

# Strictly for the birds

by Bethsheila Kent

It really is all about the birds. At this time of year you can barely take a step outside your home without encountering American robin frantically pulling worms and other creatures from the earth to satisfy those heavily-spotted, newly-fledged young dogging their heels (do birds even have heels?). There are adults of many species in worn plumage followed closely by offspring, all calling pitifully as if starved since breaking free of their eggs. The amount of traffic from nesting sites to foraging sites has a distinctly frantic quality to it, the adults well-aware of the dangers lurking nearby. And all this without leaving your yard! Indeed, with those wonderful stick-on-the-window hummingbird feeders, you can observe ruby-throated hummers from the comfort of that air-conditioned kitchen or living-room. All this activity, of course, makes for wonderful sightings and, sadly, it will all be over far too soon.

### Spotlight on Swainson's Thrush:

Swainson's thrush, like other members of this large family, is an eloquent songster. Approximately 7 inches in length, this rather drab bird is brownish above with brown-grey sides and flanks, a richly-buffy breast lightly spotted with dark brown and pale underparts. Like other family members, the Swainson's thrush has a complete eye ring, bold and buffy, and its lores (feathering above the bill) is also buffy. Undertail coverts are whitish. This thrush more than makes up for its drab appearance by its wonderful song which is a complex series of ascending spirals, a little buzzy, each series of phrases introduced by a single or pair of brief "whit" call notes. Like other thrushes, Swainson's will sing throughout the day and it is found in moist woods throughout our area.

### Recent Sightings:

Once again I must report few sightings on the water as most duck species remain in seclusion, females with young, males in molt. A few small family groups of American black duck and common goldeneye were found in various locations on small, well-protected ponds; common merganser broods were noted at North River and River Bennett. A single male red-breasted merganser was seen on St. Ann's Bay swimming with great haste out to where northern gannet (50+/-) were wheeling and diving for inbound mackerel. Large broods of Canada geese were noted in a variety of locations, the goslings easily as large and elegant as their parents. Great blue heron, adults appearing a little worse for wear, newly fledged birds awkward and unsure of themselves, were seen at ponds along the Bay Road, the shores of the Bras d'Or at Nyanza, at River Bennett and also at South Gut St. Ann's. Willet at Jersey Cove have successfully fledged at least a pair of young; the

common tern colony there continues to do battle with predating herring and great black-backed gulls, these now joined by their young. It appears only the ring-billed gull there do not engage in this unpleasant behaviour. Double-crested cormorant, many young in tow, were found in many locations along the shores of the Atlantic and the Bras d'Or. Single greater yellowlegs have been noted at Jersey Cove and South Gut St. Ann's. Belted kingfisher have been found in many locations, several still rather far from open water indicating young still in nests. Don Anderson, Baddeck, reports a very early, single male black bellied plover still sporting breeding plumage at Aspy Bay.

### Landlubber Report:

The big news this reporting period came from two sources. The first, Dennis Laffan, North River, called to report a scarlet tanager! Uncommon to Cape Breton, this almost all-scarlet songster sports black wings and tail and a distinct, black eye. The second source, Don Anderson, reported a pair of chimney swift at Middle River. Again, these cigar-shaped, swallow-like birds presented a rare sighting for Cape Breton! Ruby-throated hummingbirds have been

seen in so many locations it would be difficult to name them all and I am happy to report that Peggy MacLeod, Middle River, called to let me know her hummers had returned from parts unknown. Out and about in many locations were common grackle, red-winged blackbird, blue jay, American robin, hermit thrush, red-breasted nuthatch and American goldfinch. Purple finch were found

only at Big Harbour and South Haven. Ovenbird were heard calling at North River, Big Harbour and St. Ann's. Flycatchers noted this reporting period, all in suitable habitat were olive-sided, alder, least and eastern pee-wee. Wood warblers, again in suitable habitat, include yellow-rumped, magnolia, yellow, blackburnian, northern parula, black and white, black-throated green and American redstart. Sparrows noted were song, Lincoln's, savannah, chipping and white-throated, many with young. Both red-eyed and solitary vireo are accompanied by newly fledged young, as were dark-eyed junco, ruby- and golden-crowned kinglet. Don Anderson also reported barn swallow at Middle River; both cliff and tree swallow are also busy controlling the insect populations in many locations. An American kestrel, only the second reported sighting of this busy falcon this season came from Dennis Laffan; a Merlin dashed across the road in front of me at St. Ann's and just as quickly disappeared and American bald eagle were noted in various locations as were red-tailed hawk.

My thanks for Dennis Laffan and Don Anderson for sharing their recent sightings. I can be reached at 295-1749 with your birding news.



SWAINSON'S THRUSH

# Bests best theatre bets 2010



The cast of *Cinderella Confidential*: (front row) Emily Doyle, Katelynn March. In the second row are Cassidy Best, Tanner Best, Ashley Smith and Karlie Best. Pictured in back are Dorothy Best, Jarvis Donovan and Tanya Best.

### Ingonish

The comedy *Cinderella Confidential*, the first in a season of four different offerings from Theatre on the Hill, Ingonish, has a cast with more than half played by various North of Smokey adults and children with the last name Best.

Joanne Donovan, director of the one hour play, is no stranger to comedy. She starred in the wildly, successful production of *Shirley Valentine* last season. This year, wearing the director's mantle for the first time she has assembled a fine cast and crew to perform this delight

comedy based on the Cinderella story reported live from the stage at the Broadcove Campground every Monday night in July and August.

Other 2010 Theatre on the Hill productions include the adult comedy *Wrong for Each Other*, the Fiddlers on the Hill series with Paul Cranford and Brenda Stubbart, playing with and hosting other musicians, and a piano recital from Debut Atlantic featuring Canadian teenage prodigy, Jan Lisiecki.

All performance times are 8:15 pm. Visit [www.theatreonthehill.net](http://www.theatreonthehill.net) or call for information at 285-1018.

## Bras d'Or Yacht Club 2010 Regatta Week

sponsored by MACINTYRE CHEVROLET CADILLAC BUICK GMC

### ENTERTAINMENT LINE UP

sponsored by

**Molson Canadian**

**Sunday, August 1<sup>st</sup> 2010**

14:00 hours: Sail Past - KICK OFF TO REGATTA WEEK

16:00 hours: Wine and Cheese featuring Michelle Stephens & Friends

**Monday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010**

17:00-20:00 hours: Upper Lounge Live Entertainment Michael Cavanaugh

22:00-02:00 hours: Michael Cavanaugh and Larry MacAskill

**Tuesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010**

17:00-20:00 hours: Upper Lounge Live Entertainment Carmel Mikol

21:00-23:00 hours: YUK YUKS Comedy Night at the BYC

23:00-02:00 hours: Michael Cavanaugh

**Wednesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> 2010**

17:00-20:00 hours: Upper Lounge Live Entertainment

Tracey and Michael Cavanaugh

22:00-02:00 hours: Dance featuring DJ - Tyler MacCuspice

**Thursday, August 5<sup>th</sup> 2010**

17:00-21:00 hours: Upper Lounge Live Entertainment Michael Cavanaugh

22:30-02:00 hours: DJ - D&D Music Factory

**Friday, August 6<sup>th</sup> 2010**

17:00-21:00 hours: Upper Lounge Live Entertainment Dave Sampson

22:00-02:00 hours: Dance featuring Mitch MacDonald & Modern Slang

**Saturday, August 7<sup>th</sup> 2010**

17:00-21:00 hours: Live Entertainment

22:00-02:00 hours: Dance featuring The Aaron MacDonald Band

**ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS - ADULTS ONLY!**

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