

# Bird Wing Outing

## June 21, 2018



*Renee Levesque*

*By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe; photos as indicated*

What a shock to arrive at the former Visitors' Centre only to find it had been demolished that very day – and now no parking there. So for future outings, we will have to decide where to meet and where to leave our vehicles if carpooling.

### **Outing:**

It may have been the shock of a demolished Visitors' Centre or it may have been that we were to meet others at Powassan Lagoon that for once, at my behest, we left on time, well, almost on time, a minute past 6:30. I accept full responsibility for this because Grant McKercher arrived at 6:32 to find us gone!! Thankfully, after thinking maybe the outing was cancelled, he decided to drive to Powassan Lagoon and there we were – your Bird Wing Scribe, Dick Tafel, Brent and Laura Turcotte and their two daughters, Gary and Connie Sturge, minus Abi and Gus. And following Grant to the lagoon, Matt Procnier.



*Gary Sturge*

We didn't think there would be much at the lagoon, but there was enough to keep our interest going for 45 minutes. One of the highlights was seeing a Wood Duck with her fledglings (left). Nothing like a mother with her fledglings to illicit an "awww". Other ducks included

many, many Mallards; a female Northern Shoveler; and a male Blue-winged Teal.

Other birds seen were a Great Blue Heron sitting in the very dry cell; a Killdeer with its plaintive *kill-deer*; Tree and Barn Swallows flying low over both upper cells catching insects; Savannah and Song Sparrows; two Eastern Kingbirds; Red-winged Blackbirds; a male Bobolink; and a Common Raven flying overhead. On exiting the lagoon, Brent saw an Eastern Bluebird.



**Kaye Edmonds**

Then on to Hills Siding Road to hear the Sora (left) and hear it we did – twice! We tried for the Virginia Rail, but no luck. But making up for no Virginia Rail was an American Bittern. Other highlights included a great look at the Great-crested Flycatcher and hearing the Veery sing its full, ethereal Veery song made up of cascading *veer* notes. (Some heard either the Wood Thrush or the Hermit Thrush.)

Woodpeckers seen were the Northern Flicker and the Pileated. Sparrows seen or heard were the Swamp, the Song and the White-throated; warblers heard were an Ovenbird and a Yellow-rumped. A couple of Cedar Waxwings (below), an Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireos, Tree

Swallows, Common Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds and American Robins completed the birding part of Hills Siding Road.

But more than birds were seen. We heard many frogs, including the croaky bullfrog, and we saw a couple of Snowshoe Hares, a Raccoon and a White-tailed Deer. But the most exciting sighting, especially for Brent's and Laura's daughters, was a Midland Painted Turtle crossing the road. Gary helped it in its journey, but not before the girls got a chance to see it up close and personal! (See next page.)

By 8:30, we were on River Road, the ultimate destination to hear or see a Sedge Wren and a Le Conte's Sparrow, but again, despite all our efforts, Dick's especially, it was not to be. Still, we did get to see a Northern Harrier, more Cedar Waxwings, more Eastern Kingbirds, another American Robin, more



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Song and Savannah Sparrows, more Tree or Barn Swallows, more Common Grackles, more Red-winged Blackbirds, and in the warbler world, a Yellow Warbler and a Common Yellow-throat. Below is a photo of Gary, Connie and Grant, with Connie dressed against the biting blackflies/mosquitoes and Gary hamming it up.

With no Le Conte's and no Sedge Wren, the highlight may have been a huge sun setting on a lovely Summer Solstice evening. The sunset itself was not as spectacular as other years, but the sun itself surely was and it left a gorgeous orange glow in the sky as seen in the photo on the heading. Despite disappointing us with its lack of Sedge Wrens and Le Conte's Sparrows, River Road never disappoints when it comes to sunsets!

On our way back along Hills Siding Road, we saw a Porcupine, as did Gary and Connie who went home via Memorial Park Drive. (See next page.)

Not everyone was able to go to Dreany Lake to hear an Eastern Whip-poor-will, but for those



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there at 10:05, they were rewarded with a constant *whip-poor-will*, *whip-poor-will* that must drive those in the resort trailer park mad – or maybe it is just absorbed into their consciousness much like city traffic is if one lived in a busy city. (Because most of us never see one, just hear one, the photo below the Porcupine shows you what an Eastern Whip-poor-will looks like.)



**Gary Sturge**

### **Great Canadian Birdathon:**

As of the writing of this report, Dick has raised approximately \$1,500.00 as a result of his participation in the Great Canadian Birdathon this past May. This amount includes online and in-person donations. The money raised goes to Bird Studies Canada for bird preservation and conservation, with a percentage returned to a nature-related club of Dick's choice. This year, Dick chose Bird Wing. Interestingly, most of the donations came from non-birders, so any birders who have not yet donated and wish to do

so, can make a donation directly to Dick or online at:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon/team/tafelot/captain/richard-tafel/>. Please consider doing so.

### **Nocturnal Owl Survey:**

The Nocturnal Owl Survey reports written by a member of each team have now been sent to all birders, so you know that the winning team is that of Gary, Connie and Rachel



**Birds of North America**

Sturge and new-comer Matt Proconier, who is credited with bringing the Sturges luck this year. And luck they had, hearing/seeing 18 owls, 4 of them repeaters, as well as three species of owls – Barred and Northern Saw-whet (right), the target species for Central Ontario, and a Great Horned Owl. Quite the feat! (However, seems to me, they have one of the best routes. Give them Sand Dam Road or McConnell Lake Road and see how they do!!)

Hope you read all the reports because they are a good read and may even inspire you to take part next April. The reports are posted on the Nipissing Naturalists Club website at <https://www.nipnats.com/club-activities/bird-wing/reports-and-bird-counts/>. Scroll down past Year End Reports until you come to Owl Reports.



*Dave Palangio*

### **Nightjar Survey:**

As if the Nocturnal Owl Survey and the American Woodcock Survey aren't enough for the Sturges, they, along with Matt Proconier, volunteered to take part in the Nightjar Survey to be held between June 15 and July 15. They will be doing an assigned route along Hwy 534. (The nightjars in our area are Common Nighthawks (below) and Eastern Whip-poor-wills.) Results will be available for July's Bird Wing Report.



*Ernie Frayle*

Kevin Hannah, biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, emailed me in early June with a request for volunteers for this survey, and as far as I am aware, only Gary Sturge responded. (Some of you may remember Kevin from his February 2016 Bird Wing presentation on winter finches based on his winter finch assessment – can it really have been that long ago???)

### **Breeding Bird Survey:**

This year, on June 24, I accompanied Paul Smylie on the Breeding Bird Survey. Not easy. I had to get up at 3:30 a.m. to leave the house by 4:00 a.m. to meet Paul at Tim Horton's at 4:15 a.m. I could have left a bit later because there is virtually no traffic at that time of the morning and a drive that usually takes 15 minutes, took 5. The extra 10 minutes of sleep could have come in handy!



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The survey is conducted by those who can hear even the faintest of bird songs, some from a distance. That is not me. Try hearing a Black and White Warbler (left) against the constant song of the Red-eyed Vireo! Paul is able to and I can only assume others who are much younger than I am or who have keener ears than I have can hear some of these very faint distant songs. And to hear anything that is as high-pitched as most of the warbler songs are against the traffic on Lake Nosbonsing and Wasi Roads, well, that is certainly another challenge. By the end of our 5 hours along Trout Pond Road, Development Road, South Shore Road, Village Road, Lake Nosbonsing Road and part of Wasi Road, I thought bird songs would never leave my head. I think I started hearing songs where there were none!

We saw/heard about 65 bird species along the route, and if it weren't for Paul isolating some of the bird songs for me, I would have not heard that many, certainly not the Black and White and maybe not even the Nashville, and a couple of others with whose song I am not familiar. We also heard a Coyote or a wolf; saw a couple of Raccoons and Snowshoe Hares; and most exciting of all, watched a Red Fox play with a mole the way a cat would. (See next page.)



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We also saw a magnificent sunrise along beautiful Trout Pond Road with its rolling hills and farms.

I was certainly tired by the time I got home and still quite tired the next day, but it was a great experience thanks to Paul, and one I am glad I did and maybe will do again next year.

### **Fellowship of Bird Watching Rotarians:**

Dick Tafel helped at the booth of the Fellowship of Bird Watching Rotarians during the International Rotary Convention held the last week of June at the Air Canada Centre, Toronto. This group of the Rotary Club got its start in 1991 when the Rotary Convention was held in Mexico City. That year, there was a bird walk near the convention centre and since then,



*Courtesy of Dick Tafel*

Rotarians who like birding, and there are many of them, get together for a bird walk near the site of where the annual convention is held – and these conventions are held all over the world

wherever there are Rotarians. This year, because the convention was in Toronto, the bird walk was at High Park.

The initiator of the Fellowship of Bird Watching was none other than Dick – no surprises there! He was president of the group from 1991 until 2002.

### **Eastern Bluebird House:**

An update on the Eastern Bluebird house that I got for Christmas for my The Year of the Bird project: It was a house especially designed to keep out House Sparrows, but it did not live up to its claim! A House Sparrow found it even though Lori Anderson did not put it up near her barn, but down by Graham Lake, a distance away from the barn. The sparrow couple moved in and an egg got laid!!

### **Bird Bash:**

The next Bird Bash takes place **the weekend of July 21 and 22. Bird Wing Outing:**

The next Bird Wing outing will take place **Tuesday, July 24, starting at 6:30 p.m.** Last year, we came upon an abandoned golf course on Hornibrook Road and some Wild Turkeys in a tree, after which some of us who did not have a GPS got lost and arrived back in North Bay after it was dark! That outing has gone down in the annals of times, not forgotten by those who participated!

I will inform you ahead of time where we plan to go and where we are to meet for carpooling. If anyone has any ideas on where we can meet for carpooling, please let me know. I am thinking in the parking lot near Sears where there are not as many vehicles parked so we can find one another without our having to wave flags or wander around from vehicle to vehicle.

### **Happy Canada Jay:**

And in closing this month, Happy Canada Jay!! We Canadian birders are very happy to have its name back!! To mark this occasion and in hopes we will one day get a national bird, I borrowed very loosely from the last stanza of “The Canadian Authors Meet”, a poem written in 1945 by Canadian poet, F. R. Scott:

*O can a jay, O can a jay, O  
Can a jay go by  
Without birders wanting to make it our national bird, and plan  
More ways to make that happen.*



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