Beautiful in greyscale, but stunning in colour: *The Song Sparrow* is going electronic!

Starting with the first edition in 2009, *The Song Sparrow* will be a downloadable PDF document following BPQ’s Board approval of a proposal put forward by the Communications Committee.

There are three issues until the switch. Each issue will carry a reminder of how interesting, informative and ecological these e-issues will be; the first one is illustrated here. With an electronic format, not only are we saving trees and money, but we’re able to enhance the newsletter and use it to its full potential.

The Communications Committee has carefully considered the arguments for and against, and colour is only the tip of the iceberg. The costs of electronic distribution are very small and already budgeted for, so by going electronic, we’re liberating a minimum of $4,200 for other projects each year. Over the next five years, this would give BPQ an additional $21,000 for conservation and research projects. The Board has been considering targeting a specific project to which these savings might be directed. Though several worthy projects have already been suggested (e.g. improvement of the boardwalk at Philipsburg, installation of a bilingual kiosk at one of Montreal’s Nature Parks, increased research grants, enhanced support for the McGill Bird Observatory, etc.), we are turning to you for additional suggestions. Please send your submissions to the email address below and have your say.

Thinking of it in terms of trees, during the last 12 months we have printed 48,000 pages for *The Song Sparrow* alone. When we have the option of eliminating this amount of paper, as an organization whose mission dictates that we must protect birds and their habitats, how can we not do it? Internet accessibility shouldn’t be a problem since at least 75% of BPQ members have Internet access, and the vast majority also have broadband connections. Nevertheless, we will always ensure that a small number of printed copies will continue to be made available for those unable to receive the electronic edition, for archiving and publicity purposes, etc.

An email announcing each issue will be sent out, inviting BPQ members to download the file, so we need everyone’s email addresses: no address, no issue! In the meantime, simply hit reply with “Electronic Only” in the subject line if you wish to discontinue the paper version before January.

I’m coming in as editor of *The Song Sparrow* at a very exciting time. The Communications Committee and Gay Gruner (former editor extraordinaire) have thoroughly examined the issue and I know that they and the Board have come to the right decision. Many other organizations are slowly going electronic. Much like the founding members of BPQ 90 years ago, we are leading the way, though in an admittedly different arena. I do hope you support this new venture, and invite you to submit your thoughts to me at the address below.

Marie-Anne Hudson

Please send your preferred email address and comments to mhudson@videotron.ca

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I hope everyone has had a happy summer with lots of birds, sun, family and friends. Welcome all to a new season of birding, lectures and friendship with Bird Protection Quebec.

A piece of welcome news came to us via OrnithoQC this summer: the town of Boucherville has purchased the piece of woods we still call ‘La Saulaie’ because it is across the road from the former restaurant of that name. Many of us have counted on it as an owl refuge in the depths of winter: Great Horned, Long-eared, Saw-whet and Boreal have all been seen regularly. The property has been for sale for some time and the fear was that it would be developed for housing, sending the owls searching for new roosts. Apparently the wise councillors of Boucherville have listened to the protests of local nature-lovers and will add these few acres to their already attractive Parc de la Frayère. Congratulations to the politicians and citizens of Boucherville. Citizen advocacy works! Sometimes.

At the AGM in May we welcomed two new members and one returning member to our Board of Directors. They are Marie-Hélène Gauthier, Patrick Asch and Barbara MacDuff. I know we will keep them busy and that they will make a lively contribution to the running of the Society. Congratulations too for the award winners for all their mighty efforts on our behalf: Gail Desnoyers, Barbara MacDuff, Lance Laviollette, Roger Bider, Patrick Asch, Sheila Arthur and Betsy Barber (posthumously).

We were sad to learn of the death, on 30 June 2008, of David Sergeant, long-time member of BPQ, avid traveller, birder and noted cetologist - particularly in the study of beluga whales and harp seals. David was a member of the Board of Directors for many years, was co-founder of the Hudson Christmas Bird Count, which he hosted most congenially, and was given the BPQ Long-time Service Award in 2007. His wry humour, telling comments and deep understanding of the natural world will be greatly missed.

I hope to see many of you at the first field trip in August and the monthly meeting in October. In the meantime,

Good birding to everyone,

Eve Marshall

Welcome New Members

A hearty hello and bienvenue to our new members, and welcome back to our returning ones: Helena Arroyo, Montreal; Patrick Asch, LaSalle; H. D. Sandy Ayer, Calgary; Georgine Bissoin Doyal, Île Bizard; Gabrielle Girouard, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu; Jo Ann Goldwater, Montreal-West; Ruth Macoosh, Montreal; Nelson McDonald, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu; Diane Mercier, Montreal; Johanna Ryffel, Sutton; Denis St Germain, Montreal. We look forward to meeting you on our field trips and monthly meetings.

Bird Protection Quebec Monthly Meetings 2008-2009

Meetings are held at 7:30pm at Knox Crescent Kensington and First Presbyterian Church, 6225 Godfrey Avenue, NDG.
(between Grand Boulevard & Kensington Ave, 1½ blocks north of Sherbrooke, bus #105)

6 October, 3 November, 1 December 2008, 5 January, 2 February 2 March, 6 April, 11 May 2009 (AGM)
In Memoriam

David Sergeant spent three years of his childhood in Northern China. It was here that a teacher introduced him to bird watching. David continued birding when he moved back to England but it wasn’t until he moved to St. Johns, Newfoundland that he participated in his first Christmas count.

David and his family lived in many cities in Canada, but no matter where they were, David always gravitated to the local birding club. He and his family moved to Montreal in 1955 when David began working at McGill University with Ian McLaren. It was Ian who introduced David to BPQ (then PQSPB).

David and Ian did a bird census on Mont St. Hilaire in the sixties, when David found evidence of nesting Cerulean Warblers, a first for Quebec. David was a PQSPB director from 1958 to 1964 and edited the society’s monthly newsletter. In 1958, David headed PQSPB’s program of nest record cards, initiated by Cornell University. He built and placed many Wood Duck boxes in the Hudson area and was pleased with the results. He participated annually in the Hudson and Montreal Christmas counts, and he and his wife Johanne graciously hosted the Hudson after-count social for many, many years. David was also active in our field trips, and led the Como part of the Hudson trip for many years. He knew the woods very well and knew where to find birds, but you had to be athletic to keep up with him.

Our 1962 annual report states that David received a medal from the Royal Humane Society for saving the life of a child who had fallen through the ice at the Verdun waterfront. We can assume he was birding at the time, likely scanning for gulls.

David travelled the world to observe birds and nature, and conversation with him was always fascinating. He will be missed.

Barbara MacDuff

Since the DDT catastrophe: how are chemical pollutants affecting birds today?

Sarah Marteinson in front of Lake Louise.

with Sara Marteinson
Monday 6 October 2008 at 7:30 PM

Thousands of chemical pollutants have been introduced into the environment since DDT was banned, but we rarely hear about how they are affecting birds today. One such class of chemicals is brominated flame retardants (BFRs). BFRs are added to many commercial products for the purpose of fire prevention. BFRs are similar in nature to PCBs but less well understood. The chemical properties of BFRs allow them to disperse through air and water as well as accumulate in wildlife. They may be particularly injurious to wildlife at the top of the food chain such as raptors. Since their introduction in the 1970s, BFRs have been increasing in the environment and wildlife at exponential rates and have reached a global distribution. Current research on these chemicals indicates a variety of physiological effects including the disruption of hormonal and neurological systems.

Sarah Marteinson is studying the effects of exposure to two kinds of BFRs on captive male American Kestrels (Falco sparverius) at the Avian Science and Conservation Centre at McGill University. She hopes to determine if and how these chemicals will affect birds in the wild. Sarah is focusing her research on how BFRs affect reproduction in kestrels, including effects on courtship and brood rearing behaviour, as well as some physiological factors. Preliminary results are pointing to serious effects including decreased copulation frequency, an increase in testis weight, and an overall decrease in fertility.

Sarah has always had a passion for wildlife and the environment. She completed a Bachelor’s degree in zoology at McGill in 2000, a Master’s degree in biological anthropology at the University of Calgary in 2003, and is presently working on her PhD at McGill. Her presentation will address some of the challenges birds face from exposure to the myriad of chemical pollutants that have been introduced since DDT, and will also delve into some of the specifics of her research.

Jeff Harrison

David Sergeant (foreground) peering through his binos during a field trip to Oka.
Ecology and Management of Bobolinks

On 7 April, Barbara Frei discussed some of her findings from her study of Bobolinks in southern Quebec and Ontario. Barbara is co-supervised by Drs. David Bird and Rodger Titman of McGill University. Anyone who has discussed bird issues with Barbara knows that she is very well informed and passionate about grassland species and the management and conservation of this amazing habitat.

Life history—The Bobolink is one of the most recognizable passerines in North America, often referred to as “skunk blackbird” because the male appears to be wearing a backwards tuxedo. Bobolinks spend nearly seven months of the year in migration between wintering sites in Argentina and northern breeding areas. This yields a round-trip migration of nearly 20,000 km, one of the longest recorded for any New World passerine.

Concerns—Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1980-2006 indicate significant declines for Bobolinks in Canada (5% annual decline) and the US (1%). Severe population declines are also occurring for other grassland breeding species: Savannah Sparrow, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks. A variety of land-use changes, most notably loss of hay fields, increased alfalfa production, and harvesting of cool-season grasses during the nesting stage have contributed to these losses.

Results—Barbara is studying the Bobolink’s nesting ecology in southern Quebec (Hemmingford and Bois-de-la-Roche) and Atocas Bay, Ontario, with a goal of providing landowners with land-use strategies that will benefit breeding Bobolinks without reducing crop productivity. She is interested in determining: 1) whether Bobolinks select certain nest-site characteristics; and 2) the nest success at these sites. In 2006 and 2007, Barbara measured many habitat characteristics including vegetative cover, litter depth, and percent forbs at over 50 nest and random sites. Bobolinks preferred nesting at sites with high vegetative cover and forbs, which are likely important in reducing predator detection and access. Higher rates of nest depredation were associated with increased litter depth, suggesting that litter may provide concealed corridors for small mammalian egg predators (e.g. mice, weasels). Nest success (% of nests to fledge young) was nearly 35% for all nests but varied considerably between sites.

Management—Bobolink nest success would increase considerably if farmers delayed crop harvest until the majority of young fledged. Fledging success may be less than 40% when fields are cut prior to 25 June but 95% successful if crops are cut after 1 July, when most fledglings have sufficiently developed wings to escape cutting machines. Producers should also consider planting a mixture of grasses and forbs, particularly since the latter provide concealment of nest sites and may be an important food source for adults in spring.

Barbara is extremely appreciative of the role that BPQ has played throughout her graduate work. She was awarded financial support from the Alfred B. Kelly Memorial Fund in support of her work.

Shawn Craik

Fall Migration Monitoring at MBO

Bird banding provides a unique opportunity to gather information regarding the timing and routing of migration, survival rates, social structures, population trends, and more. Even for the most common species, such research continues to reveal surprises, while for species of concern it provides critical data for the planning of conservation and management efforts.

The McGill Bird Observatory (MBO) is gearing up for fall migration. Volunteers are needed to fill the many roles that are essential to the operation of the station: observers, net assistants, scribes and banders. For more details, please visit www.migrationresearch.org/mbo.html.
En cette année où le BIGBY est de plus en plus populaire, je vous propose aujourd'hui un petit jeu sympa
tique et tout aussi écologique que j'ai commençé à mettre en pratique depuis peu. Les règles du jeu sont simples : vous devez avoir du temps à perdre dans un endroit plus ou moins inspirant pour les oiseaux.

Comme à chaque printemps, je vais faire le rituel que tous les automobilistes pratiquent sous nos latitudes soit le changement des pneus d'hiver pour des pneus d'été. Et comme à chaque session chez le garagiste, je dois perdre un temps précieux à attendre que le boulot soit fait. Bref, je suis là à tourner en rond à ne savoir trop quoi faire. L'environnement est tout à fait l'inverse du paysage bucolique : le garage est situé sur un boulevard très achalandé face à un centre d'achat. Sa cour latérale, où sont stationnées les voitures en attente de réparation, est adjacente au mur de brique d'un petit bâtiment commercial. On retrouve une station de métro au coin de la rue. Moi qui, à chaque printemps, cours après tous les oiseaux revenant du Sud, je me sens prisonnier d'un enfer bétonné.

Puis en portant attention sur le mur de brique du voisin, je vois bien qu'il se passe quelque chose : deux couples de moineaux nichent dans des infrastructures de ce mur. Je me plais à observer le rituel de ces moineaux que j'ignore trop souvent. Je constate après tout que même dans des lieux aussi inhospitaliers, on réussit à trouver une vie aviaire.

Je pense soudainement à un article qui a fait récemment dans Birders World où Pete Dunne raconte un arrêt inopiné qu'il fait par hasard sur la tombe d'un jeune enfant passionné des oiseaux*. En mémoire du défunt, il se met alors au défi de trouver dix espèces autour de la tombe. Pourquoi ne pas relever ce même défi ? Bon… je n'ai aucune personne de qui honorer la mémoire, mais j'ai du temps à perdre. Je m'y lance donc : je dois trouver dix espèces avant que ma voiture ne soit chaussée des pneus d'été.

Le début est facile. J'ai déjà les moineaux sur ma liste, les étourneaux suivent rapidement puis un couple de pigeons passe en vitesse et, après un petit silence, se pointe un Goéland à bec cerclé. Il est à noter que nous sommes assez tôt en saison et que les goélands ne sont pas encore installés partout dans la ville. J'en suis à quatre espèces dans une cadence raisonnablement rapide, mais le plus dur reste à faire.

J'ai presque toujours une surprise lors de mes observations. Ma petite surprise lors de ce défi a été le passage à basse altitude en pleine ville d'une volée de bernaches qui m'a permis d'ajouter une cinquième espèce à ma liste. Pendant ce temps, on commence à s'affairer autour de ma voiture.

Après les bernaches, je vois difficilement ce qui pourrait suivre. Pour forcer la note, je vais dans la rue du garage où je découvre une parcelle de végétation et des résidences. J'entends alors deux chants coup sur coup : le Merle d'Amérique, sûrement le plus dur. Je suis à cinq espèces. Je portes mon regard au loin et me sens prisonnier d'un enfer bétonné. Je veux être bien au contraire farouche à retrouver le Junco ardoisé que j'avais vu un peu plus loin. Il ne manque plus qu'une espèce et le compte y est !

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Après les bernaches, je vois difficilement ce qui pourrait suivre. Pour forcer la note, je vais dans la rue derrière le garage où je découvre une parcelle de végétation et des résidences. J’entends alors deux chants coup sur coup : le Merle d’Amérique, sûrement fraîchement arrivé de sa migration et le Cardinal rouge. Sept espèces !

Rendu à ce point, je commence sérieusement à tourner en rond. Je ne trouve rien. Je triche un peu et marche dans la rue adjacente à la cour arrière. À quelques maisons de là, je perçois le cri fin du Junco ardoisé… Je veux être bon joueur et je refuse de l’ajouter à la liste car je suis trop loin du garage. Simplifier les règles enlevait le charme de mon défi.


Tout semble fini : les pneus sont rivés et le garagiste descend ma voiture au sol. Non ! Il faut que je trouve… Je fais le tour pour une sixième fois de la perspective avant sans rien trouver. Je m’apprette à aller payer la facture quand, du coin de l’œil, je vois un mouvement dans le ciel. Je cours en avant du garage puis je vois passer en vol l’espèce qui me permettra de gagner mon pari : un Geai bleu ! Croyez-le ou non, ce Geai bleu m’a mis de bonne humeur pour le restant de la journée.

J’ai réussi de justesse mon défi. Est-ce que ça fait de moi un observateur aussi bon que Pete Dunne ? Sûrement pas ! Mais le jeu est plaisant. Il vaut la peine d’être tenté et permet de passer le temps de façon agréable dans des circonstances contraignantes. Ça nous permet aussi de constater qu’avec un peu de persistance, peu importe le lieu, on réussit souvent à trouver des oiseaux auxquels on ne s’attend pas toujours. Daniel Ouellette

Turr Hunting in Newfoundland and the Strait of Belle Isle

with Kathleen Blanchard
Monday 3 November 2008 at 7:30 PM

Newfoundland and Labrador is the only region in North America where Common and Thick-billed Murres, also called “turrs,” are hunted legally. The hunting of turrs began long before Confederation as a subsistence activity for residents of isolated fishing communities. In recent decades it has developed into a recreational activity that is managed through licensing and with seasonal and bag/possession limits.

At the border region between Quebec and Labrador in the Strait of Belle Isle lies Île aux Perroquets, owned by BPQ and designated as an important seabird area as part of the Baie de Brador Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Île aux Perroquets is home to Quebec’s largest breeding colony of Atlantic Puffins as well as smaller populations of Razorbill and Common Murre. What, if any, impact does turr hunting have on the breeding birds of Île aux Perroquets? To what extent is turr hunting still pursued? This talk will discuss some of the traditions associated with the Newfoundland turr hunt that are still important today.

Kathleen Blanchard is founder and President of Intervale Associates Inc., a non-profit organization with the mission to conserve biodiversity, interpret heritage and protect the integrity of rural livelihoods. For 25 years she was employed by the Quebec-Labrador Foundation, during which she led a long-term effort to engage residents of the Quebec Lower North Shore in the stewardship of seabird colonies including Île aux Perroquets. Bird Protection Quebec was a leading partner in that collaborative effort, which gained international recognition for its community-based approach. During the 1980s to early 1990s, several BPQ members travelled with Kathleen to visit Île aux Perroquets as well as other seabird colonies. She will bring us up to date on her conservation work and how Intervale is encouraging the stewardship of marine fish and wildlife populations in the Newfoundland and Gulf of St. Lawrence regions.

Barbara MacDuff

Big Sit Report 2008

Cold, breezy, wet weather through much of the holiday weekend in May resulted in a very low number of birders submitting reports for this year’s Big Sit event. Only three observers managed to find the right combination of time and elements to participate in our annual sedentary birding experience, albeit from several well-spaced locations.

Your compiler saw or heard 43 species from his regular location in Hudson, the highlight of which was a calling Sora. Barbara MacDuff had 24 species including a Common Raven at Fulford in the Eastern Townships and Martin Bowman had 10 species at the Carden Alvar in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario. Martin’s seemingly low count is actually extremely impressive as it was done in clear, cold conditions at dusk under an almost full moon with all his species being heard and not seen. Included was a Barred Owl which was a first for this ‘competition’ and brought our cumulative total over 12 years to 197 species.

Let’s hope for better weather next year so we can all participate and put our overall total over the 200 species mark.

Wayne Grubert

Education

Bird Protection Quebec’s Education Committee accompanied two Grade 5 classes (49 children) from Saint John Fisher School to Bois-de-l’Île-Bizard. This was a follow-up to bird projects that the children had been working on in the classroom.

Highlights were Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Yellow Warbler, Mallard and a Canada Goose sitting on a nest. Also enjoyed were Painted Turtles and frogs. The children enjoyed a picnic lunch at the end of the morning before returning to school. Thanks to David Mulholland for initiating the project and to Jean Demers, Felix Hilton, Marlene Hornstein, Clémence Soulard, and Audrey Speck for their help.

Barbara MacDuff

Awards

We are entirely dependent on our volunteer membership for our operations. At our Annual General Meeting in May, the Awards Committee recognized the following members and other individuals for their outstanding contributions:

Member of the Year: Gail Desnoyers
Service Award: Barbara MacDuff
Education External: Roger Bider
Conservation Award Internal: Lance Laviolette
Conservation Award External: Patrick Asch
Long-term Service Award: Sheila Arthur and Betsy Barber (posthumously)

Each winner received a newly designed framed certificate, a letter signed by our President, and a bird book or CD.

Jeff Harrison
Jim Houghton Memorial Spring Warbler Walks, Summit Park, Westmount

22/04/08  **Weather:** Clear and calm, patches of hard snow on trails.  **16 birders  30 species**

**Birds of Note:** Sharp-shinned Hawk, N. Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Fox and White-throated Sparrows.

29/04/08  **Weather:** Overcast, cool northwest wind.  **4 birders  9 species**

**Birds of Note:** Ring-billed Gull, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, N. Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch.

6/05/08  **Weather:** Sunny with occasional cloudy periods.  **32 birders  39 species**

**Birds of Note:** Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush; 7 warbler species: Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Ovenbird.

13/05/08  **Weather:** Clear spring morning.  **11+ birders  32 species**

**Birds of Note:** Sharp-shinned hawk, Merlin, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, E. Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush; 8 warbler species: Nashville, N. Parula, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Ovenbird.

20/05/08  **Weather:** Windy.  **4 birders  26 species**

**Birds of Note:** E. Screech-Owl, Chimney Swift; 10 warbler species: Tennessee, Nashville, N. Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat.

27/05/08  **Weather:** Overcast and cool.  **15 birders  27 species**

**Birds of Note:** Merlin, Black-billed Cuckoo, E. Screech-Owl, Chimney Swift, E. Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher; 6 warbler species: Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Am. Redstart; Scarlet Tanager.

A well-anticipated event every spring, the arrival of our most colourful birds, the warblers, was made all the more special this year with a serviceberry tree planted May 16 to honour the memory of Jim Houghton, birder and warbler-lover.

Betty and Barbara Houghton, Jim’s daughters, are standing beside the Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*) planted in memory of their father by BPQ. Jim was a long-time member of BPQ and led the May early morning warbler walks on Westmount Summit for many years. The tree is described as a “large shrub or small tree with beautiful fall colours; white spring flowers give way to ¼” fruit loved by birds”. It is planted just below the lookout in Sunnyside Park.

**Kyra Emo**

Membership Renewals

Membership renewals for 2008-2009 will be in the mail soon. Thanks to those members who renew prior to 1 October, which saves us postage, paper, and time in sending reminders. As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have increased our membership fees, which were last increased nine years ago. We hope to count on your understanding and will continue to support Bird Protection Quebec.

Renewal is also a good opportunity to update your member profile. Bird Protection Quebec relies solely on volunteers to carry out its numerous functions and you can help! It is the enthusiasm and talents of our members that make Bird Protection Quebec an active and vital voice in the bird world. Please take an extra moment to update your volunteer and membership information.

The renewal notice also includes an option to make a tax-deductible contribution to Bird Protection Quebec. Support from members is a key source of funding for our conservation and education programs. Thank you to all who have contributed in the past. We appreciate your support.

**Sharon Veysey**
Bilans des observations intéressantes à travers la province
par Pierre Bannon

Communiquez vos observations intéressantes à:
Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montréal, QC H4E 1P1. Tél: 514-766-8767 en soirée/after 7:00 PM. Courriel: pbannon@videotron.ca

Summary of interesting bird observations from around the province
by Pierre Bannon

March-Mai 2008


Grue du Canada: 2 nids ont été documentés dans le sud de la province, l’un avec un œuf à Dundee le 26 avril (A. Quenneville) (un gruon noté le 29 mai) et l’autre avec 2 œufs à l’île du Grand-Calumet le 15 mai (M. Macquart, fide D. Toussaint). Pluvier siffleur: un oiseau à Fatima le 20 avril

March-May 2008

Mute Swan: a group of 5 birds appeared in the Saint-Blaise area 7 March and remained until at least 21 April (D. Jutras, m. ob.). Singles were also at Yamaska 20 April (M. Cournoyer, J. Gélinas), and at Saint-Barthélémy 2-11 May (O. Barden et al., m. ob.). Trumpeter Swan: again, some birds stayed into the Abitibi region where 3 were found at Rouyn-Noranda 4-5 May (R. Delorme, C. Montémurro, Y. Charron, L. Imbeau, ph.) and 2 wing-tagged birds appeared at Lac Duparquet 8 May. One of these had been banded at Hamilton, Ont., last spring and had been seen at Lac Duparquet last fall (J. Lapointe et al.). These birds will likely be found nesting in Quebec in the near future.

Tundra Swan: one was hanging around the upper Richelieu valley 24-30 March (R. & G. Boulet, m. ob.). Eurasian X American Wigeon: this rare hybrid was photographed at Rouyn-Noranda 5 May (L. Imbeau). Garganey: a male was found at Saint-Anne-de-Sorel with a group of 400 Greenwinged Teals 28 April-4 May (J. Lemoyne, m. ob., ph. S. Denault). This also provided the earliest spring record for Quebec. Possibly the same bird was spotted at Montmagny 6 May (C. Lamontagne, G. Poisson). Canvasback: a group of 8 birds at Magog 15-18 March (B. Turgeon), 2 at Verdun 30 March-3 April (D. Demers, m. ob.), one at La Baie 13-14 April (M. Tremblay, S. Tremblay et al.), one at Nicolet 17-20 April (S. Saint-Louis, J. Gélinas), and finally 2 at Beauport 18 April (G. Cyr, G. Lord). Common Pochard: a male was photographed and seen by many at Saint-Barthélémy 2-11 May (O. Barden, I. Lechasseur); on 3 May, a carefully described female was accompanying the male (F. Grenon). As with most Eurasian exotic ducks, these birds’ origin will likely remain a mystery. Only one record, a male seen repeatedly in California in 1989-1992, has been documented for North America outside Alaska. Tufted Duck: a male was seen at Saint-Barthélémy 27 April (R. Piché et al.). Common Eider: 3 birds identified at Nicolet 28 April (S. Guimond). Wild Turkey: one at Huberdeau 18 May provided an interesting addition to a few recent sightings in the Laurentians (S. Maillé et al.).

Tricolor Heron: now quite regular in spring, singles were at Neuville 27 May (P. Lane, P. Bruneau), and at Rimouski 31 May (A. & F. Villeneuve). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: an ad. photographed at Repentigny 26 April (R. Prévost). Glossy Ibis: a group of 5 at l’île à l’Aigle (Varennes) 24 April (F. Saint-Pierre, fide M. Robert), singles at Yamachiche 10-11 May (C. Mailléou, F. Vivier), and at Baie-Comeau 24 May (JP. Barry).

Sandhill Crane: 2 nests were documented in the south, the first with one egg at Dundee 26 April (A. Quenneville) (a chick was in the nest 29 May), and the second with 2 eggs at Île du Grand-Calumet 15 May (M. Macquart, fide D. Toussaint).

Piping Plover: a bird at Fatima 20 April was record-early (A. Richard). A banded bird was found at Saint-Barthélémy 27 May (P. Franche, A. Gosselin, ph.). It was brought to our

Parlons d’oiseaux

Please report your interesting bird observations to:

Pierre Bannon, 1517 Leprohon, Montréal, QC H4E 1P1. Tél: 514-766-8767 en soirée/after 7:00 PM. Courriel: pbannon@videotron.ca

Bird Protection Quebec

The Song Sparrow August 2008


Tourterelle à ailes blanches: une à Saint-Honoré-de-Chicoutimi 13-17 avril, une première au Lac-Saint-Jean-Beaconsfield (C. Luffer) le 20 avril rééditait la mention la plus hâtive, alors que 3 indiv. à La Vernière (IDLM) le 30 avril étaient exceptionnels aussi au nord (B. Vigneault).

Pic à ventre roux: 3 oiseaux signalés dans la région de Montréal et un à Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse 1-4 mai (C. Girard). Troglodyte de Caroline: un couple a niché à Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu au début d'avril (P. Bannon). Solitaire de Townsend: des oiseaux hivernants étaient encore à Saint-Nicolas le 7 mars (N. Hallé) et à l'Île Notre-Dame (Montréal) le 6 avril (J.P. Tousignant et al.).


Presqu’ile in Spring

Fine weather and agreeable company made this year’s spring trip to Presqu’ile Park near Brighton, Ontario, as delightful as usual. Although it seemed we had to work hard for our birds, we ended up with a total of 104 species - not bad for just a couple of days. The warblers were notable due to their relative absence (14 species, but few individuals of each), but there was a good variety of all the usual migrants, especially the woodpeckers (six species) and sparrows (Chipping, Clay-coloured, Field, Savannah, Song, Lincoln’s, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned).

Bird of the Trip had to be the American Woodcock, sighted (just) in the gloaming, but heard very distinctly as he displayed: peenting, rising and diving, showing off time and again for his mate. Alison and Stewart Bentley were stellar leaders, showing us more than any of us would have seen by ourselves. Many thanks to them and to all the sharp eyes and ears who helped the rest of us.

Eve Marshall
Field Trip Diaries

08/03/08 Bois Papineau
Leader: Chuck Kling
Weather: Cloudy and calm, -4°C
Bird of the Day: Great Horned Owl
Other Birds of Note: Great Black-backed Gull, Pileated Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing, Common Redpoll.

15/03/08 Botanical Gardens
Leader: David Mulholland
Weather: Cool and cloudy, light snow, -5°C
Bird of the Day: Sharp-shinned Hawk
Other Birds of Note: Herring Gull, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Redpoll.

22/03/08 Cap St-Jacques Park
Leader: Wayne Grubert
Weather: -8°C, strong winds and sunny
Bird of the Day: Merlin
Other Birds of Note: Common Goldeneye, Pileated Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur.

29/03/08 Île Perrot
Leader: Peter Mitchell
Weather: Clear and sunny with strong wind
Birds of the Day: Barrow’s Goldeneye, Bohemian Waxwing
Other Birds of Note: Bufflehead, Horned Lark, Song Sparrow, House Finch.

05/04/08 Parc des Rapides
Leader: Diane Demers and Wayne Grubert
Weather: 8°C and calm; some sun
Bird of the Day: Harlequin Duck
Other Birds of Note: Gadwall, Bufflehead, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Rough-legged Hawk, Am. Kestrel.

12/04/08 Baie du Fevre
Leaders: Jean Demers and Clémence Soulard
Weather: Heavy rain and wind
Birds of Note: Killdeer, N. Pintail.

19/04/08 Hudson
Leader: Barbara MacDuff
Weather: Sunny, 18°C, light wind
Birds of the Day: Red-shouldered Hawk, Fox Sparrow
Other Birds of Note: Wood Duck, Wild Turkey, N. Harrier, Cooper’s, Broad-winged, and Rough-legged Hawks, Wilson’s Snipe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Savannah Sparrow, Purple Finch.

26/04/08 Parc Regional de Longueuil
Leader: Sheldon Harvey
Weather: Cloudy and chilly
Birds of the Day: Red-shouldered Hawk, Rusty Blackbird, Palm Warbler
Other Birds of Note: N. Harrier, Killdeer, Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush.

03/05/08 Cooper Marsh, ON
Leader: Martin Bowman
Weather: Light rain, 10 to 16°C
Bird of the Day: Wilson’s Snipe
Other Birds of Note: Purple Finch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swamp Sparrow, Osprey, Rusty Blackbird.

10/05/08 Covey Hill
Leaders: John Hodges and David Smith
Weather: Beautiful weather
Birds of the Day: Immature Bald Eagle soaring over the marsh; Red-bellied Woodpecker.

11/05/08 Summit Park and Mount Royal Cemetery
Leader: Darlene Harvey
Weather: sunny with light wind
Bird of the Day: Ovenbird
Other Birds of Note: Red-shouldered Hawk, Chimney Swift, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped and Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

17/05/08 Philipsburg
Leader: Sandy Montgomery
Weather: Sunny
Bird of the Day: Cerulean Warbler
Other Birds of Note: Common Loon, Osprey, Merlin, Virginia Rail, Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina, House and Marsh Wrens, E. Bluebird, Wood Thrush, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Bobolink.
19/05/08  PARC NATURE DU BOIS DE L’ÎLE BIZARD  Leader: Felix Hilton
Weather: Cloudy, then showers and heavy rain  4 birders  44 species
Birds of the Day: Virginia Rail, Cliff Swallow, Am. Bittern
Other Birds of Note: Green Heron, Black Tern, N. Rough-winged Swallow, Marsh Wren, N. Parula, Baltimore Oriole

24/05/08  REFUGE FAUNIQUE MARGUERITE D’YOUVILLE  Leader: Felix Hilton filling in for Tom Long
Weather: Cool to start, partly cloudy  14 birders  64 species
Bird of the Day: Red-bellied Woodpecker
Other Birds of Note: Great Egret, Green Heron, N. Harrier, Sora, Brown Creeper, Marsh Wren, Wood Thrush, Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll and Black-and-white Warblers, Am. Redstart.

28/05/08  HUDSON (Evening Trip)  Leader: Barbara MacDuff
Bird of the Evening: Bobolink.
Other Birds of Note: Am. Bittern, Green Heron, Great Horned Owl, Veery, Baltimore Oriole, White-throated Sparrow.

31/05/08  PIEDMONT  Leader: Margaret Kelly
Trip cancelled due to heavy rain.

07/06/08  ALFRED BOG, LAGOONS AND LAROSE FOREST  Leader: Jacques Bouvier
Weather: Sunny and breezy  12 birders  60 species
Other Birds of Note: Redhead, Am. Coot, Wild Turkey, E. Meadowlark, Bobolink, Common Raven, Cape May Warbler.

14/06/08  LAC ST-FRANÇOIS NATURE RESERVE  Leader: Sheldon Harvey
Weather: Hot and humid  14 birders  76 species
Other Birds of Note: Blue-winged Teal, Redhead, Green Heron, Osprey, N. Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Wilson’s Snipe, Black Tern, Pileated Woodpecker, Alder Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow.

21/06/08  EARLY BIRD SOLSTICE TRIP, HUNTINGDON  Leader: Martin Bowman
Weather: 5:30 am start time! Sunny, 14 to 27°C  16 birders  68 species

28/06/08  MOUNT ROYAL CEMETERY  Leader: Sheldon Harvey
Weather: Overcast and breezy  11 birders  27 species
Bird of the Day: Brown Thrasher.
Other Birds of Note: Sharp-shinned Hawk, Merlin, Chimney Swift, House Wren, E. Bluebird, Indigo Bunting.

05/07/08  PARC REGIONAL - POINTE DES CASCADES  Leader: Sheldon Harvey
Weather: Sunny and hot  9 birders  43 species
Bird of the Day: Yellow Warbler.
Other Birds of Note: Wood Duck, Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole.

12/07/08  PARC NATURE DU BOIS DE L’ÎLE BIZARD  Leaders: Jean Demers and Clémence Soulard
Weather: Hot and sunny  11 birders  50 species
Bird of the Day: Least Bittern.

19/07/08  PARC DE LA FRAYÈRE  Leader: Sheldon Harvey
Weather: Overcast and humid  9 birders  42 species
Bird of the Day: Common Loon.
Other Birds of Note: Pied-billed Grebe, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common Moorhen, Solitary Sandpiper, Common Tern, Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren.

The Third North American Sea Duck Conference will be held in Quebec City, on 10-14 November 2008 at the Hôtel Château Laurier.
The conference will be hosted by Environment Canada and Regroupement QuébecOiseaux.
Upcoming Field Trips - Prochaines Excursions

Coordinators: Martin Bowman, 613-347-1655; Wayne Grubert, 450-458-5498

Saturday 23 August - samedi 23 aout
http://www.heritages bernard.qc.ca/rfmy.html

REFUGE FAUNIQUE MARGUERITE D’YOUVILLE on ÎLE ST-BERNARD

Leader:
Tom Long
450-692-1590
ram_air455@yahoo.com

7:30 AM Meet at the welcome centre of the Refuge Faunique Marguerite d’Youville on Île St-Bernard, Châteauguay. From Montreal, take Highway 138 and cross the Mercier Bridge. Stay right coming off the bridge and take Highway 138 through Kahnawake into Châteauguay. As you enter Châteauguay, turn right onto Boul. St-Francis. Follow St. Francis all the way to the end where it meets the Châteauguay River at Boulevard Salaberry Nord. Turn right onto Salaberry Nord. Continue past the railway bridge. The next bridge that crosses the road and river is Pont de la Sauvagine. Turn right just after the bridge. There will be a sign and an entrance ramp for the bridge for Beauharnois and Refuge Faunique Marguerite d’Youville. Cross the bridge and continue to Notre-Dame Nord. At the flashing red light, turn right onto Notre-Dame and follow the signs to Refuge Faunique Marguerite d’Youville. Cross the small bridge onto Île St-Bernard. The parking area is to the right. Walking trip looking for waterbirds, breeding birds and early migrants. The grass paths are usually wet early in the morning so wear appropriate footwear. Half day.


Saturday 30 August - samedi 30 aout

PARC-NATURE DU BOIS-DE-L’ÎLE-BIZARD

Leader:
Felix Hilton
514-631-3437
hiltonfb@sympatico.ca

7:30 AM From Highway 40 exit St. Jean Boulevard north, left (west) on Gouin Boulevard, right (north) on Jacques Bizard Boulevard, over bridge, left (west) on Chevremont, right (north) on de l’Église, right (east) on Bord-du-Lac to park entrance, approximately 1 km. Parking: $7.00. Looking for warblers, waterfowl, hawks and shorebirds. Half day.


Saturday 6 September - samedi 6 septembre

DUNDEE (La réserve nationale de faune du lac Saint-François)/STE-MARTINE

Leader:
Wayne Grubert
450-458-5498
wgrubert@hotmail.com

800 AM Meet at the Visitor Centre parking lot. From Montreal take the Mercier Bridge to Highway 132 and follow it west through Châteauguay to Beauharnois. At Beauharnois (before reaching the bridge and dam), turn left on Highway 236 and follow it through St-Étienne-de-Beauharnois, St-Louis-de-Gonzague, and St-Stanislas-de-Kostka until it once again joins Highway 132. Take Highway 132 west past Ste-Barbe, St-Anicet to Cazaville. Continue approximately 8 km on Highway 132 past Cazaville to Chemin-de-la-Pointe-Fraser. Turn right on this road and meet at the visitor centre parking lot about 1 km along on the left. From the West Island, take Highway 20 west to Exit 14 and cross over the river at Valleyfield on the Msgr. Langlois Bridge, along Highway 201 to join up with Highway 30, continue west to Highway 132 and from there to Dundee. Allow 1 to 1.5 hours driving time from Montreal. After birding the Dundee area, we will return in convoy to Ste-Martine to look for shorebirds. Looking for waterfowl, raptors, migrating passerines and shorebirds. Half day. Continued on next page

Saturday 20 September - samedi 20 septembre

GEORGE H. MONTGOMERY BIRD SANCTUARY, PHILIPSBURG

Leader:
Sandy Montgomery
514-482-0565
sandy_montgomery
@sympatico.ca


Saturday 27 September - samedi 27 septembre

HUDSON

Leader:
Barbara MacDuff
514-457-2222
barb.macduff
@sympatico.ca


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. Transportation: Contact the leader if you need or can offer a lift. Food: Bring plenty to eat and drink, even on half-day trips. Annulations : En cas d’intempérie, vérifier la possibilité d’une annulation avec le responsable. Habillement : Vêtements chauds et bottes imperméables sont toujours de rigueur. Transport : Téléphoner au responsable pour faire du covoiturage. Nourriture : Toujours prévoir une collation et quelque chose à boire.

André Pelletier
Saturday 4 October - samedi 4 octobre

ALFRED BOG

Leaders:
Jacques Bouvier
613-524-1154
bouvier@magma.ca
Martin Bowman
613-347-1655
pict@riverlink.ca

8:30 - 1:00 Meet at parking area near the boardwalk of the Alfred Bog. To reach the Alfred Bog from Montreal, take Autoroute 40 to the Ontario border (signposted Ottawa) and continue on Highway 417 west to Exit 9 (Route 17). Follow Route 17 beyond Hawkesbury towards Alfred (approximately 32 kms. from Exit 9 of 417). Just east of Alfred, turn left on Peat Moss Road. Turn right on Concession10. Turn left on chemin Giroux and left again on Concession 11 which leads to the parking area for the Alfred Bog boardwalk. Allow about 90 minutes for the trip. The Alfred Bog is the largest boreal peat bog in Ontario south of the Canadian Shield. We will explore the bog on the boardwalk looking for fall residents and migrants. We will also visit the Alfred sewage lagoons nearby where we will look for shorebirds and ducks. Bring water and snacks. We may also explore part of the nearby Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail. Half day.

Saturday 11 October - samedi 11 octobre

PARC-NATURE DU BOIS-DE-L’ÎLE-BIZARD

Leader:
Felix Hilton
514-631-3437
hiltonfb@sympatico.ca

8:00 AM From Highway 40 exit St. Jean Boulevard north, left (west) on Gouin Boulevard, right (north) on Jacques Bizard Boulevard, over bridge, left (west) on Chevremont, right (north) on de l’Eglise, right (east) on Bord-du-Lac to park entrance, approximately 1 km. Parking: $7.00. Looking for shorebirds, waterfowl, confusing fall warblers. Half day.

Saturday 18 October - samedi 18 octobre

MORGAN ARBORETUM

Leader:
Betsy McFarlane
514-457-9315
betsy.mcfarlane@sympatico.ca

8:00 AM 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. Half day.


Saturday 25 October - samedi 25 octobre

PARC NATIONAL D’OKA

Leader:
Wayne Grubert
450-458-5498
wgrubert@hotmail.com

8:00 AM Take Highway 13 north to Highway 640. Go west on 640 to its intersection with Highway 344. Cross 344 into Parc d’Oka. Proceed 6.2 km to the Accueil Camping. An entrance fee of between $3.00 and $3.50 will be charged. Looking for migrating passerines, raptors, waterfowl and shorebirds. Half day.

Two of BPQ’s lesser-known sanctuaries are a couple of small islands that are found in a small archipelago off the eastern tip of Montreal: Île aux Canards and Ilet Vert. While geographically closer to Montreal, administratively they lie in the Varennes district. The two islands are part of a larger group, several of which were acquired by a consortium of conservation groups during the 1990s to protect the variety of habitats these islands shelter, and more specifically to preserve habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Having done so, we admit that except for rare and well-spaced occasions, we have rather left the islands to look after themselves.

Both islands are separated from adjacent islands by narrow but navigable channels. Île aux Canards is somewhat higher out of the water than is Ilet Vert. Both are covered with grassy, reedy vegetation with just a very few trees on the margins. Access is not easy without a boat so for the most part they are only visited by a few wildfowlers and the occasional group seeking somewhere to picnic. Indeed, we noticed during a visit earlier this summer that at the end of Ilet Vert someone had erected a hand-written sign asking people to take their garbage away with them!

Should you be boating in the area, the islands you see may not match what you expect if, like many, you rely on satellite images from GoogleEarth. Extensive areas of the islands disappear when the river levels rise in the spring. Of course, this means that when the waters recede, large mudflats are exposed which are enticing to shorebirds.

These islands are extremely valuable habitat and hold some most unexpected birds. We consider ourselves fortunate to have them and are taking steps to ensure that they are managed efficiently and well. Île aux Canards is the more westerly of the two islands and comprises a somewhat elevated portion with an area subject to flooding. Around the periphery are a very few small clumps of trees, but for the most part it is covered with grasses and meadow plants. Île aux Canards holds one of the few seemingly viable Bobolink populations in the area and quite large numbers of Canada Geese, some of which are nesting there. On a recent visit we encountered, amongst other species, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Spotted Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Bobolink, and Red-winged Blackbird.

Although lower than the part of Île aux Canards that we walked, less of Ilet Vert is subject to flooding. This island lies to the east of the group and is adjacent to the main shipping channel. Accordingly, its edges are occasionally dumped with mud and silt dredged from the river bottom. The centre of the island is mostly flat grassland with small clumps of trees around the periphery and, at the southern end, a more elevated sandy bar with a good copse of shade trees and an apology for a beach.

Some of the species that might be seen outside of the migration period when shorebirds and waterfowl set down for some R&R include (and these were seen when we were returning to our boat and happened upon shorebird-heaven!): Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe, Short-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wilson’s Phalarope, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Eastern Kingbird, and Savannah Sparrow.

Though these small islands are not spectacular, they do provide important habitat for many species, both resident and migrant. They typify the approach BPQ takes in looking after the smaller but ecologically important portions of land in our region so that they may be preserved for wildlife in perpetuity.

Richard Gregson