



OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Birds Don't Vote

Ron Pittaway

After helplessly watching the loss of my favourite birding area to development in Ottawa in the early 1970s, a friend said it happened because *Birds Don't Vote*.

Now in 2001, I am seeing bird habitats disappearing at an alarming rate in southern Ontario. Why? Southern Ontario is a choice place in the world to live and it has the best agricultural land in Canada. Ontario's population will increase by several million in the next few decades. Many top birding spots, such as tiny Thickson's Woods in Whitby, are now surrounded by development and heavy truck traffic.

Habitat changes taking place in farming are causing big declines in grassland birds. These changes include a huge reduction in rough pastureland, bigger farms with more intensive row crops, fewer fallow fields, fewer grass fires, earlier first cutting of hay before many birds fledge, more forage harvesting for feedlots with frequent cuttings that prevent nesting, and loss of grassy and shrubby fence lines. Some grassland and scrubland birds showing long term declines in Ontario include the Loggerhead Shrike, Henslow's Sparrow, Barn Owl, Northern Bobwhite, Horned Lark, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, and Vesper Sparrow.

Ultimately global *climate change* is the biggest threat to birds. The world's climate has been relatively stable for the last few thousand years. Now world temperatures are rising faster than ever before, caused mainly by emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. We can expect more droughts, more forest fires, mild winters, low water levels and less ice on the Great Lakes, and big changes in bird habitats, numbers, and distribution. Unpredictable changes are coming too.

How can we keep Ontario as one of the best birding areas in the world? Birders must donate much more money to conservation groups who are acquiring habitat for birds. Buy green products. Reduce, reuse, and recycle more. Burn less fossil fuels and support stronger controls of greenhouse gases. *Birds Don't Vote* so we must act and vote on their behalf.

George K. Peck Distinguished Ornithologist

Jim Richards

George K. Peck has been a leading ornithologist in Ontario for 50 years. He is recognized for his work with the Ontario Nest Records Scheme, which he built into a major monitoring system of the breeding biology of Ontario birds.

George is author of 94 published works in ornithology. He has contributed much to the scientific knowledge of Ontario birds through papers in *The Auk*, *The Wilson Bulletin*, *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, *Ontario Birds*, and *Ontario Field Biologist*. As well, he authored 8 species accounts in *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Ontario* (1987), and co-authored with Jim Richards a chapter in *Ornithology in Ontario* (1994). In 1983, he co-authored with Ross James volume 1 of the *Breeding Birds of Ontario, Nidology and Distribution: Nonpasserines*. The *Passerines* in volume 2 followed in 1987. Both volumes have been updated in 7 instalments in *Ontario Birds*, 1993-99.

George was appointed a Research Associate in ornithology at Royal Ontario Museum in 1976. He is an active member of many international, national, provincial, and local organizations (some since 1939).

George is a natural teacher and speaker. He taught courses in ornithology and photography for the Grey County Board of Education in Thornbury, and at Georgian College in Collingwood.

George is well known as a wildlife photographer with a penchant for birds. His images have been published in 66 books, magazines, and journals. Since acquiring his first camera in 1948, George embarked on a lifelong pursuit to photograph all North American bird species. His quest has taken him to all of the states in the U.S. except Alaska (it's coming!) and to every province in Canada, including several trips to the arctic. To date, he has photographed about 630 species and the nest/eggs/young of over 450 species.

One of George's most valuable contributions has been his ability, through personal contact, to infect and inspire others with the same passion he has enjoyed. George is truly a Distinguished Ornithologist; I am proud to nominate him for this award and equally proud to include him as a friend.

The OFO Board is pleased to announce that George K. Peck will be the fourth recipient of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award at the Annual General Meeting at Point Pelee on Saturday 29 September 2001.

Shorebirds Show Their Colours

Mark Peck

Notice to Shorebird Watchers

In the recent publication, *Estimates of shorebird populations in North America*, Paper Number 104, Canadian Wildlife Service (2001), the authors provide estimates of population sizes for 57 species of Nearctic shorebirds, with the caveat that the accuracy of most estimates is considered poor or low. More data are required for greater accuracy, and if you are willing, we need your help!

Shorebirds make some of the most remarkable migrations in the bird world. In the Americas, Red Knots *Calidris canutus*, Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, Sanderlings *Calidris alba* and White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* leave their breeding grounds in the Canadian arctic in mid to late summer and may travel as many as 15,000 km before arriving on their wintering grounds in Tierra del Fuego in southern Argentina. In late winter they begin the migration northward, often stopping in major staging areas to rest and refuel depleted energy reserves. Although well studied on certain parts of their routes, much of their migration remains a mystery and threats to their staging areas continue to grow.

Since 1995, staff at the Royal Ontario Museum have been involved in the International Shorebird Banding Project in an effort to better understand the migration routes and life histories of these amazing birds. Initially lead by Dr. Allan Baker, Head of the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology at the ROM, and Patricia Gonzalez of the Fundacion Inalafquen in Argentina, the team has been banding shorebirds along the Atlantic coast of the Americas. The study has grown considerably and now involves major banding efforts in Canada, United States, Brazil and Argentina by professionals, amateurs, students and volunteers all working together under an umbrella group, the Western Atlantic Shorebird Association (WASA). The aim of the project is threefold:

- to assess population sizes for the four species
- to estimate annual productivity and recruitment rates
- to gain a better understanding of the migration routes and major staging areas along the western Atlantic flyway.

To date, more than 17,000 birds have been banded and the numbers continue to grow annually. The majority of the birds have been caught in cannon nets, although mist nets and even drop-traps have also been used. Before banding, captured birds are measured, weighed and in some cases blood samples and/or cloacal swabs are taken. The blood samples provide accurate sexing of the birds and allow researchers at the ROM to look for genetic population markers within species. Researchers in Georgia are taking cloacal swabs to investigate the occurrence of avian influenza throughout the migration route. Birds are banded with aluminum bands provided by the North American Bird Banding Program. In addition, coloured country flags and colour bands are added to the birds' legs providing additional data if they are resighted.



Red Knot, April 1999, USA, with grey over yellow band on left leg, metal band on right. Leg colour combinations allow volunteers and researchers to accurately identify birds from specific years and localities without retrapping. Photo by Mark Peck.

While important information is obtained when the birds are first caught, the real value of colour-marked birds is the information provided through re-sightings. This may occur in the vicinity of the banding area or anywhere along the migration route. A good network of dedicated volunteers is crucial to the success of most colour-marking projects.

Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, and White-rumped Sandpipers are usually seen in Ontario during the last weeks of May and the first couple weeks of June on their northward migration. On the southward migration, birds may start arriving as early as the third week in July and continue on into October. Although southern Ontario is not a major stopover, sight marked birds may still be passing through the area and any

re-sightings provide additional valuable data.

If you happen to see a flock of shorebirds, and are interested in helping with the project, it is just as important to count the unmarked birds as it is the colour-marked ones. When scanning flocks try to work with one species at a time. Record the time, date and locality and the species you are looking at. Count the unmarked birds and then write down any colour combinations you see. Recording colour-marked birds requires practice and patience. It is very important to write down the colour combination in the proper order, starting with the left leg. It is also important to remember that when a bird is facing you his

Atlas Up and Flying

Mike Cadman



Ruddy Turnstone, May 1999, USA, with white flag on upper right leg, and colour bands. A flag is similar to a colour band but also has a small tab projection. Searching for banded birds requires care and patience, but provides valuable information on age, distribution, and population numbers. Photo by Mark Peck.

left leg is opposite your right hand! Several hundred colour combinations have now been placed on the legs of Red Knots so accuracy is critical.

Always start recording colour combinations on the upper left leg (left tibia), followed by the lower left leg (left tarsus). A colon (:) indicates a switch to the upper right leg (right tibia) followed by the lower right leg (right tarsus). Each country has a specific flag colour:

- Canada - White flag (Fw),
- United States - Green Flag (Fg),
- Brazil - Blue Flag (Fb), and
- Argentina - Orange Flag (Fo),

Flags are designated with a capital F and a lower case colour designation. A flag is similar to a colour band but also has a small tab projection. Colours bands are designated with an upper case letter with the exception of black which is designated Bk. Metal bands are designated with a lower case m. A dash or hyphen indicates that there were no bands on that portion of the leg. For example a bird with a white flag on the upper left leg, yellow band over blue on the lower left leg, metal band on the upper right leg and no bands on the lower right would be written: Fw,YB:m,-.

The information can be sent to the Bird Banding Office, National Wildlife Research Centre, Canadian Wildlife Service, Hull QC K1A 0H3 or you can call toll free 1-800-327-2263 or fax 301-497-5717. You can also report your sightings and find out more about the project on the WASA website at:

<http://www.vex.net/~hopscotc/shorebirds/>

It looks like about 1500 people are out collecting data for the first year of the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas*. That is more people than took part in the whole of the first atlas project! Thanks to everyone who is involved.

There is plenty of room for more participants and we have 5 years to complete the job. If you would like more information about the atlas, see our website <http://www.birdsontario.org> or you can e-mail the office at atlas@uoguelph.ca or phone 519-826-2092.

Two Important Notices

Southern James Bay. There are opportunities for experienced birders with good wilderness survival skills to get involved in atlasing in forested regions in remote areas south and east of Moosonee—areas that have seldom, if ever, been birded before! Field work will be in late June until mid-July. If you are interested, complete and submit the Northern Application form (under Get Involved) on the Atlas website. If you don't have access to the web, contact the Atlas office.

Atlas Listserv. You can join the atlas listserv to find out about atlasing updates, outings, resources and tips, and share your own observations and adventures. To join, send an e-mail to:

listserv@listserv.uoguelph.ca

Type in the body of the message:

subscribe bird_atlas your full name.

Alternatively, you can join from the following site:
http://listserv.uoguelph.ca/archives/bird_atlas.html

Happy atlasing,

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2001 Taverner Cup Champs

The winner of the 5th Taverner Cup with 180 species is the Bushnell Nighthawks team comprising Bruce Di Labio, Ross Harris, Chris Traynor and driver, Andre Charron, sponsored by Bushnell Sports Optics Worldwide. The team's route included Algonquin, Ottawa, Presqu'île Provincial Park and Chaffey's Locks. The successful strategy involves breeding birds with hope for some migrants. This year's highlight was the Snowy Plover at Presqu'île.

In second place came The Merlins: Bernie Ladouceur, Tony Beck, Bob Bracken and driver, Greg Ross.

The Taverner Cup was a 24 hour birding competition from midnight on Saturday 26 May to midnight Sunday 27 May. Ottawa is the centre of the birding area that ranges in eastern Ontario from Algonquin to Presqu'île, and to western Quebec and Montreal.

A Walk In The Clouds

Pam Blakey

Haliburton Forest is 60,000 acres of privately owned forest in the Haliburton Highlands. The *Forest* borders Algonquin Park on two sides to the northeast. It also borders the 58,000 acres of mostly crown land in the northwest at the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre. The *Forest* comprises high hardwood hills and coniferous pockets in the transition zone where southern hardwoods meet northern conifers in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Region. There are over 50 lakes on the property and over 400 wetlands. Well over 100 bird species nest on the property and many migrants stop over on their way to and from more northern breeding grounds.

The *Forest Canopy Tour* in Haliburton Forest offers a unique experience for birders. The canopy tour is the only one of its kind in North America and is the longest in the world. It is a 750 metre long board walk trail that starts out at 3 metres and gradually ascends to 20 metres above the forest floor. The canopy tour is located on a peninsula of "Old Growth" Eastern White Pine, which is situated on an uninhabited lake. While walking the boardwalk in a climbing harness, birders can expect to see or hear: Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red and White-breasted Nuthatches, Ovenbird, Magnolia Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and more.

There is a 4 metre by 4 metre platform just over half way along the loop trail, which looks out over Marsh Lake. Here we have seen Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Turkey Vulture.

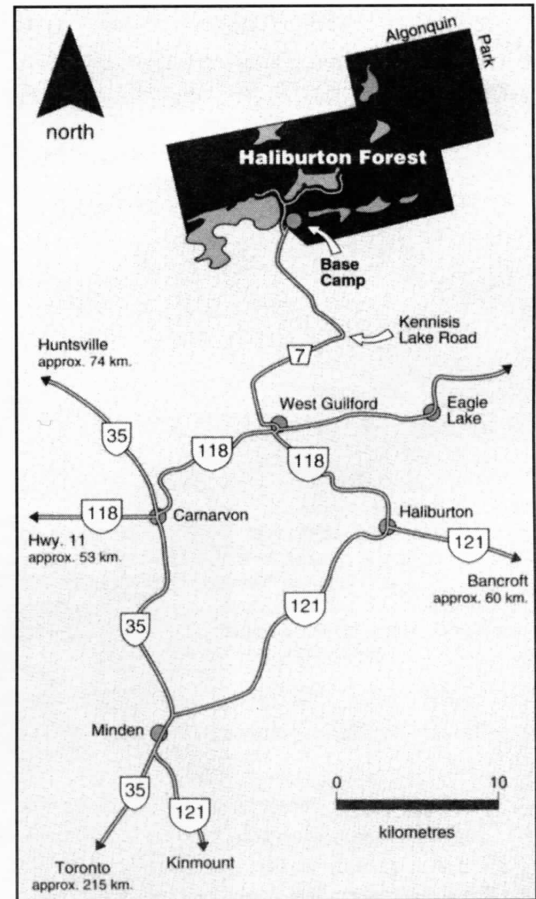
Travelling to and from the canopy tour site in a 24 foot voyageur style canoe, there is the possibility of seeing Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper and Common Loon. Keen birders will see and hear many other species on our travels.

Included is a list of some bird species seen and heard on the property that I compiled with Robert S. Placier, an ornithology professor from Nelsonville, Ohio, who comes to Haliburton Forest and Wild Life Reserve from mid-June to mid-July to do research.

General Information

The Forest Canopy Tour runs from May through the end of October. There are two, sometimes three tours per day, seven days a week. The first tour leaves at 9:00 a.m., returning at 1:00 p.m. The second tour leaves at 1:30 p.m., returning at 5:30. Maximum 12 people per tour. Participants must be 10 years old or older. Cost: age 18 and up \$65 per person; age 10-17 \$40.00 Call for group rates.

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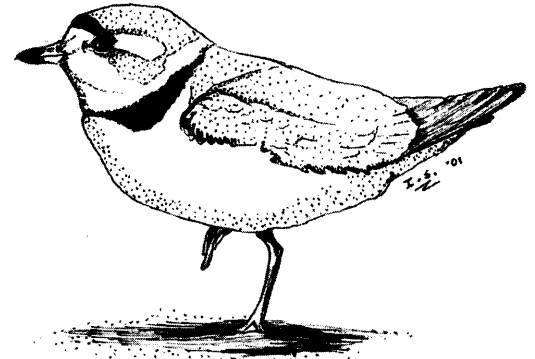
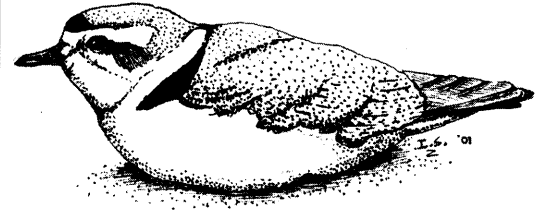
Walkway in the forest canopy. Photo by Pam Blakey

Some Birds of the Haliburton Forest

___ Common Loon	___ Whip-poor-will	___ European Starling
___ Double-crested Cormorant	___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird	___ American Pipit
___ American Bittern	___ Belted Kingfisher	___ Bohemian Waxwing
___ Great Blue Heron	___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	___ Cedar Waxwing
___ Turkey Vulture	___ Downy Woodpecker	___ Nashville Warbler
___ Canada Goose	___ Hairy Woodpecker	___ Northern Parula
___ Wood Duck	___ Black-backed Woodpecker	___ Yellow Warbler
___ American Black Duck	___ Northern Flicker	___ Chestnut-sided Warbler
___ Mallard	___ Pileated Woodpecker	___ Magnolia Warbler
___ Ring-necked Duck	___ Olive-sided Flycatcher	___ Cape May Warbler
___ Lesser Scaup	___ Eastern Wood-Pewee	___ Black-throated Blue Warbler
___ Bufflehead	___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	___ Yellow-rumped Warbler
___ Common Goldeneye	___ Alder Flycatcher	___ Black-throated Green Warbler
___ Hooded Merganser	___ Willow Flycatcher	___ Blackburnian Warbler
___ Common Merganser	___ Least Flycatcher	___ Pine Warbler
___ Osprey	___ Eastern Phoebe	___ Black-and-white Warbler
___ Bald Eagle	___ Great Crested Flycatcher	___ American Redstart
___ Northern Harrier	___ Eastern Kingbird	___ Ovenbird
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	___ Blue-headed Vireo	___ Northern Waterthrush
___ Red-shouldered Hawk	___ Philadelphia Vireo	___ Mourning Warbler
___ Broad-winged Hawk	___ Red-eyed Vireo	___ Common Yellowthroat
___ Red-tailed Hawk	___ Gray Jay	___ Canada Warbler
___ Golden Eagle	___ Blue Jay	___ Scarlet Tanager
___ American Kestrel	___ American Crow	___ Chipping Sparrow
___ Merlin	___ Common Raven	___ Song Sparrow
___ Ruffed Grouse	___ Tree Swallow	___ Swamp Sparrow
___ Spruce Grouse	___ Bank Swallow	___ White-throated Sparrow
___ Virginia Rail	___ Cliff Swallow	___ White-crowned Sparrow
___ Killdeer	___ Barn Swallow	___ Dark-eyed Junco
___ Solitary Sandpiper	___ Black-capped Chickadee	___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak
___ Spotted Sandpiper	___ Red-breasted Nuthatch	___ Indigo Bunting
___ Common Snipe	___ White-breasted Nuthatch	___ Red-winged Blackbird
___ American Woodcock	___ Winter Wren	___ Rusty Blackbird
___ Ring-billed Gull	___ Sedge Wren	___ Common Grackle
___ Herring Gull	___ Golden-crowned Kinglet	___ Brown-headed Cowbird
___ Mourning Dove	___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	___ Baltimore Oriole
___ Black-billed Cuckoo	___ Veery	___ Purple Finch
___ Great Horned Owl	___ Swainson's Thrush	___ Red Crossbill
___ Barred Owl	___ Hermit Thrush	___ White-winged Crossbill
___ Northern Saw-whet Owl	___ Wood Thrush	___ Pine Siskin
___ Common Nighthawk	___ American Robin	___ American Goldfinch
___ Chimney Swift	___ Gray Catbird	___ Evening Grosbeak

Plovers at Presqu'ile

Ian Shanahan



The Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (top) first appeared at Presqu'ile Provincial Park on 24 May 2001 and was seen by many birders for eight days.

The Piping Plover *C. melodus* (bottom) was seen briefly at Presqu'ile on 2 June 2001. It was banded and was the second Piping Plover seen at Presqu'ile this spring.

Illustrations by 15 year old Ian Shanahan of Brighton.

Red-headed Woodpecker and Mouse

Don Kerr

On 14 May 2001, I was at my cottage at Cape Hurd, northern Bruce Peninsula and I saw a Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* at 20 Zora Drive. This was most unusual since this species is uncommon in Bruce County. However, the best was yet to come. On 15 May at 17:20, I saw a Red-headed Woodpecker flying across the road and landing on the top of a wooden utility pole at 20 Zora Drive. Soon I realized that it was pecking at an object that it had placed on top of the pole. After about 4 minutes, it flew to a dead tree with the prey in its beak where I could see that it had a mouse. The head was missing but the remainder was intact. It was a fresh kill as it was flexible and there was blood on the neck. The woodpecker seemed to be trying to wedge the mouse at the junction of a branch in order to peck away at the carcass. It carried the prey to three other snags before returning to the top of the original utility pole. It seemed that the woodpecker is not well equipped for tearing apart such prey because its progress

was slow. After observing the bird for 10 to 15 minutes, it flew beyond my sight still carrying the headless mouse.

In *Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers*, A.C. Bent (1939) notes that this woodpecker is a most resourceful feeder on a greatly varied diet. The main diet is beetles, berries, corn, seeds and sometimes baby birds and eggs. There is one anecdote of a Red-headed Woodpecker attacking a house mouse on a paved street and wounding it; however, the mouse escaped when a passing car scared the bird.

I felt that a Red-headed Woodpecker eating a mouse was quite bizarre although my observations of this species is quite limited. Over the past 20 years of birding in the northern Bruce Peninsula, I have had only a few sightings. There was a nest at Cameron Lake in 1999 (I reported it to the ROM Nest Records) and a probable nesting near Dyers Bay Road in the 1980s.

Brenda Carter: The Next Step

Portrait of an Artist



Great Egret by *Brenda Carter*

Speeding along an Ontario gravel road and late for an appointment, I suddenly slammed on the brakes. The horizontal blip at the tip of a distant tree had a familiar shape. A Northern Shrike! Although common this winter, the season was getting late and this particular bird was stunning in a last ray of sun. Hastily, I fitted the mounted scope on the window. Cold air rushed in and riffled pages of my notebook. I sketched frantically. My appointment would have to wait.

Long fascinated by the European tradition of portraying birds in the wild, I was in the process of taking “the next step”. My friend, Barry Van Dusen, an outstanding illustrator and field artist uses this term to describe a difficult shift. A shift that can push the already demanding skill of sketching into the ability to create finished paintings—deeper works of art that capture the immediacy and dazzle of a field study. Because light changes and birds fly, artists must rely on years of training eye and memory to rekindle the fire of direct experience. I had spent the last three years in intensive training.

Interested in animals and art as a child, I went on to work as an illustrator with the National Museum in Ottawa, learning much from the scientists there. I left this safe job to do field work any way I could, working on the Polar Bear Project in James and Hudson Bay, helping to tag Hyenas in Kenya, and swimming with Penguins in the Galapagos. In 1996 when I was asked to be the Guest Artist for the Baillie Birdathon at Long Point Bird Observatory, I was familiar with only a portion of the birds of North America. Although I had painted in remote areas for over 30 years, I spent most of my time on

landscape and mammals. Birds are the most difficult subject matter to master and I had always wanted an opportunity to sharpen my abilities. Then I got my chance.

In 1999 I embarked on an ambitious project to see how many species I could sketch in North America in one year. Aided by the knowledge and skill of my birding friend Bruce Di Labio, the project exceeded its goals. On 31 December, having traveled from Texas to Churchill and from the East Coast to California, I completed a staggering 514 species of birds. The final watercolour paintings, all sketched on the birds’ own territory, filled five thick binders. The 500th bird, a Varied Thrush in Yosemite Park, made the news on CBC’s *As It Happens* when I phoned to announce the success.

Now, as I worked on the cooperative shrike, I had produced thousands of drawings as well as completing a new total of 552 watercolours for my continuing bird project. I had done my homework! In the waning light, one pose had enough promise for a finished painting. The following day I redrew my sketch on permanent rag paper, washing in colours quickly. I aimed for light, form and character, as I would under outdoor conditions. When it was finished, I felt the final painting captured my field impressions of the handsome bird in the winter light. I was looking forward to a trip south where warmer weather would not freeze my paints!

In Florida I achieved the breakthrough I was looking for. The quiet waders and favourable weather helped make my trip a success. I was able to complete a full size painting in an hour and a half—all in front of a displaying Great Egret in magnificent plumes. More paintings followed; a nesting Mourning Dove, a Snowy Egret and later back in Canada, a basking American Crow with its nictitating membrane protecting its eyes from the cutting wind. My hard work and study paid off—I had taken “the next step” in a difficult but rewarding direction.

For more information on Brenda Carter, visit the website:

<http://www.canalgallery.com>



American Crow basking by *Brenda Carter*

Calling Sapsuckers

Ron Pittaway

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can be called by tapping hardwood dowels together or by tapping a stick on the side of a tree to imitate their distinctive drums and taps. Rushmore (1973) developed a survey method for estimating populations of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

Sapsucker drumming is easily distinguished from the drumming of other woodpeckers because the drum is slower with spaced taps at the end. To call sapsuckers, imitate their loud drumming by a series of hard, short rapid taps lasting about one second with a few slower, louder, spaced taps at the end. Try tapping at different locations, using a sequence of five drums with 10 second pauses; repeat at least three times. A first response often happens during a pause.

Sapsuckers are also attracted to imitations of their feeding and drilling taps on live trees. These taps are different from drumming. Bark feeding taps are much softer than drums, being a short series of very rapid taps.

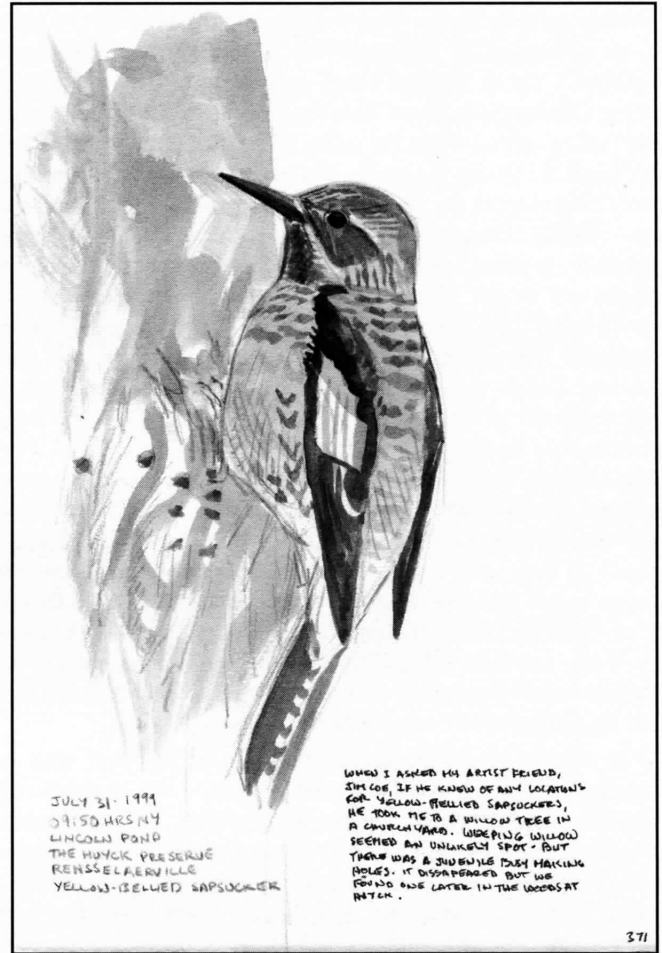
Bark drilling taps are louder and slower than bark feeding taps. These sounds are also easily imitated with sticks or dowels, even try a pencil on a metal object. Better responses can be obtained from reluctant birds by imitating two birds. Male and female drums often vary in resonance, so vary the resonance of your imitations.

Using the above techniques, Rushmore (1973) reported the percentage of responses: prenesting 87%, nesting 61%, postnesting 54%, and premigration 41%.

The most frequent response to tapping imitations is the CREEE call, usually repeated several times. The other call is an alarm call, a drawn out CAY. In the survey of 237 sapsuckers, 49% responded by calling, 28% by drumming, and 23% by coming into view without calling or drumming.

The above information could be useful on Big Days when sapsuckers are hard to find. It also could be helpful during the Breeding Bird Atlas, especially after May, when many sapsuckers have stopped drumming.

Literature Cited: Rushmore, F.M. 1973. Techniques for calling sapsuckers and finding their nesting territories. *US Department of Agriculture Forest Service Research Paper NE-281*. I thank Mark Stabb of Arnprior who told me about this study.



Juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker by Brenda Carter

Northern Bobwhite in *Ornithology in Ontario*

Ron Pittaway

When I first went to Point Pelee in the early 1960s, I heard the distinctive “bob-white” call near the Tip and there was a regular spot to hear them near Wheatley. In the winter of 1973, I saw a bobwhite covey in a brushy and weedy area near Rondeau.

I haven't seen a wild bobwhite in Ontario for many years, although I've seen released birds in Ottawa and Toronto. The bobwhite is now listed as endangered in Ontario by COSEWIC. Why is Ontario's only quail disappearing from the province? Wanting to find out more, I read the account by Harry Lumsden in *Ornithology in Ontario*. Harry is a retired research scientist with the MNR and an authority on gallinaceous birds.

Harry outlines that the bobwhite was probably resident in

extreme southwestern Ontario in pre-settlement times, being associated with the edges of prairie and forest. As southern Ontario was settled, the bobwhite increased and spread northward. Now with intensive agriculture and fewer weedy and shrubby areas, bobwhite are barely holding on in Ontario. Today the stronghold for the Northern Bobwhite is Walpole Island near Lake St. Clair where its preferred habitat still exists.

Next time I have a question about Ontario's birds or early ornithologists, I'll check first *Ornithology in Ontario*. This OFO book should be in every birder's library. It's only \$8 + \$5 postage from Maris Apse, OFO Sales, 511 Chamberlain Lane, Oakville ON L6J 6A2 or 905-338-0318 or <apsemaris@hotmail.com>.

Young Ontario Birder Takes on Texas

Chris Kimber

At 11:59.30 on 27 April 2001, the Common Pauraque at Santa Ana NWR was easily audible. In 30 seconds, it was utterly silent. It remained thus for 12 long minutes. This was the beginning of one of the best birding experiences of my short life, as a member of the American Birding Association/Leica Tropicbirds Youth Birding Team competing in the Great Texas Birding Challenge Lower Coast division. The Tropicbirds team is part of an initiative by the ABA and Leica simultaneously to raise funds for youth programs and give four young birders like myself from across the continent a chance to compete in world-class birding competitions such as the Texas Challenge. Interested youths begin by submitting an application that includes an essay. If accepted, it is then required that you actively raise pledges as part of your role in the team. You are responsible for getting yourself to the location, in my case McAllen, Texas. Beyond this, Leica was generous enough to cover the costs of food, lodging, transportation and even long-distance calls home! Beyond this we were provided with very highly skilled field leaders in Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis. Michael and Louise taught the team a great deal about birds and birding in Texas, and we would have had a much higher Big Day total if they had been allowed to assist us! My team in Texas was composed of team captain Stephanie Dosch, 18, of Bellevue, Washington, Jessie Barry, 16, of Rochester, New York, and Ben Winger, 16, of Cleveland, Ohio. I could not have had better teammates than these three, and we had the luck of all being baffled by something at the same time.

I arrived in McAllen on the afternoon of 25 April, and we spent two and a half days scouting the route and seeing many lifers. On these days we saw the majority of Rio Grande specialties, but were left without a great view of Clay-colored Robin despite hearing several. This jinx was broken by a singing bird on our Big Day at Salineño, when one sang from atop a dead tree. Having visited most spots on our route, Michael and Louise drew up what they felt to be the best schedule based on the scouting of the past week.

Despite the uncooperative Common Pauraque, we were off on 24 hours of birding pleasure. We began at Santa Ana, picked up a Peregrine atop the Chase Bank in McAllen at 12:45 a.m., hit Bentsen State Park for Elf and Barn Owls and headed west. We found Common Poorwill at Santa Margarita Ranch, and reached Falcon County Park for Vermilion Flycatcher ahead of schedule. The ahead of schedule bit wouldn't last long. Our route had us on the Rio Grande at Salineño at dawn, where we added many of the more common birds plus Ringed Kingfisher, Clay-colored Robin, White Ibis and others. We did miss Red-billed Pigeon and Muscovy, two of the hoped-for species. We headed upriver to Chapeño, impossibly missing Brown Jay but picking up Audubon's Oriole. We reached Falcon Dam to find we had missed Muscovy below the spillway by 5 minutes. Two members of our team saw one fly, but I missed it by 5 seconds. I was not pleased.

I rebounded from disappointment, seeing Painted Bunting and Roadrunner at Falcon State Park. About that time we realized we were missing Bullock's Oriole despite seeing abundant Hooded Orioles. We raced east toward Bentsen State

Park, an hour behind schedule. We ticked off Crested Caracara on the fly and pulled off near Rio Grande City for our last shot at Bullock's Oriole. We saw two orioles fly but failed to see them well, leaving us with our biggest dip. A Black-chinned Hummingbird was ointment for the wound, however. Bentsen was a real letdown, but past halfway we got a staked-out Gray Hawk on her nest at Anzalduas County Park, and a surprise Hook-billed Kite as well! Santa Ana NWR was next, and it was hopping. Highlights included Groove-billed Ani, Roseate Spoonbill and a very late Louisiana Waterthrush. Rejuvenated, we hit a number of spots on our way to the coast, seeing Tropical Kingbird, Tamaulipas Crow and Green Parakeet but missing White-tailed Hawk. We finished off with South Padre Island's abundant migrants and saltmarsh. Our final bird was a calling Upland Sandpiper in the finish line parking lot. Our final tally was 192, where we were first and only in our age group. We also tied the third best Lower Coast adult team.

All told it was a super experience for the team and me in particular. I returned home with 87 lifers, and many of these birds I had dreamed about for years such as Green Jay. We saw a good spread of species on our journey, and missed a good spread as well. In spite of Hook-billed Kite, Great Kiskadee and Roseate Spoonbill, nothing sticks in my mind more than missing Bullock's Oriole. That's life. Any young birder should have a try at applying for the ABA/Leica Tropicbirds. You won't be disappointed. Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank all my sponsors including my "corporate sponsor" Wild Birds Unlimited in Etobicoke. It is not too late to sponsor the team. Go to <http://www.americanbirding.org> for details.

Chris Kimber, 16, of Toronto, Ontario, is an avid birder and bander who loves birding South Texas almost as much as looking at gulls. He plans, however, to see Muscovy and Bullock's Oriole on his next Texas birding competition. Chris recommends the Tropicbirds experience without hesitation.

W.E. Saunders Birding Odyssey A Birding Competition

Date of Competition: Midnight, October 1, 2001 to
Midnight, October 2, 2001

(The day following the OFO Annual Meeting at Point Pelee.)

Area: All of Essex County

Categories: Competitive and Recreational

Trophies will be presented to winners in each category.

For more information and for a registration package
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Phone 519-326-6173 or fax 519-326-7925

Presented by Point Pelee National Park and the
Friends of Point Pelee in support of conservation
programs throughout Essex County.

Gonys

Ron Pittaway and Peter Lorimer

The *gonys* (pronounced GO-nees) is one of the most misunderstood terms in birding. The gonys is the outline, often a ridge, at the bottom of the lower mandible, formed by the fusion of the two sides (rami) of the lower bill. The *angle of the gonys* or *gonydeal angle* (pronounced go-NID-e-al) is the point where the lower mandible turns upwards, usually near where the two sides of the bill join (Figures 1, 2 & 5). The gonydeal angle is often an ID feature in loons, grebes, gulls, jaegers, and a few other species, but it is not useful in most NA birds. The length of the gonys is a straight line from the point where the two sides of the bill fuse to the tip of the lower mandible. In some birds, the length of gonys is extremely short, as in pelicans and ducks, or relatively short as in gulls (Figures 1 & 2). In most birds (Figures 3 & 4), the gonys is over half the length of the lower bill. The height or depth of the bill at the gonys is measured from the angle of the gonys to the ridge of the culmen directly above. This measurement is useful in gulls and corvids.

The Gull Watching Guide in *OFO News* 18 (3):1-7 said that the gonys was from the Greek word *genys* meaning chin, from the unabridged Webster's Dictionary (1976). However, Coues (pronounced cows) (1903) says that gonys is a modification of *gonu* (knee). Gonys first meant the junction point of the rami, but now is the entire line of fusion to tip of lower mandible.

We are most grateful to Earl Godfrey, Curator Emeritus, and Michel Gosselin of the Canadian Museum of Nature for information and references. See (1) Baldwin, Oberholser and Worley 1931, *Measurements of Birds*, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Science Publication No. 2, and (2) Coues 1903, *Key to North American Birds*, The Page Company, Boston.



Figure 1. Heermann's Gull has a moderate gonydeal angle or angle of gonys in profile. Photo in Toronto in 2000 by Jean Iron.



Figure 2. Note gradual fusion of two sides (rami) of the lower mandible forming the gonys. Heermann's Gull in Toronto in 2000. Photo by Jean Iron.

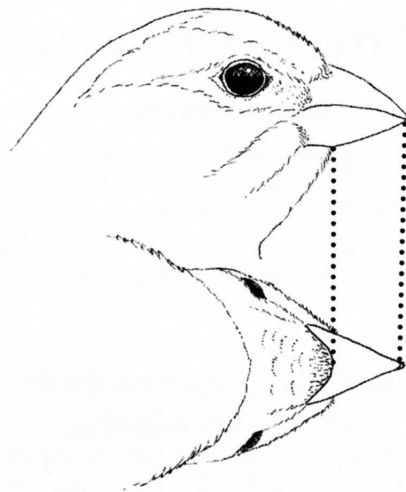


Figure 3. The gonys is of variable length. In most birds it is over half the length of the lower bill. House Finch by Peter Lorimer.

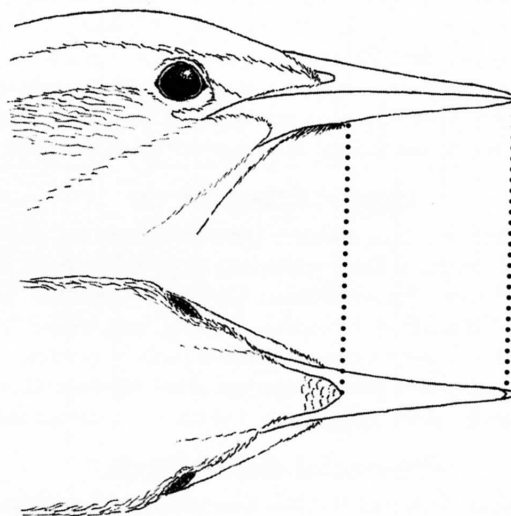


Figure 4. In most birds there is a slight or no angle of the gonys. Western Meadowlark by Peter Lorimer.

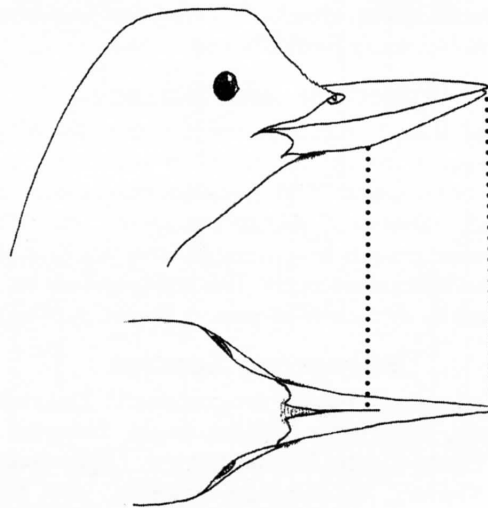


Figure 5. Yellow-billed Loon has a steep gonydeal angle. Left line shows where rami gradually fuse at the angle of gonys. Note short longitudinal groove after point of fusion. Drawing by Peter Lorimer.

Ontario Bird Laws

Ron Pittaway

This is the third in a series on birds regulated by Ontario's new *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* (FWCA) (1997). Previously, I reported on New Falconry Laws and raptors in the February 2000 issue of *OFO News* 18(1):7, and on Cormorant Law and Control in Ontario in the June 2000 issue of *OFO News* 18(2):1. I also list the 11 birds protected by Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*.

Specially Protected Birds (Other Than Raptors)

The 8 species of specially protected birds under the FWCA are the American White Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Gray Jay, Blue Jay, Common Raven, Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Birds may be added or removed from this list by regulation. The Act says "A person shall not hunt or trap a specially protected bird or any other bird that belongs to a species that is wild by nature and is not a game bird" and "A person shall not destroy, take or possess the nest or eggs of a bird that belongs to a species that is wild by nature. This provincial Act generally does not apply to those birds, nests and eggs regulated by the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act*."

Unprotected Birds

The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* does not protect the following 6 birds or their nests and eggs in most of Ontario: American Crow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, and House Sparrow. However, the Act does protect these 6 birds in provincial parks and provincial crown game preserves. Also, the federal *National Parks Act* protects all birds, nests, and eggs in national parks.

Provincial Game Birds

The provincial *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* regulates the hunting of the following 9 game birds in Ontario: Gray Partridge, Ring-necked Pheasant, Spruce Grouse, Willow Ptarmigan, Rock Ptarmigan, Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Wild Turkey, and Northern Bobwhite. Note: The hunting of ducks, geese, woodcock, snipe, and rails is regulated by the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

Education and Science

The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* gives the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) the power to authorize a person to capture, kill or possess wildlife (includes provincially regulated birds) for educational and scientific purposes. The MNR also issues possession permits for provincial birds that died of natural causes or were killed accidentally. This authority does not apply to birds regulated by the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

Endangered Species

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act* protects 11 birds: American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, King Rail, Piping Plover, Eskimo Curlew, Loggerhead Shrike, Kirtland's Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow. In addition, the national Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) lists Northern Bobwhite, Barn Owl, and Acadian Flycatcher as endangered in Ontario, but this designation gives them no extra protection.

Notes From The OBRC

Peter Burke

On 24 March 2001, the OBRC met at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto for its Annual General Meeting. The Committee for 2000 voted on 125 records with an 82% acceptance rate. Most of these reports were from late 1999 and 2000; however, 15 reports were reviewed that were "pre-OBRC" from before 1982. Many were specimens in the collections of the ROM and the Canadian Museum of Nature in Aylmer, Quebec. The OBRC Report for 2000 will appear in the August 2001 issue of *Ontario Birds*.

Townsend's Solitaire has been removed from the review list for northern Ontario. It was determined that over the past 10 years there had been more than 5 individuals per year on average, thus determining that this species be dropped. The establishment of the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory on Lake Superior has been largely responsible for the increase in the number of records in the 1990s.

Retiring members, Bob Curry and Ron Pittaway, were thanked for their past three years of service. Bob and Ron have served as Chair in the past and both have performed countless hours of service for the OBRC. Combined, they have served OBRC for 26 years, including 11 years as Chair. Several members thought it would be interesting for readers to see who has served since the Committee's inception, so we have included a 20 year chart of OBRC members on page 11.

This is my first term as Chair and I look forward to working with members of the 2001 Committee. A few of the goals I hope to steer the Committee towards include the computerization of the OBRC database, and a revamping of the Rare Bird Documentation Guidelines.

Kayo Roy continues to perform the crucial role of Secretary in 2001. His efforts are the lifeblood of the committee's work. Kayo steps down after this year and will be replaced by Bill Crins. Bill is co-editor of *Ontario Birds* and a veteran birder from Burlington and Peterborough. We look forward to his help.

Nick Escott and David Beadle are the two new members for 2001. Nick has served twice previously and brings valuable knowledge of bird status from northwestern Ontario to the committee. Dave is internationally known to birders as a illustrator of works such as *Sparrows of North America*. His world birding background will aid the committee greatly.

Three new members for 2002 to 2004 will be elected at the fall meeting in October of 2001. Other items on the fall agenda include how to deal with records that predate the OBRC, and the inclusion of the OBRC guidelines on the OFO website.

If you have questions about the OBRC, please contact me. Peter Burke, Chair OBRC at 519-679-3551.

E-mail: peter.burke2@sympatico.ca

To obtain a Rare Bird Report Form, go to the OFO website: <http://www.interlog.com/~oforeport.htm>

Send rare bird reports to:

Kayo Roy, Secretary OBRC

13 Kinsman Court

Fonthill ON L0S 1E3

E-mail: kayoroy@niagara.com

Ontario Bird Records Committee 1982 to 2001

OBRC Members	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01
Bob Curry	C	C	C				C	S	S				C	C				C	C	
Ross James	VS	VS									M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M		
Alan Wormington			VS	VS	VS															
David Brewer				C																
Paul Pratt																				
Don Sutherland																				
Tom Hince																				
Dennis Rupert					C															
Doug McRae										C										
Ron Pittaway							C				C	C	S							
Mike Runtz																				
Kevin McLaughlin																				
Glenn Coady							S	S												
Mark Gawn																				
Jim Mountjoy																				
Ian Jones																				
Ron Tozer								C	C								C	C		
George Wallace																				
Margaret Bain										S	S	S								
Nick Escott																				
Richard Knapton																				
Rob Dobos														S	C/S	S	S			
Peter Burke																				C
Kayo Roy																		S	S	S
Mark Peck																			M	M
David Beadle																				

= Voting Member
 C = Chair
 VS = Secretary (voting)
 S = Secretary (non-voting)
 M = Museum Liaison

OFO Trip Minesing Swamp

Dave Milsom

On a gorgeous spring day, 29 April, 29 OFO participants headed for the new location of Minesing Swamp, 50 square km of swamp, fen, boreal and carolinian forest, willow carr and bottomlands, lying between Barrie and Angus in Simcoe County. Because so much of this Ramsar site is inaccessible without a canoe, we drove to many peripheral sections. We were rewarded with 71 species, including numerous ducks and raptors. We counted 27 Great Blue Heron nests from a distant but spectacular overlook from an ancient terrace of a glacial lake. Most notable were Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Pied-billed Grebe, Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Redhead, Canvasback, Winter Wren, Pileated Woodpecker, Vesper Sparrow, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Bluebird.

We also saw a River Otter, Porcupine, Garter Snake, Green, Leopard and Wood Frogs, Green Darner dragonflies, Spring Azure, Mourning Cloak, Comma, Painted Lady and Red Admiral butterflies. Early flowers included Marsh Marigold, Skunk Cabbage, Trout Lily and Coltsfoot.

To reach this area, drive west on Hwy 90 from Hwy 400 at Barrie, or east from the town of Angus. Drive to the northern end of Mackinnon, Vespra Concessions 12 and 13, to the Rail-trail west of CR 28 (George Johnston Rd), and to the western end of Jodrup from the village of Minesing.

Future OFO Trips

August 25 (Saturday) **NEW TRIP
Palgrave, Tottenham, Schomberg.
Leader: Dave Milsom.**

Meet at **8 a.m.** on Patterson Sideroad just off Road 50 in Palgrave to visit the Palgrave Conservation Area, Tottenham area sod farms and the Schomberg sewage lagoons. Early fall migrants.

August 26 (Sunday) **NEW TRIP
Durham Region and Lake Ontario
Marshes. Leader: Rayfield Pye.**

Meet at **8 a.m.** at the southwest corner of the Pickering GO Train station parking lot. From the east, exit at Liverpool Rd and go south to Bayly St. From the west, exit at Whites Rd and go south to Bayly. Follow Bayly east to the Pickering GO Station located on Bayly St. one block east of Liverpool Rd. Hydro Marsh, Corner Marsh, Cranberry Marsh, Second Marsh. Early fall migrants.

**September 9 (Sunday)
Presqu'ile Provincial Park**

Leaders: Don and Ian Shanahan.

Meet at **8 a.m.** at Beach 4 parking lot. Park entrance fee. Fall migrants, shorebirds, raptors.

**September 15 (Saturday)
Hawk Hill, High Park, Toronto**

Hosts: Don Barnett and the Greater Toronto Raptor Watch.

Meet at **10 a.m.** in the Grenadier Restaurant parking lot. Use *only* the Bloor St. entrance at High Park Avenue.

**September 22 (Saturday)
Amherst Island and Area.
Leader: Peter Good.**

Meet at **7:15 a.m. for 7:30 ferry** (2001 cost \$5.00/car). The ferry dock is in Millhaven, about 20 minutes west of Kingston on the Loyalist Parkway (Hwy 33) near where County Road 4 (formerly Hwy 133) meets the lakeshore. Shorebirds, gulls, fall migrants.

**October 6 (Saturday)
Hawk Hill, High Park, Toronto.**

Hosts: Don Barnett and the Greater Toronto Raptor Watch. Meet at **10 a.m.** in the Grenadier Restaurant parking lot. Use *only* the Bloor St. entrance at High Park Avenue.

October 27 (Saturday) **NEW TRIP
Hawk Cliff and area, south of London.
Leaders: Pete Read and Ian Platt.**

Meet at **9:30 a.m.** From Hwy 401 interchange 177, take Hwy 4 south (Sunset Road) through west St. Thomas until it becomes Sunset Drive. Continue about 8-10 km to Union. Turn east onto County Road 27, Sparta Line Road. Go east one road, about 3 km, to County Road 22 (Fairview Road). Head south. The second road south is County Road 24, (Dexter Line) and a stop sign. Looking south you will see the sign for Hawk Cliff. Continue south on the dirt road to lake. Park along road allowance. Raptors, waterfowl, gulls, late migrants.

December (Sunday) Niagara River Gull Watch. Leaders: Jean Iron and Ron Tozer. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** in Niagara-on-the-Lake at Queens Royal Park. Glaucous, Iceland, Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed and other gulls.

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