

## NATURE NOTES MAY 2023

Despite disappearing for the latter part of April and the first days of May to watch birds in the Dominican Republic rather than around our lakes, we were able to tally an impressive total here for the month along with sightings of various other critters. However, as you all know, this particular observer is rather bird-focussed! Definitely had to play catch up on migrants as soon as we returned, especially those little jewels, the wood warblers, whose bright colours bring joy to every birder's heart each spring. May 6, however, was remarkable in that we recorded the very first **Peregrine Falcon** for the lakes. Not just a quick fly by either; this bird remained perched up a tree along the side of our driveway for several hours. What a great welcome home! On the same day the first Broad-winged Hawk was seen and heard whistling



overhead. Meanwhile those warbler species started to dribble in, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-White and Yellow Warblers joining the now firmly ensconced Pine and Yellow-rumped. The next day we were delighted to welcome back the first Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and **Baltimore Orioles**. A sortie at dusk produced the first Eastern Whip-poor-Will of the season and since then this species has been heard nightly, along with the Barred Owls which seem to be very vocal on both lakes this year.

May 10 was a major day of spring arrivals and more than 50 species were tallied around the lakes on that day. New year birds included American Bittern, one of which flew right across the 36 before settling invisibly into an adjacent swamp, Great Crested Flycatcher, both Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos, Barn Swallow, and three more warbler species: Ovenbird, **American Redstart** and Common Yellowthroat. The hoarse warbling of the beautiful Scarlet Tanager was also heard for the first time. In the days that followed the warblers were joined by Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Parula and Chestnut-sided, while Least Flycatchers and Eastern Kingbirds arrived to keep their relations company.



Soon Wood Thrushes were heard “Ee-oh-laying” in the woods and a week later the first Veerys, also a thrush, were heard at dawn and dusk uttering their strange descending, almost robotic song. Stepping out of the house last Wednesday I heard the first “Cawp, cawp” of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and a day later heard the almost inaudible call of a Blackpoll Warbler, usually one of the last warblers to show up on migration. I do believe that summer might have finally arrived!



Mammal-wise, there have been several sightings around the lakes of a momma bear and her two little cubs. We saw them cross the road between Camp Davern and Little Silver Lake Road and other folk have seen the bears crossing their property or even shaking food out of feeders. Definitely a time to be cautious. On the May 10 amble around the lakes mentioned earlier I saw the first Porcupine of the year hanging out up a tree along Silvery Lane and have also seen a Fisher cross the road. River Otters are present but shy - our son was lucky to glimpse one at dusk just the other night.



On a more slithery note, our son was less than enthusiastic to discover that, having been removed from its perch on a handy tire, a **Gray Rat Snake** had taken up residence in the engine of his bus. Opening the hood he was rather startled to be greeted by a waving snake head inches from his nose! He enlisted my assistance in removing it from the air intake but the critter decided to burrow further into the engine innards. Decided we'd better not start the bus up as things could have

become messy! Eventually, after much noisy work on the vehicle, a careful search failed to produce any sign of the snake so we concluded that it had slithered off to more peaceful surroundings. The Eastern Garter Snakes have indeed overwintered in our garden compost and seem quite put out when disturbed!

So now the lakes will settle down into the gentle rhythms of summer. The rush of migration is over and the birds are settling down to the serious business of nesting and raising young. A few birds remain vocal - Ovenbirds calling “Teacher, teacher” continually, Eastern Phoebes proclaiming their identity and Great Crested Flycatchers “wheeping” in the now leafy trees. Even the noisy Red-winged Blackbirds have largely departed up to the marsh.

We are heading off for nearly all of June to find birds in the last province left for us to explore: Newfoundland. So will wish you all an excellent month of enjoying all the natural wonders these lakes have to offer.

Alison Bentley, Rainbow Lane

Thanks to Stewart Bentley for the illustrations