Red-necked Grebe Nests in North Durham

The Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) is a gorgeous bird that is commonly seen along the Lake Ontario shore in spring and fall.

Rarely does it attempt to overwinter, and even more rarely (read never) does it try to breed in Durham. This year a pair established a territory at the Nonquon sewage lagoons. In mid-May, Dave Worthington found a nest with two eggs at the lagoons. Two days later I was able to confirm the nesting, finding the female with 3 eggs, as the male swam just offshore. Finally, on or about June 19th the babies hatched and left the nest.

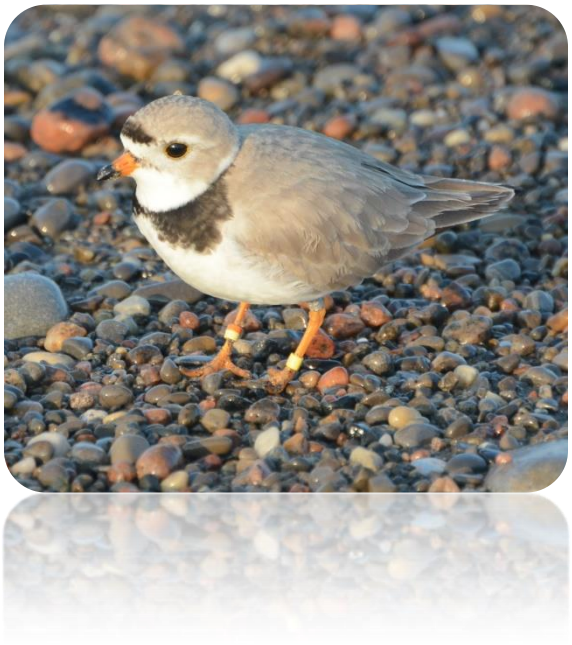
They can now be seen daily following their parents or riding on their backs. This is the first documented nest record ever for Durham Region.

Birdathon 2018

I ran my Birdathon once again in May this year, with my friend Peter Hogenbirk from Courtice. Thanks to the generosity of many of my friends, colleagues and NDN members I have raised over $2400 and still counting.

Peter and I focused our attention on select parts of Durham Region and the Carden Alvar in the City of Kawartha Lakes. Turns out this was once again a good route to choose as we found 168 species of birds in 24 hours on May 25 and 26, 2018. Places visited included Nonquon and Cannington lagoons, Darlington Provincial Park, Thickson's Woods, Cranberry Marsh, Glen Major Forest, Courtice, Whitby Harbour and Carden Alvar.

There were a lot of great finds including this rare Piping Plover at Darlington.



Here's a complete list of the birds we saw.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator*
Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*
Gadwall *Mareca strepera*
American Wigeon *Mareca americana*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*
Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*
Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*
Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*
Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*
White-winged Scoter *Melanitta fusca*
Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*
Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*
Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*
Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus*
Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*
Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*
Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*
Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*
Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*
Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*
Eastern Whip-poor-will *Antrostomus vociferus*
Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*
Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*
Virginia Rail *Rallus limicola*
Sora *Porzana carolina*
Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*
American Coot *Fulica americana*
Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*
Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*
Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*

Common Loon *Gavia immer*

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Eastern Screech-Owl *Megascops asio*

Barred Owl *Strix varia*

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Eastern Wood-Pewee *Contopus virens*

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris*

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*

Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Veery *Catharus fuscescens*

Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Purple Finch *Haemorhous purpureus*

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera*

Nashville Warbler *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

Mourning Warbler *Geothlypis philadelphia*

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*

Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata*

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*

Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus*

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*

Clay-colored Sparrow *Spizella pallida*

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*

Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla*

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*

But wait ... did you mean to donate to this most worthwhile cause but forgot to do so? It's not too late …. Go to my link (see below) at Bird Studies Canada and you can do it online. So easy, but so beneficial to our troubled avifauna. Thanks!
https://www.canadahelps.org/me/6Dd6MYs

Kid's Corner

Text by Cara Gregory

Butterfly season is here! The beautiful colours and erratic flight of the *Lepidoptera*, meaning "scaly wings", can be seen flitting across a sunny meadow, or gently landing on a flower to drink its nectar. The order *Lepidoptera* refers to both butterflies and moths. The main difference between butterflies and moths is the antennae. Butterfly antennae are smooth and clubbed at the ends, and moth antennae are feathered. Butterflies transform in a chrysalis, and moths in a cocoon. Butterflies tend to be active in the

day and moths at night. There are always exceptions to this rule of course.

Butterflies (such as the Great Spangled Fritillary above) have six legs, three body parts (head, thorax, abdomen), antennae, and wings. They "smell" with their antennae, and "taste" with their feet. They sip nectar from flowers through their mouth parts called the proboscis. Most adult butterflies are generalists, feeding on nectar from a variety of flowers, making them incidental pollinators as they rarely feed on the flowers of one plant species. They have also been known to feed on sap, mud (to get trace minerals), rotting fruit, carrion or dung. The vibrant colours and patterns on the butterflies' wings comes from the scales on their wings, each individually coloured. The larval stage of the butterfly life cycle is the caterpillar, which has six jointed legs, and other fleshy appendages, called prolegs.

They are cold-blooded, meaning that their body temperature is influenced by the surrounding air temperatures. When the air temperature drops, so does their body temperature, and they slow down. For this reason, some butterflies, like the Monarch, migrate when temperatures drop in the fall. Other species may overwinter. Their life cycle involves an amazing change called "complete metamorphosis" (4 stages – egg, larva, pupa and adult).

Female butterflies can lay anywhere from a hundred to a few thousand eggs on specific host plants on which newly hatched caterpillars will feed. Many plants have evolved to have traits such as toxins, or spines, to help protect them against herbivores. A number of insects have developed ways to overcome these defences, such as a resistance to plant toxins. The Monarch caterpillar is a perfect example of this. It has developed a resistance to the toxins in the milky sap of its host plant, Milkweed. However, when it feeds on the Milkweed, it ingests and stores the toxins. The toxin in its system makes it undesirable for consumption by predators. For this reason, the Monarch butterfly is coloured a bright orange as a warning to prey to avoid them. The Viceroy butterfly is a "mimic" of the Monarch butterfly, and being of similar appearance can confuse predators, to its advantage. The clever part is that is doesn't have the toxin, like the

Monarch Butterfly

Monarch, but predators avoid it anyway because they think it does!

The caterpillars grow in size, and moult or shed their skin as they grow. After the last moult, they will form a chrysalis. This delicate chrysalis relies on camouflage to protect it from predators. The appearance of the chrysalis is unique for each species of butterfly. The formation of the butterfly chrysalis and the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly (such as the American Copper below) within it is a life process that has always fascinated people.

It is this time of year when a number of different butterfly counts are held. There are no "Butterfly Counts for Kids", as there are for birds, but that isn't to say that one couldn't be started! You can get the young ones in your life involved in Citizen Science in relation to the butterfly, by simply heading out together to observe them, and recording your observations. Observations can easily be submitted on the computer to a website called E-butterfly at http://www.e-butterfly.org/ to help monitor butterfly populations.

When heading out with children to catch and observe butterflies, it is helpful to have a net designed specifically for butterfly catching, a pair of binoculars for close up viewing, a field guide, a camera, and a notebook. It is important if you are handling a butterfly, to be gentle and release it immediately. Bringing a see-through plastic container with a lid can help to reduce any harm to the butterfly during the observation period. If the butterfly can't be identified in the field, you can snap a picture of it, and try to identify it together at home. It's also nice to have a photo record of what you have seen, and to post to E-butterfly.

The main characteristics to look for when identifying a butterfly are colour, size, patterns, and wing shape. Location, time of year, type of flight, and proximity to their caterpillar's host plant, can also help to narrow down what species a butterfly may be.

The ROM *Field Guide to Butterflies of Ontario* by Peter W. Hall et al. can be helpful in identifying the butterflies, but children will need to be assisted with using the book. Lightweight, with photos of the butterflies for comparison, *A Pocket Guide to Butterflies of Southern and Eastern Ontario (and Southwestern Quebec)* by Rick Cavasin, can easily be carried, folded out and compared to the butterfly for identification, which is ideal for both adults and children.

The warm summer days are here, and so are the butterflies! Grab your family, slap on the sunscreen and a hat, and spend a fun-filled afternoon out observing butterflies!

Bioblitzes 2018

Article and photos by Rachel Baldwin

On May 12, 2018 North Durham Nature volunteers took part in the Durham Region Ontario Bioblitz located at Heber Down

Conservation Area in Whitby, ON. In a Bioblitz, regular citizens can become scientists and can observe plants, birds and other species to share with fellow naturalists and contribute to much needed biodiversity data. People of all ages were welcomed and we were happy to see many young children having an incredible time exploring nature.

We had a booth with a bird identification poster, info about the club and we had real nests including those of a robin, chickadee and swallow. Many people had great stories to share about birds' nests in their own yards or balconies, especially about robins! Many of the kids were inspired by the birds' nests and we had supplies to let them build their own. Playdough was used as a base and the kids could get creative (just like birds!) by adding twigs, woodchips, dried grass, feathers and milkweed seeds to their nests. Many kids had an appreciation for just how difficult a bird's nest is to build and developed their own creative ways to make a home.

The Insects of Summer

Text and photos by James Kamstra

When most people think of the insects of summer, they are thinking of the unpleasant nuisance of biting mosquitoes, black flies and deer flies, or maybe the pests that are devouring their garden plants. But really there is so much more to the Class Insecta, and as naturalists we really should appreciate them. Insects are a tremendously diverse group: over 1 million classified species and many more out there yet to be described. Even in North Durham, there are many thousands of insect species that can be observed in their natural habitat.

Summer is the time to see them, for being cold-blooded, insects need warmth to develop and maintain activity. They have special adaptations and a variety of techniques for surviving through the freezing portion of the year, but they are generally dormant then. In the warm

season they emerge, feed, fly and reproduce to ensure that their species carry on for another year.

Butterflies have to be the popular poster child of the insect world, since they are large, colourful, recognizable, easy to see and harmless. Even those who do not like insects can appreciate the beauty of butterflies. But behold their largely nocturnal relatives, the moths. In Ontario there are more than 20 times as many moth species as butterflies ranging in size from the mighty Cecropia Moth with a 15 cm wingspan to the many micro-moths, with wings of only a few mm. width. While the hefty giant silk moths and sphinxes are sure to impress, the real diversity is to found among the smaller moths like geometers (whose larvae are 'inchworms'), cutworms, prominents, pyralids and others. Many appear gray and drab at first but on close inspection most moths have intricate patterns on their wings. You need to look closely to appreciate all that beauty; sometimes bold, sometimes subtle, but with such variety of pattern.

All moths and butterflies (as well as some other insect orders) have a larval or caterpillar stage which is a slug like organism that ravenously devours as much leafy material of its chosen food plant as it can. Once satiated, they will find a secure location to pupate. Great changes of physiology and form happen within, for the slug transforms into the graceful winged adult. But the caterpillars too are often beautiful in their own right. In fact some moths are more attractive, distinctive and easier to identify as caterpillars than as adult moths.

The other orders of insects are as impressive and equally interesting. Think of grasshoppers, dragonflies, mayflies, caddisflies, bugs, beetles, flies, wasps and bees. Each of these groups contains multitudes of species, and each species specialized to its own niche. How can there be so many species living together? They may feed on a particular plant or prey item, live in different micro-habitats, have different climatic tolerances and varied life cycles.

Beetles are the largest order of insects (or of any class for that matter) with 350,000 described species. All can be recognized as beetles by the hard forewing or elytra that cover the delicate folded flying wings. With so many species, and range of sizes, shapes and life histories, beetles are nearly everywhere. Beetles are chewers; they all come equipped with toothy mandibles to masticate their meals. Bugs on the other hand are suckers; they all have piercing tubular mouthparts to literally suck the juices out of plants or insect hosts.

Flies are another large Order worthy of a closer look. They are characterized by having a single pair of wings whereas most other insects bear two pair. The Order Diptera is disgusting to some for it includes mosquitos, gnats, house flies and blowflies, and writhing maggots that feast on rotting flesh. But the group also includes many important pollinators and predators such as crane flies, hover flies, bee flies and robber flies, all with their own fascinating life histories.

Don't forget the Hymenoptera that include most of the social insects such as bees, wasps and ants. They are characterized by having narrow waists, membranous wings and many bear stingers on the ends of their abdomens. These have complex life cycles with various castes, sophisticated communication among individuals and many of them constructing elaborate structures of mud, paper or even wax.

Bees, wasps and ants have castes each performing specific tasks for the good of their colonies. Then there are the wasps that parasitize spiders and caterpillars; their larvae slowly devouring the living host on the inside.

The majority of insect species have a single life cycle stretching over the course of a year, where the egg hatches, larvae eat and grow then transform into an adult that seeks a mate, reproduce and die over a 12 month period. But some like house flies, can complete their full life cycle in two weeks, and at the other extreme some cicadas remain in the nymph stage for 17 years before emerging from its underground chamber to spend a week in the sun as an adult. The observant eye will notice that the compliment of insects in the field changes throughout the summer season. More species of butterflies and dragonflies are out in the early summer but most of the grasshoppers and wasp species appear in the latter part. Caterpillars too are more conspicuous in the late season for they have reached full size and are often seen as they descend from their food plant and go on a long trek to find their pupation location.

Observing insects does not require travelling long distances. Because they are small, most insect species do not need large habitats and may persist in nearly any small pockets of habitat. Open sunny habitats are the best place to see insects, especially where there are nectar-producing flowering plants in bloom that attract a host of pollinators and other insects. Your garden can be a great place or any meadow that supports asters, vetch, milkweed or goldenrod or meadow marshes with Joe Pyeweed and Boneset. Also try looking at the moths that are attracted to the porch lights on a warm summer night. Personally, I have an obsession with trying to identify everything I see, but this is not necessary. You can just appreciate the beauty of form and variety that the insect world has to offer. Identification can be a real challenge. There are so many species that the field guides cannot hope to cover them all. In many cases a number of

similar species are separated by subtle characters. So watch, appreciate and enjoy the insects while you can, knowing you will not see the six-legged wonders through the cold part of the year.

Insect ID (in order of appearance in this article): Beetles on Milkweed; Green Ambushbug; Small Grey Geometer; Green Stinkbug; Green-striped Grasshopper; Racket-tailed Emerald. Robber Fly mimicking a Bumblebee; and Thread-waisted Wasp.

Spring Flowers

Spring Ephemerals of the Uxbridge Countryside Preserve

by Derek Connelly

Photos by Willa Worsley (all except white flower below which was taken by Ann Goldring)

One of the joys of spring is walking in the forest and enjoying the first emerging wildflowers. Many flower only for a short time, and then seem to vanish into the forest. These ephemerals are perennials that flower and die back early in the season - ready for next year. I wondered how many

ephemerals I could find this year and how I could share this experience? I decided to do a series of Sunday walks in May and watch the changing floral landscape. As a volunteer trail captain of the Uxbridge Countryside Preserve, this was a familiar location to me. All I needed now was a couple of good wildflower books or some flower experts to help me with identification.


Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Ann Goldring has been photographing flowers in the Preserve for a few years and recently began selling them as cards at Present Presents in Uxbridge with all proceeds going to our club, so she was an obvious choice. I advertised it as a guided shared walk hoping participants would bring their wildflower knowledge and their own keen interest. It worked - a number of nature and outdoor enthusiasts showed up and by the third walk, we had a developing list supported with photographs. While none us were true botanists, we were able to key out difficult ones using various field guides and by checking with other experts. This is exactly what happens on a Bioblitz, where novice naturalists and experts come together and document what really lives in a location. It helps us focus on nature in detail and when you know what is there you have something to care about.

Our four walks included two starting at the main entrance of the Preserve in early May and two coming in from Elgin Park Drive in late May and early June. Each walk covered about a half a kilometre and all flowers could be observed without leaving the trail. The Elgin Park Drive entrance trail is on a town right-of-way which passes through private land. The owners have applied to develop the land for townhouses and a proposal was brought to Council on June 25th. The future of these wildflowers and this trail is in question. Hopefully the owners and the Town will honour the right-of-way and use care when developing so as not to damage this ecosystem. It is up to us to keep an eye on our special places and speak out when the habitat is threatened.

The following is the list of flowers we saw on our walks in the order we encountered them in May 2018. Can you identify the ephemerals on the next page? Add your sightings to the list and email me for next year.

1. *Coltsfoot*
2. *Trout Lily*
3. *Sharp-lobed Hepatica*
4. *Bloodroot*
5. *Miterwort*
6. *Bunchberry*
7. *Wild strawberry*
8. *Field Pussy-toes*
9. *Violets- White, Blue, Yellow*

10. *Northern Bedstraw*
11. *Red Trillium*
12. *Yellow Trillium*
13. *Large flowering trillium*
14. *Jack in the Pulpit*
15. *White Baneberry*
16. *False Solomon's seal*
17. *Solomon's Seal*
18. *Starflower*
19. *Fringed Polygala*
20. *Wild Lily of the Valley*
21. *Foamflower*
22. *Kidney-leaf Buttercup*
23. *Red Baneberry*
24. *Virginia Waterleaf*
25. *Blue-eyed Grass*

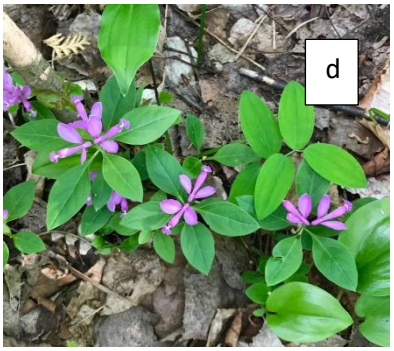
Please contribute photos to our Facebook group "Botanists of the Countryside Preserve or Facebook page - North Durham Nature.

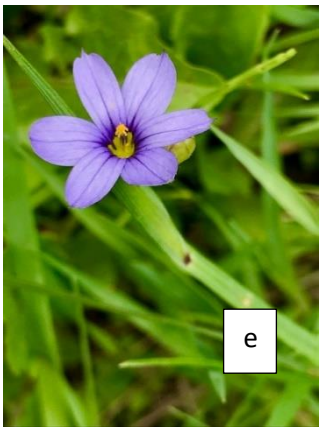
Thanks to those who joined me and added to the 2018 Spring wildflower walks.

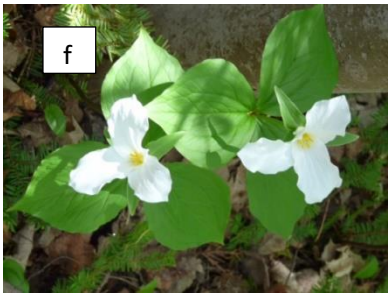
Here's a website with photos to keep us looking for next year and consider planting at home: http://www.thenewperennialist.com/sleeping-beauties-in-search-of-spring-ephemerals/

Spring flower quiz - can you identify these spring flowers pictured to the right?

Answers in next newsletter.



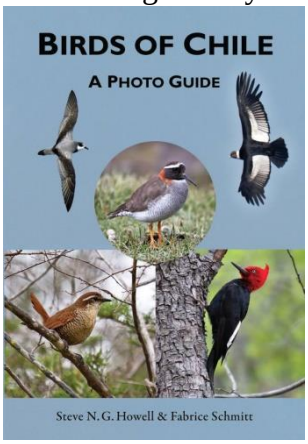




Book Reviews

Birds of Chile – A Photo Guide. Steve N.G. Howell and Fabrice Schmitt. Princeton University Press. 2018. $29.95 USD. 240 pages. ISBN:978-0-691-1167398

I just returned from Chile and I wish I could have had this new guide for my journey. I was using an outdated volume that was sorely lacking in detail and depth. This guide would have greatly improved my adventure. Even though the book is specific to Chile, if one travels to southern Peru or Argentina you will find it useful as there is a great deal of overlap with the species you will encounter. The added value rests in the fact that to date there is no good guide to Argentinian birds available.



This is a photographic guide that covers all expected species to be found in Chile as breeders or migrants. Using over 1000 high quality photos the authors accomplish this feat effectively. One of the difficulties I had with other guides to Chile and southern South America lie in the descriptions of the regions where birds might be found. Most books (until now) just spoke in general terms of mountains vs. coast and north, south or central Chile. This book goes well beyond that and provides excellent habitat descriptors that are very helpful.

So was the book good – yes – good but not perfect – I loved the photos chosen for the most part, but wold have liked to see more and in some cases closer images of certain species. For example, the study of the Diademid Sandpiper–plover is of a breeding male. What about the duller female and the quite different immature? There are no helpful images to fill that gap. The photos of the Bi-colored Hawk are small and the salient features hard to see in this confusing and variable species. On the other hand, the depictions of the Cinclodes group are excellent and show hard to see features well. In summary, if you're thinking of traveling to Chile, this book is a must!

Species Profile

The Porcupine is a familiar sight in North Durham, albeit sadly we see it most often as a road-kill victim.

Here are some facts I discovered ….

Getting skewered by a porcupine quill will hurt but it likely will not infect. The porcupine quills have a topical antibiotic on them. This is to protect itself, its offspring and any prospective mate as they are reportedly not immune to getting pricked. North American porcupines have a partially prehensile tail to keep them from falling out of trees!

Porcupines make a series of weird grunts and squeals that only they understand. Their growls can be quite intimidating however.

Porcupines can be stinky and can emit pungent odours to ward off predators. Males will often urinate on a female to bring her into estrous … strange form of foreplay!

Another Rarity for North Durham

I was co-leading a walk with Cara Gregory in early June where we hosted several members of the Orillia Field Naturalists club. Our itinerary was to go to Nonquon lagoons and our objective simple – find shorebirds! Not such an easy task as the vast majority of the migrant sandpipers had already passed by the date we went out.

I was still optimistic as the lagoons had been good of late, and lots of ducks nest there so we should find something of interest. And even if the birds let us down, the dragonflies, bluets, frogs and wildflowers were sure to amuse.

As we walked slowly along the shore of the first lagoon, several ducks did show well, many of them with several young in tow. Wood Ducks, Mallards, Gadwall and Trumpeter Swans all showed off their ducklings and cygnets well. Male Northern Shovelers and a Ruddy Duck and female Hooded Mergansers teased us alluding to breeding.

Black Terns flitted everywhere in search of insects and other invertebrates and an Osprey carried a fish to her nestlings atop the light standards at the nearby ballfield.

Suddenly I saw a shorebird – aha success! I presumed it was going to be a Killdeer or Spotted Sandpiper as that should have been all that was here at this time of year. But no, it was an extremely rare Reeve (the male is called a Ruff), from Europe and Asia.

This large shorebird had been found in unprecedented numbers in North America this year, and even in Durham it was amazingly the 3rd sighting for 2018. The first was at Cranberry in May (an adult male) and the second was on June 7th, also at Cranberry. That one was a female. When I compared my photos to the ones taken of the Cranberry female, turns out this was the same bird! I managed some bad photos due to the intense light and distance from the bird and submitted my report to the Ontario Rare Bird Committee.

I hope the lagoons continue to produce this fall. If you decide to go, don't forget you need a permit from Durham Region.

Bird pictured above is an immature Least Sandpiper

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