

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

Presented at the Annual General Meeting, May 11, 2009

As President of Bird Protection Quebec, it is my great pleasure to present to you, the members, the report of the activities of the Society over the past year, that is from March 2008 to February 2009.

As we so often remind ourselves, we group BPQ's goals under the triad of: Conservation, Education, Observation. One of our alert Board members noted recently that, if we reorder the list to read: Education, Conservation, Observation, initials of the three words would spell ECO, the modern 'green' word, and green is what we most want to be. So that's the way I'll order my report to you this evening, starting with our educational activities.

Education

We have an active education committee, chaired by Barbara MacDuff, that works mainly with school and scout groups to support bird projects and birding trips, notably one to Baie-du-Febvre last spring when a group of amazed scouts were thrilled to see the 1000s of Snow Geese as well as a Bald Eagle and a Peregrine Falcon. In addition, 26 grade four students from St John Fisher School were taken on a visit to Ile Bizard as a follow-up to bird projects that the students had worked on in the classroom. A power point presentation on winter birds was given at the Beaconsfield Library and a BPQ booth at Beaconsfield's Winter Fest in February was well attended and many young families expressed interest in BPQ's display. The children made feeders to take home and adults as well as children were able to observe birds through telescopes that had been set up on the grounds.

Members of the committee have created a simple bilingual bird list for children, and a bilingual pamphlet of interest to young people. They also provide information on their designated Bird-of-the-Month on the BPQ website and distribute BPQ badges to children – always a popular item.

They provide seed for the feeders at the Morgan Arboretum and help Camp Tamaracouta in the Laurentians pay for a camp animator in the Ecology Centre. They also supported young Jeremy Pauzé in his successful application for a scholarship to attend the Doug Tarry's Young Ornithologist's Workshop at Long Point in Ontario and paid for his transportation to attend.

Although the Education Committee takes on the major part of BPQ's educational role, Membership Services and Monthly Meetings provide wonderful life-long learning experiences for our members. Membership Services organized four excellent lectures this winter, given by experienced and appealing lecturers, all members of BPQ. Monthly meeting topics ranged from bird photography (a growing interest for birders), the plight of the Bobolink and other grassland birds, and the protocol and results of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, of special interest as data collection for an up-dated version of the Quebec BBA will soon be in the works. It's clear we could all be absolute experts, if we could but remember all the great things we've been taught.

We are proud to be able to support formal education in the form of grants by the Research Grants Committee for research into Quebec ornithology. In a misunderstanding of timing, last year's recipients were reported at the 2008 AGM and are listed on the website. You'll hear about the 2009 recipients at next year's meeting.

Conservation

BPQ's efforts toward bird conservation are what make us truly much more than simply a birdwatching club. The Conservation Committee, as such, has been re-born and re-structured under the chairmanship of Shawn Craik and has undertaken several bird monitoring projects – for example, bluebird nest boxes at several locations; Cerulean Warbler breeding evidence in the Philipsburg Sanctuary; and evidence of breeding Golden-winged Warblers, Cerulean Warblers, and Grasshopper Sparrows in the Montérégie.

Gathering and maintaining data on birds on a systematic basis is vital for conservation of species and important habitat. This is why the above studies, plus the data we collect regularly on the Christmas Bird Counts, through the outstanding Hawk Watch work of Mabel McIntosh and Bob Barnhurst, and on our weekly field trips, is so important for conservation.

The Sanctuaries Committee has the task of overseeing our eight sanctuaries. This year the Sanctuaries Committee completed its goal to visit all the sites, other than Ile aux Perroquets which, being on the Quebec/Labrador border is not very practicable. Visits included an over-the-water trip to the two islands in the Varennes archipelago that we own and some serious bush-whacking in the Alderbrooke Marsh area. They plan to use the knowledge gained in the visits of the last two years to develop strategies for the better management of the various sites in the future. We are at least confident that they are all in good condition and full of birds.

The Philipsburg Sanctuary Committee has been strengthened by the addition of two very able residents of the area. There have been many discussions for improvements and maintenance, especially now that we own some buildings on our newly acquired property there. Unfortunately budget restrictions have meant that no new installations have been possible, but they will be. As in the past, Spring & Fall field trips were organized and Gordon and Gaelies Renny and Sandy and Susan Montgomery continue to escort individuals and groups who make previous arrangements.

The Property Acquisition Committee is actively involved in investigating new properties that we may be able to conserve, or help conserve. We rely heavily on our friends at Nature Conservancy for their help and advice in this regard.

Support Grants Committee that provides funds for other conservation organizations has not been active for the past year, but I am happy to say that it has been revived under the chairmanship of Jean Demers, and will once again be making some much-appreciated grants in the current year.

Observation

And now to Observation, the third element of our triad.

We are fortunate to have a rich variety of field trips organized for us, mostly by the Field Trip Committee chaired by Martin Bowman and Wayne Grubert. Last year 43 full and half day weekend outings looked for resident, breeding and migrating birds in the spring, autumn and winter seasons while, for the fifth year in a row, Sheldon Harvey organized a slate of six summer trips known as the "Summer Series of Birding". A cumulative total of more than 600 birders participated, led by more than twenty different leaders and co-leaders.

Kyra Emo coordinated the annual "Jim Houghton Memorial Spring Warbler Walks" during the peak spring migration period in Summit Park in Westmount.

The Field Trips Committee once again oversaw a camping trip to Point Pelee National Park (183 species in four days) and a mixed accommodation trip to Presqu'île Provincial Park in Ontario (104 species in a weekend), both during spring migration.

In addition to these formally arranged trips, through the Song Sparrow group email, members are alerted to the presence of interesting birds in the area, whenever they may grace us with their presence. This is one of the enormous advantages of modern technology and much-appreciated by all who use it.

So that's the ECO part of my report, Education, Conservation, Observation. I have not done any of the committees justice with this much-abridged version of their reports, and I do urge you all to read the full committee reports posted on the BPQ website – they make impressive and interesting reading.

I would like to stress that most, if not all, of our activities and good work are only possible because of the funds we so fortunately acquired as a bequest from our great benefactor, Alf Kelly. Through careful management and investment, those funds have grown and we are able to use the income and growth to support our many projects.

Behind the Scenes

I've given you a glimpse of our more visible activities, but we couldn't do the ECO part without the efforts of untold numbers of members who work behind the scenes to keep the Society functioning, solvent and on track. We have a splendid Board and Executive who steer us in the right direction; we have an efficient, knowledgeable amazingly hard-working Treasurer, Jean Harwood Gregson, whose report you have already heard. Our Secretary, Jean Bacon, takes the minutes and keeps track of Board policy decisions amongst many other details. Our Membership Secretary knows all the members and is keenly aware of their interests and wishes, new addresses and membership status. The Communications Committee is the glue that holds us together with information, encouragement and enthusiasm. It is made up of the editor of the Newsletter, the manager of the group email, manager of the website, and the editor of *tchébec*, our annual report – a formidable group.

You may hardly have noticed the successful transfer last summer of the editorship of the Song Sparrow newsletter from Gay McDougall to Marie-Anne Hudson, so seamless was it. Gay did a sterling, imaginative job of editing for five years and we thank her enormously for her work. Marie-Anne has taken over most competently as editor and has overseen the almost complete change to electronic version only. This way we have saved 12,840 sheets of paper and about \$1,500, with just since the January issue. Marie-Anne reports that she has a stable of 39 contributors to the newsletter – remarkable participation!

The Marketing Committee brought us the charming new logo several years ago, and I don't think I'd be talking out of turn to say that they are just about to produce an attractive and very useful brochure that we'll be able to use for recruiting new members and telling the world who we are. You'll see it early in the fall.

You'll be impressed too by the awards we are giving out this year, some honouring members who have done extraordinary work over the years, others who are not necessarily members of the Society but whom we feel should be recognized for the work they have done outside the Society to further our mutual goals. This is an interesting and time-consuming initiative of Jeff Harrison, and we applaud him for it.

The one big disappointment of the past year was the cancellation of the Nature Canada Conference which we were to host here in Montreal. A smart and imaginative committee spent a lot of time arranging a first-class programme, but, in the end, not enough people were interested in attending, so it had to be cancelled. Too bad.

Finally, I would like to say a word on behalf of the Archives committee and particularly its Chair, Helen Meredith. They have toiled for untold years, collecting full sets of board minutes, annual reports, newsletters and fascinating memorabilia of the Society's 91 years of existence. After much travail, it has all been classified, listed, boxed and delivered to the McCord Museum which is happy to accept it as part of the social history of Montreal. It is there now, *in perpetuity*, to be added to every so often, and to be consulted by scholars or other interested parties along the way. Congratulations to this dedicated group for the successful fulfillment of their long-term goal..

Of course my report would not be complete without a huge vote of thanks to all the members of the Society who volunteer so much time and energy for the betterment of the Society and the furthering of its goals. Particularly I would like to mention the dedication of two members who are retiring from the Board. Lynn Miller has been on the Board for three years, has fulfilled her first term and has elected not to stand for re-election at least at this time. We hope to see her back. Rodger Titman has been on the Board for many many years, has been President, has served on important committees and has given us so much from his personal knowledge and experience of ornithology. You will be hearing more about his great contribution to the Society a bit later, but I couldn't finish my report or my term of office without mentioning him very specially, and thanking him personally for his help and advice as my predecessor.

Our host of volunteers are too numerous mention by name, and besides I'd be sure to forget some, but they are all essential to the health of this vibrant volunteer organization – let me emphasize this, we are all 100% volunteers. They go to meetings, they plan and they

execute, and they have fun doing it. It is a lot of fun and a great learning experience, but it's a lot of work too and we always need more keen helpers. I do encourage any of you who wants to, to get involved. Sometimes we hear the thought expressed, "I'd like to help, but no one ever asks me". Don't wait to be asked. Go to the website, read the Terms of Reference and annual reports for all the committees, find one that you think would interest you and you might be able to contribute to, and speak to the Chair or one of the members. They'll be happy to find you a job.

Presenting this annual report is my last responsibility as President. I have enjoyed the past two years more than I can say. I have found working with your Board of Directors and all the officers of the society pleasant and interesting and I thank you, the members, for your support and interest. It's been a lot of work, but very rewarding.

I move the adoption of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Eve Marshall