



Revolution in the field of sport optics !



Swarovski AX Visio Smart Binoculars

Good morning,

Birding constantly improving and innovating. Last November I had the chance to test a revolutionary new product during a trip to Corpus Christi, TX organized by Swarovski. They are therefore launching today the very first smart binoculars.

In this newsletter you will find articles on owls and winter birds as well as the latest new products in optics.

We will be happy to see you again and answer your questions about birds throughout the year.

Our team wishes you a happy and excellent new year 2024!

Alain Goulet, owner and bird enthusiast.



Pine Grosbeak - Michel Bordeleau

No birds in winter?

Serge Beaudette

Some may think that birding during the winter months is less appealing since many birds migrate south. However, contrary to this belief, winter offers a unique birding experience, with several species staying with us throughout the year, and others specifically visiting during this season.

The primary factor influencing birds to endure a harsh winter here is the availability of food. While the majority of insectivores, especially those dependent on flying insects, migrate, a few insectivores remain. These include woodpeckers, chickadees, creepers, and nuthatches, which find their winter sustenance under tree bark. Nuthatches who will hop down tree headfirst will view insects and larvae from a different perspective and find the food that woodpeckers missed.

Observing feeders, we notice these birds diversifying their diet by adding seeds and suet (animal fat). Some birds exclusively feed on seeds during the cold season, such as goldfinches and redpolls. The alternating abundance of these species in southern Quebec on a two-year cycle is influenced by the seed production of certain northern trees.

From the far north, birds like grosbeaks and crossbills visit us following a predictable cycle, taking advantage of the cone openings in January and also in July. Thanks to their beak adapted for this use, crossbills gorge themselves without reserve and with good reason, it is one of the only species in Quebec to have a brood in winter (when conditions are good) in addition to their summer brood.

Cyclical visitors, occurring approximately every nine years, include carnivores like the Great Gray Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, and the iconic Snowy Owl. The continued activity among small mammals will also benefit year-round birds of prey.

Unfrozen bodies of water, sustained by currents, host a diverse array of ducks, both fish-eating and vegetarian, along with over six gull species, some being quite rare. Gulls exhibit piscivorous, scavenging, and omnivorous behaviors. Fruit-eating birds, like American Robin and waxwings, forgo the southern warmth to feast on crab-apple trees and staghorn sumac.

These are just a few examples of the diverse bird species you can encounter this winter. Whether you venture outside in warm attire or observe from the comfort of your home by the feeders, you'll be pleasantly surprised by the variety and abundance of feathered beings adapted to the cold. From colorful Blue Jays and Northern Cardinals to more discreet species, solitary and flocking birds, shy and bold ones, regulars, visitors, common, and rare, there's never a dull moment! Nothing to get bored! If a storm or severe cold is in the forecast, the birds will warn you before the weather channel by their frequent attendance at the feeders, before and after a large storm. Get out and enjoy all the wonders that are, for many, only visible in winter!



Great Horned Owl : Michel Bordeleau

Where do owls go during the day?

Serge Beaudette

Strigidae is the name assigned to the owl family, encompassing nine species in Quebec. Four of them are year-round residents, two have a portion of their population staying with us while others migrate south, and three exclusively visit southern Quebec in winter, following food abundance cycles up north. Winter is the only season when all these species can be observed!



Referring to them as "nocturnal raptors" is shortsighted, as three of these species are exclusively diurnal. These northern species often experience very long days and nearly non-existent nights in the arctic and sub-arctic regions. The remaining species are more active at night, engaging in hunting, vocalizations, and territory defense. While they are relatively quiet during the day, this is when the chances of observing them clearly are highest, provided one can recognize subtle clues indicating their presence.

Other birds serve as our best allies, as owls are perceived as potential predators by them, even though they are rarely part of their menu. Like all birds of prey, the key to successful bird hunting lies in surprising them. Birds, in turn, warn each other of the predator's presence to avoid falling victim to the element of surprise.

"Mobbing" is the term used to describe the strategy of seeking, finding, surrounding, and emitting constant alarm cries near the predator. It's fascinating to note that the alarm call of birds constitutes the only recognized message across different species—a universal language. Even an informed human can sense tension without having previously heard or learned a species' alarm call. This cooperative effort among birds aims to drive away the intruder and ideally disturb it enough to make it leave the area and seek peace elsewhere

For a chickadee, a Saw-whet Owl (a small owl no bigger than your hand) is a more credible threat than a larger Barred Owl or a Great Horned Owl.

Conversely, for a crow, the larger owls pose a greater danger. If you hear a group of crows calling aggressively and decisively, there's a high likelihood they have located a predator for you. If a group of chickadees is calling, especially if accompanied by other species, look at the center of the flock of small birds, and you'll likely find a surprise. The number of "dee" at the end of the chickadee's usual call ("chikadee-dee-dee") even indicates the predator's level of danger—the more "dees", the more significant the threat. Identifying the undesirable is possible through sound alone. Even if an exhaustive search yields nothing visible, it's because owls are masters of camouflage in their environment, making them rarely seen despite their abundance.

Another clue to finding these magnificent birds is their eating habits. While other birds of prey typically consume their prey in bite-sized pieces, owls swallow them whole. They later digest and regurgitate the bones, hair, and feathers through their mouths in a pellet of sometimes surprising dimensions. If it hasn't snowed for several days, you may find several pellets together at the base of a tree used as a favored perch, often a conifer providing shelter from the snow, such as a hemlock or cedar. Alternatively, after a fresh snowfall, the freshly expelled pellets can reveal a recent owl visit.

Thermal cameras serve as an excellent tool for locating owls roosting in conifers during the day. They allow the detection of heat sources in trees, enabling a discreet approach without alarming the birds. With all these tips, you can become the Sherlock Holmes of birding!



Northern Saw-whet Owl - Michel Bordeleau



Swarovski AX Visio 10X32 Smart Binoculars

The first smart binoculars

We are proud to introduce the first smart binoculars with integrated applications AX Visio 10x32 from Swarovski. They offer exceptional access to nature thanks to useful functions, different identification options and exceptional optical quality.

They work alongside your smartphone, but they will also work without it. The integrated Merlin application allows you to identify more than 9,000 species of birds around the world, even without an internet connection.

The AX Visio binoculars integrate, among other things, the Bird ID and Mammal ID applications. With the AX Visio system, birds and mammals can be identified at the touch of a button.

The SWAROVSKI OPTIK Outdoor App lets you share data from your phone to up to four other devices.

These smart binoculars include a camera with 8GB internal memory to store approximately 1700 photos or 1 hour of video in optimal quality.



View the [Sawarovski video](#) on AX Visio Smart binoculars



View the [Ax Visio highlights video](#) by Alain Goulet (in French)



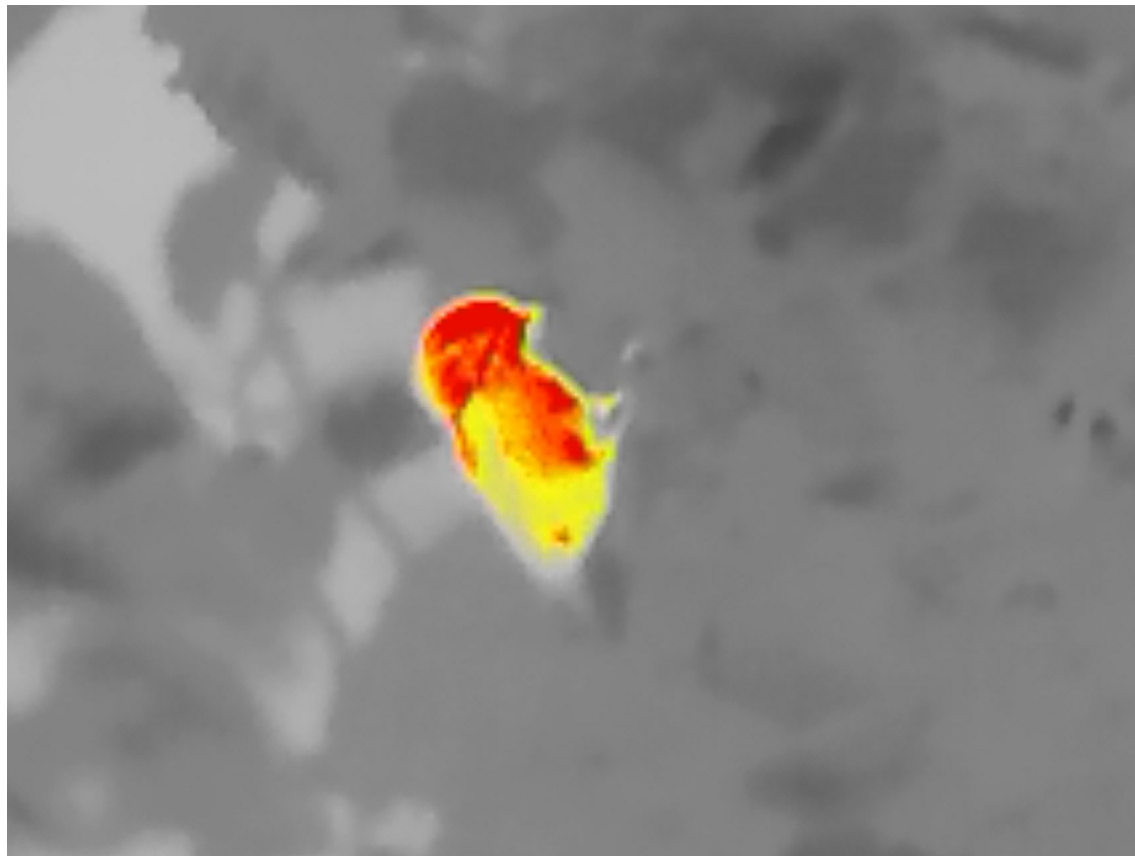
Zeiss DTI 4/50 thermal camera

Detect heat sources clearly up to 2635 meters away. Identify the smallest subjects with detailed, high-contrast image quality.

The DTI 4/50 has three pre-programmed exposure modes. So you will be able to see animals behind trees or bushes better than before, even in complete darkness.

You can change the settings of the DTI 4/50 quickly and intuitively and activate the most important functions according to your needs.

An excellent tool to find resting birds such as owls and well camouflaged birds.



Black-capped Chickadee spotted with Zeiss DTI 4/50 thermal camera - Alain Goulet

ORNITHOLOGICAL TRAVEL ENTHUSIAST?

Are you looking for a "last minute" birding trip? Here are a few with a few places still available:

With Serge Beaudette:
Point Pelee. May 5th to 15th, 2024
Contact: info@pitpitpit.com

With Rodger Titman and David Bird:
Kenya. from April 4th to 18th, 2024
Contact: Rodger.titman@mcgill.ca

Having participated in birding trips with Serge, Rodger and David, I highly recommend these trips. These are very well-organized, and I can only say great things about Serge, Rodger and David.



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**We are open Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:30 am to 6:00 pm
Thursday and Friday from 9:30 am to 7:00 pm and on Saturday from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm**

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