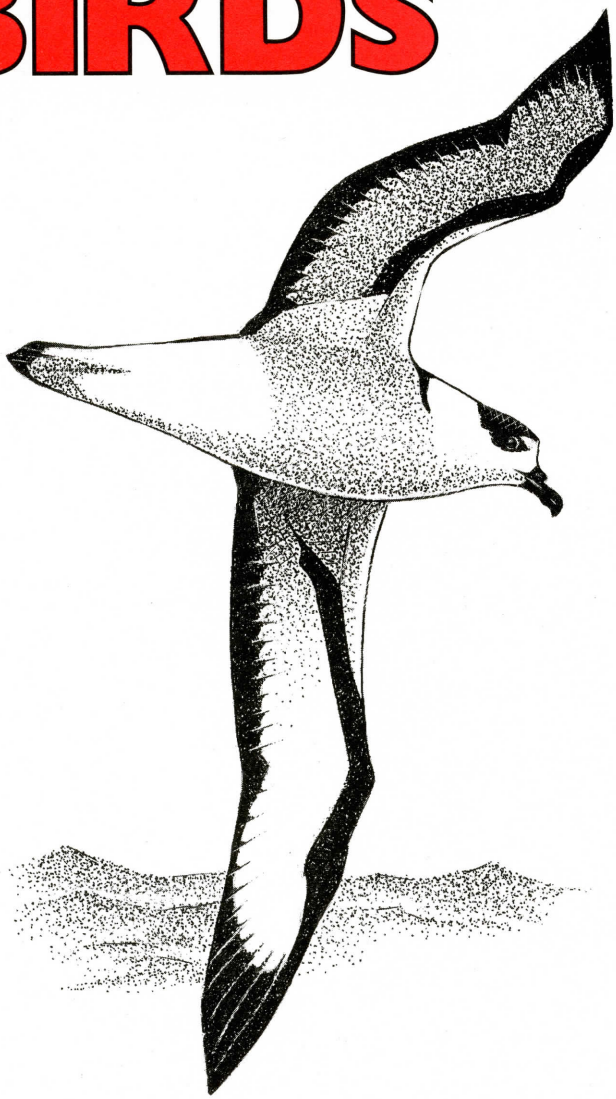
ONTARIO BIRDS



Journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists
Volume 16 Number 2 August 1998

Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever-growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), publishes a newsletter (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*), hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

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Ontario Birds

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The aim of *Ontario Birds* is to provide a vehicle for documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles and short notes on the status, distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in Ontario, as well as location guides to significant Ontario birdwatching areas, book reviews, and similar material of interest on Ontario birds.

Material submitted for publication should be on computer disc, or typewritten (double-spaced). Please follow style of this issue of *Ontario Birds*. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Submit items for publication to the Editors at the address noted above.

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Cover Illustration: Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata)*
by *Michael King*

ISSN 0822-3890

Letters to the Editors

Deformed Chickadee

On 12 November 1997, at my kitchen window bird feeder here at Mountain Chutes Camp, I noticed a Black-capped Chickadee with a difference. My feeder is filled with sunflower seeds, and the observation distance is three feet. This makes close inspection of feeding birds fairly easy.

This chickadee was twice the size of the average, and the beige underside was noticeably darker. His overall shape was more round and gave the appearance of having no neck. The most surprising difference though was the upper part of his bill, which was three times the length of the average chickadee's and downward curving. This distinctive bill was two-toned: light coloured on one side and dark on the other. The lower part of the bill was also longer than average, although it was only half the length of the upper part of the bill.

The attitude and habits of this bird were also unusual. He would land in this feeder and remain anywhere from five to 15 minutes at a time, pacing up and down the length of the feeder looking for seeds that were already removed from the shell. Several times he was noted checking the window ledge for dead flies. When he spied a seed he liked, he would tilt his head sideways, then lower his beak downward in order to pick up the seed using his lower mandible. He would eat this seed and resume pacing as he looked for more.

His attitude toward other chickadees was noticeably aggressive. He would rush at the other smaller birds as they landed in his feeder, and scare them off. For all these reasons, we named him "Snaggletooth". We started looking for him daily, making observations on his habits and differences. Even though he appeared to be a mutant, his disability had not affected his ability to survive and thrive. Several times each day, he would arrive at our feeder. His last visit was on 22 December. We will be watching for him to return.

Barry Kinch
Kenabeek, Ontario

Ron Tozer comments:
Although very unusual, many types of deformity due to accidents, dis-

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Barry Kinch
Kenabeek, Ontario

Ron Tozer comments:
Although very unusual, many types of deformity due to accidents, dis-

eases, physiological disorders, and genetic defects have been recorded in wild birds (Terres 1982). A well known example involves deformed bills in nestling Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) on the Great Lakes, apparently caused by PCB contamination (Weseloh and Collier 1995).

However, Snaggletooth's deformed bill probably resulted from injury or genetic defect. In birds such as the chickadee, the tip of the bill normally wears down with use, and is renewed by continuous growth in that area (Terres 1982). This wearing down process does not occur when the upper and lower mandibles are out of line, and unchecked growth of one or both mandibles may result. Bill deformities are very infrequently observed in the wild, probably due to the rarity of their occurrence and the increased mortality among affected birds. Hicks (1934) found only 38 individuals with bill deformities among the 10,000 European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) which he examined for abnormalities.

Snaggletooth's reported larger size may also have been due to a deformity. Hicks (1934) found seven oversize or "giant" males among his ten thousand starlings, that were at least an inch longer overall than the average. However, this chickadee's round shape, "no neck" posture, and apparently larger size are also quite consistent with the appearance of chickadees when they fluff their feathers to increase their layer of insulation to stay warm (Smith 1991). Maintaining body temperature would be a continuous problem for a likely weakened, malnourished individual with a deformed bill, which would interfere with normal feeding.

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House Finch Trends

I read with great interest Ron Tozer's House Finch article (*Ontario Birds* 15: 89-94). There is a fair amount of information now on House Finch disease on a web site of Cornell University (www.birds.cornell.edu/HOFI/HOFIdisease.htm), and a crash in the House Finch population was predicted some time ago, before it actually happened. Indeed, at my own feeder in Oakville, the population crashed and I only saw one male last winter. Ron Tozer's data do not include the 1997 CBC, but the decline continued in southern

Ontario, certainly for the South Peel Naturalists' Club area between Toronto and Hamilton. We recorded the lowest number since 1989.

However, the article puts forth data for central Ontario to show that the crash has not yet occurred in this region. House Finches are still expanding their range northward and have not been in central Ontario for very many years. Tables 2 and 4 show data on House Finches from CBCs on Georgian Bay and on the Canadian Shield for the period of 1988-1996. I have published data from the Parry Sound CBCs for 1992-1993 and unpublished data for the period of 1994-1997 (J. Gardner, pers. comm.) that was not included in these tables. I studied it to see if it fits Tozer's comments.

Year	#	Party Hours	# per 10 Party-hrs
1992	25	45	6
1993	12	51	2
1994	103	57	18
1995	2	97?	<1?
1996	19	27	7
1997	0	32	0

The results show a peak in 1994 as is shown for southern Ontario data, but then numbers decrease below the 1992 level as if the population had crashed. In 1997, no House Finches were found in the country or the towns, including Parry Sound, and 37 feeder-watchers reported data.

While the methodology of comparing all data by using the number of House Finches observed per 10 party-hours is a scientifically correct approach, it does not apply to the Parry Sound data. House Finches in this part of Ontario are showing up on CBCs at feeders and not in the country. The party-hours published in the CBCs include, by definition, only the party-hours by field observers and exclude hours by feeder observers. Taking the peak year of 1994 as an example, 45 feeder-watchers reported 88 House Finches and 14 parties in the field reported 15 House Finches (probably mostly at feeders). Dividing the total number of House Finches by the party-hours in the field badly skews the data. This method can only be properly applied where there are small numbers of feeder-watchers reporting and where a feeder species is counted by observers in the field. In 1995, 42 feeder-watchers reported two House Finches and 14 parties in the field reported **none**. (The 97 hours reported above include the many hours of the feeder-watchers, since this was a major effort in the count.) Therefore, why divide by the hours in the field? The final published CBC data used by Tozer do not show the breakdown of how many House Finches were counted by feeder-watchers and how many by field observers. Consequently, no adjustments can be made in the analysis for comparison purposes. Having said this, I have been assured by Ron Tozer (pers.

comm.) that relatively few CBCs have a significant number of feeders reporting to skew the data.

The statement made in the article that "as with the Georgian Bay and Ottawa River areas, the post-1994 decline is not shown in these data from the Shield", does not seem to apply to the Parry Sound data. Table 4 does show a peak for 1994 in the total number of House Finches reported on the Canadian Shield (without dividing by party-hours). I recognize that consistency in the coverage of the fairly new Parry Sound CBC may be poorer than other long established count areas for the purposes of this type of statistical analysis. Nevertheless, the pattern of the rise and fall of the House Finch is still evident for this area of central Ontario. It will be interesting to see the 1997 data for Georgian Bay and the Canadian Shield. It is curious that not only did 37 feeder-watchers in Parry Sound not report any House Finches in 1997, but they did not report a single House Sparrow either.

The article discussed another interesting point about House Finches. The western (native) population is sedentary while the eastern House Finch population is partially migratory. I have noticed this as they have been spreading northward to include my feeder in Carling Township, north of Parry Sound. I first recorded them from 15 April to 8 May 1994 during spring migration. The next three years followed the same pattern: 21 April to 15 May 1995, 19 to 22 April 1996, and only one single male on 23 May 1997. I had no summer or fall sightings. This is following the pattern of a collapse in Shield country now, as I observed quite a few migrating in 1994, the peak year elsewhere shown by the Christmas counts; then the numbers dropped off to the present single sighting.

Jean Niskanen
Oakville, Ontario

Ron Tozer comments:
Jean Niskanen identifies several important issues in her letter, which would require another article to fully address! I agree that the post-1994 decline in House Finch numbers is detectable on some Georgian Bay and Canadian Shield CBCs, but other counts there actually showed apparent increases during that period (e.g., Meaford, Mindemoya and Sharbot Lake). My point in the article was that the decline was more dramatic and consistent across southern Ontario. The Parry Sound CBC has not been an official Audubon count, and so the results were not available to me. However, it does appear to reflect the post-1994 decline in House Finches, as noted by Jean.

Researchers have recognized that "CBC results must be normalized to be meaningful indicators of winter bird population sizes", and that "party-hours seems to be the

best and most widely accepted factor for CBC standardization" (Bock and Root 1981). Observer effort must be factored in when comparing results of CBCs. For this reason, both Kozlovic (1994) and I utilized "birds per 10 party-hours" in our analyses of the House Finch.

However, many concerns have been expressed by researchers concerning the reliability of CBC results for monitoring bird populations (see Arbib 1981, Bock and Root 1981, Butcher and McCulloch 1990, Butcher et al. 1990, Dunn 1995, Peterson 1995). Birds that concentrate at feeders (such as the House Finch) are one of the most significant sources of bias in CBC data. Dunn (1995) reported that high levels of feeder-watching effort can inflate CBC totals "to over 67% more than would be the case with no feeder-watching" for species like the House Finch. An effective solution to this problem would be for feeder-watcher counts and hours to be recorded separately from those of field observers (Arbib 1981, Dunn 1995). However, there has been concern that more complicated reporting procedures might reduce participation among birders primarily interested in the fun and competition of CBCs (Bock and Root 1981). In any case, feeder and field results continue to be combined in published CBC totals.

Despite my earlier contrary assurances to Jean Niskanen, feeder-watcher participation in Ontario CBCs may be a significant source of bias in results for species like the House Finch. A cursory analysis of the 1996 results published in *National Audubon Society Field Notes* 51(2) for the 50 southern Ontario counts utilized in my article showed: three counts not reporting, 14 counts reporting no feeder-watcher participation, and 33 counts reporting feeder-watchers. The latter averaged 11 feeder-watchers (ranging from 1 to 39) and 26 hours of observing feeders (a range from 1 to 165 hours). The North Bay CBC had 222 feeder-watchers reporting 460 hours of observation in 1996! The apparently growing tendency to include feeder observations in CBC results has great potential to distort the data for research purposes, under current reporting procedures.

Even given the problems with interpreting CBC data, I think Ontario counts do reflect a real and large post-1994 decline in the House Finch population, as was also shown in Project FeederWatch results (Deschamps 1997). I will be continuing to monitor House Finch population trends in Ontario, and will report these in *Ontario Birds*. The introduced eastern House Finch population has now spread west to contact the native western population, and House Finches exhibiting symptoms of the eye disease have been reported from British Columbia (D'hondt 1998). The story is far from over!

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PUBLICATION NOTICE

A Birder's Guide to the Bahama Islands. 1998. By *Anthony W. White.* ABA/Lane Birdfinding Guide. American Birding Association, Inc. Wire-o binding, 320 pages, 8 colour plates, line drawings. $26.95 American, plus postage and handling. Available from ABA Sales, Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A. 80934-6599. Phone orders (have your credit card ready) toll free to (800) 634-7736, or fax orders toll free to (800) 590-2473, or e-mail: abasales@abasales.com

This is the latest in ABA's Birdfinding Guide Series, and the first to treat a region off the continent. It covers all the major Bahama Islands, including the popular Turks and Caicos. Tony White provides detailed descriptions and maps to over 150 birding sites. The guide contains a checklist that lists the islands where particular species are found, the seasons they are present, and the level of difficulty in finding them. A very useful Annotated List of Specialties discusses the rare and endemic species, including field-identifiable Bahamian subspecies and morphs. The guide also includes concise information on getting there and getting around on the islands, history, climate, precautions, other observable wildlife, and numerous sections on recommended readings.

After studying this wonderful guide, I'm now planning my first birding trip to the Bahama Islands for next March, a fitting end to another great Canadian winter! *Ron Pittaway*

Articles

Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1997

Robert Z. Dobos

Introduction

This is the 16th annual report of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The members of the Committee in 1997 were Margaret Bain, David Brewer, Peter Burke, Robert Dobos (non-voting Secretary), Nick Escott, Richard Knapton, Donald Sutherland and Ron Tozer (Chairperson). Ross James served as Museum Liaison (non-voting) to the OBRC.

The number of reports received and reviewed by the Committee was substantially higher in 1997 than the previous year. Of the 182 records reviewed, 85 percent were accepted, which is within the range of past years. The Ontario bird checklist continues to increase steadily, with the acceptance and addition of three new species: Greater Shearwater (south), Plumbeous Vireo (south) and Baird's Sparrow (north). The official Ontario list now stands at 470 species. Interest in recognizable forms is also on the rise amongst Ontario birders, as a number of reports in this category were reviewed, resulting in the acceptance of two new subspecies groups for Ontario, "Palearctic" Dunlin and "Gray-headed" Junco. No new breeding species for the province were accepted in 1997.

OBRC records are archived at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Researchers and other interested persons may examine filed reports and Committee decisions at the ROM by appointment. Please contact Brad Millen, Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6, or call 416-586-5519.

Listing of Records

The format of this report follows that used in last year's annual report (Dobos 1997). Accepted records are listed by their English and scientific names following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list (1983) and its supplements to date. Following the names, a binomial numbering system appears. The first number indicates the total number of accepted records (by the OBRC) prior to 1 January 1982 (the formation of the OBRC); the second is the total number of accepted records from

1982 to 1997 (including those listed in this report). An asterisk in place of the first number indicates that documentation was not required for the occurrence of these species prior to 1982. Date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, sex, plumage, and location(s) are provided when known. Counties, Districts and Regional Municipalities are shown in italics. The plumage terminology used here follows the Humphrey and Parkes (1959) system (see Pittaway 1995a). All contributors of documentation are listed. Contributors who were known to be the finders of the bird are underlined. Finders who did not submit a report are also listed, when known.

Every effort has been made to verify information published regarding a record; however, it is possible that some inaccuracies may still exist. We would welcome any corrections or updates to any such records. Where dates or other details listed here differ from those quoted in other published sources (for example, *Birders Journal* or *Field Notes*) we have used the most accurate available information.

All records that were not accepted because of uncertain identification or origin are listed separately. Contributors of all "not accepted" reports receive a letter from the Chairperson explaining the reasons for the decision, along with copies of the comments of the voting members. These reports are also kept on permanent file at the ROM. A "not accepted" record can be reconsidered by the OBRC if new evidence is submitted to the Committee for review.

Deferred Records

The OBRC has formerly used the "Deferred" category for records where the identification was accepted but wild status was uncertain. This year, the Committee has deferred several records on a different basis, namely where identification criteria are not fully understood. These are explained below.

The OBRC has decided to defer any further decisions on reports of Bullock's Orioles for Ontario. Following the AOU decision to re-split Northern Oriole into Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles (AOU 1995), there has been considerable discussion and some disagreement recently amongst experts across North America regarding identification criteria for separating females and first basic plumaged birds of these two species. Much of this discussion occurred over the Internet on the National Birding Hotline Cooperative's "ID Frontiers Chat Line" following the description and posting of photographs of possible female type Bullock's Orioles in the northeastern United States during late fall. It is expected that detailed identification information for separating these species will be published in the near future (Lee and Birch 1998;

Jaramillo and Burke, *in press*).

During 1997, an historical report of Bullock's Oriole was under review by the Committee, and reports of two recent sightings in 1997 were also received. These, and any subsequently received reports, are deferred for the time being. The previously accepted Bullock's Oriole records for Ontario (see Dobos 1997) may also need to be reconsidered.

A report of a "tuftless" Tufted Duck was also under review, with the decision to defer the record pending availability of more information on hybrid *Aythya* ducks. Once again, the ID Frontiers Internet site provided a useful forum for discussion of identification pitfalls involving possible hybrid Tufted Ducks and other *Aythya* spp., and a publication on this topic is expected in the near future. This record will be reconsidered at that time.

AOU Checklist

In 1997, the AOU published its forty-first supplement to the North American bird checklist (AOU 1997), which resulted in many changes to the Ontario checklist, mostly related to sequences of families, genera and species, as well as a number of taxonomic revisions at the species level and changes to scientific names. This report incorporates those changes to the best of our knowledge. It is expected that a totally revised AOU checklist will be published in 1998 which will update all of the changes since the last publication in 1983. At that point, the OBRC will republish the Ontario checklist in *Ontario Birds* in order to reflect the most current taxonomy, nomenclature and sequencing. Only the major revisions (taxonomic splits, nomenclature) from the forty-first supplement affecting the Ontario checklist are described here.

Marbled Murrelet has been split into Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) and Long-billed Murrelet (*B. perdix*). The single Ontario record pertains to *B. perdix* (Bain 1994); as a result, Marbled Murrelet is changed to Long-billed Murrelet on the Ontario list.

Solitary Vireo has been split into Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Cassin's Vireo (*V. cassinii*) and Plumbeous Vireo (*V. plumbeus*). The commonly occurring form in Ontario is the Blue-headed Vireo, which replaces Solitary on the Ontario checklist. As mentioned above, a recently accepted record listed in this report adds Plumbeous Vireo to the Ontario checklist.

Scientific name changes are as follows: Spruce Grouse becomes *Falcipennis canadensis*; American Golden-Plover reverts to *Pluvialis dominica*; Burrowing Owl becomes *Athene cunicularia*; Olive-sided Flycatcher becomes *Contopus cooperi*; Cliff Swallow becomes

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota; Cave Swallow becomes *Petrochelidon fulva*; Black-capped Chickadee becomes *Poecile atricapillus*; Carolina Chickadee becomes *Poecile carolinensis*; Boreal Chickadee becomes *Poecile hudsonicus*; Tufted Titmouse becomes *Baeolophus bicolor.*

Changes to the Review List

At the OBRC policy meeting in October 1997, a number of changes to the Review List for both southern and northern Ontario were discussed and passed, all of which involved removals from the list. The criterion used for delisting was 25 or more published records in southern Ontario during a five year period. For northern Ontario (which requires a different criterion due to scarcity of observers), changes were made on a more *ad hoc* basis. The changes to the Review List are as follows: Snowy Egret - remove for south; Greater White-fronted Goose - remove for south; Trumpeter Swan - remove for south; Western Kingbird - remove for both south and north; Varied Thrush - remove for north; Northern Cardinal - remove for north; and Harris's Sparrow - remove for south. All of these changes came into effect starting 1 January 1998.

Consideration was also given to a number of recognizable forms included on the Review List. It was decided to remove "Lawrence's" Warbler from the list, primarily since it is a hybrid form. It was also decided to remove "Appalachian" Black-throated Blue Warbler from the list, based on expert opinion received from Jon L. Dunn (pers. comm.) that this form is in fact very difficult or impossible to determine with certainty in the field, without a specimen in hand. There are no verified records from Ontario, and inclusion on the Review List was felt to be misleading.

Acknowledgements

The OBRC would like to thank the many observers who submitted reports, photographs, sketches, videos and specimens of rare birds during 1997. We are grateful to a number of people, some outside Ontario, who provided their expert opinion on several records, including the following: Tony Leukering of Colorado and James Rising of Toronto for comments on "White-winged" Junco; Alvaro Jaramillo of California for comments on Bullock's Oriole; Jon L. Dunn of Ohio and Jon McCracken of Port Rowan for comments on "Traill's" Flycatcher; and Steve Russell of Arizona for comments on *Selasphorus* hummingbird. The following people are also thanked either for obtaining and forwarding reports from others, or assisting the Committee in other ways: Robert Andrle, Margaret Bain, Peter Chapman, Barbara Charlton, Allen Chartier, Glenn Coady, Bob Curry,

Willie D'Anna, Bruce Di Labio, Dan Dufour, Nick Escott, Shawn Giilck, Jean Iron, Barry Kent MacKay, John Lemon, Sheldon McGregor, Kevin McLaughlin, Erwin Meissner, John Miles, Martin Parker, Ron Pittaway, Paul Pratt, Paul Prior, Ron Ridout, Kayo Roy, Doug Sadler, Roger Simms, Roy Smith, Marvin Smout, Mike Street, Ron Tozer, and Alan Wormington.

I would also like to thank the other 1997 OBRC members for their assistance and cooperation throughout the past year, and for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this report.

Accepted Records

Yellow-billed Loon *Gavia adamsii* (2/1)

1997 – one, juvenal, 2-7 January, Point Abino, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, Alan Wormington, William C. D'Anna, Gordon Bellerby, Kayo J. Roy, Glenn Coady, Dominic F. Sherony, Peter S. Burke, found by John Lamey) - photos on file.

This cooperative bird provided the third accepted record for Ontario, the previous records involving birds at Grimsby, *Niagara*, on 4 May 1967 (James 1983), and at Shirley's Bay, *Ottawa-Carleton*, on 19 May 1980 (Wormington and Curry 1990).

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (0/10)

1996 – one, basic, 7-8 October, Heron Bay, *Thunder Bay*, (Keith D. Wade) - photo on file.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (3/6)

1997 – one, definitive basic, light morph, male, *F.g. glacialis* (found dead, fresh), 11 December, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth*, (John L. Olmsted, Robert Z. Dobos) - photos on file, specimen (skin) in ROM.

This bird was found dead washed up on the beach at the western end of Lake Ontario on the day following a strong easterly gale. It was determined to be of the nominate subspecies *glacialis*, which breeds in eastern Greenland and frequently wanders off the coasts of Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia (Godfrey 1986), an indication that this bird likely arrived on the Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence River.

Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* (3/21)

1996 – one, 8 September, Port Colborne, *Niagara* (Alan Wormington).
– three, 8 September, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John Lamey, also found by John L. Olmsted).
– one, 12 September, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (William C. D'Anna).
– one, definitive basic, male (found dead, partly decomposed), 12 September, Windmill Point, *Niagara* (John L. Olmsted, Robert Stamp) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159637).

- one, definitive basic, female (found dead, fresh), 13 September, Long Point Provincial Park, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior, found by David C. Bostock, Chris J. Dunn) - specimen (skin) in Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO), photo on file.
- one, definitive basic, female (found dead, partly decomposed), 14 September, Crescent Beach, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159639).
- one, 14 September, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (William C. D'Anna).
- one, 15 September, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (William C. D'Anna).
- one, 15 September, Thunder Bay, *Niagara* (Robert Curry).
- one, definitive basic, female (found dead, partly decomposed), 15 September, Thunder Bay, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, Barry D. Jones, John L. Olmsted) - specimen in ROM (#159638).
- one (found dead), 15 September, Pleasant Beach, *Niagara* (Bruce M. Di Labio, found by Stephen T. Pike) - specimen in Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN), photos on file.
- one, 16 September, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).
- one, 16 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (William Wilson).
- one, 17 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos, also found by Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted).
- one, definitive basic, male (found dead, fresh), 18 September, Confederation Park, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (John L. Olmsted, Wilfred Yusek, Robert Curry) - specimen (skin) in ROM (#159640), photo on file.
- one (found dead, badly decomposed), 21 September, Pleasant Beach, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted, Wilfred Yusek) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159644).
- one (found dead, badly decomposed), 21 September, Pleasant Beach, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted, Wilfred Yusek) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159645).
- one (found dead, badly decomposed), 21 September, Empire Beach, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted, Wilfred Yusek) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159647).
- one (found dead, badly decomposed), 21 September, Lorraine, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted, Wilfred Yusek) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159643).
- one (found dead), 28 September, Waverly Beach, *Niagara* (Robert Curry, John L. Olmsted) - specimen (skeleton) in ROM (#159641).
- one (found dead, badly decomposed), 30 September, Confederation Park, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos, found by Dennis Lewington, Gwen Lewington) - specimen in ROM, photos on file.

1955 - one (found dead, emaciated), 21 August, Morgan's Point, *Niagara* (Alice Ulrich) - specimen (fluid preserved) in ROM (#76892).

1893 - one, male (found dead), 30 October, Toronto Island, *Toronto* (George Pierce) - specimen (skin) in ROM (#34256).
- one (found dead), 1893 (date unknown), Oakville, *Halton* (H.J. Baker) - specimen (skin, skeleton) in ROM (#34255).

The 1996 birds were displaced from the Atlantic Ocean by Hurricane Fran, which passed through the lower Great Lakes area on 7-8 September (Curry 1996). The passage of this hurricane resulted in what can be considered as one of the most remarkable ornithological events ever recorded in Ontario. For personal accounts of the original sightings of the petrels, see Curry and Olmsted (1996) and Lamey (1996). Curry (1996) summarized in detail all of the known sightings and dead birds found on the Great Lakes, including Black- capped Petrels and other species which were likely the result of

Hurricane Fran (see Wormington [1997a] for corrections to this article). Not all of the occurrences listed there have been dealt with by the OBRC to date, and readers are encouraged to submit additional documentation for any sightings that are not included above in order to provide a more complete record of this event. All sightings from different locations on separate days, and each specimen found, are considered here to pertain to separate records, although in reality some of the sightings may have involved the same individuals as well as some of the birds found dead. However, any duplication would be offset by the certainty that not all of the birds which reached Lakes Erie and Ontario (and the certainty that all of these birds eventually perished) would have been subsequently found. It is impossible to know for certain how many petrels were actually in Ontario following Fran, but the 21 records listed above could be considered to be a minimum at best. For a more complete picture of the effects of the 1996 hurricane season on birds along the entire eastern seaboard, see Brinkley *et al.* (1997).

The OBRC also reviewed the three previous historical records of Black-capped Petrel for Ontario, all involving specimens in the collection at the ROM. The 1955 record followed the passage of Hurricane Connie (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965). Accounts of the two specimens from 1893 appear in Brown (1894) and Fleming (1906).

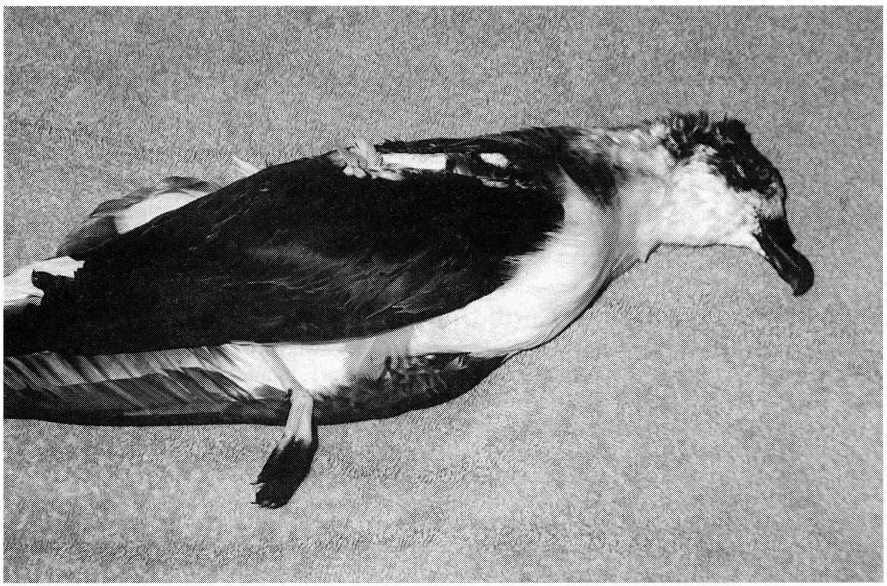

Figure 1: Black-capped Petrel found dead at Confederation Park, *Hamilton-Wentworth,* on 18 September 1996. Photo by *Robert Curry*.

Greater Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* (0/1)

1997 – one, male (found in weakened condition, died later in captivity), 20 August, Toronto, *Toronto* (Paloma Plante, Wendy Hunter, collector unknown) - specimen (skin) in ROM (#159988).

This is the first record for Ontario. The bird was found in a weakened condition by a person who was walking along the Toronto waterfront. It was taken to the Toronto Humane Society for rehabilitation, but unfortunately did not survive (MacKay 1997). A detailed account of this occurrence will appear in a future issue of *Ontario Birds* (Brewer *et al.*, *in prep.*).

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (0/1)

1996 – three, 10 September, Waverly Beach, *Niagara* (William G. Lindley, also found by Glenn Coady, Alan W. McTavish).

These birds were also the result of Hurricane Fran. Additional observations of this species and unidentified storm-petrels at Fort Erie are listed by Curry (1996), but documentation has not been submitted to the OBRC to date. These were the only inland occurrences of storm-petrels away from Fran's land-fall area in North Carolina and Virginia (Brinkley *et al.* 1997). There are two historical records for Ontario involving specimens: spring of 1897 at *Muskoka*, and 14 August 1955 at *Niagara* (James 1991). These records have not yet been considered by the OBRC.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (2/18)

1996 – one, juvenal, 10 November, Ottawa, *Ottawa-Carleton* (Michael Tate, also found by Bernie Ladouceur, Bev Scott, Gordon McLean, Maxine McLean, Colin Bowen, Pat Bowen, Tom Hanrahan).

– one, juvenal, 22 December, Burlington, *Halton*, and Toronto, *Toronto* (John L. Olmsted, Jerry DeMarco, Hendrik Hart, also found by Robert Stamp, Richard G. Snider).

The Ottawa bird was observed from both the Ontario and Quebec sides of the Ottawa River. The sightings on 22 December were four hours apart at Burlington and Toronto and are considered here to pertain to the same bird.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* North Only, Except from 1991-1997 (1/26)

1997 – one, definitive basic, 14 August, Pickering (Corner Marsh), *Durham* (Tom Cosburn).

1996 – one, 30 May - 5 June, Blenheim, *Kent* (Keith J. Burk, found by Ross Harris) - photos on file.

Sightings in southern Ontario after 31 December 1997 (or before 1 January 1991) no longer require documentation by the OBRC.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* (7/28)

1996 – one, 21 April, Peche Island Provincial Park, *Essex* (Kendall J. McKinney).

– one, definitive alternate, 3 May, Comber, *Essex* (Alan Cairns, also found by Jennifer Beale).

1991 – one, definitive alternate, 2-3 May, Mar, *Bruce* (Peter D. Middleton).

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* (2/19)

1996 – one, definitive alternate, 17-18 May, St. Clair National Wildlife Area, *Kent* (Carl J. Maiolani, Keith J. Burk, also found by Chris Maiolani).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* North Only (4/10)

1996 – one, first basic, 21 October, Moosonee, *Cochrane* (Daniel Byers, found by Sally Hester).
– three, first basic, 26 October, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (Roger M. Simms, found by Jim Keddie).

These records fall neatly within the narrow range for all northern Ontario records of 20 October - 8 November.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* (5/24)

1996 – one, alternate, 25 May, Toronto (Leslie Street Spit), *Toronto* (Larry A. Morse).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (2/26)

1997 – one, definitive alternate, 17-23 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Ronald J. Pittaway, Kevin A. McLaughlin, also found by Jean Iron).
– one, 15 June, Douro and Buckley's Lake, *Peterborough* (Peter S. Burke).
1993 – one, definitive basic, 8-12 October, Burgoyne, *Bruce* (Dean G. Newton, Shawn Giilck, found by Jim Westenberg) - photo on file.

Ibis species *Plegadis* sp. (3/26)

1997 – one, 16 May, Ruscom Shores Conservation Area, *Essex* (Alexander Bloss, also found by Jerry Ball).
– one, 17 September, Pickering (Corner Marsh), *Durham* (Tom Cosburn).
– five, 14 October, Long Point Provincial Park (Old Cut), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior).
1996 – one, 9 May, Erie Beach, *Kent* (Keith J. Burk, also found by James T. Burk, E.J. Burk).

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* (2/15)

1997 – one, definitive basic, 21-22 May, Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* (Don Craighead, Eric A. Machell) - photo on file.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* South Only, Before 1998 Only (2/50)

1997 – one, first basic, 12-21 January, Confederation Park, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Robert Curry, also found by William G. Lamond, George Naylor).
– 75, basic, 15 March, Komoka, *Middlesex* (Ian Platt, Gavin C. Platt).
– six, basic, 5 April, Lakefield, *Peterborough* (Peter S. Burke, also found by Kim Caldwell, Anne Anthony, L. Anthony, Vanessa Lasenby, Julia Monkman).
1995 – two, basic, 14 April, Lindenwood, *Grey* (David R. Tannahill).
– one, definitive basic, *frontalis*, 23-26 September and 9 October, Arkona, *Lambton* (Alfred H. Rider, found by Peter Rombouts and Elly Rombouts) - photo on file.
1994 – one, basic, 1 September, Holland Landing, *York* (James R. Macey).

The record of 75 birds on 15 March 1997 is the largest number observed in

southern Ontario to date. Subspecies determination is not stated for most records, except when supported by clear photographs. The OBRC no longer requires documentation for records effective 1 January 1998.

Figure 2: Black Vulture at Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward*, from 21-22 May 1997. Photo by *Don Craighead*.

Figure 3: Definitive basic Greater White-fronted Goose at Arkona, *Lambton*, from 23-26 September and 9 October 1995. Photo by *Alfred H. Rider*.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii* South Only (0/17)

1997 – one, definitive basic, white morph, 11-16 March, Etobicoke, *Toronto* (Terry Osborne, Glenn Coady, Craig S.A. McLauchlan, Frank Pinilla, found by Barbara Kalthoff) - photos on file.

– one, definitive basic, white morph, 15-17 and 26 March, Kingsville (15-16 and 26 March), and Hillman Marsh (17 March), *Essex* (Alan Wormington, John G. Keenleyside, found by David McNorton, Karen McNorton).

– one, definitive basic, white morph, 18 March, Fergus, *Wellington* (Richard Brown, also found by Robert Smalley, Sally Smalley).

– one, definitive basic, white morph, 2-3 April, Dundas, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Don Hough, Carole Wilkinson, Matthew Mills, H. Michael Street, John L. Olmsted) - photos on file.

– one, definitive basic, white morph, 5-9 April, King City (5-6 April) and Richmond Hill (6-9 April), *York* (James R. Macey, Norman C. Murr, Craig S.A. McLauchlan, Frank Pinilla, found by S. Cluff) - photos on file.

The occurrence of this species in the south continues to increase steadily, with all 17 accepted records occurring since 1991.

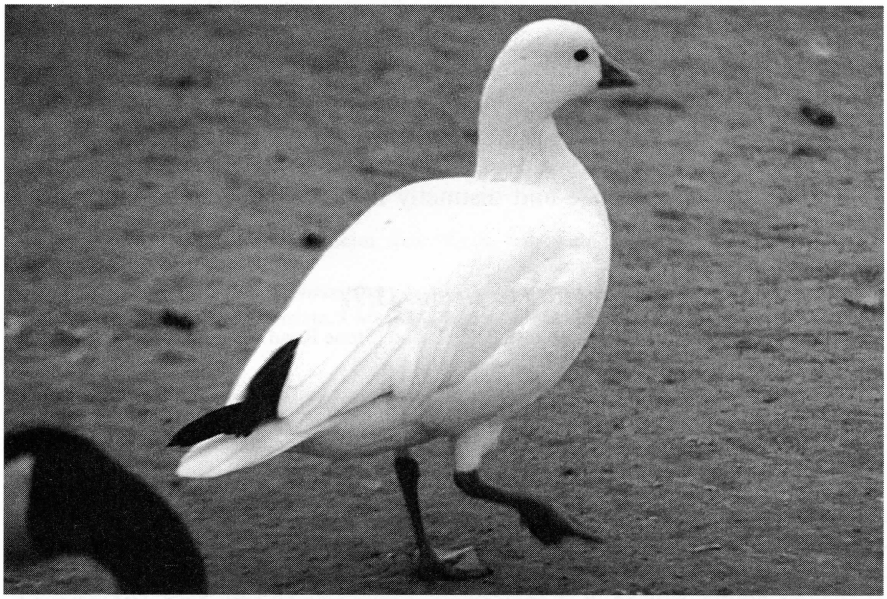

Figure 4: Definitive basic Ross's Goose at Dundas, *Hamilton- Wentworth*, from 2-3 April 1997. Photo by *Don Hough*.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* North Only (0/6)

1996/97 – two, definitive basic, 18 August 1996 and 16 September 1997, Hurkett Cove Conservation Area, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, Alan Wormington, also found by George A. Williams).

1996 – one, basic, female, 6 July - 29 October, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott) - photo on file.

There are additional sightings of two birds at Hurkett Cove from 10-24 May 1997 (Nicholas G. Escott, pers. comm.), and all of the sightings at this location are considered to pertain to the same birds.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (1/21)

1997 – one, definitive alternate, male, 16-17 February, Burlington, *Halton* (Terry Osborne).
– one, definitive alternate, male, 17 September - 3 October, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Alan Wormington, also found by Mark W. Jennings).

The first record for northern Ontario was also at Thunder Bay from 7-29 October 1995 (Dobos 1996).

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* South Only (2/11)

1997 – one, first basic, male, 14 February, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).

1996 – one, basic, female, 12 March - 6 April, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).
– one, basic, female, *dresseri*, 21 March - 6 April, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos, found by Kevin C. Hannah).

The west end of Lake Ontario continues to be the best place in southern Ontario to locate this species, amongst the large flocks of mussel-feeding diving ducks. The female present from 21 March - 6 April 1996 was determined to be of the east coast race, *S.m. dresseri*, based on the combination of reddish-brown plumage and distinctly rounded end to the bill process (see Knapton 1997).

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* (1/9)

1995 – one, definitive basic, 24 August, Pelee Island (Stone Road Alvar), *Essex* (John Lamey).

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis* (5/11)

1997 – one, definitive basic, 11 May, Grimsby (Beamer Memorial Conservation Area), *Niagara* (Thomas F. Reavley, John Ryan, Paul Summerskill).

1996 – one, first basic, 11-12 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Ronald J. Pittaway).

The earliest accepted date for this species in Ontario is now 11 May. The bird at Grimsby was the first for the Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch.

"Dark Morph" Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* (*/1)

1992 – one, definitive basic, dark morph, 18 August, Woodstock, *Oxford* (James M. Holdsworth).

The dark colour morph of Broad-winged Hawk is rare and mainly occurs in the extreme western portion of the species' breeding range through central Alberta, and is regularly encountered on migration through the eastern Great Plains (Clark and Wheeler 1987). There are two previous sight

records of this morph for Ontario, near Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay*, on 7 May 1985, and at Grimsby (Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch), *Niagara*, on 30 April 1977 (Escott 1986, Anonymous 1988).

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (8/26)

1997 – one, definitive basic, light morph, 14 September, Binbrook, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (John G. Keenleyside, also found by Daniel R. Salisbury, Alec Dobson).
– one, definitive basic, light morph, 18 October, Port Stanley (Hawk Cliff), *Elgin* (William S. Clark).

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* South Only (1/35)

1997 – one, alternate, 4-6 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (John M. Waud, Kevin A. McLaughlin).
– one, alternate, 5-8 May, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Jukka Jantunen, also found by Michael Enright, Paolo Viola).
– one, alternate, 9 August, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Robert Z. Dobos, also found by Barbara N. Charlton).

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* (7/51)

1997 – two, definitive alternate, 18-25 May, Kingsville, *Essex* (James N. Flynn, found by David J. Milsom) - photos on file.
– one, alternate, 3 August, Blenheim, *Kent* (William J. McKitterick).
– one, alternate, 11 August, Long Point (Tip), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Stuart Mackenzie).
1996 – one, alternate, 28 July, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott).
– one, 27-28 August, Blenheim, *Kent* (Keith J. Burk, found by Steven Charbonneau) - photo on file.
1994 – one, 23 October - 2 November, Warwick, *Lambton* (Alfred H. Rider) - photo on file.
1993 – two, definitive alternate, 2 May, Southampton, *Bruce* (Mac Campbell, Shawn Giilck) - photos on file.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* North Only (2/9)

1997 – one, 14 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Howard Shapiro, also found by Ken Jones).

"Palearctic" Dunlin *Calidris alpina arctica/schinzii* (*/1)

1994 – one, alternate, 31 July - 1 August, Hamilton Harbour (Windermere Basin), *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Curry, William J. Crins, Kevin A. McLaughlin, also found by John L. Olmsted, James Heslop).

This unique bird was likely of the subspecies *C.a. arctica*, which breeds in northeast Greenland. However, this race is very difficult to differentiate from the subspecies *C.a. schinzii*, which breeds in Iceland, southeastern Greenland and Europe. Both races are smaller with shorter bills than the eastern North American subspecies, *C.a. hudsonia* (Ferns 1981). The Committee has decided to list this bird as being of either Palearctic Dunlin race, either of which would be a first record for Ontario. A detailed account of this record will appear in a future issue of *Ontario Birds* (Curry, *in prep.*).

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* South Only (3/20)

1996 – one, juvenal, dark morph, 27 August, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).
– one, juvenal, light morph (found dead, fresh), 30 August, Long Point (Gravelly Bay), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior, Robert Z. Dobos, found by Jeffrey Robinson) - specimen (skin) in LPBO, photos on file.
– five (three juvenal light morph, one juvenal dark/intermediate morph, one subadult), 6 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos, Daniel Campbell, Linda Burr, Kevin A. McLaughlin, also found by John L. Olmsted).
– three (one definitive alternate, two juvenal), 8 September, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (Alan Wormington, Robert Curry).
– five (two definitive alternate, three juvenal light morph), 14 September, Waverly Beach, *Niagara* (Richard W. Knapton, William C. D'Anna, also found by Drew Campbell, Marcy Foster, Brad Clements, Marcie Jacklin).
– one, definitive alternate, 17 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).
– one, juvenal, dark/intermediate morph, 27 September, Burlington, *Halton* (Robert Z. Dobos).
– one, juvenal, light/intermediate morph, 20 October, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).

The fall of 1996 saw an unprecedented number of Long-tailed Jaegers on the lower Great Lakes. The above listings consider multiple observations of birds on any given day to relate to one record for that date involving the minimum number of birds present based on plumage differences. It is possible that there is some duplication of birds involved with these records if birds were present for more than several days, but this is certainly offset by the fact that some jaegers sighted that fall were left unidentified by observers but were likely to have been Long-taileds. The 18 birds documented above can probably be considered to be a minimum number involved. It has been speculated that Hurricane Fran had some influence on the numbers of Long-tailed Jaegers on the Great Lakes in 1996, by transplanting birds from the Atlantic Ocean inland (as was unquestionably the case with Black-capped Petrel, Sooty Tern and Wilson's Storm-Petrel) (Curry 1996). However, the indication of a strong jaeger flight was noticed prior to Fran's passage on September 8, evidenced by the above records on 27 and 30 August and 6 September. Another likely effect of Fran was that of stalling southbound migrants that would have skipped over the Great Lakes, or possibly deflecting their route farther inland. Numbers of Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers on the Great Lakes were also high during fall of 1996, possibly the result of high lemming populations in the Arctic where these species breed (Ridout 1997). Typically, numbers of juvenile jaegers out-number adult birds on the Great Lakes (Sherony and Brock 1997), and this is reflected in the records above. The above records largely coincide with the peak migration of Long-taileds through the Great Lakes in mid-September (Sherony and Brock 1997).

California Gull *Larus californicus* (0/18)

1997 – one, definitive basic, 9 January, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Dean DiTommaso).
1996 – one, definitive basic, 6-30 November, Queenston, *Niagara* (William C. D'Anna, found by Glenn Coady).
– one, definitive basic, 16-24 November, Queenston and Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (William C. D'Anna, Jon L. Dunn, found by Sharon Skelly).

This species has become a regular rarity at the Niagara River during late fall to early winter. It is uncertain if the 9 January 1997 bird is the same as one of the birds during November 1996. The two birds present during November 1996 were recognizably different in mantle shade. Some observers have suggested that two subspecies of California Gull were involved, based on Jehl (1987), who described a smaller, darker-mantled race (*L.c. californicus*) that breeds in the Great Basin states, and a larger, lighter-mantled race (*L.c. albertaensis*) from the Great Plains of northcentral United States and south-central Canada. The OBRC has not ruled on subspecies for California Gull records, pending availability of additional information. Observers are asked to carefully note size, structure and mantle shade of any future California Gulls sighted in Ontario.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (15/7)

1997 – one, first basic, 1 and 4-5 January, Pickering, Whitby and Oshawa, *Durham* (1 January), and Presqu'ile Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (4-5 January) (Matthew L. Holder, David Worthington, Craig S.A. McLauchlan, Martha Robinson, also found by Phillip J. Holder, Susan M. Holder).

After initially being seen flying east along the Lake Ontario shoreline at Pickering, this bird was observed later that day by others who were alerted to its discovery at Whitby and Oshawa as it continued eastwards. It was subsequently refound farther east at Presqu'ile Provincial Park a few days later.

Razorbill *Alca torda* (0/5)

1997 – nine, alternate, 18-23 May, Burlington, *Halton* (H. Michael Street, James R. Macey, also found by William F. Smith).

While nine birds were reported on 18 May, only eight birds were sighted on 23 May, with no observations between these dates.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* (2/4)

1997 – one, basic, 19-20 October, Lively, *Sudbury* (Donald G. Ferguson, also found by Kim Ferguson, Lorraine Ferguson, Don Ferguson) - photos on file.

This, the sixth record for Ontario, is the third occurrence in the past five years, all of which have been during the fall.

Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* After 1989 Only (*/8)

1997 – one, basic, female, 11 May, Long Point (Tip), *Haldimand- Norfolk* (Steve Mulkeen,

also found by Paul N. Prior, Jody Allair).

1996 – one, basic, female, 14 May, Beachville, *Oxford* (James M. Holdsworth).

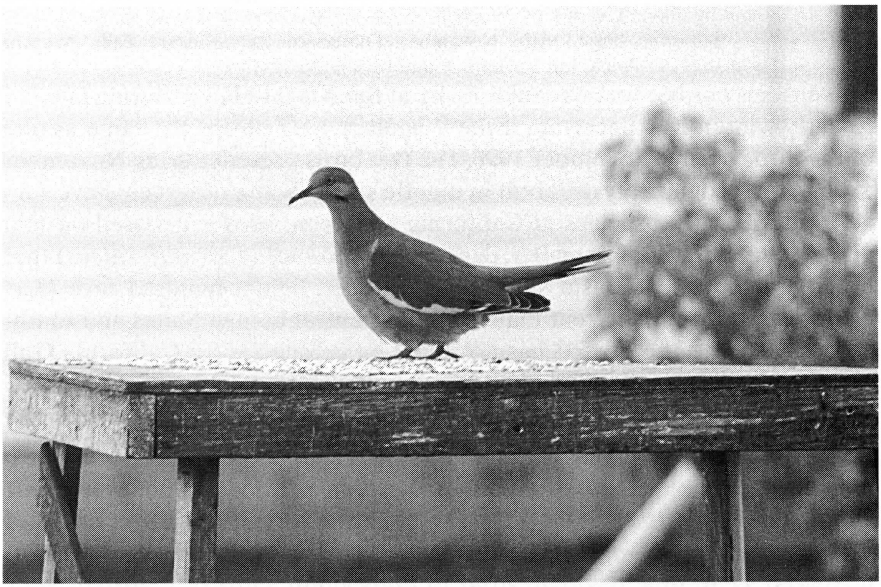

Figure 5: White-winged Dove at Lively, *Sudbury*, from 19-20 October 1997. Photo by *Donald G. Ferguson.*

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (2/10)

1995 – one, definitive basic, male, 17 October - 28 November, Owen Sound, *Grey* (David W. Fidler, Shawn Giilck, William Waterton, found by Doug Yeo, Agnes Yeo) - photo on file.

Hummingbird species *Selasphorus* sp. (0/4)

1996 – one, first basic, female, 20 October - 15 December, Union, *Essex* (F. Gladys Fisher, Alan Wormington, James N. Flynn) - photos on file.

This bird, either a Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird, was unidentifiable to species. Typically, in-hand measurements are needed in order to separate females or immatures of these species. Photographs of the upperparts of this bird show buffy edges to the green body feathers, allowing it to be aged as a first basic, and the mostly green middle rectrices indicate that it was a female (Heidcamp 1997).

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* Before 1998 Only (8/65)

1997 – one, alternate, 17-20 May, Eatonville, *Kent* (Blake A. Mann, found by Keith J. Burk, Steven Charbonneau).

– one, alternate, 2 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Howard Shapiro, also found by Jul K. Wojnowski, Daniel G. Derbyshire).

- one, alternate, 11 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Daniel G. Derbyshire, also found by Jul K. Wojnowski, Cole Snell).
- one, 13 September, Whitby (Lynde Shores Conservation Area), *Durham* (Margaret J.C. Bain, Joyce Closs).
- one, 14 September, Pelee Island (Stone Rd. Alvar), *Essex* (Jarmo V. Jalava).

The OBRC no longer requires documentation for this species for both southern and northern Ontario effective 1 January 1998.

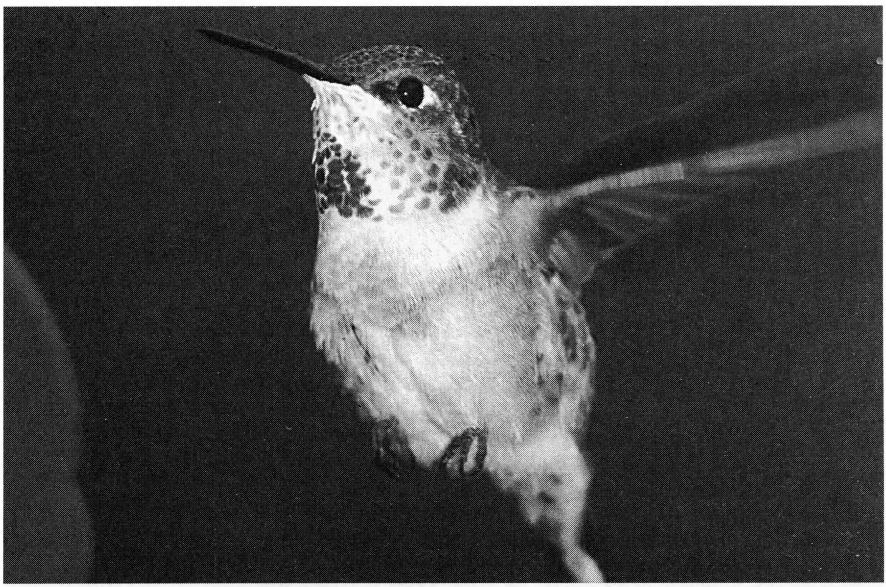

Figure 6: First basic female *Selasphorus* hummingbird species at Union, *Essex*, from 20 October - 15 December 1996. Photo by *James N. Flynn*.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (3/35)

1996 - one, definitive basic, 5 September - 4 October, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Garth Riley, Alan Wormington, also found by Nancy McPherson) - photo on file.

It is possible that this bird was the same as the one present at the same location during the fall of 1995.

Plumbeous Vireo *Vireo plumbeus* (0/1)

1997 - one, 3 June, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, James N. Flynn) - photos on file.

This is the first record of this species for Ontario, coincidentally occurring just prior to the official split of the Solitary Vireo complex (AOU 1997). See Wormington (1997b) for a detailed account of this record.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* (0/13)

1997 – one, basic, 21 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Christopher Burris, also found by Lynne Jackson).

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (7/16)

1997 – one, first basic, *leucorhoa*, 31 August - 1 September, Ottawa, *Ottawa-Carleton* (Eve D. Ticknor, Richard Ticknor, William J. Crins) - photo on file.

1995 – one, first basic, 15 October, Oshawa, *Durham* (James P. Coey, Glenn Coady, found by E. Dunhill) - photos on file.

The above two records provide the earliest accepted fall date (31 August) and ties the latest accepted fall date (15 October) for Ontario.

Figure 7: First basic Northern Wheatear at Oshawa, *Durham*, on 15 October 1995. Photo by *Glenn Coady*.

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* (2/19)

1997 – one, definitive basic, male, 10 April, Dorion, *Thunder Bay* (Jody Allair, Michael Jones).

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* (4/25)

1995/96 – one, basic, 30 December - 3 March, Lurgan Beach, *Bruce* (Martin Parker, Shawn Giilck, also found by David Kilgour, Fred M. Helleiner).

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius* Before 1994 Only for South, and Before 1998 Only for North (5/51)

1995 – one, basic, male, 4-18 November, Mokomon, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, found by Doug Johnson) - photo on file.

1988 – one, basic, male, 14 December, Elliot Lake, *Algoma* (Gordon Wereley) - photo on file.

The Elliot Lake bird may have been present through the winter of 1988-89; however, no precise dates are available. The OBRC no longer requires documentation for sightings in northern Ontario effective 1 January 1998, or for sightings in southern Ontario effective 1 January 1994.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* (3/5)

1997 – one, 16 March - 9 April, Wallaceburg, *Kent* (Blake A. Mann, Kayo J. Roy) - photos on file.

1996 – one, 28 October, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (Roger M. Simms, also found by Maggie Simms).

These are the seventh and eighth records accepted for Ontario, and the first since 1987. The date of the Wallaceburg bird, the earliest record for Ontario, seems remarkably early for a southwestern passerine vagrant. The Fort Frances bird provided the latest date for the province.

Figure 8: Sage Thrasher at Wallaceburg, *Kent*, from 16 March - 9 April 1997. Photo by *Kayo J. Roy*.

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus* North Only (1/2)

1997 – one, first basic or female, 15 September, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Alan Wormington, also found by Mark W. Jennings).

There are now four records (three reviewed by OBRC) for northern Ontario.

Black-throated Gray Warbler *Dendroica nigrescens* (4/7)

1997 – one, alternate, male, 2 May, Beachville, *Oxford* (James M. Holdsworth).
– one, definitive basic, male, 22-23 October, Burlington, *Halton* (Mark W. Jennings).

There have been five records in the past six years (of the total 11 accepted Ontario records).

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* (7/12)

1997 – one, alternate, male, 24 May, St. Williams Forestry Station, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Raymond Geras, Sean Macey, also found by Terrie Smith).

1996 – one, alternate, male, 14 May, Stoney Point, *Essex* (Gail Seamans, also found by Martin Schlabach, Nate Schlabach, Tom Beachy, Brian Beachy, Ellie Baker).
– one, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Ryan R. Sokolowski, John Luce, also found by Mark O'Connor, Robert Frew).

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* (2/14)

1997 – one, alternate, male, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Barb Mayer, Helmut Mayer, Barry Cherriere) - photo on file.
– one, first basic or female, 1 September, Toronto (Balfour Park Ravine), *Toronto* (David Beadle).

Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* (7/31)

1997 – one, first basic, male, 11 May, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Jukka Jantunen, also found by Stephane Menu, Carl Rothfels, Jim Tuck).
– one, first basic, male, 13 May, Pickering, *Durham* (Dan Shire, also found by Karen McKillop) - photos on file.
– one, basic, female, 17 May, Long Point (Tip), *Haldimand- Norfolk* (Steve Mulkeen).

1995/96 – two, definitive basic, male and female, 31 May - 4 September 1995 (pair), and 21 May - 12 September 1996 (male only), Sleepy Hollow, *Kent* (Keith J. Burk, found by Doug Barnett, Nancy Barnett) - photos on file.

The birds present in 1995 at Sleepy Hollow were a mated pair, and were observed copulating. The male was present all summer as it sang and exhibited territorial behaviour, while the female was evasive and seen for about a two week period only. In 1996, only the male was seen at the same location, again exhibiting territorial behaviour through the summer. Unfortunately, the observed behaviour does not confirm breeding according to criteria developed for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (Cadman *et al.* 1987). As such, this species cannot be added to the list of breeding birds for Ontario based on this record.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana* North Only (1/8)

1997 – one, alternate, male, 9 May, Wilson Creek, *Rainy River* (Roger M. Simms, found by Audrey Black).
– one, alternate, male, 17-22 May, Kenabeek, *Timiskaming* (Barry Kinch, also found by Kelsey Kinch, Trevor Kinch) - photos on file.

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* North Only (2/6)

1997 – one, basic, male, 2 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Daniel G. Derbyshire, also found by Jul K. Wojnowski).
– one, first basic, male, 12 November - 20 December, Kenabeek, *Timiskaming* (Barry Kinch, also found by Kelsey Kinch) - photos and video on file.

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* (0/7)

1997 – one, basic, male, 30 April, Toronto Island, *Toronto* (Craig S.A. McLauchlan).

Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla* North Only (0/13)

1997 – one, 19 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by Daniel G. Derbyshire, Cole Snell, Howard Shapiro, Erin Stephens) - photo on file.
1996 – one, 28 October - 2 November, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Roy B.H. Smith, also found by Glenn Coady, Hugh G. Currie, David R. Tannahill).

The bird on 19 May 1997 was captured and banded by Thunder Cape Bird Observatory (TCBO).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (5/42)

1997 – one, first basic, 3 September, Algonquin Provincial Park (Odenback on Radiant Lake), *Nipissing* (Colin D. Jones, Ronald G. Tozer).
1995 – one, alternate, 25-26 April, Guilds, *Kent* (Keith J. Burk, found by Peter Woodliffe) - photos on file.

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* (3/21)

1996 – one, alternate, female, 21 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by David Okines).
– one, first alternate, female, 3-4 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, Jennifer Sipkens, also found by David Okines, Brian Ratcliff) - photo on file.

The bird on 3-4 June was captured and banded by TCBO, and was considered to be a different bird than the one on 21 May at the same location.

Baird's Sparrow *Ammodramus bairdii* (0/1)

1996 – one, alternate, male, 2-9 July, Rainy River, *Rainy River* (Blake A. Mann, Jerry H. Guild, Donald E. Perks, found by John Lamey).

This is the first accepted record of this species for Ontario. This prairie grassland species breeds as close as southcentral Manitoba (Godfrey 1986), and it seems likely that it may occur from time to time in extreme western Ontario.

Figure 9: Female Lark Bunting captured and banded at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*, from 3-4 June 1996. Photo by *Jennifer Sipkens*.

Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum* North Only (1/1)

1997 – one, 4 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, George Holborn, also found by Daniel G. Derbyshire, Howard Shapiro) - photo on file.

1966 – one, first basic, 8-13 November, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Elizabeth A. Walker) - photo on file.

These are the first two records accepted by the OBRC for northern Ontario. James (1991) indicates that Grasshopper Sparrow occurs rarely in western Rainy River District; however, sightings from there have never been documented and reviewed by the Committee. The 4 June 1997 bird was captured and banded by TCBO. Subspecies determination was not possible for either of these records.

Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii* After 1992 Only (*/1)

1996 – one, alternate, male, 11 June - 2 July, Big Island, *Prince Edward* (Jean Iron, Ronald J. Pittaway, found by Terry Sprague).

This is the first report of this species that the OBRC has reviewed since it was added to the Review List in 1993 due to its rapidly declining numbers as a breeder in Ontario. Despite the fact that it occurs as a rare but annual spring migrant at Point Pelee, records away from there have become much rarer and should certainly be documented.

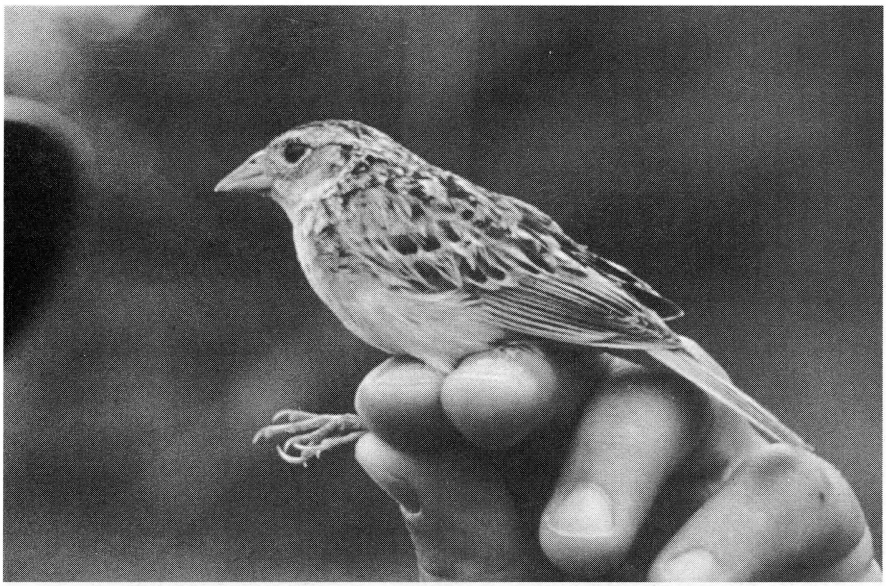

Figure 10: Grasshopper Sparrow captured and banded at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*, on 4 June 1997. Photo by *George Holborn*.

Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula* South Only, Before 1998 Only (3/30)

1995/96 – one, first basic, 15 November - 6 January, Hanover, *Grey* (Dean G. Newton, found by Lorraine Hatch) - photos on file.

1995 – one, definitive basic, 6-28 January, Sable, *Middlesex* (Alfred H. Rider) - photo on file.

Effective 1 January 1998, documentation for this species in southern Ontario is no longer required by the OBRC.

"Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis caniceps* group (*/2)

1997 – one, 25 May, Huntsville, *Muskoka* (Brenda J. Laking, William J. Crins, Ronald G. Tozer) - photo on file.

1989 – one, 9 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (John H. Kreeft, Ginny Kreeft, William H.P. Graham) - photos on file.

These are the first two records for Ontario of this phylogenetic group from the western United States, which is currently included in the Dark-eyed Junco species. Both of these records pertain to the more migratory northern subspecies *J.h. caniceps*, typified by their pale upper mandibles, clearly shown in the respective photographs for each record. The less migratory southern subspecies in this group, *J.h. dorsalis* or "Red-backed" Junco, has a dark upper mandible (Pittaway 1993, Rising 1996).

Smith's Longspur *Calcarius pictus* South Only (1/2)

1997 – one, female, 18 May, Algonquin Provincial Park (Two Rivers Airfield), *Nipissing* (R. Douglas McRae, J. David Andrews, Ronald G. Tozer, William J. Crins, James R. Macey, also found by Tom Hablitzel, Jean Morse) - photos on file.

This is only the third accepted record for southern Ontario. The previous two were both from Long Point, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, on 31 October - 2 November 1984 (Wormington 1986), and on 20 April 1980 (Wormington 1985). This recent bird was identified as a female, based on wing covert and facial patterns as described in Dunn and Beadle (1998).

Figure 11: Female Smith's Longspur at Algonquin Provincial Park (Two Rivers Airfield), *Nipissing*, on 18 May 1997. Photo by *J. David Andrews*.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (1/6)

1993/94 – one, basic, female, 24 December - 14 April, Hungry Hollow, *Middlesex* (Alfred H. Rider, found by Peter Chapman) - photo on file.

This long staying bird, that was enjoyed by many, is the sixth of seven records for Ontario, preceeding the bird at Black River, *Kenora*, on 18-20 April 1994 (Pittaway 1995b).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis* (1/5)

1997 – one, male, *circa* late March, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (Linda Moulton) - photos on file.

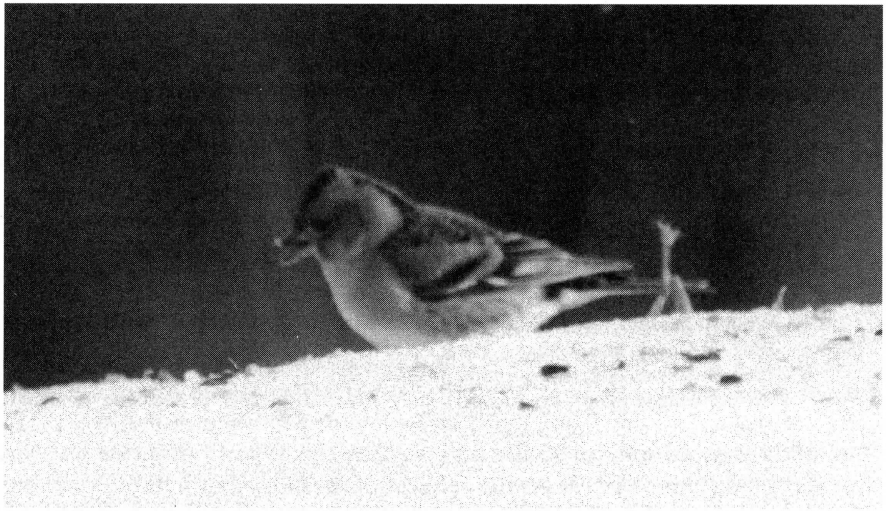

Figure 12: Female Brambling at Hungry Hollow, *Middlesex*, from 24 December 1993 - 14 April 1994. Photo by *Alfred H. Rider*.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Uncertain

In most reports listed below, the documentation provided was found to be insufficient to establish the identity of the species claimed. In very few cases did the Committee consider that the identification was actually an error. Any of these reports may be resubmitted for further review if new supporting evidence is provided.

1997
- Northern Gannet, one, 19 April, Napanee, *Lennox and Addington*.
- Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), one, 1 August, St. Charles, *Sudbury*.
- Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*), one, 25-26 July, Cheapside, *Haldimand-Norfolk*.
- Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*), one, 15 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*), one, 15 June, Grimsby, *Niagara*.
- Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*), one, 15 May, Long Point (Tip), *Haldimand-Norfolk*.
- "Lawrence's" Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera x V. pinus*), 17 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Kirtland's Warbler, one, 19 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Kent*.
- Kirtland's Warbler, one, 21 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*), one, 28 September, Dundas, *Hamilton-Wentworth*.
- Blue Grosbeak, one, 5 July, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.

- Lark Sparrow, two, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*), one, 24-25 May, North York, *Toronto*.

1996
- Black Vulture, one, 5 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Greater White-fronted Goose, one, 25 February, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
- Swainson's Hawk, one, 28 December, Cheapside, *Haldimand- Norfolk*.
- Swallow-tailed Kite, one, 18 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
- Mississippi Kite, one, 19-21 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex*.
- Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), 27 August, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Ivory Gull, one, 17 June, Barrie Island, *Manitoulin*.
- Green Violet-ear (*Colibri thalassinus*), 27 July, Evansville, *Manitoulin*.
- Blue Grosbeak, one, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Western Tanager, one, 17 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
- Western Tanager, one, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.

1995
- Blue Grosbeak, one, 3 August, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Blue Grosbeak, one, 16 December, Massie, *Grey*.
- "White-winged" Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis aikeni*), 17 October, Wingham, *Huron*.

The above record was originally reviewed by the 1996 Committee but was not accepted (Dobos 1997). At the request of the contributor, the report was sent for outside expert opinion, along with an additional report of "White-winged" Junco on 18 October 1986 which was on file at the ROM (see below). Both birds had been captured and banded by the contributor. Based on the expert opinions received, the 1997 Committee agreed to reconsider the 1995 report with the expert comments being viewed as "new evidence". However, it was the decision of this Committee that the documentation submitted did not conclusively support the identification of this subspecies which occurs in the northcentral United States. There are as yet no substantiated records from Ontario (see Pittaway 1993).

1994
- Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), one, 4 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* - photo on file.
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 5 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* - photo on file.
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 20 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*.

1993
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 15 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*.

1992
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 31 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* - photo on file.
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 31 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*.

1991
- Willow Flycatcher, one, 22 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay*.

The 1995 OBRC had originally reviewed the above seven records of Willow Flycatcher, but had deferred a final decision on the records pending additional information. These records all involve birds which were captured and banded at Thunder Cape by TCBO. Identification (and separation from Alder Flycatcher, *E. alnorum*) was primarily based on in-hand measurements using culmen length and wing formula compared to a statistical discriminant function analysis described by Stein (1963). However, this method was later shown to be unreliable (Seutin 1991), and it is no longer used by the Long Point Bird Observatory to separate "Traill's" Flycatchers (Jon McCracken, pers. comm.). In reconsidering these records, the 1997

Committee felt that they could not be confidently accepted based on the current knowledge of in-hand criteria for separating "Traill's" Flycatcher.

1986 – "White-winged" Dark-eyed Junco, 18 October, Wingham, *Huron*.

See comments above for 17 October 1995 record of "White-winged" Junco.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Accepted, Origin Questionable

Records in this category are those considered by the Committee to be likely escaped birds or birds released from captivity. However, as with all submissions to the OBRC, such records may be reviewed at any time should new information arise suggesting a wild origin.

1997 – Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), one, 2 March, Rowan Mills, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Robert Curry, also found by John L. Olmsted, Richard G. Snider).

The identity of this bird was clearly established, but the origin of the bird from a wild population in western North America cannot be determined. The status of Trumpeter Swan in Ontario in general was discussed at the OBRC policy meeting in October 1997. It was agreed to remove it from the Review List for the south (see above), since its inclusion causes confusion with observers regarding the status of introduced birds present around the province. The only way to know for certain if a bird originated from a wild population from western North America would be through a banding return or recovery. The OBRC still wishes to consider any such records, and would seek documentation if any such records were to come to light. The OBRC would also still be interested in historical records of this species, if any exist.

Updates/Corrections to Previous OBRC Reports

1996 Report (*Ontario Birds* 15: 47-66)

- under Eared Grebe, 11 May - 2 September 1996, change last date to "18 August".
- under Snowy Egret, add "North Only Until 1991" after scientific name.
- under Black-tailed Godwit, add "Glenn Coady" as a contributor.
- under Ross's Gull, add "Bruce Falls" as a contributor, and change "photos on file" to "photos and video on file" .
- under Arctic Tern, add ",After 1990 Only" after "South Only".
- under Thick-billed Murre, delete "South Only".
- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.
- under Ash-throated Flycatcher, add "Glenn Coady" as a contributor.
- under Fork-tailed Flycatcher, 25-28 September 1996, add "Glenn Coady" as a contributor.
- under Mountain Bluebird, 26 November - 22 December 1994, add ", Douglas C.

Sadler" after "found by David Johnson".
- under Spotted Towhee, 17 December 1995 - 3 March 1996, add "Glenn Coady" as a contributor, and change "Alfred Kuhnigk" to "Albert Kuhnigk".

1995 Report (*Ontario Birds* 14: 50-71)

- under Least Tern, add "Glenn Coady" as a contributor.
- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.

1994 Report (*Ontario Birds* 13: 46-65)

- under American White Pelican, add "South Only, Before 1994 Only" after scientific name.
- under Eurasian Wigeon, add "North Only After 1993" after scientific name.
- under Gyrfalcon, add ", Before 1994 Only" after "South Only".
- under Piping Plover, add "South Only" after scientific name.
- under Pomarine Jaeger, add "North Only After 1993" after scientific name.
- under Laughing Gull, add "North Only After 1993" after scientific name.
- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.
- under Varied Thrush, add "North Only After 1993" after scientific name.

1993 Report (*Ontario Birds* 12: 41-58)

- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.

1992 Report (*Ontario Birds* 11: 46-63)

- under Snowy Egret, add "North Only Until 1991" after scientific name.

1991 Report (*Ontario Birds* 10: 43-63)

- under American White Pelican, add "South Only" after scientific name.
- under Snowy Egret, add "North Only Until 1991" after scientific name.
- under Piping Plover, add "South Only" after scientific name.
- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.

1990 Report (*Ontario Birds* 9: 18-44)

- under Dark Ibis sp., 14 October 1989, add "Douglas Harding" as a contributor.
- under Chuck-will's-widow, add ",After 1989 Only" after scientific name.

1989 Report (*Ontario Birds* 8: 4-33)

- under American White Pelican, 24 June 1989, add "Kathy Parker, Martin Parker" as contributors.

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The 1995-1997 Great Gray Owl Invasions in the Peterborough Area

Doug Sadler

Introduction

The Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*) breeds in boreal forest from the west coast eastward to Ontario and Quebec (Prevett 1987, Morneau 1996). It makes periodic flights in winter to southern Canada and the northern United States, including southern Ontario (Bull and Duncan 1993). I gathered records of Great Gray Owls from a large area around Peterborough during winter invasions in 1978-79, 1983-84, 1995-96 and 1996-97, as well as during more isolated occurrences in January-April 1992 and January 1993. The region from which sightings were collected during the 1995-1997 invasions included all of Peterborough County, west to Lake Simcoe (and Thorah Island), the Kawartha Lakes, and north and eastward into Haliburton and Hastings Counties. This article describes how reports of sightings were obtained, the number of reported owls in each invasion, and some characteristics of the owls observed.

Methods

My information on the dates and locations of Great Gray Owls during these invasions was derived in part through a "communications network" developed while writing a weekly column on all aspects of the natural world and our relations with it in the *Peterborough Examiner* for nearly forty years. Reports also came in during the 1995-1997 invasions after three newspapers (in Peterborough, Lindsay and Bancroft), TV and radio ran items, often with my phone number and pictures of the owls. In 1997, flyers requesting information about the owls were posted in corner stores and other locations within the area, as well.

Significant information was fed to me through local personnel of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Much information came from dead birds reported to the MNR office; some came from taxidermists. Tim Dyson, an experienced bird bander and taxidermist who specializes in raptors, undertook efforts to band a number of the owls, which also yielded valuable data.

As a result of previous experience, during the last two invasions I kept detailed reports, pinning people down to specific sites, which I recorded in some detail with dates, and on a map. Quite rightly, people ask how I know they were all Great Grays, and how I was able to tell

that these represented separate birds. The answers are not unequivocal. However, no identification errors were detected. The owls were almost all seen along roadsides in daylight and allowed close approach. Many mentioned the great facial disks and yellow eyes. Most callers were not declared "naturalists"; certainly few had ever seen any kind of owl before.

But how did I tell whether these were new birds, repeats, or the same which had moved on? It was not always possible. But a number of factors helped. Some birds kept recurring at the same locations, often daily, over weeks. In many cases, when investigated this proved to involve two, often a pair as determined by size differential, or even as many as five birds. Sometimes these were all found on one visit. In 1997, along one stretch of road when out attempting to band the owls, Tim Dyson saw no fewer than seven, with five in view at one time. Road kills and dates helped in an estimate of the number of owls at any one location.

Birds were sometimes captured for banding at the same place, and their recorded characteristics compared. An intuitive estimate of the size of winter territories quickly developed and events seemed to back this up. As a rule of thumb, birds found two or more kilometres apart were counted as different, once the invaders appeared to have settled down to a temporary stability. Brunton and Pittaway (1971) noted that invading Great Gray Owls near Ottawa "set up definite home ranges" (one of which was approximately 112 acres), "and tended to stay within those boundaries".

No doubt there were unavoidable errors, but these were countered by presumed cases where multiples were not detected, and by the probability that many owls not visible from the car or roadside were missed. It became obvious that most sightings came from travelled routes. The estimate of numbers was almost certainly conservative.

Numbers of Owls

During the winter of 1978-79, I had records of 34 Great Gray Owls. Estimates of the total number of Great Grays in all of southern Ontario that winter ranged from 61 (Goodwin 1979) to at least 112 (Vickery and Yunick 1979). In 1983-84, my recorded sightings increased to 97 owls. James (1989a) noted that 407 Great Gray Owls were reported to the *American Birds* Ontario Region editor that winter, in a flight that "exceeded in numbers any previously-recorded movement" in eastern North America.

In the winter of 1995-96, we watched in astonishment as numbers climbed steadily to more than 330 different Great Gray Owls in my study area. Ridout (1996) later reported: "Great Gray Owl sight-

ings totalled >600 birds across s. Ontario during March. This conservative estimate places this past winter's s. invasion as likely the largest ever experienced in the province." In 1996-97, a completely unexpected 265 owls appeared here, as an "echo flight" occurred that was almost as large as the previous winter (Ridout 1997). We were astounded at the unprecedented response of those reporting during these invasions. My wife and I were overwhelmed. At the beginning, the phone never stopped ringing; we had to take it off the hook over suppertime in order to eat!

The map that resulted from all this action showed a concentration of sites just south of the edge of the Shield (with more isolated sites along the north and south fringes). This distribution was probably partly because it included marginal lands with open areas suitable for rodent hunting, but not much unbroken forest, similar to the habitat used by these owls near Ottawa reported by Brunton and Pittaway (1971). It also had a better road network and more people occupying all-year homes, thus more road traffic to provide sightings. A further, very significant factor was that it was where local media had the most effective coverage. The reporting pattern was in fact to a large degree an artifact of all this rather than an actual and impartial picture. We might assume that the total area and intensity of the invasion were much broader than I was able to record.

The occurrence of messages reporting different sightings, by month, for the invasions of 1995-96 and 1996-97, is presented in Table 1. The last report in the 1995-96 invasion was on 15 June, while a roadkill reported on 16 May was the last in the 1996-97 flight. As the latter bird had a worn tail, it may well have been a release from hospitalization.

The figures in Table 1 should be interpreted with caution, since callers would obviously report their initial sightings, but only rarely subsequent ones (let alone their last one), in spite of my requests that they do so. However, I learned to ask whether the report was the caller's first, and quite often learned about previous sightings of the same or another bird.

Table 1: Occurrence of messages reporting Great Gray Owl sightings by month

Invasion	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Total Messages
1995-96	1	3	2	2	44	271	86	11	5	425
1996-97	1	0	2	24	211	67	24	2	0	331

It is hard to tell how many casualties there were since not all would be noticed or reported. At least 15% of recorded owls became

known traffic victims in 1995-96, with fewer reported the next winter. Twenty-seven dead Great Gray Owls were reported to the MNR from the district over the winter of 1996-97.

Age and Condition

Evidence of plumage in captured or injured birds, as well as observations in the field from 1995-96, tend to show that most were fledged in 1994. Was this a particularly good year for nest success in the north woods? It seems that immature birds may be the first to be forced out when food is in short supply, followed by females (Duncan 1987). Established males are most likely to remain behind. Those that stay back often die of starvation (Duncan and Hayward 1994). Plumages noted in 1997 showed that far more were rather older birds. Perhaps some were the same young birds that arrived in 1996 but a year older and wiser, occupying territories they found productive the previous season. Seven respondents noted that birds appeared at exactly the same place each year (even the same lookout posts). Probably others did not bother to report such a happening.

Most fatalities examined were in good physical condition. Only a small handful had died of starvation; this might have been allied to disease or ageing, since food seemed plentiful. Other information that might be secured from such sources in future includes sex, age, breeding readiness, and variations in plumage.

Duration of Invasions

In view of the unexpected way that some owls lingered, even into June in 1996, there was widespread speculation as to whether some might stay to breed. Breeding has been known on some rare past occasions in southern Ontario (Forbes et al. 1992). A report surfaced in April 1997, when an owl was reported, that the caller had seen one in July 1996 in the same locality. But no hard evidence of summer occupation has surfaced. Few signs of awakening sexual activity were reported, but toward the end some owls appeared more closely paired, and there were two reports of interactive flight display, and also unusual hooting calls which may have been from this species. One owl was seen by Peter Burke turning "feet up" at an intruding individual on 29 March 1997.

Food

Great Gray Owls prey primarily on small mammals, especially rodents (James 1989b), and "voles (*Microtus* spp.) dominate their diets over most of their range" (Duncan and Hayward 1994). Such examination as we were able to do of food pellets and of the stomach contents of fatalities generally conformed to these findings, but also included some less usual prey.

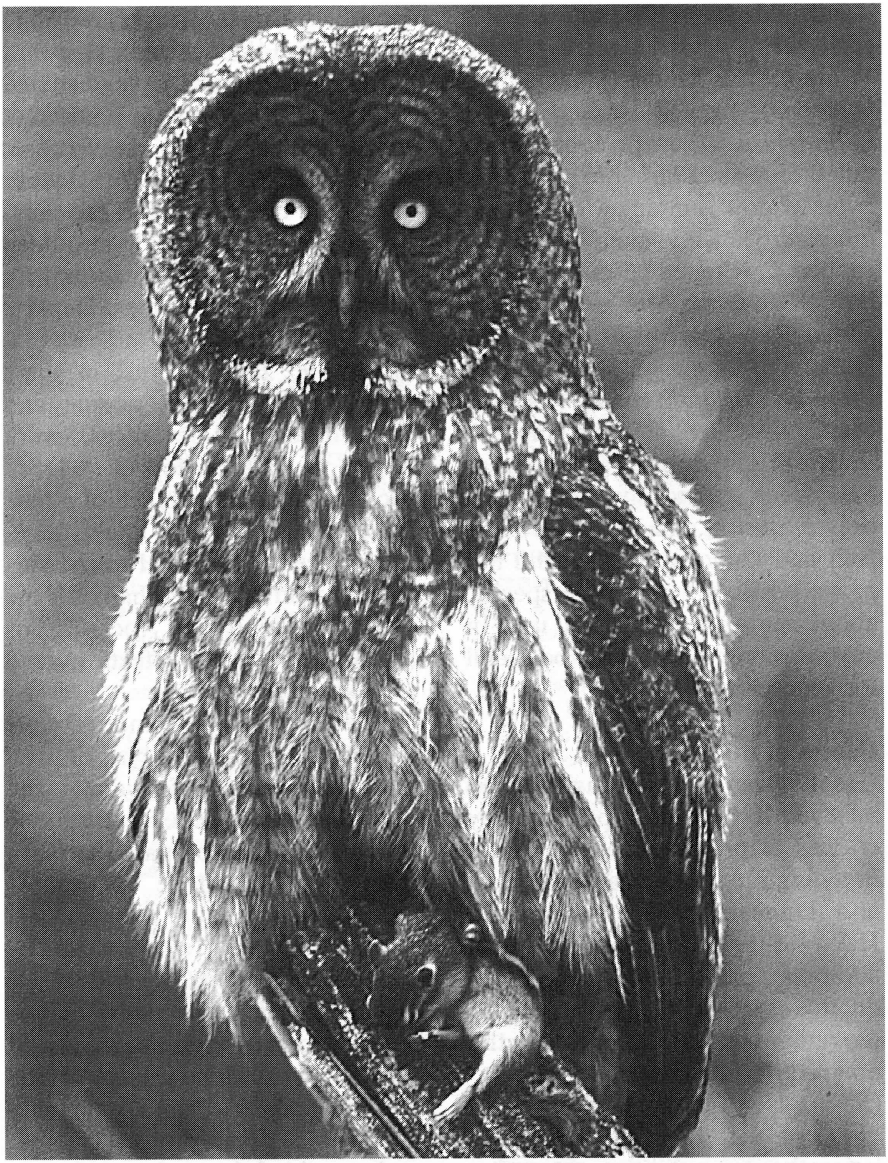

Figure 1: Great Gray Owl with Eastern Chipmunk, north of Kirkfield, 25 May 1996. Photo by *Sam Barone.*

Two pellets and ten stomachs were examined. Those from birds under treatment were ignored. Four stomachs were empty. The remain-

der yielded: 14 Meadow Voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), one White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), two Star-nosed Moles (*Condylura cristata*), four Short-tailed Shrews (*Blarina brevicauda*), two Meadow Jumping Mice (*Zapus hudsonius*), and even a Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*). Visual reports of captures added Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*), and Ermine (*Mustela erminea*). While unusual, squirrels, chipmunks and weasels have been previously reported as prey (Brunton and Reynolds 1984, Bull and Duncan 1993). It did not prove possible to be more specific about seasonality of prey use. In any case, numbers were too small for generalization.

Causes of Invasions

Great Gray Owl invasions are believed to be caused primarily by crashes of prey populations in the breeding range (Duncan 1987, Bull and Duncan 1993, Duncan and Hayward 1994, Pittaway 1997). In addition, "particularly good reproductive success of owls prior to movements may accentuate the magnitude of their invasions" (Shuford and Desante 1979).

There has been frequent speculation that snow depth and crusting in the north would affect availability of food for these owls and result in southward flights (e.g., Shuford and Desante 1979, Kaufman 1997). However, Robert Nero (1980) and Jim Duncan (Duncan and Hayward 1994) in Manitoba have disputed this assumption, pointing out that there are at times movements northward to places of deeper snow; and that these owls are capable of diving successfully into deep snow (45 cm) and even snow with substantially iced layers. Reports from northern Ontario indicate that in 1995-96, the icy crust in some areas was such that people and even moose (*Alces alces*) were forced to walk on top of it. Deep snow itself is not as much of a hazard to the owls as we might think, since mice often tunnel to the surface for ventilation. Perhaps it is the added difficulty in locating or reaching prey that affects overall success.

There is much we do not yet fully understand about this bird of mystery. We must look forward to the next invasion, whenever that may be, and be better prepared to learn from it. It should be an exciting experience.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the many people who reported their sightings of Great Gray Owls to me, and made this study possible. Tim Dyson inaugurated the flyer project in 1997, and provided important information through banding owls. Mike Barker and Barry Snyder of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources were especially helpful

in supplying information about sightings. Lastly, I appreciated the suggestions of Dan Brunton, Ross James and Ron Tozer, who undertook critical reviews of an earlier draft of this article.

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Notes

Laying Hours and Other Nesting Data of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks

David M. Scott

Introduction

Recent compilations of reproductive data on Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) have little detail on stages of the nesting cycle. Peck and James (1987) recorded 406 grosbeak nests, but only eight provided information on incubation periods. Pelletier and Dauphin (1996) indicated that the laying interval and the day of onset of incubation are unknown. Also, the hour of oviposition has not been reported.

The lack of detail is not surprising. Although commonly found, grosbeak nests often are inaccessible to humans. For example, at London, Ontario, Langley (1976) found 50 nests of a local grosbeak population. The average height was 6 m; only about five were accessible to observers.

In 1997, near London, I saw two female grosbeaks building nests at heights at which I could determine the contents with the aid of a mirror. Watching these nests and one found in 1975, I recorded the hour of laying, the length of one incubation period, asynchronous hatching in one clutch, the approximate time of the onset of incubation, and the minimum length of nesting life of three nestlings. These few data, either because they are more precise than most reported or are unique, are noteworthy.

Methods

The three nests noted above were visited frequently, and times, contents, and other notes were made during these visits. Nest location, information, and dates visited are summarized in Table 1. To estimate laying hours, I used Skutch's method (1952), which was to record times of visits before and after the egg-of-the-day was laid. It was necessary to visit a nest early to determine its contents. To do this, I tried to arrive at nests 2 and 3 (Table 1) close to sunrise. Thereafter, I checked nests 2 and 3 periodically to estimate the time of arrival of the female and the time of her departure after laying. The eggs reported below were laid between 21 May and 4 June. In that period, the onset of morning civil twilight and sunrise occurred at about 0415h and 0450h, respectively. Eastern Standard Time is used throughout.

Table 1. Nests at which observations were made, and dates visited.

Nest #	Location	Nest Placement	Dates Visited
1	near Komoka (42°56'N, 82°27'W)	2 m in dogwood shrub (*Cornus* sp.)	between 19 May and 16 June 1975
2	near Newbury (42°39'N, 81°49'W)	2 m in Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*), on upper surface of branch overhanging pond	between 24 May and 14 June 1997
3	Coldstream Conservation Area (43°01'N, 81°30'W)	2.5 m in Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*), on horizontal branch	between 30 May and 29 June 1997

Results and Discussion

Detailed observations made at the three Rose-breasted Grosbeak nests are summarized in Tables 2 to 4. Some general patterns in the nesting chronology and behaviour of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are evident, based on these observations, as well as the reports of others.

Table 2. Observations at Nest 1.

Date	Observations
19 May 1975	nest being built
21 May	0505h: no eggs
22 May	0545h: nest unattended, contained one dew-covered grosbeak egg 0915h: nest still unattended but contained two grosbeak eggs; laying, assuming female was at least 15 minutes on nest before laying, occurred between 0600h and 0915h
24 May	0830h, 0900h: female on nest 0915h: four grosbeak eggs
16 June	nest empty, young had fledged, 25 days after laying of first egg

Table 3. Observations at Nest 2.

Date	Observations
24 May 1997	female building outer framework
27 May	1300h: no eggs
28 May	1000h: one grosbeak egg
29 May	0445h-0514h: nest unattended, one grosbeak egg 0514h: female came to nest, left at 0519h 0535h: still one egg 0555h-0640h: female on nest 0655h: nest unattended, two grosbeak eggs estimated time of laying: 0615h ± 30 minutes
30 May	0444h: female accidentally flushed from nest, still quite dark, two eggs only 0535h: male on nest 0545h: nest unattended, two eggs 0600h-0700h: female on nest continuously until she left at 0700h, now three eggs 0706h: male on nest estimated time of laying: 0625h ± 35 minutes
14 June	1400h: nest empty

Table 4. Observations at Nest 3.

Date	Observations
30 May 1997	0900h: nest being built. Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), apparently taking nest material from grosbeak nest, chased away by grosbeak pair.
1 June	0915h: no eggs
2 June	0905h: one grosbeak egg, nest unattended
3 June	0452h: still one egg, nest unattended 0500h-0645h: nest unattended, examined three times, still one egg 0725h: female on nest 0740h: male on nest, flushed by me, now two eggs estimated time of laying: 0710h ± 30 minutes
4 June	0530h: female slipped off nest as I approached, still two eggs 0545h: male on nest 0600h: nest unattended 0625h: male on nest, still two eggs 0630h: pair foraging near nest 0640h: male on nest 0645h: female came to nest, and left at 0705h 0708h: male at nest, now three eggs estimated time of laying: 0655h ± 10 minutes
5 June	0840h: four grosbeak eggs
6-7 June	four grosbeak eggs

15 June	0915h: nest unattended, three eggs and one newly hatched nestling, down still damp and matted. Apparent incubation time was almost exactly 10 days, measured from 5 June when last egg was laid. 1415h: two eggs, two nestlings. Apparent incubation time for second nestling was about 10 days ± 2h.
16 June	0700h: female on nest, one egg, three nestlings Apparent incubation time for third nestling was about 10 days, 15 h ± 9h.
17 June	0630h: female brooding four nestlings. Youngest nestling recently hatched with matted damp down. True incubation time about 11 days, 22h, if it is assumed that the last egg laid was the last to hatch.
20 June	1745h: nest unattended; four young: two large, one with eyes open and stretching up vigorously when I touched the nest, the other two were quiet on the bottom of the nest.
22 June	1830h: nest unattended, only three young
23 June	1800h: male near nest, clearly SY age: all primaries and all rectrices except central two were brown. Three large young.
24 June	1800h: nest unattended, three young
25 June	0925h: three nestlings (two males and one female), quiet; fledging thought to be imminent 1230h: only female nestling present, still quiet; adult female nearby and very agitated 1800h: nest empty, parents absent; unfamiliar call notes emanating from nest bush suggested presence of a fledgling; calling ceased when I was at nest bush and did not resume in next 15 minutes when I left the area; parents still absent. On this day, many Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), old and young, were flying back and forth in the area, often within a few meters of the nest site.
26-29 June	I visited the nest site daily and spent about 6h close to it. I neither saw nor heard fledglings. A female grosbeak was often nearby, chipping incessantly. I did not see her carrying food or entering the deep cover surrounding the nest site. The male parent was rarely present. I concluded that no nestling survived for more than a few hours following fledging, if that occurred.

Eggs were laid in each nest on consecutive days, the usual pattern in northern passerines. In nests 2 and 3, the interval between eggs 2 and 3 was about 24 h. Five estimates of the hour of oviposition of second and third eggs of a clutch showed that laying occurred at least an hour after sunrise. The final and fourth egg of nests 1 and 3 was laid before 0840h in one case, and 0900h in the other. Eggs 2 and 3 in nest 2 were laid between 1 1/2 and 2 1/2 h after sunrise, and in nest 3 between 2 and 3 h after sunrise. These laying times are later than two or three recorded

for the species' closest relative, the Black-headed Grosbeak (*P. melanocephalus*), in California. There, Weston (1947, pers. comm.) observed that eggs were laid, approximately 24 h apart, before 0700h, in the hour following sunrise.

The incubation period for nest 3 was almost 12 days long. Ivor (1944) reported the incubation period was 12 days for four clutches and 13 days for three clutches. Watts (1935), however, reported incubation periods of 10 to 12 days. She may have confused early hatching of first eggs with true incubation periods.

In my study, the clutch in nest 3 hatched asynchronously, with almost exactly 48h between hatching of the first and last eggs. This means that incubation must have begun in earnest by the second day of laying. This is consistent with the absence of roosting birds preceding laying of second eggs and their presence on nests around sunrise on the third morning of laying. Ivor (1944) noted for all four clutches that he observed that the first egg hatched a day before the last hatching. Clearly, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks begin incubation before the final egg is laid.

Males were on the nests on the mornings of laying the second egg (nest 3) and the third egg (nests 2 and 3). Although I was aware that male grosbeaks sat on nests during the post-laying period, I was surprised to find them on nests well before the clutch had been completed. The function of this male behaviour is not understood. However, as the males have a moderately well developed brood patch (Langley 1976), they may help in incubation. Nevertheless, despite the male's assistance in incubation, the incubation period of 12 to 13 days is about the same as that of the related Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), in which only the female incubates (Scott and Lemon 1996).

The two oldest nestlings were 10 days old, the third slightly younger, when they disappeared. This nestling period agrees in length with that observed by Ivor (1944).

I hope that this note will encourage other field ornithologists to collect and report not only more reproductive data on grosbeaks, but also on many other poorly understood Ontario species.

Acknowledgements

The assistance and companionship of my wife, Rosemary, during field work is warmly appreciated. I appreciate the assistance of P. J. Langley on nest visits in 1975. I thank Dr. H. G. Weston, Jr., who gave me unpublished information on Black-headed Grosbeaks. I also thank Brenda Emery, who typed the manuscript. I am indebted to Ross James, whose suggestions greatly improved the organization of the paper.

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PUBLICATION NOTICE

The Butterflies of Point Pelee National Park: A Seasonal Guide and Checklist. 1998. By *Alan Wormington.* Ontario Natural History Press. 10 pages. $3.50 each or $3.00 each for two or more (includes taxes and postage). Available from Alan Wormington, R.R. 1, Leamington, Ontario N8H 3V4, or by phone: (519) 326-0687.

Point Pelee is the best place in Canada for seeing butterflies, especially southern residents and vagrants. This checklist gives status and one day high counts for all 85 species recorded at Point Pelee. Bar graphs indicate the flight season and abundance for each species. Recommended areas for viewing butterflies are described. *Ron Pittaway*

Commentary

Challenge to Life Members

Jim Richards

Fifteen years ago, in April 1983, I had the distinct honour of authoring a "Guest Editorial" for the inaugural issue (Volume 1, Issue 1) of *Ontario Birds*. It was a proud moment for me; no, not to have simply published, but because I, along with a dedicated lot, was part of something sadly lacking in Ontario, our own field journal. As noted in my editorial, it was a long time coming, but come it did. One of the reasons it happened when it did was due to the belief by many that we could make it happen. To this end, a good number of us showed our faith by pledging $50 for a Life Membership. In my editorial, I predicted that while this issue was great ...."It can only get better" .... and that it did. Are there any among the original Life Members that are disappointed? I doubt it, unless you would like to see an even thicker publication, or one that came out more frequently, as I would. Well, perhaps this is not out of the question, even without raising the absurdly low (current) regular membership fee. I doubt if too many subscribers would mind say a $5 per year increase, considering what we get .... let's hear from you on this.

One way it could be done in part is as follows. Since your initial payout in 1983, you have received 45 great issues of *Ontario Birds*. That works out to a lowly $1.10 each; what a bargain. Riding on your initial investment, you will continue to receive future issues. The same sense of pride I had when I signed up to help finance the launch still remains, and quite frankly, I don't want any of our current 930 members supporting my enjoyment or underwriting my pride. In addition to your 45 issues, you also receive regular issues of *OFO News*, keeping you even more informed about OFO and birding. A bit of crude math would indicate that 45 issues of *Ontario Birds*, 15 volumes of *OFO News* and the postage to get it all to you was more than worth the original investment. Seems to me that it was some time ago that regular members started to subsidize the "old gang", and I for one don't feel right about this. Instead of allowing the Executive to continue asking for donations from the original Life Members (and I know that many respond), why doesn't each of us consider an annual donation of

an amount at least equal to a regular current membership (you'll get a tax receipt) and save the organization even more postage and the printing of forms? Why not ensure that all of the funding that goes to OFO is reflected in the continued high quality of our own journal?

At this time then, I extend a challenge to *all* of the original Life Members to join me and do just that. Send in a donation to help ensure the continued success of OFO and *Ontario Birds*, to show our continued support for the journal we helped to launch, and in hopes of a quarterly issue in time.

Jim Richards, 14 Centre Street, Box 442, Orono, Ontario L0B 1M0

PUBLICATION NOTICE

Checklist of Yukon Birds. 1998. By *Cameron Eckert, Helmut Grunberg, Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica and Pam Sinclair* (compilers). Available free from Yukon Bird Club, Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5P7. E-mail: ybc@yknet.yk.ca

This new checklist summarizes the occurrence and breeding status of 272 species which have been documented in the Yukon. Breeding has been confirmed for 182 species. Distribution codes indicate species which are only casually found outside a limited range (North Coast, Southern Yukon, or Southeast Yukon). Frequency codes designate species which are casual or accidental for the Yukon. *Ron Tozer*

Book Reviews

Ashbridge's Bay. By *George Fairfield* (editor). Toronto Ornithological Club, Toronto. Softcover, 136 pages. $20 (plus $3 postage and handling). Available from TOC, 322 Sheldrake Blvd., Toronto, Ontario M4P 2H8.

Ashbridge's Bay was a 560 hectare (1385 acre) marsh on the eastern Toronto waterfront. Originally, it extended about 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) from east (about Woodbine Avenue) to west (Toronto Harbour), and had a width of 1770 metres (1.1 miles) at its western end. Incredibly, this huge marsh is completely gone today, replaced by "a depressing wasteland of oil tanks, coal piles and shoddy, low industrial buildings separated by open parcels of contaminated land".

George Fairfield has gathered together twenty-four accounts in this anthology of writings about the Ashbridge's Bay area, in order "to preserve the story of a great wetland", "to warn communities not to throw away their natural heritage", and "to introduce the reader to some of the human denizens of the marsh". It succeeds admirably in all these stated purposes.

The book provides fascinating glimpses of an earlier time, through old maps, archival photographs and selected writings by authors such as Fred Bodsworth, Richard Saunders, Ernest Thompson Seton, Stuart Thompson, and Robert Taylor. For instance, we learn that waterfowl were so numerous in the marsh "as to be an annoyance at night" due to their loud vocalizations, that Mrs. John Graves Simcoe set the marsh on fire "for amusement" on 27 January 1794, and that commercial hunters would trap up to 1000 Snow Buntings there in an afternoon to be sold for 5 cents each to local gun clubs for target practice! Of particular interest are sections by Ron Pittaway and Peter Burke on Cory's Least Bittern ("more than 50% of the world's records are from Ontario, mainly Toronto's Ashbridge's Bay"), and by John Carley on the nearby Leslie Street Spit ("the creation and preservation of a public urban wilderness"). In an encouraging note for the future, Carley suggests that "the creation of the Leslie Street Spit and its subsequent naturalization has somewhat redressed the tremendous loss of the marsh".

I found the book to be a fascinating and informative read. It is well bound and printed on attractive, glossy paper, and appears to be largely free of typographical errors. By way of minor criticism, I would note that all photographs of the site should have included a year (or at least an estimate) in the captions. In addition, some sections (e.g., Cory's Least Bittern, and Saw-whet Owls) have literature cited which is not

included in the Bibliography, which can be an irritation to those seeking more information.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in Ontario history, birding, and conservation.

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PUBLICATION NOTICE

Identification Guide to North American Birds. Part 1. 1997. By *Peter Pyle.* Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, California. Softcover, 732 pages. $42.00 American. Order by mail from Slate Creek Press, Box 219, Bolinas, CA, U.S.A. 94924, or by phone: (415) 868-1221, ext. 21.

This is a greatly expanded revision of *Identification Guide to North American Passerines* (1987) by Pyle, Howell, Yunick and DeSante. Described as "a synthesis of known and new information on identification, geographic variation, molt, ageing and sexing landbirds in the hand and the field", this volume treats 395 species from Doves through Weavers. While it will be of most use to banders and others identifying birds in the hand, there is a wealth of material here for the field birder who can master its complex text and terminology (which, of course, only reflect the real complexity of the birds themselves!).

The close to 1000 separate drawings are mainly of feather shapes and patterns, but include a few on subjects such as: relative size, shape, and colour of lower mandibles of *Empidonax* flycatchers; head patterns in Clay-colored, Chipping and Brewer's Sparrows; and facial plumage and tail patterns of Eastern and Western Meadowlarks. All recognized subspecies (857) are listed with brief descriptions of range and distinguishing characteristics, plus all known hybrids.

There are expanded and detailed sections on molt for all species, employing "a simplified molt terminology based on Humphrey and Parkes", which is well-described in the Introduction. The volume concludes with 2,442 cited references, a valuable guide to further reading. *Ron Tozer*

Photo Quiz

Bob Curry

Rather few of our birds sit lengthwise along branches as this bird is doing. What we have is a dark and light bird with mottled, intricate plumage. It displays no legs and feet, a tiny somewhat hooked bill, a large-headed and no-necked appearance, and rather long, pointed wings. Moreover, it is sleeping! Our only birds which combine these features are the Caprimulgidae or nightjars. It is surprising to consider that in a north temperate eastern jurisdiction such as is Ontario, five species of goatsuckers have been recorded.

These may be divided into two groups. Two species of nighthawks in the genus *Chordeiles* have occurred in Ontario: the Common Nighthawk, which unfortunately is far less common than it once was, and the Lesser Nighthawk, which occurred once at Point Pelee associated with a late April push of tropical air. The other three are true nightjars, although two genera are involved. Alas, the Whip-poor-will also is heard by fewer than it once was in Ontario, but is nonetheless a widespread breeding inhabitant of southern and central Ontario. The Poorwill, a western species, has occurred accidentally on the shore

of James Bay, and the Chuck-will's-widow, a denizen of the hot, humid southeastern U.S., has occurred in summer (and bred) at a few widespread locations, but remains an extremely rare bird, being recorded far less than annually in the province.

All these birds have a white or buff slash across the throat, although the pattern, position and extent of these varies from one species to another. On all three nightjars, the white slash is around the base of the neck, whereas on the nighthawks it covers the throat and chin. Of course, on our subject the relaxed head is sunk into the neck such that only a portion of the white mark may be seen. Nightjar plumage is a composite of subtle browns, golds and blacks offering superb camouflage as they sit on the forest floor. Nighthawks, which frequent open country such as grasslands, deserts, and, in Ontario, Shield outcrops, alvars, sand plains, forest burns and hydro cuts, present a more pale appearance with more contrasts of light and dark. The subtleties on the one hand and the contrasts on the other are the result of distinctive patterns on specific feather tracts. The nightjars have several rows of black-centred scapulars. The nighthawks tend to more uniform feathering in these areas, with broader light or white margins to the feathers. The nightjar primaries are buffy or grey-brown, but with blackish cross bars and light buffy spots, whereas the somewhat less cryptic nighthawks have plain black primaries. The underparts on nighthawks are strongly barred blackish on white or pale buff.

Being scrub and forest edge hunters, the nightjars have shorter, more rounded wings and longer tails for increased maneuverability. On close examination, what this means results from two structural features. First, the outermost (tenth) primary is shorter than those immediately inward from it. On the folded primaries of a sitting bird, this difference tends to disappear. Second, each of the outer primaries is more rounded and blunt, whereas in the nighthawks these are more tapered to points. The net effect is that on these nightjars the folded wings end short of the tail tip, whereas in the nighthawks the wingtips reach to or beyond the tail tip.

So the subject bird with the rather contrasty plumage, barred flanks and the long, black, tapered wings is a nighthawk. But which one? This bird was photographed by Michael Runtz at Point Pelee in May, just the time and place for another vagrant Lesser Nighthawk to turn up! The slightly smaller size, as is implied in the name Lesser, is useless in species determination. Common Nighthawk tends to be more heavily barred underneath, and there is more contrast with white, whereas Lesser is buffier.

Again, however, these are tendencies only and cannot be used as proof of identity. The critical diagnostic feature is the position and extent of the white patch on the primaries of both species. But in our sleeping bird, the tertials are relaxed and have dropped down to cover the white patch. So is the bird unidentifiable as to species?

Perhaps not. Will Russell, in his own ID Frontiers discussion group entitled BIRDWG01 (available at http://nbhc.com/birdmail.htm) offers an excellent analysis of this feature based upon his examination of museum specimens, prompted by a controversial nighthawk photo in *Living Bird*, the Cornell University publication. To understand this feature, it is important to know that the primaries are numbered (1 to 10) from innermost to outermost. On Common Nighthawk, the patch is larger, extending from p10 to p6, while on Lesser, it extends from p10 to p7. This could be seen on a resting bird if the tertials were not relaxed, as they are in the Runtz photo.

The guide books make much of the point that the patch is farther out on the wing in Lesser than in Common. This, as it happens, is real and not just an artifact of the more rounded wing of Lesser (a point to which we will return briefly in a moment). On Lesser, the patch is positioned approximately opposite the tip of p5, whereas in Common it falls about opposite the tip of p4. Count downwards from the outermost primary on our bird. You will see that the tip and most of the exposed portion of p5 is visible. On a Lesser Nighthawk, the distal edge of the white patch on the folded outer primaries should just be visible, whereas on this **Common Nighthawk** the white patch remains covered by the tertials.

Controversy surrounds the point that primary 9 in Lesser Nighthawk is longer than p10, whereas p10 is longer than p9 in Common Nighthawk. This feature is well illustrated for both species on page 251 of the National Geographic Society guide. The problem is that photos and observations (again, see ID Frontiers) indicate that this feature is not diagnostic, and that on at least some Common Nighthawks, p9 can be longer than p10. Try studying nighthawks closely, especially during fall migration when flocks are overhead (which will not be easy given the erratic flight of nighthawks), keeping in mind that primary proportions may vary even more with juveniles.

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