

THE SONG SPARROW

Newsletter of Bird Protection Quebec
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February 2007



Troy G. Murphy

Birding in Mayan ruins near Progreso, Yucatan, Mexico

Nature Canada and BirdLife International with Mara Kerry Monday 5 February 2007 at 8:00 PM

Nature Canada, formerly known as the Canadian Nature Federation, is involved in conservation efforts in Canada and internationally. It is a Canadian co-partner of BirdLife International (BLI), a global partnership of conservation organizations in more than 90 countries. BLI seeks to conserve wild bird species and their habitats, protect the world's biological diversity and support the sustainable use by humans of the world's natural resources.

The main focus of BirdLife International's habitat conservation is the Important Bird Area (IBA) program, which identifies and protects sites critical for birds throughout their ranges. Since 1999 Canada has been working with BLI to advance the conservation status of

two sites that are of critical importance to Canadian migratory birds: the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Mexico and the Rio Bayano/Upper Bay region in Panama.

Mara Kerry is Director of Conservation at Nature Canada. She was hired in 2000 to manage and develop Nature Canada's international programs in conjunction with BLI. While working in Latin America, Mara developed a keen interest and understanding of the importance of integrating human socio-economic concerns with the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources. Mara will discuss her work at BirdLife International and Nature Canada.

Jeff Harrison

90
1917
2007
Years

Happy Anniversary Bird Protection Quebec

Congratulations on 90 years of:

- Observation
- Education
- Conservation

Here's to many more!

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**Meetings will take place at
the Fraser-Hickson Library,
4855 Kensington Avenue,
NDG, until further notice.**

Message From Our President

During our Christmas break, with some rare time to read and reflect, I was influenced by media presentations that have hammered home a critical awareness about climate change. The presentations included: Tim Flannery's 2005 book, "*The Weather Makers*", a video presentation featuring a 2006 lecture by former U.S. presidential candidate Al Gore entitled "*An Inconvenient Truth*", and a front page article in *The Gazette* on 28 December 2006, "*Ice Shelf Collapse Sends Chill*". These all touch upon the topic of global warming. Add to this the unseasonably warm weather during the Christmas Bird Count on 16 December and our green Christmas, and one tends to consider the topic very seriously.

Studies of birds have shown changes in distribution with species extending their ranges northward in North America. Locally consider recent establishment of Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, and Tufted Titmouse populations that were absent not so long ago. Spring migrants have arrived earlier and fall migrants have departed later than they have historically. Some even stay so late that they are trapped when winter does eventually come. There were large flocks of Canada Goose still apparent in our area as the New Year came in. In Europe spring migrants have been arriving 1.3 to 4.4 days earlier per decade in the last several decades. Common Murres have begun to lay 24 days earlier per decade for each decade since the 1950s. There are records of many species of insects emerging significantly earlier than they have historically. Hatching birds that depend on this insect food supply have suffered because their timing was off when they hatched close to their normal schedule and there is not enough food for them. These are but a few of the impacts suspected to be due to climate change.

We in North America are major producers of carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to the greenhouse effect influencing the warming trend. As scientists who see strong correlations involving a complicated set of variables instead of direct cause and effect, we have tended to pussyfoot around the issue. However, we have to accept evidence of the relationship between human activity and climate change and the fact that polar ice is melting and global temperature is climbing at an alarming rate. Obvious results are the increased frequency of weather events that have caused heavy mortality and changed environments. Yet, as the saying goes, these events represent just the tip of the iceberg. Unless we do not care about what the earth will be like for our children and grandchildren we need to do something NOW.

What can we do? We can minimize individual contributions to CO₂ emissions: consume less energy, walk or take public transportation whenever possible, turn our thermostats down, reduce waste, reuse, recycle, etc. Spread the word! Influence whomever we can socially and politically. The Kyoto Protocol may not be the best answer but it is a step in the right direction - let's not accept politicians who scoff at it. We need to get through to the North American and European populace who are affecting our lives with their energy consumptive, wasteful and polluting practices. Industrial business people and politicians must be convinced that burning fossil fuels is detrimental to the earth's health.

Rodger Titman

New Members

A very warm welcome to new and returning members Jim Harris, NDG; Guy Huot, Danville; Celia Lafleur, Westmount; Tom Orton, St. Hubert; Paul Scudamore, Pointe Claire; Sylvie Vanier, St. Eustache and the Whitehouse family, Montreal. We look forward to seeing you on our field trips and at our monthly meetings. Join our 90th Anniversary celebrations such as the Big Year of Birding: http://www.birdprotectionquebec.org/by_eng_home.htm.

Bird Protection Quebec



■ Observation ■ Education ■ Conservation

Bird Protection Quebec is the operational name of The Province of Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds.

Established 4 January 1917

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Bird Protection Quebec/PQSPB is a registered charity.

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All donations are tax deductible.

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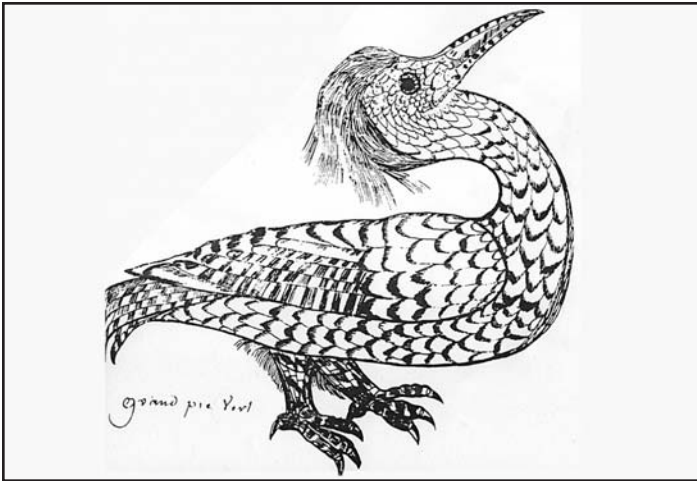
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**Deadline for the next newsletter:
25 February 2007**



"Grand Pic" from *Codex Canadensis*. attributed to Louis Nicolas circa 1701.

Early Quebec Ornithology 1534 - 1840 with Jeff Harrison

Monday 5 March 2007 at 8:00 PM

Little research has been carried out or published on the history of the ornithology of New France and Acadia. The best-known writers were Nicolas Denys in Acadia and Baron LaHontan in New France. In recent years an unpublished Canadian manuscript from the late 17th century entitled *Histoire Naturelle des Indes occidentales* and a book of natural history sketches referred to as the *Codex Canadensis* have been positively ascribed to the Jesuit Louis Nicolas. The Nicolas documents are by far the most important works in early Quebec and Canadian ornithology.

As New France developed, scientific interest concentrated on navigation, public health and identifying useful plants and animals. In the late 1700s to the early 1800s, few Canadian residents or visitors recorded much about Canadian ornithology. With the founding of the Montreal Natural History Society in 1827, bird specimens were systematically collected for the first time. Jeff Harrison will examine Quebec's contributions to the early history of North American ornithology.

Jeff Harrison started birding in his native Toronto in the mid 1950s and has pursued his interest ever since. In the 1970s he started collecting antique etchings, engravings and lithographs of birds from early ornithological texts. Intrigued by early descriptions and artwork of Canadian birds, and by the unpublished early 19th century ornithological manuscript of Charles Fothergill, he started research on early Canadian ornithology. He hopes to publish *Canadian Ornithology 1534-1840* within the next few years.

Birds of Prey Demonstration

BPQ's Education Committee is sponsoring a live Birds of Prey demonstration at the Morgan Arboretum on Sunday 28 January at 10 AM. A bilingual animator from the Ecomuseum will teach us many interesting facts about these fascinating creatures.

Admission is free for Morgan Arboretum members. The charge for non-members is \$5.00 (adults) and \$2.00 (children).

Spring Camping with Bird Protection Quebec

The Field Trip Committee has organized opportunities for spring camping at two of the best places in Ontario to experience the spring migration: Presqu'île Provincial Park on Lake Ontario and Point Pelee National Park on Lake Erie. The dates are such that you may attend both trips, moving on to Pelee after Presqu'île. Please note that these are two separate events, and if you wish to attend both, you should apply for each trip separately as per contact details below. Alison Bentley has offered to make suggestions on what might be done as one goes from Presqu'île to Pelee. Contact her if you would like more details.

Weekend Field Trip to Presqu'île Provincial Park 11 - 12 May

The Field Trip Committee is running a field trip to Presqu'île Provincial Park, Ontario for the nights of 11 - 12 May. This park equals Point Pelee in terms of spring migrants and has the advantages of not being overcrowded and closer to Montreal.

Those preferring to be indoors would stay in a nicely-appointed cottage overlooking Salt Point or in another cottage nearby. Both cottages are within easy walking distance of the lighthouse and Calf Pasture. There is also the option to stay in the Presqu'île Beach Motel. Space will be reserved in the campground for those who prefer the great outdoors. For details, please contact trip leader Alison Bentley, 450-458-8076; email: alisonbentley@hudson.net.

Camping at Point Pelee 14 - 17 May

The Field Trip Committee is pleased to announce the return of the spring Point Pelee Trip. We have reserved 12 camping spots in the park for the nights of 14 - 17 May, departing on 18 May. Wake up and start birding from your tent! Tent lifers have included Clay-colored Sparrow and Connecticut Warbler. Finding 100 species a day in this park is not uncommon. From the campsite it is a five-minute walk to the Interpretation Centre, walking trails and tram service to the tip.

Although this is not a field trip *per se*, several Pelee veterans will likely be on hand to orient you to the park and its amenities. Spaces will be allotted on a first come, first serve basis. Please email Field Trip Committee Co-chairs Martin Bowman: pict@riverlink.ca, or Wayne Grubert: wgrubert@hotmail.com. If you do not have access to e-mail, telephone Wayne, 450-458-5498.

Kelly Support Grants

The Support Grants Committee is now accepting applications for the funding of projects consistent with the mission of Bird Protection Quebec. For an application form and guidelines please email Committee Chair Alison Bentley: alisonbentley@hudson.net. Guidelines can also be downloaded and/or submitted electronically on the website: <http://www.birdprotectionquebec.org/supportgrants.htm>. The first deadline for 2007 project submissions is 31 March. The Committee will meet to evaluate proposals in April.

Montreal Christmas Bird Count 16 December 2006

SPECIES	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	TOTALS
Snow Goose			1													1
Cackling Goose					3											3
Canada Goose	200	900	750	300	450	80	152									2,832
Gadwall			8		8	17										33
American Wigeon		5	3		3			3								11
American Black Duck	3	2		2	5	5		28					4	87		136
Mallard	50	11	37	211	120	2	CW	208	10	7		7	10	173	8	854
Greater Scaup			131		3											134
Lesser Scaup					3			3								6
Harlequin Duck*					2	1										2
Black Scoter								1								1
Long-tailed Duck								1								1
Bufflehead								1								1
Common Goldeneye	10	156			276	25	3	504						14		988
Barrow's Goldeneye								1								1
Hooded Merganser*	2				26	2		10								38
Common Merganser*	1	107	55		106	2		8						1	7	285
Red-br. Merganser*					3	1	1	7								10
Red-throated Loon								1								1
Common Loon				1				5								6
Northern Gannet		CW														CW
Double-cr. Cormorant		3	7					1								11
Great Blue Heron	CW															CW
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1							2				1	1		1	6
Cooper's Hawk			1			1		1			1					4
Northern Goshawk		1														1
Red-tailed Hawk*	2									1	3	2				7
Rough-legged Hawk*															1	1
American Kestrel*		1	2		1	1	1			1		3				9
Merlin						CW										CW
Peregrine Falcon			2				CW			3		1				6
Ring-billed Gull	7		130	44	920	62	104	145	10	81	4	46	8	127	9	1,697
Herring Gull	23	60			91			13		1		1	1	40	5	235
Lesser Bl.-backed Gull					1											1
Glaucous Gull	1															1
Great Bl.-backed Gull*	8	220	7	6	203	2	CW	9		1		3		5	12	474
Rock Pigeon	43	15	223	30	61	38	189	100	151	232	2	29	106	244	333	1,796
Mourning Dove	20					1			1	1		2	1	1		27
Eastern Screech Owl					1	2		1	2							6
Snowy Owl												CW				CW
Red-bell. Woodpecker	2															2
Downy Woodpecker	8	1			2	1	3	8	2	10	7	6	23	2		73
Hairy Woodpecker	4	1			1	CW	1	1	3	9	3	1	11	1	1	37
Northern Flicker	2					1		2			1					6
Pileated Woodpecker	1									2		1				4
Blue Jay	8				1	CW	2					5	2	1		19
American Crow	200	82	101	20	54	56	57	13	121	91	35	510	140	1717	43	1,717*
Common Raven	3							2			1					6
Black-c. Chickadee	49	45	24	11	15	14	9	46	39	49	48	26	104	29	3	511
Red-br. Nuthatch		1														1
White-br. Nuthatch	9	4		1	3	2		2	2	7	10	2	16	1		59
Brown Creeper	3	8			5	2		10	2	1	1		3			35
Carolina Wren					2											2
Winter Wren	1							1								2
Golden-cr. Kinglet	1	6			1			12								20
Ruby-cr. Kinglet					1			1								2
Hermit Thrush					1											1
American Robin		18	1		CW			11		33	1	1	1	3		69
N. Mockingbird						CW										CW
European Starling	100	375	556	45	287	51	376	68	61	123	140	280	45	126	333	2,966
Cedar Waxwing								8								8
Yellow-r. Warbler			1													1
Black-thr. Gray Warbler								1								1
Eastern Towhee	1															1
Am. Tree Sparrow	21	16				2						2	7	1		49
Song Sparrow					1	CW										1
White-thr. Sparrow						2		2					6			10
White-cr. Sparrow												1				1
Dark-eyed Junco	2				4	2	CW			5	6		8			27
Snow Bunting												2				2
Northern Cardinal	2	2	3		5	5	CW	2	CW	2	4	4	32			61
Red-w. Blackbird	CW															CW
Rusty Blackbird	CW															CW
Br.-headed Cowbird	CW															CW
House Finch			21	26	14	16	5	4	4	22	2	10	59	13		196
Am. Goldfinch	10	2	2	4	13	6	17	53	8	89	15	12	95	11	9	346
House Sparrow	70		192	50	126	40	98	34	62	162	2	56	92	85	36	1,105
Total Birds	868	2042	2258	751	2822	442	1018	1334	478	934	285	1014	775	2682	801	16,967
Total Species	34	25	23	14	38	30	15	42	15	24	18	26	23	21	14	69
Total including CW	38	26	23	14	39	35	20	42	16	24	18	27	23	21	14	77

* Numbers have been adjusted to take into into consideration likely double-counting.

CW = Birds observed during count week.

Studies of the Red-breasted Mergansers at Kouchibouguac National Park

At our November monthly meeting, Rodger Titman shared some of the insights gained by his students between 1984 and 2006. Student Lisa Janiszewski explored aspects of brood parasitism among Red-breasted Mergansers. Normal nests hold 8 to 12 eggs, being laid at a rate of approximately one egg every one-and-a-half to two days. She found many nests held significantly higher numbers of eggs indicating other females had also laid in the same nest. In the same vein another student Jovette Bouchard further explored this phenomenon, finding that annual rates of brood parasitism actually fluctuated from 18.8% to 70.9%. These figures may not be quite so astounding if we recognize that female Red-breasted Mergansers are highly philopatric and that there is a good chance that many of the extra eggs are actually laid by sisters or close relatives. So what we have, in effect, is truly a family affair.

One very interesting field technique discussed was the web-tagging of ducklings while still in their shell. In common with all ducks, once the brood has hatched the female leads the ducklings away from the nest. Since this event may occur in a very short period of time, it is often difficult to capture and mark those ducklings. Web-tagging allows the researcher a very successful way of identifying each bird before it is actually hatched. The very exciting result of four web-tagged females being recaptured in the nesting grounds confirms its usefulness. Once adult size is reached of course, leg bands can be added, resulting in reports of birds from this colony being found in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and Virginia.

Shawn Craik has also added to the knowledge base for this colony. Questions concerning nest site location to timing of nest initiation and success were explored. Indications are that if the nest survives, the success rate is good; however, abandonment rates are also high. It is always a balancing act when so many factors play a role.

Rodger's well-organized and articulate presentation drew us into the exciting world of fieldwork and scientific inquiry. His obvious passion for this work has successfully been transmitted to his students.

Lynn Miller

BPQ Summer Nature Camp

The Education Committee will be running a camp for 11-14 year olds at Camp Tamaracouta in the Laurentians from 5 - 11 August 2007. Participants will stay in newly renovated railway cabooses, experience nature-related activities and participate in the camp ecology program. The cost for the week, including accommodation, all meals and snacks, use of camp equipment and animation, will be approximately \$300. Space is limited to 12-16 individuals, so sign up quickly!

BPQ members willing to volunteer either for the whole week or for certain days are being eagerly sought. Your expenses will be covered by the Education Committee. We are also looking for some young adults to act as animators in exchange for a small honorarium.

For further information, contact Alison Bentley, 450-458-8076 or Barbara MacDuff, 514-457-2222.

Montreal Christmas Bird Count 2006

The final tally from the Montreal Christmas Bird Count held on Saturday 16 December 2006 was 69 species, plus 8 additional species recorded during the Count Week. The total of 69 matches the average of counts over the last ten years. The record for the Montreal CBC is 75 species, set in 1993 and equalled again in 2004.

This year two new birds were recorded: Cackling Goose and Black-throated Gray Warbler. This brings the total number of species recorded on Montreal Christmas Counts, first held in 1931, to 150.

Record highs were recorded for the following six birds, with the old records and year(s) in brackets: Canada Goose, 2,832 (1,186 in 2001); Harlequin Duck, two (one in four years); Hooded Merganser 38 (10 in 1992), Common Loon six (four in five years); Sharp-shinned Hawk, six (five in 2004); and Peregrine Falcon, six (three in 2003 and 2005). Unfortunately the two Harlequin Ducks, rare species in Quebec, were both shot by hunters as they were being observed.

Record highs were equalled for the following seven birds: Snow Goose (one); Black Scoter (one); Red-throated Loon (one); Red-bellied Woodpecker (one); Common Raven (six); Eastern Towhee (one); and White-crowned Sparrow (one).

Complete open water resulted in widespread dispersal of waterfowl within the Count area, and presumably elsewhere in the province. This resulted in record numbers of Canada Geese and Hooded Merganser, but probably accounted for the surprising lack of variety of waterfowl species.

There was almost a complete lack of winter finches (only House Finch and American Goldfinch were recorded) and virtually no "winter" gulls (one Glaucous Gull). A total of 2,966 European Starlings were recorded making them the most abundant species recorded on the Count. This total was closely followed by the record number of 2,832 Canada Geese. High numbers were also recorded for Rock Pigeons (1,796), American Crows (1,717), Ring-billed Gulls (1,697) and House Sparrows (1,105). In total 16,967 birds were recorded.

Many thanks to all participants and to all who contributed delicious nibbles to the post-count party.

Jeff Harrison, Montreal CBC Coordinator

Legend of Montreal CBC Parties

- P1: Kahawake-Châteauguay
- P2: Ste. Catherine Locks
- P3: Candiac
- P4: Longueuil
- P5: St. Lawrence River
- P6: LaSalle-Montreal West - Côte St. Luc West
- P7: Verdun - NDG - Côte St. Luc East
- P8: Nuns' Island - Expo Islands
- P9: TMR West - Westmount - St. Henri
- P10: Mount Royal Park - Downtown
- P11: Mount Royal Cemetery - Outremont - TMR East
- P12: Airport
- P13: Bois-de-Liesse
- P14: Gouin - CP Yards Crowroost
- P15: Downtown East - Ahuntsic

Hudson Christmas Bird Count 30 December 2006

SPECIES	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	P 16	P 17	FIELD	FEEDER	GRAND
																		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Cackling Goose															1			1	0	1
Canada Goose	780	1132	640	2	12				163	2		1			1200	3715		7647	0	7647
Gadwall															35			35	0	35
Amer. Black Duck															24	1		25	0	25
Mallard	1											2			60	150		213	0	213
Common Goldeneye														1	47	20		68	0	68
Hooded Merganser														1	1	4		6	0	6
Common Merganser												10		7	103	94	2	216	0	216
Ruffed Grouse					5		2											7	0	7
Wild Turkey	18	2																20	0	20
Great Blue Heron					1					1								2	0	2
Northern Harrier		1																1	0	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk									2	1							1	5	0	5
Cooper's Hawk	1						1							1	1			4	0	4
Northern Goshawk	1	1										1						3	0	3
Buteo sp.							1											1	0	1
Red-tailed Hawk	1			1													1	3	1	4
Rough-legged Hawk			1						1	1				1				4	0	4
American Kestrel	3													1				4	0	4
Merlin	1																	1	0	1
Gull sp.												1						1	0	1
Ring-billed Gull		9												4	1	29		43	0	43
Herring Gull												5		18	8	4	4	39	0	39
Gr. B.-backed Gull			2									25			7	4		38	0	38
Rock Pigeon	89	69	8				95	2	59	56				1	142	48	90	665	0	665
Mourning Dove	149	83	183	19		14	4	6	50	87	1	4	31	58	71	55	48	863	59	922
E. Screech Owl					1	1				1								3	0	3
Snowy Owl	3																	3	0	3
Barred Owl	1								1									2	0	2
Long-eared Owl				2														2	0	2
Yellow-b. Sapsucker							1											1	0	1
Downy Woodpecker	8	2	7	2	2	1	3		5	8	1	2	2	7	7	18	14	89	8	97
Hairy Woodpecker	5	1	5	2	7	5	9	2	3	8		2	15	1	3	3	2	73	5	78
Black-b. Woodpecker			1															1	0	1
Pileated Woodpecker		1	1		1		1				3	1			2			10	1	11
Northern Shrike		1			1													2	0	2
Blue Jay	44	18	39	13	12	8	28	4	21	37	2	3	19	5	30	10	25	318	35	353
American Crow	31	41	12	15	10	7	21	14	111	14	34	28	18	8	8	31	3	406	2	408
Common Raven								1	1									2	0	2
Horned Lark	80	91	30							1								202	0	202
Black-c. Chickadee	148	69	115	55	67	55	109	67	106	82	52	42	66	44	87	40	33	1237	58	1295
Red-br. Nuthatch	2		5		3				1									11	1	12
White-br. Nuthatch	8	3		2	8	5	3	4	6	3	2	7	3	7	5	10	4	80	9	89
Brown Creeper	2		6		6							1		1		7		23	0	23
Wren sp.															1			1	0	1
Golden-cr. Kinglet	7		4		9		5											25	0	25
American Robin					2	1	5								1			9	0	9
European Starling	100	97	72	2	6	10	18	4	42	65		49		73	41	160	37	776	19	795
Amer. Tree Sparrow	70	6	23	19	21	11	44		7	13		19	6		30	1	14	284	21	305
Chipping Sparrow													1					1	0	1
Field Sparrow									1									1	0	1
Song Sparrow					1							1						2	0	2
White-thr. Sparrow			1															1	0	1
Dark-eyed Junco	4	17	38	4	20	11	19	24	40	37	2	8			13	6	45	288	25	313
Lapland Longspur	3																	3	0	3
Snow Bunting	97	105	40	3						160			1		60			466	0	466
Northern Cardinal	2	4	3	3	1	1	6	2	7	15	3			9	6	2	6	70	3	73
Red-w. Blackbird										1					30			31	0	31
Common Grackle															4			4	5	9
Brown-h. Cowbird								1	1						6		4	12	0	12
Purple Finch																		0	5	5
House Finch		4	1						11	1					18	8		43	0	43
White-w. Crossbill			4															4	0	4
Common Redpoll														25				25	0	25
Pine Siskin															1			1	0	1
American Goldfinch	48	30	21	19	31	34	77	3	52	11		4	16	17	19	8	36	426	42	468
House Sparrow	29	94	25	2			1		22	152		1	1	79	101	244	105	856	16	872
Total Individuals	1736	1881	1287	163	228	165	453	133	712	759	100	217	180	510	2080	4715	390	15709	315	16024
Total Species	30	24	26	16	22	15	21	12	22	25	9	22	13	22	35	26	19			65

What Do Feathers Tell Us?

In his December presentation, Marcel Gahbauer focused on how to make the task of identifying certain classes of birds that have a reputation as being tough seem less daunting and more doable. The key is to turn an initially overwhelming, formless mass of information into well-defined, manageable chunks.

Most experienced birders already apply many of Marcel's techniques, possibly without knowing it. But it can be useful to apply them consciously to the cases you find particularly difficult. What you must do is constantly narrow down your options. As Marcel pointed out, the average Montreal birder does not need to memorize every one of the 2,000-odd species found in North and Central America, or even the 357 found in the Montreal area. Instead, we learn to distinguish families of birds: waterfowl, shorebirds, hawks, songbirds, etc. If you instantly know that something is a duck, that significantly reduces the number of species that you need to consider as you identify it. It's also important to get to know the local birds. Marcel reminded us that we tend not to examine common birds in detail; rather, we identify them at a glance. It's the unfamiliar birds that we look at carefully. But it pays to know the details of the common species. The more common birds we know, and the better we know them, the faster we'll be able to home in on something new and different.

Overall, our job is to train our memory by remembering more and shorter lists (Montreal-area warblers, or even Montreal-area warblers with wing bars, instead of all Montreal-area birds). Then, when we encounter a bird we don't immediately recognize, we need to focus our observations. Marcel's mnemonic **What Feathers Tell Us** reminds us to check Wings, Face, Throat, Undertail. Doing this will enable us to expand our ambitions beyond merely identifying species and move on to determining sex and age, when possible.

It was time to get down to cases, and Marcel took us through two notoriously difficult groups of birds - "confusing fall warblers" and sparrows - and showed us how to use the **WFTU** mnemonic to subdivide them into ever smaller groups. With the fall warblers, for example, the initial division was into those with wing bars versus those without; then we moved down to finer gradations such as "greenish streakers" (Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Pine) and "pale'n'plain" (Black-throated Blue, Orange-crowned, Tennessee, Yellow). With sparrows, the initial dichotomy is streak-breasted versus plain-breasted and we drilled down from there. The key is to find the memory tricks that work *for you* and then practise, practise, practise in the field.

Zofia Laubitz

Thank You

Heartfelt thanks to Jeff Harrison, Alison Bentley and Barbara MacDuff for coordinating BPQ's Christmas Bird Counts. Their hard work resulted in two fun-filled birding days, plus the disciplined collection of data to help researchers understand winter bird abundance and distribution.

Hudson Christmas Bird Count 2006

For what was probably the first time ever, the number of species on the Hudson Christmas Bird Count surpassed the number of observers! Sixty-three observers tallied 64 full species and one genus not represented elsewhere, for a total of 65 species, according to Audubon. This makes it a record count for the Hudson area.

Though our total numbers were huge (over 16,000 individuals), almost half that number was made up of Canada Geese seen flying through the area in huge skeins. Feeder birds were few and far between largely due to the availability of natural habitat giving them plenty of feeding choices. Even in the woods we had to work hard for every woodpecker and nuthatch. Mild conditions also made for a shortage of winter finches, although we were lucky in that a single Pine Siskin, a small flock of Common Redpoll, five Purple Finches and some White-winged Crossbills were picked up by four different groups.

On a more positive note the open water, a first for many of the routes, produced some nice surprises such as Gadwall, the first-ever record of this species on the count. Other count highlights were the Field Sparrow found by Barbara MacDuff's group, a Chipping Sparrow located in Como by Lynda Gales and Helen Martz and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, found by Justin Reeves, also in Como. Owls were well represented with four species discovered: Eastern Screech-Owl, Long-eared Owl, Snowy Owl and Barred Owl; as were the hawks with two buteo species, all three accipiters, two species of falcon and also Northern Harrier being reported.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in this record count and also to Gillian Kinsman who was brave enough to host the post-count get-together and go counting too! See you all next year.

Alison Bentley, Hudson CBC Coordinator

Legend of Hudson CBC Parties

- P 1: 201 West
- P 2: 201 East
- P 3: Pinery and fields south
- P 4: Mount Victoria and Main Road
- P 5: Alstonvale
- P 6: Montée Harwood
- P 7: Como east
- P 8: St-Lazare north, including Saddlebrook & Cedarbrook
- P 9: St-Lazare south, Forestières etc.
- P 10: St-Lazare east
- P 11: Hudson Heights
- P 12: Hudson Village
- P 13: Como west
- P 14: Vaudreuil-Dorion, Île Perrot etc.
- P 15: St. Lawrence east of Les Cèdres
- P 16: St. Lawrence west of Les Cèdres
- P 17: Oka

Parlons d'oiseaux

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

par **Pierre Bannon**

Octobre-novembre 2006

Après un mois d'octobre frais et pluvieux, novembre fut très doux, ce qui a permis à plusieurs oiseaux de s'attarder. Par exemple, pas moins de 12 espèces de parulines furent signalées en novembre.

Oie à bec court: une à Penouille 20-30 oct (S. Marchand, pl. ob., ph.). **Bernache nonnette:** des indiv. à Laval le 16 oct (G. Lachaine) et Métabetchouan 17-19 oct (M. Tremblay, D. Gervais *et al.*). **Petit Garrot X Garrot à oeil d'or:** cet hybride fut à nouveau signalé à Laval 6-30+ Nov (G. Lachaine). **Dindon sauvage:** sept indiv. à Saint-Barthélemy le 27 nov, possiblement des échappés (R. Houde).

Fulmar boréal: un aux Escoumins le 12 oct (R. Pintiaux), neuf vus de la traverse Matane-Godbout le 19 oct (J.F. Rousseau). **Puffin des Anglais:** un vu de la traverse Matane-Godbout le 7 oct (G. Gendron, D. Ruest), un à Cap-des-Rosiers le 29 oct permet d'égaliser le record de date tardive pour la province (D. Jalbert, E. Asselin). **Fou de Bassan:** des oiseaux se sont dispersés vers l'ouest jusqu'à Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu le 5 nov (N. Frappier), Victoriaville le 11 nov (M. Grégoire) et Montréal le 30 nov (P. Bannon).

Grande Aigrette: une à Chambly le 24 nov, un record de date tardive (M. Berlinguette, M. Maheu). **Héron garde-boeufs:** des oiseaux à Mercier le 21 oct (*fide* J. Laplante) et aux îles de la Madeleine 11-30 nov (DG. Gaudet *et al.*). **Bihoreau gris:** trois indiv. encore à Rivières-des-Prairies (Montréal) le 29 nov (D. Leblanc *et al.*). **Ibis falcinelle:** une à Lévis le 3 oct (PA. Gagnon). Deux autres oiseaux n'ont pu être rattachés qu'au genre *plegadis*: l'un à Cap Tourmente le 7 oct (D. Ouellette, D. Paquette) et l'autre à Victoriaville le 15 oct (J. Lachance, D. Boutin).

Pygargue à tête blanche: un total de 187 comptés cet automne à Tadoussac, un nouveau record (S. Belleau, S. Denault). **Buse de Swainson:** un juv. de forme sombre à Longue-Rive 19-23 oct (S. Denault, S. Belleau *et al.*, ph.). D'autres observateurs l'auraient noté le 8 oct (J. Tremblay *et al.*). **Buse à queue rousse:** des indiv. de la race *calurus* vus à La Baie 10 & 25 sept (M. Tremblay, S. Tremblay, H. Simard, G. Savard), et aussi à Gatineau le 24 nov, où il était de retour pour un 4^{ième} hiver (Gisèle G, A. Cloutier).

Mouette atricille: un oiseau de 1^{er} hiver à Lévis le 19 nov (G. Lemelin). **Mouette pygmée:** un ad tardif à Chambly 24 nov-2 déc (P. Bannon, pl. ob.). **Mouette rieuse:** des oiseaux à Rivière Saint-Jean le 26 oct (C. Buidin), Sept-Îles le 18 nov (B. Duchesne) et Tadoussac le 15 nov (R. Pintiaux). **Goéland cendré:** un ad à Portneuf le 16 nov (S. Denault) et un autre à Sept-Îles le 25 nov (B. Duchesne). **Mouette de Sabine:** un juv. à Lévis le 1^{er} oct, seule présence cet automne (J. Lachance, D. Boutin). **Mouette blanche:** une à Sept-Îles 18-21 nov (B. Duchesne, C. Couture *et al.*).

Coulicou à bec jaune: des oiseaux tardifs à Pointe-des-Monts le 7 oct (B. Gendreau) et Port-Saint-François le 27 oct

Birdviews

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

by **Pierre Bannon**

October-November 2006

After a rather cool and wet October, November was very mild, allowing many birds to linger late in the province. For instance, 12 species of warblers were reported in November.

Pink-footed Goose: one at Penouille 20-30 Oct (S. Marchand, m. ob., ph.). **Barnacle Goose:** singles at Laval 16 Oct (G. Lachaine) and at Métabetchouan 17-19 Oct (M. Tremblay, D. Gervais *et al.*). **Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye:** again this fall, this hybrid was reported at Laval 6-30+ Nov (G. Lachaine). **Wild Turkey:** seven indiv. at Saint-Barthélemy 27 Nov may have been escaped birds (R. Houde).

Northern Fulmar: one at Les Escoumins 12 Oct (R. Pintiaux), nine seen from the Matane-Godbout ferry 19 Oct (J.F. Rousseau). **Manx Shearwater:** one from the Matane-Godbout ferry 7 Oct (G. Gendron, D. Ruest), one at Cap-des-Rosiers 29 Oct tied a record late date for the province (D. Jalbert, E. Asselin). **Northern Gannet:** single imm. strayed west to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu 5 Nov (N. Frappier), Victoriaville 11 Nov (M. Grégoire) and Montreal 30 Nov (P. Bannon).

Great Egret: one at Chambly 24 Nov was record late (M. Berlinguette, M. Maheu). **Cattle Egret:** singles at Mercier 21 Oct (*fide* J. Laplante) and at a few different locations in the Magdalen Is. 11-30 Nov (DG. Gaudet *et al.*). **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** three indiv. were still at Rivières-des-Prairies (Montreal) 29 Nov (D. Leblanc *et al.*). **Glossy Ibis:** one at Lévis 3 Oct (PA. Gagnon). Two more birds allowed identification to the genus *plegadis* only: one at Cape Tourmente 7 Oct (D. Ouellette, D. Paquette) and one at Victoriaville 15 Oct (J. Lachance, D. Boutin).

Bald Eagle: a total of 187 at the Tadoussac Hawk Watch this fall, a new record number (S. Belleau, S. Denault). **Swainson's Hawk:** a dark-morph juv. at Longue-Rive 19-23 Oct (S. Denault, S. Belleau *et al.*, ph.). Other observers had apparently noticed this bird on 8 Oct (J. Tremblay *et al.*). **Red-tailed Hawk:** single *calurus* indiv. were seen at La Baie 10 & 25 Sept (M. Tremblay, S. Tremblay, H. Simard, G. Savard), and also at Gatineau 24 Nov where it had returned for its fourth winter (Gisèle G, A. Cloutier).

Laughing Gull: a first-winter bird spotted at Lévis 19 Nov (G. Lemelin). **Little Gull:** a late ad. bird at Chambly 24 Nov-2 Dec (P. Bannon, m. ob.). **Black-headed Gull:** singles seen at Rivière Saint-Jean 26 Oct (C. Buidin), Sept-Îles 18 Nov (B. Duchesne) and Tadoussac 15 Nov (R. Pintiaux). **Mew Gull:** an ad at Portneuf 16 Nov (S. Denault) and one at Sept-Îles 25 Nov (B. Duchesne). **Sabine's Gull:** a juv. at Lévis 1 Oct was the only indiv. for the fall (J. Lachance, D. Boutin). **Ivory Gull:** one reported at Sept-Îles 18-21 Nov (B. Duchesne, C. Couture *et al.*).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: late birds were located at Pointe-des-Monts 7 Oct (B. Gendreau) and Port-Saint-

(R. Barbeau, J. Brunelle). **Engoulevent bois-pourri**: un oiseau à Forestville le 13 oct une date record (R. Gilbert). **Pic à tête rouge**: un indiv. à Pointe-des-Monts le 14 oct (B. Gendreau) et un imm. à Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue le 17 oct (B. Barnhurst). **Pic à ventre roux**: des oiseaux aux IDLM le 16 oct (C. Cyr) et à Sainte-Hedwidge 7-29 nov (A. Girard, I. Martel, *et al.*).

TYRAN GRIS: un à l'Anse-à-Beaufils 5-30 nov, une 1^{ère} mention provinciale (J. Wiseman, pl. ob., ph.). **Viréo aux yeux blancs**: un imm. à Métabetchouan le 2 oct (S. Boivin). **Viréo de Philadelphie**: un à Québec 16-17 nov, un record de date tardive (JM. Giroux, ph.). **Pie d'Amérique**: une dans une région boisée au nord de Authier-Nord le 18 oct, possiblement un égaré plutôt qu'un échappé (B. Gagnon). **Hirondelle noire**: des oiseaux très tardifs à La Pocatière le 15 oct (C. Auchu) et Rivière-Hatée le 16 oct (R. St-Laurent). **Hirondelle bicolore**: un oiseau tardif à Sainte-Catherine le 19 nov (P. Otis). **Troglodyte de Caroline**: un à Lévis 28 août-30 nov (S. Bégin, L. Plante), un à Granby le 4 nov (S. Labbé), et trois à Philipsburg le 25 nov (D. Ouellette). **Gobemoucheron gris-bleu**: un oiseau très tardif à Chandler le 11 nov (R. Garrett, M. Garant).

Traquet motteux: un à Québec le 4 oct (L. Messely). **Merlebleu de l'Est**: deux à quatre oiseaux se sont attardés au cimetière du Mont-Royal jusqu'au 18 nov (P. Bannon). **Solitaire de Townsend**: un à Saint-Adalbert le 11 nov (J.G. Chouinard). **Grive à joues grises**: une à Boischatel (Québec) 18-20 nov (JM. Giroux, O. Barden, ph.), un record de date tardive. **GRIVE MUSICIENNE**: un oiseau de 1^{ère} année à Saint-Fulgence 11-17 nov (C. Samson, D. Côté, G. Savard *et al.*, ph.); sans doute l'OISEAU DE L'ANNÉE et une première nord-américaine.

Paruline grise: une femelle à l'île Sainte-Hélène (Montréal) 4-30 nov + (D. Demers, D. Ouellette, pl. ob. ph.). **Paruline à gorge jaune**: des oiseaux à Lachenaie le 6 nov (JP. Hameury) et à Saint-Urbain 24-30 nov (C. Pinel). **Paruline vermivore**: une à l'île Sainte-Hélène 7-10 nov (A. Quenneville, pl. ob. ph.). **Paruline à capuchon**: une femelle à Québec 4-8 nov (G. Cyr *et al.*, ph.). **Paruline polyglotte**: une détectée à Québec 1-2 oct (A. Gagnon, M. Raymond, L. Plante). **Tangara écarlate**: une femelle encore à Sept-Îles le 2 nov (L. Dubé). **Tangara à tête rouge**: un mâle à l'Ascension-de-Patapédia le 27 oct (C. Francoeur). **Bruant à joues marron**: des oiseaux à Tadoussac le 9 oct (Y. Rochepault) et l'Anse-au-Griffon 24 oct-30 nov + (J. Lacasse, D. Jalbert *et al.*). **Oriole de Bullock**: un mâle de 1^{ère} année à Havre-aux-Maisons le 1^{er} nov (N. Langford, ph.). **Oriole de Baltimore**: un nombre étonnamment élevé signalé sur la Côte Nord cet automne, e.g. un maximum de cinq à Sept-Îles le 11 nov (B. Duchesne, C. Couture). **Bec-croisé bifascié**: des nombres record sur la Côte Nord en oct, e.g. 35,000 à Pointe-des-Monts le 10 oct (F. Gagnon). **Sizerin blanchâtre**: 18 à Tadoussac le 19 nov, un nombre record (S. Belleau, S. Denault).

Veillez communiquer vos observations intéressantes à: Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montréal, QC H4E 1P1. Tél: 514-766-8767 en soirée. Courriel: pbannon@videotron.ca

François 27 Oct (R. Barbeau, J. Brunelle). **Whip-poor-will**: a record late bird at Forestville 13 Oct (R. Gilbert). **Red-headed Woodpecker**: an indiv. was at Pointe-des-Monts 14 Oct (B. Gendreau) and an imm. was spotted at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue 17 Oct (B. Barnhurst). **Red-bellied Woodpecker**: singles in the Magdalen Is. 16 Oct (C. Cyr) and at Sainte-Hedwidge 7-29 Nov (A. Girard, I. Martel, *et al.*).

GRAY KINGBIRD: one at l'Anse-à-Beaufils (Gaspé Pen.) 5-30 Nov, a first record for the province (J. Wiseman, m. ob., ph.). **White-eyed Vireo**: an imm. at Métabetchouan 2 Oct (S. Boivin). **Philadelphia Vireo**: one at Quebec City 16-17 Nov, a record late date (JM. Giroux, ph.). **Black-billed Magpie**: one seen in a forested region north of Authier-Nord 18 Oct, a good candidate for a genuine stray (B. Gagnon). **Purple Martin**: singles at La Pocatière 15 Oct (C. Auchu) and Rivière-Hatée 16 Oct (R. St-Laurent) were very late. **Tree Swallow**: a very late bird was at Sainte-Catherine 19 Nov (P. Otis). **Carolina Wren**: one at Lévis 28 Aug-30 Nov (S. Bégin, L. Plante), one at Granby 4 Nov (S. Labbé), and three at Philipsburg 25 Nov (D. Ouellette). **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: a very late indiv. at Chandler 11 Nov (R. Garrett, M. Garant).

Northern Wheatear: one at Quebec City 4 Oct (L. Messely). **Eastern Bluebird**: two to four birds lingered in the Mount Royal Cemetery until 18 Nov (P. Bannon). **Townsend's Solitaire**: one at Saint-Adalbert 11 Nov (J.G. Chouinard). **Gray-cheeked Thrush**: one at Boischatel (Quebec City) 18-20 Nov (JM. Giroux, O. Barden, ph.), a record late bird. **SONG THRUSH**: a first year bird at Saint-Fulgence 11-17 Nov (C. Samson, D. Côté, G. Savard *et al.*, ph.); certainly the BIRD OF THE YEAR and a first North American record.

Black-throated Gray Warbler: a female at St. Helen's Island (Montreal) 4-30 Nov + (D. Demers, D. Ouellette, m. ob. ph.). **Yellow-throated Warbler**: singles at Lachenaie 6 Nov (JP. Hameury) and Saint-Urbain 24-30 Nov (C. Pinel). **Worm-eating Warbler**: one at St. Helen's Island 7-10 Nov (A. Quenneville, m. ob. ph.). **Hooded Warbler**: a female at Quebec City 4-8 Nov (G. Cyr *et al.*, ph.). **Yellow-breasted Chat**: one detected at Quebec City 1-2 Oct (A. Gagnon, M. Raymond, L. Plante). **Scarlet Tanager**: a female was still at Sept-Îles 2 Nov (L. Dubé). **Western Tanager**: a male at l'Ascension-de-Patapédia 27 Oct (C. Francoeur). **Lark Sparrow**: singles at Tadoussac 9 Oct (Y. Rochepault) and at l'Anse-au-Griffon 24 Oct-30 Nov + (J. Lacasse, D. Jalbert *et al.*). **Bullock's Oriole**: a first-year male at Havre-aux-Maisons 1 Nov (N. Langford, ph.). **Baltimore Oriole**: astonishing numbers reported on the North Shore late this autumn, e.g. a peak of five at Sept-Îles 11 Nov (B. Duchesne, C. Couture). **White-winged Crossbill**: record numbers on the North Shore in Oct, e.g. 35,000 at Pointe-des-Monts 10 Oct (F. Gagnon). **Hoary Redpoll**: 18 at Tadoussac 19 Nov, a record number (S. Belleau, S. Denault).

Please report your interesting bird observations to: Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montreal, QC H4E 1P1. Tel: 514-766-8767 after 7:00 PM. Email: pbannon@videotron.ca

River of Raptors, Veracruz, Mexico

My October 2006 trip to Veracruz, Mexico, began with a 6:00 AM flight to Chicago. Eighteen hours and 3,584 km later (and without luggage), I stumbled into a cab after having spotted my first Mexican bird: a Great-tailed Grackle hopping about the airport rafters. My first morning in Veracruz was spent tracking down my luggage, and getting my first glimpses at several Great Kiskadee and Social Flycatchers.

The next day proved to be slightly frustrating bird-wise, as we had been so preoccupied with preparing presentations for the North American Ornithological Conference that none of us had brought a Mexican field guide. So the unfamiliar raptors drifting amongst the tall buildings, the gulls streaming past us on the beach, and the peeps skittering in the surf remained best guesses. Fast-forwarding through the conference, which was the largest ornithological assembly in history (roughly 1,700 participants), I'll elaborate on my three-day ProNatura River of Raptors tour.

To give you an overall sense of the trip: I saw 127 species, of which 76 were lifers. The tour began at La Catalana, an abandoned housing development reclaimed by scrub forest. The morning yielded a Rufous-naped Wren's nest, noisy aggregations of Groove-billed Ani and Brown Jays, and fleeting glimpses of a Squirrel Cuckoo - the most elegantly brilliant bird we saw. As the sun rose, Turkey and Black Vultures, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged and Swainson's Hawks lifted off and floated past us, heading south for the winter. We also had great looks at the resident Roadside, Common Black, White-tailed and Short-tailed Hawks.

Once back at the hotel in Cardel, the main Hawk Watch site in Veracruz, we made a beeline for the roof, as the sky was filled with birds. Thousands of raptors and migrating waterbirds swirled together: American White Pelican, Wood Stork, Anhinga, White and White-faced Ibis. After gawking

at hawks for a few hours, we headed to La Antigua, a small river that feeds into the Gulf of Mexico. We boated to the river mouth, where we saw hundreds of waders, gulls and shorebirds: Black Skimmers, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, four species of tern, Collared Plovers... The highlight of the evening, however, was a rather unfortunate event for a Common Yellowthroat. It frantically landed at my feet, and took off again, only to be taken out by an Aplomado Falcon. Backlit by the setting sun, the falcon flew its dinner over to a post where it plucked it, the glowing feathers quickly carried by the ocean breeze.



Marie-Anne Hudson

Groove-billed Ani

The next morning, we headed to Juan Angel beach - not so much a beach as an impromptu garbage dump. The flycatchers carried the day, highlighting their resilience to pollution. Vermilion, Scissor-tailed and Fork-tailed Flycatchers dazzled us with their acrobatic and noisy fights, perching on piles of garbage and hawking for insects.

Thousands of vultures and hawks rising from the surrounding scrub indicated the promise of another productive hawk watch. That night, we found ourselves in front of a giant bat roost. Having thousands of bats whipping by our heads was completely surreal and enchanting.

Our final day was spent at La Mancha, a biological reserve and banding station. We saw Montezuma Oropendola, Aztec Parakeet, Black-headed Trogon, and heard forest specialists such as the Collared Forest-falcon and the Blue-crowned Motmot. The visit was crowned by a Common Black Hawk that was hunting crabs on the beach, and a snoozing Northern Potoo mimicking a branch.

The trip went by in an instant. I met some wonderful people, saw loads of amazing creatures, and ate a lot of fried food (but that's another story).

Marie-Anne Hudson

On Your Mark, Get Set, Count!

To date, over 100 individuals (including 15 teams) have made the decision to register and take part in one or more of the contests that make up Bird Protection Quebec's Big Year of Birding event. Young and old, experienced and not (30% of registrants have less than four years of birding experience), participants have found at least one contest to suit them.

Sure, the Big Year category is bound to attract the more zealous and experienced birder and the one who can afford to travel greater distances to see a bird, but there are plenty of categories for the more laid-back birder.

Most of us have a backyard, even if it is just a balcony. Why not keep a running tab of what shows up and submit your list at the end of the year for the Backyard List? The Most Lifers category will obviously favour the not-so-experienced birder having a low "Life List". The simplicity of the Big Sit (to be held Victoria Day weekend, 19 - 21 May)

makes it another appealing contest. Just find a good spot for bird watching, preferably one with good views of a variety of habitats and sit for an hour. And if that spot doesn't cough up enough birds to your liking, then move on to another spot. Nothing stops you from doing several Big Sits. Or several Big Months. Or several Big Days.

Not yet convinced? Take a look at our prize list. It includes an all-inclusive three-night stay for two at the Auberge du Lièvre on l'Île-aux-Lièvres, three spotting scopes, two pairs of binoculars, field bags, watches, over twenty-five field guides and books (in French and English), clothing, bird houses, etc. Although the Big Year of Birding is under way, it's still not too late for you to register. Full details are available on the website: http://www.birdprotectionquebec.org/by_eng_home.htm.

Barbara Szabo

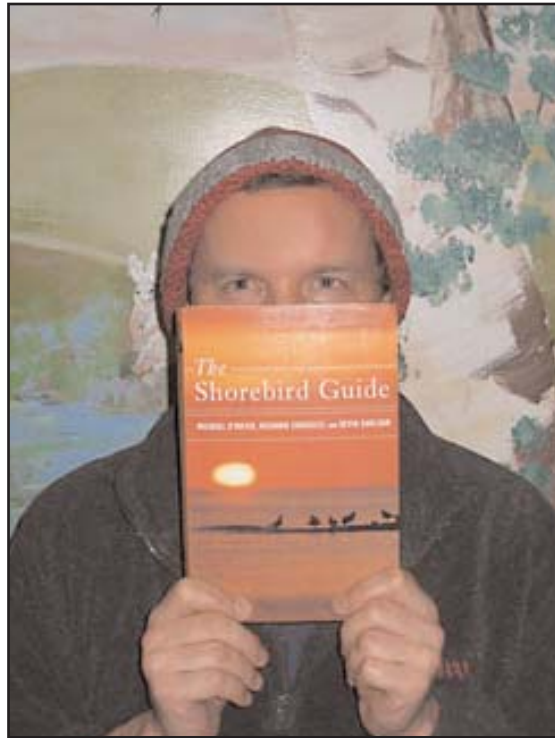
The Shorebird Guide

Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson
Houghton Mifflin Company 2006 ISBN-10: 0618432949

As a leader of a good number of our Society's weekly field trips I should not readily admit this, but I will. Shorebirds baffle me. How can it be that a group of birds that stand in plain sight, assume posed positions on open beaches, mudflats and rocks, give long leisurely views and often show little fear of humans can elicit such second-guessing when it comes to positive IDs? Yet how many of us have not felt that sense of anticipation mixed with trepidation when confronted with our first migratory flocks of "peeps", dowitchers or other waders which we must identify? I, for one, welcome any new resource that takes some of the mystery out of this pursuit. *The Shorebird Guide* by Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson does just that.

At first glance the guide may seem to be just another compilation of "pretty" photos, but a closer examination will show that there exists a definite pattern to the order in which the photos are presented. In keeping with the philosophy that GISS, (General Impression of Size and Shape) is a crucial first step in any bird identification, the authors lead each species' photo section with a somewhat distant shot of the birds, often as part of a flock - just the way a birder in the field usually first encounters them. Then a series of photos takes us chronologically through each species' various plumages from juvenal to breeding adult all the while showing various characteristic postures and behaviors.

And there certainly is no shortage of photographs in *The Shorebird Guide* with over 300 pages dedicated to them, all in full colour. As an example of this thoroughness



the photo section for Dunlin alone has eighteen pictures! Even if some of the full-page photographs interspersed among the others are not of particular value in identification they are nonetheless stunning in quality. One of the novel ideas in this guide book is having a few "quiz" photos thrown into the mix with answers given in an appendix. Also of particular interest are pictures showing mixed flocks of birds. The visual comparison of size and shape in a single shot can often do more than paragraphs of prose when describing relative features between species. That is not to say that the species profiles should be overlooked in this guide. The 150 or so pages that follow the photo section give a concise but thorough account of each species status, taxonomy, behavior, migration, moult pattern and vocalizations.

The Shorebird Guide is not necessarily a guide one would want to lug across mudflats unless you plan to simply sit in a beach chair and let the birds come to you. At over a kilogram in mass it rivals the original Sibley Guide in size. However, as an addition to the serious birder's library it is highly recommended. There is no substitute for getting out in the field and, yes, making mistakes in shorebird identification, but this book should certainly help to limit the errors to say nothing of the embarrassment of a certain nameless trip leader. A little less egg on the face, shorebird or otherwise, is always welcome. Now if he can just master those hybrids and aberrant individuals with which the book finishes he will be all set!

Anonymous

Great Backyard Bird Count 16 - 19 February 2007

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It's free, fun, and easy - and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site: <http://birdsource.org/gbbc>.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can

explore what is being reported from the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see during the count period.

In 2006, participants reported a record-breaking 7.5 million birds of 623 species. They submitted 60,616 checklists, just 433 shy of an all-time record for total checklists. Quebec birders observed 47,455 birds of 93 species and submitted 301 checklists, the fourth highest number of checklists submitted in Canada. Ontario birders led the country with a whopping 1,309 checklists! To view the complete results and photographs from 2006 visit: <http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/results>.



Left to right: A Blue Jay is attracted to the mixed seed in a dome feeder. What appears to be a mirror image is actually two Downy Woodpeckers enjoying shelled peanuts. A Hoary Redpoll and an American Goldfinch visit a niger feeder.

Photos: Richard Gregson

Winter Bird Feeding: Food For Thought

26 December 2006. Snow at last and my feeders are covered with birds! Chickadees, juncos, goldfinches, cardinals, nuthatches and Mourning Doves. All familiar birds, but against the snowy backdrop they really stand out. Fortunately my feeders are full and not covered with snow. I have to admit it's hard to stay motivated to fill and clean feeders with the lack of action during this warm weather while natural food sources are available.

Traditionally, feeding the birds has been a winter hobby. How many of us simply put out bread, table scraps and fat drippings for the birds when we were children? Now we have a dazzling array of seeds and feeders available to entice birds to our properties year round. Winter bird feeding quickly illustrates the importance of feeder placement. Positioning feeders where we can see them easily from the comfort of the house is important. For most people this is the kitchen/breakfast area. By seeing the feeders easily and often we get more enjoyment out of watching the birds, miss less, and are more quickly aware of when feeders need attention (filling, clearing, cleaning, moving out of reach of squirrels). Winter's cold temperatures and snow and ice make certain activities necessary.

- Put out high-energy foods such as suet, peanuts, black sunflower seeds, meal worms.
- Make sure feeders are filled especially before snow-falls and extremely cold weather.
- Clear snow and ice from bird feeders and heated baths so that birds can access the food and water.

Project FeederWatch (www.bsc-eoc.org/national/pfw.html) lists the most common birds in our area from December to April as: Black-capped Chickadee, Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, Blue Jay, Downy Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinal, White-breasted Nuthatch and

House Finch. With this in mind it makes sense to provide food that is attractive to these species. I would suggest:

- Black sunflower seed in any or several kinds of feeders for chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals, and goldfinches; really almost all birds will eat it.
- Mixed seed (that contains black sunflower seeds, cracked corn and millet) in a platform feeder for Mourning Doves, juncos, cardinals and Blue Jays
- Niger seed in a distelfink feeder (tube-type with special small holes for "thistle" seed) for goldfinches and redpolls should they arrive.
- Shelled peanuts in a peanut feeder or suet in a suet holder for woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches.

Different types of feeders also encourage or discourage birds with different feeding habits. Feeders that birds cling to will attract "clinging" birds (chickadees, nuthatches, goldfinches, woodpeckers) and will not accumulate snow. Feeders with flat trays/surfaces attract "ground feeder" types of birds (cardinals, Blue Jays, Mourning Doves, juncos) and need to be covered or the snow will accumulate on them. Although Dark-eyed Juncos are occasionally seen on platform feeders providing white millet, they really prefer ground feeding. Scattering millet in the shelter of cedar hedges and evergreens attracts them.

If such protection is not available near your feeding station, temporary shelter can be provided using brush piles - a good use for the Christmas tree! Water is also very attractive for birds in freezing weather. Following these simple guidelines should attract an interesting variety of birds to our yards.

Postscript. 2 January 2007. Don't be too concerned if there are fewer birds when there is little snow and there is a lot of natural food available.

Elise Titman, with input from Jean Gregson

Field Trip Diaries

- 28/10/06 **PARC NATURE DE LA POINTE-AUX-PRAIRIES** **Leader: Diane Demers**
Weather: Rainy, windy, 4° C. 1 birder 31 species
Bird of the Day: Northern Flicker.
Other Birds of Note: Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Surf Scoter, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden-Crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow.
- 04/11/06 **MORGAN ARBORETUM** **Leaders: Betsy McFarlane & Barbara MacDuff**
Weather: Cool & sunny. 21 birders 30 species
Bird of the Day: Rusty Blackbird.
Other Birds of Note: Blue-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet.
- 11/11/06 **STE-MARTINE, ST-ÉTIENNE, HUNGRY BAY, ST-LOUIS-DE-GONZAGUE** **Leader: Felix Hilton**
Weather: Cool, windy & rainy. 8 birders 29 species
Bird of the Day: None specified.
Other Birds of Note: Snow Goose, American Coot, White-winged Scoter, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Merlin, Horned Lark, Brown-headed Cowbird.
- 18/11/06 **PARC NATURE DU CAP-ST-JACQUES** **Leader: Wayne Grubert**
Weather: Windy, 2 to 4° C, some sun. 8 birders 29 species
Birds of the Day: Two Golden Eagles, Common Loon.
Other Birds of Note: Greater & Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, and one RUBBER CHICKEN SP !
- 25/11/06 **BOIS PAPINEAU** **Leader: Chuck Kling**
Weather: Clear, sunny, - 2° C. 14 birders 13 species
Bird of the Day: Pileated Woodpecker.
Other Birds of Note: Great Black-backed Gull, Downy & Hairy Woodpecker, American Tree Sparrow.
- 02/12/06 **NOTRE DAME DE L'ÎLE PERROT** **Leader: Wayne Grubert**
Weather: Cold, heavy winds, rough water. 2 birders 20 species
Bird of the Day: Peregrine Falcon.
Other Birds of Note: Greater & Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Goldeneye.
- 09/12/06 **CASSELMAN & LAROSE FOREST REGION, ON** **Leaders: Jacques Bouvier & Martin Bowman**
Weather: Cloudy, windy, 0° C. 9 birders 27 species
Birds of the Day: White-winged Crossbill, Snowy Owl, Belted Kingfisher.
Other Birds of Note: Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Raven, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting.

Field Trip Diaries Prepared by Sheldon Harvey

Kelly Research Fund Requests Now Being Accepted for 2007

Fonds commémoratifs de recherche
Alfred B. Kelly, Protection des oiseaux du Québec

Des subventions d'une somme maximale de 3 000 \$ sont disponibles pour la recherche visant directement l'étude des oiseaux du Québec. Pour raison d'impôts, le numéro d'assurance sociale de l'auteur ou un numéro d'enregistrement d'organisation à but non lucratif doit être indiqué sur la soumission.

Pour obtenir les formulaires de soumission contactez :

Protection des oiseaux du Québec : Comité de recherche

CP 43, Succ. B
Montréal, Québec H3B 3J5

ou :

lance.lavoilette@lmco.com

Date limite pour les formulaires complétés :
le 16 février 2007

The Alfred B. Kelly Memorial Research Fund
of Bird Protection Quebec

Research grants for amounts up to a maximum of \$3,000 are available for studies pertaining directly to Quebec ornithology. For income tax purposes, a social insurance number or a charitable organization number must be supplied on all applications.

Requests for application forms should be sent to:

Bird Protection Quebec: Research Committee

PO Box 43, Station B
Montreal, Quebec H3B 3J5

or:

lance.lavoilette@lmco.com

Deadline for completed applications:
16 February 2007



Upcoming Field Trips - Prochaines Excursions

Coordinators: Martin Bowman, 613-347-1655; Wayne Grubert, 450-458-5498

Saturday 3 February - samedi 3 février

HUDSON

Leader: Barbara MacDuff
514-457-2222
barb.macduff@sympatico.ca

8:00 AM Meet at the CPR station on Wharf Street in Hudson. Take Hwy 40, exit 22 onto Côte St. Charles north, right on Main Street, left on Wharf Street. Looking for winter finches, owls, Pileated Woodpecker, crossbills. **Half day.**

8 h 00 Rassemblement à la gare C.P. sur la rue Wharf, Hudson. Prenez l'autoroute 40, sortie 22, et tournez à droite sur la Côte St-Charles nord jusqu'à la rue Main. Tournez à droite et se rendre à la rue Wharf puis tournez à gauche. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d'hiver, hiboux, becs-croisés et Grand pic. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 10 February - samedi 10 février

SOUTH SHORE SURPRISE - EXCURSION HIVERNALE - RIVE-SUD

Leader: Sheldon Harvey
450-671-3773
ve2shw@yahoo.com

The leader will decide the ultimate meeting place, route and destination based on careful monitoring of the best bird sightings during the previous week. Check the SongSparrow group email as the date approaches or contact Sheldon for details.

Le guide décidera de la destination et de la route à suivre selon les signalements d'oiseaux dans la région au cours de la semaine précédente. Vérifiez les courriels du SongSparrow group email durant les journées précédant cette date ou téléphonez à Sheldon pour plus de renseignements.

8:00 AM Meet in the parking lot in front of the Wal-Mart on Taschereau Blvd., west of the Champlain Bridge. From Montreal, take the Champlain Bridge to Exit 8 (Taschereau Blvd.). Turn right on Taschereau Blvd. The Wal-Mart will be immediately on your right. There will be lots of driving (weather permitting), but little walking. Car-pooling is recommended. **Half day.**

8 h 00 Rassemblement sur le terrain de stationnement du Wal-Mart, Boulevard Taschereau, à l'ouest du pont Champlain. De Montréal, prenez le pont Champlain et allez jusqu'à la sortie 8 (Boul. Taschereau). Tournez à droite sur le Boulevard Taschereau. Le Wal-Mart se trouve tout de suite à droite. Si le temps le permet, nous ferons beaucoup de voiture, mais peu de marche. Nous recommandons le covoiturage. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 17 February - samedi 17 février

STE-MARTHE, ST-CLET, STE-JUSTINE

Leader: Wayne Grubert
450-458-5498
wgrubert@hotmail.com

8:00 AM Meet at Hudson Inn, exit 17 off Hwy 40. Take Hwy 40 west towards Ottawa. Allow an hour's drive from Montreal. Looking for Snowy Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, Snow Bunting and other open-country winter birds. Bring warm clothes for standing around or taking short walks. Car-pooling is recommended. **Half day.**

8 h 00 Rassemblement au Hudson Inn, sortie 17 de l'autoroute 40. Prenez la 40 ouest, direction Ottawa. Prévoir une heure à partir de Montréal. Espèces recherchées : du Harfang des neiges, de la Buse pattue, du Bruant des neiges et autres oiseaux d'hiver. Apportez des vêtements chauds pour de courtes marches et pour vous permettre de passer du temps à l'extérieur. Nous recommandons le covoiturage. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 24 February - samedi 24 février

BOIS PAPINEAU - LAVAL

Leader: Chuck Kling
514-277-2567
chuckk@videotron.ca

8:00 AM From Hwy 40 (Metropolitan Boulevard) take exit for Papineau Ave. north (Hwy 19). Cross bridge into Laval. At third exit take St. Martin east for approx. 1.5 km. On the left is a police garage and a community centre. Take the lane between them to a parking area at the back. Looking for owls, winter finches and early migrants. **Half day.**

8 h 00 De l'autoroute 40 (boul. Métropolitain) Prenez la sortie Papineau nord (rte 19). Traversez le pont qui mène à Laval. À la 3^{ème} sortie, prenez St-Martin est pour environ 1,5 km. À gauche, se trouvent un garage de police et un centre communautaire. Prenez la ruelle entre les deux édifices jusqu'au stationnement à l'arrière. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d'hiver, hiboux et migrateurs précoces. **Demi-journée.**

Sunday 25 February - dimanche 25 février

SPECIAL TRIP/ EXCURSION SPÉCIALE: AMHERST ISLAND, ONTARIO

Leader: Martin Bowman
613-347-1655
pict@riverlink.ca

11: 45 AM Meet at the dock in Stella, the only settlement on the island. As stated, the meeting time is 11:45 a.m. (*i.e.* arrival of the 11:30 ferry from Millhaven); the journey takes approximately 3 to 4 hours driving time from Montreal. The group will check back at the dock at 12:45 for any late arrivals. Accommodation is available in Kingston for those preferring to stay over.

Amherst Island is an area with a great reputation for late winter birding. Looking for owls, finches, waterfowl and early migrants. This will be a combination driving/walking trip. Bring your own food and dress warmly. The trip will end at dusk after looking for Short-eared Owls. The return ferry leaves every hour on the hour; the crossing takes about 15 minutes. Please note that access to the Owl Woods may be restricted if there has been a lot of snow. In that case, people should be prepared to hike a mile or so. If there is little snow, access to the woods by car is possible.

Amherst Island is 16 km west of Kingston. Exit 593 from Highway 401. Proceed south to Millhaven. Turn right at the T-junction in Millhaven. The ferry dock is 200 metres west on Hwy 33 (Bath Road). Round trip costs \$5.00 per vehicle. The ferry leaves Millhaven every hour on the half hour. Carpooling recommended. Please contact the leader between 15 and 20 February, and he will try to put you in contact with other participants.

11 h 45 Rassemblement au quai à Stella, le seul établissement de l'île, à 11 h 45 (arrivée du traversier à 11 h 30 de Millhaven), environ 3 à 4 heures de Montréal. Le groupe vérifiera de nouveau vers 12 h 45 s'il y a des arrivées tardives. Logements disponibles à Kingston pour ceux qui préfèrent ne pas revenir à Montréal la même journée.

Amherst Island est une région qui a une grande réputation pour l'observation des oiseaux à la fin de la saison hivernale. Espèces recherchées : hiboux, de fringillidés, d'oiseaux aquatiques et de migrateurs hâtifs. Ce sera une combinaison de marche et de conduite. Apportez votre nourriture et s'habillez chaudement. L'excursion se terminera au crépuscule après avoir recherché des hiboux des marais. Le traversier retournant au lieu de départ part à chaque heure (à l'heure exacte). La traversée dure environ 15 minutes. L'accès à Owl Woods peut être restreint s'il y a beaucoup de neige au sol. Dans ce cas, il faut envisager de marcher environ 1.7 kilomètres. S'il y a peu de neige, l'accès à cet endroit par auto est possible.

Amherst Island est 16 km à l'ouest de Kingston. Sortie 593 de l'autoroute 401. Se rendre au sud vers Millhaven. Tournez à droite au T-Intersection dans Millhaven. Le quai du traversier est 200 mètres à l'ouest de Hwy 33 (Bath Road). Le coût est 5,00 \$ par véhicule. Départ du traversier à chaque heure. Covoiturage recommandé. Si le covoiturage vous intéresse, contactez le responsable entre le 15 et 20 février et il va essayer de vous mettre en contact avec d'autres participants.

Saturday 3 March - samedi 3 mars

MORGAN ARBORETUM - ARBORETUM MORGAN

Leader: Betsy McFarlane
514-457-9315
betsy.mcfarlane@sympatico.ca

8:00 AM From Montreal take Highway 40 west. Exit at exit 44 (Morgan Blvd). Turn left on chemin Ste-Marie. Drive 1.4 km to second stop sign (at Arboretum road). Turn right. Drive 1 km to main parking on left. \$5.00 admission charge for non-Arboretum members. Looking for winter finches, owls and woodpeckers. **Half day.**

8 h 00 De Montréal, prenez l'autoroute 40 ouest, sortie 44 (boul. Morgan). Tournez à gauche sur le chemin Ste-Marie et continuez pendant 1,4 km jusqu'au second arrêt (rue Arboretum). Tournez à droite, roulez 1 km jusqu'au stationnement principal à gauche. Frais d'entrée 5,00 \$ pour ceux qui ne sont pas membres. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d'hiver, hiboux et pics. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 10 March - samedi 10 mars

MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDENS - JARDIN BOTANIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

Leader: TBA

8:00 AM Meet in front of the restaurant, near the entrance on Sherbrooke St. East. There is a charge for parking inside the gates. Looking for winter finches, crossbills, Northern Mockingbird. **Half day.**

8 h 00 Rassemblement devant le restaurant, près de l'entrée du jardin sur la rue Sherbrooke-est. Prévoir des frais de stationnement. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d'hiver, becs-croisés et Moqueur polyglotte. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 17 March - samedi 17 mars

PARC DES RAPIDES, LASALLE AND THE VERDUN WATERFRONT

Leader: Diane Demers
514-729-3051
ddemers03@hotmail.com

8:00 AM Meet in the parking lot at Parc des Rapides, corner of LaSalle Blvd. and 6th Avenue in Ville LaSalle (just east of Bishop Power Blvd.) Take Highway 20 to the Boulevard de la Vérendrye exit. Heading west on de la Vérendrye, turn left on to the Stephens Street bridge that crosses the Aqueduct. Follow this street south to the waterfront on LaSalle Blvd. Turn right on LaSalle Blvd. and follow it to the parking lot at the corner of 6th Avenue. Looking for waterfowl and early migrants. If there is no open water or there is insufficient bird activity to occupy the entire morning, we will go to a nearby alternate site such as Angrignon Park. Be prepared to drive. **Half day.**

8 AM Rassemblement dans le stationnement du Parc des Rapides. Celui-ci est situé à l'intersection du boulevard LaSalle et de la 6^{ème} avenue à Ville LaSalle (juste à l'est du boulevard Bishop Power). Prenez l'autoroute 20 et prendre la sortie du boulevard de la Vérendrye. Allez en direction ouest sur ce boulevard. À la rue Stephens, prenez le pont qui traverse le Canal de l'Aqueduc. Continuez sur la rue Stephens jusqu'au boulevard LaSalle, qui longe le fleuve. Tournez à droite sur ce boulevard et continuez jusqu'à stationnement, situé au coin de la 6^{ème} avenue. Espèces recherchées : sauvagines et migrateurs hâtifs. Si le fleuve n'est pas suffisamment dégelé ou qu'il n'y a pas assez d'activité pour occuper la matinée entière, nous visiterons un site voisin comme le Parc Angrignon par exemple. Il faudra s'attendre à conduire. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 24 March - samedi 24 mars

ÎLE PERROT

Leader: Peter Mitchell
819-687-2850
lpmitchell@sympatico.ca

8:00 AM From Highway 20, exit Don Quichotte. Meet at Windmill Point at the end of Don Quichotte Blvd. Looking for waterfowl, hawks and early migrants. **Half day.**

8 h 00 De l'autoroute 20, prenez le boulevard Don Quichotte jusqu'au bout. Espèces recherchées : sauvagines, buses et migrateurs hâtifs. **Demi-journée.**

Saturday 31 March - samedi 31 mars

PARC NATURE DU CAP-ST-JACQUES

Leader: Wayne Grubert
450-458-5498
wgrubert@hotmail.com

8:00 AM Take Highway 40 West. Exit chemin Ste-Marie Road. Turn left to l'Anse-à-l'Orme. Turn right and continue to the end. Turn right on Senneville Road (Gouin Blvd). Continue for two kilometres to the chalet d'accueil of the park. Parking: \$5.00. **Half day.**

8 h 00 Prenez l'autoroute 40 ouest. Sortir au chemin Ste-Marie. Tournez à gauche. Continuez jusqu'au chemin de l'Anse-à-l'Orme. Tournez à droite. Continuez jusqu'au bout. Tournez à droite sur le chemin Senneville (boul. Gouin) pendant 2 km jusqu'au chalet d'accueil du parc. Stationnement : 5,00\$. **Demi-journée.**

Trip Advice - De rigueur pour les excursions



Cancellations: Trips are rarely cancelled, but in case of extreme weather check with the leader.

Clothing: Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear, even if the day seems mild and dry.

Security: Be sure to lock your car securely.

Transportation: Contact the leader if you need or can offer a lift.

Food: Bring plenty to eat and drink, even on half-day trips.

Annulations : En cas d'intempérie, vérifiez la possibilité d'une annulation avec le responsable.

Habillement : Vêtements chauds et bottes imperméables sont toujours de rigueur.

Sécurité : Assurez-vous de bien verrouiller les portes de votre voiture.

Transport : Téléphonnez au responsable si vous voulez faire du covoiturage.

Nourriture : Amenez toujours une collation et quelque chose à boire.

André Pelletier

Bird Protection Quebec
Protection des oiseaux du Québec
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