

Issue 67-1  
September 2024



Fall Issue  
The Science of Birding

News for Members



The  
**SONG SPARROW**

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## Bird Protection Quebec - Mission Statement

### VISION

We envision a world in which people appreciate the intrinsic benefits of birds and act to protect our planet and its wildlife.

### MISSION

Our mission is to protect birds and bird habitat while fostering an appreciation of them through conservation, observation, research, and education.

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# In this Issue



## Features

23

Catching Thermals: the Journey of the Broad-winged Hawk

29

Living with Lupin: The Merlin Project



19

Birding Camps for Teens

21

Camp d'ornithologie pour adolescents

04

A Word from the Editors

05

A Message from the President/  
Message du présidente

06

Announcements

- Christmas Bird Counts
- Recensements de Noël

08

Focus on Members / Nos membres

11

Field Observations

- Upcoming trips / excursions
- Summaries of past trips

16

Education

- Monthly lectures
- Committee news

31

Birding Basics

32

Les B.A.BA de l'observation

33

Early Canadian Ornithology

## ON THE COVER

Banded young Broadwing in the nest

*Photo: Larry Fischer*

**This Page**

*Photo: Alexandre Terrigeol*

# A Word FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome back! We hope you all had a great summer and are ready to head into a new birding season. It's already been busy around BPQ: our regular field trip season began a few weeks ago, monthly meetings are set to restart in October, and we've had a change at *The Song Sparrow*.

After leading the revamp of our long-running newsletter in 2021, Connie Morgenstern has stepped down as co-editor. We're so grateful to her for setting *Song Sparrow* on its new course, and for all her work during the last three years. Her input will be greatly missed, but we're happy to welcome Rina Calabrese, a member of the Communications Committee, who has agreed to come on board and jumped right in with both feet on this issue!

Now, onto business. This issue focuses on scientific research and showcases the work of women in science, right down to the budding ornithologist who was awarded our Youth Ornithology Camp sponsorship this year. In our first feature article, Rebecca McCabe explains in *Catching Thermals* how the research at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary on the lifecycle of Broad-winged Hawks is vital to understanding its conservation challenges. In *Living with Lupin*, Shawna Sevigny shares her personal experience with the Merlin Project and how humans can help orphaned birds develop the survival skills needed to return to the wild.

In our regular features, our Monthly Lecture Series returns with three excellent speakers lined up from October to December, and the Field Trip Committee presents its full slate of trips through to the end of the year. Birding Basics offers a refresher on proper birding etiquette, and Jeff Harrison is back, exploring Early Canadian Ornithology. In Citizen Science news, please take special note of the Christmas Bird Count announcement on page 9.

So, grab your favourite drink, get settled in your comfiest chair, and enjoy!

*Darlene & Rina*



# A Message from THE PRESIDENT

# Message DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

I hope you all had a lovely summer and are enjoying fall migration!

To start the season off on a strong note, the Board is pleased that Émile Brisson-Curadeau has agreed to take on the role of Vice-President, Conservation. He will also join the executive committee. Émile was first elected to the board in 2020, is a biologist by trade, and, having just recently successfully defended his dissertation on King Penguins, holds a PhD. We're excited about the knowledge and experience that Émile will bring to guiding this important part of BPQ's mission.

The theme of this month's issue is scientific research. Science is near and dear to my heart as a biologist myself. While BPQ is well known as a bird club, we also contribute to scientific research in multiple ways.

As many of you know, BPQ supports research by awarding grants to organizations and individuals each year, funding bird research, education, and conservation. Two scientists that have received BPQ grants have articles featured in this issue.

If you saw our contractor Jules' presentation at a monthly meeting last season, you'll know that BPQ is, itself, engaged in science. Across many of our sanctuaries, we've conducted bird surveys over the years, such as Marsh Monitoring and Cerulean Warbler surveys. We've also, more recently, used technology to help us survey wildlife; Jules led the deployment and analysis of camera trap and Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) in the Lucas sanctuary, capturing some exciting species! In addition, we're developing a conservation plan for the Montée Biggar sanctuary to conserve Golden-winged Warbler habitat.

In this month's issue, you'll find plenty of neat science, with feature articles from two great women in science. Enjoy!

*Kristen*

J'espère que vous avez tous.tes passé un bel été et que vous profitez de la migration automnale !

Pour commencer la saison sur une bonne note, le conseil d'administration est heureux qu'Émile Brisson-Curadeau ait accepté d'assumer le rôle de vice-président, Conservation. Il se joindra également au comité exécutif. Élu pour la première fois au conseil d'administration en 2020, Émile est biologiste de métier et, ayant récemment soutenu avec succès sa thèse sur le Manchot royal, il est titulaire d'un doctorat. Nous sommes ravis des connaissances et de l'expérience qu'Émile apportera à l'orientation de cet important volet de la mission de la POQ.

Le thème du numéro de ce mois-ci est la recherche scientifique. En tant que biologiste, la science me tient particulièrement à cœur. Bien que le POQ soit bien connu comme un club d'ornithologie, nous contribuons également à la recherche scientifique de multiples façons.

Comme beaucoup d'entre vous le savent, le POQ accorde chaque année des subventions à des organisations et à des individus pour soutenir la recherche, l'éducation et la conservation des oiseaux. Deux scientifiques ayant bénéficié d'une bourse du POQ ont rédigé des articles présentés dans ce numéro.

Si vous avez assisté à la présentation de notre entrepreneur Jules lors des réunions mensuelles, vous savez que le POQ fait lui-même de la science. Dans bon nombre de nos sanctuaires, nous avons complété des recensements des oiseaux au fil des ans. Jules a dirigé le déploiement et l'analyse de pièges photographiques et d'unités d'enregistrement acoustique (ARU) dans le sanctuaire de Lucas, capturant quelques espèces intéressantes ! En outre, nous élaborons un plan de conservation pour le sanctuaire de la Montée Biggar afin de préserver l'habitat de la Paruline à ailes dorées.

Dans le numéro de ce mois-ci, vous trouverez de nombreuses informations scientifiques intéressantes, dont beaucoup d'articles rédigés par des femmes scientifiques. Bonne lecture !

*Kristen*



**Coordinator Needed**

# Christmas Bird Counts

## Montreal & Hudson

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As the rest of us enjoy the change of season from summer to fall, Sheldon Harvey, our CBC coordinator, has begun planning for winter and the Birds Canada Christmas Bird Count territories sponsored by BPQ.

Although Sheldon will continue as Montreal Count Coordinator, we have an *URGENT* need for someone to coordinate the one in Hudson this year, as Chris Cloutier has stepped down after handling the task for the last couple of years. (Big thanks go out to Chris!) Sheldon will be available to guide the new organizer through the process.

The coordinator organizes the team participants, confirms their routes, tabulates the count data, and arranges a post-count get-together. Most participants have been doing the same routes for years so the process is pretty smooth, and, remember, it's only once a year! If you can take this on, or want more information about what is involved, contact Sheldon by email: [ve2shw@yahoo.com](mailto:ve2shw@yahoo.com)

The Montreal Count will take place on Saturday December 14, so be sure to mark your calendars!

The new coordinator will be able to choose any day from December 15 to January 5 to hold the Hudson Count.

Stay tuned for more information as we get closer to the events.



**Save the Date**

**Coordonnateur·rice recherché·e**

# **Recensement des oiseaux de Noël**

## **Montréal & Hudson**

Alors que le reste d'entre nous profite du changement de saison de l'été à l'automne, Sheldon Harvey, notre coordonnateur du RON, a commencé à planifier l'hiver et les territoires du Recensement des oiseaux de Noël d'Oiseaux Canada, parrainé par le POQ.

Sheldon continuera d'être coordonnateur du recensement de Montréal, mais nous avons un besoin URGENT de quelqu'un pour coordonner celui de Hudson cette année, car Chris Cloutier s'est retiré après avoir assumé cette tâche au cours des deux dernières années. (Un grand merci à Chris !) Sheldon sera disponible pour guider la nouvelle personne tout au long du processus.

Le·la coordonnateur·rice organise les équipes de participants, confirme leurs itinéraires, compile les données du recensement, et organise un rassemblement après le comptage. La plupart des participants suivent les mêmes itinéraires depuis des années, de sorte que le processus se déroule sans heurts. Si vous êtes prêt à prendre en main ce projet, ou si vous souhaitez obtenir plus d'informations, contactez Sheldon : [ve2shw@yahoo.com](mailto:ve2shw@yahoo.com).

Le RON de Montréal aura lieu le samedi 14 décembre, alors n'oubliez pas d'inscrire cette date à votre agenda !

La nouvelle personne pourra choisir n'importe quel jour entre le 15 décembre et le 5 janvier pour tenir le recensement de Hudson.

Restez à l'écoute pour plus d'information à mesure que nous approchons des événements.

**Réservez la date**



Focus on

# OUR MEMBERS



## A big welcome to our new members

We are very happy to welcome the following new and returning members:

*Pat O'Connell, Susan Kovac, Louis Leprohon and Mary Leprohon*

We look forward to meeting you, either on Zoom at our monthly meetings or on one of our weekly field trips! Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and to join our Song Sparrow [e-list group](#) to connect with fellow members.

## Bienvenue aux nouveaux membres

Nous sommes très heureux d'accueillir les nouveaux membres et les anciens membres suivants qui ont renouvelé leur adhésion :

*Pat O'Connell, Susan Kovac, Louis Leprohon et Mary Leprohon*

Nous sommes impatients de vous rencontrer, que ce soit sur Zoom lors de nos réunions mensuelles ou lors de l'une de nos excursions hebdomadaires ! N'oubliez pas de nous suivre sur Facebook et Instagram, et de rejoindre notre [groupe de liste électronique](#) « Songsparrow » pour vous connecter avec d'autres membres.

## IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Current memberships expire on September 30, so, unless you are a Life Member or a new member who joined after March 1, 2024, it's time to renew your support and remain a part of BPQ, one of the oldest bird conservation charities in Canada!

Keep an eye out for the renewal notice that will have hit your inbox by now, or simply click [here](#) to go to our website, where it is easy to renew online with your credit card through PayPal (no PayPal account required). If you prefer to pay by cheque, just follow the instructions for "Becoming a Member by Mail" at the bottom of the same webpage.

## C'EST LE TEMPS DE RENOUELER VOTRE ADHÉSION

Votre adhésion actuelle expire le 30 septembre, donc, à moins que vous ne soyez un membre à vie ou un nouveau membre qui s'est joint après le 1er mars 2024, le temps est venu de renouveler votre soutien et de faire partie de POQ, l'un des plus anciens organismes de bienfaisance de la conservation au Canada!

Gardez l'œil ouvert pour l'avis de renouvellement qui sera déjà arrivé dans votre boîte de réception, ou cliquez [ici](#) pour accéder à notre site Web et renouveler facilement en ligne avec votre carte de crédit par l'entremise de PayPal (pas nécessaire d'avoir un compte PayPal) ou, si vous préférez payer par chèque, en suivant les instructions «Si vous préférez payer par chèque» au bas de la page.

## BPQ members in the news

### Celebrating Mabel McIntosh

Story & photos by Barbara MacDuff

On April 25, 2024, long-time BPQer Mabel McIntosh was celebrated by the city of Pointe-Claire during a ceremony at Stewart Hall. Alison Hackney and I were honoured to be invited, at Mabel's request, to represent Bird Protection Quebec and her many birding friends.

Mabel and six other Pointe Claire seniors were recognized for their outstanding contributions to society and to Pointe Claire. Among Mabel's contributions to Pointe Claire was her membership on the planning committee of Terra Cotta Park in Pointe Claire, where she provided input on the birds and flowers of the park. Her knowledge was necessary to the development of checklists and for leading field trips there once or twice a year.

In addition to her accomplishments in the birding community, did you know that Mabel was an artist? I did not, and was pleased to see some of her paintings at Stewart Hall.

Mabel was the first citizen to sign Pointe Claire's Golden Book (centre photo below) in recognition of her being over 100 years old!

High tea was served after the ceremony, completing a delightful afternoon.

*Mabel with long-time Hawkwatch partner Bob Barnhurst*



*Mabel with BPQ member Alison Hackney*



### Talking birding with Michel

There was an excellent article in La Presse recently about BPQ member and birder extraordinaire Michel Bertrand. Congratulations, Michel, you did all birders proud!

Link to the article [here](#).



PHOTO HUGO-SÉBASTIEN AUBERT  
LA PRESSE

### Parler des oiseaux avec Michel

La Presse a récemment publié un excellent article sur Michel Bertrand, membre du POQ et miroiseur extraordinaire. Félicitations, Michel, vous avez donné une bonne image des ornithologues amateurs !

Lien vers l'article [ici](#).

## BPQ volunteers at work

On August 24, members of the outreach committee joined in the 7th edition of "Mikinak, Festival of the Turtle" in Pike River, MRC Brome-Mississquoi. This very special event is organized in conjunction with Granby Zoo, which collects vulnerable spiny softshell turtle eggs, incubates them at the zoo, and then releases the babies into the river. The focus of the event is the turtles, but protection of birds, wildlife and habitat such as the area's wetlands were also highlighted and we were happy to have been one of several conservation groups invited to participate.

Many fans of BPQ's George H. Montgomery sanctuary, located in nearby Phillipsburg, stopped by to chat, and were impressed to learn about our many other properties. Some even signed up as new volunteers!



Outreach committee members Suzanne Bélanger, Darlene Harvey and Sheldon Harvey, with BPQ member King Wong. / Suzanne Bélanger, Darlene Harvey et Sheldon Harvey, membres du comité de sensibilisation, et King Wong, membre de POQ.

Reps from the Ministère de la Faune came with a ready-to-go kiosk. They popped open the doors and were good to go! / Les employé.e.s du ministère de la Faune est venu avec un kiosque prêt à l'emploi. Il suffisait d'ouvrir les portes et voila !

BPQers Yvonne & King Wong were thrilled to be picked to release two of the baby turtles!

Yvonne et King Wong, membres de POQ, ont eu la chance de relâcher deux des bébés tortues !



Photos contributed by Yvonne

## Bénévoles sur le terrain

Le 24 août dernier, les membres du comité de sensibilisation se sont joints à la 7e édition de « Mikinak, festival de la tortue » à Pike River, MRC Brome-Mississquoi. Cet événement très spécial est organisé en collaboration avec le Zoo de Granby, qui recueille les œufs vulnérables de la tortue molle à épines, les incube au zoo et relâche ensuite les bébés dans la rivière. L'événement est axé sur les tortues, mais la protection des oiseaux, de la faune et de l'habitat, comme les zones humides de la région, a également été mise en avant et nous sommes heureux d'avoir été l'un des nombreux groupes de conservation invités à participer.

De nombreux admirateur.ice.s du sanctuaire George H. Montgomery de la BPQ, situé dans la ville voisine de Phillipsburg, se sont arrêtés pour discuter et ont été impressionnés d'en apprendre davantage sur nos nombreuses autres propriétés. Certains se sont même inscrits comme nouveaux bénévoles !





# Focus on FIELD OBSERVATIONS

## Upcoming Field Trips

Welcome to fall, everyone! Have you come across any “confusing fall warblers” yet that had you threatening to hang up your binoculars in frustration? We have, on the first outings of the new season, which launched with Ron Rind’s trip to Cooper Marsh on August 31, and was followed by Sue Denoncourt guiding a group around Bois-de-Liesse and Émile Brisson-Curadeau around Île-Bizard.

You’ll find the dates and destinations of the rest of the fall trips, right up until our December break, below. Mark your calendars with all your favourites - we look forward to seeing you in the field!

*BPQ Field Trip Committee*

**NB:** Final details with driving instructions will be communicated before each week’s event through our eNews emails, and postings in the iO group and on Facebook, allowing us the flexibility to adapt to weather, closures, etc. if necessary.

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**NOTE UNUSUAL DAYS OR TIMES IN BLUE / LES HEURES DE DÉPART ET JOURS INHABITUELLES SONT INDIQUÉES EN BLEU.**

**Saturday September 21 / samedi 21 septembre**

**REFUGE FAUNIQUE MARGUERITE-D’YOUVILLE,  
ÎLE ST-BERNARD** <https://goo.gl/maps/g5spD>

Guide(s): Tom Long

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday September 28 / samedi 28 septembre**

**PARC DE LA FRAYÈRE, BOUCHERVILLE**

<https://goo.gl/maps/ktQvfi2tt9n>

Guide(s): Sheldon Harvey

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Sunday October 6 / dimanche 6 octobre**

**HUDSON - MARCHÉ FINNEGAN AND AREA**

<https://tinyurl.com/yc4pdhk3>

Guide(s): Wayne Grubert

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday October 12 / samedi 12 octobre**

**RÉSERVE NATIONALE DE FAUNE DU LAC SAINT-FRANÇOIS, DUNDEE** <https://goo.gl/maps/u3ihE>  
Guide(s): Wayne Grubert, Sheldon Harvey  
8:00 am - half day walking and driving trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied et en voiture

**Saturday October 19 / samedi 19 octobre**

**MONTRÉAL TECHNOPARC, VILLE ST-LAURENT**  
<https://tinyurl.com/yc7n7yb8>  
Guide(s): Katherine Collin, Julie Tremblay, Jim Harris  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday October 26 / samedi 26 octobre**

**PARC ANGRIGNON**  
<https://tinyurl.com/mr3w9w5c>  
Guide(s): Virginia Elliott  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday November 2 / samedi 2 novembre**

**BEAUHARNOIS & VALLEYFIELD AREA**  
<https://goo.gl/maps/kmyAR44HsfP2>  
Guide(s): Wayne Grubert, Sheldon Harvey  
8:00 am - half day driving trip, with short walks  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion en voiture, courtes marches

**Saturday November 9 / samedi 9 novembre**

**PARC DES RAPIDES, LASALLE & VERDUN WATERFRONTS**  
<https://goo.gl/maps/ZKadR>  
Guide(s): Diane Demers  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday November 16 / samedi 16 novembre**

**PARC NATIONAL D'OKA**  
<https://goo.gl/maps/sG8gG>  
Guide(s): Frédéric Hareau  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday November 23 / samedi 23 novembre**

**MORGAN ARBORETUM**  
<http://goo.gl/maps/etLSX>  
Guide(s): Ron Rind  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**Saturday November 30 / samedi 30 novembre**

**PARC-NATURE DU CAP-ST-JACQUES**  
<https://goo.gl/maps/TLEH1>  
Guide(s): Wayne Grubert  
8:00 am - half day walking trip  
08h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied



# Focus on FIELD OBSERVATIONS

## Past field trips

This summer we celebrated the 21st anniversary of the "Summer Series of Birding" field trips! Eight Saturday trips were held, beginning on June 29 and ending on August 17.

<b>WEEK 1</b>	Urban Birding, Parc de Dieppe & Ile-des-Soeurs <b>25 species</b>
<b>WEEK 2</b>	Parc de la Frayère, Boucherville <b>44 species</b>
<b>WEEK 3</b>	Ruisseau de Feu, Terrebonne <b>53 species</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>	Beauharnois & St-Etienne-de-Beauharnois <b>42 species</b>
<b>WEEK 5</b>	Lacs Fauvel, Blainville <b>49 species</b>
<b>WEEK 6</b>	Parc Nature de l'Ile-Bizard, Ile-Bizard <b>54 species</b>
<b>WEEK 7</b>	Ile-St-Bernard, Chateauguay <b>55 species</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b>	Hudson, Saint-Lazare, Coteau-du-Lac <b>45 species</b>



Birders on the boardwalk at Boisé des Lacs Fauvel, Blainville, QC  
Photo: Darlene Harvey

## FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of **110** different species were observed for the 8 trips combined.
- The average number of species per trip was **46**, with a high of **55** at Ile-St-Bernard and a low of **25** on the Urban Birding trip to Parc de Dieppe and Ile-des-Soeurs.
- The average number of participants per trip was **14**, with a high of **23** and a low of **8**.



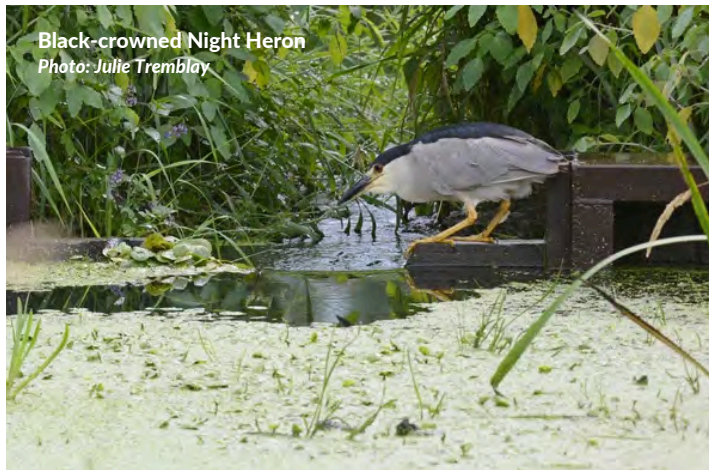
Cape May Warbler Photo: Tom Long

This summer two species were seen for the first time in the 20 years of Summer Series field trips (excluding the COVID years), bringing our 21-year total to 235. However, that does include 35 species observed by individuals on various summer outings during the 2020 and 2021 COVID years to a number of far-flung destinations that our conventional summer outings would not have visited.

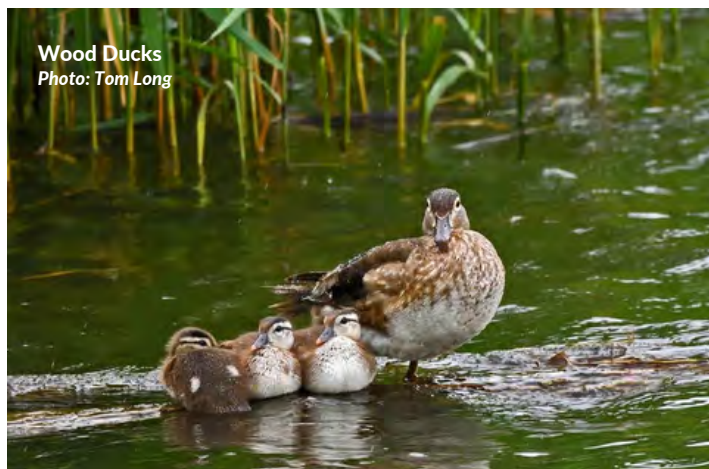
Excluding those two summers, the two first-time species were Trumpeter Swan, with 2 birds seen at St-Etienne-de-Beauharnois on Week 4, and Red-bellied Woodpecker, seen at both Ile-Bizard on Week 6 and Ile-St-Bernard on Week 7, bringing us to a total of 201 species over 19 years of conventional Summer Series field trips.



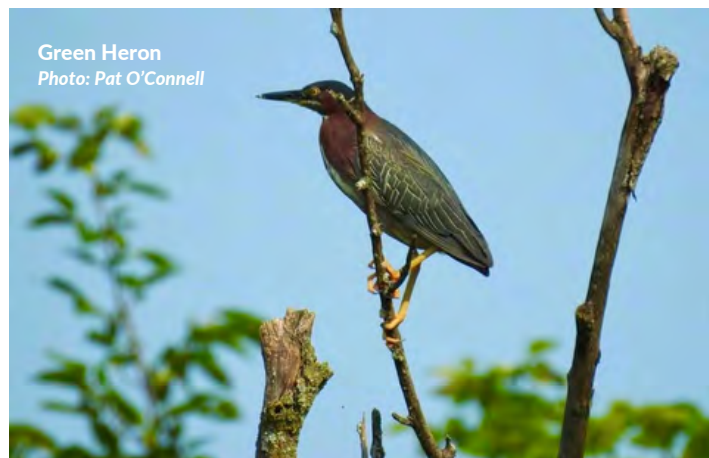
Trumpeter Swan  
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Black-crowned Night Heron  
Photo: Julie Tremblay



Wood Ducks  
Photo: Tom Long



Green Heron  
Photo: Pat O'Connell

A few highlights from this summer included 12 duck, goose and swan species; 6 species of herons and egrets and bitterns, including Least Bittern at Boucherville on Week 1; both the Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos, both at Lacs Fauvel on Week 5 and the Black-billed at Ile-Bizard on Week 6; Carolina Wren at Ile-St-Bernard on Week 7; and 10 species of warblers.

Thank you to all of the birders whose participation contributed to another successful and enjoyable summer of birding. We all look forward to our 22nd season of the BPQ Summer Series of Birding in 2025.

Sheldon Harvey  
Field Trip Committee



A few unexpected guests dropped by this summer!

Quelques invités imprévus nous ont rendu visite cet été!



Laughing Gull / Mouette atricille - Parc des Rapides, LaSalle

Photos: Darlene Harvey



Scissortailed Flycatcher / Tyran à longue queue - Sainte-Marie-Salomé

Photos: Joe McGill



Snowy Egret / Aigrette neigeuse - Hudson

Photos: Wayne Grubert



## Focus On Education

BPQ presents a series of monthly lectures from October through April, usually on the first Monday of each month. Events are held via Zoom in order to attract a wider range of speakers and reach a broader audience.

**Monday, October 7, 2024**

**7 PM - Via Zoom - [Register here](#)**

### **How do wind turbines and oil and gas infrastructure affect birds? Empirical evidence based on citizen-science data**

Erik Katovich, Assistant Professor, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, University of Connecticut

Rapid expansion of wind turbines and oil and gas fracking infrastructure has raised concerns over potential impacts on wildlife, especially birds. Erik combined citizen-science data from Christmas Bird Counts with registries of all the turbines and shale oil and gas wells constructed in the United States between 2000 and 2020 to quantify the effects of turbine or shale well construction on local bird population counts and biodiversity. Using a variety of statistical methods Erik will review the current scientific evidence on environmental impacts of wind and oil and gas infrastructure, and describe the data and methods he used in his study. Erik found two main results, which he will share with us.



#### **About our Speaker**

Erik Katovich received his MSc and PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He studied at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas in São Paulo, Brazil on a Fullbright Scholarship and completed a post-doc at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. Erik's research focuses on understanding how we can govern natural resources and extractive industries to promote sustainable economic development. Erik is also an enthusiastic lifelong birder, with extensive birding experience in the US, Brazil, and Europe.

**Monday, November 4, 2024**

**7 PM - Via Zoom - [Register here](#)**

### **Sandhill Cranes on the rise in Quebec**

Christine Lepage, Waterfowl Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service



Breeding numbers of Sandhill Cranes have increased significantly over the past 30 years in Quebec. This presentation will provide an overview of the population trend and describe the field work that surrounded a telemetry study of a hundred cranes, carried out between 2019 and 2022 by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Christine will also talk about the findings of the telemetry study and population management.

#### **About our Speaker**

Christine Lepage has been a waterfowl biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service since 1994. Her work focuses on the conservation of sea duck populations in Quebec, through aerial surveys, banding and telemetry monitoring. More recently, the advance of the Sandhill Crane in the province has piqued her curiosity, and this species has become one of her favourite subjects.

**Monday, December 2, 2024**

**7 PM - Via Zoom - [Register here](#)**

## **Birds in Winter**

Roger Pasquier, American Museum of Natural History

Winter affects birds all over the world, not only where there is a cold season. For many, this is the most challenging season, whether they remain at a high latitude where they have only a few hours each day to find the food that must sustain them through long nights, or if they move to more equatorial regions where they may compete with many other species at the time of year when food is scarcest even there. Birds have evolved in many highly specialized ways – physiological, behavioural, and ecological – to meet their daily needs through winter, wherever they spend it.



### **About our Speaker**

Roger Pasquier, a lifelong birder, is an associate in the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. His career has been in conservation, with BirdLife International, the World Wildlife Fund-US, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the National Audubon Society. He is the author of several excellent books, including *Watching Birds*, *Masterpieces of Bird Art*, and *Birds in Winter*. His latest book, *Birds at Rest: The Behaviour and Ecology of Avian Sleep*, will be published in 2025.

Roger's books are outstanding examples of research and scholarship. In addition, his many volunteer commitments to conservation include his efforts to save the tropical forest and provide a role for indigenous people as the founder and president of Friends of the Peruvian Rainforest and Vice President of World Parks Endowment.

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**CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF LEARNING?** As many of you know, Bird Protection Quebec is a member of QuébecOiseaux (QO), a non-profit umbrella organization that brings together birding clubs and works to advance birdwatching and bird studies in Quebec.

Each year, QO offers both their individual members and members of affiliated clubs a series of free talks on subjects of interest to birders. BPQ members are, therefore, welcome to attend but **must** register using the Zoom links in the *Programme de webconférences* available [here](#) (note that these talks are offered in French). Do not try to register on their website (unless you are also have an individual or family membership with QO; if you have a QuébecOiseaux magazine subscription only you **cannot** register on their site.)

Please do not share these links outside of BPQ as the free conferences are restricted to members of QO and QO-affiliated clubs.



**VOUS AVEZ ENVIE D'APPRENDRE ?** Comme plusieurs d'entre vous le savent, Protection des oiseaux du Québec est membre de QuébecOiseaux (QO), une organisation parapluie à but non lucratif qui regroupe les clubs d'ornithologues amateurs et qui travaille à l'avancement de l'observation et l'étude des oiseaux au Québec.

Chaque année, QO offre à ses membres individuels et aux membres des clubs affiliés une série de conférences gratuites sur des sujets d'intérêt pour les ornithologues amateurs. Les membres du POQ sont donc les bienvenus, mais doivent s'inscrire en utilisant les liens Zoom dans le document *Programme de webconférences* disponible [ici](#). N'essayez pas de vous inscrire sur leur site Web (à moins d'être membre individuel ou familial de QO ; si vous êtes seulement abonné à la revue QuébecOiseaux, vous **ne pouvez pas** vous inscrire sur leur site).

Veillez ne pas partager ces liens à l'extérieur du POQ, car les conférences gratuites sont réservées aux membres de QO et des clubs affiliés à QO.



In addition to our lectures, the BPQ Education Committee organizes events that inspire new birders of all ages to explore and appreciate the world of birds, sparking curiosity and a deeper connection to nature.

## Inspiring the next generation of birders

by Barbara MacDuff

The Education Committee held two events earlier this year, focused on young birders. Committee members Megan Phillips and Barbara MacDuff had the pleasure of visiting Marla's Minis Daycare in May for an exciting bird-themed day with the children, following up on learnings their teacher had already introduced in the classroom. And a winter birding contest was held, aimed at inspiring families to enjoy nature together.

### You can't start them too young!

The children greeted us enthusiastically, each wearing a headband adorned with their favourite bird, proudly sharing its name in both French and English. Equipped with handmade binoculars they had made in the classroom, we set off on a bird walk to a nearby park.

The weather couldn't have been better, and the young birders were thrilled to spot an American Robin. We also observed a Common Grackle and heard the calls of a Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Cardinal, and Song Sparrow.

The morning wrapped up with a delightful rendition of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," bird-style, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. A big thank you to teacher Marla for sparking such a keen interest in birds among these curious young minds!

Equipped with handmade binoculars, these little birders get a lesson in spotting birds at a nearby park. — Photo: Barbara MacDuff



Little birders at Marla's Minis Daycare, sporting their handmade bird headbands! — Photo: Barbara MacDuff

## Winter Bird Bingo Winners!

To inspire families and children to discover the diverse array of winter birds in their neighbourhoods and get creative with bird-friendly activities, the Committee launched the Winter Bird Bingo Challenge, which ran from January to April 2024.

We're thrilled to announce that Isabelle Rheume and Greg Dorash from Waterloo, Quebec, and Bernadette Couture from St. Lazare, Quebec, each won a bird feeder from Brome Bird Care, along with a children's bird activity book.

Participants shared that the children thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

A big thank you to [Brome Bird Care](#) for generously donating the prizes!

WINTER BIRD BINGO				
Discover the wonder of winter birds in your neighborhood or get creative with these nature activities each day! Play with a friend and complete 5 boxes in a row to win.				
Create an eBird list	Northern cardinal	Find bird tracks	Black-capped chickadee	Stick decals on your windows
Red-breasted nuthatch	Explore the Merlin Bird ID app	American crow	Build a bird feeder	Downy woodpecker
European starling	Mallard	Free	Cedar waxwing	Draw a winter bird scenery
Blue jay	Build a bird snow sculpture	Ring-billed gull	Post in Naturalist	Dark-eyed junco
Write a poem about a bird	Red-tailed hawk	American goldfinch	House sparrow	Find a nest



# FOCUS ON GRANTS

Every year BPQ is proud to award grants to fund research, conservation and education projects that are deemed to advance our mission to protect birds and their habitat. These grants represent our largest annual financial outlay.

In this column we share progress reports from our grant recipients.

In addition to providing grants to educational institutions, BPQ also advances its mission to promote bird conservation and awareness by supporting young birders and sponsoring birding-related educational events through the work of its Education Committee. Financing for these initiatives is provided by BPQ on top of the annual grants budget.

In keeping with the theme of this issue, we feature one such initiative that aims to encourage the next generation of research scientists: the Youth Ornithology Camps Program.

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Every summer, the Education Committee makes funding available for up to two youths hoping to attend one of two bird banding camps for teens. Applicants receive sponsorship from BPQ of up to \$500 towards camp fees and \$250 for transportation costs to attend either Camp ornithologique des Jeunes Explos, offered at l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac in Tadoussac, Quebec, or the Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop at Long Point Bird Observatory in Port Rowan, Ontario.

The sponsorship request received from the mother of this year's recipient, Megan Lafrance, convinced the committee that Megan's already well-developed passion for birds was definitely to be encouraged!

*"Megan is 13 years old and has been passionate about ornithology for several years now, despite her young age. This camp is a dream for her, as she wants to pursue a career as an ornithologist. She already knows a lot about ornithology thanks to the many books she has on the subject, as well as the training courses and conferences on ornithology she has attended. This camp is an opportunity for her to improve her knowledge and put the theory she has learned into practice. What's more, bird conservation is central to Megan's ornithology, and the fact that the camp is funded by BPQ is also a significant factor." -Kathy B. [translated from French by editor]*

Thanks from a  
happy camper!

## Youth Ornithology Camp Sponsorships



“

I loved taking part in the Tadoussac ornithology camp. The camp really helped me to improve my knowledge of ornithology. It was a wonderful experience to be able to band birds.

- Megan Lafrance

Megan Lafrance and a Gray Catbird  
Photo courtesy of: Alexandre Terrigeol



## POINT DE MIRE SUR LES SUBVENTIONS

Chaque année, POQ est fier d'accorder des subventions pour financer des projets de recherche, de conservation et d'éducation qui sont considérés comme faisant avancer notre mission de protection des oiseaux et de leur habitat. Ces subventions représentent notre plus grande dépense financière annuelle.

Dans cette rubrique, nous vous présenterons les rapports d'activité de nos bénéficiaires de subventions.

En plus d'accorder des subventions aux établissements d'enseignement, POQ poursuit sa mission de promotion de la conservation des oiseaux et de sensibilisation en soutenant les jeunes ornithologues et en parrainant des événements éducatifs liés à l'ornithologie par l'intermédiaire de son comité d'éducation. Le financement de ces initiatives est assuré par le POQ en plus du budget annuel pour les subventions.

Conformément au thème de ce numéro, nous présentons une initiative de ce type qui vise à aider à former les chercheurs scientifiques de demain : Le parrainage de camps ornithologiques pour les jeunes.

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Chaque été, le comité d'éducation offre du financement à un maximum de deux jeunes qui souhaitent participer à un camp de baguage d'oiseaux pour adolescents. Les candidats reçoivent une commandite du POQ pouvant aller jusqu'à 500 \$ pour les frais de camp et 250 \$ pour les frais de transport afin de participer soit au Camp ornithologique des Jeunes Explos, offert à l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac à Tadoussac, au Québec, soit à l'Atelier des jeunes ornithologues Doug Tarry à l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Long Point à Port Rowan, en Ontario.

La demande de parrainage reçue de la mère de la lauréate de cette année, Megan Lafrance, a convaincu le comité que la passion déjà bien développée de Megan pour les oiseaux devait absolument être encouragée !

*“Megan est âgée de 13 ans et est passionnée d'ornithologie depuis déjà plusieurs années, malgré son jeune âge. Ce camp est un rêve pour elle qui désire faire une carrière comme ornithologue. Elle a déjà plusieurs connaissances en ornithologie grâce à plusieurs livres qu'elle possède sur le sujet, ainsi qu'aux formations et conférences portant sur l'ornithologie auxquelles elle a participé. Ce camp représente pour elle l'opportunité d'améliorer ses connaissances et de mettre en pratique les éléments théoriques qu'elle a appris. De plus, la protection des oiseaux est un élément central de l'ornithologie pour Megan et le fait que le financement du camp provienne de la POQ est aussi un élément significatif à prendre en compte.” - Kathy B.*

Un grand merci  
du camp

## Subventions - Camp d'ornithologie pour les jeunes



Megan Lafrance avec un Moqueur chat

Photo : Alexandre Terrigeol

“

J'ai adoré participer  
au camp  
ornithologique de  
Tadoussac. Ce camp  
m'a beaucoup aidé à  
améliorer mes  
connaissances en  
ornithologie. C'était  
une merveilleuse  
expérience de  
pouvoir baguer des  
oiseaux.

- Megan Lafrance

# Catching Thermals

## The Journey of the Broad-winged Hawk

By Rebecca A. McCabe, PhD

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*Rebecca has worked as a Research Biologist at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania since 2021. Her connection to BPQ goes back to her days as a PhD candidate at McGill, when she received a BPQ research grant to help fund her study of the winter movement ecology of Snowies.*

Imagine you are flying along the Appalachian Flyway, circling 400 metres above the ground. You can feel the warm air from the thermal up against your broad feathered wings as you continue to gain lift. When you reach the top, you can see your fellow Broad-winged Hawks streaming into an adjacent thermal. You are one of the 32,000 Broad-winged Hawks migrating past Holiday Beach Hawk Watch on your southbound journey after successfully raising two young from your nest in the Muskoka District in Ontario. The weather is changing, winter is coming, and although you've already travelled 400 kilometres, you still have 8,000 more to go.

This is the biannual migration of one of North America's long-distance migrants.



Photo: Guy Fitzgerald

The Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*, hereafter Broadwing) is the most numerous raptor migrant in north-eastern North America, yet little is known about its ecology and the conservation challenges faced by this long-distance traveller. Broadwings traverse many diverse landscapes – crossing over political boundaries, different cultures, communities, and ecosystems – with various anthropogenic and natural threats not only during migration but also in their breeding and wintering areas. Nesting throughout east and central United States and Canada, the entire population of Broadwings migrates to Mexico, Central and South America to overwinter. In their southern winter range, habitats are threatened by deforestation, wildfires, illegal mining and shooting, while in their northern breeding range, forests are being lost to development and human-caused mortality is prevalent. Both migration count data and breeding bird atlases suggest populations of Broadwings may be declining in some areas of eastern North America, primarily south and east of the Appalachians (e.g., West Virginia, southern Pennsylvania, eastern Massachusetts and Connecticut). This information led Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association (Kempton, PA, USA) to initiate a full life cycle study in 2014. Now, 10 years later, scientists have many new insights and many more questions.

Since the inception of the project, Hawk Mountain biologists and partners have monitored over 75 pairs, mainly in Pennsylvania but also consistently in Connecticut and New Hampshire, since 2021. Searching for nests begins in mid-April or once the pair is back on territory. Broadwings are notoriously secretive, especially once incubation commences. Training your eyes to find a small lump or pile of sticks in the crotch of a tree takes time but scanning the upper one-third of the canopy and knowing what to look (and listen) for gets you one step closer to confirming a nest. A good indicator that a nest is indeed occupied is the presence of fresh stick ends and greenery in the nest. Once the birds are ready to start incubating you will notice small downy feathers from the now-bare brood patch, stuck to the nest edge. If the adults have already started incubating, you might even see a piercing eye glaring back at you!

After confirming active nests in our study areas, we return weekly to monitor the pair and to assess if the nest successfully fledged young. We take measurements of the nest tree and later complete GIS (Geographic Information System) analyses on the surrounding habitat. In addition to monitoring and habitat measurements, our team, with the help of volunteers, collaborators and Hawk Mountain trainees, traps and bands adults, often at the nest site. In the last 10 years, we've banded more than 70 individuals, and affixed transmitters to more than 40. Over 80% of the transmitters deployed yielded at least one season of data, shedding light on breeding and wintering home ranges, pre-migratory movements, migration patterns, stopovers, and habitat requirements, and more.

One of our main questions when we first started tracking Broadwings was "Is there strong migratory connectivity (i.e., geographic linking between different parts of an animal's annual cycle) within populations?" With our satellite and GPS tracking data, we found that there does not seem to be a pattern, as birds nesting only within a few kilometres of each other in the same region can winter more than 1,500 kilometres apart.

## Get to know Hawk Mountain

- **Founded in 1934, Hawk Mountain is the oldest and largest member-support raptor conservation organization in the world.**
- **The Sanctuary was founded by a conservation activist, Rosalie Edge, who saw a photo of hundreds of dead raptors and decided she needed to help protect these birds. Mrs. Edge leased and then purchased the 1,400 acres of land, ending the shooting in 1934.**
- **Hawk Mountain uses a local-to-global approach in conservation, seeking to educate the public and conserve raptors in the immediate area, across the country and around the world. You can learn more about our traineeships, graduate student program, and leadership opportunities at <https://www.hawkmountain.org/about/community/trainees-graduate-students>**
- **You can support Hawk Mountain's global raptor conservation mission by joining as a member today at <https://www.hawkmountain.org/give/membership>**



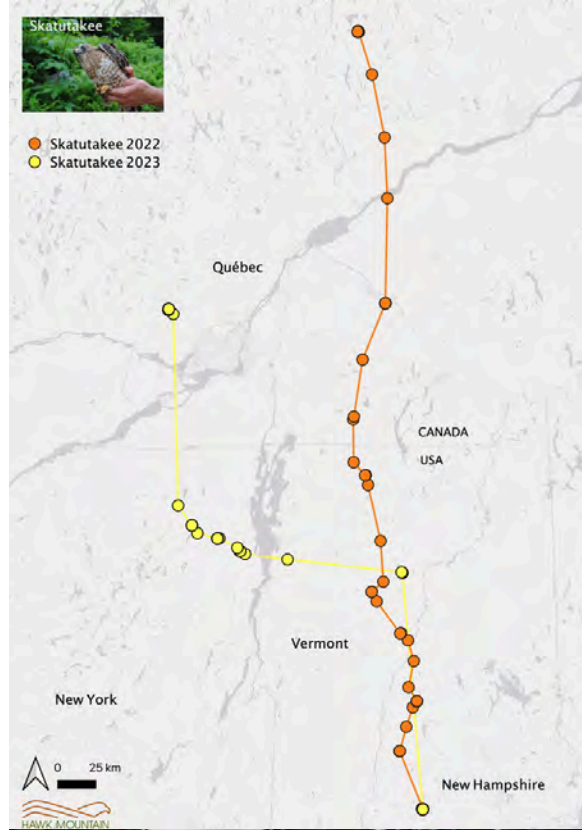
Fledgling  
Photo: Natia Javakhishvili

Another exciting finding from our tracking study is that some Broadwings display pre-migratory movements. Birds will leave their breeding territory in July or early August and migrate hundreds of kilometres (range: 50–500 km) to a different region, while their young are back at the nest site still learning how to hunt on their own. For example, we tagged an adult female nesting in Hancock, New Hampshire, USA, who departed her nest site on 4 August 2022, a few weeks after her two young fledged. She then travelled more than 500 kilometres north to La Tuque, Québec, before starting her fall migration on 14 September. She migrated down to Bolivia where she wintered for a few months, before migrating back to New Hampshire for another nesting season. In August 2023, she made a similar pre-migratory movement but instead of going back to La Tuque she travelled to Baie-Atibenne, about 144 kilometres west of La Tuque. Like many new findings, this got us asking more questions: “What is the benefit to making these pre-migratory movements for a bird that already travels long distances? Are they going back to their natal grounds (where they were born)? Why do some birds display this behaviour, and others don’t?” These are all stirring questions that we hope to uncover answers to, as we continue to study this elusive forest raptor.

One of the most rewarding and successful aspects of the project is connecting and collaborating with other people and organizations. The project has been highly collaborative since its inception and its expansion into other states and provinces outside of Pennsylvania would not be possible without the support of others. Our Broadwing research extended into Canada after seeing a Facebook post from raptor banders Charlotte England and Malcolm Wilson. The two were road trapping for raptors in southern Ontario and found a hot spot for Broadwings in the Muskokas, trapping over 100! We immediately reached out to see if we could collaborate. Between 2020 and 2022, we teamed up with Charlotte and Malcolm to deploy eight transmitters (some of which did not transmit for more than three months) on birds migrating through or breeding in the Muskokas.

**What is road trapping?** A bal-chatri trap - a wire-domed cage with monofilament nooses tied to the top and a non-native or exotic lure animal placed inside (out of talon reach) - is placed on the shoulder, just off the road and away from moving cars, in the immediate vicinity of a perched raptor. The researcher stays just beyond the raptor and the trap, constantly watching the trap and the surroundings. Once the raptor comes down and gets caught in the nooses, the researcher safely retrieves the bird from the trap.

One bird that we affixed a satellite transmitter to in 2020 flew eastwards 200+ km to Frontenac Provincial Park, but unfortunately the transmitter stopped working just as the bird was getting ready to migrate. In early August 2024, Charlotte and Malcolm shared exciting news about this individual, “We re-discovered the bird through a social media post by its alphanumeric colour band at the same location (Frontenac Provincial Park) four years later. This proves that we are catching birds on passage in spring and hope to learn more about the movements of birds moving through our study site.” Charlotte and Malcolm continue to colour-band Broadwings in the Muskokas and, since starting their study six years ago, have captured and banded 600 Broadwings in the region!





In summer 2023, we set out to the Saguenay region in hopes of road trapping Broadwings. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful as only a few untrappable birds were seen during our travels and a series of field mishaps continued before we had to drive back to Pennsylvania. However, the story doesn't end there, as we reached out to our colleague Dr. Guy Fitzgerald at Clinique des oiseaux de proie and Centre hospitalier universitaire vétérinaire (Université de Montréal) to see if he could help us address a mutual study question: "How do Broadwings with minor injuries fare in the wild after rehabilitation?" Later that summer two candidates came in for treatment, one with head trauma and a minor eye injury and the other also with head and severe eye trauma from an automobile collision resulting in a crippled right eye. The two birds, named Jude and Amanirenas, received a GPS-GSM transmitter and were released in St-Jude at Chouette à Voir. Both left Québec and migrated east of the Great Lakes and down into the USA. Amanirenas's tracking data shows a non-direct path and an end location in Arkansas whereas Jude made it down to Mexico City before her transmitter went quiet (note: GPS-GSM transmitters depend on the cellular network, which becomes less reliable when birds move into Mexico, Central and South America). Unsure if their injuries impacted their behaviour and survival, more research is needed to understand the fate of injured and rehabilitated Broadwings in the wild.



Photo: Guy Fitzgerald



Photo: Liane Nowell

Another Canadian collaboration we are thrilled to have developed is with The Kenauk Institute in Montebello, Québec. Shortly after connecting with Executive Director Liane Nowell in early 2024, we were planning our summer visit to the preserve. We were excited to hear that Liane and her wonderful team of interns found an active nest on the property. On 9 July we arrived at The Kenauk Institute and within 10 minutes of setting up our trapping gear we had a healthy adult female in the mist nets. The team was all smiles as we processed the bird and released her back to the nest with a new GPS-GSM transmitter. We look forward to following 'Kenauk' as she migrates south this fall.

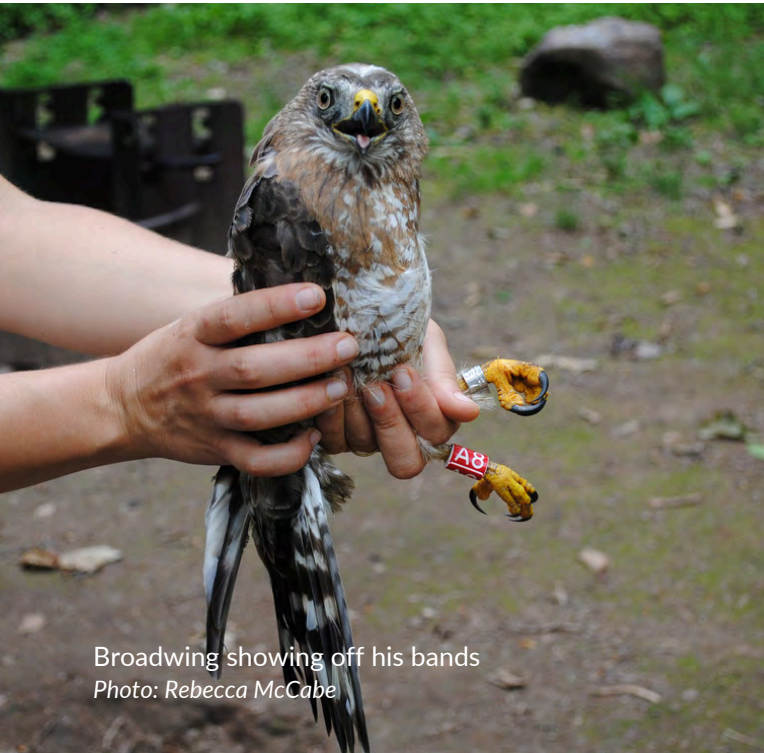


Kenauk selfie

Liane shared, "The Kenauk Institute was privileged to work with the Hawk Mountain organization. From scanning the skies, to listening for their whistles and searching for their nests, the interns have not only learned so much about the species but unlocked a curiosity and passion for raptors in general."

“The opportunity to tag a hawk was unforgettable, a truly special moment that will keep us connected to this bird and the conservation of the species forever.

- Liane Nowell



Broadwing showing off his bands  
Photo: Rebecca McCabe

By adding more tagged birds from eastern Canada, the heart of the Broadwing's nesting range, we will better understand the migration routes, migration stopovers, and wintering sites of Canadian nesting birds, as well as the conservation threats facing these populations. Birds tagged in Canada will be tracked in subsequent years to monitor survival, as well as quantifying habitat of nesting territories. Information from the full-life cycle monitoring and habitat use will be synthesized to inform conservation planning recommendations for Canadian breeding birds.

We are grateful to Bird Protection Quebec [*Hawk Mountain received a BPQ research grant in 2022. -Ed.*], the Baillie Fund from Birds Canada, and private donors for funding this research. The expansion of The Broad-winged Hawk Project into Canada would not be possible without the collaboration of Charlotte England and Malcolm Wilson (Arctic Affinity, Ontario), Dr. Guy Fitzgérald and technicians at Clinique des oiseaux de proie and Centre hospitalier universitaire vétérinaire, and Liane Nowell and the 2024 interns at The Kenauk Institute.

For more information on the project follow us on Facebook  
[@The Broad-winged Hawk Project](#)

or visit our homepage at [www.hawkmountain.org/broadwing](http://www.hawkmountain.org/broadwing)  
or follow the birds on migration at [www.hawkmountain.org/birdtracker](http://www.hawkmountain.org/birdtracker)

## Sharing data is our priority

Since 2016, we have been publishing results from our study in various ornithological journals including The Wilson Journal of Ornithology, Journal of Raptor Research, and the Journal of Field Ornithology (all publications are free to download on our website: <https://www.hawkmountain.org/conservation-science/publications/technical-publications>)

Sharing our findings with the scientific community, as well as the public, has been a priority since the project started. In addition, the data we have collected has been used by the National Audubon Society (<https://explorer.audubon.org/explore/species/943/broad-winged-hawk/migration?sidebar=collapse>) as well as The Nature Conservancy to create models for migratory bird habitat conservation in the Central American region. Thus, data from Canadian birds will be shared to improve conservation priority mapping for migrant and wintering Broadwings.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association science and education staff have also created and published a bilingual Broad-winged Hawk curriculum ([www.hawkmountain.org/education/resources/Curricula](http://www.hawkmountain.org/education/resources/Curricula)) that builds on this work and uses tracking data in classrooms.

- New Hampshire (n=3)
- Pennsylvania (n=3)
- Connecticut (n=2)
- Ontario (n=3)

## Fun Facts About Broad-winged Hawks

- ✓ Adults migrate 4,800-11,000 km one way, taking 1-3 months to reach their wintering or breeding areas.
- ✓ Broadwings show strong site fidelity to their nesting territories and wintering sites.
- ✓ As forest specialists, Broadwings use forested habitats during nesting, in winter, and on stopovers.
- ✓ Broadwings are generalists, eating a wide variety of prey including small mammals (chipmunks, red squirrels, voles, shrews), frogs, snakes, lizards, small birds, and insects.





# Living with Lupin

## A Personal Experience with the Merlin Project

By Shawna Seigny

*Shawna is the Bander-in-Chief at McGill Bird Observatory (MBO), and an avid falconer. She is a past BPQ board director, and a member of the Education Committee.*

When I first heard about the Merlin Project through a fellow falconer, I was immediately captivated. The opportunity to help a wild bird have a fighting chance at surviving in the wild was a perfect way to combine my passion for falconry with meaningful conservation work.

Receiving my first Merlin was an unforgettable moment. I decided to name him Lupin, inspired by one of the professors from Harry Potter—a fitting name for a bird as mystical as the Merlin. Lupin's arrival marked the beginning of an incredible journey filled with excitement and anticipation.

Building a bond with Lupin was unique and unlike bonding with a domesticated pet like a cat or dog. Raptors like merlins haven't been domesticated and don't aim to please us in the same way dogs do. The relationship between a bird and a falconer is founded on trust, respect and, of course, food! Birds of prey are highly motivated by their rewards, and this was a crucial part of our daily training.

“**Raptors don't aim to please us in the same way dogs do.**

- *Shawna Sevigny*



Setting Lupin free was a bittersweet moment for me. Watching him fly off, ready to live as an independent bird, filled me with a sense of accomplishment and happiness.



However, it was also a poignant farewell, as our journey together had been a roller coaster of emotions and adventures over the past few months.

The Merlin Project is ongoing, and we hope to learn whether training these young hatch-year birds improves their survival rates. By comparing data from Merlins released with falconry training to those released without such training, we aim to determine the impact of our efforts.

## Get involved in preserving our natural heritage

To my fellow bird enthusiasts and conservationists, I encourage you to get involved in projects like the Merlin Project. Whether through volunteering, spreading awareness or participating in conservation activities, every effort counts. Together, we can make a significant difference in preserving our natural heritage and ensuring that magnificent birds like the Merlin continue to soar in our skies.



Setting Lupin free...  
a bittersweet moment  
Photo: Anne-Marie Cousineau

## The Merlin Project

The Merlin Project is a collaborative effort between the Union Québécoise de Réhabilitation de Oiseaux de Proie (UQROP), a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of injured birds of prey, and the Association Québécoise des Fauconniers et Autoursiers (AQFA), a network of independent falconers practicing the art of falconry.

The project's goal is to have falconers train young merlins that have fallen from nests or ended up in precarious situations before they are fully capable hunters. Essentially, the falconers act as surrogate parents, teaching these birds how to fly, build muscle mass, gain agility, and hunt, much like their parents would in the wild.

Once deemed ready, the birds are equipped with Motus trackers (radio telemetry) and released back into the wild. These trackers help monitor their movements post-release.



Photos in this article (except where tagged otherwise):  
Shawna Sevigny

# Birding Basics



## Birding Etiquette:

# How to Spot Birds Without Ruffling Feathers



New birders bring great enthusiasm—and that’s awesome! But keep in mind that excitement can disturb the birds we’re eager to observe. Good birding etiquette protects both birds and their habitats while enhancing your experience.

Here are some good practices to follow on both group outings and solo adventures:

### RESPECT THE BIRDS

#### Keep your distance

Birds are sensitive—if they stop singing or fly away, you’re too close. Use binoculars or a zoom lens to watch without stressing them.

#### Keep it quiet

Minimize noise—speak softly, silence your phone, and avoid bird call apps that could confuse them. Quiet walking helps you hear their calls too.

#### Ditch the flash

Flashes startle birds, especially at night. Use natural light or increase your camera’s ISO for better shots without disturbing them.

### RESPECT FELLOW BIRDERS

#### Be punctual

Arrive early to settle in and start on time—this boosts the group’s chances of spotting birds.

#### Be considerate

Give others space, quietly alert the group to sightings, and, if sharing a spotting scope, take a quick look—no hogging!

#### Be a bird advocate

Share your knowledge, join local groups, and support conservation to inspire others and protect birds.

### RESPECT YOUR SURROUNDINGS

#### Stick to the path

Stay on marked trails to protect habitats and avoid disturbing wildlife. Share public spaces respectfully with other users like cyclists and runners.

#### Mind private property

Always ask permission before entering private land and avoid restricted areas. Keep your binoculars focused on birds, not people’s homes.

#### Leave no trace

Pack out what you bring in and pick up any trash you find to keep birding spots clean for everyone.

Follow these simple guidelines to enjoy birding while protecting birds and their habitats. Happy birding, and remember—leave nature as you found it, or even better!

# LES B.A.-BA DE L'OBSERVATION



## Observation respectueuse :

# Comment repérer des oiseaux sans froisser les susceptibilités



PLUS D'INFO :

Oiseaux Canada [Code de conduite](#)

Les nouveaux ornithologues font preuve d'un grand enthousiasme - et c'est formidable ! Mais gardez à l'esprit que l'excitation peut perturber les oiseaux que nous sommes impatients d'observer. Une bonne étiquette en matière d'ornithologie amateur protège les oiseaux et leurs habitats tout en améliorant votre expérience. Voici quelques conseils pour les sorties en groupe et les aventures en solo :

### RESPECTER LES OISEAUX

#### Gardez vos distances

Les oiseaux sont sensibles : s'ils cessent de chanter ou s'envolent, c'est que vous êtes trop près. Utilisez des jumelles ou un zoom téléobjectif pour les observer sans les stresser.

#### Restez silencieux

Minimisez le bruit - parlez doucement, mettez votre téléphone en mode silence et évitez les applications d'appels d'oiseaux qui pourraient les troubler. Une marche silencieuse vous permet également d'entendre leurs cris.

#### Oubliez le flash

Le flash effraie les oiseaux, surtout la nuit. Utilisez la lumière naturelle ou augmentez la sensibilité ISO de votre appareil photo pour prendre de meilleures photos sans les déranger.

### RESPECTER LES AUTRES

#### Soyez ponctuel

Arrivez tôt pour vous installer et commencez à l'heure, ce qui augmente les chances du groupe de repérer des oiseaux.

#### Soyez prévenant

Laissez de l'espace aux autres, alertez discrètement le groupe si vous repérez un oiseau et, si vous partagez une lunette de repérage, soyez rapide, pas de monopolisation !

#### Soyez un défenseur des oiseaux

Partagez vos connaissances, rejoignez des groupes locaux et soutenez la conservation pour inspirer les autres et protéger les oiseaux.

### RESPECTER L'ENVIRONNEMENT

#### Restez sur le sentier

Restez sur les sentiers pour protéger les habitats et éviter de déranger la faune. Partagez les espaces publics de manière respectueuse avec les autres usagers, tels que les cyclistes et les coureurs.

#### Respecter les propriétés privées

Demandez toujours la permission avant de pénétrer sur un terrain privé et évitez les zones interdites. Concentrez vos jumelles sur les oiseaux et non sur les habitations.

#### Ne laissez aucune trace

Emportez ce que vous apportez et ramassez les déchets que vous trouvez afin de garder les sites d'observation des oiseaux propres pour tout le monde.

Suivez ces quelques conseils pour profiter de l'observation des oiseaux tout en protégeant les oiseaux et leurs habitats. Bonne observation des oiseaux et n'oubliez pas de laisser la nature dans l'état où vous l'avez trouvée, voire mieux !

# Exploring Early Canadian Ornithology

with Jeff Harrison

Louis Nicolas:

## A Man Well Ahead of His Time

Unequaled among 17th-century ornithological histories of Quebec and Canada is the work of the Jesuit Louis Nicolas (1634-c1690).

Recognition of the prominence of Nicolas' work is of very recent origin. Prior to the mid-1980s, his 197-page manuscript on the natural history of New France, *L'histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales*, was unattributed in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. His companion work, known as the *Codex Canadensis*, containing 79 drawings of flora and fauna, had been published and erroneously ascribed to Quebec-born, Charles Bécard, Sieur de Grandville (1675-1703). The *Codex* passed through various owners, including Louis XIV, and after the tumult of the revolution went through many hands before being published in 1930 in Paris by the Maurice Chamonal bookstore. The manuscript of the *Codex* was eventually acquired by the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



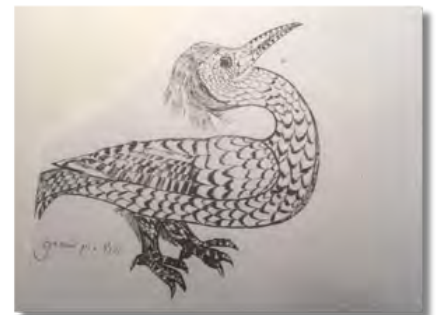
Nicolas' work was brought to light by François-Marc Gagnon (1935-2019), one of Canada's most respected art historians, who focused on the painters and sculptors of New France, and Quebec artists like Borduas, Riopelle and Molinari. Gagnon's interest in New France led to his examination of the artwork in *Codex*. The recognition of *Histoire* and *Codex* as both works of Louis Nicolas led to Gagnon's publication of ***The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas (2011)***, in collaboration with Réal Ouellet, who translated Nicolas' text into modern French, and Nancy Senior, who provided the English translation.

This article provides a brief summary of this book, which represents the first important work in Canadian ornithology.

Louis Nicolas was born in 1634 in Aubenas, a town about 150 kilometres northeast of Montpellier. He entered the Jesuit order in Toulouse in 1654. (Davault 1994). Nicolas was ordained in 1663 and sent to New France to conduct missionary work among the aboriginal people, arriving at Quebec in 1664. Over the next ten years he resided in diverse settlements from Sept-Iles to Ashland, Wisconsin. Nicolas returned to France about 1675. It is not clear when he died but it was probably in the late 1680s or early 1690s.

During his ten-year residence Nicolas ranged widely across New France recording birds and wildlife he encountered. He specifically mentions seabird and heronry sites well known to us today including Iles aux Oiseaux (Bird Isles) down river from Anticosti Island, the egg islands at Sept-Iles, Pointe aux Alouettes near Tadoussac, Cap aux Oies and Isles aux Coudres, and the Ile aux Hérons at the Lachine Rapids at Montreal. At each of these famous birding sites, he describes the breeding or migrant fauna in sufficient detail to enable identification today.

Nicolas' fantastical sketch of a Pileated Woodpecker in *Codex*, is arguably the most iconic image in 17th-century Canadian ornithology.



Gagnon, François Marc. "Large woodpecker with a red head like a fine cock's crest," *The Codex Canadensis* (English translation accompanying image).

It is likely Nicolas wrote *Histoire* during his residence in New France. The *Codex*, however, contains sketches copied or adapted from texts of medieval artists only available to Nicolas after his return to France. *Histoire* demonstrates Nicolas' knowledge of classical Greek and Roman authors and reveals previous knowledge of and interest in European birds. Many of the names Nicolas used for his birds in *Histoire* are different from those used for the same birds in *Codex*. The interval between writing of the *Histoire* and *Codex* likely accounts for the discrepancy between bird names he used in the two works.

In addition, as best as can be determined, there are about 10 species discussed in *Histoire* for which no sketch is provided in *Codex*, and at least nine sketches in *Codex* for which there is no text in *Histoire*.

The marrying of Louis Nicolas' text and images helps to fill the gaps in our knowledge of 17th-century European writing about natural history in Canada. Nicolas' *Histoire* is arranged in four major sections: plants; mammals; birds and insects; and fish and other water animals. His discussion of birds covers 36 pages and includes 40 birds individually described in detail.

Nicolas' observations are considerably more significant than those of 17th-century naturalist Nicolas Denys (c1598-1688). Denys, who lived in Acadia, is the most widely cited by early historians of ornithology in New France. Out of 45 species of identifiable Denys birds, only seven are discussed in any detail. *Histoire* is a more organized and scientific effort. The birds described by Louis Nicolas in the 1670s represent the first important descriptions of a number of bird species in Canada.

The bird accounts in *Histoire* are divided into three chapters (Books), which cover 36 pages. This separation reflects Nicolas' form of classification. Book Nine describes land birds (16 pages), Book Ten, birds of prey (13 pages), and Book Eleven, waterbirds (7 pages). As was common in the period, Nicolas' selection of birds for discussion relies primarily on their use to people. This accounts for inclusion of the birds of prey, including a discussion of falconry, descriptions of edible land birds, and waterfowl. Gagnon notes that Nicolas' discussion of falconry is the centrepiece of his discussion of terrestrial birds:

{ ... perhaps it will not be hard to place them in the middle of this treatise on birds, so that, by describing river birds at the end of the treatise on birds, they can seize as many as they can with their talons ... on the land, on trees and on the surface of the water (p.144) }

Waterbirds were more likely to be discussed if they were larger. Nicolas suggests he knew many others. He lists numbers of species by generic group including 3 or 4 chevaliers (long-billed shorebirds), 4 or 5 becassines (sandpipers), 4 or 5 pluviers (plovers), and more than 15 species of plongeurs (diving waterfowl). He subdivides the diving ducks into categories such as: 'des grand canards noirs' (scoters), 'des becs de scie' (literally sawbills) 'communs' (small diving ducks), 'des becs de scie plus grands' (larger diving ducks), 'autre becs de scie encore plus grands' (probably mergansers).

The birds were likely brought to Nicolas by Indigenous hunters. He ate many as he often mentions how they taste and how to cook them. Unlike most writers of the period, Nicolas also showed an interest in non-game land birds, which may have caught the eye of the hunters because of their beauty (goldfinch, scarlet tanager, bluebird, bobolink), because they were very common (chickadee), or for their uniqueness (hummingbird). Like everyone before him and most Canadian observers into the 18th century, he does not mention the vast majority of families of small birds such as sparrows, thrushes, warblers, vireos and flycatchers.

Although he provides no measurements, he arranges the birds he discusses in detail in order of size. Thus, his first land bird is the "l'oiseau-mouche" (Ruby-throated Hummingbird) and the last is "le coq d'Inde" (Wild Turkey). This practice allows contemporary ornithologists to identify most of the birds.

Nicolas regularly compares Canadian birds to those he knew in France. Discussing his 'ortolan' (Bobolink), for example, he notes "Le plumage, le gout, le chant sont tous différents du notre (our bird – perhaps Ortolan Bunting), et cet oiseau est assez rare dans le pays. Il est blanc, gris, noir, jaune etc. Il est de même corsage [body size] que ceux de ce pays [France]." Unlike other observers in the 16th and 17th century, Nicolas' writings suggest that he did not assume that the birds were the same. He was more likely to note similarities.

Nicolas' individual descriptions of birds are eclectic. He failed to use a more encyclopedic approach, which might have resulted in a common format. As a result, the locations where he saw birds, the habitat, resident or migratory status, size and field comparisons with European birds, food habits, edibility, nesting sites, etc. are presented in a piece-meal fashion for many species. His sketch of the 'Chete' in *Codex* and description in *Histoire* leaves no doubt that he saw the White Pelican, likely around Ashland near Lake Superior. On the other hand, a sketch of a Bobwhite in *Codex* is not described in *Histoire*.

Nicolas describes in some detail the remarkable tree nesting habits of Wood Ducks. He also notes that the young leave the nest and reach the ground on the back and wings of the parents. One might forgive this rare slip. Unlike Denys, who was not above embellishing his wildlife accounts to assist in the sale of his books, Nicolas was a much more serious naturalist who saw his work as a genuine contribution to science.

Nicolas was enthralled with the Passenger Pigeon (le biset sauvage). A small quote from his extensive text is fairly typical of his interesting writing style:

{ *“This bird passes through twice a year: first in spring and secondly at the end of summer. Some years the migration is so great that some people kill them with sticks in the streets of Montreal; others from their windows as they pass by in flocks.”* }

Nicolas recorded the Willow Ptarmigan only in winter but was unaware of any colour phase. (He was aware that some birds changed plumage – see his discussion of the Snow Bunting.) He noted the ptarmigan’s very well-proportioned hare-like feet adapted for walking on snow, a fact largely unknown to European naturalists. Nicolas also notes that the feet of the Spruce Grouse closely resemble a similar species in his native France. However, his close examination reveals that the bottom of the feet resembles those of a caterpillar with little hooks for easier perching on tree branches.

Well into the 19th century, naturalists who visited or lived in North America found it very difficult to distinguish between various hawks and owls. Nicolas was particularly interested in birds of prey, and clearly knowledgeable about falconry, since he presented a short discussion on what made a ‘good bird’ and discussed terms used in falconry. He thus brought a considerable background to his efforts to describe the hawks and owls, two of the more difficult groups of birds to identify. One can conclude from reading through his accounts that he was largely successful in sorting out North American species. Birds of prey identifiable in his writings include Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Gyrfalcon, Goshawk, Osprey, Bald Eagle, as well as Saw-whet and Great Horned Owls.

His familiarity with the European Sparrowhawk, an accipiter, also allows him to mention two types of similar North American accipiters (in addition to the Goshawk). By inference we can conclude that he probably observed both Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawk; however, there are no images to accompany his text.

### **Codex Canadensis**

Contains 14 plates of birds with 56 drawings in pen and ink. The drawings appear to be copied from works in European ornithology, and in particular Gagnon notes the images from Conrad Gesner’s *Historiae Animalium Liber III, qui est de Avium natura*, first published in Zurich in 1555 with a second edition in 1585 in Frankfurt. Nicolas appears to have selected sketches of European birds which best represented the Canadian birds he was viewing, usually showing them according to their relative size; hence, Ruby-throated Hummingbird as small and ‘l’ayglon américain’ (osprey) as large. An examination of the birds sketched in *Codex*, without the *Histoire* text, would make identification of most of the images impossible.

Liberal spaced throughout his text are references to the movement of live birds and skins to New France previously unknown to historians of science. He mentions specifically that the skin of a Common Loon was presented to Louis XIV and that a pair of Wood Ducks were sent to the royal menagerie at Versailles in the vessel La Grande Espérance.

Nicolas’ sketches are highly stylized with feathering and shading often confusing but the relative anatomical features mostly proportional. In cases where he felt that a previous drawing adequately represented a bird he saw, he copied it. Thus, the sketch of the Willow Ptarmigan looks like a pigeon with extensive feathering on its legs and padded feet added.

In other cases, Nicolas altered the European bird image to better reflect the unique characteristics of the North American bird. Thus, the Ruffed Grouse appears to be an adaptation of a pigeon with a ruff of feathers about the neck and an added fan tail. His ‘turc’, which is likely a Nighthawk, or less likely a Whip-poor-will, is shown on the ground capturing an insect with its long tongue. While Nicolas’ text describes this species as a bird of the night with a large mouth capable of holding an egg, he was likely not always able to find a suitable image to represent his bird.

Nicolas was an observer of great ability with a passionate interest in the natural world. His work, as Daviault comments, reveals a man “of an independent and curious nature, of exceptional rigorous intellect, a man well ahead of his time.”

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