

ONTARIO BIRDS



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Articles

Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2002

William J. Crins

Introduction

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) evaluates documentation that it receives of any record of a species or recognizable form that is on the Review List for Ontario (see www.ofo.ca/obrc). This 21st annual report deals with the results of the adjudication of 110 records reviewed by the OBRC during 2002, of which 84% were accepted. A total of 121 observers submitted documentation for review by the 2002 committee. The quality of the reports submitted generally was good, with thorough descriptions and accounts of the circumstances relevant to the observations being provided. Reports were submitted by a wide range of birders, from experts to novices, and often were accompanied by photographs (prints, slides, digital images), copies of field notes, sketches, and, in one case, a videotape.

The members of the 2002 committee were David D. Beadle, Peter S. Burke (chair), William J. Crins (non-voting secretary), David H. Elder, Christopher J. Escott, Nicholas G. Escott, Ronald G. Tozer, and Alan Wormington

(Figure 1). Mark K. Peck continued to serve in the role of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) liaison (non-voting) to the OBRC in 2002.

The official Ontario bird checklist has increased by one species to 475 species, with the addition of White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*). The evidence for the occurrence of another species, Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*) had not been reviewed by the Committee until this year, although it had been included on the Ontario checklist by James et al. (1976) and Wormington and James (1984). The present Committee has accepted the evidence for its occurrence in Ontario. A record of a *Plegadis* sp. ibis was accepted as the first record for this genus in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, in spite of the existence of photographs, this bird could not be identified categorically as a Glossy Ibis or a White-faced Ibis.

Listing of Records

The format for listing the number of accepted records for each species that was implemented in last year's annual report (Roy 2002) is retained in this year's report. Thus,

a single number is used to indicate the total number of accepted records of a Review List species. The former trinomial and binomial systems no longer will be used. Accepted records are arranged taxonomically by their English and scientific names following the Seventh Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds (American Ornithologists' Union 1998) and its 42nd supplement (American Ornithologists' Union 2000). 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 that of Humphrey and Parkes (1959). For a detailed explanation of plumage and molt terminology, see Pittaway (2000). The names of all contributors of documentation are listed. Those contributors who are known to be the discoverers of the bird also are underlined. Others present when the bird was found, but who did not submit reports, are listed when known.

The committee makes every effort to verify documented information prior to the acceptance and publication of a record. It is, however, still possible that inaccuracies remain. The committee welcomes 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.

All records that were not accepted because of uncertain identification or origin are listed separately. Contributors of all "not accepted" reports receive a letter from the chairperson explaining the reasons for the decision, along with copies of the comments obtained from the voting members. These reports, as well as documentation for all accepted records, are kept on permanent file at the ROM. A "not accepted" report can be reconsidered by the OBRC if new evidence, in the form of additional documentation, is submitted to the committee for review. Researchers and other interested individuals are welcome to examine any of the filed reports at the ROM, but an appointment is necessary. Please write to Mark K. 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).

No changes have been made to the Review List during 2002.

Acknowledgements

The OBRC would like to extend its appreciation to the many observers who took the time to submit documentation of their observations of rare birds in 2002. We thank the following people who assisted the committee in the acquisition of

additional data and other material evidence that supplemented the information submitted directly by observers and committee members: Bruce M. Di Labio, Robert Z. Dobos, Sandra Eadie, Jean H. Iron, Anthony L. Lang, Mark K. Peck, Ronald J. Pittaway, Ron C. Ridout, Kayo J. Roy, Sarah E. Rupert, John Vandebroek, and Charles J. Whitelaw. Additional outside experts have provided invaluable assistance in the verification of certain records, including Alvaro Jaramillo, David C. Sibley, and Andrea Smith.

The committee also is indebted to Mark Cranford for his continuing efforts in ensuring that ONTBIRDS (listserv of the Ontario Field

Ornithologists) remains a useful source of information on rare birds appearing in Ontario. This electronic source of information, including dates and locations, makes the secretary's job of securing documentation much more efficient!

I am indebted to Kayo Roy for his help in making the transition from his tenure as secretary to mine much easier. His organizational skills and suggestions on getting the job done have been invaluable. I want to thank the 2002 committee for being patient during my learning process in the position of secretary. Finally, I want to thank Alan Wormington, Ron Pittaway, Ron Tozer, and Peter Burke for numerous suggestions to improve this report.



Figure 1: Ontario Bird Records Committee members for 2002. Left to right, seated: Nick Escott, Bill Crins, Peter Burke. Standing: Alan Wormington, David Beadle, Ron Tozer, Chris Escott. Not in photo: Dave Elder, Mark Peck. Photo by Bob Curry.



Figure 2: Dorsal view of definitive basic female Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, found at Bluff Bar, Long Point, *Norfolk* on 13 July 2000. Photo by *Ron Ridout*.



Figure 3: Juvenal/first basic Brown Pelican, photographed at Jordan Lake, *Hastings* on 28 September 2002. Photo by *April Tannahill*.



Ken Newcombe

Figure 4: Definitive basic Glossy Ibis, one of two present at the Winona sewage ponds, Grimsby, *Niagara*, from 30 August to 7 September 2002. Photo by *Kenneth M. Newcombe*.



Figure 5: First alternate female Snowy Plover, present at Amherst Island, *Lennox & Addington*, between 25 May and 6 June 2002. Photo by *Rick Brown*.



Figure 6: First basic Piping Plover, present at Port Colborne, *Niagara*, between 9 and 12 October 2002. Photo by Willie C. D'Anna.



Figure 7: Definitive basic Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) at Wheatley Harbour, *Chatham-Kent*, between 1 and 8 March 2002. Photo by Alan Wormington.



Figure 8: Basic White-winged Dove, present at St. Clair National Wildlife Area, Chatham-Kent, from 7 to 14 July 2002. Photo by Alan Wormington.



Figure 9: Juvenal Common Ground-Dove (*C. p. passerina*) found at Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay on 14 August 2002. Photo by Allan Gilbert.



Figure 10: Definitive basic Lewis's Woodpecker, present at Wooler, *Northumberland*, from 18 January to 7 March 2002. Photo by *Harold E. Stiver*.



Figure 11: This definitive basic Tropical Kingbird, present at Erieau, *Chatham-Kent*, from 26 October to 30 November 2002, is the first record of this species in Ontario. Photo by *Alan Wormington*.



Figure 12: Juvenal Cave Swallow (*P. f. pallida*), present at Point Pelee National Park, Essex, from 13 to 16 November 2002. Photo by *James N. Flynn*.



Figure 13: Alternate male Painted Bunting, present in Point Pelee National Park, Essex, from 7 to 15 May 2002. Photo by *Barry S. Cherie*.

Accepted Records

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* **North Only (10)**

- 2002 – one, alternate, 5 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Bert Harding).
 – four, alternate, 1-4 June, two, 5-7 June, Emo, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder, also found by Chris Martin, Gord Martin, Mary Elder).
 – one, alternate, 1 June, Rainy River, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder, also found by Chris Martin, Gord Martin, Mary Elder).

Coady et al. (2002) summarized the breeding records of Eared Grebe in Ontario. The first confirmed nesting of this species in Ontario occurred at the Emo sewage lagoons, *Rainy River*, in 1996. In 1997 and 2001, they nested in the same location. Although the species has not been confirmed as a nester at the Rainy River sewage lagoons, *Rainy River*, it has been present there during at least a portion of the breeding season for three consecutive years, 2001 to 2003 (Coady et al. 2002; R. G. Tozer, pers. comm.).

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* **(17)**

- 2002 – two, alternate, 20 April, 12 km north of Rainy River, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder; also found by Mary Elder, Chris Martin).
 – two, 4-6 October, Burlington, *Halton* and *Hamilton*, *Hamilton* (John L. Olmsted, Christopher J. Escott; also found by Bob Stamp, Jack Hanna).

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* **(2)**

- 2000 – one, definitive basic, female, 13 July, Long Point (Bluff Bar), *Norfolk* (John Ferris, Julie Ferris) – specimen (skin) at ROM (#67110); photos on file.

This bird was found in a weakened state by the Ferris family as they were returning from a day of fishing. There had been considerable debate about the identity of this bird, even with the specimen in hand. Band-rumped Storm-Petrel and Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) can be quite difficult to separate, and various people had leaned toward one or the other of these identities. A conclusive identification finally was obtained when a sample of DNA from the specimen matched other samples of Band-rumped Storm-petrels, but not samples of Leach's Storm-petrels (Andrea Smith, pers. comm.). The only other Ontario record of this species is of a specimen obtained in Ottawa on 28 August 1933 (James 1991, Roy 2001).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* **(27)**

- 2002 – one, juvenal, 17 November – 16 December, Hamilton, *Hamilton* to *Pickering*, *Durham* (David R. Don, Cheryl Edgecombe, Verna J. Higgins, Kenneth M. Newcombe) – photos on file.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* **(6)**

- 2002 – one, juvenal/first basic, 19 May and 4 September; 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*; 4 September, Cedar Beach, *Essex* (Peter S. Burke, Brandon R. Holden, J. Michael Tate, Alan Wormington, also found by Colin D. Jones, David A. Martin,

Susan Holden, Eric W. Holden).

- one, juvenal/first basic, 5 June, 2 and ca. 14-19 August, 3-4 October; 5 June, Hamilton Harbour, *Halton*; 2 August, Cobourg, *Northumberland*; ca. 14-19 August, Barcovan Beach, *Hastings*; 3-4 October, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* and Hamilton Harbour, *Halton/Hamilton* (Glenn Offen, Mary Offen, Cheryl Edgecombe, Mark Chojnacki, found by Jill Franklyn, Cynthia Pekarik) – photos and videotape on file.
- one, juvenal/first basic, 23 September – 1 October; 23-26 September, Deux Rivieres, *Renfrew*; 28 September, Steenburg Lake, *Hastings*; 28-29 September, Jordan Lake, *Hastings*; 29 September – 1 October, Belmont Lake, *Peterborough*; 1 October, Crowe Bridge, *Northumberland* (April Tannahill, Tom Morton) – photos on file.
- one, juvenal/first basic, 5 October, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Michael A. Kielb, Sarah E. Rupert).
- one, juvenal/first basic, 5 and 13-14 October; Athol Bay, *Prince Edward*; 13-14 October, Cobourg, *Northumberland* (Margaret J. Bain, Carol M. Horner, found by John Blaney, Sharron Blaney) – photo on file.

The year 2002 certainly can be considered the year of the Brown Pelican in southern Ontario. Burke (2002) and Wormington (2002b, 2003b) summarized the known occurrences of this species in Ontario, including preliminary assessments of the five records from 2002. Determination of the number of birds involved was assisted by overlapping observations at different locations, plumage conditions, and other identifiable marks on individual birds.

The first bird, from Point Pelee National Park, is known to have been present in western Lake Erie, mainly in Ohio waters, until at least 23 September. The bird seen between 23 September and 1 October was identifiable by a “hole” in its left foot. This bird, first noted in Michigan on 17 August, undertook an odyssey that was very well tracked by observers. It was last seen in Michigan on Lake Michigamme, on 2 September, then was seen in west-central Quebec between 13-22 September, and finally, moved from Deux Rivieres, *Renfrew* southwestward to Crowe Bridge, *Northumberland*, where it was last recorded (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (9)

2002 – one, juvenal, 23 November, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Port Weller, *Niagara* (Alan Wormington).

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* (2)

2002 – one, definitive alternate, male, 3 August, Orillia, *Simcoe* (Peter D. N. Middleton, also found by Jan Middleton).

In addition to the Orillia bird, documentation was received (too late for inclusion in this report) for another sighting of an Anhinga that was made in Alliston, *Simcoe*, on 29 August 2002. It is possible that this report may have involved the same bird, since these two locations are relatively close to each other, as the Anhinga flies (approximately 60 km). The Alliston report will be reviewed by the 2003 committee. Tozer (2000) reviewed the status of this species in Ontario. There is some question about the exact location in

which the first bird (collected in 1881) was obtained (the Ontario or Michigan side of the St. Mary's River). He concluded that a second bird, shot near Wellington, *Prince Edward*, in 1904, probably was of wild origin. The OBRC has not yet reviewed these two reports. The thoroughly documented appearance of this species near Delaware, *Middlesex* in 2000 is the only other record of *Anhinga* in the province that has been accepted by the OBRC (Read 2000, Roy 2001).

Great Egret *Ardea alba* **North Only (10)**

2002 – seven, definitive basic, 12-17 August, Eton-Rugby, *Kenora* (Carolle Eady, found by Donna Montague) – photo on file.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* **(49)**

2002 – one, definitive alternate, 3 May, Blenheim, *Chatham-Kent* (Ronald G. Tozer).
– one, first alternate, 18 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* **(33)**

2002 – one, definitive alternate, 15 June, Minett, *Muskoka* (Clay Campbell, also found by Liz Campagna) – photo on file.
– one, juvenal, 10-13 August, Port Colborne, *Niagara* (Willie C. D'Anna, also found by Betsy Potter) – photos on file.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* **(40)**

2002 – seven, definitive alternate, 23-30 April, Melbourne, *Middlesex* (Peter S. Burke, found by Barbara Pokraka and Rheinhold Pokraka).
– one, definitive alternate, 27-28 April, Port Hope, *Northumberland* (Margaret J. Bain, found by Russell Lake).
– two; one definitive basic, one juvenal; 30 August-7 September, Grimsby, *Niagara* (Thomas A. Crooks, David R. Don, Cheryl Edgecombe, Gerard McNaughton, Kenneth M. Newcombe) – photos on file.

Ibis species *Plegadis* **sp. (35)**

2001 – one, juvenal, 18 October, Gowganda, *Timiskaming* (Gertrude Trudel, also found by Paul Trudel) – photos on file.

This report constitutes the first accepted record of a *Plegadis* sp. ibis from northern Ontario. White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) was suspected at the time, and this may be the most likely species to occur in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, autumn juvenile ibises are notoriously difficult to identify to species with certainty, a point reiterated by David C. Sibley (pers. comm.), when reviewing the present report for us.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* **(42)**

2002 – one, definitive basic, 23-26 January, Echo Bay, *Algoma* (Robert D. Knudsen, Jim Evans, Erwin Meissner, found by Euan Aitken) – photos on file.
– one, 23 May, Cup and Saucer, *Manitoulin* (Bruce C. Ventura, also found by Christine N. Hall).

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* (12)

2002 – one, definitive alternate, male, 18 April, Snake River Marsh, *Renfrew* (Daryl Coulson, also found by Lauren Trute).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (25)

2002 – one, definitive alternate, male, 10 March, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis* (5)

2002 – one, dark morph, 24 April, Grimsby (Beamer Memorial C. A.), *Niagara* (Cheryl Edgecombe, Robert W. Stamp, John L. Olmsted, L. Verne Evans, also found by John Niewiadomski).

This is an extremely rare bird in Ontario, so the occurrence of the even more rare dark morph of this species is particularly noteworthy. Questions of origin have been raised for this species in the past (Roy 2001). However, although it is always difficult to say with any certainty, it seems unlikely that a bird travelling with other migrating raptors would be of suspect origin.

Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus* (3)

2002 – one, definitive basic, 16-26 July, Fort Albany, *Cochrane* (Ken M. Wesley, found by Ivan Edwards).

There is a developing pattern of vagrancy in this species, with most records occurring during the summer months (see D. Roberson at: montereybay.com/creagrus/MTYcaracara.html). This, combined with the recent expansion of its breeding range northward in Texas (Matt White, pers. comm. to BIRDWG01@listserv.arizona.edu), strongly support the conclusion that this was a bird of wild origin, rather than an escape. Two previous records of this species have been reviewed by the OBRC. These were an adult female found dead after a southwesterly gale on Victoria Island, *Thunder Bay* on 18 July 1892; and a bird observed on Pelee Island, *Essex* on 6 July 1994 (Wormington 1986, Pittaway 1995).

The Fort Albany bird was reported to be eating frogs on the ground.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* (10)

2002 – one, juvenal, late October, Elliot Lake, *Algoma* (Terry Carr [photographed the dead bird]; brought in by unknown person to Dr. M. Belanger, veterinarian) – photo on file.

This bird was kept alive for two days after being brought in to Dr. M. Belanger, a veterinarian in Elliot Lake.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (4)

2002 – one, first alternate, female, 25 May – 6 June, Amherst Island, *Lennox & Addington* (Jean H. Iron, Kim Brown, Rick Brown, Paul D. Pratt, also found by Ken Kingdon, Maris Apse, Dennis Young, Chester Gryski, Camilla Gryski, Al Boivert, Maureen Riggs, Don Lloyd, Daphne Payne) – photos on file.

Previous Ontario records involved single birds at Long Point Flats, *Norfolk*, on 4-9 May 1987 and 9 May 1990, and at Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*, on 24-31 May 2001 (Roy 2002).

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* **South Only (47)**

- 2002 – one, alternate, female, 1-4 May, Oshawa (Darlington Provincial Park), *Durham* (David B. Worthington, found by Tyler Hoar).
 – one, alternate, 21-24 May 2002, Hamilton (Tollgate Ponds), *Hamilton* (Curtis A. Marantz, found by Daniel R. Salisbury).
 – one, first basic, 9-12 October, Port Colborne, *Niagara* (Kayo J. Roy, John E. Black, Willie C. D'Anna, found by Blayne E. Farnan and Jean M. Farnan) – photos on file.
- 2001 – one, alternate, 30 April, Thunder Bay (Mission Island), *Thunder Bay* (George A. Williams).
 – one, alternate, 10-15 June, Long Point, *Norfolk* (Matt Hindle, found by Ian Richards).

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* **North Only (13)**

- 2001 – one, alternate, *C. s. inornatus*, 5 June, Polar Bear Provincial Park (Burntpoint Creek), *Kenora* (Kenneth F. Abraham).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* **(23)**

- 2002 – one, definitive alternate, male, 16 May, Smithville, *Niagara* (David R. Don, Thomas A. Crooks, Cheryl Edgecombe).

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* **South Only (31)**

- 2002 – one, juvenal, light, 15 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Christopher J. Escott, also found by John L. Olmsted, David R. Don, Cheryl Edgecombe, Thomas A. Crooks, William F. Smith, James A. Cram).
 2001 – one, juvenal, light, 7 October 2001, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Matt Hindle).

Mew Gull *Larus canus* **(17)**

- 2002 – one, definitive basic, *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, 26 February – 8 March; 26, 28 February, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*; 1-8 March, Wheatley Harbour, *Chatham-Kent/Essex* (Alan Wormington, Blake A. Mann, Curtis A. Marantz) – photos on file.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* **(8)**

- 2002 – one, definitive basic, 1 December, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Jim Watt, Gavin Edmondstone, Chris Kimber, Willie C. D'Anna, also found by Ron Scovell, Maris Apse, Mark Cranford).

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* **(27)**

- 2002 – one, juvenal, 16 December, Deep River, *Renfrew* (Ray Metcalfe).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* **South Only After 1990 (6)**

- 2001 – one, alternate, 28 May, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Miguel Demeulemeester).
 This species is recorded infrequently south and west of the Ottawa River in southern Ontario.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* (12)

- 2002 – one, 30 June, Erie View, *Essex* (Stuart A. Mackenzie).
 – one, basic, 7-14 July, St. Clair National Wildlife Area, *Chatham-Kent* (Donald E. Perks, Paul D. Pratt, Blake A. Mann, Alan Wormington) – photos on file.
 – one, basic, 8 July 2002, Bostwick Island, *Leeds & Grenville* (David C. Bostock).
 2001 – one, juvenal, 19 October, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Matt Hindle, also found by Vicki Brown, Henri Robert, Rhonda Donley).

The occurrence of three White-winged Doves in a single year (2002) in Ontario is unprecedented. The observation made on 30 June 2002 has been described by Mackenzie (2003). His paper also includes a listing of all previous records in Ontario.

Inca Dove *Columbina inca* (2)

- 2001 – one, definitive basic, 24-28 September, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (Sherry Beck) – photo on file.

This bird came to the attention of the birding community only after it had disappeared. However, the observer obtained a photograph that supports its identity. The first record of this species in Ontario occurred from 7-13 October 1992 in Atikokan, *Rainy River* (Bain 1993, Graham and Wormington 1993).

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina* (2)

- 2002 – one, juvenal, *C. p. passerina*, 14 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, Kenny Burrell, Allan Gilbert, also found by Jody R. Allair, Jessie Allair, Maureen Woodcock) – photo on file.

This bird, banded, photographed, and released at the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, continues the series of interesting and rare birds that has been found there since its inception. The previous record of this species in Ontario constitutes a specimen obtained at Red Rock, *Thunder Bay* on 29 October 1968 (Dick and James 1969, Wormington 1987).

Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* (14)

- 2002 – one, definitive alternate, male, 5 June, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Valerie Blazeski, Patrick Garcia, Remi Buisse) – specimen (skin) at ROM (#90970).

This bird was found by an unidentified park visitor and reported to park staff, who retrieved the injured bird. It appeared to have been hit by a vehicle. Attempts to rehabilitate the bird failed (Anonymous 2002c).

White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris* (1)

- 2002 – one, 10 June, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Tristan ap Rheinallt).

This stunning record constitutes an addition to the known avifauna of Ontario and Canada. This neotropical species is prone to wandering, and, in North America, it has occurred as a vagrant in Florida, Texas, California, and Michigan. The discoverer of this bird provides a detailed account of his observation in this issue (ap Rheinallt 2003).

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (14)

2002 – one, definitive basic, male, 1 and 10 September; 1 September, Point Petre; 10 September, Wellington, *Prince Edward* (Bill Vloeberghs, Madeline Kimmitt, also found by Cheryl Reed).

There was some debate about whether or not this report actually constituted two records. However, the majority opinion was that these two sightings, nine days apart, that occurred approximately 20 km apart, involved the same bird. A similar situation involving a male Rufous Hummingbird that was observed on consecutive days, 15 km apart, occurred in Flamborough, *Hamilton* on 28-29 August 1992 (Bain 1993, A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

Lewis's Woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis* (7)

2002 – one, definitive basic, 18 January-7 March, Wooler, *Northumberland* (Curtis A. Marantz, R. Douglas McRae, Harold E. Stiver) – photo on file.

There has been speculation that this may have been the same bird as that seen nearby, in Carman, *Northumberland*, on 13-18 June 2000. These two locations are approximately 7 km apart. However, the long period between observations makes it prudent to treat this as a distinct record until evidence to the contrary becomes available.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (4)

2002 – one, first basic, male, 7 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (David R. Don).

Full details of this record, including a description and the circumstances of the observation, have been published by Don (2002). The date of occurrence (7 May) was a day of massive migration over a large area, resulting in other birds of note being found at Point Pelee, including a Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) and a Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) (Wormington 2002a).

As noted above, this is only the fourth accepted record of Vermilion Flycatcher in Ontario. All four records have involved first basic males.

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* (1)

2002 – one, definitive basic, 26 October – 30 November, Erieau, *Chatham-Kent* (Irene Woods, J. Burke Korol, Willie C. D'Anna, Doug Sheepway, Alan Wormington, Curtis A. Marantz, found by Anne Anthony and Jerry Ball) – photos on file.

This bird, which stayed at the Erieau location for over a month, was seen by many observers, and excellent photographic documentation was obtained. A brief account of its stay at Erieau has been published elsewhere (Anonymous 2002d). A previous record of a member of the Tropical/Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus/couchii*) complex occurred on 27 September 1998 in Hurkett, *Thunder Bay*, but it could not be assigned specifically to one or the other of these two species (Dobos 1999). Since the Erieau bird did vocalize, it could be identified unequivocally. Mlodinow (1988) provided a useful summary of the North American extralimital records of this complex, including a discussion of the identification problem.

Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans* (2)

- 1970 – one, 19 September – 9 October, Britannia, *Ottawa* (Daniel F. Brunton, Bruce D. Mactavish).
 1953 – one, 4-5 June, Algonquin Provincial Park (Achray), *Nipissing* (Alan G. Gordon) – specimen (skin) at ROM (#81283).

Limited details of the 1953 record from Algonquin Provincial Park have been published previously (Snyder 1954, Baillie 1957). Brunton (1971) provided details of the occurrence at Britannia. These two records of Cassin's Kingbird in Ontario had not been reviewed by the OBRC previously, but the species had been included on the Ontario list by James et al. (1976) and Wormington and James (1984).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (43)

- 2002 – one, definitive alternate, 15-30 July, Caledon East, *Peel* (Theo Hofmann, found by Nathan Miller) – photo on file.
 – one, definitive basic, male, 31 October – 8 November 2002, Fingal, *Elgin* (Christopher J. Escott, Blake A. Mann, Harold E. Stiver, Curtis A. Marantz) – photos on file.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* North Only (9)

- 2002 – one, alternate, 17 April, Gowganda, *Timiskaming* (Gertrude Trudel; also found by Paul Trudel).

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* (8)

- 2002 – one, basic, 13 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Onik Arian, Sarah E. Rupert).

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva* (26)

- 2002 – one, basic, 12 November, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).
 – one, basic, *P. f. pallida*, 13 November, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).
 – two; one juvenal, one unaged, *P. f. pallida*; two, 13-14 November, one, 15-16 November 2002, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, James N. Flynn, J. Burke Korol) – photos on file.
 – one, basic, 16 November, Port Burwell, *Elgin* (David A. Martin, also found by Linda Wladarski, Ross C. Snider).
 – one, basic, 16 November, Port Burwell, *Elgin* (David A. Martin, also found by Linda Wladarski, Ross C. Snider).

This second invasion (involving multiple birds) of Cave Swallow into southern Ontario, although not as spectacular as the first one that occurred in November 1999 (Curry and McLaughlin 2000), still was an impressive event, given the natural distribution of this subspecies (*P. f. pallida*) in the southwestern U.S.A. and adjacent Mexico. Six birds have been documented in this latest invasion. Most occurrences of this species in northeastern North America have been in November (Curry and McLaughlin 2000). The two birds at Port Burwell were observed approximately 75 minutes apart (the first seen at 1015h, the second seen at 1130h). Each bird was travelling in a westward direction along the shore

of Lake Erie, indicating that they were different individuals (Wormington 2002c).

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* (16)

2001/02 – one, basic, 18 December – 4 March, Massey, *Sudbury* (Erwin Meissner, John G. Lemon) – photo on file.

1974 – one, basic, 4-5 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, also found by G. Tom Hince) – photo on file.

The 2001/02 record is only the second winter record of this species in Ontario. The first winter record was also the first record of the species in the province: 12 December 1908, ca. 40 km west of London, *Middlesex* (Saunders 1919).

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* (30)

2002 – one, basic, male, 14 April, Tetlock Lake, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott).

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* South Only After 2000 (50)

2002 – one, basic, 20-21 April, Deep River, *Renfrew* (Oliissia Stechishen, Bruce Hood, also found by Olga Stechishen, Ed Stechishen).

– one, basic, male, 11-15 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Richard Pope, James N. Flynn, also found by Felicity Pope) – photo on file.

The bird observed at Point Pelee was also heard to sing on occasion (R. G. Tozer, A. Wormington, pers. comm.), a very rare occurrence in Ontario.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* (10)

2002 – one, basic, 15 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock) – photos on file.

This bird also was banded at the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory (see Common Ground-Dove, p. 68).

Audubon's/Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler intergrade

***Dendroica coronata* (1)**

2002 – one, alternate, male, 5 May, Whitby, *Durham* (Margaret J. Bain, found by David B. Worthington).

This bird was singing the song of an “Audubon’s” Warbler, and had a bright yellow throat, but exhibited other facial features of a “Myrtle” Warbler, including the white eyebrow and dark cheek patch of the latter. Very few “Audubon’s” Warblers have been documented in Ontario, and it appears that no intergrades have been reported previously (James 1991). This report constitutes the first documented intergrade between the two forms in Ontario.

Hermit Warbler *Dendroica occidentalis* (5)

2002 – one, male, 30 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Peter A. Read, J. Michael Tate).

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* (29)

- 2002 – one, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park (East Beach), *Essex* (D. Keith Sealy).
 – one, alternate, female, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park (Sleepy Hollow), *Essex* (J. Michael Tate).
 – one, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Todd R. Pepper).
 – one, female, 24 May, Dyer's Bay, *Bruce* (Kim McGuire, Ethan J. Meleg, also found by David Johnson) – photo on file.
 – one, 29 August, Cobourg, *Northumberland* (Margaret J. Bain).

Wormington (2002a) published the observations from 14 May at Point Pelee as pertaining to two different birds.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* North Only (11)

- 2002 – one, first alternate, male, 19 May, Kaministiquia, *Thunder Bay* (Susan Vander Wal, also found by Jake Vander Wal, Eric Vander Wal) – photos on file.

This bird was noted to eat bees, a characteristic behaviour for this species (Terres 1980).

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* (20)

- 2002 – one, male, 26 April – 17 May, Sault Ste. Marie, *Algoma* (Robert D. Knudsen, Joanne Knudsen, found by R. A. Lautenschlager) – photos on file.
 – one, male, 9-20 May 2002, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Paul B. Jones, Mike Boyce) – photos on file.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (65)

- 2002 – one, 16 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Peter Coo).
 2001 – one, alternate, 23 May, Polar Bear Provincial Park (Burntpoint Creek), *Kenora* (Kenneth F. Abraham, also found by Dan Beyers, Melanie Croft, Greg Dahl, Pete Engman, Dan Holm, Robert Stitt).
 – one, first basic, 15 August, Long Point, *Norfolk* (Matt Hindle).

The 2002 record is one of the earliest ever recorded in Ontario, with two earlier records both appearing on 13 April, in 1987 at Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*, and in 1993 at Harrington, *Oxford* (Anonymous 2002a).

Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii* (8)

- 2002 – one, alternate, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden).
 – one, alternate, 19-21 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (J. Burke Korol, found by Steven Daniel).

Seven individuals of this species were reported in the Point Pelee Birding Area in 2002 (Wormington 2002a), but unfortunately, documentation was received for only two of these. This species has virtually disappeared as a breeding bird in Ontario, but it continues to make brief appearances during migration. It has been found to be relatively common in some areas of Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York (D. A. Sutherland, A. Wormington, pers. comm.), not far away from Ontario, so it is possible that the species may be able to re-establish itself here in the future.

Smith's Longspur *Calcarius pictus* **South Only (4)**

2002 – one, basic, male, 2 February-10 March, Hagersville, *Haldimand* (Gavin Edmondstone, Robert H. Curry, Willie C. D'Anna, Curtis A. Marantz, R. Douglas McRae, Harold E. Stiver, also found by John B. Miles) – photos on file.

This well studied and well documented bird has been discussed in detail by Curry et al. (2002); it constitutes the first winter record of this species for Ontario.

Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* **(55)**

2002 – one, female, 7 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Michael A. Biro, also found by Elena Biro, Ian Cannell).

– one, first alternate, male, 9 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Ross Mackintosh, also found by Sandy Mackintosh, Joe Prochaska).

1972 – one, female, 16-21 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Dennis F. Rupert, found by Alan Wormington, Ronald J. Pittaway) – photos on file.

By far, the most frequent site of occurrence of Blue Grosbeak in Ontario is at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*. Recently, Wormington (2003a) summarized the history of occurrence of this species in the park. Forty-seven valid records have been reported (many, but not all, of which have been reviewed by the OBRC). He has documented an increasing trend in the regularity and frequency of occurrences there since 1979. It is interesting to note that the pattern of occurrence in Ontario, with the vast majority of sightings occurring during the spring migration period, differs somewhat from that in the Maritime provinces, where autumn occurrences are more frequent than they are here (Wormington 2003a).

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena* **(5)**

2002 – one, alternate, female, 9 June, Bowker, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, also found by Geoff Gooding, Allan Baxter, Jean Baxter, Myra J. McCormick, Norm Krupa, Liz Krupa, Bert Harding).

The occurrence of this bird in northwestern Ontario coincided with at least four, and up to seven, reports of different birds throughout Minnesota in 2002 (Anthony X. Hertz, pers. comm. to Nicholas G. Escott, 19 June 2002; Peder Svingen, pers. comm. to Nicholas G. Escott, 19 June 2002). It should be noted that, at the time of the correspondence, the Minnesota records had not yet been adjudicated by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* **(14)**

2002 – one, alternate, male, 7-15 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Claude Nadeau, J. Michael Tate, Barry S. Cherièrè, also found by Ginette Boyer) – photo on file.

– one, alternate, male, 10-21 May, Batchawana Bay, *Algoma* (Robert D. Knudsen, found by Bob Moore) – photos on file.

Brief details of the bird at Point Pelee, including a photograph, have been published previously (Anonymous 2002b).

Not Accepted Records

Origin Uncertain

Records in this category are considered by the Committee to be correctly identified, but the origin of the bird(s) is suspect. Such birds may have escaped or may have been released from captivity. However, if new evidence suggesting wild origin becomes available, such records may be reconsidered by the Committee.

- 2002 – Whooper Swan, two, 31 July – 8 August, Port Stanley, *Elgin* (Ann White, Andrew S. Ross) – photos on file.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Uncertain

The documentation received for the following reports generally was found not to be detailed enough to eliminate similar species unequivocally. In a great many cases, the Committee members felt that the species being described probably was correctly identified, but that the details provided in the report, perhaps due to the circumstances of the observation, viewing conditions, etc., were insufficient. It should be noted that any of these reports may be re-submitted if additional documentation becomes available.

- 2002 – Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*), one, 4 May, Toronto, *Toronto*.
 – Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*), four, 2 August, Holiday Beach, *Essex*.
 – Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), one, 24 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Ivory Gull, one, 19 August, Wye Marsh, *Simcoe*.
 – Mountain Bluebird, one, 11 May, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk*.
 – Hermit Warbler, one, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Western Tanager, one, 9 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Western Tanager, one, 19 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), one, 4 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Lark Sparrow, one, 11 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Henslow's Sparrow, one, 5 May, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk*.
 – Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), one, 7 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Black-headed Grosbeak, one, 10 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Black-headed Grosbeak, one, 10 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Blue Grosbeak, one, 24 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 – Blue Grosbeak, one, 30 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.

Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports

2001 Report (Ontario Birds 20: 54-74)

–under Black Vulture, 25 March, change “William R. Clark” to “William J. Clark”.

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William J. Crins, 170 Middlefield Rd., Peterborough, Ontario K9J 8G1

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The OFO Annual Convention at Point Pelee will be an exciting weekend of fall birding, interesting presentations, and fun with old and new friends. On both Saturday and Sunday, experienced OFO birders Bob Curry, Karl Konze, Dave Milsom, Ian Platt, Ron Tozer, Ann White and Alan Wormington will lead groups of convention participants to some of the very productive fall birding spots in Point Pelee National Park and nearby areas. Also, expert Alan Wormington will conduct a butterfly walk at Point Pelee on Saturday afternoon. At the Roma Club in Leamington on Saturday, Ron Scovell's extremely popular "Old and New Book Sale" will take place in the afternoon, to be followed by a sumptuous evening banquet and program, featuring an illustrated talk on "The Art of Bird Photography" by Ethan Meleg, and presentation of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award to Bob Curry.

There is still time to sign up for this great event. See the mailed-out registration form, or the OFO website (www.ofo.ca), for details.

White-collared Swift: New to Ontario and Canada

Tristan ap Rheinallt

On 10 June 2002, a White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) was seen briefly from the Marsh Trail at Rondeau Provincial Park. The record, which has been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (Crins 2003), becomes the first for Ontario and Canada.

Circumstances

On the afternoon of 9 June 2002, I arrived in Toronto from the UK at the start of a week-long birding trip. It was my first visit to Canada since 1987 and my first to North America since 1993. Although I knew that spring migration would be more or less over, there were several species of breeding warblers that I hoped to add to my life list. One of these, Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*), was the reason I decided to make Rondeau my first destination. I spent the evening of 9 June birding around the Tulip Tree Trail, renewing my acquaintance with birds I used to know very well, having lived in Quebec from 1982 to 1985. I was pleased to discover that many field characters, and quite a few calls and songs, were still stored in my memory.

On 10 June, I was up well before dawn, and I started walking the Marsh Trail at around 0500h. The sky was clear and there was very little breeze, if any. Once the

sun rose, it soon warmed up and became a bright, though somewhat hazy, morning. I spent three very pleasant hours pottering along the first part of the trail, enjoying the sight of old friends such as Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*). I was enjoying myself immensely and, for once, rarities were the last thing on my mind.

At 0800h, as I stood listening to the birdsong and debating whether or not to attempt a photograph of a superbly lit male Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) perched on a nearby branch, I noticed what appeared to be a swift flying directly towards me from the direction of the lake. As I thought "swift", I simultaneously thought "impossible" because this was clearly a very large bird. I was well aware that the only common swift species in eastern North America is the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*), although I had not yet seen any on my trip.

Various other unlikely possibilities flashed through my mind, including Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) and Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*). But despite these stray thoughts, I knew that it was a swift,

even in an almost head-on view, and its appearance as it came closer confirmed my initial instinctive identification. It also clearly was *not* a Chimney Swift. With the sun more or less behind me and the bird approaching from the west, the light conditions were excellent. The bird continued to fly straight towards me and passed directly overhead at a height of perhaps 10 metres, before continuing inland. Its plumage was amazing: entirely dark with a gleaming white band across the upper breast. I had an excellent view of the underparts but I did not see the upperparts at all.

My first reaction was to reach for my copy of Sibley (2000), the only field guide I had with me. I remembered that there was a

species of swift in the West that had white as well as black in the plumage. I had seen that species in California in 1993, and although I could not remember its name or its exact appearance, I imagined that it might turn up as a vagrant in the East from time to time. However, when I opened the book and looked at the paintings of White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), I realized that it did not match the appearance of my bird at all. Nor did Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*) or Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*).

At this point, I tried to convince myself that I was imagining things. But I knew that, however brief the view, I had seen this bird very well indeed. It seemed that I had finally succumbed to the "it isn't in the book" syndrome that I myself had derided on several occasions in the past. Given that it certainly wasn't in the book, what could I do? I contented myself with drawing a quick sketch in my field notebook (Figure 1) and adding some notes as I returned to the car. By this time I had unearthed a vague memory of a swift I saw in Venezuela in 1999. I even thought I could remember its name—White-collared Swift—but I had no reason to suppose that it ever occurred in North America. As I walked back towards my car, I had plenty of opportunity to study Chimney Swifts, several of which appeared very soon after the large swift and may well have arrived with it. Also present were Purple



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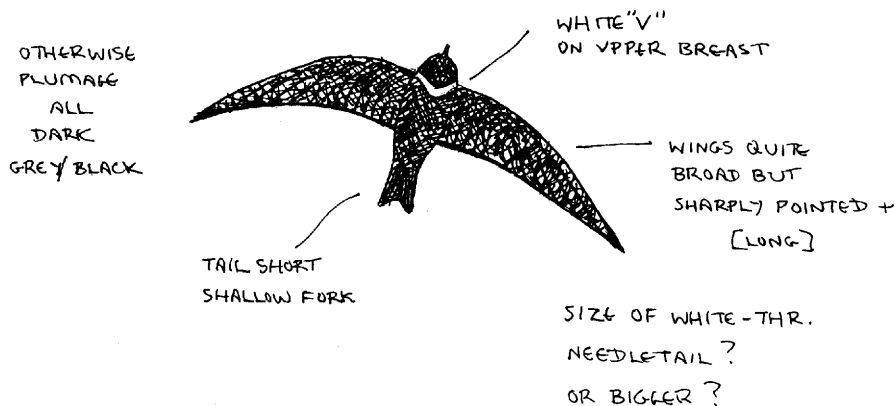


Figure 1: Field sketch of White-collared Swift at Marsh Trail, Rondeau Provincial Park, on 10 June 2002. Drawing by *Tristan ap Rheinallt*.

Martins (*Progne subis*), Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and Bank Swallows (*Riparia riparia*). Needless to say, none of them bore any resemblance to the bird I had seen.

The experience left me feeling unsettled. Although in the normal course of events I am a keen rarity-hunter, I knew that having been in the country for less than 24 hours, I was out of my element. Had I had the opportunity to study the bird for a lengthy period, I might have felt driven to report it to someone. As it was, I knew that although I had clearly seen something very unusual, no local birder would be impressed by an unknown observer reporting something he couldn't

identify, seen for only about a minute. Nevertheless, I did stop at the park visitor centre, only to find that it was closed for the day. At this point I decided that I would try to forget the whole event.

Later that afternoon, having arrived at Point Pelee, I visited the Pelee Wings bookshop. On impulse, I picked up a copy of the National Geographic field guide (Dickinson 1999) and found the swifts page. Staring out at me was the bird I had seen. When I read the notes on its status, I was stunned. At the same time, I felt obliged to report the sighting just in case the bird might still be around. I therefore approached the people who ran the shop. They put me in touch with Alan Wormington, whom I met the

next day and who encouraged me to submit the record to the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Description

General impression: A very large swift with an exceptionally striking plumage pattern: all dark except for a narrow pure white “V” on the upper breast.

Size and structure: Unfortunately, I was unable to compare the bird directly with any others. However, my initial reaction was that it was enormous for a swift: the Common Swift (*Apus apus*) found in the UK (itself considerably larger than the Chimney Swift) was my instinctive yardstick for this comparison. I thought the bird was comparable in wingspan to an Alpine Swift (*Apus melba*) or White-throated Needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*), both of which I am familiar with from visits to continental Europe and Australia, respectively. Like an Alpine Swift, it appeared bulky, with relatively broad-based wings. However, the wings were also long, sharply pointed and characteristically crescent- or scimitar-shaped. The tail, on the other hand, was short and had a shallow fork.

Plumage: In head-on view, the bird looked completely black. As it flew over me, its underside—with the exception of the “collar”—appeared uniformly greyish-black. I was able to see the individual primaries and secondaries but had little time to

register anything else. In retrospect, I cannot be certain whether the greyish-black colour was the true colour (as opposed to pure black) or merely an effect of the strong light coming from behind me.

A pure white neck band stood out from the rest of the plumage—indeed, it positively “shone” in the light. This band was narrow and largely uniform in width but came to a point in the centre of the breast, where it may have been slightly broader. It reached the edge of the body on either side just in front of the base of the wing. I could see no other pale areas whatsoever, not even on the throat.

Flight: The bird flew directly towards me in a straight line. Its wing beats were stiff and shallow, with the wingtips well below the body on the downstroke. This, I believe, is why I immediately decided it was a swift based on an initial head-on view, before I could see the shape of the wings and tail. I cannot remember whether it changed the angle of its body relative to the ground as it flew. However, it did not give the “flickering” impression of Chimney Swift or a swiftlet such as Australian Swiftlet (*Aerodramus terraereginae*). Instead, it appeared powerful and purposeful.

Analysis

Over the following few days, as I toured southern Ontario and northern Ohio in search of birds, I had plenty of opportunity to reflect on

this brief sighting and consider whether the identification was beyond doubt.

Although I was well aware that it is difficult to estimate the size of a lone bird accurately, especially in an unfamiliar environment, I was confident that this had indeed been a very large swift. Before seeing it, I had plenty of opportunity that morning to study Purple Martins, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows and Bank Swallows—the last two being familiar species at home. Indeed, because I was seeing some of them for the first time for several years, I spent quite a lot of time looking at them, paying particular attention to the Barn Swallows because of the differences from the European race. There were also many other birds flying around in the general area, and although I did not have any of them in the same field of view as the White-collared Swift, I have no recollection of misjudging the size of any of these birds. When I saw my first Chimney Swifts of the trip immediately after seeing the White-collared Swift, they looked exactly as I expected them to. They seemed tiny by comparison with the bird I had just seen.

As far as the plumage pattern was concerned, the excellent viewing conditions made me sure that I had seen everything there was to see on the bird's underside, and that no additional pale or white areas had escaped my notice. However, I had to admit that the brevity of the view made it difficult to be 100 per-

cent sure of the *exact* shape and position of the white band or collar.

Finally, there was no doubt in my mind that the bird I had seen was indeed a swift. The only other realistic possibilities, given the long wings and the shallow fork to the tail, might be a hirundine or a tern. Over the next few days, I spent some time looking at common hirundine species from this perspective. Only fleetingly did any of them (Purple Martin and Tree Swallow) give a swift-like impression as they occasionally glided on stiff wings. This impression lasted no more than an instant. The proportions of these birds were also clearly different, with relatively shorter wings and more body

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behind the wings. I cannot imagine that even an aberrant male Purple Martin with a white collar (if such a thing is possible) would ever trick me into thinking it was a swift under the same circumstances as the bird I saw at Rondeau. Being familiar with terns in the genera *Chlidonias*, *Sterna* and *Anous*, I am equally confident that the possibility of the bird being a tern can be ruled out by structure and flight action, let alone plumage.

Discussion

With nine recognized subspecies, the White-collared Swift breeds across a wide area from Mexico and the Caribbean south to Argentina. Within its large range it is often montane or submontane, although it does occur over a variety of lowland and highland habitats, both coastal and interior. It is partly migratory, with differing kinds of dispersal in different populations. Altitudinal migration is known, as are movements to exploit seasonal savanna fires, while some parts of the range are apparently occupied only outside the breeding season. However, the White-collared Swift does not appear to be a long-distance migrant. Thus, although it breeds within some 500 km of the Texas border, it is only an accidental vagrant to North America, with eight accepted records for the ABA area prior to my sighting. These eight records involved a total of nine birds (del Hoyo et al. 1999, Semo and Booher 2002).

Six of the North American records come from Florida and Texas, where birds have been seen or found dead in the months of September, December, January, March and May (Semo and Booher 2002). More directly relevant to the Ontario record are sightings in extreme northwestern California on 21 May 1982 (Semo and Booher 2002) and in Michigan on 19 May 1996 (Dunn 1996, Semo and Booher 2002). The location of the latter record, Tawas Point, is only some 250 km from Rondeau.

Both the Michigan and Ontario records involve birds seen from a peninsula projecting into one of the Great Lakes. The former was associated with a strong passage of Chimney Swifts and many swallows (Dunn 1996), while the latter may have been associated with the arrival of a group of Chimney Swifts. Both birds were seen to fly in from the lake, but the weather conditions were very different on the two occasions: howling southerly winds at Tawas Point (Dunn 1996), and near-calm conditions at Rondeau, though a strong easterly breeze did pick up later in the day.

The California record involved an individual seen on the seacoast at Point St. George, where it was foraging with a mixed-species group of swallows (Semo and Booher 2002). This bird was tentatively identified as belonging to the race *mexicana*, which breeds from Mexico to Belize. Judging by geographical distribution, *mexicana* is

one of the two subspecies most likely to turn up in the USA or Canada. It is thought to account for several other North American records, including a specimen from Texas. The other candidate, *pallidifrons*, nests in the Caribbean and its occurrence in Florida is confirmed by a specimen record (Semo and Booher 2002). No attempt was made to assign the Michigan bird to either of these two subspecies. In the case of the Ontario sighting, the absence of any pale markings on the face or throat would appear to rule out *pallidifrons*, leaving *mexicana* as the most likely possibility.

Although the Ontario bird was seen some three weeks later in the year than the California and Michigan individuals, the concentration of these extralimital sightings in May and June is nonetheless interesting. Semo and Booher (2002) suggested that the California and Michigan records, together

with records from Texas in March and May, represent lost individuals trying to return to their breeding grounds. They imply that the birds may have dispersed from their Mexican wintering grounds earlier in the year, perhaps driven north by low prey availability. However, swifts are known to undertake major movements to escape adverse weather at any time of the year, and it has been suggested that this habit may be common within the family (del Hoyo et al. 1999). It is therefore entirely possible that the California, Michigan and Ontario birds were all recent arrivals. Whether or not this is the case, the pattern of occurrences suggests that flocks of swifts or hirundines in late spring, at the margin of land and water, provide the best chance of finding this spectacular species in Canada or the northern USA.

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Tristan ap Rheinallt, Lenimore, Gruinart, Isle of Islay, Scotland PA44 7PP, UK

Bird Observations at the Pickering Wind Turbine

Ross D. James

INTRODUCTION

In September of 2001, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) installed a modern wind turbine at the west end of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station (PNGS). The Canadian Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in granting permission to OPG for the turbine, requested a year-long monitoring program to assess avian mortality and the possible impact of that turbine on bird populations. I prepared the monitoring program for OPG and, because of security considerations, ended up doing the monitoring through 2002. Quite apart from estimating bird mortality, I was able to make observations of bird behaviour in relation to the turbine. What follows is a summary of my observations near the wind turbine.

THE STUDY SITE

The wind turbine was placed in the west landfill area at the west end of PNGS (Figure 1). To the north of the landfill is Alex Robertson Park, an area of open lawns and a number of deciduous and coniferous trees scattered about in some parts. To the west is Hydro Marsh, which has open water areas, cattail stands, mudflats, and is bordered by shrubs and trees. It connects with Frenchman's Bay farther west. To

the north of Alex Robertson Park, along Kronso Creek that flows into Hydro Marsh, there is a small wooded area with trees of various ages. The creek is marshy along the edges and has mudflats much of the year. To the south of the turbine is Lake Ontario. Between Hydro Marsh and the lake is a barrier beach. The Waterfront Trail passes through the south end of the park, south and close to the turbine, and west along the barrier beach. Other paths circle most of the park. A parking lot near the northeast corner of the park provides access to visitors to the park, and there are numerous users with their dogs on most days.

This is an area relatively rich in bird life, because of the lake, wetlands, parkland, and nearby urban areas, that provide a variety of habitats. Compilations of bird life in the area were made in conjunction with environmental assessments required for the generating station (Marshall, Macklin, Monaghan 2000). These inventories indicate that during the course of a year about 140 species might regularly occur, mainly as migrants, with about 20 species nesting in surrounding habitats. An additional 100 species have been reported, but their occurrence would be expected to be sporadic and likely only in very small numbers.

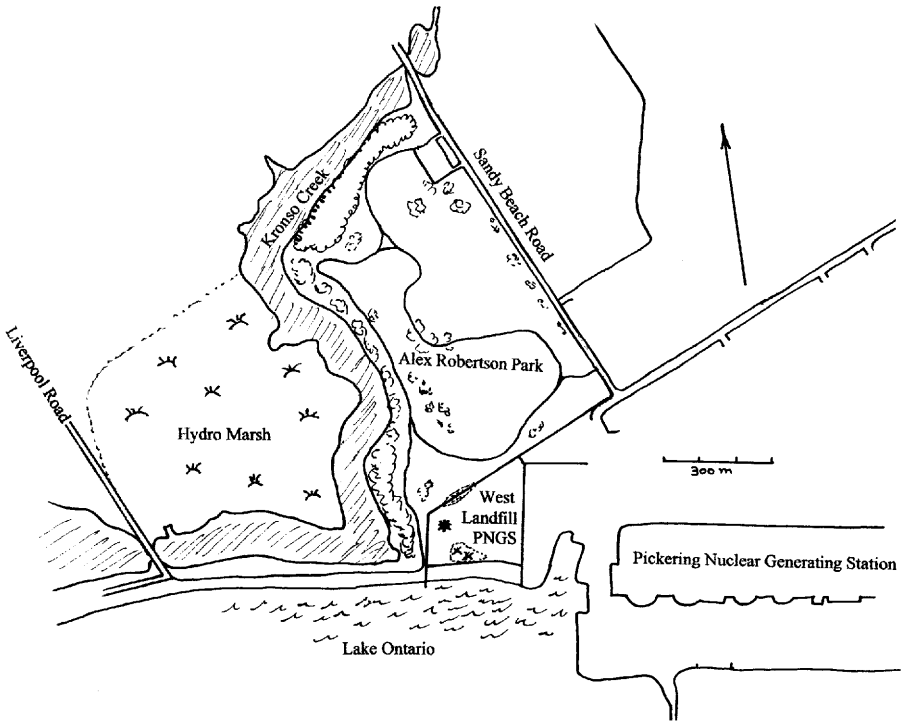


Figure 1: West end of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station (PNGS), showing the surroundings of the wind turbine located in the west landfill.

The marsh and adjacent creek provide foraging, nesting, roosting, and shelter for cormorants, herons, waterfowl, rails, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and songbirds of many kinds. I was not able to spend the time to compile a detailed list of birds in all surrounding habitats. However, species most commonly seen from my usual cruising radius in 2002 included Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Canada Goose (*Branta*

canadensis), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*), Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*), Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*). The park provides foraging, nesting, and/or roosting for a variety of species, most notably Canada

Goose, Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), and American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*). Numerous migrant songbirds also stopped temporarily during both spring and autumn. The waters and shores of Lake Ontario provide foraging and loafing areas for a wide variety of waterfowl, plus cormorants, gulls, and terns. A warm water discharge to the lake from the generating station maintains open water conditions all winter that is attractive to waterfowl.

The west landfill area itself is fenced off from the park. The area searched for carcasses included areas inside and outside the fence within at least 50 m of the tower. Within this 50 m radius, mowed lawn and paved trail covered about 24% of the area; bare gravel and roadway covered about 29%. Together, more than 50% could be searched thoroughly all year. There was some uncut grass (about 20% of the area) that could be easily searched, but finding small birds would have been more difficult at times once grass grew tall and until the grass died and matted down a bit. Shrubby and weedy areas (15%) could be searched fairly well through the spring migration, and again late in the year for any remains that might have been in evidence from summer. Some open

portions could be searched all year, although small birds would have been missed. The marshy areas (12%) with tall cattails were the only area that could not be searched well, although I certainly scanned the edges for evidence of anything large.

THE TURBINE

The turbine is a Vestas V80, 1.8 MW, constant speed model, with a tower standing about 78 m high (Figure 2). The blades are 39 m long. The rotation is a constant 15.3 rpm. The generator is very quiet. The main audible sound, which was minimal, resulted from the sweeping of the blades through the air when the turbine was in operation. The noise was not sufficient that I noticed anyone in the park reacting to it. The wind usually made as much or more noise. The sound may have been audible to birds at close range, helping to alert them to the presence of the turbine.

PROCEDURES

Monitoring

The monitoring protocol was prepared in accordance with standard procedures recommended by Morrison (1998). Direct visual searches were concentrated mainly within 50 m of the turbine tower. However, I regularly scanned beyond that distance for anything obvious, and often extended the search for 20 to 30 m downwind, where possible, following days when winds might have carried



Figure 2: The Pickering wind turbine from the waterfront trail in Alex Robertson Park, looking southwest. Photo by Don Chubbuck.

something in that direction. Searches lasted about an hour each time. I walked a pattern that covered all searched area at intervals of about 5 m or less. I varied the approach and specific path somewhat in order to see things from a different perspective, or to be closer to somewhat different parts of the area. But, I was to a large extent guided by the layout of the area.

Searches were usually made on the same day or days of the week, in order to get fairly even coverage. The weather was random with respect to searches, and many different conditions were encountered. The search day was not changed because of weather, except to avoid following a snowfall, which

would have buried carcasses. Searches were made about every two weeks from January until early March, and between the end of October and mid December. From 10 March to 4 May, 2 June to 17 August, and 22 September to 26 October, searches were made once per week. Search frequency was increased to three times a week from 5 May to 1 June and from 18 August to 21 September. Thus, the searches were more frequent at times when fatalities were more likely.

Study of removal by predators

This study was conducted to assess the potential for removal of dead birds by predators prior to being

found on searches. I placed out dead birds, within 50 m of the turbine, on a variety of ground covers. While I tried to avoid putting birds where they might be found by park users, I did place a number close to areas regularly passed by people and their dogs. Birds were tagged asking any person finding them to leave them. However, a dog could have consumed most before a person could intervene, or at least would have left noticeable damage. I checked each bird, on each subsequent visit, to determine how long it remained. They were removed by me after one week, when of no further interest to a predator because of the extent of decay.

RESULTS

Bird Behaviour

Canada Geese were present throughout the year, and common most of the time. They foraged regularly in the park, and foraged, loafed, or roosted along the lakeshore and in the marsh. They flew back and forth past the turbine virtually every day on a number of occasions. Typically they flew wide of the turbine by at least 75 m, moving over Hydro Marsh, or between the turbine and PNGS. They were obviously aware of the turbine, and simply avoided it most of the time. However, on some occasions I saw them fly close past the turbine even when it was in operation. When flying close, they did not make any sudden panic manoeuvres to avoid it, but continued directly on their

flight, even when it brought them within 10 to 20 metres of the turning blades. They also landed on the ground and walked all about, even right beside the tower when the blades were turning above them.

Other waterfowl were present in varying numbers throughout the year, with more in migration and the nonbreeding season. Most were in Hydro Marsh or out on the lake, and regularly flew back and forth between the two. A few ducks, mainly Mallards, but also Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), flew closer into the small marsh to the southeast of the tower, landing in a small bit of open water closer than 40 m from the tower. A pair of Mallards nested in this marsh, 35 m from the tower below the rotating blades. Trumpeter (*Cygnus buccinator*) and/or Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) were present in Hydro Marsh or on the lake through the year. I also saw them fly over the landfill within 100 m of the turbine when in operation. The turbine did not seem to inhibit waterfowl from living in close proximity to where they would be normally.

Ring-billed Gulls were common in the area all year and regularly flew from the lake to the park to forage on the grass. They also typically flew wide of the turbine by at least 75 m, but at times passed within a few metres of the turning blades without showing any apparent alarm.

Smaller numbers of Black-crowned Night-Herons were in

Hydro Marsh most of the summer and autumn, and regularly flew past the turbine to get to the outflows from PNGS. Usually, they passed more than 100 m away, but on occasion were seen flying within 50 m of the tower, below the height of the blades. They visited the small marsh southeast of the turbine also within 50 m of the tower. Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) were in Hydro Marsh on many occasions, and flying about over the park, although not seen close to the turbine. The herons' activities did not seem to be interrupted by the presence of the turbine.

Common Terns remained in Hydro Marsh through the summer, nesting on a raft there. As many as 70 birds could be seen at one time. Their nesting activities proceeded as normal, and they were seldom seen east of the marsh and closer to the turbine.

Killdeers were regular users of the gravel areas of the landfill, and flew in and out to the park every day. One pair nested within 60 m of the turbine tower. They regularly walked all about, even within a few metres of the tower below the turning blades. Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*) visited puddles on the road and landfill, within 100 m of the tower. Migrant shorebirds of several other species certainly used Hydro Marsh, although they were not seen any closer to the turbine.

Double-crested Cormorants were regular users of Hydro Marsh

and the adjacent lake most of the year. Ordinarily, they did not come close, but on one occasion, I watched one fly under a blade close to the generator when the turbine was not in operation.

Rock Doves (*Columba livia*) lived in the generating station and a flock regularly flew about the park and toward Hydro Marsh. I regularly saw them fly over the landfill area, usually well clear of the blades. On one occasion, four flew between stationary blades. Some foraged on the ground near the turbine in operation with no apparent concern.

Considering that hawk migration could have brought many hawks along the lakeshore nearby, I saw very few close to the turbine. I did see a Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) in the park, and several Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*). When the turbine was not operating, I watched one Sharp-shinned Hawk circle up right past the nacelle in front of the blades. One flew across the landfill very close to the tower when the blades were turning, but below them. I watched another chase a bird within 25 m of the turning blades. As with other birds, there was no apparent avoidance of the turbine, while keeping clear of any danger.

Summer resident songbirds of several types were regularly encountered near the turbine. Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), Mourning Doves, Song Sparrows, European

Starlings, American Goldfinches, House Finches, Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), and Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*) were the most numerous. All were seen close to the operating turbine, and carried on their daily lives seeming to pay no attention to it operating above. Their activities were largely closer to the ground below the blades, but not exclusively so. Several nested near the turbine: Red-winged Blackbird within 30 m, Song Sparrow within 50 m, Common Grackle within 50 m, and American Robin within 30 m. There were eggshells of Mourning Dove and Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) on the ground within 50 m, suggesting they may have nested close also. A goldfinch or warbler nest (depredated and torn up) was also within 50 m of the tower.

Several other species, such as Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*), Northern Cardinal, and Downy Woodpecker frequented the trees and shrubs below the turbine blades. Swallows of several kinds foraged over the landfill area. Numerous migrant songbirds were seen in the trees of the park, marsh edge, and landfill. Several times when the turbine was not operating, I observed small birds flying within a few metres of and between the turbine blades. Overall, these small birds, while undoubtedly well aware of the turbine, were not inhibited from normal daily activities right around it.

Predators

Typically, I arrived and searched outside the fence starting before sunrise. Occasionally, I came at other times. Most days, however, I arrived prior to any people or dogs that may have removed birds. Some dogs and people usually passed while I was there. Most dogs were running loose, and some ranged widely over the grassy areas. It was obvious from tracks that through the course of the day, and particularly on weekends, people and dogs were numerous and could be anywhere outside the fenced area.

There were numerous burrow dens in the landfill area. Some were woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) burrows, but others were used by other species. There were red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) tracks fairly regularly, and foxes used one of the dens. Digging in the landfill area indicated that skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) were present. There were raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) tracks regularly seen after each rain. There were at least two feral domestic cats roaming the area. Several times, half-eaten mice and snakes were found, attesting to the presence of these predators.

Common Crows were fairly regularly seen about the park and landfill areas from winter to early summer. However, when they came close to the turbine, they were usually distracted by attacks from blackbirds and grackles, and quickly departed. In summer, they were virtually absent (West Nile virus?). More were seen again after the end

of September as migrants began to move in. Gulls were present every day, but they generally avoided close approach to the turbine. Although gulls and crows were potential removers of any dead birds, they were seldom within the area most likely to have had avian casualties.

I found old bleached bones of birds and raccoons in the landfill area, on the shrubby hillside to the southwest of the turbine, and around the edge of the small marsh to the southeast. These were obviously not the result of turbine casualties, but of the activities of mammalian predators active in the area.

Removal by Predators

I placed out 42 dead birds, but am excluding seven from consideration. One was placed directly on the entrance to an active burrow, in far too obvious a place to indicate predator efficiency. The six placed out in the last week all disappeared, suggesting that a predator, perhaps a feral cat, suddenly began searching for placed birds. But, even then, four of the six were not found for at least two or three days.

Of the remaining 35 birds, most were small (20-warbler/sparrow-sized), that were the size of those most likely to have been turbine casualties, and most likely to have been completely removed by a predator, leaving no trace of their presence. Nine medium-sized birds (thrushes), and six large birds (woodcock, Rock Dove, gull) also were

placed out. Fourteen were placed outside the fence and 21 inside.

I was amazed at how inefficient predators were at finding dead birds. The first few I placed were back side up and not as obvious. But, I very quickly got to the point of seeing how obvious I could make them. Birds were placed in a variety of situations, including areas of short grass, longer grass, bare gravel, and among shrubbery or under trees. However, I made no attempt to conceal the birds. When placed on longer grass, they were clearly visible from above and from one or more directions. When among shrubs, I chose spots where there was no overhead cover. When under trees, the branches were well above them so that they were easily seen from beside the tree. Thus, they were placed much as if they had fallen dead on the ground. Most were placed with the lighter coloured under surface upward, making them all the more visible. Those on bare gravel had no concealing vegetation at all.

Of the 14 birds placed outside the fence, only one disappeared. This is despite having placed one just into sparse weeds at the edge of a well-trodden path along the edge of the marsh, and another within 30 cm of the waterfront trail where dozens of people and dogs passed daily. The numerous dogs running loose in the park were certainly not adept at finding motionless birds. The one that disappeared was placed on an area of long grass.

None of those on the closely mowed grass disappeared within a week.

Of the 21 birds placed inside the fence where there were no dogs, five were found. Four of these were exposed on bare gravel, clearly visible from all directions. Only two of the six large birds were eaten, and one of those was on the roadway where predators could be expected to travel. The visibility of birds on bare gravel would seem to have been a factor in their being found, as proportionately more were taken there.

Overall, 29 of 35 birds were finally removed by me, when no longer of interest to a predator because of the state of decay. Of the six birds found by predators, three were eaten in place and remains were clearly visible. Of the six birds scavenged, four were removed within the first 48 hours, and two remained more than two days. Only three of 35 vanished without a trace (8.6%), and two of those were not found by predators for at least three days. Had I not left birds in such visible places, I doubt as many would have been found.

Avian Mortality

Over the course of the year, a total of three dead birds or their remains was found that I considered probable turbine kills. Two were nocturnal migrants, a Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) in spring migration, and a Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) in autumn. Injuries were consistent with those

expected of a bird striking a structure in flight. They probably died as a result of flying into the structure in darkness, but not because they were hit by rotating blades. I know the turbine was not operating when the thrush was hit in spring. In the autumn it probably was not active in the middle of the night; the bird was beside the tower.

There is some uncertainty that the third bird was a turbine casualty. It was an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron. They are fairly common all summer as visitors to the marsh and generating station outflow, but the remains were found only in late October. Remains were found in two different places about 50 m apart, so at least one part, if not both, were moved by predators. I am inclined to think the bird was hit at night, and the predators then consumed most of it at one place and dragged the rest elsewhere. Both pieces were under the extent of the turbine blades.

I also found a fourth dead bird, a European Starling, that I do not think had anything to do with the turbine. It was 50 m away, under a tree where it probably fell after dying of unknown causes. There were no broken bones or any indication of hemorrhaging in the skull.

Projected Total Mortality

The search pattern that I followed, and the ground conditions, allowed me to find even single small feathers in many places, including long

grass areas and open shrubby areas. Dozens of feathers were removed over the course of the year. These were not the results of any interaction with the turbine, but normal loss of feathers from passing birds. Most were found in late summer when many birds are molting. Thousands of feathers were also scattered through the park at that time. But, I doubt that I missed any dead birds, if they were there, in the areas that could be searched.

Searches were most frequent at the times of the year when small bird casualties were most likely to have been encountered. At other times of the year, the most likely casualties would have been large birds. If large birds had died, even if found by a predator, it is highly probable that remains would have been evident, as they were when I placed out larger birds. Smaller birds were less likely to have been found by predators before rotting, in which case, I would have found them. I was able to find individual bones and feathers in areas of uncut grass and open shrubbery until at least late June, and hence probably would have found small birds. In those areas, I could have found large birds at any time, if not all the small birds. More than 50% of the 50 m search area got a careful search throughout the year. More than 75% of the area got a careful search for all birds through the spring migration, and for medium and large birds throughout the year. Also, I searched additional area

beyond the 50 m radius.

Predators proved to be rather inefficient at finding conspicuous dead birds, and with half of those few they did find, remains were left. Their efficiency was less than ten percent overall, and with the rate of removal and frequency of searches during periods of greatest nocturnal migration, it is more probable that anything would have been found before removal by a predator. Given the frequency of searching, the ease of finding even feathers in most places, and the inefficiency of the predators, I doubt that there was more than one bird, if any at all, that was missed.

DISCUSSION

Numerous studies during the past two decades and more, at virtually every new wind energy installation, have now been undertaken to estimate bird mortality at wind turbines. Studies have covered the range from one to thousands of turbines, and from mountains to offshore, across Europe and North America (Crockford 1992, Gill et al. 1996, Percival 2001, Erickson et al. 2001). These studies were initially driven largely by one situation in California where, with thousands of turbines, it was felt that the level of mortality of birds was unacceptably high. At this locality, the Altamont Pass, more extensive recent studies have found a mortality rate of about 0.23 birds per turbine per year (Thelander and Rugge 2001), but that the main concern is for rap-

tors, particularly Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Similar problems have not been found at other wind energy facilities even in California (Kerlinger 2000), but the concern for Golden Eagles and other raptors is important.

Through many studies, and millions of dollars spent to find answers, the results have indicated relatively low numbers of birds killed at wind turbines, and often none have been found, especially at single turbines (Kerlinger 2000, Erickson et al. 2001). The study at Pickering also indicates that the turbine at PNGS is not going to have a significant impact on bird populations, despite there being plenty of birds flying about the area. The local resident birds soon learned of the presence of the tower and easily avoided it. I could see no indication that the turbine disrupted normal activity of the local birds. Some may have had to fly slightly farther to move safely about. This was unlikely to have seriously affected their foraging activity. Smaller birds just moved about below the turning blades as if they were not even there. Migrants continued to pass through the area, and nesting birds continued to nest as usual.

The recorded mortality at the turbine was half the number of birds that I also recorded as dead on a one kilometre section of Sandy Beach Road that runs beside and north of Alex Robertson Park, where I drove to and from the turbine. The road was likely to have

experienced higher scavenging by crows and gulls, since these birds largely avoided the turbine, but were regular in the parks on either side of the road.

From all available mortality studies at wind turbines in the United States, the average outside California is about 1.83 fatalities per turbine per year (and 2.2 including California). These are considered to be accurate estimates if not slight overestimates, as detailed procedures have been followed (Erickson et al. 2001). Given that each of the free roaming house cats in North America is capable of killing more than 1000 small animals, including birds, each year (Coleman and Temple 1993), the wind turbine at Pickering is undoubtedly far less lethal than the two cats roaming the area. Each house in North America has been estimated to kill on average between 1 and 10 birds per year (Klem 1990, Dunn 1993). Wind turbines would not seem to be appreciably different than houses in the level of avian mortality reported.

The level of avian mortality at wind turbines has always been found to be absolutely insignificant when compared with tall buildings and tall communications towers that routinely kill hundreds and even thousands of birds each year (Weir 1976, Ogden 1996, Kerlinger 2000, Erickson et al. 2001). There has never been a record of a mass kill at a wind turbine. The highest mortality in one night ever record-

ed at a single turbine in North America was 14 birds at two turbines following a night of severe thunderstorms (Johnson et al. 2002). The highest I have come across for Europe at a single tower was 43, largely because there was a steady light attached to the turbine tower that night, attracting the birds; the turbine was not operating (Clausager and Nohr 1995).

The main factors that seem to determine mortality rate at towers of various types are poor weather, lights, guy wires, and height. In clear weather, even in coastal situations, the chances of a bird strike at a wind turbine are virtually zero (Crockford 1992, Winkelman 1995). Hence, raptors that migrate during the day are very unlikely to be killed. (In California, it is a population living among the turbines that is at risk.) Poor weather may bring nocturnal migrants down closer to the earth where they are more susceptible, and such weather reduces visibility. But, the occurrence of such weather, in inland situations at least, is unpredictable in time and space, such that the turbine location is not a predictor of potential mortality (Hanowski and Hawrot 2000). Even if a flock of migrants were to be low enough during bad weather, over 80% can pass right through the blades of a rapidly spinning variable speed turbine and remain unhurt (Winkelman 1992). The rate of rotation is much slower at Pickering and for any turbines in Ontario, and even less likely to

cause mortality as blades are easier to see and avoid (Hodos et al. 2001). Should a bird ever get to a position of having to fly through the rotating blades, there is more time to do so if blades are moving slowly. The increased time/space between blade passes should reduce the chance of collision (Tucker 1996). Local birds soon learn the location of towers and avoid them even in darkness (Dirksen et al. 1997), hence local birds are at low risk.

Lights are known to attract birds and to disorient them, causing them to circle and fall from exhaustion, or more likely strike guy wires or glass windows where they are killed or injured (Manville 2001). But, modern turbines do not have guy wires and the lighting is minimal, and usually at least flashing, if not a strobe light. The Pickering turbine has a single strobe light by day, and a flashing red light at night. Flashing lights are generally considered to be less lethal than steady lights, although strobes apparently are even better (Ogden 1996, Larkin 2000). The lighting on wind turbines is not likely to be of significant impact in most situations.

The height of a tower is generally believed to be one of the most significant factors, with towers below 400 to 500 feet (122 to 152 metres) causing minimal mortality (Kemper 1996, Kerlinger 2000, Crawford and Engstrom 2001). The Pickering turbine and others used or to be used in Canada fall below

this height, and thus, are likely to continue to cause minimal mortality. The greatest threat to all wildlife is still loss and/or degradation of habitat (Manville 2001).

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Ross D. James, R.R. 3, S1480, Concession 7, Sunderland, Ontario L0C 1H0

Notes

Manx Shearwater: The Possible First Ontario Record?

David Brewer

The Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) breeds mainly in the eastern Atlantic, from Iceland and the British Isles south through France to the Azores and Madeira, with recent records in New England and Newfoundland. After breeding, the western European population winters mainly in the southwestern Atlantic, off the coasts of Brazil and Argentina, although significant numbers do occur off the eastern seaboard of Canada and the United States, with occasional sight records in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Harrison 1983, Godfrey 1986). So far, there have been seven recoveries of birds banded in the British Isles in North America, mostly on the east coast of the United States (British Trust for Ornithology website: www.bto.org/ringing/recoveries.html).

On 19 August 2000, an adult male Manx Shearwater was found in a weakened condition in Armada Township, Macomb County, Michigan (42° 53' N, 82° 57' W), a location about 35 km west of the St. Clair River, essentially due north of Windsor and southwest of Sarnia. The bird, which was in grossly emaciated condition, was taken into

care at the Detroit Zoo, but died on 24 August. The specimen is now in the collection at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. The bird had been banded (ER33263) as a nestling on Copeland Island, County Down, Northern Ireland, on 7 September 1991, and was thus nine years old.

Although it will clearly always be an unprovable hypothesis, given the location of the recovery, it is very difficult to see how ER33263 could possibly have gotten to Armada Township without passing through Ontario or Ontario waters. The state of emaciation is, of course, consistent with the conditions of other oceanic tubenoses which have been found on the Great Lakes—for example, specimens from the 1996 invasion of Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*).

Nevertheless, we are left with the intriguing notion that if observers at Point Pelee or Kettle Point had been a little bit more lucky, we might have had this new species for the province one year earlier than the official first record, a female found dead at Ottawa on 26 August 2001 (Roy 2002).

Acknowledgements

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David Brewer, R.R. 1, Puslinch, Ontario N0B 2J0

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An Unusual, Late, Second Nest by a Canada Goose

Ken Abraham

In mid-September 2001, Bob and Maureen Jones of Kinmount, Ontario, contacted Gerald Moraal at the Minden Area office of the Ministry of Natural Resources to report a Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) that was nesting on their property. Because a September nest seemed very unusual, Moraal contacted me to ask whether I was interested in following up the contact. On 26 September 2001, I visited the Jones property with Gerald Moraal to document the nest. We were met by Bob and Maureen and taken to view "Baby" (as they had named the female goose) who was sitting on her nest on a straw bale in a loft of an otherwise inactive barn, adjacent to a pond. The goose obviously was familiar with Bob, who regularly visited her, and even with strangers in attendance, she allowed him to reach beneath her and gently raise her off the eggs. She was incubating a clutch of seven eggs. While a September nest itself is extremely unusual, what makes this nesting attempt even more unusual is that Bob indicated it was her second nest in 2001 and that her first attempt in spring was successful! The full history of the goose, as recounted by Bob, is described below.

In 1989, Bob was working in Toronto near the Lakeview Generating Station on the waterfront when he encountered a brood of five day-old goslings covered with oil. He brought them to his rural Kinmount property for rehabilitation and raised them in the company of some domestic geese on his farm pond. They reached flight capability and began to fly between the pond and the nearby Irondale River in the company of a wild flock of Canada Geese attracted to the pond and the other birds. They sometimes left for 2-3 days at a time but returned and resumed their usual familiar behaviours. They eventually left the farm for the winter, apparently with the wild flock. Four birds arrived at the Jones property in early March of 1990. Although none was banded, these were presumed to be surviving goslings based on their behaviour; upon arrival, they approached the back door, honking and unafraid, which strongly suggests they were the same birds raised by Bob and Maureen the previous summer. A variation on this behaviour still signals Baby's arrival every year. She lands, approaches, honks insistently, and on some occasions has even flown up to the

windowsill or walked in the back door when a response was not forthcoming.

In 1991, one female returned with a mate (which did not approach the house), but no nest was found that year. In 1992, as a three-year-old, she returned with a mate and nested near a well. A domestic Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*) harassed her and eventually drove her from the nest and the eggs were depredated. Each year from 1993 to 2002, she arrived in late February or early March and nested in the barn loft. Although she entered and exited under a closed door, none of the males has entered the barn, even when the door is opened. They take up various positions outside the barn and near the pond, and respond to calls from inside, to potential predators and also to Bob's approach. Male participation in raising the young has also been variable, perhaps not surprisingly. In some years, the male stays only about two weeks, but in others "he" has stayed to help raise the young. Bob estimates the female has actually had three different mates over the years, basing this on size (the second mate was very large), behaviour with respect to the barn, and behaviour with respect to Bob, including willingness to take food from him (only the current one seems inclined to do so).

In 2001, the pair arrived in early March and nested, producing seven eggs from which five goslings

hatched and survived to flight stage. One developed inverted wings, a condition known as paddle wing, apparently related to a diet imbalance (Harry Lumsden, pers. comm.) which rendered it unable to fly. The pair and four young left the property, but for 1-2 weeks after departure, the female would occasionally return with one young bird. Eventually, the young bird did not return but the female stayed on to produce this unusually late, second clutch of seven eggs. Candling showed the presence of air spaces, but no embryo development in any of the eggs; a single egg was removed and when opened showed no evidence of fertilization, but was not decomposing (the yolk was "fresh" and the albumen had some differentiation).


Discussion

This nesting attempt was unusual on two major counts, timing and laying history. Egg-laying in northern hemisphere wild geese occurs in spring following gonadal recrudescence, stimulated primarily by appropriate daylength. Species have different critical daylengths for reproduction, which stimulates reproductive tract development, but does not guarantee reproductive maturation on its own. Other factors such as temperature, rainfall, pairing behaviour, and nutrition also provide information necessary to bring the gonads to maturity (Bluhm 1992). I could find no other published records of

September nests of wild Canada Geese, but Bluhm (1992) cited records of captive swans laying between February and April, and then again in mid-September, when their critical daylength was repeated. This seems to have happened here. Among the other factors usually necessary for successful reproduction is pair bonding or at least presence of a mate. It does not appear from the account of events here that normal pairing behaviour occurred, as no mate was present for the second attempt. Finally, the availability of an assured and enriched food supply was likely a factor that over-compensated for absence of other factors, and in combination with appropriate

daylength may have allowed this laying to occur. Had the eggs hatched, it is unlikely that sufficient natural foods of appropriate quality would have been available to raise them, but with the assistance of Bob and Maureen Jones, they may have survived.


Female Canada Geese typically produce only a single clutch of eggs. The majority of them successfully incubate the eggs to hatching and subsequently are occupied with raising the goslings to flight stage. Successful birds rarely produce a second nest. Most anecdotal accounts of second nests suggest they are the product of an unsuccessful female continuing to lay, or laying again, after nest destruction. The propensity to do so, and the conditions that favour continuation nests versus true second nests are uncertain. The laying of a true second clutch by geese, sometimes called "re-nesting", is thought to be uncommon to rare (Alisauskas and Ankney 1992). Therefore, it is of interest to both ornithologists and goose managers, from the perspective of reproductive strategies and production potential, respectively. The term "re-nesting" does not differentiate between a true second nest (that is, a completely new reproductive effort involving a new set of developed follicles) or a continuation nest (the completion of laying of eggs from the original set of developed follicles). There is some suggestion that there is variation in the propensity to lay contin-



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uation nests, with lower latitude species or subspecies more likely to do so than higher latitude species or subspecies. A recent study of medium-sized Dusky Canada Geese (*B. c. occidentalis*) in the Copper River Delta, Alaska, used radio-marking and experimental removal of eggs at different stages throughout laying and incubation to determine the frequency and nature of second nesting. The results were that a rel-

atively high proportion of females whose eggs were depredated early in the reproductive cycle did indeed lay additional eggs in both continuation nests and some true second clutches.

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Ken Abraham, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife Research and Development Section, 300 Water Street, Peterborough, Ontario K9J 8M5

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August 2003 Quiz

Glenn Coady

This issue's photo quiz is that of a largely black and white water bird with little in the way of colour clues except for a bright red iris and some orange tones to the basal half of the bill. Although most winter loons exhibit this general pattern, this bird's relatively shorter, pointed bill and squat, puffy looking body easily eliminate any of the loons from consideration. Similarly, any duck that has such a plain black and white plumage can be eliminated from consideration by this bird's short, narrow and sharply pointed bill. The lack of visible tubular nostrils on this bird's bill further eliminates any of the black and white patterned shearwaters, petrels, storm-petrels or other "tubenoses". The phalaropes all have relatively longer bills and paler backs, and tend to look more slender and attenuated than this bird. None of the small or medium sized alcids that have a bill even remotely similar to this bird have such strikingly contrasting reddish eyes.

It is probably safe to say that intuitively most observers would quickly recognize that this mostly black and white, puffy looking bird, with a short, pointed bill and tail feathers so inconsequential that they go unseen among fluffy tail coverts, belongs to the grebe family.

Only five of the seven North American grebe species have occurred in Ontario, so the possible candidates are few. Pied-billed Grebe is tawnier in all plumages than this bird and it has dark eyes and a much thicker bill, and is thus ruled out. The much larger Western Grebe can be eliminated easily also as it has an obviously longer and more cleanly white-sided neck, and a much longer, and more uniformly yellow-olive bill. Red-necked Grebe can be eliminated also based on the combination of its longer neck, and much longer and heavier bill, in combination with its darker eyes.

We have thus narrowed our choice to being between Horned Grebe and Eared Grebe in their respective nonbreeding (basic) plumages, perhaps the most common scenario for confusion in grebe identification experienced by Ontario observers.

Several aspects of the bill are useful in separating these two species of grebes. The Horned Grebe tends to have a slightly thicker, straighter bill that shows a more symmetrical dagger shape, such that both the upper and lower edges curve roughly equally to form a slightly more blunt point. The Eared Grebe tends to have a finer, more sharply pointed, and more

noticeable upturned appearance to the bill (resulting from a straighter culmen and a distally upturned lower mandible). Much practice is needed with these structural clues, however, and observers should note that artists' depictions in most North American field guides tend to illustrate these variations as less subtly different than they often appear in the field (or certainly from photos). Another note of caution is that in our quiz photo, we are seeing this bird's bill from an oblique angle that is slightly above the bill, making some of these assessments difficult. Keeping these considerations in mind, we can note that, for all the characters discussed above, our quiz bird is more consistent with the appearance of Eared Grebe. However, Horned Grebes also overwhelmingly tend to exhibit a small, highly contrasting whitish tip to the bill in all seasons. Eared Grebes usually have a uniformly dark bill tip. For this character, our quiz bird is again more consistent with Eared Grebe.

There are many plumage characters that are useful in separating these two grebes in winter. The Eared Grebe usually shows a dark auricular patch bordered by a white crescent-shaped area starting from the chin and extending up the back of the head to the rear of the auriculars. In stark contrast, the Horned Grebe usually shows an all white area on the head below the level of the eye (including whitish auriculars). Much more often than not,

the Eared Grebe will exhibit dark lores with little or no area of pale contrast. Contrary to this, the Horned Grebe predominantly tends to show an often much paler area of contrast in the lores versus the dark crown. Eared Grebes are much more likely to be dusky plumaged on the front and sides of the neck than Horned Grebes, which usually show a sharper demarcation between a dusky hind-neck and cleaner, whitish foreneck.

The Horned Grebe generally shows a fairly flat crown profile, with a more gently sloped forehead and a crown peak occurring well back behind the eye on the head. In contrast, the Eared Grebe shows a highly peaked head, with a forehead that rises much more abruptly from the bill, a crown peak that occurs above or before the eye, and gives a general impression of a much greater volume of head above the eye level. Once again, for all these characters, our quiz bird appears to be more consistent with the appearance of Eared Grebe.

Two other general impression clues often can help in separating these two grebes. The many head characteristics discussed above combine to give the Eared Grebe a small, circular-headed appearance and the Horned Grebe a relatively larger, more triangular-headed appearance. Additionally, the Eared Grebe is the much more likely of the two species to fluff up its rear feathers in an exaggerated fashion to give an overly buoyant, "high-

stern" appearance, also characteristic of Pied-billed Grebe and Least Grebe. Our quiz bird remains more consistent for both of these impressions with the expected appearance for Eared Grebe.

Indeed, this **Eared Grebe** was photographed by Sam Barone at Humber Bay Park East in Toronto on 1 January 2000.

It should be noted that in early spring both Eared Grebe and Horned Grebe are often seen in Ontario sporting much more confusing transitional plumages as they begin to attain their breeding plumage. Many of the above mentioned plumage criteria for separat-

ing the two in winter are either equivocal or much less easy to apply then. It is in these cases where experience with the structural cues will become even more important in helping identify such birds.

Correction: In the April 2003 photo quiz, in speculating on the age of the Kirtland's Warbler depicted, the section which reads "and bright white (rather than buffy) edges to the rear scapulars" should have read "and bright white (rather than buffy) edges to the median primary coverts". This was an error I failed to correct in transcribing from my field notes.

Glenn Coady, 604-60 Mountview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2L4

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Editors: Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway, Ron Tozer

Editorial Assistance: Kevin Clute, Jean Iron

Ornithology Consultants: Michel Gosselin, Ross James, Mark Peck

Art Consultant: Christine Kerrigan

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