

The Legal Seafoods boycott of Canadian fish

Birds I View

Bill Montevecchi

Legal Seafoods has always been one of my favourite seafood restaurants when I visit my parents in Massachusetts. According to the NBC Today Show Legal Seafoods is the “Best Seafood Restaurant in America.”

The restaurant, I believe, has a green purchasing policy. There is no buying of threatened or unsustainably caught fishes. The Legal Seafoods chain also prides itself on supporting sustainable fisheries and fishing communities. These are worthy goals.

My appetite for Legal Seafoods fare has however vanished. The Legal Seafoods chain is boycotting Canadian fish. Why? - the seal hunt.

At a recent workshop at the New England Aquarium on marine mammals and birds in the Gulf of Maine, I had the opportunity to act on the issue. Following meetings at the aquarium, we usually dine at nearby Legal Seafoods. Owing to my work with Newfoundland fishermen and sealers, I informed the group of 35 marine scientists that I would not eat at Legal Seafoods. A DFO scientist from New Brunswick also declined to eat there.

It was not my intention to force the issue, as some scientists at the meeting might themselves not support the seal hunt. Yet, by the end of the day, I decided to send a note to the CEO of Legal Seafoods, Roger Berkowitz, with the diners. It was just a small personal protest in an overwhelming sea of politically-correctness.

To my surprise, just before the dinner break the group decided not to eat at Legal Seafoods. Dr. Scott Kraus, Vice President of Research at the New England Aquarium, Dr. Lew Incze, Director of the Gulf of Maine Census of Marine Life, and I walked to Legal Seafoods and cancelled our reservation at a very long and impressively set table.

We informed the maitre d' of our concerns over the boycott of Canadian

fish. He tried to explain unconvincingly that Legal Seafoods would not be buying much Canadian fish at this time of year (April) anyway. That seemed beside the point. I asked that he convey our concerns to Mr. Berkowitz. After that I had to buy beers for Scott and Lew before we dined at another waterfront restaurant.

In April, I wrote formally to Mr. Berkowitz about these concerns. I suggested that he visit some Newfoundland fishing communities to try to gain a better perspective on sustainable fisheries and communities, and a sustainable seal hunt. As of yet, he has not replied.

If you venture to the USA and want to enjoy excellent seafood dining, there are many options. If you also want to support Canadian fishing communities, tell the maitre d' at Legal Seafoods why you've chosen not to eat there. He might not care, but you'll feel better, and I'll buy you a beer.

If you're not planning on visiting the USA, but still might want to support Canadian fishers and sealers, here's the man to contact: Mr. Roger Berkowitz, President & CEO, Legal Seafoods, 26 Square Plaza, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 USA. Maybe he'll reply to your letter?

Long-liner sinking and oil spill near Funk Island

On 17 June, the long-liner *Bold Wind II* began taking on water before dawn. The crew abandoned ship and was picked up by another long-liner. The disabled vessel continued taking on water before it sank in the late afternoon sank 1.5 nautical miles east of Funk Island. No efforts were made or required by coast guard to attempt to pump out or tow the vessel away from this highly sensitive marine area. There appeared to be ample time to do so?

The situation now is that the sunken *Bold Wind II* is leaking diesel fuel. Funk Island is home to about 70 % of the NW Atlantic populations of common murre. These birds are extremely vulnerable to marine oil pollution because they spend so much time on the water. To make matters worse, murre are flightless after breeding when they molt their wing feathers. At this time, hundreds of thousands of flightless murre chicks on Funk Island go to sea.

Funk Island has the densest concentration of the seabirds most vulnerable to oil in the world. The situation is being monitored very sporadically by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division. I will update this situation as it unfolds.

Birds in the area and around the province

Tony Power has noted 6 pairs of northern fulmars nesting again at Cape St. Mary's. Some murrelets are having a difficult time being flushed from cliffs by an immature bald eagle. When the murrelets fly off, herring gulls are quick to exploit the situation and steal eggs. Cape naturalist Jason McGrath observed a laughing gull in St. Brides in June, and Kyrin Power observed a male brown-headed cowbird on the helicopter pad.

An adult little blue heron was at Frenchman's Cove on the Burin Peninsula (Jim Cluett). Wildlife officers Bill Greene and Eric Davis observed a Caspian tern by Macgregor Pond near Howley on 9 June (Tina Leonard).

While at Stephenville Crossing, Bruce Mactavish attracted 2 excited pairs of willets. One pair was tending 4 downy chicks, and the other pair may have had chicks also. Willets were formerly only known to nest on Sandy Point Island in Newfoundland. A wayward willet was seen at Mistaken Point by Julie Cappleman.

A belted kingfisher sitting on a wire on Oliver's Pond Road almost "caused" Sarah Hansen to drive off the road. On an unrelated driving note, Kathryn Welbourn made eye-contact with a lynx in the early morning by Windsor Lake!

Western Reef Heron

The rarest bird currently visiting Newfoundland is a North Africa western reef heron that showed up at Stephenville Crossing in June. This is a first record for Canada. The heron has been hanging out with an also rare European little egret. The heron and egret were recently observed in the midst of a dense ring-billed gull colony, where they were apparently seeking refuge from the aggressive terns nesting nearby (Bruce Mactavish).

Newfoundland red crossbills

About 30 - 40 red crossbill including 3 juveniles are feeding on white spruce cones and on sunflower seeds at Lester Rees's feeder in Whitbourne. These large-billed Newfoundland red crossbills have very rare in recent decades and considered to be endangered. They have been in the immediate area for some time, perhaps not moving away from a reliable supply of food (Lester Rees, Greg Stroud, John Gosse).

New whale book

Whale release expert and local resident, Wayne Ledwell, has written a new book, “Whales and Dolphins of Newfoundland and Labrador.” Wayne who “cut his teeth” in this work with Jon Lien has been leading the charge on whale releases and strandings for some time now. This attractive and useful guide is published by Boulder Publications of Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s. At \$19.95, it’s a bargain for personal use and gifts (boulder@nl.rogers.com)

Questions? Sightings? Comments?

Contact – mont@mun.ca.

Keep looking.