



## In this issue:

- Nest boxes
- Peregrine webcam
- New products

## CCFA - Nature Expert

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Tue. / Wed. 9:30 – 18:00  
Thurs. / Fri. 9:30 – 19:00  
Sat. 9:30 – 17:00

Happy spring everyone!

It has been an unusually warm winter with little snow and many spring migrants should soon be on our doorstep. I am very excited just thinking about spring migration. In this issue of our newsletter, you will find tips on how to welcome our summer residents, get an update on our Université de Montréal falcons, and learn about one very unusual bird observed this winter at a customer's feeder.

We enjoy receiving your questions and comments about our electronic newsletter... please continue to pass them along to us.

In the meantime, happy birding!

*Alain Goulet, Owner*

## Nest boxes (bird houses) 101

There is a lot to consider when it comes to building or installing a nest box. A reduction in natural sites has contributed to decreased populations of cavity-nesting species, yet nest boxes can help to reverse this trend.

Courtship begins as early as February in species such as owls, and as signs of spring become evident, many other species start looking for places to nest.

March is a good time to prepare your nest boxes by cleaning and repairing them. You can also place a camera or webcam close to your next box if you want to follow nesting birds.

For most of us, possible

nest box tenants are limited to common backyard cavity nesters such as chickadees, nuthatches, swallows, woodpeckers, and, yes, even House Sparrows and European Starlings.

Remember that not all birds nest in cavities. A nest box needs to be specifically designed to be successful and to avoid attracting invasive species like European Starlings and House Sparrows. Generic bird houses found in big box stores actually encourage nesting by introduced birds, and this makes life harder for our own native species.

It is important to remember that different species of birds require bird houses of different dimensions. Therefore

the following criteria must be considered when buying or building a nest box:

- ✎ diameter of the entrance hole and its height relative to the base
- ✎ interior dimensions
- ✎ building and insulating materials (birds and eggs need protection from excessive heat or cold)
- ✎ protection from predators

Ideally, nest boxes should be weatherproof and of naturally-decaying and insect-resistant wood such as cedar or pine. Ventilation and drainage holes are also important. The nest box can be equipped with one side that opens to allow for monitoring and seasonal cleaning.



**Tree Swallow**  
nest box –made of pine with  
hinged door for easy cleaning.



Pine nest box for  
**Black-capped Chickadee** and **Downy**  
**Woodpecker**



Hand turned  
cedar log nest  
box with  
oxidized copper  
roof for **Tree**  
**Swallow** (also  
available for  
**Black-capped**



**American Robin** pine  
nest box



**Purple Martin** house equipped  
with winch and cable system  
for use in raising and lowering

Natural and subdued browns, beiges or greens are the preferred colours (the more inconspicuous the better).

There is no need for a perch on a birdhouse; cavity-nesting birds do not require them. A perch may only serve to provide support for animals raiding the nest and may tempt young birds to venture out of the box before they can fly.

So, what is the primary consideration when putting up your nest box to ensure occupancy by these choosy little house hunters? As with any real estate, it is location, location, location. The nest box must be placed in the right habitat for the bird you are trying to attract. You will not find chickadees in the middle of a field nor can you expect to attract bluebirds in the middle of a forest.

To reduce the chance of occupancy of swallow and Purple Martin nest boxes by House Sparrows and starlings, it is recommended to plug the entrance holes at the end of the nesting season and leave them

plugged (or delay installing the box if it's been removed) until the first sign that the birds have arrived. Keeping nest boxes out during the winter will encourage roosting by sparrows who then make early claims on the box.

In general, nest boxes can be placed from 6' to 15' off the ground. Find a location that is protected from the sun for part of the day, and turn the entrance away from the usual direction of wind and rain (usually east). Ensure the box is securely fastened to a post or pole and never put a nest box near a bird feeder.

Finally, nest boxes need to be thoroughly cleaned and used nesting material discarded after the birds leave in the fall to eliminate parasites. Birds can use the empty box as a winter roost.

*Note: In addition to the boxes featured on this page, our store carries a large variety of nest boxes as well as bat houses (which also need to be installed early spring). We also carry a variety of books on these subjects.*

## Webcam on U de M Peregrines

The story began in 2007 when Roger and Spirit, a pair of Peregrine Falcons, took up residence in the tower of the Roger-Gaudry Building at the Université de Montréal.

Last August, following two years of courtship, Roger and Spirit produced two healthy birds, Polly and Algo, in a nest box that was donated by CCFA.

This year, Roger and Spirit were observed mating thanks to two new cameras installed earlier this year and have started laying eggs. Interestingly, Polly is still around and her parents do not seem bothered by her presence. It will be interesting to see if she becomes a helper at the nest when the young

have hatched.

CCFA, Vortex, Kowa, Éditions Michel Quintin and the Université de Montréal all contributed financially to the project. Richard Dupuis helped with the installation and also provided an additional camera. We invite you to look in on the peregrines at [www.ornithologie.ca](http://www.ornithologie.ca) or <http://fauconsudem.blogspot.com>.

For those interested, Eve Bélisle who is in charge of the project, will be giving a presentation on the subject on Saturday, May 8, at 1:00 pm (location to be determined) as part of the 24 hours of Science for Everyone programme.



**Eve Bélisle**



Jean-Guy Lafleur

The Brown Thrasher is a migratory species that is not usually found in the Montréal area during the winter months. This one was observed this winter on a daily basis right up until January 31st at the feeder of one of our customers in Anjou.

## Our newest in-store products

### Leica APO-Televid 82



This scope represents a brand new design packed with the most advanced optics technology – all of which have fuelled an air of high expectation among birders seeking the ultimate in optical excellence. It is significantly smaller than its predecessor, the angled model measuring only 325 mm in length – approximately 20 percent shorter than the previous Televid 77 – and it is more compact. Gone, too, is the silver housing; in its place is a sleek, black, tapered magnesium body which is fully protected by rubber armour. Drop by and try it out to see what you think.

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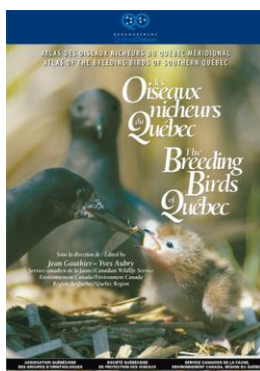
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### *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Southern Quebec* now available on DVD



The *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Southern Québec* is the result of an exhaustive inventory that was conducted over the span of six years and involved close to 1,000 volunteer birdwatchers. Each of the 292 recorded species is carefully documented with a number of photos, detailed range map and complete information on habitat, behaviour, range and population fluctuations.

19.95 \$