

Bird Wing

Report

March 2025





Birding Events

Nocturnal Owl Survey: The Nocturnal Owl Survey takes place preferably on any nice non-windy evening during the month of April and preferably before the spring peepers start peeping. Most teams are lined up. If any team would like to write an article for one of the Bird Wing Reports following their survey, it would be appreciated.

Bird Wing: Our Bird Wing meeting usually takes place the fourth Tuesday evening of the month, but there may be changes for April's meeting date, so stay tuned. If the weather is nice, a bird walk might be in order.

Bird Bash: The next Bird Bash is over the **weekend of April 26-27**. Surely the weather will be more spring-like by then with no freezing rain, no snow and no below zero temperatures!

Project FeederWatch: Just a reminder that Project FeederWatch comes to an end on April 30. If you did not take part in this citizen science project, you might want to consider it for next year. For an overview of the project see: <https://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/>

Laurier Woods May bird walks: Saturday morning Laurier Woods May bird walks begin on May 3, from 10:00 until noon. Dick Tafel is hoping to lead them or at least some of them.



Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas bird outings: Grant McKercher will be organizing Atlas bird outings probably in early May, quite possibly to Black Forest Park as well as an area at the former North Bay landfill site on Marsh Drive. Both these areas are off Hwy 11 North. Stay tuned for dates, times and locations. Dates will not conflict with the Laurier Woods walks.

Bird Wing Zoom Meeting

Three new members joined us for our Zoom meeting on March 25 – Jeremy and Erica Henderson, transplants from Southern Ontario who now live in Mattawa, and Zoe Watson, a transplant from Ottawa who now lives in North Bay. Always great to have new members join us!

Thanks to Angela Mills, Treasurer, for her report on our financial standing and the Bird Wing membership numbers. **Hope those who haven't yet joined will do so as soon as possible, as this may be the last report that will get sent to non-members.**

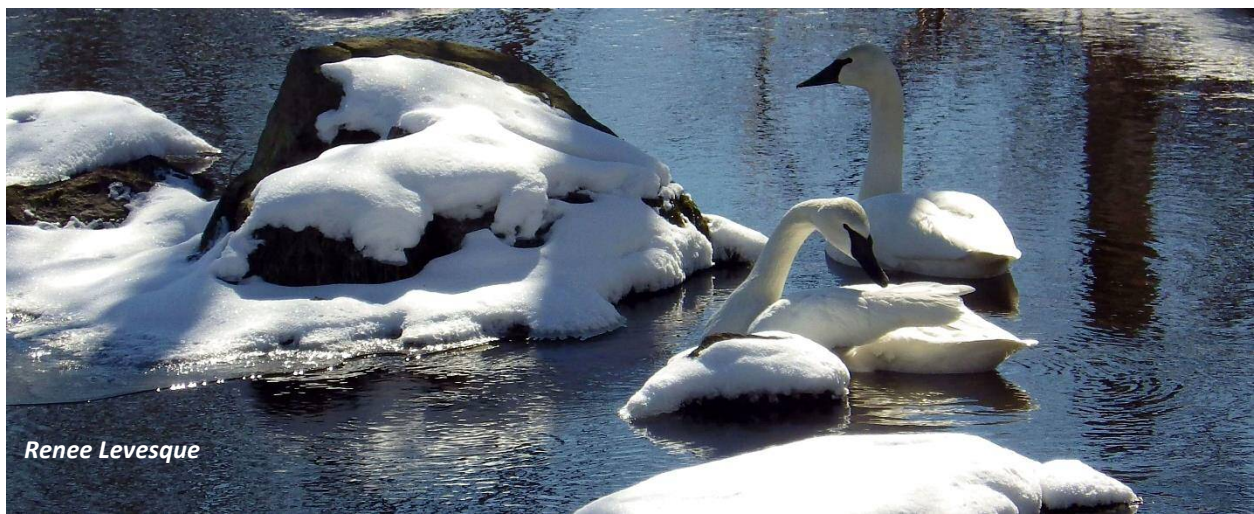
We have now agreed to support three charities – FLAP Canada, Turtle Pond Wildlife Centre and Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge. Angela will send each a cheque for \$50.00.

Thanks also to Rick Tripp for playing the DVD on *Hawk Watch*. So much information to take in regarding hawk flight patterns. It takes a lot of practice to get it down pat and even then... It is best to hawk watch with someone who knows about hawks and their flight patterns. I am hoping there will be an article or two on the video for the next issue of the Bird Wing Report.

Thanks also to Grant McKercher, Regional Coordinator for Region 29, Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, for his informative presentation on where we stand on year 5 and the final year of the breeding bird survey. Stay tuned for one or two Atlas bird walks in early May. Grant will provide an article on the findings to date for the next issue of the Bird Wing Report.

Birds seen in March

Despite not great weather recently, spring has nevertheless sprung in the world of birds with many more migrants still to arrive. My first indication of spring is always the many, many crows that arrive in country areas, after being found mostly in cities and towns all winter. Thereafter, there are American Robins, Song Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Turkey Vultures, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels. And we can't forget Trumpeter Swans (below) and Canada Geese. All new for the year and all exciting to see again.



Renee Levesque

While some migrants arrive to stay, some are just passing through on their way further north. One just passing through as it makes its way north to the James and Hudson Bay Lowlands is the Northern Shrike, a bird some of us saw during the winter. We did not hear it sing then, but the one Stephen O'Donnell recently saw and photographed beautifully was singing. I have never heard a Northern Shrike sing. Stephen told me it isn't a pretty song and right enough when I listened to it, it certainly wasn't. It is not just the male that sings, but also the female. **Stephen's photograph of the Northern Shrike is on the front cover**, singing goodbye to us before making its way north. (Subsequently Dick Tafel and I saw one in West Nipissing and Sue Gratton and Faye Oei saw one in the Sundridge area. It was a lifer for Faye.)

American Robin (photo at right): Angela Mills was the first at the meeting to mention seeing an American Robin, with many of the rest of us chiming in that we too had seen one. Not many have arrived yet. There is so much snow still on the ground, and these days every time I see a patch of grass, I look for a robin, once finding two on such a small piece of grass there was barely enough room for both of them.

Sparrows: Faye was the only one to see a Chipping Sparrow at a feeder at her friend's house on Eagle Lake. I see that others (not members) in the Parry Sound District have reported on eBird seeing Chipping Sparrows. I look carefully at all the American Tree Sparrows in my yard hoping one will be a Chipper because it is my favourite sparrow.

I have had up to a dozen American Tree Sparrows all winter and they are still with me. Grant McKercher, Mary Young and Lori Anderson have them coming to their feeders too, and others have seen some here and there.

The Song Sparrow got a mention by Grant, as did his over-winter White-throated Sparrow. Others – Faye, Sue, Stephen, Dick, Lori and me – have seen a Song Sparrow here and there, but only Grant has seen a White-throat.



Renee Levesque

Dark-eyed Juncos have made an appearance at Mary's. Many have also arrived at my feeders and I am sure many others have them at their feeders.



Only two of us, Stephen and I, have seen the Fox Sparrow (photo at left), a large handsome sparrow we see in the spring also making its way north to the James and Hudson Bay Lowlands. Look for one vigorously kicking leaves to get at its food, but if you don't see one this spring, you will perhaps see one on its migration south when it has even more leaves to kick! Since St. Patrick's Day, I have had a couple in my yard. There are no leaves yet, but plenty of snow to kick as they look for fallen bird seeds.

Black birds: "On the fences the shiny blackbirds with red epaulets clicked their dry call." (John Steinbeck, *The Red Pony*.)

Stephen O'Donnell

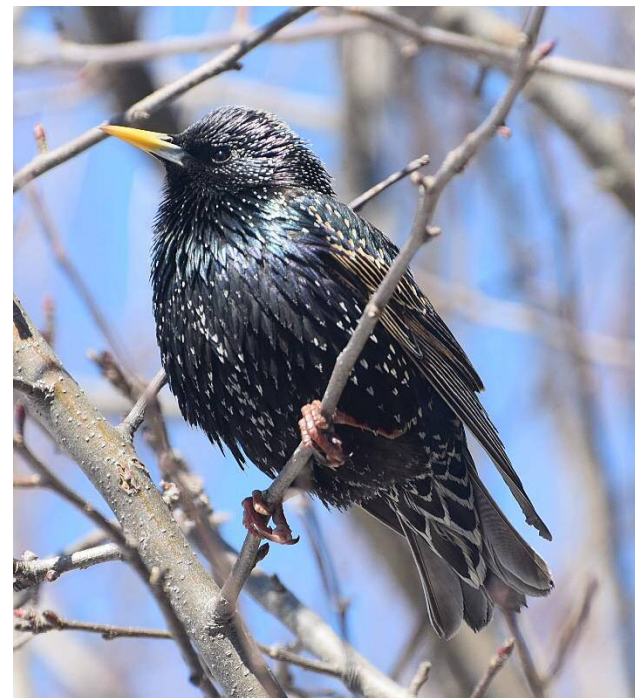
When the Red-wings arrive and I hear their *conk-laree*, I recall Steinbeck's quote, although it is more indicative of a real spring day, one when the sun is shining and the fields are clear of snow. Faye saw Red-wing Blackbirds, a bird also seen by many others.

Mary made mention of the Common Grackles in her yard, also seen by many others.

American Crows, seen by Catherine Mills, have spread out and can now be seen everywhere. I have seen some crows gathering nesting materials, flying with large sticks in their mouths.

Not as many Common Ravens are being seen – they are probably busy raising their young.

I will include the European Starling here, a bird mentioned by Kim Stahl and one most of us have seen. They are very dull in the winter, but in the spring when the sun is shining on their iridescent coats, they can come across as quite the outstanding birds as you will see in the photo of one at right.



Renee Levesque

Finches and finch-like birds: Sue and others have had American Goldfinches, some of which have come to feeders on and off throughout the winter months. Sue described how she watched the male goldfinch molt into its breeding plumage. It is a bird we can watch in our own yard or from our own window molt in stages from its dull winter plumage into its black and yellow summer finery.

Evening Grosbeaks were seen by me and by Garry Waldram, and I am sure others must be getting them at their feeders. I often hear them before seeing them – another bird that does not have a terribly pretty call or song!

Dick has 6 Pine Siskins coming to his feeders, a bird also seen by Mary and Stephen. I saw one in January, but a couple of days after the meeting, I had two at my feeder. We can probably expect a lot more! (Common Redpolls, a bird not seen hardly at all this winter, came to my feeder and Dick's and Mary's on the last day of March!)

Dick was the only one to have seen the beautiful male Purple Finch (photo at right) at his feeder. The rest of us will just have to wait for this dipped in raspberry juice finch!

Northern Cardinal: Another beautiful red bird is the Northern Cardinal. Rick Tripp continues to have a couple come to his feeders, as does Rick's nearby Callander neighbours. No one else mentioned that they saw one lately.



Woodcock: Lori saw an American Woodcock (photo at left) at her farm in Chisholm Township. It seems to me that Lori and Ken Gowing are always the first to see one! I will eventually have to go to Cedar Heights Road and wait in the chilly late evening air to hear one – not always a fun task on a cold April night!

Nuthatches and creepers: Rick also continues to get the White-breasted Nuthatch and others have seen one or more. Some of us see more Red-breasted than White-breasted and vice-versa. The Brown Creeper was not mentioned, but I know Dick had one at his place – thank

goodness because there have been years we have spent an inordinate amount of time looking for one for him!

Woodpeckers: Kim saw the always delightful Pileated, and Zoe Watson, the Hairy Woodpecker. Although not mentioned, I am sure others have seen the Downy Woodpecker. No one mentioned the Black-backed this month.

Eastern Meadowlark: John Steinbeck's bird quote in *The Red Pony* about blackbirds continues with "*the meadowlarks sang like water*" – but again the image is more indicative of meadowlarks in the real spring. However, despite the snow still on the ground, Garry saw some male Eastern Meadowlarks (photo at right) in Bonfield. Stephen also saw some and Lori heard some. Seems to me they arrived a bit early this year, but perhaps not.

Black-capped Chickadee: Catherine and no doubt everyone else have seen Black-capped Chickadees. They abounded this winter! Such loyal Canadian birds!

Geese: Zoe mentioned Canada Geese, a goose we all have now probably seen. A day after the meeting there were over 150 lined up along the Sturgeon River, which is now open to the mouth of Lake Nipissing. I remember with great fondness the years we would have a group walk along the edge of the river to the mouth of Lake Nipissing. It seems to me most of those walks occurred in April, but in recent years that would not be possible in April – earlier springs and lack of public access to the river.



Garry Waldram



Stephen O'Donnell

Raptors: Erica Henderson saw a juvenile Bald Eagle, and many of us saw eagles in their various stages of maturity. Red-tailed Hawks were seen by Stephen, Dick and me and probably by others. Lori saw a Northern Harrier, as did some others – Grant, Garry and Stephen. Grant saw a Rough-legged Hawk (photo at left), and Dick and I subsequently saw a couple during March's Bird Bash. Grant also saw a Merlin, right in his yard! And American Kestrel have been spotted by some.

Grant was the only one to see a Cackling Goose in the West Arm Narrows. There was a photo of one in last month's Bird Wing Report with Fred Pinto's article on his journey through the Northwest Passage. Since Grant saw one, I have looked for it at the West Arm Narrows, but as the number of Canada Geese have increased there, it became a mug's game looking for one!

Shorebirds: The only shorebird to have arrived in March of which I am aware is the Killdeer, seen by Garry in Bonfield.

Gulls: Erica saw Herring Gulls (photo at right) on the Ottawa River, as did some others. Some had also arrived on the Sturgeon River and at the South River landfill site, seen there by Faye. Ring-billed Gulls have also started to arrive and have been seen by a few of us.

Ducks: Jeremy Henderson saw Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers on the Ottawa River, two ducks seen by some of us, the goldeneye having been around during the winter, the merganser recently arriving and its numbers now increasing. The Hooded Merganser was also seen by some of us – Garry, Grant, Dick and me and no doubt others. The only one who saw a pair of Gadwalls was Garry. He saw them in Bonfield but said they flew off after he took their picture with a Canada Goose. Garry's photo is below.



Renee Levesque



Garry Waldram

Cranes: Garry saw a couple of Sandhill Cranes in Chisholm Township in the Maple Hill/Wasing Road area.

Swans: Trumpeter Swans have been seen by Dick, Grant and me at the West Arm Narrows; by Garry in Mattawa; by Grant in flight in Callander; by Denise Desmarais on Cache Lake; and by Dick and me on Cache Bay the day after the meeting.

Birds not mentioned: Some birds seen in March were not mentioned: Mallards, American Black Ducks, Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, Wild Turkeys, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, and Ruffed Grouse.

Birds Seen after the meeting: Two birds not mentioned that were seen after the meeting were Turkey Vultures (photo of one below) – always exciting to see one at first until they become quite common and then it is, “Oh just a TV.” – and Bohemian Waxwings. Dick and I saw a couple in Verner a day after the meeting and during March’s Bird Bash. Linda Stoner and Pat Stack also saw some during March’s Bird Bash. I had given up seeing any Bohemians this winter, so it was especially delightful to see these very beautiful birds!



A Great afternoon in more ways than one



Garry Waldram

By Denise Desmarais

On March 2, at least 15 of us from Nipissing Naturalists Club and Bird Wing, led by Garry Waldram, made our way to Galston Road in Calvin Township to see the Great Gray Owl that had been in the area for at least a couple of weeks. Garry, who lives in the area, was the first birder to see it and it was subsequently seen by other Bird Wingers – Renee Levesque, Dick Tafel, Stephen O’Donnell, Linda Stoner, Faye Johnson and probably a few others.

On the way, some saw a Bald Eagle; at least 80 Snow Buntings; a Downy Woodpecker; a couple of Black-capped Chickadees; and a couple of Common Ravens.

We didn’t see the Great Gray at first, but eventually there it was in a tree at a bit of a distance, but still quite visible!

It was a “Great” afternoon. I got a lifer as did some others, and I got better acquainted with some members of Bird Wing that until now I have seen only on Zoom!



Stephen O’Donnell

Honduras

You will find in this issue five short articles about the trip some Bird Wing members, known as “The Flock”, took to Honduras in January. Lori Anderson writes about her trip of a lifetime; Grant McKercher writes about the group’s visit to the cloud forest; and Sue Gratton, Fred Pinto and Grant write about the gift presented to all members, each one different, each one reflecting to some extent who they are or why that particular bird was chosen to represent them.

On the final night of their stay, Olbin, a painter and also their guide throughout their 10-day stay, presented each member of “The Flock” with t-shirts, each one with a different bird hand-painted on it.

Student artists who attend a local school, Artesanos y Guias De El Pino, in the lower part of Pico Bonito National Park, painted the t-shirts. And once you see the three t-shirts that are highlighted in this report, you will see what wonderful painters they are!

I have also put together a collage of “The Flock”. Grant and Lori’s articles show some photos of the group, but because there were so many more photos, I decided a collage was a great way to highlight our intrepid birders.



- *Renee Levesque*

A trip of a lifetime

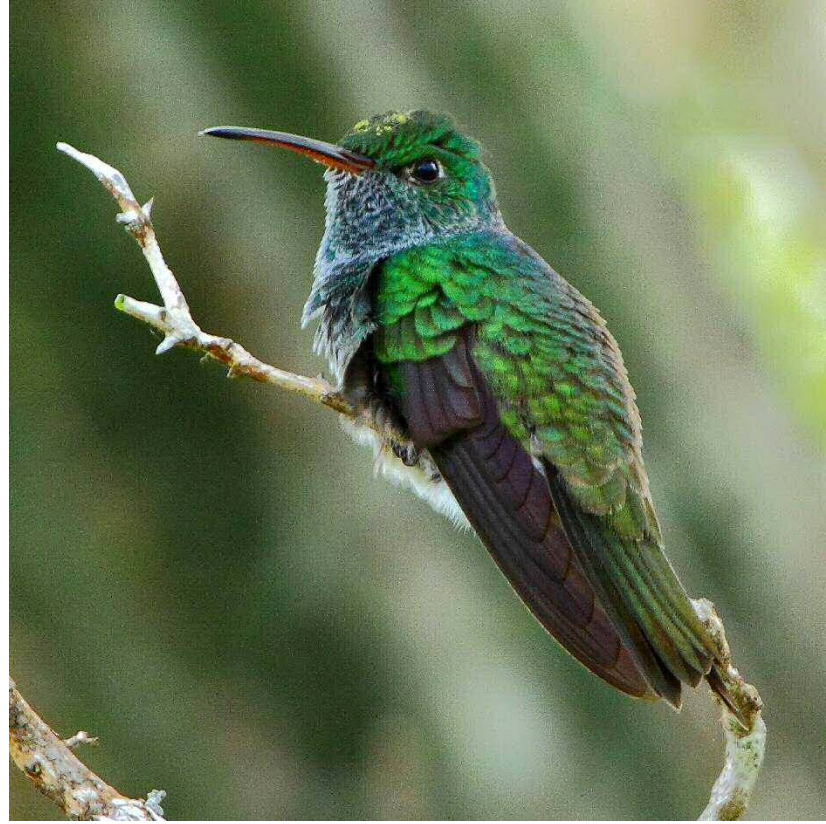
By Lori Anderson

My being able to travel to Honduras for a guided birding trip with a small group of Bird Wing members this past January was an opportunity too good to pass up. For someone who hadn't flown in many years and never ventured south of Florida, this was to be quite an adventure for me!

I must admit that before I got to Honduras, I was somewhat worried about how many mosquitoes would be feeding on us and concerned about the heat – 30 degrees on either side of 0 is unpleasant in my view! I needn't have worried about either because these pre-trip concerns turned out to be unfounded!

Our group members quickly established as a "family" and I had all the assistance necessary to obtain a flight, passage to Pearson and a digital boarding pass!

Flying to San Pedro Sula in Honduras was a long day. Dressed for the Canadian winter and hauling luggage, we arrived warm, somewhat dehydrated and worried we would not find



Honduran Emerald, James Adams

Honduran lempiras (local currency). However, within seconds, we noticed two young men waving a "Natural Selections" sign - our guide Olbin and our driver Frank who presented us with a cooler full of ice cold bottled water - the most refreshing water in recent memory! They then led us to the "lempira booth" and then out the airport door to find birds! And find them we did!

Accommodation and food were superb. We enjoyed home-cooked meals at private residences on several occasions. The cup of homegrown and brewed coffee I was given by the family of Leonel after the mountain climb will be remembered as my most enjoyed coffee ever. See photo at left of some of us drinking this superb coffee.



Sue Gratton

Olbin provided us with everything we needed to be comfortable and entertained for the next 10 days. Frank proved his superb driving skills as we ventured through the mountainous backwoods of Honduras to discover over 220 species of birds!

I cannot choose a highlight of the trip or a favourite bird sighting – it was one continual highlight!

The birds were so abundant, colorful and unusual. Some became familiar - the toucans, Clay-coloured Thrush, Brown Jays and the vocal and entertaining Montezuma Oropendolas (at right). The diurnal Pygmy Owl appeared regularly, serenading us with his *toot toot* song, very similar to our Northern Saw-Whet's song.

I saw more warblers than I usually discover during the whole month of May in my home region. My favourite was the Prothonotary – a brilliant male and a lifer for me.



Many of the species Olbin led us to were peculiar or rare. I had noticed these in the bird guide beforehand, but had decided they were not apt to be seen. One such, the most unusual Northern Potoo (photo at left) looks like a cross between an owl and a whippoorwill, but is actually related to the hummingbird. We had an excellent view of it roosting within the Luna del Puente Reserve. The only endemic species, the Honduran Emerald, occurs in very localized drier areas and we observed several in the Cortes Department or Region where we spent half of our trip when we stayed at Panacam Lodge. (Photo of a Honduran Emerald at heading.)



Sue Gratton

Equally as exciting as the bird discoveries were the adventures and experiences finding them – Mangrove river by boat (see photo below); the infamous rail transport; climbing a cloud mountain; hiking the tropical rainforests where I noticed trees in giant colorful flowers!; crossing canyons and suspension bridges; and passing through Honduran villages and countryside.



Olbin

I will be forever grateful to everyone involved with making this trip so wonderful – Sue was the inspiration, Fred got it rolling, and the rest of the group were such helpful and good-natured travel companions. The folks in Honduras are skilled hosts and hostesses. Olbin the guide, driver Fran and Olvin the cook are the best! (Photo of “The Flock” with Olbin sharing a meal below.)



Frank

Sue's t-shirt – Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, the spunky owl

By Sue Gratton

“My” bird of the trip was the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl. Olbin, our guide, assigned this bird to me, probably not because he thinks me particularly wise, but because he knew it was on my trip “wish list”. I had heard several of these owls calling on my previous Honduras trip in November 2023, but unfortunately had not seen one. This time, over the course of the 9 days, we saw or heard 8 of these beauties and I had a good view of three of them!

The Ferruginous Pygmy Owl is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, they are adorable. At about 6 inches tall, they are smaller than a Canadian Robin. At the beginning of the trip, I simply couldn't find it in the tree, even though it was in the open and my flock members were telling me, “It is RIGHT there”! My eye was automatically looking for a much bigger mass.



Darcy Gratton



Sue Gratton

Second, the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl is a common owl, relatively accessible to birdwatchers. It often hunts during the day and will hoot persistently from its roost. It ranges from southern United States to southern South America and occupies a variety of habitats.

Third, it is a spunky little owl with outsized claws which it uses to attack birds double its size. It has two false “eyes” on the back of its head which apparently work to confuse its prey, making the prey more vulnerable to capture.

The Ferruginous Pygmy Owl was my first ever owl seen in the wild. I have frequently heard Barred Owls in our area, but still have not seen one. For that reason alone, the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl will always hold a special place in my heart!



Grant McKercher

Fred's t-shirt – the Sungrebe, the “marsupial” bird

The Sungrebe is an ancient freshwater bird that is neither a grebe nor found in sunny locations!

It is one of three species in the family Heliornithidae or finfoots, with the other species found in Africa and Indochina. (Finfoots have webbed lobes on their feet like coots and actual grebes.)

The male has pouches or folds under its wings that are used to carry the young until they are old enough to swim independently. If it senses danger, it can even fly with the chicks tucked safely into the pouches.

As we slowly motored downstream on the Rio Cuero, we spotted two Sungrebes swimming under the hanging vegetation of the river bank. Grant McKercher was able to get a quick photo of one of the Sungrebes – very fortunate because Sungrebes are reclusive and the two we saw were playing hide-and-seek. (Grant's photo is at the top of the page.)

Some birders try to see every species in every family of birds in the world, so seeing the reclusive Sungrebe is quite the thrill for those birders and a bird I had wanted to see for my life list.

- Fred Pinto



Fred Pinto

Grant's t-shirt – the Red-capped Manakin, the moonwalk bird

Red-capped Manakins are small (10cm, 16g) perching birds of the lowland tropical forests from southeast Mexico to Ecuador. Although they are resident and non-migratory, individuals and groups may move some distances in search of seasonal fruit. They are known to eat more than 70 types of fruit!

The males are unmistakable with a velvety black body, bright red head and nape and yellow thighs. (See photo above.) The female is olive green above with paler yellow-green underparts.



Olbin

The male courtship display is noteworthy for snapping wing sounds and a rapid backwards shuffle akin to a 'moonwalk' dance. (You must see this at [All About Birds](#)). We saw the male pictured, quietly sitting (not displaying) in the gardens around the Pico Bonito Lodge.

Our guide, Olbin, presented me with a t-shirt with a design painted by one of his art students. He said that I reminded him of the manakin as I moved back and forth amongst our group during our bird walks. I certainly wasn't doing any 'moonwalk' moves, but just trying to get positioned to see the target birds! (Photo of Grant in his t-shirt at left – without the moonwalk!)

- Grant McKercher



Shirley McKercher



Grant McKercher

Our hike to a cloud forest

By Grant McKercher

On one of our birding outings in Honduras, we hiked to a cloud forest habitat in the Santa Barbara Mountain National Park. The main target species for the day was the Resplendent Quetzal, an iconic bird of Central America which resides almost exclusively in this high mountain habitat.

Cloud forests are humid habitats found at higher elevations (1,800 - 2,500 m) and characterized by the constant presence of air moisture in the form of clouds or light misty precipitation. Abundant epiphytes (bromeliads, orchids, arboreal ferns) and mosses form dense mats on tree trunks and large branches. The trees themselves are generally very tall and gnarled, with large buttresses and narrow canopies. The understory growth is relatively sparse due to the low light penetration through the thick canopy.

In Honduras, cloud forests are found in the mountainous interior, Sierra de Agalta National Park, La Tigra National Park, as well as Santa Barbara Mountain National Park.

Honduras has the highest percentage of natural forest cover in Central America, and the government has declared that all land over 1,800 m is to be protected. Despite these good intentions, however, only 10 of 32 declared areas have been mapped in detail and have formal conservation plans in place.

On our birding hike, we were fortunate to be hosted and guided by Leonel Chavez, a private citizen with a vision to protect an area of cloud forest habitat on land that

he has purchased. He and his family have been developing trails in the area and monitoring the biodiversity of the forest, while also actively promoting conservation efforts in Honduras. (Below is a photo of “The Flock” with Leonel on the left and Olbin, our main guide throughout our stay, on the right.)



The adventure began with meeting Leonel and his family in their home. We were served a traditional Honduran breakfast accompanied by award-winning coffee that sells for up to \$50 a cup in the cafes of London and Paris!

We then proceeded up the mountain, initially walking on an easy track until we began some prolonged upward climbs along muddy trails. (Photo of our climb at left.) Safety was top of mind for our guides. We were all provided with walking sticks and a ‘helping hand’ when navigating the more challenging areas. As we

climbed higher, we had increasingly spectacular views of the mountain landscapes and Lake Yojoba in the distance. (See photo at heading)



Ryanacandee, Wikipedia

The cloud forests of Honduras are habitat for many species of endemic tropical birds – Resplendent Quetzal at left, hummingbirds, toucans, motmots, tanagers – and an important wintering habit for migratory nearctic species, including many of our familiar warblers.

Although we only had a fleeting glimpse of the elusive Resplendent Quetzal, we were pleased with our checklist for the day’s outing – an impressive 62 species – including five species of hummingbirds and eight species of warblers, many of which we see here – Wilson’s, Black and White, Black-throated Green and Yellow.

After six hours and 7.19 km of hiking, we were rather worn out, but Leonel had one other special place to take us.

Driving a short distance into the town of Las

Vegas we visited his mother’s home and property where we saw a roosting Middle American Screech Owl (at right) – a perfect ending to another great day of birding in Honduras!

References: 1. Fagan J & Komar O. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America*. 2016.

2. Wikipedia - “Cloud Forests”





Seeds and Cones

World Sparrow Day: Thirteen Bird Wing members submitted a list of sparrows they saw on March 20, World Sparrow Day. Six species of sparrows were seen – Dark-eyed Junco, seen by 8 participants; Song Sparrow, seen by 7; American Tree (photo at right), seen by 7, some of whom have had these sparrows all winter; House Sparrow, seen by 2, also seen all winter; White-throated Sparrow seen by Grant McKercher who has had the White-throat at his feeders all winter; Fox Sparrow, seen by one.



Renee Levesque

Many years ago and for a few years, we held World Sparrow Day for a week because on the designated day very few sparrows were ever seen. So we extended the day to a week to make finding sparrows more interesting. Still, few were seen despite the extension – mainly House Sparrows, some American Tree and the odd Song Sparrow if we were

especially lucky. One year we even had a Harris's Sparrow, which spent some time at Gary and Luana Chows' feeders. Out of seemingly lack of interest because so few sparrows were generally seen, we discontinued this annual event. However, this year at the last minute on March 20, because the weather was rather spring-like, I sent an email to all members asking if they saw any sparrows and was pleasantly surprised to get 13 responses.

Lori Anderson indicated in her submission that she was glad to see the World Sparrow Day count was back! So maybe next year, based on this interest, we will revive it again, but maybe just for the one day.

Canada Goose vs. the Bald Eagle: I am sure many of you saw the video of the 20-minute fight between a Bald Eagle and a Canada Goose that took place on the ice of Lake Ontario in Burlington on February 23, taken by an Oakville wildlife photographer, Mervyn Sequeira. It was perhaps a symbolic fight between our Canada Goose and the national bird of the US, the Bald Eagle. Here is the link to the CBC news report of it, narrated beautifully by the photographer and showing individual frames of the fight:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIjaxrQBkPk>. Spoiler alert: Our Canada Goose won!

Great Backyard Bird Count: A whopping 8,078 species were seen by 838,113 participants in 217 countries during the Great Backyard Bird Count held over four days from February 14 to 17.

In Canada, we saw 247 species. British Columbia had the most species at 195; Ontario was second with 150; and Nova Scotia third with 123. The top three birds across the country were the Black-capped Chickadee, the Dark-eye Junco (photo at right) and the Northern Cardinal.



Renee Levesque

In Nipissing District, which also includes Algonquin Park, 36 species were seen. Within our Nipissing area, not including Algonquin Park, we saw at least 29 of these species. Seven Bird Wing members participated – Lori Anderson, Diane Deagle, Denise Desmarais, Grant McKercher, Renee Levesque, Dick Tafel and Garry Waldram.

In Parry Sound District, 26 species were seen. Grant McKercher was the only Bird Wing member to participate in the Parry Sound District even though this count was held over our Bird Bash weekend. He spotted 10 of the 26 species in his own backyard!

Orange Snowy Owl: For at least a couple of months from about mid-January, an orange Snowy Owl, named Creamsicle, was seen in Michigan and was tracked by scientists/biologists. Although all of them agree it is rare and unique to see an orange Snowy Owl, they are not in agreement as to why it is orange. Some opinions put forth are: genetic mutation; accidental spraying, for example being sprayed by dye or paint; deliberate spraying; eating too many shrimp; and preening the blood of its prey into its feathers for whatever reason. I go with the accidental staining and am partial to the theory that because Snowy Owls like airports, and considering the terrible winter some States have had, airport de-icing was the cause. Some de-icing fluids contain substances that are red/orange.

Despite its unusual colouring, it is thought Creamsicle is healthy and not in danger. It is also thought it is a juvenile male and once it molts, it will lose its orange colour. I can't show you a photo because any I have seen are copyrighted, but here is the CBC Radio link in which you can see some of the photos: <https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.7486027>.

MarshWatch: Sue Gratton brought to my attention a series of webinars about the birds and other animals that inhabit marshes: <https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/marsh-watch>.

This series from Birds Canada, which runs for 10 weeks from March 5 to May 7, is particular to prairie marshes, but there is a broad overlap in the birds seen in prairie marshes and those we see here. It is for all skill levels and comes with plenty of tips and tricks to help build your identification ability.



Sora, Garry Waldram

The series runs every Wednesday evening from 9:00 here in our time zone, a bit late for some of us. However, don't worry about missing those webinars that have already taken place or any future ones if you don't want to watch it live every Wednesday evening. After each webinar runs, it is posted on You Tube. Check out the website, given above, to see the course content and the videos already posted.

Comedy Wildlife: Mary Marrs sent me a link to the Comedy Wildlife Awards, 2024 winners: <https://www.comedywildlifephoto.com/gallery/comedy-wildlife-2024-competition-winners.php>.

There are many delightful and hilarious photos in this link, but one particular photo that reminded me of Greg Jaski's submission to Bird Wing that was in February's issue is the one of a Red-bellied Woodpecker paying a visit to a cavity of an owl family. You may recall a White-breasted Nuthatch paid a very quick visit to the Eastern Screech Owl nest house in Greg's backyard.

Over the years, some Bird Wing photographs that have been sent to me are quite funny. I am thinking of Steve Pitt's in particular. So please send any along. There is always lots of room for humour these days.

Leaf art: Last month I highlighted bird art made with Lego. This month, leaf art by Japanese artist, Lito. Most of his leaf art is not about birds, but if you click on the link below, you will see some wonderful examples of his leaf art in *The Guardian*, including an owl one – first photo as you scroll down: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2024/nov/16/what-a-carve-up-playful-intricate-japanese-leaf-art-in-pictures>.

Lito's leaf art is very intricate and only an artist like Lito can create it. However, there are many videos online on how to create leaf crafts, including leaf bird crafts that many of us who are not artistic like Lito would be capable of doing. I plan on trying my hand at some come fall, when we have a variety of colour.

Holy sights:



Renee Levesque

- *Renee Levesque*