

# FREDERICTON NATURE CLUB



## Newsletter Summer 2024

### Current Executive

President: Dr. Tony Diamond  
Treasurer and Membership: Doug Jackson  
Webmaster: David Lilly  
Secretary: André Vietinghoff

Past President: Dr. Graham Forbes (ex officio)

## CONTENTS

[Editor's Corner](#)

[Financial Picture](#)

[Meeting Reports](#)

[Outing Reports](#)

[Book Review](#)

[Executive](#)

[Announcements](#)

- [Club Election](#)

[FNC Website](#)

[Nature NB](#)

[Publication Info](#)



*Tree Swallow / photo by Peter Duguid*



*Least Flycatcher / Photo by Peter Duguid*



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker / photo  
by David Lilly



Red-bellied Woodpecker / photo  
by David Lilly



Downy Woodpecker / photo by  
David Lilly

### Editor's Corner

Happy mid-summer, Fredericton Nature Club members.

The 2023/24 season was an incredibly good one for our club financially. According to the financial picture that our Treasurer, Doug Jackson submitted and that is included in this issue, our October 1, 2023 balance was \$1,423.73 while our August 1, 2024 balance is \$2,235.81 – an increase of over \$800.00. This increase is due to a new membership fee structure, growth in our membership, and in no small measure to the budget plan and stewardship of our Treasurer, Doug Jackson.

Our club is becoming more well known and more active. In addition to the monthly presentations from Oct-May, this spring and early summer we boasted a full roster of club outings - reported in this issue.

We certainly do welcome suggestions for meeting topics and speakers in 2025 and for outings commencing autumn 2024. The rapidly approaching new club season promises to be a good one, but your Executive seeks members to coordinate and help with meetings, outings, and events.

In perusing the summer 2024 issue, you will find a book review by your editor of Jennifer Ackerman's What An Owl Knows: the new science of the world's most enigmatic birds. This 2023 publication is ornithological reportage at its finest by the author of the Genius of Birds. So, if you are not in the mood for a book review, consider reading the summary for this work in the

### Le mot de la rédaction

Joyeux mi-été, membres du Club de la nature de Fredericton.

La saison 2023/24 a été très bonne pour notre club sur le plan financier. Selon le tableau financier que notre trésorier, Doug Jackson, a soumis et qui est inclus dans le présent numéro, notre solde au 1er octobre 2023 était de 1 423,73 \$, tandis que notre solde au 1er août 2024 est de 2 235,81 \$ - une augmentation de plus de 800,00 \$. Cette augmentation est due à une nouvelle structure de frais d'adhésion, à l'augmentation du nombre de membres et, dans une large mesure, au plan budgétaire et à la gestion de notre trésorier, Doug Jackson.

Notre club est de plus en plus connu et de plus en plus actif. Outre les présentations mensuelles d'octobre à mai, nous avons organisé au printemps et au début de l'été un grand nombre de sorties, dont vous trouverez le compte rendu dans ce numéro.

Les suggestions de sujets de réunion et de conférenciers pour 2025 et pour les sorties à partir de l'automne 2024 sont les bienvenues. La nouvelle saison du club, qui approche à grands pas, promet d'être bonne, mais votre exécutif recherche des membres pour coordonner et aider à organiser des réunions, des sorties et des événements.

En parcourant le numéro de l'été 2024, vous trouverez une critique de livre par votre rédactrice en chef de What An Owl Knows: the new science of the world's most enigmatic birds de Jennifer Ackerman. Cette publication de 2023 est un reportage sur la nature dans toute sa splendeur, réalisé par l'auteur du Génie des oiseaux. Si vous n'êtes pas d'humeur à lire une critique de livre, vous pouvez consulter le résumé de cette œuvre dans le catalogue en ligne de la bibliothèque publique du Nouveau-Brunswick.

New Brunswick Public Library System  
online catalogue.

Anyhow, wishing you pleasant summer  
reading and enjoyable and refreshing times  
in your garden or the fields and woods.

*Translated into French with DeepL.com*

Quoi qu'il en soit, je vous souhaite une bonne  
lecture d'été et des moments agréables et  
rafraîchissants dans votre jardin ou dans les  
champs et les bois.

*Traduit avec DeepL.com (version gratuite)*

### **FREDERICTON NATURE CLUB member information**

**Annual membership, Fredericton Nature Club:  
\$25.00 per adult; \$10.00 per student; Free for children  
Two for a toonie: 1 meeting and 1 outing**

**Membership payment via e-transfer to:  
[frederictonnatureclub@gmail.com](mailto:frederictonnatureclub@gmail.com)**

**Our Treasurer prefers e-transfer but will also accept cash or cheques.**



*Magnolia Warbler / photo by David Lilly*

## Financial Picture <sup>j</sup>

	Budgeted	As of Aug 1
<b>INCOME</b>		
	\$	\$
Memberships (45 Adult)	1,125.00	1,500.00
	\$	\$
Memberships (10 Student)	100.00	10.00
	\$	\$
Drop-in Fees	10.00	-
	\$	\$
Donations	-	3,200.00
	\$	\$
Merchandise Sales Profits	60.00	73.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,295.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,783.75</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>		
	\$	\$
Insurance	137.00	145.00
	\$	\$
Room Rental	400.00	400.00
	\$	\$
Website	285.00	278.28
	\$	\$
Administration	25.00	-
	\$	\$
Optics & Field Guides	-	2,893.51
	\$	\$
Gifts to Speakers	120.00	120.00
	\$	\$
Snacks	120.00	117.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,087.00</b>	<b>\$ 3,954.43</b>

<b>Excess / (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 208.00</b>	<b>\$ 829.32</b>
---------------------------	------------------	------------------

October 1, 2023 Balance	\$1,423.73
August 1, 2024 Balance	\$2,235.81

MEMBERSHIP	Adult/Student	Individual / Couple					
		2022-23	2021-22	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-19	2017-18
Year	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-19	2017-18
Members	60 / 1	19 / 14	16 / 11	12 / 13	7 / 16		
Total	61	47	38	38	39	33	31

*J. Financial snapshot for summer 2024 and membership information provided by Doug Jackson, Treasurer*

## **Meeting Reports**

**FNC Meeting: 2 May 2024**

**Speaker: Larissa Simulik (DNRED/ MRNDE)**

**Title: Finding Woodcock: the diurnal and nesting habitat of the American Woodcock in New Brunswick**

**Attendance: 32 or 33**

An enjoyable social time organized by Judith Dewar preceded the meeting that Dr. Tony Diamond, President, chaired. After member reports of nature sightings, Tony turned to the issue of the new Fredericton Nature Club constitution and moved its ratification. This motion was seconded by Barry Monson. A majority present at the meeting were in favour.

The main event was the presentation <sup>1</sup>, by Larissa Simulik, Master of Science in Environmental Management, who works for the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development/Ministère de Ressources naturelles et Développement de l'énergie du Nouveau-Brunswick. She pointed out that there are two Woodcock species, Eurasian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) and American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*); the latter is the subject of Larissa's presentation.



*American Woodcock* <sup>3</sup>

The American Woodcock is a beautiful and droll-looking shorebird that does not frequent shores. Woodcocks were abundant in the 1800's but overhunting at the beginning of the 1900's threatened the woodcock population. Singing ground surveys started out as annual road surveys in 1969 with 10 survey points for a chosen 5.4 kilometre stretch of road and consisted in listening for the "peent" call of Woodcock. Singing ground surveys showed a 1% decline in Woodcock over fifty years. The American Woodcock Conservation Plan was released in 2008. There was a tie-in with the Young Forest Initiative (YFI) and the the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture, <sup>2</sup>, "a partnership established on 15

November 1989<sup>1</sup> between governments, organizations, and conservation groups in

eastern [Canada](#) to protect and enhance [wetlands](#) important to [migratory birds](#), under the auspices of the [North American Waterfowl Management Plan](#).

To determine whether the YFI should be brought to New Brunswick, field data on nesting and diurnal habitats was needed. Larissa suggested that there should also be testing whether a high number of singing males = high number of females. Larissa talked briefly about the West Midlands Ringing Group that “pioneered thermal imaging technology for bird surveys, specializing in farmland species.”

In New Brunswick surveying started at 6-7 p.m. and ran for 3-4 hours in the evening during the mating season. Diurnal locations were ones where woodcocks were flushed. Initially, three sites, a non-SGS route, SGS route #85, and SGS route #115 were chosen but to round out the provincial picture two more sites were added including one near Bathurst and another near a Moncton Sobey’s store. Slides showing woodcock habitat followed.

The survey tallied 13 nests at 33 diurnal locations. A high number of singing males was associated with availability of ample singing grounds. Larissa also talked about plot layout and parameters of habitat surveys associated with trees. (Larissa had established the following four basic parameters in an initial overview slide: singing ground or roosting, feeding/diurnal, nesting and brood-rearing, and sites of little use that coincided with trees over 25 years old). Larissa briefly mentioned data analysis, the types of statistical tests that were performed, and model building. Further slides in her PowerPoint presentation provided results for forest structure, tree species, and shrub/small tree species.

A discussion slide seems to indicate that there is greater variation in woodcock habitat in NB than originally thought, partly because these birds can associate with different tree and shrub species if these plants produce the same forest structure. Moreover, there seems to be little difference between diurnal and nesting habitat. Finally, there was no correspondence on given routes between many singing males and many nesting females.

Larissa pointed out that further research is needed on the influence on woodcock of climate change and of commercial forest management. She also recommended a multi-species approach to management. Conclusions pertaining to the Young Forest Initiative (YFI) were that (1) it was unlikely that woodcock would benefit from a YFI in NB; (2) Singing ground surveys might not accurately represent the woodcock population; and (3) There was too much focus on singing grounds and singing males.

1. Larissa kindly sent to the newsletter editor the PDF of her presentation as my lackluster notetaking couldn’t keep up with her!
2. “Eastern Habitat Joint Venture” In [Wikipedia](#). at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern\\_Habitat\\_Joint\\_Venture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Habitat_Joint_Venture)
3. Photo courtesy of Backyard Ecology on Google Images

*Thank you for a wonderful presentation, Larissa!*

## **Outing Reports**

**Outing: Hyla Park**

**Organizers: Nature Trust of New Brunswick & Fredericton Nature Club**

**Leaders: Tessa Snook (NTNB) & Doug Jackson (FNC)**

**Date: Saturday, 4 May 2024 at 9:00 a.m.**

**Number of participants: 24**

The Hyla Park walk occurred under the auspices of the Nature Trust of New Brunswick and the Fredericton Nature Club. Some trails were too soggy for many participants. However, some Painted Turtles and the following 25 species of birds were tallied overall: American Crow, American Goldfinch American Robin, Belted Kingfisher, Black-Capped Chickadee, Blue-headed Vireo, Chipping Sparrow, Common Grackle, Downy Woodpecker, European Starling Hairy Woodpecker, Mallard, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Northern Flicker, Pied-billed Grebe, Purple Finch, Red-winged Blackbird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, Sora, Swamp Sparrow, Tree Swallow, White-throated Sparrow, Wood Duck



Identifiable participants mostly FNC: 1<sup>st</sup> from left: Sylvie Race, Bonnie Flynn, Nancy Farmer, Doug Jackson, Nancy Dufour ((n background; 3<sup>rd</sup> from right: Juan Sanchez; at far right: Tessa Snook, NTNB.



**World Migratory Bird Day  
Fredericton Nature Club with Nature NB**

Date: **Saturday, 11 May 2024**

Location: **Odell Park, Fredericton, NB**

Total number of participants: **12**

Combined tally: **31** species

1<sup>st</sup> WALK: 6 ° c. – 10 ° C. Sunny, calm, cool. STARTED AT 7:30 ended 9:50 a.m.

Organized by: André Vietinghoff

PARTICIPANTS: (5) [This was strictly a FNC club walk].



Walk 1: From l-r: Wendy Rogers, Maxwell Francioni, Peter Duguid, Evan Houlding; photographer and walk participant, André Vietinghoff



Walk 2: From l-r: Laurie Jane, Barry Monson, Francie Morgan, Nancy Dufour, Samuel LeGresley, Milda Markauskas, Kaitlin Hoyt, Craig Dupuis; photographer and walk participant, André Vietinghoff

The list for the first walk is based on the eBird tally kindly maintained and submitted by **Maxwell Francioni**:

2<sup>ND</sup> WALK: 10 ° C. – 12 ° C. Sunny, calm. STARTED JUST AFTER 9:30

[This was a joint walk organized by **Francie Morgan** of Nature NB and **André Vietinghoff** and **Milda Markauskas** of the Fredericton Nature Club]. The walk was led by Milda and by Samuel LeGresley of Nature NB.

The list for the 2<sup>nd</sup> walk is based on the eBird tally kindly maintained and submitted by **Milda Markauskas**. Both lists have been combined in the table on the next page:

A third event, not specifically an FNC event, at Odell Park on World Migratory Bird Day was a children's workshop that was planned and co-taught by Francie Morgan of Nature NB and Judith Dewar of the Fredericton Nature Club at the Odell Park Lodge from 10:00-11:30 a.m. The theme was the importance of insects to birds. Thirty participants – children with their parents attended this successful workshop! There were fun interactive games to learn about birds, their varied habitats, and species interactions. This was followed by a walk through the park woods listening for birds. Thanks Francie and Judith!



World Migratory Bird Day:  
Children's Workshop

WALK 1 7:30 a.m.			WALK 2 9:30 a.m.		
	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>NUMBERS</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>NUMBERS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1	American Crow	8	American Crow	3	11
2	American Goldfinch	26	American Goldfinch	5	31
3	American Robin	3			3
4	Black-and-white Warbler	6	Black-and-white Warbler	5	11
5	Blackburnian Warbler	4	Blackburnian Warbler	1	5
6	Black-capped Chickadee	9	Black-capped Chickadee	2	11
7	Black-throated Green Warbler	10	Black-throated Green Warbler	8	18
8	Blue Jay	1			1
9	Blue-headed Vireo	10	Blue-headed Vireo	7	17
10			Brown-headed Cowbird	1	1
11	Chestnut-sided Warbler	1			1
12	Chipping Sparrow	11			11
13	Common Grackle	1			1
14	Common Raven	1	Common Raven	1	2
15	Downy Woodpecker	1	Downy Woodpecker	1	2
16	Eastern Phoebe	4			4
17	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2			2
18	Grey Catbird	1			1
19	Hairy Woodpecker	1			1
20	Nashville Warbler	1	Nashville Warbler	1	2
21	Northern Cardinal	3			3
22	Northern Parula	14	Northern Parula	9	23
23	Purple Finch	1	Purple Finch	3	4
24	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2			2
25	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3			3
26	Song Sparrow	6	Song Sparrow	2	8
27	Tree Swallow	2			2
28	White-breasted Nuthatch	1			1
29	White-throated Sparrow	7	White-throated Sparrow	4	11
30	Winter Wren	6	Winter Wren	1	8
31			Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	1

Location: **Salamanca Trail**, Fredericton

DATE/TIME: **May 18, 2024, 8:00 AM**

Traveling by foot 1.99 km 125 minutes

Start: 10 ° C. slightly overcast, a bit breezy. At 10:10 pm. 15 ° C.; slightly overcast; slight breeze.

Participants: **5** (Derek Hogan, Doug Jackson, Angélique Gloss, Sylvie Race, André Vietinghoff)

The tally of **31** species is based on the eBird list kindly maintained and submitted by **Derek Hogan**:

1 Canada Goose	3 Gray Catbird
11 Mallard	1 Veery
2 Common Goldeneye	1 American Robin
1 Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	2 House Finch
1 Mourning Dove	1 Purple Finch
1 Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5 American Goldfinch
1 Bald Eagle	1 Chipping Sparrow
1 Hairy Woodpecker	10 Song Sparrow
1 Eastern Phoebe	X Red-winged Blackbird
2 Great Crested Flycatcher	5 Common Grackle
1 Blue Jay	10 American Redstart
4 American Crow	10 Northern Parula
3 Black-capped Chickadee	10 Yellow Warbler
1 Tree Swallow	2 Chestnut-sided Warbler
3 White-breasted Nuthatch	2 Northern Cardinal



From l-r: Doug Jackson, Derek Hogan, Sylvie Race, Angelique Gloss; photographer/walk participant, André Vietinghoff

**Carman Creek Outing**

Outing Leader: **Dr. Graham Forbes**

Fredericton--NB Trail - Barkers Point Bypass to Duffy's Brook

Date: **May 25, 2024, at 7:58 AM**

Traveling 2.25 km for 145 Minutes

Weather: sunny, about 9 0 C. at start; 15 0 C. at finish

List based on eBird tally kindly maintained and submitted by **Milda Markauskas** with a few additions reported by Graham.

No. of participants: **12**

No. of bird species tallied: **42**

12 Canada Goose		1 White-breasted Nuthatch
2 Wood Duck		1 Gray Catbird
6 Mallard		3 Veery
1 Mourning Dove		5 American Robin
2 Killdeer		1 Purple Finch
2 Spotted Sandpiper		3 American Goldfinch
1 Great Blue Heron		2 Chipping Sparrow
1 Belted Kingfisher		2 Song Sparrow
2 Eastern Wood-Pewee		10 Red-winged Blackbird -- Just counting males- probably more
1 Alder Flycatcher		1 Common Grackle
4 Least Flycatcher		4 Northern Waterthrush
2 Great Crested Flycatcher		1 Ovenbird
1 Eastern Kingbird		5 Black-and-white Warbler
1 Warbling Vireo		3 Common Yellowthroat
5 Red-eyed Vireo		7 American Redstart
2 Blue Jay		2 Northern Parula
5 American Crow		5 Yellow Warbler
1 Common Raven		1 Chestnut-sided Warbler
4 Black-capped Chickadee		2 Pine Warbler
4 Tree Swallow		1 Black-throated Green Warbler
5 Barn Swallow		1 Northern Cardinal



*From l-r: Angelique Gloss, Sylvie Race, Bonnie Flynn, Doug Jackson, Graham Forbes (outing leader), Peter Duguid, Juan Sanchez, Milda Markauskas, Barry Monson; photographer and walk participant, Andre Vietinghoff*



## Parks & Trails Day

Date: **Saturday, June 1, 2024** at 10:00 a.m.

Report by: **Doug Jackson, walk leader**

Fredericton Nature Club was a participant in Parks & Trails. The publicity given to us by Fredericton Trails Coalition resulted in the participation of two new birders on our birding walk. We set out from the north end of the Bill Thorpe walking bridge and walked along the Nashwaak Trail before turning onto the Gibson Trail and crossing the Nashwaak River. Our first sighting was a Grey Catbird, followed by American Redstarts, Yellow Warblers, a Tree Swallow at a nest box and 2 House Wrens.



After an hour, we returned to the starting point and enjoyed the art displays and free barbeque.



Trail scene: City of Fredericton photo

**FNC Event: Chimney Swift Roost Survey**

**Leader: Juan Sebastian Sanchez**

**Date: 3 June 2024 TIME: 8:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.**

**Attendees: 22-23 persons** (a few stragglers joined us a bit later)

**Weather: sunny, clear, cool** ranging from 14<sup>o</sup> – 19<sup>o</sup> C.

A large gathering assembled on the green at Queen and Church. Juan led us up Church St. where we paused several times to observe chimneys near which a few Chimney Swifts flitted. We proceeded to Queen Square and just before 9 p.m. arrived at the corner of McLeod & Saint John where we faced a church with a large chimney – apparently the roosting site for the largest concentration of Chimney Swifts in Fredericton. And we waited. For 15-20 minutes, no swifts appeared. However, just after 9:15 a few swifts flew past. Between 9:20 and 9:30, there were several flybys of larger numbers of Chimney Swifts. Just after 9:30, we experienced the thrill of seeing the mass of Chimney Swifts dive into the chimney, the nightly roost area! Juan counted **54** Chimney Swifts that evening.

Thanks for a well-timed and enjoyable outing, Juan!



*From l-r: Doug Jackson, Bonnie Flynn, Juan Sanchez; other participants not identified; photographer: A. Vietinhghoff*

**Joint Outing: CPAWS with FNC**

**DATE: Saturday, June 15 TIME: 9 a.m.**

**Location: Killarney Lake Park**

**Report by: Doug Jackson**

The first joint outing of the **Fredericton Nature Club** and the **Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's NB chapter** was held on Saturday, June 15th at Killarney Lake Park.

**Danielle Hak** and **Emily Ruttan**, **CPAWS' Conservation Education Coordinator** and **Conservation Outreach Assistant** respectively, joined with **Doug Jackson** in leading a group of nine people on a 2-hour long walk on the park's trails.

Following introductions, we started on the "Pink Trail" which circles the lake, stopping briefly at the lookout platform to spy small fish and hopeful human fishers. A detour on two of the renumbered side trails was taken after a stop to observe nature and report on what we experienced with our senses.

Birdlife was abundant that morning, beginning with a Cedar Waxwing on a power line in the Rotary Lodge parking lot and species including Crow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Ovenbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Parula, Robin, Least Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, and Swainson's Thrush.

Spring plant life was abundant, with interrupted, cinnamon, oak and sensitive ferns found near large patches of bunchberries. Fresh green lichen was considered an indicator of good air quality. Mushrooms of various shapes and colours were growing on the trailside. Bull frogs and green frogs called loudly from the lake, and we were observed by an inquisitive red squirrel.

Outings to our parks remind us of their value as refuges for wildlife and stressed humans, underlining the importance of the work done by FNC and CPAWS in protecting and promoting them. Both organizations will be actively doing so in the coming months and years.



*CPAWS members: At far left: Danielle; From right-left  
Brandon, Emily, Lakshita*

**Outing: Sunset Acres/Wilkins Field/Burpee Flats**

**DATE: June 22, 2024, TIME: 9 a.m.**



**Leader: Dr. Graham Forbes**

**Duration: 2 hr., 31 min. Distance: 2.61 km.**

**No. of participants: 13**

**Bird tally: 40**

Tally based on eBird list kindly maintained and submitted by Maxwell Francioni:

Canada Goose 30 Wood Duck 3 Rock Pigeon 1 Mourning Dove 2 Black-billed Cuckoo 1 Double-crested Cormorant 5 Green Heron 1 Great Blue Heron 1 Bald Eagle 1 Belted Kingfisher 2 Alder Flycatcher 3 Willow Flycatcher 3 Eastern Phoebe 1 Great Crested Flycatcher 1 Eastern Kingbird 2 Warbling Vireo 1 Red-eyed Vireo 3 Blue Jay 1 American Crow 6 Black-capped Chickadee 3	 <p><i>Green Heron / Photo by Maxwell Francioni</i></p>	Tree Swallow 1 White-breasted Nuthatch 1 Marsh Wren 2 Gray Catbird 3 Veery 3 American Robin 2 Cedar Waxwing 7 Purple Finch 1 American Goldfinch 22 Chipping Sparrow 2 Song Sparrow 9 Swamp Sparrow 4 Bobolink 8 Red-winged Blackbird 6 Brown-headed Cowbird 4 Common Grackle 3 Northern Waterthrush 6 Common Yellowthroat 5 American Redstart 9 Yellow Warbler 12	 <p><i>Green Heron/ Photo by Maxwell Francioni</i></p>
---	--	--	---



*Doug Jackson, Sylvie Race, and others in Wilkins Field*



*Sylvie Race and others in Wilkins Field*



## Book Review

Ackerman, Jennifer. What An Owl Knows [electronic resource]: the new science of the world's most enigmatic birds. Penguin Publishing Group, 2023. 1 e-book (333 pages): illustrations; ISBN: 9780593298893

Available from the New Brunswick Public Library Service's Electronic Library New Brunswick as a downloadable **E-BOOK** (EPUB) via Libby/OverDrive

Also available from NBPLS in hard copy under the call no. **598.97** ACK (available at Fredericton Public Library)

Both formats include bibliographical references and index.

"What is it about owls that so enthralls us?" is the question with which Janet Ackerman begins her preface. She proceeds to stoke our enthusiasm with brief tantalizing answers that will be developed throughout the chapters of this delightful study.

The author informs us in the first chapter, "Making sense of owls: unpacking the mysteries" that the ancestors of modern owls "first appeared on Earth during the Paleocene epoch, some fifty-five to sixty-five million years ago"; that there are "two main families of owls: Tytonidae (barn owls) and Strigidae (all other owls)"; that over millennia, some owl species have gone extinct but 260 species of owls remain. Owls live in almost every kind of habitat on all continents except Antarctica and they range in size, appearance, and behavior. Scientists have invented many new tools and techniques for studying owls including DNA analysis, imaging technology, radio tagging, satellite telemetry, infrared cameras, nest cams, sophisticated audio recording devices. In the meantime, long-term studies with more traditional methods have also uncovered new insights into owl behavior and adaptation. Finally, seeing and/or hearing them in their wild habitat is important and can be extremely difficult. The author talks about her own experience in trying to see and later to trap a Long-eared owl in a "gully dense with hawthorn and chokecherry trees."

In the next chapter. "What's it like to be an owl: ingenious adaptations" Ackerman mentions "antiperistalsis," an owl's ability to move indigestible food out through its beak in the form of pellets. She also talks about the deadly feet of owls. She then describes discoveries by scientists about three major owl adaptations: their hearing, their eyesight, and their feathers. Owl eyes and owl ears have developed well beyond the acuity of these senses in other birds. And while facial feathers enhance hearing, wing feathers have evolved to give owls silent flight. Overall, these adaptations account for the formidable hunting prowess of owls.

The author explores the methods by which owl researchers are adding to our stock of knowledge in the chapter "Owling: studying the world's most enigmatic birds." Owls are hard to study because they are well camouflaged, wary, secretive, and most often, nocturnal. Vocalization survey methods are used but are not always successful; for example, in northwestern U.S. Spotted Owls have become quieter after the influx of Barred Owls into their territories. Some researchers use detective dogs to find owl pellets that will lead to the owls themselves. In large areas, other researchers use "passive acoustic monitoring" that involves planting hundreds of audio recording devices across vast territories. In rough terrain, scientists are turning to satellite imagery and drones, e.g., in studying Blakiston's Fish Owl: in addition to locating open water where the fish owls hang out, drones can spot owl nests and eliminate the need to climb up to the nest.

While the author provides copious information about owl research throughout her study, chapter 9. "What an owl knows: how wise are owls?" ties most closely into the author's interest in bird cognition. (Ackerman is the author of The Genius of Birds). While a bird brain is tiny, the author points out that the portion of the brain called the pallium is configured differently in birds from that of mammalian brains and has many

neurons. Admittedly, owls, e.g., Great Gray Owls, do not pass a classic animal intelligence test called a string-pulling test that bird species like crows do pass. However, the author and researchers that she cites contend that this is not a fair test of an owl's intelligence. Some research seems to indicate that owls have a particularly good memory. As well, species such as Burrowing Owl, Barred Owl, and Long-eared Owl seem to have "plasticity" in cognition and behavior that allows them to adapt to and settle in urban areas. My only criticism of What an Owl Knows, is that in this chapter Ackerman insists on pointing out how owls are useful with arguments that seem unrelated to their intelligence.

Earlier Ackerman takes us to various locations in the U.S. where she spends time with researchers who are studying the breeding of species such as Barn Owl, Pygmy Owl, Great Grey Owl, and Great Horned Owl. From courting, mating, and nest-making to the first flights of young owls, we learn much about their family life in this chapter entitled "What it takes to make an owl: courting and breeding." Ackerman introduces us to owl breeding researchers including Steve Hiro, a retired heart surgeon and volunteer for the Owl Research Institute in Montana and Denver Holt, a well-respected owl expert and the founder of ORI. The author concedes that, "owls may be skilled hunters and mate finders, but skilled nest builders they are not." Yet, many owls ferociously defend their nests. For example, Jim Duncan, one of her researcher acquaintances was hit in the back of the head by a territorial female Great Grey Owl. "One of the talons dug deep into the back of my skull, and the tip broke off in there." Even owl chicks defend themselves by bill snapping and hissing, and Burrowing Owl chicks buzz like a rattlesnake.

The follow-up chapter, "To stay or to go: roosting and migrating" homes in on three species: Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Snowy Owl. Ackerman begins by talking about owls staying put. She hooks up with Chloe Hernandez and Denver Holt to study the roosting of Long-eared Owls in Montana where the largest roosts top out at about twenty individual owls. However, this number pales in comparison to the Long-eared Owl roost in the village of Kikinda in northern Serbia where hundreds of owls roost at any given time. The Serbian ornithologist Milan Ružič established the world record of 743 Long-eared Owls for a single roost on a single day. Now these owls have become a big tourist draw in Kikinda.

Ackerman also delves into the complexities of owl migration. Migratory patterns vary even within given species and the sex of the owl often plays a role. It turns out that for Saw-whet Owls, most owls netted during migration are females with young non-breeding males comprising the remainder. While satellite transmitters are ok with large owl species like Snowy Owl, they are too heavy for small owls. However, there is promise in tracking movements of small owls with the Motus Wildlife Tracking System that makes use of nanotags that send out signals every 2-13 seconds.

Whimsical anecdotes highlight Ackerman's chapter entitled "Who gives a hoot: owl talk." She reports that a Great Horned Owl at the International Owl Center in Minnesota pecks Karla Bloem, the executive director sharply on the head until the day Bloem learns to bow while performing her imitation hoot. Ackerman spends time in the Netherlands with Marjon Savlesberg, a musician-by-training-turned-field-researcher" who fell in love with owl calls, especially those of the Eurasian Eagle Owl.

In the chapter. "An owl in the hand: learning from captive birds" Ackerman points out that owls sometimes become pets, e.g., the fictional Harry Potter pet Snowy Owl, Hedwig and the historical Florence Nightingales pet owl, Athena. However, owls are wild animals and do not really make good pets. Sometimes they become "ambassador birds" in wildlife rehabilitation centres and in educational programs such as Discover Owls founded by Jim Duncan. The author discusses owl psychology and efforts to rehabilitate injured owls.

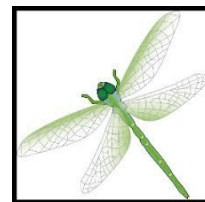
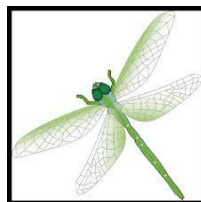
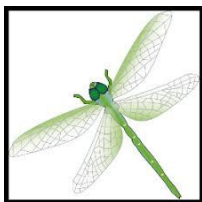
If the Serbian ornithologist, Milan Ružič had to educate the Kikinda townspeople about Long-eared Owls, chapter 8. "Half bird, half spirit: owls and the human imagination," which shifts the focus from scientific to

socio-cultural, gives ample reasons why such education is necessary. Owls have been both revered and much reviled throughout time and among various societies; for example, among the Ainu of Japan fish owls are seen as a god while to the Kamba of Kenya owls are birds of ill omen. The author introduces us to David Johnson who is putting together a folklore collection for his *Owls in Myth and Culture* project. Johnson also conducted 6,000+ interviews in 26 countries to reveal attitudes about owls. Felice Wyndham, an ethnoecologist at Oxford University, studies “avimancy,” divination through birds. In studying the role of owls in human societies, Tomás Ibarra attempts to link ecology with anthropology. Robyn Fleming, a research librarian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is known as that museum’s owl lady and has found 550 images that “reveal the wildly weird, wonderful, idiosyncratic - and very long-standing - human fascination with owls.” She can show you, for example, ancient Greek silver coins known as Athenian Owls that feature a portrait of the goddess Athena on one side and a Little Owl on the other: both stood for wisdom.

The author’s afterword is entitled “Saving owls: protecting what we love.” This critically important and interesting ending to an enthralling work should have been named chapter 10. The author points out that generalists of the owl world like Barred Owls and Eastern Screech Owls are expanding their populations whereas some species like “Northern Saw-whet Owls and Great-Horned Owls are holding their own in the face of change.” Yet, habitat destruction threatens the survival of many species. Among the most vulnerable are island species like the Siau Scops Owl of Indonesia. And the fact that deforestation and other activities are turning many parts of the world into “island-like fragments” does not help. Snowy Owls too are threatened. The author writes, “The idea that Snowy Owls, creatures lodged so deeply in our psyches might vanish—to have that magic and then to lose it—is unfathomable and points to the urgency of doing everything we can to save these birds.” Owl populations are dwindling, and although David Johnson says that it is not too late, the question of what to do arises. The author’s response is a terse “Everything in our power.” First, get a better understanding of the populations of owls including long-running studies of owl ecology such as the ones conducted by Pertti Saurola in Finland. Secondly, understand that methods for monitoring owls differ from those for monitoring other bird species; one of these is nocturnal owl surveys--there is tacit praise for Canada when the author states that owl prowls have become quite popular in Canada. Thirdly, educate people about the birds’ nature and need for protection. Sometimes this entails altering cultural attitudes and superstitions about owls. The author points to Raju Acharya who “has worked for decades to change attitudes in his native Nepal” where owls are believed “dumb and unlucky.” Acharya organizes large festivals that include education about the twenty-three species of owls that live in Nepal; he also conducts conservation camps and workshops. “In Italy, where Little Owls are still often linked with death and feared and harassed, naturalist and writer Marco Mastroianni has created owl-friendly trails, owl workshops, and a massive owl festival.” When the author asked researchers what any individual can do to save owls, the answer invariably was “do what you can.” Janet Ackerman affirms that we still have much to learn about owls and that it is critically important to protect them. Her lively and highly informative study reflects her love for owls and attempts to transfer this love to her reader in a most convincing way.

**Highly recommended.** Book Review by A. Vietinghoff

And from the NBPLS/SBPNB online catalogue: “A New York Times Notable Book of 2023” “Named a Best Book of 2023 by Publishers Weekly.”



## Announcements

**Election:** The Constitution passed by members in May provides for members of the Executive (President, Secretary, and Treasurer) to be elected each year. Our October meeting will start with these elections. **Our outgoing President, Dr. Tony Diamond** will preside over this election.

**Dorothy Diamond** has volunteered to head up the **nominating committee**. Dorothy will email all Fredericton Nature Club members to inquire who might let their name stand for a position on the Board, starting in October 2024. If you would like to submit your name, please contact her at [doroth@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:doroth@nbnet.nb.ca) -- Dorothy can fill you in as to what the position entails. We are in particular need of a President. and it would be helpful to have a Vice-President as well.

### Fredericton Nature Club website:

<http://www.frederictonnatureclub.com/>

### Email webmaster, David Lilly

[dillynb@gmail.com](mailto:dillynb@gmail.com)

### Nature NB website:

<https://www.naturenb.ca/>

### Publishing Information for newsletter

The Fredericton Nature Club newsletter is published four times a year, i.e., seasonally. Contributions are welcome! Please contact the editor at: [andre.vietinghoff@yahoo.com](mailto:andre.vietinghoff@yahoo.com)

Photographs/images in this issue are largely ones contributed by members. Those not identified are public domain images derived from Google Images.