

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

by Marg Hendrick

Many bird lovers tuck away their feeders for the summer months preferring, except for feeding hummingbirds, to let the birds fend for themselves when food is plentiful. But, dare I say it, winter approaches! Now is the time to give some thought to your winter feeding plan. Are your feeders in good shape? Are you going to erect more? What food are you going to put out? Do you need to find a way to discourage squirrels and I don't mean by shooting!

In previous columns I have discussed this subject so will only underline a couple of points. For those who prefer to buy mixed seed make sure the mixture you buy has a heavy sunflower seed content, for it is favoured by many species. People who feed the birds heavily will find it advantageous to buy their seed at a feed store. It is much cheaper bought in bulk and each type of seed can be bought separately according to your needs. Squirrels can be controlled by proper placement of feeders and the help of metal cones or similar baffles to prevent them from reaching the food. Admittedly, it takes some doing to outwit these persistent creatures, but we, who put out the food are attracting them so I prefer to let them live.

Last year the Ontario Bird Feeder Survey was expanded to take in the greater part of North America. This new program is known as FeederWatch and those of you who are interested in keeping feeder records might like to join this program. Perhaps a quote from the 1987-88 report will give you the best idea of what it is all about. "Project FeederWatch was launched in 1987 by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Canada's Long Point Observatory with some trepidation and high expectations. After a successful first season, the project is being expanded with minor modifications.

The goals of Project FeederWatch are to identify the species of birds using feeders throughout North America and to count the numbers of birds of each species at the feeders. After several years of data has been gathered, the information will show changes in bird population levels and in the geographic distribution of bird species. In addition FeederWatch data can document how feeder use is affected by weather, habitat near feeders and types of food offered."

Participants in the above study are asked to pay \$9.00 to help defray expenses. They will receive an annual report summarizing the information provided by the observers, and their

names will also be listed in said report. To join this study write immediately enclosing the \$9.00 fee to: Project FeederWatch, Ontario Bird Feeder Survey, Long Point Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0.

Because I was holidaying and not available for reports, the sightings for the month are few. My apologies to those who were unable to reach me. Please do not let it deter you from reporting in the future.

George Antoine, who has been keeping an eye out for eagles at South Lake, watched 2 Bald Eagles fishing out in front of his cottage. A wonderful sight! In early September, Don and Mary Warren saw a Green-Backed Heron and a Northern Harrier near Chaffey's Lock. About the same time Peggy Fry discovered a Black-Crowned Night Heron near Briton-Houghton Road and Highway #15. Alice Kearns had a close up view of a Great Blue Heron near Lyndhurst, always an impressive sight.

Ruby throated Hummingbirds were last seen by Leorene Hayes on September 15 and I would appreciate hearing if anyone has a later date on this species.

Dorcas Pinch had at least 7 Eastern Bluebirds feeding in her yard and Rene Waterfield had about the same number in hers. Rene has also had large numbers of Eastern Meadowlarks gathering near her home as well as mixed flocks of sparrows vying for their turn in her birdbath.

Winter is a good time for novices to start birding. Numbers of species are fewer, so by spring many common birds will be well known. As a result the new birder will be better able to tackle the onslaught of spring migration. The North Leeds Birdwatchers, who bird every Wednesday morning, are always happy to receive visitors or new members. Call the President Winona Barker at 272-2304 or myself for further information. My phone number is 359-5178 and until next month
GOOD BIRDING!



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