

Bird Observatory Family-Friendly Spring Festival Kicks Off May 12 - 15

By Cristina Petrucci

The Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO) is gearing up for its annual Spring Birding Festival, running from May 12-15, 2023. The festival is a celebration of the spectacular bird-life in the region and an opportunity for visitors to connect with nature, learn about migratory bird populations, and support conservation efforts. From guided walks to tent talks and bird banding demonstrations, there is something for everyone at this family-friendly event.

Festivities kick off at 7 a.m. each day with a sunrise meditation at the dock. This peaceful and reflective start to the day is the perfect way to prepare for a morning of bird watching.

The Spring Birding Festival offers a variety of guided walks along different trails, with some

being suitable for families or those with limited mobility. To participate, pre-registration is required through PEPtBO's website peptbo.ca/SBF23. Most walks are limited to 15 people and cost \$30 per person for a one-hour hike. If you're looking for a more extended adventure, consider joining the two-hour bird photography walk, led by acclaimed nature photographer Paul Jones, which costs \$40 per person. The Ring Road trail is available for those who prefer a gentler hike, and is priced at \$10. Remember to wear comfortable shoes and dress appropriately for the weather as it's typically cooler at the Point.

For those looking to get even closer to the birds, PEPtBO offers the opportunity to observe bird banding up

close with free banding demonstrations on the hour every hour from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. each day. This process involves capturing birds in mist nets, carefully extracting them, and attaching a small, lightweight band to their leg. The birds are then released unharmed, and the band helps researchers to track their movements and learn more about their behavior and lifespan.

In addition, visitors can also participate in free tent talks, which run every hour on the half hour. These talks offer a range of discussions and themes, including how to be a citizen scientist and use the eBird app, bird identification strategies and "cheat sheets," and a presentation on a recent Bobolink research study.

For younger visitors, the festi-

val also offers a cool Kids' Corner with a variety of fun activities, including crafts, a scavenger hunt, and even bird "tattoos." This is a great way for families to enjoy the festival together and spark a love of nature.

As the festival runs during Mother's Day, PEPtBO has organized a special 'Birding and Brunch-in-a-Box' program for those looking for something special to do with their mother, grandmother, or someone whose mothering they wish to honour. The program includes an optional morning meditation, a choice of two guided birding walks for different levels of ability, a bird banding demonstration, and a lovely boxed brunch, all for \$45.

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