



Nature Expert

Newsletter

It's summer, grab your binos!



Serge Beaudette - www.pitpitpit.com ©

Magnolia Warbler

We are thrilled to share our summer newsletter with you, packed with exciting information and tips for making the most of the season by observing bird families and attracting them to your backyard. Here's a glimpse of what you can expect in this edition:

Marvels of Avian Vision: Discover the extraordinary vision of birds and how they perceive the world around them. Learn about their ability to see ultraviolet light, which adds a whole new dimension to their color palette. Explore how this unique vision helps in finding mates, locating food sources, and navigating during migration.

Upcoming Festivals and Birding Trips: Stay up-to-date with the latest birding festivals and an upcoming international trip.

New Products and Suggestions: We are excited to introduce our latest products designed to enhance your birding experience.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our summer newsletter and find inspiration to embark on new birding adventures. Observing bird families, understanding their unique behaviors, and attracting them to your backyard can offer endless joy and learning opportunities. Wishing you a delightful summer filled with the wonders only birds can offer!

Enjoy your reading!

Alain Goulet, proud owners and birding enthusiast and the entire Nature Expert Team.

Please note that we will be closed from July 18th to 31st, 2023. Take the opportunity to stock up on bird seeds or other birding products in before our summer closing.



Common Grackle - Michel Bordeleau

Droppings in the Pool!

"No way! It's doing it on purpose! There's a bird that casually keeps approaching my pool. It skims the water's surface and consistently drops its waste in the same spot, multiple times a day! Is it taunting me or something? This story describes a behavior that initially appears very peculiar, and I hear it dozens of times every summer.



American Robin - Serge Beaudette

It's difficult not to attribute ill intentions to this bird, as it seems to hold a grudge against us. While this behavior initially evokes intolerance and sometimes even anger, understanding the phenomenon and its origins can help us coexist more harmoniously with these birds and be more at peace with these temporary inconveniences.

A closer observation of this event reveals that the droppings are peculiarly expelled from the bird's mouth. In fact, it is not its own droppings that it deposits but those of its young. I know, I know, droppings are droppings! If the nestlings were constantly defecating in their nest, it would be terrible for the nest's cleanliness, and the smell would quickly attract parasites and predators. And if they simply threw them outside the nest, the

accumulation would undeniably reveal the nest's location to predators.

Long before humans appeared, birds had to develop an effective system to dispose of their waste hygienically and safely. The nestlings excrete their droppings in the form of small bags called "fecal sacs." The parents, during their frequent trips to feed their offspring, arrive at the nest with food and always leave with a freshly produced fecal sac from a nestling. They dispose of it in a manner that keeps it hidden and odorless... namely, in the water! And then comes the human. We drain all the marshes and ponds, which serve as their natural habitat, and replace them with swimming pools! From the bird's perspective, merely trying to submerge the fecal sacs, what difference is there between a pond and a swimming pool?

By depositing these fecal sacs in our pools, the birds have once again adapted to new realities in their environment—changes created by humans. What changes brought about by birds do humans have to adapt to? For some reason (perhaps because we are stronger and can assert our presence), we are very inflexible and hesitant to make the necessary compromises for cohabitation. The slightest discomfort makes us furious.

However, wouldn't it be necessary to cultivate tolerance for the two weeks during which the young birds are in the nests and producing fecal sacs... even if they end up in our swimming pools? Birds were here at least 140 million years before us. Cleaning our swimming pools may seem like a superficial act compared to the behavior that bothers us, but it's simply vital for an entire bird family! If we shift our perspective, the uniqueness of this behavior might even inspire admiration.

Have a fantastic summer with your feathered friends!"



Starling - Pierre Morin.

The Marvels of Perceiving the Unseen

by Serge Beaudette

Birds possess a remarkable ability to perceive what remains hidden to us, and it's truly awe-inspiring! Firstly, you may be surprised to learn that most birds can see ultraviolet light. It's as if they perceive an extra color (ultraviolet) that eludes our human vision. A seemingly plain bird to us could actually display intricate ultraviolet patterns visible only to other birds. These hidden colors can blend with the ones we can see, creating new hues, patterns, and arrangements.

This exceptional visual acuity may also aid migrating birds in navigation, although comprehending the precise mechanics is challenging for us. What we do know is that certain predators, like the American Kestrel, employ ultraviolet vision to track their prey, even when unfamiliar with their habits during long migratory journeys.

Field mouse urine reflects ultraviolet light, turning an otherwise colorless liquid to our eyes into a sharply contrasting substance for predators capable of tracking them. Similarly, certain types of blueberries have adapted to reflect ultraviolet light, making them more visible to thrushes. Consequently, these birds play a crucial role in dispersing the blueberry seeds on a larger scale through their droppings.



Rock Pigeon - Michel Bordeleau

Polarized light, vital for migration, is yet another form of light visible exclusively to migratory birds, both diurnal and nocturnal. During the day, as polarized light penetrates clouds, it enables birds to always determine the position of the sun, even in overcast conditions. At night, it assists migrants in calibrating the position of the stars relative to the setting sun. While we may still perceive the sun's position just after sunset, the darkness is not yet sufficient for us to see the stars. We can observe them only 45 minutes later, by which time the sun has disappeared. However, the sun continues to emit polarized light for a few additional minutes, benefiting the avian migrants.

In recent times, fascinating discoveries have shed light on birds' perception of the Earth's magnetic field. For long, scientists hypothesized that birds could "sense" the magnetic field's strength. However, a research team in Germany has now demonstrated that birds go beyond mere sensing—they can actually see the magnetic field with their eyes! Special neurons in their eyes convey information about the magnetic field to a region of the thalamus (associated with vision) that activates exclusively during migration, solely among migratory birds, and specifically at night.

In addition to these extraordinary perceptions, it's worth mentioning that some migrants can hear sounds 11 octaves lower than the lowest notes audible to humans. A bird flying in the heart of North America can discern the waves crashing on the East Coast or a thunderstorm rumbling in the Rocky Mountains. Furthermore, oceanic migrants can detect odors emanating from the seas, even at concentrations as low as 3 parts per million! These marvelous creatures can hear the inaudible, smell the odorless, and see the invisible!



Giant Kingfisher - Alain Goulet

Birding expedition in Kenya

In may 2024, David Bird and Rodger Titman will be leading a birding trip to Kenya. They will explore the rich biodiversity of this country. There are a few places left on that trip. For more information, please contact David or Rodger: david.bird@mcgill.ca & rodger.titman@mcgill.ca



American Kestrel / Rusty Blackbird - Michel Bordeleau

Plan your fall festivals

From September 18th to 24th

<http://www.explosnature.ca/oot/festival-des-oiseaux-migrateurs-de-la-cote-nord/>

The Côte-Nord Migratory Bird Festival was founded in 2009 by the OOT team with the aim of raising awareness of the avian richness of this magnificent region during the impressive fall migration. The event has been held mainly in the Tadoussac area since the event was created, given that the majority of its research projects take place there on that date. Nevertheless, the objective being to discover the region, activities will be present this year on several sites and in particular in Les Bergeronnes, head office of the OOT (Tadoussac Bird Observatory). Nature Expert will be present with a kiosk on Saturday September 23rd.



Snow Goose/ Ross Goose - Michel Bordeleau

Victo et ses oies

<http://victoetsesoies.com/>

October 20-22, 2023

On the banks of Reservoir Beaudet, classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA), this event brings together thousands of geese, several artists and bird lovers. It brings together: painters, sculptors, photographers and other professional artists with a particular interest in ornithological art.

Birding conferences will be presented, birding guides will be on site, as well as kiosks of interest including that of QuébecOiseaux and Nature Expert. Lots of festive and family activities are waiting!

In short, a unique opportunity to come to Victoriaville to observe the largest fall gathering of Snow Geese in Eastern Canada!

NEW PRODUCTS



Triumph HD 10x42

Experience a great binoculars performance with this new model, boasting unparalleled image quality, ergonomic design, and exceptional durability. Whether you're an avid birdwatcher, a nature enthusiast, or a seasoned outdoor adventurer, these binoculars are designed to exceed your expectations. Here's why they stand out from the rest:

- **Superior Optics:** These binoculars feature fully multi-coated lenses that provide better edge-to-edge sharpness and exceptional light transmission. You'll enjoy a crystal-clear, high-definition viewing experience, comparable to binoculars that come with a much higher price tag.
- **Built for the Outdoors:** These binoculars are built to withstand the harshest conditions. They are water, fog, and shockproof, ensuring reliable performance even in challenging weather or rugged environments. No matter where your adventures take you, these binoculars are up to the task.
- **Ergonomic Design:** We understand the importance of comfort during extended observation sessions. That's why these binoculars are equipped with adjustable eyecups and a diopter, allowing you to customize the viewing experience to your individual needs. Say goodbye to eye strain and enjoy hours of comfortable viewing.
- **Convenient Accessories:** Your binoculars come complete with a neck strap for easy carrying and quick access. Additionally, the adjustable GlassPak harness provides a secure and comfortable way to carry your binoculars on your outdoor excursions. Keep them ready in your car, backpack, or go-bag, so you never miss a moment.

Invest in binoculars that offer uncompromising quality, ergonomic design, and rugged durability. See the world with clarity and precision, and embark on your outdoor adventures with confidence. These binoculars come with a lifetime no-fault warranty.

Only available in 10x42



Placemat - Birds of North America

Even though you don't have to be a bird-watcher to appreciate its beauty, it seems like it would be particularly appealing to those who admire avian creatures. The fact that it is easy to clean makes it a practical choice for daily use.

The placemat is made of plastic and showcases a colorful rendering of a friendly gathering of birds. The artist's depiction of the birds on the placemat likely captures their vibrant plumage and the joyous atmosphere of their gathering. This imagery can bring a touch of nature and liveliness to your dinner table or wherever you choose to use the placemat.

Whether you're enjoying a meal, working on a craft project, or simply looking for an eye-catching addition to your home decor, the Birds of North America placemat is a lovely choice. It allows you to appreciate the beauty of birds and nature in the comfort of your own home.



Clingers Only Feeders

The Clingers Only feeder is designed for easy filling and cleaning, ensuring the health of our beloved birds by protecting them from disease. Its entire lid effortlessly comes off for convenient top-filling and securely locks back into place.

Unlike other feeders with small ports that can freeze in snow and ice, this feeder features a larger capacity and a swivel-open port. It can hold 2-3 times more seed than typical small bird feeders, preventing frequent refills. With a seed capacity of 4 cups, it is a specialized feeder catering to Chickadees and other small birds.

The Clingers Only feeder is intentionally designed to discourage larger birds such as pigeons, grackles, and starlings from feeding. This feeder is ideal for attracting and catering specifically to smaller bird species.

Available in green, yellow or red.



The Ornitrotteurs - tales and tells of an incredible quest?

Text by Serge Beaudette

Our birding expedition begins at 8:45 am!

At our very first stop, we will record our first 10 species in just over a minute, and a total of 26 species in 25 minutes, including ALREADY, many highly sought after rare or localised species. The one that was the most unique was without a doubt the Clay-coloured Sparrow. He was particularly cooperative, and we observed it at very close range.

On to our 2nd ULTRA "productive" site. We observed Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, Field Sparrow, Bobolink and another Clay-coloured Sparrow. Those are all species in VERY strong decline. We also observed Black-billed Cuckoo, Rufous-sided Towhee and Yellow-throated Vireo (specialties of southern Quebec) And in the next hour, we will also add Sedge Wren, Caspian Tern and Sandhill Crane.



American Woodcock - Serge Beaudette

After 1 hour and a half: 50 species! After 6 hours of this “marathon”, we are already 99 species!

We are heading without delay to our next site which is a 2-hour drive away: Baie-du-Fèbvre.

At 5 p.m., when we get out of the car at the Baie-du-Fèbvre ponds, the first species we see will be the 100th species. A splendid Redhead!



Redhead Duck - Serge Beaudette

Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Ruddy Duck (101st species) and the Northern Shoveler (110th species) are also observed nearby.

Once again, the promises of Baie-du-Fèbvre will have been fulfilled in only 4 hours of observation: 68 SPECIES.

Mid-term report: 133 SPECIES in 12 hours.

At our 1st nocturnal STOP: quite quickly, we hear without doubt the most unique of all Quebec bird song: the Whip-poor-will and just before getting back in the car, we hear a Barred Owl.

2nd STOP: very quickly, we hear and find a magnificent Eastern Screech-owl.



Barred Owl - Serge Beaudette

3rd STOP: we hear, search, and find a superb young Great Horned Owl.

Finally, we will find 2 Woodcocks displaying. In LESS THAN 2 HOURS (A RECORD!), we will have seen ALL THE NOCTURNAL SPECIES that we were hoping to see.

Before sunrise, we are therefore at the impressive mark of 138 SPECIES!

We therefore had 4 good hours left, during the best time of day for birding, and we were on an excellent site: the Technoparc. The birds we found at the Technoparc were less active and much quieter than usual. But it is a "Grand Défi" so there has to be a "Challenge" somewhere. In the end, we worked very hard so that in 4 hours there, we tallied a very impressive 68 species. And among those 68 species, we added 10 new species.

...It's had almost an hour since we added ANY new species and at the VERY LAST MINUTE of our Grand Défi (between 8:44 and 8:45 AM), we saw... not one... but 8 White-crowned Sparrow!

It was therefore the 148th and last species seen in this 24 hours, which was, once again, an activity that I will always remember! First for the quality and quantity of our observations, condensed over such a short period! Knowing that there are 300 species in all of Quebec, it's a very productive 24 hours!

148 Species in 24 Hours!

In addition to the number of species, we were very lucky to see several rare birds and species of great interest such as: Sedge Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Sandhill Crane, Caspian Stern, Rusty Blackbird, Vesper Sparrow, Clay-coloured Sparrow, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Eastern Meadowlark, Field Sparrow and Rufous-sided Towhee.



The Ornitrotteurs team. From left to right : Serge Beaudette, Jean-Philippe Gagnon, Frédéric Hareau and Alain Goulet

Most importantly, the four of us had an absolute blast! The delightful and invigorating ambiance, coupled with the sheer enjoyment we derived from collaborating as a group for such a noble purpose, renders it an indelible and unparalleled experience!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who offered us unwavering support, as well as our esteemed sponsors who generously contributed prizes for our remarkable Grand Défi: Brome Bird Care (Squirrel Buster), Vortex Canada, Zeiss, and Nature Expert. Your encouragement and invaluable donations have made a significant impact and are truly appreciated.

