

BIRDS OF A FEATHER
by Marg Hendrick

Novice birders are often astounded by the ability of the "pros" to separate species of birds by song, even amid the tumult of the dawn chorus. Participants in the North American Breeding Bird Survey (NABB), which takes place in June, make good use of this skill. As with other official surveys strict rules are followed, so that the information obtained will be as valuable as possible. It may be of interest to know that some of these counts take place locally, the starting point of one being in Elgin.

Each survey covers a 25 mile route. Usually 2 people take part - an observer who is able to identify birds both by sight and sound, and a person to record the results. Once chosen, both the route and the observers remain the same each year, with major changes being made only when absolutely necessary. The count begins 1/2 hour before dawn. At the appointed hour, the observer steps out of the car and calls out the species both seen and heard and the numbers thereof, for exactly three minutes. The recorder charts the data under stop #1. Then the car is driven 0.5 miles to stop #2 where the process is repeated. This procedure continues until 50 stops have been made, making the survey complete.

The results are sent to the United States Department of Fish and Wildlife as well as the Canadian Wildlife Service. This information provides, among other things, helpful data on the status of breeding birds within North America. If all this sounds very serious, rest assured that many hilarious moments occur during these counts. Just one illustration. A friend of mine and her male companion sat in a darkened car in a remote spot at 4:15 a.m. They were waiting for the official starting time for the survey. A police cruiser drew up and the officer stepped out to investigate these "suspicious" circumstances. Your imagination can fill in the scenario, when the two explained that their reason for being there was to count birds!

The latter part of April and the first half of May saw a considerable shift in bird populations. On April 20 a Northern Oriole and a Brown Thrasher were seen in the Portland area; Chipping Sparrows arrived in Morton on April 21 and White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows were soon visible at feeders throughout the region. Mary Anne Leggett saw a wader, the Greater Yellowlegs, on April 22 and Pine Siskins turned up at Elsie and John Goodman's feeder on April 28. The first Eastern Kingbird was reported by Pat McManus on April 30 and he also saw a Gray Jay near Portland on May 6. Late in April, Gerald Thompson spotted

2 Black-crowned Night Herons at Newboro, a species which was observed at close range by the North Leeds Birdwatchers (NLB) on their May 14 field trip to Prince Edward Point.

Pine Warblers trilled in a stand of tall pines near Morton on April 28. Black and White Warblers were recorded by the NLB on May 1, and a Nashville Warbler was seen on the same day near Sand Lake. Annette Mess saw both Cape May and Palm Warblers on May 6 and she also observed Black Terns on May 8.

On May 1, Bob Wanless observed Broad-winged Hawks soaring over a ridge at Sand Lake. Hundreds of this species are sometimes seen rising on thermals during their migration.

Also on May 1, Sandra Gray gave the first report of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, her earliest sighting yet. Joe Kenney phoned on May 6 to report this species, and mentioned that for the previous three years hummingbirds had arrived at the Kenney Hotel feeders on May 7.

John Goodman saw the first Bobolinks on May 9 and Marjorie Jackson the first Indigo Bunting on May 10.

From this time on there were waves of new arrivals and they livened up the fields and forests with their music. Whip-poor-wills, with their incessant song now keep some people awake, and lull others to sleep; the ethereal songs of the Wood and Hermit Thrushes permeate the woodlands at dawn and dusk; Red-eyed Vireos repeat their monotonous phrases

throughout the day and the Ovenbird's "teacher, teacher, teacher" can scarcely be ignored by anyone who hears it. The migrants that nest further north join the chorus temporarily, then move on, leaving those that breed here to get on with their nesting.

Ed and Alice Campbell of Harlem still have Northern Cardinals at their feeder, which will probably nest nearby. Winona Barker has seen evidence that Pileated Woodpeckers plan to nest near her home. The NLB discovered 2 Red-tailed Hawk nests near Portland and Eleanor Taylor reported a third, found near Seeley's Bay. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest was discovered in Anne McInrue's yard in Portland, and Rene Waterfield has already seen a Killdeer with young near her home.

There were two exciting finds this month! The first was a Sandhill Crane observed by Dick Ussher. This species is described in the supplement of "History of the Birds of Kingston, Ontario" as a "sporadic, very rare spring and fall transient." The second discovery was a Cattle Egret found by Kay and Allan Balmer near Sunbury. It is about 25 years since Cattle Egrets were first discovered in the Kingston region. They are now known to occasionally breed here but are still considered a rarity. In order to be accepted for publication in scientific journals, etc., species found here such as the Sandhill Crane and Cattle Egret must be documented by those reporting the rarity. Both Dick and Kay are following this procedure and are well qualified to do so.

Ozzie White described a Sharp-shinned Hawk's attempts to capture an American Robin. It was so intent on making a kill that it inadvertently slammed into the door of Ozzie's truck. This mismanaged manoeuvre saved the robin and nearly finished off the hawk! Bob Waterfield witnessed the united action of "his" Purple Martins as they gathered together to successfully fight off a hawk that had encroached on their domain. The Kingston Field Naturalists held their annual May Roundup - a 24 hour count to see how many species could be found within a 50 kilometer circle of MacDonald Park in Kingston. Six parties tallied a total of 205 species within the prescribed time.

So you see there are birds out there for you to find! Please call me with your discoveries at 359-5178 and until next month GOOD BIRDING!

1986 NORTH LEEDS FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

<u>TUES. MAY 13</u> D AT E N AT G SC AT SB	<u>THURS MAY 15</u> G AT F N AT SC SB AT D	<u>TUES MAY 20</u> SB AT G E AT N SC AT D	<u>THURS MAY 22</u> F AT SB G AT SC D AT N	<u>TUES MAY 27</u> SC AT E D AT G N AT SB
<u>THURS MAY 29</u> E AT D G AT N SB AT SC	<u>TUES JUNE 3</u> F AT G SC AT N D AT SB	<u>THURS JUNE 5</u> G AT SB N AT F D AT SC	<u>TUES JUNE 10</u> SB AT F SC AT G N AT D	<u>THURS JUNE 12</u> F AT SC G AT D SB AT N
<u>TUES JUNE 17</u> D AT E N AT G SC AT SB	<u>THURS JUNE 19</u> G AT F N AT SC SB AT D	<u>TUES JUNE 24</u> SB AT G E AT N SC AT D	<u>THURS JUNE 26</u> F AT SB G AT SC D AT N	<u>TUES JULY 1</u> SC AT E D AT G N AT SB
<u>THURS JULY 3</u> E AT D G AT N SB AT SC	<u>TUES JULY 8</u> F AT G SC AT N D AT SB	<u>THURS JULY 10</u> G AT SB N AT F D AT SC	<u>TUES JULY 15</u> SB AT F SC AT G N AT D	<u>THURS JULY 17</u> F AT SC G AT D SB AT N
<u>TUES JULY 22</u> D AT E N AT G SC AT SB	<u>THURS JULY 25</u> G AT F N AT SC SB AT D	<u>TUES JULY 29</u> SB AT G E AT N SC AT D	<u>THURS JULY 31</u> F AT SB G AT SC D AT N	<u>TUES AUG 5</u> SC AT E D AT G N AT SB

D = DELTA N = NEWBORO
E = ELGIN SB = SEELEY'S BAY
G = GREENBUSH SC = SWEET'S CORNERS