



Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon
1302 Main Street, Saint Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Enchanted April

Every April I watch the movie “Enchanted April”; it’s just a habit. The story goes like this: early in the 1900’s a group of English people spend a month at an Italian castle and become transformed, no longer looking at life in the same way. April bird arrivals remind me of the transformations we witness every day as more and more migrants are showing up. They are maturing, becoming sexually active, putting on weight with new food sources and dressing up for the courtship and breeding displays to come and of course, singing (drumming) their hearts out.

To me, anything that comes and goes with the wind is truly enchanting (other than biting insects). Take the spring migration of birds of prey for example. It is not known to be as spectacular as in the fall, but any hawk that did not spend the winter here, is a welcome change for birders. Spiraling on the updrafts along the ridges, we usually see the turkey vultures as an early sign of spring. Something is making a barred owl sing more these days around my house. So far broad winged hawks and merlins have been mentioned in the VTBird group. After the recent south winds and warm temperatures, watch carefully for these travelers.

It goes without saying that the emerging flowers seem enchanted, drawn out of the earth as if by magic. Even though this is a birding column, I have to mention the flowers, which attract the insects that will attract the birds. The location of the first emerging flowers will be the places (called stopover habitat) to find the first arrivals. Until they reach their breeding grounds, they are on the move for many weeks, stopping only long enough in any location to feed and rest, before the next leg of the northward journey. In fact, a study was done on where and when birds return in the Connecticut River Watershed a few years back, take a look <http://www.science.smith.edu/stopoverbirds>. We know that over time, suitable stopover habitats have become separated by agricultural fields, roads, cities and suburbs. Unfortunately more birds are required to make use of fewer remaining areas. Our understanding of stopover habitat is now playing a larger role in the overall conservation of Neotropical migrant birds.

A final note as we look towards May. Hummingbirds will be arriving soon so get your feeders ready! To follow their arrival in New England, check this website: <http://www.nehummers.com>, and click on the Map 2009. They will enchant our summer world.
Happy Enchanted Birding!



Picture from Wikimedia

**Carolyn E. Boardman is a board member of NEK Audubon living in Brownington, Vermont. NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non -profit organization that encourages people’s enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit www.nekaudubon.org.
Art work by Robin Rothman.**

