

Rare Birds Leonel Richard 2013

Birding can be very unpredictable. Sometimes birds travel far from their usual range and create a lot of frenzy within the birding community. This phenomenon occurs mainly during the Spring and Fall migrations. No less predictable is the appearance of birds that are expected to be here but are so rare or elusive that years or sometimes decades can go by without a sighting. Listed here are some of the more noteworthy ones from this year so far.

On April 20th a Short-eared Owl was seen on Hay Island near Neguac. The Short-eared Owl is native to this area but it's quite rare to see one. Unusual in the fact that it comes out during the day and unlike our other owls species, it lives and hunts in the open.

On May 1st an Upland Sandpiper showed up at Oak Point. Unlike other Sandpipers this one is not usually found along the seashore. It nests in open grassland and is usually found from Southern Quebec westward to Alberta. It has been known to breed in Charlotte County in Southwestern New Brunswick but is extremely rare elsewhere in the Province.

On May 10th a pair of Sandhill Cranes were foraging in a plowed field in the Rogersville area. Standing at a metre or more in height with a wingspan of 2 metres, Sandhill Cranes are some of the largest birds in North America. In flight they extend their necks compared to Great Blue Herons who fold theirs in an S shape while flying. Their normal range extends from Ontario to the Pacific and north to the Arctic Islands.

During the second week of May, an American Coot made itself at home at the Miramichi Marsh. It could be described as an occasional visitor to New Brunswick although usually it's only seen in the marshes of the extreme south of the Province.

On May 16th also at the Miramichi Marsh, a very unusual visitor to our part of the world showed up. The Fork-tailed Flycatcher makes its home in Central and South America but shows up every few years in Eastern Canada. Mature males can sport a forked tail 2 to 3 times the length of their body while females or young birds will have a much shorter tail than that. It appeared to be the only bird of the species in North America north of Florida at that time.

A Northern Mockingbird arrived at Oak Point on May 21. The last known occurrence in the Miramichi region was a few years ago. True to its name, the mockingbird has the ability to mimic the sounds of other birds. It may stick around for the summer or it may move on but only time will tell.

The harshness of our winter season forces many birds to migrate to warmer

places. Shorebirds usually lead the procession beginning their southward trek as early as August while Canada Geese and sea ducks can delay their departure to as late as December. Some that usually fly south decided to spend last winter here such as Northern Cardinals, White-throated Sparrows and at least one Pine Warbler.

Thanks to local and online information networks such as “Birding New Brunswick” and “eBird”, rare bird sightings are quickly shared thus allowing others to have a better chance at seeing them.

If you are are curious about the natural world why not join the **Miramichi Naturalists' Club**. Visit <https://miramichinaturalistclub.com/about/>