

## **ROUTE 273, Nipissing Route, Gary, Connie and Rachel Sturge**

*By Gary Sturge*

April 12<sup>th</sup> was a decent day and the evening was clear and 5 C, not a bad start. Daughter Doctor Rachel accompanied us as our secret weapon, and so it started.

**Stop 1** at the end of South River Road near Nipissing. To set the stage, you need to know that I'm as deaf as a post - an owl has to land in a nearby tree and throw a rock at me to get my attention before I hear it. Con is our ears and she is pretty darn good, but Rachel is like a directional microphone. She was the first to hear a pair of dueting Barred Owls (not sure what they were singing); Con was next to hear them; and finally when they flew out to the car (they threw rocks) I heard them. Score 2.

**Stop 2.** Just peepers. (Incidentally, this was about the only place we heard any number of them on both routes.)

**Stop 3.** Right off there was action (at least for the 2 that could hear). Two dueting Barreds made their way towards us. Once they flew out and over us, I heard them too. All the noise started up a 3<sup>rd</sup> Barred from afar who was coming to meet everyone, but this just upset the female already with us. She got very agitated and sounded angry (maybe an old girlfriend of her partner?). This was a good time to leave for the next stop. Score 5.

**Stop 4.** Halfway through the route, from way off, Dr. Super Ears heard a Barred, and because of the direction, it was classified as one of the previous pair and thus a repeater. Score kind of 5 ½, say 6.

**Stop 5.** No action initially until Old Stone Ears standing apart from the others, heard a WU, no not a WHO like Horton and later barking (not a dog), but the defensive call of the Great Horned Owl, verified by the Dr. Score 7. **(Editor's Note: For those WHO may not know, "WHO like Horton" refers to *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss.)**

**Stop 6.** Led us in, around and about, to Green Acres Road and there in the dark amongst the tall deciduous trees, we got nothing!

**Stop 7.** Likewise, though we did get a distant dog bark and a shooting star, but they don't count.

**Stop 8.** Virtually at the end of the road near the homes and cottages on McQuaby Lake we did again score, with all present hearing a pair of lovely dueters who came near but not into view. Score 9.

Now this route is a backtracker so you now have to turn around and run back to Wolfe Lake Road where the route continues and so we proceeded on.

**Stop 9.** Here in spite of the running torrent nearby, we finally pulled in a candidate Barred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> call. After thanking him or her, we moved off around Wolfe Lake and approached Alsace Road. Score 10.

**Stop 10.** Just past the swamp at the end of Wolfe Lake, we stopped and tiredly pulled out the boom box and started up. We were very satisfied, a very productive and enjoyable night, but one last Barred flew out to us on the second call to say thanks, good night and have a safe drive home...which we did. Score11

*WHAT A NIGHT!!* 10 Barred Owls and 1 Great Horned Owl.