

Spring is for the birds

By: Debbie Ristimaki

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PHOTO BY DEBBIE RISTIMAKI

A black-capped chickadee gets friendly at Assiniboine Park.

I know that there are those who would disagree with me but I think that we are privileged to live within such close proximity to nature. There is no shortage of parks and green spaces in Winnipeg where there is an abundance of wildlife.

White-tailed deer and birds definitely top the list.

Deer can be found in parks and neighbourhoods across the city, including Bridgwater Forest. Outside of rutting season, they are relatively docile when you maintain your distance.

They also happen to be quite photogenic and I have been lucky enough to capture a few good photos. If you are like me and enjoy exploring with a camera in hand, there is a Facebook group - Manitoba Bird and Wildlife Photography - where members share their wildlife photos and where they were taken. I have discovered some new areas to explore thanks to them.

Then there are the birds - beginning with those that can often be found in our own back yard. This winter, the regular visitors have included:

- black-capped chickadees;
- nuthatches;
- sparrows;
- hairy woodpeckers;
- downy woodpeckers;
- blue jays.

Even a northern flicker stopped by one afternoon.

I have also spotted pileated woodpeckers in St. Vital Park, Assiniboine Park and even at the Charleswood Dog Park. The prettiest of them all are the wild turkeys in nearby St. Norbert. I'm just kidding about their good looks but you have to admit that they are fascinating creatures.

Hopefully it won't be too long before the robins, American goldfinches, house finches, and red-winged blackbirds find their way back. The funny thing is that the red-winged blackbirds were more of nuisance bird in Montreal - similar to the magpies here - yet now I look forward to seeing them.

And my list doesn't even include those 'passing through' on their migration.

It is like a revolving door. You never know who and how many are coming to dinner. So you always have to be prepared.

Our feeders are always filled with peanuts, both shelled and not, as well as a songbird mix and black oiled sunflower seeds. We also discovered a woodpecker favourite -

cranberry seed cylinders - which we pick up from Wild Birds Unlimited in Transcona. They can be found at www.winnipeg.wbu.com and on Facebook.

Whether it is because of the wildlife or the fresh air, time spent outdoors is good for the soul.

Debbie Ristimaki is a community correspondent for Bridgwater Forest.

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