

# ONTARIO BIRDS



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by *Barry Kent MacKay*

## Articles

### Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2005

William J. Crins

#### Introduction

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) evaluates documentation it receives of any record of a species or recognizable form that is on the Review List for Ontario (see [www.ofo.ca/obrc](http://www.ofo.ca/obrc)). In addition, it reviews documentation relating to new species, new subspecies, and new breeding species for the province. This 24th annual report deals with the results of the adjudication of 120 records reviewed by the OBRC during 2005, of which 77% were accepted. A total of 116 different observers submitted documentation for review by the 2005 committee. Written reports often were accompanied by photographs (prints or digital images), copies of field notes, sketches, and, in one case, a videotape.

The trend toward submission of only photographic evidence, with little or no supporting written evidence, continues. This makes it much more difficult for the committee to compile dates of occurrence, and often there are details and circumstances associated with an observation that cannot be ascertained from photographic evidence alone (e.g., behaviour, comparisons with nearby birds, features hidden from view when the photograph was taken). Therefore, we will

continue to urge observers to submit written reports to accompany the images submitted to OBRC. We request that those submitting photos to the OFO website also take the time to send the same photos, along with written documentation, directly to the OBRC. For further information on the kinds of information that should be included in the written report, refer to the guidance that is provided on the OBRC page on the OFO website ([www.ofo.ca/obrc](http://www.ofo.ca/obrc)).

The members of the 2005 committee were Margaret J. C. Bain (Chair), William J. Crins (non-voting Secretary), Glenn Coady, Jean Iron, Colin D. Jones, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Ian M. Richards, Kayo J. Roy (non-voting Assistant to the Secretary), 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 2005.

#### Listing of Records

The format for listing the number of accepted records for each species remains the same as that used in the past couple of years (Crins 2004, 2005). A single number is used to indicate the total number of accepted records of a Review List species.

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 (AOU 1998) and its subsequent published supplements (42nd to 47th; see [www.aou.org/checklist/index.php3](http://www.aou.org/checklist/index.php3)). 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 who did not submit reports are listed when known.

The committee attempts to verify documented information prior to the acceptance and publication of a record, but it is inevitable that inaccuracies creep in from time to time. 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, Department of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6 (e-mail: [markp@rom.on.ca](mailto:markp@rom.on.ca) or telephone 416-586-5523).

### **Changes to the Review List**

Two species have been added to the official provincial list in 2005, Neotropical Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) and McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*), bringing the list to 479 species. Neotropical Cormorant has been added to the review list for southern Ontario and McCown's Longspur has been added to the review list for northern Ontario.

### **Acknowledgements**

The OBRC appreciates the efforts of the many observers who took the time to submit documentation of their observations of rare birds for

consideration by the 2005 committee. We also 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, or by providing expert opinions on material evidence submitted to the committee: Colin Bowen, Peter Chapman, Nicholas G. Escott, Christian Friis, Paul E. Lehman, Barbara McMullen, Michael A. Patten, Brian D. Ratcliff, Ron Ridout, and Ronald G. Tozer.

The committee also is indebted to Mark H. Cranford for his continuing efforts in ensuring that ONT-BIRDS (listserv of the Ontario Field Ornithologists) remains a useful source of information on rare birds appearing in Ontario. In addition, the

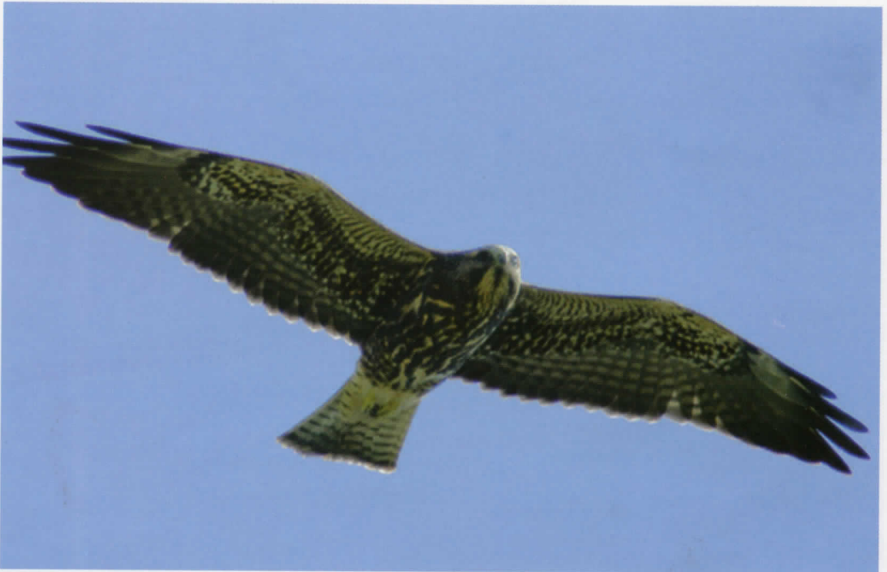
photographic pages on the OFO website, maintained in 2005 by Carol M. Horner, provide an excellent source of documentation for rarities. These sources of information make the Secretary's job of securing documentation much more efficient. During 2005, Kayo J. Roy continued in the role of Assistant to the Secretary. Kayo's valuable assistance in tracking down documentation for reports has been very helpful to the OBRC. I also wish to thank the members of the 2005 committee for their support and assistance during the year. Finally, I would like to thank Ron Tozer for his extra efforts in editing the annual report this year, while the author had to contend with a demanding work schedule that took him away from his computer at a critical time.



**Figure 1: Ontario Bird Records Committee members for 2005. Left to right, Kevin McLaughlin, Jean Iron, Glenn Coady, Margaret Bain, Bill Crins, Alan Wormington. Not in photo: Colin Jones, Mark Peck, Ian Richards, Kayo Roy. Photo by Mark K. Peck.**



**Figure 2:** Western Grebe present at Fifty Point, *Hamilton/Niagara*, from 5 to 12 November 2004. Photo by *Brandon R. Holden*.



**Figure 3:** One of two juvenal, intermediate morph Swainson's Hawks present north of Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*, from 17 to 21 September 2005. Photo by *Barry S. Cherriere*.



**Figure 4: Juvenal, intermediate morph Long-tailed Jaeger present at Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton*, on 5 September 2004. Photo by *Brandon R. Holden*.**



**Figure 5: Definitive basic male Rufous Hummingbird, present at Marathon, *Thunder Bay*, from 9 August to 7 November 2004. Photo by *Cheryl R. Vosburgh*.**



**Figure 6:** Male Townsend's Solitaire present at Rothwell Heights, *Ottawa*, from 2 February to 5 April 2005. Photo by *Roger Clark*.



**Figure 7:** Sage Thrasher observed on 31 May and 10 June 2005 at Cabot Head, *Bruce*. Photo by *Michael E. Carlson*.





**Figure 8:** First basic, male *Phainopepla*, present at Duttona Beach, *Elgin*, from 27 December 1975 to 21 January 1976. Photo by *Marshall H. Field*.



**Figure 9:** First basic female *Black-throated Gray Warbler*, present in *Toronto*, *Toronto*, from 6 to 16 December 2004. Photo by *Ian Stanley*.



**Figure 10: Definitive basic Swainson's Warbler, present on Long Point (Courtright Ridge), Norfolk, on 9 May 2005. Photo by *Kenneth G. Burrell*.**



**Figure 11: Lark Sparrow present at Cabot Head, Bruce, on 22 and 23 May 2005. Photo by *Virgil Martin*.**



**Figure 12:** Definitive basic, male Hooded Oriole, of the *sennetti* subspecies, present in North Bruce, *Bruce*, from 12 to 19 May 2005. Photo by *Lynne Erley*.



**Figure 13:** Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in basic plumage, present at Chelmsford, *Sudbury*, from 19 December 2004 to 27 February 2005. Photo by *Christopher J. Escott*.

## Accepted Records

### Ross's Goose *Chen rossii* South Only (48)

- 2004** – one, definitive basic, white morph, 25-26 March, Aylmer, *Elgin* (David A. Martin, found by D. Keith Sealy).  
 – one, definitive basic, white morph, 11-16 October; Aylmer, *Elgin* (11 and 16 October), and Lake Whittaker Conservation Area (12 October), *Middlesex* (David A. Martin, also found by Linda Wladarski, Ross C. Snider, Terry Ricker).  
 – one, definitive basic, white morph, 21-26 November, Reids Mills, *Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry* (Robert A. Bracken, Christina Lewis, Vivien Rolland-Commarmot, found by Thomas A. Hanrahan, Mark A. Gawn) – photos on file.
- 2003** – one, definitive basic, white morph, 1 April, Markham, *York* (Stan Long).

### Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* (15)

- 2004** – one, alternate, male, 8 December, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (unknown hunter) – photo on file.
- 1995** – one, female, 22-30 April, Clarkson (Ratray's Marsh), *Peel* (Luc S. Fazio, Kevin A. McLaughlin, found by Donald E. Perks) – video on file.

The 1995 record involved a female Cinnamon Teal paired with a male bird that was apparently a Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*) x Cinnamon Teal hybrid. The 2004 record was of a male bird shot by an unknown hunter, and Dean J. Ware was able to obtain a photograph of the bird.

### Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* South Only (31)

- 2004** – one, alternate, 16 May, Cabot Head, *Bruce* (Virgil Martin, also found by Grant Snyder).  
 – one, definitive basic, 1-3 November, Hamilton, *Hamilton* (Robert Z. Dobos).  
 – one, definitive prebasic molt, 13 November, Pelee Island (Fish Point), *Essex* (Dean J. Ware, also found by Dave Bracken).

As noted last year (Crins 2005), the autumn of 2004 produced several reports of Pacific Loons in their southbound migration; two more records from that period are added here. It should be noted that the correct date for the spring 2004 observation from Cabot Head is 16 May, not 17 May as published in *North American Birds* 58: 361.

### Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* North Only (12)

- 2005** – two, alternate, 29 May, Emo, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder, also found by Mary C. Elder).

### Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (18)

- 2004** – one, first basic, 5-12 November, Fifty Point Conservation Area, *Hamilton/Niagara* (Don Graham, Ady Gancz, William W. Watson, Brandon R. Holden, found by Lois Evans) – photos on file.

### Western/Clark's Grebe *Aechmophorus* sp. (5)

- 2004** – one, 25 October, London, *Middlesex* (Jason McGuire).

**Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* (30)

**2004** – one, juvenal, 19 October, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (David R. Don, found by Daniel R. Salisbury).

**Neotropic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (1)

**2005** – one, definitive alternate, 3-6 May, Wheatley Harbour and Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (David J. Milsom, Ronald G. Tozer, Donald E. Perks, Harold E. Stiver, Karl Egressy, Alan Wormington) – photos on file.

This phenomenal occurrence constitutes the first record for both Ontario and Canada. The observation is fully described by Tozer and Milsom (2006).

**Frigatebird sp.** *Fregata* sp. (2)

**2005** – one, 1-2 August, Port Elgin/Frenchman Bay, *Bruce* (David Ellingwood).

This bird probably was associated with the passage of Hurricane Dennis, which stalled over Tennessee on 12 July, but with remnants continuing to swirl around southern Indiana for five more days (until 17 July). Descriptions of this bird were inconclusive with respect to which species of frigatebird was involved. There are two records of Magnificent Frigatebird (*F. magnificens*) in Ontario; 28 September 1988 at Point Edward, *Lambton* (Wormington and Curry 1990) and 28 October 1995 at Stoney Point, *Essex* (Dobos 1997). Both are believed to have been associated with hurricanes, as was the only other Ontario record of a frigatebird (in 1995), which could not be assigned to species (Mississippi Lake, *Lanark*, 15 October, and Snow Road Station, *Frontenac*, 30 October; Dobos 1997). Also in 2005, a Magnificent Frigatebird was photographed in Ohio along Lake Erie on 5 September, and an apparent Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*) was photographed in Michigan at the mouth of the Detroit River on 11 September.

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* (56)

**2005** – one, definitive alternate, 20 April-4 May; Holiday Harbour (20-25 April), and Wheatley Provincial Park (27 April – 4 May), *Chatham-Kent* (Alan Wormington, Donald Pye, Ronald G. Tozer, Karl Egressy, found by June M. Gordon, James N. Flynn) – photos on file.  
 – one, first alternate, 11-12 May, Toronto Islands, *Toronto* (David D. Beadle) – photo on file.  
 – one, definitive alternate, 22 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, also found by Stephen T. Pike).  
 – one, juvenal, 27 July, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

**Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor* (36)

**2005** – two, definitive alternate, 9 May, Big Creek Marsh, *Norfolk* (Scott Gillingwater, also found by Teresa Piraino).  
 – one, first alternate, 13-16 June, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Dean J. Ware, Alan Wormington, Stephen T. Pike) – photo on file.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (43)

- 2005 – one, definitive alternate, 13-20 May; Rondeau Provincial Park (13 May), and Erieau (15-20 May), *Chatham-Kent* (Steve Charbonneau, Blake A. Mann, found by S. Mitchie, K. Roberts, P. Holloway) – photo on file.

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus* (50)

- 2005 – one, basic, 9 October, Seacliff, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

**Swainson's Hawk** *Buteo swainsoni* (46)

- 2005 – one, first basic, light morph, 10 April, Grassie, *Niagara* (Barry S. Cherriere, also found by Linda Cherie) – photos on file.  
 – two, juvenal, intermediate morph, 17-23 September, north of Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Paul D. Pratt, Stephen T. Pike, Alan Wormington, Claude Radley, Barry S. Cherie) – photos on file.

With regard to the Pelee record, it should be noted that two birds remained at the site from 17 to 21 September, after which only one bird was seen until 23 September.

**Ferruginous Hawk** *Buteo regalis* (6)

- 2004 – one, juvenal or first basic, light morph, 26 September, Bronte, *Halton* (George M. Naylor).

This is the first autumn record for Ontario (*per* Dobos 1996, Roy 2001). It is interesting to note that an adult Ferruginous Hawk was observed in Michigan on 24 September 2004 (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

**Piping Plover** *Charadrius melodus* (56)

- 2005 – one, definitive alternate, 4 May, Wheatley Harbour, *Chatham-Kent* (Kevin A. McLaughlin).  
 2004 – one, first alternate, 27 April, Pelee Island (Fish Point), *Essex* (P. Allen Woodliffe).

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* **North Only; South Before 2000** (70)

- 1998 – one, basic, 3-20 December; Blenheim (3-12 December), and Rondeau Provincial Park (20 December), *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe, found by Steve Charbonneau).  
 1997 – two, definitive alternate, male & female, 11-12 May, Blenheim, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe, found by Dorothy Smith) – photo on file.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* (25)

- 2005 – one, first alternate, 18 July, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Dean J. Ware, Alan Wormington).

Presumably the same bird was observed at Point Mouillee, Michigan, only about 57 km away, on 11-13 July 2005 (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

**California Gull** *Larus californicus* (42)

- 2004 – one, definitive basic, 20 November, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Jean Iron, Robert Z. Dobos) – photos on file.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata* (6)

**2005** – one, definitive basic, 31 August, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk* (Stuart A. Mackenzie, also found by Michael D. Boyd, Ross Wood).

This bird was associated with the passage of Hurricane Katrina. Numerous Sooty Terns appeared in the eastern states following this hurricane, including 20+ in Tennessee, 2 in Kentucky, 1 in inland Pennsylvania, and 1 in Ohio (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

**Long-tailed Jaeger** *Stercorarius longicaudus* **South Only** (39)

**2005** – one, juvenal, intermediate morph, 22 October, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, Stephen T. Pike) – photo on file.

– one, juvenal, light morph, 25 October, Point Edward, *Lambton* (Blake A. Mann, also found by Adam M. Byrne, Tex Wells, Glenn Belyea).

**2004** – one, juvenal, intermediate morph, 5 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal, light morph, 8 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden).

– one, juvenal, intermediate morph, 8 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden).

– one, juvenal, intermediate morph, 23 October, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden) – photos on file.

**Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus* (6)

**2004** – one, basic, 7 November, Point Edward, *Lambton* (Tim Snieder, David Stimac, also found by Erika Stimac).

All previous records of this species in Ontario have occurred in late fall, between the dates of 7 November and 14 December (Pittaway 1995, Roy 2000).

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* (21)

**2005** – one, basic, 2 May, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), *Norfolk* (Kenneth G. Burrell).

– one, basic, 7 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Paul D. Pratt, Stephen T. Pike, Jean Iron) – photos on file.

– one, basic, male, 9-10 June, Long Point (town site), *Norfolk* (Michael Burrell, Kenneth G. Burrell) – photos on file.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* (4)

**2005** – one, definitive basic, male, 30 November, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (unknown collector) – specimen (skin and wing) in ROM (#102372).

**2004** – one, basic, 4 December, Riverstown, *Wellington* (unknown finder) – photos on file.

The Riverstown specimen involved a road-killed bird that was taken to the Guelph office of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to obtain a permit for taxidermy. Photographs of the mounted bird subsequently were widely circulated on the web. The Thunder Bay bird, well beyond its previously documented range in Ontario, was found alive but with an empty stomach and seriously injured, on the catwalk in front of the fifth wheel on a truck that had come from Terrace Bay, which is also in *Thunder Bay*, about 170 km to the east (Nicholas G. Escott, pers. comm.).

**Chuck-will's-widow** *Caprimulgus carolinensis* (17)

2004 – one, male, 17 May – 18 June, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe).

**Rufous Hummingbird** *Selasphorus rufus* (17)

2004 – one, definitive basic, male, 9 August – 7 November, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Cheryl R. Vosburgh) – photos on file.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker** *Melanerpes carolinus* **North Only** (16)

2004/2005 – two, basic, male & female, three young, December – mid-July, Rainy River mouth, *Rainy River* (Julia Hill, Larry Budreau, also found by Roland Hill) – photos on file.

A male bird appeared at the feeder of Julia and Roland Hill in December 2004. In May 2005, the male was joined by a female, and on 8 July 2005, a nest containing three large young was discovered by Glenn Coady (pers. comm.). This record constitutes the first nesting of this species in northern Ontario. Details will be published by Glenn Coady in the near future.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** *Tyrannus forficatus* (49)

2005 – one, 4 June, Bond Head, *Durham* (Margaret J. C. Bain, found by Malcolm Pacey).

2004 – one, 26 June, St. Clair National Wildlife Area, *Chatham-Kent* (Cecilia Verkley).

– one, 27-31 October, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott) – photo on file.

**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* (39)

2005 – one, definitive basic, male, *P. f. pallida*, 7 November, Algonquin Provincial Park (Hwy. 60 near km 38), *Nipissing* (R. Dan Strickland, Ronald G. Tozer) – photos on file; specimen (skin and wing) in ROM (#102353).

2004 – one, 5 November, Long Point (Old Cut), *Norfolk* (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Christian Friis).

– one, 5 November, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, also found by Robert L. Waldhuber, Kevin A. McLaughlin).

– two, 23 November, Fruitland, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden) – photos on file.

2003 – one, definitive basic, female, 8-10 November, Point Petre, *Prince Edward* (Wynne Thomas) – specimen (wing and partial skeleton) in ROM (#98207).

– one, 10 November, Cedar Springs, *Chatham-Kent* (Keith J. Burk).

**Mountain Bluebird** *Sialia currucoides* (31)

2004 – one, female, 23 October, Pigeon River, *Thunder Bay* (M. Thomas Auer).

**Townsend's Solitaire** *Myadestes townsendi* **South Only After 2000** (57)

2005 – one, male, 2 February – 5 April, Ottawa (Rothwell Heights), *Ottawa* (Justin Peter, Tony F. M. Beck, Roger Clark, Wilson Hum) – photos on file.

– one, 28 February – 24 March, Hungry Hollow, *Middlesex* (Karl Egressy, Blake A. Mann, found by J. Peter Chapman) – photos on file.

– one, mid January, Dowling, *Sudbury* (Jen Abeline, Gary Russell) – photos on file.

– one, 21 September, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Christopher J. Dunn) – photos on file.

– one, 6 November, Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, *Prince Edward* (Peter J. Good, also found by V. Paul MacKenzie).



**Sage Thrasher** *Oreoscoptes montanus* (12)

2005 – one, basic, 31 May and 10 June, Cabot Head, Bruce (Michael E. Carlson, also found by Helen Penfold, Michael Penfold) – photos on file.

The published date of 5 July (*North American Birds* 59: 590) is incorrect.

**Phainopepla** *Phainopepla nitens* (1)

1975/1976 – one, first basic, male, 27 December – 21 January, Duttona Beach, Elgin (Reinhold J. Pokraka, Marshall H. Field, Alan Wormington, Donald R. Gunn, Ross D. James, also found by Lloyd D. Auckland) – photos on file.

This bird has been included on the provincial list for some time (Goodwin 1976, James 1991), but the OBRC did not review the material evidence until 2005. A brief account of its discovery was published by Pokraka (1976). Goodwin (1976) and James (1991) indicated incorrectly that the bird remained until only 17 January 1976. Extralimital records of this species in eastern North America are few, including one in Rhode Island (AOU 1983), two in Massachusetts (Veit and Petersen 1993), and one in Wisconsin (Robert C. Domagalski, pers. comm.).

**“Audubon’s” Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata memorabilis/auduboni* (6)

2004/2005 – one, basic, male, 22 December – 13 January, Toronto Islands, Toronto (Alfred L. Adamo).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** *Dendroica nigrescens* (13)

2005 – one, first alternate, female, 18-30 April, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, Stephen T. Pike, Ronald G. Tozer) – photos on file.

2004 – one, first basic, female, 6-16 December, Toronto, Toronto (Steven M. Favier, Robert Z. Dobos, David R. Don, Cheryl E. Edgecombe, Ian Stanley, Gene Denzel) – photo on file.

These are the first records of this species in Ontario since 1997 (Dobos 1998).

**Kirtland’s Warbler** *Dendroica kirtlandii* (35)

2005 – one, male, 11 May, Ruscom Shores Conservation Area, Essex (Susan D. Wurker, E. Dale Wurker).

– one, male, 25-26 May, 4 km west of Port Bruce, Elgin (Ronald J. Kingswood) – photo on file.

**Swainson’s Warbler** *Limnithlypis swainsonii* (7)

2005 – one, definitive basic, 9 May, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), Norfolk (Kenneth G. Burrell, also found by Matt Hindle, Benoit Genereaux) – photos on file.

**Kentucky Warbler** *Oporornis formosus* North Only (3)

2005 – one, first alternate, male, 12 May, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock) – photo on file.

This bird was banded and photographed at the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory. Two other records from northern Ontario exist for this species; 29 May 2003 and 13 October 2003, both also at Thunder Cape (Crins 2004).

**Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens* North Only (7)**

**2005** – one, basic, male, 25 April, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock) – photo on file.

The OBRC has published only one other spring occurrence of this species for northern Ontario, on 17 May 1981 on Caribou Island, *Thunder Bay* (Wormington 1986).

**Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* (19)**

**2005** – one, basic, male, 4-19 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Joanne Knudsen).

– one, first basic, male, 30 October, Algonquin Provincial Park (Hwy. 60 near km 35.6), *Nipissing* (Theodore Smith) – photos on file.

– one, basic, male, 10-15 November, Atikokan, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder, found by Betty Zajac, Jerry Zajac).

**2004/2005** – one, basic, male, late November – early April, Ignace, *Kenora* (David Penney) – photos on file.

**1979** – one, basic, male, 6 November, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe).

**Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla* North Only (16)**

**2002** – one, basic, male, 29 September, Hilliardton, *Timiskaming* (Bruce Murphy) – photo on file.

**Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (72)**

**2005** – one, 22-23 May, Cabot Head, *Bruce* (Virgil Martin, Holly Bickerton) – photos on file.

**2004** – one, 17 April, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Janus Ethelberg, Christian Friis, also found by Kevin Picard).

– one, 20-22 December, Bradshaw, *Lambton* (Larry Cornelis, Blake A. Mann) – photos on file.

**Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* (25)**

**2005** – one, definitive alternate, male, 23 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, also found by Allan Gilbert) – photo on file.

The last record of this species published by the OBRC pertains to a 1996 occurrence (Dobos 1998).

**Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum* North Only (3)**

**2005** – one, first alternate, 19 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock) – photo on file.

Two previous records are known from northern Ontario, one on 4 June 1997 at Thunder Cape, and the other on 8-13 November 1966 in Thunder Bay (Dobos 1998). During the spring of 2005, three different Grasshopper Sparrows were caught and banded at Thunder Cape (John M. Woodcock, pers. comm.). In addition to the 19 May bird noted above, the other individuals were recorded on 28 May and 30 May.

**Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula* South Only Before 1998 (34)**

**1997** – one, alternate, 11-12 May, Chatham, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe, found by Dorothy Smith).

**McCown's Longspur *Calcarius mccownii* (1)**

**2005** – one, female, 21 June, Weagamow Lake, *Kenora* (Peter A. Read, also found by Josh Shook) – photos on file.

This is the first Ontario record of McCown's Longspur. The circumstances of the sighting are described by Read (2006). There are several records of this species from the U.S. side of Lake Superior, falling during the period from late May to early June (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

**Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* (61)**

**2004** – one, male, 14 May, Port Elgin, *Bruce* (Cindy E. Cartwright).

– one, male, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (M. Brennan Mulrooney).

**Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (21)**

**2005** – one, definitive alternate, male, 29 April – 3 May, Long Point Lake, *Timiskaming* (Gert Trudel, Barry Kinch, Deanna Caldwell, found by Tom Wilson, Della Jo Everett) – photos on file.

– one, female or first alternate male, 26 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Ross Mackintosh, also found by D. Keith Sealy).

**Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus* (2)**

**2005** – one, definitive basic, male, *I. c. sennetti*, 12-19 May, North Bruce, *Bruce* (Lynne Erley, Willy Waterton, David R. Don, Donald E. Perks) – photos on file.

This is the second record of this southwestern species in Ontario. It was of the eastern subspecies (*sennetti*), normally found from southern Texas to eastern Mexico. The first bird occurred on 19-20 May 1992 at Long Point, *Norfolk*, but its subspecies was not determined (Boardman 1992, Bain 1993).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis* (9)**

**2004/2005** – one, basic, *L. t. tephrocotis*, 19 December – 27 February, Chelmsford, *Sudbury* (John Somerset, Carol Somerset, John G. Lemon, Terry Osborne, Anne Anthony, Alan Wormington, John Nishikawa, Christopher J. Escott, Carol M. Horner) – photos on file.

This bird remained at the Somerset feeder in Chelmsford for over two months, and was seen and photographed by numerous observers. It fits the usual pattern of late fall through late winter or early spring occurrence of this species in northern and central Ontario. There is a single record for extreme southern Ontario in mid-summer, an extraordinary time of year for this species to appear anywhere in eastern North America; it occurred at the Tip of Long Point on 8-10 July 1999 (Roy 2000).

## Deferred Records

### Identification Accepted; Wild Status Deferred

**2004/2005** – Pyrrhuloxia (*Cardinalis sinuatus*), one, first basic, female, 23 December – 1 January, Eagle, *Elgin* (Reinhold J. Pokraka, Christopher J. Escott, Barry S. Cheriére, Peter S. Burke, found by Walter Wojick) – photos on file.

The evidence for and against the unassisted occurrence of this bird is equivocal. Patten (2006) has summarized the extralimital records of this species in North America, which include occurrences north to Kansas (9+ accepted records) and one to Montana. Various opinions on possible origins also were obtained. Since there is no consensus, the status of this record is deferred until the balance of the evidence favours one hypothesis over the other.

## Not Accepted Records

### Origin Uncertain

Birds in this category are considered by the Committee to be correctly identified, but their origin is suspect. These birds may have escaped or may have been released from captivity. However, if new evidence suggesting wild origin becomes available, such reports may be reconsidered by the Committee.

- 2005**
- Great Tit (*Parus major*), one, female, 11-14 May, Pelee Island (Sheridan Point), *Essex* (Michael Penfold) – photo on file.
  - Great Tit, one, male, 14 May, north of Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Richard V. Z. Salembier III, Barry S. Cheriére, also found by Christine M. Salembier) – photos on file.
  - Eurasian Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*), one, male, 10 May, Red Lake, *Kenora* (Merle Nisly) – photos on file.

Various species of Eurasian songbirds continue to be reported from Ontario and adjacent states. There is still no evidence that these birds are anything more than escapes or releases (Crins 2005). Nevertheless, it is still worthwhile documenting observations of these species, for two reasons. The documentation helps to confirm the extent of the occurrences and the species involved, and evidence may be forthcoming in the future of a true pattern of vagrancy in some of these species. Documentation may be valuable in testing such patterns.

## 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, 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 conditions, etc., were insufficient. It should be noted that any of these reports may be re-submitted if additional documentation becomes available.

- 2005**
- Neotropic Cormorant, one, 12 May, Port Alma, *Chatham-Kent*.
  - Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*), one, 9 May, west of Marentette Beach, *Essex*.
  - “Richardson’s” Merlin (*Falco columbarius richardsonii*), one, 25 April, Pelee Island (Fish Point), *Essex*.
  - Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), one, 13 May, Lypps Beach, *Essex*.
  - California Gull, one, 18 June, Pelee Island (Fish Point), *Essex*.
  - White-winged Dove, one, 21 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
  - Bell’s Vireo (*Vireo bellii*), one, 7 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
  - Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), one, 11 June, Peterborough, *Peterborough*.
  - Kirtland’s Warbler, one, 11 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent*.
  - Blue Grosbeak, one, 11 May, Kingsville, *Essex*.
- 2004**
- Ross’s Goose, one, 28 March, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton*.
  - Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), one, 2 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
  - Mississippi Kite, one, 30 August, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
  - Ferruginous Hawk, one, 20 May, Eagle River, *Kenora*.
  - Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), one, 18 September, Port Stanley, *Elgin*.
  - Long-tailed Jaeger, one, 8 September, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton*.
  - Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), one, ? – 4 December, Timmins, *Cochrane*.
  - Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), one, 17 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
  - Bullock’s Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), one, 10 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- 2003**
- Long-tailed Jaeger, one, 19 September, Toronto, *Toronto*.
- 2002**
- Eurasian Collared-Dove, one, 29 May and circa 30 June – 1 July, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk*.
  - Eurasian Collared-Dove, two, 2 June, Blackburn Hamlet, *Ottawa*.
- 1997/1998**
- Mountain Bluebird, one, 19 December – 14 February, Pelee Island, *Essex*.
- 1985**
- Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), one, 17 August, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent*.

## Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports

### 2004 Report (Ontario Birds 23: 54-75)

- under Tufted Duck, add “also found by Brian R. Ahara” after “Kayo J. Roy, Kenneth M. Newcombe”.
- under Piping Plover, 2004, Oshawa, change dates from “22-23 May” to “22-24 May”.

### 2003 Report (Ontario Birds 22: 54-74)

- under Tufted Duck, add “Ken Allison, Mark Gawn, Robert A. Bracken, Christina Lewis” after “J. Burke Korol”.
- under Hermit Warbler, Cabot Head, change “alternate” to “first basic”. Last year’s annual report (Ontario Birds 23: 54–75) stated that this should be an addition, rather than a change.

### 2001 Report (Ontario Birds 20: 54-74)

- under Ross’s Goose, 2001, Riceville, add “Janet Castle” after “Christina Lewis, Robert A. Bracken”.

### 1997 Report (Ontario Birds 16: 51-80)

- under American Avocet, 1997, Blenheim, change dates from “3 August” to “3-5 August”, add “P. Allen Woodliffe” after “William J. McKitterick”, and add “photo on file” at the end of the record.

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

- under Fork-tailed Flycatcher, add “Nancy L. Barrett” after “John Miles, Kayo Roy”.

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

- under Sandwich Tern, 24 April, add “Stan Long” before “Robert H. Curry”; add “also found by Daniel R. Salisbury, John Stone” after “Robert H. Curry”.

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## OFO Annual Convention and Banquet Ottawa

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## First Documented Nest of Stilt Sandpiper in Ontario

Peter S. Burke, Martyn E. Obbard, Donald A. Sutherland,  
Colin D. Jones, Jon D. McCracken, and Ron Ridout

The Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*) is an entirely New World nesting calidrid with a disjunct breeding range. It nests from northern Alaska to James Bay mainly in low tundra habitat. Stilt Sandpipers breed: along the coastal plain in Yukon Territory (Sinclair et al. 2003); eastward along the northern coastline of Mackenzie, probably to Perry River (Godfrey 1986); on southern Victoria and Jenny Lind islands (Parmalee et al. 1967); and in northern Keewatin; also in southeastern Keewatin, northeast Manitoba and Ontario (Klima and Jehl 1998). In Ontario, it breeds along the coast of Hudson Bay from the Manitoba/Ontario border east to the Cape Henrietta Maria area and the northern end of James Bay (Peck and James 1983).

Manning (1952) provided the first evidence of breeding of Stilt Sandpiper in Ontario when a half-fledged juvenile was collected at Cape Henrietta Maria during a geodetic survey of the area in 1947. The following year, a field party from the Royal Ontario Museum collected two downy young (out of a total 18 birds) about 40 km south of the Cape near Hook Point, James Bay (Peck 1972). During a trip down the Sutton River in 1962, D. H. Baldwin and D. J. T. Hussell collected a downy young

on 24 June west of the river mouth (Schueler et al. 1974). Further observations of birds during the breeding season were made in the vicinity of the Cape in 1957 and 1970 (Peck 1972). R. I. G. Morrison reported a nest found in the vicinity of radar site 415 on 20 June 1976 (Hussell 1987); however, no documentation has been forthcoming.

During the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (OBBA) from 1981-1985, Stilt Sandpiper was reported from nine 10 x 10 km squares in six different 100 x 100 km blocks, extending from radar site 415 along the northern James Bay coast to the Manitoba border (Hussell 1987). Evidence of probable breeding was reported for six of the nine squares as either agitated behaviour or observed pair. In 1984, Stilt Sandpiper was reported daily in the vicinity of radar site 415 with as many as 12 seen per day; agitated behaviour of some birds suggested nesting or young out of the nest but no nests were found (James and Peck 1985). Wilson and McRae (1993) found small numbers in wet hummocky tundra near the Brant River mouth in 1991 and also suspected breeding.

Provisionally, the species has been recorded from seven of the ten blocks along the Hudson Bay and

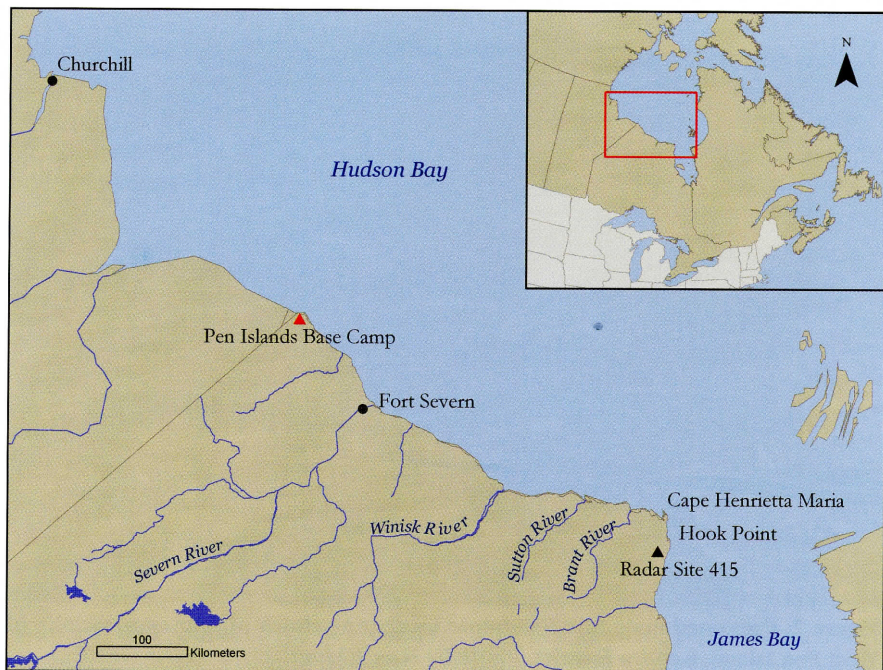


northern James Bay coastlines during the second OBBA (2001-2005; unpubl. data). It is important to recognize that only a very small percentage of suitable nesting habitat was visited during peak detection time, and by a means with which a singing male could be heard. Many squares were accessed by air or along rivers only. The fact that Stilt Sandpiper was detected in only eleven squares is likely a result of limited coverage rather than a low population. Thus, it appears that Stilt Sandpiper is an uncommon to locally common breeder in moist, vegetated subarctic tundra, as well as sedge fens in the taiga as far as 50 km inland (R. K. Ross/K. F. Abraham and D. A. Sutherland/W. J. Crins, pers. comm.) from the Hudson Bay and northern James Bay coastlines in Ontario. Here, we present information on Ontario's first documented Stilt Sandpiper nest, found 24 June 2004 southwest of West Pen Island, Kenora District, and provide further evidence of breeding along with comments on abundance.

From 23 June to 7 July 2004, the authors conducted field work in the vicinity of the Pen Islands in support of the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (Figure 1). Our base camp was located on a narrow marine beach ridge running parallel to the Hudson Bay coast, approximately 6 km SSW of West Pen Island (56° 47' 8" N, 88° 57' 7" W). The immediate area is maritime subarctic wet tundra dominated by sedges (*Carex aquatilis*, *C. chordorrhiza*, *C. scirpoidea*) and

interspersed with low willow (*Salix* spp.) and dwarf birch (*Betula* spp.) thickets, numerous shallow lakes and ponds, and a series of parallel low gravel marine beach ridges extending inland. The ridges support a lichen-heath community (Johnson 1987) dominated by lichens (*Cladonia* spp.), Mountain Avens (*Dryas integrifolia*), Black Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Alpine Blueberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), Mountain Cranberry (*V. vitis-idaea*) and Lapland Rosebay (*Rhododendron lapponicum*). Approximately 5 km inland from the coast, widely scattered trees or small copses of "krummholz" White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) become increasingly frequent on the ridges, giving way to lichen-spruce woodland approximately 10 km inland from the coast.

Upon our arrival on the evening of 23 June, several different Stilt Sandpipers were heard and observed performing aerial displays in the general vicinity of the camp. From the base camp at approximately 1200 h on 24 June, Burke heard alarm calls of an adult Stilt Sandpiper in flight, apparently disturbed by a female Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) hunting nearby. After the harrier departed, the Stilt Sandpiper attempted to land several times on the beach ridge about 200 m away from the camp, then finally landed and walked about 20 m until it was lost from view. After waiting about 10 minutes for the bird to reappear,



**Figure 1: Map of southern Hudson Bay and northern James Bay coastlines showing the location of the Pen Islands base camp and other sites mentioned in the text.**

Burke walked down the ridge to the approximate location where the bird had been lost from view and a nest was located when the bird flushed from nearly underfoot.

The incubating bird (Figure 2), a presumed male as males normally incubate during the day (Parmelee et al. 1967, Jehl 1973), flew off but reappeared within 5 m of the nest after others in the party were called over. The nest was a scrape between two crustose lichen-covered peat hummocks and was lined with a few dead leaves of a Net-veined Willow (*Salix reticulata*). It contained four ovate pyriform eggs, deep olive-brown with heavy brown markings,

and the bird returned to incubate shortly afterwards. From then until the nest was depredated sometime during the night between 1 and 2 July, we were able to pass by the nest daily without the adult flushing. No exchange of incubating parents was observed, nor was the other parent ever observed in the proximity of the nest before it was depredated. At 0730h on 3 July, however, Burke noted the pair performing aerial courtship display over the nest. The pair landed on the ridge in the vicinity of the nest and one adult settled momentarily on the ground, stood up and attended this location for 1.5 minutes while



**Figure 2: Presumed male Stilt Sandpiper incubating clutch of four eggs, vicinity of West Pen Island, Kenora District. Photo by Ron Ridout.**

the other adult stood nearby. The first bird then walked into the sedge fen, but it was not noted whether the other bird followed. This was the last observation of the pair.

On 4 July, the nest was measured and the habitat was described. The width of the nest scrape was 105 mm and its depth was 20 mm. No egg measurements were made during the time the clutch was incubated, to minimize disturbance to the nest. The beach ridge was aligned in a NW to SE orientation and was 35 m wide at the location of the nest, with a slight north-south gradient. The nest was positioned 11 m from the south edge. The closest parallel beach ridge was about 300 m south and a small tundra lake was located approximately 200 m to the north. The vege-

tation of the ridge was typical of ridges in the area. Wet graminoid tundra bordering the ridge supported scattered thickets ( $\geq 25\%$  cover) of low (0.5 m) dwarf birch/willow and vernal meltwater pools.

Other bird species nesting on the ridge in close proximity to the Stilt Sandpiper nest included: Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*), Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) and Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), and Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) were confirmed or probably breeding nearby in the adjacent wet tundra.

We determined Stilt Sandpiper to be a fairly common component of

the West Pen bird community, as we detected them on 49 of 121 point counts (40.5%) from 24 June to 5 July in four 10 x 10 km squares. A rapid decline in aerial displays was noted in the first week of July and birds became harder to detect. At 1515h on 4 July, Obbard heard alarm calls of an adult in flight over a small lake, and observed a second adult attending two downy young (Figures 3a and 3b) in sedges near the shore of a lake east-northeast of camp at 56° 47' 9" N, 88° 56' 7" W. This observation was about 1.2 km from the nest, and provided the second confirmed breeding record for atlas square 16CH89 in the second OBBA. From 1800-1830h on 4 July, Obbard and Sutherland searched unsuccessfully for a nest in the vicinity of the morning sighting and on a nearby elevated gravel ridge (20 m from lake). At 0845h on 5 July, Obbard relocated the family near the shore of the lake in the same general area as on 4 July. One adult (Figure 4) was brooding the chicks at that time and it was verified that there were only two chicks. On 6 July, the family group was relocated nearby by Jones.

## Discussion

This first documented nesting of Stilt Sandpiper in Ontario is typical of what has been described for the species in the Churchill area (Jehl 1973) with one minor exception. Although the width of the scrape was within the range reported by Jehl (1973), the nest depth was slightly

shallower, and this can likely be attributed to the fact that the nest was placed on a gravel beach ridge (Figure 5) rather than in the typical moist or relatively dry sedge meadow (Klima and Jehl 1998). We suspect that birds in the West Pen area do use typical habitat extensively; however, perhaps in a cold year like 2004, the only successful pairs are those that nest early on snow- and ice-free locations such as elevated beach ridges. Dry upland sites are used at Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island, as well as wet tundra (Parmalee et al. 1967).

Our planned arrival date of 16 June was pushed back to 23 June due to extensive snow cover in the West Pen Island vicinity (L. Walton, pers. comm.). Stilt Sandpipers have a typical incubation period of 24 days (Klima and Jehl 1998), so it is interesting that the brood Obbard discovered on 4 July had a clutch initiation date of about 11 June, a time when the incubating birds must have endured many days of inclement weather and much of the habitat, except for raised ridges, must have been snow-covered. Predation pressures at this time would have been intense, as a nearby Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) colony of 8250 pairs experienced nearly complete failure (K. Abraham, pers. comm.). Lateness of season likely led to few Snow Goose nesting attempts (Abraham and Ankney 1986) and pairs that did nest likely suffered nest predation by Common Raven (*Corax corax*), Bald Eagle



**Figure 3a:** Downy young Stilt Sandpiper, West Pen Island vicinity, Kenora District, 4 July 2004. Photo by *Martyn E. Obbard*.



**Figure 3b:** Downy young Stilt Sandpiper at edge of small lake, West Pen Island vicinity, Kenora District, 5 July 2004. Photo by *Martyn E. Obbard*.



**Figure 4: Adult Stilt Sandpiper calling to nearby downy young, West Pen Island vicinity, 5 July 2004. Photo by *Martyn E. Obbard*.**



**Figure 5: Habitat surrounding Stilt Sandpiper nest, West Pen Island vicinity, Kenora District. The nest was placed on the low gravel beach ridge covered by lichen-heath. Photo by *Donald A. Sutherland*.**

(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*), Red Fox (*V. vulpes*), Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) and Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), all of which were observed in the vicinity. Other shorebirds either appeared to delay their nesting schedules (Least Sandpiper; Dunlin; Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*), or abandoned the breeding season almost entirely (Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*; Short-billed Dowitcher, *Limnodromus griseus*; and Hudsonian Godwit, *Limosa haemastica*) based on our observations of aerial displays and nests. Until our date of departure, there were several large mixed flocks of shorebirds near the coast, some of which contained up to 150 Stilt Sandpipers.

Nesting habitat within 3 km of the goose colony seemed minimal as overgrazing had diminished suitable nesting and brood-rearing sites, as observed near Churchill (Klima and Jehl 1998). However, it appears that the West Pen Island area of Ontario supports a substantial breeding population of Stilt Sandpipers based on point count censuses and our multiple observations of breeding birds in a small area. At Churchill, a local density of 2-4 pairs/100 ha in the mid 1990s

was in decline compared to 12-16 pairs/100 ha in the mid 1960s (Klima and Jehl 1998). Based on our point count data, we estimated a density similar to what was most recently found at Churchill.

### Acknowledgements

Fieldwork at the West Pen Island area in 2004 was made possible through funding to the OBBA by the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, Canadian Wildlife Service and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). Mike Cadman and Nicole Kopysh (OBBA) arranged funding for the trip and assisted with logistical arrangements. Lyle Walton and Ken Abraham (OMNR) offered technical advice and logistical support. Special thanks to OMNR Twin Otter pilots Frank Aquino and Corey Burella who graciously delivered us to and from our field site, safely. Ken Abraham and Ross James reviewed an earlier version of the manuscript, and Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) intern Simon Dodsworth kindly prepared the map.

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## **Neotropic Cormorant: New to Ontario and Canada**

Ronald G. Tozer and David J. Milsom

During mid afternoon on 3 May 2005, a Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) was found by the authors on the north shore of Lake Erie at Wheatley Harbour, Essex County, Ontario. The exciting discovery of this new bird for Ontario and Canada transformed an otherwise rather ordinary day of birding!

After searching the Hillman Marsh area, Liz and Dave Milsom came to Wheatley Harbour to check for shorebirds and gulls. There were no birds on the west beach so Dave drove onto the pier on the west side of the harbour where the fishing boats are moored. After scanning the gulls on the docks, he looked at those on posts at the end of the pier. It was then that he noticed an odd-looking cormorant on the farthest post. Milsom looked around to see whether any other birders were present, and spotted Tozer on the east side of the harbour. Milsom shouted to him and pointed at the cormorant on the post. Milsom then checked his old Peterson (1980) field guide and immediately saw that the head illustrated for "Olivaceous Cormorant" (now Neotropic) was a perfect match for the bird on the post. He grabbed his camera and slowly

advanced up the pier, clicking as he went (Figure 1). By then, Tozer had carefully examined the bird with his telescope and shouted "Neotropic Cormorant" across the harbour! Milsom nodded but did not speak, not wanting to frighten off the cormorant which he was then approaching fairly closely. After taking a number of photographs, Milsom drove around to the east side of Wheatley Harbour to join Ron and Pat Tozer. Milsom then called the Point Pelee National Park Visitor Centre on his cell phone to alert the many birders there who would soon be rushing to Wheatley Harbour to see this rarity.

Field notes made by Tozer included the following: smaller and thinner compared with adjacent Double-crested Cormorants (*P. auritus*); shorter wings with a greenish sheen; longer tail; smaller head and shorter bluish bill; white V bordering yellow skin at the base of the bill; and a few short white plumes on the side of the head. In flight, its tail and neck appeared to be about the same length, in contrast to the shorter tails of the Double-crested Cormorants.

This Neotropic Cormorant in definitive alternate plumage was under observation by us on 3 May from 1520 to 1540h. During that



**Figure 1: Neotropic Cormorant in definitive alternate plumage at Wheatley Harbour, Essex County, Ontario on 3 May 2005. Photo by David J. Milsom.**

time, it joined several Double-crested Cormorants in the harbour, swimming and successfully diving for fish. Ellen Smout and some birding friends just happened to come by then, and excitedly took some photographs of the cormorant as it swam

in the harbour channel. At 1540h, the Neotropic Cormorant and several Double-crested took off, flew low out of the harbour mouth to the lake, and headed southwestward toward Hillman Marsh. It was literally about one and a half minutes after the birds

disappeared from view that the first alerted birder arrived from Point Pelee! Many birders searched diligently for the remainder of the day at Wheatley Harbour, Hillman Marsh, Point Pelee and Leamington, but the Neotropic Cormorant could not be found. The thought that it might not be seen again created much disappointment.

Starting early on 4 May, even more birders arrived at Wheatley Harbour, hoping that the cormorant would return or be located elsewhere. Then, in mid morning, Bob Curry and Glenda Slessor first spotted what was presumably the same Neotropic Cormorant with two Double-cresteds, flying into the harbour. Many people got to see the bird that day, and it was subsequently observed at Wheatley Harbour on 5 and 6 May, as well. Some observations involved it flying to or coming from nearby Hillman Marsh, also. However, the Neotropic Cormorant was never seen within Hillman Marsh proper, and may have been travelling farther south to West Cranberry Pond in Pelee Marsh to roost, since Double-crested Cormorants by the hundreds (sometimes thousands) congregate there regularly (A. Wormington, pers. comm.).

### Discussion

The Neotropic Cormorant is one of the most widely distributed of the cormorants, its breeding range extending throughout South and Central America, Mexico, the West

Indies, and northward to New Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana (Telfair and Morrison 1995). It has been reported as casual to Mississippi, southeastern California, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, southern Minnesota, and northern Illinois, with a sight report for southern Nevada (Telfair and Morrison 1995, AOU 1998). Most occurrences beyond the nesting range have involved postbreeding dispersal (Telfair and Morrison 1995). Recent examples of vagrant Neotropic Cormorants include a pair of adults at Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge in Lac Qui Parle County, Minnesota from 12 August to 6 October 2003 (Bardon 2004); and one found on the Potomac River at Seneca, Maryland on 12 August 2005, which was later seen regularly in that area from 24 October to 11 November, and was the first record for the East Coast of North America (Day 2006). Since 1970, the population of Neotropic Cormorant in the United States has fluctuated but risen steadily overall, with increases in the number and size of breeding colonies, and establishment of new nesting colonies (Telfair and Morrison 1995).

The occurrence of this Neotropic Cormorant at Wheatley Harbour and Hillman Marsh from 3 to 6 May 2005 has been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), and constitutes the first record for Ontario (Crins 2006). Although there were some other reports of Neotropic

Cormorant after 6 May, at Wheatley Harbour and Port Alma, Chatham-Kent Region, they were either not submitted to the OBRC or were not accepted by it (Crins 2006).

The Neotropic Cormorant reported here is also the first confirmed record for Canada. A small cormorant identified by a single observer as a Neotropic Cormorant (then Olivaceous) was reported on Wascana Lake in Regina, Saskatchewan, on 8 September 1989. The sighting with minimal description of the bird was later published as the first record for Canada (Brazier 1990). However, that record is reportedly not considered valid by most ornithologists in Canada.

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Neotropic Cormorant is currently designated as “hypothetical” on the *Field Checklist of Saskatchewan Birds* (Nature Saskatchewan 2005). The Saskatchewan report was not included in the casual occurrences listed for Neotropic Cormorant in the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (AOU 1998), and the species was not on the “List of Canadian Birds” published by Birders Journal (2003), either.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Ron Pittaway and Alan Wormington for their comments on an earlier draft, and Margaret Bain for helpful suggestions.

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## McCown's Longspur: New to Ontario

Peter A. Read

On 21 June 2005, Josh Shook and I flew in to remote Weagamow Lake, Kenora District, Ontario to undertake a week of bird observation for the Boreal Initiative and the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. After meeting with the First Nation Band Council and settling into our accommodations, and despite being tired after the long flight from Sioux Lookout, we decided to check out the community's sewage lagoon. Separately, we walked the gravel berms which surrounded the two lagoon ponds. The berms were sparsely covered with short, drought-resistant wild grasses. Josh flushed a small bird which drifted high over his head and landed behind him. It was sparrow-like, had white in the outer tail feathers, and he did not know what it was.

We met up at the far end of the lagoons and decided to go back to look for the mystery bird. Luckily, we were able to find it again but it quickly flushed. With binoculars, I thought I noted white "wedges" in the tail, which seemed unlike most of the species that I had been considering as possibilities, such as Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) and Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*). The bird's flight was somewhat undulating as it rose higher in the sky with its head slightly elevated, wheeled

back over us and then swooped down to the ground to skim along and then run through the short grass into the longer grass near the edge of the lagoon. I was convinced by its actions that it was not a sparrow. Fifteen minutes had now passed since we had first located the bird at 1700h, and rather than chase it further, I decided to return later with CD recordings to see if we could coax it into the open by playing songs and call notes of likely species.

We returned at 1900h and located the bird again. We tried playing vocalizations of several candidate species, and got no response. As the bird was a bit nervous, it kept to the taller grass on the inside bank of the berm. That made viewing impossible, so I walked along the thicker grass while Josh watched for the bird. I tried to move slowly enough that it would not fly off again, hoping that it might move into the shorter grass on top of the berm where we could get a good look. Finally, this happened and I had the bird in full view from less than 5 m distance. Although superficially the bird looked like some of our guesses, as soon as I saw the bill I knew it was entirely wrong for all of them. I got out my small digital camera and snapped a couple of pictures

(Figures 1 and 2), though I knew I could not get good shots. I made a rough sketch in my notebook also.

I left the bird and moved back to Josh, who was checking the sparrows in the Sibley (2000) guide. We dismissed all but the longspurs, which I confess I had not considered among the possibilities up to then. McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*) in non-breeding plumage, and probably a female given the date, was the best fit for the field marks we had noted and sketched. Not believing my eyes or notes, I crept back to within 5 m of the bird, and called out its features to Josh again. The field marks continued to support female McCown's. Neither of us had ever seen the species before, but I had observed the other longspurs previously, unlike Josh. We knew McCown's Longspur was rare, but did not realize that there were no accepted records for Ontario.

We had been observing the bird for about half an hour by then, and decided not to bother it further that day in the hope that it would remain in the area. Back at our lodgings, I called south to find out about the bird's Ontario status. Given its extreme rarity, we decided we would post the sighting on ONTBIRDS (the bird sightings listserv operated by OFO), if the Band Council gave permission for birders to visit the reserve. They agreed the next morning that if people contacted me first and stayed in our accommodations, then it was alright for them to fly in to see the bird. We

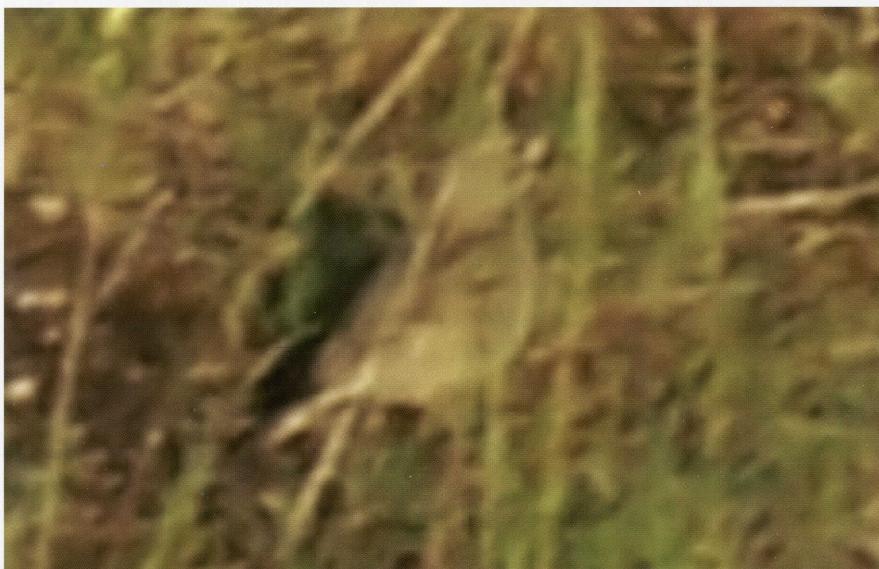
posted the report, but cautioned that we had to check to see if it was still present. I quickly raced back to the lagoons, but was not able to relocate the bird after a considerable search. I looked along the edge of the airport runway as well, where the habitat appeared much more suitable, but to no avail. On several subsequent days I searched for the longspur, but could not find it again. The oasis of dry grassland in a sea of boreal bog and water habitats must have been a beacon for the McCown's Longspur, but it may have stayed for only a short time.

### **Description**

The bird was pale, sparrow-like and seemed similar in size to a Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). The head showed a wide pale supercilium stretching back to the nape; a pale throat; a whitish malar stripe extending back and up to almost join the supercilium; a darker cheek patch and crown; and a plain gray, unstreaked nape. The large bill had a darker upper mandible and fleshy pink lower mandible. A whitish ring around the beady eye joined the supercilium. The breast and belly were unstreaked, pale beige-gray; and the flanks and chest were light tan and unstreaked. The back was darker beige-gray, with darker streaks; and there were fewer streaks near the rump. The wings were long, extending down to the middle of the tail, with darker primaries. There were no obvious wing



**Figure 1: Female McCown's Longspur at Weagamow Lake, Kenora District, Ontario on 21 June 2005. Photo by *Peter A. Read*.**



**Figure 2: Female McCown's Longspur (enlarged image) at Weagamow Lake, Kenora District, Ontario on 21 June 2005. Photo by *Peter A. Read*.**

bars, but there was a row of tiny bead-like reddish-brown “spots” on the median coverts in the shoulder area. When the bird was on the ground, the tail appeared very dark gray, with white wedges that were barely visible. However, when it flew, we could see that the centre of the tail exhibited an inverted dark gray-black T-shape pattern, surrounded by the white wedges. The legs were flesh-coloured. The call given in flight was a high pitched “chip-it” or “see-chip”.

### Discussion

The breeding range of McCown’s Longspur is restricted to short grass prairie of the northern Great Plains from southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan south to Montana, east Wyoming, north-east Colorado and northwestern Nebraska, with a few in extreme southwestern North Dakota and possibly in northwestern South Dakota (AOU 1998, Dunn and

Beadle 1998). Vagrant McCown’s Longspurs have been reported from southwestern Manitoba and the north shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota, and there was a well documented male at Whitefish Point, Michigan from 27 to 29 May 1981 (Dunn and Beadle 1998). Winter and early spring records exist for Missouri, Louisiana, and Mississippi (Dunn and Beadle 1998), and a female was at Bridgewater, Massachusetts from 9 to 26 January 1977 (Veit and Petersen 1993).

This occurrence of a female McCown’s Longspur at Weagamow Lake on 21 June 2005 was accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), and constitutes the first record for Ontario (Crins 2006).

### Acknowledgements

I thank Ron Tozer for assistance with the literature, and suggestions for revision of an earlier draft.

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## Notes

### Co-operative Flock Feeding by Waterbirds

David H. Elder

On 29 May 2005, I observed a large feeding flock of waterbirds moving along the shore of Windy Bay in the southeast corner of Lake of the Woods, Rainy River District, Ontario (Figure 1). The flock consisted of American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*). I have seen similar large feeding flocks in the same area in the past but this one was very close to the shore. I was surprised by the noise generated by the feeding birds—not vocal, but a steady dull roar created by the activities of the birds taking off, landing, swimming and diving as the flock slowly rolled

along the shore of Windy Bay in the southeast corner of Lake of the Woods, Rainy River District, Ontario (Figure 1). The flock consisted of American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*). I have seen similar large feeding flocks in the same area in the past but this one was very close to the shore. I was surprised by the noise generated by the feeding birds—not vocal, but a steady dull roar created by the activities of the birds taking off, landing, swimming and diving as the flock slowly rolled



**Figure 1: A mixed species feeding flock of American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Ring-billed Gulls and Common Terns on Lake of the Woods, Rainy River District, 29 May 2005. Photo by David H. Elder.**

forward. Pelicans and cormorants, finding themselves at the back of the flock, would take off, fly over the body of the flock, land at the front and immediately begin diving and feeding. In this manner, the entire flock moved rather quickly along the shore of the bay. The gulls and terns circled over the flock, dropping to the surface or diving into the water to catch small fish. The cormorants fished by diving and pursuing fish underwater. The pelicans fed by swimming forward, opening their huge bills and plunging them and their heads and necks down into the water. I saw several pelicans then lift their bills upward almost vertically and swallow something that was too small to make a bulge in their pouches but was likely a small fish.

As I watched the flock move along, two questions came to mind. Were the birds following a large school of small fish, the birds in front keeping track of its movements, or were the birds feeding on scattered small fish disturbed by all the activity generated by the flock as it moved along? The flock was likely formed when a few birds discovered some fish and started to feed. Their activities would catch the attention of other birds that would fly in to participate and in turn attract even more birds.

Certainly there appeared to be definite co-operation and co-ordination between the cormorants and the pelicans. The cormorants by diving and chasing fish underwater



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would cause some fish to flee upward where they could be reached by the pelicans plunging their bills, heads and necks into the water. The gulls and terns just took opportunistic advantage of all the activity to pick off frightened fish that came near the surface. The flock rolled along rather quickly and was a cohesive unit when it rounded a small point of land and could not be seen. The flock contained at least 500 birds, a rough estimate based on the number counted on the surface and an estimate of those underwater at any time.

### **Discussion**

Double-crested Cormorants (Bartholomew 1942, Palmer 1962,

Glanville 1992, Hatch and Weseloh 1999) and American White Pelicans (Palmer 1962, Evans and Knopf 1993) regularly exhibit co-ordinated and co-operative foraging flock behaviour. In addition, these cormorants and pelicans plus other birds have been reported in mixed species foraging flocks (Evans and Knopf 1993). American White

Pelicans are observed to commonly steal prey from neighbouring birds in multi-species flocks, especially from Double-crested Cormorants (Evans and Knopf 1993).

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I thank Ron Tozer for assistance with the literature and comments on an earlier draft.

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## Distinguished Ornithologist Award

The Distinguished Ornithologist Award is granted by the Ontario Field Ornithologists to individuals who have made outstanding and authoritative contributions to the scientific study of birds in Ontario and Canada, who have been a resource to OFO and the Ontario birding community, and whose research on birds has resulted in numerous publications and a significant increase in new ornithological knowledge. Recipients to date have been: Earl Godfrey (1997), Ross James (1998), Murray Speirs (2000), George Peck (2001), Bruce Falls (2002), Bob Curry (2003), Jim Rising (2004), and Ron Pittaway (2005). Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway and Ron Tozer form a committee responsible for proposing candidates for this award to the OFO Board of Directors.

## Hermit Thrush Preys on Snake

Seabrooke Leckie

This spring I was seasonally employed by the Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) to assist with migration monitoring on Pelee Island, Essex County, Ontario. During the regular capture program on 30 April 2006, I flushed a bird from the ground near the trail while en route to check the mist nets. The bird, a Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), flew across my path and into the net I was approaching. Upon reaching the net, I discovered that the thrush had been disturbed partway through a meal. Hanging from its mouth was approximately 8 cm of the tail of a small snake, apparently a DeKay's Brownsnake (*Storeria dekayi*). I removed the bird carefully from the net and placed it in a cloth bag to bring back for banding. All measurements were taken quickly and the bird released. Unfortunately, no photograph was obtained as I was initially concerned about letting the thrush return to ingesting its meal.

### Discussion

The DeKay's Brownsnake is one of the more common snake species on Pelee Island, as it is elsewhere in Ontario (Meleg and Tiessen 1996). It is the smallest snake species documented on the island either currently or historically, as the Red-bellied Snake (*S. occipitomaculata*)

does not occur there (Kamstra et al. 1995). Given the time of year, it is unlikely that the snake was the young of a larger species.

Jones and Donovan (1996) reported the Hermit Thrush diet to include insects, other small invertebrates, fruit, amphibians (frogs and salamanders), and reptiles (snakes). They cited a single reference (Robbins 1990) for snakes in an appendix summarizing animal and plant species consumed by the Hermit Thrush. That occurrence was in Florence County, Wisconsin, and involved an adult Hermit Thrush bringing a freshly-killed 8-inch (about 20 cm) Red-bellied Snake to a nest, and two nestlings attempting to swallow the snake, starting from opposite ends (Throne 1941). Although the frequency of vertebrate consumption by the Hermit Thrush is not discussed by Jones and Donovan (1996), the small number of reported instances suggests such events are very rarely observed.

American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) have been reported to take snakes, fish and shrews rarely, but only four references were listed for snakes by Sallabanks and James (1999) in *The Birds of North America*. Additionally, Dan Derbyshire (pers. comm.), coordinator of the Tommy Thompson Park

Bird Research Station on the Toronto waterfront, reported observing an American Robin capture and kill a DeKay's Brownsnake in the park during June 2005.

A review of other thrush species accounts in *The Birds of North America* indicated there are relatively few reports of them taking vertebrate prey. Shrews, salamanders, tree frogs and snakes have been noted as occasional foods of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*; Gowaty and Plissner 1998). The Veery (*C. fuscescens*) was stated to sometimes eat small frogs and salamanders, with only one source cited (Moskoff 1995), and the Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) was indicated to take some small salamanders occasionally (Roth et al. 1996). Vertebrate prey items were

not listed for Swainson's Thrush (*C. ustulatus*; Evans Mack and Yong 2000), Gray-cheeked Thrush (*C. minimus*; Lowther et al. 2001) or Bicknell's Thrush (*C. bicknelli*; Rimmer et al. 2001).

My conclusion is that while there is evidence that thrushes will take vertebrates occasionally, it is mostly limited to small amphibians such as salamanders. The occurrence of snakes in the diet of any thrush in eastern North America appears to be rare, especially for the smaller *Catharus* thrushes.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dan Derbyshire for the contribution of his observation, and Ron Tozer for suggestions on an earlier draft and assistance with the literature.

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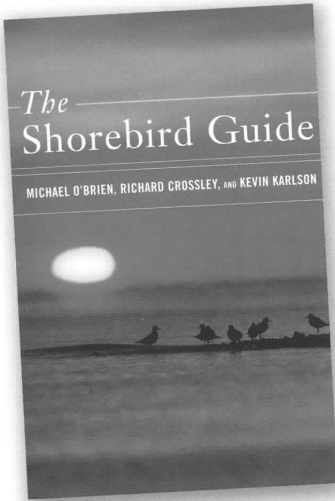
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## Book Review



**The Shorebird Guide.** 2006. By Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley and Kevin Karlson. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York. Vinyl Flexicover, 491 pages, 870 colour photographs, 15.5 x 23.5 cm. \$33.95 Canadian. ISBN 13: 978-0-618-43294-3.

**The Shorebird Guide** follows closely the publication in 2005 of a photographic guide to the *Shorebirds of North America* by Dennis Paulson. I reviewed Paulson's guide a year ago in the August 2005 issue of *Ontario Birds*. There is a third recent shorebird guide (illustrated with paintings) titled *Shorebirds of North America, Europe, and Asia* published in 2005 by Princeton University Press. If you were to buy only one of these specialty books, I recommend

*The Shorebird Guide* which is reviewed here. Get all three books if you love shorebirds as I do.

**The Shorebird Guide** covers all North American shorebirds including vagrants. The *Introduction* gives an excellent overview of shorebird families, how to identify shorebirds, topography using three photos, molt, plumage and aging. The guide is divided into two large main sections, the *Species Photos* and the *Species Accounts*, which are discussed in the next two paragraphs.

The *Species Photos* section is the core of the guide. It is a tremendous visual resource. The high quality of the colour photographs is outstanding and many stunning full page images are included. It first treats 48 Domestic Species of regular occurrence in North America in considerable detail (e.g., 17 photos on 5 pages for Western Sandpiper), showing juvenile, winter and breeding plumages including birds in molt, mixed species flocks, in flight and close-up shots, behaviors and habitats. The photo captions bulge with identification tips. The month and location for most photos are given in the caption. Dates are extremely useful in understanding appearance, plumage and molt. There are small but accurate range maps in colour. The second part of the *Species Photos* section treats 46 Rarities and Regional Specialties. The number of photos per species is fewer. There are

no range maps in this part, but range is described in the *Species Accounts*. Canadian content in the *Species Photos* section is represented by only two photographs: a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper in flight on page 172 by Brandon Holden of Ontario and a juvenile presumed hybrid White-rumped x Buff-breasted Sandpiper on page 314 by Bruce Mactavish of Newfoundland.

The *Species Accounts* (text) is the second main section. The accounts contain an exceptional amount of detailed and valuable information on the Status, Taxonomy (a better heading would be Sub-species), Behavior, Migration, Molt and Vocalizations. The heading Behavior is misleading because under it is considerable information normally not considered behavior, such as habitat.

Instead of identifying shorebirds primarily by plumage field marks, this guide focuses on their **General Impression of Size and Shape** or GISS, which is an old military term for recognizing aircraft. The acronym changed to JIZZ used by birders. Identifying birds by jizz is also known as the holistic or gestalt method. Two examples of jizz identifications are: a yellowlegs dashing around chasing small fish is almost certainly a Greater; and a dowitcher that looks like it “swallowed a grapefruit” is a Long-billed. The guide is full of such examples. As birders gain experience, they incorporate more jizz into their identifications. I support the jizz method because most of

my identifications use jizz. I caution identifying birds by jizz only. Particularly when documenting rarities, be certain to note diagnostic plumage characters and eliminate all similar species if you expect your reports to be accepted.

The guide has a number of “special features” making it challenging and fun to use, such as the following. There are 45 quiz questions in the captions of the *Species Photos* with answers in the Appendix. There are 27 full page shorebird photos with answers in the Appendix. There are photo pages of hybrid and aberrant shorebirds. There is a photo page comparing juvenile stints. There is a quiz of 27 shorebird silhouettes on the inside back cover and facing page, with the page number answer under each silhouette.

Here are some additional comments and discussion. The two subspecies of Solitary Sandpiper, eastern nominate *solitaria* and western *cinnamomea*, may be separate species. DNA barcode analysis suggests they were isolated several million years ago (*fide* Paul Hebert). Fresh juveniles of the two subspecies are easily told apart in the field. In eastern *solitaria* the upperparts are dotted with buffy white spots (which soon fade whitish) whereas *cinnamomea* has much brighter cinnamon spots. With this in mind, the guide only has a good photo of a juvenile *solitaria* whereas the juvenile *cinnamomea* is a small inset photo making it hard to see the difference.



This guide realistically states that the Eskimo Curlew is “presumed extinct”. It would be interesting to know the year of the last juvenile Eskimo Curlew specimen. A few years ago I inquired about the ages (adult or juvenile) of the last two Eskimo Curlew specimens. Both were taken in late summer, and if they were juveniles it would indicate breeding in the years they were collected. The second last specimen was taken at Battle Harbour, Labrador, on 29 August 1932. It is in the Canadian Museum of Nature, and is an adult. The last ever specimen was shot in the Barbados, West Indies, on 4 September 1963. It is in The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and is an adult too. Accepted sightings in Texas dating from 1945 to the 1960s never recorded more than two birds. The last photograph of an Eskimo Curlew (reproduced on page 268) was taken in March 1962 in Texas. I have often wondered if the bird in the 1962 Texas photo and the 1963 Barbados specimen are the same individual given that there were perhaps only three very old Eskimo Curlews still alive in 1963. There are no secret breeding grounds in Canada. Searches were done for many years in Mackenzie District (Northwest Territories) in summer and in Labrador for fall migrants. None were sighted. Since there have been no confirmed records in over 45 years, the Eskimo Curlew is extinct.

The *Glossary* consists of three pages. Some specialized terms used in the guide such as intergrade are not defined. The North American term “peep” and the European term “stint” are said to be analogous (similar but not synonymous) without explaining the difference. Peep was defined in Peterson’s classic 1947 edition under Least Sandpiper: “Collectively we call the small sparrow-sized Sandpipers ‘Peep’ (Least, Semipalmated, Western, Baird’s, and White-rump)”. The first three are stints, but not the slightly larger White-rumped and Baird’s Sandpipers. All stints are peeps, but not all peeps are stints.

The *Bibliography* is weak because it lists mainly books whose primary content is not shorebirds. Much of the scientific literature on shorebirds is not in the bibliography, such as Pitelka’s classic 1950 monograph on dowitchers. Also missing are significant shorebird articles in ABA’s *Birding* magazine and other major journals. Considering the many general bird books listed, I cannot understand the omission of *The Birds of Canada* by W. Earl Godfrey (1986).

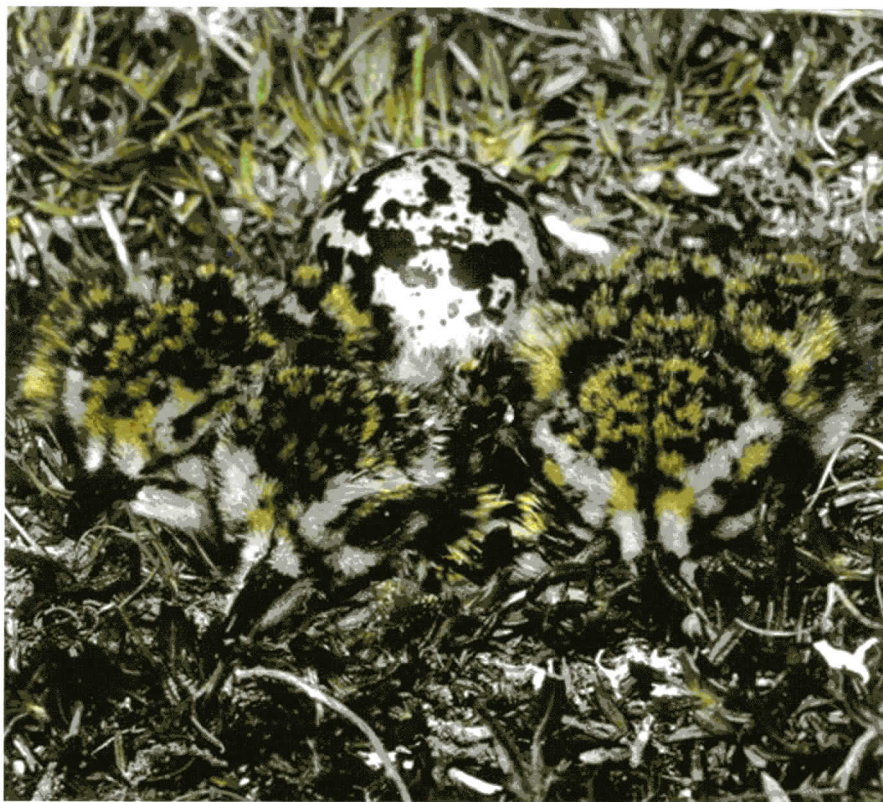
**The Shorebird Guide** has no equal. Study its splendid photos, and read the detailed captions and species accounts. Do the quizzes and memorize the silhouettes. The guide contains a huge amount of information not found in other shorebird books. It is highly recommended.

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## August 2006 Quiz

Glenn Coady

For this photo quiz, we have presented a much different type of challenge than usual. As a tribute to this summer's fiftieth field season for the Ontario Nest Record Scheme, we submit this nest photograph with an egg and recently-hatched nestlings for your consideration.

Although not likely to be carried in the field by many birders, there is a very good field guide for identifying North American nests, eggs, and nestlings. Many Ontario observers are likely still unfamiliar with *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds (Second Edition)* by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison (Academic Press, 1997). It contains a wealth of information on the topic of nests, with thorough descriptions, illustrations and identification keys for the nests, eggs, and nestlings of most North American breeding birds. Most well-described Ontario nests with eggs and/or young can likely be keyed out using this book without having to visit a major ornithological collection for suitable reference material.

Of course, in the field, in most situations where one can obtain good descriptions of nests, eggs and/or nestlings, that information becomes academic. Such opportunities will more often than not involve the presence of well-known, easily

identified adults providing agitated nest defence or distraction display, making identification of the nest and its contents decidedly routine. For the purposes of the quiz though, we will use the information in Baicich and Harrison to narrow our list of candidates.

The first thing we notice is that there is little or no constructed nest in this case and it is found on open ground not adjacent to any water. Baicich and Harrison's key to the nests suggests the only Ontario breeding birds likely associated with such a nest would be Peregrine Falcon, Willow Ptarmigan, Wild Turkey, most plovers, some sandpipers, Parasitic Jaeger, and the goat-suckers. Given the recent description of a ground-nesting Merlin in Ontario, we might also consider it a possibility based on the type of nest. Although gulls and terns tend to nest colonially and near water, a tight nest photo like this one might depict one of their nests, as well.

The one creamy-white egg in the nest is medium-sized based on comparison to the vegetation around the nest, and is mottled with very large black blotches. Peregrine Falcon and Merlin both have reddish eggs and can easily be ruled out. Wild Turkey eggs are much more finely spotted with brown or purple flecking. Parasitic Jaegers tend to have eggs

with a much more olive to olive-brown ground colour. The combination of this type of nest with a medium-sized white egg with heavy black blotches is thus only likely to belong to either a Willow Ptarmigan, larger plover, large sandpiper, gull, tern or goatsucker. We could reduce this list further if we were able to adequately describe the egg shape, but in this photo the egg shape is not easy to clearly ascertain.

The nestlings would best be described according to the Baicich and Harrison key as large, downy nestlings that are striped or mottled, with a long and slender bill. The long and slender bill would easily rule out Willow Ptarmigan (which generally also have more reddish eggs than this with finer blotches, although they can vary to creamy white) and any of the goatsuckers.

So we are dealing here with either a large plover, one of the larger sandpipers, a tern or gull (except Bonaparte's Gull, which is a tree nester). Note that the nestlings in the photo have fairly long and slender bills that are uniformly black from the base to the tip. At this age, all of the nestlings of the larger breeding gull species in Ontario (Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull) have shorter, black bills with contrasting white tips. Little Gull nestlings have a pinkish-based bill with a dusky tip. The nestlings of all the breeding species of tern in Ontario (Caspian, Common, Arctic,

Forster's, and Black) show pinkish or reddish-based bills with contrasting dark tips at this age.

The most striking thing about these nestlings is how extensively yellow-gold they are and how heavily mottled with black. Among the Ontario breeding species of shorebirds, only the plovers routinely construct little or no nest beyond a simple, mostly unlined scrape. Among the Ontario breeding plovers (American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, and Killdeer) only the American Golden-Plover has so yellow-gold a nestling that is so heavily mottled with black. This **American Golden-Plover** nest was photographed in Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island, Nunavut, on 11 July 1996 by Jim Richards.

This is quite a fitting species to choose as a tribute to the Ontario Nest Record Scheme. Although breeding evidence for American Golden-Plover in the Cape Henrietta Maria area was obtained as early as 1948, the first nest was found on 23 June 1970 near radar site 415 by none other than Ontario Nest Record Scheme coordinator George Peck.

I am sure all OFO members wish to join me in thanking George for his life-long commitment to the success of the Ontario Nest Record Scheme, one of the finest nest databases to be found anywhere in the world. May the next fifty years be equally as successful.

# Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It formed in 1982 to unify the ever-growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC); publishes a newsletter (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*); operates a bird sightings listserv (ONT-BIRDS), coordinated by Mark Cranford; hosts field trips throughout Ontario; and holds an Annual Convention and Banquet in the autumn. Current information on all of its activities is on the OFO website ([www.ofo.ca](http://www.ofo.ca)), coordinated by Carol Horner. Comments or questions can be directed to OFO by e-mail ([of@of.o.ca](mailto:of@of.o.ca)).

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

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

Submit material for publication by computer disk (CD or Floppy), or e-mail attachment ([rtozer@vianet.on.ca](mailto:rtozer@vianet.on.ca)). Mail items for publication to the Editors at the OFO address noted above. Please follow the style of this issue of *Ontario Birds*. All submissions are subject to review and editing.