



OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Jim Rising Distinguished Ornithologist

Jean Iron

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Jim Rising will be the 2004 and seventh recipient of OFO's Distinguished Ornithologist Award.

Jim Rising is well known in Ontario and North America for his valuable ornithological research and contributions to our knowledge of the taxonomy and identification of North American birds.

As professor of ornithology at the University of Toronto, Jim has taught courses in evolutionary theory, field ornithology, freshwater and marine biology and subarctic ornithology. He has supervised many graduate students, including OFO member Alvaro Jaramillo.

Jim is a member of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) and is the only Canadian member on the AOU Check-list Committee. This committee decides the names and taxonomic order of North American birds.

Jim is best known for his studies of sparrows and Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles. He has published 62 peer-reviewed scientific papers, contributed chapters in 20 books, authored or co-authored four books, and written several popular articles about birds. Jim regularly writes articles for *OFO News*, providing Ontario birders with insights into changes to the AOU Check-list. His identification guides to sparrows are recognized for their thorough treatment.

Jim wrote the species accounts for 10 species in the first *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario*. He co-authored six species accounts in *The Birds of North America* and two chapters in *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behaviour*. Jim is an active member of the birding community. He contributes regularly to the popular e-mail listserv *Birdchat*.

Jim Rising was nominated by the editors of Ontario Birds: Ron Tozer, Bill Crins and Ron Pittaway. The Distinguished Ornithologist Award will be presented to Jim Rising by Bruce Falls, his longtime friend and colleague, at the OFO Annual Convention and Banquet in Oakville on Saturday, 2 October 2004.

Fishing For New Birders

Ron Pittaway

We often hear that birding is the most popular and fastest growing outdoor wildlife pursuit in North America. But is this an urban legend? The American Birding Association (ABA) has 22,000 members and the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) has 1,250 members. ABA and OFO members are serious birders, yet these numbers are small considering respective large populations.

Fishing is the most popular outdoor wildlife activity in North America. There are 600,000 licensed anglers in Ontario. This number does not include anglers under 18 years and those 65 and older who do not require a licence. Thus serious anglers easily number over 1,000,000 in the province. Revenues from licence sales go to managing the fishery resource. The political power of anglers is considerable on environmental issues.

Where can we recruit new birders? Recently I heard several stories about anglers who became birders. One story went like this: "My friend just loved fishing. He fished all the time. I took him birding and he really liked it. He bought binoculars and a field guide and now goes birding every spare moment." Many birders were or are anglers. Birding and fishing have many features in common. Both combine the excitement of the chase and thrill of catching the big one.

Ontario's million plus anglers include thousands of potential birders. If you have friends who get a rush from fishing, introduce them to the skills and joys of birding. Some will get hooked on birds.

Harry Lumsden

Member of the Order of Canada

Stan Long

Harry Lumsden, OC, of Aurora, Ontario, was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada on 27 January 2004. This announcement was made by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson in Ottawa. By the strong example Harry Lumsden has shown over the years, he has proved that by working together, we can make a lasting contribution to conservation. A retired biologist and research scientist with Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources, Harry Lumsden is an international authority on the grouse family and waterfowl. As well, he has shared his knowledge of aviculture with the general public. He has also inspired volunteers to follow his lead in breeding Canada Geese and Trumpeter Swans, successfully reintroducing these birds to Ontario. Known throughout the birding community for his passion and dedication, Harry continues to stimulate public interest in wildlife conservation.

We are proud to congratulate OFO member, Harry Lumsden, on his appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada.



Harry Lumsden scouting for Trumpeter Swans near North Bay in May 2002. Photo by *Bev Kingdon*.

To Catch a Trumpeter

Bev Kingdon



Photo by: *Jocelyne Ares*

Harry Lumsden inspecting a Trumpeter Swan.

It was difficult for me to appreciate the seriousness and the prestige associated with the Order of Canada given the manner in which I was first advised of this tremendous recognition for Harry Lumsden. Harry and I play good guy and bad guy to tag swans since they recall all too vividly their past encounters with him. So I catch them for him.

To sex a swan is rather intrusive and requires a great deal of caution or your clothing is likely to become multi-colored. In January 2004 at one such encounter we were both down on our knees in Burlington in minus 25 degree weather with a captured swan and I was covered in the swan's donation. It was at this point that Harry remarked that he received word yesterday that he was being awarded the Order of Canada. I looked at him in his patched hip waders and at me with my newly decorated clothing and we both burst into laughter. This moment surely was a pure picture of contrast that will remain with me for all of my life.

Bird Bills — ID Tip

Ron Pittaway

In this modern era of detailed feather fringe birding, bills are an under-appreciated way of identifying birds. Top birders instinctively use bill size and shape to clinch an identification. Learn bill terminology: upper mandible (maxilla), lower mandible, culmen, gonyes, gonydeal angle, gape, nostril, nail, hook, tooth, notch, cutting edge, lamellae and so forth. Study bill shapes in the field and in photos to improve your birding skills. Examples of using bills to separate similar groups of birds are orioles versus tanagers and vireos versus warblers. Even among warbler bills, the trained human eye can discern subtle distinctions in many species. When you are next confronted with a difficult bird to identify, carefully note its bill size, shape, length and colour. The bill will often identify a mystery species.

My Introduction To A Shrike

Bev Kingdon

On 31 December 2000, I was standing at the window of our cottage near North Bay, Ontario, looking out at the variety of whites and greys in the snow and clouds when my mind wandered back to a TV program I had seen. It was the story of a Gray Jay that someone spends time with in Algonquin Park. I had never seen a Gray Jay but thought to myself how nice it would be if one would move onto the cottage property.

It was New Year's Eve and we were entertaining that evening. My thoughts changed to the list of preparations and I turned towards the kitchen. As I turned, a flying flash of gray caught the corner of my eye.

I quickly stepped back to the window with the thoughts that a Gray Jay may have chosen our trees for a new residence. I looked to the ground where I had seen the flash of colour dart. There, flailing in the snow was a beautiful grey bird. My immediate thought was that the bird had misjudged the distance from the branch to the ground and was seriously injured.

The flailing and flapping caused the powdery snow to fluff away from around the bird, leaving a cavity. Under the grey bird was a starling. To my amazement I realized that the grey bird had the starling pinned to the ground by the nape of the neck and a ferocious battle was ensuing. The grey bird was strangling the starling and slapping it with both wings. I watched a 50/50 strength fight between the two birds for over 40 minutes before the starling succumbed. I tried to recall what I could of the program about the Gray Jay in Algonquin Park and just couldn't remember anything like this happening.

A quick reference to my bird book identified the bird as a shrike, presumably a Northern Shrike. Once the shrike had battled the starling into a motionless state, it flew to the branch above the prey and stayed perched on the limb. Five minutes later the starling started to flutter and the shrike renewed the attack.

Once again with the starling motionless the shrike flew to the branch above. It puffed its feathers up until it looked like the fluffy snow that was sitting amongst the pine needles of the tree. It then shuffled until it was next to the trunk, and continued to move around until its entire chest feathers took on a green tinge from the reflection of the pine needles. At this point the bird was like a chameleon. It camouflaged into the tree and was practically invisible. I could never have spotted the bird at this point, had I not watched it manoeuvre itself into that position. It stayed there, perfectly still for 40 minutes. Three starlings

landed on the branch beside it, flew to the ground near the dead starling and then flew away. The shrike never moved. Four Blue Jays were screaming and darting everywhere and still the shrike never moved.

At the end of the 40 minute rest period the shrike flew to the ground and for the next ten minutes made numerous attempts to carry the starling away. The starling was just too heavy for the shrike to get it airborne. It kept grasping the carcass with its claws but only managed to drag it about 60 cm. The shrike then put the starling onto its back and started to pluck off the neck and crop feathers. It then proceeded to eat out the crop, spitting away what appeared to be the crop's contents. Its next move was to open a small line down the chest area of the carcass. It then proceeded to eat the innards. It had first attacked the starling at 1:20 p.m. and at 5:10 p.m. the shrike finally left the area.

On two separate occasions during the time that the shrike was eating the starling, a snowmobile came across our front yard to within four metres of the bird. All it did was to mantle its wings, quietly over its food. After it flew away I looked at the carcass before deciding to place it into our garage for the night. I could hardly tell that the bird had an empty cavity. It was cleaned out in such a manner that the chest feathers covered the opening.

On day two I replaced the carcass in the same general area. The shrike did not come back. On day three, however, around 10 a.m., the shrike returned and started to eat the frozen remains. This time it ate from the neck and shoulder area. About 5% of the back of the neck was still attached when it left for the day.

When it returned on the fourth day it started to eat all the chest feathers. There were times that it had so many feathers in its mouth that I could not see its beak or eyes. The way the feathers disappeared into its mouth it looked like it was using a vacuum action to ingest them. After it ate all the chest feathers it turned the starling over and ate the two meaty areas at the lower back, above the tail area of the bird. It then separately ate two individual feathers that were as long as my little finger. It individually took each one sideways in its mouth and with just a flip of its head downed the long ones. That completed, it flew off.

Unfortunately I ran out of time and had to return to Burlington. I imagine it will be a very long time before I am ever able to study such an exciting event only five metres from the comfort of a cabin chair at a window.

Birding Software Review

Geoff Carpentier

Birder's Diary v.3 World Edition. 2003. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, N.Y. Thayer's Birding Software. US\$124.95.

I started birding when I was about 13 years old and living in northern Ontario. This was in the days when computers were as big as houses and a personal use PC was only a fantastic dream. I carried a small hardcover notebook with me wherever I went and dutifully recorded my meager sightings therein. One day I lost the book and was heart broken as three years of notes were suddenly gone—no opportunity for a backup here! Still I persisted with the written record until the mid 1970s when I eventually moved into the computer age and used cumbersome spreadsheets to track my records. Finding individual sightings or preparing trip lists was problematic.

And then along came Birder's Diary v.3—World Edition! Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not a computer geek by any means, but rather an average PC user whose comfort level is usually low. This said, I immediately felt at home with the program as it used a familiar windows format similar to the one on my own computer.

And so I jumped right in and tried to figure out how to use Birder's Diary. The first thing I found was that it was very user friendly, and even had a humorous mascot, Petey the Parrot, who greets you when you sign in and guides you through all processes and exercises. Petey led me to the fifty help videos that explained everything this powerful program can do. Each video is short, 5 to 10 minutes, but is fact-packed and informative. The "Help" menu is equally useful and friendly. All this is supported by an on-line service that is equally friendly. Visit www.thayerbirding.com to see for yourself. I found it helpful to print out the on-line help manual so I could quickly read the text and start entering and sorting my data. It covers everything the videos do and has numerous hyperlinks to provide further guidance to the reader.

I have been trying to decide what to tell you about the attributes of this program because there is so much offered. It literally will meet every one of your needs, for both the novice to the hard core lister to the professional ornithologist. It covers 10,241 species and has a built-in checklist for every country in the world. All known names for a species and a total of 20,000 aliases are included to help with cross referencing of your records.

Features within the program are designed and separated specifically to serve the appropriate client group. For example, there are several advanced features that allow you to modify the program to suit your needs such as adding subspecies and morphs to creating custom master checklists. For the less ambitious or the novice, factory default settings are built-in to accommodate most of the

average user's needs. The data can be entered in English, French, Spanish and German and can be sorted by taxonomy, first or last word of the common name or by scientific name. Information can be typed in based on predetermined or customized checklists, trip lists or by individual species (keyboard). Or if you're a little lazy, it can be operated as a voice activated database. You can even track an unlimited number of individual lists if you choose.

You can sort your records in as many ways as you choose from your own back yard to the world at large. The thoughtful use of drop down menus is complemented by the ease by which you can add your preferred local spots and then link them immediately to all the other lists. Let me explain. Let's say I want to track all the birds I have ever seen in my yard, but I want to add them to my year list, life list, or Ontario list where appropriate, all at the same time. I simply choose the appropriate "filters" and I can do this in seconds. Cross references to my other lists are automatically upgraded by the software. Lists are populated upwards so if I saw a lifer in my yard, and presuming I had established a variety of lists for record tracking, all the lists above that list, i.e., Ajax, Durham Region, Ontario, Canada, North America, World, would be automatically updated once I had recorded it for my yard list. This is such a simple, but powerful, program to use. Extreme listers will be in their glory.

SmartSearch! is a nice feature that assists the user in quickly finding any entry or bird name at lightening speed. Type in the first letter of a bird name and the feature self-activates and it closes in on your choice rapidly as each letter is entered in turn. It's quick and easy.

Report writing is also dead simple and can be customized to the user's individual needs or "canned" reports can be chosen. You can print your life list numerically catalogued, sorted by area such as ABA, your yard, county or by trip, etc. The limits are set by the user and the locations chosen to record sightings.

Surprisingly, the developers even anticipated the current trends of some users to go beyond birding and have included a list of North American butterflies and a world list of whales and dolphins. They have provided a mechanism for the user to create many other checklists from dragonflies to mammals, which are supported by all the features of the software. The developers also advise they are designing more lists to be included in future versions of the program, but they don't specify which ones.

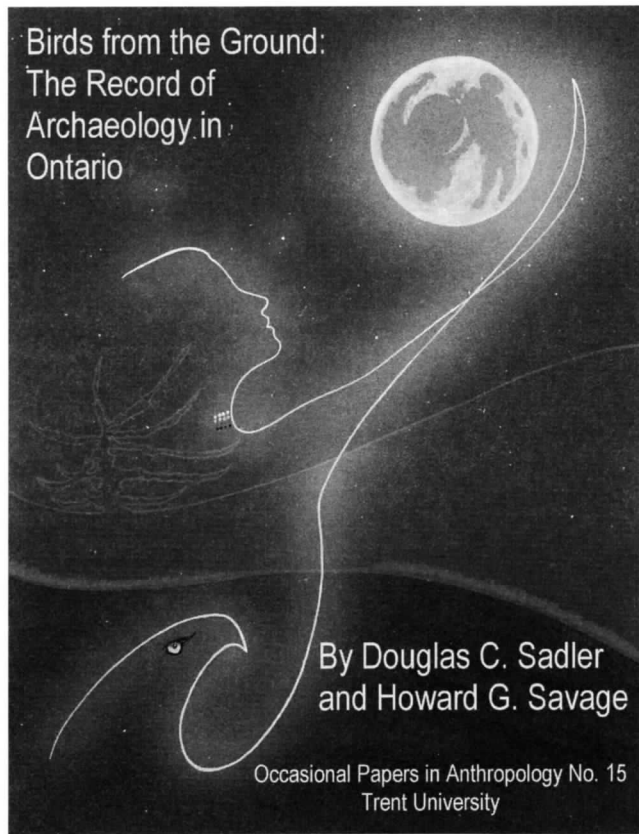
In case you want to be amused, Petey the Parrot has a repertoire of bad jokes he can recite to amuse you. I know what you're thinking, but I'll bet you'll listen to them and share them with your fellow birders.

If you're looking for an effective, friendly and inexpensive way to track all your records and to produce useful and attractive reports, try this software. I know you won't be disappointed.

Book Review

Geoff Carpentier

Birds From the Ground: The Record of Archaeology in Ontario. 2003. Douglas C. Sadler and Howard G. Savage. Department of Anthropology, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. E-mail: anthro@trentu.ca. Softcover, 324 pages. \$20+\$5 shipping and handling. ISSN 0825-589X.



Right from the first moment you pick up this book you will realize what a gem it is. The cover is an original piece of artwork created by David Johnston, a local Ojibway artist. As you move into the first pages of the book you will understand why Doug is renowned as a superb storyteller. His abilities are demonstrated as we are drawn back thousands of years in time to when a native hunter gathers his equipment and heads out to hunt for food for his clan. Quickly, we are brought to the present where today's archaeologists explore the remnants of these former societies.

The purpose of the book is to research and document Ontario's ornithological records as represented by skeletal remains, bones and fragments. This daunting task was undertaken expertly. The results are shared in this book and unquestionably enhance our knowledge of presence, range, abundance and migration of Ontario's birds at a time when no scientists existed.

The format of the book is pleasing. It begins with a

short essay on the ornithological significance of archaeology, culturally impacting agents, faunal seasonality/range, and highlights of the findings. This is augmented by another short paper on Ontario's archaeological periods.

Now for the meat of the book. The authors begin by defining some of the limitations and successes associated with the preservation of bones and specimens over time. Likewise, they describe some of the factors that degrade or destroy these artefacts, such as climate, soil acidity, and fire. Despite this, a significant amount of information persists and is documented herein. A complete list of all of the records of the 125 species and 3 subspecies found is provided and cross indexed to tables and maps for each site. Sadly, some of the species documented are now extinct, namely Passenger Pigeon, Eskimo Curlew and Carolina Parakeet, or were extirpated such as Trumpeter Swan and Whooping Crane.

Each of the 244 sites is catalogued in detail: dates of occupation, name/location of site, cultural groups, faunal analysis, reports/papers published, species identified, and a comment section where notes on the specimens are detailed. These data are supplemented with 124 pages of maps organized by species. For every species described, two maps are presented, one for southern Ontario and one for Ontario as a whole. If I had to offer one suggestion, it would be to eliminate the maps of southern Ontario, which did not add any information not shown on those provided for Ontario as a whole. This could have resulted in savings of over 60 pages of the book. Highlighting the sites in colour on these maps would have enhanced their readability.

An interesting series of photographs of bird related artefacts is offered, with references to origin provided. The book then closes with selected appendices that speak in part to climatic changes in Ontario since these prehistoric periods, an essay on wildlife in Upper Canada in the 1840s, another paper on Canada in the 17th century, and then a teaser where the authors start to explore what lies outside Ontario's borders. This appendix reports on 24 more sites from Quebec, Newfoundland, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York, including one exciting record of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker from Michigan. The book closes with an excellent reference list, biographies of the authors and two excellent pull-out colour maps that show the locations of all the sites referenced in the book.

This publication that is long overdue, and now having seen it, was worth the wait. This superb work deserves credit and recognition. It has opened an entirely new source of information to the scientific community and hopefully will spark additional interest for further research in other jurisdictions. I highly recommend this book to those who care about birds and our heritage.

OBRC Notes

Bob Curry

The Records Committee held its Annual Meeting at the Royal Ontario Museum on Sunday 28 March 2004. Once again, we thank Mark Peck of the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology for his usual generous and expert support in providing specimens for examination and reports from the OBRC files and otherwise making us feel comfortable.

There are a number of changes to the Committee composition. Dave Beadle and Nick Escott have come to the end of their three-year terms. We thank them for their careful consideration of records and contributions to the Committee. We welcome back two long-time and highly experienced members, Kevin McLaughlin and Alan Wormington.

Ron Pittaway has retired early in order to pursue other goals. He has served the committee for a total of 12 years over its lifetime and has been both chair and secretary. This is a great loss as there is no one in the province with a greater understanding of the finer points of identification of Ontario birds and of the potential pitfalls involved in reporting rarities. His has been a voice of learned caution. We are pleased that Margaret Bain has agreed to complete Ron's term; this will provide stability as she has given nine years of previous service.

We are pleased to announce that Kayo Roy will be a special assistant to the secretary, Bill Crins. He will follow up on reports of Review List Species and encourage observers to submit documentation. Kayo is known to the entire Ontario birding community and is the ideal person for this task. We anticipate an even higher percentage of rare birds sighted in Ontario to make their way into the Annual Report.

One final change is that Ron Tozer has taken over as chair for 2004. Ron summarized the frequency of occurrence of a number of species over the past five years. He examined the frequency with which regular rarities such as Eurasian Wigeon, Ruff, Black-headed Gull, Varied Thrush and others have been reported and printed in various sources over the past five years. At this time none of these species has been added to the Review List.

We plan to make increasing use of the OFO web site. Some fine-tuning was done to the Operating Guidelines and this document should soon be posted and available to all OFO members who are interested in how the Committee functions. In addition to facilitate and speed up voting Committee members will soon be able to examine and vote on reports posted to the website.

We have sought outside expert opinion on a couple of 2003 birds that will not therefore appear in the 2003 An-

nual Report. The reporters will be notified and the results will be published in next year's Annual Report. As announced in the previous OBRC Notes we have set 31 December as the deadline for submission of reports which will appear in the Annual Report for that year.

As I write this, the peak rarity season is upon us. Once again we strongly encourage Ontario birders to submit documentation for all Review List species. *Ontario Birds* is the only province-wide publication where the full details of rare bird species appear. An online form is available on the OBRC page of the OFO website:

<http://www.ofo.ca/obrc/>

Or, please submit written forms to:

Bill Crins, OBRC Secretary
170 Middlefield Road
Peterborough ON K9J 8G1
E-mail: obrc@ofo.ca

Three New Publications

Hawks and Owls of the Great Lakes Region and Eastern North America. Chris Earley. 2004. Firefly Books Ltd. 128 pages with 180 colour photos, range maps, bibliography, comparison charts, index. CAN\$16.95 paperback, \$24.95 hardcover.

We are pleased to announce the publication of a new field guide by OFO member Chris Earley. This guide is lavishly illustrated with outstanding photos by Tony Beck, Scott Fairbairn, Jim Flynn, Wayne Lynch, Robert McCaw, John Reaume, Brian Small and Brian K. Wheeler.

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Hawks and Owls of Eastern North America. Donald S. Heintzelman. 2004. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey. 203 pages with mixture of colour and black & white photos. US\$29.95 hardcover.

This is an excellent companion book to your raptor field guides. It covers in detail all the hawks and owls found in the East.

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Bird Almanac: A Guide to Essential Facts and Figures of the World's Birds. 2004. David M. Bird. Key Porter Books Ltd. 460 pages. US\$24.95 softcover.

The almanac is a handy collection of facts, tables and illustrations providing concise information on many aspects of birding and avian biology.

Swallows Mob Northern Goshawk

Randy Horvath

On 24 May 2003 at about 1040h, I was standing on the bridge over Little River at the entrance to the Ganatchio Trail in east Windsor. It was a cool and breezy Saturday morning with overcast skies. Numerous swallows were flying about, chiefly Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows, with the odd Northern Rough-winged and a number of Chimney Swifts. But apart from a lone Forster's Tern that flew right over my head, there was not much to see.

Suddenly the twittering and chirping around me changed to strident chattering. I looked up and spotted a raptor soaring directly over the river about 75 metres downstream. It only took a few seconds to realize that it was an juvenile Northern Goshawk, a notably late migrant for this date.

As I watched the goshawk spiral higher and higher, I was struck by the behaviour of the swallows. They were clearly agitated by the appearance of the accipiter, vocalizing their shrill alarm calls and swarming all around it. A few intrepid individuals were particularly aggressive in their efforts to repel it, attacking from all angles. It seemed a classic instance of mobbing behaviour, but one I had never witnessed before.

The goshawk was gaining altitude quickly, evidently determined to escape the frenzied harassment of the swallows. At one point it thrust out both feet in what looked like an attempt to pluck a swallow from the air as it zipped past, almost within reach. Finally, the goshawk pulled its wings in and descended in a long, shallow dive, disappearing beyond the trees about one kilometre away. The episode lasted less than a minute and so far as I could tell involved the Tree and Barn Swallows exclusively.

This aerial kaffuffle was a remarkable event. The site is often visited by Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, but never had I seen them bothered in this fashion. Nor had I ever seen swallows mob the Red-tailed Hawks that frequent the area. In fact, the only times I could recall seeing swallows display aggression anywhere were when people wandered too close to Tree Swallow nest boxes at Hillman Marsh.

When I began to consult the literature, I was surprised to learn that mobbing behaviour by swallows is not unusual. Indeed, Sibley (2001) mentions swallows first in his list of bird families that exhibit this phenomenon. He remarks that "Collective mobbing by several species probably serves both to keep control of potential threats (to nest sites) in the area and to teach younger birds how to recognize predators". It was therefore inevitable that I should eventually witness the spectacle myself.

My efforts to find similar documented accounts were in vain. In terms of aggression generally, Tree Swallows are known to combat bluebirds for preferred nest sites, and will of course battle other Tree Swallows (Bent 1942). But I found no mention of the species mobbing predatory birds.

As for the Barn Swallow, Bent (1942) recounts personally seeing a pair of birds "chasing and attacking a sharp-shinned hawk that came too near their nesting place; the hawk retreated, but the swallows followed it high into the air and it finally tired of their attacks and disappeared". So there is evidence that this species will not tolerate the presence of an accipiter close to the nest.

It is noteworthy that the incident I observed occurred nowhere near Tree or Barn Swallow nest sites. I am thoroughly acquainted with the Little River area and there were no Barn Swallows nesting where the goshawk appeared. Tree Swallows nest throughout the area, but chiefly in the hedgerows hundreds of metres away. Moreover, all the swallows involved were likely adults, though this was difficult to ascertain. All this could point to mobbing as a powerful instinct triggered by the goshawk's arrival.

The Northern Goshawk is a species one might think most swallows may not regard as a threat. For one thing, it is relatively uncommon and unlikely to be encountered by most swallows; hence it would doubtless be an unfamiliar bird. Secondly, it is somewhat *buteo*-like in appearance, especially in flight, particularly when it is soaring. Thirdly, it is difficult to imagine that any predatory bird could successfully capture a swallow on the wing. Yet the mobbing behaviour I witnessed first hand clearly establishes that (1) Tree and Barn Swallows do perceive Northern Goshawks as legitimate sources of danger and (2) they will work in concert to drive them away when they appear.

Literature Cited

Bent, A.C. 1942. Smithsonian Institution United States National Museum Bulletin 179: 439-458. United States Government Printing Office.

Sibley, D.A. 2001. The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behaviour. National Audubon Society. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Jaeger Watching at Van Wagners Beach

Brandon Holden

In the fall, as strong onshore winds hit the Hamilton area, most birders all look in one direction. That direction is the lake. Lake Ontario is a great migrant trap for many species of birds, from passerines to waterfowl to raptors, although a few particular species get a lot of attention from birders. The birds that steal the show are primarily known as “pelagic” species, meaning they spend almost all of their time far out at sea, and far from the human eye. Once these birds have reached Lake Ontario, usually from James Bay or funneled down the St. Lawrence River, they patrol the lake looking for food and a way to get back to the ocean. Pelagic birds on Lake Ontario can see land in all directions except to the west, which is the Hamilton shore. Although many pelagic species have been seen from this location over the years, there is one family that is more often observed and is very enjoyable to watch. These are the three species of jaegers.

To see these birds, heading down to Hutch’s restaurant on Van Wagners Beach during a strong east or northeast wind is the place to start. Good ways to find jaegers are to scan the horizon with a spotting scope or binoculars. By looking this way, you can sometimes see the jaegers flying fast, just a few feet over the tops of the waves. Very strong flyers, they are generally bobbing in the wind as they carve through it. Once you have seen a jaeger in flight, you won’t forget it for a while! Another method to find jaegers is to simply watch the gulls on the beach. Since jaegers routinely attack the gulls on the beach, they are often the ones to find the jaegers before the birdwatchers. Once a gull spots a jaeger, all the gulls on the beach will take flight in order to “get out of its way”. Every gull in the area will take flight, and none will land quickly; they just hang in the air waiting for the jaeger to pass or attack. When this occurs, it means a jaeger is in the immediate area and you should scan offshore, out in front of where the gulls have taken flight from. Sometimes you

can even tell what direction the jaeger is coming from by watching as different groups of gulls take flight at different times down the beach. Once you have seen a jaeger flying and chasing down a gull or tern with amazing speed, you become hooked and have a desire to watch them more often.

Identification of jaegers can be extremely complex. I find the best way to identify jaegers is to start by observing the structure of the bird. All three species of jaegers are usually recorded from Van Wagners Beach each fall during migration, but the Parasitic Jaeger is easily the most common of the three, while the Pomarine Jaeger is rarer and Long-tailed Jaeger is the rarest.

Long-tailed Jaeger

Starting with structure, this bird is the smallest and most delicately built. It has thin wings and tail compared to other jaegers, but actions are also important for identification. Its flight is described to be more buoyant and tern-like than the other jaegers. This species

will chase other birds much less often than the other two species and usually finds most of its food on its own.

Parasitic Jaeger

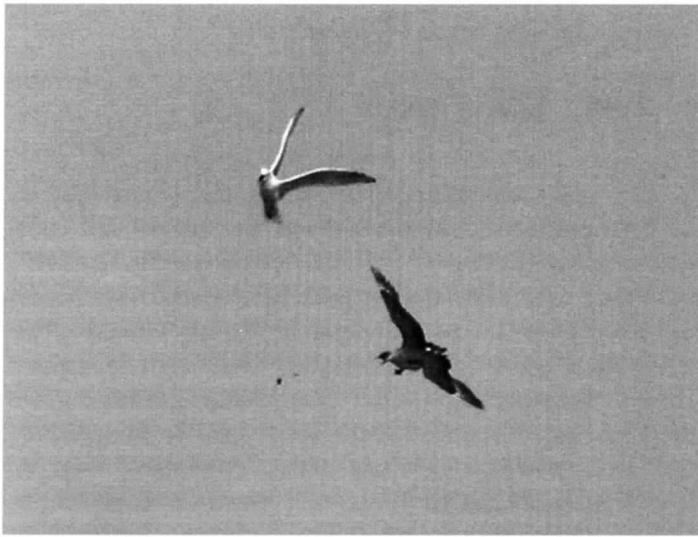
Structurally in between the Pomarine Jaeger and the Long-tailed Jaeger, this jaeger is an extremely fast and powerful bird, as it almost always chases other birds in order to steal their prey. It flies more powerfully than Long-tailed, often carving through the wind and bobbing between the troughs of waves out on the lake. The head of the Parasitic Jaeger is also relatively small compared to the size of the body, unlike Pomarine Jaeger.

Pomarine Jaeger

Structurally the largest and bulkiest of the three jaeger species, it has a heavy body with wide wings and tail. It flies powerfully, but much more direct than the other jaeger species. When chasing other birds, the chases do not last as long as Parasitic Jaegers, and are typically less ac-



Juvenile Parasitic Jaeger at Van Wagners Beach on 3 September 2003.
Photo by Eric Holden



Parasitic Jaeger catching food it forced a Ring-billed Gull to disgorge at Van Wagners Beach on 12 September 2003.

Photo by *Brandon Holden*

robatic. The head on the Pomarine Jaeger is very large compared to the other species; also it has a larger and heavier bill than the other species.

Once you have a species in mind by using structure, you can use differences in plumage to identify the birds. A jaeger you are viewing could still be a Parasitic Jaeger, but now you are trying to differentiate it between a Parasitic/Long-tailed or a Parasitic/Pomarine. You would most likely not confuse a Long-tailed Jaeger with a Pomarine Jaeger if you started your identification by using structure, as Long-tailed Jaegers are never large and bulky, and Pomarine Jaegers are never thin and tern-like. Here are some tips to tell these species apart from Parasitic Jaeger by using differences in plumage.

Parasitic/Long-tailed Jaeger

Juveniles: Juvenile jaegers are usually patterned with dark and light barring on their underside. Juvenile Parasitic Jaegers in their light and intermediate morphs will almost always show warm cinnamon tones to the dark parts of the plumage, while the rest of the patterning on the underwing and undertail coverts is white. Juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers are primarily dark brown/black, with white barring on the underside. Dark juvenile Parasitic Jaegers will be almost entirely dark, with white only on the underside of the primaries. Dark juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers will still show crisp white barring on the undertail and uppertail coverts, which it also shows in all plumages, unlike the other plumages of Parasitic. **Adults:** They are fairly easy to tell apart, as there are some major differences. Adult Long-tailed Jaegers will have a solid black cap, while adult Parasitic Jaegers will have a brown cap. The main difference is that the adult Long-tailed Jaeger has a uniformly dark underwing, while all ages and morphs of Parasitic have large white patches on the underside of the primaries. The two central tail feathers of a

Long-tailed Jaeger are pointed and much longer than the Parasitic Jaeger, which also has pointed central tail feathers. However, in the fall some tail feathers are broken off and cannot be used in identification. Adult Long-tailed Jaegers are 100% light morph.

Parasitic/Pomarine Jaeger

Juveniles: In all juvenile plumages, Pomarine Jaegers show strong white barring on the uppertail and undertail coverts, while this is rarely seen on Parasitic. Light and intermediate morph Parasitic Jaegers almost always show warm cinnamon tones to their plumage, while this is very rare on Pomarine Jaeger. **Adults:** Even the lightest adult Pomarine Jaegers are a very dark brown on the wings, back and tail, while adult Parasitic Jaegers in their light and intermediate morphs are a much paler brown. Adult Pomarine Jaegers also show extensive blackish caps, while Parasitic have a dark brown cap. Dark adults are relatively similar in plumage, so structure will be important in your identification. One difference is the central tail feather. Adult Pomarine Jaegers have long, broad central tail feathers that are twisted 90 degrees. Adult Parasitic Jaegers have thin, pointed central tail feathers.

Van Wagners Beach in Hamilton is an amazing place to watch these birds that can rarely be viewed elsewhere inland in North America. The three species of jaegers are all very similar and many birds seen at a distance must go unidentified. There are also many other exciting pelagic species that can be seen from this location, including Red Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Northern Gannet, Sabine's Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake. These are usually seen during the fall migration. Goodies like Brown Pelican, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Black-capped Petrel, Northern Fulmar and Arctic Tern have been recorded fairly recently as well in the Hamilton area during or after east winds, and some as a result of the effects of hurricanes. The Hamilton shoreline is an amazing place, one that birders should look towards every time they see strong east winds blowing during the fall migration.



Jaeger watching at Van Wagners Beach on 18 September 2003.

Photo by *Brandon Holden*

First Annual Little Gull Viewing Day

Chip Weseloh, Richard Joos, Tyler Hoar

The First Annual Little Gull Viewing Day was held at Oshawa Second Marsh on three mornings, 23 to 25 April 2004, from sunrise to 10:00 a.m. For Ontario birders outside the Oshawa–Niagara River–Long Point area, the Little Gull is an uncommon bird. For most birders in North America, it is a very rare bird.

The objectives of the Little Gull Viewing Day were two-fold: (1) to provide an opportunity for those who were not familiar with this species to view it leisurely and for extended periods to develop a familiarity with it and (2) to develop in the birding community an appreciation of how significant Oshawa Second Marsh is in the life cycle of the Little Gull in North America. It is the location of the largest predictable annual gathering of Little Gulls in North America. It is comparable to the Platte River for Sandhill Cranes, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge for Whooping Cranes or Cap-Tourmente for Greater Snow Geese. Oshawa Second Marsh is the best place to see Little Gulls in North America.

Since the early 1960s, Oshawa Second Marsh has been known as a location where Little Gulls congregate in the spring, though quantitative counts were lacking. In 2002 and 2003, systematic spring counts were made of Little Gulls arriving at the marsh in the morning. In both 2002 and 2003, more than 100 Little Gulls were recorded in late April to early May. Thus, 23 to 25 April was selected for the First Viewing Day.

This year, the number of Little Gulls seen from 23 to 25 April was not as many as hoped. Trying to carefully account for those flying into and out of the Marsh, our best estimates had 24, 30 and 16 Little Gulls on 23 to 25 April, respectively. In terms of the number of people who turned out to view the Little Gulls, we had about 30, 100 and 30, on the three days. On Saturday, the weather was wonderful and many individual birders, families and club and group outings showed up to view the birds. On Sunday, the weather was miserably cold and a bit rainy with strong winds, and not even many gulls showed up. How-

ever, in past years this kind of weather and worse, such as on 25 April 2002 when it snowed, produced peak numbers of Little Gulls.

Along with Little Gulls, there were many other waterbirds at Oshawa Second Marsh: Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, scaup, Mute and Trumpeter Swans, Bonaparte's Gulls, with Mallards and Canada Geese being common. There were smaller numbers of Common Mergansers, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Common and Caspian Terns, and Black-crowned Night-Herons. Other birds included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Great Egret, Iceland Gull, Virginia Rail, and a Sora on Thursday morning.

As best we know in the life cycle of the Little Gull, fall migrant birds arrive in Lake Erie at Point Pelee and Port Burwell as early as late July with numbers increasing during the late summer and autumn. In early winter, relatively large numbers of Little Gulls are reported on Christmas Bird Counts at Niagara and Long Point, often up to 100 birds or more. Soon after the Christmas Bird Counts, in the dead of winter, the numbers of Little Gulls in southern Ontario decline. However, there appears to be an as of yet not well defined congregation of Little Gulls off the coast of



Adult Little Gull in breeding plumage. Photo by Richard Joos

North Carolina during January-March. Upwards of 100 birds have been reported there in February. By March, Little Gulls start to appear at the Niagara River again and by early April they begin to appear at Oshawa Second Marsh. As numbers build up at Oshawa Second Marsh during April, they decline at the Niagara River and it seems logical that birds have moved from Niagara to Oshawa Second Marsh as a small step in their northward migration. An intriguing question at this time of the year centres around the Little Gull's evening roosting habits. When resident on the Niagara River, they roost at the mouth of the river about 1-2 km from shore. When resident at Oshawa Second Marsh, all we know is that as evening approaches they fly off over Lake Ontario in a southwest direction. Do birds which feed and loaf at Oshawa

Second Marsh during the day fly all the way to the mouth of the Niagara River to roost? We don't know; it seems quite far. Little Gulls remain at Oshawa Second Marsh into mid-May. In June, they appear in and near Churchill, Manitoba, the only area where they are still known to breed. They used to breed on and near the Great Lakes in low numbers, with less than five known nests per year from 1962 to 1989.

All in all, the First Little Gull Viewing Day was very successful. Friends of Oshawa Second Marsh provided signage to direct visitors to the General Motors Tower as well as coffee, muffins and Timbits. Bushnell had an optics display on Saturday and the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada provided a Little Gull handout. Thanks for everyone's support. We hope to see you next year.



Little Gull watchers at Oshawa Second Marsh on 24 April 2004.
Photo by Richard Joos

New Field Guides to West Africa

Hugh Currie

I have just returned from a birding trip to Cameroon, West Africa. The trip was very successful and well run by the organizers, **Birding Africa**, of Cape Town, South Africa. We were able to use three new field guides for that region of the world. These books helped us get to the amazing total of 596 species in 24 days.

West Africa should be a major birding destination, but until 2001 it was served only by *A Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa* by Searle, Morel and Hartwig. This book is way behind modern taxonomy and it omits about 40% of the species possible. For example, their plate 38 shows one plumage only of 16 species of green-bul and bulbul. The first field guide I discuss shows 29 species including immature plumages and regional variations. Cameroon has no civil unrest but roads, meals and accommodation are often well below Canadian standards.

A Guide to the Birds of West Africa by Borrow and Demey, Princeton University Press, 2001, was the field guide of choice for the leaders. They liked it because of the wealth of information in the species accounts. However, the illustrations sometimes lack fine detail and are too dark. Nik Borrow has been the Birdquest leader to West African countries for 10 years and Demey has lived and worked in West African countries for many years. This book has the major drawback for the traveling birder that it is too heavy. Amazon.ca price is CAN\$105.

Birds of Africa South of the Sahara by Sinclair and Ryan, Princeton University Press, 2003, is in a true field guide format with about 6-8 lines of text and a range map on the facing page of the illustrations. The 2100+ birds

depicted must be some sort of record for any field guide for numbers. The drawings were beautifully done by Abbott, Hayman and Harris and the publisher's reproductions are excellent. Amazon.ca price is CAN\$67.50.

This was the book I often chose to carry in the field because of its moderate weight and the high quality of the plates. Ian Sinclair is Africa's leading lister and he produced the South African guide. Ryan is a partner in the aforementioned **Birding Africa** and is also very knowledgeable about African ornithology. This book has the additional advantage that it can be used for East and South Africa although those regions are already well served with excellent field guides. Rare species occurring 10 or fewer times are not shown.

Finally there is *Birds of Western and Central Africa* written and illustrated by Ber Van Perlo, Princeton University Press, 2002. This book has illustrations for more than 1500 species with all plumages on only 109 overly busy plates. Many of the drawings lack fine detail and the reproduction has been too pale. Nevertheless, this book is the lightest of the three and it may be the one you decide to put in your backpack along with all the drinking water, cameras etc that you also need for the day. Amazon.ca price is CAN\$39.25.

There are other books that will be helpful. The *Birds of Africa* series with 6 volumes so far is an excellent library reference. Field guides also exist for Senegal and the Gambia, although these countries are in the northwest of West Africa.

Atlas Relative Abundance Maps - Hot off the Plotter

Mike Cadman

Ontario's second breeding bird atlas is not only repeating the coverage provided during the first atlas, it has added a whole new component that will allow the mapping of the relative abundance of birds throughout the province. Some preliminary maps are now available and are revealing hitherto unknown patterns of bird distribution in the province.

The relative abundance data are being collected through *point counts*, which are a simple form of bird survey. Doing point counts is optional for all atlas participants who know birds well by song. A point count involves standing in one spot for 5 minutes and recording every bird observed, seen or heard. Birds are noted as being less than or more than 100 m from the atlaser. The counts take place between dawn and 10 a.m. between 24 May and 10 July. These standard dates and times ensure that counts take place when most breeding birds are most active.

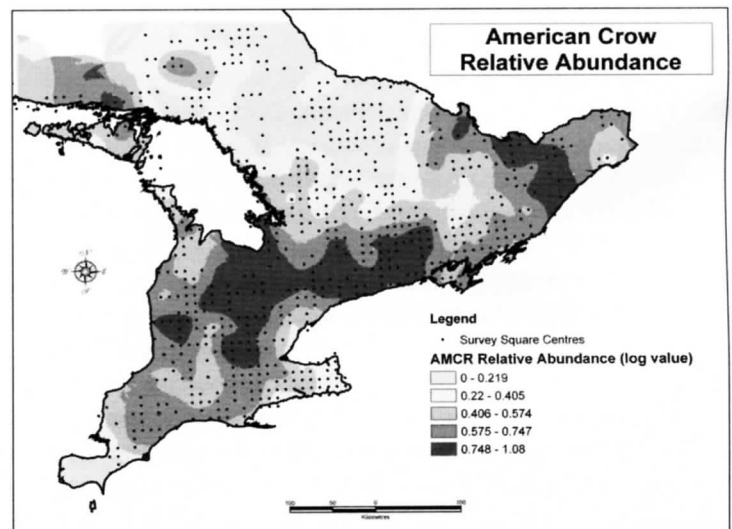
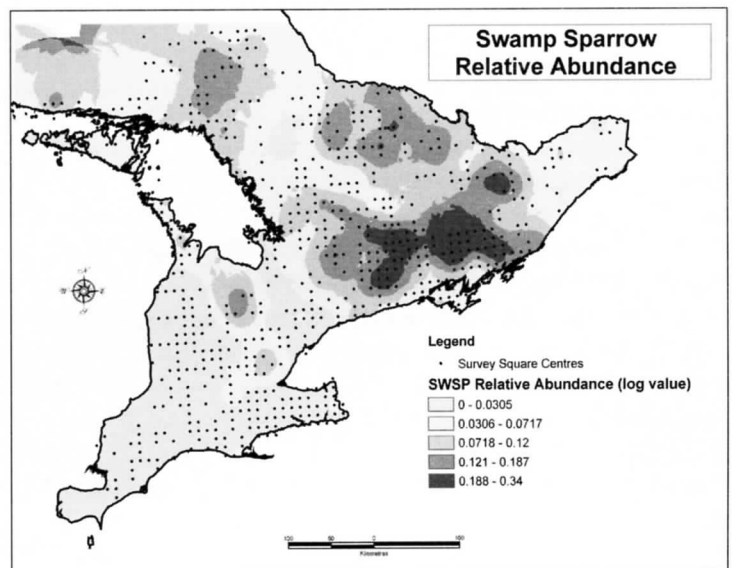
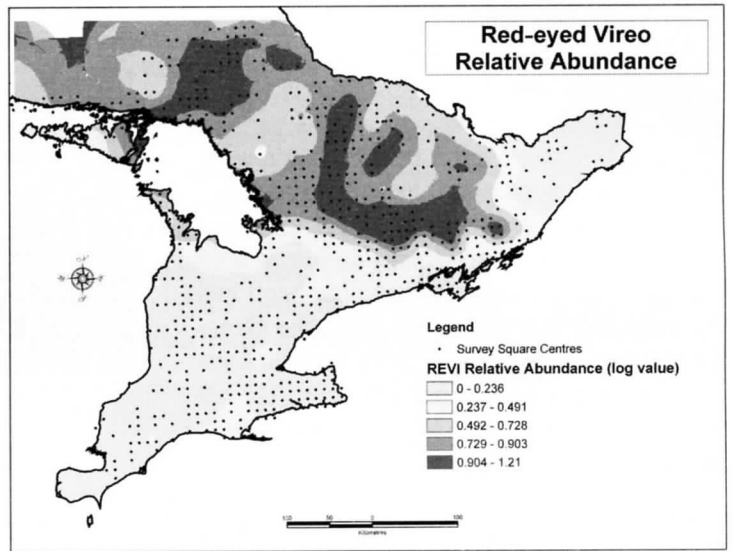
In each targeted square, we hope to have 25 or more point counts completed. Most points are at randomly distributed locations on roads (shown on the atlas 10-km square map), but a few additional points are added in prescribed off-road habitats to ensure that the major habitats in each square are proportionately represented in the point count surveys.

So far, point count coverage is going very well. About 500 people have done a total of over 37,000 point counts to date, recording 266 species in 1714 10-km squares. In the final two years of data collection for the atlas, we will be trying to ensure that the full quota of point counts is completed in as many target squares as possible.

Preliminary Maps

The maps shown here are preliminary in that they are based on point counts completed to date, which make up only part of what will be the final data set, and coverage is far from complete in some regions. The specific methods of analysis and mapping are also still being decided upon. Nevertheless, they do give an idea of what the final maps might look like, and they do reveal some fascinating patterns.

The maps show contours of relative abundance across southern Ontario. The small grey dots indicate 10-km squares in which at least 10 point counts have been done. The maps are based on data from those squares. Even though the maps are labeled "Density", at this point, it is best to think of the maps as showing relative abundance with darker areas having higher abundance. Although the maps are shown in black, white and grey here, they will be in colour in the published atlas.



Red-eyed Vireo

Although breeding evidence has been reported in almost every square in southern Ontario, relative abundance data show this species occurs in far higher densities on the Canadian Shield than it does south of the shield. There are small areas of relatively high abundance on the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island. Both of these areas have relatively high forest cover compared to surrounding areas.

Swamp Sparrow

The relative abundance of the Swamp Sparrow is closely correlated with the pattern of wetland occurrence in southern Ontario. Note how the highest areas of relative abundance occur in the Peterborough-Kingston-Ottawa areas, where wetland occurrence is at its highest. Note also, the high relative abundance of both wetlands and Swamp Sparrows in the very wet townships of southern Grey County, and around the moraine lands south and east of Guelph.

American Crow

The American Crow shows a pattern somewhat the inverse of the Red-eyed Vireo. Although breeding evidence is reported in most squares in southern Ontario, the highest relative abundance is south of the shield. Note that the number of crows is very low in the Toronto-Hamilton area and in the Windsor area, which is where major outbreaks of West Nile Virus occurred in 2002. Note also that the number of point counts in these areas is currently low, so this situation may change as more point counts are added.

Wilson's Snipe

The Wilson's Snipe has a similar overall pattern to the Swamp Sparrow in southern Ontario, though is generally sparser, with peaks in eastern Ontario, and around the Carden Alvar and southern Grey County.

Field Sparrow

The extensive grassy areas north of Kingston and on the Carden Alvar are obviously of great importance to the Field Sparrow, as is the moraine land south of Guelph, and parts of Elgin, Kent and Lambton counties.

Veery

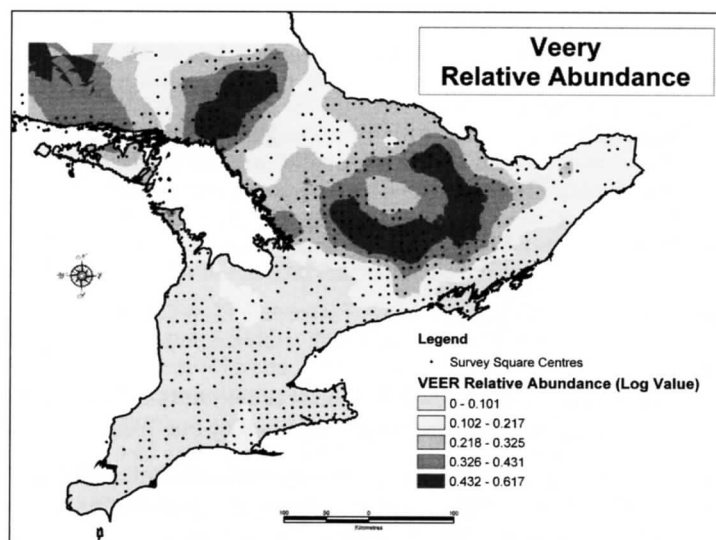
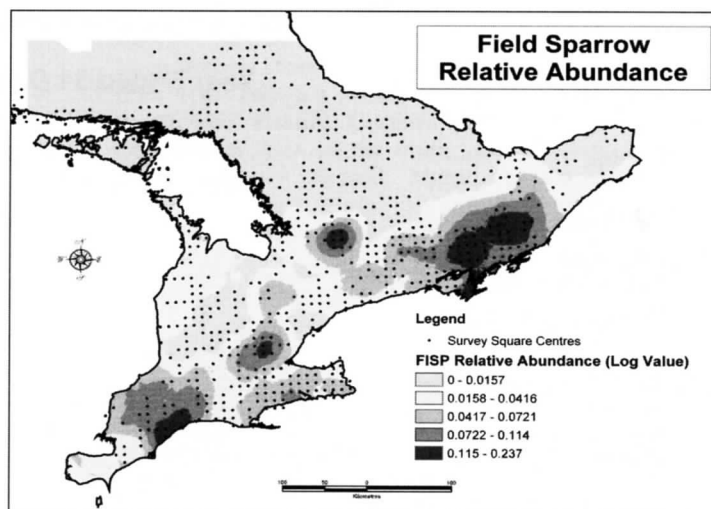
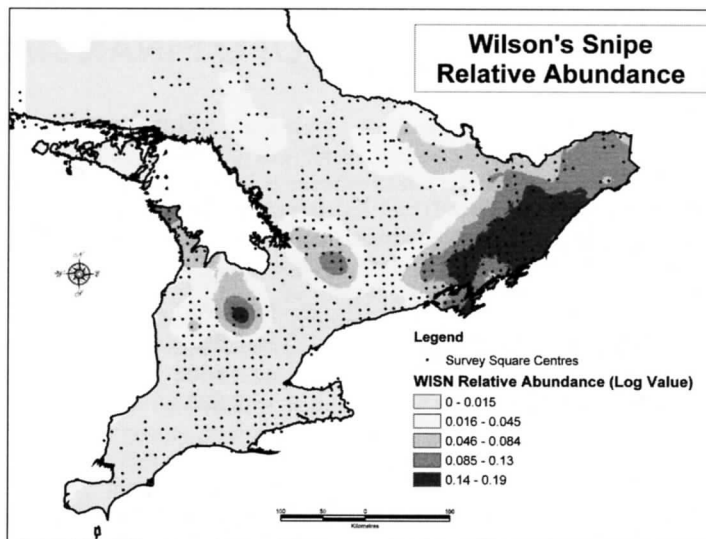
The highest numbers of Veerys occur on the southern edge of the Canadian Shield and in the French River/Lake Nipissing areas. The explanation for this pattern isn't obvious, but the map will provide a good starting point for additional research into the species' needs.

These maps are just a taste of what's to come as more point count data are collected and maps are produced. Maps like these will be a goldmine of new information for birders, scientists and conservationists interested in Ontario's birds. They are available on the Atlas web page: www.birdsontario.org.

Thanks to those taking part in the atlas for making this all possible. Thanks also to the Atlas Point Count Subcommittee for designing the data collection and analysis methods, to Kevin Middel and Bruce Pond of MNR, and Andrew Couturier and Pete Blancher of BSC for producing the maps.

If you are not already participating, please get involved in the final two years of the atlas project by contacting your Regional Coordinator or the Atlas office at: atlas@uoguelph.ca or toll free phone 1-866-900-7100.

<http://www.birdsontario.org/atlas/contactreg.html>



OFO FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2003

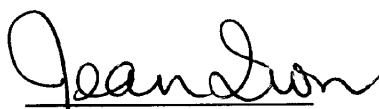
Balance Sheet 31 December 2003


ASSETS	2003	2002	LIABILITIES	2003	2002
Cash in Bank	\$17,468	\$18,397	Deferred Membership Dues	\$13,490	\$12,162
RBC T-Bill (Mutual Funds)	37,602	30,870	Member's Equity		
Prepaid 2004 Convention	500	300	Balance beginning of Year	37,542	33,133
Accounts Receivable	3,366		Net Income/Balance end of Year	<u>7,904</u>	4,272
				45,446	
TOTAL	<u>\$58,936</u>	<u>\$49,567</u>	TOTAL	<u>\$58,936</u>	<u>\$49,567</u>

INCOME and EXPENSE STATEMENT

Year Ended 31 December 2003

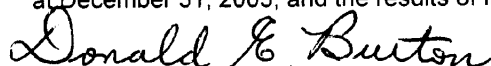
INCOME	2003	2002	EXPENSES	2003	2002
Membership Dues	\$22,710	\$21,874	Printing and Mailing		
Donations	6,418	3,930	Journal Ontario Birds	\$21,224	21,131
Annual Convention	998	-215	Newsletter OFO News	5,870	6,740
Baillie Birdathon	2,792	929	Liability Insurance	2,090	1,760
Advertisements	7,825	9,012	Field Trips	2,334	1,220
Sale of Merchandise	2,441	2,481	Purchase of Merchandise	796	1,901
Interest	731	1,095	Administration	2,954	3,540
Sale of Publications	282	1,049	Stationery	2,511	0
GST Rebate	<u>2,725</u>	<u>0</u>	Equipment: Laser Printer	590	0
			OFO Website and Ontbirds	<u>649</u>	331
			Carden Alvar Project		1,000
			GST Rebate		<u>-1,740</u>
			Total Expenses	39,018	35,883
			Net Income for Year	<u>7,904</u>	<u>4,272</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$46,922</u>	<u>\$40,155</u>	TOTAL	<u>\$46,922</u>	<u>\$40,155</u>


 Jean Iron
 President


 Eileen B Beagan
 Treasurer

I have examined the 2003 Financial Statements of Ontario Field Ornithologists and reviewed supporting documentation and information supplied by the Treasurer to the extent I deemed necessary.

In my opinion, these Financial Statements accurately reflect the financial position of the organization as at December 31, 2003, and the results of its operations for the year then ended.


 Donald E. Burton
 Auditor

Thank You OFO Donors

OFO is a registered charity. Donors receive a tax receipt for donations over \$10. Donations are an important source of revenue for OFO. They support our publications, including *Ontario Birds* in colour and *OFO News*, and *Ontbirds*, the OFO website, field trips, and other services to birders. We are grateful to the following members for their generosity in 2003.

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Irene and Gordon Wright
Kenneth Wyllie
Dennis and Arlene Young

Future OFO Field Trips

Don Barnett, Field Trips Coordinator
Phone 416-588-9724

August 7 (Saturday) Rock Point Provincial Park and Eastern Lake Erie Shore. Leader: Willie D'Anna.

Meet at 8 a.m. at entrance to Rock Point Provincial Park near entry kiosk. Park entrance fee. Directions: *From the west on Highway 3*, drive into Dunnville. Where Highway 3 curves left, continue straight on Main Street, staying along the river. When you reach the bridge that crosses the river, do not cross the bridge but continue straight onto County Road 3 eastbound. Go through Stromness and turn right onto Rymer Road, about 8 km from the bridge in Dunnville. Take the first left onto Downy Road. At next intersection turn right. Park entrance comes up shortly on your left. *From the east on Highway 3*, drive into Dunnville and turn left onto Inman Road. Turn right onto the next road, Mumby Road. Follow this to County Road 3 and turn left. Follow directions from bridge in Dunnville above. Shorebirds and early fall migrants.

August 15 (Sunday) Durham Region and Lake Ontario Marshes. Leader: Rayfield Pye.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lynde Shores Conservation Area parking lot on Victoria Street in Whitby. Exit Hwy 401 at Brock Street (Exit 410). Turn left (south) onto Brock Street. Turn right (west) onto Victoria. Continue 2.5 km to Lynde Shores Conservation Area on the south side. Visits to Cranberry Marsh, Oshawa Second Marsh, Corner Marsh and Frenchman's Bay. Early fall migrant warblers, vireos, flycatchers, shorebirds and butterflies.

August 22 (Sunday) Palgrave, Tottenham, Schomberg. Leader: Dave Milsom.

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

September 12 (Sunday) Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Leaders: Don and Ian Shanahan.

Meet at 8 a.m. at Owen Point Trail (formerly Beach 4) parking lot. Park entrance fee. Fall migrants, shorebirds, hawks.

October 9 (Saturday) Hamilton, Burlington, Stoney Creek and Vicinity. Leader: Kevin McLaughlin.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Hutch's Restaurant parking lot at Van Wagners Beach in Hamilton. From Niagara on QEW, exit Centennial Parkway, turn left onto North Service Road and follow to Van Wagners Beach Road. Continue to Hutch's Restaurant. From Toronto on QEW, exit Woodward Avenue, turn right at lights, then right at next lights, go under bridge, turn right onto Van Wagners Beach Road, and continue to Hutch's Restaurant. Fall migrants.

October 23 (Saturday) Hawk Cliff and Area, Southwest of London. Leaders: Pete Read and Ian Platt.

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at Hawk Cliff. From Hwy 401 interchange 177, take Hwy 4 south through west St. Thomas until it becomes Sunset Drive. Continue about 8 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 you will meet 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. Hawks, waterfowl, gulls and late migrants.

Save More Carden Alvar: Windmill Ranch

Don Barnett

This spring the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) signed an agreement to purchase the 1600 acre Windmill Ranch on the Carden Alvar, subject to available funding. The Windmill Ranch partially adjoins the Cameron Ranch, which was purchased in 2003. The ranch is familiar to Carden birders being on the west side of Wylie Road, both south and north of the Sedge Wren Marsh. It is home to bluebird box 10, which is the best place in Ontario to see a Loggerhead Shrike. Art and Noreen Hawtin were pleased to offer their ranch to the NCC because they wanted the land kept in a natural state.

The combined Cameron and Windmill Ranches will form a Provincial Nature Reserve owned by Ontario Parks. The protection of provincially significant alvar habitats and species at risk will be the highest priority in future management plans.

Alvars are globally rare open habitats of flat limestone, dolostone or marble bedrock at the surface (classic alvar pavement) or covered with thin soils. Alvar vegetation comprises grasses, sedges, wildflowers, shrubs and scattered trees, which are subject to drought. The Carden Alvar is interspersed with woodlands and wetlands.

The Carden Alvar is of special interest to birders because of its grassland and scrubland birds such as the Loggerhead Shrike, Upland Sandpiper, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

In saving the Carden Alvar, the Nature Conservancy of Canada formed a partnership with Ontario Parks,

Couchiching Conservancy, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Toronto Ornithological Club, Carden Field Naturalists, City of Kawartha Lakes, and Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada. To express your appreciation and financial support of the new Windmill Ranch acquisition, please direct donations to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, 5420 Highway 6 North, RR 5, Guelph ON N1H 6J2. Specify Windmill Ranch Dedication.

www.natureconservancy.ca

Index

- Page 1** Fishing For New Birders
Jim Rising: Distinguished Ornithologist
- Page 2** Harry Lumsden • To Catch a Trumpeter
Bird Bills – ID Tip
- Page 3** My Introduction to a Shrike
- Page 4** Birding Software Review
- Page 5** Book Review
- Page 6** OBRC Notes • Three New Publications
- Page 7** Swallows Mob Northern Goshawk
- Page 8** Jaeger Watching at Van Wagners Beach
- Page 10** First Annual Little Gull Viewing Day
- Page 11** New Field Guides to West Africa
- Page 12** Atlas Relative Abundance Maps
- Page 14** OFO Financial Statement 2003
- Page 15** Thank You OFO Donors • Future OFO Trips
- Page 16** Save More Carden Alvar: Windmill Ranch

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Mark Cranford - Coordinator

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