

NATURE NOTES – MAY 2021

Although somewhat peeved to have my April surgery cancelled, being of an optimistic bent I figured that being able to enjoy spring migration to its fullest would more than make up for the change of plans. The lakes did not disappoint and this May, although not over yet, has been the best for birding in the six years we have been living on Rainbow Lane. Just yesterday an uncommon and very hard to see species, **Gray-cheeked Thrush**, appeared in our yard and other new birds for the area included a fly-by flock of Brant, a type of goose, and an American Bittern heard several times in the marsh at the end of Rainbow Lake.



Black-throated Green, Golden-winged (quite rare in other parts of Ontario), Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Northern Parula, American Redstart and, of course, the vociferous **Ovenbird** whose strident “Teacha, teacha” can be heard echoing through the woods daily at this time of year. Not to be outdone the vireos arrived, starting off with the spectacled Blue-headed Vireo, which is always the first to show, soon followed by Warbling Vireo, a singularly boring



Things started off with a bang at the beginning of the month with three of the most awaited species around here making an appearance at our feeders: **Baltimore Oriole**, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. It never ceases to amaze me that such tiny hummingbirds can make the arduous journey over the Gulf of Mexico on their way from Central America back to us here in Canada. During that first couple of weeks of May, many more species of warblers started to arrive to join their earlier cohorts: Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Nashville,



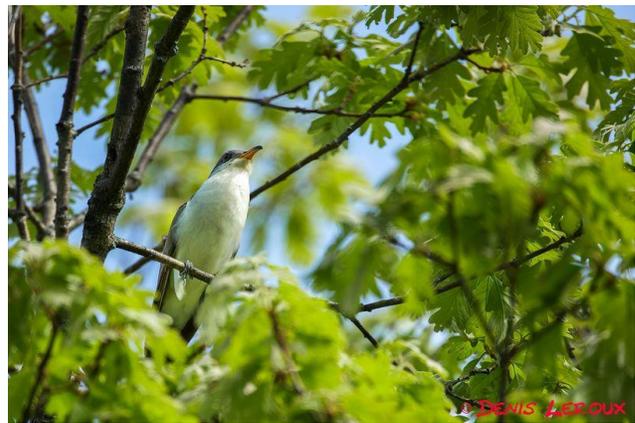
brown bird which sings its finch-like song from the tops of trees, interspersed with harsh calls that has caused Stewart and I to christen it “Whining Vireo”. About the same time the gorgeous Yellow-throated Vireo made an appearance, calling its lazy, buzzy “re-oo, three-eight” song. With a similar but more musical song, is the Red-eyed Vireo This is the vireo you can hear all the time and Stewart and I have called it “Persistent Vireo” as it continues to call all day long after it has established territory.



On the flycatcher front the early phoebes were joined by Great Crested Flycatcher, whose loud “wheeps” still can be heard, Least Flycatcher, which proclaims “tchebec, tchebec” with a stridency belying its tiny size, Eastern Wood Pewee, whose “pee-a-wee” calls provide a ready ID and Eastern Kingbird, with its staccato calls that sound like sparking electrics. Then that jewel of the woodland, **Scarlet Tanager**, returned. Its song has been described as like that of a Robin with a sore throat. Very distinctive, however, is the “Chick-burr” call note that often gives away its presence. The bright

blue Indigo Bunting could also be found along both lakes about this time.

By the middle of the month a stroll along any of our roads could produce a nice bird list of over 60 species. However at that point the leaves had come in and the bugs had come out, making birding something of a challenge that needed to be conducted mostly by ear. Then of course, many birds established territories and stopped singing, so over the past week or ten days there has been a certain frustration involved in trying to record the birds seen around the lakes. Luckily some of the later arrivals, such as the Eastern Whip-poor-will and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, are quite vociferous if almost impossible to see! Kudos to Denis Leroux for getting this shot.



Although birds tend to be the focus of my activities during spring migration, I was happy to record a new mammal for the area: Long-tailed Weasel, seen here with its prey as it shot across the 36 during one of our walks. Denis’ game cam has also captured images of the local Black Bears, a mother and cub, wandering through the wetland area on Little Silver Lane. Something new for us was the sighting of a Groundhog up a tree: never knew they could climb! Turtles and snakes also abound this month, so please be careful as you drive the lanes as I have found a few squashed snakes on my walks around the neighbourhood.

I was rather disappointed that no-one took me up on my challenge to start recording bird species for our lake hotspot on eBird. Anyway, with the appearance of that uncommon thrush yesterday, I am now up to 132 species seen in total around our lakes and 106 for this year alone. There are some benefits to being stuck in your local area!

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With thanks to Stewart Bentley and Denis Leroux for the illustrations