



Bird Notes

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

For Immediate Release

The Count...Down

We are always counting. With the economy in our faces everyday, it's hard not to. People are watching their bird feeders this winter, and discussing the numbers of this species and that species, and what's up and what's down. It all started last fall with the question, where are all the birds? Then someone reported recently that chickadee numbers were down. Yet other people have indicated that they are the same or up in numbers. Where goldfinches seem to be abundant this year, other bird feeder regulars are absent. Then someone will report the opposite. From our neighbors in Canada, the Winter Finch Forecast for 2010 did not predict any major influx of redpolls or siskins this winter. (Google winter finch forecast for details) This, for the most part, has been true. Seed crops of certain types of trees are the key to winter bird survival. The general consensus is that feeder numbers are down this year. In a nutshell, we really just don't know what to expect from year to year. To help figure out how bird populations are doing over the long haul, everyone can observe, count and share information about the birds they see.

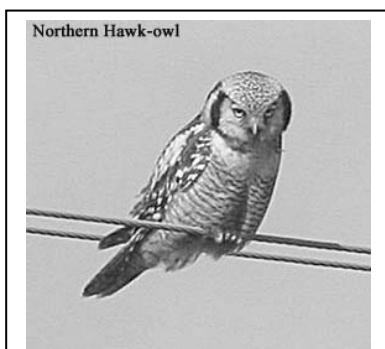
Which leads me to the important part, our annual winter bird count is almost here. Let the count down begin to the Great Backyard Bird Survey over President's Day weekend, Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. It is one of the easiest citizen surveys I know. Keep your bird feeders stocked up to bring the birds in, start watching and make a list of what you see. Also on this website, you can brush up on your winter birds with a regional checklist and identification aids.

There have been a few rare bird visitors this winter, for example the hawk owls. This is an adorable little owl (*Surnia ulula*) with some hawklike behaviors. Ranging from Alaska across Canada to Labrador, this visitor will most likely a juvenile. Typically perched on the top most branch of a tree, they wait for prey (mice, voles) to venture forth. They have been seen hovering, much like a sparrow hawk.

Which leads me to the next important part, NEK Audubon is on Facebook. We are now able to post the bird sitings from our trips or other observations. There is a picture of the hawk owl and directions to its location in the Derby/Newport area. Most importantly (outside of the social coolness) anyone on Facebook, which could be you, can post bird sitings on our page and find out where birds are being seen.

Happy Back Yard Bird Counting!

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 to enjoy 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. Find us on Facebook at Nek Audubon. Art work by Robin Rothman.



Internet photo