

Saoghal na Gàidhlig... The Gaelic way of living in the world

'S iomchaidh aig an àm seo dhen bhliadhna cuimhne a chumail air an fheadhainn a dh'fhulaing 's a fhuair bàs gu h-àraidh ann a' cogaidhean mór' an t-saoghail. Seo òran dhaibh a rinn Ruairidh MacNèill, Gleann Bharraidh, Ceap Breatainn (air 'ath-fhoillseachadh le cead). Bha Ruairidh fhéin thall thairis le Réisimeid na h-Albann Nuaidh' an Iar aig àm an darnna chogaidh (1944-46).

"Mas dìochuimhnich sinn ar cuideachd nach maireann":
Séisd: A bhith fàgail ar baile/ 'S daoine gasda còir ann/ A bhith fàgail a' chala/ Gu seòladh na mara/ Measg gach cunnairt 's cafaig/ Air an fhairge throm.
1.Mór ghruaimean ar dùthcha/ Leis an naidheachd a fhuair sinn:/ Tha a' Ghearmailt 'gar gluasad/ 'S gar n-imrich gu blàr.
2.Ged a bha sinn an dòchas/ Nach tigeadh i ri cogadh/ 'S beag a tha i nis coltach/ Gum bi sòlas 's an tìr.
3.Turus againn ri seòladh/ Ann am meadhon an t-soithich/ Leis an eascaraid 'fheitheamh/ Fo iochdar nan stuadh.
4.'S nuair a bha sinn a' fàgail/ Le mór-bheannachd ar càirdean/ Feuch gun till sinn gu sàbhailt/ Gu dùthaich ar gaoil.
5.Sia bliadhnaichean cianail/ Dòrtadh-fala neo-chrìochnach/ Ach le cuideachadh an Tighearna/ Thàinig solus na sith.
6.Tha am piobair a' gleusadh/ Cur a-mach ceòl 's seula/ Leis an duanaig as spéiseil/ Gun do chrìochnaich am blàr.
7.Saoil seo: àm bhith ri mireadh/ Ach cha slànaich sin na cridhean/ No chuir stad air deòir a' sìleadh/ Do dh'fhir tha fuar bho 'n fhòid.
8.Daor 's cosgail an t-saorsa/ Ann an airgead 's ùine/ Suarach sin 's neo-phrìseil/ An coimeas sgrìos air fuil bhlàth.
9.'S an iarmailt 's air fearann/ Air a' mhuir am measg na feamainn/ Gun chiste 's gun anart/ 'S gun luchd-faire ri bròn.
10.Òg fallainn 's gun chreuchdachd/ Bha air falbh 's cha d'fhuair tilleadh/ Airson nach maireann, ar cuideachd/ Guidh gur Pàrras an dìol.
11.Càirdean curanta, as uaisle/ Fad a bhios sibh 'nar cuimhne/ Ged is meirgeach an gunna/ 'S ged a thiormaich an t-sùil.

At this time of year, it's fitting to hold in remembrance those who suffered and died especially in the great world wars. The following is a song for them composed by Rod C. MacNeil of Barra Glen, Cape Breton (reprinted here with his permission). Rod himself was overseas in WWII with the West Nova Regiment (1944-46).

"Lest we forget our dead comrades":
Chorus: Leaving our community/ And the fine, kind people there/ Leaving the pier/ To sail the ocean/ Amidst every danger and rushing/ On the angry sea.
1.Much gloom covers our country/ With the news we heard/ Germany is on the move/ And impelling us to battle.
2.Although we were in hope/ That it wouldn't come to war/ Little is it now likely/ There will be solace in the land.
3.We have a journey to sail/ In the bowels of the ship/ With the enemy awaiting/ Down under the waves.
4.And when we were leaving/ With many blessings from our loved ones/ For a safe return/ To the land of our love.
5.Six dreary years/ Of unending bloodshed/ But with the help of the Lord/ The light of peace appeared.
6.The piper is tuning/ Delivering music and a message/ With the tune most loved/ That the battle has ended.
7.Imagine now, a time for merry-making/ But that won't heal the hearts/ Or stop the flow of tears/ For men cold under the sod.
8.Dear and costly the freedom/ In money and time/ Trifling and of little value that/ In comparison with the destruction of warm blood.
9.In the air and on the land/ On the ocean among the seaweed/ Without a coffin and without linen/ And without the wake-fold to mourn.
10.Young, healthy people without ailments/ Were away and did not return/ For the departed, our comrades/ Pray that Paradise is their reward.
11.Friends, gallant, the noblest/ Long will you be in our memory/ Although the gun has rusted/ And the tears have dried.

Note: Rod's song was published in *In the Morning: Veterans of Victoria County, Cape Breton* by Bonnie Thornhill and W. James MacDonald, published by UCCB Press 1999.

The Gaelic Way of Living in the World is written by Catriona Parsons and sponsored by...



Office of Gaelic Affairs
Oifis Iomairtean na Gàidhlig

Strictly for the birds

by Bethsheila Kent

A yellow-billed cuckoo crossed my path on Thursday, October 27. This, in itself was quite remarkable as this bird is a "lifer" for me, one of those species not common (indeed categorized as a rare vagrant to the Maritimes in fall migration in many sources and listed as occasional in the Seasonal Checklist of The Birds of Cape Breton Island) but, to add to my amazement was the fact that not two weeks ago Helen MacLeod, South Haven, reported a yellow-billed cuckoo that had, unfortunately, suffered a fatal collision with her kitchen window! Having made my identification in the field based solely on memory of photos and drawings of this very beautiful and relatively large bird I decided to embark on some research to discover what I could of this species.

Cuckoos belong to the family Cuculidae and share that designation with roadrunners and anis, two species found far to the south of Cape Breton Island. All prefer specialized habitats: cuckoos forage in dense, deciduous growth and feed on insects. Caterpillars, and not just any caterpillars but hairy caterpillars are their food of choice; roadrunners, true to cartoon fame, are desert dwellers but are also found in open pine forests of the southwest and supplement an insect diet with such tasty treats as lizards, snakes and rodents; anis, sub-tropical to tropical, like dense underbrush, are quite secretive and supplement an insect diet with fleshy fruits.

The yellow-billed cuckoo is approximately 12" in length, is quite slender and its most distinguishing feature is its extremely long tail distinctly marked below with large white spots on black. Its tail feathers are also broadly tipped with white. Its slender and short bill is down-curved and, true to its name, the lower mandible is yellow. Rather drab above - grayish-brown - its primaries are a lovely rufous shade that contrasts dramatically with bright white underparts that extend from chin to undertail coverts. A complete eye ring gives this bird a rather surprised look and this feature, as well as its hunched posture, are good field marks. The yellow-billed cuckoo's song is not musical, being rather a series of hollow kuk-kuk-kuk-like sounds. Generally a quiet bird, it is more vocal in summer.

Yellow-billed cuckoo prefer open, deciduous woods and thickets, preferably near water. Smooth and quiet fliers, they move effortlessly through dense thickets and will often perch quietly for long periods of time and slowly survey their surroundings.

Sexes are similar. Platform nests are fashioned from twigs lined with leaves, grasses and mosses and are built on horizontal limbs of large shrubs or small trees. The average number of eggs, pale blue-green, is 4 which hatch between 9-14 days. Feathers emerge between 7-9 days at which time young are fledged. Yellow-billed cuckoo are monogamous and both sexes share in the incubation and care of young. Interestingly, their numbers are often food-source dependent. In seasons of

high density caterpillar populations, females lay more eggs.

In other birding news, as many of you are aware, species and individual numbers are substantially lower this year than in the past. In fact, most of the calls I receive these days are centered on the failure of common species to make their appearance at this time of year. For example, American

robin. Generally by this time in October, lawns and fields are covered with American robin fattening up for the journey south. The mountain ash in our area are literally dripping with berries untouched and beginning to rot on their stems. The much anticipated fall warbler fallout did not materialize. Species normally found only during fall migration either passed us by or did not move this far north during the spring. By late August, early September some species - flycatchers and hummingbirds, for example - seemed to vanish from our area overnight. Feeders remain quiet.

Much of this lack of activity is a result of the long, very wet spring our area experienced which was followed by an unseasonably cool and also wet summer. Nests were damp and very cool resulting in some species failing to hatch young in such adverse conditions. All in all, our spring, summer and early fall were not conducive to great success by our nesting bird populations which begs the question, what happens now? I wish I had the answers...

I can be reached at 295-1749 with your birding news.



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO



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Baddeck Village Commissioners



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