

Issue 68-2
December 2025



Winter Issue
Science and Birding

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.



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The Song Sparrow is published four times per year for members of Bird Protection Quebec.
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Early Canadian Ornithology

ON THE COVER

BABY KESTREL WITH HIS BLING

Photo: Shawna Sévigny

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BANDERS BEING BANDERS

Photo: Leslie Harmidy

A Word FROM THE EDITORS

Winter has arrived, bringing crisp mornings, quiet trails, and the unique joys of cold-weather birding—but it is also a time to celebrate and contribute to the richness of scientific discovery.

In this issue of Song Sparrow, we highlight the research and conservation science that deepen our understanding of the birds whose stories continue to educate and amaze us. From monitoring projects to innovative studies, this edition celebrates the researchers, volunteers, and community members whose curiosity and dedication advance ornithological science in Quebec.

In our first feature article, *The High-Stakes Journey of Warblers in an Urbanizing World*, Nathanya Goudreau details how she monitors the challenges facing migratory warblers in rapidly urbanizing landscapes. In a perfect follow-up, Jessica Liddell and Ava McKee explain a project they have undertaken to study the impact of the urban environment on birds by monitoring bird-window strikes on the McGill campuses. And, in Part 2 of Wayne Grubert's *Avian Success Stories*, he reveals the last seven of his baker's dozen of species bucking the trend of declining populations.

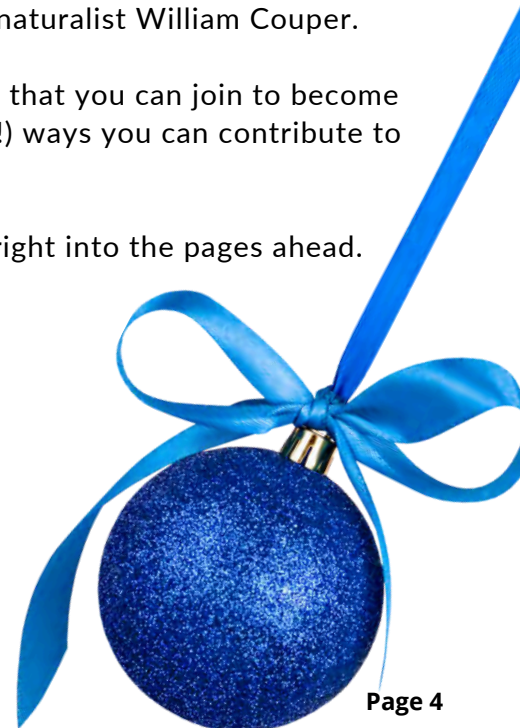
In our regular columns, we once again showcase the research work supported by BPQ's grants program, this time with an update on the success of AQFA's Kestrel nest box network, a well-established program that BPQ has supported for several years. The Field Trip Committee announces weekly trips lined up all the way to the end of March, the upcoming monthly lectures are presented, and, if you missed one of our past talks, our *Cheep Sheets* offer detailed summaries so you can catch up on key insights. In *Birds with Quirks*, Marcel Gahbauer spotlights the charismatic Red-breasted Nuthatch, with true Canadian attributes and more oddities than most of us realize. You'll also find guidance on proper attire for winter birding in *Birding Basics*, and Jeff Harrison's continued exploration of *Early Canadian Ornithology* through the life and legacy of naturalist William Couper.

We have also prepared a calendar of year-round citizen science projects that you can join to become part of all this important bird research. Take a look and find one (or two!) ways you can contribute to science while doing your favourite thing - watching birds!

We invite you to settle in with a warm drink, get comfortable, and dive right into the pages ahead.

Happy Holidays!

Darlene & Rina



A Message from THE PRESIDENT

Un mot DE LA PRÉSIDENTE

We can all be Citizen Scientists! Scientific investigation is essential to a more complete understanding of birds and their behaviours, including their mating rituals, nesting success, food finding, migratory patterns, environmental pressures, response to pollutants and so much more. Bird Protection Quebec supports the work of local academics, ornithologists and their graduate students through its granting program, and in some cases through access to our protected sanctuaries, as they carry out research that expands our knowledge of complex avian lives.

Citizen science is the contribution of information, through nature observation, to a database by members of the public in collaboration with the scientific community. BPQ leads the Christmas Bird Counts in Montreal and Hudson, and shares data from its guided field trips throughout the year as examples of our decades-long commitment to building a strong database of bird observations here in Quebec. Each year hundreds of ebird checklists are submitted to Cornell University that document bird occurrence and abundance across a range of Quebec habitats. Not so long ago, migration was a poorly understood mystery with spotty observations painting only a partial picture. Now with hundreds of citizen scientists submitting thousands of checklists yearly, the understanding of where birds travel, breed and feed has become so much clearer. Our members and volunteers contribute substantially to that knowledge by observing and reporting on birds, maintaining bird feeders and nesting boxes, by assisting at banding stations (McGill, Tadoussac and Rimouski are supported financially by BPQ), by joining efforts to manage sanctuaries and remove invasive species and by advocating for bird habitat protection, among other ways. We thank everyone for their contributions to citizen science and for protecting birds and their habitats – keep up the good work!

Wishing all our members and their families a healthy, warm and joyful holiday season – happy birding!

Bonnie

Nous pouvons tous être des citoyens scientifiques ! La recherche scientifique est essentielle pour mieux comprendre les oiseaux et leurs comportements, notamment leurs rituels d'accouplement, leur succès de nidification, leur recherche de nourriture, leurs habitudes migratoires, les pressions environnementales, leur réaction aux polluants et bien d'autres choses encore. Protection des oiseaux du Québec soutient le travail des universitaires, des ornithologues et de leurs étudiants diplômés locaux grâce à son programme de subventions, et dans certains cas, en autorisant l'accès à nos sanctuaires protégés, car ils mènent des recherches qui élargissent nos connaissances sur la vie complexe des oiseaux.

La science citoyenne consiste en la contribution d'informations, par l'observation de la nature, à une base de données par des membres du public en collaboration avec la communauté scientifique. POQ dirige les recensements d'oiseaux de Noël à Montréal et à Hudson, et partage les données recueillies lors de ses excursions guidées tout au long de l'année, illustrant ainsi son engagement de plusieurs décennies à constituer une base de données solide sur les observations d'oiseaux ici au Québec. Chaque année, des milliers de listes d'observation eBird sont soumises à l'université Cornell, qui documentent la présence et l'abondance des oiseaux dans divers habitats du Québec. Il n'y a pas si longtemps, la migration était un mystère mal compris, avec des observations sporadiques qui ne donnaient qu'une image partielle. Nos membres et bénévoles contribuent de manière significative à nos connaissances en observant et en signalant les oiseaux, en entretenant les mangeoires et les nichoirs, en aidant dans les stations de baguage (McGill, Tadoussac et Rimouski sont soutenues financièrement par POQ), en participant à la gestion des refuges et à l'élimination des espèces envahissantes, et en plaidant pour la protection de l'habitat des oiseaux, entre autres. Nous remercions tous ceux qui contribuent à la science citoyenne et à la protection des oiseaux et de leurs habitats. Continuez votre excellent travail !

Nous souhaitons à tous nos membres et à leurs familles de joyeuses fêtes de fin d'année, en bonne santé et dans la chaleur humaine. Bonne observation des oiseaux !

Bonnie

Focus on

OUR MEMBERS



To all our members

We would like to extend a warm welcome to new members:

Patricia Dumais, Camila Gosselin, Gabriel Newman, Deborah Smart, Idzie Desmarais, Arkady Kunysz, Femma Van As, Allison Masse, and Gail Desnoyers, a long-time past member who we are happy to see rejoin the flock!

We look forward to meeting all of you, either at a monthly meeting on Zoom, 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 iO Song Sparrow [e-list group](#) to connect with fellow members.

We would also like to thank those of you who have renewed your membership for 2025/2026 for believing in our mission and continuing to be a part of BPQ year after year! We received a good number of donations this renewal season on top of regular membership fees as well, and are grateful to members for this generous additional expression of support.

À tous nos membres

Nous souhaitons la bienvenue à nos nouveaux membres :

Patricia Dumais, Camila Gosselin, Gabriel Newman, Deborah Smart, Idzie Desmarais, Arkady Kunysz, Femma Van As, Allison Masse, et Gail Desnoyers, une ancienne membre de longue date qui, à notre grande joie, a rejoint le groupe!

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.

Nous tenons également à remercier ceux d'entre vous qui ont renouvelé leur adhésion pour 2025/2026, qui croient en notre mission et qui continuent à faire partie de POQ année après année ! Nous avons reçu un nombre important de dons cette saison de renouvellement, en plus des cotisations régulières, et nous sommes reconnaissants à nos membres pour cette généreuse marque de soutien supplémentaire.

Last call!

Do you enjoy reading The Song Sparrow? Sadly, this will be your last issue if you haven't renewed your membership for 2025/26 by the end of December!

Remember, all annual memberships expired on September 30, 2025, regardless of the date you joined (unless it was after March 1, 2025) or last renewed.

So don't wait! [Click here](#) now to go to our website and quickly renew online with a credit card (no Paypal account needed, use the Guest feature).

Dernier appel !

Appréciez-vous « The Song Sparrow » ? Malheureusement, ce numéro sera le dernier si vous n'avez pas renouvelé votre adhésion 2025/26 avant la fin du mois de décembre !

N'oubliez pas que toutes les adhésions annuelles ont expiré le 30 septembre 2025, quelle que soit la date d'adhésion (sauf si elle est postérieure au 1er mars 2025) ou de dernier renouvellement.

Alors n'attendez pas ! [Cliquez ici](#) pour accéder à notre site web et renouveler rapidement votre abonnement en ligne avec une carte de crédit (pas besoin de compte Paypal, utilisez la fonction « Guest »).

BPQ volunteers at work

BPQ was busy promoting birding and conservation this fall!

On September 13, the Outreach Committee was at Parc-Nature de la Pointe-aux-Prairies as part of GUEPE's (Groupe uni des éducateurs-naturalistes et professionnels de l'environnement) annual event focused around their permanent exhibit *À ciel ouvert : focus sur les oiseaux* in the park's Pavillon des Marais. This year's theme was Flying Fauna, and the event included a raptor demonstration, bird walks, and information kiosks.

Le 13 septembre, le comité de sensibilisation était présent au Parc-Nature de la Pointe-aux-Prairies dans le cadre de l'événement annuel du GUEPE (Groupe uni des éducateurs-naturalistes et professionnels de l'environnement) axé sur leur exposition permanente *À ciel ouvert : focus sur les oiseaux* dans le Pavillon des Marais du parc. Le thème de cette année était la faune ailée, et l'événement comprenait une spectacle avec des oiseaux de proie, des promenades ornithologiques et des kiosques d'information.

Bénévoles sur le terrain

POQ s'est activement employée à promouvoir l'observation des oiseaux et la conservation cet automne !



Photos: Darlene Harvey



Photos: Darlene Harvey



The Committee was happy to once again be invited to McGill University's annual Biodiversity Festival. The event, held this year on September 23, showcases McGill's [Biodiversity Plan](#), which, when first launched in 2023, positioned McGill as one of the first universities in Canada to create an institutionalized, multi-departmental plan to protect and promote biodiversity. Our information booth, and those of other conservation and environmental protection groups, attracted the interest of many very engaged students and passers-by, and interesting conversations were had throughout the day. And we gained two new members, on the spot!

Le comité de sensibilisation du POQ a été heureux de participer au deuxième festival annuel de la biodiversité de l'Université McGill, qui s'est déroulé le 24 septembre et a célébré le premier anniversaire de l'introduction du [plan de biodiversité](#) de McGill. Lors de son lancement en 2023, McGill est devenue l'une des premières universités au Canada à créer un plan institutionnalisé et multidépartemental pour protéger et promouvoir la biodiversité. Notre kiosque, ainsi que ceux de 15 autres groupes de conservation et de protection de l'environnement, a suscité l'intérêt de nombreux étudiants et passants très engagés, et des conversations intéressantes ont eu lieu tout au long de la journée.

Later in the fall, BPQ was invited to participate in the Morgan Arboretum's 80th Anniversary Celebration, held at the Conservation Centre on Sunday, October 26. For those not familiar, the Morgan Arboretum is a 245 hectare forest reserve with approximately 25 km of trails where a healthy mix of avian wildlife can be enjoyed, along with the flora and other fauna.

The event was well attended and provided an opportunity to showcase the many types of birds found within the Arboretum itself. It included nature walks organized by the Arboretum, along with many information booths. BPQ was represented by Sanctuaries Committee Chair Ron Rind.



Photo: Ron Rind

Plus tard à l'automne, POQ a été invité à participer à la célébration du 80e anniversaire du Morgan Arboretum, qui s'est tenue au Conservation Centre le dimanche 26 octobre. Pour ceux qui ne le connaissent pas, le Morgan Arboretum est une réserve forestière de 245 hectares avec environ 25 km de sentiers où l'on peut observer une faune aviaire variée, ainsi que la flore et d'autres espèces animales.

L'événement a attiré de nombreux participants et a été l'occasion de présenter les nombreuses espèces d'oiseaux présentes dans l'Arboretum. Il comprenait des promenades dans la nature organisées par l'Arboretum, ainsi que de nombreux kiosques d'information. POQ était représenté par le président de notre comité des sanctuaires, Ron Rind.



Focus on FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Upcoming Field Trips

After our usual break through the holiday and Christmas Count seasons, our guides will be looking forward to seeing everyone back in the field in January—cold and white as it may be! Our regular trips resume January 10 with our usual winter-season opener at the Botanical Gardens, with a full slate planned for you to the end of March. But despite the best laid plans, weather is notoriously impossible to plan for and, although we *rarely* cancel a trip, be sure to check our Facebook page the night before and morning of, if the forecast is looking sketchy. Have a happy holiday season; we can't wait to see you again in the field! —BPQ Field Trip Committee

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

NOTE : Les détails et les indications routières seront communiqués avant chaque événement hebdomadaire par le biais de notre bulletin eNews, et de publications sur Facebook et dans le groupe iO, ce qui nous permettra de nous adapter en toute flexibilité aux conditions météorologiques, aux fermetures, etc. si nécessaire

UNUSUAL DAYS OR TIMES, IF ANY, IN GREEN / LES HEURES DE DÉPART ET JOURS INHABITUELLES SONT INDIQUÉES EN VERT.

Saturday January 10 / samedi 10 janvier

MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDENS / JARDIN BOTANIQUE

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

Guide(s): Sheldon and Darlene Harvey

9:00 am - half-day walking trip

9h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

Saturday January 17 / samedi 17 janvier

NUNS' ISLAND / ÎLE DES SOEURS

Guide(s): Fred Hareau

8:00 am - half-day walking and driving trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied et en voiture

Saturday January 24 / samedi 24 janvier

MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY / CIMETIÈRE MONT-ROYAL

<https://goo.gl/maps/kAWiSJGXA1Q2>

Guide(s): Cory Ruchlin

8:30 am - half-day walking trip

8h30 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

Saturday January 31 / samedi 31 janvier

SOUTH SHORE - VARENNES, SAINT-HUBERT, LONGUEUIL

Guide(s): Sheldon Harvey

8:00 am - half-day driving trip

08h00 - demi-journée, excursion en voiture

Saturday February 7 / samedi 7 février

Saturday February 14 & Sunday February 15
Samedi 14 février & dimanche 15 février

This joint Cornell/Audubon/Birds Canada annual event has been held since 1998 and runs for four days from February 13-16. Although we encourage participation all four days, the "BPQ GBBC" will concentrate its efforts on the weekend. Go out birding, alone or with friends, to your favourite spots. Submit your checklists to eBird, then share them to BPQ's account to help us create a snapshot of Montreal and its surrounding areas. More details will follow in February through eNews.

Saturday February 21 / samedi 21 février

Saturday February 28 / samedi 28 février

Saturday March 7 / samedi 7 mars

Saturday March 14 / samedi 14 mars

Saturday, March 21 / samedi 21 mars

Saturday, March 28 / samedi 28 mars

PN DU CAP-SAINT-JACQUES, PIERREFONDS

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

Guide(s): Sue Denoncourt

8:30 am - half-day wiking trip

8h30 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

**BPQ'S 2026 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT WEEKEND /
LE GRAND DÉNOMBREMENT DES OISEAUX DE FÉVRIER 2026**

Cet événement annuel conjoint Cornell/Audubon/Oiseaux Canada existe depuis 1998 et se déroule sur quatre jours, du 13 au 16 février. Bien que nous encourageons la participation tout au long des 4 jours, le « POQ GDOF » concentrera ses efforts sur la fin de semaine. Sortez observer les oiseaux, seul ou avec des amis, pour visiter vos endroits préférés. Soumettez vos listes d'observations à eBird, puis partagez-les sur le compte du POQ et aidez-nous à créer un instantané de Montréal et de ses environs. Plus de détails suivront en février dans le bulletin « eNews ».

ANGRIGNON PARK, VERDUN/LASALLE

<https://tinyurl.com/mr3w9w5c>

Guide(s): Virginia Elliott

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

TENTATIVE! - SEARCH FOR SNOWIES, BUNTINGS, ETC

This trip is dependent upon road conditions and recent sightings

Guide(s): Wayne Grubert

8:00 am - half-day driving trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion en voiture

MORGAN AROBRETUM, STE-ANNE-DE-BELLEVUE

<http://goo.gl/maps/etLSX>

Guide(s): Ron Rind

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

RÉCRÉ-O-PARC (SAINTE-CATHERINE)

Guide(s): Tom Long

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

RF MARGUERITE-D'YOUVILLE, ÎLE-ST-BERNARD, CHATEAUGUAY

<https://goo.gl/maps/g5spD>

Guide(s): Tom Long

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

PARC DE LA FRAYÈRE, BOUCHERVILLE

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/dFJj3uMEJgnS9QQJ9>

Guide(s): Sheldon Harvey

8:00 am - half-day walking trip

8h00 - demi-journée, excursion à pied

Happy Holidays!
Joyeuses fêtes!



From the field trip committee
and our loyal field trippers



Focus on FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Past field trips

This fall we explored a fantastic mix of habitats across the region, catching the tail end of migration and moving into the quieter pace of late-autumn birding before December's Christmas Bird Counts. From warm sunny mornings to grey skies, strong winds, and even a few cold snaps, the weather kept us guessing. But even with the changing conditions, turnout was consistently strong and every outing brought great company and memorable sightings. A huge thank you to our dedicated guides and to everyone who joined us and helped make this season's trips such a pleasure to lead. —BPQ Field Trip Committee

06/09/25—Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal

Guides: Glen Chipman and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: A grey, overcast day with a few brief sprinkles

Number of Participants: 40; Number of Species: 29

Birds of Note: Olive-sided Flycatcher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Cooper's Hawk, Merlin, a dozen Eastern Bluebirds including many young ones, Baltimore Oriole and a female Scarlet Tanager.

eBird checklists: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S271853910>

13/09/25—Pointe-des-Cascades

Guides: Sarah Marshall and Bill Thompson

Weather: Cloudy with sunny breaks

Number of Participants: 29; Number of Species: 42

Birds of Note: Merlin, American Robins, Warblers (Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula and Black-throated Green), Spotted Sandpiper, Green Heron, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S273203367>

20/09/25— Ile-St-Bernard, Chateauguay

Guide: Tom Long

Weather: Cool, 7 C; sunny with light winds

Number of Participants: 13; Number of Species: 56

Birds of Note: Brown Thrasher, Common Gallinule, Great Egrets, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon chasing Greater Yellowlegs.

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S274529318>

27/09/25—Hudson

Guide: Wayne Grubert

Weather: Sunny, light breezes, 12 to 18 C.

Number of Participants: 29; Number of Species: 48

Birds of Note: Seven species of waterfowl, Solitary Sandpiper, Green Herons, Bald Eagles, Turkey Vultures, Sharp-shinned Hawks, a Red-tailed hawk, American Kestrel, Blue-headed Vireo

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S275843809>



American Wigeon—Beauharnois
Photo: Wayne Grubert

04/10/25—Angrignon Park, Verdun/LaSalle

Guide: Virginia Elliott

Weather: Warm and sunny

Number of Participants: 30; Number of Species: 37

Birds of Note: Wood Ducks, Pied-billed Grebe, Warblers (Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula and Common Yellowthroat), Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Dark-eyed Juncos, Brown Creeper.

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S277246837>

11/10/25—Réserve National de faune du Lac-St-François, Dundee

Guides: Wayne Grubert and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Light breezes, mostly sunny; temperatures 5 to 17 °C

Number of Participants: 20; Number of species: 44

Birds of Note: Sandhill Cranes, American Bittern, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Pintails, Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harriers, Bald Eagle, Rusty Blackbirds

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/420752>

18/10/25—Morgan Arboretum, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue

Guide: Ron Rind

Weather: Warm with overcast skies

Number of Participants: 55; Number of Species: 29

Birds of Note: Brown Creepers, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hermit Thrushes, Dark-eyed Juncos

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S280334805>

25/10/25—Centre d'interprétation de la nature du lac Boivin (CINLB), Granby

Guides: Darlene and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Cool, overcast

Number of Participants: 24; Number of Species: 37

Birds of Note: 11 species of ducks and geese, Pied-billed Grebe, Snow Geese, Turkey Vultures, Evening Grosbeaks, American Tree Sparrow, Rusty Blackbirds.

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S281278538>

01/11/25—Beauharnois, Maple Grove, St-Louis-de-Gonzague

Guides: Wayne Grubert and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Windy, 6 C. with brief sunny period

Number of Participants: 17; Number of Species: 34

Birds of Note: Common Loon, American Kestrel, 9 species of waterfowl, Bald Eagle

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/428431>

08/11/25—Parc-nature du Cap-St-Jacques, Pierrefonds

Guide: Sue Denoncourt

Weather: Sunny with strong winds

Number of Participants: 35; Number of Species: 26

Birds of Note: Common Goldeneye, Red-tailed Hawk, American Robins

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283531795>

15/11/25—Pointe-du-Buisson, Beauharnois, and Hungry Bay

Guide: Fred Hareau

Weather: Sunny with light wind, Temperature near 0 C.

Number of Participants: 21; Number of Species: 38

Birds of Note: Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-winged Scoters, Red-necked Grebes, Red-breasted Merganser, Greater Scaup, Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, and no less than 12 Common Loons

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/432714>



Blue Jay—CINLB, Granby QC
Photo: Omar Morsy

22/11/25—Parc Frédéric Back, Montreal

Guide: Glen Chipman and Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Mix of sun and cloud; Temperature near 0 C.

Number of Participants: 31; Number of Species: 19

Birds of Note: Cooper's Hawk, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Finch

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S285607228>

29/11/25—Fort Chambly & St-Jean-sur-Richelieu

Guide: Sheldon Harvey

Weather: Cold and windy but sunny

Number of Participants: 24; Number of Species: 30

Birds of Note: Over 2,000 Snow Geese, over 11,000 Canada Geese, very distant Black and White-winged Scoters, a single Bufflehead and a single Wood Duck, two Bald Eagles, and Pine Siskins.

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/437000>



Downy Woodpecker—
St-Jean-sur-Richelieu
Photo: Darlene Harvey



Black-capped Chickadee—
Cap-Saint-Jacques
Photo: Bill Thompson

Two special sightings dominated the rare bird reports this fall:

Deux observations exceptionnelles ont dominé les signalements d'oiseaux rares cet automne :



Black-throated Gray Warbler | Paruline grise

With over 240 observations reported to eBird, this small bird without a doubt captured all the attention! First reported at PN Cap-Saint-Jacques on November 15, this very rare visitor was still being seen in early December.

Breeding in the western United States, the Black-throated Gray Warbler migrates only as far south as Mexico. It tends to follow mountain ranges and the Pacific coastline southward but, per All About Birds, despite these landmarks to follow, "some get lost and turn up every year in the eastern states"—and, apparently, sometimes in eastern Canada!

Photos: Cory Ruchlin



White-eyed Vireo | Viréo aux yeux blancs

A constant presence at the Jardin Botanique in Montreal since late October, this bird was still being seen in early December.

White-eyed Vireo abounds in thickets and scrubby areas in south-eastern United States every summer. It winters along the coast in the United States and farther south into Mexico, the Caribbean, and northern Central America, so, particularly at this time of year, this one is a little off-track!

Photos: Cory Ruchlin



Honourable Mentions

A very special sighting on December 3, at a park in Terrebonne: Purple Sandpiper!

A Nashville Warbler reported at Parc Frédéric-Back on December 4 seems to be hanging around a little long, as does a Ruby-crowned Kinglet seen at the Jardin Botanique in Montreal on December 1.

An Eastern Bluebird popped up on the Longueuil Rare Bird Alert December 1 at PN Mont-Saint-Bruno, although this species is becoming more common in winter in the Montreal area. Example: this rather annoyed-looking one seen on the Hudson Christmas Count last year. *Photo: Darlene Harvey*



Spotting Owls Without Spooking Them

For many bird lovers, spotting an owl like a Snowy Owl or Northern Saw-whet Owl is unforgettable. These magical encounters can inspire a lifelong connection to nature, but they also risk harming the owls if we're not careful. Winter brings many owl species south, and while this is an exciting time to observe them, it's crucial to minimize disturbances that could impact their survival.

Tips to Observe and Photograph Owls Responsibly:

- Watch quietly from a distance; move farther away if the owl notices you.
- Limit your time near roosting owls and never disturb them.
- Never follow a flushed owl or go off trail.
- Avoid baiting owls or altering their natural behaviours. Baiting can make owls accustomed to human presence, leading to dangerous situations like collisions with vehicles. Always photograph owls hunting naturally, without interference.
- When photographing owl nests, arrive early, stay hidden, and avoid disturbing the birds. Always prioritize their well-being over getting the perfect shot.
- Avoid flash photography. A flash can startle owls, so it's best to avoid it, especially with nocturnal species. If you must use it, be sure to illuminate the owl gradually.
- Maintain a safe distance. Be aware of an owl's stress signals. If an owl opens its eyes during the day or raises its body off its legs, you're too close. Stay far enough to avoid disturbing their natural behaviour.
- Be cautious about sharing owl locations; review eBird's sensitive species guidelines at https://ebird.org/news/sensitive_species

By respecting these guidelines, you help protect these incredible birds and ensure they continue to thrive in the wild. Thank you for appreciating owls responsibly!

Observer les hiboux sans les effrayer

Pour de nombreux ornithologues amateurs, l'observation d'un hibou, comme le Harfang des neiges ou la Petite nyctale, est inoubliable. Ces rencontres magiques peuvent inspirer un lien à vie avec la nature, mais elles risquent aussi de nuire aux hiboux si l'on n'y prend pas garde. L'hiver amène de nombreuses espèces de chouettes et de hiboux vers le sud, et bien que ce soit une période passionnante pour les observer, il est crucial de minimiser les perturbations qui pourraient avoir un impact sur leur survie.

Conseils pour observer et photographier les hiboux de manière responsable :

- Observez tranquillement à distance ; éloignez-vous si la chouette vous remarque.
- Limitez votre temps à proximité des hiboux perchés et ne les dérangez jamais.
- Ne suivez jamais une chouette en fuite et ne sortez jamais du sentier.
- Évitez d'appâter les chouettes ou de modifier leur comportement naturel. L'appâtage peut habituer les chouettes à la présence humaine, ce qui peut entraîner des situations dangereuses telles que des collisions avec des véhicules. Photographiez toujours les chouettes en train de chasser naturellement, sans interférence.
- Lorsque vous photographiez des nids de chouettes, arrivez tôt, restez cachés et évitez de déranger les oiseaux. Privilégiez toujours leur bien-être à la prise de vue parfaite.
- Évitez de prendre des photos au flash. Le flash peut faire sursauter les chouettes, il est donc préférable de l'éviter, surtout avec les espèces nocturnes. Si vous devez l'utiliser, veillez à éclairer la chouette progressivement.
- Maintenez une distance de sécurité. Soyez attentif aux signaux de stress d'une chouette ou d'un hibou. Si un hibou ouvre les yeux pendant la journée ou soulève son corps de ses pattes, c'est que vous êtes trop près. Restez à une distance suffisante pour ne pas perturber leur comportement naturel.

Soyez prudent lorsque vous partagez les localisations de chouettes et de hiboux ; consultez les directives d'eBird sur les espèces sensibles à https://ebird.org/news/sensitive_species

En respectant ces lignes directrices, vous contribuez à la protection de ces oiseaux incroyables et vous assurez qu'ils continuent à prospérer dans la nature. Merci d'apprécier les hiboux de manière responsable !

For more tips:



<https://www.birdscanada.org/owl-observation-tips-for-birders-and-photographers>



<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2016/let-pro-teach-you-how-to-take-great-owl-photos>

Pour plus de conseils :



<https://www.oiseauxcanada.org/les-chouettes-et-les-hiboux-conseils-aux-observateurs-et-photographes>



<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2016/let-pro-teach-you-how-to-take-great-owl-photos>



Focus On Education

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

Monday, January 5, 2026

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

Beyond the feeders: Cardinal behaviour in the urban landscape

Anne-Marie Cousineau, MSc, Project Coordinator for Bird Protection Quebec

We often think of cardinals as backyard regulars at our bird feeders during the winter, but where do they go when they're not snacking on sunflower seeds? Using fine-scale telemetry tracking across Montreal's urban gradient, Anne-Marie followed individual cardinals through three consecutive winters to reveal how they navigate and survive in the concrete jungle. Turns out, these beautiful red birds can be picky urbanites and what she found out might just surprise you! This talk will cover what Anne-Marie learned researching these resilient birds, while also exploring some fun facts and interesting questions you may have about them.



About our Speaker

Anne-Marie Cousineau is a biologist and currently Project Coordinator for Bird Protection Quebec. While completing her MSc degree in Natural Resource Sciences at McGill, Anne-Marie served on the Board of BPQ, while also volunteering at the McGill Bird Observatory as an assistant. In her free time, she can be found outdoors doing some hiking, climbing or (of course) birding.

Monday, February 2, 2026

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

The Appalachian Corridor Project

Pascal Côté, Director of Strategic Conservation and Innovation Nature Conservation Canada - Quebec

The Appalachian Corridor Project is a partnership of conservation organizations dedicated to protecting the ecological corridor of the Northern Green Mountains, a vital area for biodiversity and one of the most intact remaining stretches of continuous temperate deciduous forest in the world. The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a leading partner helping to protect more than 55,000 hectares in Quebec, including areas that are highly strategic for ecological connectivity. The presentation will highlight some flagship projects, in particular the Green Mountains Nature Reserve, which is a major protected area located in the Corridor that also plays a key role in conservation of multiple bird species. In recent years BPQ has provided grants to the Project for bird research.



About our Speaker

Pascal Côté is Director of the Strategic Conservation and Innovation team for NCC – Québec. Pascal is a graduate of UQAM with an MSc in Forest Ecology and Environmental Science. Prior to joining NCC in 2021 he served for 12 years as Director of the Tadoussac Bird Observatory. Pascal has a passionate interest in birds and volunteers for Regroupement QuébecOiseaux.

Monday, March 2, 2026

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

Cats and Birds in the Great Outdoors: A Conservation Conundrum

David Bird, Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology at McGill University

The direct ancestor of our house cats is likely the African wild cat, *F. libyca*. The cat, as we know it, was only fully domesticated during the last 150 years. Based on figures gleaned from the literature, there are now well over 150 million pet cats in the world. The number of feral cats is not really known. Roughly half of owned pet cats run free outdoors. While not all pet cats hunt birds, many of them do, even if well fed. A very conservative estimate is that several billion birds are killed by pet cats all over the world each year! Needless to say, it has been no easy task to convince cat owners to keep their pets indoors and the subject has pitted animal-lovers squarely against one another, sometimes quite fiercely. It is critical that the two sides at least maintain a dialogue with one another to find a solution that is palatable for all.



About our Speaker

Dr. David Bird is now living on Vancouver Island, having moved there from Montreal. He has co-authored over 200 peer-reviewed papers, supervised 50 graduate students, mostly on birds of prey, and has written and/or edited more than a dozen nature books, including *Birds of Canada*. David is a past-president of the Raptor Research Foundation Inc. and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, and has earned several awards for his research and education efforts. Besides his innumerable public lectures and radio and television appearances, he contributes regularly to BWD and Canadian Wildlife magazines. See www.askprofessorbird.com.

REMINDER: As BPQ is a member of QuébecOiseaux (QO), a non-profit umbrella organization that brings together birding clubs in Quebec, our members are invited to participate in the free talks on subjects of interest to birders that QO offers. All BPQ members are welcome to attend but **must** register using the Zoom links in the *Programme de webconférences* available [HERE](#) (note that these talks are offered in French). Do not try to register on their website (unless you also have a personal membership with QO; if you have a QuébecOiseaux magazine subscription only you **cannot** register on their site).

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



RAPPEL : Comme le POQ est membre de QuébecOiseaux (QO), un organisme sans but lucratif qui regroupe les clubs d'ornithologie du Québec, nos membres peuvent participer à la série de conférences gratuites sur des sujets d'intérêt pour les ornithologues qu'ils offrent. Tous les membres du POQ sont les bienvenus, mais doivent s'inscrire en utilisant les liens Zoom dans le Programme de webconférences disponible [ICI](#) (notez que ces conférences sont offertes en français). N'essayez pas de vous inscrire sur leur site Web (à moins que vous ne soyez vous-même membre de QO ; si vous êtes seulement abonné à la revue QuébecOiseaux, vous ne pouvez pas vous inscrire sur leur site).

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

with Zofia Laubitz and Sarah Marshall

Missed out on one of our lectures? Here are some cheep...er...
cheat...sheets created from our speakers' presentations

Lecture: October 6, 2025

Adventures with Island Birds

Bob Montgomery, PhD

Emeritus Professor, Queen's University

by Sarah Marshall



Dr. Bob Montgomery is an evolutionary biologist, who is now retired after 40 years on the faculty at Queen's University, Kingston. He is a naturalist at heart, and has studied birds, fish, mammals (including humans), and insects throughout his long and successful career. He is still active as a writer, blogger, researcher, and presenter. He spoke about some of his island adventures, with examples of research on songbirds, hummingbirds, seabirds, rails, fairywrens, and ptarmigan at the October BPQ Education presentation.

Ever since Darwin and Wallace discovered natural selection by studying birds on the islands of the South Pacific, ornithologists and other scientists have been fascinated by island birds. There may be no better places to study speciation and the evolution of body and bill size, plumage colours, and flightlessness than in island habitats. Over the past half century, Dr. Montgomery has studied birds on more than 25 islands, from Heron Island in tropical Australia to Prince Leopold Island in Canada's High Arctic. Dr. Montgomery shared with the group seven stories about or related to birds on islands.

The presentation was focused on a few interesting stories that illustrate evolution on islands that arise from small 'founder' populations, fewer competitors and predators, and less competition for mating opportunities.

Speciation—the formation of new and distinct species—often occurs on islands faster than elsewhere because of the small population sizes, reduced competition for food, and less diverse habitats and foods than on the nearby mainland areas. On islands, large species tend to be smaller, and small species larger, than their mainland populations, and they are often darker in colour than their mainland counterparts. In some species—particularly rails, ducks, and wrens— island forms are also flightless.

Story 1: Great Island, NFLD: 1973 Dr. Montgomery was sent by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) to Witless Bay, NFLD, to survey the seabird populations there. Of the three terrific seabird islands in that bay, Great Island was the most accessible and livable as a previous researcher had built a small cabin on the south shore. The plan was to stay on the island for a few days at a time from April to August. Great Island was indeed great. The island consisted of steep rocky cliffs, but Dr. Montgomery could take photos from the opposite cliff faces, and thereby count the individual murre, kittiwakes and gulls nesting there as well as surveying puffin and petrel burrows in the soil on top of the island. There were over 5,000 Common Murres, over 300,000 Atlantic Puffins, and about one million Leach's Petrels breeding there in 1973. Dr. Montgomery also discovered the first-ever Newfoundland breeding record for the Northern Fulmar that summer on Great Island. Regrettably, the access to the island was sometimes very treacherous; a few years later a researcher died due to a rogue wave while trying to land on the island.

Story 2: Green Island, NFLD: Nearby in Witless Bay, Green Island was not as accessible. It was accessible only by jumping from a rowboat to a narrow ledge, and only when there was not much ocean swell, and then only at specific times of day when the tide was just right. Green Island was absolutely packed with birds but only had the one cove where landing was possible, though not really safe in any weather! This island had the second largest Common Murre colony in Newfoundland, numbering about 75,000 breeding pairs. On this island, there was no cabin, or anywhere to stay overnight, so the maximum stay on any day was limited to four or five hours, until the next time that the landing ledge could be used. Because of that limitation, a plan was hatched to stay overnight in June in 1973, to permit many hours of daylight for censusing, and then leave at the end of the second day when the tide was just right. Dr. Montgomery packed a small pup tent, a little cook stove, and provisions for two days. However, the weather turned foul on the afternoon of the second day when a strong Nor'easter blew in with winds at 100km/h, bringing spray blowing

over the tops of the 30-metre cliffs. The following day saw 10 cm of rain, again with 100km/h winds. Dr. Montgomerie kept censusing but ran out of notebook space, so began writing his notes in the margins of the late Jane Goodall's book, *In the Shadow of Man*. Day 4, the swell was 10 m high although the skies were clear! A rescue helicopter arrived in the early evening and hovered 50 m above the island, but it scared up thousands of Murres, so the chopper could not land. Day 5, Dr. Montgomerie had run out of food, although the weather was clear and windy. His lonely teabag made many cups. In order to survive, Dr. Montgomerie took an egg from a Herring Gull nest, and ate that, although he claims it was a bit "birdy." By Day 6 he felt he would have to kill some Murres to eat, while he still had strength. But the helicopter came again and dropped a bag of provisions that landed in the middle of a small pond on the top of the island. Although retrieving that bag was an unpleasant affair, the kind people from Bay Bulls on the mainland had prepared what proved to be a feast. Day 7 again saw dense fog. The fishermen who had dropped him off on the island came close to shore to check on him, but they could not safely land. Finally on Day 8, the helicopter returned after dark and was able to land. Within five minutes he was all packed up, and aboard and safe.

Story 3: The very pointed shape of the Common Murre's egg has been an unsolved mystery for years. The shape is quite pear-like, with a really pointed end. The reigning hypothesis had suggested that the egg was pointy so that it would not roll off the narrow rock ledges where it was laid. Not true. Dr. Montgomerie witnessed that they do roll off cliffs when the parents flush in panic as a predator approaches. Perhaps the shape kept them cleaner? That also is not true, as they were often covered in muck and bird poop, according to Dr. Montgomerie. All the colony's eggs are laid packed onto ledges, very close together. Why the shape? Dr. Montgomerie believes that the shape enhances the amount of contact between the egg and the rock, keeping it more stable when the parents switch incubation duties, which they do several times a day.

Story 4: Prince Leopold Island. In 1973, after the Witless Bay censusing was done, Dr. Montgomerie traveled for the CWS to tiny Prince Leopold Island, in Lancaster Sound in Canada's High Arctic to survey the immense colony of Thick-billed Murres breeding on the 300-metre-high cliffs. Camping there for a week on his own, he was given a shotgun and a box of slugs for protection against Polar Bears. Although the week alone on the island was memorable, especially because no Polar Bears were seen, the cliffs were treacherous, often crumbling and sweeping many Murres, Kittiwakes, and Fulmars down to the sea below. Dr. Montgomerie declined the offer to continue that research for his PhD degree.

Story 5: Islas Trés Marias off the west coast of Mexico. Dr. Montgomerie spent three years (1974-76) trying to get to these islands to study hummingbirds for his PhD thesis. But he was unable to get government permission, probably because in those days the islands housed a penal colony holding what were likely political prisoners. Instead, he confined his research to the mainland in the vicinity of San Blas, where he studied Broad-billed Hummingbirds, Plain-capped Starthroats, Golden-crowned Emeralds, and Cinnamon Hummingbirds. Only Cinnamon and Broad-billed Hummingbirds live on the islands, where their bills are longer and shorter, respectively than those same species on the mainland. The absence of competition from those other species is probably the reason for the change in bill sizes on the islands.

Story 6: Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef, Australia. In 1987, Dr. Montgomerie began studying the Buff-banded Rail, well on its way to becoming flightless on the island. Though this species can fly reasonably well on the mainland, they can only fly about 10 metres on the island, due to lower pectoral muscle mass and higher wing loading. Without predators on the island, and really nowhere to go, the birds appear to be well on the road to flightlessness.

Story 7: St. Paul Island, Bering Sea, Alaska: The Gray-crowned Rosy Finches that live year-round on nearby Pribilof and Aleutian Islands, in the Bering Sea, are about twice as big as they are on the nearby mainland. On these islands, they are relatively easy to observe and study because they nest in cracks on the walls of a huge quarry. Dr. Montgomerie and colleagues have found that selection on several genes related to body size has created these island giants. But why?

Questions remain, such as what is called Island Rule 1: birds are not as brightly coloured on islands. For example, the Rock Ptarmigan on Attu at the western end of the Aleutians is black in summer, but on the mainland, it is light brown. The White-winged Fairy Wren is also black on two islands off the western shore of Australia, but a vivid blue on the nearby mainland. As for Island Rule 2: birds and many other animals are a different size on islands compared to on the mainland. Large species are often smaller on islands, whereas small species are larger on islands. Reduced competition for food and for mating is often suggested as the reason for this rule.

This was a delightful and engaging presentation throughout those seven stories, but because of the vivid descriptions of the adventures ON the islands where the birds were, the presentation might have been more aptly entitled, *Adventures on Islands (with Birds)*!

Lecture: November 3, 2025

Conservation Finance: How Do We Obtain Funding for More and Better Conservation to Protect Birds and Other Biodiversity?

Kristen Lalla, Biologist - ECCC

by Zofia Laubitz



As most readers know, Kristen Lalla is a board member and past president of Bird Protection Quebec. When not wearing her BPQ hat, Kristen is a biologist at Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) Science and Technology branch. Her most recent mandate is developing and testing a biodiversity indicator for a conservation finance pilot program.

Conservation finance may not seem like the sexiest of issues, but it's an important one: quite simply, if we want to conserve species and spaces, we need money. In Kristen's concise definition, conservation finance means using economic principles to improve and/or increase conservation. Biodiversity is continuing to decline, so what we're doing now clearly isn't enough. How can we do more? In two main ways: (1) get more money, and (2) work more efficiently with the money we have. The main tool in approach 1 is incentivization, which can be involuntary (regulations obliging companies to protect biodiversity or spend money on conservation) or voluntary (incentives such as tax breaks or enhanced public prestige). As for approach 2 (efficiency), the main tool is prioritization, namely, figuring out how best to allocate limited conservation dollars.

The regulatory framework for protecting biodiversity includes laws such as the Species at Risk Act and the Migratory Birds Convention Act, which provide penalties for individuals or corporations that infringe on them. Another tool that Kristen discussed is offsetting, whereby the loss of one territory to a development project is, in theory, offset by the protection of another equivalent territory, such that there is no net loss or gain. Many people are familiar with the concept of carbon offsets and, as Kristen pointed out, carbon offsetting is quite straightforward. That's not the case with biodiversity offsetting, because it's extremely difficult to determine whether two tracts of land really are equivalent. Moreover, some unique ecosystems are very hard to find equivalents for. When offsetting isn't well thought out, it can result in the destruction of biodiversity in return for little or no gain from the offset. Thus, for many conservationists, biodiversity offsetting is a last resort. That said, there are examples of successful offsetting programs, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mixed voluntary and regulatory Habitat/Conservation Banking program, which seeks to ensure that offsets, protected by conservation NGOs, provide true equivalence, or "like for like," where the same kind of habitat and the same species that are lost because of a project will be protected in the offset territory. Such mixed voluntary and regulatory programs can have mixed results: they can reduce risk and allow companies and NGOs to be recognized for their contributions to conservation, but they can also discourage avoidance of ecosystem damage because they're seen as "easy outs."

Purely voluntary incentivization is something that environmental organizations have been doing all along. What kind of incentives can they provide? These can be monetary, as in the case of tax breaks, and Kristen noted that such incentives can increase uptake since financial barriers can be substantial. Incentives can also be reputational, such as biodiversity reporting in corporate disclosure; after all, companies care about their image. However, care has to be taken on both sides to avoid greenwashing. In this context, the Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) issues recommendations on how companies can incorporate nature into their decision-making and how they should report on their nature-related achievements. As Kristen mentioned, this is a hot topic in the business world today. In fact, the ECCC program she has been working on, the Conservation Exchange Pilot, supports companies and conservation organizations that engage in real, voluntary conservation projects, and grants government certificates to participating companies, testifying to their contributions. She is part of the team developing a standard biodiversity indicator that can be used for any territory on which a project is planned and will generate scores enabling different projects' effects on biodiversity to be accurately compared.

Regarding prioritization and efficiency, the key question is how to achieve as much as possible with a limited budget. To decide which conservation actions should be prioritized, we need to know how effective each one is. This information is often hard to come by, but tools are now becoming available to help with project prioritization. As Kristen explained, focusing on bang for the buck can lead to projects that save the largest possible number of species for each conservation dollar. But it also leads to a very tough question indeed: Should we simply let "expensive" species go? Remember that some of the most expensive species to save are among the best known and best loved by the general public. But, as Kristen reminded us, prioritization is already going on, even if it's often unconscious. Smart prioritization results in more species being saved, so it's important not to let it simply happen without thinking.

The active discussion and question period after Kristen's talk made it obvious that if audience members hadn't been aware of the importance of conservation finance before, they were now—and they were eager to learn more about this crucial factor in protecting the species and habitats we treasure.



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.

Advancing the American Kestrel Nest Box Project - Association québécoise de fauconniers et autoursiers (AQFA)

Original grant abstract:

AQFA has received grants in 2020, 2022 and 2024 from Bird Protection Quebec (BPQ) to establish a nest box monitoring program for American Kestrels in southern Quebec, in collaboration with the McGill Bird Observatory (MBO). In 2023, we also received a grant from the North American Falconers Association (NAFA). The goal of the project is to collect data on the occupancy rates of the nest boxes, which is then submitted to the Cornell Lab NestWatch program. This data is used to analyze the causes of the American Kestrel's decline in North America. Since 2021, we have been banding the juveniles in the nest boxes.

Given the encouraging results of the last four (4) seasons, the AQFA wishes to submit a new grant application for \$2,500 to continue its project in 2025. The objectives for the coming year will be to monitor the nesting boxes weekly during the breeding season, to fit the juveniles with metal rings and coloured identification rings, and to transmit the data to Cornell Lab Nestwatch.

Decision

The Grants Committee noted that this was a well-developed project and that progress reports have been received on a regular basis. The Committee recommended that BPQ support this project for its 2024 season (\$2,000) and again in 2025 (\$2,500). The Board of Directors agreed and the full amount requested in each year was granted.

The coordinator of the Kestrel Project, Gabrielle Girard, has shared an update to the end of the 2025 season, which you will find on the following page—along with some great pictures!

American Kestrel Conservation in Southern Québec

by Gabrielle Girard, Coordinator - Kestrel Project, AQFA

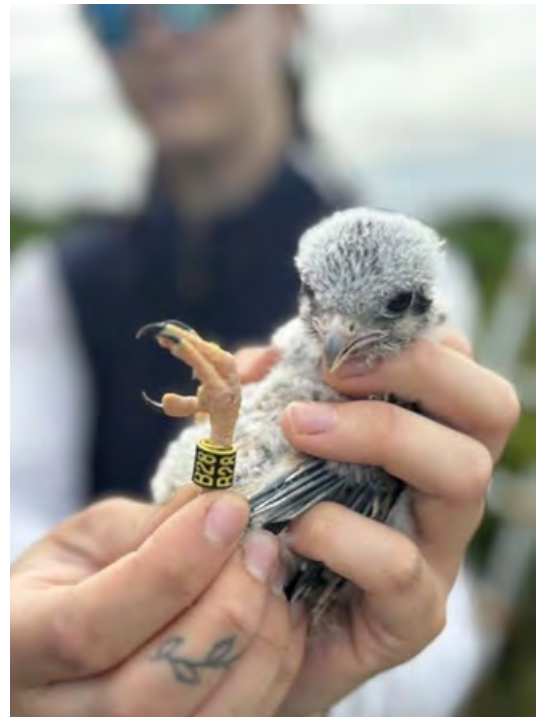
The Association Québécoise des Fauconniers et Autoursiers (AQFA) has contributed to conservation efforts of American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) thanks to the continuous funding from Bird Protection Quebec. The project was launched in 2020 by Joanie Lavigne with 20 nest boxes installed in the region and the goals of doing weekly follow-ups of the nests as well as banding the baby Kestrels. In 2025 we now have 90 nest boxes spanning across Southern Quebec!



Male and female Kestrels before banding
Photo: Gabrielle Girard



Please note that no bird banders were injured for this photo by Leslie Harmidy!



Kestrel with the project-specific band
Photo: Shawna Sévigny

This year we had a roughly 30% breeding success rate throughout our network, with 29 nest boxes that successfully laid eggs and raised their young. In total, 114 baby Kestrels from 26 nest boxes were processed and banded, with a perfect 50-50 split between sexes: 57 males and 57 females. The baby Kestrels have two bird bands—the aluminium federal band on the right tarsus and a project-specific band on the left. The project-specific band has yellow lettering on a black background with a code consisting of one letter and a two-digit number that is visible with binoculars and in photos. (If you see one, please report it to reportband.gov.) Our banding and follow-ups allow us to train new biologists, educate the public, provide datasets for researchers and create interest in birds and conservation efforts.

Finally, all of this is possible thanks to the BPQ grants allocated to us, for which we are grateful.



Adult female brooding; there are five babies in the nest.
Photo: Frédéric Henneuse

*All manipulations were conducted by trained professionals with appropriate permits.
Our efforts follow the ethics guidelines of the Bird Banding Office of Canada.*



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.

Poursuite du projet de réseau de nichoirs à Crécerelle d'Amérique - Association québécoise de fauconniers et autoursiers (AQFA)

Proposition initiale de subvention

L'AQFA a obtenu en 2020, 2022, et 2024 une subvention de Bird Protection Quebec (BPQ) afin de mettre en place et d'entretenir un réseau de nichoirs à Crécerelle d'Amérique dans le sud du Québec, en association avec l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de McGill (OOM). En 2023, nous avons obtenu une bourse de la North American Falconers Association (NAFA). Le projet vise à récolter des données sur l'occupation des nichoirs, qui sont transmises à Cornell Lab Nestwatch, un organisme qui analyse les causes du déclin de l'espèce en Amérique du Nord. Depuis 2021, nous procédons également au baguage des jeunes crécerelles dans nos nichoirs.

Étant donné les résultats encourageants des quatre (4) dernières saisons, l'AQFA souhaite soumettre une nouvelle demande de subvention s'élevant à 2 500\$ afin de poursuivre son projet en 2025. Les objectifs de la prochaine année seront d'assurer un suivi hebdomadaire des nichoirs durant la période de reproduction, de munir les juvéniles d'une bague de métal et d'une bague d'identification de couleur, et de transmettre les données à Cornell Lab Nestwatch.

Décision

Le comité des subventions a fait remarquer qu'il s'agissait d'un projet bien développé et que des rapports d'étape étaient soumis régulièrement. Le comité a recommandé que POQ soutienne ce projet en 2024 (2 000 \$), et encore en 2025. Le conseil d'administration a donné son accord et la totalité des montants demandé, soit 2 000 \$ en 2024 et 2 500 \$ en 2025, a été accordée.

La coordinatrice du Projet crécerelle, Gabrielle Girard, a partagé une mise à jour sur la fin de la saison 2025, que vous trouverez à la page suivante, accompagnée de superbes photos !

La Conservation de la Crécerelle d'Amérique au Québec

par Gabrielle Girard, Coordinatrice - Projet crécerelle AQFA

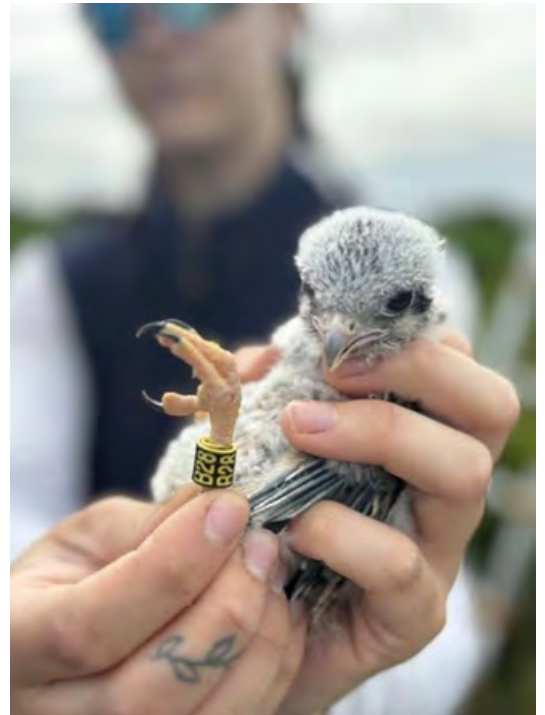
L'Association québécoise des fauconniers et autoursiers (AQFA) contribue aux efforts de conservation de la Crécerelle d'Amérique (*Falco sparverius*) grâce aux subventions en continu de la Protection des oiseaux du Québec. Le projet a été fondé en 2020 par Joanie Lavigne, avec 20 nichoirs déployés, le but était de faire des suivis hebdomadaires des nids et de baguer les fauconneaux. En 2025, nous avons maintenant 90 nichoirs dans le sud du Québec !



Fauconneaux mâle et femelle avant le baguage
Photo: Gabrielle Girard



Aucun bagueur n'a été blessé dans cette photo par Leslie Harmidy !



Crécerelle portant la bague de couleur du projet
Photo: Shawna Sévigny

Cette année, nous avons observé un taux de succès de reproduction de 30% dans notre réseau, 29 nichoirs avaient des œufs. Au total, nous avons bagué 114 fauconneaux de 26 nichoirs, la répartition de sexe est à égalité avec 57 mâles et 57 femelles. Nous apposons 2 bagues sur les fauconneaux, une bague en aluminium sur le tarse droit et une bague de couleur spécifique au projet sur le tarse gauche. La bague de couleur est noire avec une écriture jaune qui est un code consistant d'une lettre et de deux chiffres (ex : A01) qui sont visibles avec les jumelles ou sur les photos. Si vous en voyez une, s'il vous plaît, faites une mention sur ce site : reportband.gov. Notre projet et le baguage permettent d'entraîner des nouveaux biologistes, d'éduquer le public, de fournir des données pour les chercheurs et surtout de créer un intérêt pour les oiseaux et les efforts de conservation.

Finalement, un grand merci à POQ pour le financement qui permet à ce projet de perdurer !



Femelle adulte sur ses bébés, il en a cinq
Photo: Frédéric Henneuse



Photo: Nathanya Goudreau

The High-Stakes Journey of Warblers in an Urbanizing World

by Nathanya Goudreau,
MSc Student, McGill University

Nathanya is an MSc student at McGill researching the migration of two warblers with an urban ecology lens. She tells us she "got the help of [past BPQ board member and sanctuaries committee chair] Ana Morales for planning logistics and with fieldwork in exchange for a BPQ article (kidding!)."

Chestnut-sided Warblers (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) and Yellow Warblers (*Setophaga petechia*) need to be resilient: the 9 - 10 g birds migrate from North America to their wintering grounds in Central America—or even to the Northern part of South America for some Yellow Warblers—and migrate back to their breeding grounds all in one year. During migration, the birds encounter urban areas where they face threats that can lead to death, lowered fitness, delays in migration and/or orientation impairments. While most negative consequences are not immediately deadly, they can have negative impacts on future survival and reproduction. The non-lethal consequences result in limited chance and ability to secure high quality habitat on either or both the wintering and breeding grounds.

A sneaky urban threat to birds is artificial light at night (ALAN). It attracts and disorients nocturnal migrants. It can lead to birds deviating from their planned route by causing an unplanned stopover in an area with poor food resources and to birds wasting energy by flying in circles near large sources of ALAN. ALAN makes collisions more likely. Injuries sustained by non-lethal collisions hinder an individual's ability to refuel and to avoid other threats.

Other urban threats also lead to decreases in refuelling. Exposure to environmental contaminants like insecticides and heavy metals often leads to suppressed appetites and weakened orientational capabilities. Noise pollution disrupts communication between individuals of the same or different species. Individual birds need to increase their vigilance with limited communication, which means less time is spent foraging. Being in an area with a higher concentration of predators, like in an urbanized setting with domestic and wild cats, also leads to more time spent on vigilance.

Cats have more directly negative impacts on birds: they can injure and kill birds. Cat predation is the leading cause of bird mortality. Researchers estimate that cats are responsible for over two billion deaths a year in the United States of America and roughly 60 million in Canada. Collisions with power lines, cars, and buildings are another high source of mortality. Collisions with buildings are responsible for over 600 million deaths a year in North America. Warblers are one of the two most common groups killed by building collisions.

With all the threats migratory birds face in urban areas, it is not surprising that mortality rates are up to 20 times higher during migration compared to sedentary periods. A famous study from 2019 estimated that 3 billion birds were lost since 1970, and that out of the 3 billion, 2.5 billion are migrants. One of the challenges with the conservation of migratory birds is that they are dependent on interconnected sites across large geographical areas. Both the Chestnut-sided and Yellow Warbler have declining populations in southern Québec.

To better inform policy and conservation, I will be mapping their migratory routes and wintering sites. From that, I will be able to estimate their urban exposure over the course of a full annual cycle.

“With all the threats migratory birds face in urban areas, it is not surprising that mortality rates are up 20 times higher during migration compared to sedentary periods.



Yellow Warbler with a Motus tag.
Photo: Shawna Sévigny



Yellow Warbler with a geolocator.
Photo: Ana Morales



Chestnut-sided Warbler with a geolocator.
Photo: Ana Morales

To accomplish these goals, I used a combination of archival light-level geolocators and Motus tags. Geolocators record light every five minutes over the span of about one year. The light data allows us to determine the times of sunrises and sunsets. From the times of the twilight events, we can estimate the rough location of the individual. The tricky part of geolocators is that the bird needs to be recaptured the following year to get the data from the tag.

A lovely team, Lauriane Nault and Josiah Riskin, deployed 45 geolocators on breeding birds at urban and rural sites in 2024. The birds were banded with the standard aluminum band and a unique colour band combination. With the extra time they had, they colour banded some birds to act as controls to compare return rates between birds with a tag and those without. An equally lovely team, Lauriane Nault and Jess Liddell, deployed a second round of geolocators (n=43) in 2025.

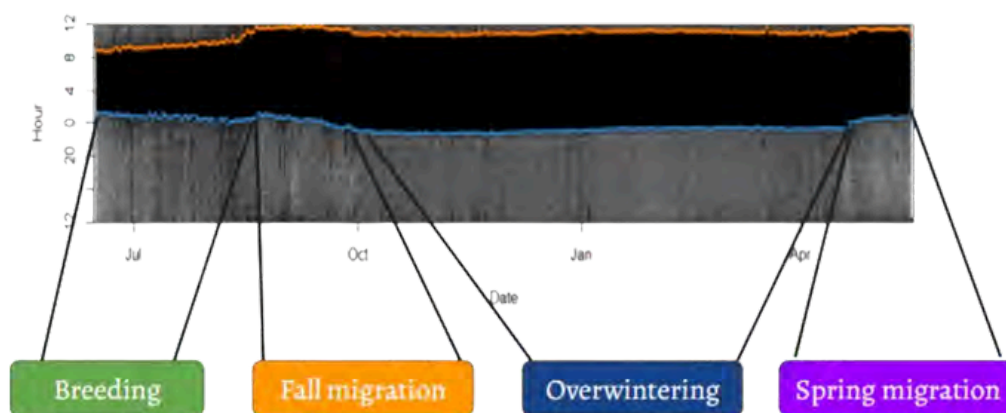
To get more precise locations, I used Motus tags. They are radio tags that emit a signal at a specific frequency, and within the detection range of a Motus tower, the tower receives the pings from the tag. A downside with this type of tag is that the battery only lasts the length of one migration. That is why the Motus tags are deployed on migrating birds. To cover the fall migration, birds caught during the normal monitoring work of the McGill Bird Observatory (MBO) were tagged. The talented bander in charge, Shawna Sévigny, deployed them in fall 2024 and then helped me deploy the second round in fall 2025.

“Geolocators record light every five minutes over the span of about one year.

In summer 2025, my amazing field assistant Danae Niflis and I focused on re-sighting and recapturing the birds that were tagged with geolocators the previous year. Even though it meant waking up a bit past 2 a.m., we were lucky to spend time at some Bird Protection Quebec (BPQ) sites. Seeing beautiful sunrises and being present for the boom of bird activity more than made up for the early mornings. While we re-sighted a control bird, but unfortunately none of the tagged ones at Montée Biggar, we are hopeful that we will have more success next summer at BPQ's Montgomery sanctuary, our newest banding site. These sites hold a special place in my heart because I saw some amazing lifers: a Golden-winged Warbler and a Bobolink at Montée Biggar, and Eastern Bluebirds at Montgomery. I'm happy to report that we did get a total of seven geolocators back.

FIGURE 1:

Timings of sunrises (orange dots) and sunsets (blue dots) from the start to the end of recording from a rural Yellow warbler. The black blob represents night. Note that the hours are in UTC so they need to be shifted 4-5 hours to represent the true times.



And with the seven geolocators, I can share preliminary results. Analyzing the light data has been challenging, but I've learnt good problem-solving skills and kept working at it until I got over the road bumps I had encountered. Stay tuned for final results next year! Looking at the light data in Figure 1 above, we can see drastic changes in the timing of twilight events which indicates the individual has travelled to a new far away location. Doing a basic location estimate from the data in Figure 1 gives us the map in Figure 2, which follows.

The location estimates need to be refined by using more sophisticated models that limit estimates to land and that remove impossible estimates (like those near the Antarctic). Nonetheless, we can still infer some interesting information: Yellow Warblers cross the Gulf of Mexico to get to their wintering sites in northern South America. It confirms what the fall 2024 Motus detections suggest in Figure 3. Based on the Motus data, it looks like the Chestnut-sided Warblers migrate along the Eastern coast in general as opposed to the Yellow Warblers migrating further west. It seems that there are also two different strategies: some go towards Florida to cross over to their wintering sites, and others cross the Gulf of Mexico.

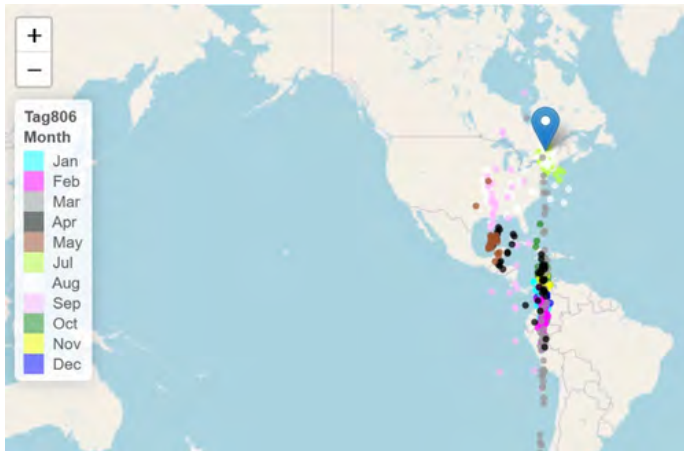
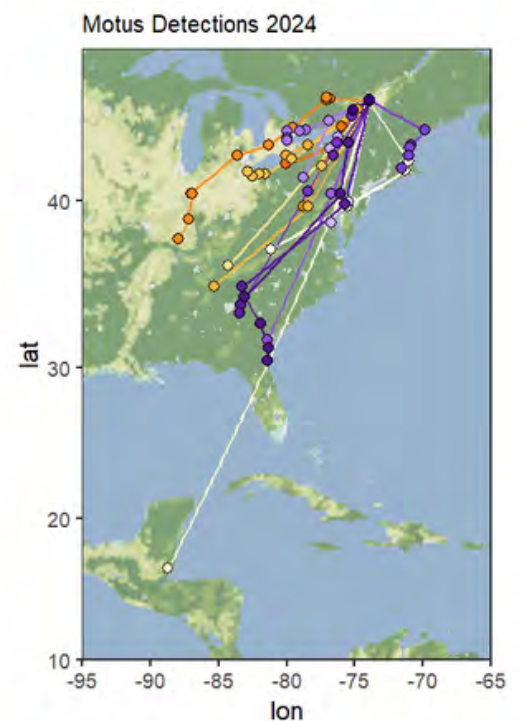


Figure 2: Map of preliminary locations estimates from the same rural Yellow Warbler. The colours of the dots represent the corresponding month of the estimated location. Note that the map was originally created to be interactive, but it was impossible to include that aspect.

Figure 3: Cleaned Motus detections of tagged Yellow & Chestnut-sided Warblers from fall 2024. Yellow Warbler individuals are in shades of yellow and Chestnut-sided individuals are in shades of purple. The lines are not the actual path of the individual but show rather the shortest straight path between detections.



As for next steps, I have a long to-do list. I will finish analyzing the geolocators data and clean up the fall 2025 Motus detections. After that, I will have the privilege of going to Belize in the spring to deploy a last round of Motus tags. Next summer I will be glued to my binoculars trying to re-sight birds and hopefully recapture more tagged birds. I'm excited to piece together all the data to see the final results.

I want to take the time to thank BPQ for allowing me to conduct my research on some of their properties. The project wouldn't be possible without the help I had planning for and during the fieldwork. Thank you to Ana Morales, Danae Niflis, Lauriane Nault, Jess Liddell, Josiah Riskin, Shawna Sévigny, and to my supervisors Barbara Frei and Kyle Elliott.

Project Bird Safe McGill: Quebec's First Window Collision Monitoring Program

By Jessica Liddell and Ava McKee

Jess and Ava are studying biology and finance respectively at McGill. We first learned of their bird-window collision project on social media, and then were lucky enough to meet Jess when Project Birdsafe and BPQ were booth-mates at the McGill Biodiversity Festival in September. She generously agreed to share with our readers their project results on this topic of concern to all birders.

Thunk. It's the awful sound a bird makes when it hits a window—one many of us have heard and will never forget.

Birds cannot see windows. To them, transparent glass looks like open space, and reflective surfaces mirror sky, trees, and shrubs that appear to offer safe passage or inviting habitat. In Canada alone, an estimated 16 to 42 million birds collide with windows every year, making bird-window collisions the second leading cause of human-related bird mortality. Unlike other major threats to birds, such as habitat loss and invasive species, bird-window collisions have a simple fix: make windows visible to birds.

Project Bird Safe McGill aims to do just that.

Founded by two undergraduate students, Project Bird Safe McGill is an initiative committed to reducing bird-window collisions at McGill University. It all began when we (Jess Lidell, a Biology student and avid birder, and Ava McKee, a Finance student with a passion for sustainability), set out to turn what was originally a school assignment into a campus-wide effort to make McGill University safer for migratory birds. After months of meetings with experts, project designing, and paperwork, we received \$85,750 of funding from McGill's Sustainability Projects Fund to carry out our two-phase plan to reduce bird-window collisions:

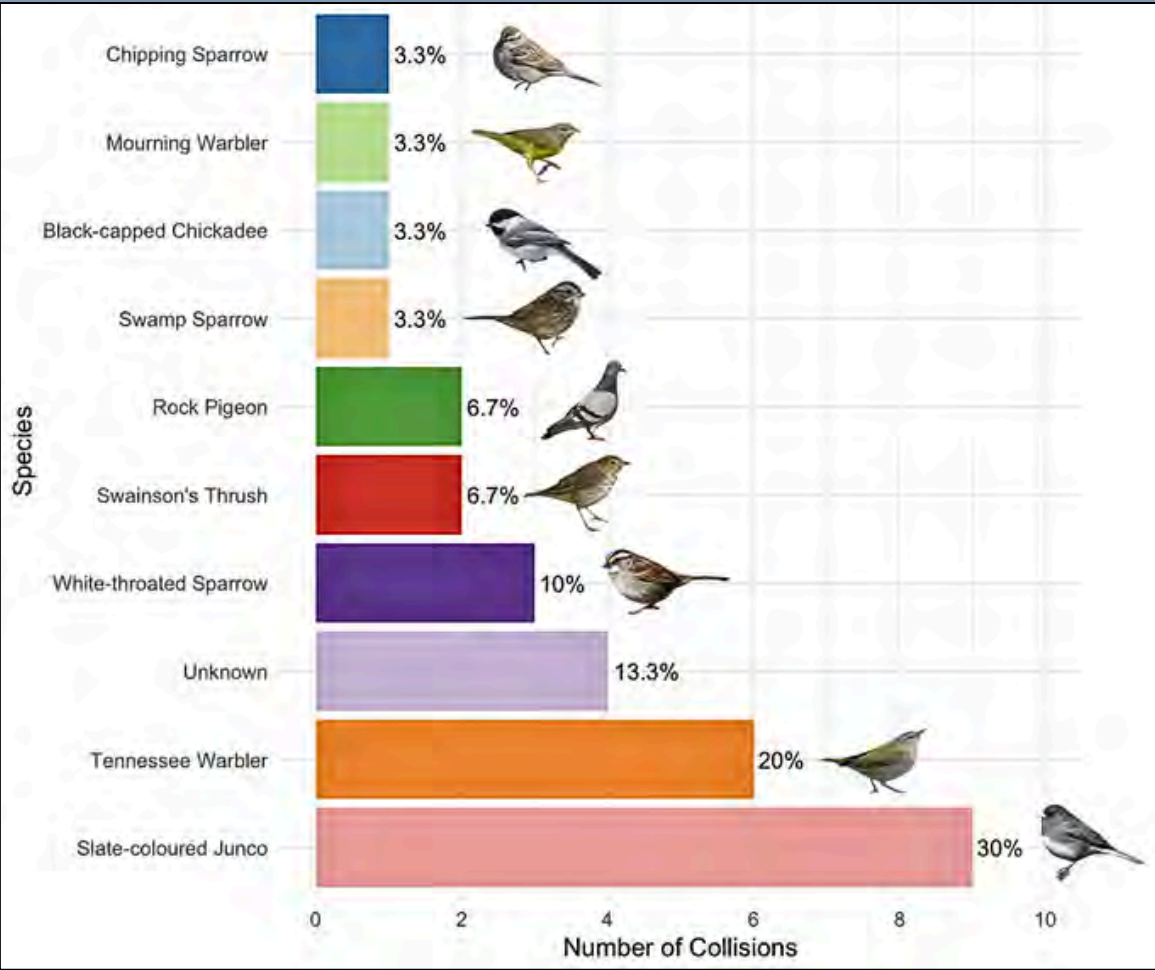
- Phase 1.* Establish a Collision Monitoring Program to survey downtown campus for bird-window collisions during fall migration, allowing us to determine how many collisions are occurring and around what buildings.
- Phase 2.* Use the collision data we collected to identify a high-risk campus building and retrofit its windows with bird-safe design.

Thanks to the 50 volunteers on our Collision Monitoring Team, we have completed Phase 1 of our project and collected the first data on bird-window collisions in Quebec.

Our Monitoring Program's Results

From late August to early November, we monitored nine buildings on McGill's downtown campus twice a day, once at dawn and again in mid-morning. We found a total of 30 bird-window collisions, composed of nine different bird species. Slate-coloured Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) were our most frequent collision victims with nine collisions, followed by Tennessee Warblers (*Leiothlypis peregrina*) with six collisions. Among the 17 birds we were able to age, 94% of them were juvenile birds that had hatched this season.

Image 1. Bird-window collisions by species.



Most buildings averaged two collisions each, but two buildings stood out: together, they accounted for more than half (53%) of all the collisions we recorded. Gardner Hall, an Upper Residence dormitory, caused nine collisions. Its highly reflective windows and surrounding trees make it especially hazardous for birds. Leacock Building, a building in the centre of campus, caused seven collisions. Its terrace has floor-to-ceiling reflective windows that create another dangerous illusion for birds flying by.

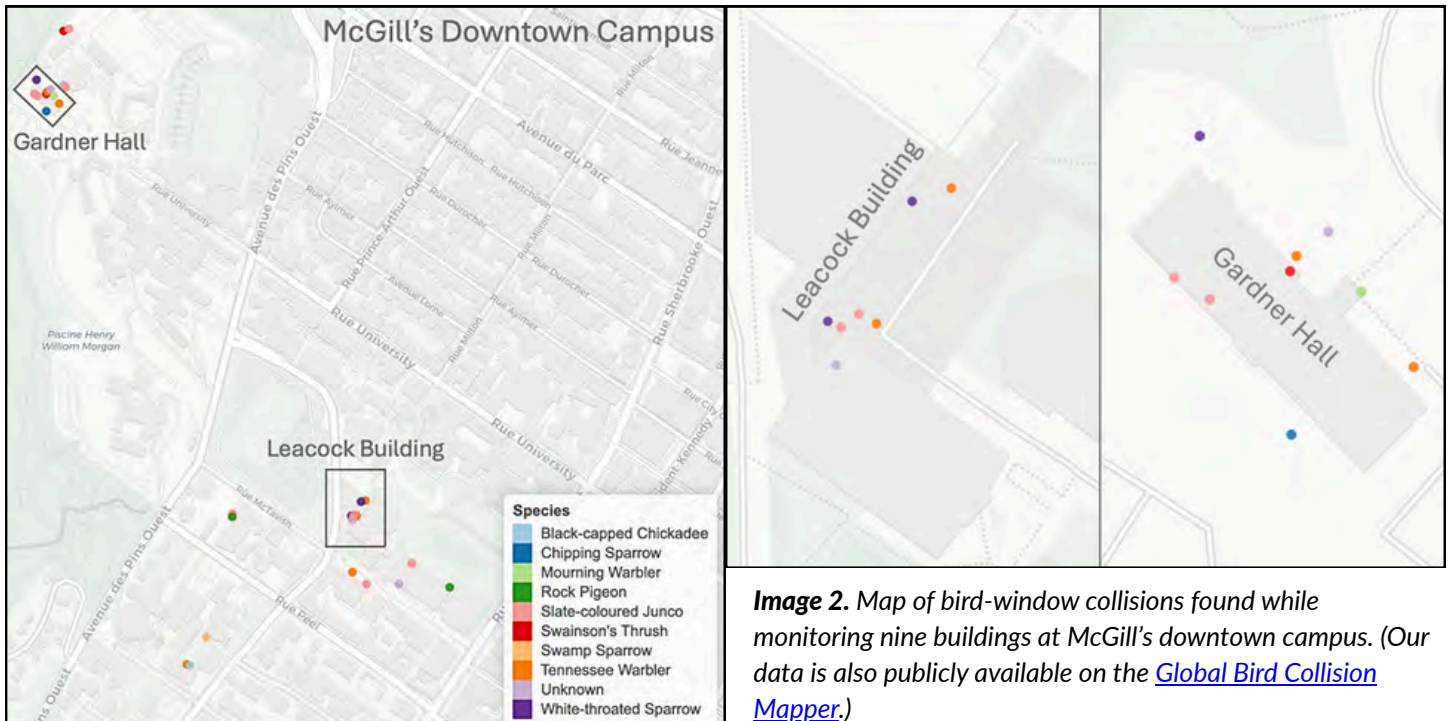


Image 2. Map of bird-window collisions found while monitoring nine buildings at McGill's downtown campus. (Our data is also publicly available on the [Global Bird Collision Mapper](#).)

Bird-window collisions don't always look like a dead bird lying on the ground. They can also appear as piles of feathers, smudges on glass left by feather dust, and injured birds that are still alive. During our surveys, we found 18 dead birds, 4 feather piles, 2 window smears, and 6 injured birds. We were able to capture three of the injured birds and bring them to Le Nichoir, a wild bird rehabilitation centre. Thanks to their care, one Tennessee Warbler was rehabilitated and successfully released.

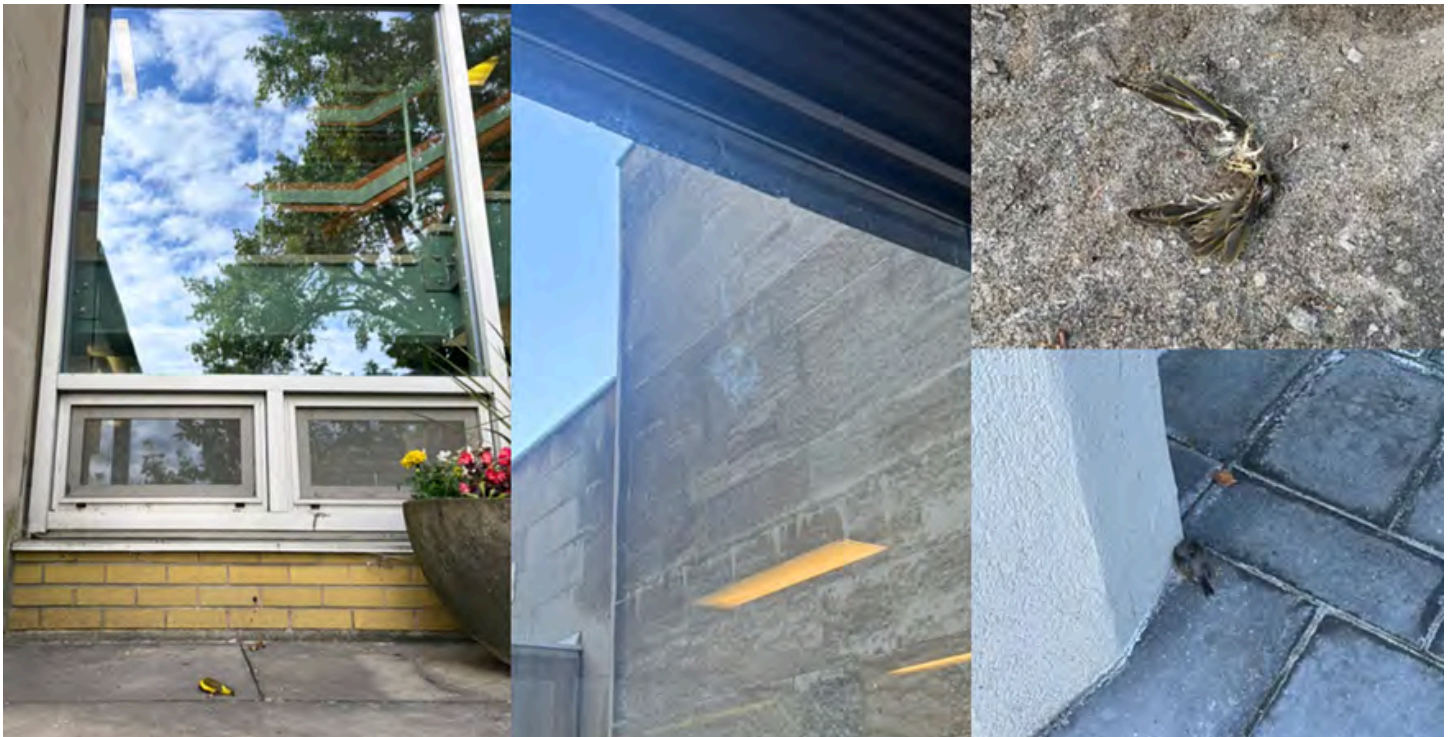


Image 3. Different appearances of bird-window collisions. Dead bird (left), window smear (middle), feather pile (top right), injured bird (bottom right).

Our Next Steps

With Phase 1 complete, we'll be analyzing our data and working with building managers to choose a site for bird-safe window retrofits this spring. Bird-safe design makes windows visible to birds by modifying the glass to reduce transparency or reflectiveness. A common way to retrofit windows is to use bird-safe decals: stickers spaced no more than 5 cm apart that make windows stand out as a solid surface to birds, preventing collisions. We plan to use bird-safe decals to make a high-risk McGill building safer for birds. We will also continue our Collision Monitoring Program next fall to see how well the window retrofits work and to identify other buildings on campus that put birds at high risk of collision. To learn more or follow our progress, you can find us on Instagram (@birdsafemcgill) or reach us by email at birdsafemcgill@gmail.com.

What Can You Do?

Bird-window collisions happen anywhere there is glass—including at home. In fact, houses and low-rise buildings cause far more collisions than tall skyscrapers in cities. The good news is that making your own windows bird-safe is simple: you can make glass visible to birds by adding external markers like tape, decals, or screens to the outside of your windows no more than 5 x 5 cm apart. There are many easy ways you can do this, such as hanging cords (like Acopian BirdSavers), applying tape or decals (such as Feather Friendly), drawing tight patterns with paint or markers, and installing exterior screens or netting.



Image 4.
Examples of bird-safe windows:

Top left window is retrofitted with Feather Friendly dot decals (photo: FLAP Canada).

Bottom left window is retrofitted with Acopian BirdSavers hanging cords (photo: Acopian BirdSavers).

Right windows are patterns drawn on with wax markers for glass (art by Jessica Liddell on the left, and Kennedy Webb on the right).

If you find evidence of a bird-window collision, you can take a picture of it and report it to the [Global Bird Collision Mapper](#), a worldwide community-science database that tracks bird-window collisions.

Bird collisions are completely preventable, and every bird-safe window can save lives! The less *thunks* we hear, the better.

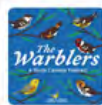


Citizen Science Calendar 2026



PROGRAM NAME AND WEBSITE LINK	DETAILS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2026 Checklist-a-day Challenge	Submit an average of one checklist a day to eBird for the entire year for prizes.												
Great Backyard Bird Count	Count birds to help create a real-time snapshot of avian life around the world (Feb. 13–16 2026)												
Nocturnal Owl Survey	Volunteers count owls along rural roads to document population trends and breeding range limits.												
Schoolyard Bird Blitz	Count birds any day in May or participate several times throughout the month.												
Marsh Monitoring Program	Tracks bird and amphibian population trends to guide marsh conservation.												
Global Big Day	Share the birds you find with eBird. Check the eBird website for 2026 event date.												
The Canadian Nightjar Survey	Volunteers conduct a survey at dusk, once between June 15 and July 15 to help conserve these unique species.												
Canadian Lakes Loon Survey	Visit a lake once in June and July to see if loon chicks hatch, and once in August to see if chicks survive to fledge.												
North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)	Skilled observers survey pre-determined BBS routes one day per year (May 28 July 7). Click here for available BBS routes												
Project FeederWatch	Survey of birds that visit backyards, community centers, etc. from November to April each year.												
Birds Canada Christmas Bird Count	For BPQ-sponsored Montreal CBC count on Dec. 20 & Hudson count on Dec. 27.												
Birds Canada CBC4Kids	Events based on the traditional Christmas Bird Count organized for kids throughout December and January.												
Rallye des oiseaux	An activity for kids aged 4-17. Dec. 1 - Jan. 15												
iNat Worldwide BioBlitz 2026	The goal is to encourage iNaturalist users to participate in a fun, simple event. From Feb. 1 - Sept. 30.												

Check out this Birds Canada [The Warblers](#) podcast to learn why citizen science data matters!

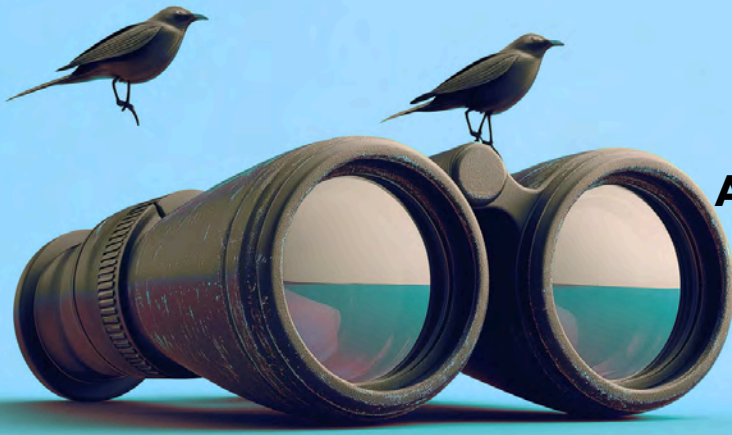


NatureCounts: Helping Birds with Your Data

The Warblers by Birds Canada



- A series of lessons on citizen science
- NatureCounts: Helping Birds with Your Data
- The week-up call: Monitor form
- The digital census (201)
- The counting crowd of nature (and birds)



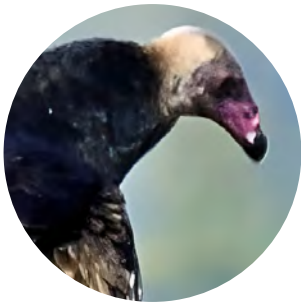
Bucking the Trend: A Baker's Dozen of Avian Success Stories - Part 2

Story & Photos by Wayne Grubert

In our last issue, we presented six avian species that have bucked the trend of declining populations in our province. For several of these species we presented statistics from the two Québec breeding bird atlases set a quarter century apart to back up the author's anecdotal memories of their increasing numbers. In this concluding part of our article, we present the next seven species that complete our baker's dozen of successful birds. (Reminder: "Squares" refer to the 10 km x 10 km parcels of land into which the area was divided for survey purposes.)



No. 7 - Turkey Vulture

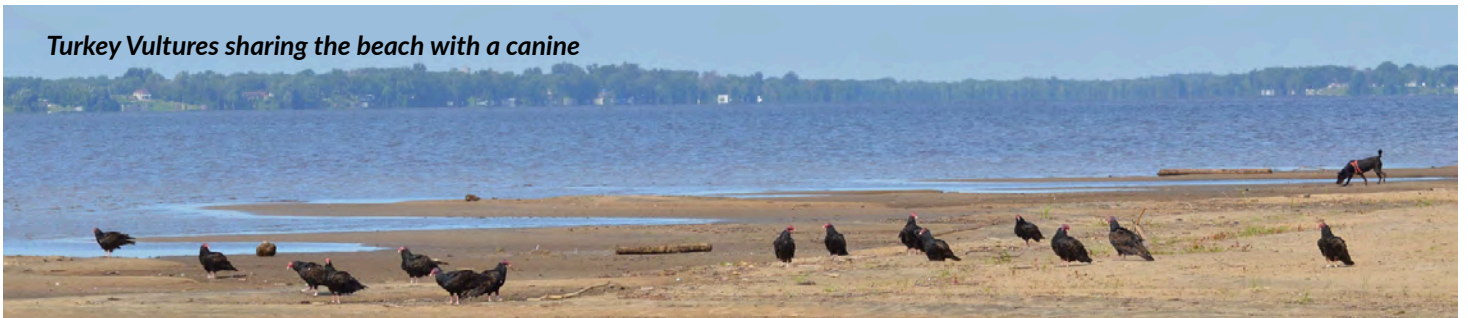


Somewhere around 1980 your author was puzzled by a large dark bird soaring over an escarpment near Gananoque, Ontario. Flipping through the dog-eared pages of his Robbins "Birds of North America" field guide, an identification of Turkey Vulture was determined. That would not seem to be a big deal except it was his first ever in Canada. In fact, the book's range map showed the species barely penetrating the extreme southern parts of that province. Today, even beginners quickly learn to identify TVs at a distance by their dihedral wing position and a tilting flight style that reminds us of tightrope

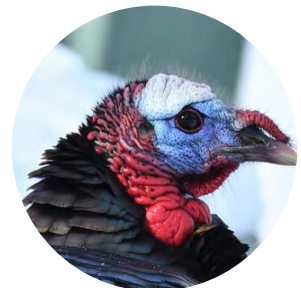
walkers. This speaks to how common these masters of seemingly effortless flight have become. The first Quebec breeding bird atlas had only four squares with confirmed breeding, but that number had reached 38 by the end of the second, just 25 years later.



Turkey Vultures sharing the beach with a canine



#8 - Wild Turkey



Wild Turkeys share a bald-headed appearance with the previous species. That, and a portion of their name, seem to be the only similarities between the two birds, unless one considers their exploding population in Southern Quebec. Flash back to the late 1980s and imagine a special outing to our southern border in the hopes of witnessing part of an invasion occurring. (Don't worry, no immigration politics here.)



Wild Turkeys were crossing that frontier, with a second front also opening along the Ontario border. Feeling the need to do my part to document these aliens, I dragged my wife to the car in the early morning hours of a beautiful spring day. We headed for the Hemmingford area, a stone's throw from the United States. Slowly cruising the backroads all morning while carefully scanning every field and forest produced a grand total of zero of the target species. Apparently at the time black bears were even more common, as we saw at least one of those ambling across the road and leaving its footprints on the dewy surface for us to admire. But despite "dipping" on the target species that day, we now know that turkeys have been wildly successful in the years since. Confirmed breeding went from seven to an astonishing 213 squares in the time between the two atlases. Warmer winters, changing agricultural practices, reintroduction efforts and the species' own fecundity (females with a half a dozen chicks or more is not an uncommon sight) have all played a role in their increase.



#9 - Common Raven

Staying with large dark birds, before the 1990s seeing a Common Raven on a Christmas Bird Count in the immediate Montreal area was always a thrill. Other times of year they were almost non-existent. So uncommon were they that even seasoned birders almost always relied on their raucous croak to make a definitive identification. Now, most observers have

learned at least a few visual characteristics to help separate ravens from their American Crow cousins. Ravens are extremely intelligent birds and have probably realized they are no longer being persecuted by humans and have developed an increased tolerance. In fact, they have quite taken to man-made structures for nest building, anything from farm silos to communication towers. They have adapted to agricultural areas and urban areas alike to the extent that almost any birding outing has the potential to produce sightings of one or more individuals. Confirmed breeding squares increased almost four-fold between atlases from 214 to 819.

#10 - Bald Eagle



In March 2025, BPQ's guest speaker Tina Morris reminisced about her role in initial efforts to reintroduce Bald Eagles into north-eastern United States in the mid-1970s. Their precipitous decline in previous decades from the effects of DDT and human persecution had also affected southern Quebec, with sightings of this iconic species being a special event. Only 12 squares had confirmed breeding in the first atlas. This number had grown to 145 twenty-five years later, with a noticeable incursion into southwestern sections of the province. Now, spend a day along a major waterway such as the St. Lawrence or Ottawa Rivers, and chances are very good that at least one of these majestic birds will make an appearance. Knowing that these birds take upwards of five years to reach maturity and learning to recognize immature plumages will increase the likelihood of spotting one. Nearly 40% of our weekly BPQ field trips in 2025 produced one or more eagles.

Immature Bald Eagle



No. 10.5: Ospreys, although not incurring as great a decline as Bald Eagles, have undergone a similar increase in southwestern parts of the province between atlases and have therefore become more visible to most of our readers. They could have been included on our list in their own right. It remains to be seen how these two competitors will share the same space, especially as one is known to predate the other's young at times.

Adult Bald Eagle





#11 - Barred Owl

#12 - Pileated Woodpecker

Although large swaths of forest continue to be harvested to make way for agriculture in the St. Lawrence lowlands region of southwestern Quebec, there are significant areas which have followed the opposite path. Some abandoned farms have passed through various successional stages, and many have now reached mature status in terms of vegetation. This, along with a newfound quasi-tolerance of humans, has led to increases in sightings of our next two species: Barred Owl and Pileated Woodpecker.

Barred Owls were an uncommon sight for many birders in the mid-20th century with Great Horned Owls being the more likely species to be observed in our area. That comparison seems to have now been reversed. The two hunt in different habitats for the most part with Barred preferring forested areas and Great Horned favouring edge habitat with a variety of vegetation. The switch to monoculture agriculture has not been kind to either species but areas reverting from farmland to forest seem to have benefitted Barred Owls more. Their otherworldly mating duets and raucous territorial disputes are impressing more and more nocturnal listeners.

Pileated Woodpeckers have also undergone a resurgence in population in part due to forest regrowth. Almost as importantly, from this author's point of view at least, is their increased tolerance of humans. These factors have allowed them to thrive in fragmented habitats if there is at least some older growth forest providing trees large enough for excavating nest holes. In the past these Woody Woodpecker look-alikes would flee like gamebirds and waterfowl at the mere sight of people. They now often seem oblivious to us as they excavate nest holes or shred rotten stumps in search of carpenter ants and other delicacies.



#13 - Northern Cardinal

Let's end with a species that everyone, birders and non-birders alike, recognizes and loves. With its scarlet plumage, jaunty crest and fluid song, there is no mistaking a male Northern Cardinal. Not to be outdone, his mate also sports beautiful if more subtle plumage, and she often joins him in song. Now so commonly seen in urban, suburban and rural areas in southern Quebec, it is hard to believe the first nesting record was only about 60 years ago, on Mount Royal in 1964. Warmer winters, a proliferation of bird feeders, and the scrubby vegetation that springs up from abandoned farmland have all played a role in the explosion of this species' population in our area. The cardinal is a permanent resident, meaning we can enjoy everything about this special bird in person year-round. Imagine being restricted to seeing this beauty only on holiday greeting cards, as would have been the case in mid-20th century Quebec.

Summing up...

It would be great if all bird species could undergo increases in population that signified a healthy environment, but unfortunately that is obviously not the case. Most are struggling and decreasing in numbers, some precipitously. With that in mind, we hope it was nice to take the proverbial stroll down memory lane and rejoice a bit in highlighting those birds which have been successful because of their ability to adapt to our rapidly changing world. No doubt readers will be able to add a few of their own favourites to this list. Hopefully in the future many, many more will have reversed their negative population trends and be eligible for inclusion on a new edition of this tally.

Marcel Gahbauer's

Birds with Quirks

By definition, each species is unique. However, some have more distinct characteristics or behaviours than others. This column features species with notable quirks, focusing on those found in Quebec but sometimes referencing related species elsewhere.



Red-breasted Nuthatch - A True Canadian!

The Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sittelle à poitrine rousse*) is a common enough bird throughout the year in much of central and southern Quebec that it's rarely sought out by birders as a target—yet at the same time sufficiently uncommon in most areas to be appreciated when it is seen. Along with the Black-capped Chickadee, it's also among the boldest birds, one of the few that tends to quite readily take seeds from an outstretched hand. But there's more to this little bird than you may realize...

Its scientific name is *Sitta canadensis*, making it one of just eight birds named after Canada (bet you can't name them all! See the full list below). It is the most Canadian of the country's three nuthatch species, with approximately 59% of its population breeding in Canada, compared to 7% for the White-breasted Nuthatch and only 1% for the Pygmy Nuthatch (Fink et al. 2025).

This reflects their overall patterns of distribution, which in turn are tied to their habitat preferences. Whereas White-breasted Nuthatches favour deciduous woods and Pygmy Nuthatches are mostly associated with Ponderosa Pine stands, Red-breasted Nuthatches prefer spruces and other conifers, and, as such, are widespread across much of the boreal forest and through the Rocky Mountains (Fig 1A), whereas White-breasted Nuthatch is more limited to the southern parts of Canada (Fig 1B), and the Pygmy Nuthatch's Canadian range is only in southern British Columbia.



Photo: Darlene Harvey

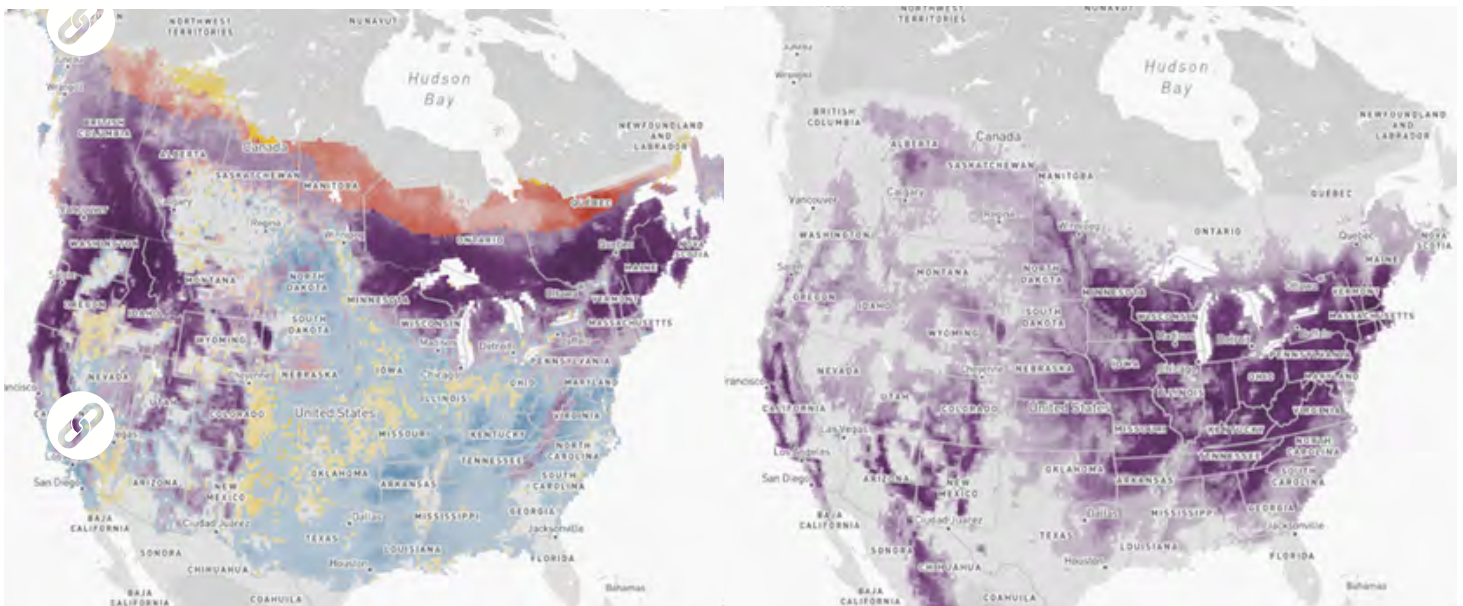


Figure 1: eBird models of distribution for (A) Red-breasted Nuthatch and (B) White-breasted Nuthatch. Seasonal presence indicated by colours (red = breeding, blue = wintering, purple = year-round, yellow = migration only), with intensity of shading proportional to relative abundance (Fink et al. 2025)

The range maps also highlight another important difference between the two species: White-breasted is generally sedentary, whereas Red-breasted is at least somewhat migratory. However, Red-breasted Nuthatches are more like boreal finches than typical migrants, moving in relation to resource availability rather than just change in season. They are known as one of the species that shows a strong positive response to Spruce Budworm outbreaks. But from fall through spring, Red-breasted Nuthatches are primarily seed-eaters, and for this reason, they have long been featured in the annual "Finch Forecast" along other 'irruptive' species; this year's report noted substantial numbers on the move as early as mid-August, and predicted a substantial southward shift this year because of poor cone crops across much of the eastern boreal region (Hoar 2025). Consistent with this, a new record for southernmost eBird observation of the species was set just a few weeks ago on October 27 in Jalisco, Mexico (20.76N; Muñoz-Padilla 2025).

Despite their differences in distribution and habitat preferences, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches sometimes do occur together, especially at feeders in winter. Visually they're easy to distinguish of course, but what about by ear? Both are described as having nasal call notes, but beyond that there are a number of differences to listen for. The Red-breasted tends to have a higher-pitched, thinner call, and often has a faster rhythm than the White-breasted. This is particularly true when multiple individuals are together and become vocally animated - the cacophony of nasal beeps can sound like a small fleet of trucks backing up.

Little bird with a lot of quirks!

The most obvious quirk of Red-breasted Nuthatches (and all other nuthatches for that matter) is their predilection for going down trees head first – what's up (what's down?) with that? Well, consider that to a large extent, woodpeckers and nuthatches are exploiting the same prey base - insects and their eggs and larvae on tree trunks and branches. Moving in the opposite direction of woodpeckers (and creepers) gives nuthatches a different perspective into cracks and crevices, allowing them to snatch prey that the "upward" species overlooked.

However, Red-breasted Nuthatches have another behaviour that's even more unusual. They are cavity nesters and, as a form of predator defence, they line the entrance of their hole with conifer resin (sap) that they collect from spruces, firs, or pines. The sticky surface deters snakes and mammals such as squirrels and weasels from entering, protecting the eggs and young, as well as the adults while incubating (Mouton et al. 2025). The resin may also dissuade potential nest competitors such as chickadees, woodpeckers, and House Wrens. As well, it has been noted that the terpenes in resins are antimicrobial, suggesting that the barrier around the nest entrance could, therefore, impede the passage of mites, ants, and invertebrate parasites. The nuthatches themselves seem to avoid getting stuck by diving through the nest hole with remarkable precision, although on occasion even they can misjudge and get trapped (e.g., [Strauss 2007 Canadian Field-Naturalist](#)). White-breasted Nuthatches have also been documented using resin around their nest entrances but less frequently, and among other birds it is considered rare at best.



Photo: Darlene Harvey

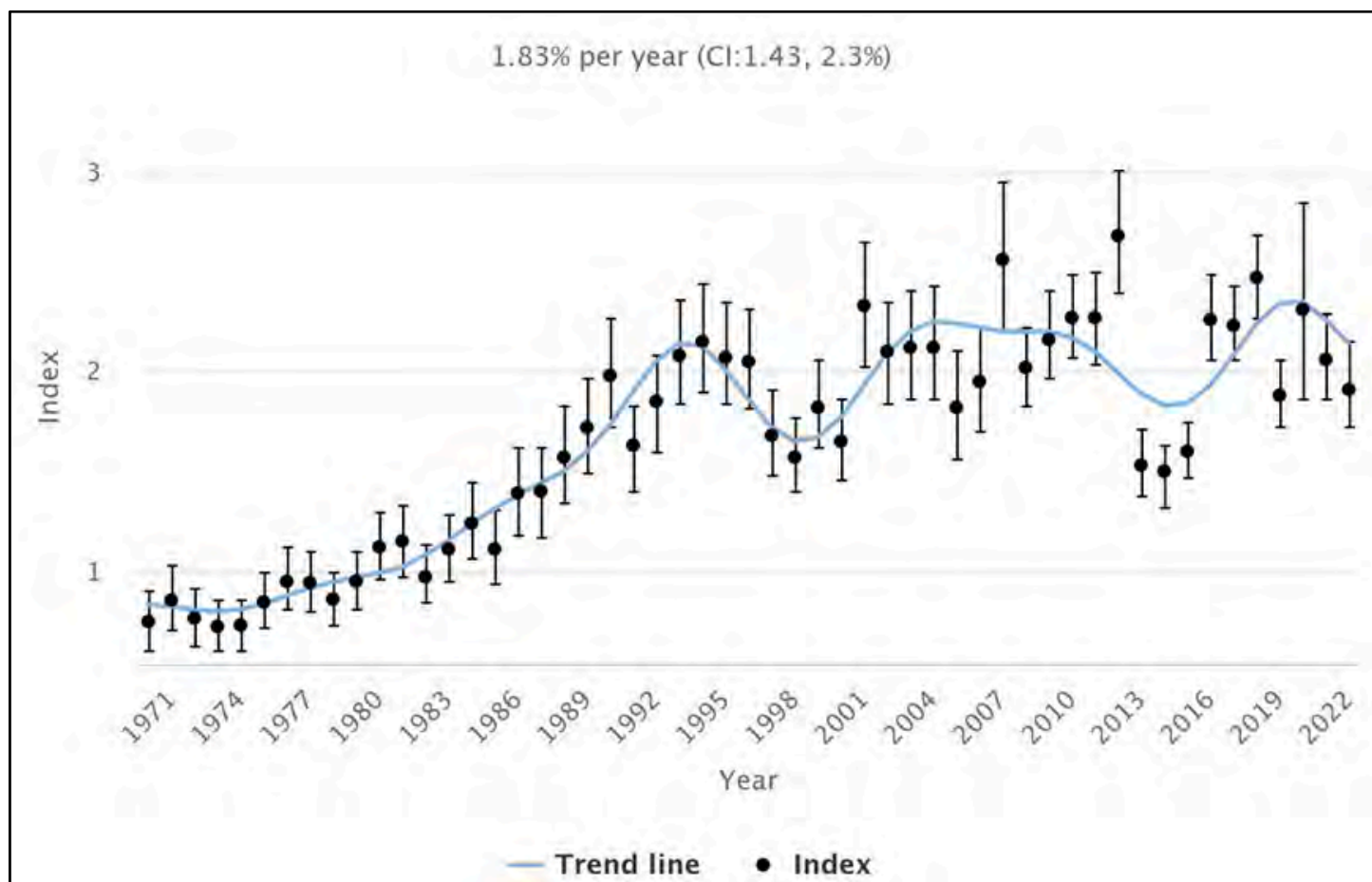
“ Oh—and what about hatching nuts?
Obviously they don't do that...” ”

Oh—and what about hatching nuts? Obviously they don't do that; rather, the name has evolved over time from “nuthack” in Middle English, when hacking referred to pecking forcefully. Effectively, nuthatches were named after their tendency to wedge nuts (or large seeds) into crevices on tree trunks and hammer them open. Notably, Eurasian Nuthatches rely more on nuts (especially hazelnuts, acorns, and beech nuts) than their various North American counterparts.

And, last but not least...

It's worth noting that Red-breasted Nuthatch is among the species doing well in Canada. Based on Breeding Bird Survey data, the population appears to have roughly doubled between the early 1970s and early 1990s, and has since then fluctuated around that higher level, estimated to be around 11 million individuals (Birds Canada and ECCC 2024; Fig 2).

Figure 2: Canada-wide population trend for Red-breasted Nuthatch from the State of Canada's Birds (<https://naturecounts.ca/nc/socb-epoc/species.jsp?sp=rebnut>) based on Breeding Bird Survey data.



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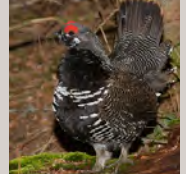
Nomenclature Quiz

The other seven species with canadensis in their scientific name are:

1) Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)



2) Spruce Grouse (*Canachites* – formerly *Falcipennis* – *canadensis*)



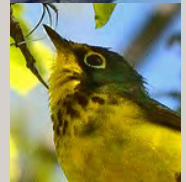
3) Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*)



4) Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*)



5) Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*)



Plus...

6) Black-crested Antshrike (*Sakesphorus canadensis*); and

7) Yellow-green Grosbeak (*Caryothraustes canadensis*)

What??

Yes, these last two species are named 'canadensis' even though they have never been observed in Canada! In the case of Yellow-green Grosbeak, it was first described by French zoologist Mathurin Jacques Brisson in 1760, based on a specimen from Cayenne, French Guiana. When renowned systematist Carl Linnaeus updated his *Systema Naturae* in 1766, he mistakenly attributed the species to Canada rather than Cayenne, and referred to it as *canadensis*. Brisson was also behind the naming of the Black-crested Antshrike, although this time he was the one who mistakenly believed that the specimen came from Canada. He proposed the name *Lanius canadensis*, putting it in the same genus as our other North American shrikes, but while the genus was eventually corrected, the species name again remained despite being based on a false premise. The trouble is that to maintain taxonomic stability, it is not considered appropriate to change a species name just because it is misleading, and so these names have stuck for more than 250 years!

Birding Basics



Tips for chill-proof birding:

Gear Up for a Comfortable Winter Birding Season



Winter birding can be magical. Quiet trails. Fresh snow. Chickadees calling from frosty branches. The right clothing helps you enjoy it all, stay safe, and stay focused on the birds instead of the cold. Here are some simple tips to keep you comfortable out there.

Start with warm, dry feet

Choose insulated, waterproof boots with good tread for icy paths. Wool or synthetic socks work better than cotton, they stay warm even when damp. If your feet run cold, heated socks can add a steady warmth that keeps you comfortable during those longer pauses while you scan for birds.

Think layers, not bulk

Layering lets you adjust to changing weather and activity levels and lets you stay warm without overheating. Try:

- Base layer to wick moisture
- Mid layer like fleece or a light insulated jacket
- Outer shell that blocks wind and snow

Protect hands and ears

Wind and cold make a big difference on exposed skin. Choose gloves or mitts you can easily remove for using binoculars.

If your hands get cold easily, heated gloves are a great option. A warm hat or headband also helps keep heat from escaping, which makes your whole body feel warmer.

Bring a bright outer layer if visibility is low

Snowy days can make it harder for others to see you, especially on shared trails. A bright jacket or vest helps keep everyone safe and aware.

Stay safe on icy trails

Winter paths can be slippery, especially after fresh snow or a sudden freeze. Wearing boots with strong grip helps, and traction aids like crampons can add extra stability. Take your time on uneven ground and watch for icy patches, especially when you're focused on spotting movement in the trees.

Carry a small pack

A small backpack can hold extra layers, warm drinks (a good thermos is key), snacks, and a spare pair of gloves. Staying fueled and hydrated helps you stay focused on respectful spotting and sharing the trail warmly with others.

Quick Gear Checklist

- Insulated, waterproof boots
- Wool or synthetic socks, or heated socks if needed
- Base, mid, and outer layers
- Warm hat or headband
- Gloves or mitts, or heated gloves if your hands run cold
- Bright outer layer for visibility
- Traction aids (crampons or similar) for icy trails
- Small backpack with snacks, water, extra gloves, and a hot drink
- Binoculars and field guide or app

LES B.A.-BA DE L'OBSERVATION



Conseils pour une sortie ornithologique sans frisson

Équipez-vous pour une saison d'observation hivernale confortable



L'ornithologie en hiver peut être magique. Des sentiers tranquilles. De la neige fraîche. Des mésanges qui appellent depuis des branches givrées. Les bons vêtements vous aident à en profiter, à rester en sécurité et à garder votre attention sur les oiseaux plutôt que sur le froid. Voici quelques conseils simples pour rester confortable dehors

Commencez par des pieds chauds et secs

Choisissez des bottes isolées et imperméables avec une bonne semelle pour les sentiers glacés. Les chaussettes en laine ou en fibres synthétiques sont plus efficaces que le coton, elles restent chaudes même humides. Si vous avez souvent froid aux pieds, les chaussettes chauffantes offrent une chaleur constante qui aide pendant les longues pauses d'observation.

Pensez en couches, pas en volume

La superposition permet de vous adapter aux changements de température et d'activité, et de rester au chaud sans surchauffer. Essayez :

- Une couche de base pour évacuer l'humidité
- Une couche intermédiaire comme une polaire ou une veste isolée légère
- Une couche extérieure coupe-vent et imperméable

Protégez vos mains et vos oreilles

Le vent et le froid ont un impact important sur la peau exposée. Choisissez des gants ou des mitaines faciles à enlever pour utiliser vos jumelles. Si vous avez souvent froid aux mains, les gants chauffants sont une excellente option. Un bonnet ou un bandeau aide aussi à conserver la chaleur corporelle.

Portez une couche extérieure de couleur vive si la visibilité est faible

Les journées neigeuses peuvent réduire la visibilité, surtout sur les sentiers partagés. Une veste ou un gilet vif aide les autres à vous repérer facilement.

Restez prudent sur les sentiers glacés

Les chemins d'hiver peuvent être glissants, surtout après une chute de neige ou un redoux. Des bottes avec une bonne adhérence aident beaucoup, et des crampons ajoutent encore plus de stabilité. Avancez lentement sur les surfaces irrégulières et surveillez les plaques de glace, particulièrement lorsque vous êtes concentré sur le moindre mouvement dans les arbres.

Apportez un petit sac

Un sac à dos léger peut contenir des couches supplémentaires, une boisson chaude (un bon thermos est essentiel), des collations et une paire de gants de rechange. Être bien hydraté et bien nourri vous aide à rester concentré et à partager le sentier avec respect et chaleur.

Liste rapide d'équipement

- Bottes isolées et imperméables
- Chaussettes en laine ou synthétiques, ou chaussettes chauffantes au besoin
- Couches de base, intermédiaire et extérieure
- Bonnet ou bandeau chaud
- Gants ou mitaines, ou gants chauffants si vos mains sont sensibles au froid
- Couche extérieure de couleur vive pour la visibilité
- Aides à la traction (crampons) pour les sentiers glacés
- Petit sac à dos avec collations, eau, gants de rechange et boisson chaude
- Jumelles et guide d'identification ou application

Exploring Early Canadian Ornithology

with Jeff Harrison

William Couper:

Exploring the Birdlife of 19th-Century Quebec Through William Couper's Notes

William Couper was a 19th-century Quebec naturalist who made important contributions to Canadian zoology. Today Couper is largely known as an important entomologist. This article discusses his contributions to Canadian ornithology.

In this article I have relied heavily on the research of James Baillie Jr, former Assistant Curator of Ornithology at the Royal Ontario Museum. Baillie wrote: "William Couper – A Pioneer Canadian Naturalist" published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN) 43 (1929) and a follow-up article, "Additional Notes" in CFN 51 (1937).

Baillie discussed Couper's career during his residence in Toronto, Quebec, Ottawa, Montreal and Troy, New York. This paper focuses on Quebec and Montreal where Couper made his most significant contributions to Canadian ornithology.

Details of Couper's personal life are scant. For information on Couper's birthplace and death I am greatly indebted to Michel Gosselin, formerly curator of ornithology at the Canadian Museum of Nature. Michel provided data from the 1861 Canada East census which states that Couper was born in Scotland in 1826. His early interest in natural history was entomological. He wrote in *The Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist* (3, 1883, 220) that, in 1843, when he "was a youth, studying insects, books containing descriptions and life-histories of species inhabiting Canada could not be obtained for love or money – there were few systematists in North America – and the papers then published were obscure to the beginner ...".

Both Paradis, who wrote Couper's biography for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and Baillie, suggest that Couper moved to Troy, N.Y., in 1884 to live with his son. Ernest Thompson Seton in his article "William Couper—A Pioneer Canadian Entomologist" in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (42: 208), notes that in 1890, according to Cassino's *The Scientist's International Directory*, Couper was living in Lansingburgh, N.Y., advertising as a taxidermist and entomologist. An Index Card providing Couper's death record, provided by Michel Gosselin, indicates that that he died in Burlington, Vermont, in June, 1892.

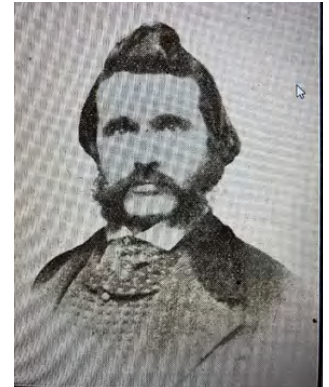
Toronto 1842 to 1859

In 1842 Couper was employed in Toronto as a typographer in the bookstore and printing shop of Henry Rowsell. Baillie also notes that throughout his adult life Couper was able to make his living as a taxidermist giving instruction to others, plying his trade in museums as a curator, contributing articles on insects, particularly coleoptera, and on birds to scientific journals, and selling natural history specimens he collected during extensive field work in Canada and the United States.

In the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Paradis adds that Couper first became known as an entomologist:

because of his excellent and original collections which won him praise and awards at exhibitions in Toronto in 1852 and 1856. Couper did not confine his interests to the insects themselves; his collections also included nests, cocoons, and various structures which both illustrated the building instinct of hexapods and facilitated the identification of species.

In the "Naturalist's Calendar" column in *The Canadian Journal* (CJ) (2: 20 1854) Couper describes the building, timing and number of eggs in the nest of a Pied-billed Grebe and the start of nest building of a Red-winged Blackbird in the spring of 1853. In CJ 2:76 he notes migrating flocks of Passenger Pigeons, Bluebirds and Goldfinches.



From Baillie "William Couper – A Pioneer Canadian Naturalist" in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 43. Courtesy of the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL).

Baillie cites an article in the *Toronto Leader* on February 13, 1856, which mentions that Couper visited Montreal in October 1855 (Baillie CFN 1937), where he joined the Montreal Natural History Society (MNHS) as a Corresponding Member, as well as the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec (LHSQ) a year later. By the mid-1850s, Montreal was the centre of the natural sciences in Canada. In addition to the MNHS, founded in 1827, Montreal was home to the Geological Survey of Canada, founded in 1842, and saw the establishment in 1856 of Canada's first scientific journal devoted to natural history, *The Canadian Naturalist and Geologist* (CNG).

Quebec: 1859-1868

After a brief stay in Trois-Rivieres, Couper took up residence in Quebec in 1859. Couper's re-location to the city of Quebec, rather than Montreal, may have been kindled by his association with ornithologist Samuel Passmore May. May emigrated to Quebec in the early 1850s, where his first job was to arrange and catalogue the large collection of geological and zoological specimens in the museum of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. In 1853 Passmore May moved to Toronto where he associated with a small group of pioneering naturalists, including Couper. Passmore May wrote the birds section in the 1856 *Toronto Handbook*, which listed 256 species of birds.

By 1861 Couper was advertising in a Quebec newspaper as a "Naturalist, Zoological Artist and Entomologist" (Baillie). He was also contributing articles and papers on entomology to the CNG and presentations to the LHSQ. Paradis commented that his writings in this period "are still of much interest because they were the result of personal observation and experience." In 1864, a year after the Entomological Society of Canada was founded in Toronto, Couper was instrumental in establishing a branch in Quebec City. F. Martin Brown in an article on Couper in the *Journal of the New York Entomological Society* 82 (1973) suggests that in the late 1860s Couper held the position of Assistant Curator and Taxidermist at the LHSQ.

Couper was to make a significant contribution to ornithology in the Quebec area largely due to his work as a taxidermist, mounting specimens for sportsmen and naturalists, conducting local collecting trips and a major collecting expedition to the Quebec north shore in 1867.

In 1862, Couper published three early Quebec bird records in CNG (7:319-320, 1862):

Occurrence of the Blue Grosbeak (Guiraca caerulea Swainson) at Mille Vaches, Lower St. Lawrence.

Canadian Ornithologists will be gratified to learn that the beautiful Blue Grosbeak is now for the first time added to the list of birds visiting Canada: — On the 7th of May both sexes of the species were noticed by Mr. Beverley, sen., of Mille Vaches; they were accompanied on the same tree by the little Indigo bird. ...

Occurrence of the Stone Chat (Saxicola oenanthe Bechst.) [Northern Wheatear] at Beauport, near Quebec.

A single specimen of this pretty bird was procured and stuffed by me; it is now in the Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington. It also forms an addition to Canadian Ornithology.

Occurrence of the Yellow Rail (Porzana noveboracensis) in the vicinity of Quebec.

Although this handsome little bird is mentioned by Swainson in the "Fauna Boreali Americana" on the authority of Mr. Hutchins who resided on the coast of Hudson's Bay, near the influx of Severn River, I am not aware that it has appeared in any of the published lists of Canadian birds. It is extremely rare in this latitude, only two specimens have been procured during two years; both were shot by Mr. G. Campbell of the Quebec Custom; one is in his possession, and the other he presented to me, which I stuffed, and is now in the collection of S. Derbishire, Esq.

In 1867 Couper undertook his first collecting expedition to the Quebec north shore, which he described in a self-published account in 1868, entitled "Investigation of a Naturalist Between Mingan and Watchicouti, Labrador." Couper attempted to finance the trip through subscriptions:

I intimated to several of my correspondents, in the United States and Canada, that it was my intention to make a trip along the coast during the summer of 1867, for the purpose of identifying, collecting and studying the eggs of birds found breeding on the coast, and, as far as could be ascertained, in the interior of the country. To cover my expenses, I requested subscribers to this collection. The appeal brought no response ... E. A. Samuels, Esq., of Boston, came to my aid, and subscribed for four shares, which he kindly sent in advance.

Edward Samuels was a well-known American bird collector and ornithologist. He hoped Couper's expedition would clarify the northern breeding range of many New England birds. Samuels published *The Birds of New England and Adjacent Areas* in 1870. Couper's extensive notes on the birds are included in Samuels' *Birds*.

Couper left Quebec on May 17, 1867, returning on July 30, a trip of 75 days. The expedition, largely by boat, visited Esquimaux Point (Havre-St.-Pierre), Attepetal Bay (Betchouane Bird Sanctuary), Watchsheshoo (Bird Sanctuary), Natashquan and Kegaska.

He returned to Quebec via Mingan. Couper's bird notes cover 13 pages in five sections of Samuels' *Birds of New England*. His extensive notes on the birds were no doubt greatly influenced by Samuel's lone financial support and prime interest in ornithology. Couper was an excellent all-around naturalist. *Investigation* is full of interesting observations on birds, including the seabird colonies on islands along the coast, as well as mammals, insects, fish and the inhabitants in the remote north shore. His notes on encountering the Fox Sparrow attest to his knowledge of contemporary ornithology:

At this season, the sweet song of the Fox-colored Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) is pleasing to the ear of man, while wandering through the open parts of these northern forests, and with no little joy I discovered its nest (June 15th), and authenticated its eggs for the first time. Audubon has made a mistake in his description of the eggs of this species. The egg is larger than that of any other sparrows found within this latitude, and they are completely covered with blotches of a ferruginous tint. Contrary to the habit of sparrows, this nest was built in a low fir tree, about three feet from the ground.

I have compiled, in AOS Checklist order, an Annotated List of the 152 species of birds assembled by Couper which appear in Samuels' book. The list was compiled from Couper's field notes from his many collecting trips in the Quebec area, from specimens he mounted from collectors, and from his north shore trip.

The annotated list is too extensive to include here. The following two excerpts from *Birds of New England*: 396 under the title "grouse, pigeons and doves" illustrate a small sample of the content:

ECTOPISTES MIGRATORIUS. [Passenger Pigeon] The Passenger Pigeon is not so common in this portion of Lower as in Upper Canada, where they breed in large numbers. They are found breeding in the eastern townships of Lower Canada; but I have not ascertained that they breed in this district or north of it. I remember at one time finding a nest of this pigeon in the woods north of Toronto: it contained a single young one. I believe there are many instances of its breeding in solitary pairs, something like the Wood Pigeon of Europe.

ZENAIDURA CAROLINENSIS. [Mourning Dove] The Carolina Dove has never been noticed in Lower Canada. It occurs occasionally in the woods north of the city of Toronto, where, I believe, it breeds.

There are no Quebec woodpeckers on Couper's list. This seems likely to be an error of omission by Samuels given the rigour of Couper's natural history research.

Montreal: 1870-1884

After a short residence in Ottawa in 1868 and 1869, where he wrote three papers published in the *Canadian Entomologist* (CE) 2: 49, 68, 110 (1870), Couper moved to Montreal, no doubt to take advantage of his established connections as a taxidermist and naturalist in the province and to pursue financial benefits as a zoological collector:

Couper was a professional collector who realized the need for entomological work in that northern region and it appears certain that he undertook these trips in the face of handicaps and evidently on his own resources. Through the medium of the *Can. Entomologist*; however, he solicited orders for specimens in advance of each of these collecting ventures and it is conceivable that they were at least partially financed in this way. (Baillie 1929:173)

Baillie documents three additional collecting trips to the Quebec north shore that Couper made in 1872, 1873 and 1878. The 1872 and 1873 trips included collecting trips to Anticosti Island though there are few records for Anticosti. Unlike the 1867 expedition, which focused on birds, Couper's later trips, based in Montreal, had a strong emphasis on insects. Baillie reports that the 1878 trip went as far as Godbout. It was entirely devoted to collecting insects.

In 1873 Couper was a founder and served as the first president of the Montreal branch of the Entomological Society of Canada (ESC). The Montreal Branch prospered and eventually became the Entomological Society of Quebec in 1951. Couper's final major venture was the founding of *The Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist* (CSN). During its short three-year lifespan, he published 36 monthly issues between 1881 and 1883. Baillie writes that Couper's "all-round knowledge is best shown in this magazine, where he wrote on such diverse subjects as entomology, mammalogy, ornithology natural history in schools, Canadian museums, lobster fisheries, fish culture, game conservation, etc." [Baillie 1929:175] Couper's article on "Bird Nesting in Labrador", describing the birds encountered on his 1867 trip, appeared in the first issue of the magazine (CSN, 1: 50-52 1881).

Couper reviewed Dionne's *Les Oiseaux du Canada* (1883) in *The Canadian Sportsman*. His comments are generally favourable, but he notes, that despite the title, the coverage was limited: "we would like to have seen a more complete account of the birds of the Dominion, many species occurring in Manitoba and other western portions not being included." (CSN 3: 237,1883)

Couper also pointed out a number of errors, citing the commonality of species such as Brown Thrasher and Meadowlark, which Dionne suggested were rare. There is little doubt that after more than 20 years' residence in the province, Couper's extensive field experience and connections through his taxidermy



Cover, First Issue, *The Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist*; Courtesy of the Biodiversity Heritage Library

practice and his network of sportsmen made him a leading expert on the ornithology of Quebec.

The 152 Quebec species found in Samuels' Birds were not all Couper's Quebec bird records. There are other important bird records. Added to the list are two species new to the province. These records are found in Charles Dionne's *Catalogue des Oiseaux de la Province de Quebec* (COQC) first published in 1889. The two species are:

Western Grebe (COQC:5) which is listed in a note by Couper in CSN 2:139 (1882) which states: "The Western Grebe occurs rarely in the Province of Quebec. I purchased one in the Quebec market"

Sharp-tailed Grouse (COQC:51), which Dionne notes that Couper occasionally found in the Lac St. Jean Valley.

A third additional species cited by Dionne, was an early nesting record of a juvenile Short-eared Owl (COQC: 59), found by Couper near Quebec. While the Yellow Rail presence in Quebec appears on Couper's 1867 Quebec list, records for Blue Grosbeak and Northern Wheatear from CNG 7 (1862) do not.

Baillie (1929:174) notes that other Couper bird records during his residence in Montreal are found in the CSN, other publications, and in papers published by other authors:

From 1877 to 1880 he contributed occasional original notes on birds, mammals and fish to *Forest and Stream* and to the *Ornithologist and Oologist*.

His records of birds have been frequently quoted by writers on Quebec ornithology as we find his name appearing as authority for certain records in Vennor's *Eagles, Hawks and Owls of Canada* (1879) ... Chamberlain's *Catalogue of Canadian Birds* (1887), Dionne's *Les Oiseaux de la Province de Quebec* (1889) and Wintle's *Birds of Montreal* (1896).

An important early notice of the presence of Rock Ptarmigan in Quebec is found in CSN 2: 142 (1882):

The Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus rupestris*) is also occasionally found in winter. The species evidently nests on the north coast of the Lower St. Lawrence. We would be pleased to hear from Oologists regarding the summer locality of this bird.

Chamberlain includes Couper's record of Eurasian Woodcock collected at Chambly in 1882, which is also cited in Dionne and by Godfrey (*Birds of Canada*, 986: 243). Wintle notes Couper records of Wood Thrush in the Eastern Townships (not recorded in Montreal) and a nesting Barrow's Goldeneye in Missisquoi Bay. The Goldeneye record is one of the few Couper records that is highly suspect. As pointed out by Todd in his *Birds of the Labrador Peninsula*: 167, Barrow's Goldeneye "does not breed anywhere on the Labrador Peninsula south of the tree limit".

Couper was elected a member of the AOU in 1883. It is evident that Couper, due to his long residences in Quebec and Montreal, and his extensive field experience, was the most knowledgeable ornithologist in Quebec, and should be recognized along with his better-known contemporaries, LeMoine and Vennor.

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