



OFO NEWS

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Birding Guide To Carden Alvar

Ron Pittaway

Introduction: This guide features a 35 km (21 mile) car birding tour including route descriptions, a detailed map, additional birding areas and annotated bird list. The tour leads through scenic back roads where the birds, wildflowers, butterflies, dragonflies, herptiles, mammals and night sounds will bring you back again and again. The alvar or plain is named after Carden Township in northern Victoria County. The alvar lies just east of Lake Simcoe and borders the southern edge of the Canadian Shield.

Important Bird Area: The Carden Plain or Alvar is designated as an *Important Bird Area* (IBA) by Birdlife International. Carden is an IBA because it is nationally significant as one of the last strongholds of the eastern Loggerhead Shrike and because it has high populations of grassland birds, a declining group in much of Canada.

Alvars: Alvars are globally rare habitats supporting many threatened and endangered species. They are harsh places for many plants to grow. Alvars are naturally open areas of flat limestone bedrock either at the surface (pavement) or covered with thin soils and a sparse vegetation of lichens, mosses, herbs and shrubs. Trees are absent or scattered, never forming a closed canopy. Vegetation is restricted by shallow soils and extremes of spring wetness and summer drought. The ecological role of fire on alvars is poorly understood. Many grassland birds may benefit from periodic fires. Much of the Carden Alvar is ranchland. Cattle grazing enhances and maintains the open habitats preferred by Loggerhead Shrikes and many grassland birds. However, heavy grazing threatens some sensitive alvar plants. There are several quarries in Carden and others are expected soon because of increasing demands for mineral aggregates.

Birding Season: The *breeding birds* are best seen in June, but anytime between mid-May and mid-July is productive. Weather is cool to warm in May, mild to hot in June and usually hot in July. *Poison Ivy* is abundant along roadsides. Learn its three distinctive leaflets and avoid it. *Insects* are rarely a problem, but bring repellent just in case. Black flies are present in small numbers from mid-May to early June. They may be a nuisance on humid days, especially just before sunset. Black flies are not active at night! Mosquitoes are not a problem in open areas during the day. They are active near wetlands just after sunset.

Back Roads: The back roads are narrow, but traffic is usually light. Be careful not to block roads or laneways. There are some good spots to pull off, but check them on foot first. In spring and after heavy rains, some roads develop mud holes and washouts. Drive slowly, find a safe place to park, then bird from the roadside.

Birding Ethics: Most of Carden is private property. Be friendly



Carden Alvar with a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes in a hawthorn and Upland Sandpiper on a post by *Christine Kerrigan*

to ranchers and others using the back roads. *Do not trespass.* Birds are easily seen from roadsides without harming them. Always act in the best interest of birds and their habitats. There is a concern that endangered species, such as the Loggerhead Shrike, could be disturbed by birders and photographers. Ontario's *Endangered Species Act* prohibits (1) the killing, injuring or interfering with endangered species and (2) the interference with or destruction of the habitat of endangered species. The penalty is a fine up to \$50,000 or imprisonment up to two years or to both. Report anyone disturbing endangered species to the Ministry of Natural Resources at 705-286-1521.

Ecotourism: Support local businesses. Birders contribute to the economy by buying gas, eating at restaurants and using accommodations. Proudly wear your binoculars everywhere you go. Tell people about grassland birds and that the Carden Alvar is internationally recognized as an *Important Bird Area*.

Accommodation, Food & Fuel: The Sir William Mackenzie Inn, a bed and breakfast in Kirkfield, welcomes birders. Birding is excellent on the trails of this 5.3 ha (13 acre) estate. Call toll free 800-266-6025 or phone/fax 705-438-1278 or web site www.bbcanada.com/13.html. Motels are in Beaverton and Orillia. Camping is available at Balsam Lake Provincial Park, 12.0 km east of Kirkfield on County Road 48. Call toll free 888-668-7275 to reserve a campsite in a provincial park. Restaurants are in Kirkfield, the Lift Lock and Lake Dalrymple Resort. Gas stations are along CR 48 just east and west of Kirkfield.

Birding Tour

Getting to Carden: The Carden Alvar is a 1½ hour drive (125 km or 75 mi) northeast of Toronto. See small inset map at top left of map on page 3. From Toronto, take Highway 401 or Don Valley Parkway to Highway 404 north. At the end of 404, turn right (east) on Davis Drive to Highway 48. Turn left (north) on 48 and continue to where it meets Highway 12. Go left on Highway 12/48 about 12.5 km to County Road 48. Follow CR 48 right (east) 19.0 km to Kirkfield. At main intersection, turn left (north) on CR 6, go 3.0 km to the Lift Lock.

Tour Overview: The 35.0 km route begins at the Lift Lock and ends at County Road 48 about 5.5 km west of Kirkfield. The 6 stops are enclosed in circles on the map and distances between stops are given in the route descriptions. At Stop 1 set odometer to zero. Distances between stops are cumulative. Relax and go slowly. Bring a lunch and get set to experience an abundance of Ontario's grassland birds. Refer often to annotated list of birds on pages 4 and 5. Scan with binoculars the tops of shrubs, tufts of grass, boulders, dead trees and fences for singing birds. Then use your telescope to get great views grassland birds.

1. Kirkfield Lift Lock: *km 0.0.* The Trent-Severn Waterway, operated by Parks Canada, connects Lake Ontario and Lake Huron. The hydraulic Lift Lock is the second largest in the world. There is a pay parking lot on the left just after the underpass. The facilities include washrooms, picnic area and nearby restaurant. If you return later for a picnic lunch at the Lift Lock, the birding is excellent. Take the stairs to the top of the Lift Lock. Scan for hawks, Osprey and Turkey Vulture. Check the swallows for Cliff and Northern Rough-winged. Also bird the narrow trail going west 0.4 km along the north edge of the canal to where it meets the Talbot River. Be careful along the edge of the canal. Return by going up the bank and birding the meadow and shrubbery back to the Lift Lock. You cannot get lost here being surrounded by the Talbot River, canal and road. This is public land owned by the federal government.

2. Wylie Road: *km 2.6.* From the Lift Lock, drive 2.5 km north, turn right (east) on McNamee Road where County Road 6 turns sharply to the left. Then turn left (north) almost immediately on Wylie Road (first road) and park on the shoulder. Wylie Road ends 9.4 km to the north at a "T" intersection (Stop 4). You will soon discover why this is the best early summer birding road in southern Ontario. Watch for Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird, Horned Lark, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Meadowlark and many more species. Drive slowly, stopping frequently to enjoy the multitude of birds. In the large meadow just north of the house on the left, listen and look for Grasshopper Sparrow. Watch for Loggerhead Shrike between 0.4 and 0.8 km north of the house.

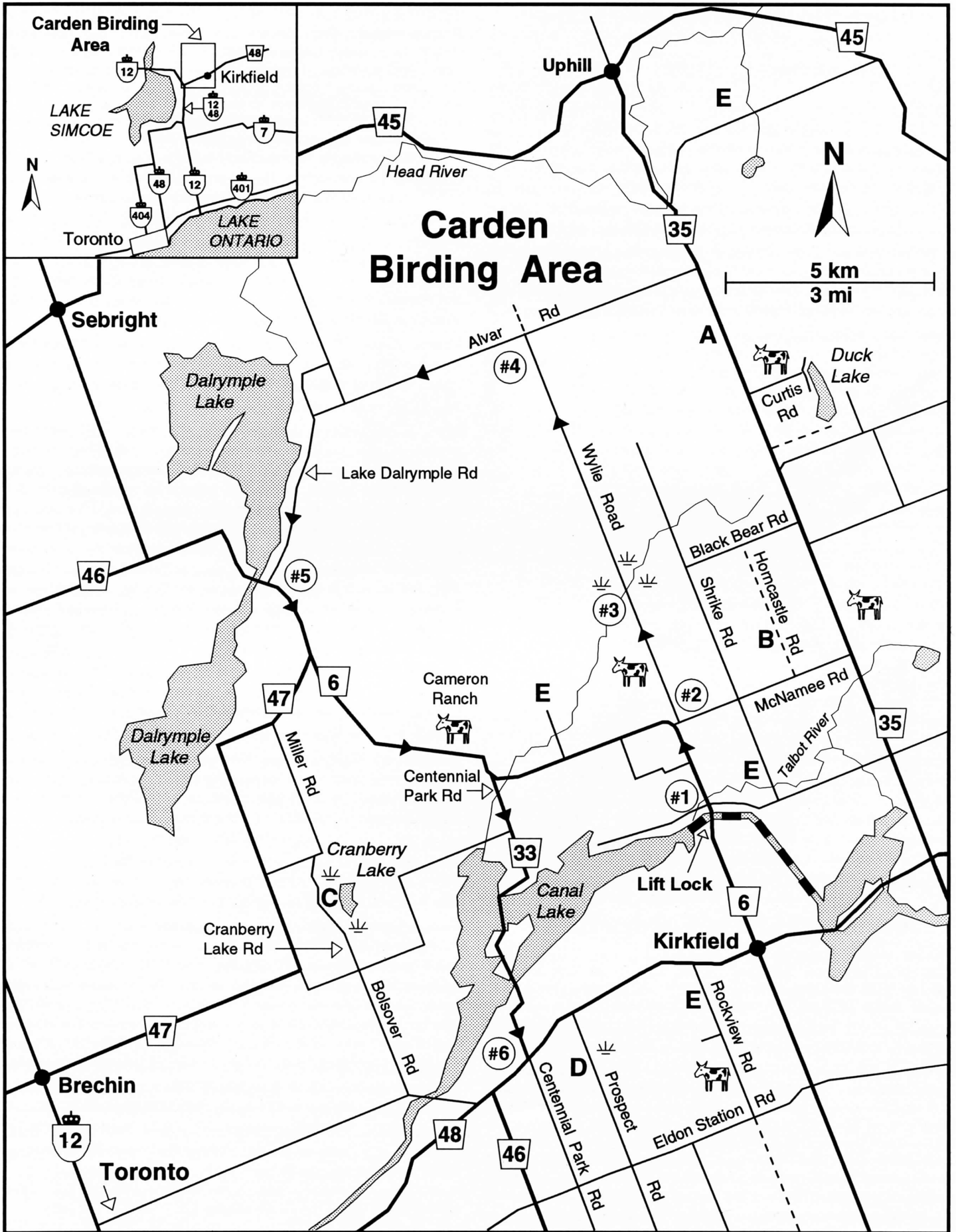
3. Sedge Wren Marsh: *km 5.4.* There is a small parking area on the left just before the marsh or park only one car well to the side on the bridge to allow others to pass. This intriguing wetland is the most reliable location to find Sedge Wren. Walk the road on both sides of bridge. Listen and watch for Alder Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat and Swamp Sparrow. Trees and shrubs on both sides of the marsh along the road provide excellent birding. At dawn and dusk, the marsh is a good spot to hear and see Common Snipe, American Bittern, Common Nighthawk and Whip-poor-will (heard). You may hear Virginia Rail and Sora. Yellow Rail is heard here in mid-May, but not every year.

4. To Carden "T": *km 12.0.* It is 6.6 km from Sedge Wren Marsh to the Alvar Road or Carden "T". This section goes through dry and wet meadows and scrub forests rich in songbirds. Drive slowly and stop several times. Golden-winged Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee and Field Sparrow are in the scrubby areas with scattered trees. Listen for Clay-colored Sparrow about 0.5 km before the "T". Watch for patches of Prairie Smoke, a characteristic alvar wildflower. At night, drive and watch for the bright eye shine of Common Nighthawk and Whip-poor-will sitting on the road. Listen for Coyotes.

5. "T" to County Road 6: *km 21.0.* Turn left (west) at the "T" onto Alvar Road towards Lake Dalrymple. It is 4.7 km to the next left turn at the Dalrymple Road. This section goes through a coniferous forest with several small alvar openings. Singing Hermit Thrush, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Purple Finch and sometimes Evening Grosbeak lend a distinct northern flavour. Turn left at the intersection with the Dalrymple Road and soon you will enter a cottage area on the east shore of Lake Dalrymple. There is a resort store here if you need a drink, snack, washroom break or gasoline. South of the store 1.3 km, you can get a good view of the lake opposite a rock cut on the left. Check for Black Terns and other water birds. Continue to the junction with County Road 6, where there may be Purple Martins at the house on the left.

6. To County Road 48: *km 35.0.* Turn left onto County Road 6. The store on the left (0.5 km) has refreshments and washrooms at the side. Go 5.0 km to the large open alvar on your left. This is the Cameron Ranch. Scan the ranch for grassland birds including Loggerhead Shrike. Continue 2.0 km and turn right on Centennial Park Road (County Road 33) which leads to the causeway across Canal Lake. There is an Osprey's nest on the hydro pole at the middle of the causeway. Watch for Common Loons and Common Terns. Continue 3.5 km to County Road 48, where the tour ends. Turn right for Toronto or left for Kirkfield.

Turn page for **More Birding Areas and Annotated List of Carden Birds.**



More Birding Areas (See Map)

For locations see bolded letters A to E on map

A. County Road 35: Instead of going left (west) on Alvar Road at Stop 4, go right (east) to County Road 35. Be careful turning right (south) at this blind intersection. CR 35 is paved and traffic is usually light. Bird your way to CR 48. Turn right and go 4.5 km to Kirkfield.

B. Horncastle Road: Most grassland birds, including Loggerhead Shrike, are possible here. Allow 2 hours for *walking tour* of 4.0 km return trip. Do not drive road without a 4-wheel drive.

C. Cranberry Lake: Birding is excellent along the very narrow 3.0 km road on the west side of Cranberry Lake. Black Tern breeds here.

D. Prospect Road: Eldon Township has excellent birding. Prospect Road (Concession 5) goes south from CR 48 about 4.0 km west of Kirkfield. It is 11.0 km to CR 8 through scrub, woodlots, meadows, marshes and swamps. Of interest is the large marsh 2.5 km south of 48.

E. Exploring: Look on map for letter E to explore other roads.



Loggerhead Shrikes & impaled grasshopper in hawthorn by Christine Kerrigan

Annotated List of Carden Birds

This list covers the breeding season from *mid-May to mid-July* after the main spring migration. Abundance status is given for each species. Specialty birds are shown in *italics* and they have extra information on habitat, voice and finding tips. Accidentals are not included.

Loons, Grebes & Cormorants: Common Loon is uncommon. Pied-billed Grebe is rare. Double-crested Cormorant is uncommon but increasing.

Hérons & Bitterns: *American Bittern* is fairly common but secretive. Stop 3 is the best spot. Most often seen in flight. Listen for its deep bass *pump-er-lunk* at dawn and dusk or on cloudy days. Scan short grass areas in the direction of its song for a bittern's bill & head pointing up. *Least Bittern* is very rare and secretive in large cattail marshes. Sings a low cuckoo-like *coo-coo-coo-coo* at dawn and dusk. Best spots are Cranberry Lake and Prospect Road marsh. Great Blue Heron is fairly common. Green Heron is rare in swamps with dead trees.

Ducks & Geese: Canada Goose, Mallard and Blue-winged Teal are fairly common. Wood Duck (uncommon) and Hooded Merganser

(rare) are secretive in summer. Other ducks are occasional in summer.

Diurnal Raptors: The following 5 species are fairly common, usually seen in open areas: Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk & American Kestrel. The next 5 raptors are secretive, usually staying in the forest or seen flying across openings to another woods. All soar in the open at times: Red-shouldered Hawk (rare), Broad-winged Hawk (uncommon), Sharp-shinned Hawk (uncommon), Cooper's Hawk (uncommon), Northern Goshawk (rare). Watch for Merlin; it is increasing and spreading southward as a breeder.

Grouse & Turkeys: Ruffed Grouse is uncommon. It drums at dusk and early morning to early June. Wild Turkey is rare but increasing.

Rails: *Yellow Rail* is rare migrant in May and occasionally may breed. It prefers short grass/sedge marshes with shallow water. Listen for rapid clicking *tic-tic, tic-tic-tic* at dawn & dusk, all night, sometimes on cloudy days. Stop 3 is the best spot, but also heard at Cranberry Lake and Prospect Road marsh. Virginia Rail is common. Sora is uncommon. Common Moorhen and American Coot are very rare.

Cranes: *Sandhill Crane* is rare but increasing. Listen and watch for it at Sedge Wren Marsh (Stop 3) and Cranberry Lake. Its far carrying vibrant *gar-oo-ooo* call is usually heard before the crane is seen.

Plovers: Killdeer is a fairly common breeder.

Sandpipers: 1. *Upland Sandpiper* is fairly common in dry short grass fields. Listen for its curlew-like song and calls. Often perches on fence posts. Its shallow quavering wing beats suggest a Spotted Sandpiper. 2. *Common Snipe* is fairly common in marshes & wet meadows. Often perches on posts. Listen for its hollow *ho-ho-ho-ho-ho* made by outer tail feathers as it dives through the air. Becomes elusive after mid-June. 3. *American Woodcock* is fairly common but rarely seen. Ground call at dusk and dawn is a nasal nighthawk-like *peent*, given every few seconds in open areas near woods. Displays up to early June. 4. Spotted Sandpiper is fairly common breeder. 5. From late April to early June, a few migrant shorebirds are seen in wet areas: Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper & Least Sandpiper are regular.

Gulls & Terns: Ring-billed Gull is fairly common. Herring Gull is uncommon. Common Tern breeds at Canal Lake. Black Tern breeds at Cranberry Lake & marshy narrows of Lake Dalrymple.

Pigeons & Doves: Rock Dove is uncommon. Mourning Dove is common.

Cuckoos: *Black-billed Cuckoo* is uncommon and secretive in thickets with scattered trees. Arrives in late May and increases during outbreaks of Tent Caterpillars. More often heard, but sometimes seen flying low across openings. *Yellow-billed Cuckoo* is rare in similar habitat.

Owls: Great Horned Owl is heard year round. Barred Owl is rare. Short-eared Owl is seen rarely at dusk and dawn hunting over meadows. Long-eared Owl is heard occasionally. Northern Saw-whet Owl calls from mid-February to May. Eastern Screech-Owl is very rare.

Goatsuckers: *Common Nighthawk* is common & conspicuous at dusk (often day active) after mid-May in open areas. Call is a nasal *bizert* and it performs spectacular booming nose dives. Woodcock's call is mistaken for a nighthawk, but it comes from the ground whereas nighthawk calls in flight. A nighthawk heard before mid-May is probably a woodcock. *Whip-poor-will* is common in young woodlands with openings. Begins loud song at dusk. At night, watch for the bright reflective eye shine of both Whip-poor-will and nighthawk sitting on back roads.

Swifts, Hummingbirds & Kingfishers: Chimney Swift is rare. Ruby-throated Hummingbird is fairly common. Belted Kingfisher is uncommon.

Woodpeckers: *Red-headed Woodpecker* is a rare and declining breeder in open areas with scattered large dead trees used for nesting. Other woodpeckers, except Northern Flicker, are hard to find in summer. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy, Hairy and Pileated (most often seen in flight) Woodpeckers are regular. Listen for taps and calls.

Flycatchers: 1. *Alder Flycatcher* is fairly common in wet alder thick-

ets. Song is raspy *wee-bee-o* often given from a dead branch. 2. *Willow Flycatcher* is uncommon but increasing in willows, dogwoods and shrubs, preferring drier sites than Alder. Learn its *fitz-bew* song. 3 Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird are common. Learn their songs.

Shrikes: *Loggerhead Shrike* is an endangered species. In recent years, there have been about five breeding pairs plus a few unmated birds. Look for shrikes in actively grazed pastures with short grass and scattered clumps of hawthorns, for example, in areas where the cow symbols are on the map. Ungrazed areas quickly become unsuitable breeding habitat because they overgrow with tall grasses, shrubs and trees.

Vireos: Listen for their distinctive songs, but they are hard to see. Warbling Vireo (tall open deciduous trees) and Red-eyed Vireo (deciduous woods) are common. Yellow-throated Vireo is very rare in mature oak/maple woods. Blue-headed Vireo is rare in dry mature coniferous woods.

Crows & Jays: *Common Raven* is uncommon but increasing & spreading south. Listen for adult's distinctive *croak* or high pitched calls of young. American Crow & Blue Jay are fairly common.

Larks: *Horned Lark* is uncommon in open areas of short grass & bare ground associated with heavy cattle grazing. Sometimes sings from rocks & fence posts. *Caution:* Juvenile Horned Larks are mistaken for pipits or longspurs, but these species do not summer in southern Ontario.

Swallows: Tree and Barn Swallows are common. Northern Rough-winged & Cliff Swallows are uncommon. Purple Martin & Bank Swallow are rare.

Chickadees, Nuthatches & Creepers: Black-capped Chickadee is fairly common. Red-breasted (conifers) & White-breasted (hardwoods) Nuthatches are uncommon. Brown Creeper (wet woods) is uncommon. All hard to find in summer.

Wrens: Learn distinctive songs. 1. *Sedge Wren* is uncommon in sedge/grass marshes with scattered shrubs, not in cattails. Learn *tip-tip-tip tititititititititi* song. Sings partly hidden in tuft of grass or in a low bush, sometimes in the open! 2. *Marsh Wren* is uncommon in cattail marshes, not in sedge/grass marshes. Sings its distinctive *rattling song* all day & on bright nights. Best spots are Cranberry Lake and marsh along Prospect Road. 3. House Wren is common. 4. Winter Wren is rare in wet woods.

Kinglets: Golden-crowned Kinglet is rare and hard to see in tall dense spruce. Listen for its high pitched calls and song.

Thrushes: *Eastern Bluebird* is common at nest boxes along back roads. American Robin is common. The following are secretive & usually heard only: Hermit Thrush (open coniferous) is fairly common. Veery (moist deciduous) & Wood Thrush (deciduous) are uncommon.

Mockingbirds & Thrashers: 1. *Brown Thrasher* is fairly common in dry thickets near young woods. Secretive. Sings from a high perch. 2. Gray Catbird is uncommon, preferring moister habitats. Sings from a low to medium height perch. 3. Northern Mockingbird is very rare.

European Starling: Common and widespread breeder.

Waxwings: Cedar Waxwing is fairly common after late May.

Warblers: Study songs & habitats. 1. *Golden-winged Warbler* is uncommon in moist alder thickets & young aspens on drier sites. Listen for its buzzy *bee bz bz bz* song, first note loudest. Singing male perched

at a distance looks like a chickadee! Blue-winged Warbler & hybrid Brewster's Warbler are very rare. 2. Alvar Road is best spot for many of the following regular species. Learn their songs: Nashville Warbler (young open woods), Yellow Warbler (aspen/alder/willow near water), Chestnut-sided Warbler (shrubby woodland edges), Magnolia Warbler (small spruce/fir), Black-throated Blue Warbler (understory shrubs of deciduous & mixed woods), Yellow-rumped Warbler (mixed woods), Black-throated Green Warbler (tall evergreens), Blackburnian Warbler (tall evergreens), Black-and white Warbler (moist deciduous & mixed woods), American Redstart (woodland edges), Ovenbird (dry closed canopy deciduous woods), Northern Waterthrush (wooded swamps), Mourning Warbler (low bushy openings), Common Yellowthroat (swamps/marshes with bushes) & Canada Warbler (moist mixed woods).

Tanagers: Scarlet Tanager is uncommon in mature mixed woods. Heard, but hard to spot.

Sparrows: 1. *Eastern Towhee* is fairly common but secretive in dry, partly open scrublands with tangled undergrowth & scattered young trees. Sometimes sings from a high dead limb. Heard calling *chewink* from tangles. Responds to pishing & squeaking. 2. *Clay-colored Sparrow* is uncommon in dry open scrubby fields, usually with scattered small conifers. Also found in Christmas tree plantations in Eldon Township. Listen for its buzzy song. 3. *Field Sparrow* is fairly common in dry open scrub. Learn its song. 4. *Vesper Sparrow* is fairly common in very short dry grass pastures with some bare ground. Other sparrows prefer taller grass. 5. *Grasshopper Sparrow* is fairly common but secretive in dry grass meadows with scattered perches. Sings from a low bush, rock or fence. 6. *Henslow's Sparrow* is an endangered species. Overly reported from Carden. Fairly common in southern Ontario in 1960s, but it has declined to a few sightings in recent years, mostly spring migrants at Point Pelee. Its disappearance is a mystery as suitable habitat remains. Prefers taller grass fields, often moister than Grasshopper Sparrow. Secretive, rarely seen unless singing from a low bush or tussock of grass at dawn & dusk. Sings at night too. Be sure to hear its distinctive insect-like *tes-lick* song, second syllable louder. Note its greenish face and reddish wings.

7. Other sparrows: Chipping, Savannah, Song & Swamp Sparrows are common. White-throated Sparrow is uncommon.

Cardinals & Allies: Northern Cardinal is rare. Rose-breasted Grosbeak is fairly common. Indigo Bunting is uncommon in tangles, openings and tall trees, often singing from a high dead branch.

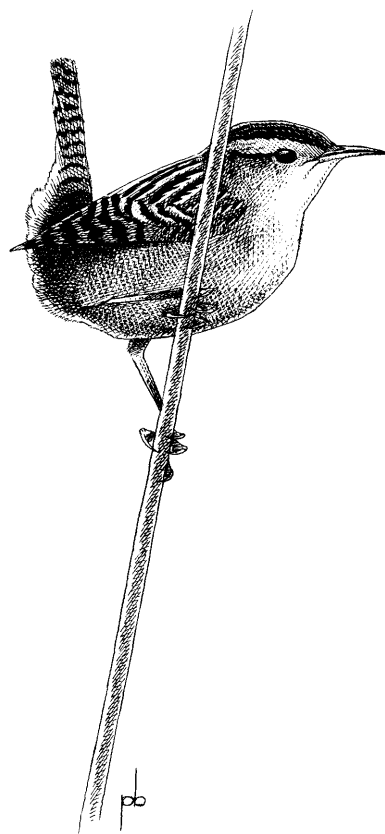
Blackbirds: *Brewer's Blackbird* is rare around cattle and grazed areas. It likes fences and road shoulders. Other blackbirds: Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird & Baltimore Oriole are common. Eastern Meadowlark is common. *Western Meadowlark* is very rare and declining.

Finches: Purple Finch & House Finch are uncommon. American Goldfinch is common. Evening Grosbeak is rare and irregular.

House Sparrow: Rare and declining around farms and villages.

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Sedge Wren by Peter Burke

Field Sketching

Ian Shanahan

When the shores of Presqu'ile Provincial Park's Owen Point are filled with various shorebirds, my sketch book is my favourite companion. All through the summer and fall when I bird at Presqu'ile, my sketching pencil is almost in constant motion. I never miss a chance to draw an interesting bird while I stand and watch hordes of shorebirds busily feeding before my eyes.

This past year, I have learned a lot about birds' feathers, shapes, characteristics and much more. It all began in August of 1998, when I was hit with the shorebird sketching bug. My first drawings were mostly rough profile outlines lacking much detail and completely ignoring different feather tracts. Now I have learned to show many different poses, and to include feather tracts and patterns. Details such as primary tip projection, and bill length, which I had previously disregarded, are now important to me. What I usually try to accomplish is to look for diagnostic features and characteristics that I have seen in the past, then search for new ones.

As I said, most of my drawings are done at Owen Point. On warm August days, the algae-filled shores are usually packed with small and large shorebirds running around searching for food. When sketching in the field, you can re-create the feeling you have when seeing the bird or the details you see. Another advantage of field sketching is that you may find a detail on a bird that some field guides do not show. Variations are very common in juvenile shorebirds, so sketching is most important. At times, I have seen a juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper that is very similar to a Western Sandpiper. By sketching, I remember field marks that will help me for future identifications.

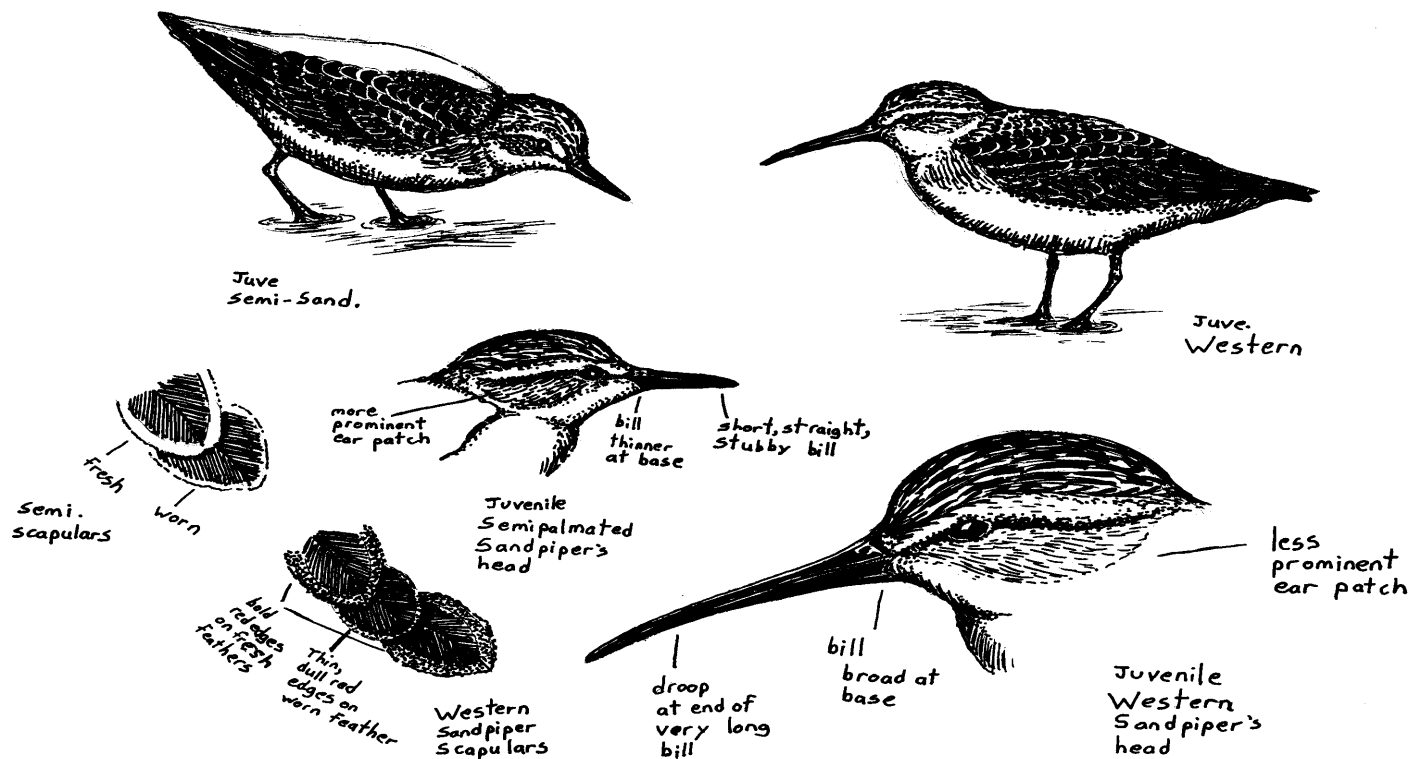
For this article, I have done a pen and ink sketch comparing juvenile Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers. I have drawn this to re-create what my sketch book would look like. Note the different parts of the birds that I have emphasized, as well as arrows and identification notes. The Western I saw, right beside a Semipalmated, was on 1 October 1999, so most of the red edges on its scapulars had molted or worn off. For each bird I have drawn individual feathers showing fresh and worn ones. I also have the head of each bird in a larger proportion. The Western Sandpiper clearly has a much longer bill, with a slight droop at the end. The bill also is broader at the base, and the cheek patch of the Western is less prominent than that of the Semipalmated. Though it may not be clear in my drawings, the Western Sandpiper is slightly larger than the Semipalmated Sandpiper.

Sometimes, I am unfortunately drawn away from a sketching site while my drawing is not quite complete. To overcome this, I have learned to file away the features of a bird in my memory, so the sketch can be completed at home.

I strongly encourage birders of all ages to sketch birds, especially when you see a feature you have never seen before. Even if your sketch is a primitive stick bird, it may help you later. I try to improve by sketching almost every time I bird. You see something new each time and knowledge starts to build up. It is much easier remembering what you see and draw, rather than depending only on what the field guides show.

For birders beginning to sketch, I have a few suggestions.

1. Don't get frustrated if a sketch is not turning out the way you



A page from Ian Shanahan's 1999 sketch book

want. Some birds just won't allow you to sketch them.

2. Try to develop a loose fluent hand. Having stiff hands is very inconvenient when trying to catch a pose.
3. Always make notes about things you notice. The weather, the feeding habits, the lighting and feather patterns are all good note criteria.
4. Just enjoy sketching and have fun. Some days will be better than others, but it always should be enjoyable.

In the future, I hope to be a wildlife artist and/or an ornithologist. Hopefully my sketching will pay-off once I begin a career involving bird art. My knowledge of birds will improve and my identification skills should as well. The more you know about birds, the more you will see and appreciate them.

To sum up, whenever you are birding, remember that a sketch pad is helpful and it is very useful for identification. The first few drawing will not be masterpieces, but if you are patient and draw often enough, you will develop a routine of automatically pulling out the pad to produce useful sketches. Good luck and I hope to see you in the field soon!

Ian Shanahan is a 14 year old grade 9 student who lives in Brighton. His keen interest in birds developed over the past two years while birding at Presqu'ile Provincial Park.

Birding Tip

Winnie Yung

What do you do when Gull Island at Presqu'ile Provincial Park beckons you and the temptation to cross the water is irresistible? You are still sane enough not to rush out and buy a pair of hip waders just for occasional use. Yet the island is full of birds and fun! Well, here is a proven method developed in the early 1980s by veteran birder Doug McRae. Just put each foot into a sturdy plastic garbage bag and tie it at the thigh. Hold up the bags with one hand and carefully wade across the water. Once across, take off the bags and hide them in the bushes ready for the return trip. Alternatively, you can wade across in a pair of old running shoes, then change into a dry pair of shoes later. Now I keep some plastic garbage bags in my car. They could be useful anytime and anywhere!

Note: Gull Island is only accessible from 11 September to 9 March because of breeding birds at other times of year, and on non-hunting days (Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday) from late September to late December.

Taverner Cup Birding Competition

Saturday 27 May 2000

Sponsored by The Ottawa Field-Naturalists

Last year eighteen teams participated. The winner was Bruce Di Labio and his *Bushnell Nighthawks* team which recorded 183 species. Bruce and others think that under the right conditions they can get 200 species in a day. Why not enter and discover for yourself just how good the birding is!

Contact: Jeff Harrison 150 Wolseley Ave N, Montreal West, QC H4X 1V9 Tel: 514-486-4943 E-mail: dha@videotron.ca

official website: www.web-nat.com/taverner/

New Falconry Laws

Ron Pittaway

Falconry has been practised in Ontario for over a century. Ontario has about 200 falconers. The provincial government, not the federal government, has jurisdiction over eagles, hawks, falcons, owls and other raptors.

Falconry was essentially unregulated under the outdated Game and Fish Act. On 1 January 1999, Ontario's new Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA) became law, replacing the old Game and Fish Act. The new FWCA is very specific with respect to falconry and the possession of birds of prey. The keeping of wildlife in captivity is generally prohibited under the FWCA, but the use of birds of prey for falconry is an exception.

The FWCA establishes two categories of birds that may be used for hunting: (1) 16 native species and (2) 12 non-native species. The Act also specifies licences for falconry. To hunt game animals regulated by the province, such as rabbits and grouse, falconers require both a falconry licence and a provincial Small Game Hunting Licence. They also must follow the seasons and bag limits. To hunt game birds regulated by the federal government such as ducks, falconers require the two aforementioned provincial licences, plus a federal Migratory Bird Permit.

The FWCA lists 16 species of indigenous falconry birds needing a falconry licence: Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcon, Great Horned Owl, Northern Hawk Owl and Snowy Owl.

The Act also lists 12 non-indigenous falconry birds that *do not need* a falconry licence: Tawny Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, European Sparrow Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, European Kestrel, Saker Falcon, Laggar Falcon, Lanner Falcon and Prairie Falcon. However, the above 12 species may be used for hunting. A provincial Small Game Licence is required to hunt game animals regulated by the province. To hunt game birds regulated by the federal Migratory Bird Convention Act, a falconer requires a Migratory Bird Permit in addition to the provincial licence. Other exotic raptors may be possessed in Ontario, but they must be banded and not used for hunting.

All falconry birds must be banded and falconers must keep a log book and submit annual reports on the activities of each bird to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

New falconers must train with experienced falconers. They obtain an apprentice licence and take 30 hours of instruction over a 15 month period. To get a general falconry licence, the applicant must have kept a bird of prey for at least two years in the last five years. To breed falconry birds requires a commercial falconry licence and a Small Game Hunting Licence.

Under conditions set out by the Ministry of Natural Resources, non-residents may bring birds of prey into Ontario.

Falconers are prohibited from capturing wild raptors in Ontario. However, some use of wild raptors (not rare species) may be authorized from time to time. Non-releasable injured birds and nuisance birds may be permitted use by falconers.

In future issues of *OFO News*, I will discuss other changes in the FWCA that affect birds in Ontario.

Favourite Birding Hotspots

Canoe Lake Road and Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road Near Kingston

Bruce Di Labio and Paul Mackenzie

The Sites

This guide describes two popular birding roads in eastern Ontario, both of which are north of Kingston and south of Highway 7. About 20 km north of Kingston, flat farmland gives way to a myriad of small lakes, mixed forest and rocky ridges typical of the Precambrian or Canadian Shield. Bird diversity is high, and most Bird Atlas blocks record well over 100 breeding species. Frontenac Provincial Park is a good example of habitat associated with this area. Many of the breeding species can be located along either Canoe Lake Road or Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road, despite increasing cottage development on many of the lakes and "road improvements" which have reduced roadside canopy.

The routes can be visited as early as mid-May, but late May to mid-June is the peak time to locate singing birds. Both roads are easily accessible. We will describe the Bedford/Canoe Lake Road from south to north, and the Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road from east to west.

The Birds

This area is characterized by the meeting of northern forest and Carolinian forest species. Both Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes can be found here. Three-toed Woodpeckers bred in 1984, while Red-bellied Woodpeckers are permanent residents along Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road. Some of the highest densities in Ontario of breeding Yellow-throated Vireos, Golden-winged Warblers and Cerulean Warblers are found here.

Noteworthy breeding species to seek along these roads include: Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, Common Raven, Carolina Wren (rare), Winter Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Blue-winged Warbler (rare), Golden-winged Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler (scarce), Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler (local), Cerulean Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush (rare), Mourning Warbler (scarce), Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee and Indigo Bunting.

Many species are common along these roads in suitable habitat. No specific directions are needed for Least and Great Crested Flycatchers, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, Wood Thrush, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, and Chipping, Field, Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows.

Bedford Road and Canoe Lake Road

Exit from Highway 401 (Exit 613) in Kingston at Sydenham Road (County Road 9) and proceed north to the T-junction at County Road 5 (16.3 km). Turn left (west) to Sydenham (1.7 km) then right at Wheatly Street which is signposted toward Kingston Ski Hills. Wheatly Street stops in 0.5 km at George Street, where a right turn leads over a small bridge to Bedford Road (County Road 19). Set the car odometer at 0.0 at this bridge. Keep right on Bedford Road which bears northeast through some fields (2.5 to 4.0 km) that have Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows and go past the tiny Kingston Ski Hill (4.3 km).

Here the geology and habitat suddenly change. It is worth a look and a listen at the bottom of the hill (4.8 km) where there is a pond on the right. The road continues through cottage country until Salmon Lake Road exits to the right to Frontenac Park (km 11.1) just past the obvious Frontenac Outfitters (Canoes and Kayaks). Continue straight on Bedford Road, stopping at a gate marked #6900 where the hemlock grove is home to Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers and Winter Wrens.

Bedford Road next passes through the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, a property of the Kingston Field Naturalists. The unmarked Greenwood Trail entry past the sanctuary sign on the left (km 13.2) is an area for Cerulean Warbler and Veery. Stop at the bridge at Otter Lake (km 13.9) or just beyond the bridge at an old gravel pit where one may park. There are American Bittern and Pied-billed Grebe in the marsh left of the bridge. Watch for Red-shouldered Hawks, Ospreys and Northern Goshawks. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Indigo Buntings frequent the gravel pit area. The wooded ridge on the left just past the gravel pit may have Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Yellow-throated Vireos.

Next, check a beaver pond on the left (km 15.0) where Hooded Merganser and Wood Duck may skulk among the stumps. Eastern Bluebird, Pileated Woodpecker and Belted Kingfisher may be seen here too.

County Road 19 turns left (km 16) to Desert Lake, but continue straight on the gravel road, Snug Harbour Road, which becomes Canoe Lake Road. Golden-winged Warblers are often heard just past this junction. There is a small bridge over Mitchell Creek (km 17.4) at Snug Harbour, and Eastern Bluebirds may be seen around the buildings.

As the road turns right at Snug Harbour, proceed to the Desert Lake Cemetery (17.8) where Pine Warblers nest. On the left, Eel Lake is visible from the road (km 19.7), Red-shouldered Hawks and Yellow-throated Vireos are often seen. The next 6.0 km are generally good, so proceed slowly and listen for bird activity. On the right, but not visible from the

road, are Birch Lake and then Kingsford Lake. At 22.2 km, watch for soaring raptors such as Turkey Vultures, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks that may be seen from this overlook. Cerulean Warblers may be found in the tall deciduous woods 1.0 km before and 1.0 km after Eel Lake Rd. (formerly Wilson Rd.) branches left to the west (km 23.4). Continuing north, the road eventually becomes Canoe Lake Road. The only road to the right is Devil Lake Road (formerly Salem Road) at km 25.6 which passes the north entrance to Frontenac Park.

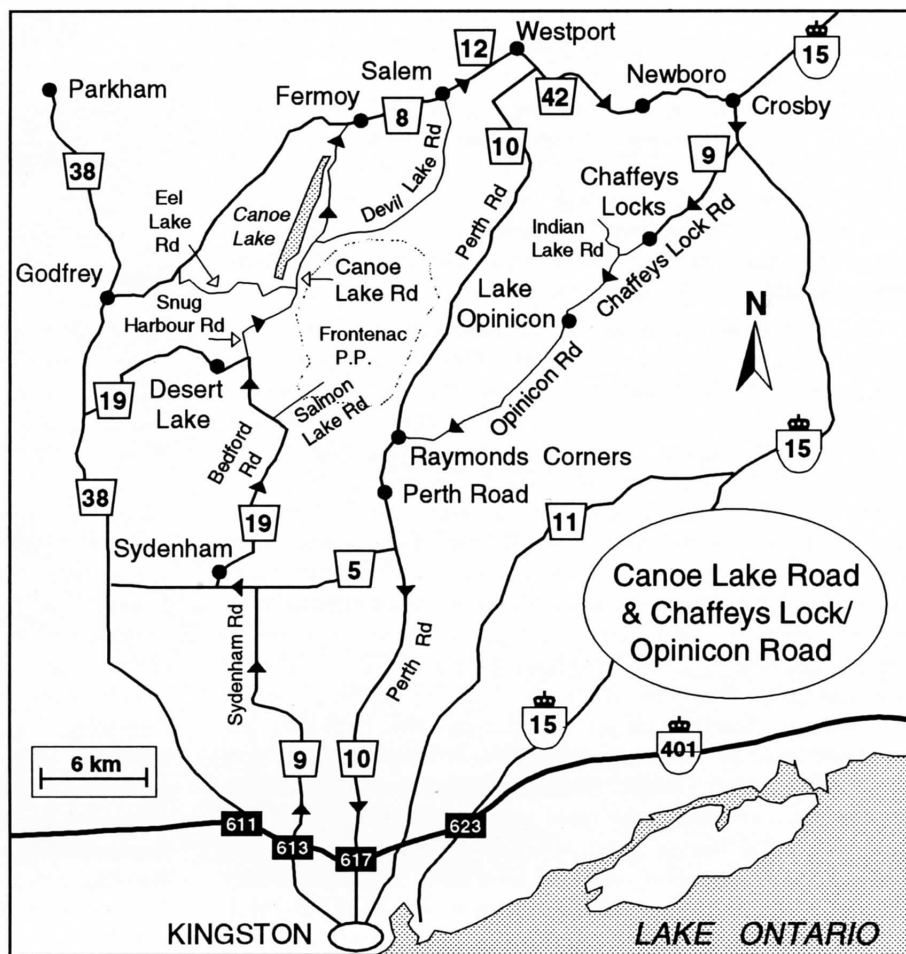
The Deerwood Farm Bed and Breakfast at #9741 is an imposing house on the left (km 26.5). Keep going past the gates of the Bing Retreat (km 28.5) to a lane on the left marked #10201 and park (km 28.8). The land and lane are private, but the small creek running through the hemlock stand has been a reliable site for Louisiana Waterthrush for some years. They may be on either side of the creek. Listen for Northern Waterthrush, Winter Wren, Black-and-white Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler.

Just past the large trailer park (km 30) the road borders Canoe Lake, and you can park against the rocky cliff face (km 30.2) and look over the lake. Prairie Warblers nest on the rocky cliffs on the far side of the lake. Familiarize yourself with their distinctive song, as seeing them from this location is remote. Yellow Warblers, Warbling Vireos and Northern Orioles may deafen you. At the top end of Canoe Lake (km 30.8) many other birds may be heard including Great Crested Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting. Common Loon, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper and Northern Rough-winged Swallows may fly by. If you arrive before dawn, you will likely hear Whip-poor-wills and Barred Owls. Good birding continues until the power lines cross the road at km 31.3. The Canoe Lake Road ends at County Road 8 (km 32.5) onto which you may turn left to County Road 38 at Godfrey or right through Fermoy and Westport to Highway 15 at Crosby. To continue the tour, at Crosby take Highway 15 south 2.5 km to Chaffeys Lock Road.

Visitors from west of Kingston may wish to look for Loggerhead Shrikes along the side roads northwest of Newburgh before returning to Highway 401 at Napanee.

Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road

To optimize your success while visiting this area, it is important to be familiar with the vocalization of the key species. Tape recorders are discouraged due to possible disturbance to the ongoing bird studies by the Queen's University Biological Station. Traveling the roads and walking the trails can easily net between 60 and 80 species. Under optimum weather and migration conditions, 100 species is not out of the question.



Canoe Lake Road and Chaffeys Lock/Opinicon Road Map by Michael King

From Toronto, take Highway 401 eastbound to the Highway 15 exit (623). Travel north towards Ottawa for 48.5 km. and turn left onto Chaffeys Lock Road. From Ottawa, take Highway 417 to Highway 7 to Carleton Place, turn left onto Highway 15 and proceed passed Smiths Falls to Crosby, then south 2.5 km to Chaffeys Lock Road. Turn right and follow the road for 7.8 km through open fields until you reach the locks. Watch for Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Kingbird, Savannah Sparrow and Turkey Vulture. Set your odometer at 0.0 on the bridge over the Rideau Canal just the past Opinicon Lodge. At the locks, listen for Pine Warblers singing from the Eastern White Pines and check the Tree Swallows for Northern Rough-winged Swallows feeding over the canal. Continue west 0.9 km to Indian Lake Road. From this point westward, frequent stops along this route are advised as this is a lush area for many breeding species including Golden-winged Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Cerulean Warbler and the occasional Louisiana Waterthrush. Just past this intersection and to the right is a small dump. Listen for singing Golden-winged Warblers and watch for Indigo Bunting and Eastern Kingbird perched on the hydro wires.

Continuing west along Chaffeys Lock Road, the entrance to the Queen's University Biological Station will be on your left at 1.5 km. Due to the rich and diverse nature of this unique area, many ornithological research studies are conducted from this campus. Watch for Eastern Bluebirds and Red-shouldered Hawks overhead. A singing male Acadian Flycatcher (1992)

and Carolina Wren (1991) have been found in the woods near here. At 1.8 km, check a large pond to the right for Hooded Mergansers and Wood Ducks, and Belted Kingfishers perched among trees bordering the shoreline. Listen for the distinctive *Blue Jay* call of breeding Red-shouldered Hawks and during migration for the Olive-sided Flycatcher's *quick-three-beers* song. Red-eyed and Warbling Vireo, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat and Rose-breasted Grosbeak are just a few of the regular breeders in this area. Also listen for Golden-winged Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo.

Continue along this road making periodic stops. Due to the interbreeding of Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers, visual not audio identification is recommended as songs are not always reliable. Opposite Skycroft Campground at 5.7 km is a series of trails leading north to the old railroad bed. At the beginning of the trail, follow through the mature deciduous woods listening for the Wood Thrush, American Redstart and Eastern Wood-Pewee. Further down the trail at the bridge, listen for Louisiana Waterthrush which occasionally has been heard singing in this area. The canopy was heavily damaged during the ice storm of 1998, but Cerulean Warblers continue to occupy this area as their stronghold. Listen for Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, Least Flycatcher, Pileated Woodpecker, Scarlet Tanager and Barred Owl. Exploring the trails will lead to more varied birdlife: Ruffed Grouse, Great Crested Flycatcher, Winter Wren and Northern Waterthrush. For the more ambitious, the main trail leads to the old railroad bed. Check the beaver pond opposite the track for breeding Red-headed Woodpecker. Walking west leads to a small colony of Prairie Warblers at about 4.0 km west of Skycroft Campground along the track. Young deciduous trees dispersed among the rock cut habitat characterize this area. Watch and listen for Field Sparrow, Eastern Towhee and Indigo Bunting.

Back at Chaffeys Lock Road at Skycroft, continue to Lake Opinicon (6.0 km.). Watch for Common Loon on the lake and the occasional Osprey flying overhead. Listen for Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers in the pine trees and Blackburnian Warblers in the pine/hemlock groves.

At 8.1 km, the Queen's Pangman Conservation Centre Trail appears on the right. Listen for the many Cerulean Warblers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. It is worthwhile to walk the trail and watch for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler and hybrid Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warblers. Over the next 4.0 km the area will be dotted with numerous Tree Swallow boxes among the fields. At 12.4 km listen for Eastern Phoebe at the bridge. The next 8.0 km go through cottage country to end at Perth Road (County Road 10). Along this route, watch and listen for Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee and Field Sparrow. To return to Highway 401, turn left and follow County Road 10 south for 25.0 km. Birders heading to Ottawa, either retrace the route to Highway 15 or turn right on County Road 10 and follow it to Perth.

Bruce Di Labio is a well-known birder from Eastern Ontario. He works as a nature consultant and tour guide for Turaco Nature Inc.

Paul Mackenzie began birding in London, Ontario in 1952, where Bill Girling and others inspired his interest in the McIlwraith Field Naturalists. Paul is currently president of the Kingston Field Naturalists.

Whip-poor-will Sees Red

Jean Iron

On 3 May 1999 at 5:00 a.m., I heard a Whip-poor-will singing outside my house near Highway 401 and Don Valley Parkway in Toronto. In the dim light I saw a dark shadow flit across the lawn and down into the ravine. At 9:30 a.m., I went looking for it. As I walked, the Whip-poor-will flushed up from a downed log and onto the horizontal branch of an Eastern Hemlock. A safe distance away, I set up my scope and observed the resting bird without disturbing it. This peaceful scene ended abruptly at 1:45 p.m. when a Red Squirrel scampered onto the same branch and came nose-to-beak with the Whip-poor-will. I expected the Whip-poor-will to fly off but it did not budge. Instead, it puffed itself up, making itself look big and scary. The Whip-poor-will, with its feathers all fluffed out, held its own against the squirrel which charged at it five times, stopping just short of touching it. I wondered who would win this exciting confrontation! Eventually, the Red Squirrel backed off and ran down the trunk of the tree. Having successfully repelled the intruder, the Whip-poor-will settled back to its resting pose and closed its eyes.

When threatened, birds and other animals are known to puff themselves up in order to look bigger, stronger and more fearsome. But I had not heard of this behaviour in Whip-poor-wills. A check of Bent's (1940) *Life Histories of North American Birds* found no reference to Whip-poor-wills puffing themselves up as a means of defence. Bent mentions the use of vocalizations to intimidate enemies, but I did not hear anything. I asked Alex Mills, an expert on Whip-poor-wills, if he had encountered this behaviour. He did not have any similar experience to compare to this episode, but wondered why it was worthwhile for the Whip-poor-will to stand its ground.

In summary, I think "puffing up" in response to an intruder is probably a well developed defensive behaviour in Whip-poor-wills that we do not see often because they are very secretive birds. Its function may be to stop squirrels and other small nest predators from getting at the eggs or young, which are very vulnerable on the ground where they could be stumbled upon.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Alex Mills and Ron Pittaway for help with this note.

Maps and OFO Site Guides

We recommend that birders carry an up-to-date Ontario road map in their car. Road names and signs changed in January 1998. Many of us still use the old names! *OFO News* uses the latest edition of the *MapArt Ontario Road Atlas* to check road names and help compile the maps in our site guides. This road atlas comes in a convenient ringed book format that can be purchased in bookstores, gas stations, office supply stores and through the CAA. Concession roads, side roads and small roads that birders use a lot are generally well marked. *Jean Iron*

Hooked!



Ring-billed Gull tangled in fishing hook
Gull Island, Presqu'île, 19 September 1999 Photo Jean Iron

OFO Port Burwell Trip

Dave Martin

On 18 September 1999, nine OFO members joined us at the Port Burwell Provincial Park Hawkwatch with another 50 visitors from the campground and local communities. Despite the heavy migration through southern Ontario the previous two days, there was still enough of a steady trickle of hawks to keep everyone busy watching. From 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. we counted 839 individuals of eight species of hawks including seven Ospreys, four Merlins and 620 Broadwings. When we first arrived, two Merlins were perched in the same tree near the viewing area for about half-an-hour and later an adult male Merlin perched in full sight for another half-hour.

A small flight of other migrants included 820 Blue Jays, 190 American Goldfinches, 166 Double-crested Cormorants and five Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

Other interesting sightings included seven Little Gulls (two adults, one second year bird and four juveniles), three American Golden-Plovers, one Long-billed Dowitcher and one Stilt Sandpiper on the Otter Creek harbour mudflats.

After the watch some of the participants wandered through the interdunal meadows with us and found 10 species of butterflies including two Buckeyes and two Fiery Skippers. The Bottle Gentians and Swamp Lousewort were nearly finished but the Fringed Gentians and Grass-of-Parnassus were at their peak. One of the patches of Bottle Gentians was of the rarer white form.

Port Burwell Provincial Park has a wonderful campground, a magnificent beach, and a woodland trail if you are interested in spending a few days in the area.

E-mail: dave.martin@odyssey.on.ca

Certificates of Appreciation

1999

Each year, OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions to the birds and birding community of Ontario. This year the following people received an OFO award:

Edge and Betty Pegg, Claremont, for welcoming birders to see the Harris's Sparrow at their feeder December 1998 to May 1999.

Algonquin Provincial Park Visitor Centre Staff for contributing to our knowledge of birds through publications and programs, and welcoming birders to the Park.

Lea Martell and Friends of Point Pelee for providing staff and programs that help birders visiting Point Pelee and contribute to our knowledge of birds.

Paula and Greg Ouellette of Paula's Fish Place, near Point Pelee, for their hospitality to visiting birders on the occasion of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, May 1999.

Mike Street for creating *Ontbirds*, setting up the system and maintaining the listserv 24 hours a day.

Bronte Harbour Outer Marina for providing help and support to the nesting Red-necked Grebes.

Art Hawtin, a rancher in Carden, Victoria County, for maintaining habitat for nesting Loggerhead Shrikes and always being friendly to visiting birders.

Les and Valerie Woodhall, Brockville, for their hospitality to visiting birders on the occasion of the Lewis's Woodpecker, October 1999.

Ontario Power Generation, for allowing birders to go down the Hydro Access Road to view the gulls on the Niagara River at Sir Adam Beck.

*To nominate a person or organization for an OFO Certificate of Appreciation, contact: Chris Escott, 1 Shouldice Court, Toronto ON M2L 2S3
Tel: 416-444-8055 or e-mail: escott@user.rose.com
Please provide the name, address and phone number of the person or organization and the reason for the nomination.*

Bird Tapes by Tom Cosburn

1999 Algonquin Park Nature Recordings

To purchase, send a cheque for \$8.00 (includes postage) to: Tom Cosburn, 3 Paddington Place, Toronto ON M9R 2S9 Tel: 416-241-1396

Semipalmated Plover

in

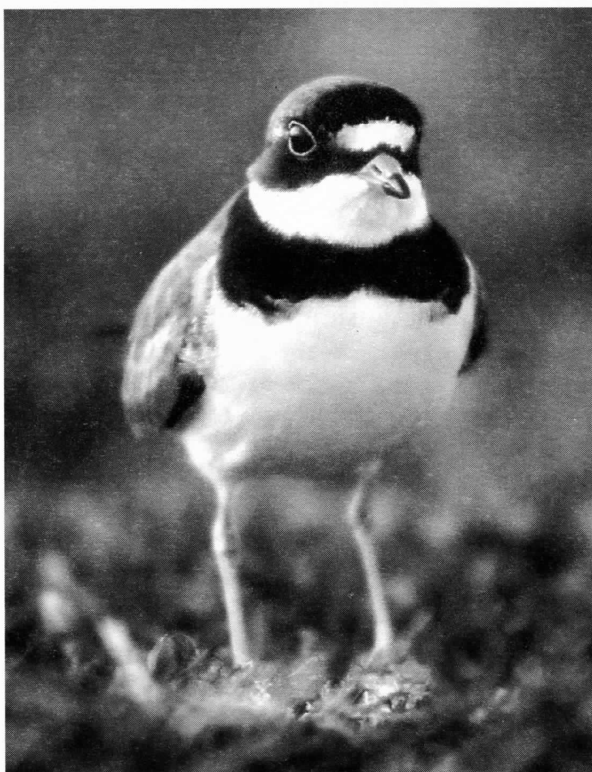
The Birds of North America

Erica Nol

While enrolled in an undergraduate program at the University of Michigan in the 1970s, I decided to spend a year away at a slightly less urban institution. I chose Humboldt State University on Humboldt Bay in far northern California. There, on the extensive tidal mudflats I saw my first huge flocks of migrating shorebirds including Western Sandpipers, Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlews and Willets. These flocks were so impressive and evocative in their finely coordinated movements, turning in unison over the flats in order to evade aerial predators. I immediately took this group of birds as my all time favourite. So, when Michael Bradstreet introduced me to banding Killdeers at Long Point in the mid-1970s, I was delighted and hooked on using banding as a way to study the habits of shorebirds on their breeding grounds. For my M.Sc. at the University of Guelph, I studied Killdeer nesting on Long Point to see whether, through management of their nests using predator exclosures, we could also find a way to manage and protect the Piping Plover, which still nested in small numbers on the point. Piping Plovers became locally extirpated from the lower Great Lakes, as a result of high water levels, gull and mammal predators and possibly human interference, but I have continued to study several species in the genus *Charadrius* through to the present day.

When I moved to Trent University in Peterborough in 1986, I resolved to begin a long-term study on a shorebird species, since most of the long-term studies which yielded such interesting information about factors affecting the biological fitness of birds had been conducted on either songbirds (e.g. the Great Tit) or waterfowl (e.g. Barnacle Goose). Few shorebirds had been studied on the breeding grounds for more than two or three consecutive years. I was familiar with Semipalmated Plovers in Churchill through an earlier trip to Churchill in the 1970s and knew that they were quite an amenable bird for study. They had a quieter and tamer disposition than Killdeer, and would likely be easier to catch and colour band. I also thought that, with the collaboration of graduate students, we could come up with a number of short-term projects on this species that would contribute to their theses and also contribute to the baseline information required for a long-term study.

Over the years my students have discovered a great deal about the breeding biology of this species. Allison Rippin Armstrong, one of the first to work in Churchill, discovered that in Churchill, as on Baffin Island, birds nesting on the coast had aggregated nesting distributions, whereas birds nesting inland usually nested by themselves. The birds nesting at inland sites, nested earlier and appeared to incur higher predation pressure than the birds at the coast. As a result of this work Michèle Sullivan Blanken decided to test an idea that had originated from a study of African lapwings: species and populations within species that nested in sites with low visibility exhibited



Semipalmated Plover Photo Erica Nol

active parental behaviour where parents stayed close to the chicks and followed them around during foraging, whereas species and populations within species that nested in very open sites with greater visibility, stood a good distance away from the chicks and passively attended their offspring. Our inland sites were often surrounded by Black Spruce, whereas the coastal sites were on open tundra or beach habitat so that the analogy with the African situation was quite close. Michèle found that although birds on the coast chased intruders more, they did not exhibit any different behavioural patterns than those parents at inland sites. Michèle did, however, observe that there was a great deal of male-male competition in the crowded coastal sites. As most monogamous birds have been found to exhibit a mixed paternity pattern, with chicks fathered by a number of

fathers, Yuri Zharikov proposed to test the idea that the coastal birds gained an advantage in seeking extra-pair partners by nesting within close proximity to other nesting pairs. He used DNA fingerprinting to determine that, in fact, at the coastal site there was a small proportion of nests where all of the young raised by a particular male had indeed been fathered by a different male. We found no cases of extra-pair paternity at inland locations.

By this time we had enough histories of individually colour-marked birds to allow us to look at how site tenacious birds were and whether pair bonds were maintained from one breeding season to the next. Laura Flynn compiled this information and she found that divorce rates were about the same as they are in western human populations (35-45%) and

that males, upon return in subsequent breeding seasons nearly always took the same territory as in previous years, whereas females only returned to the same site if they took the same mate. Females also seemed to respond to failure in the previous year by moving farther in the subsequent year, with females sometimes moving as far as 4.0 km from their previous nesting site. Within a breeding season we found no cases of divorce after a nest was lost to predation. This seemed intuitively logical given the very short time that this and other arctic species have to lay eggs and raise their young. In comparison, the Piping Plover, a temperate nesting species, does divorce between nesting attempts as a result of failure in the first attempt.

In 1997, I felt that we had enough data to try and model the local survivorship of this species at the Churchill study area. In contrast to most other plovers, the Semipalmated Plover population does not have any indication of decline. In the other declining populations (e.g. Snowy Plover, Piping Plover, Mountain Plover, Wilson's Plover) adult survivorship is supposed to be key to determining whether the population will decline or increase. Debbie Badzinski used a computer population model to determine that annual adult survivorship was about 71%. Surprisingly, this was about the same value that has been obtained for the other species, so that it is unlikely that adult survivorship alone is responsible for their decline. More likely it is nesting success, the one factor that managers of these threatened and endangered populations have been and are able to control.

As in other long-term studies, I continue to be fascinated by other aspects of this species biology and do not consider my studies finished. One of the lowest rates of annual survivorship in Churchill occurred after an El Niño year, and I am now very interested in determining how changes in oceanic conditions might affect feeding conditions on tropical mudflats, and as a consequence, overwinter survivorship of this and other species of neotropical migrant shorebirds. My work on the breeding grounds will also continue as the biology of this species has the potential of closely tracking climate change in the Hudson Bay lowlands because the chronology of arctic nesting is determined primarily by the June temperatures. More work for the future!

Erica Nol is a professor in the Biology Department of Trent University in Peterborough. She co-authored both the Semipalmated Plover (with Michele Sullivan Blanken) and the American Oystercatcher (with Robert Humphrey) accounts for The Birds of North America series.

Baillie Birdathon Chris Escott

In 1999, OFO ranked second overall in participating bird clubs by raising \$5920.45 of which \$1960.23 was returned to OFO to support our projects. Fantastic! Thanks to Jean Iron (Celebrity Birder), Maris Apse, Geoff Carpentier, Judith Nancekivell, John Schemelefske, Ron and Linda Valentine, and David Worthington for making this possible by doing their big days for OFO. Thanks also to everyone who supported OFO and the Baillie Birdathoners. We look forward to even better results in 2000.

Thank you

OFO is a registered charity and donors receive a tax receipt. Donations are an important source of income. They support our publications and services. We are grateful to the following members for their generosity:

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Bill and Kathy Holding	Irene Woods
	Winnie Yung

In memory

OFO appreciates special donations received in memory of
Gerry Bennett
Jack Cranmer-Byng
Jim Wilson
Peter Whelan

Birding Etiquette

Clive Goodwin wrote to *OFO News* asking that we include a note to remind birders about birding etiquette while visiting Presqu'île this spring, especially in the cottage area. It is very important that birders present a good image.

- Please use the designated public viewing areas and do not trespass on private property, even if the cottages are unoccupied at the time.
- Please stop in designated parking areas or well off the road so as not to hinder traffic.
- Before you leap from your car, please look for oncoming and following traffic, and close your car door, *quietly!*

SEACLIFF

A new location at Point Pelee to observe hawks and other diurnal migrants

Alan Wormington

Along the north shore of Lake Erie there are several known locations that are exceptional during fall for observing the east-to-west migration of hawks and other diurnal birds. Among these are The Coves (Long Point), Port Burwell Provincial Park (Elgin County), Hawk Cliff (Port Stanley) and Holiday Beach. In the area of Point Pelee, however, these migrants tend to become somewhat dispersed and—except for the Tip area—often difficult to intercept for the purpose of obtaining comprehensive counts.

For years it has been common knowledge that large numbers of diurnal fall migrants move west at the Leamington waterfront as they exit the Point Pelee peninsula. Birds in passage here originate from the northeast and east as well as the Point Pelee peninsula including Hillman Marsh, the Onion Fields, Point Pelee National Park and Sturgeon Creek, etc. In the past there has been the occasional attempt to intercept the main flight of Broad-winged Hawks through the area, but other species have been virtually ignored. During a five-hour period on 15 September 1984, I counted 42,500 Broad-winged Hawks in addition to 600 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 240 American Kestrels. This major flight was observed from the Evergreen Cemetery, located west of Leamington on old Highway #3. Unfortunately this site, although excellent, does not provide a clear view to the east, the direction from which birds are arriving.

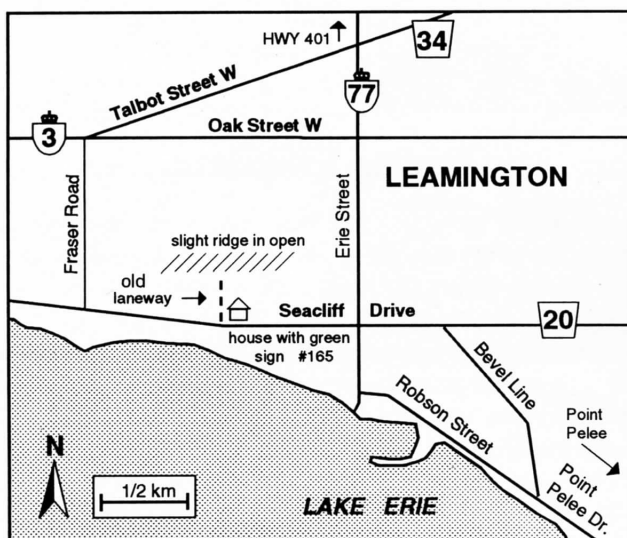
In early August 1998, I was scouting the area around Seacliff (southwest of Leamington) in Essex County for potential locations to cover for the Point Pelee Butterfly Count, when I found a site that looked very promising for observing diurnal migrants. The site is a slightly raised ridge in an open field about a half km north of the lakeshore, offering a panoramic view in all directions; furthermore, a laneway leads directly to this location. See map below and directions on p. 15.

During 1998 from 10 September to 7 December inclusive, I conducted counts at this new site on 19 days that appeared favourable for migration. On some days I counted birds for up to six hours, starting usually at sunrise. Remarkably I did not conduct a single count during all of November, since it was exceptionally warm with virtually a total lack of north winds.

In summary, the results greatly exceeded my expectations despite the fact that this was a known migration corridor. This is obviously a great place to go birding! Some of the season's highlights are detailed in Tables 1 and 2 on page 15. Despite the long history of bird study at Point Pelee, all-time record counts were established for no fewer than five species at Seacliff, clearly demonstrating the potential of this site. Although it has been presumed that Swainson's Hawk must pass through Point Pelee during fall migration (the species is observed almost annually at Holiday Beach to the west), it was not until the observation of an adult at Seacliff on 22 October established the first fall record for the area.

Certainly another highlight of the 1998 season was the migration of Blue Jays that occurred on 28 September when 42,200 birds were tallied in only five hours. On this day not a single Blue Jay was seen from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m., yet during the next 30 minutes an incredible 15,300 appeared—literally “a wall of birds!” This count exceeded any one-day count at Holiday Beach for the season, where the highest tally here was only 15,090 birds on 4 October (Leamouth 1999).

During the 1998 season there were also a number of interesting butterfly observations at the site, including Snout Butterfly (8 August), Gray Hairstreak (17 September) and Variegated Fritillary (25 September). On 8 August 1998, the moth *Heliothis accesi* was collected here, possibly only the fourth record for Ontario.



Map by Michael King

1999 Update

Due to lack of observers, very few counts were conducted during the fall of 1999. Nonetheless, there were a few observations of note. New record-high counts for the Point Pelee Birding Area were: 12 Bald Eagles on 3 October; 2161 Turkey Vultures on 6 October; and a remarkable 3 Swainson's Hawks also on 6 October (only one prior fall record for Point Pelee). Other counts of note were: 37,120 Blue Jays in four hours on 3 October, and 747 Tree Swallows in four hours on 30 September. For those interested in butterflies, a male Checkered White was present on 6 October; most years this southern immigrant goes unrecorded.

Table 1: High Counts at Seacliff (1998)

Species	Number	Date	Effort	Comments
Turkey Vulture	1,318	10 October	2 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
Sharp-shinned Hawk	353	1 October	5 hrs.	
Cooper's Hawk	34	9 October	6 hrs.	
Red-shouldered Hawk	39	29 October	2 hrs.	
Red-tailed Hawk	110	29 October	2 hrs.	
American Kestrel	63	17 September	4 hrs.	
Killdeer	268	9 October	4 hrs.	
Red-headed Woodpecker	8	28 September	5 hrs.	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12	28 September	5 hrs.	
Tree Swallow	775	1 October	5 hrs.	
Blue Jay	42,200	28 September	5 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
	15,400	30 September	3.5 hrs.	
American Crow	8,080	22 October	5 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
American Robin	1,290	22 October	5 hrs.	record fall count for Point Pelee
American Pipit	1,630	21 October	4 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
	1,780	22 October	5 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
European Starling	4,500	22 October	5 hrs.	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	291	8 October	2 hrs.	
Red-winged Blackbird	12,500	22 October	5 hrs.	
House Finch	850	20 October	2 hrs.	
American Goldfinch	2,475	28 September	5 hrs.	record count for Point Pelee
	1,545	9 October	4 hrs.	

Table 2: Rare and Miscellaneous Sightings at Seacliff (1998)

Species	Number	Date	Comments
"Richardson's" Canada Goose	2	22 October	uncommon fall migrant at Point Pelee
Swainson's Hawk	1	22 October	first fall record for Point Pelee
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1	23 September	
Franklin's Gull	17	13 November	single compact flock flying west
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	15 November	exceptionally late for Point Pelee

Summary

Seacliff is clearly a major observation site for hawks and other diurnal migrants during fall. Despite the limited coverage during the initial (1998) season, the results indicate that the number of migrants here is similar or possibly exceeds those at long-established sites elsewhere on the north shore of Lake Erie. Hopefully interest in this site will increase, thus providing the Point Pelee area with additional high counts and rare observations.

Directions

In Leamington, take Erie Street South to County Road 20 (road to Kingsville, formerly Highway 18). Go west on this road 1.2 km to green marker #165 on the north (right) side. On west side of house, take laneway north (right) to top of ridge where there are a couple of poplar trees. To enhance your visit, a lawn chair, 10-power binoculars, telescope, clipboard and a lunch are recommended! If you visit this site, a copy of your observations would be appreciated; please send them to the author.

Acknowledgements

I thank the following people who assisted in the 1998 counts: Barbara J. Casier, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Henrietta T. O'Neill and Fred J. Urie.

Literature Cited

Learmouth, B. [Editor] 1999. Blue Jay Migration, 1998. *The Northwind* 14 (1): 9-10.

Alan Wormington lives near Point Pelee. Alan is a recognized expert on the birds and butterflies of the entire province. He currently works for Louisiana State University on the Migration-over-the-Gulf project.

Alan Wormington, RR 1, Leamington ON N8H 3V4

Notes from the OBRC

Bob Curry

As you read this, the work of the Records Committee for 1999 is approaching its end. The Annual Meeting at which final decisions on last year's reports will be taken is scheduled for 25 March. We will have examined about 145 reports which is up somewhat from 1998. Voting members for 1999 who have put in considerable hours on these reports are: Margaret Bain, Bob Curry (chair), Rob Dobos, Doug McRae, Kevin McLaughlin, Ron Pittaway and Ron Tozer. Kayo Roy has been an indefatigable secretary to which many of you can attest having received requests and exhortations for write-ups.

Coming to the end of their three-year terms at the March meeting are Doug McRae and Ron Tozer. On behalf of OFO members we thank Doug and Ron for their learned input and many hours of volunteer service. Joining members Bain, Curry, Dobos, McLaughlin and Pittaway for 2000 are Peter Burke and Alan Wormington. Alan's knowledge of the status of rare Ontario birds is unmatched and Peter brings an artist's critical eye to the Committee. We are most pleased that Kayo Roy will serve again as secretary in 2000. The OBRC secretary is a difficult, demanding and time-consuming job. Without an effective secretary the Committee would be unable to function.

As readers are well aware, fall 1999 was outstanding for rarities. Whenever possible, we like to include birds seen in a year in the report for that year. However, we have to cut off reports about the end of the year to ensure that they have been circulated by mail among members. In this regard our publication performs a different function than those journals that produce a snapshot of bird observations from the previous season. So some rarities will not be in the 1999 Report because reports have not been received, arrived too late or the birds remain into 2000. These will be published in the 2000 Annual Report.

In case I have left a wrong impression, the work is not onerous but rather is an enjoyable learning experience for Committee members. And, I believe that writing and submitting reports are equally instructive and satisfying. We look forward to many exciting birds and reports in 2000.

Please send reports to: Kayo Roy, OBRC Secretary, 13 Kinsman Court, Fonthill ON L0S 1E3. E-mail: kayoroy@niagara.com

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Questions: contact Mike Street
mikestreet@hwcen.org

Future OFO Trips

APRIL 15 (Saturday) Gore Bay, Manitoulin Island. Hosts: Doreen Bailey and Friends of Misery Bay. For further information and to register, call Barbara Mann (416-483-1832) by April 1. Sharp-tailed Grouse lek and area birds.

APRIL 29 (Saturday) Algonquin Park. Leader: Ron Tozer. Tel: 705-635-2315. Meet **9:00 a.m.** at WEST GATE of the park. Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee. Park entrance fee.

MAY 6 (Saturday) Rondeau Provincial Park. Leader: Allen Woodliffe. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the Visitor Centre. Park entrance fee. Camping is available. For camping rates and reservations call 888-668-7275. Spring migrants.

MAY 7 (Sunday) Leslie Street Spit, Toronto. Leader: Norm Murr. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the base of the Spit parking lot near the intersection of Leslie St. and Unwin Ave. Spring migrants.

MAY 20 (Saturday) Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. Leader: Terry Sprague. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in the Canadian Tire parking lot on Highway 33 just west of Picton. Motels in Picton and Belleville. Spring migrants.

MAY 27 (Saturday) Kingston Area. Leader: Paul Mackenzie. Meet at **7:00 a.m.** in the parking lot of Denny's Restaurant next to the Days Inn near Division Street exit from Highway 401 (exit 617). Breeding birds including and Cerulean Warbler.
****NEW TRIP****

JUNE 4 (Sunday) Carden Alvar, Victoria County. Leader: Ron Pittaway. Tel: 705-286-3471. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** in Kirkfield at the parking lot of Lady MacKenzie School on the right on County Road 6 about 1/2 km north of County Road 48. Grassland birds: Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows.

JUNE 10 (Saturday) Long Point. Leader: John Miles. Meet at **6:30 a.m.** at the main parking lot of the St. Williams Forestry Station on County Road 24 west of the intersection with County Road 16. Motels in Simcoe. Carolinian specialties and nesting warblers. ****NEW TRIP****

JUNE 17 (Saturday) and JUNE 18 (Sunday) Bruce Peninsula. Leader: John Miles. On Saturday meet at **7:00 a.m.** at the entrance to Spirit Rock Conservation Area, about 1.5 km north of Wiarton on east side Hwy 6. On Sunday meet at **7:00 a.m.** in the parking lot of the Tobermory airport, west of Hwy 6 on Warner Bay Road. Possible park entrance fees. For accommodations information see the *OFO field trips flyer* or the *OFO Web Page*. Brewer's Blackbird, Common Raven, Virginia Rail, Clay-colored Sparrow, Sandhill Crane, Upland Sandpiper, breeding warblers and other passerines. ****TWO-DAY TRIP****