

Being in Bird Cove

Birds I View

Bill Montevecchi



Dunlin foraging on the beach at L'Anse aux Meadows. (photo: Bill Montevecchi)

Writing from the Russian adventure cruise vessel, the *Ioffe*, I am again fortunate to be participating in Adventure Canada's Newfoundland circumnavigation. As always it's an enriching full experience – it's a time, as they say.

Having just departed Bird Cove on the Northern Peninsula, we are on our way to Bonne Bay. Much of the experience of Bird Cove remains with us. Like so many of our small coastal communities, Bird Cove is hanging on. By hanging on and working for prosperity, Bird Cove conveys the importance of accessing economic capital. Yet more importantly and surely more vitally, the residents of Bird Cove are enriched with a human capital that fuels survival, generosity and friendship. Being in Bird Cove is a good place to think and gain perspective.

Last year when I was circumnavigating Newfoundland, my daughter of wisdom Gioia having just graduated from Memorial University of Newfoundland left on a CIDA (Canadian International Development Association) internship in Cambodia. She was very keen about the venture but little did I imagine what a formative experience it would be for her. She was deeply touched and totally

captured by the welcoming, the openness and the kindness of the Cambodian people who were enveloped in varying states of economic impoverishment.

Cambodians have recently endured the horrors of the Pol Pot regime's bloody killing fields. Many of those who survived are deeply scarred. All who have survived are blessed with the wealth of human capital that knows no bounds in the face of abject poverty and suffering.

Today, as our vessel is steaming from the Bonne Bay fjord and on to the Bay of Islands, Gioia is back home in Portugal Cove. She has decided to return to Cambodia for a 5-year stint as the director of a rehabilitation centre for land-mine victims who have been torn and severed by machinations of corrupted power and exploitation.

Being in Bird Cove has made me wonder about these things and why my daughter is making these choices that make me feel hugely proud and a bit forlorn at the same time. Some of Gioia's perspective and commitment has derived from growing up in rural Newfoundland in Portugal Cove. Here we have enjoyed strong family bonding and shared adventures in an open, friendly and peaceful community atmosphere. It has truly been a formative experience for our entire family. In Portugal Cove, Gioia learned at a very young age that it is the human capital that matters most in our relationships with others and with our environment.

As the *loffé* makes its way to Cox's cove, I am aware of the ongoing global financial crisis. I wonder if the New York Stock Exchange will implode before our journey ends in St. John's. I speculate about what it might be like if there were no Canadian dollars, no U.S dollars, no economic capital. I imagine that people in Manhattan may be jumping off of skyscrapers and shooting at each other. I marvel in the confidence that even if economic devastation was to occur, that in Portugal Cove, in Bird Cove and in Cox's Cove, we are going to be just fine. Our human capital will ensure our survival.

Birds in the area and around the province

A juvenile northern goshawk was seen perching in a tree in the parking lot just outside the Nature Conservancy of Canada office on Elizabeth (Doug Ballam, Heather Chaffey).

As the *loffé* began forged out of the Narrows on the first leg of the circumnavigation of the island, Leach's storm-petrels attracted by the ship's lights fluttered on to the deck. Gulls were aware of the Carey chicks' predicament and

flocks were winging rapidly along in the ship's glow, looking to snag a nocturnal meal.

It is that time of year, when the newly fledged storm-petrels are departing their nest burrows for the first and final time. Some of these navigationally-challenged new flyers can be expected to be stranded along the coast when onshore winds prevail. Donna Covey rescued a storm-petrel stranded near the yacht club in Long Pond.

If you come across a stranded storm-petrel during the day, it is best to hold it in a small box with lots of toweling for warmth in a quiet dark place. You might leave a bowl of watery mushy capelin or sardines as stranded birds are often dehydrated. The bird can be released after dark near the sea, but not in a location where there are bright lights, because the petrels are attracted to artificial night lighting.

Two greater shearwaters were straggling off the coast of Fogo Island (Rod Green), getting a late start for their arduous trans-equatorial migration to their major breeding at Tristan da Cunha in the middle of the deep South Atlantic some 10,000 kilometers distant.

A female shoveller duck is with the tame black ducks in Virginia Lake near the entrance of the Virginia River (Ken Knowles). There are disturbing reports of illegal night-time shooting of Canada geese in Carmanville – sad situation indeed (George Brinson).

Dovekies are showing up in coastal waters. At Blackhead, Bruce Mactavish saw one flying inland with a raven in close pursuit.

Ruffed grouse have been visiting yards in Portugal Cove (David Artiss) and in St. John's (Carole Anne Coffey). On a drive on the Northern Peninsula, Juliana Coffey observed 5 bald eagles on September 14.

A chestnut-collared longspur was foraging for insects along with semipalmated plovers, white-rumped sandpipers and dunlins on heavily shelled beaches near the former Norse settlement in L'Anse aux Meadows. On 10 October, a song sparrow was hopping in the gardens in Brakes Cove in the Bay of Islands. And in Raleigh, two ruddy turnstones were feeding on a fresh and recently discard moose bone – a truly made in Newfoundland sighting.

A Northern shrike was perching attentively among the chickadees and warblers in Bird Cove. Another shrike landed on the loffe off the southwest coast of Newfoundland. Baltimore orioles are at Blackhead and in the Hezbergs' yard in St. John's.

Indigo buntings and dickcissels have been seen at Cape Race (John Wells, Ken Knowles), on the Northern Peninsula (John and Ivy Gibbons) and at Francois during 12 – 14 October. Snow buntings are returning to our coasts and were seen on the Northern Peninsula (John and Ivy Gibbons), in Eastport (Bruce Bradbury) and at Cape Freels and Cape St. Mary's.

Keep looking. Contacts = mont@mun.ca, 895-2901 Or 737-7673.