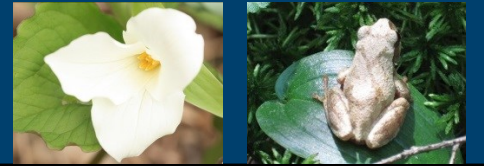




Vaudreuil-Soulanges Green Corridor

Toward a **GREENER** forest



Landowner's Newsletter

Vol.22– December 2017

This newsletter offers insights into the project and informative articles to learn more about the Vaudreuil-Soulanges natural areas. Enjoy!
The Green Corridor team

The Least Bittern: a rare species

The Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) is the smallest heron in North America. It measures 30 cm in height, which isn't much taller than the American Robin. With its reddish-brown plumage it blends in perfectly with its environment. The species spends summers in Québec, where it nests and raises its young before migrating to the southern coasts of the United States, Mexico, and Panama to spend the winter.



Habitat

The Least Bittern nests exclusively in marshes dominated by emergent plants such as cattails. It prefers areas that cover a surface of more than 5 ha, half of which must be open water. In such habitats, it finds all the food it needs: small fish, snails, insects, frogs, and even, on occasion, small mammals or the eggs of songbirds. It builds its nest above the water's surface.



Behavior

The Least Bittern is well-known for being secretive. It hides in the vegetation and flies off only rarely. When surprised, it freezes, keeping its neck outstretched and its beak in the air in order to blend in perfectly with the cattails. It is even thought that when the wind blows, it sways to the movement of the plants to remain camouflaged. Only its call, a deep and muffled *poo-poo-poo*, might betray its presence, especially in late May and June. To hear its call, visit https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Least_Bittern/id.



A threatened species

The nesting population in Quebec is estimated at only **200 to 300 pairs** and in all of Canada, at about **1500 pairs**. The destruction and degradation of wetlands, especially marshes, a vital habitat for this species, is the main cause of its decline. The Least Bittern is protected by federal and provincial laws, and it has the status of threatened in Canada and vulnerable in Québec. However, on private land, the preservation of its habitat is based essentially on voluntary actions by landowners.

Presence in Vaudreuil-Soulanges

Every year, the species is observed by birders in the municipality of Pointe-Fortune. Fortunately, much of its habitat in this sector is located on land belonging to Ducks Unlimited Canada and thus protected. Ducks Unlimited is a private conservation organization dedicated to conserving, restoring, and managing wetlands and prairies for the benefit of waterfowl, other animals, and humans. During the summer of 2017, the Vaudreuil-Soulanges Green Corridor team carried out inventories on the periphery of this protected area. In the coming weeks, a team biologist will visit the owners of these properties to raise awareness of the importance of protecting these natural areas, which are so important to the Least Bittern. Indeed, the only way for the species to recover is to preserve wetlands and their integrity (vegetation and water quality). The habitats around the protected area also serve as a buffer zone, especially in terms of ensuring a quiet environment.

The entire team wishes you a Happy Holidays filled with nature and precious moments with family and friends. Thank you for taking an interest in our work and supporting our efforts to protect the natural areas of Vaudreuil-Soulanges!





In search of nightjars

There are two species of nightjar in Québec: the Common Nighthawk and the Eastern Whip-poor-will. They are both nocturnal, insect-eating species that can be hard to spot because of their amazing ability to blend into the environment.



Eastern Whip-poor-will

Since both species feed while flying, they can be told apart by their wings. The wings of the Common Nighthawk are pointed at the tips and have a large white band across them, while those of the Eastern Whip-poor-will are rounder and unmarked. They can also be told apart by their calls. The Whip-poor-will's name actually describes its call (it can repeat the "whip-poor-will" call hundreds of times) while the Nighthawk's call is a nasal "peent" (go to <https://www.allaboutbirds.org> to here these calls).



Common Nighthawk

Both species are in decline and designated as threatened in Canada and likely to be designated threatened or vulnerable in Québec. The potential threats to nightjars have been identified, but few have been studied extensively. Among these threats are ecosystem modification (e.g., reduction in insect populations), the loss or degradation of habitat, climate change, pollution (pesticides, mercury, acid rain, etc.), and invasive species.

This past summer, with their ears wide open, our team went in search of these threatened birds that sing mostly in the evening at sunset. During these inventories, a Whip-poor-will was identified in Sainte-Marthe, and a Nighthawk in Saint-Lazare.

A turtle story



In recent months, a female northern map turtle was found along Chemin de l'Anse in Rigaud, but she had been seriously injured while laying her eggs. Although she eventually died from her injuries, she had managed to lay two eggs. Thanks to Service d'Intervention Animale Rive Nord, the eggs were incubated, and two baby turtles hatched a few weeks later. They were released near where they had been collected, on the banks of the Rivière à Raquette. If you spot a turtle alongside or in the middle of a road, please do not touch or bother it. If it is in danger, help it across the road **in the direction it is travelling**. Do not move it elsewhere, and do not return it to the water. Use caution, because these are wild animals that may bite. Above all, never handle them by the tail.



In all cases, please register your observation with Carapace (www.carapace.ca/en).

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