

Backyard Birder

Trees literally alive with returning birds in May

By YVONNE SHEPPARD
Correspondent

The birds in our backyard fall into three main groups: residents, summer visitors and migrants. Although most of our enjoyment from backyard birdwatching comes from the first two groups, the peak of the spring and fall migrations can be outstanding in backyards throughout York and Durham. Depending on weather, early May is the time to watch for migrants in this area.

Back in the bleak cold days of February, wintering birds throughout Central and South America were beginning to feel the urge to move north.

They would begin a perilous northwards migration to nest and rear their young. Many of these birds, warblers, vireos, kinglets and others will move through the York and Durham area during migration. Many will stop and rest in our backyards. Part of this massive movement will be our summer visitors - those birds choosing to stay and nest here. The others - the migrants - will move farther north to nest.

The earlier arrivals, those wintering not so far away, have been back for several months. Returning in scattered individual flocks, blue jays, robins, red-winged blackbirds, killdeer, bluebirds and others have already begun to build their nests, some already sitting on eggs.

The movement in early May will consist mainly of warblers and other small birds. These small brightly coloured birds, beloved by bird-watchers only stop to rest and feed for a few days and identification can be difficult but quite exciting.

The nicest part for passive bird-watchers is that they come to you. All you have to do is look out your window and listen. During two days last May our small backyard played host to seven species of warblers including black-throated, green, black and white, magnolia, bay-breasted and Canada warblers. White-throated and white-crowned sparrows, an indigo bunting, vireos and a host of others were also welcome visitors. The trees literally

came alive. If you keep a list of birds seen in your backyard this is the time to add to it. Good birding.

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