

Bird Wing Report

February 2025



Bird Wing Events

Nocturnal Owl Survey: One of the yearly events we look forward to is April's Nocturnal Owl Survey, Birds Canada. **Please let me know if you plan to volunteer and on what route.**



Oriana Pokorny has two routes. However, she will not be here in April and it would be important that members take over her routes, especially the route we all craved for these many years, Gary and Connie Sturge's old route. Maybe, Rachel, you and Nanda can take it on??? However, if not, Oriana will gladly go over the route with you, even driving it with you during the day. It is an important route because it yields many owls. I call it the Powassan route because it encompasses Hwy 534.

Oriana's other route is the Sand Dam Road and roads beyond, a difficult northern route to access unless our snow melts quickly and judging by the sheer amount we got this year, that is highly unlikely. So to take you along this route will be difficult before Oriana leaves, but she can go over it with you.

Oriana usually does Gary and Connie's route in early April, but has to leave the Sand Dam Road Route until late April in hopes that the snow has melted, and even then sometimes by jeep, she just can't access the roads beyond it.

If either of these routes appeals to you, please contact Oriana at orianap@nipissingu.ca or let me know at reneelevessque91@gmail.com.

I believe there are other routes open in our area: Songis Road and the route from Mattawa to Hwy 63. Please contact Kathy Jones at Birds Canada for any additional information: volunteer@birdscanada.org.

Bird Wing: Our next Bird Wing Zoom meeting is on **Tuesday, March 25, starting at 7:00 p.m.** We will be showing the CD entitled *Hawk Watch*, a *Video Guide To Eastern Raptors*, just in time to help you identify the raptors in our area, like the juvenile Peregrine Falcon shown at right.

Bird Bash: March's Bird Bash takes place over the weekend of March 29-30. Surely we won't have bad weather then as we had during January and February's Bird Bashes. And we should definitely see some early spring migrants!



Birds Seen in February



Garry Waldram

Great Gray Owl: Although to my knowledge the Great Gray Owl was not mentioned at the meeting, I have to start with it because it is after all, the Great Gray (above). It was first spotted by Garry Waldram in Calvin Township and subsequently seen by many others – Dick Tafel, Linda Stoner, Pat Stack, Kim Johnson, Stephen O'Donnell and me. (Apparently there are three in that area.) However, after the Nipissing Naturalists Club's outing with Garry and Fred Pinto on March 2 to see the owl, I am sure many others have now seen it. I will mention more about this outing in March's Bird Wing Report.

Common Raven: Next is Catherine Mills' sighting of a Common Raven, a bird most of us have seen. It is one of the common winter birds in our area. It is also the most intelligent of birds, a great mimic despite its gurgling croaks, and with its long wings and graceful wingbeats, it is an acrobatic flyer doing somersaults in the air and flying upside down. For this reason, **Stephen O'Donnell's photo of one in the snow on the cover** could not be more appropriate for one of our coldest and snowiest winters in some time. If you want to see a large conspiracy (or flock) of ravens, landfill sites are great places to see one.

Canada Crow: Another all-black bird that is also intelligent and also mimics is the Canada Crow seen by Kim Stahl and probably most of us. Many stay with us all winter in the City and very recently, I have seen a couple come to my northern North Bay area checking things out. At some point in March, they take over the ravens that dominate my area in the winter.

Snow Bunting: I don't think there has been a February when many of us have not seen a drift of Snow Buntings, a bird mentioned by Denise Desmarais. She saw them in the Verner area, specifically at the Co-op Feed Centre, where they were seen there by Dick, Linda, Garry, Pat and me – and perhaps other birders. Others, like Lori Anderson – and also Garry – saw them in farm fields in Chisholm and Calvin Townships, and Dick and I saw some at North Bay's landfill site.

Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs: I made mention of the many Horned Larks seen this month in the Verner area, at times about 75 of them and at other times close to 200. They were mainly in the fields across from the Co-op Feed Centre, but also on the road in front of the Centre and on the grounds of the Centre itself. They were also seen by Dick, Garry, Denise, Linda and Pat. In amongst them were anywhere from 10 to 40 Snow Buntings and from 3 to 15 Lapland Longspurs depending on the date and time of the sighting. It wasn't always easy to spot the Lapland Longspurs what with the Horned Larks rarely staying put, but instead flying constantly from one area to another. On the road and at the Feed Centre, the Longspurs could be seen more easily, but to identify them further off in the fields, a scope came in handy. The Lapland Longspurs were also seen by Dick and Garry and perhaps others. Photos of the Lapland Longspur (at left) and Horned Lark (at right) are below.



Renee Levesque

Brown Creeper: Angela Mills saw the Brown Creeper, but I am not sure many of us have seen it yet. It is a tiny and slender brown and white tree creeper that begins its spiraling climb up the tree trunk from the bottom of the trunk, using its stiff tail for support and holding on by means of its long, curved claws.

White and Red-breasted Nuthatches: Two other birds that like to climb trees are the Red and White-breasted Nuthatches. Rick Tripp has some of both coming to his feeders. Faye Oei has the Red-breasted coming to hers, as do I, and Dick has the White-breasted. I am sure many others have seen both nuthatches. The Red-breasted is a small plump bird with a short tail and a sharp bill that creeps any which-way on tree trunks in search of food. The White-breasted is also compact with a short tail and a sharp bill, most often seen going down the tree trunk, though it also moves up and around.

Woodpeckers: Grant McKercher was the only one to mention seeing a Black-backed Woodpecker (at right) that he saw on the Wasi cross-county ski trails on Lake Nosbonsing Road, Astorville. For those who want to see this often hard-to-find woodpecker, March is a good time to try and find one. Peacock Road in South River and Machar Strong Boundary Road near Cheer Lake Road, Sundridge, is another good place.

Mary Young continues to have the Red-bellied Woodpecker come to her feeders. This has become almost a yearly Christmas Bird Count and winter event at Mary's. Dick also managed to see it at Mary's feeder.

Barbara Lee has a Pileated coming to her feeders, and I am sure some others have seen this woodpecker that cannot help but delight everyone who sees it, including Barbara's cat – an indoor cat that watches this big woodpecker through the window. I have two that come to my special squirrel-proof cage-like Brome feeder, but they have some problems managing it. And many have seen the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers.

Ruffed Grouse: Pat also saw a Ruffed Grouse and I am sure others have too. I have one that comes to my yard most early mornings and late afternoons, the times during winter days they seem to like to eat. Did you know that Ruffed Grouse, like Snow Buntings, will bury under the snow to keep warm and to avoid predators? This behaviour is known as snow roosting.

Northern Cardinal: Dick and I saw a Northern Cardinal recently by Sweetman's Gardens. This is no doubt a relief to Rick and his neighbours, as Dick no longer has to stalk Rick's Callander area looking for Rick's pair!

In the winter 2025 edition of Cornell Lab's *Living Bird*, there is a beautiful illustration of a male and female Northern Cardinal by Lauren Richelieu. Lauren views the cardinal as "a symbol of nature's enduring spirit and quiet elegance, even in the depths of winter."



Stephen O'Donnell

Finches: Many have seen Canadian Goldfinches this winter, sometimes in large flocks and sometimes just one or two. Other finch-like birds seen by some, including Kim Johnson, are Evening Grosbeaks (at right) whose population has plummeted greatly since 1966. There is an Evening Grosbeak Working Group that is part of the Road to Recovery Initiative, a group of scientists trying to identify the reasons for the bird's decline. Road to Recovery is an independently funded collaboration with a focus on the recovery of the most rapidly declining birds here in Canada and in the United States. In addition to the Evening Grosbeak, focus is also on the Golden-winged Warbler, Lesser Yellowlegs and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. If you wish to refresh your memory or read it for the first time, I wrote about the Road to Recovery initiative in the February 2024 Bird Wing Report starting on page 17.



Faye Johnson

Canada Jay: Dick and I saw a Canada Jay in West Nipissing on Levac Road, not a place we usually see this bird, although one year we also unexpectedly saw one on Veuve River Road. We had been looking for one in all the usual places with no luck, so for us it was a bonus to see it when we weren't expecting to see it in this area.

Bald Eagle: No one mentioned the Bald Eagle, but no doubt some have seen one. The most spectacular number of adult Bald Eagles that Dick and I and Garry saw during the February Bird Bash was at the Sturgeon Falls Landfill Site. We saw 20 or more but were told sometimes there are up to 60. I am not a fan of showing a photo of one standing in garbage, as seen below, but the truth is this is where they can be found in the winter.



Renee Levesque

Ring-necked Pheasants: Lori saw five Ring-necked Pheasants at her place – 4 females and a male - and although eBird does not recognize them here as a wild bird – not yet anyway – they are a delight to see because they rarely seem to be seen. Since seeing them, Lori reports one was killed by a car. I saw two males near Lori's in December. So if you want to see them, comb the roads of Chisholm Township.

Sparrows: Grant still has the White-throated Sparrow coming to his feeder and I have 10 Canadian Tree Sparrows coming to mine. I used to get 11, but perhaps the Northern Shrike I saw in my yard got it. Some of us have seen the shrike in various locales, although I don't think we have seen nearly as many shrikes this winter as we did last winter.

Mourning Dove: Mary has many Mourning Doves (a photo of one at right) at her feeders, as does Keith Thornborrow in South River – I believe over 20 for both. I haven't seen them anywhere else so far this winter, but maybe others have.

(I had to be absent for about 10 minutes of the meeting when I lost power, had to find my cord and then had to wait to be re-let into the meeting, so some may have seen them elsewhere. Thanks to Angela for filling me in on what birds were seen while I was gone.)

Ducks: Mallards, Canadian Black Ducks, and Common Goldeneyes were not mentioned, but all three have been seen in Bonfield and Mattawa, and the first two in Trout Lake by the Green Store on Hwy. 63.

- *Renee Levesque*



Gary Chowns

Seeds and Cones

Lifers: From Denise Desmarais: “I got a lifer one January morning from my kitchen window, though I had to venture out in the cold to be sure. I saw a flock of something or another land in my neighbour's spruce tree, and with my binoculars I could see they were red. I could also see wing bars, so I figured they were either Pine Grosbeaks or White-winged Crossbills. Since White-winged Crossbills (photo at right) would be a lifer for me, I put on my jacket and had a closer look. Once I was closer, I could see that they were crossbills, my first lifer of 2025 and a good way to start my week.”



Renee Levesque

Black King Penguin: In 2024 when Belgium photographer and expedition leader, Yves Adams, had just landed on South Georgia Island, he saw and captured on film an ultra-rare sight – a King Penguin completely covered with black feathers - a pure melanistic penguin! Colour aberrations in birds, such as the production of too much melanin as is the case with this all-black penguin, tend to be a disadvantage, putting this King Penguin at risk when swimming because its black belly will not blend into the water below. Mr. Adams reports he was lucky the penguin landed near him because it could easily have been missed in a sea of thousands of penguins on Salisbury Plain, South Georgia.

But this is truly amazing: In 2019, the same photographer on the same island saw and photographed another ultra-rare penguin, a yellow King Penguin! In this case, the opposite happened – melanin was not produced and, therefore, the black feathers became a yellow, creamy colour. Again, Mr. Adams just happened to spot it swimming and coming ashore with a few other King Penguins. It too could have easily been lost amongst the thousands of other penguins. (Although Mr. Adams spotted the yellow penguin in 2019, he did not release his photographs until 2021.)

I can't show you Mr. Adams copyright photos of each of the penguins, but you can see the yellow one at: <https://www.livescience.com/yellow-penguin-south-georgia.html> and the black one on You Tube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PmyhoIgZNk>.

(In late January, Mr. Adams just completed a phototour for 5 people to see Snowy Owls in Canada. If anyone is interested in his phototours and photographs, see: <https://www.yvesadams.com/> and click on Photo Tours at the end of the page.)

Eastern Screech Owl: Last month in “Seeds and Cones”, I showed a photo of Greg Jaski’s Eastern Screech Owl in its nesting box in Greg’s backyard in Beaverton. However, I misidentified it as a Northern Saw-whet Owl. (This has been corrected in the report posted on the Nip Nats website.)

But a White-breasted Nuthatch made an even bigger mistake than I did. It thought the owl’s box might make a nice nesting box for it. It too was mistaken! See Greg’s photos below.



Greg Jaski

Wisdom astonishes again: In January’s report, I wrote about Wisdom, the 74-year old Laysan Albatross who laid an egg at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Centre. She is the oldest known wild bird in the world, which is astonishing enough, but to lay an egg is even more astonishing, and then to have that egg hatch is super astonishing. Despite a 70 to 80 % chance that the egg would hatch, it did just that on January 30!

(Midway is part of the Hawaiian archipelago and home to the largest colony of albatross in the world. At least 2 to 3 million arrive on its breeding grounds each year.)

It was Wisdom’s mate who was with the chick when it was hatched. At the time, Wisdom was out at sea replenishing her energy. She returned on February 6 to care for her chick while her partner then went off to replenish his energy.

For videos of Wisdom and her partner and their chick, see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me7tvLJVmqI>

and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dBNec-KBvU>

Grey Hairy: Ed Rowley sent me a photo (at right) of what is definitely a Hairy Woodpecker, but with a grey back and grey belly. At first I thought it might be a Pacific Hairy, but Pacific Hairys have brownish underparts. To be sure, I sent the photo to Mike Burrell who said, “I think it is more likely that it has gotten stained somehow - maybe it got stuck in a chimney and covered in soot? The darker versions found along the Pacific tend to have more of a tawny colouration to the underparts, rather than the grey this one does.”



Ed Rowley

Lego art: Roy Scholten is a Netherlands-based artist and printmaker with a love for birds. This love has resulted in his creating 50 handmade prints of various European species, one of which is the Sanderling (at left) that we see here on its migration south. “Each print is made using Lego letterpress, combining individual blocks into stamps to recreate birds’ shapes and patterns.” (*The Guardian*, December 16, 2024.)

Birds, says Scholten, “are daily reminders of the richness of our natural surroundings. They can fly! How cool is that! Sadly most species are in decline, which makes it all the more worthwhile to really look and appreciate them.”

If one of these beautiful prints is not already sold out, you can buy one for around 340 euro. See: <https://www.royscholten.nl/project/50-birds/>.

Out-of-season birds: Dick and I saw 5 American Robins in Garden Village on January 15, and Garry Waldram saw one near Bonfield on February 25. Garry also saw a Belted Kingfisher in the Bonfield area on January 23 and in mid-February (photo at right); and Grant McKercher’s White-throated Sparrow continues to come to his feeders. Perhaps it remained for a purpose. See the collage that follows highlighting its song, *Oh sweet Canada, Canada, Canada*.



Garry Waldram

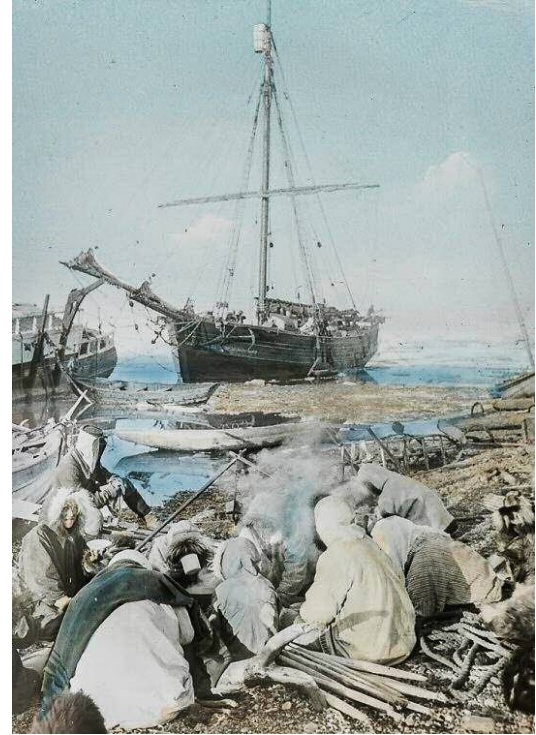


Birding the NW Passage

My adventures in August 2023

By Fred Pinto (with Renee Levesque); photos as indicated

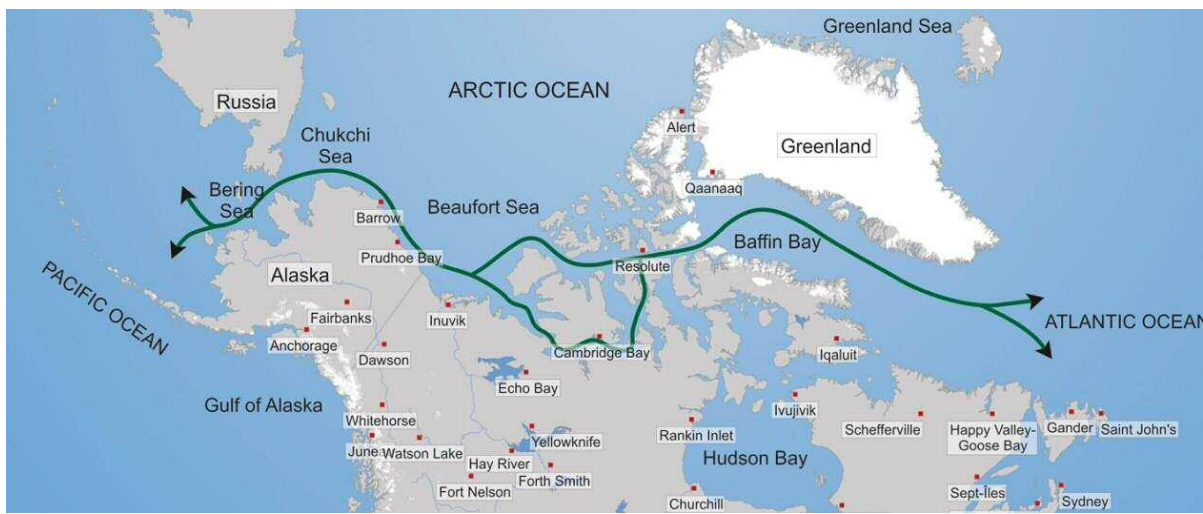
We are all aware of the historic Northwest Passage, a westward route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean that for over 400 years many explorers like Baffin, McClure and Sir John Franklin, sought and failed to find. It wasn't until the early 1900s that the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, finally navigated it successfully. (Photo of his ship is at right.) It is a route embedded in our imaginations from studying these explorers in school and later getting caught up in the Franklin mystery. Just like those days of long ago, if you wish to sail through the Northwest Passage, as I did in August 2023, you have to determine the best time to plan your trip due to weather, ice conditions and remoteness.



Earlier in the summer, ice conditions and the very remote location preclude sailing even with well-provisioned ships that have ice-hardened hulls. By September, daylight becomes limited and storms are more frequent. Therefore, the best time to sail through the NW Passage is August, although August is late in the season for observing birds and mammals because of their short breeding and feeding season.

The best time for birding is in June when migratory birds arrive for their brief breeding season, a season when they are at their most observable. The adults and young use the pulse of food produced as the day length increases, the waters warm up, and freshwater with dissolved nutrients pours across the land and into the sea.

However, the Canadian Coast Guard will not allow you to transit the NW passage in June when the ice is very thick. If you want to go at the height of breeding season, there are alternative wildlife viewing trips in May and June – and until September – that depart from Norway or Iceland and travel to Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago between mainland Norway and the North Pole. These trips are less expensive than sailing through the Canadian Arctic. A map of the NW passage is below.



There are many protocols to follow and permits to obtain to travel through the Canadian Arctic. There are no permanent resources there to help if a ship has a problem. Even airlifting a sick passenger is very expensive and in many cases impossible due to the weather and remoteness.

The Arctic is a very large region with different geology, topography, soils, daily and seasonal temperature fluctuations, wind conditions, etc., which create different habitat conditions. In the East, there is generally more nutrient-poor granitic rocks and rugged landscapes; in the Yukon and eastern Alaska, there are nutrient-rich sedimentary rocks and silty soils; and further west, the landscape becomes rugged again with mountains and cliffs.

Before starting my trip, I studied the ecological conditions we would encounter to better prepare for the birdlife I might see in different parts of the Arctic. For example, I wanted to determine when we would encounter an Ivory Gull, a gull that winters in the Arctic and one that is extremely rare and endangered. There has been a rapid decline of the Ivory Gull in Canada, by approximately 80% since the 1980s. Because it is an ice floe bird, I was more likely to see it when we were the furthest north, around Devon and Beechy Islands, areas where we could encounter floe ice and icebergs. Unfortunately, I did not see an Ivory Gull because the floe ice had melted and was many miles north of us.

The Ivory Gull (photo at right) is the only all-white gull, with no known subspecies. Adults are entirely white with dark eyes, black legs and a yellow-tipped bill. The immature Ivory has dusty speckling on its face and black speckling on its wings and tail. It takes two years to attain full adult plumage.

I used the same process to determine when I would most likely be able to see Cackling Geese, Arctic Loons, Thayer's Gulls and Sabine Gulls. Floe ice is ice that forms solid sheets that float on top of the sea. The portion of the ice that is underwater is an important habitat for microscopic life that feeds larger sea creatures like crustaceans, shellfish, and fish like Arctic cod, which, in turn, feed birds and mammals. As we sailed from Greenland to Baffin Island, the floe ice disappeared overnight. With its disappearance, sightings of icebergs, birds, whales, and seals also became scarce.



Jomilo, Wikimedia Commons

I saw the slender, tern-like Long-tailed Jaeger (photo at right) in Gjoa Haven, an Inuit hamlet in Nunavut on King William Island, and although that was exciting, there was something extra special about actually setting foot in historic Gjoa Haven, named after Amundsen's ship, Gjoa, and the only settlement on the island.

Near Gjoa Haven is where Franklin's two ships, the *HMS Erebus* and the *HMS Terror*, became trapped in ice and where the crew spent the winters of 1846-47 and 1847-48. In 1848, both ships were abandoned and the 129 men on board were never found. It is considered the worst disaster in the history of British polar explorations. A painting of Franklin's *HMS Erebus* (below) by Francois Etienne Musin hangs in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.



Ted Gatlin



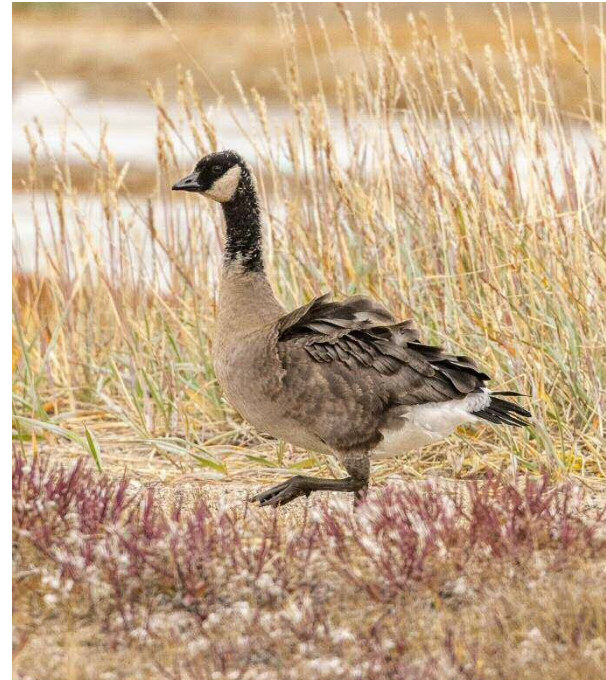
In 2014 and 2016, the wrecks of both these ships were discovered near Gjoa Haven. Both remain there under water, now a National Historic Site managed jointly by Inuit and Parks Canada. The discovery of the two ships and the artifacts from them are considered the most important archaeological finds in recent history. Photos of some of these artifacts are online at:

<https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/nu/epaveswrecks/culture/archeologie-archeology/artefacts-artifacts>.

The best preserved artifact is the bell of the *Erebus*, now sealed in a tank of distilled water in an environmentally secure location at Parks Canada Conservation Laboratory in Ottawa, although there is a replica of the bell in Gjoa Haven. Eventually some of the artifacts will get displayed at the Nattilik Heritage Centre in Gjoa Haven.

Cackling Geese (photo at right) migrate mainly through the central flyway, and because the majority of these birds migrate west of Hudson Bay, they are rarely seen in our region, even though every year some of us spend many hours looking for them. I got my first look at Cackling Geese in the ponds around Cambridge Bay. They are distinctly smaller than Canada Geese, though this feature is difficult to discern from a distance. They also have a stubbier bill and a shorter neck, the latter more obvious when they are flying.

I knew that I had only a small opportunity to see Arctic Loons. They are widespread across Eurasia, where they are known as Black-throated Divers. To see one on my journey, I determined my best chance would be as we sailed through the Bering Strait between Alaska and Russia. And I did! The Arctic Loon (photo below) is a handsome bird with its pale grey head and hind neck, its black and white stripes along the sides of its neck and its dark chin and throat.



Ted Gatlin



Ian Davies, Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab

The number of bird species in the Arctic is small, but some areas host very large numbers. Prince Leopold Island (photo on next page) is an Important Birding Area (IBA) with as many as 400,000 nesting birds, most of which are Thick-Billed Murres, large, stocky, black and white seabirds with a thick bill, as its name implies. Before they can fly, the fledglings jump from their nests located on the cliff's edge into the water below where

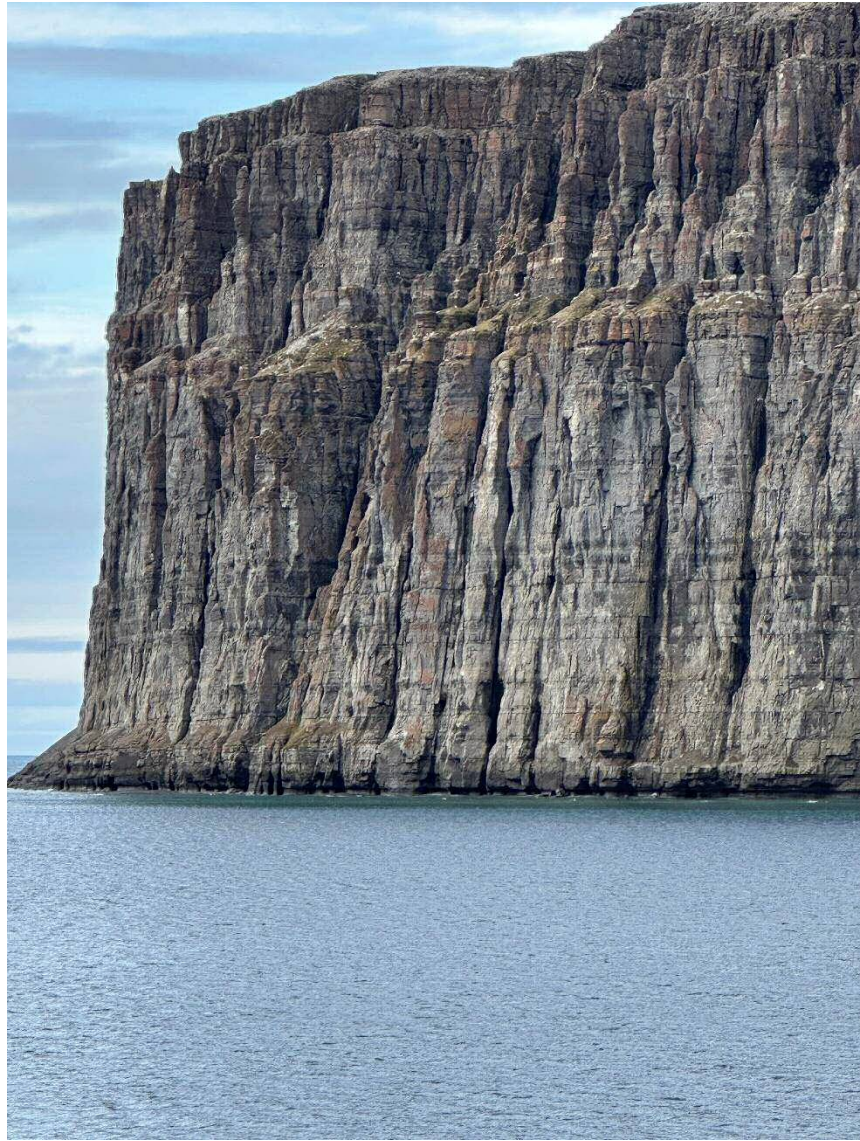
their male parents are waiting to feed them, to teach them how to fish and to lead them to their winter habitat in places like northern Quebec, Labrador and the Atlantic provinces. The female parents remain in the colony for several more weeks.

The flocking behaviour of Arctic birds makes the spread of infectious diseases, such as Avian Flu, very easy. At the midpoint of our travels, we came across a very large number of recently dead birds, primarily Long-tailed Ducks and Glaucous Gulls, birds we see in our area in small numbers in the late fall. We did not go ashore that day as we did not want to contaminate our ship. Bio-decontamination is taken very seriously in the Arctic. Our clothes are inspected before trips ashore, and footwear is decontaminated after every trip ashore.

Seeing puffins is a delight! They are fun to look at and they don't fail to bring a smile to the faces of observers. They have a high-speed wing beat, a distinctive rounded body shape and colourful bills. Numerous Atlantic Puffins (photo below) were seen around Iceland and also seen in Greenland and the Baffin Strait.



Renee Levesque



Fred Pinto

Tufted and Horned Puffins (photo of Horned on top of next page) were common in the west in the area around the Diomed Islands. The Diomed Islands are in the middle of the Bering Strait between mainland Alaska and Siberia. The larger island is Russian territory, and the smaller is American. I was surprised to see a Tufted Puffin attacked by a Peregrine Falcon as I stood outside on the observation deck with other birders. Both birds disappeared under the water and then both reappeared as the

Peregrine Falcon, behaving like an Osprey, lifted the puffin out of the water and flew back to its roost!

The Tufted Puffin, found in the Pacific, is the largest of the puffin species and the Atlantic, found in the Atlantic as its name implies, is the smallest. The Tufted (photo below) has thick golden tufts above its eyes, and the Horned, also found in the Pacific, has a black fleshy line or “horn”, pointing upwards from the top of its eye.

I observed 46 different bird species on this trip, sixteen of them lifers for me. I’m not sure what all the species were that those long-ago explorers found on their voyages, but one gull, the Franklin’s Gull, was definitely a lifer for Sir John!



U.S. Fish and Wildlife



Dan Busby

The fascination of owls

By Renee Levesque

They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time. (Naturalists Henry Beston on all wild animals.)

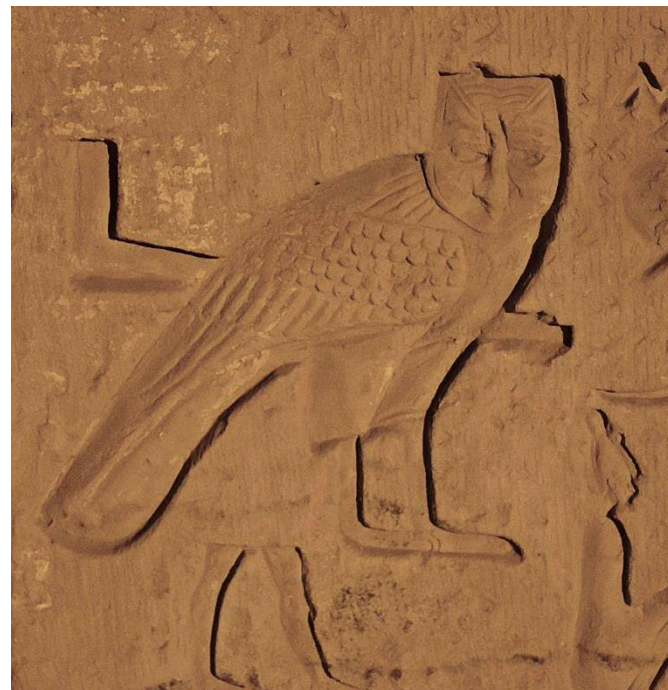


Great Gray Owl, Renee Levesque

What makes owls so fascinating? Is it their human visage – their flat faces, their big rounded heads and their large front-facing eyes? Or is it their nocturnal nature, their swiveling necks, their sensory powers, and their eerie calls, screeches and hoots that spook the night air? Or perhaps it is their silent flight? There they are without warning!

Whatever the reason, owls go way, way back with humans. There are images of them throughout the ages, even back to ancient times. (At right is an image of one from the Temple of Sobek, Kom Ombo, Egypt.) There are proverbs about them, myths about them and stories about them. Sometimes they are presented as benevolent, sometimes as wise, sometimes as evil.

Some owls may seem calm and easy-going, but if they sense danger, they hold completely still, blending in with the trees, “trying to be invisible, trying not to die.” They disappear by depending on camouflage, by staying put.



Renee Levesque

This is particularly true of small owls, owls that are vulnerable to predators.

Owls are not mini-humans with feathers. They are not mirrors of us. We, in comparison, are big and clumsy and noisy. Owls have a keen sense of hearing, and are very sensitive to sounds. If they are to survive – and starvation is one of the main threats to an owl's survival – they have to be able to catch their prey.

Owls are very sensitive. If you see an owl, respect its ability to hunt. Keep your distance. Stay quiet and move slowly. Avoid loud or sudden noises. Do not flush it. Do not use a flash or floodlight. Do not bait it. Do not follow it if it flies away. Do not go off a trail to pursue it. Do not stop your vehicle near one – rather drive past and park or park before you reach the owl and approach on foot. Do not keep your vehicle running. Photograph it quietly and from a distance. Try and help the owl realize by your body language that you are not a threat. Move further away if you see the owl's behaviour changing and move on after a while.

To avoid drawing a crowd – and crowds can be loud and intimidating – use discretion in sharing information. Ebird considers most owl sightings sensitive and does not post where the owl is seen. Ontario Bird Alerts (OBA) also does not post owl locations. And if you post your sightings and/or photographs on social media, you can delay your postings.

Disturbances by viewers use up an owl's valuable hunting energy, especially during cold winter months. At all times, the well-being of the owl – any bird for that matter - comes first.

(Note: Information contained in this article comes from Jennifer Ackerman's book, *What An Owl Knows*; from All About Birds, Cornell Lab; from Ontario Federation of Ornithology; from eBird; and from Ontario Birds Alert.)



Northern Saw-whet Owl, Gary Chowns

Bird Wing Business

Year End Report: Angela Mills, Bird Wing's Treasurer, presented Bird Wing's Year End Annual Report for 2024 at our meeting on March 25, 2025. At the end of 2024, we had a total of \$1025.83 in our Bird Wing account.

Renewal of membership: If you have not already renewed your 2025 Bird Wing membership, you can renew it by e-transfer or by cheque. The e-transfer email address is nipnatmembership@outlook.com. Use the security password "naturalists". The Bird Wing annual membership fee continues to be \$5.00.

The mailing address is: Connie Sturge, 537 Hwy. 534, Powassan P0H 1Z0. If paying by cheque, please make one cheque payable to Nipissing Naturalists Club for your Nip Nats membership, and a separate cheque payable to Bird Wing for your Bird Wing membership. (As you know, you must be a member of Nipissing Naturalists Club if you want to join Bird Wing.)

Donations to charities: For the last few years, Bird Wing has donated to two or three wildlife charities. Our recent donations have been to:

Turtle Pond Wildlife Centre. It is a wildlife refuge centre for injured, ill and orphaned wildlife, including birds. It is the closest wildlife centre to us in Nipissing District, an important consideration. For more information see: <https://www.turtlepondwc.com/about-us>.

Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge: This wildlife refuge centre near Orillia was recommended to us by Greg Jaski, Bird Wing member, who, along with his wife, Joanne, is a personal supporter of the centre. At the time of this report, it is caring for four small Screech Owls, perhaps including the one that was in Greg's backyard. (See Seeds and Cones.) Greg has not seen the owl for a couple of weeks. It may have moved on or it is one of the four at the Centre. Greg reports these small owls are having trouble finding food because of the phenomenal amount of snow in that area. For more information see: <https://www.shadesofhope.ca/>.

Fatal Light Awareness Program Canada (FLAP Canada): A leading cause of bird mortality and injury is by window collision. We are all aware that there has been a serious decline in many bird species and we need to do all we can to help prevent this. Thanks to FLAP Canada, the first to adopt bird safe guidelines, many cities across North America and abroad have now adopted these safe guidelines. For more information see: <https://flap.org/about/>.

In the past, Bird Wing has donated \$50.00 to each of these registered charities. Please let me know either by email or at the March 25th meeting whether you want to continue to support them or whether you would prefer alternative charities.

- Renee Levesque, reneelevsque91@gmail.com



Courtesy of FLAP Canada