



SPRING BULLETIN 2021

Laurier Woods is a perfect spring walk



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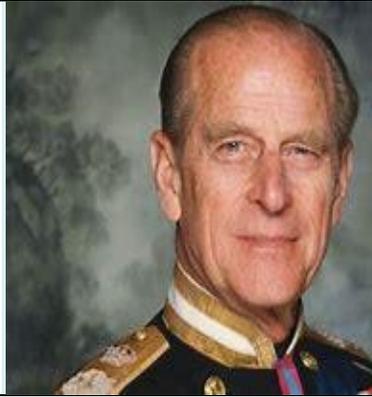
Troy Storms, NBMCA Rep

Spring is back and here come the birds. I am one of those people who love birds and envy ornithologists with their instant recognition and ability to identify them. I thought it might be worthwhile to learn about the most common avian visitor in my yard and sort out which is which. First, it's a good idea to review bird maps for our area and absolutely get a good guidebook. Another option is to join a group with knowledgeable birders such as the Nipissing Naturalists Club as your interest grows.

Let us take a look at identifying black birds such as the grackle vs raven. Among the several blackbird species that occur in North America, only a handful typically occur in a given region. In the meantime, here are some ways to distinguish them. Consider features like beak, tail, and plumage. Bill shape and tail shape provide key features in distinguishing ravens and crows. Long tails characterize grackles and specific size, and shape helps to differentiate between grackle species. (check your guide). Blackbirds have moderate-sized beaks and tails, but species differ in their distinguishing marks (red wings are easily recognized for example.) Cowbirds have thicker beaks and shorter tails. Starlings have very short tails and pointy beaks (which are bright yellow in the breeding season unlike the others). These differences might seem overwhelming at first, but if you do have a map and a bird identification book you find there is a list of four-six species that occur in this region, cutting back on the information you need to memorize and will make identification easier. As you spend time observing these birds, you will notice that they differ in characteristics like movement, foraging style, and sound. While many guidebooks provide some description of these characteristics, it really takes a dedicated observer to familiarize yourself with these characteristics. If you have the opportunity talk to an expert or join them in the Woods. It's a great hobby.

<http://www.ontariofieldnaturalists.ca/FieldGuides/Birds.html>

<http://www.ofo.ca/site/page/view/checklist.checklist>



We have received a generous donation in memory of Prince Phillip who passed away on April 9, 2021. Our donor wrote eloquently “He was an avid conservationist and avid bird watcher and we wanted him to be remembered with a donation to The Friends of Laurier Woods.” We are grateful for all he did to support and preserve the natural world during his lifetime.



SONGS OF THE POND

With the arrival of spring, decibel levels rise dramatically around the pond/wetland. Our thoughts are triggered visually with the arrival of birds returning from their winter destinations, but in truth the noisiest of species are the ones you don't see. Every year as the male frogs & toads emerge from hibernation, they travel to breeding ponds and start singing to attract a mate & protect their territory. Most frog species are nocturnal and therefore more active & vocal after dark. Frogs produce sound from the air

sac below their mouth which, from the outside, is seen to inflate and deflate. Air from the lungs is channelled to the air sac, which resonates to make the sound louder. Each species has a unique song and specific temperature and time during the spring that you will hear them. Over the course of the spring season as individual species begin their mating calls the range of frog songs becomes a virtual orchestra. Of the eight species (7 frog/1 toad) that can be found in our region the first two species we hear, when daytime temperatures reach 5C, are the Wood Frog and Spring Peeper. The Wood sounds like a duck quacking and the Peeper has a high-pitched peeping repeated over and over. When all the frogs sing together scientists refer to it as a 'chorus' When in chorus the Peepers sound like sleigh bells! Two to four weeks on the spring calendar after the Wood and Peeper are heard tune your ear for the Northern Leopard Frog, a rattling snore followed by soft grunts. In another two weeks you'll hear the American Toad with his long musical trill. Following in May are the Gray Treefrog & the Green Frog, the first sounding more as a melodious trill & the second more a throaty 'gunk'. Later in the season we start to hear the **Mink Frog** with his sharp, woody rasps. And of course, we all know the Bullfrog for his “rumm...rumm...rumm” - often transliterated as “jug-o-rum”! Check out the website www.musicofnature.com to see & listen to individual species.

Frogs & toads are an important part of local biodiversity. They have a special role to play in keeping the environment healthy. With their semi-permeable skin & their ability to live 'on the edge' between water & land, frogs & toads are very sensitive to pollution & other environmental changes.

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