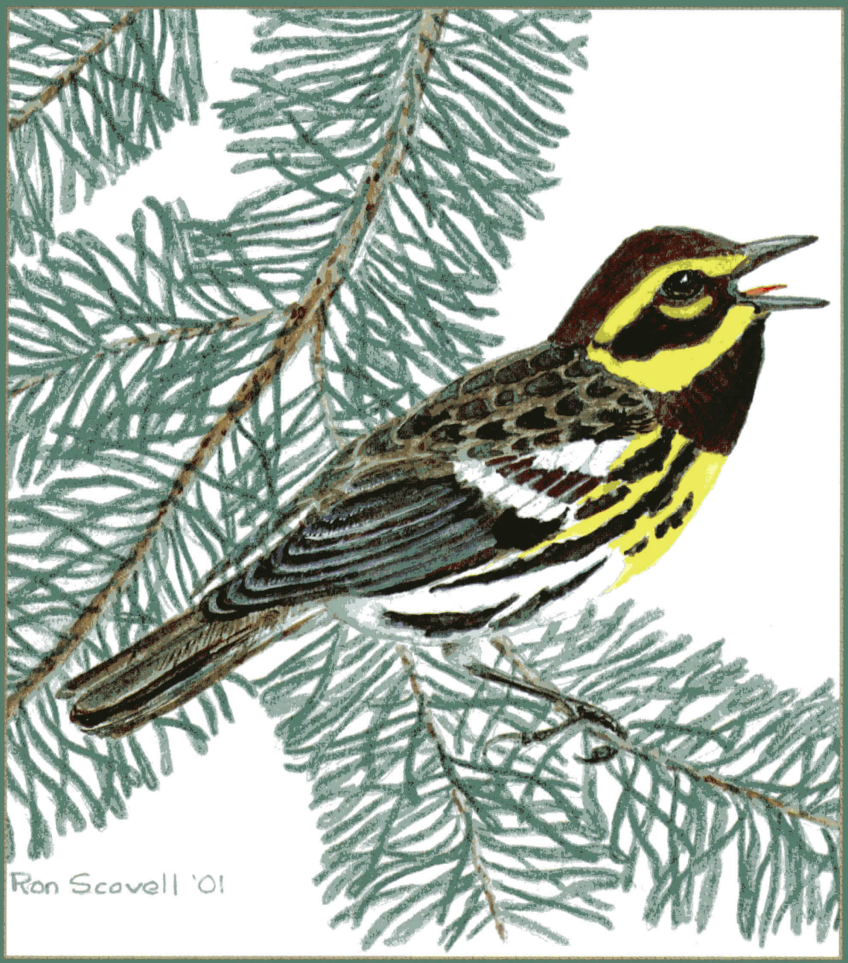
ONTARIO BIRDS



Journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists
Volume 19 Number 2 August 2001

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 listserve (ONTBIRDS, coordinated by Mark Cranford), hosts field trips throughout Ontario, and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership rates can be obtained from the address below. All members receive *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*. Please send membership enquiries to: **Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 455, Station R, Toronto, Ontario M4G 4E1**

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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 *Ron Scovell*

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Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2000

Kayo J. Roy

Introduction

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) reviews documentation of any record of an OBRC Review List species. This 19th Annual Report covers the adjudication of 126 records received by the OBRC during the year 2000, of which 82% were accepted. A total of 183 observers submitted documentation for review by the 2000 Committee. These reports were sent in by a wide range of birders, both expert and novice, who for the most part submitted well written and thorough accounts, often including field notes and sketches. Photographs or video tapes were also included with a substantial number of submitted reports.

The members of the 2000 Committee were: Margaret Bain, Peter Burke, Robert Curry (Chair), Robert Dobos, Kevin McLaughlin, Ron Pittaway, Kayo Roy (non-voting Secretary) and Alan Wormington. Mark Peck served as the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) liaison (non-voting) to the OBRC in 2000.

The official Ontario Bird Checklist remains at 473. However, one new subspecies, "Western" Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis calurus,* was accepted for the province. No new breeding species were added in 2000.

All the records received by the OBRC are archived at the ROM in Toronto. Researchers and other interested individuals are welcome to examine any of the filed reports at the ROM, by appointment only. Please write Mark Peck, Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6, e-mail: markp@rom.on.ca or telephone 416-586-5523.

Listing of Records

The format of this report follows that used in last year's annual report (Roy 2000). Accepted records are arranged taxonomically by their English and scientific names following the Seventh Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (AOU 1998). Following the species names, a binomial numbering system appears. The first number indicates the total number of accepted records (by the OBRC) prior to 1 January 1982 (the forma-

tion date of the OBRC); and the second is the total number of accepted records from 1982 to 2000 (including those listed in this report). An asterisk in place of the first number indicates that documentation was not required for the occurrence of that species prior to 1982. Date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, sex, plumage, and location(s) are provided when known. Counties, districts, and regional municipalities are shown in italics. The plumage terminology used here follows the Humphrey and Parkes (1959) system as approved at the 11 September 1999 OBRC Policy Meeting. See Pittaway (2000) for a detailed explanation of plumage and molt terminology. The names of all contributors of documentation are listed. Those contributors who were known to be the finders of the bird are underlined. Others present when the bird was found, but who did not submit a report, are listed when known.

The Committee makes every effort to verify documented information prior to accepting and publishing a record. It is, however, still possible that some inaccuracies occur. We welcome written communication to the Secretary from anyone with pertinent information that would correct or strengthen any record. There may be occasions where dates or other listed details in a record differ from those quoted in other published sources. We have used the most accurate information that was available to us.

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

Changes to the Review List

At the OBRC Annual Meeting in March 2001, the Committee removed Townsend's Solitaire from the Ontario Review List for northern Ontario only, effective 1 January 2001. Delisting species from the northern Ontario Review List is done on a species by species basis. With the numbers of Townsend's Solitaire continuing to increase as they have over the past five years, the Committee felt it was time for this species to be delisted. Townsend's Solitaire remains on the Review List for southern Ontario.

Acknowledgements

The OBRC would like to extend their appreciation to the many observers who took the time to submit documentation, photographs, sketches, and videos of their observations of rare birds in 2000. We thank the following people who assisted in many ways to provide

the Committee with additional data, photographs, videos and other material evidence: Bob Andrle, Sam Barone, John Black, Rachel Brew, Barry Cherriere, Art Clark, Willie D'Anna, Bruce Di Labio, Nick Escott, Jim Flynn, Michel Gosselin, Phill Holder, Jean Iron, Jon McCracken, Peter Read, Mark Peck, Alf Rider, Ron Ridout, Sarah Rupert, Dan Salisbury, Don Shanahan, Roy Smith, Ron Tozer, Ron Weir, and Alan Wormington. The OBRC is very grateful to Jon Dunn, Steve Howell, Bruce Mactavish, Klaus Malling Olsen, and David Sibley for their expert opinions on a record they reviewed in 2000.

Sincere appreciation is extended to Mike Street for access to ONTBIRDS (the listserve sponsored by the Ontario Field Ornithologists) on matters dealing with the OBRC. This form of communication for channeling data, especially dates and places, has been invaluable in maintaining accurate records, and many rare bird reports were submitted to the OBRC because of direct appeals through ONTBIRDS.

To the 2000 OBRC members, I thank you for your assistance and cooperation. Your continuing support is very much appreciated. To Rob Dobos, an extra thank you is extended for his valued advice.

Figure 1: Female Northern Fulmar at Aurora, *York*, on 5 January 2000. This bird was found injured and incapable of flight, and was euthanized on 6 January 2000. Photo by *Patricia Lang*.

Figure 2: Definitive alternate/basic male Anhinga at Delaware, *Middlesex*, from 16 July to 16 September 2000. Photo by *Kayo J. Roy*.

Figure 3: Alternate male Cinnamon Teal at Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay*, on 3 June 2000. Photo by *Nicholas G. Escott.*

Figure 4: Female Smew on Niagara River at Miller's Creek, *Niagara*, on 22 February 1960. Photo by *Donald R. Gunn.*

Figure 5: Juvenal Long-tailed Jaeger at Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton, *Hamilton-Wentworth*, on 28 October 1991. Photo by *Kayo J. Roy*.

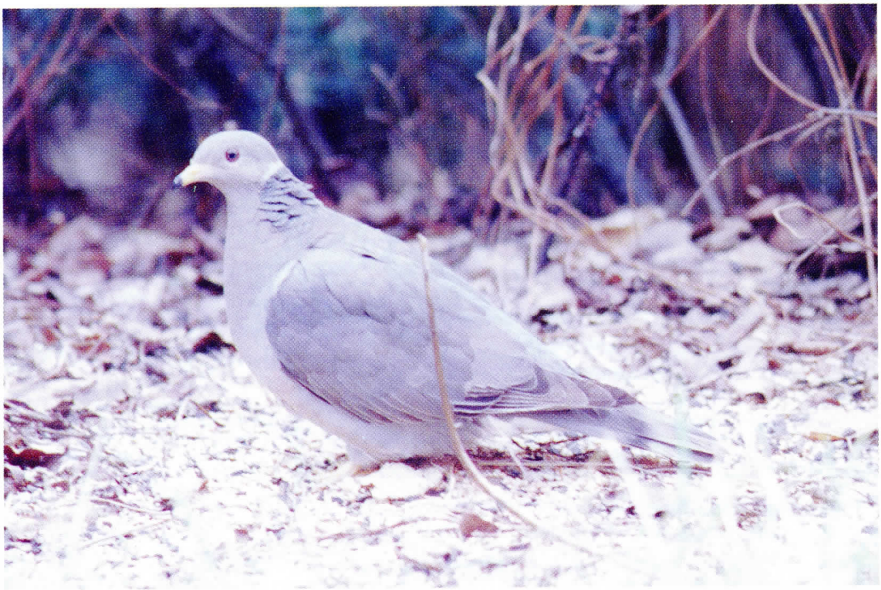

Figure 6: Basic Band-tailed Pigeon at Kingfisher Lake, *Thunder Bay*, from 26 May to 1 June 2000. Photo by *Nicholas G. Escott*.

Figure 7: Male Rufous Hummingbird at Nipigon, *Thunder Bay*, from 31 July to 2 August 2000. Sketch by *Lola Grimes*.

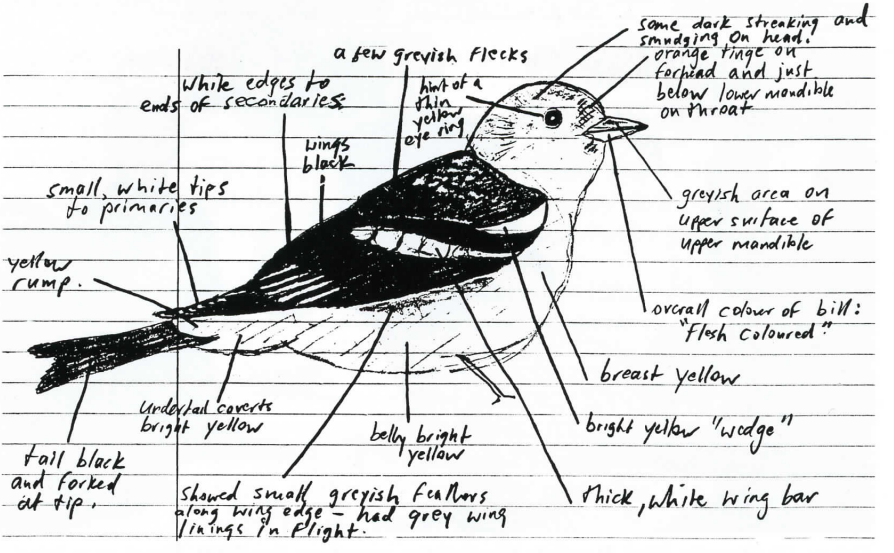

Figure 8: Basic male Western Tanager at Whitney, *Nipissing*, from 2 to 13 March 2000. Sketch by *Doug Tozer*.

Figure 9: Alternate Lark Sparrow at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*, on 17 May 2000. Photo by *James N. Flynn*.

Figure 10: Ontario Bird Records Committee members for 2000. Front row, left to right: Kayo Roy, Ron Pittaway, Bob Curry. Back row: Mark Peck, Alan Wormington, Kevin McLaughlin, Peter Burke, Margaret Bain. Absent: Rob Dobos. Photo by *David Beadle*.

Accepted Records

Pacific Loon ***Gavia pacifica*** **(3/16)**

1999 - one, definitive basic, 19 December, Wolfe Island, *Frontenac,* (Ronald D. Weir, GeorgeVance).

Western Grebe ***Aechmophorus occidentalis*** **(0/14)**

2000 - one, 23 August, Rainy Lake (Red Pine Island), *Rainy River,* (Allan G. Harris, also found by Sue Bryan, Robert Foster)

Northern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialis*** **(3/9)**

1999 - one, female, 5 January, Aurora, *York,* (Gary Lawrence, C. Silla Darvasi, Andrea S. Coombs, Patricia Lang) – photos on file, specimen (skin) at ROM (#65648).

This injured bird was found at a roadside in an industrial area in Aurora and was taken to the Wildcare Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Woodbridge, Ontario. While the bird showed no signs of trauma externally, a radiograph determined that the bird had a fracture of the left clavicle, rendering it incapable of flight. Given both the time required for fracture repair, and the logistics of returning this bird to its natural habitat, it was decided that euthanization by intracardiac injection was best for the bird.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel ***Oceanites oceanicus*** **(2/1)**

1955 - one, 14 August, Long Beach, *Niagara,* (Glenn A. Meyers, George A. Meyers, Eric Bastin) - specimen (skin) at ROM (#73077).

1897 or 1898 - one, spring, Gull Lake, *Muskoka,* (collector unknown) - specimen (skin) at ROM (#34288).

The 1955 specimen was likely the result of Hurricane Connie as it swept through Ontario. The 1897/1898 specimen had a tag attached indicating that the identification of the species was made by Percy A. Taverner. See also Baillie (1955), Beardslee and Mitchell (1965), and Speirs (1985).

Leach's Storm-Petrel ***Oceanodroma leucorhoa*** **(3/0)**

1955 - one, 16 August, Kingston (Loughborough Lake), *Frontenac,* (Mrs. H. Patry) - specimen (skin) at ROM (#73086)

1939 - one, 19 July, Cornwall (St. Lawrence River), *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry,* (A. Burrelle) - specimen (skin) at ROM (#33400).

The 2000 Committee examined the specimens for these two occurrences at the ROM. The 1955 specimen was located immediately after Hurricane Connie passed through Ontario. For further reference, see Toner (1940), Baillie (1955), Quilliam (1973), and Speirs (1985).

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel ***Oceanodroma castro*** **(1/0)**

1933 - one, female, 28 August, Ottawa (Rideau River), *Ottawa-Carleton,* (found by Bunny Sunderland) - specimen (skin) at CMN (#CMN AV 25668).

This specimen is deposited with the Canadian Museum of Nature in Aylmer, Quebec. See also Taverner (1934), and Speirs (1985).

Anhinga ***Anhinga anhinga*** **(0/1)**

2000 - one, definitive alternate/basic, male, 16 July - 16 September, Delaware, *Middlesex,* (Louise McAsh, Robert Curry, Peter Read, Burke Korol, Kayo J. Roy, James N. Flynn, Alfred H. Rider) – photos on file.

Clearly, the bird of the year in Ontario, this is the first fully documented record of this species for Ontario and Canada. This remarkable rarity remained a full two months in a small marsh just west of London, and was seen by a very large number of birders. A full account of this occurrence can be found in Bain (2000) and Read (2000). The 2001 Committee will review two very old Anhinga records for Ontario, for which there appears to be some very limited and controversial documentation (Tozer 2000).

Little Blue Heron ***Egretta caerulea*** **(7/37)**

2000 - one, definitive alternate, 3 May, London (Westminister Ponds), *Middlesex,* (Andrew Ross).

- one, definitive alternate, 14 May, Essex, *Essex,* (David R. Don, also found by Gerrard McNaughton, Thomas Crooks, Wolfgang Luft).
- one, juvenal, 26 August - 14 September, Rondeau Park (Townsite), *Chatham-Kent,* (Blake A. Mann, Burke Korol, Alfred H. Rider) – photo on file.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* (2/24)

2000 - one, definitive alternate, 2-24 May, Presqu'ile Provincial Park (Owen Point), *Northumberland,* (Donald Shanahan, also found by Ian Shanahan).
- one, 14 June, Brockville (McNair Island), *Leeds and Grenville,* (Cynthia Pekarik, D. V. Chip Weseloh).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* North Only (4/11)

2000 - seven, basic, 2 November, Red Rock, *Thunder Bay,* (George A. Williams, also found by Joseph Williams, Keith Johnson) - photo on file.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* North Only (1/5)

2000 - one, 7 May, Fort Frances, *Rainy River,* (Roger M. Simms).

There are very few records of this species for northern Ontario, and evidence of possible breeding in the Rainy River area needs to be explored.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (2/30)

2000 - one, basic, 13-16 September, Alfred (Sewage Lagoon), *Prescott and Russell,* (Jacques M. Bouvier, Roger Clark).

1996 - one, definitive alternate, 24-25 May, Alfred (Sewage Lagoon), *Prescott and Russell,* (Jacques M. Bouvier, Christopher Michener).

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* (2/31)

2000 - one, 31 March, Pickering, *Durham,* (Michael Williamson).
- one, 31 March, Grimsby (Beamer Memorial Conservation Area), *Niagara,* (Donald E. Perks, Robert Curry, Verne Evans).
- one, 15-21 May, Sturgeon Creek (15-17 May), and Point Pelee National Park (17-21 May), *Essex,* (David J. Milsom, Alan Wormington, also found by Kevin A. McLaughlin, David Wilson).
- one, 26 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent,* (P. Allen Woodliffe).
- one, 14 and 17 July, Spry, *Bruce,* (Robert Curry, found by Denys Gardiner, Sharon Gardiner, Dennis Lewington, Gwen Lewington).
- one, 30 July, Hillman Marsh, *Essex,* (Ross Mackintosh, Randy P. Horvath, also found by Paul Desjardins, Sandy Mackintosh).
- one, basic, 24 August, Mount Hope, *Hamilton-Wentworth,* (Robert H. Westmore, also found by Dorothy Westmore).
- one, basic, 9 October, Vittoria, *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Hugh McArthur).

This species, formerly considered accidental in Ontario, is being reported with increasing frequency. The eight records this year equals all of the reports of this species observed for the entire 1980s (James 1991).

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii* South Only (0/29)

2000 - one, definitive basic, 24 September - 2 October, Huntsville, *Muskoka,* (Colin D. Jones, Doug Tozer, Allan Sinclair, Burke Korol, found by Mark Peck) - photos on file.
- one, juvenal, 9-11 October, Ottawa, *Ottawa-Carleton,* (Christina Lewis, Robert A. Bracken, also found by Michael Tate).
- one, definitive basic, 27 November - 6 December, Kingsville (Jack Miners Bird Sanctuary), *Essex,* (Dean J. Ware, Stephen T. Pike) – photos on file.

- one, definitive basic, 17 December, Whitby (Harbour), *Durham,* (Ron Tozer, also found by Doug Tozer, Margaret J. C. Bain).

Here is another example of a species being observed more frequently in Ontario.

Cinnamon Teal ***Anas cyanoptera*** **(0/11)**

2000 - one, alternate, male, 27 May - 23 June, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay,* (Nicholas G. Escott, also found by Rob Foster, Sue Bryan, Michael Bryan, Allan G. Harris) - photo on file.

A female teal was associated with this male bird, but was not seen well enough to make an identification.

Smew ***Mergellus albellus*** **(2/0)**

1973 - one, female, 9-10 December, Normandale (Fish Hatchery), *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (John L. Olmsted, Alan Wormington, also found by Barry D. Jones, Jack Hanna, Douglas Hanna) - photo on file.

1960 - one, female, 21 February - 30 March, Niagara River (between Fort Erie and Chippawa), Miller's Creek (21-22 February, 13 March, and 28-30 March), Frenchman's Creek (23 and 28 February) Ussher's Creek (27 February), *Niagara,* (Harold D. Mitchell, Mary Louise Emerson, Donald R. Gunn, found by James L. Baillie) – photo on file.

Photographs and written documentation for these two records provided the 2000 Committee sufficient data to rule out any concerns of origin. Prior to being found in Ontario, the 1960 bird was the same female seen in the Buffalo Harbour, New York, the previous week. In the February 1960 issue of *The Prothonotary,* Harold H. Axtell (1960), in a cover story, refers to this bird as "more than just a rarity and, in fact, constitutes one of the highest points in the entire history of ornithology in the Niagara Frontier Area". For further information, see Roche (1960a, 1960b), Baillie (1964), Beardslee and Mitchell (1965), and Speirs (1985)

Swallow-tailed Kite ***Elanoides forficatus*** **(1/11)**

2000 - one, 6 and 10 May, Hillman Marsh (6 May), Point Pelee National Park (6 and 10 May), *Essex,* (Dennis Fast, Steven M. Coogan, Pauline M. Hockey, Vicki McKay).
- one, 16 May, Walsingham, *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (John N. Hollyer, John Kalman, Joyce E. Hollyer).

Mississippi Kite ***Ictinia mississippiensis*** **(5/20)**

2000 - one, adult, 6 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Paul Jones, Ronald Fleming).
- one, definitive basic, 15 May, Port Royal, *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Donna Sheppard, Mark Cranford).

"Western" Red-tailed Hawk ***Buteo jamaicensis calurus*** **(0/1)**

2000 - one, definitive basic, 23 December, Fisherville, *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Willie D'Anna, also found by Dean DiTommaso).

This is the first record of this subspecies accepted for Ontario by the OBRC. This very complete report includes a good description of the circumstances, and eliminates confusion with a dark morph "Eastern" Red-tailed Hawk.

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis* (0/5)

1999 - one, juvenal, 3-25 April, Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, *Prince Edward,* (Ronald D. Weir, Joel H. Ellis, Craig S. A. McLauchlan, Christopher J. Escott).

This bird at Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area was not accepted in the 1999 Report due to questions about its origin. While these questions remain, the Committee has decided to follow the approach of some other Great Lakes area records committees. Thus, the record is accepted with the caveat that wild origin cannot be determined with certainty. This applies also to the previously accepted Ontario records of this species.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrula martinica* (4/5)

2000 - one, juvenal, 22 September, Toronto, *Toronto,* (Robert Cumming, Jean Iron, Jerry DeMarco) - photos on file.

This juvenile bird was rescued from the middle of a street in north Toronto where it was likely hit by a car. The bird was taken to a small area of cattails in High Park, where it was observed to be in poor condition when released. The bird was not relocated the next day.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* South Only (1/40)

2000 - one, alternate, 22-23 May, Southampton (Miramichi Bay), *Bruce,* (Cindy Cartwright, found by David Fidler, Barbara Fidler).
- one, alternate, male, 2 June - 15 July, Long Point (Tip), *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Stuart MacKenzie, Kenny Burrell).

A keen young birder, a volunteer for Bird Studies Canada at Long Point, heard an unfamiliar sound, a high-pitched, mournful *booop!* He knew instantly what it was, and that it was important. He looked for the bird and soon found it on the shoreline, calling for a mate. He watched as the little male Piping Plover lifted off to perform its courtship flight. This was not just a migratory bird, this was a would-be breeding bird on a sandspit that had not seen breeding Piping Plovers since 1978. The bird remained for nearly two months, hoping to attract a mate, and then one morning, realizing this was not going to happen, the lonely male circled the tip of Long Point and disappeared south over Lake Erie (Michael Bradstreet, pers. comm.).

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* North Only (7/61)

2000 - one, basic, male, 5 November, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay,*(Nicholas G. Escott).
- one, basic, female, 9-18 November, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay,* Nicholas G. Escott, found by Wally Zarowski) - photo on file.

1999 - one, basic, female, 17-23 October, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay,* (Nicholas G. Escott, Jody R. Allair) - photo on file.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (2/2)

1998 - one, alternate in prebasic molt, 21 August, Nepean (Ottawa Beach), *Ottawa-Carleton,* (Robert A. Bracken, Gordon Pringle, Timothy Allison, Kenneth Allison).

1976 - one, alternate in prebasic molt, 25 July, St. David's, *Niagara,* (Harold H. Axtell, John E. Black, Paul M. Benham, Robert Curry).

The 1976 observation was an extremely well documented report. "Awesome" and "excruciatingly detailed" were adjectives used by some members of the 2000 Committee to describe the reports on the 1976 bird, particularly the typed eight page submission from Harold H. Axtell. For further information, see Axtell et al. (1977).

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* North Only (2/10)

2000 - one, alternate, 17 May, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay,* (Nicholas G. Escott, Philip J. Cripps) - photo on file.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (1/2)

1999 - one, juvenal, 17 October, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay,* (Geoffrey Gooding, also found by Sheila Gooding).

This observation represents the first record of this species for northern Ontario, and is only the third for the province.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (1/19)

1965 - one, definitive basic, 21 August and 6 September, Burnaby (Morgan's Point), *Niagara,* 11 September, Byng (Grant Point), *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Robert Curry, Adrian Dorst, also found by Angela Thomas) - specimen (skin) in Buffalo Museum of Science (# BSNS 5072).

In addition to this well documented report, more details can be found in Beardslee and Mitchell (1965).

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* South Only (3/23)

1999 - two, juvenal, 27 August, Grimsby, *Niagara,* (Kevin A. McLaughlin).

- one, juvenal, 19 September, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Alan Wormington).

1991 - one, juvenal, 28 October, Hamilton (Van Wagners Beach), *Hamilton-Wentworth,* (Kayo J. Roy, found by Brian K. Wylie) - photos on file.

The photographs of the 1991 bird were studied by Kevin A. McLaughlin. After considerable research, he submitted a detailed and explicit analysis of why he felt the bird was a Long-tailed Jaeger rather than a Parasitic Jaeger as initially identified. The Committee also chose to seek outside expert opinion, and these experts unanimously concurred with McLaughlin that the photographed bird was indeed a juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger.

California Gull ***Larus californicus*** **(0/27)**

2000 - one, definitive basic, 12 November - 10 December, Niagara Falls, *Niagara,* (Jean Iron, Michael M. Morgante, Willie D'Anna, also found by Kevin A. McLaughlin).

California Gull has been observed along the Niagara River in Niagara Falls every year since 1992. It is likely that one or more individuals have been returning over the past few winters.

Ivory Gull ***Pagophila eburnea*** **(15/8)**

2000 - one, first basic, 23 January, Toronto (Leslie Street Spit and Humber Bay Park), *Toronto,* Bronte (Harbour), *Halton,* (Judy Edwards, Tyler Hoar, David Mudd, Glenn Coady).

Extremely well documented descriptions of this rare visitor from the north were reviewed by the 2000 Committee. Incredibly, at year end, three first winter Ivory Gulls were reported, one in December 2000 from Toronto, and two in January 2001 from Hamilton and Amherst Island. The 2001 Committee intends to review them as a group to clearly ascertain if three individual birds were involved.

Arctic Tern ***Sterna paradisaea*** **South Only After 1990 (*/3)**

2000 - one, definitive alternate, 27-28 May, Hamilton Harbour (LaSalle Marina), *Hamilton-Wentworth,* (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Barry Cherriere) - photo on file.

Razorbill ***Alca torda*** **(2/5)**

1971 - one, first basic, 9 January, Oakville (Harbour), *Halton,* (Robert Curry, also found by Barry D. Jones).

1967 - one, first basic, 4 May, Stoney Creek (Community Beach), *Hamilton-Wentworth,* (Robert Curry).

These two well documented old reports, that were submitted to the OBRC this year, clearly eliminate other alcid species.

Band-tailed Pigeon ***Columba fasciata*** **(3/5)**

2000 - one, basic, 26 May - 1 June, Moosonee, *Cochrane,* (Kenneth Abraham, found by John Walker, Andrew Jano, Ken Ross) - photo on file.

- one, basic, 6-27 November, Kingfisher Lake, *Thunder Bay,* (Nicholas G. Escott, found by Jody R. Allair) - photo on file.

Barn Owl ***Tyto alba*** **(*/1)**

2000 - one, basic, female, (found dead), 15 February, Kitchener, *Waterloo,* (Kate MacIntyre, Jennifer Jacobson) - photo on file.

This endangered species was hit by a truck and killed on Highway 401 near Kitchener.

Chuck-will's-widow ***Caprimulgus carolinensis*** **(1/11)**

2000 - one, male, 11 May, Wheatley Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent,* (Ron Tozer, also

found by Pat Tozer, Laura Tozer).
- one, male, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*, (Michael Tate).

1964 - one, male, 11 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*, (Robert Curry, also found by David L. Bissell, Edward R. McDonald).

The 1964 record represents the first modern record and the second ever for the province. The first was also at Point Pelee, on 21 May 1906 (Stirrett 1973).

Rufous Hummingbird ***Selasphorus rufus*** **(2/11)**

2000 - one, male, 31 July - 2 August, Nipigon, *Thunder Bay*, (Lola Grimes, Timothy Grimes).

Lewis's Woodpecker ***Melanerpes lewis*** **(1/4)**

2000 - one, basic, 17-19 May, Hilliardton, *Timiskaming*, (April Newell, Roger Newell) - photo on file
- one, basic, 13-18 June, Carman, *Northumberland*, (Beverley Stewart, David J. Milsom, Ann White, Donald Shanahan, also found by Bruce Stewart).

Say's Phoebe ***Sayornis saya*** **(1/8)**

2000 - one, first basic, 22-24 September, Algonquin Provincial Park (Lake of Two Rivers Airfield), *Nipissing*, (Doug Tozer, Michael W. P. Runtz, Burke Korol, Martin Roncetti, also found by Andrea Stewart) - photos on file.

Vermilion Flycatcher ***Pyrocephalus rubinus*** **(1/2)**

2000 - one, first basic, male, 31 October, Malden Centre (Holiday Beach Conservation Area), *Essex*, (S. Wesley Kinnin) - photo on file.

This remarkable observation is only the third record of this species for Ontario.

Ash-throated Flycatcher ***Myiarchus cinerascens*** **(1/5)**

1999 - one, 24 November, Port Stanley (Hawk Cliff), *Elgin*, (Glenn Barrett, also found by Pam Martin, Robert Hubert, Gary Hubert).

Readers will recall that this bird reported at Port Stanley was included in the 1999 Report as Ash-throated/Nutting's Flycatcher. However, after consultation with several other records committees in eastern North America, we have decided to accept this as Ash-throated Flycatcher with the caveat that Nutting's Flycatcher has not been eliminated. This statement applies to all previously accepted Ash-throated Flycatcher records, and will be added to all future records of Ash-throated unless identification criteria positively eliminate one or the other species.

Fish Crow ***Corvus ossifragus*** **(1/6)**

2000 - one, basic, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*, (David R. Don, also found by Wolfgang Luft, Gerrard McNaughton, Thomas Crooks, Michael McEvoy, David J. Milsom).

Cave Swallow ***Petrochelidon fulva*** **(0/21)**

1999 - two, 3 November, Leamington (Sturgeon Creek), *Essex,* (G. Thomas Hince).

Rock Wren ***Salpinctes obsoletus*** **(1/2)**

1964 - one, male, 6-7 December, Port Weller, *Niagara,* (Carl Mrozek, Daniel Salisbury, also found by Richard Brownstein, Joanna Burger, Robert F. Andrle, Arthur R. Clark) - specimen (skin) at ROM (# 94722).

The 2000 Committee examined the specimen of this record at the ROM, and reviewed two written reports. For more information, see Baillie (1964) and Beardslee and Mitchell (1965).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher ***Polioptila caerulea*** **North Only (2/12)**

2000 - one, 17 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay,* (Bruce Rodrigues).

Mountain Bluebird ***Sialia currucoides*** **(3/26)**

2000 - one, basic, female, 22-29 February, Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward,* (Joel H. Ellis, Bud Rowe) - photos on file.

- one, basic, female, 7-9 April, Fort Frances, *Rainy River,* (Roger M. Simms).

Townsend's Solitaire ***Myadestes townsendi*** **(4/36)**

2000 - one, basic, 5-7 January, Wiarton, *Bruce,* (Cindy Cartwright, Judith King, also found by Barbara Martin).

- one, basic, 3 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay,* (Lionel Leston).
- one basic, 10 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay,* (Matthew J. Mills, also found by Tina Newbury, Lionel Leston).
- one, basic, 21 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay,* (Matthew J. Mills, also found by Allan G. Harris, Lionel Leston, Tina Newbury, Glenn Desy, Sarah Wyshynski).
- one, basic, 29 October, Port Stanley (Hawk Cliff), *Elgin,* (Kevin A. McLaughlin, also found by Shay Redmond).

This was a banner year for this species. The 2000 Committee voted to delete Townsend's Solitaire from the Review List for northern Ontario, effective 1 January 2001. All observations in southern Ontario will continue to require written reports.

Townsend's Warbler ***Dendroica townsendi*** **(2/4)**

2000 - one, alternate, male, 20-23 April, Whitby (Thickson's Woods), *Durham,* (Jay Vander Gaast).

Yellow-throated Warbler ***Dendroica dominica*** **North Only After 1993 (17/59)**

2000 - one, 28 October - 4 December, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay,* (John McKee, Mary Vancook) - photo on file.

Kirtland's Warbler ***Dendroica kirtlandii*** **(7/17)**

2000 - one, first alternate, male, 21 May, Tobermory (Cape Hurd), *Bruce,* (Ted Cheskey, also found by Bakiss Laurent) - photos on file.

Western Tanager ***Piranga ludoviciana*** **(2/17)**

2000 - one, basic, male, 2-13 March, Whitney, *Nipissing,* (Doug Tozer, found by Jack Borrowman, Karen Borrowman).
- one, alternate, male, 7 May, Ridgeway (Point Abino), *Niagara,* (Edmund D. Stevens, also found by Peter M. Stevens, Carol A. Stevens).

Bachman's Sparrow ***Aimophila aestivalis*** **(2/0)**

1964 - one, alternate, male, 7-10 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Robert Curry, also found by David L. Bissell).
- one, alternate, male, 8-9 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Robert Curry, also found by David L. Bissell).

Although there are other sight reports and possibly a specimen, at this time, these two birds are the only ones for which documentation has been submitted for review by the OBRC. Plumage and song description were convincingly reported. It is unfortunate that the reports of these birds at Post Field were not followed up over the summer, as it is possible that they may have remained on territory and perhaps even nested.

Lark Sparrow ***Chondestes grammacus*** **(6/52)**

2000 - one, alternate, 2 May, Cheapside (Sandusk Creek), *Haldimand-Norfolk,* (Barry D. Jones).
- one, alternate, 6-7 May, Kenabeek (Mountain Chutes Camp), *Timiskaming,* (Barry Kinch, Kelsey Kinch) - photos on file.
- one, alternate, 13 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay,* (Nicholas G. Escott).
- one, alternate, 17 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (James N. Flynn, found by B. Marsh) - photos on file.
- one, alternate, 22-24 May, Petawawa, *Renfrew,* (Manson Fleguel, found by Viola Nitschke).
- one, alternate, 22-25 May, Minnitaki, *Kenora,* (Carolle Eady) - photos on file.
- one, alternate, male, 2-4 June, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Alan Wormington, James N. Flynn) - photos on file.
- one, alternate, 17 June, Kent Bridge, *Chatham-Kent,* (Larry Drew).

This was an exceptional year for this species, with eight reports received by the OBRC. It is interesting to note that all of these observations were seen in a six week period from early May to mid-June.

Henslow's Sparrow ***Ammodramus henslowii*** **(*/ 7)**

2000 - two, alternate, males, (one) 21 May - 10 June, (two) 10 June, Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton,* (Gavin Edmondstone, Burke Korol).
- one, alternate, male, 10 June, Milton, *Halton,* (Burke Korol, found by Mark Wiercinski).

Blue Grosbeak ***Guiraca caerulea*** **(8/42)**

2000 - one, first alternate, male, 7 May, Windsor, *Essex,* (Randy P. Horvath).
- one, female, 12 May, Point Pelee National Park (onion field), *Essex,* (Dallas Johnson, also found by Amy Johnson).
- one, alternate, male, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* (Jocelyn Tremblay,

also found by Pierre Bouthellier, Cheryl Massey, Jacques Turcotte)

1996 - one, definitive alternate, male, 3-4 May, Miners Bay, *Haliburton,* (Gail Leach-Wunker, Randy Wunker) - photos on file.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (2/9)

2000 - one, definitive alternate, male, 10 May, Dryden, *Kenora,* (William F. Beatty, Janet M. Dall Beatty) - photos on file.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Accepted, Origin Questionable

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

1979 - Leach's Storm-Petrel, one, 5 November, Thorold (Welland Canal), *Niagara,* - specimen (skin) at BMS (# BSNS 7542).

This sick and dying bird was handed off an ocean freighter in the Welland Canal to the care of a local bander and rehabilitator. Unfortunately, the bird survived for only three days.

2000 - Black-billed Magpie *(Pica hudsonia),* one, 7 March, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* Susan Brock, also found by Paul Brock).

1999 - Black-billed Magpie, two, at nest, 2-25 April, Underwood, *Bruce,* (Patricia Wilkin, Martin Parker, also found by Joyce Wedow, Lindsay Wilken) - video on file.

The identity of these three birds was clearly not in doubt, but their origin was felt to be questionable, especially since a few birds reported elsewhere during the same years in southern Ontario were seen to have coloured leg bands (Alan Wormington, pers. comm.). The 2000 Committee continues the cautious approach taken by previous Committees on records of this species in southern Ontario.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Uncertain

The documentation submitted for the following reports was for the most part found to be inadequate to unequivocally identify the species claimed. There were very few reports that the Committee felt were clearly erroneous.

Any of these reports may be re-submitted, should additional documentation become available.

2000
- Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*), one, 7 November, Marten River (Marten River Provincial Park), *Nipissing*.
- Yellow-billed Loon, one, 26 November, Cabot Head, *Bruce*.
- Little Blue Heron, one, 12 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea)*, one, 25 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
- "Cackling" Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis minima*), 20 December, Pelee Island, *Essex*.
- Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni)*, one, 12 October, Malden Centre (Holiday Beach Conservation Area), *Essex*.
- Swainson's Hawk, one, 13 September, Long Point (Old Cut Banding Station), *Haldimand-Norfolk*.
- Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*), one, 25 June, Ancaster (Mineral Springs), *Hamilton-Wentworth*.
- Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*), one, 16 May, Wheatley Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent*.
- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), two, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- Barn Owl, one, (dead), 15 June, Chatham, *Chatham-Kent*.
- Rufous Hummingbird , one, 31 July-2 August, Nipigon, *Thunder Bay*.
- Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), one, 30 January, Kirkfield, *Victoria*.
- Mountain Bluebird, one, 21-27 May, Hilton, *Northumberland*, - photo on file.

An enlarged copy of the photograph accompanying this report was carefully examined by the Committee, and this analysis revealed characteristics of hybridism. Accordingly, the Committee was not able to clearly accept the report as a pure Mountain Bluebird.

- Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), one, 30 October, Fort Frances, *Rainy River*.
- Blue Grosbeak, one, 22 May, Kingston, *Frontenac*.
- Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*), one, 1 June, Oshawa (Second Marsh), *Durham*.
- Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), one, 9-11 May, Peterborough, *Peterborough*.

Corrections/Updates To Previous OBRC Reports

1999 Report (Ontario Birds 18: 53-72)

- under Ibis species, 28 November, 1999, change "also found by Linda J. Nuttall)" to "also found by Linda J. Nuttall, Jul K. Wojnowski)".
- under Black Vulture, change bracketed numbering to "(2/28)"
- under Common Eider, 1-24 December 1999, change "also found by John L. Olmsted)" to "also found by John L. Olmsted, Glenda J. Slessor)".
- under Mississippi Kite, 13 June 1999, add "also found by Ross A. Layberry)".
- under Common Moorhen, 26 May 1998, change "1998" to "1999".
- under Curlew Sandpiper, 6 June 1999, change "Ronald D. Weir" to "Ronald D. Weir".
- under California Gull, 6-19 December 1998, change "(Betsy Potter, Michael M. Morgante, Jean Iron, Winnie Yung, also found by Willie D'Anna, William Lee, Walton Sabin)" to "(Willie D'Anna, Michael M. Morgante, Jean Iron, Winnie

Yung, also found by Betsy Potter, William Lee, Walton Sabin)".
- under Ross's Gull, 17-18 May 1999, add "photos on file".
- under Mountain Bluebird, 25 April - 20 June 1999, change "David H. Elder" to "David H. Elder".
- under Townsend's Solitaire, 24 December 1997 - 1 February 1998, change "Ethan J. Meleg" to "Ethan J. Meleg".
- under Spotted Towhee, 1 December 1999 - 19 January 2000, change the dates to "1 December 1999 - 8 February 2000".
- under Lark Sparrow, 20-22 April 1974, change "*Cochrane*" to "*Algoma*".

1996 Report (Ontario Birds 15: 47-66)

- under Say's Phoebe, 10 September 1995, change the date to "10-11 September 1995".

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Molts and Plumages of Ontario's Heermann's Gull

Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway

A Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*) in Toronto, Ontario, provided a singular opportunity to study closely an individual for several days each week for 9 months from early December 1999 to 16 September 2000. The record of this Heermann's Gull was fully documented by Yukich (2000) and Roy (2000). This paper describes the Prealternate I and Prebasic II molts of a second calendar year Heermann's Gull. Tables 1 and 2 are bar graphs showing the respective Prealternate I and Prebasic II molts. Figures 1 to 9 are photographs showing significant stages of the molts and plumages in chronological order. Information is also provided on soft part colours.

MOLTS AND PLUMAGES

Normal molting or molt is the growth of new feathers, which pushes out the old feathers. It includes both the shedding and replacement of feathers. In this study, we use the terminology of Humphrey and Parkes (1959) to describe the names of molts and plumages. The Humphrey and Parkes terminology is recommended to describe precisely a bird's plumages and molts. See Pittaway (2000) for a detailed comparison of Humphrey and Parkes with the general terms of molt and plumage.

Basic I Plumage

This plumage is acquired by a partial Prebasic I molt of the head, body, and scapular feathers. The wings and tail are retained from the Juvenal plumage. Note: a few apparently new median secondary coverts were present on the outer wing in December, which we consider a variable extension of the Prebasic I molt. When the Heermann's Gull was first seen well and photographed in early December 1999, it had mostly completed its Prebasic I molt as shown in Figure 1. It had new brownish grey Basic I head and body feathers, scapulars, and a few apparently new median coverts. These newer and greyer feathers contrasted with the worn and faded browner Juvenal wing coverts and tertials on the perched bird.

Alternate I Plumage

This plumage was acquired from mid-January to mid-July by a partial Prealternate I molt of the head and body feathers, and the scapulars. This molt appears to be less extensive than the Prebasic I molt. See Table 1 for a bar graph of the Prealternate I molt.

Head: Molt began in mid-January. By early February, the Heermann's Gull

had new white throat feathers, and the eye crescents were whiter. There was a gradual increase in the number of white feathers on the head and face from January to July. The head was its whitest from mid-June to early July. See Figure 5. The scattered whitish Alternate I feathers were noticeably worn in mid-July.

Body: In mid-February, many new dusky grey Alternate I body feathers were mixed with worn and faded brown Basic I feathers. By mid-May, all body feathering was the same dusky grey colour.

Scapulars: In February and March, new dusky grey scapulars were mixed with the old worn and faded brown Basic I scapulars. All new dusky grey Alternate I scapulars had fully grown by late May. See Figure 3. One long pale-tipped posterior scapular (subscapular), forming part of the scapular crescent, appeared on each side in late March. See Figure 2. In early May, one more pale-tipped scapular on each side grew from underneath the earlier pale-tipped scapulars.

Basic II Plumage

This plumage is acquired by a complete Prebasic II molt from mid-February to September. When the Heermann's Gull was last seen on 16 September 2000, it had essentially completed molting to its dusky greyer Basic II plumage. The Ontario Heermann's in September (Figure 7) was very similar to the bird in the black-and-white photo number 469 in Grant (1986). See Table 2 for a bar graph of the Prebasic II molt.

Head: From mid-July to mid-August, many worn white-tipped and browner Alternate I feathers were replaced by new greyish Basic II feathers. Wear probably contributed to the loss of some white-tipped feathers. By early September, the head feathering was a mixture of mostly new greyish feathers and a few scattered older brownish ones. The throat and forehead were still whitish.

Body: Most molting occurred from mid-August to at least mid-September, when slightly faded brownish-grey Alternate I feathers were replaced with dusky, greyer Basic II feathers. On 14 September, the bird was still preening whitish sheaths off newly grown feathers. Like the head, the body plumage was a mixture of older brownish grey and newer dusky grey feathers, with the newer grey feathering predominant.

Scapulars: Molting extended from early July to 15 September, replacing most Alternate I scapulars with Basic II scapulars. In mid-July, two ages of feathers were obvious, older worn faded grey Alternate I mixed with new dusky grey Basic II scapulars. On 3 July, new white-tipped posterior scapulars (subscapulars)

Figure 1: Basic I plumage on 2 December 1999, showing molt contrast of older, worn, brownish Juvenal wing coverts and tertials, with newer fresh greyish Basic I head, body, and scapular feathers. Photo by *Sam Barone*.

Figure 2: Alternate I long, pale-tipped, posterior scapulars (subscapulars) on 30 March 2000. Compare with Figure 6. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

emerged on each side from under the two older pale-tipped Alternate I scapulars, followed by another pair of white-tipped scapulars on 6 July. On 7 August, another new white-tipped feather emerged on each side. Between then and 15 September, on each side, the two older worn Alternate I pale-tipped scapulars were replaced with new bright white-tipped dusky grey feathers, forming a conspicuous white scapular crescent on the perched bird. See Figure 6.

Primaries: These are the large outer wing feathers attached to the manus (hand) of the wing. Gulls have 11 primaries, but the tiny rudimentary outermost Primary 11 or remicle is not treated here. The short form P is used here for primary/primaries. The primaries are numbered and molted from the inner P1 outward to the long outermost P10 in a descendant sequence. The completion in growth of P10 usually is considered to be the end of the Prebasic II molt in gulls. Primary molt in the Heermann's Gull started with the shedding of very worn and faded brownish-black Juvenal P1 and P2 at the end of April 2000 and continued until the new dark greyish-black P10 finished growing in before mid-September, a period of over 4 months. The primaries molted sequentially from P1 to P10. See Figure 4. On 3 July, the old very worn and faded P10 shed on the right, and on 4 July, the old P10 shed on the left. The new dark greyish-black P10 had completely grown by 15 September. See Figure 9. The new Basic II primaries were a dark greyish-black and contrasted with the paler dusky grey body, tertials, coverts and scapular feathers. In flight, the bird seemed to be a uniform dark grey, almost black, but when perched the difference between the darker flight and tail feathers and the paler grey of the rest of the feathers was obvious.

Secondaries: These are the large wing feathers attached to the ulna between the wrist and the elbow, forming a continuous series with the primaries. We estimated 21 secondaries on each wing, which included 5 differently shaped tertials. The tertials are discussed and numbered separately below. The short form S is used for the secondary/secondaries. Molting of the secondaries occurred from early June to early August for S1 to S16. The secondaries are numbered and molted in an ascendant order from the outermost inward toward the body, from S1 to S16. Secondary molt started in early June with the shedding of the old very worn brownish-black Juvenal S1. By 25 June, the new dark greyish-black S1 was 75% grown and there was a large gap from S2 to about S9. By 3 July, all the old worn Juvenal secondaries had molted out. The new dark greyish-black Basic II secondaries 1-16 had fully grown by 2 August. The new Basic II secondaries were the same dark greyish-black

Figure 3: New dark grey Basic II median coverts and Alternate I scapulars on 25 May 2000. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

Figure 4: Heavy primary molt on 11 June 2000, showing new Basic II primaries 1-6, with primaries 5 and 6 partly grown, primary 7 shed, and primaries 8-10 being retained Juvenal feathers. White quill bases of the primaries show where primary coverts have shed. Browner secondaries have not yet molted. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

colour as the Basic II primaries, and contrasted with the other feathers, especially the paler grey tertials.

Tertials: The tertials are the innermost secondaries when they differ in shape, colour or molt pattern from the other secondaries. The short form T is used here for tertial(s). Many birds have three tertials, but gulls have at least five tertials, which are most noticeable when stacked fan-like on perched birds. They are numbered ascendantly, T1 to T5 inward from S16. The Heermann's Gull's tertials differed in colour from the secondaries. Prebasic II molt of the Heermann's Gull's tertials occurred from mid-May to late July. All old worn faded brown Juvenal tertials molted out by late June. The pale-tipped dusky grey replacements started growing in mid-May. By early July, there were 5 new pale-tipped tertials. Note: from mid-August to the end of the gull's stay in mid-September, two, probably three, new whitish-tipped tertials replaced some Basic II tertials, indicating a Presupplemental molt. See Figure 8.

Greater Secondary Coverts: These consist of one row of large coverts overlying the bases of the secondaries. The outer webs of the greater coverts are exposed and overlap one another in the same direction as the secondaries and primaries. Molting took place from early April to late June as follows:

- 9 April: very worn and faded brownish Juvenal greater coverts; looked like 1 or 2 missing.
- 30 April: several old greater coverts were missing on right, and 1 or 2 on left.
- 20 May: larger gaps where old greater coverts were missing, exposing the white bases of the secondaries.
- 31 May: all worn and faded brownish Juvenal greater coverts had molted out.
- 8 June: 4 new dusky grey greater coverts (same colour as other coverts, slightly paler than secondaries and primaries) coming in at the front, then in the centre.
- 8-23 June: new dusky grey feathers growing in from body side out, uneven in length.
- 28 June: all new dusky grey Basic II greater coverts appeared fully grown.

Median Secondary Coverts: Molting occurred from mid-February to June. In this study, we treat median coverts as two rows, lower and upper, above the greater coverts. In Heermann's Gull, the two rows of medians overlap in the same direction as the greater coverts. The lower row consists of larger feathers, whereas the feathers of the upper row are smaller, but noticeably larger than the lesser coverts above. The medians also molted differently than the other coverts, hence our separate treatment. Loose old worn brownish median coverts were pushed out by

Figure 5: Scattered Alternate I whitish head feathers and eye crescents on 30 June 2000. Some whitish feather tips have worn off. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

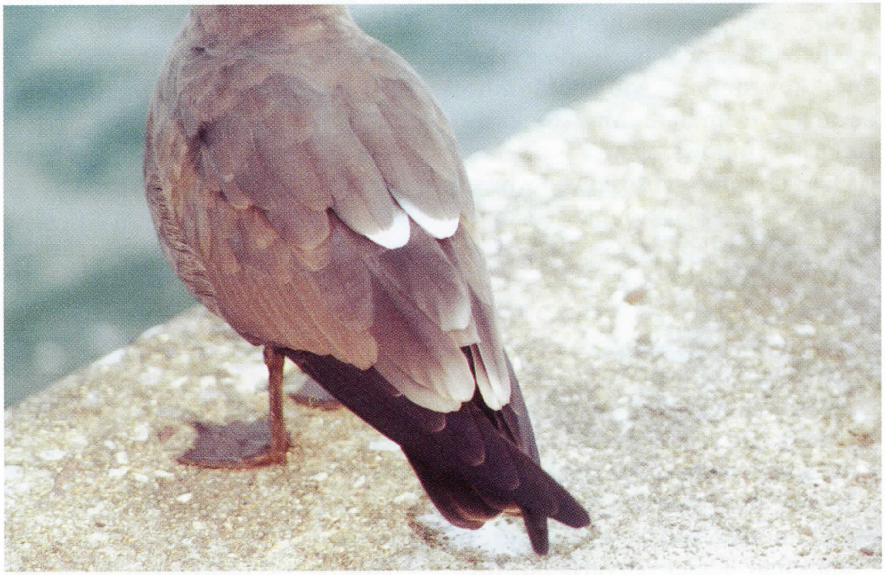


Figure 6: Long Basic II white-tipped posterior scapulars (subscapulars) on 26 August 2000. Compare with Figure 2. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

new grey medians during mid-February to April, often showing obvious gaps on the folded wings. On 2 May, there were two new lower medians on the right wing. On 3 May, a gap on the right side showed where old medians were missing. On 11 May, more new lower medians were growing. By 20 May, there was an almost complete row of lower medians on each side. See Figure 3. On 14 June, the upper row of new medians was growing. By 29 June, all new grey median coverts were fully grown. Note: some new medians replaced the Basic II medians during August and September, indicating a Presupplemental I molt. See Supplemental I Plumage below.

Lesser Secondary Coverts: The lesser coverts, including marginal coverts, comprise multiple rows of small feathers near the leading edge on the upper wing. Molting occurred from late May to early August as follows:

- 25 May: some gaps showed where older feathers had molted, and the remaining feathers were very worn and faded brown.
- 28 May: many new dusky grey lessers were growing.
- 30 May: white bases of median coverts showing where old brown lessers had recently shed.
- 11 June: many new dusky grey lessers, but some old brown ones still interspersed; new dusky grey marginal lesser coverts at the leading edge of the wings were growing at the same time.
- 30 June: mostly new dusky grey, but still a small narrow partial row of old worn brown lesser coverts.
- 2 August: all new dusky grey Basic II lesser coverts had grown.

Greater Primary Coverts: These are one row of feathers covering the bases of the primaries. The short form P denotes primary/primaries below. Molting of greater primary coverts occurred from late April to early August as follows:

- 25 April: old worn and faded brown primary coverts over P1 and 2, and possibly P3, were missing.
- 29 May: new dusky grey primary coverts covered bases of P1-3.
- 11 June: new dusky grey primary coverts covered bases of P1-6. See Figure 4.
- 30 June: new dusky grey primary coverts covered bases of P1-8, but there was still an old worn brown Juvenal covert over P10.
- 2 August: all new dusky grey Basic II greater primary coverts noted.

Median Primary Coverts: These cover the bases of the greater primary coverts. The short form P is used below for primary/primaries. Molting occurred from late April to early August as follows:

- Molt in old worn median primary coverts occurred first in those feathers above P1-3 and P7 and

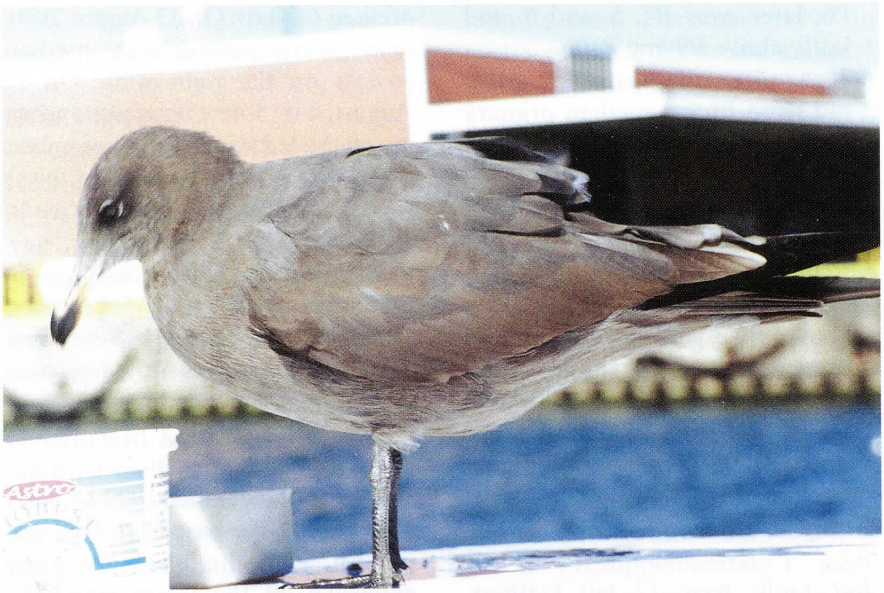


Figure 7: Basic II plumage on 7 September 2000. New grey median coverts and some new tertials indicate a probable Supplemental I plumage. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

Figure 8: Arrow indicates new, whitish-tipped tertial growing on 7 September 2000, which is apparently part of the Presupplemental I molt. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

P8, later over P4, 5, and 6, and lastly above P9 and P10.

- 30 April: small gaps where a few old worn brown median primary coverts were missing.
- 30 May: more gaps where old brown median primary coverts were missing.
- 1 July: new dusky grey median primary coverts were growing above P1-3 and 8; missing old brown coverts above P4-7; and old worn brown ones still above P9 and P10.
- Early August: all new dusky grey median primary coverts appeared fully grown.

Tail: Gulls have 12 tail feathers. Molt started in mid-May with the shedding of the old very worn and faded brownish Juvenal tail feathers, with new dark greyish-black feathers growing in simultaneously, left and right from the centre. On 1 July, there were 6 new dark grey-black central feathers growing. On 8 August, the tail appeared fully grown.

Supplemental I Plumage

During the Prebasic II molt, some tertials and median coverts were replaced twice, indicating a limited Presupplemental I molt.

Tertials: From mid-August to the end of the gull's stay in mid-September, two, possibly three, new whitish-tipped tertials on each side replaced the Basic II ones that had grown during May through July. See Figure 8.

Median Coverts: On 13 August 2000, there were several new median coverts on the right wing. On 17 August, 4 or 5 new ones were growing on the left wing. By 1 September, there was almost a complete lower row of new, darker, dusky grey median coverts. On 5 September, new median coverts started to grow in the upper row. By 15 September, there was one complete lower row of new medians, plus some new ones in the upper row. See Figure 7.

Soft Part Colours

Bill: From December 1999 to early March 2000, the base of the bill was pinkish, with the black tip more extensive on the lower mandible. The bill became more intensely pink in mid-March. From mid to late April, the bill base became more orange. The bill gradually changed colour to mostly orange, with a black tip. By late August, the bill had changed again to greenish at the base of the upper and lower mandibles; the remainder was orange with a black tip on the upper mandible, and more extensive black on the lower, with the extreme tip a white-bone colour.

Gape: The gape of the mouth was a soft pink.

Mouth: The lining of the mouth was pink (Yukich 2000).

Legs and feet: They were a dark charcoal grey to black.

Irides: They were mid-brown in colour, appearing black at a distance.

DISCUSSION

We examined a skin of a second year Heermann's Gull in Basic II plumage in the Canadian Museum of Nature. This bird was collected on 5 September 1923 at Morro, California. It was still growing Primary 10, which was 2.5 cm shorter than Primary 9. We estimated that its Prebasic II molt was about 2 weeks behind the Ontario bird. Jon King (pers. comm.) reported molt data for Heermann's Gulls in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, which indicated that the Ontario bird was very similar in both molt timing and duration to birds in California.

The Heermann's Gull molted almost continuously during the 9 months from December 1999 to mid-September 2000. See Tables 1 and 2. Howell and Corbin (2000), in a study of Western Gulls (*L.occidentalis*), reported "molt appears to be more or less continuous for at least the first two years" of life.

After the Basic I plumage was acquired (which apparently included a few median coverts), some tertials and median coverts molted two more times. After Basic I, we considered the first molt of the tertials (five on each wing) and median coverts to be part of the Prebasic II molt, and the second molt of some tertials and median coverts after mid-August to be a Presupplemental I molt. Another interpretation is that the first molt of the tertials and median coverts was part of the Prealternate I molt, and the second molt was part

Figure 9: Fully grown Basic II primaries on 15 September 2000. Photo by *Jean Iron*.

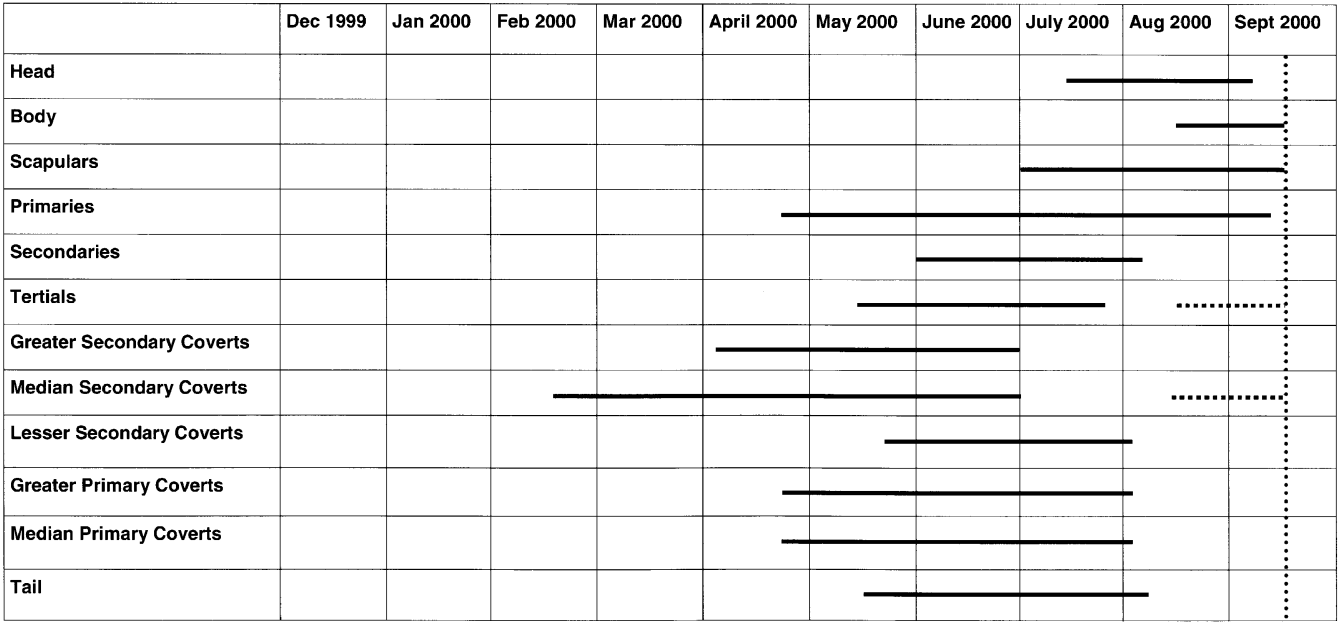
Table 1: Prealternate I Molt in Heermann's Gull

	Dec 1999	Jan 2000	Feb 2000	Mar 2000	April 2000	May 2000	June 2000	July 2000	Aug 2000	Sept 2000
Head										
Body										
Scapulars										
Primaries										
Secondaries										
Tertials										
Greater Secondary Coverts										
Median Secondary Coverts										
Lesser Secondary Coverts										
Greater Primary Coverts										
Median Primary Coverts										
Tail										

——— *Indicates Prealternate I Molt.*

Vertical dotted line indicates 16 September 2000 when the Heermann's Gull was last observed in Toronto, Ontario.

Table 2: Prebasic II Molt in Heermann's Gull



Indicates Prebasic II Molt. ····· *Indicates Presupplemental I Molt.*

Vertical dotted line indicates 16 September 2000 when the Heermann's Gull was last observed in Toronto, Ontario.

of the Prebasic II Molt. More study is needed over a longer period of time to determine the full story of molts and plumages in second calendar year Heermann's Gulls.

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Notes

Chipping Sparrow Feeds Young of Eastern Kingbird

Janet Foster and Ron Tozer

On 10 July 1999, Foster discovered an Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) nest containing three young, near the village of Tweed, Hastings County, Ontario. The nest was approximately 7 m from the ground, in an elm (*Ulmus* sp.) that was about 11 m in height. With the assistance of her husband John, Foster proceeded to set up their video camera on the kingbird nest to obtain footage of the parents feeding the young. Within seconds of focussing the 500 mm lens on the nest and rolling the camera, the first bird arrived at the nest ... and it was a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*).

The sparrow stuffed a small green caterpillar into the gaping beak of a young kingbird, then hopped onto the nest, and began what at first appeared to be "nest maintenance". It went all around the nest, poking and probing at the grasses, vacating only when one of the parent kingbirds arrived. This amazing occurrence marked the beginning of four days of filming and observing the pair of kingbirds and the Chipping Sparrow as they cared for the three young kingbirds.

One adult kingbird (believed to be the female, since it brooded the young) appeared to pay little or no attention to the Chipping Sparrow. Frequently this kingbird would perch on an adjacent branch, seemingly not in the least concerned by the presence of the Chipping Sparrow right in the nest. This seemed highly unusual, given that kingbirds are known for their aggressive behaviour toward other species near their nests. However, the other adult kingbird (presumed to be the male) was not so tolerant; it was seen to dive at the Chipping Sparrow at least twice, and "snapped" its bill occasionally when the Chipping Sparrow approached the nest during the kingbird's presence. The Chipping Sparrow would leave the nest a split second before this kingbird arrived, and return again the moment this adult departed.

Not long after filming began on 10 July, it started to rain. One adult (female?) kingbird settled down over the young to brood, just as the Chipping Sparrow arrived with another green caterpillar. A tiny head shot out from under the brooding adult, and the sparrow fed the caterpillar to the young kingbird. This performance was soon repeated again, as the Chipping Sparrow returned with yet another green caterpillar.

Over the next four days, it

became apparent that the Chipping Sparrow was not only helping with the feeding and nest maintenance, it was also removing fecal sacs. At one point, John Foster saw the sparrow even "defend" the nest, as it chased a Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapilla*) away from its vicinity. After feeding the young kingbirds one afternoon, the Chipping Sparrow perched on an overhead branch and sang. Confirmation that it was indeed a male came later, during viewing of the video footage, when Mary Gartshore detected the sparrow's cloacal protruberance. Gartshore also identified the apparent "nest maintenance" by the Chipping Sparrow as "mite eating". The sparrow spent considerable time poking and probing within the kingbird nest structure, apparently gleaning mites, which it consumed.

By 13 July, the young kingbirds were hopping out of the nest onto nearby branches. With the nest now empty, the Chipping Sparrow spent even more time gleaning mites from within it. The sparrow continued to bring caterpillars to the young kingbirds, but not nearly as frequently. On occasion, an adult kingbird and the three young would perch in a row on a branch, with the diminutive Chipping Sparrow perched between two of the young – a remarkable sight!

Foster left for Alberta on a filming assignment on 14 July, and so was unable to continue the observations. However, a friend saw the kingbirds and the Chipping Sparrow still together in the nest tree on 17 July. Over two hours of video tape were obtained of this amazing event, and questions about the frequency of occurrence of such behaviour and why it would occur were raised.

Discussion

Shy (1982) undertook an extensive literature search concerning "the feeding of one bird by another of a different species", and summarized 140 cases of this "interspecific feeding". Adopting birds were represented by 65 species of 22 families, while birds that were fed were represented by 71 species of 22 families (Shy 1982). Skutch (1976) concluded that "the known combinations of species that enter into these relationships are diverse enough to suggest that every species of altricial birds has occasionally helped another altricial species of somewhat similar size with which it has been associated over a wide area for many years". So, this behaviour is certainly not rare, although it is infrequently observed and reported.

Shy (1982) organized the published interspecific feeding occurrences into eight categories based on "their probable proximate causes". Some observations of this behaviour involved more than one of these categories, and there was a large "miscellaneous" group which included instances where the circumstances were not known or not recorded. Interspecific feeding summarized by Shy (1982) occurred in the following types of circumstances: mixed clutches involving nest sharing or egg dumping (espe-

cially in hole-nesting species where there is intense competition for nest sites); feeding another species after their own nest or brood was destroyed; nests of two species located close together (especially where the nestlings that hatch first receive the attention of one or both birds of the other pair); the calling and begging of young birds apparently triggering the behaviour; feeding orphaned broods; males feeding at another species' nest while their mates incubated (and sometimes continuing after their own young hatched); and mateless birds (either a "single" adopting bird or a "widowed" parent bird).

Skutch (1976) noted that male birds are often so eager to feed nestlings that they may even offer food to their unhatched eggs. The feeding of a neighbour's offspring "may provide an outlet for repressed energy", and the nearest nests are likely to belong to some other species (Skutch 1976). Perhaps the most bizarre published example of interspecific feeding involved a male Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) that was observed feeding seven goldfish (*Carassius auratus*) in a garden pool for several days (Lemmons 1956). The goldfish, apparently accustomed to being fed by humans, crowded to the edge of the pool with their mouths open, and the cardinal (standing on the pool edge) fed them mouthfuls of worms, as can be seen clearly in a photograph by Lemmons (Welty 1963).

In addition to interspecific feeding, "less frequent modes of helping are nest building, incubation, brooding the young, cleaning the nest, and allopreening" (Skutch 1976). "The relations between the helpers and the parents of the young that they attend" may be friendly, hostile, or neutral (Skutch 1976).

There have been several published reports of interspecific feeding involving either the Chipping Sparrow or the Eastern Kingbird with other species, but we were unable to find any previous accounts describing feeding between these two species. Female House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) were observed feeding fledgling Eastern Kingbirds in Kansas (Fitch 1949) and in Louisiana (Hamilton 1952), and the parent kingbirds were not seen in both cases. In Wisconsin, Snyder (1913) reported the adoption and feeding of a fledged brood of three Eastern Kingbirds by an unmated Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) for about 10 days after the kingbird parents disappeared following an electrical storm. Finally, Jackson (1941) observed a pair of Chipping Sparrows that fed a brood of Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus*) and their own young, where the nests were just one tier of branches apart in a small spruce (*Picea* sp.).

Acknowledgements

We appreciated the assistance of John Foster in the field, and the help of Dan Strickland with references. The comments of Ron Pittaway on an earleir draft were very helpful.

Figure 1: Chipping Sparrow and young Eastern Kingbirds in nest. Photo by *John Foster*.

Figure 2: Chipping Sparrow feeding young Eastern Kingbird. Photo by *John Foster*.

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Subnival Foraging by a Golden-crowned Kinglet

Ross D. James

Snowfall in temperate or arctic regions of the world presents a challenge to many animals that try to overwinter there. For birds in particular, snow covers many sources of food on or close to the ground. And unless such snow can be relatively easily scratched, shaken, or flicked off food, it is probably not energetically worthwhile for birds to move snow in order to find food. Species such as grouse, spending much of their lives on the ground, seem to resort largely to what is available above the snow, often high in trees. Even ptarmigan that may burrow into snow to roost, pick at exposed vegetation mainly, although they will scratch through soft snow to expose plant foods (Holder and Montgomerie 1993, Hannon et al. 1998). Although Great Gray Owls will plunge-dive into snow to capture rodents (Nero 1980), raptors generally wait for food to appear on the snow.

But quite apart from moving snow, it is also possible to find food beneath snow without moving it, by entering small openings to cavities remaining under snow where it has accumulated on top of bent-over vegetation. I would expect that small birds regularly foraging on the ground would readily enter relatively light snow-covered spaces. However, in these situations, they would largely be moving laterally, or nearly so, into spaces canopied by snow, where some of the vegetation was still visible above the snow.

However, few birds have been observed dropping vertically down into confined spaces in deep snow where vegetation is largely or completely buried. This seems to be a topic about which very few observations have ever been made, or using such subnival spaces through long winters seems to be something few birds have exploited to help them survive. Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) have been observed feeding in snow tunnels during winter in Alaska, where no vegetation was above the snow (Cade 1953). But it does not seem to be known for Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*), which readily enter burrows among stones where they place their nests. Nor have I found reference to subnival foraging for any other northern-wintering birds.

Observations

On the afternoon of 8 February 2001, about 1600h, I was plowing snow on my driveway through an area wooded mainly with white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), and a few scattered deciduous trees. It

was a winter of heavy snow, with at least 75 cm accumulated on the ground in the open. It had been snowing all day and tree boughs were heavily laden. The temperature was about minus 3°C, and had been below freezing all day.

I saw a small bird drop into an opening beside a leaning cedar stump and disappear down into the snow. I stopped the tractor and was walking closer when it re-emerged, after about 30 seconds, flew around me across the driveway, and again dropped into a small hole in the snow. This time it disappeared for about one minute. It then flew up into low branches of the cedars, and I was able to confirm that it was a Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*), as it foraged away in a more usual fashion. The way it flew to the second hole without hesitation suggested that it might have been there before.

Discussion

Golden-crowned Kinglets have been known to forage on the ground, but are rarely below 2 m, typically foraging on smaller branches well up in trees (Ingold and Galati 1997). They are not known to roost under snow in winter, and my observations were made at least half an hour or more before they might have been expected to roost for the night.

Golden-crowned Kinglets prefer to winter where there is typically snow cover of some extent (Lepthien and Bock 1976). In such areas, there seems to be plenty of food on conifers, and they are opportunistic foragers, taking a wide variety of invertebrate items (Heinrich and Bell 1995). Even among snow-laden trees, they seem well adapted to foraging there, so it seems strange that they would be attracted to subnival foraging.

There could also be distinct disadvantages to foraging in snow caverns. Light levels might restrict their ability to forage effectively. Kinglets apparently do not take insects hidden from view (Heinrich and Bell 1995). My observations were made on an overcast day, among cedars, and late in the afternoon, further contributing to low light levels. However, as dwellers of conifer forests, they may be able to see well in restricted light. There could also be mammalian predators in subnival spaces, or such predators might trap the birds in there. Weasels and squirrels commonly enter and use such spaces.

There is a possibility that this bird was seeking something other than food, such as water or vegetable matter. But, they are not known to eat vegetable material (Ingold and Galati 1997), and with the temperature below freezing all day, water may not have been available. However, there are moist places in many spots through this low lying area, and under deep snow the temperature might have been high enough that water could

have been present. But, just what the bird was doing remains unknown.

Despite some potential hazards or difficulties, it seems that more birds ought to take advantage of subnival spaces for winter foraging. It is a thermally protected environment for them, as well as for some invertebrate prey that would make searching such spaces worthwhile. For seedeaters, it could provide easy access to quality food. That a species such as a kinglet would forage under snow suggests perhaps subnival foraging is used much more than observed, but remains poorly documented.

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Forest Tent Caterpillars and Birds

David H. Elder

Participants in the 1-2 June 2001 Ontario Field Ornithologists' birding tour to Rainy River had the opportunity to experience a major insect infestation and see its effects on the forests of the area. For the second year, Forest Tent Caterpillars (*Malacosoma disstria*) had completely defoliated the trees in the predominantly Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) forests. They had also eaten willow (*Salix sp.*), alder (*Alnus sp.*) and other shrubs, and left the landscape looking like it would in November. The occasional conifer and the ferns and grass in the ground cover were the only greenery in the forests.

Once the caterpillars had eaten all of the leaves on a tree, they moved to another. This was done by lowering themselves to the ground on a self-produced silken thread, and then crawling to and up another tree. This species does not build a tent. Since millions of caterpillars were on the move, their threads abounded in the forest and made walking therein very unpleasant.

As the tour group was watching a flock of Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*) in a defoliated aspen stand on 1 June, one bird was noticed in some difficulty. This siskin had become entangled in a number of silken threads hanging abundantly from the leafless trees and its efforts to escape were unsuccessful. Robin Dawes and Darlene Salter braved the bugs and ticks, entered the forest, and were able to capture the bird. As the rest of the group looked on, it took several minutes to disentangle the Pine Siskin from the surprisingly strong threads and release it.

A week later, another observer reported a Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) trailing a skein of caterpillar threads from one leg as it flew through the trees. Although larger and stronger than a Pine Siskin, it is still possible that the threads could have eventually caused the Veery some trouble.

What other effects does a Forest Tent Caterpillar infestation have on the birds that live in the defoliated woodlands? Undoubtedly, they provide some food for some species. On the negative side, they eat all the leaves that other insect larvae depend on and likely reduce food availablity for adult and young birds. Since the trees have no leaves, many nests are exposed to the elements and also likely suffer a higher rate of failure. In addition, birds in general are more exposed to predators in the leafless trees.

Of course, the long term effects of the Forest Tent Caterpillar on

birds are negligible, as infestations of this magnitude occur on a cyclic basis and are a normal part of the forest ecology and evolution in the area. Still, it was very interesting to see some of the immediate effects and to realize the power of the insect world.

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Book Reviews

The ROM Field Guide to Birds of Ontario. 2001. By *Janice M. Hughes*. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Toronto. Softcover, 416 pages. $26.99. (ISBN 0-7710-7650-9).

The Hughes bird guide is the first in a series which The Royal Ontario Museum has decided to produce to cover our wildlife. In promotional items, it is referred to as the definitive guide to Ontario's birds and written specifically for the Ontario birdwatcher. One has to question the wisdom of producing a field guide when there are several excellent continental and eastern North American guides. In fact, this guide just does not stand up to any kind of scrutiny and pales when compared to, for example, the National Geographic Guide, The Sibley Guide and the Stokes Guide, to name but three. Of course, as it deals with just Ontario, the status and distribution information should be of great utility to Ontario birders. This certainly is true, in part, but the omissions and errors in these sections severely detract from what should be the greatest strengths of the book. So let's have a closer look.

An inviting introductory page discusses the diversity of Ontario bird life, the joy we all derive from experiencing birds, and a plea for conservation and vigilance on our part to preserve our treasures.

A section on bird identification has the usual headings and instructions such as size, shape, plumage and behaviour. The author comments that when difficult species groups such as *Empidonax* flycatchers and fall *Dendroica* warblers are encountered, "it may be more rewarding to forgo the struggle and merely enjoy the experience". Such advice, which runs counter to modern field techniques, will hardly mollify experienced birders and hints that, claims to the contrary notwithstanding, this is a book more suited to beginners. Beginners beware – minefields lie ahead.

Sections entitled Birding by Habitat and by Season refer specifically to Ontario and would be useful to the inexperienced. The habitat descriptions are good and allow Hughes to emphasize her loss of habitat theme. There are, however, several inaccuracies. For example, readers now accustomed to seeing Sandhill Cranes in parts of southern Ontario in virtually every season will be surprised to learn that "adventurous birders often travel to the Hudson Bay Lowland Forest in search of the rare Sandhill Crane"!

The grouping unit for birds in this book is the order. While this is taxonomically appropriate, it is not in some instances helpful to birders who generally perceive and sort

birds by family. For example, the order Charadriiformes contains, as Hughes points out, six anatomically and behaviourally distinct families (shorebirds, gulls, and so on). So why not treat these separate families, as birders do automatically in their thought processes, which would aid immeasurably in finding a bird in the book and matching it to what one encounters? The orders are designated by different colours to direct the user more quickly to the appropriate section of the book. Again, when so many species are within a colour group it can still be difficult to find a bird quickly. Moreover, it would have been helpful if a colour legend on the inside cover indicated the order name and page range.

As most authors do, Hughes includes a list of labels which thumbnail the status of each species. In this case, there are nine categories ranging from abundant to accidental, plus vagrant and irruptive. Such designations are always difficult in application, but some of the definitions can be challenged. Occurring five to 20 times in the province in a given season hardly seems "very rare". It would be simpler to eliminate very rare and just have rare (five to 20) and extremely rare (occurring less than five times in the province in a given season). More troublesome is that the categories have not been correctly applied to many species, possibly because the author is not familiar enough with the status of birds in Ontario. I'll return to this under the species accounts.

Hughes includes a list of books which provide further information on Ontario birds. Most notable for their absence, however, are Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada*, Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* and Kaufman's *Lives of North American Birds*. On the other hand, a list of Internet sources on page 17 will help both beginning birders and the organizations whose web pages have been listed.

Obviously, the species accounts of this book are its essence. The format of one page per species is a very good one. It begins with a three or four line introduction to the species that is often the best part of the account. It is frequently informative and sometimes evocative. For example, workers have injected natural gas pipelines with odours attractive to Turkey Vultures and watched circling flocks to find leaks!

This is primarily a photographic guide to the birds of Ontario. As such, the photos must pass the test of accuracy and usability. Many of the photos are attractive and will aid beginners, cottagers and the like in identifying that unfamiliar bird. Others fail. All the photos must be correct, but there are several errors in the species depicted and several more errors in the labelling of age classes. There is no excuse for this. Proofreaders should have picked

up all of these errors. At best, experienced birders will take some amusement in finding the errors and at worst, those less experienced will be misled and will make mistakes if they use this book solely. Moreover, many photos are portraits, when a flight shot would be much more useful in identification. Or adults in breeding plumage are depicted, when it is immatures and winter plumages that are needed.

Incorrect photos are as follows: the female Common Eider is a King; the Franklin's Gull is a Bonaparte's; the flying Thayer's Gull looks much closer to the Kumlien's end of the continuum; and the Common Yellowthroat female is a female Orchard Oriole. The introduction states that, unless otherwise captioned, the photos depict the summer (breeding) male. Among those that are not alternate males or are otherwise mislabelled are the following: the Rough-legged Hawk is a juvenile female; the Willet is not a breeding plumaged bird; the Black-headed Gull is a breeding plumaged adult, not a summer immature; and Sanderling, Solitary, Western and Least Sandpipers are juveniles, not winter plumaged birds.

If this is to be a field guide, then many of the portraits are inappropriate. The photos of hawks, eagles and falcons are essentially portraits. Inexperienced birders would seldom if ever be able to identify Mississippi Kite, Northern Harrier, the accipiters, the buteos and Merlin using these photos. Similarly, the vultures are photographed perched, the Parasitic Jaeger is sitting on a nest and the Chimney Swifts are photographed inside a roost! Only professional photographers encounter birds in these situations. Some species have two photos – one in breeding plumage and one of a bird in duller plumage (juvenile or winter). This should have been done for many other species, but wasn't.

Under the heading, Appearance, adult breeding males are first described followed by more obscure plumages. Similar species and the features used to distinguish them from the currently discussed bird are outlined. The format is that a detailed description of the breeding adult is followed by a shorter description of females, winter adults and immatures. Since in many cases the photographs show the salient features of the breeding adult, it would have been much more helpful to virtually eliminate this description and use the space for a more detailed explanation of how to distinguish the birds in their less obvious plumages. Instead of using 49 words to describe the breeding Common Loon, which is one of the most familiar species in the province, why not let the photo do that job and greatly expand on the twenty or so words used to describe winter and immature plumages.

It is the status description and the maps which ought to make this book most useful to Ontario birders. However, the status definitions in the front of the book are incorrectly applied in very many of the species accounts. Space precludes mentioning all such errors and omissions, so I will mention just a few examples that are incorrect by two categories of status. The status as given in the book will be followed by my assessment in brackets: Blue-winged Teal: rare winter resident (casual in winter); Long-tailed Duck: locally common winter resident (locally abundant winter resident); Swainson's Hawk: rare spring and fall migrant (extremely rare spring and fall migrant); Kirtland's Warbler: very rare spring and fall migrant - remember, the definition given is that it usually occurs only five to 20 times in a given season - (casual in spring and fall); Lark Bunting: rare visitor –remember that rare as defined in the book means present in very low density – (casual visitor). That Lark Bunting is present in very low density came as a surprise to this reviewer, who has seen but two in 47 years of birding in this province. In other cases, omission of information is misleading to the inexperienced. The reader would not know that Common Eider has ever occurred in southern Ontario, as it is not mentioned. No mention is made of the winter status of Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck and Harris's Sparrow, to name a few. You get the picture. To repeat, the problem stems from an unwieldy system, but also had the author checked the OBRC Annual Reports and seasonal accounts in the various journals, she would have obtained a truer picture of status.

The distribution maps are printed in five colours, which allows for a lot of information to be depicted. Generally, these are quite accurate and helpful, but with a little more care their accuracy and utility could have been improved. Several species of ducks could have been shown as wintering in the extreme south. The Northern Bobwhite as a wild native species occurs only on and adjacent to Walpole Island (birds elsewhere are releases from captive stock), whereas the map suggests it occurs throughout southwestern Ontario. The Black Vulture has occurred in the Bruce Peninsula and as far northeast as Ottawa. There are many more cases where more attention to detail and the available literature would have produced a better map.

An Accidentals section follows the species section. I'm unconvinced that the clinical descriptions of each would be of much help in identifying most of these birds. Most people would use one or more of the standard North American field guides for these species. My

suggestion would be to note the number of occurrences of each, and perhaps whether there is a spatial or temporal pattern involved. More seriously, at least the following species have occurred more than a few times in the province (again, the precise number of reports accepted by the OBRC is available in the Annual Reports) and are thus not accidental: Western Grebe, Great Cormorant, Tufted Duck, Swallow-tailed Kite, Purple Gallinule, Black-necked Stilt, Rufous Hummingbird, Fish Crow, Sage Thrasher and Spotted Towhee. All of the birds on this list are given the same weight. A few words in place of the description, giving the true status of Black-capped Petrel, Slender-billed Curlew, Siberian Rubythroat and Cave Swallow, to name just some, would be infinitely more appropriate in a book about Ontario birds.

In summary, the book lacks accuracy and focus. Birding is, to quote a line I've heard, "the most sporting of sciences and the most scientific of sports". The information presented could have been much more accurate and contained far fewer errors had the author consulted with experienced field birders (i.e., non-scientists) and used the OBRC Annual Reports and the other journals. With so many excellent field guides on the market, perhaps the ROM book should have focussed on the status of the birds in Ontario. It could have had at least two good photos per species and substituted more detailed Ontario status and distribution material for the descriptions. It could have been titled *An Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario,* and then the photographic portraits which are of little use for identification purposes would have been quite appropriate.

Birders being acquisitive by nature will probably have a copy of this book on their shelves. But apart from checking for errors in addition to those listed herein, I doubt they will use it. It is casual and beginning birders who will be misled by much of the information in this guide.

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Birds of Ontario. 2000. By *Andy Bezener*. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta. Softcover, 376 pages. $26.95. (ISBN 1-55105-236-9)

Here is yet another book called *Birds of Ontario*, published the year before the ROM guide. It is authored by Andy Bezener, who has written apparently similar books for other localities in North America. The title page also notes "contributions by Ross James", who reviewed the manuscript and distribution maps. I am not familiar with Bezener or his work, but it appears that he has considerable knowledge of birds and birding in Ontario.

The Introduction makes it clear that this book is intended for beginning and intermediate birders, and those who casually watch birds, perhaps at the backyard feeder or the cottage. It states that: "by focusing specifically on the bird life of Ontario, we hope to ease the beginner's difficulty" in coping with standard North American field guides which "can be daunting because they cover the entire continent and present an overwhelming number of species". So, how well does this book present information for its target audience? In my opinion, it succeeds fairly admirably, within its limitations.

The book begins with short, informative sections on: beginning to learn the birds, classification, birding equipment, birding by ear, watching bird behaviour, birding by habitat, calling birds closer, bird listing, birdwatching groups, bird conservation, bird feeding, and nest boxes. One hundred of Ontario's top birding sites, selected "to represent a broad range of bird communities and habitats, with an emphasis on accessibility" are listed, and their locations shown on a map of Ontario. There are short descriptions, including expected noteworthy birds, for 21 of these sites, which will be helpful to inexperienced birders. They appear to be accurate for the most part, although one error detected was the statement that Northern Saw-whet Owls are likely to be encountered in Algonquin Park during winter, when in fact the species is very rarely observed then.

The remainder of the book is devoted to the species accounts, which consist of a colour illustration, text and Ontario range map for each bird, all on one page. A handy Reference Guide at the beginning of the book features a miniature version of each species painting, with a colour code grouping birds by type (e.g., waterfowl, birds of prey, grouse-like birds) and linked to the species accounts, plus a page number for each species. This feature will be particularly helpful for those unfamiliar with the latest taxonomic order.

Perhaps due to a typographical error, there is some confusion as to how the species featured in the accounts were chosen. The Introduction (page 31) states that "this book gives detailed accounts of the 318 species of birds that have nested or been confirmed nesting in Ontario at least 10 recorded times; these species can be expected on an annual basis". However, many of the accounts deal with species that do not breed in Ontario, and clearly state this in the Nesting section. Perhaps the criterion should have been stated as "have nested or been confirmed in Ontario at least 10 recorded times".

Each species account begins with a short overview about aspects such as behaviour, habitat, appearance, and origin of the name. These introductory remarks are usually

very interesting and well written. Then there is concise information under the headings of: ID, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, similar species, and best sites. The colour illustrations by Gary Ross and Ted Nordhagen, although of uneven quality, are mostly quite good and certainly enhance the visual appearance of the book. The identification information and the illustrations would be inadequate for distinguishing many species of Ontario birds, without reference to a standard field guide as well, but the book was not intended to "stand alone" in this regard.

The Ontario range maps are a valuable feature of the book. They designate areas of summer/breeding, year-round occupancy, occurrence during migration, and winter presence. Most appear to be accurate, providing current information not readily available elsewhere.

An Appendix provides brief notes and an illustration for each of 37 additional "occasional bird species" that occur less frequently in Ontario. A checklist of Ontario's birds, a reference list, a glossary, an index of scientific names, and an index of common names complete the book.

I would recommend this book to those seeking an informative and entertaining introduction to the birds of Ontario. This volume is a handy, concise reference to basic information.

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OFO Annual General Meeting
Point Pelee National Park
29 and 30 September 2001

There is still time to register for this great weekend of fall birding. Join experienced OFO birders Bob Curry, Karl Konze, Gavin and Ian Platt, Paul Pratt, Pete Read, Ron Tozer and Alan Wormington who will lead field trips with a focus on bird identification at Point Pelee and nearby hotspots. The Saturday evening banquet at the Leamington Dock Restaurant will feature a special presentation on **Hawk Migration and Accipiter Identification** by keynote speaker Allen Chartier, plus presentation of the OFO Distinguished Ornithologist Award to George Peck, and "Bird Migration Across the Gulf of Mexico" by Alan Wormington. For AGM information and registration form, please see the OFO website: www.interlog.com/~ofo/AGM2001.htm

Nikon

Photo Quiz

(sponsored by Nikon Canada)

Clearly we have a brown duck. It may be quite large, but it is too short-necked to be a goose. It has a distinctive triangular head and bill, in side profile. Birders understand classification better than most. We mentally sift through the various groups of ducks, eliminating them very quickly. Many female pond/dabbling ducks are overall brown in tone like this bird, but none has such a triangular head and all have a classic duck bill. That is, they definitely do not have a bill process extending up toward the eye. Among the pochards or *Aythya* ducks (the scaup and their allies), only the Canvasback has a triangular head-bill profile, but it has smooth, unbarred plumage and its bill is essentially squared off at the base. The scoters in some ages and plumages have swollen bills, but again they do not have a section of bill extending posteriorly towards the eye. Moreover, they are all quite uniform in body plumage, lacking the richness and barring of this bird, and the females have patches or blotches of white on the head.

Say ... didn't we look at a duck such as this not long ago in the Photo Quiz? Is this déjà vu? Well, almost. Dig out the August 2000 quiz [*Ontario Birds* 18(2): 92–95], and let's compare photographs. If you go and get that edition and photo, you will much better appreciate the following analysis. I really mean it; go and get it.

Yes, we have another eider, one of those husky brown sea ducks we spend so much time searching the waters of the Great Lakes for on bitterly cold winter days. This **Common Eider** was found by Jean Niskanen along the Burlington shoreline and spent several months there, allowing for ample study and excellent photos such as this one by Sam Barone. As it and the King Eider are both facing left and are about the same-sized images, we can make a point-by-point comparison of the two similar species.

Both ducks are females. By the time eiders reach our waters in late fall and into winter, immature males have molted from juvenal plumage to Basic I (first winter) and then on into Alternate I as the winter progresses. Unless they are very arrested in molt, the males would show some white and black plumage by mid-winter.

Aging female eiders is very tricky, even if we could see the wing and the pattern of the secondary coverts. We cannot here, as the wings are folded up under the scapulars. On adult female eiders, the tertials are longer and more downcurved. This is a relative feature, but the two which can be seen on the near side of the body just anterior to the rump do not seem particularly long or downcurved. The tips of the tail feathers are diagnostic. In this photo and indeed almost all field situations, these cannot be discerned. In the case of this bird, which could be viewed at close range from above,

the tips of the tail feathers appeared to be notched. Such notching would seem to corroborate this as a bird in its first winter, with retained juvenile tertials and remiges (tail feathers). In this case, the precise age is not integral to species and subspecific identification.

So let's go through the features, point-by-point, which distinguish this female Common Eider from the earlier King Eider.

1. The head-bill profile is distinctly triangular in shape in Common. The bill-forehead shape is close to straight, being only very slightly concave upwards in Common and considerably more concave in King. Be warned that depending upon individual variation, angle of viewing and observer enthusiasm, King can appear to be quite straight in forehead profile. In these photos, hold a straight edge along each from crown to bill tip to prove the difference to yourself. You'll see much more water in the King Eider photo.

2. There is a crease in the face of the King extending from the gape upwards, giving it an apparent "grin". There is no such smile in Common.

3. There is a broad whitish line over the eye and extending back towards the nape on this quiz bird. On the King Eider, the rounded light area above the eye is not so much a line as a crescent, and also note the pale line extending back from the eye, a feature not seen in this (and most) Commons.

4. While the crowns on both birds are brown with fine black streaks, the white supercilium of Common accents the crown and results in a more dark-capped appearance. There is a light patch on the face of the female King Eider at the base of the bill. Common Eider's face is more uniform with no light patches.

5. Now look at bill colour. The bill on our Common Eider is grey with a yellowish-olive nail, quite different from the all black bill of female King. Pay particular attention to the bill frontal lobes and the feathering on the face. On the Common, the lobe is a long, narrow extension almost to the eye, whereas in the King Eider it is shorter and blunter. The lobe on the Common extends three-quarters of the distance between the rear edge of the nostril and the eye; in King, the lobe extends at most two-thirds of this distance. Obviously, this measurement can be done using photos but not in the field. Nevertheless, it serves to illustrate the different bill proportions. The long-faced look of Common is also exaggerated by the feathering extending in a point right to the nostril. Note on the King that the feathering ends in a rounded fashion, well short of the nostril. Above the lobe, the feathering on our Common extends half way down the bill lobe to the nos-

tril, whereas on the King it extends almost all the way to the nostril.

In the field, we probably would have noticed body plumage before we critically examined the face and bill. On both species, all of the mantle, scapular, sides of breast, flank and rump feathers are brown with transverse black bars. However, on the Common these are much more linear, resulting in striking vertical black bars on the sides of the body. On the King, these are more like chevrons. Similarly, on the back and scapulars, the black markings are not so arrow-shaped on the Common as on the King.

The bird is so close and the image so clear that we ought to be able to assign this bird to a subspecies. Most female Common Eiders that occur on the lower Great Lakes are quite greyish-brown and are likely from the mainly non-migratory *sedentaria* population from Hudson and James Bays. Indeed, with such birds, a grey eider might be the first indication that it is not a King Eider, which is richer brown. However, our bird is a rich, reddish brown which would seem to rule out *sedentaria* and points to the Atlantic Coastal *dresseri* subspecies.

The real key to subspecies is the form of the bill lobe. The best reference for this is R. S. Palmer's *Handbook of North American Birds, Volume 3, Waterfowl, Part 2* (1976). On page 31 are head drawings of seven subspecies. The female eider with the longest lobe extending three-quarters of the distance to the eye is *dresseri*, whose breeding range extends well up the St. Lawrence River Estuary. In addition, the lobe has a more rounded tip than other subspecies.

To sum up, our scrutinized duck is a female Common Eider, *Somateria mollissima dresseri* of the Atlantic coast, likely in its first winter.

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