

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

by Marg Hendrick

Now that summer is waning, members of the North Leeds Birdwatchers (NLB) are eagerly looking forward to resuming their weekly field trips. If you would like to take part in these outings you will be made most welcome. Expertise in bird identification is not a requirement, and there is no need to join the NLB unless, after a number of field trips, you find you enjoy the hobby, and wish to continue throughout the year. Participants in the first 1/2 day field trip are asked to meet at the library in Elgin on Wed. Sept. 9 at 8:00 a.m. sharp. For more information please call the president, Winona Barker 272-2304 or speak to any member of the NLB.

Fall migration is already underway. About the middle of August, various warblers began to appear among little flocks of Black-capped Chickadees. By the end of September most warblers will be gone except for a few lingering species such as the Yellow-rumped. So, during September never ignore chickadees, for many species seem to like to travel with them, or at the very least "hang around" with them while passing through their territory. In this way you may turn up migrating warblers, vireos, tanagers, kinglets, etc., that you might have missed except for the noisy little chickadees. Of course, in the case of the warblers, you may have some difficulty with identification, as they will be in their drabber fall plumage. Peterson expresses the problem well by referring to them as the "confusing fall warblers".

Though it is sad to see our warm weather birds disappear we can look forward to those, some of which are uncommon here, that are winter visitors. For instance, we have 2 species of 3-toed woodpeckers that migrate through here and sometimes overwinter: the

Black-backed Woodpecker (formerly Arctic Black-backed) and the Three-toed Woodpecker (formerly Northern Three-toed). These birds are about the size of a Hairy Woodpecker and have black and white barring on their sides. Both males have bright yellow caps which the females lack. The Black-backed has an all black back and the Three-toed has a black and white barred back. These birds work quietly. They delicately pick the bark off trees in their search for food. During the height of the Dutch elm disease these woodpeckers enjoyed a bonanza! They are very interesting birds and if you should find one please let me know. About the middle of June, Joan Hargrave was concerned because the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds had all but disappeared from her feeder. It could have been that natural food was more available elsewhere. Apart from that, the only reason I could suggest was that perhaps more of "her" birds had been females, who were now occupied by nesting activities. They might therefore be feeding closer to home. Female hummingbirds do all the work; nest building, laying and incubating the eggs as well as feeding the young are her tasks alone. Father is interested in a different life - chasing other females! Later, Joan returned from a trip and found to her delight that the birds were back, and that some were young of the year. Eastern Bluebirds seem to be managing reasonably well this year. Betty Blackman reported that all but one of the young fledged from her nest box. Harrison Peters had 3 bluebird eggs in his nest box, and as well, adults fed young nearby. Also encouraging was the fact that 5 of the 36 nest boxes put up on Cedar Valley Road by local school children showed evidence of bluebird use.

Tom Kenney reported a Killdeer that was incubating 4 eggs in its nest on the ground in the parking lot of St. Columbanus Church in Elgin. The area was roped off in an effort to minimize disturbance to the incubating bird.

Joe Langlois observed adult Common Loons with 1 young on both Clear Lake and Indian Lake. Four loons, 2 adult and 2 young, swam close to Allan and Marjorie Earl's campsite on Big Rideau Lake.

A frustrated American Goldfinch tried to get rid of a rival male. His enemy was himself reflected in a window of Lorraine Porter's home! Many species make the same mistake. About the only answer to the problem is to cover the offending window, and hope the bird does not see his reflection in another!

Phil Mott thought it might be interesting for people to mention birds that they usually found in their area, that they felt were scarce this year. For instance, he did not see the usual number of Green Herons, Brown Thrashers, Cedar Waxwings, Great Blue Herons or Common Loons near his place. On the other hand, he saw more Eastern Phoebes, Red-winged Blackbirds and American Robins. A Mourning Dove was a first for his yard list. A caller from Seeley's Bay (whose name I mislaid and would appreciate receiving) saw her first Great-crested Flycatcher. This impressive flycatcher shows rust coloured patches in its wings when it flies and has a long rusty tail. It's loud ascending "wheep" can often be heard in deciduous or mixed woods.

An Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen by Annette Mess and Bill Cutfield near Charleston Lake. It calls an amusing "quick, three beers"! Annette and Bill also saw 2 Solitary Sandpipers near Delta and Katherine Sides another 2 near Morton.

Two Caspian Terns were seen fishing in Sand Lake just off South Crosby Beach, and Don Warren has been watching the graceful flight of Black Terns near Chaffey's Lock.

Allan and Kay Balmer have been impressed by the amount of energy the tiny House Wren expends in song and scoldings as it attempts to protect its nesting area.

A group of 12 Common Nighthawks were seen near Narrows Lock by Katherine Sides on June 7. Marjorie Earl had a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker visit her yard, and on June 10 there were 2 Cerulean Warblers seen at Skycroft Family Camps.

Rene Waterfield has been observing a flock of about 60 Bobolinks that visit her yard and bathe in her birdbath. The males have shed their "tuxedos" and now look similar to the female.

House Finches have recently moved into this area and reports of this species are on the increase. Elsie and John Goodman, Marjorie Jackson and Katherine Sides have all had them at their feeders.

A Western Meadowlark seen close to Clear Lake Road by Chris Hanrahan was a great find! This western bird, difficult to distinguish from the Eastern Meadowlark except by song, is accidental to this area. There are still many migrating birds to be seen so please call me at 359-5178 with your sightings, and until next month  
GOOD BIRDING!

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