Vireo could be heard

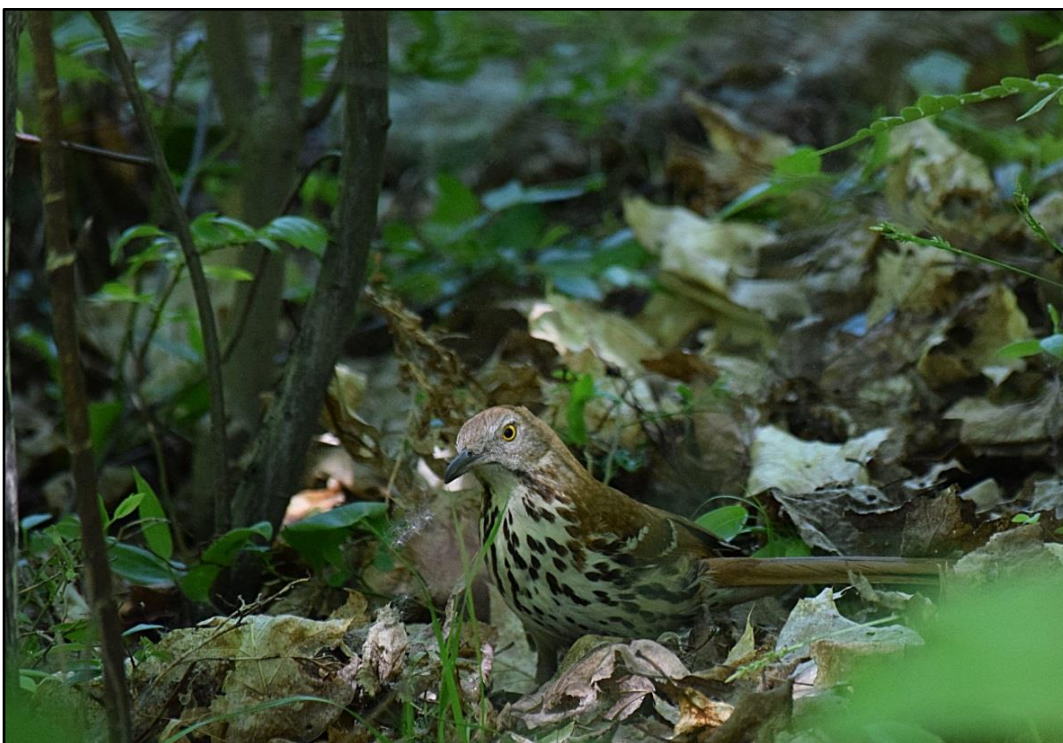


everywhere and there were at least a couple of Warbling Vireos (photo at right by **Lisa Hackett**) with their more melodic songs. We also heard a Great-crested Flycatcher. The Veery was heard calling many times, although I don't believe any sang for us on that occasion.



The Brown Thrasher (photo below) and the Gray Catbird were either seen or heard. I think we heard the Gray Catbird, but saw a Brown Thrasher, actually two of them, on the forest floor in their usual place, just before you get to the first pond. This is stretching my memory after all the bird walks I have done so far this year, but I believe I am accurate, although...

Woodpeckers seen or heard were Northern Flickers and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.



In addition to the Common Grackles and many, many Red-wings, we heard a Brown-headed Cowbird. I don't believe we saw it, but Kevan did hear one in the same area where I saw one a few days earlier.

We heard Red-breasted Nuthatches and saw Black-capped Chickadees and Pine Siskins, many of which were seen all over the area this spring. We also heard or saw American Goldfinches (photo at right), Blue Jays, a Raven and a Mourning Dove.

And finally, a couple of Mallards and five Canada Geese were seen.

Outside of the world of birds, we saw a Skunk in the cattails at the end of the boardwalk after the first pond and we saw about 20 Painted Turtles sunning in their usual spot on a log in Arum Pond.

I think the highlight was seeing an Eastern Wood Pewee and it posing for us for a good minute or so.

After our walk, we met up at Country Style Donuts on Seymour Street for lunch.

2. American Woodcock Singing-ground Survey: Gary and Connie Sturge did their annual American Woodcock Singing-ground Survey on May 11. Gary reports it was a beautiful night for him and Connie – hmmm! – but not for the woodcocks (photo below). Gary reports nine stops with no woodcock responses,



but on the very last stop, the tenth, they heard three. However, they did hear two Wilson's Snipes, a Barred Owl and six barking dogs at other stops. All very great, but they don't count as woodcocks!!

3. Unusual/Interesting Birds found in Area: Some rare or unusual or interesting species found in our area this spring:

a) Brant's Goose: Found initially by Kaye Edmonds on May 5 and subsequently seen by many others. (photo at right)

b) Ruddy Duck: Found initially by Dick and me, also on May 5, at Verner Lagoon and subsequently seen by others.

c) Red-headed Duck: Many seen this spring at Callander, Verner and Warren Lagoons.

d) Spruce Grouse: A male seen on May 11 by Dick and me in Sundridge on the Summit Trail to Louck Lake.

e) Trumpeter Swans: An adult and a juvenile seen on May 11 by Dick and me at Callander Lagoon and a pair, also an adult and juvenile, the same pair perhaps, at Verner Lagoon on May 29 by the Tafel and McKercher Birdathon Teams.

f) House Wren: Vic Rizzo reports three nesting pairs at his place. Lori Anderson and I heard one at Vic's during the Birdathon.

g) House Sparrow: Lori has some at her place and two were seen by the Tafel Birdathon Team.

h) Upland Sandpiper: Seen in the field across from Warren Lagoon by Dick and me on May 25 and confirmed by eBird after I submitted a less than stellar photo, seen below, but you can make out its "pigeon head". They did not do their "wolf



whistle”, and so it was a lucky and fortunate sighting as the grass was not too tall at that point and they were quite close to the road.

I) Franklin’s Gull: Seen on May 29 during the Birdathon by Marc Buchanan, Grant and Shirley McKercher and Sarah Wheelan.

j) Black-bellied Plover: Seen on May 29 in the recently plowed field at Verner Lagoon by the McKercher Birdathon Team.

k) Wilson’s Phalarope: A female seen on May 15 at Verner Lagoon by Dick and Elsa Tafel and subsequently seen by the McKercher Birdathon Team on May 29.

l) Red-necked Phalarope: A male seen on May 29 at Warren Lagoon by the Tafel Birdathon Team.

m) Northern Cardinal: Reports of a pair in the Pinewood area and near Ski Club Road.

n) Wild Turkey: Seen by Gary and Connie Sturge in their neck of the Powassan area during the May Bird Bash.

o) Scarlet Tanager:
Seen by Lisa Hackett in Laurier Woods on May 13 (**photo at right by Lisa Hackett**). As far as I know, it hasn’t been seen in Laurier Woods since, although heard at the end of Tower Drive singing repeatedly from the high hardwood canopy.

Shorebirds seen were the Solitary Sandpiper at Powassan Lagoon, all by itself as its name implies,





by the Tafel Birdathon Team; Lesser Yellowleg (photo at left); Least, Spotted and Semipalmated Sandpipers; Killdeer and Semipalmated Plover.

Other birds that always generate interest are: the Eastern Bluebirds seen by Gary and Connie at their place and by me and Dick in the most unusual place, on Olrig Road off Hwy. 63. It is a heavily

wooded area, not the sort of place one would expect to see bluebirds; the Indigo Bunting (below left) – three of us, Therez Violette, the Doug Pattersons and I had one in our yards in early May. Kevan Cowcill reported one on Monastery Road during May’s Bird Bash; the Wood Thrush heard by Team Tafel during the Birdathon; the return of the Cedar Waxwings; and the handsome Rose-breasted Grosbeak (below right) – what would spring be without the arrival of one?





The White-crowned Sparrows have now moved on to points north. They are the last of the mass spring migrating birds that visit backyard feeders. The last two in my yard left a week or so ago and once they left, I took down my feeders, except for the nyjer feeder which I keep up for the summer for the American Goldfinch. A couple of Pine Siskins which were certainly plentiful this spring are still feeding at it, but I am down to two or three of them.

Common Grackles, European Starlings and American Robins have visited my yard with their fledglings. Always fun to watch the young demanding food from their over-worked parents.

There was, and still is, the leucistic female Red-wing Blackbird in the cattails at the first pond in

Laurier Woods. **Gary Chowns captured the photo** of her above left:

I am sure I am leaving out many more interesting May sightings other than those already listed above and below. I have not had any reports yet of the Swainson's Thrush and so far this spring, not many reports of hearing the Hermit Thrush's ethereal song. And has anyone yet seen the Common Nighthawk and the Blackpoll Warbler? I briefly had a Cape May Warbler in my yard earlier in May, but did not see a Bay-breasted Warbler.

4. Chimney Swifts and Whip-poor-wills: I don't know when others first saw the Chimney Swifts, but John and I and Dick Tafel saw about 175 on the Monday of the Victoria Day weekend, May 23 (photo at right). I heard that



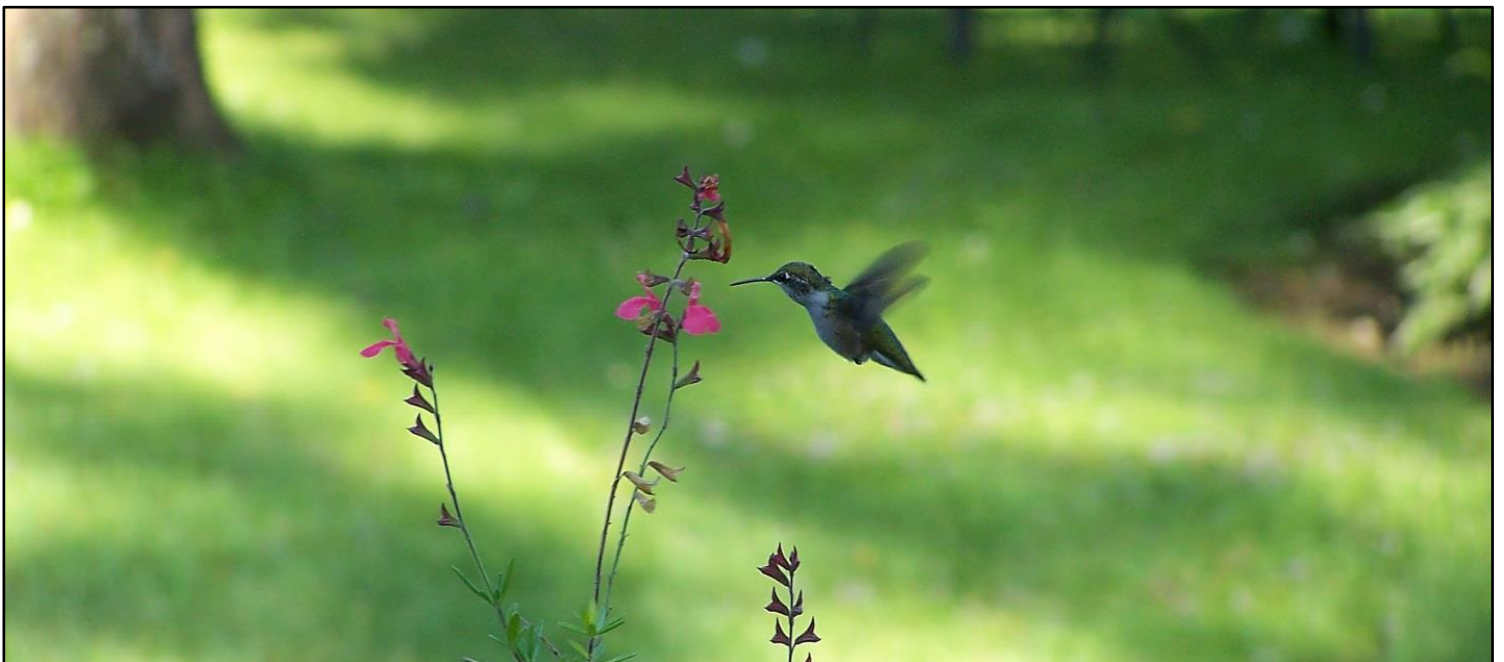
numbers increased to about 300 after that and then dropped to 85 on June 2 when John and I filled in for Grant McKercher who is doing the Swift Watch Count at the chimney on Main West by Foran Street. There is also someone monitoring the other local chimney the swifts use. Grant will be providing me with his results which I will report on in June's Bird Wing summary. What was interesting for me was that this was the first time I actually heard them as they did their multiple circles before dropping down the chimney. The wind that evening was carrying their calls so they could be heard very clearly.

Whip-poor-wills are back at Dreany Lake off Hwy 17 East. Dick heard them in late May and then Team Tafel heard them during the Birdathon.

5. Hummingbird: The first report I had of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird was from Gary on May 11, followed by Dick a day or two later. I am sure we have now all seen them. (photo below)

From the novel *Green Mansions* (1904) by W.H. Hudson, author, naturalist and ornithologist:

Have you ever observed a hummingbird moving about in an aerial dance among the flowers – a living prismatic gem that changes its colour with every change of position – how in turning it catches the sunshine on its burnished neck and gorget plumes – green and gold and flame-coloured, the beams changing to visible flakes as they fall, dissolving into nothing to be succeeded by others and yet others? In its exquisite form, its changeful splendour, its swift motions and intervals of aerial suspension, it is a creature of such fairy-like loveliness as to mock all description.



6. Laurier Woods May Bird Walks: The three Laurier Woods May bird walks led by Dick are summarized in June's issue of *The Woodland Observer*. For those who don't receive this newsletter and want to read about birds seen during these Saturday morning May bird walks, please visit, <http://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>.

7. Trumpeter Swan: Bev Kingdon, Ms. Trumpeter Swan, will be talking about these swans on **Wednesday, June 15, starting at 7 p.m.**, at the Callander Community Centre on Swale Street off Callander Bay Drive. This event is sponsored by the Callander Horticultural Society. It is open to everyone at no cost.

8. Bird Bash: The next Bird Bash is over a 24-hour period **weekend of June 25 and 26.** (Date has been changed since Dick's initial announcement.)

9. Bird Wing Outing: The next Bird Wing outing will take place **the evening of Tuesday, June 28. Meet at the Visitors' Centre at 6:30 p.m.** Route to be determined. We decided over our lunch at Country Style Donuts after the May morning walk that we would go back to an evening outing in June because it stays light for quite some time at this time of the year. We may return to morning walks in July and August, although now that we have broken out of the box, who knows. We might even be brave enough to do an afternoon walk!!

Below is a **photo from Steve Pitt** of four Blue Jays, dismayed by their performance in the infield!

