



Centre de conservation de la faune ailée

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Photo : Johanne Charette

Hours of operation

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

Greetings everyone. We hope you enjoyed the holiday season and are ready to embrace all that the 2010 birding season has to offer.

Our first newsletter of the year was precipitated by a number of recent inquiries and by an exceptional photograph of a Great-horned Owl. Feel free to share it with friends and family. We would like to thank Johanne Charette for permitting us to use the photograph. We also wish to thank Richard Dupuis for his photograph of the cat that caught a bird. Further thanks go to David Bird, Professor of Wildlife Biology at McGill University, for providing us with the statistics for the article.

On behalf of everyone here at CCFA, I would like to extend to you our wish for a happy and bird-filled New Year. We look forward to serving you in the coming months.

Alain Goulet, Owner

The world of birds and cats

One memorable night, Johanne Charette rushed to the window of her home in St-Zénon to investigate an outside noise and to her astonishment found herself staring right into the eyes of a Great Horned Owl. The owl, obviously in search of a meal, had swooped down and captured a neighbourhood cat right on her deck. Carefully opening the door, Johanne managed to snap this exceptional image of bird and prey before the owl flew off with the cat firmly in its grip.



90% of the Great Horned Owl's diet is made up of small and medium-sized mammals including hares, skunks, raccoons, mice, rats, squirrels, bats, and from time to time, domestic cats. The remaining 10% of its diet consists of birds – anything from ducks, loons, herons, grouse, pigeons, crows and starlings. They can also prey on other raptors such as Northern Goshawk, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Short-eared and Long-Eared Owls.

Although our St-Zénon Great Horned Owl seems to have a penchant for *Felis silvestris catus*, the predator-prey pendulum swings completely in favour of cats.

Birds must contend with a great number of predators be it in urban or rural areas. According to several scientific studies, the cat is without question its primary predator.



Photo: Richard Dupuis

In a Michigan study, one single cat was reported to have killed 1,600 small rodents and 60 birds in the space of 18 months – enough to fill up three large garbage bins!

Following a study in rural Wisconsin, Stan Temple and John Coleman estimate that on average 1.2 million cats kill 400 million animals per year, 7.8 million of which are birds. The rural species of birds most vulnerable to predation are ground-nesters such as bobolinks, meadowlarks and sparrows. According to this study cats eat 62% of the birds they capture.

A British study (Churcher and Lawson) demonstrates that 30% of the mortality rate of House Sparrows is attributable to cats and that these feline predators are responsible for the death of 70 million animals per year in England, 20 million of which are birds.

In Canada, Bob Bancroft, Wildlife Biologist, estimates that 5 million cats kill 40 to 70 million birds a year.

North American FeederWatch statistics indicate that as much as one third of reported incidents at feeders involve cats. Only the Sharp-shinned Hawk wreaks more havoc.

Here are some further statistics (figures are based on conservative estimates):

- 2 billion birds worldwide are killed by cats every year.
- 126 million birds are killed by cats every year in North America.
- The cat is the primary predator of North American birds.
- Domestic cats only bring half of their prey back home.
- The rates of bird predation are at their peak during the months of May, June, July.

Disclaimer: Really, I am not against cats! I grew up with them and took care of two wonderful cats until they both died in 2008 at the age of 20 (see photo on the left). They were indoor cats that rarely went outside and didn't kill any wildlife.

What can you do?

- Keep cats indoors, particularly when birds are most vulnerable (May-August). Free-roaming cats are also exposed to injury, disease, parasites, Great-horned Owls and are prone to being hit by cars or becoming lost or stolen.
- Spay or neuter your cats before they can produce an un-wanted litter. Records indicate that 35,000 kittens are born each day in the U.S. alone.
- Never abandon cats you cannot care for. Instead, find them new homes or take them to an animal shelter where they can be adopted.
- Do not feed stray and feral cats.
- Cats with bells on their collars *do* kill birds. Studies have shown that these collars are ineffective in preventing cats from killing wildlife.
- Avoid placing feeders near areas where cats can easily hide and ambush birds.



My twenty-year old cats,
Leroux and Semiroux.

In this contest, everybody's a winner...



Eve Bélisle draws the winner.

Back in our November issue, we announced the details of a contest aimed at raising funds for a Quebec women's curling team in their quest to secure a berth at the upcoming Olympics. Eve Bélisle, Captain of the curling team, was responsible for initiating the banding of the now-famous Université de Montréal Peregrine Falcons, a project in which CCFA also took part. The draw was held on December 23rd and we were pleased to have Eve on hand to draw the winning ballot.



Alain Goulet presents Mr. Van Houtte with his prize.

Our winner, Mr. Jean Van Houtte, was one happy customer. His decision to enter the contest was impulsive but it earned him a pair of Vortex Fury 8x28 binoculars with a suggested retail value of \$350. We congratulate him and wish him many happy hours of birding.



Team Bélisle wins the provincials.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the contest and supported the dreams of this young curling team. Team Bélisle was heartbroken not to secure a spot at the Olympics in Vancouver but are happy to report that they won the provincial tournament and will be representing Québec at the 2010 Scotties Tournaments of Hearts in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, at the end of January. We wish them continued success.

Our newest in-store products

Friends

Join us on Facebook! It's a great way to ask us questions.

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Préférez vous recevoir une version française de notre bulletin?

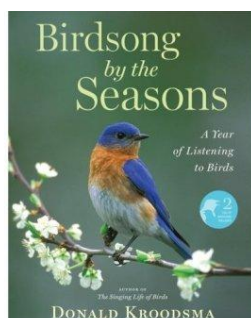
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The highly anticipated **Swarovski EL 8.5x42 and 10x42 Swarovision** have arrived in our store! They are sleek and deliver on their promise of bright, high-contrast, lifelike image quality.

Droll Yankee 15" Ring Pull Sunflower/Mixed Seed Feeder – This newest Droll Yankee design requires no tools for cleaning --simply lift the cap and pull the metal rod to remove the ports ...maximum clean for birds and minimum fuss for you!



Birdsong by the Seasons: A Year of Listening to Birds
Following on the heels of Kroodsma's wildly successful "The Singing Life of Birds", this book is a celebration of birdsong from January through December. The stories begin with a Pileated Woodpecker on New Year's Day and unfold through the year, covering limpkins and scrub-jays in February in Florida, prairie birds in May, Scarlet Tanagers in July, and ending with a chorus of singing birds in Massachusetts just before Christmas. With Kroodsma's gentle guidance and the pairing of sonograms with the two audio CDs, this book makes birdsong accessible and fascinating.

As recommended by David Bird in the December 16th issue of The Gazette.