



The Leaflet

Newsletter of the Morgan Arboretum

Worth the Risk

By Jim Fyles, Director

Spring 2019

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The print was almost too tiny to read. But the second sentence brought it into clear focus:

“You should be aware that Nordic skiing involves risks of injury and even death.”

The new pair of cross-country ski boots, replacing the well-used pair that would not make it through another season, promised cozy toes, and never-ending glide in perfect tracks illuminated by golden slanting rays. The accompanying brochure promised otherwise; in twenty languages.

Life is a risky business. We spend our lives reducing risk. We salt our sidewalks. We look both ways before we cross. We buy insurance. We get three quotes. We check the forecast. We eat our vegetables.

I am sure that the manufacturer hoped that I would still buy the boots despite the risks, or at least not read the fine print until we got home. As with much in life, we need to accept and manage some risk.

The staff of the Arboretum are always worrying about risk. The state of the road, the state of the trails, dead trees, hanging branches, signage, communications with members, visitors, school groups and tours and insurance for rentals, filming and volunteer work are all on our risk ‘worry list’. We are very grateful for the volunteer ski patrollers who reduce the risk on winter trails.

As a self-funding unit of McGill, with our major source of funding coming from your memberships and entrance fees, we are always aware of the risks of over- and under-spending. Hiring staff and students, buying and caring for equipment, organizing events, setting fees and advertising all come with risk as well as potential reward.

In 2016, due to a tax rule change, we began to pay sales tax on memberships and entrance fees; we decided to absorb the cost



Do you recognize this tree?

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Birding 101

By Hannah Legault, Communications Assistant

Common Yellowthroat - Richard Gregson

A Tour of 6 Fabulous Bird Resources

Richard Gregson's Birding Guides

<https://sparrowworks.ca/wildlifing/shop/>

Richard Gregson is a local biologist, former president and director of Bird Protection Quebec, and an avid birder. He regularly leads guided bird walks in the Arboretum for novice and advanced birders. He has created and published two birding guides that offer useful information about birding in the Morgan Arboretum and in the West Island of Montreal. The guides are available for a small fee on his web page. The location information from the Morgan Arboretum guide for key species is summarized in the following pages.

Bird Protection Quebec

<https://birdprotectionquebec.org/>

Founded in 1917, BPQ is the oldest bird conservation oriented charity in Canada. BPQ often hosts field trips within the Morgan Arboretum to help birders of all levels get the most out of their experiences here. They have monthly lectures on various bird-related topics that are free of charge. BPQ is also responsible for the presence of several bird sanctuaries in Quebec, and gives valuable grants to important ornithological research projects.

Club ornithologique Vaudreuil-Soulanges

<https://sites.google.com/site/ornithovs/>

The Club ornithologique Vaudreuil-Soulanges is a local organization promoting ornithology with a keen interest in the protection of habitats and monitoring of endangered species. Their website includes a discussion board, a list of nearby places to go to observe birds, and an extensive photo gallery of local birds, including the location information of where the images were captured and when. If you have taken a photo of a bird and want help identifying it, you can email the photo to the Club and they will assist you.

Oiseaux rares du Quebec

<https://quebecoiseaux.org/index.php/fr/oiseaux-rares>

Hosted within the Regroupement Québec Oiseaux website, the Rare Bird Page contains rare bird sightings in Quebec. They are listed chronologically starting with most recent and specify the location. There is a legend to indicate the significance of the sighting, and contributors often include a photo of the bird that was spotted.

Le Nichoir

<https://www.lenichoir.org/>

Founded in 1996, le Nichoir is a non-profit wild bird rehabilitation and refuge centre located close by in Hudson. Their facilities are open 7 days a week, and they have a hotline (also open 7 days per week) to help people who have found injured birds. Their website includes a Bird Help 911 page with emergency information, and they offer guided tours of their facility for children and adults that are easy to book via email.



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The Cornell University Lab of Ornithology

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>

The Cornell University Lab of Ornithology is a world leader in the study, appreciation, and monitoring of bird populations. Their website hosts All About Birds & eBird, two of the most useful resources for detailed knowledge about bird species. They are also responsible for the creation and data used by the Merlin App. These three platforms are described below.

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

The All About Birds website provides key information on how to identify specific bird species describing their features and silhouettes, and providing targeted images to help narrow your search. Species' pages include all kinds of useful information including what the species eat, where they live, if and when they migrate, etc. In some instances, there is information about how you can attract them to your yard.

<https://ebird.org/>

The eBird website is an excellent tool to help organize and streamline your birding, at all levels of experience. It is the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen science project, where contributors share more than 100 million bird sightings per year. The shared data helps you find birds based on the latest sighting information for any location across the globe. Take the opportunity to share your own sightings, photos and sounds, and track your lists. A wealth of statistical tools also provides for the exploration of range, abundance, habitat, and trends for each species through maps, charts and animations.

<http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

The Merlin Bird Identification App (for smartphones) is lighter in weight than a field guide and possibly more user friendly, depending on whom you ask! You can get assistance identifying a bird you saw by answering simple questions, or by taking a photo of the bird. It is uncanny how accurate the bird ID feature is! The app is available free of charge for Apple and Android smartphones.

Commemoration

Contact Anne Godbout at 514.398.8697



Insights on Birds: Where to look for common and spectacular birds of the Arboretum this spring and summer

The excitement of spring and hope for summer come as the snow begins to melt, temperatures begin to rise and the ground begins to thaw. Spring is an excellent season for spotting migratory birds and spring blooms. The Arboretum offers an illustrated guide for spring blooms listed in order of appearance, to make your discoveries easy and fun. This issue of the Spring Leaflet highlights the coming seasons' important avian visitors, gives you tips to ID them, and tells you when and where you are most likely to find them during your visits here. We have sought the experience of seasoned birders and researchers to share with you our best guesses on where to spot seven of our local bird species. Find them in order of appearance on page 6.

Continued on page 6



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Every contribution helps, and we could not do this without you.

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in our budget, and increase the fees gradually over a few years. It was a bit of a risky approach but we have managed the budget carefully since then to minimize the impact. You will have noticed that a 15% fee increase to cover the tax has been introduced this year. We hope you will support us in keeping our financial balance positive. This year we have also assumed a bit of a financial risk by hiring Hannah, our communications intern. Supported in part by a federal 'Digital Skills for Youth' grant, the increased action you will have noticed in our social media is part of Hannah's work to expand awareness of the Arboretum. You can help by liking our posts and sharing them with your friends.

The second trip to the Arboretum with my new but risk-incurring boots was wedged into a Saturday morning that already had too many commitments. But freezing rain was on its way and "If we don't ski now, who knows? We might not get another chance!" We weighed the risk of an even more chaotic day against the risk of terrible skiing following freezing rain and headed for the trails.

It was one of those days when everything seemed to be waiting in anticipation of the approaching storm. There was no wind. There was barely a sound. The sky was so blue that we had to stop a few times just to look.

The tracks were manicured, the glide perfect. The toes were cozy, just as the boots had promised. We saw two barred owls! The chaos of the cluttered morning vanished. Sometimes...often...usually...the reward is worth the risk. So let's be careful with the risks out there!

If it's icy, cleats are a very good idea. If it's very windy, let's stay out of the woods. If the hills are very crusty, let's take our skis off and walk down beside the trail. Let's bring our phones and an extra sweater, just in case; in summer insect repellent and drinking water. Chocolate! And we, your support staff, will continue to be careful with the risks we manage, keep you informed through our social media, keep the woods and trails as safe as we can, and make sure that we spend your money well. But let's not be too careful. The Arboretum is not a very risky place. But from the comfort of home, we can easily magnify the risk of being too hot, too cold, too many bugs, too icy, not worth the time or money.

With a bit of care and attention, we can manage those risks. When we do, the risk of not having a pleasant day is very low.

Of course, as soon as we step out of the car, the risks of encountering a fox, seeing an owl, strolling past a patch of trillium or meeting a friend on the trail, shoot up. And these are risks that bring their own rewards.

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MARCHÉ RICHELIEU

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Red-bellied Woodpecker

Pic à ventre roux
Melanerpes carolinus

A year-round resident species whose distribution has moved north in the recent years, it is thought to have been resident in the Arboretum since approximately 2005.



Male Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Michel Bourque

ID Tips: The same size as a Hairy Woodpecker, slightly smaller than an American Robin, the Red-bellied Woodpecker male and female have a bright red nape of the neck (in most woodpecker species this is only seen in males). At rest, the back is barred black and white. In flight, watch for white patches near the wingtips and typical undulating flight pattern of woodpeckers. Despite the name, the “red belly” is little more than a pale reddish wash on the stomach which can be hard to see.

WHEN to look for them: Year-round

WHERE to look for them: Like most woodpeckers, this species can be found around suet and black sunflower seed feeders, and in old growth forests.

In the Arboretum: Look for them between the Conservation Centre and Chalet Pruche, in the maple stands south and west of Blossom Corner, in the forest edge west of Chalet Pruche and in trees near the Sugar Shack.



Male Tree Swallow - David Saliba (FLICKR)

Pileated Woodpecker

Grand pic
Dryocopus pileatus

Since the 1998 ice storm, the Pileated Woodpecker has become very prominent in our local mature forests and one of the most common birds in the Arboretum, hence its use as an emblem on our Facebook page. Its unique appearance makes it easy to distinguish from other local species.



Male Pileated Woodpecker
- Michel Bourque

ID Tips: The largest of six local species of woodpeckers it is similar in size to a Crow. Both sexes possess a pointy red head crest and are almost completely black all over. In flight, the undersides of its wings are white.

WHEN to look for them: Year-round

WHERE to look for them: Listen for the drumming of the large beak and ringing territory calls. Look for vertically long, rectangular holes in large dead tree trunks and limbs.

In the Arboretum: They enjoy the trees past Hill Pond - on the right, halfway along the Orange Trail, and the North-West section delimited by the Orange and Yellow Trails.

Tree Swallow Hirondelle Bicolore *Tachycineta bicolor*

Often the first swallow to arrive in Spring, this small but swift bird catches insects mid-flight with speed and grace.

ID Tips: Sparrow-sized or smaller, Tree Swallows have long, sharply pointed dark wings, a metallic blue-turquoise back and a clean white chest and stomach.

WHEN to look for them: Mid-March to early April, until September.

WHERE to look for them: Tree Swallows usually nest near bodies of water (ideal for insect foraging) and can be spotted diving for insects in open areas such as fields, ponds, marshes and wooded swamps.

In the Arboretum: Observe the nest boxes from a distance (this applies to all nest boxes – never go close) and watch them hunting in the field between the two main parking lots.

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Paruline à croupion jaune
Setophaga coronata

Named for the flash of yellow on its rump that is visible as it flies, the Yellow-rumped Warbler is generally the first to arrive and the last to leave of our local warblers.

ID Tips: The Yellow-rumped Warbler is sparrow-sized or smaller with a long, narrow tail. They have a speckled appearance with white, black, brown and grey visible.

They have yellow patches (with undefined edges) on their sides in front of the wings and on their rump (visible when in flight or with wings open).

WHEN to look for them: Early April through May, peak mid May, until mid-October.

WHERE to look for them: Mature coniferous and mixed coniferous-deciduous woods. Try to spot their yellow patches in spring before full foliage is present, in areas with spring flowers and blooms.

In the Arboretum: Early morning is the ideal spotting time. Best spots to look are in Blossom Corner and in the shrubby, dense parts of Pullin’s Pasture, specifically around May 20.



Male Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Jeannine St-Amour (FLICKR)



Male Indigo Bunting - Dan Pancamo (FLICKR)

Red-eyed Vireo

Viréo à œil rouge
Vireo olivaceus

Smart and sleek looking, the Red-eyed Vireo is another local spring and summer favourite. It is one of the most populous birds found in the woods of Eastern North America.



Red-eyed Vireo
- Cristiane Pamponet (FLICKR)

ID Tips: Sparrow-sized or smaller, male and female Red-eyed Vireos are similar. Look for a grey crown, olive green back and a clean white chest and stomach. A horizontal stripe pattern delineates the eyes, which are dark from a distance but visibly red when viewed close up (with binoculars).

WHEN to look for them: Late April to early October.

WHERE to look for them: Listen for the distinct, loud, repetitive (near incessant) calls of “here I am, there you are.”

In the Arboretum: The Red-eyed Vireo’s calls can be heard at the T-junction of the Orange & Yellow Trails near Maple Corner, and the Eastern parts of the Arboretum seem most popular.

Indigo Bunting Passerin indigo *Passerina cyanea*

A favourite to photograph, the stunningly brilliant hue of the male Indigo Bunting makes him easy to spot among the spring and summer foliage of Southern Quebec.

ID Tips: Look for the male: female Indigo Buntings assume the majority of parental care, and with their yellow-brown plumage, are much more difficult to locate than the vocal and showy, bright blue males.

WHEN to look for them: Late-April to early-May, highest density between June & July, until September.

WHERE to look for them: “Edge” habitats, next to clearings & meadows, are where the males will usually appear. They are occasionally seen singing from power lines.

In the Arboretum: The hedges between the Orange Trail and the field to the North and East of Chalet Pruche are a favoured location. They can also be seen at the edges of the forest surrounding the field downhill from Chalet Pruche in front of the Sugar Shack.

Join us this season at the following events:

Forest Spring Flowers	Saturdays, May 4 & May 11, 11h-12h30
World Migratory Bird Day Spring Walk	Saturday, May 11, 7h-11h
Where the Wild Things Are	Sunday, May 19, 10h-12h
Survival in the Wild: Useful Plants	Saturday, June 1, 10h-13h
The Summer Night Sky	Saturday, June 8, 19h30-21h30
Infrared Astronomy	Saturday, July 6, 19h30-21h30
What's in this Pond?	Saturday, July 27, 10h-12h
Photographing a Meteor Shower	Friday, August 9, 19h30-21h30
Perseids Meteor Shower	Monday, August 12, 19h30-23h

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<https://birdprotectionquebec.org/>

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Scarlet Tanager

Tangara écarlate *Piranga olivacea*

Looking for a challenge? The Scarlet Tanager is a rare find due to its small habitat range and preference for treetop foraging, but the bright plumage of the male Scarlet Tanager is a treat for the adventurous birder looking for the unusual.



Male Scarlet Tanager
- E. Estrada (FLICKR)

ID Tips: Look for the breeding male. Between sparrow and robin-sized, the male Scarlet Tanager has black wings and a black tail, contrasting with the very bright red plumage all over his head and body.

WHEN to look for them: Mid to late May until September.

WHERE to look for them: Find them high up in the canopy of mature, forested areas, (binoculars are strongly recommended). They nest in hemlock, oak, pine, hickory, and beech mixed forests, but sometimes in stands of aspen, birch and poplar.

In the Arboretum:

The best chances to see them are on dry, sunny days near Blossom Corner, high up in the trees. They might also appear in the small but tall stand of maple trees within the Orange Trail loop in front of Chalet Pruche. 🌿

Morgan Arboretum Association

Established in 1952



*Dedicated to forest conservation
and environmental education*

Morgan Arboretum

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THE LEAFLET

is published in English and French,
twice a year in April and September

English revision:

Richard & Jean Gregson

French translation:

Anne-Marie Pilon & Jean Lapierre

Cover page photographs:

Top **Michel Bourque** Bottom **John Lanthier**

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