

Bird Wing Report

April 2019

By Renee Levesque, Bird Wing Scribe

For many reasons, I do not have the time this month to do my usual Bird Wing Report and I apologize for that, but to find the time with all that is going on in my world these days would not be easy – doable, but not easy.

Presentation: Before the meeting got underway, Dick Tafel, chairman, was presented with a gift from Bird Wing members by Steve Pitt. It was a gift righting the fact that 20 years ago, Grant McKercher did not get a photo of the Spruce Grouse, Dick's nemesis bird at the time, perched on top of Dick's head. Grant's camera battery died after he took one of Cal Osborne with the grouse on his head. So here we are 20 years later making up for Grant's not being camera-prepared. From now on, it is required that Dick wear this hat for at least part of the meeting, the part where we say who we are and then list two birds seen that month.

If you are reading this, Cal, maybe you can get the photo at right printed and place it beside your photo that Dick tells me you keep on your mantel – or at least once did. For those who don't know the story, it is in April's *The Woodland Observer*. However, I have attached the article to this report for those who don't get the newsletter.



Kaye Edmonds

Overview: April's Bird Wing meeting was held at Space 176 in Meeting Room A to accommodate Michael Arthurs' wonderful presentation on the owls he saw while visiting Amherst Island (near Kingston and in the St. Lawrence) twice this spring and once last year. Last year, there were 18 Snowy Owls seen by Michael; this year, none. But making up for that

lack were many Northern Saw-whet Owls, many Barred Owls, a few Long-eared Owls and an influx of Short-eared Owls. In fact, it was a banner year for the Short-eared. Michael saw 28 of them in a 5-acre field!

Michael also showed us some great photos of Long-tailed Ducks gathered by the thousands on the St Lawrence, and some photos of Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks.

To read about Long-tailed Ducks, see May's issue of *The Woodland Observer*, <https://www.nipnats.com/newsletters/>. This interesting duck was highlighted as an early spring find because one was surprisingly seen on Smith Lake off Hwy 630 by Kaye Edmonds over the Easter weekend, and subsequently by me and Dick Tafel, and includes photos from Michael, as well as Kaye and Stephen O'Donnell.

All other birds mentioned at the meeting are itemized in Dick Tafel's April Bird Bash Report and will not be repeated here. If you did not get a copy of the Bird Bash Report, you can view it online at <https://www.nipnats.com/bird-wing/bird-bash-reports>. Despite a cold spring, the birds are migrating, maybe somewhat more slowly than in the past, but 102 species were observed during April's Bird Bash, well above our average of 96 species for April!!

Shown below was a typical April scene of hundreds of Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows seen everywhere during the April Bird bash weekend and beyond.



Renee Levesque

Nocturnal Owl Survey: For those teams who were able to do their owl survey, please designate one person on your team to write a report and send it to me as soon as possible. Can the trophy be taken away from the Sturge team? Did anyone see many owls, more than one species of owl

or a charging moose? At the meeting, two teams that had completed their survey were quite secretive about what they saw and heard, although one owl tried to listen in on a conversation by an opposing owl, but was caught red-handed! (Since the writing of this report, the Sturge team has submitted their report.)

Great Canadian Birdathon (GCB): The date has been set – **May 25 and 26** - and the race is on! This is another event in which a trophy is at stake. The Le Mans start will take place on May 25 in the parking lot of the former Sears at 1:00 p.m. SHARP! It will end at 1:00 p.m. SHARP on May 26 at Country Style Donuts on Seymour Street.

This team in 2015 did find some time to stop for a photo op (right), but this is highly unusual as we race against the clock for the coveted trophy.

Points will be deducted if a team does not arrive on time. I recently read about other Birdathon teams outside our region and discovered they actually do adhere to this rule and lose points if they arrive late.

Other rules: at least 2 team members must see or hear the bird and playing a bird song to lure the bird is not allowed. There is a full point for seeing the bird and half a point for hearing it.

If you are interested in competing, let me or Dick Tafel know. And all who compete and all who don't, please consider donating to Dick who will be collecting donations on behalf of Bird Studies Canada with a percentage of the donations going towards a nature club of Dick's choice – hopefully Bird Wing again. Dick has the official donation forms and if he also sets up an online GCB account through Bird Studies Canada, I will provide the link.



Renee Levesque

Surveys, Watches, Counts: Many bird watches, counts and surveys take place throughout May and June and even beyond. Your participation in at least one would be helpful. See May's *The Woodland Observer* for a complete list. (Link provided above in the section dealing with the Long-tailed Duck.)

Bird Bash: May's Bird Bash takes place over the same weekend as the Great Canadian Birdathon, **May 25 and 26**. Most of the wood warblers should be here by that time. At the time of the meeting, only the Pine and Yellow-rumped had returned and in very small numbers. Sarah Wheelan was the first to report a Pine Warbler at her feeder. (See photo at right.) The Pine, an early arrival, is one of the very few warblers to make use of feeders.

Bird Wing Outings:

April's meeting marked the last of the meetings until September. In May, we begin the outings, still on the 4th Tuesday of every month. The first may be led by Bird Wing member, David Rooke, at Seguin Beach and area. A variety of birds is usually found here and it is an opportunity to bird in an area that is on private property. It will be a daytime outing. Details will be sent by email to all members ahead of time, so stay tuned.



Sarah Wheelan

In the meantime, bird walks through Laurier Woods led by Dick Tafel began on **Saturday, May 4, and will be held every Saturday morning throughout May, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.**