



Summer and nesting season are upon us!



Piranga écarlate / Scarlet Tanager

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We are excited to introduce our new edition of the NatureExpert newsletter. After all, it is the beginning of the nesting season for many species! In this newsletter, you will find an article on nesting behaviours in birds. You already filled your feeders and are planning the little extras? We have a very nice selection of new products for you. But the big star of this edition is the Grand Défi QuébecOiseaux during which our team, *Les Ornitrotteurs*, broke the record for sightings in 24 hours with a total of 169 species! We invite you to read all about our crazy adventure.

Enjoy your reading!

Dara and Alain Goulet, proud owners and birding enthusiasts



Please note that we will be closed from July 17th to July 31st, 2022

A memorable Grand Défi QuébecOiseaux!



Les Ornithotteurs from left to right : Serge Beaudette, Alain Goulet, Frédéric Hareau et Jean-Philippe Gagnon

We have completed our 24-hour Grand Challenge, with a result WELL BEYOND our expectations!

We (Serge Beaudette, Jean-Philippe Gagnon, Alain Goulet and Frédéric Hareau) traveled southwestern Quebec from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Sunday May 29 and then went to Baie-du-Febvre. At dark, we had 124 species checked and the night was spent going to Rimouski and observing nocturnal species at a few strategic places on the way.

During our previous Grand Défis, we were always very lucky on the “nocturnal birds” side, finding each time: Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock ... and sometimes we added others (Common Nighthawk, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Least Bittern).

This time we tried everything, but with very little success. Fortunately, we had the Barred Owl at noon, at 30 degrees C (a singing pair!)

But during the night, out of the 11 species we were hoping for, we only found the American Woodcock.

So, we arrived in Rimouski, in the boreal forest, after a trip of just over 5hrs including stops, just before sunrise and with 125 species under our belt. At 6:15 a.m., an hour later, we came out of the forest with... 18 more new species, bringing our provisional total to 143 species! Very beautiful boreal species that we could only see by going there. Among other species, we saw the Boreal Chickadee, Cape May Warbler and Bay-breasted Warbler.

We only had 2h30 of Grand Défi left, and we chose to devote it to observing aquatic and pelagic species on the St-Laurent River, as well as shorebirds. Our hopes were high, but we didn't know exactly what to expect.

Once again, you had to come to this place to see these particular species and it was a very wise plan since we added MANY SPECIES!



Among the most spectacular:

- 1 Parasitic Jaeger (a pelagic species very difficult to see from the mainland),
- a dozen Purple Sandpiper,
- the 3 species of Scoter,
- 2 Northern Gannet,
- 7 species of gulls,
- Long-tailed Duck,
- Razorbill and other alcids.

Not to mention many new, more common species, such as the splendid Brant Geese, many of which are migrating in the area at the moment!

During the last 4 editions of the Grand Défi, we set a new record for the number of species observed in 24 hours:

- The 1st year, with 130 species.
- the 2nd, with 145.
- in 2019, the great record of 161 species.
- and last year, when we had the constraint of the curfew (preventing us from driving at night to change regions), we identified 135 species.

We would not have believed that we could exceed our own record of 161 species... it was already so exceptional. But to our total of 125 species arriving in Rimouski at the first light of the morning, the boreal forest and the river allowed us to add, in just 4 hours, 44 NEW SPECIES! Bringing the GRAND TOTAL to 169 species in 24 hours, setting a new record for our team as well as for the Grand Défi! What a day!

Remember that this "madness" is the largest fundraising campaign for the preservation of birds and their habitats in Quebec.

We thank the Rimouski Bird Observatory, Mikaël Jaffré in particular, director of the observatory, for his precious tips and his hospitality during the few hours of our visit.

Thank you to the Regroupement QuébecOiseaux for their ongoing work to protect birds and for organizing this vast campaign.

We also thank Vortex Canada, Zeiss and Squirrel Buster for their product donations that we will raffle among our donors.



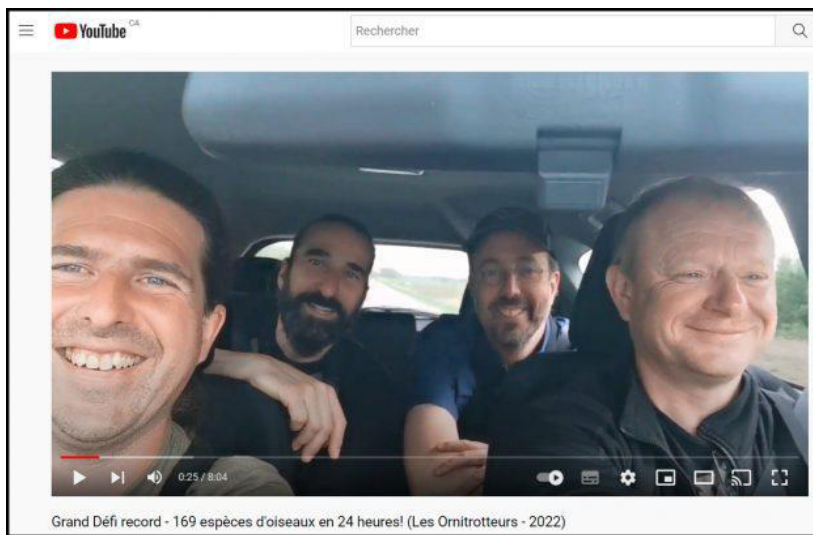
And above all, a **big thank you for your very generous donations** to help the birds.

If you would like to add a donation to this campaign, we invite you to do so here:

<https://www.quebecoiseaux.org/fr/campagne-grand-defi/donate/grand-defi-quebecoiseaux/1773/participant/42/#don-form-box>

See a video of our adventure created by Serge Beaudette:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5MBfMPsu2g>



I make a pledge to Les Ornitrotteurs



The red mouth of hungry birds

by Serge Beaudette

You have probably observed birds feeding their young in or outside of their nest. If you are like me and have observed them for a long time, perhaps you have noticed that baby birds have the inner lining of their mouth red? This characteristic, combined with the specific cries of the nestlings (which must have the same effect on the parents as a crying human baby for us) is an effective device to encourage the parents not to keep the food that they have it in their mouths and instead offer it to their gluttonous children! When we observe this phenomenon with more attention, the merry-go-round of the providers at the nest, we can observe a singular fact... Indeed, when a parent visits the nest, it will put all the food in the mouth of the one nestling stretching out its beak the most. As if it was saying: "Mine, Mine!" After that, the adult will carefully look at all the open mouths and take some food from the mouth of the first one and redistribute it to the others in the nest.

The intensity of the red inside the mouth of the little ones can vary according to their hunger. The parent therefore compares how hungry each nestling is and feeds them accordingly.



Occasionally, when food is scarce, a younger or weaker nestling will be ignored during food distribution to ensure the survival of as many young as possible. These observations are easily made for species which make a more traditional nest, an open cup and for species that nest close to human habitations.

But observing a brood of Northern Flickers which nests in the privacy of a deep cavity inside a tree trunk, I wondered how the parents manage to deposit the food in the mouths of their young who are blind at birth and when the parent hides with its body the only source of light inside the nest. A few hours passed before I noticed that the young, shortly before they are able to fly, will stick their head out of the cavity to beg for food. I noticed that their beak had a white dot at the base of the bill and a larger one near the top. These dots form a small protuberance which gives their

bill a rounded appearance compared to a very pointed one in the adult.

It was still quite a while later, when the youngsters entered further into the cavity, that I discovered the whole mystery! Only the white spots, arguably the most conspicuous color in the dark, were now visible. And when the baby opens its beak, there is a bigger point at the top and a smaller one at the bottom. Therefore, right in the middle of a big and a small dot is the entrance to the mouth. Nothing could be clearer to guide a parent to the right place. Easy then to make the connection between the fact that apart from very rare exceptions, even though egg coloration varies greatly among birds, the eggs of cavity nesters are usually white! This is very useful so that birds will not crush them at the change of guard during incubation. White as an indicator is also widely used in the tips of the outer tail feathers of birds migrating at night. In this way, the birds are better able to follow each other in single file! In the creation of the emergency flasher on cars, humans were more a good imitator of nature than an inventor!

Nestlings of several cavity-nesting species temporarily possess distinct white spots on or around the beak. More visible in the dark, the distribution of these spots indicates precisely where the mouths to feed are.

You will find on our Facebook page a series of videos on the progression of an Eastern Bluebird's nest from the Eastern Townships.

<https://www.facebook.com/ccfanatureexpert/>

Photos: Michel Bordeleau



NEW PRODUCTS



[Vortex Sun Slayer Hat](#)

Built to beat the burn, the Vortex Sun Slayer Boonie keeps you covered afloat or ashore with UPF 50 sun protection and designed to float.

Cotton/polyester blend: Comfortable and fast drying



Cast Iron Bird Bath on Pedestal

[See details](#)



[Hanging Hummingbird Feeder - Backyard Essential](#)

Clear glass bowl so you can see how much nectar is left in the feeder.

Each feeder comes with hook to conveniently hang the feeder.

[See the product](#)