

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

by Marg Hendrick

Recently a new book came on the market entitled "Birds of the Kingston Region." It was written by Dr. Ron Weir, who is a member of the Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN). Dr. Weir is well known in birding circles for his prowess in identifying birds and for his all-round knowledge of the avian world. He has the ability to explain scientific matters in uncomplicated terms, and it is this quality that makes his book so interesting both to the ornithologist and to the inexperienced birder.

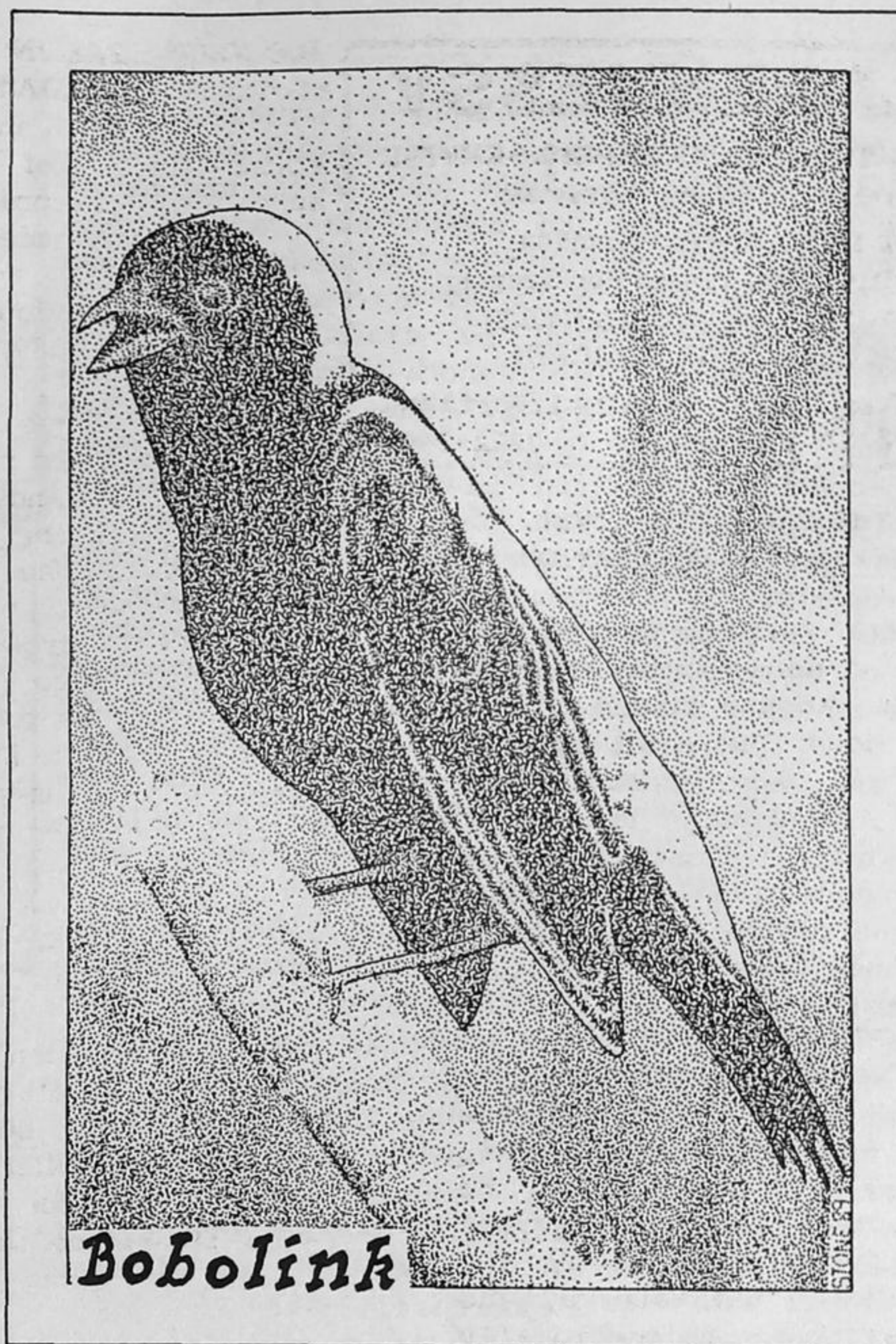
"Birds of the Kingston Region" provides "the avid birder with an account of the frequency, distribution, location, history, and seasonal status of the 343 species known in this region, extending from Prince Edward County in the west to the Thousand Islands in the east, from Westport in the north and to Wolfe Island in the south... Fully indexed, illustrated with comprehensive charts and tables, this book is the authoritative work on the Kingston region." You may be interested to know that a number of people from this area provided some important sightings which are detailed in the book. Some names I have noticed are the late Dick Ussher, Frank Phelan, Annette Mess, Bill Cutfield, Pat McManus and Marg Hendrick.

The purchase price of "Birds of the Kingston Region" is approximately \$36.00 and all the proceeds go to the KFN to further their work of conservation. Should you wish to examine this book you would be welcome to borrow mine. If you have difficulty finding it in your bookstore, I can obtain a copy for you.

Because I had a long summer break this year, some of your sightings will be absent or belated. During May, Leorene Hayes and Jacquie Wanless both reported finding Brown-headed Cowbird eggs in their Chipping Sparrow nests. Later on in the season Bill Cutfield discovered that a Yellow-rumped Warbler's nest in his yard had also been parasitized. Brown-headed Cowbirds do not make their own nests, but rather lay their eggs in another species' nest. Some host species incubate the Cowbird eggs and raise the young to the detriment of their own; others reject the eggs in various ways and so are rid of the problem.

Bill Cutfield saw a Red-throated Loon on Red Horse Lake on July 24. According to Ron Weir's book (mentioned earlier in this column) "this is a rare but fairly frequent transient, more often seen in autumn than in spring." Ron also notes that "only on two occasions have more than two been seen at once."

Bob Wanless had a rewarding experience relative to Common Loons. However, I plan to feature the story next month, so if you are particularly interested in loons be sure to read next month's column.



It was with consternation that John and Helen Shepherd realized that the young Eastern Bluebirds in their nesting box had been orphaned. To their credit, the Shepherds undertook to care for the nestlings until such time as they could arrange to take them to Kathy Nihei in Ottawa. Kathy is licensed to care for wild birds and was delighted to help. John and Helen eventually received the happy news that all but one of the bluebirds survived, and were successfully returned to the wild.

There was an interesting letter from John Harrison in which he tells of the pleasure he and his wife have had watching birds since they moved to this area in the fall of '88. Among many sightings, he tells how they discovered an Osprey's nest on their property and how they were able to find a place where they could look down on the nest at fairly close quarters.

John also saw "3 drake Mallards competing for a hen's favours

IN THE AIR, overhead for at least 30 minutes, around and around, up and down, actually STALLING in mid-air and then spinning earthward, and all the time chattering... What a sight, finally 2 gave up and the lucky pair then landed in the pond!"

A delighted Marjorie Earl saw a female Common Merganser with 7 young swimming in Big Rideau Lake. Frank Hayes had a different story to tell. Investigating noises in his chimney and stove pipes, he discovered what appeared to be a young Wood Duck trapped inside!

A nesting American Goldfinch made itself at home in Eleanor Taylor's yard. Eleanor also saw her first Rose-breasted Grosbeak - a truly handsome male with its striking black-and-white colouring accented by a large rose-red triangle on its breast. Another impressive but much smaller bird, the Indigo Bunting, was seen by Harrison Peters near Chaffey's Lock. This little

finch, which flashes deep blue all over when seen in good light, is often missed. However, if you learn its song, you will be surprised at how many are about, for it is a persistent songster and thereby gives away its location.

Phil Mott called to say he had an orange-variant of the House Finch at his feeder for about a week. The Motts also had a "pet" Red-winged Blackbird which came when they called it. Phil also noticed that House Wrens were avidly devouring gypsy moths, something that will make many people happy. Gypsy moths beware, for Harrison Peters has had a total of 16 House Wrens fledge from his nesting boxes!

Phil Mott had a nasty personal experience worth relating. He had to have the remains of a DEER TICK removed from his body. As many of you know, infected deer ticks can spread the dreaded Lyme disease, cases of which have already been diagnosed in Ontario. Deer ticks are tiny, about the size of a pin head and so are difficult to see. According to W. Gifford Jones, a medical columnist, the first sign of Lyme disease is "usually a rash that erupts within a month after the initial bite. Often found at the site of the tick bite, it is red and circular with a clear centre that resembles a bull's eye... Be sure to contact a doctor if a bull's eye rash appears."

George Antoine has once again come through with the sighting of a Bald Eagle! It was seen near the Antoine cottage on South Lake on July 30. I believe that is the third consecutive year that George has reported seeing eagles there.

Our grandson, Michael Hendrick, will be very disappointed if I don't mention that he saw and heard his first Screech Owl near Morton while on an owl prowl - I leave it to your imagination as to who took him owling!

This month, in his art work above, David Stone has depicted a Bobolink. Male Bobolinks have a largely black-and-white breeding plumage which suggests, as Roger Tory Peterson says, "a dress suit on backward." However, after the breeding season, moult begins, and the male Bobolink loses his striking plumage and soon resembles the sparrow-like female. On July 19, the North Leeds Birdwatchers came across a flock of 35 Bobolinks. It was a motley group - the Bobolinks I mean! Some male birds were still in the "backward tuxedos" - others had already started their moult and looked scruffy, as brown patches showed up in their former striking plumage. Lastly, the group contained females and young of the year in their sombre brown attire. They were preparing for fall migration which would start in late July.

When you read this, migration will be well underway. Please call 359-5178 with your sightings and, until next month, GOOD BIRDING!

BYGONE DAYS

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The Office of the Ombudsman has the mandate to investigate complaints from the public concerning all provincial departments, agencies and institutions.

The District Officer for the Office of the Ombudsman for Ottawa and Eastern Ontario will visit Lanark County on Tuesday, September 12th.

Individuals who wish to discuss their complaints may meet the District Officer at that time. He will be available from 11:00 a.m. until 12 Noon at the Lanark County Building on Sunset Blvd. in Perth and from 2:00 until 3:30 p.m. at the offices of the District Health Council at 1 Abel Street in Smiths Falls. No appointments are necessary.

During his visit to the area, the District Officer will also meet staff of the Smiths Falls Housing Authority and the Perth Seniors' Information and Support Centre.

Inquiries from the public can be made by phoning 234-6421; collect calls are accepted.

