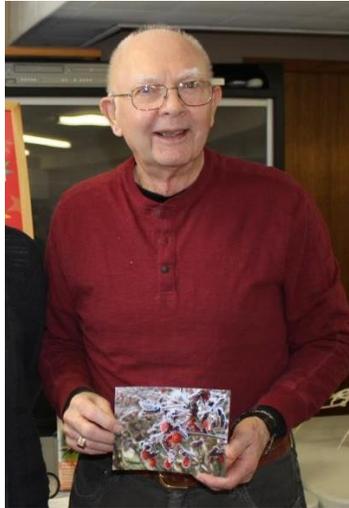


It is with sadness we mark the passing of long-time member, Glen Holmes. He was a great birder and photographer who shared his talents through presentations and was a perennial photo contest winner. Jeni Pepper commented, "...I always appreciated Glen's occasional photographic pointers. Glen's eye for a photo wasn't just seeing a nice view; he had the knack of getting the right angle and ambience."



We extend our condolences to his wife, Elaine, and family. He will be greatly missed.



This recent Globe and Mail article was forwarded by Pat Guay who commented, "Immediately I thought of our HFFN group and the fact they might also enjoy it also."

There are indeed many positives during this retreat from our regular routines....and lessons to be learned."

As we all hunker down at home, interest in birds is soaring, Julia Zarankin writes. They help us connect to something larger than ourselves amid a dearth of good news

With the animal kingdom spared from the lockdowns that have kept billions of humans at home, birds can bring colour, drama and comfort to our lives – if we know where to look.

Even as our lives have been put on pause – or in a stream of interminable Zoom meetings – in a way that is beyond our control, birds carry on with their migratory journeys and that fact alone brings real solace: Life hasn't stopped for them.

Julia Zarankin, author of the forthcoming book *Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder: A Memoir*

A few days ago, my father called to tell me about the extraordinary bird he'd just seen in his backyard: It was black, but not black, with some kind of fantastical iridescent feathers, the head shone purple and malachite green in the light depending on where you stood, its body dotted with majestic yellow splashes. Surely this must be something rare? It was, unsurprisingly, a starling.

This wasn't exactly a new occurrence. Ever since I began birding semi-maniacally 10 years ago, friends and family have been sending me their "rare bird" sightings, which usually turn out to be starlings or robins. But in the past several weeks, since COVID-19 has radically changed the way we live and forced us into a regime of physical distancing and large amounts of time indoors, the phone calls with bird trivia have proliferated. Not just phone calls, but texts, e-mails, anecdotes, photos of my friends' children at the window with homemade toilet-paper-roll binoculars, watching birds with gusto.

I'm not alone in noticing this trend. Jody Allair, director of citizen science and community engagement at Birds Canada, told me he's also "seen a noticeable increase in the number of people feeding birds and commenting about the birds in their yards on social media."

COVID-19 might be turning many into unintentional birders. As the world around us has shrunk drastically, it seems that the only thing that hasn't yet been cancelled is ... birds. Schools and universities are closed, sports are off the table, the performing arts have been put on hold – or are now live streamed – national and provincial parks have shut their gates, and yet none of this changes the fact that we're in the thick of spring migration and the birds are coming back in droves. Charms of finches, clouds of red-winged blackbirds, corrals of brown-headed cowbirds, seasons of killdeer, gulps of double-crested cormorants and a

Vatican of northern cardinals – they’re here, they’re loud and they’re clamouring for our attention. And the American woodcocks are back, peenting, displaying and embarking on their colossal spring copulation spree. Once the songbirds make an appearance – warblers, tanagers, orioles – our trees will be aglow with fluttering pockets of fiery colour.

When COVID-19 shut down life as we know it, everything moved online: school, movies, operas, reruns of sports, concerts. The array of things to learn and watch is dizzying (and mostly free), and yet none of it feels entirely fulfilling. We’re in this limbo where we’re overstimulated, suffering from a certain amount of Zoom fatigue, and at the same time, paradoxically, under-fulfilled. Even the power of a sourdough starter feels short-lived.

Instead, we’ve turned to watching our feathered friends. Even as our lives have been put on pause – or in a stream of interminable Zoom meetings – in a way that is beyond our control, birds carry on with their migratory journeys and that fact alone brings real solace: Life hasn’t stopped for them. Instead, birds remind us, by their very vivaciousness and their loud presence, that they’re very much alive and that, by extension, so are we. The cycles of the natural world haven’t been marred by the coronavirus, and witnessing that gives us a sense of hope and even reassurance in this dark and chaotic time.

If this frustrating and devastating time has a silver lining, it’s that people are now paying attention to nature. Watching birds closely encourages deeper ways of noticing, which is particularly welcome now, when anxiety and stress are high. Birding forces us to slow down, to be in the moment, to find joy in the little things around us – in other words, like any other meditative practice, it’s good for our mental health. Nate Swick, social-media manager for the American Birding Association (ABA), says he believes that watching birds “can help us through this difficult time if for no other reason than they provide us with an opportunity to get out of our own heads and focus on something positive for a while.”

And it’s also filled with top quality drama. “Now that sports are on hold,” Mr. Swick says, “there is a desire for the sort of real-time drama that is missing now, and birds at a feeder can fill that void.” Different species have their own personalities, and power dynamics reign supreme at a feeder, where hierarchies quickly become apparent. Slick common grackles terrorize everyone in their midst; when the supermodel blue jay struts his stuff at the feeder, most other birds steer clear; a nuthatch bullies whoever it needs to for first dibs on the food source. Mr. Swick also reminds us of the “ever-present drama of raptors.” When a Cooper’s hawk swoops in to survey the buffet offerings, the adrenaline rush-inducing drama at the feeder becomes a matter of life and death.

Even for those of us who are backyard-less, birding opportunities abound out the window. I used to think my eighth-floor apartment urban view held nothing for me beyond concrete buildings, but once I took the time to really examine the skies, I started noticing raptors. As Roger Tory Peterson, the god of modern birding, once said, “The more you look, the more you will see.” I feel that I’ve befriended the resident red-tailed hawks that grace my neighbourhood. The other day, I saw an American crow dive-bombing one of them while the other looked on, perhaps happy to have escaped the crow’s fury. Many birds work in shifts: Every afternoon, like clockwork, I watch the turkey vultures appear, soaring their hearts out. A persistent house sparrow is carting nesting material around, trying desperately to make a home for himself somewhere in the bricks near my window. I used to find this house sparrow irksome, but now I’m full of admiration for his persistence and sheer grit.

Although birding festivals, group walks and events have been cancelled, birding associations such as Birds Canada and local naturalist groups are still urging people to get outside and watch birds more locally – remaining mindful and vigilant about physical distancing – which can be a positive thing. Emily Rondel, vice-president of the Toronto Ornithological Club, says she believes “we’re

really seeing a return to birding in the old way.” Since people are limited in their ability to travel, they’re focusing on their neighbourhood patch or their backyard, which has advantages. “I think this type of birding, focused on getting to know the nature in a place, rather than building a list, has great benefits,” Ms. Rondel says, and “connecting to the natural rhythms in your neighbourhood makes you a better environmentalist and allows you to inject an appreciation for nature into your daily life and routine.”

Birders have developed a reputation for stopping at nothing to chase down a rare bird. No distance is too far to accumulate sightings for a life list. But being forced to slow down and challenge ourselves to once again care deeply about our common backyard birds and observe our immediate surroundings with greater attention will make us better, more compassionate birders and environmentalists in the long run.

With so little comfort coming from the news, birds offer us a connection to something larger than ourselves. Tools such as eBird allow us to track our sightings and contribute to citizen science from our own backyard or living room. Watching birds closely, we also realize we don’t have to stray too far from home to experience wilderness. They remind us that our urban landscape is teeming with life. And now that we are witnessing a decrease in urban pollution firsthand, there’s hope that our re-entry into the world will be accompanied by a different way of thinking about nature and the responsibility to protect it.

Increased social-media initiatives by birding organizations worldwide are helping to foster a sense of community among people sequestered in their homes. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Britain offers “daily doses of Vitamin N” through their #breakfastbirdwatch posts on Twitter. But perhaps more importantly, live streamed webinars and Q&As such as the ABA’s weekly live “Virtual Bird Club” and “What’s This Bird,” both played host by Mr. Swick, not only provide ways to connect and convene, but also help break down barriers between seasoned and novice birders.

If anything, the pandemic is turning all of us into beginners who watch everything outside our window – even the flyby cacophonous gaggle of Canada geese – with curiosity and wonder. Remembering to notice and marvel at the patches of vermilion on a (very common) red-winged blackbird’s epaulets is as good a reminder of the magic of nature as anything I can think of.

Not only are the birds far from cancelled – they’re thriving. By watching them closely, so are we.

Now that we are witnessing a decrease in urban pollution firsthand, there’s hope that our re-entry into the world will be accompanied by a different way of thinking about nature and the responsibility to protect it.

Eastern Screech Owl, Roberts property, May 5, 2020



Murray Jamieson forwarded a message from Jack Campbell with a link to a nature video.

“Watch PBS May 6 at 8:00PM **I Spy Nature** for the complete program. Looks like butterfly heaven to me.”

<https://petapixel.com/2020/04/28/hummingbird-spy-drone-captures-stunning-video-from-inside-a-monarch-butterfly-swarm/?fbclid=IwAR2YKo0g0sMkStlo7jnHefLcvFgc1wJXRG6GZbfZQrHH0kcDX2ooXgwQRNw>



World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2020

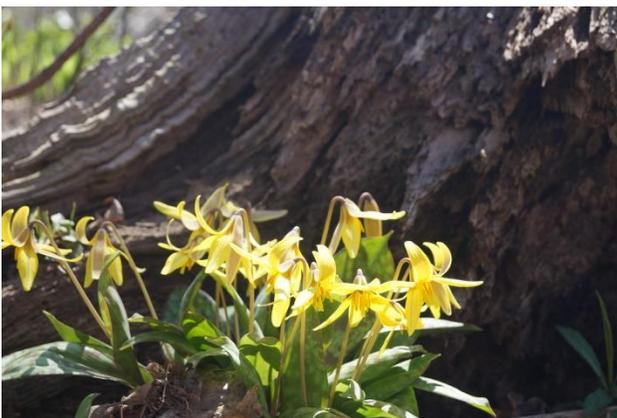
BIRDS CONNECT OUR WORLD!

WMBD is officially celebrated on the second Saturday of May in Canada and the US (May 9th in 2020), and the second Saturday of October in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean (October 10th in 2020). However, every day is Migratory Bird Day, and you can celebrate birds and host events any day of the year!

Go to <https://www.migratorybirdday.org/> for resources and videos.

Interested in learning more about migratory birds? Well, you don't have to "wing" it!

In celebration of World Migratory Bird Day on May 9, we've put together another set of videos, activities and DIY projects to help you learn more about our feathered friends and take action to support their conservation.



Donna Butson sent this luminous photo of Trout Lily from her property south of Goderich

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation will host a series of interesting webinars this spring and summer. You must register in advance to participate.

Go to <https://www.lakehuron.ca/>

THE LAKE HURON CENTRE FOR COASTAL CONSERVATION PRESENTS:

Learning about Lake Huron...

A Summer Coastal Webinar Series

WED, MAY 20, 2020 : 2-3 PM

Harnessing Nature's Power: Green infrastructure vs. hardened shorelines.

THURS JUNE 4, 2020 : 10-11 AM

Plastic Pollution: Microfibers to tires, how do we sort through the waste?

THURS JUNE 18, 2020 : 2-3 PM

Go with the Flow: Water levels and what shapes Lake Huron.

WED JUL 8, 2020 : 10-11 AM

Throwing Shade: The right plants for your coastal environment.

WED JULY 22, 2020 : 2-3 PM

Identifying Imitators: Comparing species at risk to their look a-likes.

THURS AUG 6, 2020: 10-11 AM

How to: Coastal restoration on beaches, dunes, and forests.

Thank you to our generous sponsors:



If you were unable to attend the Coastal Centre's Nearshore Workshop in Kincardine February 25th, you can watch it on Youtube. It was an very cohesive and informative look at coastal systems, mitigation and regulation. Worth a watch.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8io2eUsNgSI&list=PLEnri9X-Dy_6lPe_4mHCKwmfnHVWGTh&fbclid=IwAR0CXc2suydtbH_0s-

[plckWH4R9KhX58OSU5dbkTvzYefLAufdzYmuay0l](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8io2eUsNgSI&list=PLEnri9X-Dy_6lPe_4mHCKwmfnHVWGTh&fbclid=IwAR0CXc2suydtbH_0s-plckWH4R9KhX58OSU5dbkTvzYefLAufdzYmuay0l)