

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

by M. Hendricks

At the last meeting of the North Leeds Birdwatchers (NLB) it was mentioned that there are some people who would like to attend field trips, but who feel they lack the stamina to participate in the type that is usually held. It was decided that, as an experiment, once a month a less strenuous field trip would be held, to enable such individuals to become a part of the club. The first "slow and easy" field trip will be held on Wed., Sept. 10 when those interested should meet in front of the library in Elgin at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Participants should have binoculars and will be assigned to cars to make the best use of available transportation. This will be a driving trip interspersed with easy, short walks and will finish at 11:30 a.m. Those wishing more information may call Marg Hendrick 359-5178, Pat McManus 272-2183 or any member of the NLB.

Despite the fact that summer birding is often slow there have been many interesting calls. Claire Mills had a happy story to tell: after an unsuccessful first nesting her Eastern Bluebirds raised 5 young on their second try. On the other hand Tiffany Mattes, a young person, was disappointed when the baby bird (species unknown) she attempted to save, died. Readers who find "orpahns" and are willing to make the effort should contact Kathy Nihei in Ottawa 226-6443 who has both the permit and set up to raise nestlings. Orphaned birds of prey can be taken to Kitt Chubb of Verona 374-2923. The important thing is to get the birds to these places as soon as possible.

Mary Anne Leggett, a relatively new birder, has turned up many interesting birds, including a Golden-winged Warbler. This colourful species is often missed, in spite of its buzzy be-bz-bz-bz song. Jacquie Wanless was delighted to have a good look at an Indigo Bunting, a species whose striking blue colour is due primarily to structural elements in the feathers which reflect blue. There are no known blue pigments in birds.

Kay Williams reported seeing a pair of House Finches in her birdbath, and Marjorie Jackson has a pair of Purple Finches coming to her feeder. Because of the similarity of these two species, it is a good idea to be aware of their individual field marks.


A Great Blue Heron was observed by Rose Pritchard as it worked to reposition a fish so it could be swallowed head first. That accomplished, she watched as the fish was sent on its downward journey. Its progress was easy to follow, because as it moved along, the feathers on the bird's neck were raised accordingly.

Andrew Anderson was impressed when a Great Blue Heron flew close by him as he canoed on Morton Bay. He also watched a pair of Common Loons as they tended their two young. Don and Maxine Fysh, who had a pair of nesting loons in their bay, were fortunate to witness the hatching of the two eggs through a telescope on July 19. After the first egg hatched, the adult was seen pecking the other egg to facilitate hatching. By mid-July Winona Barker had already observed adult Common Loons congregating, presumably non-nesters and those which experienced nest failures. Douglas Anderson watched a Belted Kingfisher fly by as he canoed on Morton Bay, and both he and his sister Elizabeth watched as a Red-tailed Hawk flew across the bay, landed on the ground and picked up a mouse, all the while pursued by an upset Eastern Kingbird. Loree Smith saw a Red-tailed Hawk flopping about at the roadside. Thinking it had been hurt she was amazed to see it fly away. Investigation revealed a rabbit which it had apparently dropped by the road. The rabbit showed no signs of car injury, but it did show talon marks. The bird returned later in the day and the rabbit disappeared.

While on her daily morning walk Peggy Fry was discovered by a Cooper's Hawk! It dive-bombed her on successive mornings, to the point she felt it was safer to stay at home! This behaviour indicated the probable presence of a nest, and later a large nest, which contained young hawks was found nearby by Sybil Jeffray. Through the efforts of Annette Mess, the occupants were identified as Cooper's Hawks and at least 2 young fledged. Ellen Bonwill enjoyed sighting an American Kestrel, a "first" for her. Doris and Gerd Vonhove have been keeping track of a kestrel which they frequently see not far from their home and which may have nested in a nearby dead tree. While haying Gerd put up a Northern Harrier and upon investigation he discovered a nest with two young. Because the grass had been inadvertently cut too close to the nest, Gerd provided what protection he could, but to no avail - a predator took the young. A Bald Eagle was sighted at South Lake by George Antoine in the same area as he saw one last year. Another fish eater, the Osprey was seen hunting over the water by Elsie and John Goodman as they canoed in the Frontenac Park area. Allan Earl watched a Turkey Vulture from the distance being harried by a Northern Oriole and a Red-winged Blackbird. No sooner would it drop to the ground, presumably to feed on carrion, than the birds would attack,

and it would fly up in the air followed by its tormentors. It was interesting to see the vulture (with a six foot wingspan) give way to birds so small by comparison. While haying Gerry Gunnewiek nearly mowed over a duck's nest. He tried to provide cover for the nest, but when it was checked at a later date by Alfie Gunnewiek it was found to be abandoned. Five eggs were still in the nest along with some pieces of broken shell. The nest was believed to be that of a Mallard or Black Duck. Last but not least, a Red-headed Woodpecker, a species not too often seen in this area was discovered by Dick and Mollie Ussher near the intersection of Hartsgravel and Summer's Roads. One was later seen by Kathy Lawson working over dead trees near the Summer's Road. Subsequently Katherine Sides and a friend found a pair of adults with one young, confirming a successful nesting. Because of upcoming holidays this has been written early (July 25) so further news will have to wait until the October Lantern. Please call me at 359-5178 with your sightings. Until next month GOOD BIRDING!

*Photography*  
For all occasions



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