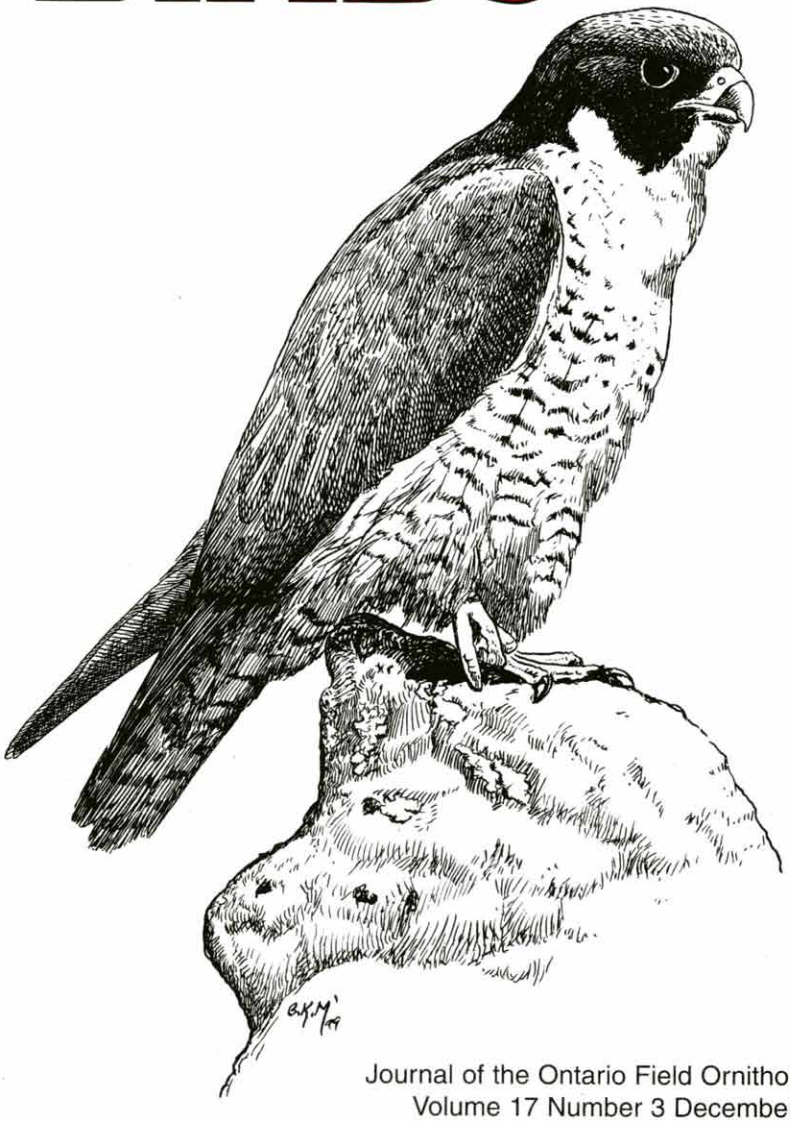
ONTARIO BIRDS



Journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists
Volume 17 Number 3 December 1999

Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It formed in 1982 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*), operates a bird sightings listserv (ONTBIRDS, moderated by Mike Street), hosts field trips throughout Ontario, and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

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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 disk, or typewritten (double-spaced). Please follow the 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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by *Barry Kent MacKay*

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Volume 1: Nonpasserines (Additions and Revisions)

George K. Peck and Ross D. James

Appendix C: *Additions to Volume 1 (Peck and James 1983) since Appendix A in Volume 2 (Peck and James 1987), and the 1993 and 1994 revisions in Ontario Birds (Peck and James 1993a, 1993b, 1994).*

In the list below, common and scientific names follow the 7th edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (AOU 1998). Changes in the listing sequence of species also conform with the 7th edition of the Check-list, and involve the families Cathartidae, Anatidae, and Phasianidae. Common names in parentheses were those used in previous revisions.

During the past six years, a considerable volume of new information has driven the desire to present this appendix. A new breeding species (Eared Grebe), population increases and decreases, new clutch sizes, additional incubation periods, new egg dates, breeding range extensions, and additional provincial nesting regions, all serve to indicate the ever-changing aspects of provincial ornithology.

For this appendix, we have counted the total number of nests and colonies in order to determine the average colony size for each of the 15 nonpasserine colonial species. In the Ontario Nest Records Scheme (ONRS), the number of nests of these colonial species was 1,733,693.

Breeding Bird Species

Red-throated Loon, *Gavia stellata*

An early observation (1944) of young with an adult on James Bay at Cape Henrietta Maria, Kenora, was recently acquired.

Pacific Loon, *Gavia pacifica*

Additional breeding records from 1944 on James Bay, Kenora, have been received of two broods of young with adults, one at Cape Henrietta Maria and the other 40 km (25 miles) to the south. An adult with two chicks was observed 3-5 July 1995 on an interior pond on Akimiski Island, NWT, James Bay, an island geographically but not politically part of Ontario (unpublished data, Ministry of Natural Resources); this breeding record is the most southerly to date.

Common Loon, *Gavia immer*
A 1995 nest record was submitted from Akimiski Island, NWT.

Pied-billed Grebe, *Podilymbus podiceps*
An early nest record from Elgin (1951), and recent nests from Lennox and Addington (1997), Sudbury (1991), and Waterloo (1993) have been received. The regional nesting total is now 35.

An incubation period of ca 22 days was reported from a 1994 Durham nest, and the hatching period was at least four days; incubation commenced before the last egg was laid. A second period of ca 22 days was obtained from a Lennox and Addington nest.

An early egg date of 26 April was submitted from Durham. In Grey, an adult was observed feeding 5 young late in the season on 5 September 1995.

Red-necked Grebe, *Podiceps grisegena*
After an absence of almost 50 years, the species has been reported nesting again in Halton on the Lake Ontario shoreline in 1991, 1994, 1997 (Dobos and Edmondstone 1998), 1998 and again in 1999. An adult was observed on the 1998 nest in Bronte Harbour on 13 April and young were subsequently hatched. An adult was observed on this same nest presumably incubating eggs on 7 September, and was observed with two small young on 20 September (C. Peck, pers. comm.). The first of these nestings would appear to provide our earliest egg date. In 1999, two pairs nested in this location.

An historical record of two 1903 nests in Simcoe was recently determined to be incorrect, and the species has been removed as a breeding bird from that county (Peck 1999).

Eared Grebe, *Podiceps nigricollis*
The first provincial nesting of this western species occurred in 1996 on a sewage lagoon in Emo, Rainy River District, when an adult was observed, 7 and 14 June, on a nest from which two young later fledged. In 1997, two more nests in the same location each fledged two young.

In Lambton, a courting pair was seen in June 1994, and in 1996 a possible breeding occurred there, since an adult was observed feeding a young bird.

American White Pelican, *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*
49 records representing 2 provincial regions. The 93 reported colonies total 77,719 nests, and the average colony size is 836 nests.

Double-crested Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auritus*
389 records representing 17 provincial regions. The records comprise 14 single nests, 233 colonies and a total of 40,243 nests. The average colony size is 173 nests.

New provincial nesting regions were Sudbury (1996) and Toronto (1993). After decades of low numbers due to lake pollution and human persecution, populations on the Great Lakes are currently increasing, and in 1998, the Canadian Wildlife Service tallied 6,697 nests in Lake Ontario's largest colony at Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Northumberland.

American Bittern, *Botaurus lentiginosus*
Early nest records from Bruce (1933) and Halton (1933) have been obtained, together with a current record from Haliburton (1994). Forty nesting regions are now represented. An early (1944) breeding record was received of a flightless young at Lake River, Kenora.

Least Bittern, *Ixobrychus exilis*
Previous nest records were recently obtained for Manitoulin (1981) and Waterloo (1949), increasing the regional total to 29.

Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*
699 records representing 43 provincial regions. Currently, a total of 19,966 nests is made up of 24 single nests and 468 colonies. The average colony size is 43 nests.

Figure 1: Nest of Eared Grebe with incubating adult. This western species first nested in Ontario in 1996 in Rainy River District. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Figure 2: Nest of Double-crested Cormorant with three eggs and a newly-hatched young, 28 June 1975, Big Chicken Island, Lake Erie, Essex County. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Nest records from Grenville (1997), Peel (1994), and Victoria (1992) have been added. The most northerly record for Cochrane District was the report of three nests at Moosonee in 1996 (Ridout 1996).

Great Egret, *Ardea alba*
42 records representing 8 provincial regions. These records list six single nestings, 31 colonies and a total of 465 nests. Average colony size is 15 nests.

An undocumented 1984 sighting of an adult at a nest in Wellington County (Peck 1987) has been added. Haldimand-Norfolk became the sixth provincial nesting region with the finding of a nest in Backus Woods in 1988, and again in 1997, when another nesting was photographically documented. The seventh provincial nesting region was Kent (1997), and the eighth was Northumberland (1999), with a single nest noted on High Bluff Island, Presqu'ile Provincial Park.

The Nottawasaga Island colony in Simcoe has ranged from 12 to 27 nests in the years 1993 through 1999, with 18 active nests in 1998 (Peck 1999), and 20 nests all containing young counted in 1999. Ten nests were reported on Chantry Island, Bruce County, in 1999.

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*
No new nests have been reported since the 1986 nest in Hamilton-Wentworth, noted in Appendix A (Peck and James 1987).

Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*
34 records representing 5 provincial regions. Nine single nests, 8 colonies and a total of 57 nests have been reported. The average colony size was 6 nests. No new reports of provincial nesting have been received since 1977.

Figure 3: Great Egret pair at Ontario's most northern colony on Nottawasaga Island, Georgian Bay, Simcoe County, 24 June 1991. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Green Heron (Green-backed Heron), *Butorides virescens*
No pertinent new information has been received. Because nesting is most often solitary, colonial nesting counts have not been considered for this species.

Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*
395 records representing 17 provincial regions. The records list 7 single nestings, 136 colonies and a total of 22,401 nests. Average colony size is 165 nests.

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*
Nest records were obtained from Glengarry (1999), Huron (1994), Nipissing (1991), and Victoria (1994), bringing the regional nesting total to 28.

Snow Goose, *Chen caerulescens*
17 records representing 2 provincial regions. The records list 7 single nests, 6 colonies, and a total of 21,030 nests. Average colony size is 3,505 nests. It should be noted that due to the straggling, spread-out colonies along the Hudson Bay coast of Ontario, accurate and meaningful colony counts have been difficult to ascertain, and the numbers of nests, undoubtedly, were far greater than these listed numbers.

Nest records were received in 1993 and 1996 from Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay.

Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*
Nest records from Glengarry (1997), Grenville (1997), Grey (1998), Renfrew (1994), and Victoria (1985) were added to bring the regional total to 33.

Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor*
Nests from Grey (1994) and Haldimand-Norfolk (1982) increased the regional total to 10.

[Trumpeter Swan], *Cygnus buccinator*
Nests of free-flying birds have now been reported from Durham (1995, 1997), Kenora (1994, 1995, 1997), Leeds (1996-8), Simcoe (1993-7), Toronto (1996-7),York (1996-7), and a 1999 breeding record from Haldimand-Norfolk was also noted. Formerly believed to breed in Ontario (Lumsden 1984), reintroduced birds are apparently close to re-establishing the species in Ontario (H.G. Lumsden, pers. comm.).

Wood Duck, *Aix sponsa*
Recently added nest records from Haliburton (1977), Muskoka (1996), Thunder Bay (1995), Victoria (1997), and Waterloo (1959) increased the nesting regions to 31.

A 28 day incubation period was recorded in a 1999 York nest.

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*
A 1981 nest record made Manitoulin the 17th nesting region, and breeding records from Sudbury (Ridout 1994) and Thunder Bay (Weir 1987) were noted.

American Wigeon, *Anas americana*
A 1996 nest record was submitted for Durham (the ninth provincial nesting region), and an early report of seven broods seen in 1944 on the west James Bay coast of Kenora was received.

American Black Duck, *Anas rubripes*
Early nest records for Lambton (1940) and Waterloo (1951) were obtained, and 41 nesting regions are presently represented. An early report of eight broods seen in 1944 on the west coast of James Bay in Cochrane and Kenora was noted.

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*
Glengarry (1997) and Prescott (1996) were two new regions for which nest records were received, and the regional total is now 48. A breeding record involving a female with eight young was submitted for 1996, on Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay.

Blue-winged Teal, *Anas discors*
A 1994 nest record for Rainy River and earlier nests from Peel (1979) and Waterloo (1957) have increased the provincial nesting regions to 34.

Northern Shoveler, *Anas clypeata*
Breeding records in 1994 have been noted from Hamilton in Hamilton-Wentworth, and Mud Lake in Niagara (Ridout 1994). A 1944 sighting of two broods on the west shore of James Bay, Kenora, was noted.

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta*
A female with young in Hamilton-Wentworth (1994) was evidence of breeding (Ridout 1994); and a nest record was submitted in 1995 from Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay. An early report from 1944 of 19 broods on the west coast of James Bay, Kenora, was obtained.

A 1992 nest from Winisk in Kenora had an inside diameter of 24 cm (9.4 inches) and an inside depth of 4 cm (1.6 inches).

Green-winged Teal, *Anas crecca*
Nesting records were submitted for Niagara (1993), Timiskaming (1995), and York (1985), increasing the regional total to 14. A female with two downy young, 18 July 1997, at Lakefield, Peterborough, was a noted breeding record (Ridout 1997). The Niagara and Timiskaming nests both held clutches of 10 eggs. Observations of three broods on the west shore of James Bay, Kenora, in 1944, were received.

Canvasback, *Aythya valisineria*
In addition to the breeding records from Dufferin and Kenora (Peck and James 1987), two other regions where probable breeding occurred are Kent and Lambton, both in 1983 (Weir 1983).

In July 1999, adults with two broods were observed and photographed in Toronto at the Leslie St. Spit, to establish the most recent new breeding record.

Redhead, *Aythya americana*
A 1994 nest record was received from Dufferin County (the eighth nesting region), and a 1998 breeding record from Hamilton-Wentworth was reported (Ridout 1998).

Ring-necked Duck, *Aythya collaris*
Nest records for Haliburton (1980) and Nipissing (1988) were submitted, and a probable breeding was reported from Norwich, Oxford (Ridout 1996). The regional nesting total is 11.

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila*
In 1944, eight broods were observed at or just south of Cape Henrietta Maria, Kenora.

King Eider, *Somateria spectabilis*
No new breeding evidence has been obtained since 1983.

Common Eider, *Somateria mollissima*
10 records representing 1 provincial region, and three islands in James and Hudson Bays, NWT. These records list 3 single nestings, 6 colonies, and a total of 130 nests. The average colony size is 23 nests.

An early breeding record was received of a brood at Cape Henrietta Maria, Kenora, in 1944.
EGGS 40 nests, 1 to 6 eggs; 1E (2N), **2E** (3N), **3E** (4N), **4E** (13N), **5E** (8N), **6E** (10N).
Average clutch range 4 to 6 eggs (31 nests).
EGG DATES 10 records, 23 June to 16 July (11 dates); 5 records, 26 June to 3 July.

Figure 4: Nest and eggs of Northern Pintail, 19 May 1989, Fishing Islands, Bruce County. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Oldsquaw, *Clangula hyemalis*
In 1944, 12 broods were observed at or just south of Cape Henrietta Maria, Kenora. No nests have been reported since 1981.

Bufflehead, *Bucephala albeola*
A 1998 sight record of four young on Lake Timiskaming, Timiskaming District, was submitted and is the first evidence of a probable breeding since 1983.

Common Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*
A female, observed on 10 July 1994 with 11 young, was a reported breeding record from Gananoque, Leeds (Ridout 1994).

Hooded Merganser, *Lophodytes cucullatus*
Nest records for Grey (1993), Lanark (1993), and Muskoka (1994) increased the provincial nesting regions to 22. A breeding record of an adult with 11 downy young in 1996 in Hamilton-Wentworth was noted (Ridout 1996).

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser*
A 1992 nest record from Grey has been received, and the regional nesting total is now 18.

Ruddy Duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*
Breeding records were received by the ONRS in 1989 from Essex, and in 1989 and 1990 from Grey. Additionally, probable breeding records were noted in 1989 from Huron (Weir 1989), in 1993 from Oxford (Ridout 1993), and a female with six young was observed in 1988 in Russell (Weir 1988). This species is continuing to expand its breeding range in Ontario.

Three ducklings, six to seven days old, with a female, were observed on 23 May 1997 at Lake St. Clair, and indicated a much earlier egg date than our previous earliest of 24 May.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*
Nest records have been received from Bruce (1987), Grenville (1997), Grey (early 1980s), Haldimand-Norfolk (1998), Hamilton-Wentworth (1998), Lanark (1997), Timiskaming (1985), and Wellington (1994), and the regional nesting total has been increased to 33.

Protection of known nests and the use of nesting platforms have been of additional help in the continued provincial breeding success of this widespread raptor. Nest records in the ONRS total 977 as of 1998.

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Records were received for 1996 nestings from Manitoulin and Northumberland, and the species has now been recorded nesting in 23 provincial regions. In 1999, 7 of 11 active nests produced young along the Rainy River in Rainy River District; and, also in 1999 in southern Ontario, 17 active nests fledged 24 young. One of the latter nests was located on an island in the St. Lawrence River, Leeds County, and was the first nest in that region in more than three decades.

As was indicated in Part B of the revision of Volume 1 (Peck and James 1993b), the Bald Eagle is continuing slowly to recover its former status in southern Ontario. Nest records in the ONRS files now total 695 (1,075 nests).

An incubating adult, 20 February 1999, in Elgin, provided our earliest egg date.

Northern Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*
Essex (1989) and Glengarry (1999) were new nesting regions, raising the regional total to 41.

Another incubation period of ca 32 days was submitted.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*
Grey (1985) and Niagara (1993) were recently submitted nesting regions, which now total 25.

Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*
Kenora (1995), Ottawa-Carleton (1994), and Prince Edward (1995) were the most recently added nesting regions, which now total 32. By 1998, there were 150 nest records in the ONRS.

Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*
Nest records have been submitted from Glengarry (1995), Haliburton (1977), Sudbury (1997), and Wellington (1995). Nesting regions total 33, and by 1998 there were 182 nest records in the ONRS.

Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*
A 1993 nest record for Algoma was only the fourth from northern Ontario. The nesting region total is now 35.

Broad-winged Hawk, *Buteo platypterus*
Nest records were received for Bruce (1982), Glengarry (1996), and Lennox and Addington (1998), increasing the regional nesting total to 36.

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*
A 1997 nest record for Grenville and a 1998 nest record from Russell have been added.The Red-tailed Hawk nests in 44 provincial regions and is the most commonly reported nesting Ontario raptor, with 1,150 nest records in the ONRS.

Golden Eagle, *Aguila chrysaetos*
All 24 known nestings of Golden Eagle up to 1997 are in ONRS files. All nests were in Kenora and were recently updated from files submitted by the Ministry of Natural Resources, who have requested that their exact locations not be revealed.

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*
Parry Sound (1994) was the latest of the 42 nesting regions recorded. In 1993, the most northerly nest record to date involved a nest found near Hudson Bay at Fort Severn in Kenora.

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*
Haliburton (1994), Renfrew (1997), and Timiskaming (1985) were the most recent new nesting regions. The present total of 105 nests, 14 nesting regions, plus numerous recent sightings suggest that this falcon is increasing in Ontario.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*
Almost 48 new nest records have been received in the ONRS since 1993 (Peck and James 1993b), with 17 nests in 1997, and another 18 reported in 1998 (Ridout 1998). These records are the result of the re-introduction of captive-raised birds to new as well as former nesting sites in the province. Some of these sites were on ledges of tall buildings in urban centres. In 1998, a pair nested successfully on a cliff-ledge in Niagara Gorge. New nesting regions were Algoma (1997), Hamilton-Wentworth (1995), Manitoulin (1995), Middlesex (1996), Niagara (1998), Ottawa-Carleton (1996), Timiskaming (1997), and Toronto (1995). The nesting region total is 21.

In 1999, urban nests continue to be reported from Hamilton, London, Ottawa, and Toronto.

Ring-necked Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*
An early nest record (1953) has been obtained for Waterloo County, as has a 1977 nest record from Peel. The most recent nest record of this species was submitted in 1990 for Durham.The regional nesting total is 17.

Figure 5: Nest and eggs of Broad-winged Hawk, 30 May 1967, Durham County. Photo by *G. K. Peck.*

Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa umbellus*
Glengarry (1995) was the 46th regional nesting, and a 1978 nest in Haliburton was the 47th.
A short incubation period of 20 days was submitted.

Spruce Grouse, *Falcipennis canadensis*
34 nests representing 7 provincial regions.
EGGS 32 nests with 1 to 8 eggs; 1E (1N), 2E (1N), 3E (1N), **4E** (5N), **5E** (10N), **6E** (7N), **7E** (5N), **8E** (2N).
Average clutch range 5 to 6 eggs (17 nests).
EGG DATES 30 nests, 9 May to 25 June (37 dates); 15 nests, 29 May to 10 June.

Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*
The most southerly breeding record in Ontario was a 1996 sighting of a female with six young on the James Bay coast, 100 km (60 mi) north of Attawapiskat, Kenora.

Sharp-tailed Grouse, *Tympanuchus phasianellus*
Although no new nests have been reported, the species continues to breed on Manitoulin Island as evidenced by its "lek" activities each spring at Gore Bay airfield.

Wild Turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*
New nest records have been received from Dufferin (1996), Grey (1997), Hamilton-Wentworth (1994), Northumberland (1997), and Victoria (1997), and nesting regions have increased to 10. Breeding records have also been noted from Brant (1998), Bruce (1987), and Elgin (1993), as released birds continue to propagate in southern Ontario.
A Grey nest contained 16 eggs and a Hamilton-Wentworth nest contained 18 eggs.

Figure 6: Female Merlin at nest with three young. This falcon appears to be increasing in Ontario. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*
In Volume 1, page 157, line 3, the regions in parentheses should read "(Cochrane and Kenora Districts and Simcoe County)".

No new nests have been reported since the fourth in Ottawa-Carleton in 1982.

King Rail, *Rallus elegans*
The breeding record from Grey (1987) mentioned in the Volume 1 revision (Peck and James 1993b) was considered questionable by the Grey-Bruce Bird Records Committee and has been discarded.

No new nests have been recorded since 1977.

Virginia Rail, *Rallus limicola*
A Bruce (1991) nest was the 29th regional nesting and a Nipissing (1999) nest was the 30th.

Sora, *Porzana carolina*
A nest record for Sudbury (1996) has been submitted, and was the 32nd regional nesting.

Common Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus*
An early (1953) nest record from Waterloo and 1997 nest records from Lennox and Addington have been obtained, and the nesting region total is 27.

A late egg date of 26 July has been obtained from a Lennox and Addington nest.

American Coot, *Fulica americana*
An early (1949) nest record has been obtained from Waterloo County, which was the 20th nesting region. It is worthy of note that no current nests of this marsh-dwelling species have been received since 1992.

Figure 7: Sharp-tailed Grouse on lek, 30 April 1997, Gore Bay, Manitoulin District. Photo by *G. K. Peck*.

Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis*
Many current sightings and reports of breeding would appear to indicate a marked population increase of this species in Ontario. In 1996, breeding was documented in Haldimand-Norfolk (Ridout 1996), and in 1998, breeding was reported in Lanark (Ridout 1998). Nest records from Peterborough (1998) and Thunder Bay (1993) have been submitted, bringing the regional nesting total to 6.

The 1988 breeding record for Russell (Peck and James 1993b) was actually in Ottawa-Carleton; the observation of a pair with two young (Weir 1988) occurred at Navan, on the northeast side of the Mer Bleue Bog.

American Golden-Plover, *Pluvialis dominica*
No new nests have been reported since 1984.

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*
Two nests were found on Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay on 11 and 14 June 1995.

Piping Plover, *Charadrius melodus*
Single nest records have been submitted in 1992, 1995, 1996, 1997, and two in 1998, all from Lake of the Woods, Spohn Twp., Rainy River District, where this species is making its last stand in the province.

Lesser Yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes*
A 1996 nest record was submitted from an islet near Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay, and is the most southerly nest to date.

Solitary Sandpiper, *Tringa solitaria*
In 1994, a record was received of the second Ontario nest of this species, found on Manitoulin Island in 1992.

Marbled Godwit, *Limosa fedoa*
A breeding record of two adults with four downy young was recorded on 6 June 1994 at the Rainy River sewage lagoons, Rainy River District (Elder 1994).

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*
Nest records from Glengarry (1996) and Victoria (1996) increased the regional total to 31.

American Woodcock, *Scolopax minor*
The 42nd region from which a nesting has occurred was Lanark (1996), and the 43rd was Glengarry (1998).

A fifth incubation period of 20 days was reported from a York nest in 1999.

Wilson's Phalarope, *Phalaropus tricolor*
A 1981 breeding record for Bruce has been obtained.

Little Gull, *Larus minutus*
No nests have been reported since 1989.

Bonaparte's Gull, *Larus philadelphia*
Timiskaming became the 5th provincial nesting region with the submission of a 1997 nest record, near Kirkland Lake. This is the most southerly nest record for Ontario.

Ring-billed Gull, *Larus delawarensis*
482 records representing 33 provincial regions. These records list 24 single nestings, 298 colonies, and a total of 1,363,179 nests. The average colony size is 4,574 nests.

Nipissing became the 33rd provincial nesting region with the submission of a 1996 nesting. Later, an early (1909) nest record for Nipissing was obtained.

Figure 8: Nest and egg of Sandhill Crane. Breeding records and occurrences of this species are increasing in Ontario. Photo by *G.K. Peck*.

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*
1,105 records representing 37 provincial regions. These records list 111 single nestings, 566 colonies, and a total of 120,227 nests. The average colony size is 212 nests.

A breeding record of three half-grown young was submitted for 1996 on Akimiski Island, NWT, in James Bay.

Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*
Nest records have been received for Hamilton-Wentworth (1995) and for Niagara (1995-6), and nesting regions now total 11.

Caspian Tern, *Sterna caspia*
111 records representing 13 provincial regions. These records list 13 single nestings, 77 colonies, and a total of 11,981 nests. The average colony size is 155 nests.

Rainy River (1996) was the 13th provincial nesting region. New nesting sites were reported from Half-moon Island in Georgian Bay, Bruce County (1980-91), and from an islet in Spider Bay, Parry Sound District (1990). In 1998, the colony in Hamilton Harbour totalled 433 nests (Ridout 1998).

Another incubation period of at least 21 days was reported from Toronto (M of M) in 1998.

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*
620 records representing 32 provincial regions. These records list 72 single nestings, 336 colonies, and a total of 52,907 nests. The average colony size is 157 nests.

In 1998, the Hamilton Harbour colonies totalled 261 nests.

Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*
The 19 nest records in the ONRS, all from Kenora District, describe eight single nestings and 11 colonies making up a total of 87 nests. The average colony size is 7 nests.

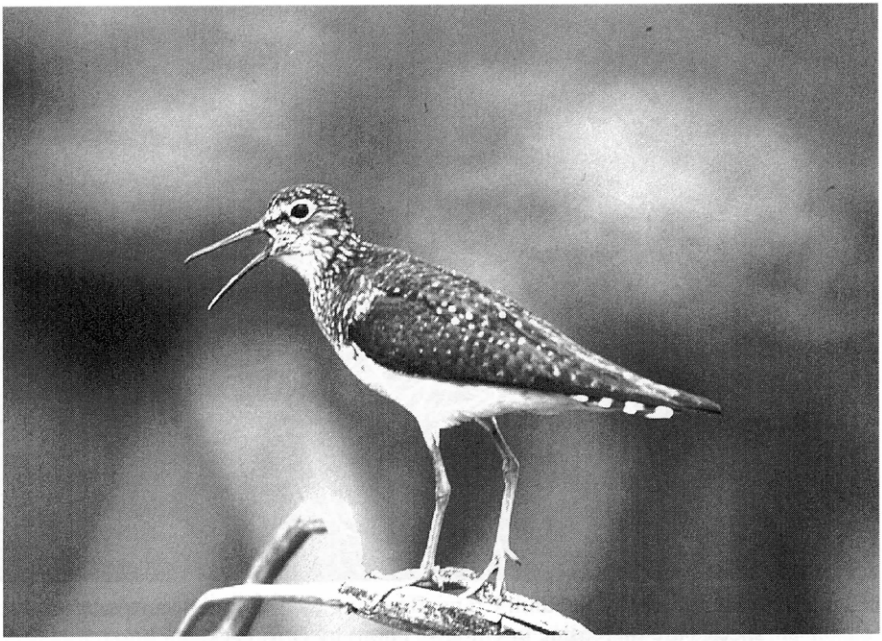

Figure 9: Solitary Sandpiper on breeding territory, 28 June 1986, Vrooman Twp., Sudbury District. Photo by *M. K. Peck*.

No nests have been reported since 1993 when three nests in a small colony were observed and photographed on a small island south of Akimiski Island, James Bay, NWT.

Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*
51 records representing three provincial regions. These records list 9 single nestings, 22 colonies, and a total of 739 nests. The average colony size is 33 nests.

The most recent nest record was from Kent in 1997.

Black Tern, *Chlidonias niger*
1,066 records representing 32 provincial regions. These records list 142 single or isolated nestings, 216 colonies, and a total of 1,912 nests. The average colony size is 8 nests. It should be noted that because the small colonies of this species are usually loose and spread-out, resulting in some nests being missed, the number of single nests may be fewer than listed and the average colony size may be a little greater.

A nest record for Algoma (1996) increased the provincial nesting regions to 32.

A 1994 Durham nest was positioned on top of an abandoned Canada Goose nest, still containing two goose eggs.

Black Guillemot, *Cepphus grylle*
On an islet just off the northwest coast of North Twin Island, NWT, in central James Bay, 11 nests (18 eggs) were found on 18 and 22 July 1973 (Manning 1981). This is the only other record of nesting near Ontario since the initial record in 1957 (Peck and James 1983).

Figure 10: Nest and eggs of Caspian Tern, 29 June 1978, South Limestone Island, Georgian Bay, Parry Sound District. Photo by *G.K. Peck.*

Rock Dove, *Columba livia*
Nest records were received for Brant (1994), Essex (1978), Haliburton (1999), and Muskoka (1995), and 35 provincial regions are now represented by nestings.

The inside diameter of a York nest was 14.8 cm (5.8 inches).

Incubation periods in 9 nests ranged from 17 to 21 days, with 5 nests averaging 18 to 20 days.

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*
Glengarry (1999), Muskoka (1995), and Sudbury (1994) nests increased the regional total to 43.

A late egg date of 4 October 1997 was submitted from Grey County.

Passenger Pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*
Omitted from Volume 1 was Bruce County, where two dated nestings occurred. The first of these was in Amabel Twp., 28 April 1876, and the second, also in Amabel Twp., Lot 13, Con. D., 24 May 1878 (Mitchell 1935).

Black-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*
A 14 day incubation period was reported from a York nest in 1999.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus americanus*
A 1997 nest made Haldimand-Norfolk the 26th nesting region.

Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*
Sault Ste. Marie is mentioned in the distribution of this species in Ontario (Campbell and Campbell 1984), and is far north of its breeding range in southern Ontario. It is doubtful if the species breeds at such a latitude.

No new nests have been reported since 1989.

Eastern Screech-Owl, *Otus asio*
A Haldimand-Norfolk nest in 1998 increased the nesting regions to 26.

An incubation period of ca 24 days was reported in a 1999 York nest containing 4 eggs, and hatching was completed in two days. Two other incubation periods of 25 and 27 days were submitted. In each instance, incubation was arbitrarily assumed to have begun with the laying of the second egg.

Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*
Muskoka (1995) was the 45th provincial nesting region. A 1994 Niagara nest held 3 young and 1 egg and is the only reported clutch of four for Ontario.

Northern Hawk Owl, *Surnia ulula*
Manitoulin (1997) became the 4th provincial nesting region when the sixth nest reported to date was discovered on 29 March 1997 and photographed (ROM PR 2090), on Barrie Island, part of Manitoulin Island. Three of the 4 hatched young later fledged successfully (Campbell et al. 1998). This nest was the second most southerly found in Ontario.

A breeding record of an adult with 3 young was reported in 1997 from Black Sturgeon Lake, Thunder Bay (Ridout 1997). In 1998, the seventh and eighth provincial nests were found in this same area. The 1998 nests were 3.5 km (2.2 miles) apart in a recent burn and were situated in burned poplars; one nest with four young was on top of a stub at a height of 12 m (39 ft), and the other with five young was in a hollow in the trunk at a height of 9 m (29.5 ft).

Barred Owl, *Strix varia*
28 nests representing 13 provincial regions.

Haliburton (1980), Manitoulin (1987), Muskoka (1997), Nipissing (1999), and Victoria (1996) nest records recently increased the provincial nesting regions to 13. A 1999 Durham RM nest was the second for the region. In 1987, a Manitoulin nest provided an early egg date of 23 March, and a latest egg date of 22 May was reported from a 1982 Haliburton nest.
EGGS 16 nests with 2 to 3 eggs; **2E** (8N), **3E** (8N).
EGG DATES 11 nests, 23 March to 22 May (16 dates); 6 nests, 18 April to 15 May.

Great Gray Owl, *Strix nebulosa*
A photograph made on Manitoulin in 1997, of a fledged juvenile still with traces of down, has been received at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM PR 2089); it provides documentation of the second most southerly breeding record for this species in Ontario (Whitelaw 1998).

Boreal Owl, *Aegolius funereus*
In 1994, the third Ontario nest was reported from the third provincial region, Thunder Bay.

Northern Saw-whet Owl, *Aegolius acadicus*
Two nest records have made Parry Sound the 13th provincial nesting region; one of these nests was an early record from 1928, and the other was a nest discovered in 1981. A nest in a bird box in 1998 made Brant the 14th nesting region. A 1998 breeding record from Peterborough was reported (Ridout 1998).

Common Nighthawk, *Chordeiles minor*
Two nest records from Toronto both had incubation periods of 19 days.

Whip-poor-will, *Caprimulgus vociferus*
Lively, Sudbury (1994) was the site of the 25th provincial nesting region and the most northerly nest location yet recorded for the species in Ontario.

Chimney Swift, *Chaetura pelagica*
Niagara (1995) was the 33rd provincial nesting region.

In Haliburton, two complete clutches of two eggs each were incubated and young successfully fledged.

Incubation periods of 19 and 20 days were reported also from two Haliburton nests.

Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon*
Lambton became the 44th provincial nesting region when a 1940 nest record was submitted. INCUBATION PERIOD 6 nests; 3 of 22 days, 1 of no more than 23 days, 1 of 26 days, 1 of at least 26 days, and 1 of ca 28 days. The last three periods are longer than usual (Bent 1940, Nice 1954, Hamas 1994).

Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*
Bruce (1996) was the 37th provincial nesting region.

Incubation periods of 11 days and 12 days were reported from two York nests.

Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*
Brant (1994) was the 10th provincial nesting region. In 1996, 1997, and 1998 probable breeding records were reported from Leeds (Ridout 1996, 1997, 1998).

A 1995 nest from Haldimand-Norfolk was in a cavity in a dead beech at a low height of 7.6 m (25 ft); the cavity was 25.5 cm (10 inches) in depth, and had a diameter of 8.2 cm (3.2 inches).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*
Nest records were submitted for Brant (1985) and Glengarry (1995), and 39 nesting regions are now represented.

New incubation periods: 1 nest, 13 days; 3 nests, 14 days.

Downy Woodpecker, *Picoides pubescens*
Glengarry (1995), Grey (1993), and Haliburton (1996) nests increased the regional total to 40. INCUBATION PERIOD 12 nests, 12 to 14 days; 6 of 12 days, 5 of 13 days, and 1 of 14 days.

Hairy Woodpecker, *Picoides villosus*
Nest records for Essex (1994), Glengarry (1999), Lennox and Addington (1995), and Prince Edward (1994), increased the provincial nesting regions to 47.

Two more incubation periods of 12 days, and one of 13 days were recorded.

Three-toed Woodpecker, *Picoides tridactylus*
Nest records have been obtained from Frontenac (1981) and Haliburton (1984). Eight provincial nesting regions are now represented. There are 28 nest records on file.

Black-backed Woodpecker, *Picoides arcticus*
Lanark (1994) was the 14th provincial nesting region.

An incubation period of ca 14 days was submitted.

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*
In Volume 1 (Peck and James 1983), under the sub-heading EGGS, the number of nests should read 235 and not 245.

A 1998 nest record for Russell was submitted and the regional total is all but complete at 51. INCUBATION PERIOD 17 nests, 11 to 15 days; 9 nests averaged 12 to 13 days. In at least one nest, incubation commenced before the clutch was complete.

Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*
Haldimand-Norfolk (1997), Haliburton (1996), and Waterloo (1994) nests increased the regional total to 33. Photographic documentation of a 1992 Elgin nesting has been received. INCUBATION PERIOD 3 nests: 1 of 15 days, 1 of 16 days, and 1 of 20 days. The variation in length may indicate that incubation commenced before the clutch was complete, as often happens (Bull and Jackson 1995).

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Least Bittern with young in nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

Questions about Thayer's Gull

Richard C. Banks and M. Ralph Browning

Two recent papers (Howell 1999, Pittaway 1999) have expressed opinions about the taxonomy of Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) and its presumed close relatives. Both express the viewpoints of the authors, seemingly based on reports of unpublished studies weighted by opinions published by others. Both chide the AOU Check-list (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, 1998) for retaining specific status for Thayer's Gull, and Pittaway (1999) suggests that "The AOU is bound to change its position as more authors independently adopt a taxonomy recognizing that Thayer's is a form of the Iceland Gull".

This response is at two levels. One of us (RCB) chairs the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (=Check-list Committee) and will respond to what "the AOU is bound to..." do. Beyond that, we have long had an intense interest in the systematic position and taxonomy of the Thayer's Gull complex and have done a great deal of research on it which, unfortunately, we are not yet prepared to publish. The length of that interest is suggested by the fact that most of the comments below are from a paper that we presented to a meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society in 1990.

The Committee on Classification and Nomenclature is a conservative group that is inclined to maintain the taxonomic status quo until there is sufficient published scientific evidence for us to consider and vote on a change. Aside from the publication of opinions, there has been nothing to instigate even serious discussion of Thayer's Gull by the committee, although the committee is aware that there is a problem and that its treatment may be wrong. There are, in fact, a fair number of species in that category. The committee may eventually change its position, but the reason will not be unfounded opinions of others.

Some years ago, we (B and B) compiled a taxonomic history of Thayer's Gull similar to that of Pittaway (1999). Rather than leading us to conclusions, our compilation generated additional questions that we believe must be addressed before an informed taxonomic decision can be made. Our studies since we posed these questions in 1990 have addressed some of these problems, but to our knowledge none of them has been fully resolved. Along with our questions, we give some comments on why they remain unanswered. What follows is only slightly modified from our oral presentation.

As everyone knows, Thayer's Gull was named as a species in 1915, reduced to the level of a subspecies of the Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*, a few years later, revived as a distinct species in the 1970s, and is now considered by some to be a subspecies of the Iceland Gull, *L. glaucoides*. The nomenclature and history of Thayer's Gull is so closely tied to that of Kumlien's Gull, first described as a species, *L. kumlieni*, in 1883, and now generally considered a subspecies of the Iceland Gull, that it is impossible to discuss one without frequent reference to the other.

1. Is the Thayer's Gull the same bird in the western part of its range as in the eastern part? The original description of Thayer's Gull was based on birds breeding on Ellesmere Island, although two birds from the Arctic coast of Alaska were also assigned to the species. No information on the true range of the species was then available. Dwight (1917) quickly placed it in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, and extended its range as far west as Banks Island by assigning to the form several specimens from intervening localities. The August adult from Alaska has been ignored in subsequent statements of the breeding range, but who knows if that bird was a breeder, or if it was even what we now call Thayer's Gull.

Taverner (1933) stated that the characters of Thayer's Gull in the east were stable, showing little or no intergradation with the Herring Gull, but that in the western Arctic there was complete and perfect intergradation of characters so that "it is difficult to tell where one form begins and the other leaves off". Manning et al. (1956) similarly found no sign of intergradation with the Herring Gull in the Frozen Straits area of eastern Canada, even though the range of variation there was sufficient to overlap Kumlien's Gull, but *contra* Taverner, they had no difficulty in assigning western birds. One is forced to wonder if Manning et al. had a better set of criteria than Taverner. At any rate, their confidence was so much better that they did not give their criteria or the distinguishing characters of the two forms.

Is it possible that the western birds assigned to *thayeri* are different from the eastern birds? We cannot tell, because eastern and western *thayeri* have never been directly compared in the literature. Most published measurements of *thayeri* lump all specimens available into a single sample, and aside from the very large numbers of Thayer's Gulls measured by Smith (1966) on Baffin Island and in the Frozen Straits area, all told there are measurements in the literature of fewer than 50 male Thayer's Gulls – and some of these may be the same birds measured by different workers. Despite the fact that Thayer's

Gull acts like a species in the east, relative to the Herring Gull, and like a subspecies in the west, according to some accounts, no one has reported looking at the possibility of differences in eastern and western birds.

2. With that in mind, we ask how reliable are identifications of Thayer's Gull? One of our favourite quotations is from a 1986 *American Birds* Regional Summary, where Ken Able noted that "A bird matching the description of what usually passes for an adult Thayer's Gull was seen . . . ."

As a subspecies, Thayer's Gull was reduced to observational obscurity only two years after it was described. There were few birders then, so there is no record of a lot of these gulls being seen. Field workers in the Canadian Arctic did identify and study Thayer's Gulls, and museum workers labeled some specimens with that name. But many of us grew up before there was an entity called Thayer's Gull to be seen on field trips, and not surprisingly there are few records of it in most of the literature for about 50 years, and no illustrations of it in field guides of those times. Soon after studies purported to show that it didn't interbreed with anything and it was elevated back to species status, Thayer's Gulls popped out of the woodwork everywhere, showing up on life lists, state lists, and so on, particularly in the west where the literature said it occurred abundantly, but to some extent all over North America. It is not only observations or sight records that we wonder about; we wonder also about identifications of specimens.

Consider the following. In 1945, a gull taken in the Niagara Falls area was sent to the American Museum where it was identified as *L. glaucoides kumlieni.* Another "almost identical" bird taken in the same area in 1957 was therefore also considered to be Kumlien's, or Iceland, Gull. After Thayer's Gull was recognized as a species, those specimens were considered to be the first records of *Larus thayeri* for the Niagara Frontier region (Andrle 1969). There is no indication that the specimens were re-examined or re-compared – just re-identified. We wonder which species they really represent, and why, if the first was Thayer's Gull after 1973, it was not identified as *L. argentatus thayeri* originally. Kumlien's Gulls did not automatically become Thayer's Gulls when *thayeri* was split from *argentatus.* We wonder, too, about records for the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where what appears to be the same individual has been identified in the literature as Thayer's, Herring, and Kumlien's gull. Most current literature seems to reflect the first identification, by Dwight (1925), and ignore the two later identifications. How can the range of a form be recorded if we

don't know which identification of an individual is correct?

Taverner (1933) wrote in reference to Kumlien's Gull: "Juveniles of sure identity have never been positively demonstrated and specimens so designated have been named more by process of elimination and careful judgement (neither of which I care to question here but suggest possibilities of doubt) than by evidence of parentage". Surely that statement could be extended to Thayer's Gull, many records of which are based on juvenile birds.

3. Have there been recent range extensions of either or both Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls creating a zone of secondary contact where they are now reported to interbreed? On Southampton Island, Sutton (1932) found only *L. argentatus* on the south side of the island. Manning et al. (1956) found *L. thayeri* in a small area at the northern tip, and Smith (1966) found Thayer's much farther eastward. Kumlien's were unknown from the island. But Gaston and Decker (1985) found Thayer's and Kumlien's interbreeding on the north side of the Bell Peninsula, the easternmost part of Southampton Island, where neither species had been reported – although perhaps no one ever had a chance to look there.

On Baffin Island, Soper (1928, 1946) reported that Thayer's Gull was confined to a northern area extending only to Pond Inlet, which is very far north, and Kumlien's Gull was found north only to Cumberland Sound, which is pretty far south. Wynne-Edwards (1952) noted that there were no gulls of the *glaucoides-argentatus* group in several intermediate localities, and that there was a gap of about 500 miles (800 km) on the east coast of Baffin Island without any gulls of this group. Maps published by Macpherson (1961) show this large gap. There were, however, several colonies of Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) known from the area, so it is not strictly a matter of the area being unexplored. Yet, for some reason, Smith went to Home Bay, in the middle of this no-gull's-land, in 1961 and found not only Glaucous but also Thayer's, Kumlien's, and Herring Gulls, breeding in variously mixed colonies in large numbers, and mating assortatively. In 1975 and 1976, Knudsen revisited Home Bay and found Thayer's and Kumlien's interbreeding (Godfrey 1986, Snell 1989).

Thus, by early accounts, Thayer's and Kumlien's gulls were well separated geographically, but suddenly they were interbreeding all over the place, especially where neither had been before. If these are truly zones of secondary contact, how much do they tell us about species relationships? Might not the situation stabilize in a decade or two, as it may have in a similar situ-

ation in orioles in the Great Plains? How much do we need to know before we rush to judgement?

4. And anyway, what happens when *thayeri* and *kumlieni* interbreed? Normally, when two species interbreed, the progeny are intermediate in most respects. If this happens frequently, and there is a fair number of F-1 hybrids, they may interbreed and backcross and form a hybrid swarm. Perhaps this is the situation in the Thayer's-Kumlien's Gull, where individual variation was said to be so extensive as to bridge the difference between the two types even before they were known to interbreed. Yet where they occur together, investigators seem to have no trouble telling them apart. Smith apparently had no trouble on Baffin Island where they bred assortatively. Gaston and Decker (1985) had no trouble on Southampton Island, reporting six pairs of Thayer x Thayer, five pairs of Thayer x Kumlien, and one pair of Kumlien x Kumlien. They did mention two intermediate birds, but did not list them among known pairs. How do you tell intermediates when the range of variation bridges the gap?

Snell (1989) wisely didn't use names, but reported dark- and light-winged pair combinations and cited Knudsen's unpublished paper as reporting pairs consisting of light x dark, two of "fairly intermediate" coloration, and intermediate x light-winged. Since Snell considered the birds to form an unbroken continuum from dark to white, and Knudsen's criteria are not available, these data are not readily interpretable.

The results of any of these interbreedings, in terms of young produced, have never been reported, so we do not know (except as judged from the range of variation) whether the forms are interfertile. No young from mixed nests have ever been collected or raised to adulthood, so we don't know what they look like. And when you get right down to it, seeing two birds at a nest does not necessarily mean that those two birds copulated and laid the eggs in that nest, if there are any. Most of these nests have been viewed only from afar, e.g., from a boat.

5. Even if interbreeding is regular and mixing is thorough, why is Kumlien's Gull, and therefore Thayer's, associated with the Iceland Gull? When it was first described, *kumlieni* was differentiated from and compared to the Glaucous-winged Gull, *Larus glaucescens*, of the Pacific coast. The English name proposed was "Lesser Glaucous-winged Gull." Its similarity to the Iceland Gull was noted and a possible relationship mentioned, mainly on the basis of color.

Taverner (1933) stated that *kumlieni* "is of the Herring Gull type" with the "wing tip pattern washed out to grey and greatly reduced in area. In all other charac-

ters it seems indistinguishable from that species." Manning et al. (1956:98fn) quoted Wynne-Edwards as writing that "in life Kumlien's Gull does not differ greatly from the Herring Gull except in the paler pigmentation of the primaries, whereas they were 'obviously different from Iceland Gulls on any but the most superficial examination'".

Rand (1942) was the first to list *kumlieni* as a subspecies of the Iceland Gull, on the basis of a series of immatures intergrading in color. Salomonsen (1950) thought that both *kumlieni* and *thayeri* should be treated as the same species as the Iceland. Characters he gave were smaller size, less melanin on the primaries, and "having a very different, much paler juvenile plumage". But according to Godfrey (1986), some young *thayeri* are darker than Herring Gulls.

The fact that both Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls have dark fleshy eye rings, in contrast to the yellow eye ring of the Herring Gull, has been of primary importance in merging these two forms. This eye ring is also dark in the Iceland Gull, and the Glaucous-winged. Both Kumlien's and Thayer's have variable dark flecking in the iris, in contrast to the pure yellow iris of the Herring Gull and the yellow iris of the Iceland Gull. There is much variation reported in iris color of both Thayer's and Kumlien's gulls, ranging from nearly pure yellow to very dark. Eye color and contrast do not really provide any definitive evidence of relationship. No one has reported a contact zone between Iceland Gulls and Kumlien's Gulls. Indeed, they are well separated by the Davis Straits.

Is it conceivable that Thayer's and Kumlien's could represent a species distinct from both Herring and Iceland? That seems to be about the only combination that has not been proposed seriously.

6. And finally, has everyone forgotten that regardless of one's concepts of the characters of these birds, or how many of each are identified in the field in or out of the expected range, their nomenclatural disposition depends on the characters of the type specimens? Despite all that has been written about Thayer's Gull in the past two or three decades, there is no indication in the literature that anyone (besides us) has examined the type specimen or the rest of the type series since Dwight in the early 1920s. The same can be said for Kumlien's Gull. Even Howell (1999), who gave measurements of birds from the Museum of Comparative Zoology, does not mention examining the type of *thayeri*, which is housed there.

The purpose of this paper is not specifically to rebut or refute anything published on the subject by others. Rather, we hope that it might stimulate work that will eventually lead to the resolution of the problem.

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Richard C. Banks, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, National Museum of Natural History MRC-111, Washington, DC 20560-0111, U.S.A.

M. Ralph Browning, 15373 Elk Creek Road., Trail, OR 97541, U.S.A.

Book Reviews

Art on the Wing: British, American, and Canadian Illustrated Bird Books. 1999. By *Joan Winearls.* Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto. Softcover, 80 pages. $20.

Birders who missed Joan Winearls' excellent exhibition of bird books at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in Toronto can still obtain copies of Joan's book which was written to accompany the exhibition. The book stands on its own as a scholarly, but easily readable, history of the books that led up to our present bird books.

Art on the Wing traces the development of bird books that were either published in, or contained birds from, the Americas over several centuries. It is fascinating to read the evolution of bird art and printing techniques from their first crude beginnings to the excellence we have come to take for granted today.

The illustrations of the 18th and 19th centuries were stiff and lifeless, as would be expected where the artists depended on mounted specimens or even study skins as their models. Audubon tried to bring life to his work by wiring freshly killed birds into life-like poses. He then traced the outline of the bird on graph paper before filling in the detail of the feathering and soft parts. The bird in the resulting painting was of course full size, as was reflected in his huge Double Elephant folio edition of *The Birds of America.* With the advent of good binoculars and photography, some of the artists were able to portray the personality of the bird.

Short biographies of all major Canadian and American artists are woven into the text. I especially enjoyed those of our Canadian artists such as Allan Brooks and Terry Short, who, despite the high quality of their work, have not been given the recognition they deserve.

I found the description of the evolution of printing techniques to be most interesting. The earlier books were limited to black and white illustrations printed from crude wood cuts. Wood gave over to metal plates that were given a coating that could be scraped away to produce a drawing of the bird that could be reproduced many times. The quality of the reproduction was again improved by the advent of stone plates (lithography).

An enormous problem was how to print coloured illustrations. At first, each drawing in each book had to be hand-coloured, adding greatly to the cost of producing the book and limiting their availability to the wealthy. The advent of lithography greatly improved the colouring process. A series of plates, each with its own colour, was

applied in turn to the illustration, thus standardizing the product and eliminating the hand work. Our present fine, inexpensive bird books had to await the invention of photoengraving and computers.

Art on the Wing devotes a chapter to the evolution of the field guide from its beginning with Ernest Thompson Seton and its evolution through the several editions by Roger Tory Peterson to our excellent modern guides.

As would be expected of a book about books, *Art on the Wing* is well designed and printed on good paper. It includes thirty-seven drawings and paintings to illustrate the text, all taken from the exhibition. The colour reproduction is true to the original paintings.

Copies of the book may be obtained by phoning the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at (416) 978-5285.

George Fairfield, 332 Sheldrake Blvd., Toronto, Ontario M4P 2B8

Figure 1: Black Tern on nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

OFO Bird Finding Guide # 7

A Birder's Guide to Second Marsh Wildlife Area, McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve, and Surroundings

Jim Richards

Introduction

Located on the north shore of Lake Ontario east of Toronto, the Regional Municipality of Durham offers many prime birding locations for both residents and visitors alike. These range from the forested townships in the north, and Lake Scugog (with extensive wetlands at the south end), through the open rolling meadows and woodlots along the Oak Ridges Moraine, to the creek valleys and dynamic waterfront.

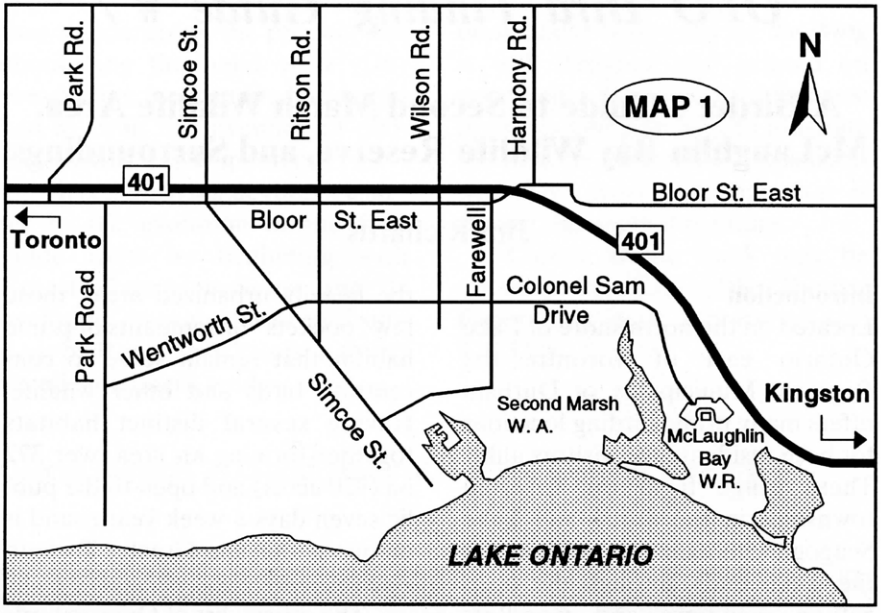
A jewel along the lakeshore (in southeast Oshawa) is composed of three separately owned but physically abutting sites: the Second Marsh Wildlife Area (123 ha, City of Oshawa), McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve (41 ha, General Motors of Canada Limited) and Darlington Provincial Park (208 ha, Ontario Parks). With cattail marsh, swamp, barrier beaches, open meadows, ponds and mixed forest, this area offers much for both wildlife and birders.

With the rapid loss of wetlands, fragmentation of forests and woodlots and loss of open meadows, especially along the waterfront in the heavily urbanized areas, those few "pockets" or remnants of prime habitat that remain serve to concentrate birds and other wildlife. Having several distinct habitats together forming an area over 372 ha (920 acres) and open to the public seven days a week year-round is unique within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The official list of Ontario birds as determined by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (Dobos 1998) is 472 species. The unofficial list of birds for the Regional Municipality of Durham currently stands at 349 species. Within this site guide area, 276 species have been reliably recorded, and of these, there is evidence of breeding for 98 species (see Appendix 1).

Getting There

As shown on Map 1, exit Highway 401 at the Harmony Road ramp (Exit # 419). Entering from the west brings you out to the intersection of Bloor Street and Farewell Street. From here, you proceed south on Farewell as described below. Entering from the east brings you out to the intersection of Bloor



Street and Harmony Road. You must turn left at this stoplight, crossing back over the 401 and turn left at the next light (intersection of Bloor Street and Farewell Street). Go south on Farewell Street to the next stoplight (Col. Sam Drive on your left, Wentworth Street on your right.). Turn left (east) on Col. Sam Drive. At a point about 0.5 km east you will reach a crossing for the Waterfront Trail, and the main entrance to the Second Marsh Wildlife Area on your right. On-street parking is allowed here. On the left side of the road you will see a viewing platform for Harmony Pond. These areas are shown on Map 2. Likewise, farther east at a small water-pumping station on your right, the start of the Marshland Trail allows access to the Second Marsh Wildlife Area and a two-tier viewing deck within the Ghost Road Bush. This entrance also is designated on the site map (Map 2). Limited on-street parking is allowed here. Please be careful not to block the paved service entrance. Follow Col. Sam Drive to the General Motors of Canada Limited (GMC) complex. The first parking lot on your right allows access to both the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve and the Second Marsh Wildlife Area, via the Marshland Trail. A raised viewing deck is located here. The east parking lot (east side of office) allows access to the main trail (Beaton Path) of the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve and the Dogwood

Trail for the visually impaired. Buses should park in the "Visitors" lot, directly north of the office.

General Information

Birders need not be reminded about good birding ethics but perhaps a word of caution is necessary here to alert visitors to particular circumstances involving dogs. Within Darlington Provincial Park, dogs must be on a leash, and no dogs are allowed on the beaches. There are no dogs allowed anywhere within the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve (except for certified guide dogs on the Dogwood Trail). Within the Second Marsh Wildlife Area, dogs on a leash are allowed on the main paved trail only; dogs are not allowed along the woodland trail through the Ghost Road Bush.

Parking for vehicles is available at all three sites, and for pedestrians and cyclists, all three are linked *via* the Provincial Waterfront Trail. Washroom facilities are only available at Darlington Provincial Park along with telephone access. Emergency telephone access is available at the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve in the GMC Corporate Headquarters.

While high-quality binoculars are a prerequisite for a good birding experience, a scope would be most beneficial for shorebirds and offshore waterfowl in Darlington Provincial Park as well as for viewing waterbirds in Second Marsh, due to the proximity of viewing platforms and the extensive wetlands.

Mosquitoes can be a slight problem within the Ghost Road Bush and along the Marshland Trail during May and June; be prepared. Not unlike any other outdoor activity, proper clothing and footwear will make your visit more comfortable.

Seasoned birders will be aware of such things as what birds are found in certain habitats, what is the best time of year to expect certain species, what is the best time of day (early morning and evening) and what your ID skill level will allow. In areas like the Second Marsh, water levels also play an important role. Low levels, exposing mudflats, will produce more shorebirds in spring and fall, whereas high levels generally produce more waterfowl. For the novice, it is suggested that a good knowledge of habitat requirements can be gained by reading any of the great life histories now available and a study of migration charts and other data will be of prime importance. For example, superb articles in *OFO News* by Ron Pittaway on the fall migration of shorebirds (Pittaway 1999a), and the fall raptor migration (Pittaway 1999b) should be consulted. Rather than a continuous repeat of information contained in these recent articles, there will be few dates given within the text of this site guide pertaining to fall migration. In fact, given the wealth of published knowledge now available for bird movements, frequency and

abundance in Ontario, this site guide will concentrate more on getting you to where the birds should be at particular times of the year. This guide does not pretend to detail specific dates when birds might be observed and as such, terms like "early, mid and late" in conjunction with a particular month or season will be used.

The composite area checklist contained herein (276 species) is preliminary in nature. If you are aware of additional species or discover a new "area" species, please inform the author. An annotated list complete with bar graphs is in preparation and will be published in due time. Not unlike the breeding birds, certain species are not to be expected every year; in fact, some species on the current checklist have only been observed once.

BREEDING BIRDS

A few species that are recorded as breeding in this area do so sporadically or in low numbers. Not all breeding birds listed on the area checklist should be expected to nest here every year, although they may appear as migrants or summer vagrants. This would include species such as: Pied-billed Grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Wigeon, Hooded Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Common Snipe, Little Gull, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Screech-Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Alder Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, and Brewer's Blackbird. A total of 98 species has been known to nest within the site guide area. There follows a brief discussion about some of the "specialty" species found within the area.

Least Bittern: One or two pairs of this increasingly uncommon species nest annually at Second Marsh. Birds feeding in the marsh are usually encountered at the north end or along the east side.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: First nested in Second Marsh in 1977 (Richards 1978). Nest-building evidence has been found since that time but no active nests have been reported. Adults are encountered here throughout the breeding season, roosting in willows at the southeast end of the Marsh and in an area in the northwest corner.

Cooper's Hawk: A pair nests regularly in Darlington Provincial Park near the main (paved) roadway. Adults searching for food are frequently encountered in the Ghost Road Bush during the spring and summer.

Little Gull: The first reported nesting of this species in North America occurred in Second Marsh in 1962, when G.A. Scott found three nests, but none was successful (Scott 1963). The second nesting occurred

there as well, in 1963, when Scott found one nest; it too was unsuccessful (Tozer and Richards 1974). There has been no evidence of breeding here since. These nests and subsequent nestings in nearby Cranberry Marsh (Whitby) in 1971 and 1972 have been summarized by Richards (1973) and Tozer and Richards (1974).

Common Tern: This tern nested frequently, but in low numbers, in Second Marsh well into the 1960s. Physical alteration of the Marsh coupled with a widespread decline of this species throughout the province resulted in a decline in Durham Region over the next 30 years. Artificial habitat islands constructed within Second Marsh as part of the Environment Canada restoration project resulted in a return of this species in the mid-90s. Now, between 35 and 75 pairs nest annually, the largest concentration in the Region.

Black Tern: Another species of concern, the Black Tern's traditional breeding areas are no longer producing results. Once very common in Second Marsh, between 15 and 20 pairs now occupy the area.

Sedge Wren: A rare breeding species in Durham, at least one pair is usually present on the east side of Second Marsh within the weedy fields of the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve. Scott found a nest with six eggs in 1962, and Richards located a nest with six eggs in 1997.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Found in widely scattered sites throughout Durham, this area seems to be heavily favoured by the species. Perhaps more than 15 pairs inhabit the Ghost Road Bush, with additional pairs found in the willows north of Col. Sam Drive in the Harmony Pond area and along the Cool Hollow Trail in McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve.

Brewer's Blackbird: Usually a rare seasonal vagrant in Durham, it did breed in 1968 when two active nests were found by Richards and Peck (1968) only a few metres apart in both Darlington Provincial Park and what is now the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve. There has been no breeding evidence since that time.

BIRDING AREAS

Second Marsh Wildlife Area

Pedestrians and cyclists can enter the main trail off Farewell Street (see Map 2, Point "B"). Visitors with vehicles can park on Col. Sam Drive, and enter at Point "A". The paved trail is 1.25 km in length. Part of the extensive (Provincial) Waterfront Trail, it is known as the Ed Kroll Memorial Walkway.

Prior to entering the trail system, you may wish to access the viewing platform immediately across (north) from the Second

Figure 2: Common Moorhen at nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

Figure 3: Sora near nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

Marsh Wildlife Area sign on Col. Sam Drive. If the water is high and the vegetation low, you can see Harmony Pond from here. This shallow basin is an ideal location for viewing waterfowl, herons and shorebirds, especially in the spring.

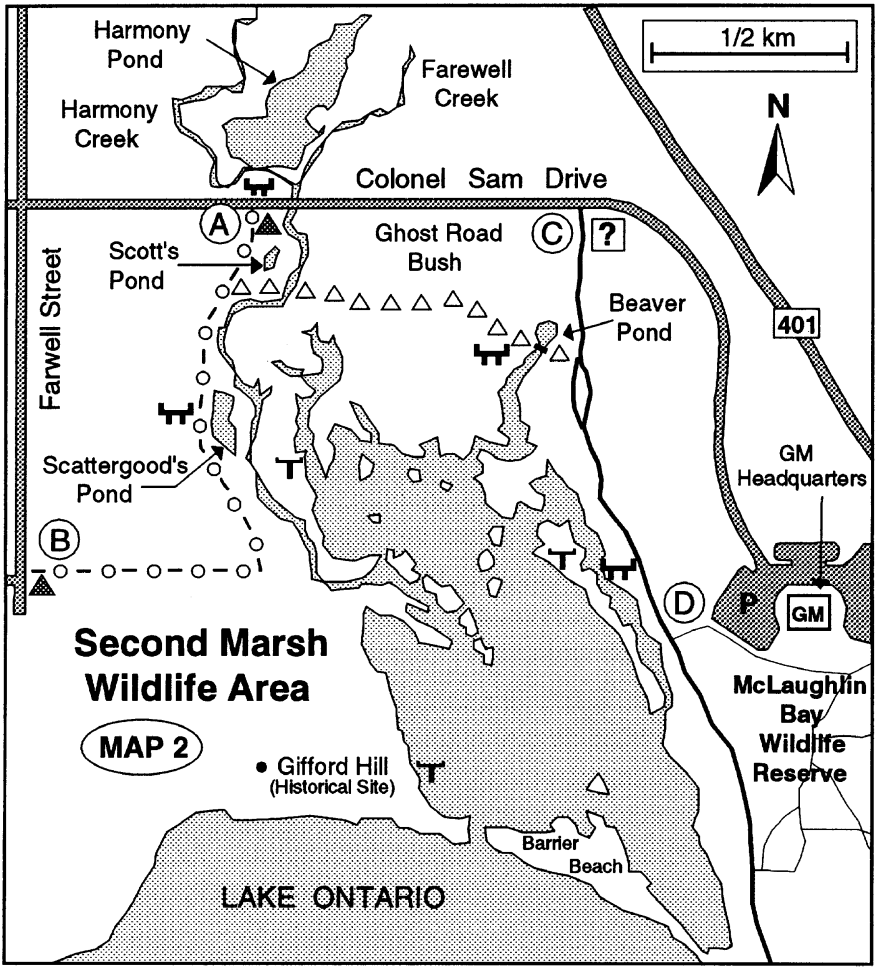
A series of three groves of spruce trees on the north edge of the Ghost Road Bush along Col. Sam Drive just east of the bridge is almost a sure bet for wintering Northern Saw-whet Owls. They are generally found from mid-October onwards, but can become rare by late December.

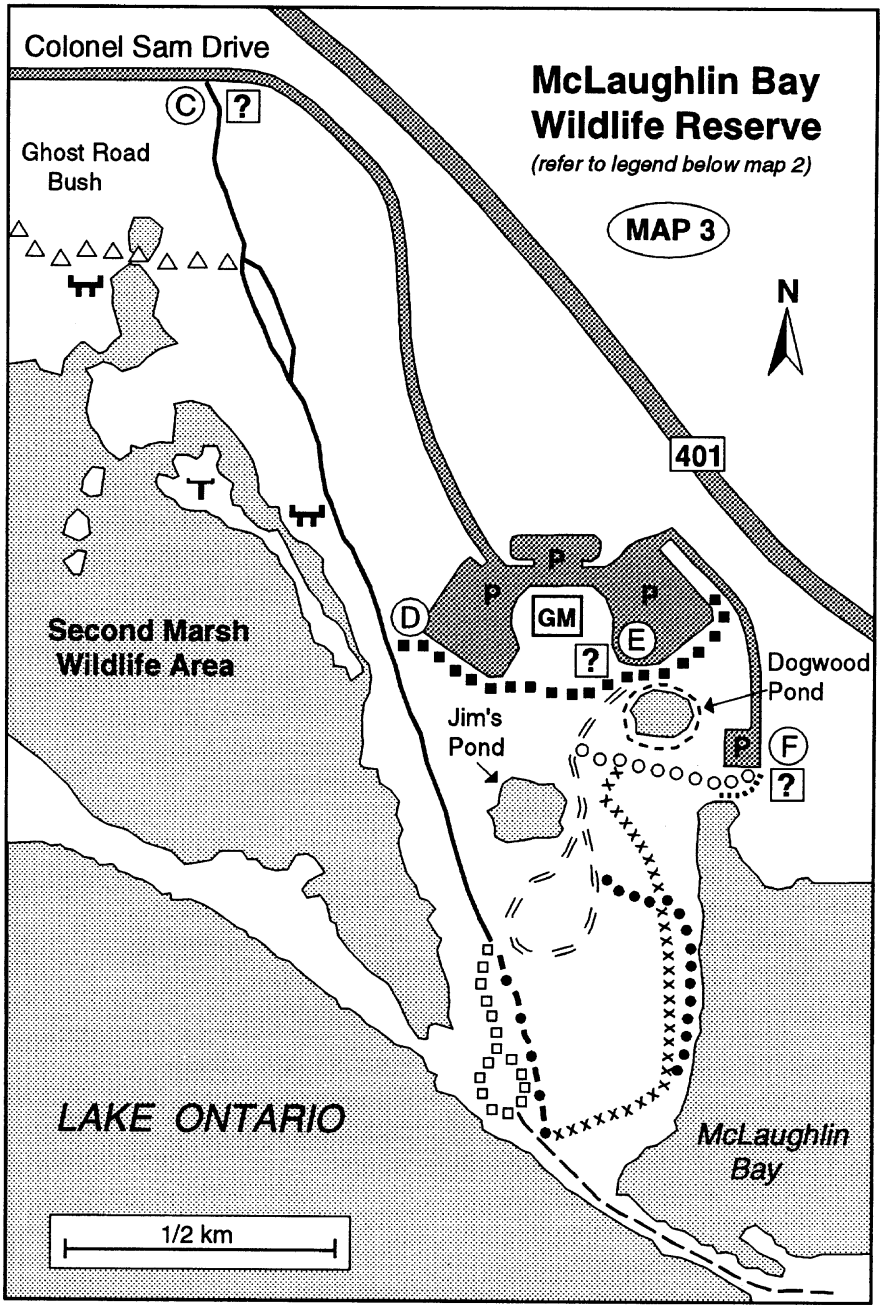
After entering at Point "A", the visitor passes a sign on the right listing all partners in the community effort to rehabilitate Second Marsh, provide signage and construct walking trails. Just past this feature, a low, seasonally wet area known as Scott's Pond (on your left) usually harbours such species as Virginia Rail and common waterbirds such as Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler and Great Blue Heron, along with expected species like Red-winged Blackbird, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow.

A little farther along the trail, you will encounter a snake hibernaculum. Just past here is a steel bridge which crosses the Harmony/Farewell Creek, but we will come back to this in a moment. Here and elsewhere along the creek you may hear and see Belted Kingfisher.

Continuing along the paved trail as it skirts the creek beside a row of willows (sometimes good for warblers), you come to a viewing platform on the left overlooking Scattergood's Pond. Along with the opportunity to view Snapping and Painted Turtles basking on the raised mounds and logs, you can usually find a muskrat or two working the pond. Waterfowl such as Wood Duck are sometimes encountered here in low numbers along with interesting species such as Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Solitary Sandpiper. Great Horned Owls are sometimes found in the spruce and pine trees along the edge. A feeding station located here and operated during the winter months by Friends of Second Marsh usually attracts Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncos, American Goldfinches and American Tree Sparrows.

Southward from here, the trail passes along the edge of Second Marsh but does not afford great viewing. However, it is possible to see waterfowl, gulls and terns flying over the marsh. Various swallow species also can be seen along here. The paved trail takes a sharp turn to the right (near the end) and at this point, a walking trail to the left leads southward past a No Trespassing sign. **Please do not access this area.** The trail is for use (by permission of the landowner) by Friends of Second Marsh for


Harmony Pond
Harmony Creek
Farewell Creek
1/2 km
N
Colonel Sam Drive
A
Scott's Pond
Ghost Road Bush
C
?
Beaver Pond
401
Farwell Street
Scattergood's Pond
B
GM Headquarters
D
P
GM
Second Marsh Wildlife Area
MAP 2
Gifford Hill (Historical Site)
McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve
Barrier Beach
LAKE ONTARIO
OSM Wildlife Area Sign
Information
Osprey Platform
Veiwing Platform
Parking
Entry Points
Marshland Trail
Shoreline Trail
Paved Trail
Dogwood Trail
Boardwalk Trail
Bayview Trail
The Beaton Path
Bayside Trail
Cool Hollow Trail
Oshawa Trail
Woodland Trail
Darlington Trail
Flank Trail
please use this legend for both maps


Colonel Sam Drive
McLaughlin Bay
Wildlife Reserve
(refer to legend below map 2)
MAP 3
N
Ghost Road
Bush
401
Second Marsh
Wildlife Area
GM
Dogwood
Pond
Jim's
Pond
LAKE ONTARIO
McLaughlin
Bay
1/2 km

planting and monitoring purposes only. After the trail turns to the right (west) up the hill and back to Farewell Street, a commanding overview of the marsh can be experienced. Now back to the bridge!

A steel bridge leading east off the paved trail takes you into the Ghost Road Bush. This trail is known as the Bob Mills Boardwalk (1340 m). The first section leads through a low wet area dominated by willow. Black-crowned Night-Herons can be seen here on occasion. Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe and Baltimore Oriole are found here along with other songbirds.

Soon the trail enters the main swamp, which is predominantly Red Ash with aspen, poplar, hawthorn and other tree/shrub species. The boardwalk meanders through the woodland affording access at trailside to numerous small ponds with habitat for Wood, Leopard, and Green Frogs as well as American Toad. Over 375 species of vascular plants are found at Second Marsh and many interesting and showy species can be discovered along the boardwalk such as Jack-in-the-pulpit, White Trillium, Yellow Lady-Slipper, Blue Flag and several fern species. White-tailed Deer are sometimes encountered along the trail, especially near the east end. The full range of woodland bird species can be found here at the right time of year and especially during spring (early April to late May) and fall (late August to mid-October) migration periods. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, wrens, orioles, tanagers and grosbeaks are found here in great variety and good numbers then, and several species remain throughout the summer to breed.

Near the east end of the trail, a two-tier viewing platform offers a spectacular panorama southward over the marsh. Again, most of the large numbers of waterfowl are found during spring and fall migration periods, but numerous species of ducks along with Canada Geese and a few Mute Swans breed in and around the marsh and therefore are present during the summer. Many heron species are found in the marsh, from Great Blue Heron and Green Heron to seldom-seen species like Least Bittern and Great Egret to the more spectacular vagrants like Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron and Tricolored Heron on rare occasions. American Woodcock nest in the vicinity and White-tailed Deer frequent the area. A small ponding of shallow water right at the base of the tower (created by beavers) is a good place to see Virginia Rail, and sometimes Sora and Least Bittern.

Just north of the tower, but well within view, a beaver pond (sometimes active) provides a dynamic habitat for several species such as Green Heron, Least Bittern, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Wood Duck, Northern

Pintail and Hooded Merganser, and numerous songbird species. Nesting boxes here and elsewhere throughout the marsh provide homes for Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Eastern Screech-Owls.

The trail continues east past the tower for a short distance before joining the Marshland Trail on the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve. In this section of the Ghost Road Bush, you are most likely to find Blue-gray Gnatcatchers; a few pairs nest in this area each year. A winter feeder here serves to attract the same species as the previous one, as well as Common Redpolls and other erratic finches and any wintering blackbirds and sparrows. Visitors can enter at Point "C" on Map 2 and walk directly to the Beaver Pond Tower.

Another location to enter Second Marsh is provided at Point "D" off the GMC parking lot. A short trail takes you to a raised viewing deck offering a good vista of the marsh and ideal viewing opportunities (a scope is useful). From here, you can fully enjoy a better look at most of the waterfowl such as Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, both scaup species, Bufflehead and mergansers. As well, you can observe herons from this vantage point and the nesting islands for Common Terns. From here as well, you can see Black Terns, grebes, Common Moorhens and the abundant Double-crested Cormorants roosting on islands. It is from this viewing platform that you can witness sometimes massive flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls on migration from mid-April through May. Usually mixed in with these noisy visitors are upwards of 10 to 15 Little Gulls. Marsh Wrens can be seen and heard from this location. Caspian Terns are more often encountered during August than at any other time.

In years when water levels are low, especially from late August well into October and sometimes later, the exposed mudflats play host to numerous species of shorebirds during migration, sometimes in spectacular numbers.

The quiet waters at the southeast corner of the marsh can be accessed from the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve (Cool Hollow Trail) and are worth a visit to see Spotted Sandpipers, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Common Moorhens, herons and waterfowl. Visitors are discouraged from walking farther west on the barrier beach during the breeding period (May to June) so as not to discourage frequent nesting attempts by herons and other species.

The gravel beaches here and southward on Beaton Point are sometimes good for shorebirds (especially in the fall). Species such as Ruddy Turnstone, plovers and "peeps" can be numerous at times, and Great Black-backed Gulls can

be quite common beginning in early September and continuing throughout the fall and winter.

McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve
Once an active dairy farm, this 81 ha property is now the home of General Motors of Canada Limited (Corporate Headquarters). About 41 ha have been set aside as permanent open space to preserve the waterfront, buffer and complement Second Marsh, and offer the public access to the lakefront. The Reserve is open seven days a week, free of charge. Over 38,000 trees and shrubs (mainly native; a few ornamentals along the main trail) have been planted to provide wildlife habitat. When fully grown, the tree/shrub zones will occupy about 40% of the property, while the remainder will stay as wetland and open meadow.

The main entrance to the Reserve (see Map 3, Point "E") is off the east parking lot. This trail (Beaton Path) is of granular surface, suitable for wheelchairs. A guiderope starting here takes visitors to the Dogwood Pond (on your left) which was designed for the visually impaired. This pond is a good place to see Midland Painted Turtles, Green Frogs and a variety of marsh and water birds, as well as plants. Common Snipe are sometimes found in the wet area south of the pond in spring. Just prior to reaching the entrance to the Dogwood Trail, another short trail on your right will take you to the Second Marsh viewing platform. Another option is to park in the west parking lot and to take the trail to the platform (access Point "D").

Just past the Dogwood Trail entrance, an old roadway will take you over to Darlington Provincial Park. As well, you can access the area by driving past the GMC office, taking a gravel roadway to a small parking lot (access Point "F").

Farther along the 832m Beaton Path, you will come to Jim's Pond (on your right). Waterfowl and shorebirds (Pectoral Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, and yellowlegs) use this pond for feeding during migration and ducks use the shallow waters here for brood rearing. Herons frequent the pond, and terns (Black and Common) are frequently seen here along with swallows feeding overhead. A pair of American Kestrels has nested in a box on a dead tree on the south side of the pond for several years, and Purple Martins often utilize an apartment house nearby. Sedge Wrens have been known to nest in this area. Visitors are advised to stay on the trails as several songbirds nest in the grassy meadows, along with many waterfowl such as Mallard, Gadwall and teal. As well, species such as Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon and Northern Pintail favour certain areas, especially near Jim's Pond. These same meadows, overgrown with thistle, goldenrods and asters, play host to

Figure 4: Common Tern on nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

Figure 5: Little Gull at nest. Photo by *J.M. Richards.*

migrating Monarchs in late August and throughout September

Farther up the trail, you will come to an area known as the "Hilltop" (a drumlin). In addition to a good view of Jim's Pond, Second Marsh and McLaughlin Bay, along with a chorus of House Wrens, Baltimore Orioles, and other common songbirds, picnic tables provided here make this an ideal setting for lunch.

From the Hilltop, you can descend eastward on the Bayview Trail, then take either the Oshawa Trail or the Bayside Trail to skirt McLaughlin Bay. This is a good idea if rafts of waterfowl are present in the Bay. Otherwise, stay on the Beaton Path. It is a loop trail and it will bring you back to Jim's Pond. Another option is a trail on your right (just past the loop) which is the terminus of the Marshland Trail. This trail will be described later.

Continuing on the Beaton Path, you will soon come to a spur trail on your left that will take you along the edge of a future forest zone. Trees of many varieties, including some Carolinian species such as Redbud, Hackberry, Tulip Tree, and Magnolia have been established here. This is a good area to see and hear numerous songbirds; it can be great during migration periods for warblers, flycatchers, thrushes and sparrows.

Another option at this gentle "fork" is to continue along the trail between the willows and Silver Maples through an area known as "Cool Hollow". Again, this area can be dynamic for songbirds, especially during spring migration (early to mid-May). Soon, the trail breaks out on the Lake Ontario shore. You can access the southeast portion of Second Marsh by staying to the right, or go straight ahead to the beach. Staying on the trail as it turns to the left (it soon becomes the Oshawa Trail) will bring you back to Jim's Pond area. If you wish to access the beach and follow it to your left (out Beaton Point), you can walk over to Darlington Provincial Park (Beaton Point becomes McLaughlin Point once inside the Park boundaries). Please do not access the barrier beach fronting Second Marsh in May and June as Night-Herons and other species continue attempts to nest here and must not be disturbed.

The waters off Beaton Point/McLaughlin Point (and Darlington Park) can be especially productive (spring and fall) for certain types of waterfowl such as Common Goldeneye, Oldsquaw, Redhead, scoters and mergansers. As well, these waters should be checked for loons and grebes. The beaches here act like magnets for certain shorebirds (spring and fall) like Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied and American Golden-Plover, Sanderling, and Dunlin. Other species like Least and Semipalmated Sandpiper and Spotted Sandpiper are also found here, and it is the most likely

location for rarities such as Purple Sandpiper and phalaropes.

The Marshland Trail (1710 m) actually starts at the water pumping station on Col. Sam Drive (see Map 3, access Point "C"). Here, it skirts the edge of the Ghost Road Bush and offers good birding for species such as Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great Crested Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing and other songbirds. A short trail off to the right will take you to the Beaver Pond and the viewing platform. A Yellow-breasted Chat was found here in 1999, and Northern Mockingbirds have been observed along here. Continuing southward, as it winds its way along the edge of the marsh, it passes through habitat for Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink. Some of this habitat (outside of the Reserve, near Col. Sam Drive) will be lost in the future to office buildings. Farther south, you will come to another observation deck with a good overview of the east side of Second Marsh (see previous section for details). A short trail just south of here takes you back to the GMC parking lot. Continuing south along this mown grass trail, you should hear some of the many Marsh Wrens found at Second Marsh and see species such as Common Yellowthroat, Alder and Willow Flycatcher. Resident Coyotes are sometimes encountered along here in early morning and evening. The trail ends near Cool Hollow, described above.

Hawk migration in the fall (early September to late October) can sometimes be spectacular, with large numbers and numerous species observed. Usually, by mid-September, many species such as Merlin, American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Broad-winged Hawk are present. A good knowledge of weather conditions is important to ensure a successful watch. Species such as Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and Osprey are also found here, along with others such as Red-tailed Hawk and Northern Harrier (which also breed here). Beginning in mid-September and continuing for about a month, waves of migrating Blue Jays are often encountered flying westward along the waterfront and inland.

Winter birding on the Reserve is generally unproductive unless there is sufficient open water in the marshes for gulls and waterfowl. Species such as Snowy Owl, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawk, Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur and American Pipit sometimes are present in the open meadows.

Darlington Provincial Park

Located immediately east of the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve, this 208 ha forested zone offers yet another great birding opportunity along the waterfront. The mixed forest provides good habitat for many species of birds and other

wildlife. A wooded creek valley (Robinson Creek) is ideal for warblers, migrant songbirds and resident Great Horned Owls. The extensive, open shoreline, especially along McLaughlin Point, a sand/gravel barrier beach separating Lake Ontario from McLaughlin Bay, is renowned for shorebirds, especially in the fall. The offshore waters are excellent for diving ducks and other waterfowl. Waterfowl hunting is allowed here in season, so be prepared to time your visits accordingly.

There are 315 camping sites in the Park and about 3.2 km of walking trails. Trails here link to existing trails in the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve where cyclists and pedestrians can enter, and to the east via the Provincial Waterfront Trail. Vehicle entry is from Courtice Road off Highway 401(Exit # 425).

No attempt is being made here to detail birding opportunities within the Park. It is deserving perhaps of its own site guide.

Additional Birding Information

The standard reference (long out-of-print) to the birds of Oshawa, and Durham Region, is *Birds of the Oshawa-Lake Scugog Region, Ontario* (Tozer and Richards 1974). More recent information is contained in the five issues of *Durham Region Natural History Report*, produced annually from 1989 to 1993 by M. Bain and B. Henshaw. In addition, B. Henshaw authored various breeding bird monitoring reports for Friends of Second Marsh, from 1995 to 1999. Current birding information is available on the Durham Region Birding Hotline at (905) 576-2738. Lastly, a 76-page booklet, *Second Marsh Wildlife Area/McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve: A Visitor's Guide*, is available from Friends of Second Marsh ($5.00).

Other Information Sources

The **City of Oshawa** web site **www.city.oshawa.on.ca/co_res/nat_env.html** contains a section on local hiking trails and parks in addition to information dealing with the Second Marsh Wildlife Area. Likewise, the **Municipality of Clarington** web site **www.municipality.clarington.on.ca/** has a section of interest.

Friends of Second Marsh have a major web site **www.secondmarsh.com** containing much information about the history of the marsh, natural ecology and about the programs and projects of the organization (in prep.).

General Motors of Canada Limited carries a major page on the McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve within their corporate site. **www.gmcanada.com** (in prep.).

The **Darlington Provincial Park** web site **www.ontarioparks.on/darl.html** has information about natural history and camping opportunities.

The **Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority** web site **www.speed line.ca/cloca/ home** contains much information about natural history in addition to information about camping.

The **Ontario Field Ornithologists** web page, with access to current birding information, sightings, etc., is **www.interlog.com/~ofo**

The **Ontario Birding** web page, with reports and sightings sometimes pertaining to this area is **www.web-net.com/bic/ont/index.html**

Environment Canada with several web pages of interest also has a section dealing with the restoration efforts at Oshawa Second Marsh and other Great Lakes wetland issues. Please check out the following:
www.cciw.ca/green-lane/wildlife/glwcap (Conservation Action Plan)
www.cciw.ca/green-lane/cuf (Great Lakes Cleanup Fund)
glimr.cciw.ca/tmpl/glimr/publication.cfm?ID=w123&lang=e (Habitat rehabilitation)
glimr.cciw.ca/tmpl/glimr/publication.cfm?ID=098&Orig=Glimr&Lang=e (Great Lakes 2000)

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

Appendix 1

A Checklist of the Birds of Second Marsh, McLaughlin Bay and Darlington Park

This list comprises those species (276) that have been recorded within the Second Marsh Wildlife Area, McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve and Darlington Provincial Park. Of these, 98 species (marked thus *) are known to have bred here. Classification and nomenclature follow the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds* (7th edition, 1998) and its supplements.

— Red-throated Loon
— Common Loon

— Pied-billed Grebe*
— Horned Grebe
— Red-necked Grebe
— Eared Grebe

— Double-crested Cormorant

— American Bittern*
— Least Bittern*
— Great Blue Heron
— Great Egret
— Snowy Egret
— Little Blue Heron
— Tricolored Heron
— Cattle Egret
— Green Heron*
— Black-crowned Night-Heron*

— Glossy Ibis

— Turkey Vulture

— Greater White-fronted Goose
— Snow Goose
— Canada Goose*
— Brant
— Mute Swan*
— Trumpeter Swan
— Tundra Swan
— Wood Duck*
— Gadwall*
— Eurasian Wigeon
— American Wigeon*
— American Black Duck*
— Mallard*
— Blue-winged Teal*
— Northern Shoveler*
— Northern Pintail*
— Green-winged Teal*
— Canvasback
— Redhead
— Ring-necked Duck
— Greater Scaup
— Lesser Scaup
— King Eider
— Common Eider
— Harlequin Duck
— Surf Scoter
— White-winged Scoter
— Black Scoter
— Oldsquaw
— Bufflehead
— Common Goldeneye
— Hooded Merganser*
— Common Merganser
— Red-breasted Merganser
— Ruddy Duck

— Osprey
— Bald Eagle
— Northern Harrier*
— Sharp-shinned Hawk*
— Cooper's Hawk*
— Northern Goshawk
— Red-shouldered Hawk
— Broad-winged Hawk
— Red-tailed Hawk*
— Rough-legged Hawk
— Golden Eagle
— American Kestrel*
— Merlin
— Gyrfalcon
— Peregrine Falcon

— Ring-necked Pheasant*
— Ruffed Grouse*

— King Rail
— Virginia Rail*
— Sora*
— Common Moorhen*
— American Coot*

— Sandhill Crane
— Black-bellied Plover
— American Golden-Plover
— Semipalmated Plover
— Piping Plover
— Killdeer*

— Greater Yellowlegs
— Lesser Yellowlegs
— Solitary Sandpiper
— Willet
— Spotted Sandpiper*
— Upland Sandpiper
— Whimbrel
— Hudsonian Godwit
— Ruddy Turnstone
— Red Knot
— Sanderling
— Semipalmated Sandpiper
— Western Sandpiper
— Least Sandpiper
— White-rumped Sandpiper
— Baird's Sandpiper
— Pectoral Sandpiper
— Purple Sandpiper
— Dunlin
— Curlew Sandpiper
— Stilt Sandpiper
— Buff-breasted Sandpiper
— Short-billed Dowitcher
— Long-billed Dowitcher
— Common Snipe*
— American Woodcock*
— Wilson's Phalarope
— Red-necked Phalarope
— Red Phalarope

— Long-tailed Jaeger
— Laughing Gull
— Franklin's Gull
— Little Gull*
— Black-headed Gull
— Bonaparte's Gull
— Ring-billed Gull
— Herring Gull*

— Iceland Gull
— Lesser Black-backed Gull
— Glaucous Gull
— Great Black-backed Gull
— Caspian Tern
— Common Tern*
— Forster's Tern
— Black Tern*

— Thick-billed Murre

— Rock Dove*
— Mourning Dove*
— Passenger Pigeon (extinct)

— Black-billed Cuckoo*
— Yellow-billed Cuckoo*

— Eastern Screech-Owl*
— Great Horned Owl*
— Snowy Owl
— Barred Owl
— Long-eared Owl
— Short-eared Owl
— Boreal Owl
— Northern Saw-whet Owl

— Common Nighthawk
— Whip-poor-will

— Chimney Swift

— Ruby-throated Hummingbird

— Belted Kingfisher*

— Red-headed Woodpecker*
— Red-bellied Woodpecker
— Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
— Downy Woodpecker*
— Hairy Woodpecker*
— Northern Flicker*
— Pileated Woodpecker

— Olive-sided Flycatcher
— Eastern Wood-Pewee*
— Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
— Alder Flycatcher*
— Willow Flycatcher*
— Least Flycatcher*
— Eastern Phoebe*
— Great Crested Flycatcher*
— Western Kingbird
— Eastern Kingbird*

— Loggerhead Shrike
— Northern Shrike

— White-eyed Vireo
— Yellow-throated Vireo
— Blue-headed Vireo
— Warbling Vireo*
— Philadelphia Vireo
— Red-eyed Vireo*

— Blue Jay*
— American Crow*

— Horned Lark*

— Purple Martin*
— Tree Swallow*
— N. Rough-winged Swallow*
— Bank Swallow*
— Cliff Swallow
— Barn Swallow*

— Black-capped Chickadee*

— Red-breasted Nuthatch
— White-breasted Nuthatch*

— Brown Creeper

— House Wren*
— Winter Wren
— Sedge Wren*
— Marsh Wren*

— Golden-crowned Kinglet
— Ruby-crowned Kinglet

— Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*

— Eastern Bluebird*
— Veery*
— Gray-cheeked Thrush
— Swainson's Thrush
— Hermit Thrush
— Wood Thrush
— American Robin*

— Gray Catbird*
— Northern Mockingbird*
— Brown Thrasher*

— European Starling*

— American Pipit

— Cedar Waxwing*

— Golden-winged Warbler
— Tennessee Warbler
— Orange-crowned Warbler
— Nashville Warbler
— Northern Parula
— Yellow Warbler*
— Chestnut-sided Warbler
— Magnolia Warbler
— Cape May Warbler
— Black-throated Blue Warbler
— Yellow-rumped Warbler
— Black-throated Green Warbler
— Blackburnian Warbler
— Pine Warbler
— Prairie Warbler
— Palm Warbler
— Bay-breasted Warbler
— Blackpoll Warbler
— Cerulean Warbler
— Black-and-white Warbler
— American Redstart*
— Ovenbird
— Northern Waterthrush
— Connecticut Warbler
— Mourning Warbler*
— Common Yellowthroat*
— Hooded Warbler
— Wilson's Warbler
— Canada Warbler
— Yellow-breasted Chat

— Scarlet Tanager

— Eastern Towhee
— American Tree Sparrow
— Chipping Sparrow*
— Clay-colored Sparrow
— Field Sparrow
— Vesper Sparrow
— Savannah Sparrow*
— Grasshopper Sparrow
— Henslow's Sparrow
— Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
— Fox Sparrow
— Song Sparrow*
— Lincoln's Sparrow
— Swamp Sparrow*
— White-throated Sparrow
— White-crowned Sparrow
— Dark-eyed Junco
— Lapland Longspur
— Snow Bunting

— Northern Cardinal*
— Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
— Indigo Bunting*

— Bobolink*
— Red-winged Blackbird*
— Eastern Meadowlark*
— Rusty Blackbird
— Brewer's Blackbird*
— Common Grackle*
— Brown-headed Cowbird*
— Orchard Oriole
— Baltimore Oriole*

— Pine Grosbeak
— Purple Finch
— House Finch*
— Red Crossbill
— White-winged Crossbill
— Common Redpoll
— Pine Siskin
— American Goldfinch*
— Evening Grosbeak

— House Sparrow*

In Memoriam

Peter Whelan (1934–1999)

Mary Ellen Hebb

This summer, on 14 August 1999, Peter Whelan, *Globe and Mail* columnist, and to many, the conscience of the birding community, died at his home in Toronto. His death did not come as a surprise to the very few people who knew he was ill, although for the first year after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, he seemed surprisingly untouched by the disease. But it made up for lost time in 1999, swiftly and steadily depriving Peter of his mobility, and bringing at times crushing pain, which Peter bore with astonishing grace, the one telltale sign being the fierceness with which he rejected any overtures of pity or despair. And although by the time he made his annual trip to Point Pelee in May, it was clear to onlookers that he was seriously ill, he insisted on maintaining a near-normal routine, and on continuing to wear the appallingly heavy 10x50 binoculars around a neck that by then could hardly bear the weight of a shirt-collar. I hope that among the many other things that Peter learned about himself in those last months was that he had real courage.

Peter was born in Welland, Ontario, on 22 May 1934. His family lived on the same street as his father's four siblings and their families, and was thus an extended family in the fullest sense! It was his father who encouraged his interest in the natural things still so abundantly around them in the Welland of the 30s and 40s, although, as Peter was later to recount in one of the few very personal columns that he wrote for the *Globe*, "Dad's identifications weren't always correct!" Perhaps that was his first lesson in scepticism. One of the things I remember him telling me during our first telephone conversation was that there was no species of bird anywhere that someone somewhere couldn't mistake for another species!

By the age of 18-19, he had become a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse. That job lasted only a year (although in many ways, he remained a teacher all his life). By 1954, he had begun to work on what was to be his true calling: writing. He began with the *Welland Tribune* as both editor and reporter, then went on in 1958 to the *Brantford Expositor*. In 1965, he left the *Expositor*, took a six-month birding vacation to Florida, and then returned to take up his craft again.

Passionate about justice all his life, he had delayed moving to

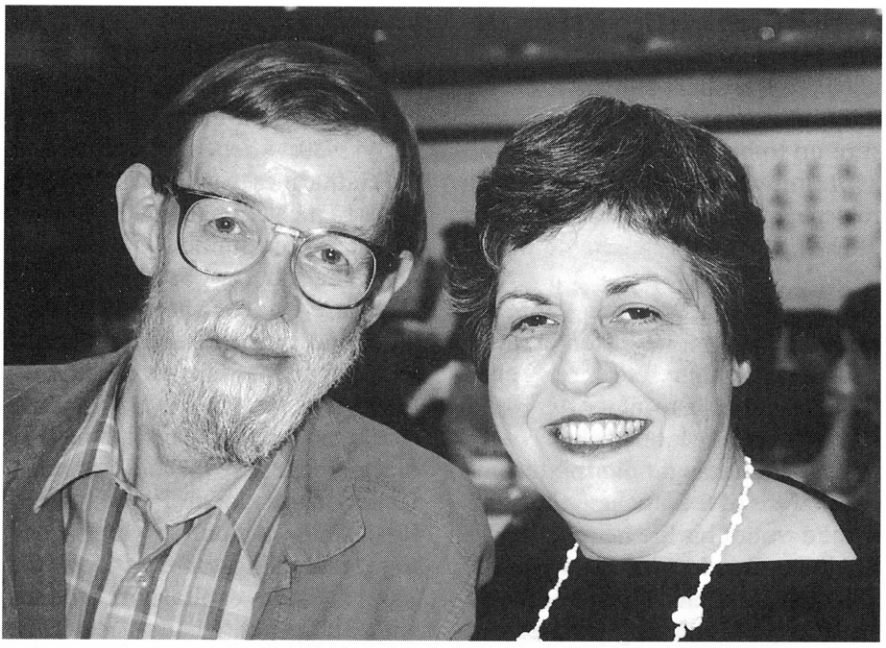

Figure 1: Peter and Elizabeth Whelan. Photo by *Cathy Lu.*

Toronto for many years, because he would not cross the picket line set up by striking typesetters. After a brief stint at the *Toronto Star*, he began to work for the *Globe and Mail* as an editor. By 1968, the frustration of reading other people's writing without doing any himself, got to him, and he arranged to be "demoted" in order to become a reporter and writer again. In this capacity he wrote on a wide variety of subjects (balking, however, when the *Globe* wanted him to do the City Hall beat, and duly punished with an assignment to the police beat!).

It was also around this time that he met his wife-to-be, Elizabeth, in Montreal, on the very last day of Expo 67. She was a hostess in the American pavilion, but Peter actually found her in a Montreal restaurant. He hung around and stared at her for so long that she finally said something to him, whereupon he was able to claim for the rest of his life that she had picked him up! In fact, he knew within hours of meeting her that she was the woman he would marry (she didn't, but he did, and indeed they lived happily ever after).

In the early 1970s, Peter sold the *Globe* on the idea of having an environmental beat, and he became the first environmental reporter in English Canada. He remained at

this desk until 1977, when he left the *Globe* with the intention of becoming a short-story writer. In this, unfortunately, he did not measure up to his own standards; as far as I know, his work was never rejected by a publisher, only by himself. He didn't like anything he wrote!

Deciding at this point that he had to earn money (somehow I can't imagine that Peter would ever have allowed Liz to support him; he was quite old-fashioned about some things), Peter taught himself technical analysis of the stock market, and for the rest of his life he remained a fascinated student of its mysteries and machinations. (Elizabeth says Peter was a "lifelong learner" of many things, and the stock market was one of those.)

That same year, on 16 November 1977, Peter began to write the bird column as a regular feature of the *Globe and Mail.* And although, for a brief time, it was taken over by another writer, and although every now and then the *Globe* either dumped the column or tried to bury it in what can only be called the bowels of the paper, Peter remained, and prevailed. And it strikes me as some kind of fair return that, at the end, when Peter could no longer sit up at the computer long enough to complete a column, yet remained ever hopeful that the cancer would go into remission, he kept the paper dangling for weeks ("Of course I'll be back", he'd say), and they'd dutifully report "Peter Whelan Will Return" in each Saturday edition.

I first met Peter in the very early 1980s when my back yard in St. Catharines was swarming with House Finches. I had gone from two to at least ten sunflower seed feeders to help out a poor little Tufted Titmouse that had showed up in my yard and was trying to compete with the finches for food. Each new feeder I'd put out for the titmouse would be swiftly overwhelmed by more finches. So I'd add another feeder...and so on. Right around then, Peter announced in his column that Kingston was now the House Finch capital of Canada, with 31 finches. I had at least 250, and I called Clive Goodwin to say so! Soon after that, Richard Knapton, recently appointed professor at Brock University, showed up at my door to see if I was just a nutty little old lady with serious ID problems, or not! Although it was nearly a disaster for my reputation (only one female eventually showed up that day), I was ultimately deemed to be reasonably sane, and in due time I received a call from Peter to discuss my plethora of House Finches. We had many chats after that, but always on the telephone.

Many months later, I was standing with other local birders at the marina in Niagara-on-the-Lake watching the 4 p.m. flypast of gulls, when a voice behind me said, "Of

course, these Niagara birders can't even tell a Purple Finch from a House Finch!" Rising recklessly to the challenge, I snarled: "Oh yeah????" and turned to do battle with whatever idiot had said the nasty words. The "idiot" was grinning, and I should have got the hint, but in fact quite a few words were exchanged (as I dug myself deeper and deeper into the hole), before I began to register that the voice was awfully familiar. Peter (because of course, that's who it was) had had me pointed out to him, and then to the huge enjoyment of all around had tossed out the bait and got this foolish fish to rise to it! That was the cementing of our friendship.

Peter's bird column did many different things for different people. At first it was simply local, hotline-rarity oriented. But then the *Globe* demanded that he make it a truly national column, and Peter responded with what I believe was ultimately a much better product. Relying on a huge network of informants in every part of Canada, he continued to report on rarities, but also painted a new and fuller picture of bird life in the country: interesting trends, curious avian behaviour, anomalies, and quite often, unusual human encounters with birds. The column drew in people with only a passing interest in birds, partly because by never reverting to birding jargon (at least not without explaining it), it maintained its connection with non-birding readers, and because it was so exquisitely written that it was irresistible. He explained birds, bird life and bird chasing to outsiders, and made it all interesting.

For us birders, he added a rich dimension to our understanding of our own hobby. There was a very special way in which Peter could write about a bird or an event and make it more alive, more lovely or more comical than you'd ever realized. But once you'd read his words, why yes, he was right! It was like that! I will never forget, for example, the opening lines of the column he wrote after being taken by Jon McCracken of Bird Studies Canada to see the nesting Prothonotary Warbler site: "In a secret place, we wade through tea-brown water under ancient trees. A golden bird sings out its triumph in owning this place, where the lighting is more magnificent than a cathedral's." Did the *Globe*, or the many editors that Peter dealt with over the years, ever really realize what an astonishing writer they had on their hands?

Peter had high writing standards, and high ethical standards as well, not only for himself, but for the birders he was reporting on. He occasionally used his column to scare birders into behaving honorably in the field. Ultimately, there were people he found it very hard to like, especially those that cheated, lied, or felt they were above the rules. In his application to one of the cancer support groups (yes, you

have to apply!), Peter was asked how well he was succeeding in making friends with those he had never liked. Peter just had to be honest. He wrote: "Working on it...working on it..."!

Let me leave it to another great writer, Fred Bodsworth, to make some closing comments: " I had a huge regard and admiration for Peter as a writer, birder and friend. He was someone as rare and special as the birds he wrote about. I used to tell him some of his columns should go in a textbook for journalism schools as examples of writing that could be spare and tight, a minimum of words, but still have maximum impact and imagery. ... My Saturday mornings have an aching hole in them that will not easily be filled." Indeed. Rest in peace, Peter.

Mary Ellen Hebb, Bird Studies Canada, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0

Photo Quiz

Bob Curry

To state the obvious to the point of absurdity, our bird pecking at mud adjacent to a body of water is a shorebird. Moreover, the shape and proportions, including a small head, moderately long and slender bill, and moderately long legs (especially the tarsi), tell us this is a sandpiper and not a member of the short-billed, shorter-legged, large-headed plover family. The largest subfamily of sandpipers, the calidrids, with about 25 species worldwide, is well represented in Ontario, where 13 species have been recorded. This bird is one of these, what I like to think of as the "classic" sandpipers.

A quick perusal of our bird reveals that it is a well proportioned, small sandpiper with, for its size, a rather long, slender bill which is slightly downcurved throughout its length, with a slight droop near the tip. Many readers will identify the bird, at a glance, correctly, as a **Western Sandpiper**. This is one of those species which, when we find a "real one", we usually identify quickly and accurately. Unfortunately, there are many pretenders, and it is the ID pitfalls thus created about

which I would like to elaborate.

The Western Sandpiper is over-reported in Ontario. It is very rare on spring passage but, very occasionally at that season, can occur in small parties of up to a half dozen or more birds. On fall migration, the odd adult Western may be seen from late July into August. A few juveniles generally occur from mid-August onward. This species, which winters to a large degree within the United States, has occurred in Ontario as late as early December. The number of birds in the province fluctuates from year to year, and during some falls there are almost none. Nevertheless, some birders come to expect "their" annual Western Sandpiper, and it is this context which is rife with the possibilities of misidentification.

To help eliminate other possibilities, it is necessary to age a sandpiper. The quiz bird has immaculate crisp plumage, with sharp-edged feathers, most with light fringes. There is no sign of wear. This is a juvenile bird, likely fairly early in the fall season.

It is unlikely that Sanderling would be confused with Western as it is overall lighter in plumage, appearing checkered black-and-white in juvenal plumage, and a much more evenly pale bird as it molts to basic (winter) dress. It is a chunkier bird, with a proportionately shorter bill. Similarly, Pectoral Sandpiper should cause little confusion. Even a small "Pec" would have pale legs, a shorter bill with a pale base, and the distinctive pectoral band of streaks across the breast.

Some potential errors may be more likely in life than with this black-and-white photograph. For example, juvenile Dunlin has the two upper rows of scapulars broadly fringed in reddish-chestnut, much in the manner of Western. One can become fixated on this mark for Western Sandpiper and fail to notice other obvious discrepancies. Juvenile Dunlin of our North American race is larger, and has vague blotchy black streaking on the underparts, and its bill is longer and more deeply downcurved. Without the reddish scapulars to see, the structural differences and scruffy underparts compared to our bird with clean white underparts would help us in making the correct identification.

Which brings us to the "peeps" or "stints", the collective name given to the small calidrids. Six species have occurred in the province. Even juvenile Least Sandpiper may be mistaken for Western, especially if one is fixated on looking for a reddish peep. The legs can be entirely dark from mud-stains, and the bill is downcurved. However, the bill is quite short and delicate, the entire upperparts are rufous, not just certain feather tracts as in Western, and there is a rufous breast band. In black-and-white, look for the delicate propor-

tions, dainty downcurved bill, and breast band.

The Baird's and White-rumped pair are quite different in shape from Western. They have long wings which extend beyond the tail, and considerable primary projection beyond the tertials. This said, juvenile White-rumped is a very likely candidate for misidentification as a Western. In life, it has reddish margins to the upper scapulars and mantle feathers. This chestnut is rather more extensive than on Western but the overall effect is markedly similar. But a White-rumped would have a shorter bill which is light at the base, proportionately shorter legs, wings which project well beyond the tail, and a neck-breast band of buffish-grey overlain with fine streaks. None of these features is possessed by our bird.

Which brings us to Semipalmated, the likeliest sandpiper to masquerade as Western. Once again, to deal first with the problem in the field, juvenile Semis can be quite rufous. Here in Ontario, we see juvenile Semis with back and upper scapulars which vary from dull buff to those which are quite reddish-buff. In fact, discussion in the summer of 1999 on the Internet chat group, *ID Frontiers*, referred to "rufous morph" juvenile Semis, and some opined that up to 10% of juveniles in some areas are this colour. In addition, some Semipalmated Sandpipers, especially females, can be quite long-billed. Given, then, that we know that long-billed, "rufous morph" Semipalmated Sandpipers can and do occur, the need for extreme care in identification of Western Sandpiper ought to be obvious.

So let us return to the photo and examine our bird carefully. Look very closely at the left foot, which is poised above the mud. There is webbing between the middle and left toes. This feature immediately eliminates all peeps but Semipalmated and Western. So, in separating Westerns from Semipalmated, it is not necessary to see foot webbing, but if you think you have a Little or Red-necked Stint, you had better scrutinize the feet! The difficulties of distinguishing reddish Semipalmated Sandpipers from Little Stint and Red-necked Stint are even greater than the present problem, but require a different treatment than the bird quiz at hand. Although the exact location of rufous-margined feathers (the upper two rows of scapulars) would be one of several cues used in combination to identify Western Sandpiper (as in most bird identification do not use just one feature), we cannot use it in this black-and-white photo so we must resort to other criteria. The bill is indeed quite long, at least as long as the head, although it is not as drooped at the tip as in some Westerns. Moreover, the bill tapers to a relatively fine point, whereas in Semipalmated,

the bill tip is blunt or even slightly swollen. Westerns feed with the bill pointed straight down, more in the manner of Stilt Sandpiper, a feature which might help pick it out in a group of feeding Semipalmateds. Note also the distinct elongate spots forming streaks on the sides of the breast; on Semipalmated, these streaks are more diffuse or appear as a wash of colour.

In summary, in identifying juvenile Western Sandpipers, first beware of the potential for a gross error, especially confusion with Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Dunlin. However, a combination of bill length and shape, the streaking on the sides of the breast and, in life, the exact pattern of reddish-margined feathers will serve to identify most individuals. Beware, however, of some Semipalmated Sandpipers which can look very much like Westerns, especially when one is enthusiastically in pursuit of the rarer species.

Our quiz juvenile Western Sandpiper was photographed by Dan Strickland during September at Victoria, British Columbia.

Bob Curry, 3115 New Street, Unit 30, Burlington, Ontario L7N 3T6

2000
OFO Annual General Meeting

Please mark your calendars now for the 2000 Ontario Field Ornithologists' AGM to be held at the Kortright Centre near Kleinburg during the weekend of 16 and 17 September 2000. We look forward eagerly to another excellent meeting after our great success at Point Pelee this past fall. Some of the events planned include guest speakers, a banquet on Saturday evening, field trips to birding hotspots for shorebirds and raptors, and the return of Ron Scovell's ever-popular book sale.

Watch for further details in the coming months. *Jean Iron*