



Nova Scotia

Birders scramble for rare sighting of Steller's sea eagle in small N.S. community

Species is native to eastern Asia but one lone 'vagrant' has been touring North America

Simon Smith · CBC News · Posted: Apr 16, 2022 4:00 AM CDT | Last Updated: April 16, 2022



While most members of its species migrate between Japan, South Korea, China and eastern Russia, 'Stella' has flown as far south as Texas and as far north as Gaspé, Que., since it presumably arrived in the continent through Alaska. (Ian Murray/Wallace River Photography)

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Dozens of birders flocked to a small Nova Scotian community last week to catch a glimpse of a rare sea eagle that has ventured far from its native range in eastern Asia.

The lone Steller's sea eagle, which has been nicknamed Stella by those following its movements, was seen near Pictou on April 1 then flew northwest a few days later to the Wallace Bay National Wildlife Area.

Last November, [a Steller's sea eagle was discovered by chance near Windsor, N.S.](#) Nova Scotia Bird Society president Diane LeBlanc said she believes that was Stella.



Phil Taylor, an Acadia University ornithologist was the first to identify the Steller's eagle in Nova Scotia last November. (Jason Dain)

"There's no doubt in anyone's mind that I know of that this is the same bird," LeBlanc said. "Partly because it does have this distinct group of white feathers on one of its wings."

LeBlanc said that the chances of there being more than one Steller's sea eagle on the East Coast of North America are "beyond astronomical."

Local residents concerned

LeBlanc said she heard from two residents of the area about how some birders were parking on the road to catch a glimpse of the bird. But, as she understands, they were doing so legally and safely. She said one birder flew from Toronto to see Stella only to miss their opportunity.

"Typically when birders arrive and they're really excited to see a bird, they might be a little bit anxious," she said.

"But when I talked to people who had been there, they said that they didn't feel that there was any safety concerns themselves."



Wildlife photographer Ian Murray said he saw the Steller's sea eagle on April 3, 2022, at the Wallace Bay National Wildlife area. (Ian Murray/Wallace River Photography)

She said birders frequent wildlife areas and, in this instance, they were being led by a local resident who was the first to see the bird in the area. LeBlanc added that she encourages birders to interact with small communities like Wallace Bay in a respectful way.

Another sighting Tuesday

Wildlife photographer Ian Murray spotted the eagle again Tuesday while driving around near Northport, N.S., on the Northumberland Strait near the New Brunswick border. Murray initially set out that day looking for foxes and bears to photograph.

"It was kind of a quiet day so I just figured I'd go out looking for something interesting," Murray said. "Instead of that, I found this guy. So that's even better."

When Murray got home, he quickly shared the photos to the Facebook community that was created to track Stella's whereabouts in Canada, where members also share co-ordinates of sightings and other information about Steller's eagles.

LeBlanc said the bird, whose sex has not been determined, is likely mimicking its typical migratory path, [which takes it north in the summer and south in the winter.](#)

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