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The Congo: No country for old men?

by SANDY AYER (for the Calgary Herald)

Few people travel to the DRC, but it’s birding heaven for intrepid ornithologists

Why would three old guys, average age 61, spend two weeks birding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) when they could’ve gone to Costa Rica or Kenya and seen far more species? That’s easy: they want to do something useful, rise to an age-appropriate challenge, and achieve immortality.

I meet my travelling companions in Kinshasa in mid-June. They’re veteran Congo birder Dr. David O. Matson of Norfolk, VA; and Martin Bowman of Williamstown, ON, an old birding friend and the brother of famous NHL coach Scotty Bowman.

We spend the next morning at The American School of Kinshasa. A good chunk of TASOK’s 42-acre campus remains jungle, and so it’s a good place to warm up for forest birding. Despite reclusive birds, poor light, and few second chances (challenges we will have to contend with throughout the trip), we end up with a respectable 31 species, including a Yellow-crested Woodpecker.

A few days later we take taxis to Boma, a nine-hour drive to the west. We inch our way through shop-lined streets bustling with poor but colourfully dressed Kinois, and before long we’re on the main highway.

As we slow down for the speed bumps in each village, children greet us with cries of “Mundele!” (white man). Our only birding stop along the way is the world-renowned Kisantu Botanical Gardens. Right away, we happen on a treetop gathering of large luminescent purple and green birds: Splendid Glossy-Starlings. With them are some forest Chestnut-winged Starlings. The flock disperses, and we begin hearing...
the morse-code-like calls of tinkerbirds. David searches through the West African bird songs on his iPod for a match — definitely Speckled Tinkerbird — and plays it through the speaker.

The normally shy bird perches in the open and starts singing at its “rival.” Soon after, we hear Yellow-throated Tinkerbird, but the birding peters out quickly, and so we break for lunch.

In Boma, the staging point for our upcoming trip to the Luki Forest (a UNESCO biosphere reserve 20 kilometres to the north), we stay at FACTEB Seminary, where my friend Mabiala Kenzo is rector.

Kenzo and I want to find out if FACTEB can increase its revenues by providing logistical support for ecotours, and so this trip is a sort of pilot project.

Meanwhile, we bird the hilly savanna around the campus. David finds a Rufous-necked Wryneck and Martin a Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, neither of which, according to our field guides, is supposed to occur here.

Indeed, the DRC’s birds offer a good chance of making significant sightings and of achieving “immortality” through a scientific article. We’d have no chance of that in Kenya or Costa Rica. We spend the next several days conducting the first-ever survey of Luki’s birds.

Our crowning achievement comes on our second morning. David stops us on a forested hillside.

“Hear that? Sounds like a thrush.”

We remain silent and motionless as he tape-records the song. We then search our field guides for thrushes that might reside here. The most likely seems to be the rare Black-eared Ground Thrush.

“Song unknown,” say the guides. Only the call has been recorded. For the next 15 minutes, David alternates between playing the call and the song he’s recorded.

Finally, the bird emerges. I get a two-second glimpse, noting the diagnostic parallel black smudges (“ears”) below and just behind the eye.

David’s recording may be a scientific first, although it will take time for us to get an expert judgement — how do you identify an unknown song? We take a GPS reading and then celebrate with high-fives and a group photo.

We return to Boma and spend the next afternoon as tourists. Martin and I buy bolts of the colourful patterned cloth with which Congolese women fashion their dazzling outfits, and then we all visit the Stanley Baobab, a massive hollow tree in which the explorer Henry M. Stanley is said to have spent a couple of nights in 1877.
We end our day at the Auberge restaurant, which is built out over the Congo River on pilings. We order shrimp and a round of Primus beer, scan the river for birds, and find **Congo Martins** skimming over the surface.

“Terns!” calls David, pointing to some dainty hovering birds silhouetted against the hulls of anchored freighters. They’re either **Little Terns** or **Damara Terns**. Neither should be here at this time of year.

The low point of our trip comes at the airport the next morning. The immigration officer discovers a “problem” with our visas: “I won’t prevent you from flying to Muanda, but if you could think of me . . . .” He has our passports! Utterly powerless, we pass him an overly generous “thought.” Once our anger subsides, we realize that the real culprit is poverty: our official probably rarely gets paid.

Our host in Muanda, Dr. Pierre Mavuemba, is a scientist and conservationist who’s recently become a birder. To help him in his ornithological research, I’ve brought along equipment donations from the Calgary-area and pass them on to him — yet another purpose of our trip. I present him with a telescope with photographic adapter and tripod, a pair of waterproof binoculars, and a set of CDs of African bird songs.

During our five-day stay in Muanda Dr. Pierre takes us to various birding sites in the nearby Parc Marin des Mangroves. Together we develop a preliminary inventory of the park’s birdlife. We visit savanna, forest, and marsh habitats and see a number of article-worthy birds: **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Spotted Thick-knee** (one previous record for the coast), and **Cape Glossy-Starling** (third record for the country!).

On our final afternoon we encounter a group of kids returning from a soccer game.

Their team lost, they say, but only because the other team used a feticheur (witch doctor). Night falls as they leave us, and nightjars (the family to which nighthawks and whippoorwills belong) have already begun to call. We hear **Black-Shouldered Nightjar** — it sounds like a car alarm going off — and have the thrill of seeing a **Square-tailed Nightjar** in flight.

**Square-tailed Nightjar** - *Caprimulgus fossii*

Photo and text by Martin Bowman

We were fortunate to encounter this nightjar species three times. We heard it at night at the Luki Forest Biosphere Reserve north of Boma, saw a pair at dusk at Kifuku near Muanda and best of all, this roosting bird on the private property of our host in Muanda, Dr. Pierre Mavuemba. I saw the bird flying low in broad daylight, and David Matson was able to find where it had landed for its daylong roost. We had remarkable scope views before abandoning the species to search for another of Dr. Pierre's specialty birds, the Spotted Thick-knee. The Square-tailed Nightjar is called Engoulevent de Mozambique in French. This was one of two species of Goatsuckers that we observed in the DR Congo; the other was the Black-shouldered Nightjar, heard and seen.

On our last day in the DRC, David takes us to Livingstone Falls, spectacular house-high rapids that would capsize any whitewater raft.

Beyond the rapids on the far shore, about 700 metres away, he spots a shorebird preening and trains the telescope on it. Even at this distance we can tell from the white stripe on its grey wing that it’s a **White-headed Lapwing**. I find an all-black stork. Its head and legs droop as it flies. The only possibility: **African Openbill**.
We also see Grey Pratincole, African Pied Wagtail, and African Darter, the African cousin of the Anhinga.

Buoyed by our strong finish, we do our final tally: 200 species, give or take a few — a mere fraction of the 1,141 (the most of any country in Africa) that have been recorded in the DRC.

We really must do something about that.

H. D. Sandy Ayer is director of library services and archivist at Ambrose University College/Ambrose Seminary. This is his second trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During his first, which occurred in June of 2009, he saw Cape Glossy Starling Lamprotornis nitens, which had only been recorded once before in the DRC, and White-collared Starling Grafisia torquata, which he saw about 900 km farther west (Muanda, on the coast) than it had been seen before in the country. He published these and other significant observations of birds and bird behaviour in a peer-reviewed scientific article: Some Recent Observations, Malimbus: Journal of West African Ornithology 33 (September, 2011): 65-77.

Update January 18 2012:
By Martin Bowman

Since the article was published in The Calgary Herald, we have had a response from Ron Demey, co-author with Nik Borrow of Birds of Western Africa, to the recording that we thought might be the unknown song of the Black-eared Ground Thrush. Demey has identified the song as that of the Blackcap Illadopsis (illadopsis cleaveri), a member of the Babbler family. Borrow and Demey describe the song as "1-2 resonant whistles, usually introduced by 1-2 short notes (only audible at close range)." My description in our species account describes the song as "two introductory clicks followed by one beautiful minor key note." We are still hoping that we may also have recorded the Ground-Thrush song.

In any case, we still made birding history as the Blackcap Illadopsis, observed by all three of us at the same time as we saw the Ground Thrush, is the first record of the species for the DR Congo.

Photo by Martin Bowman
Kisantu Botanical Gardens is where the group spotted rare birds, such as the Speckled Tinkerbird, which is shy and hard to photograph.

If You Go

• The Bradt Travel Guide. Democratic Republic Congo is indispensable.

• Contact person for the World Wildlife Foundation site at Luki Forest is Laurent Nsenga (lnsenga@yahoo.fr or insenga $30 per day room and meals, $15 per day for a guide (essential), $40 roundtrip pick-up and drop-off by WWF “taxi” in Boma. You will need to provide a research proposal in French (they’ll provide a model; our proposal is available on request from sayer@ambrose.edu).

• Taxi is the best transportation option Boma-Muanda

• Dr. Pierre Mavuemba pierremavuemba@ yahoo.fr is willing to help set up tours in Muanda

• Muanda-Kinshasa by air is around $200 one way. Baggage limit, incl. carry-on, is 14 kg. Surcharge is $1 per kg.

• In Kinshasa, Chez Tintin, a glorified pop stand, provides a viewpoint overlooking Livingstone Falls. $10 photography fee, and you’ll need to buy some food or pop. Ask your hotel’s staff about taxis.

• At least one member of your group should speak French fluently.
Bird-Brained Thoughts
The President’s Message

FINDING YOUR LOCAL BIRDING PATCH

I have made use of this column in recent editions to tell you about the many interesting and important projects that BPQ is engaged in. Now our various ventures have been put into the hands of our committees to develop means of putting them into action. We are very busy but at the same time there is nothing new to shout about while we wait for the seeds we have planted to take root and grow — as they will in the year ahead. So, I am taking the opportunity to speak to you about something that matters to me and which is beginning to matter to more and more birders around the world.

People who like birds and take an interest in their behaviour fall into two groups. The larger, traditional group that we shall call “Bird Watchers” are content to enjoy the birds that happen to be wherever they happen to be. They don’t specifically go out in search of birds, but when they do see them they stop and look. The second group designates itself as “Birders” and takes this much more seriously. Most birders keep extensive lists of the species they see, are prepared to travel quite long distances to find interesting and new birds, often spend serious money on binoculars and have terrific skills at identifying birds in the field. It cannot be denied that mainstream birding is a very popular pastime and the people who enjoy it are amongst the most concerned members of the population when it comes to the protection of wild creatures and their habitats. Still, by its very nature, birding’s almost inevitable and somewhat excessive use of the internal combustion engine adds greenhouse gases to our environment. Climate change is a fact and it seems that our actions, in this case travelling extensively in search of new birding experiences, put another (albeit relatively small) nail in the lid of the environmental coffin. The constant urge to range far and wide to add birds to our lists too often means that we ignore or downplay the importance of the birds that are virtually under our noses, close to where we live and work.

A relatively new tribe of birders who do not automatically reach for the keys of their cars when heading out for a day with birds is beginning to emerge under the banner of “green birding.” They predominantly concentrate their birding activities on observations and investigations on their local birding patches, and typically they travel around their locality under their own power — they try very hard not to add greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere while enjoying their birding. This is not to say that we should all throw away the keys to our cars, which would not be realistic; rather it is a suggestion that we pay more attention to the birds that we live close to and try to become the local experts, the go-to people for knowledge about “our” birds.

It has been suggested that we might deliberately restrict ourselves to what is still quite an extensive area using perhaps a 15-mile circle (the idea being taken from the Christmas Bird Counts) centred on our homes. This would allow us to concentrate on a very reasonable and varied range of habitats, while dramatically reducing the distances we travel. Within that circle we can each identify and develop our own personal birding “patches” somewhere close to where we live. By visiting them regularly, keeping good notes about the observations we make throughout the year as season gives way to season, reporting them to eBird (and ÉPOQ) of course, we will add depth to the breadth of our experiences. I find that, by pursuing the bulk of my birding in this manner, I gain more enjoyment, am able to contribute a bit of specialized local knowledge to the ever-growing citizen science databases and know that I am reducing my carbon footprint a bit more than I otherwise would.

By concentrating on our patches and circles, we have time to do more than simply ticking off the species — we are able to take time to “stand and stare,” observe our birds, and their interactions with each other and with their environment. In effect, we are compelled to take a more observational and scientific approach to birding ... one that has the potential to make it immensely more interesting.

And so I ask you — do you have a local patch? Everybody has somewhere within walking or cycling distance that is home to some birds and worthy of getting to know intimately. Hopefully, it attracts rarities from time to time but even if not there is no
denying that the common species, the chickadees, sparrows, woodpeckers et al, are no less fascinating for being plentiful. We should not take them for granted.

Why not make 2012 the year you adopt a local patch?

Richard

Message du Président

TROUVER VOTRE PARCELLE ORNITHOLOGIQUE LOCALE

J'ai fait usage de cette rubrique dans les éditions récentes afin de vous parler des nombreux projets intéressants et importants dans lesquels POQ est engagé. A ce jour, nos divers projets sont entre les mains de nos comités afin qu’ils développent les moyens de les mettre en œuvre. Ce qui signifie que si nous sommes très occupés, il n'y a rien de nouveau à annoncer avant que les graines que nous avons semées portent fruit - ce qui arrivera dans les années à venir. Je profite donc de cette édition pour vous parler d’un sujet qui me tient à cœur, et qui commence à compter pour de nombreux ornithologues à travers le monde.

Ceux qui aiment les oiseaux et s’intéressent à leur comportement peuvent être divisés en deux catégories. La première catégorie, que nous appelons "observateurs" est la plus nombreuse, et comprend ceux qui se satisfont d’apprécier les oiseaux, quelque soit l’endroit où ils se trouvent. Ils ne sont pas toujours à la recherche d’espèces en particulier, mais quand ils voient les oiseaux, ils s’arrêtent pour les observer. Il existe également une autre catégorie qui se qualifie elle-même de cocheurs et qui considère tout cela beaucoup plus sérieusement. La plupart des cocheurs conservent des listes de toutes les espèces qu’ils observent et sont près à voyager sur de longues distances pour observer de nouvelles espèces intéressantes, dépensant des sommes conséquentes sur des paires de jumelles. Ils possèdent souvent des compétences impressionnantes d’identification des oiseaux sur le terrain.

On ne peut nier que l’observation des oiseaux est un passe-temps populaire et que les gens qui l’apprécient sont parmi les membres les plus engagés de la population quand il s’agit de la protection des créatures sauvages et leurs habitats. Mais, par sa nature même, l’observation des oiseaux implique presque inévitablement l’utilisation, parfois excessive, du moteur à combustion qui contribue à l’effet de serre dans notre environnement. Le changement climatique est un fait et il me semble, comme à beaucoup d’autres, que nos actions, et dans ce cas nos nombreux voyages à la recherche de nouvelles expériences ornithologiques, plantent un nouveau clou (quoique relativement petit) dans le cercueil de notre environnement. En outre, l’envie constante d’ajouter de nouvelles espèces à nos listes signifie trop souvent que nous ignorons ou négligeons l’importance des oiseaux qui sont littéralement sous notre nez, tout près de là où nous vivons et travaillons.

Une tribu relativement nouvelle d’ornithologues amateurs, peu enclins à se jeter sur les clés de leur voiture dès qu’il s’agit de partir pour une journée d’observation d’oiseaux, commence à émerger, sous la bannière de l’observation écologique. Ils concentrent principalement leurs activités de recherche et d’observations ornithologiques des parcelles locales et limitent leurs déplacements à leur localité, se limitant à leur propre énergie - ils font ainsi le maximum pour ne pas contribuer aux émissions de gaz à effet de serre dans l’atmosphère tout en profitant des plaisirs que leur apportent les oiseaux. Cela ne veut pas dire que nous devrions tous jeter les clés de nos voitures, ce qui ne serait pas réaliste, mais il s’agit plutôt de suggérer que nous devrions tous porter plus d’attention aux oiseaux qui vivent près de nous et essayer de devenir des experts locaux, les personnes référence quand il s’agit de "nos" oiseaux.

Il a été suggéré que nous pourrions délibérément nous limiter à ce qui constitue une zone circulaire, encore relativement vaste, de 15...
miles (une idée provenant du recensement des oiseaux de Noël) centrée sur nos maisons, et qui nous permet de nous concentrer sur une gamme très raisonnable et variée d’habitats, tout en réduisant considérablement les distances que nous parcourons. Au sein de ce cercle, chacun d’entre nous pourrait identifier et développer ses propres parcelles d’observations ornithologique, relativement près de là où nous vivons, et nous y rendre régulièrement, en gardant des notes détaillées sur les observations que nous y faisons à longueur d’année, tout au long des saisons (et régulièrement saisir nos observation sur eBird ou EPOQ). Nous ajouterons ainsi la profondeur à la diversité de nos expériences. Je trouve qu’en concentrant l’essentiel de mes observations sur cette approche, j’ajoute davantage de plaisir à l’intérêt que je porte aux oiseaux ; je suis davantage en mesure de contribuer aux connaissances locales spécialisées qui alimentent les bases de données scientifiques citoyennes en croissance permanente et je réduis mon empreinte carbone un peu plus que je ne le ferai autrement.

En se concentrant sur nos parcelles ornithologiques et nos cercles, nous nous donnons plus de temps que de simplement cocher les espèces, nous sommes en mesure de regarder et de fixer, d’observer nos oiseaux, et leurs interactions, et celles avec leur environnement. En réalité, nous sommes obligés de prendre une approche plus scientifique et inquisitrice de l’observation des oiseaux... une approche qui a le potentiel de rendre l’observation des oiseaux immensément plus intéressante.

Et donc je le vous demande – Avez-vous une parcelle locale d’observation? Tout le monde a quelque part, à distance de marche ou de vélo de la maison, un endroit fréquenté par les oiseaux et digne de connaître intimement. Avec un peu de chance, il attire des rares de temps en temps, mais même si ce n’est pas le cas, on ne peut nier que les espèces communes telles que les mésanges, les moineaux, les pics et autres, n’en sont pas moins fascinants par le fait qu’ils sont abondants. Nous ne devrions pas les prendre pour acquis.

Pourquoi ne pas faire de l’année 2012 celle durant laquelle vous adopterez une parcelle locale ?

**REMINDER – BPQ’S WINTER BIRD COURSE LECTURES**

Come to all or just some of our Winter Bird Course lectures, to be held on alternate Wednesdays in February and March 2012. Mark these dates in your agenda!

**February 8: Lecture cancelled**

**February 22: "Rise and Shine, it’s Dark Outside!"**
The secret lives of Whip-poor-wills and Common Nighthawks - with Gregory Rand

**March 7**: "Let's Enjoy Our Ducks"
Tips to identify North American Waterfowl - with Rodger Titman

**March 21: "The Early Bird Gets the … Grub"**
The intricate lives of birds and insects; co-evolution and adaptation - with Chris Cloutier

**Place:** Knox Crescent Kensington & First Presbyterian Church, 6225 Godfrey Avenue, NDG

**Time:** 7:30 pm; (**exceptionally, on March 7, the lecture will be held at 8.p.m.)

**Cost:** $15 per lecture for BPQ members and $20 for non-members

Further details and the registration form can be picked up from the Membership Services table at monthly meetings, or can be downloaded from the BPQ website under Activities, Courses, at:: [http://tinyurl.com/BPQ-Winter-Lectures](http://tinyurl.com/BPQ-Winter-Lectures)

**For more information please contact:**
Averill Craig at: 514-484-6575; ak.craig@sympatico.ca
or: Audrey Speck at: 514-487-4032, a.speck@videotron.ca
Fulvous Whistling-Duck: an ad at Chambly 19 Nov (R. Belhumeur, D. Collins et al.). The same bird was resighted at Otterburn Park, 10 km north of Chambly 20-23 Nov (J. Lizotte, m.ob. ph.). The bird’s behaviour suggested a wild origin. Greater White-fronted Goose: several juv most likely originating from Greenland were reported, e.g. a family group of one ad (flavirostris) and 2 juv at Victoriaville 16-21 Oct (A. Daigle et al., ph.), an ad with a juv at Norway Bay (Pontiac) 11 Nov (R. Dubois, D. Dallaire), a single juv at Victoriaville 19-26 Nov (C. Roy, L. Longpré), and up to 4 imm. in the Québec City region (m. ob.). Graylag Goose: an imm of the ssp anser accompanied Canada Geese at Saint-Mathias 14-20 Nov (R. Belhumeur, G. Éthier, m.ob. ph.). Circumstances as well as appearance and behaviour of the bird strongly suggested a wild bird, most probably originating from Greenland where the species is now nesting. Ross’s Goose: an ad with a yellow neck collar was photographed at Roxton L. 30 Oct (R. Roy et al.). It had been banded at Arviat, Nunavut, on the western shore of Hudson Bay 25 Jul 2003, resighted at the same place in summer 2004 and 2005, and also in March 2004 in Nebraska. Mute Swan: one at Île Perrot 9 Nov-1 Dec (A. Rouleau). in Swan: 2 at Granby 13 Nov (JF. Ostiguy). Eurasian Wigeon: 5 reports including a bird at Tadoussac 19-30 Nov + (S. Denault). Canvasback: after its almost complete disappearance as a migrant during the last 2 decades, numbers were on the rise this fall starting in late Nov and culminating in early Dec. Hooded Merganser X Common Goldeneye: this hybrid was reported at Saint-Jean 11 Nov (M. Roy). Ruddy Duck: one at Portneuf 11 Nov, rare on the north shore (S. Denault). Pacific Loon: one ad still in breeding plumage appeared at Rivière-Ouelle 5 Oct (JF. Rousseau). Western Grebe: one at Gatineau 23-29 Oct (M. Gawn, J. Dubois et al.).


Sandhill Crane: good numbers in Témiscamingue, as evidenced by 500 at Nédélec and 200 at Roulier 1 Oct (J. Fréchette); also in L. Saint-Jean where 200 were tallied at Saint-Augustin 9 Oct (D. Lavoie, G. Lemelin). A group of 4 at Sept-Iles 25 Sept was noteworthy so far east (JY. Galland, B. Galland). On 13 Nov, a flock of 10 was at Dundee, sw of Montréal, where the species has been nesting for the last 5 years (J. De Marre). Hudsonian Godwit: it was a remarkable fall for this species with a total of over 100 birds reported. The latest individual was at Saint-Ferdinand 20 Nov, a record late date (D. Gagné). Marbled Godwit: one at Sept-Iles 8 Oct (JF. Laporte). Western Sandpiper: singles at Portneuf 14 & 25 Oct were nicely documented with photographs (S. Denault). Long-billed Dowitcher: 3 at Saint-Lazare 7 Oct (M. Dennis) and one at Yamachiche 19 Oct (M. Bisson). A flock of 100 dowitchers sp seen in flight at Saint-Blaise 1 Oct was quite intriguing since such a large group of any dowitcher species would be very surprising for this date (M. Gauthier et al.).


Grue du Canada: de bons nombres au Témiscamingue, tel que 500 à Nédélec et 200 à Roulier 1er oct (J. Fréchette); par ailleurs, 200 ont été dénombrées à Saint-Augustin (L. Saint-Jean) 9 oct (D. Lavoie, G. Lemelin). Un groupe de 4 à Sept-Iles 25 sept était remarquable aussi à l’est (JY. Galland, B. Galland). Le 13 nov, un groupe de 10 était encore à Dundee, au S.O. de Montréal, où l’espèce niche depuis 5 ans (J. De Marre). Barge hudsonienne: ce fut un automne remarquable pour cette espèce avec un total de plus de 100 oiseaux signalés. Le plus tardif était à Saint-Ferdinand 20 nov, une date record (D. Gagné). Barge marbrée: une à Sept-Iles 8 oct (JF. Laporte). Bécasseau d’Alaska: deux oiseaux différents à Portneuf les 14 et 25 oct respectivement, bien documentés avec de superbes photos (S. Denault). Bécassin à long bec: 3 à Saint-Lazare 7 oct (M. Dennis) et un à Yamachiche 19 oct (M. Bisson). Un groupe de 100 bécassins sp en vol à Saint-Blaise 1er oct demeuré intrigant puisqu’un nombre aussi élevé serait surprenant pour les 2 espèces de bécassins à cette date (M. Gauthier et al.).

Magdalen Is. 6 Oct (A. Richard). **Dovekie**; small numbers reported on the North Shore; 2 at Sainte-Pétronille (Île d’Orléans) 20 Oct (S. Rioux) and one at Rivière-Ouelle 29 Oct (C. Auchu, C. Girard) were noteworthy so early and so far upstream. **Thick-billed Murre**: 11 seen at Matane 19 Nov (G. Gendron, D. Ruest). **Atlantic Puffin**: an incursion upstream in the St. Lawrence R. was detected in early Oct, as shown by 5 at Rivière-Ouelle 2 Oct (C. Auchu, C. Girard) and 12 at Bergeronnes 6 Oct (R. Pintiaux).

**Eurasian Collared-Dove**: up to 8 indiv were reported at Sainte-Brigide-d’Iberville throughout the period (G. Gilbert), suggesting that the pair initially found there this past summer has reared several broods. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: 9 birds reported in Oct.

**Western Kingbird**: one at Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé 28 Oct-1 Nov (A. Couture, ph.). **White-eyed Vireo**: one died after crashing into a window at Alma 30 Oct (C. Duguay), while one at Cowansville 12 Nov-1 Dec, established a new record late date for the province (B. Hamel, JP. Santerre, ph. m.ob.). **Cliff Swallow**: singles at Portneuf-sur-mer 11 Nov (S. Denault) and at Port-Daniel 13 Nov (P. Poulin et al) established new record late dates for the province. **Carolina Wren**: one at Mont-Laurier 27 Nov (R. LeBrun). **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: an astonishing 4 birds seen together at l’Anse-au-Griffon 24 Oct (J. Lacasse). **Townsend’s Solitaire**: singles at Shawinigan-Sud 15 Nov (S. Bouchard), and in the Mount-Royal Cemetery 29-30 Nov+ (E. Samson, m.ob.). **White Wagtail**: one seen in flight with 4 Horned Larks at Rivière-Ouelle 10 Oct (L. Messely).

**Audubon’s » Yellow-rumped Warbler**: a female of this western ssp at I. Charron (Boucherville) 8 Nov (Y. Gauthier). **Yellow-throated Warbler**: 4 birds reported: Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse 6-7 Nov (C. Girard), Maplegrove 12 Nov (JM. Béliveau, D. Ouellette et al.), Bic 14 Nov (L. Masson), and Roberval 29 Nov-1 Dec (C. Bellemarre). **Ovenbird**: one at d’Orléans) 20 Oct (S. Rioux) and un à Rivière-Ouelle 29 oct (C. Auchu, C. Girard) étaient dignes de mention aussi en amont sur le Saint-Laurent. **Guillemot de Brünnich**: 11 vus à Matane 19 nov (G. Gendron, D. Ruest). **Macareux moine**: une petite incursion en amont sur le Saint-Laurent a été détectée au début d’oct : eg 5 à Rivière-Ouelle 2 oct (C. Auchu, C. Girard) et 12 à Bergeronnes 6 oct (R. Pintiaux).

**Tourterelle turque**: jusqu’à 8 indiv signalés à Sainte-Brigide-d’Iberville pendant la période (G. Gilbert), ce qui suggère que le couple trouvé à l’été 2011 s’est reproduit plusieurs fois. **Coulicou à bec jaune**: 9 oiseaux signalés en oct. **Colibri roux/d’Allen**: un imm présent à un abreuvoir de Blainville 12-17 nov (C. Fiset, ph.). Les photos n’ont pas permis une identification définitive de l’espèce. **Pic à tête rouge**: un près de LaTuque 12 oct (S. Marcotte). **Pic à ventre roux**: une importante dispersion post-nuptiale a parachuté des oiseaux jusqu’à Sept-Îles 21 oct (C. Bérubé), aux îles de la Madeleine (jusqu’à 3 indiv) 1-14 nov (RA. De Coste, B. Vigneault) et à Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan 15-17 nov (W. Desmond) tandis qu’au moins 8 oiseaux ont été détectés en nov en Gaspésie (fide P. Poulin).

**Tyran de l’Ouest**: un à Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé 28 oct-1 nov (A. Couture, ph.). **Vireo aux yeux blancs**: un oiseau s’est tué en heurtant une fenêtre à Alma 30 oct (C. Duguay), tandis qu’un autre présent à Cowansville 12 nov-1 déc, a établi un nouveau record de départ tardif (B. Hamel, JP. Santerre, ph. pl.ob.). **Hirondelle à front blanc**: des oiseaux à Portneuf-sur-mer 11 nov (S. Denault) et à Port-Daniel 13 nov (P. Poulin et al) ont établi des nouveaux records de départ tardif. **Troglyde de Caroline**: un à Mont-Laurier 27 nov (R. LeBrun). **Gobemoucher gris-bleu**: un groupe très étonnant de 4 oiseaux aperçus ensemble à l’Anse-au-Griffon 24 oct (J. Lacasse). **Solitaire de Townsend**: des oiseaux à Shawinigan-Sud 15 nov (S. Bouchard), et au cimetière du Mont-Royal 29-30 nov+ (E. Samson, pl.ob.). **Bergeronnette grise**: une aperçu en vol avec 4 Alouettes hausse-col à Rivière-Ouelle 10 oct (L. Messely).

**Paruline à croupion jaune, race Audubon**: une femelle de cette ssp de l’Ouest aperçue à l’île Charron (Boucherville) 8 nov (Y. Gauthier). **Paruline à gorge jaune**: 4 oiseaux signalés : Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse 6-7 nov (C. Girard), Maplegrove 12 nov (JM. Béliveau, D. Ouellette et al.), Bic 14 nov (L. Masson), et
Longueuil 26-27 Nov was late (A. Provost). **Clay-colored Sparrow**: one at Tadoussac 4 Oct (S. Denault, T. Biteau). **Summer Tanager**: singles at Saint-Fulgence 7-8 Nov (C. Cormier), Cap-aux-Os 17-19 Nov (D. Sigouin, **fide** M. Côté) and at Pointe-aux-Trembles (Montréal) 19 Nov (Y. Gauthier). **Dickcissel**: singles at Port-Daniel 2 Oct (A. Couture et al.), Tadoussac 3 Oct (S. Denault), Tadoussac 22 Oct (S. Denault, O. Barden), and 2 at Sainte-Félicité 1-22 Nov (G. Rivard, J. Deschênes). **Yellow-headed Blackbird**: 2 different individuals were seen during the period 20-24 Oct in the Magdalen Is (JC. Richard, A. Richard, DG. Gaudet). **Streak-backed Oriole**: a bird photographed at Notre-Dame-de-Montauban 23-26 Oct (A. Picard, ph. I. Therrien) was determined to belong to the *sclateri* group of the Pacific slope of Central America. A bird of captive origin seems to be the most likely explanation for this non-migrant taxon. **Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin**: up to 18 Nov, 51,000 redpolls and 30,000 siskins had been tallied at the Tadoussac birds observatory. This represents new records for the observatory, since the highest counts ever recorded were 26,387 redpolls and 18,451 siskins. The Common Redpoll daily mean count from 26 Oct through 18 Nov was 2,135. **European Goldfinch**: one at Jonquières 24 Oct (N. Simard).

Please report your interesting bird observations to: Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montréal, Qc H4E 1P1. Tel: 514-766-8767 after 7:00 p.m. or by E-mail at pbannon@videotron.ca

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Veuillez communiquer vos observations intéressantes à: Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montréal, Qc H4E 1P1. Tél: 514-766-8767 en soirée. Courriel: pbannon@videotron.ca
The 76th Montreal Christmas Bird Count

by Sheldon Harvey

The 76th Montreal Christmas Bird Count was held on December 17, 2011. Seventy field observers, in 19 teams, covered 20 sectors within the Montreal area circle, which is centred at Sherbrooke Street West and Westminster in Montreal West.

A total of 75 different species were recorded on Count Day. This tied the record set in 1993 and again in 2004. Five additional species were recorded during the Count Week; however, according to Audubon regulations and guidelines, these species are not added to the official species numbers on the actual count day. The five count week species were Redhead, Townsend’s Solitaire, Bufflehead, Black-crowned Night Heron and, of course, the famous Atlantic Puffin found in downtown Montreal on Thursday, December 15. The Puffin was easily a first ever recorded on the Montreal count.

The total number of birds recorded was 24,513. This surpassed the record of 23,730 set in 2009. However this number is subject to adjustment due to the probable duplication of counted birds, in particular Canada Geese, American Crows, European Starlings and, possibly, the Peregrine Falcons. We will be reviewing this over the next week or so and will adjust the numbers with Audubon accordingly.

Some of the highlights of this year’s count included:

- Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the Seaway Dyke
- Yellow-rumped Warbler on Nuns Island
- Pine Warbler on Nuns’ Island
- 152 Snow Geese
- Hermit Thrush at Mount Royal Cemetery
- 2 Snowy Owls, one on a rocky mound in the St. Lawrence River off Nuns’ Island and the other in the Trudeau Airport area
- Horned Grebe recorded by the Châteauguay team

Lance Laviolette and Andrée Dubois-Laviolette again took on the responsibility of tracking the Montreal area crow roost. It proved to be a more difficult task this year as the crows kept moving around quite a bit. Finally 5,187 crows were counted this year, far below the record number of 9,149 during last year’s count.

For the following species, record numbers were either tied or surpassed this year:

- Hooded Merganser – 76 – previous high 40 in 2010
- Common Loon – 7 – previous high 6 in 2006
- Black Scoter – 1 – tied previous high 1 in 1937!
- Barrow’s Goldeneye – 5 – previous high 3 in 2010
- Snow Geese – 152 – previous high 15 in 2000
- Pine Warbler – 1 Tied previous high 1 in 1993, 1997 and 2004
- Red-bellied Woodpecker – 2 – tied previous high 2 in 2004 and 2006
- Wood Duck – 2 – tied previous high 2 in 1983

More detailed information from this year’s Count will be posted on the BPQ webpage at a later date, once the final numbers have been submitted to Audubon. This is proving to be a more difficult task than usual this year as the Audubon data entry webpage has been experiencing some difficulties.

The after-count compilation social, attended by approximately 35 people, was held at the Montreal West Curling Club, with food from Dagwood’s supplied by BPQ. Special thanks to Jean Demers, Clémence Soulard, Virginia Elliott, Barbara Szabo and...
Raymonde Simard for assisting with the set-up, the tabulation of data for presentation, and the clean-up.

We thank everyone for their effort and dedication to this important annual citizen science project. We look forward to the 77th Montreal Christmas Bird Count which will be held on Saturday, December 15, 2012.

Sheldon Harvey and Barbara Szabo
Montreal Christmas Count Compilers

Sheldon Harvey is a BPQ Board member, Chair of the Marketing Committee, and serves on the Field Trips Committee. He leads several “spontaneous” field trips throughout the year, leads the bird sightings at our Monthly Lectures, and keeps us informed about rare bird sightings. We are grateful to Sheldon for initiating and continuing to offer his successful Summer Series field trips.

Hudson Christmas Bird Count
by Jean Dermers

The Hudson Christmas Bird Count was held on December 27, 2011. Field Observers enjoyed great weather; it was sunny, not too cold, and there was very little wind. Fifty-nine people participated and collectively we observed the second highest number of birds in 71 years: 12,655 individuals and 64 species. Eleven FeederWatchers contributed another 265 birds to the total.

The after-count reception was held in a private room in the St-Hubert restaurant in Dorion. The room was, at times, a little too small for the 35 participants stopping in. Finger food was provided, along with a little wine, which seemed to be greatly appreciated.

As usual, the highest number of species was counted by the amazing duo of Bob Barnhurst and Mabel MacIntosh. They observed 35 species including one species never seen before in 71 years of the count, an American Wigeon, resulting in a total of 139 species over the years. The highest number of birds was found by Party One (Bonnie Soutar, Mark Romer, and two new recruits, Matias Baert and Joanna Walasek). They found 2,110 Snow Buntings. As a result, more Snow Buntings were counted than any other species. The species with the second highest number in the total count was European Starling with 2,122 birds, followed by Black-capped Chickadees in third place with 1,601.

Record numbers of birds were counted in six species, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, Wild Turkey, American Crow, American Robin and Common Grackle.

Full results can be found in the file section of the Songsparrow newsgroup. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Songsparrow/

Overall, for my first experience at organizing the Hudson Count, I’m quite happy with the results.

Jean Demers and his partner Clémence Soulard are dedicated Bird Protection Quebec members, participating in most Saturday field trips and Monthly Lectures. Jean is a BPQ Board member, as well as a Membership Services Committee and Marketing Committee member. He has participated for a number of years in the Montreal and Hudson Christmas Bird Counts, Project FeederWatch, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and the Quebec Marsh Monitoring Program. He is a regular field trip leader and volunteers at the McGill Bird Observatory. Jean is always willing to take the time to point out the finer details about bird
Past Field Trip Reports

03/12/11 – Casselman & Ste-Rose-de-Prescott, Leader: Jacques Bouvier
45 species

Bird of the Day: Snowy Owl

Other Birds of Note: Sandhill Crane, Snow Goose, Canvasback, Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Pine Grosbeak, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull

03/12/11

14/01/12 – Bois de Liesse Nature Park, Montreal, QC
Leader: Wayne Grubert

Cold, breezy, -18C w/-28C wind chill  8 birders: 17 species

Bird of the Day: Northern Shrike

Other Birds of Note: Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Snow Bunting, House Finch

FORTHCOMING FIELD TRIPS
Late February to late April 2011

Trip Advice - De rigueur pour les excursions

Transportation: Contact the trip leader or the Songsparrow email group if you need or can offer a lift. Cancellations: Trips are rarely cancelled, but in case of extreme weather check with the leader. Clothing: Dress warmly and wear waterproof footwear, even if the day seems mild and dry. Food: Bring plenty to eat and drink, even on half-day trips.


Saturday 25 February- samedi 25 fevrier
Grenville - Lachute Area
Leader: Frédéric Hareau fredhareau1@yahoo.ca
514-815-8491 (cell phone on the day of the trip only)

8:00 a.m. From Montreal take Highway 40 to the Ontario border (40 km from Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue). Continue on Highway 417 and take Exit 9 (9 km) for Hawkesbury. Continue on Highway 17 approximately 7 km and take the Tupper Street exit on your right (signed for Province de/of Quebec). At 1.8 km at the T Junction, turn left on Main Street. After another 1.8 km, turn right onto John Street (opposite the big church). Continue on John St. across Long Sault Bridge over the Ottawa River. At the first traffic light in Grenville, QC, turn right on Rue Principale and make an immediate right into SAQ parking lot where we will meet. The distance is approximately 52 kilometres from the Île-aux-Tourtes Bridge at the west end of Montreal Island on Highway 40. We will explore a diversity of habitats in the area between Grenville and Lachute. It will be a driving trip, and some of the roads will not be paved. Looking for winter finches, raptors and waterfowl. Half day
ne sont pas asphaltées. Les oiseaux recherchés sont les fringilidés, les rapaces et la sauvagine. **Demi-journée.**

**Saturday 3 March - samedi 3 mars**
**Morgan Arboretum**
Leader: Betsy McFarlane  514-457-9315  
betsy.mcfarlane@sympatico.ca  
http://www.morganarboretum.org/

8:00 a.m. From Montreal take Highway 40 west, take exit 44 (Morgan Blvd.). Turn left on chemin Ste-Marie. Drive 1.4 km to second stop sign (at Arboretum road). Turn right. Drive 1 km to main parking on left. $5.00 admission charge for non-Arboretum members. Looking for woodpeckers, owls and migrants. **Half day.**

8h00 De Montréal, prendre l’autoroute 40 ouest, sortie 44 (boul. Morgan). Tourner à gauche sur le chemin Ste-Marie et continuer sur une distance de 1,4 km jusqu’au second arrêt (rue Arboretum). Tourner à droite et rouler sur une distance de 1 km jusqu’au stationnement principal, situé à gauche. Frais d’entrée : 5,00 $ pour les non-membres. Espèces recherchées : pics, hiboux et migrateurs. **Demi-journée.**

**Saturday 10 March - samedi 10 mars**
**Botanical Garden - Jardin Botanique de Montréal**
Leader:  David Mulholland  514-630-6082  
davidjhmulholland@sypatico.ca

8:00 a.m. Meet in front of the restaurant, near the entrance on Sherbrooke St. East. There is a charge for parking inside the gates. Looking for winter finches and early migrants. **Half day.**

8h00 Rassemblement devant le restaurant, près de l’entrée du jardin botanique situé sur la rue Sherbrooke Est. Des frais sont exigés pour le stationnement situé dans le jardin botanique. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d’hiver et migrateurs hâtifs. **Demi-journée.**

**Saturday 17 March - samedi 17 mars**
**Hudson**
Leader:  Barbara MacDuff  514-457-2222  
barb.macduff@sympatico.ca

8:00 a.m. Meet at the CPR station on Wharf Street in Hudson. Highway 40, exit 22 onto Côte St. Charles north, right on Main Street, left on Wharf Street. Looking for winter finches and early migrants. **Half day.**

8h00 Rassemblement à la gare C.P. sur la rue Wharf, à Hudson. Prendre l’autoroute 40, sortie 22, et tourner à droite sur la Côte St-Charles nord. Continuer jusqu’à la rue Main et tourner à droite sur celle-ci. Continuer jusqu’à la rue Wharf puis tourner à gauche sur celle-ci. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux d’hiver et migrateurs hâtifs. **Demi-journée.**

**Saturday 24 March - samedi 24 mars**
**Saint-Barthélemy Fields and the Berthier Islands**
Leader:  Joël Coutu  438-937-3252  
fauconbleu65@hotmail.com

8:00 A.M. Meet at the Tim Hortons, 1041 Ave Gilles Villeneuve, Berthierville. From Highway 40 East towards Québec, take exit 144 at Berthierville. Turn left (SouthEast) into Berthierville on Route 158 (Ave. Gilles Villeneuve) and continue to the Tim Horton’s on your right. Allow 45 minutes from Montreal. We will visit the islands and finish in the Saint-Barthélemy fields. Looking for geese, ducks, hawks and owls. Boots are strongly recommend. Carpooling is suggested. **Half day**

Saturday 31 March - samedi 31 mars
Parc des Rapides, LaSalle and Verdun Waterfront, Qc
Leader: Diane Demers  514-729-3051
ddemers03@hotmail.com
8:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot at Parc des Rapides, corner of LaSalle Blvd and 6th Avenue in Ville LaSalle (just east of Bishop Power Blvd). Take Hwy 20 to the Blvd de la Vérendrye exit. Heading west on de la Vérendrye, turn left onto the Stephens Street Bridge that crosses the acqueduct. Follow this street south to the waterfront on LaSalle Blvd. Turn right on LaSalle Blvd and follow it to the parking lot at the corner of 6th Avenue. Looking for waterfowl and early migrants. If there is enough time left, we will visit the riverfront at Nuns Island. Be prepared to drive. Half day.


Saturday 14 April - samedi 14 avril
Parc-Nature du Bois-de-l’Île-Bizard, QC
Leader: Felix Hilton  514-631-3437
hiltonfb@sympatico.ca
8:00 a.m. Hwy 40; exit St. Jean Blvd north to Gouin Blvd; left (west) on Gouin to Jacques Bizard Blvd; right (north) on Jacques Bizard Blvd, over bridge to Blvd Chevremont; left (west) on Chevremont to Montée de l’Église; right (north) on de l’Église to Ch. Bord-du-Lac; right (east) on Bord-du-Lac to park entrance, approx. 1 km. Parking: $8.00. Looking for waterfowl, hawks and migrating passerines. Half day.


Saturday 7 April - samedi 7 avril
Baie-du-Febvre, QC
Leaders: Jean Demers and Clémence Soulard
514-694-8240  jeandemers@sympatico.ca
8:30 a.m. Meet at the Route Janelle lookout at Baie du Fevrbe. Two possible driving routes. First route: Take Hwy 30 east to Sorel and then Hwy 132 east to Baie du Fevrbe. Look for Route Janelle on your left. Alternate route: Take Hwy 20 east to Exit 185 past Drummondville and then Rte 255 north to Hwy 132. Turn left and look for Rue Janelle almost immediately on your right. Allow 90 minutes driving time from Montreal. Looking for waterfowl, hawks, early spring migrants and thousands of migrating Snow Geese. All day.

Thursday 19 April – jeudi 19 avril
Thursdays, Thrushes and Thrashers for Beginners / Jeudis, Jaseurs et Geais pour débutants, Session 1
Parc-nature du Bois-de-l’Île-Bizard
Leader: Barbara MacDuff  514-457-2222
barb.macduff@sympatico.ca

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 PM Hwy 40; exit St-Jean Blvd north to Gouin Blvd; left (west) on Gouin to Jacques-Bizard Blvd; right (north) on Jacques-Bizard Blvd, over bridge to Blvd Chevremont; left (west) on Chevremont to Montée de l’Église; right (north) on de l’Église to Ch. Bord-du-Lac; right (east) on Bord-du-Lac to park entrance, approx. 1 km. Parking: $8.00.


Saturday 21 April - samedi 21 avril
Spontaneous Spring Outing: Location to be determined
Sortie printanière spontanée: Destination à confirmer
Leader: Sheldon Harvey  450-462-1459
ve2shw@yahoo.com

Early spring is an interesting but unpredictable time for birding as early, late or vagrant migrants may turn up just about anywhere. As a result, the destination of this trip will be determined mere days prior to the actual outing. The destination will be chosen based on a number of factors including weather conditions, bird activity and any special or rare bird sightings reported in the days leading up to the trip. Complete details of the field trip, including the destination, the start time, the meeting spot and the duration, will be posted on the BPQ webpage and on the Songsparrow Yahoo Group two or three days in advance of the Saturday outing. Le début du printemps est un moment intéressant mais imprévisible pour l’observation des oiseaux ; des migrateurs préoces, tardifs ou des visiteurs rares pouvant se retrouver à peu près n’importe où. En conséquence, la destination pour cette sortie ne sera confirmée que quelques jours avant qu’elle n’ait lieu. La destination sera déterminée en fonction d’un certain nombre de facteurs dont les conditions météorologiques, l’activité des oiseaux et la présence d’espèces rares ou spéciales signalée dans les jours précédant la sortie. Les informations détaillées concernant l’excursion, incluant la destination, l’heure de début, le lieu de rencontre et la durée, seront affichées sur la site internet de POQ et sur le groupe Yahoo Songsparrow deux ou trois jours avant la sortie.

Thursday 26 April – jeudi 26 avril
Thursdays, Thrushes and Thrashers for Beginners / Jeudis, Jaseurs et Geais pour débutants, Session 2
Morgan Arboretum
Leader: Barbara MacDuff  514-457-2222
barb.macduff@sympatico.ca

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 PM From Montreal take Hwy 40 west. Exit at exit 44 (Morgan Blvd). Turn left on chemin Ste-Marie. Drive 1.4 km to second stop sign (at Arboretum road). Turn right. Drive 1 km to main parking on left. $5.00 admission charge for non-Arboretum members.

9h00 - 12h00 De Montréal, prendre l’autoroute 40 ouest, sortie 44 (boul. Morgan). Tourner à gauche sur le chemin Ste-Marie et continuer sur une distance de 1,4 km jusqu’au second arrêt (rue Arboretum). Tourner à droite et rouler sur une distance de 1 km jusqu’au stationnement principal, situé à gauche. Frais d’entrée : 5,00 $ pour les non-membres.

Saturday 28 April - samedi 28 avril
Cooper Marsh
Leader: Martin Bowman  613-347-1655
pict@riverlink.ca

8:00 a.m. Take Highway 20 (Ontario Highway 401) and exit at Lancaster, Ontario (exit 814). Follow Highway 2 west, and follow signs to Cooper Marsh. Park in the gravel parking area. Allow 1 to
1-1/2 hours travel time. A walking trip. Looking for waterfowl, egrets, herons, hawks and passerines. Could be muddy. **Half day.**

**8h00** À partir de l’autoroute 20 (Ontario 401), prendre la sortie pour Lancaster, Ontario (sortie 814). Prendre l’autoroute 2 ouest et suivre les indications pour le marais Cooper. Prévoir entre 1h et 1h30 de voyage. Espèces recherchées : oiseaux aquatiques, de buses, de passereriaux. Excursion à pied. Des chaussures imperméables sont recommandées. **Demi-journée.**

**Thursday 3 May – jeudi 3 mai**  
**Parc-nature du Bois-de-l’Île-Bizard**  
**Thursdays, Thrushes and Thrashers for Beginners / Jeudis, Jaseurs et Geais pour débutants, Session 3**  
**Leader: Barbara MacDuff  514-457-2222  
barb.macduff@sympatico.ca**

**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 PM** Hwy 40; exit St-Jean Blvd north to Gouin Blvd; left (west) on Gouin to Jacques-Bizard Blvd; right (north) on Jacques-Bizard Blvd, over bridge to Blvd Chevremont; left (west) on Chevremont to Montée de l’Église; right (north) on de l’Église to Ch. Bord-du-Lac; right (east) on Bord-du-Lac to park entrance, approx. 1 km. Parking: $8.00.


**Jim Houghton Spring Warbler Walks on the Summit**

7:00 a.m. on Tuesdays April 24 and May 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29  
Summit Woods in Westmount is a wooded area transected by numerous footpaths. From mid-April to late May, spring migrants find the woods an attractive place in which to rest and feed. At least 33 warbler species have been seen over the years and about 24 warbler species are seen each year. Come out and participate in one or all of the Jim Houghton Spring Warbler Walks with an informal group of BPQ members. It's a perfect start to a spring day!

**Les marches printanières aux Parulines Jim Houghton au Bois Summit**

Les marches se tiendront les mardis 26 avril et les 3, 10, 17 et 24 mai à 7h00 au Bois Summit de Westmount. Le parc offre un secteur boisé traversé par de nombreux sentiers. De la mi-avril à la fin mai, les migrateurs printaniers trouvent cet endroit attrayant et s’arrêtent pour se reposer et s’alimenter. Au cours des années, quelques 33 espèces de Parulines ont été répertoriées et environ 24 espèces sont observées à chaque année. Vous êtes invités à vous joindre à l’une ou toutes les marches printanières avec un groupe amical des membres du POQ. C’est une belle façon de commencer une journée du printemps.
The Gault Nature Reserve on Mont Saint-Hilaire: a Biological Field Station

The Gault Nature Reserve, 40 km south-east of Montreal, was acquired by McGill University in 1958 and covers an area of 1,002 hectares. Geologically it is interesting as it rises to a height of 414 metres out of the St. Lawrence River plain. It has a mixed habitat of forest, lake, streams and wetlands. More than 120 species of birds, about 40 species of mammals and an astonishing number of plants (600 species of vascular plants) have been observed at the Reserve. As a biological field station, the main mission is to support academic and research activities at the Reserve and in Montérégie. The current research interests of professors and students working at the reserve are aquatic ecosystems, land use changes, forest corridors, insects, ecosystem services and climate change. Come and visit this magical oasis so close to the huge metropolitan area of Montreal!

David Maneli has a B.A. in Wildlife Biology from McGill (2003) with a special interest in botany and ecology. He also has an M.A. from UQAM. Working on a project, with the Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN), on stream macroinvertebrates at the Gault Nature Reserve was life-defining for him, and he has worked there since 2009. As the Conservation and Academic Affairs Administrator, he liaises with all levels of government and is responsible for the academic and research activities at the reserve.

March 5

Feathering One's Nest

Where does Bird’s Nest Soup come from? How do relics from two centuries ago end up in cormorants' nests? Which birds incubate their eggs in an Easy-Bake Oven? What nesting bird saved thousands of human lives in South America? How do birds build their nests so that their eggs do not end up as an omelette for a hungry predator? The answers to these questions, along with many more, will be revealed by Professor David Bird in yet another whimsical instalment of his Ornithology 101 lectures.

As a Full Professor of Wildlife Biology and Director of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre of McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Dr. David Bird has published over 175 scientific papers on birds of prey and supervised over 40 graduate students. He has written and/or edited several books, the most recent ones being Birds of Canada (published by Dorling Kindersley) and The Bird Almanac: A Guide to Essential Facts and Figures on the World’s Birds.

Dr. Bird is a regular columnist for the Montreal Gazette as well as for BirdWatcher’s Digest magazine and its newsletter, Backyard Bird News.
Tracking bird movements at different scales

With Jean-François Giroux, Professeur titulaire, Département des sciences biologiques, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and board member of Société Duvetnor.

Ornithologists have always been fascinated by bird movement and have thus developed different devices for marking individuals to understand the where, when and why of bird movement. During this talk, we will concentrate on three species studied by our group: Canada Geese, Common Eiders and Ring-billed Gulls. We have used several techniques including some recently developed miniature GPS loggers to track the local, regional and long-distance movements of these birds during different parts of their annual cycle. We will compare the advantages and disadvantages of the various markers and give examples of how the data obtained from these programs can be used to study the ecology and behaviour of these species. Some techniques rely mostly on the work of students and technicians, but others greatly depend on public participation including bird watchers and hunters. Citizen Science has become increasingly important in recent years and has been facilitated by the power of the Internet. You will learn how you can participate in these research programs.

An early April Nebraska trip was something I had long wished for...

by Sylvia Wees

In the dark, we waited in an old school bus blind beside a lek for the predawn dance of male Greater Prairie Chickens. We could hear the males approaching through the gloom, producing an eerie moaning sound until 14 birds were disposed in a circle on the hilltop. The alpha male was at the centre, and he was scarred from previous battles. Others challenged him in an incredible display of dancing, flapping, feather-raising, fencing with sharp claws, and making the booming sound that inflated the orange sacks on the sides of their necks.

Two female Greater Prairie Chickens fed in the short grass nearby and barely seemed to notice. One made a cursory inspection and left without choosing a mate. Maybe tomorrow.

We were taken to the lek by the Calamus Outfitters ranch which offers a variety of services to birders, hunters, and rafters, joining with two other ranches to become an Important Bird Area (IBA). A raft of White Pelicans floated on the nearby lake and Western Meadowlarks sang from the fence posts. We could have stayed on for sightings of Sharp-tailed Grouse and other open country species, but we had timed our visit to coincide with the beginning of the lek dances and the end of the Sandhill Crane migration. So we drove south to Kearney to a reserved space in a blind at the Rowe Sanctuary right beside the Platte River. We saw Sandhill Cranes by the twenties and hundreds all day, feeding diligently in the cut corn, but the dusk fly-in of a quarter million Lesser Sandhill Cranes to nighttime roosts on the mud bars in the river is truly a Wonder of the Western World. We were obliged to enter the blind in daylight and wait quietly until the sundown signal for the fly-in. The cranes arrive in pairs, bugling and flapping and dancing on the mud bars, filling the spaces, then others, until it seemed as though there could be no more. A coyote trailed through the bushes on the opposite bank and a cacophony of birds moved to more remote roosts. A lone Whooping Crane was spotted far up the river. And then, as it grew dark, the bugling tapered off and the cranes began to settle for the night. We quietly left the blind.

The whole area was once the shallow waters of the Great Inland Sea (Western Interior Seaway) that separated the North American continent into two highlands. It was filled with marine life, including early birds. Its retreat left a wide shallow basin of rich loam that was dense with grass. The loam now supports agriculture, but north of the remnants of the Tallgrass Prairie, the Sandhills of Nebraska support cattle ranching and a varied though diminishing birdlife. The first week of April and the last week of March are good times for viewing.
Sylvia Wees is a long-standing member of Bird Protection Quebec. She is the former Membership Secretary and continues to be responsible for correspondence with Life Members. Her work on bird censuses includes leading the Bois de Liesse sector of the Christmas Bird Count, and compiling the data for last spring’s Mt. Tremblant census. In recognition of her endeavors, BPQ presented Sylvia with a 2009 long-term service award.

John’s Parrot

A young man named John received a parrot as a gift. The parrot had a bad attitude and an even worse vocabulary. Every word out of the bird’s mouth was rude, obnoxious and laced with profanity. John tried and tried to change the bird’s attitude by consistently saying only polite words, playing soft music and anything else he could think of to “clean up” the bird’s vocabulary. Finally, John was fed up and he yelled at the parrot. The parrot yelled back. John shook the parrot and the parrot got angrier and even ruder.

John, in desperation, threw up his hand, grabbed the bird and put him in the freezer.

For a few minutes the parrot squawked and kicked and screamed. Then suddenly there was total quiet. Not a peep was heard for over a minute.

Fearing that he’d hurt the parrot, John quickly opened the door to the freezer. The parrot calmly stepped out onto John’s outstretched arms and said "I believe I may have offended you with my rude language and actions. I’m sincerely remorseful for my inappropriate transgressions and I fully intend to do everything I can to correct my rude and unforgivable behaviour."

John was stunned at the change in the bird’s attitude. As he was about to ask the parrot what had made such a dramatic change in his behaviour, the bird spoke-up, very softly and said, "May I ask what the turkey did?"

New Directors

All members are encouraged to get involved in the nomination of new Directors for the BPQ Board. The deadline for the 2012-2014 term is April 16, 2012.

For more information, visit http://goo.gl/Tr5EC

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BPQ Birding Calendar
to April 2012
Full details are on our website at
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Lecture
Monday 6 February
The Gault Nature Reserve on Mont Saint-Hilaire - David Maneli

Field trip
Saturday 11 February - samedi 11 février
Chateauguay, Rue Higgins & Sainte-Catherine Récré-O-Parc

Field trip
Saturday 18 February - samedi 18 février
Sainte-Marthe, Saint-Clet, Sainte-Justine

Winter lecture series
February 22, 7:30pm
“Rise and Shine, it’s Dark Outside!”
The secret lives of Whip-poor-wills and Common Nighthawks
Gregory Rand

Field trip
Saturday 25 February- samedi 25 février
GRENVILLE - LACHUTE AREA

Field trip
Saturday 3 March - samedi 3 mars
Morgan Arboretum - Arboretum Morgan

Lecture
Monday 5 March
Feathering One’s Nest - David Bird

Winter lecture series
March 7, 8:00pm
“Let’s Enjoy Our Ducks”
Tips to identify North American Waterfowl
Rodger Titman

Field trip
Saturday 10 March - samedi 10 mars
Botanical Garden - Jardin Botanique de Montréal, QC

Field trip
Saturday 17 March - samedi 17 mars
HUDSON

Winter lecture series
March 21, 7:30pm
“The Early Bird Gets the … Grub”
The intricate lives of birds and insects; co-evolution and adaptation - Chris Cloutier

Field trip
Saturday 24 March - samedi 24 mars
Saint-Barthélemy Fields and the Berthier Islands

Field trip
Saturday 31 March - samedi 31 mars
Parc des Rapides, LaSalle and Verdun Waterfront, QC

Lecture
Monday 2 April
Tracking Bird Movement - Jean-François Giroux

Field trip
Saturday 7 April - samedi 7 avril
Baie-du-Febvre, QC

Field trip
Saturday 14 April - samedi 14 avril
Parc-Nature du Bois-de-l’Île-Bizard, QC

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