

Issue 65-4
June 2023



Breeding & Nesting
Issue

News for Members



The **SONG SPARROW**

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.

President	Kristen Lalla
Vice-Presidents	Sheldon Harvey Darlene Harvey Ana Morales
Treasurer	Sheldon Harvey
Membership Secretary	Darlene Harvey
Lectures Coordinator	Jeff Harrison
Song Sparrow Editors	Connie Morgenstern Darlene Harvey

Contact us:

General inquiries: info@birdprotectionquebec.org
Publication: songsparrow@birdprotectionquebec.org

Box 67089 – Lemoyne
Saint-Lambert, QC J4R 2T8
Tel.: 514-637-2141
www.birdprotectionquebec.org

The Song Sparrow is published five times per year for members of Bird Protection Quebec.

In this Issue



Features

21

Post-spring migration blues? Whatever for!

27 & 32

If you build it ... Si vous les aidez ...

38

Really Random Nesting Facts!



18

Monitoring the Horned Lark and Purple
Finch at OOT

19

Surveillance de l'alouette cornue et le
roselin pourpre à OOT

04

A Word from the Editors

05

A Message from the President/
Message du président

06

Announcements / Annonces

08

Membership / Nos membres

11

Field Observations

15

Upcoming Field Trips / Excursions

17

Bird Views / Parlons d'oiseaux

39

Citizen Science

42

Birding Basics

44

Early Canadian Ornithology

48

BPQ Archives

ON THE COVER

Cooper's Hawks

Photo: Chuck Kling

This Page

Purple Finch

Photo: Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac

A Word FROM THE EDITORS

It seems not long ago that spring migration had us excited as we welcomed back “our” birds, after oftentimes long and arduous journeys, from their wintering grounds. Now, we move on to the thrill of sighting nesting birds! While the long trip back was difficult enough for bird parents, the hard work had really just begun. Next up: finding a mate, building a nest, protecting eggs and then offspring from predators, and teaching them all they need to know.

In this issue we pay tribute to this important time of the year for birds, and how it fits into your summer birding. Our feature article by Marcel Gahbauer provides some fascinating insight into the learning opportunities available to us during breeding and fledging season. The Education Committee gives some great tips on how we can help cavity-nesting birds that are finding it more and more difficult to locate nesting sites in urban areas, and Richard Gregson’s Citizen Science column explains the importance of the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

In other columns, Marcia Mason takes over Birding Basics this issue to explain all about the strange “third eyelid” newer birders often puzzle over, and Archives gives examples of the “Perils of Nesting”. Also, Jeff Harrison features an important figure in Quebec ornithology, Charles-Eusèbe Dionne, and makes a connection to the late Normand David, an influential presence in the Quebec birding community and a long-time BPQ member, sadly lost in April of this year.

We also announce the new BPQ Board of Directors, elected by the members at the May Annual General Meeting, and take this opportunity to congratulate Kristen Lalla, who was appointed by the Board as president for the next two years. Her first Message follows.

Connie & Darlene



A Message from THE PRESIDENT

Message DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

It's my pleasure to be writing to you as the new president of BPQ. For those of you who might not know who I am, I've served on the board since 2018, and chair the Conservation and Education committees as well as our new working group on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and in the last year served as Vice-President of Outreach and Education until taking on the role as President. My background is in wildlife biology, which I think positions me well on the science side of things at BPQ. In addition to my involvement with BPQ, I volunteer at the McGill Bird Observatory, and I work as a biologist.

One of the reasons that I decided to go for the position as president was that I'm excited about the direction that BPQ is taking. Simon did a lot of great things during his term as president, most notably being a driving force in creating the coordinator position, and I hope to continue that momentum. Thank you to Simon Duval for all his hard work during his presidency, and to outgoing board members Don-Jean Léandri-Breton and Yong Lang. Congrats to our new board members Ron Rind and Suzanne Bélanger, and to Darlene Harvey for filling the role of Vice-President of Outreach and Education.

I'm excited to continue to work with the current board and executive, our coordinator Jules Delisle, the committees, and the membership during my term as president. There are a lot of things going on in the background that I'm excited about, including the development of our new website, surveys at many of our sanctuaries, and our commitment to improve EDI at BPQ.

Summer is a busy time of year for birds as they raise their young, and also for the ornithologists who study those breeding birds, myself included! But I believe that a sense of community is important for any organization; I'm open to hearing about new ideas from you and committed to being present in my new role despite the occasional absence for remote fieldwork.

Kristen Lalla

C'est avec plaisir que je vous écris en tant que nouvelle présidente du POQ. Pour ceux qui ne savent pas qui je suis, je fais partie au conseil d'administration depuis 2018, je préside les comités de conservation et d'éducation ainsi que notre nouveau groupe de travail sur l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion et, au cours de la dernière année, j'ai occupé le poste de vice-présidente de la sensibilisation et de l'éducation jusqu'à ce que j'assume le rôle de présidente. J'ai une formation en biologie de la faune, ce qui me positionne bien pour le côté scientifique des choses au sein du POQ. En plus de mon implication au sein du POQ, je suis bénévole à l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de McGill et je travaille comme biologiste.

L'une des raisons pour lesquelles j'ai décidé de me présenter au poste de président est que je suis enthousiasmé par la direction que prend le POQ. Simon a fait beaucoup de bonnes choses pendant son mandat de président, notamment en jouant un rôle moteur dans la création du poste de coordonnateur, et j'espère continuer sur cette lancée. Merci à Simon Duval pour son travail acharné durant sa présidence, ainsi qu'à Don-Jean Léandri-Breton et Yong Lang, membres sortants du conseil d'administration. Félicitations à nos nouveaux membres du conseil d'administration, Ron Rind et Suzanne Bélanger, ainsi qu'à Darlene Harvey, qui occupe le poste de vice-présidente de la sensibilisation et de l'éducation.

Je suis ravie de continuer à travailler avec le conseil d'administration et l'exécutif actuels, notre coordinatrice Jules Delisle, les comités et les membres au cours de mon mandat de présidente. Il se passe beaucoup de choses en arrière-plan qui m'enthousiasment, notamment le développement de notre nouveau site web, les recensements menées dans plusieurs de nos sanctuaires et notre engagement à améliorer l'EDI au POQ.

L'été est une période de l'année très occupée pour les oiseaux qui élèvent leurs petits et pour les ornithologues qui étudient ces oiseaux nicheurs, moi y compris ! Toutefois, je crois que le sens de la communauté est important pour toute organisation; j'aimerais entendre de nouvelles idées de votre part et je m'engage à être présent dans mon nouveau rôle malgré les absences occasionnelles pour le travail sur le terrain à distance.

Kristen Lalla

New Board Elected by the Members at the Annual General Meeting - May 29, 2023

At our recent AGM, five directors were elected or re-elected to the Board of Directors to serve with eight others who were elected last year for a two-year term.

A call for nominations had been put forward earlier in the year. One position had been vacant since last year and five sitting directors' terms were ending. Three of these directors offered themselves for re-election. Two candidates submitted their duly signed and supported nomination forms to the Elections/Nominations Committee: Suzanne Bélanger and Ron Rind. There being no other nominations, it was motioned that the slate of five people presented be approved by the membership. With only two new candidates having come forward to fill the three open positions, and one director recently resigning mid-term, two board positions remain open and, as permitted by our by-laws, will be filled by the board if and when suitable candidates can be identified.

The board thanks Simon Duval, Don-Jean Léandri-Curadeau, and Yong Lang for their many contributions during their time as directors.

New Board of Directors

Suzanne Bélanger (new)
Émile Brisson-Curadeau
Claude Cloutier *
Kyle Elliott
Jeff Harrison
Darlene Harvey *
Sheldon Harvey

Kristen Lalla
Helen Meredith
Ana Morales
Ron Rind (new)
Shawna Sevigny
Bonnie Soutar *

* re-elected

As previously announced, after serving as president for three years Simon Duval made a decision to step down part way through his second term to concentrate on his home life and business. The board is grateful for his stewardship during that time and wishes Simon and his (growing!) family much success. At a special meeting following the AGM, the board was pleased that Kristen Lalla accepted an appointment as president for the next two years, as did Darlene Harvey as Vice-President, Education & Outreach, a position previously held by Kristen.

Officers - Elected by the Board

President:	Kristen Lalla
Vice-President, Administration:	Sheldon Harvey
Vice-President, Conservation:	Ana Morales
Vice-President, Education & Outreach:	Darlene Harvey
Treasurer:	Sheldon Harvey
Secretary:	Helen Meredith

The Executive Committee, as appointed by the board, is comprised of the president and the three V-Ps.

Nouveau conseil d'administration élu par les membres lors de l'assemblée générale annuelle - 29 mai 2023

Lors de notre récente assemblée générale annuelle, cinq administrateurs ont été élus ou réélus au conseil d'administration pour siéger aux côtés de huit autres élus l'année dernière pour un mandat de deux ans.

Un appel à candidatures avait été lancé plus tôt dans l'année. Un poste était vacant depuis l'année dernière et les mandats de cinq administrateurs en exercice arrivaient à échéance. Trois d'entre eux se sont portés candidats à la réélection. Deux candidats ont soumis leurs formulaires de candidature dûment signés et appuyés à la commission des élections et des nominations : Suzanne Bélanger et Ron Rind. En l'absence d'autres candidatures, il a été proposé que la liste des cinq personnes présentées soit approuvée par les membres. Étant donné que seuls deux nouveaux candidats se sont présentés pour occuper les trois postes vacants et qu'un administrateur a récemment démissionné à mi-mandat, deux postes du conseil d'administration restent vacants et, comme le permettent nos règlements, seront pourvus par le conseil si et lorsque des candidats appropriés pourront être identifiés.

Le conseil d'administration remercie Simon Duval, Don-Jean Léandri-Curadeau et Yong Lang pour leurs nombreuses contributions au sein du conseil.

Nouveau conseil d'administration

Suzanne Bélanger (nouveau)	Kristen Lalla
Émile Brisson-Curadeau	Helen Meredith
Claude Cloutier *	Ana Morales
Kyle Elliott	Ron Rind (nouveau)
Jeff Harrison	Shawna Sevigny
Darlene Harvey *	Bonnie Soutar *
Sheldon Harvey	

** réélu

Comme il l'a déjà annoncé, Simon Duval, après avoir assuré la présidence pendant trois ans, a décidé de se retirer à mi-parcours de son deuxième mandat pour se consacrer à sa vie familiale et à son entreprise. Le conseil d'administration lui est reconnaissant pour le leadership dont il a fait preuve pendant cette période et souhaite à Simon et à sa famille (qui s'agrandit !) beaucoup de succès. Lors d'une réunion spéciale qui a suivi l'AGA, le conseil a eu le plaisir d'apprendre que Kristen Lalla avait accepté d'être nommée présidente pour les deux prochaines années, de même que Darlene Harvey en tant que vice-présidente chargée de l'éducation et de la sensibilisation, un poste précédemment occupé par Kristen.

Membres de la direction - élus par le conseil

Présidente:	Kristen Lalla
Vice-président, administration:	Sheldon Harvey
Vice-présidente, conservation:	Ana Morales
Vice-présidente, éducation & sensibilisation:	Darlene Harvey
Tresorier:	Sheldon Harvey
Secrétaire:	Helen Meredith

Le comité exécutif, nommé par le conseil, est constitué de la présidente et des trois vice-président.e.s.

Focus on

OUR MEMBERS



A big welcome to our new members

Please join us in welcoming the following new and returning members:

Jessica Thompson, Marie Meunier and Mary Rutherford.

We look forward to meeting you, either on Zoom at a monthly meeting or on a field trip! Keep reading this issue for details of our planned activities, and be sure to follow us on Facebook and to join our Song Sparrow [e-list group](#) to connect with fellow members.

How can you do more for the birds? Consider volunteering!

Get involved as much or as little as you are able:

- join one of our standing committees, which are always looking for new members with new ideas;
- talk to one of our board members about what is involved in joining our board and contributing to the decisions that guide BPQ;
- become a field trip leader;
- help with specific events such as bird surveys, nest box monitoring, trail clearing at our sanctuaries.

Download the *Become a Volunteer* form available [here](#) to see our list of committees and activities, complete it to let us know what interests you, and send it to our volunteer coordinator at: volunteering@birdprotectionquebec.org. Or, simply send an email and ask to be added to our volunteers mailing list to be kept up to date on upcoming activities.

You may have noticed some new email addresses popping up, such as the volunteering one on this page.

With our recent move to a new webhost, the mishmash of @pqspb.org and @gmail.com accounts currently in use are being replaced with more recognizable @birdprotectionquebec.org domaine addresses, including our main contact, which will now be info@birdprotectionquebec.org



Bienvenue aux nouveaux membres

Veillez vous joindre à nous pour accueillir les nouveaux membres et anciens membres qui ont renouvelé leur adhésion qui suivent:

Jessica Thompson, Marie Meunier et Mary Rutherford.

Nous sommes impatients de vous rencontrer, que ce soit par Zoom lors d'une réunion mensuelle ou lors de l'une de nos excursions ! Continuez à lire ce numéro pour plus de détails sur les activités prévues, et n'oubliez pas de nous suivre sur Facebook et de rejoindre notre [groupe de liste électronique](#) « Songsparrow » pour vous connecter avec d'autres membres.

Que pouvez-vous faire de plus pour aider les oiseaux ? Faire du bénévolat !

Impliquez-vous autant ou aussi peu que vous le pouvez :

- rejoignez l'un de nos comités permanents, qui sont toujours à la recherche de nouveaux membres avec de nouvelles idées ;
- discutez avec l'un des membres du conseil d'administration pour savoir ce qu'implique le fait de rejoindre notre conseil et de contribuer aux décisions qui guident POQ;
- devenir guide d'une de nos excursions;
- aider lors d'événements spécifiques tels que les inventaires d'oiseaux, la surveillance des nichoirs, l'entretien des sentiers dans nos sanctuaires.

Téléchargez le formulaire *Devenir bénévole* disponible [ici](#) pour consulter la liste de nos comités et activités, remplissez-le pour nous indiquer les domaines qui vous intéressent, et envoyez-le à notre coordinateur des bénévoles à l'adresse volunteering@birdprotectionquebec.org. Vous pouvez également envoyer un courriel et demander à être ajouté à la liste de diffusion des bénévoles afin d'être tenu au courant des activités à venir.

BPQ volunteers at work

For a second year, BPQ was invited to participate in a nature event "À ciel ouvert : focus sur les oiseaux" sponsored by Groupe uni des éducateurs-naturalistes et professionnels en environnement (GUEPE), held at Parc Nature de la Pointe-aux-Prairies in April. Sheldon Harvey co-led a novice bird walk with GUEPE, and he and fellow Marketing Committee members Claude Cloutier and Darlene Harvey staffed our information kiosk and spent the day introducing visitors to BPQ and the work we do.

Photos: Darlene Harvey & Claude Cloutier



Bénévoles sur le terrain

Pour une deuxième année, en avril le POQ a été invité à participer à l'événement " À ciel ouvert : focus sur les oiseaux " parrainé par le Groupe uni des éducateurs-naturalistes et professionnels en environnement (GUEPE) au Parc Nature de la Pointe-aux-Prairies. Sheldon Harvey a co-animé une randonnée ornithologique pour les novices avec le GUEPE, et lui et ses collègues Claude Cloutier et Darlene Harvey, membres du comité de marketing, ont tenu notre kiosque d'information et ont passé la journée à présenter aux visiteurs le POQ et le travail que nous accomplissons.

At the end of February, the annual cleaning and monitoring of the Wood Duck nesting boxes in BPQ's George H. Montgomery bird sanctuary in Philipsburg was carried out. Ana Morales, Jane Cormack, Jules Delisle, Sandy Montgomery and Ron Rind were present, along with two new enthusiastic volunteers - Josué Machado and Stacey Gould.

Despite the mild winter, Streit pond was frozen, giving easy access to all the nesting boxes. Installed back in 2014 to encourage Wood Duck reproduction in the area, some of the boxes showed signs of activity:

- one contained 11 unhatched eggs, meaning a female was forced to abandon the nest after laying all her eggs - usually one per day - possibly because of a wasp nest found inside the box
- three boxes contained nesting material with cattail fuzz for comfort, and one of them had eggshells
- one box will have to be put up again as the tree supporting it fell, and next year we'll change the location of a box that is hard to access where it is, and only showing Spongy Moth occupation so far.

À la fin du mois de février a eu lieu le nettoyage et le suivi annuels des nichoirs à canards branchus dans le sanctuaire d'oiseaux George H. Montgomery de POQ, situé à Philipsburg. Ana Morales, Jane Cormack, Jules Delisle, Sandy Montgomery et Ron Rind étaient présent.es, ainsi que deux nouvelles.aux bénévoles enthousiastes - Josué Machado et Stacey Gould.

Malgré l'hiver doux, l'étang Streit était gelé et ils ont pu marcher et accéder facilement à tous les nichoirs. Installés en 2014 pour encourager la reproduction du canard branchu dans le secteur, certains des nichoirs ont montré des signes d'activité:

- l'un d'entre eux contenait 11 œufs non éclos, ce qui signifie qu'une femelle a été contrainte d'abandonner le nid après avoir pondu tous ses œufs - généralement un par jour - possiblement dû à la présence d'un nid de guêpes trouvé dans le nichoir
- trois nichoirs contenaient du matériel de nidification avec du duvet de quenouille pour le confort, et l'un d'entre eux contenait des coquilles d'œuf
- un nichoir devra être réinstallé car l'arbre qui le supportait est tombé, et l'année prochaine nous changerons l'emplacement d'un nichoir qui est plus difficile d'accès et qui ne montre pour l'instant qu'une occupation par la Spongieuse.

Photos : Jules Delisle | BPQ





In Memoriam Normand David

We were saddened to learn of the passing of long-time BPQ life member and past board member Normand David on April 17, 2023. He was a founding member of the organization which became QuébecOiseaux, and an important influence on birding in Quebec. BPQ extends its sincerest condolences to Normand's family and friends.

Song Sparrow asked a fellow BPQer and friend of Normand for over 60 years to share his thoughts on the loss of such an important figure in Quebec birding.

Mon ami Normand David n'est plus

Par Michel Bertrand

La nouvelle du décès de Normand a été tout un choc pour moi. J'étais en contact fréquent avec lui et rien ne laissait présager une disparition aussi rapide. Je connaissais Normand depuis le collège (Collège Bourget à Rigaud) et j'avais collaboré à l'initier à l'ornithologie et à la botanique. J'offre mes condoléances à sa famille et à toutes les personnes pour qui il était un être précieux.

Après le collège, Normand a poursuivi des études universitaires en histoire, puis a enseigné cette matière pendant deux ans, toujours à Bourget. Il est ensuite allé participer à une étude portant sur les risques aviaires associés au tout nouvel aéroport projeté de Mirabel.

Normand a contribué de façon majeure au développement du loisir ornithologique québécois. Il a été pendant plusieurs décennies le directeur général de l'Association québécoise des groupes d'ornithologues qui est devenue le Regroupement Québec Oiseaux qu'on connaît aujourd'hui. Il y a participé à la naissance et à l'évolution du magazine Québec Oiseaux et à de nombreuses réalisations. Parmi ses publications, il ne faut pas oublier sa liste annotée des oiseaux du Québec qui précise le mode de présence de nos espèces, son guide des sites d'observation pour la province, son livre Observer les oiseaux au Québec (en collaboration avec Michel Gosselin) et les autres livres qu'il a contribué à rendre disponibles par son travail d'auteur et de traducteur, dont les guides majeurs d'identification de Peterson, de la National Geographic et de Sibley, sans oublier Les oiseaux du Québec et de l'Est du Canada de Fred J. Alsop. Il y a de plus ses nombreux articles publiés au Québec et à l'international ainsi que ses conférences.

Normand a contribué à l'élaboration d'une nomenclature française mondiale par sa participation à la Commission internationale des noms français des oiseaux dont il a été un co-fondateur et, en tant que latiniste, à la progression de la nomenclature scientifique latine des oiseaux.

Normand a fait partie du conseil d'administration de BPQ-POQ, alors le PQSPB.

Nous venions d'achever, Normand, Jean Boulva et moi, la préparation d'une publication réunissant son intérêt pour l'histoire à sa passion pour les oiseaux. Elle sera annoncée dès que possible.

Je déplore la perte d'un ami et d'un grand homme.



Normand David avec Michel Bertrand vers 1960, alors étudiants au Collège Bourget, lors d'une expédition botanique estivale.



Past field trips

Our early spring trips were rather un-springlike, with weather reports for the first at Parc des Rapides that promised heavy rain and low temperatures no doubt scaring off some participants. As we moved into May, extra trips were added to our regular weekend schedule to take full advantage of spring migration. These included our traditional weekday Wood Warbler Walks at Summit Woods, as well as two beginners' trips organized in conjunction with the Education Committee.
- BPQ Field Trip Committee

01/04/23 – Parc des Rapides & Verdun Waterfront Guide: Diane Demers

Weather: Light showers, turning to heavy rain at times
Number of Participants: 8; Number of Species: 21
Birds of Note: Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Cooper's Hawk, Great Black-backed Gull, Merlin
eBird checklists: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S132459888>
& <https://ebird.org/checklist/S132438936>

08/04/23 - Beauharnois/Salaberry-de-Valleyfield Area Guides: Darlene & Sheldon Harvey, Wayne Grubert

Weather: Sunny, light winds, close to 0 C.
Number of Participants: 24; Number of Species: 37
Birds of Note: Snow Goose, Trumpeter Swan, 7 duck species, Great Egret, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Yellow-rumped Warbler
eBird Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/118198>

15/04/23 - Parc Nature du Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard, Île-Bizard Guide: Emile Brisson-Curadeau

Weather: Sunny, mild
Number of Participants: 38; Number of Species: 57
Birds of Note: Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Red-necked Grebe, Virginia Rail, Killdeer, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Winter Wren, Red Crossbill, Field Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S133840751>

22/04/23 – Baie-du-Febvre Guides: Darlene and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Mostly sunny
Number of Participants: 22; Number of Species: 49
Birds of Note: Sandhill Crane, 15 species of waterfowl, including Ruddy Duck, Redhead, Northern Pintail, and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Harrier, 7 Bald Eagles, Broad-winged Hawk, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, Purple Martins, Killdeer, Savannah Sparrow.
eBird trip report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/121143>

25/04/23 – Warbler Walk #1 – Mount Royal Cemetery Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: 5 C; light wind & overcast
Number of Participants: 12; Number of Species: 30
Birds of Note: Cooper's Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Winter Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin.
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S135205790>

27/04/23 - Bird Walk for Beginners Morgan Arboretum, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue Guide: Barbara MacDuff

Weather: Foggy
Number of Participants: 14; Number of Species: 25
Birds of Note: Cooper's Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, White-throated Sparrow

29/04/23 - Parc Nature de la Pte-aux-Prairies, Montreal

Guide: Michel Beaupré

Weather: Overcast, but mild

Number of Participants: 15; Number of Species: 35

Birds of Note: Least Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron, Great Horned Owl with two chicks, Belted Kingfisher, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S135588730>



06/05/23 - Ile-St-Bernard, Chateauguay

Guide: Tom Long

Weather: Warm, sunny

Number of Participants: 37; Number of Species: 62

Birds of Note: Osprey, Least Bittern, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Virginia Rail, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Harrier, Tufted Titmouse, Winter Wren, Purple Martin

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S136315499>



02/05/23 - Warbler Walk #2 - Summit Woods, Westmount

Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: 8 C, showers

Number of Participants: 14; Number of Species: 22

Birds of Note: Great Blue Heron, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin, Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S135800531>

09/05/23 - Warbler Walk #3 - Summit Woods, Westmount

Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: Sunny, mild

Number of Participants: 14; Number of Species: 23

Birds of Note: Chimney Swift, Turkey Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S136790883>

04/05/23 - Bird Walk for Beginners

Parc Nature du Bois-de-l'Ile-Bizard, Ile-Bizard

Guide: Barbara MacDuff

Weather: Mild, sunny

Number of Participants: 4; Number of Species: 28

Birds of Note: Wood Duck, Great Blue Heron, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, Swamp Sparrow

10/05/23 - Evening Walk in Hudson

Guides: Barbara MacDuff, Wayne Grubert

Weather: Sunny spring evening, moderate winds

Number of participants: 14; Number of species: 41

Birds of Note: Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Wild Turkey, Least Sandpipers, Red-shouldered Hawk, Brown Thrasher, Scarlet Tanager

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S137063701>



13/05/23 - Hudson

Guide: Wayne Grubert

Weather: Sunny, temps in 11 - 16 C range
Number of Participants: 18; Number of Species: 57
Birds of Note: Cape May Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole.
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S137617996>

16/05/23 - Warbler Walk #4 - Summit Woods, Westmount

Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: Overcast, showers
Number of Participants: 4; Number of Species: 44
Birds of Note: Merlin, Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, 17 species of warblers, Scarlet Tanager.
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S137997290>

20/05/23 - Lac Saint-Francois Nature Refuge, Dundee

Guide: Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Grey skies, sprinkle of rain, temp low 20's
Number of Participants: 14; Number of Species: 64
Birds of Note: Sandhill Cranes, Ruffed Grouse, Bald Eagle, Sedge Wren (on Gordon Road)
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S138736320>

22/05/23 - Mount-Royal Cemetery

Guide: Darlene Harvey

Weather: Sunny, mild
Number of Participants: 32; Number of Species: 55
Birds of Note: Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, Orchard Oriole, 12 warbler species
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S138869960>

23/05/23 - Warbler Walk #5 - Summit Woods, Westmount

Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: Warm and sunny
Number of Participants: 6; Number of Species: 23
Birds of Note: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, 7 warbler species
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S138970075>

27/05/23 - George Montgomery Sanctuary, Phillipsburg

Guides: Nick Acheson, Ron Rind

Weather: Cloudy, cool but warmed up nicely
Number of Participants: 11; Number of Species: 51
Birds of Note: Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Broad-winged Hawk
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S139548073>



Black and White Warbler
Photo: Joe McGill

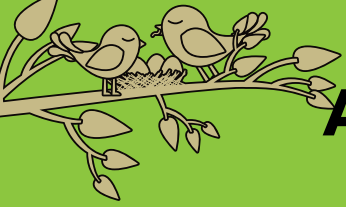


Sandhill Crane
Photo: Tom Long

30/05/23 - Warbler Walk #6 - Summit Woods, Westmount

Guide: Jeff Harrison

Weather: Warm and sunny
Number of Participants: 8; Number of Species: 21
Birds of Note: Chimney Swift, Cooper's Hawk, Wood Thrush, Indigo Bunting, 4 Warbler species
eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S139891631>



And the hard work begins ...

Le travail difficile commence



American Robin
Merle d'Amérique
Photo: Wayne Grubert



House Wren
Troglodyte familier
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Balbuzard pêcheur
Ospreys
Photo: Tom Long



Canard volvert
Mallard
Photo: Wayne Grubert



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Pic maculé
Photo: Bill Thompson



Cliff Swallow
Hirondelle à front blanc
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Spring migration has come and gone; we hope you took full advantage. As you can see from the Past Field Trips report, we certainly did everything we could to get you out in the field, with 19 events held in April and May! Now we go back to our more regular one-trip-per-week schedule for the month of June, with our "normal" field trip season wrapping up on June 24. But don't despair - our popular "Summer Series of Birding" will be back this year, with Sheldon Harvey announcing each weekend destination only a few days before to take advantage of any special sightings or newly discovered locations. As we started doing in the last issue, we are providing only the dates and destinations of upcoming trips so you can make sure to block them off in your calendar. Complete details with driving instructions will be communicated before each week's event through our eNews bulletin, the BPQ Facebook pages and the iO Song Sparrow email group, which gives us the flexibility to make any last minute changes. - BPQ Field Trip Committee

Saturday June 3 / samedi 3 juin

Guide: Sheldon Harvey

This special late-afternoon-to-sunset trip had already happened at time of publication.

**IN SEARCH OF WHIP-POOR-WILLS /
À LA RECHERCHE DES ENGOULEVENT D'AMERIQUE
Ormstown/Saint-Antoine-Abbé region**

Saturday June 10 / samedi 10 juin

08h00 - half day walking trip / demi-journée, excursion à pied

Guide: Claude Cloutier

BELVEDERE CEMETERY, SENNEVILLE

Saturday June 17 / samedi 17 juin

08h00 - half day walking trip / demi-journée, excursion à pied

Guide: Virginia Elliott

PARC ANGRIGNON

<https://montreal.ca/en/places/parc-angrignon>

Saturday June 24 / samedi 24 juin

05h15 - not a typo! Half-day driving trip, but may extend into the early afternoon / excursion en voiture, demi-journée mais peut se prolonger en début d'après-midi

Guides: Wayne Grubert, Sheldon Harvey

**EARLY MORNING SOLSTICE TRIP -
SOUTHWESTERN QUEBEC /
EXCURSION DU SOLSTICE D'ETE - SUD-OUEST DU
QUEBEC**

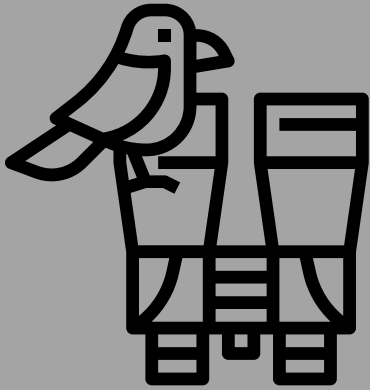
Next up: Summer Series #20 - Stay tuned!!

A few things to know about BPQ field trips

- Trips are open to all, members and non-members alike, so feel free to bring a friend (maybe they'll decide to join!). No reservations required.
- Our trips are learning and sharing experiences - beginner birders are always welcome and our experienced guides are eager to share their knowledge. Sometimes this means we take our time on the trails, often discussing the details of what is being seen.
- Please arrive on time. It's unfair to ask those who do to hang around when they could be looking for birds! Our guides won't wait more than a few minutes past the start time to head out.
- Trips are *very* rarely cancelled because of weather, and cancellations are at the discretion of the guide. Check the forecast the morning of the trip and bring appropriate shoes, raingear, etc. In extreme conditions (i.e. a blizzard!), check the BPQ Facebook page for a cancellation notice and use your own judgement if you don't see one.
- Ticks are a problem. We stick to trails but they are persistent. It is strongly recommended not to wear shorts or sandals.
- We love our dogs too! But not everyone is comfortable around them, and many of the sites we visit have eco-sensitive areas, so please leave pets at home.
- Although guides will try to build in comfort breaks when possible, be aware that there are not always facilities at the locations we visit.
- Many of our guides graciously provide their email addresses with their trip descriptions. If an instruction is unclear or you have a trip-related question, you can contact them directly.



Birding at Mount-Royal Cemetery
Photo: Francis Stöckel



Pierre Bannon's **BIRD VIEWS**

A summary of interesting bird sightings in Montreal and around the province

Bird Views in *The Song Sparrow* will now be aligned with other publications in which it appears and be presented once per season, four times a year instead of five. The complete spring report will appear in our next issue.



PIERRE BANNON **PARLONS D'OISEAUX**

Un bilan des observations intéressantes à Montréal et à travers la province

La rubrique *Parlons d'oiseaux* sera désormais alignée sur les autres publications dans lesquelles elle apparaît et sera présentée une fois par saison, soit quatre fois par an au lieu de cinq, donc le rapport complet du printemps paraîtra dans notre prochain numéro.



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.

Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT)

Original grant abstract:

"Over the past decades, the Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) positioned itself as a leader in Canada for the quality of its migration surveys and the long-term monitoring of several boreal and arctic species. Keeping track of population dynamics (age structure, body condition, reproductive effort, survival rate) of indicative species is highly relevant for ecosystem monitoring.

Our organization wishes to collaborate with Bird Protection Quebec to monitor critically important indicative species of the boreal forest. For the next three years, OOT aims to track Horned Larks and Purple Finches, as well as to pursue its long-term monitoring of Saw-Whet and Boreal Owls."

Decision:

On the recommendation of the Grants Committee, the board approved the awarding of a three-year grant of \$12,500 per year for this project.

An extract from the report (in French) from the OOT on their first year results follows. The full report can be found [here](#).



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.

Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT)

Proposition de subvention :

« Au cours des dernières décennies, l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) s'est positionné comme un leader au Canada pour la qualité de ses relevés migratoires et le suivi à long terme de plusieurs espèces boréales et arctiques. Le suivi de la dynamique des populations (structure d'âge, condition physique, effort de reproduction, taux de survie) des espèces indicatrices est très pertinent pour le suivi des écosystèmes. Notre organisation souhaite collaborer avec Protection des oiseaux du Québec pour surveiller des espèces indicatrices de la forêt boréale d'une importance critique. Pour les trois prochaines années, l'OOT souhaite suivre les alouettes cornues et les roselins pourpres ainsi que poursuivre son suivi à long terme des nyctales de Tengmalm et des nyctales boréales. »

Décision :

Conformément à la recommandation du comité des subventions, le conseil d'administration a approuvé l'octroi d'une subvention triennale de 12 500 \$ par an pour ce projet.

Un extrait du rapport de l'OOT sur les résultats de la première année de projet suit. Le rapport complet est disponible [ici](#).

Étude sur la connectivité migratoire de l'Alouette hausse-col, du Roselin pourpré et des nyctales à l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac à l'automne 2022



Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac Corporation Explos-Nature Février 2023

1. Résumé - Abstract

En 2022, le financement obtenu auprès de Protection des oiseaux du Québec a permis à l'OOT de prolonger le suivi de l'Alouette hausse-col et des deux espèces de Nyctales tout en débutant un nouveau projet portant sur le Roselin pourpré. Cette année, ce sont 25 Alouettes hausse-col et 23 Roselins pourpré qui ont été munis d'un émetteur télémétrique HF. Ce nombre, supérieur au nombre prévu (40), s'explique grâce à la contribution de POQ/BPQ mais également au support d'Environnement et Changement Climatique Canada. Quant aux Nyctales, ce fut la seconde meilleure année en termes de captures, depuis le début du projet en 1996, avec un grand total de 331 individus capturés. Toutefois ce nombre important n'a pas été aussi positif pour la Nyctale de Tengmalm qui ne présente toujours pas de pic d'abondance normalement caractéristique pour cette espèce aux Dunes de Tadoussac. Le programme s'est notamment fait remarquer pour ses recaptures aux États-Unis.

In 2022, the funding obtained from Bird Protection Quebec allowed Tadoussac Bird Observatory (TBO) to extend its monitoring of the Horned Lark and the two species of owls (Saw-whet and Boreal) while allowing the beginning of a new monitoring project on the Purple Finch. This year, 25 Horned Larks and 23 Purple Finches were fitted with VHF telemetry transmitters. This number is higher than expected (40) thanks to the contribution of POQ/BPQ and Environnement et Changement Climatique Canada. As for northern saw-whet and boreal owls, this was the second-best year in terms of captures since the beginning of the project in 1996, with a grand total of 331 individuals captured. However, this important number was not as positive for the Boreal Owl, which still does not show a peak of abundance normally characteristic for this species at the Tadoussac Dunes. The program was particularly noted for its recaptures in the United States.

4. Conclusion générale

Le suivi télémétrique de l'Alouette hausse-col et du Roselin pourpré nous a offert de précieuses connaissances sur les trajets migratoires et les aires d'hivernage de ces deux espèces. Nous avons largement dépassé notre objectif de 20 individus par an pour l'alouette hausse-col et de 20 Roselins pourpré pour la première année. Avec le changement de statut potentiel de l'Alouette hausse-col, nous espérons également être en mesure de pouvoir très prochainement analyser les données sur les trajets migratoires de l'Alouette hausse-col. Nos connaissances sur ces espèces ont considérablement augmenté grâce à ces recherches utilisant la technologie Motus. Quant aux Nyctales, les données accumulées nous permettent de mieux comprendre les tendances de populations de ces deux espèces. Ces 2 espèces rejoignent également un grand nombre de personnes, nous permettant de les sensibiliser aux oiseaux et à la nature en général. Au vu du faible nombre de Nyctale de Tengmalm capturé, il semble important à présent de savoir si ces chiffres font partis d'un cycle, ou si nous avons affaire à une diminution avérée de la population de Nyctale de Tengmalm. Le support de POQ/BPQ est indéniable et vraiment apprécié afin d'améliorer nos connaissances sur la faune aviaire et nous espérons pouvoir compter encore sur votre collaboration dans les prochaines années.



Post-spring-migration blues? Whatever for!

by Marcel Gahbauer

There's a whole other world of birding in the summer

What is summer? By the calendar, the season begins at the summer solstice around June 21 and ends at the fall equinox around September 22. Meteorological summer also lasts three months, but is shifted a bit earlier to include all of June, July, and August. Many Canadians consider summer to start on the Victoria Day long weekend in May and wrap up with the Labour Day weekend in September. In the minds of children and teachers, it's when school is out from late June to early September.

For birds, the definition isn't much more consistent! In a temperate environment like ours, we tend to equate summer with breeding season. That fits well for migrants, some of which (e.g. Black-billed Cuckoo, Olive-sided Flycatcher) may not even quite spend three months of the year in Canada. But among year-round residents, there are some, such as Great Horned Owls, that start nesting as early as January, and by summer have young that are almost ready to test their independence. Overall though, the core of summer here is generally June and July – effectively the period between spring and fall migration, and when the majority of species are nesting and raising their young.

All photos courtesy of Marcel

Based on eBird data for the past ten years (2013-2022), 216 species have been reported on the island of Montreal in June and July (<https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=2013&eyr=2022&bmo=6&emo=7&r=CA-QC-MR>). That includes a fair number of lingering spring migrants (e.g., Brant, Ruddy Turnstone), summer vagrants (e.g., Glossy Ibis, Hooded Warbler), and early fall migrants (e.g., Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Cape May Warbler), so in any given year fewer than 130 species are likely nesting in the region. In contrast, 252 species have been observed in May over the past decade, and 229 species in September. The specific numbers will vary by region, and by individual hotspots, but the general pattern typically holds – far fewer species are present in summer than during migration.

Although that means summer can feel like a letdown after the excitement of spring, there is still plenty to enjoy. Who hasn't at some point been charmed by a tiny, downy duckling running as fast as it can on its little legs to keep up with its mother, or by a bevy of wide-open bills poking up out of a nest, cheeping incessantly for the next worm/fish/berry/fly? Sometimes we get lucky and can watch a growing bird family from the comfort of home – American Robin, Northern Cardinal and, in recent years, Carolina Wren, seem to be among the most comfortable nesting just outside windows. But of course, like in any other season, we generally need to get out and about to see a greater variety of species.



Where to find birds in summer?

The simple answer is: anywhere! Even if you spend much of your time in downtown Montreal, glancing up periodically gives you a good chance of spotting a Peregrine Falcon or some Chimney Swifts. Most species, though, do favour more natural habitat, and searching for them in summer warrants a somewhat different approach than during migration. In both spring and fall, it can be relatively easy to build up a big species list for the season just by returning repeatedly to the same one or two productive hotspots, often shoreline areas where habitat diversity is high and birds are inclined to gather and rest before or after crossing bodies of water. Such locations may also host a decent variety of breeding birds but almost always those represent a much smaller fraction of the diversity present within the region.

The reason for that is simple. During migration, birds are primarily seeking food to power the remainder of their journey, and some shelter while they stop over; as long as there are enough resources to go around, being in large groups is less of a concern. When breeding, however, birds are dependent on having enough resources to support themselves and their offspring throughout the season. For many species, this translates into being much more selective and territorial about habitat during the breeding season.



Pine Warbler - aptly, in a White Pine!!

Think back to where you went birding last summer or the year before, and chances are you may recall a species that you saw at only one location. Maybe Blackburnian Warbler, which during migration occurs widely in mixed flocks and even in suburban backyards but, when nesting, is highly associated with stands of mature Eastern Hemlock. Within the greater Montreal region, the Morgan Arboretum and the Gault Reserve at Mont Ste-Hilaire are among the few reliable places to find this species in summer. Other species may be more widespread, but still highly selective of habitat. There's no point looking for Pine Warblers in summer unless you're among mature pines (proof that at least some warblers have logical English names – but don't apply this logic to Palm Warblers!). Hearing an Ovenbird is good evidence that you are in, or near, a mature hardwood or mixed forest of decent size. Warbling Vireos are strongly associated with riparian habitat. And so on...

Some of these preferences are well documented, whether in field guides, online resources such as Cornell's Birds of the World, or regional bird-finding references. Others may be more subtle or localized: these are the ones you can sleuth out yourself by paying attention to your surroundings when you encounter uncommon species. That may sound daunting, but remember that this isn't a test, but rather a learning process that allows you to gain a deeper understanding of the habitat needs of each species. Sure, it's fun to see a dozen species of warbler passing through the same stand of trees on a busy day of migration – but it's arguably more satisfying to be successful in finding them each in their preferred portion of the landscape when breeding.

There are many ways to go about building up that experience. For a habitat-based approach, visit places like Ste-Timothée (swamp), Morgan Arboretum (mixed forest), Cap St-Jacques (open fields), Ile Ste-Hélène (riparian areas and hardwood forest), or destinations with a mosaic of habitat types like Ile Bizard or the Technoparc, and pay attention to how bird communities change as you move among them. Or if there are particular species you're interested in finding, consider searching for recent sightings in eBird. Alternatively, take part in BPQ's Summer Series of Birding, and note the species that tend to be ubiquitous vs. present at only one or a few of the destinations.

What is THAT bird??

Summer also offers some unique ID challenges. Although vagrants may be scarce, seeing species in juvenile plumage can be a similarly rare and puzzling experience – and arguably more difficult to resolve, as many species retain this appearance for such a short time that it tends to not be described in most references, let alone illustrated. Consider the “gray warbler” – a creature that banders encounter with some regularity, but is otherwise rarely spotted. It's actually one of our more common local breeders – it's just that Yellow Warblers replace these feathers right around when they first leave their nest, so we rarely see that gray plumage.

If we're honest about it though, we probably identify most juveniles by association rather than their actual appearance. Thinking back to cute ducklings, how many could you identify if not in the company of their parents? Look closely enough, and there are usually some distinguishing characteristics, whether in terms of plumage, shape, size, or even behaviour. Most of us just tend to not pay much attention to those subtle details when the answer is obvious – but maybe this, too, is another learning opportunity to take advantage of.

Quiz! What species is this?



We rarely get to see birds that complete their preformative moult soon after fledging in their juvenile plumage ... this is a Chestnut-sided Warbler!

Young Mallard ducklings ...



... but how confident would you be with their ID if mom wasn't present?

For some species, it isn't just the juveniles that can throw off observers with their appearance. Every year in mid-late summer there's a buzz about what is 'wrong' with Northern Cardinals that suddenly show up looking bald and tiny-headed. These, of course, are adults going through their prebasic moult. Most species just are more secretive during the height of their 'ugly' phase ... not so much as a matter of vanity, but rather because their mobility is often also reduced while replacing their feathers and so they tend to be quieter and less active than usual. But be sure to keep your eyes open for other rough-looking birds in mid-summer and you may even be able to spot visible contrasts between the last of the old feathers they are about to shed and the brand new ones growing in.



Birds going through their prebasic moult can look rough. This adult Eastern Screech-Owl is perfectly healthy, despite his ratty appearance!

Breeding, birding and science

Clearly there are plenty of ways for us to improve our own birding skills in summer but, as always, there are also opportunities to document and share sightings through citizen science projects to help advance our collective understanding of bird populations.

Arguably the most important of these is the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) [*ed. note: see Richard Gregson's Citizen Science column this issue*], which has now been running for over 50 years and is the primary basis of population trend estimates for hundreds of species. Although each route is surveyed just once annually, the consistency of coverage across years, combined with the survey's broad spatial sampling, allows for important insights into changes over time. The BBS is targeted at experienced birders, as it involves undertaking a series of 50 three-minute point counts before mid-morning, and the majority of birds are detected by ear. If you are up for it though, please consider taking on one (or more) of the many existing routes in Quebec that require new observers (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/bird-surveys/landbird/north-american-breeding/overview.html>).

While the BBS is not a good fit for all, anyone can contribute data easily through eBird. The analysis of eBird data is less straightforward than for the BBS because there are so many other variables in terms of time, location, observer experience, and more. However, the volume of records is getting to the point where analysts can nonetheless mine the database to produce some remarkable advances in our understanding of bird distribution and movements (explore eBird Science at <https://science.ebird.org/> - but be warned that you could get sucked in!). It's worth noting that eBird can be particularly valuable for documenting species that are not covered well by the BBS. For example, the greater Montreal area has among the largest Peregrine Falcon populations anywhere in eastern North America, nesting on various bridges, skyscrapers, old port infrastructure, and even quarries. However, as BBS routes all avoid urban areas, none of these would be detected; the same goes for the Chimney Swifts mentioned earlier, the vast majority of which now nest in cities.

Additional limitations of the BBS are that its timing isn't optimal for detecting all species, and that the routes only cover a tiny fraction of the landscape. Conversely, breeding bird atlases encourage as much spatial coverage as possible and allow for records to be submitted whenever nesting occurs, but they typically only sample a five-year period every twenty years. The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas is now in its third of five planned years of data collection. Just as a number of eastern Ontario birders contributed records to the last Quebec Breeding Bird Atlas, Quebec birders are welcome to cross over and report their observations. This will be the third breeding bird atlas for Ontario, making it the first jurisdiction anywhere in North America to reach that milestone. Novel analytical approaches are already well underway to enable the most meaningful and reliable comparisons with previous efforts. To learn more about how to participate, and access the new app for direct field entry, see <https://www.birdsontario.org/>

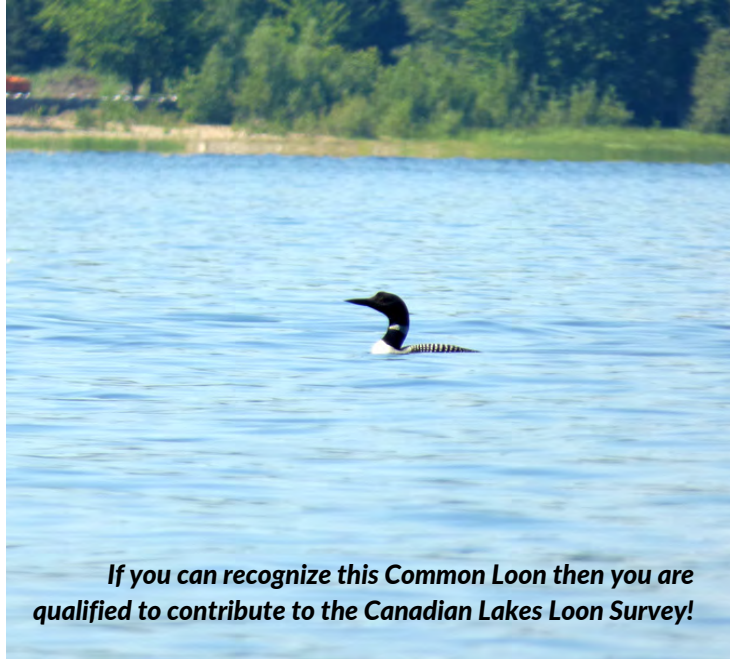
And not to worry if you are not yet confident enough with your overall bird identification skills to participate in these multi-species programs. If you can recognize Common Loons, and routinely visit any lakes in summer, consider contributing to the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (www.birdscanada.org/loons). It is one of Birds Canada's longest-running programs, with a recent report summarizing 40 years of effort at over 4,500 lakes.

The breeding season is also an important time for biologists studying specific bird populations. Beginning in 2019, BPQ supported Kristen Lalla's MSc research on Purple Martins, in collaboration with McGill Bird Observatory. Although Purple Martin numbers in most of eastern Canada have declined precipitously, their colonial nature and attraction to artificial nest "condominiums" makes them relatively easy to monitor. Across three years, 485 nestlings and adults were banded as part of the project in Pointe-Claire, Ile-St-Bernard, St-Georges-de-Clarenceville (by Lake Champlain), Beauharnois, Baie-du-Febvre, and Trois-Rivières; some of them also received an additional yellow band to facilitate resighting reports. To date, two nestlings, banded at Ile-St-Bernard and St-Georges-de-Clarenceville, have been resighted as adults at the Beauharnois colony. Another way you can contribute: if you manage to read a band number (whether on a Purple Martin or any other bird), report it through <http://reportband.gov/> and you, as well as the bander, will receive all of the associated details.

Kristen also tracked some adults with GPS biologgers, showing the exact locations of individuals as they foraged, and revealing a preference for water as foraging habitat. Fledglings were equipped with radio transmitters linked to the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, which showed that they remain around the colony for about two weeks after fledging, roosting either back in the nest box or in wetlands.

Another local study of interest is UQAM's Ring-billed Gull research, led by Jean-François Giroux. Although gulls tend to get little respect, they can actually serve as good indicators of the state of the environment. Since 2009, this project has marked over 15,000 gulls with standard metal and colour bands in an attempt to learn more about their movements, habitat use, and population dynamics. For more on this project, including a form for reporting any sightings of marked gulls, see <https://www.goeland.uqam.ca/>

Last but not least, at a multi-species scale, the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program has become the standard approach adopted by banders across most of North America for summer banding. McGill Bird Observatory has been contributing to MAPS annually since 2009, and with funding from BPQ has also operated a satellite station at BPQ's Montée Biggar property over the past four years. At its core, MAPS is a banding program, with particular emphasis on tracking fluctuations in reproductive output and using inter-annual recoveries as a basis for estimating survival rates. Over the course of 33 years, the MAPS network has compiled over 2.5 million capture records, which are now publicly accessible at <https://ibp-maps-data-exploration-tool.org/>



If you can recognize this Common Loon then you are qualified to contribute to the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey!



The vast majority of Purple Martins in eastern N.A. now nest in custom-built condominiums like this one



One of the colour-banded Ring-billed Gulls from UQAM's research project

Get out and enjoy summer birding!

Hopefully you're now looking forward to summer birding opportunities, rather than just mourning the end of spring migration (although that's certainly legitimate too!). As in any season, pursue what interests you most, be open to learning from challenges, and please consider sharing your observations with one or more of the programs that underlie much of bird conservation in North America.

A few more fun nesting and summer birding facts from Marcel:

Some species breed later than others. **American Goldfinches** only begin nesting once thistles flower in mid-summer, and are often still raising their young into September.



Looking for **Indigo Bunting**? Focus on prominent perches along hedgerows and forest edges.



Although a still relatively new and rare part of Montreal's avifauna, **Carolina Wrens** are comfortable around houses and sometimes even nest in flower pots!



Just because a bird is present in summer doesn't mean it is breeding. For example, small numbers of **Long-tailed Ducks** stay on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River in summer, instead of heading to the Arctic.





American Robin & nestlings
Photo: Darlene Harvey

If you build it ...

Tips from the BPQ Education Committee


Spring migration is pretty well done and that means that birds are thinking about mating!



Some birds nest in tree cavities, which are often hard to come by in urban and suburban environments. Woodpeckers can excavate their own cavities, but most other birds cannot.




For those birds that have migrated to our area, the next challenge will be the search for potential nesting locations. If your home can provide a suitable location, and you have a knack for DIY projects, you could consider helping by building a nest box. On the following pages, you will find information on how you can go about supporting your local cavity-nesting birds.

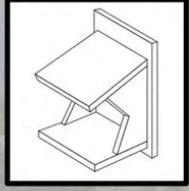
Here are a few common urban bird species and beginner-friendly nest boxes designs, with tips on when and where to place them and links to downloadable plans.

American Robin



Attach to:
 Building
 Post

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing any direction

Preview


Nesting Period

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
			■	■	■	■	■	■			


 Not nesting ■ Some nesting occurrence ■ Nesting in most of range





Tip: Mount shelf under a sheltered site eg: under eaves or soffits

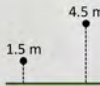


[Nest shelf plans](#)

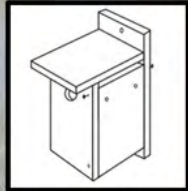
[Nest box plans](#)

Black-capped Chickadee



Attach to:
 Building
 Tree
 Pole
 Post

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing away from prevailing wind

Preview


Nesting Period


JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
			■	■	■	■	■				


 Not nesting ■ Some nesting occurrence ■ Nesting in most of range




Tip: Place 1" of wood shavings in box floor


[Nesting basket plans](#)

Mourning Dove



Attach to:
 Live Tree

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing any direction

Preview


Nesting Period

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
			■	■	■	■	■	■			










 Not nesting ■ Some nesting occurrence ■ Nesting in most of range

Tip: Place cone in a shady part and secure the cone with wires

Some birds that live in open habitats are cavity nesters, but can have a hard time finding natural cavities to nest in. Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and American Kestrels readily nest in artificial nest boxes in large, open spaces like fields or wetlands. Providing nest boxes for these species helps with their conservation. Different species have different nest box requirements, and it's important to tailor nest boxes for the species in your area to avoid attracting invasive species.




Some birds that live in open habitats are cavity nesters. Eastern bluebirds, tree swallows, and American kestrels readily nest in artificial nest boxes in large, open spaces. Different species have different nesting requirements, and providing species-specific nest box setups helps with conservation.


SPECIES	NEST REQUIREMENTS	EGGS
<p>TREE SWALLOW</p> 	<p>Fields, grasslands, & wetlands. 1 3/8" entrance hole.</p> 	
<p>EASTERN BLUEBIRD</p> 	<p>Farm fields and cemeteries. 2 1/4 (h) x 1 3/8" (w) entrance hole.</p> 	
<p>AMERICAN KESTREL</p> 	<p>Fields and grasslands in high-up cavities. 3 x 4" entrance hole.</p> 	


Follow the links in the post for nest box plans & mounting instructions!
 Interested in putting up nest boxes but don't have a large, open space? See our post on backyard bird artificial nest structures!

Please do not disturb nesting birds. Information from Project NestWatch <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/>. Photos by K Lalla, A Morales, & P Berthelot, creative commons (Mike & Chris, Kshanti Greene).





Construction difficulty: **Moderate** ★★★

 10-30 feet high in a tree or on a pole.

 Entrance hole 3-4" facing any direction.

 Begins nesting as early as February.

Follow the links in the post for nest box plans + mounting instructions!

Eastern-screech Owl


If you are someone who lives in an area with a small patch of forest, you may be lucky enough to welcome an Eastern-screech Owl into your nest box. These small owls are cavity nesters which means they will look for natural cavities in trees or old woodpecker holes, but they will quite readily use a nest box if there is one available!


The Eastern Screech-Owl and the Wood Duck are two cavity-nesting species that require relatively large nest boxes. Both species like to nest in treed areas. Check out our info on building nest boxes below:


Wood duck nest box: <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/wood-duck/>
<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-wood-duck-nest-box>

Screech-Owl nest box: <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/eastern-screech-owl/>
<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-screech-owl-nest-box>


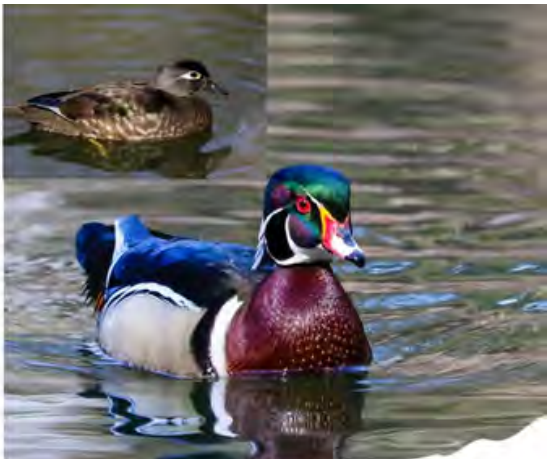


Construction difficulty: **Moderate** ★★★

 6-30 feet high in a tree or on a pole.

 Entrance hole 3" by 4" facing the water.

 Begins nesting in early April.

Follow the links in the post for nest box plans + mounting instructions!

Wood Duck

Wood ducks are also very fond of nest boxes. If you live near a wooded area that tends to flood in the spring or even stays wet for the most part of the year, you may have a good chance of welcoming some wood ducks in your nest box.

This covers most of the cavity-nesting species that will use nest boxes in southern Quebec, but there is more that you can learn! Proper management of your nest boxes can help increase the chances of nesting success: for example, annual cleaning and anti-predator protection such as baffles. In addition, nest box maintenance is important.

If you'd like to learn more, you can consult Project NestWatch's website:

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/>

If you have installed nest boxes or are building some, we'd love to see pictures! Photos can be posted to BPQ's Facebook community page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3144357499161566/>



Tree Swallows
Photo: Francis Stöckel

Editor's note: These great tips were originally posted by the Education Committee on BPQ's Facebook page. We thought that reproducing them here would be well worth it, not only to share with those not on Facebook but also to make it easy to keep them handy for future reference.



Eastern Bluebird
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Si vous les aidez, ils viendront !

Quelques idées du comité d'éducation


La migration printanière est pratiquement terminée, ce qui signifie le commencement de la période de nidification des oiseaux !



Certains oiseaux nichent dans les cavités des arbres, qui sont souvent difficiles à trouver en milieu urbain et suburbain. Les pics peuvent excaver leurs propres cavités, mais pas toutes les espèces ont cette capacité.

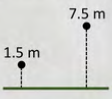


Dans les pages qui suivent, nous partagerons avec vous des renseignements sur ce que vous pouvez faire pour soutenir les oiseaux locaux qui nichent dans les cavités.

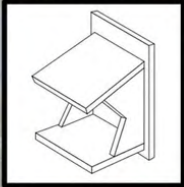
Voici différentes espèces d'oiseaux urbains avec des modèles de nichoirs adaptés aux débutants. Si votre maison offre un emplacement adéquat pour le nichoir de l'une de ces espèces, vous pouvez envisager d'en construire un en utilisant les plans (en anglais) indiqués ci-dessous.

American Robin



Attach to:
 Building
 Post

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing any direction

Preview


Nesting Period


JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Not nesting	Not nesting	Not nesting	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Not nesting





Tip: Mount shelf under a sheltered site eg: under eaves or soffits

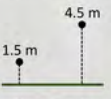

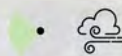
[Nest box plans](#)

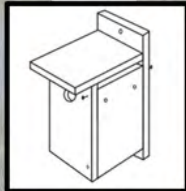
[Nest shelf plans](#)

Black-capped Chickadee



Attach to:
 Building
 Tree
 Pole
 Post

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing away from prevailing wind

Preview



Nesting Period


JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Not nesting	Not nesting	Not nesting	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Not nesting

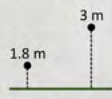


Tip: Place 1" of wood shavings in box floor

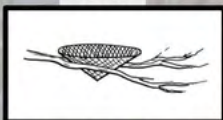
[Nesting basket plans](#)

Mourning Dove



Attach to:
 Live Tree

Placement information:
 Nest height
 Spacing between nests
 Facing any direction

Preview


Nesting Period

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Not nesting	Not nesting	Not nesting	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Some nesting occurrence	Not nesting

Tip: Place cone in a shady part and secure the cone with wires

Certains oiseaux qui vivent dans des habitats ouverts nichent dans des cavités, mais ils peuvent avoir du mal à trouver des cavités naturelles pour nicher. Le merle bleu de l'Est, l'hirondelle bicolore et la crécerelle d'Amérique nichent volontiers dans des nichoirs artificiels installés dans de grands espaces ouverts tels que des champs ou des zones humides. L'installation de nichoirs pour ces espèces contribue à leur conservation. Il est important d'adapter les nichoirs aux espèces présentes dans votre région afin d'éviter d'attirer des espèces envahissantes.



Certains oiseaux qui vivent dans des habitats ouverts nichent dans des cavités. Le merle bleu de l'Est, l'hirondelle bicolore et la crécerelle d'Amérique nichent volontiers dans des nichoirs artificiels installés dans de grands espaces ouverts. Les exigences en matière de nidification varient d'une espèce à l'autre. La fourniture de nichoirs spécifiques à chaque espèce contribue à leur conservation.

ESPÈCE	NICHOIRS	OEUFs
HIRONDELLE BICOLORE 	Champs, prairies et zones humides. Trou d'entrée de 1 3/8". 	
MERLE BLEU DE L'EST 	Champs et cimetières. Trou d'entrée de 2 1/4 (h) x 1 3/8" (l). 	
CRÉCERELLE D'AMÉRIQUE 	Champs et prairies dans des cavités en hauteur. Trou d'entrée de 3 x 4". 	

Suivez les liens dans l'article pour les plans des nichoirs et instructions de montage !
 Vous souhaitez installer des nichoirs mais vous ne disposez pas d'un grand espace ouvert ? Consultez notre post sur les structures artificielles de nidification pour les oiseaux d'arrière-cour !

Veuillez ne pas déranger les oiseaux qui nichent. Information: Project NestWatch <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/>. Photos par K Lalla, A Morales, & P Berthelot, creative commons (Mike & Chris, Kshanti Greene).


[NestWatch Plans & Info Tree Swallow](#)


[NestWatch Plans & Info Eastern Bluebird](#)

[NestWatch Plans & Info American Kestrel](#)

Le Petit-duc maculé et le canard branchu sont deux espèces qui nichent dans des cavités et qui ont besoin de nichoirs relativement grands. Ces deux espèces aiment nicher dans des zones boisées. Consultez nos informations sur la construction de nichoirs pour ces espèces en bas:

Difficulté de construction: **Modérée** ★★☆☆

 10-30 pieds dans un arbre ou sur un poteau.

 Trou d'entrée 3-4" orientation aucune importance.

 Niche dès Février.

Suivre les liens sur le post pour les plans de nichoir + les instructions d'installation!




Petit-duc maculé

Si vous habitez dans une région avec une petite parcelle de forêt, vous aurez peut-être la chance d'accueillir le petit-duc maculé dans votre nichoir. Ces petits hiboux nichent dans des cavités naturelles dans les arbres, les anciens sites de nidification des pics, ainsi qu'un nichoir s'il en a un de disponible!

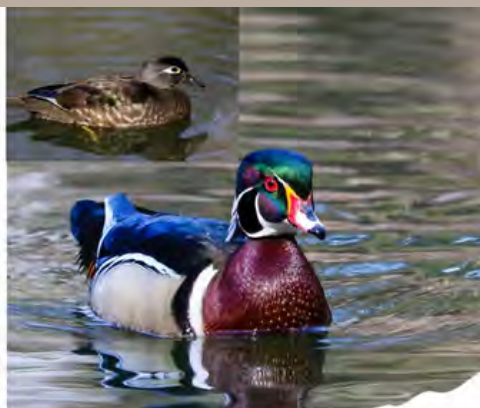
Difficulté de construction: **Modérée** ★★☆☆

 6-30 pieds dans un arbre ou sur un poteau.

 Trou d'entrée 3" X 4" orienté vers l'eau.

 Niche en début d'avril.

Suivre les liens sur le post pour les plans de nichoir + les instructions d'installation!



Canard branchu

Les canards branchus aiment également les nichoirs, si vous habitez près d'une zone boisée qui a tendance à être inondée au printemps ou même à rester humide la majeure partie de l'année, vous avez de bonnes chances d'accueillir des canards branchus dans votre nichoir.

Nichoir à petit-duc maculé

<https://www.quebecoiseaux.org/fr/nichoirs>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-screech-owl-nest-box>

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/eastern-screech-owl/>

Nichoir à canard branchu

<https://wce-education.ducks.ca/images/pdf/nestbox-FR-2020.pdf>

<https://nature-action.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fiche-nichoir-NAQ-web.pdf>

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/wood-duck/>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-wood-duck-nest-box>

Nous avons couvert la plupart des espèces qui nichent dans les cavités et qui utilisent les nichoirs dans le sud du Québec, mais vous pouvez en apprendre davantage ! Une bonne gestion de vos nichoirs peut aider à augmenter les chances de succès de la nidification, par exemple, un nettoyage annuel et une protection contre les prédateurs comme des défecteurs. En outre, l'entretien des nichoirs est important.

Si vous souhaitez en savoir plus, vous pouvez consulter le site Web du projet NestWatch :

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/>

Si vous avez installé des nichoirs ou si vous en construisez, nous aimerions voir des photos ! Les photos peuvent être postées sur la page communautaire Facebook du POQ :

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3144357499161566/>



Hirondelle bicolor
Photo: Francis Stöckel

Note de l'éditrice : Ces excellents conseils ont été publiés à l'origine par le comité d'éducation sur la page Facebook du POQ. Nous avons pensé qu'il serait utile de les reproduire ici, non seulement pour ceux qui ne sont pas sur Facebook, mais aussi pour qu'il soit plus facile de les garder à portée de main pour s'y référer ultérieurement.



Merlebleu de l'Est
Photo: Darlene Harvey

It's worth all the work in the end ...

Mais en fin de compte, cela en vaut de la peine



Great Horned Owl
Grand-duc d'Amérique
Photo: Marcel Gahbauer



American Woodcock
Bécasse d'Amérique
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Brown-headed Cowbird
Vacher à tête brun
Photo: Connie Morgenstern



Least Bittern
Petit blongios
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Cooper's Hawk
Épervier de Cooper
Photo: Chuck Kling



Really Random Facts about Nesting Birds

In no particular order, here is an assortment of really cool bird trivia you can use at your next cocktail party.

1. The "it takes a village" philosophy – bird version. A few bird species, such as the American Crow, engage in cooperative breeding, a practice where the previous year's offspring help rear the current year's brood.

2. Nesting Cycle Query Tool – If you ever wondered when a particular bird species nests, this handy tool provides you with a calendar to determine the nesting cycle according to location. You can find it [here](#).

3. Hello out there! In some species, young can peep loudly enough to be heard outside the egg before they are even hatched. Apparently, they can also hear the parents. In some instances, it has been observed that they will quiet down after a parental response to their peeping. In a study with Northern Bobwhites, it was concluded that the chicks can even recognize their mother's call from inside the egg.



Northern Mockingbird Fledgling

Photo by Connie Morgenstern

4. Hey, nice eggs baby! - For some species, the male will choose to invest more time in parental care of their young depending on the condition of the colour of the eggs in the nest. This has been observed in species such as the Gray Catbird, where the male is more likely to participate in parental care when the female lays vibrant blue eggs, a favourable sign as to her condition.

5. Cue the Pink Panther music or "Don't hate me because I'm clever" - Obligate brood parasites are birds that lay all their eggs in the nests of other species. This is very rare and only occurs in about 1% of the world's bird species. The most familiar to most of us is probably the European Cuckoo, whose actions are akin to an Ocean's 11 caper: the couple works together, with the male luring the potential host bird away from their nest with his singing, while the female then lays the egg in the nest. In North America, the only obligate parasites in the bird world are Bronzed and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

6. Home Sweet Dome – Some birds that nest on the ground among vegetation build a dome shaped nest with a side entrance to protect nestlings. For example, the Eastern Meadowlark breeds in grassland, and the female weaves her nest into surrounding vegetation using grass stems and such. The Ovenbird, found in forests, constructs a domed structure from grasses, stems, bark, and hair and then camouflages it with dead leaves and sticks. So watch your step when you walk outdoors!

7. Moof outta da way, I got sumfing in my mouf - Cliff Swallows carry mouthfuls of mud to construct and attach their nests to walls and cliffs.

8. Open up – here comes the airplane! If you've ever seen a young bird waiting for food with their beaks open, you've probably noticed the swollen bright coloured outer area that seems to outline its bill. This is called the gape flange and is useful to help parents aim food into their offspring's mouth in low light conditions.

Citizen Science

by: Richard Gregson

North American Breeding Bird Survey

The North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is a long-term monitoring program designed to track changes in bird populations across North America. The program was initiated in 1966 by the United States Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Service, and it is now one of the most extensive and successful bird monitoring programs in the world.

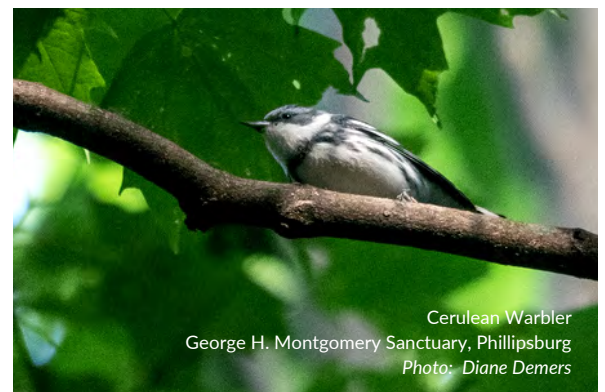
The BBS involves trained volunteers who travel along pre-determined routes, stopping at 50 point-count locations at intervals of approximately 0.8 kilometres. At each stop, volunteers record all birds seen or heard within a three-minute period. The surveys are conducted during the peak of the breeding season, typically from late May to early July, to capture the highest possible number of breeding birds.

The requirements for participating in the BBS are:

- The ability to quickly and accurately identify all birds in the area by sight and by sound
- Good hearing and eyesight
- Access to suitable transportation
- An intention to participate in the survey for at least two years

The data collected from the BBS is used to generate population trend estimates for over 500 bird species across North America. The program provides essential information on population size and distribution, as well as insights into the factors influencing bird populations, such as climate change, habitat loss, and land-use changes. The BBS also serves as a critical tool for identifying species at risk, informing conservation efforts, and assessing the effectiveness of management actions.

The BBS data are publicly available and widely used by researchers, policymakers, and conservationists to inform their work. For example, the data have been used to identify species of conservation concern, such as the Cerulean Warbler (present in the BPQ sanctuary at Phillipsburg), a migratory songbird that has experienced a significant population decline over the past few decades due to habitat loss and fragmentation. The BBS data has also been used to evaluate the impacts of climate change on bird populations, as well as to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures, such as habitat restoration and management.



Cerulean Warbler
George H. Montgomery Sanctuary, Phillipsburg
Photo: Diane Demers

Over the past 50 years, the BBS has grown in size and scope, and it now covers over 3,700 routes across the United States and Canada, with over 2,000 volunteers contributing to the program each year. The program has been praised for its innovative design and rigorous methodology, which allows for the reliable detection of population trends over time. The program has also been credited with raising public awareness of the importance of bird conservation and providing opportunities for citizen scientists to contribute to scientific research.

The BBS has its limitations, however. One challenge is the potential for bias in the data due to differences in volunteer effort and observer skill. Additionally, the BBS is focused on breeding bird populations and does not provide information on non-breeding birds or birds that are not present during the breeding season. Nevertheless, the program remains an essential tool for monitoring bird populations across North America, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing bird populations and informing conservation efforts.

Has Richard piqued your interest? Currently only about half of the BBS routes in Canada are being covered, and new recruits are needed to fill the gaps. You can find all the information you need to know to become a part of this important Citizen Science project at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/bird-surveys/landbird/north-american-breeding/how-to-participate.html>



Bobolink *Photo: Connie*

Eastern Meadowlark *Photo: Darlene*

Eastern Bluebird *Photo: Connie*

Where did all the grassland go?

By Connie Morgenstern

At the end of May, I had the pleasure of participating in my first ever Birds Canada Birdathon in the company of a group of veteran birders marking their 18th consecutive year of raising funds for wild bird conservation. Our team had the good fortune of finding 118 species of birds in varying habitat. Despite the excitement of finding so many birds, what struck me most through this 24-hours of frenzied birding is how vital fundraising efforts are for habitat conservation efforts. If anything, the above photo of a 'soil mining' operation graphically emphasizes the meaning of 'loss of grassland' for birds that thrive in that type of habitat. Something to think about during your next trip to the plant nursery?

While some of the birding spots we visited had managed to escape unscathed for another year and continued to provide safe habitat to species such as Bobolinks, Meadowlarks and Bluebirds, others did not fare as well. We were especially struck by the loss of grassland in exchange for more lucrative corn and soil farms. In contrast, it was heartening to see that a likely too-wet vast farm field was left alone as a welcome respite for hundreds of shorebirds. One can only hope that it too will not soon succumb to some other more profitable purpose.

Birding Basics



Why do birds have a third eyelid?

by Marcia Mason

When I started birding I had many questions - in fact, even after many years, I still do - but this one in particular comes to mind. If you've asked yourself about it, too, I hope this article helps.

A number of years ago, I photographed a Northern Harrier with a membrane partway across the eye. This made me realize that I couldn't remember the name of the membrane and really knew little about it. I had learned from PBS's "Nature" that it is employed when a Peregrine dives down to catch prey at 200 mph or when an American Dipper dives into the frigid waters to collect salmon eggs and other goodies, but not why a bird sitting on a fence would employ it or who, in the wild, has them. So my research began.

What is it?

The nictitating membrane comes from the Latin word *nictare*, to blink. It is also known as the third eyelid, haw or inner eyelid. It is usually translucent or clear. Unlike the first and second eyelids, which open and close vertically and meet in the middle of the eye, the nictitating membrane moves across the entire eye horizontally, as evidenced by the pictures of the Northern Harrier. The upper eyelid resembles that of humans; the lower lid closes when the bird sleeps; and the nictitating membrane, hinged at the inner side of the eye, uses cartilage to sweep horizontally across the eye's cornea from the medial side. Birds can actively control the opening and closing of the membrane.

Who has the membrane?

Many mammals have a vestigial nictitating membrane that does not cover the whole eye. Even humans have vestigial remnant of the membrane, known as the *plica semilunaris*, a crescent-shaped piece of skin folded permanently in the corner of the eye closest to the nose. A number of mammals have the full version, including seals, polar bears and camels. Some birds (it is not known if all birds have one), reptiles and sharks have full nictitating membranes. The full membrane is rare among primates, with the exception of lemurs and nocturnal primates.

What does it do?

The membrane protects the eye from the wind, bright light, debris etc. and moisturizes the eye while retaining visibility. This is extremely helpful for birds of prey flying at high speed. Many diving birds and animals use it to protect their eyes while they are swimming underwater and in these species it is usually transparent so that they retain 100 percent of their visual acuity while submerged. I have read that the nictitating membrane of the American Dipper, an amphibious songbird, is cloudy, milky, or opaque although I have never captured this phenomenon with my own camera. Birds of prey also use the membrane, during the feeding of eager chicks, to protect their eyes.

Woodpeckers employ the membrane when they drill into a tree. Evidently, a millisecond before its bill hits the trunk the woodpecker unconsciously activates its nictitating membrane. This helps to prevent the bird from developing eye injuries, which would otherwise be induced by its continual hammering and from debris.

Similarly, predators such as owls cannot risk repeatedly blinking their eyes while on the hunt for small prey, or risk harming their eyes while darting through woody terrain. The nictitating membrane functions as goggles for these birds, while the additional moisture created by the membrane also aids their vision. American Robins and other prey birds employ it when evading capture.

Aardvarks close their membrane when eating termites to keep from getting bitten; polar bears use it like sunglasses to filter ultraviolet light and prevent snow blindness, while also working as waterproof goggles in the salty, cold water; sharks use this protective covering when biting to prevent injury against thrashing prey.

Some mammals, such as the sea lion, activate it while on land to remove anything caught in their eyes. This appears to be the primary function of the membrane in most animals. Although the exact function of the nictitating membrane remains unknown in cats, it is thought that it is used to protect the cat's very large cornea when it is stalking prey through long grass.

So why was my Northern Harrier closing the membrane? It appears that it was moisturizing the eye and removing any debris, which might have accumulated while it was hunting/flying.



Northern Harrier - clear-eyed to the left, then partial coverage below



Half Coverage below, 100% coverage of the membrane to the right



A historical map of North America, showing the Great Lakes region and the St. Lawrence River. The map is in a sepia tone and features various geographical labels in French and English, such as 'Sewern', 'BATE JAMES', 'L A B R A T O I R', 'ESQUIMAUX', 'TERRE DE LA BOURGEOISIE', and 'TERRE DE LA RAIXE'. The title 'Exploring Early Canadian Ornithology' is overlaid in large, bold, black font across the top of the map.

Exploring Early Canadian Ornithology

with Jeff Harrison

Charles-Eusèbe Dionne (1846-1925)

This article provides a background explaining the importance of Charles-Eusèbe Dionne to Quebec ornithology.

Dionne (1846-1925) was born in humble conditions in Saint-Denis de-la-Bouteillerie, a village on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence, between Rivière-Ouelle and Kamouraska. He was the eldest son of Eusèbe Dionne, a shoemaker, and Emélie Lavoie.

Dionne's interest in birds started in childhood according to late BPQ member Normand David, who was awarded QuébecOiseaux's Charles-Eusèbe-Dionne Prize in 2006 for his life-long commitment to the development of ornithology in Quebec, and was chosen to write Dionne's biography in the *Biographical Dictionary of American and Canadian Naturalists and Environmentalists*:

"He attended elementary school in St-Denis (1853-1859). His interest in natural sciences was already apparent at this age. [He] carved wood sculptures of common birds, which he also attracted by the imitation of their song. At age eleven [he] mounted the first specimen in his collection."

Normand also noted that between 1862 and 1864, on account of his natural curiosity, Dionne was permitted to attend lectures at a local private school.

In 1865 Dionne moved to Québec, where he secured a job as a handyman at the Séminaire de Québec. Dionne had a strong desire to improve himself and, with the help of the priest who administered Laval University, he was able to secure a position in 1866 as a laboratory attendant at the Faculty of Law. There he had access to the university library, which offered him an opportunity to satisfy his voracious appetite for the study of natural history.

During this period he took up taxidermy as a hobby. Under the guidance of Abbé Léon Provancher he developed a strong interest in entomology and a wider interest in natural history. During the 1870s Dionne also gained a reputation within the university for his dedication to scholarship and natural history. In 1872, he was appointed an Assistant Librarian, and ten years later, in 1882, Curator of the Zoological Museum, a position he held until his death in 1925.

Dionne devoted himself to enhancing the museum's collections and putting them on display. For his work he was given an honorary MA in 1902, and later awarded an Honorary Doctorate.

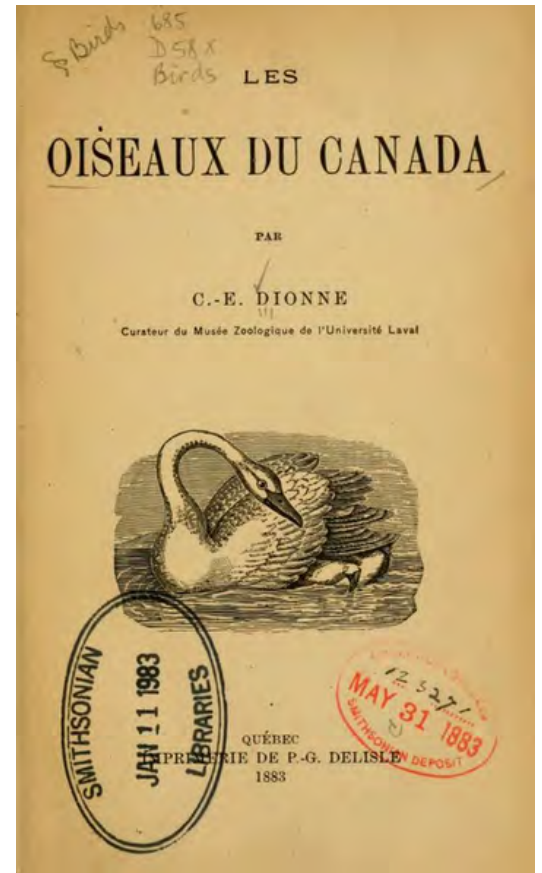
Throughout Dionne's career he maintained his strong interest in ornithology, which culminated in the publishing of *Les Oiseaux du Canada* in 1883, his *Catalogue des Oiseaux de la Province de Québec* in 1889, and *Les oiseaux de la province de Québec* in 1906.

Les Oiseaux du Canada (1883)

Dionne dedicated *Les Oiseaux du Canada* to Abbé Provancher. In his Preface he discusses the wonder of birds and outlines his reasons for attempting a work covering all of Canada. He cites the many important publications to date but noted that numerous titles were out of print or not available and that new information was always being discovered. Dionne also wanted to address the lack of information on Canadian birds available in French.

Dionne discussed 343 species of birds attributed to Canada, but admitted that his work on Canadian bird records was, however, incomplete. Most published records from the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia were not included. Records from the territories of Saskatchewan and Alberta were largely excluded. He also included few records from eastern Canada and relied on the classification system of Elliot Coues.

Dionne listed the publications he consulted but unfortunately, he was unaware of or did not have access to two of the key published works on Canadian ornithology: Swainson and Richardson's *Fauna Boreali Americana 2: The Birds* (1831), the most important 19th-century work of Canadian ornithology; and Archibald Hall's *On the Mammals and Birds of the District of Montreal*, written in 1839 and published in the *Canadian Naturalist and Geologist* in Volume 6 (1861) and Volume 7 (1862). Hall was also a key 19th-century work on Quebec ornithology.



Dionne. *Les Oiseaux du Canada*. 1883. Cover. Courtesy of the Biodiversity Heritage Library

A review of Dionne's *Oiseaux du Canada* by well-known Canadian ornithologist, Montague Chamberlain, in the *Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist* 3: 248-252 in 1883 pointed out that Dionne's use of most of the key sources was minimal, and that Dionne's reliance on Malcolm Ross's *The Birds of Canada* (1873) for non-Quebec Canadian content was also problematic. Chamberlain summed up his assessment:

"It would take a large volume to point out all the errors which these two authors have made. I have picked out these few quite at random, but they will suffice to show how little reliance can be placed in anything which the books contain. Had they been content to publish what they had observed, or could have compiled from authentic sources, these writers would have rendered a valuable service to Canadian students and ornithologists at large, but the publication of these books must bring a blush to the cheek of every Canadian who realizes that those claiming to be eminent among our scientists are responsible for such miserable failures. It is time such work was stopped."

While his work was well-received in Quebec, Dionne took the criticism to heart. One of his biographers, Victor Gaboriault, suggested that Dionne felt the force of Chamberlain's remarks and profited by them ("Dionne sentit le bien fondé de ces remarques et les mit à profit").

Though much of Chamberlain's criticism is justified, particularly his dismissal of the obsolete Coues classification system, his harsh tone may have been partly the result of a jealous concern for his own work. He published *Catalogue of Canadian Birds* in 1889.

In summary, Dionne discusses over 264 pages 343 species of birds attributed to Canada. In the end the value of *Oiseaux* might lie in Dionne's inclusion of comment on the Quebec status of the birds discussed. Unlike James LeMoine, who cited the records of 17th- and 18th-century Quebec naturalists in his *Ornithologie du Canada* (1860, 1861), Dionne used contemporary records and his own personal experience. His lack of research of Quebec records is, however, somewhat disappointing.

As suggested by Gaboriault, the criticism directed at *Oiseaux du Canada* encouraged Dionne to produce his next work, the *Catalogue*, devoted to Quebec birds.

Catalogue des oiseaux de la province de Québec - avec des notes sur leur distribution géographique (1889)

The *Catalogue* is a much more tightly focused work, and as Marianne Ainley notes, it “was much more thorough and was organized along lines suggested by Chamberlain in 1883”. Gone is the dedication, the Preface is shorter, and Coues’ classification system is replaced with Dionne’s use of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) classification system. The *Catalogue* contains an annotated list covering 267 species recorded in Quebec, by far the best effort to date to provide a scientific Checklist of the Birds of Quebec.

Dionne’s new approach provided a much shorter text, illustrating a scientific approach, and greater effort to provide details on initial describers, as well as information on where and when birds were collected or observed, and who collected them.

The *Catalogue* was reviewed in *The Auk* 7 (1890) by the American ornithologist Charles Foster Batchelder (1856-1957) who wrote:

"Dionne's Catalogue of the Birds of Quebec –

The writer modestly expresses a hope that his work will be of some use as a guide to the young ornithologists of Quebec. This is evidently its chief purpose, and is one that cannot fail to be amply fulfilled. The Catalogue follows the classification and nomenclature of the A. O. U. Check-List, and gives also – as an aid in reference to earlier writers – the names and numbers borne by each species in the check-lists of Baird, Coues, and Ridgway. Following this comes a generalized statement of the bird's distribution, adapted from the A. O. U. Check-List, together with information as to its occurrence, abundance, times of appearance, etc., in the Province of Quebec ... It is to be regretted that in recording rarities Mr. Dionne does not always give full particulars and, in some of these cases, that the specimens were not identified by some ornithologist of unquestionable authority. The author justly regrets the scantiness of the data at his command, and, doubtless, more field work in his own neighborhood would have led him to change some statements, especially as to the abundance of certain species. Nevertheless he gives us much valuable information, and a book that promises to serve so well the purpose for which it was written may well be spared too searching criticism." – C. F. B.

Les oiseaux de la province de Québec (1906)

The 1906 publication of Dionne’s third volume on birds - *Les oiseaux de la province de Québec* - was the culmination of close to 50 years' study of Quebec ornithology. It contains detailed accounts of 279 species and sub-species. Normand David remarked on its singular importance: “At the height of his career [Dionne] wrote *Les mammifères de la province de Québec* (1902) and *Les oiseaux de la province de Québec* (1906). Quebec became one of the few political divisions in North America covered by “state books”, on both mammals and birds.”

Other naturalists such as John James Audubon, Archibald Hall and James LeMoine all made significant contributions to 19th century Quebec ornithology, but as David said, “For many decades, Dionne’s French-speaking compatriots turned to *Les oiseaux de la province de Québec* (1906) as the standard reference on the birds of Quebec. It contains original notes on status of birds at the turn of the century that remain an invaluable source of information.”

While David noted that although Dionne did not undertake original research, he “was a meticulous compiler of life histories, descriptions, and distributional occurrences... Both learned naturalists and laymen found him always ready and willing to answer their queries.” It was the unstinting and singular passion of Charles-Eusèbe Dionne that pioneered ornithology in 20th-century Quebec.



Charles-Eusèbe Dionne with some of his bird collection
Laval University

Bibliography

Ainley, Marianne Gosztanyi. 1985. From Natural History to Avian Biology: Canadian Ornithology 1860-1950. Unpublished Thesis. Montreal: McGill University

Batchelder, C. F. 1890. "Dionne's Catalogue of the Birds of Quebec". The Auk 7: 387. New York: L. S. Foster

Chamberlain, Montague. 1883. "M. Dionne Les Oiseaux de Canada". The Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist 3: 248-251. Montreal: Self-published

David, Normand. 1997. "Dionne, Charles-Eusèbe" Biographical Dictionary of American and Canadian Naturalists and Environmentalists. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press

Dionne, Charles-Eusèbe. 1883. Les Oiseaux du Canada. Québec: Imprimerie de P-G Delisle

Dionne, Charles-Eusèbe. 1889. Catalogue des Oiseaux de la Province de Québec. Québec: J. Dussault

**Dionne, C-E. in Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles-Eus%C3%A8be_Dionne**

Gaboriault, Victor. 1947. Bibliographie de Charles-Eusèbe Dionne. Montréal: École des bibliothécaires de l'Université de Montréal

Ouellet, Henri. 2000. "Dionne, Charles-Eusèbe". Dictionary of Canadian Biography 15 (1921-30). Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Our theme for this month's column is **The Perils of Nesting**, poignantly illustrated by the following anecdotes mined from some of our *Annual Reports* of the 1950s and '60s. The *Report on Birds* section of these publications included species observation data intermingled with great stories to go along with the accounts. The nesting period is a risky time for birds; in the cases below we see how predators, the weather or other dangers threaten both young birds and parents, and provide wonderful insight into bird behaviour.

1952 Annual Report

Chimney Swift

Trouble was caused to some residents of Hudson in whose chimneys these swifts nested, by the nest falling down onto the grate-fire hearths. No doubt this was caused by heavy rains washing away the glutinous saliva by which these birds attached the half crescentic structure of twigs which formed the nest, to the side of the chimney. If, however, the nestlings are not injured by the fall, and the grate fire can be darkened by a screen, the parent birds will descend the chimney and feed them, coaxing them up the flue, and continue to feed them until they are fledged and able to fly out from the top.

Tree Swallow

At Hudson on April 10 Bluebirds were making nests in a birdhouse but on April 18 were driven out by Tree Swallows. Meantime, Tree Swallows had started nesting in three other bird houses. The Bluebirds attacked these, and by April 22 had taken possession of one and driven the Swallows from the other two. By April 27, the latter, two houses and three others were occupied by Tree Swallows. However, later, House Wrens drove the Swallows out of three of these houses. (Ommanney)

1955 Annual Report

Bank Swallow

Raccoons, or foxes, appear to have despoiled at least two Bank Swallow colonies at Ulverton. Early in July, more than half of the nest tunnels were found opened and the nest pulled out to the entrance, with the contents obviously destroyed. (Terrill)

1957 Annual Report

Bank swallows

The Bank Swallow colony in the sandpit at Piedmont apparently suffered heavy losses due to the effect of hurricane Audrey, June 29 and 30. Many holes were washed out by the effect of water from the top and by driven rain. Their numbers were greatly reduced after the hurricane. (Kelly)

1963 Annual Report

Swallows

On August 13, approximately 20,000 Bank Swallows were seen at the village of Cote Ste. Catherine. Bank Swallows and Purple Martins were all over the village and the sanctuary. Many have been killed by cars on the provincial road. In the sanctuary itself, hundreds were lying on the road, visibly exhausted, taking off at the last moment before the car, which was advancing at 6 miles an hour and sometimes stopping. Between two poles, holding electric wires, 330 birds were counted. It was like that all along the sanctuary road and the sky was filled with hundreds of swallows of other species. About 80% were Bank Swallows, 5%, Purple Martins, and 5% other species." (Boulva).

Tree Swallow

While driving on the shore road in Como, I noticed a swallow, hovering over an injured or dead bird that has been hit by a car. I stopped and watched it move the little body almost 2 feet to the grass at the edge of the road. It hovered over the body and gripped it with his feet, dropping it and returning. This seemed an amazing performance in a swallow. (Golden)

Squirrel Buster[®]

NUT FEEDER

NO MESS,
NO WASTE[®]



SHELLED PEANUTS



DRIED FRUIT



SUET NUGGETS



www.brome.com

INFO 1-800-856-5685

