



NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON

A Chapter Of The National Audubon Society

Fall 2005

The mission of Northeast Kingdom Audubon is to foster the stewardship and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife and natural habitats.

Notes from the President ... Bats!

Anyone with doubts about the importance of bats was set straight at our Annual Meeting at the end of July. Claude Phipps' interest in this intriguing and vital animal started in 1981 when he was employed as Park Engineer for the Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico. Later he joined Bat Conservation International. Now, in his retirement, Claude and his wife, Connie, continue to promote respect and encourage conservation of bats by giving talks and helping to design bat exclusions in public buildings in Newbury.

The 925 species of bats make up nearly one-quarter of all mammal species and range in size from Indonesia's "flying foxes" with six-foot wingspans, to Thailand's bumblebee bat, weighing less than a penny. In certain parts of the world bats are essential in pollinating flowers and dispersing seeds. Vermont bats consume enormous quantities of insects, and keep the plants we depend on for food from being overrun. A little brown bat (the most common of Vermont's nine species) eats about 1,200 bugs in an hour. A nursing mother devours some 4,500 in an evening!

The fear of bats is unfortunate and misguided. Rabies is less common in bats than in many other mammals and bats rarely bite unless in self-defense. They've been around since the time of dinosaurs, but now are alarmingly endangered. Many are dying due to pesticides and loss of habitat. The sport of caving threatens bats as it often disturbs critically important hibernation. More than half of American species and many throughout the world are in decline. Bats are especially vulnerable because many produce only one young per year, and their rate of recovery is slow. Bats can only survive if we allow and design safe places for them to live and hibernate.

To learn more about bats and receive a free catalogue, contact Bat Conservation International,

P.O. Box 162603, Austin, Texas, 78716, or visit www.batcon.org. Another great source is <http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu>.



Great Grays

For almost a month I heard and read reports about the Great Gray Owl "invasion" taking place southwest of Montreal in the L'île Bizard area. The Great Gray Owl is seen in that area only about once every ten years. Its normal range is across northern Canada from Ontario west and on up into Alaska. In the winter it can wander further south into the northern states of New York, Wisconsin and Minnesota as its food supply of rodents (mainly voles) dwindles.

Knowing this, I still hoped that the Great Gray Owls would make their way a little further south into Vermont. I just knew that if I made the trip north they'd leave the day before my arrival. I have had good luck in the past driving long distances to find a particular bird that was in an uncharacteristic location, but it was like trying to find a needle in a haystack. So when a friend called and said let's go see the Great Grays, I half-heartedly said OK.

I got directions to L'île Bizard from the "Birding on the Net" web site. I, also, read many reports that led me to believe that I could wind up in the middle of a circus: cars had been broken into; snowmobilers were plentiful and loud; and, photographers and birders were getting uncomfortably close to the birds. My friend and I arrived early one Sunday morning. Incredibly, not more than 100 yards from where we parked, we saw four Great Gray Owls and heard them calling to one another. I'd never before seen a Great Gray Owl. When I set up the scope about 100ft. away and peered

through the lens a pair of the huge beautiful yellow eyes was staring back at me. At least that's the way it seemed. Wow! On my left I heard a small hoot and there was another Great Gray Owl on a leafless branch. A man behind me said, "straight ahead" and there was another Great Gray Owl. It's an 'Owlathon"!

I was amazed at how close some of the other birders and photographers were able to get to the owls. Some people got as close as 10 ft. with their cameras trying to get that perfect picture. I didn't need to get so close. I was satisfied that they'd been very accommodating and wanted to allow them some space. The owls didn't seem to be stressed out by all the attention. If they were I'm sure they'd just fly off to a more isolated perch.

While at Bizard, other birders mentioned that a Boreal Owl and a Northern Saw-whet Owl were being seen in Bucherville. They gave us directions for the 25-mile ride and we set off to further press our luck. The easiest way to find these small owls (10 inches and 8 inches in length, respectively) is to arrive at the location 30 to 40 minutes after other birders have been at the site. Hopefully, the other birders will have found the owls by the time you arrive. This is what happened in our case. Someone else had shown those birders who showed us and so on throughout the day.

The Boreal Owl is found across Canada up into

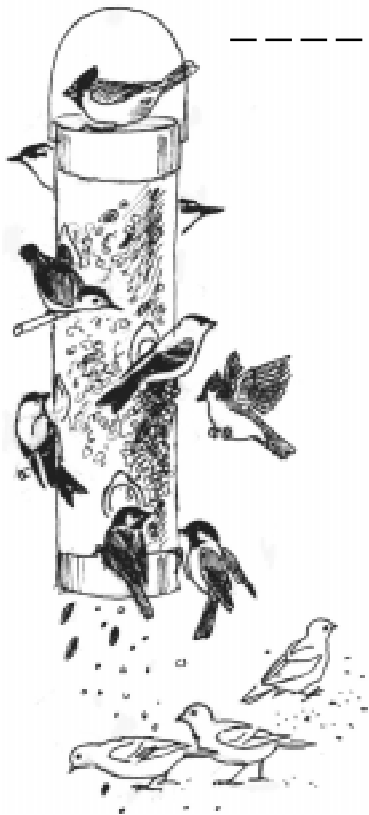
Alaska and would be almost as rare as finding a Great Gray in Vermont (VINS daily field card doesn't list either bird). The owl was roosting deep inside a conifer occasionally opening his eyes to stare back at his viewers. It was our life bird number two for the day.

While looking at the Boreal, we heard the call of a Great Horned Owl. With the help of a Canadian couple we found not one but two Great Horned Owls forty feet up a large fir, one slightly below the other. This was too easy! The Great Horned is probably the most common of the Owl species as it inhabits almost all of the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Still, finding two together and viewing them in daylight was a real treat.

Life bird number three for the day – the Northern Saw-whet – was shown to us by the same couple. It was sleeping twelve feet up in the under story of trees and was content on not waking to acknowledge our presence. Its sleeping position prevented us from getting a good look at its face. Without the assistance of the Canadian, we would never have been sure of which owl we had seen.

It was a Great day for Great Owls and I felt very fortunate to have seen these species especially during the daylight hours. On the drive home to Vermont, we were treated to drive-by views of three Rough-Legged Hawks and as the saying goes this was all "icing on the cake".

–Tom Berriman



Buying Birdseed? Feeders? Buy them at Howard's Home and Garden!

Upon presentation of this coupon, ten percent of October sales will be donated to Northeast Kingdom Audubon in support of the Windsong Wildlife Sanctuary in East Peacham and in support of the ecology camp scholarships for students.

In addition, purchases of \$25 or more with this filled-out coupon, are good for one NEK Audubon chapter membership, including the newsletter and email updates on field trips and other activities.

Please donate ten percent of my purchase to Northeast Kingdom Audubon in support of Windsong Wildlife Sanctuary and ecology camp scholarships:

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ amount of purchase _____

List birds you see at your feeders: _____

Upcoming Events • September - November 2005

All activities and Board Meetings are open to the public. Events are listed in our newsletter and in local newspapers, but may be updated or change. We appreciate a \$3/member or \$5/non-member donation and pre-registration for trips and programs. Contact Airie Lindsay airie@kingcon.com (802) 748-8515 to receive this calendar (and updates!) via email.

Monday, September 12: Informational and Planning Meeting 4:30 - 6 pm Fairbanks Museum Classroom; Open to all.

Sunday, September 18: NEK Audubon Bird-Walk 7-10 am at **Blue Mountain School Trails**. Meet at Fairbanks Museum at 7:00 am. Call Tom Berriman at 626-9071, or email thomas.barriman@verizon.net to confirm

Sunday, September 25: NEK Audubon Trip to **Champlain Valley** to look for migrating birds. Meet at West Danville Park and Ride near Joe's Pond at intersection of Rtes. 2 and 15 at 7:00 a.m. Return later that afternoon. Bring bag lunch. Call Tom Berriman at 626-9071, or email thomas.barriman@verizon.net to confirm.

OCTOBER: MONTH-LONG BIRDSEED SALE with the coupon in this newsletter at HOWARD'S HOME AND GARDEN on Memorial Drive, St. Johnsbury.

Monday, October 3: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30-6 pm Fairbanks Museum Classroom; Open to all.

Sunday October 16: NEK Audubon trip to **Champlain Valley** to see Snow Geese. Meet at West Danville Park and Ride, Joe's Pond intersection of rtes 2 & 15 at 7 am Bring bag lunch. Call Tom Berriman at 626-9071 or email thomas.barriman@verizon.net to confirm.

Saturday October 29: NEK Audubon Bird-Walk 8-11 am in the **Victory Basin**. Meet at Damon's Crossing at 8 am Call Tom Berriman at 626-9071, or email thomas.barriman@verizon.net to confirm.

Sunday, November 6: Campers' Presentations and Potluck Supper; 5-7 pm at the Knights of Pythias Hall on Hill Street in Danville. Kate Roosa and Claire Simons will make presentations about their Audubon Camp experiences at High Pond and Hog Island. Come hear about the camps and bring others who may be interested in applying for a scholarship! For more information contact Airie Lindsay 802-748-8515; airie@kingcon.com

Monday, November 7: Informational and Planning Meeting, 4:30-6 pm Fairbanks Museum Classroom; Open to all.

NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON

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NORTHEAST KINGDOM AUDUBON

ANNUAL CHAPTER EVENTS

Christmas Bird Count: January 1
Camp Scholarship Awards: early March
BIRDATHON: late May
Annual Meeting: last Sunday in July
Campers' Presentation Potluck: first Sunday
in November
Newsletter: April, September and December

For Upcoming Events Calendars via email:
contact airie@kingcon.com (748-8515)