

# THE BRODIE CLUB



*Established 1921*

Website: <http://thebrodieclub.eeb.utoronto.ca>

## **Brodie Club field activities – Special edition, June 2020**

With the global covid-19 pandemic having caused the Brodie Club to cancel the March meeting and all subsequent gatherings to date, Brodie members were invited to submit brief reports of their natural history experiences during these times of lock-down and self-isolation. Fortunately for us naturalists, getting outdoors to look at things on our own is nothing new! Most of the submissions were accompanied by best wishes to other members, and hopes that we'll be able to meet in person again before too long. Stay safe, everyone!

### Glenn Coady

I have been strictly sheltering in place since the emergency orders in response to Covid-19 were issued in March. Because I work with immune-compromised renal transplant and cancer patients, I have strictly stayed at home so as not to endanger my patients. I thought it would mean an impoverished spring migration, but I was pleasantly surprised with how productive birding from home can be when you live adjacent to a great migrant trap like Thicksen's Woods. I certainly miss not having the opportunity to spend time at Point Pelee, but I turned up quite a few really good birds from my yard as follows:

**April 25** - heard a warbler song that sounded somewhat similar to Yellow-rumped Warbler (but with a flatter pitch and with more of a lisp) from my bedroom. Went outside to see if I could find the bird. Located it in high in the pines in my front yard - an exquisite singing adult male '**Audubon's' Yellow-rumped Warbler**.

**May 3 - 4** - an adult **Worm-eating Warbler** which spent much of the morning at the north end of the woods on May 3, came to my yard that evening to roost in the cedars on the east side of my house, where I also saw it foraging early the next morning.

**May 15** - in the early morning I found a singing male **Acadian Flycatcher** just to the west of my yard in my neighbour Jay McCarten's yard. This was a first ever occurrence for my yard.

**May 16** - early in the morning an adult male **Prairie Warbler** was singing from a large pine in my backyard. It eventually moved north into the woods where it was seen by many for a couple of days.

**May 18** - I found a flock of 163 Brant flying east to west right past my front yard and these included a lone adult **Black Brant** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) - although I am very familiar with this subspecies from many trips to Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, this is the first time that I have ever seen it in Ontario. Black Brant normally winter on the Pacific Coast, but occasionally birds in the Queen Maud Gulf area around Jenny Lind Island, where Atlantic Brant also breeds, get mixed in flocks of the wrong subspecies and end up wintering on the wrong ocean. This is a decidedly rare occurrence though. The next day I saw another 52 Brant.

**May 26** - when I began lake-watching in the early morning, two adult **Red-throated Loons** in full breeding plumage were seen not far offshore in Thickson Bay right in front of my house. Despite much time watching for Whimbrel, I only saw one flock of eight birds on this day as well

**May 31** - although new arrivals were very few today, I did end the month with great looks at a singing male **Connecticut Warbler** in the northwest corner of my property line. A very nice way to end the month!

I have finished the month of May having seen 26 species of warbler from my yard and will always look back on 2020 as my "there's no place like home" spring migration.

### Bruce and Ann Falls

Kathryn Falls wrote that during several afternoons in her parents' backyard, particularly with her dad, they have seen a Tennessee Warbler and Yellow Warblers, Red-Tailed Hawk, cowbirds, Turkey Vulture, a White-crowned Sparrow, goldfinches, White-throated Sparrow and a thrush! Even observing from a back yard, Bruce recognized that migration was close to two weeks late this spring.



### Hugh Currie

Went to Turner and Currie tracts north of Hamilton yesterday [30 May]. The hydro line has almost completely grown back in. Encountered no people on the trails except a few dog walkers. Cool but very birdy. Practically right away a male Mourning Warbler sat up in front of me. My new hearing aids helped me hear and see Blackpolls. Field Sparrows were also first-of-year for me. Butterflies included 3 kinds of duskywings. Birding alone is a very safe thing to do nowadays.

Dave Beadle, Katie Thomas (and James Beadle)

Here is our extended "Field Trip" Report of the recent sightings seen from our home near the intersection of Bathurst and Dupont, in downtown Toronto, for the period April - June 2020.

Mammals - 3

- Nothing of note, includes a NORWAY RAT.

Birds - 96

- Highlights- YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (June 6 – photo at right), flock of 6 *APHIA* ducks flying high (April 16)



Insects:

- Butterflies – 2. Including EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL. Generally, very poor showing thus far, no EASTERN COMMA or MOURNING CLOAK (after which our laneway is named!).



- Moths – 90. About average for this time of year. Will start to get "busier" from this point onwards. Includes an ABBOTT'S, LETTERED and NESSUS SPHINX; and new for this location PLUSH-NAPED, ASHEN, and BROAD-ASHEN PINIONS; and a THREE-SPOTTED SALLOW.
- Beetles – 32. Fairly standard selection so far, nothing exceptional, includes a number of smaller species. The diminutive but dramatically named TWICE-STABBED LADY BEETLE was a nice chance sighting.
- Flies -30. We've had good looks at the HAIRY-EYED FLOWER FLY and SUNFLOWER MAGGOT FLY (photo at left).
- Wasps and Bees - 32 species. Numbers likely to increase as spring / summer rolls along. Highlights have been a ROSE SAWFLY (photo below right), and an UNEQUAL CELLOPHANE BEE.
- True Bugs – 6. Only just getting started but a MASKED HUNTER and a BIRCH CATKIN BUG are notable.

Spiders – 6

- The nice-looking WOODLOUSE SPIDER has been the highlight so far.

Other Arthropods - 20 odd.

- Includes several centipedes, millipedes, slugs, and snails. HOUSE CENTIPEDE was a typical find in the basement substrate.





## Rose & Ed Addison

On May 16, we canoed in the newest large southern Ontario provincial park, Kawartha Highlands. It is situated an hour north of Peterborough on the southern edge of the Canadian Shield. The park is mixed hardwood conifer forest with a good number of white pines. The leaf buds had broken and the emerging leaves cast dappled shade on the forest floor. There were no blackflies or mosquitoes to speak of.

Warblers moving through included:

- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Yellow-rumped (or Magnolia) Warbler
- Black-and-white Warbler
- Yellow Warbler
- American Redstart

Other Birds:

- Song Sparrow
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Winter Wren
- American Crow
- Blue Jay
- American Robin
- Hermit Thrush
- Common Raven
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Turkey Vulture
- Great Blue Heron
- Common Loon
- Herring Gull



Our grandson flushed a Song Sparrow at the edge of the water and with careful searching found the nest containing 5 eggs.

The most exciting observation was a mating ball of three large Northern Water Snakes in a crevice between some rocks. One left the mass and moved very slowly onto the dry vegetation where it



quietly basked in the sun. This snake was over a metre in length and looked in good health. A second snake also rustled away from the crevice and basked. The third snake remained in the crevice and disappeared into the ground. One basking snake was seen returning to the crevice some time later. Two small (~18 cm in length) water snakes were seen within a metre of the edge of the lake and a larger water snake was observed swimming some distance out from shore.

## Warren Dunlop

My wife, Janet Kelly, and I are lucky to live in Peterborough with a number of open spaces and trails in close proximity. We have been getting out and exploring new areas to break the boredom of limited social contact. We have been focusing on hiking unfamiliar (to us) sections of the Lang-Hastings Trail (part of the Trans-Canada Trail system). A diversity of habitats border the trail: swamps, marshes, hardwood bush, conifer forests, meadows, old fields, streams, etc. We have had some great bird sightings recently. We had good looks at the often skulky Mourning Warbler (right) and enjoyed watching a Warbling Vireo engaged in nest building (below).



More recently, we hiked Big (Boyd/Chiminis) Island on Pigeon Lake, a Kawartha Land Trust property. It was a bit cool and breezy which made hiking pleasant but birding difficult. We were rewarded with large numbers of recently emerged Common Baskettails. We also saw Canadian Tiger Swallowtails, a few Northern Cloudywings, Dreamy Duskywings, and Hobomok Skippers (photo).



## Ricky Dunn

Early spring weather was so terrible that I concentrated on keeping track of nests either in my yard or visible from my kitchen window.

### American Robin:

- Nest 1a (on bend in downspout) – abandoned in late April after 1 egg laid; broken cowbird egg on ground below
- Nest 1b – same place as above and timing suggests the same bird – 3 young fledged.
- Nest 2a (on neighbour's porch light) – 3 young fledged
- Nest 2b - same place as above and timing suggests the same bird – ongoing

#### Mourning Dove:

- Nest 1 (in roof gutter) – failed in late April after series of snow squalls and sub-zero nights
- Nest 2a (on furnace vent) – possibly same bird as #1, but can't be sure. 2 young fledged. Parent sat tight when I mowed the lawn, despite having to look me in the eye at close quarters (see photo).
- Nest 2b (on bend in downspout, on top of robin nests 2a & 2b); timing suggests same bird as 2a, who possibly abandoned site 2a because she didn't like looking me in the eye when I mowed the lawn beneath her. Currently incubating,



It has been fun watching the young Mourning Doves harassing their parents during prolonged feeding bouts by regurgitation (which can last up to an hour, according to Birds of the World). Males take sole charge of feeding older fledglings while females get started on next round of egg production; thus my suspicion that nest 2b involves the same female, getting underway before the young from nest 2 are fully independent.

Birding has expanded beyond my yard now that local trails and parks have reopened. Jeremy and I managed a relatively normal birdathon (though without our usual companions), detecting 126 species (me) and 130 (Jeremy; whose ears are still way better than my hearing aids).

#### Trudy Rising: Self-Isolating Outings, May, 2020

What a thrill to get out of the city construction and back to the woods. At my cottage just off Go Home Lake Road, east of Georgian Bay, many birds were back the second week of May and the Wood Frogs were going wild in pools of water in the woods. Phoebe and a number of warbler species were back, and a walk along the road brought me, unfortunately, to two species of road-killed snakes, a garter snake and a species shown at right that I could not identify. I don't think it is a Ring-necked Snake. **If anyone can identify it, I'd be interested to know what it is.**

Two weeks later, the place was teeming with wildlife – Trillium finally in bloom up there, two male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds aggressively interacting, the first ever Rose-breasted Grosbeak at my cottage, many Purple Finches, goldfinches, Black-throated Green and Yellow-rumped warblers, the always vocal Red-eyed Vireo, nesting Tree Swallows, a pair of kingfishers, a Caspian Tern, loons, Great Blue Herons, etc.







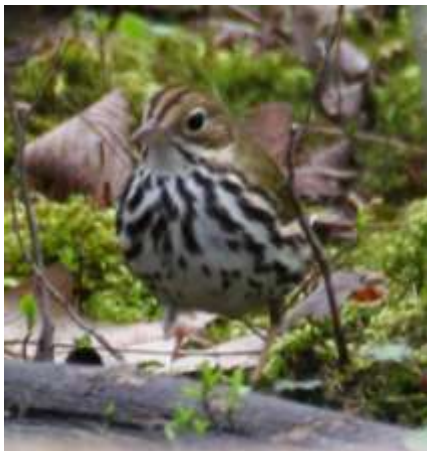
Caught in a spider web on my dock were five dragonfly nymphs. (I didn't know what they were, actually, but Jeremy looked at the photo here and identified them instantly!)

And, at night, now the Spring Peepers are out and a Whippoorwill called. Alas, as well, a persistent raccoon visited on two nights, destroying all my newly planted pots of flowers. I thought that all the hot sauce and

garlic paste I put around the deck would discourage him/her from coming the second night, but no – he/she just needed to check those pots for grubs, once again. **Any ideas on good ways to discourage visiting raccoons?** My first time for this problem; bears, often, but never before, this unwanted, destructive mammalian friend (?).

### Rae Hutchinson

This may be a familiar experience for others as well; in the last few months, I have once again spent many hours in the nature close at hand. There is an area of forest and field very nearby that in my childhood was more extensive, but still remains in part what it once was. Since I can remember, I walked in those fields and in that forest, and again in recent years, I have spent many free hours roaming in what is left. And yet! This spring has caught me by surprise, as I encountered birds that I had seen elsewhere, but never in my “secret little patch”.



For a forest that sometimes seems bereft of life in its deafening silence, it has been full of life these past 2 months, providing lovely encounters. Such as one evening hearing a Wood Thrush, then startling a Virginia Rail resting on a trail at dusk, as well as having Winter Wrens warble at my feet, Ovenbirds and a Lincoln's Sparrow hopping through the undergrowth, Canada Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos flitting through the sumac -- and one long afternoon, watching a Golden-winged Warbler delicately flitting up from the forest floor to catch insects. Alongside all the regular

migrants and local breeders, to have so many new birds for a small area I have birded so long and so often, with already more than 100 bird species seen in this patch previous to this spring, has been a very pleasant surprise and just proved once again how unpredictable wildlife can be!



Jeremy Hussell

I spend more time indoors identifying other people's observations on iNaturalist than I do outside, but have been trying out the moth trap I got for Christmas. Here's a selection of what I caught at Birds Canada HQ on 27 May. (Nothing like the haul Dave Beadle gets!)



Virginian Tiger Moth  
(*Spilosoma virginica*)



Greater Black-letter Dart  
(*Xestia dolosa*)



Small Brown Quaker  
(*Pseudaethodes vecors*)



Veiled Ear Moth  
(*Loxocoma velata*)



Common Hyppa Moth  
(*Hyppa xylinoides*)



Forage Looper Moth  
(*Caenurgina erechtea*)