



# OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume 22 Number 3

October 2004

## New President's Message

Chris Escott

It is with a mixed sense of excitement and trepidation that I have taken over the position of President of OFO. I'm excited because this is a vibrant and growing organization that is really going places, and it is an honour for me to be selected as one of its leaders. I'm also excited because our Board of Directors is a terrific group of people and I'm looking forward to working with them. I'm a little frightened as well by the magnitude of the task before me, and I hope I can measure up to the high standard set by my predecessor Jean Iron.

Jean has been President for as long as I have served on the Board, in fact one year longer as I've been around for just eight years so far. Over that period I've seen our numbers grow to over 1,000 memberships; our finances are in great shape; *Ontario Birds* has become a journal to be proud of both in content and presentation; *OFO News* is now a vital publication and I look forward to every issue; our fabulous website and *Ontbirds* listserv have carried us into the internet age in style; our Annual Conventions have become hugely popular, as have our many field trips; and the OBRC continues to do a stellar job. Everywhere I look I see the signs of a healthy organization, and a great deal of credit for that belongs to Jean.

What do I see on the horizon for OFO? Certainly I see more of the same, because we've got a good thing going and I don't plan to change that. I also hope to continue to build on our strengths. We've kept dues low by growing the membership base, and at the same time offering top value for the membership dollar, and we will continue to strive for this in the future. It is a combination that is hard to beat.

I first joined the Board because I appreciated everything OFO had given me over the years, and I wanted to give something back. I'd love to hear from any of you that feel the same way. I hope you, the members, appreciate the efforts of everyone on the Board of Directors, our committees and our publications. These folks put in a great deal of effort for you, the members, and without their tireless devotion we would not be as strong as we are. Let us celebrate their contribution, and your support, as we move forward. Feel free to send me questions or suggestions by email. My electronic door is always open at [chris@escott.ca](mailto:chris@escott.ca)

## Solunar Birding

Ron Pittaway

I remember fishing trips as a boy with my late uncle Norm Taylor, an expert woodsman, to secret lakes in the Gatineau Hills of Quebec. My uncle always cut out the solunar tables from the Ottawa newspaper. We rarely missed our limit of trout. Solunar tables list the times each day when fish and wildlife are most active. As the name solunar suggests, times are based on sunrise, sunset, phase of the moon, moonrise, moonset, and time of year. Solunar tables are used by anglers and hunters, so why not birders?

Date	AM Minor	AM Major	PM Minor	PM Major
6 Nov	N/A	6:07	12:18	6:30
7 Nov	12:37	6:48	12:59	7:10
13 Nov	5:06	11:22	5:37	11:52
14 Nov	6:12	12:04	6:44	12:28
20 Nov	12:00	6:11	12:23	6:35
21 Nov	12:42	6:53	1:04	7:15
27 Nov	4:53	11:05	5:18	11:30
28 Nov	5:45	11:58	6:11	N/A

Major activity periods begin at the times listed and last about 2 hours. Minor periods last about 1 hour. The above solunar times are for the four weekends in November 2004, including the OFO gull trip to Niagara on Sunday 28 November. Plan to be birding or owling so that you are in prime areas during peak times. Solunar tables for each upcoming week accompany John Kerr's outdoors column every Thursday in the Toronto Sun. Let me know if using solunar times improves your birding.

**Acknowledgements:** I thank Jack Payne and Leslie Payne-Shaul of Solunar Services. Website [www.solunar.com](http://www.solunar.com)

# Guide to Hawk Watching in North America

Ron Pittaway

**Guide to Hawk Watching in North America.** 2003. Second Edition. Donald S. Heintzelman. The Globe Pequot Press, Guilford, Connecticut. ISBN 0-7627-2670-9. Softcover, 425 pages. US\$16.95.

AFALCONGUIDE™

Donald S. Heintzelman

## Guide to Hawk Watching in North America



This guide gives descriptions and directions to 460 spring and fall hawkwatching sites in North America. It rates them as poor, fair, good, excellent. Fourteen sites are described for Ontario. Amherst Island is listed under other viewing areas. The Fisherville area for winter viewing should be listed in the next edition. Bald Eagle watching etiquette and viewing areas are described.

Every North American diurnal raptor is described under these heading: field recognition, wingspread, length, flight style, voice, nest and eggs, longevity, food, habitat, and range in North America.

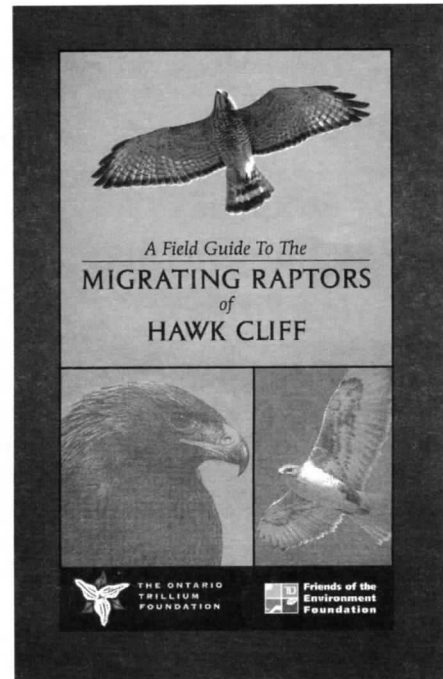
Included is information on watching hawks such as judging size and shape, flight style and behaviour, distance from observer and viewing angle, light conditions, habitat, field equipment, owl decoys, etc. The chapter on migration seasons has excellent visual bar graphs showing the spring and fall migration periods for eastern North America and a fall bar graph for western North America. The chapter on mechanics of hawk flights discusses weather conditions, deflective updrafts, lee waves, thermals, thermal streets, squall lines, and leading-lines.

I highly recommend this informative and useful book. It is the hawkwatcher's companion.

# A Field Guide to the Migrating Raptors of Hawk Cliff

Ron Pittaway

**A field guide to the Migrating Raptors of Hawk Cliff.** 2004. Thomas Bolohan, Dave Brown and Harvey Patterson. Published by Hawk Cliff Foundation. Ring bound, 52 pages. CAN\$10 plus \$2 shipping. Available from Tom Bolohan, 10 Vincent Crescent, London ON N6C 4X8 or email [ntbolohan@sympatico.ca](mailto:ntbolohan@sympatico.ca)



Hawk Cliff on the north shore of Lake Erie is Canada's first and most famous hawk migration watch. It began in 1931, about the time Hawk Mountain began in Pennsylvania. Much of what we know about fall hawk migration and identification in Ontario was first discovered at Hawk Cliff.

The first 8 pages describe the past and present, annual migration, geography, best weather for hawks, times of day and season, and other migrants such as hummingbirds and Monarchs.

There are 28 illustrations of flying raptors by Barry Cheriére, plus many photographs by nine photographers. Barry and Linda Cheriére spend countless hours watching hawks. Treatment for most species describes adults and juveniles, flight style, range and migration. An interesting feature is the migration charts (graphs) showing the spread of migration, peaks times and high count dates for each species.

This guide has many features not found in other hawk books, such as the checklist of the Birds of Elgin County. Every hawkwatcher will learn from this guide.

# OBRC Notes

Ron Tozer

“OBRC Notes” is a regular feature of *OFO News* which presents information and opinion from the Chair or Secretary of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). It is intended to inform Ontario birders, and stimulate discussion, concerning the activities of the OBRC. As chair of the 2004 committee, I offer the following items of current interest.

The American Ornithologists' Union recently designated the Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) as a full species on the North American list, based on genetic research involving mitochondrial DNA which verified previously suggested species status due to differences in voice, nesting habits, habitat, timing of migration, colour and size (Banks et al. 2004). Subspecies comprising this newly recognized species are *hutchinsii*, *leucopareia*, *taverneri*, and *minima*, which were formerly considered small races of the Canada Goose (*B. canadensis*). Of particular interest to Ontario birders is the fact that the *hutchinsii* subspecies, the former Richardson's Canada Goose, is a common spring and fall migrant in northern Ontario, and occasional in eastern and southern Ontario (Pittaway 1996, Abraham 1997). There are Ontario specimens in the Royal Ontario Museum collection (James 1991). Cackling Goose will be added to the official Ontario list (bringing the species total to 477), pending review by the OBRC.

Readers of the 2003 OBRC report will have noted that the committee forwarded reports of a Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) to outside experts for evaluation (Crins 2004). OBRC members occasionally decide to consult with recognized authorities concerning reports involving complex identification issues and/or unfamiliar plumages. This has been done on several previous occasions, and so this instance was not particularly unusual. However, it should be noted that it is OBRC members who ultimately vote to accept or not accept these reports, based on all the available evidence, including the views of consulted experts. A final decision on the Slaty-backed Gull reports will probably appear in the August 2005 issue of *Ontario Birds*.

OFO's bird sightings listserv (ONTBIRDS) and the photo section of the OFO website <http://www.ofo.ca> are tremendously popular with Ontario birders. ONTBIRDS provides detailed information on the occurrence of rare birds, and the website photos allow us all to share in these experiences, even when a trip to see the birds is not feasible. However, neither of these com-

puter resources is a permanent record of rare bird sightings in Ontario, which is a goal of the OBRC. We think that persons studying Ontario ornithology in the future will benefit greatly from the existence of the OBRC's adjudicated repository of Ontario rare bird sightings. Ontario birders should continue to send rare bird sightings to *Ontbirds* and place photos of them on the OFO website, but also we encourage everyone to submit reports and photographs of rarities, with complete details, to the OBRC. In his new capacity as Assistant to OBRC Secretary Bill Crins, Kayo Roy will be contacting observers of Review List species and recognizable forms to seek this documentation, and we look forward to increased reporting in the future.

In order to have sufficient time to circulate submitted bird reports and have members complete the first round of voting, the OBRC has imposed a final date for the receipt of records to be evaluated and published in the next annual report. The upcoming deadline for submission of reports to the OBRC will be 31 December 2004. We recognize that Ontario birders are eager to see submitted records appear in the following OBRC report, but the committee must have adequate time to undertake its deliberations as well. An online report form is available on the OBRC page of the OFO website <http://www.ofo.ca/obrc> or reports can be mailed to:

Bill Crins, OBRC Secretary  
170 Middlefield Road  
Peterborough ON K9J 8G1  
Email: [bcrins@cogeco.ca](mailto:bcrins@cogeco.ca)

## Literature Cited

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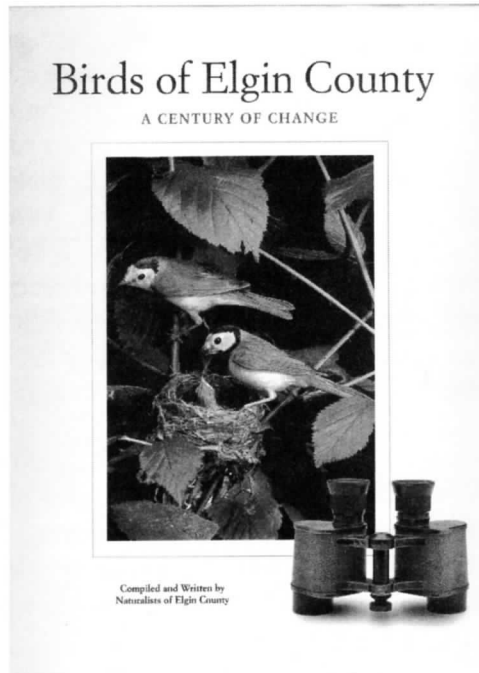


## Book Review

# Birds of Elgin County

Ross James

**Birds of Elgin County: A Century of Change.** 2004. Lancaster, H, C. Leys, D. Martin, G. Prieksaitis, M. Prieksaitis, and the naturalists of Elgin County. 306 pages.



It has been 50 years since the previous *Birds of Elgin County* was published. This is a most welcome update in an area of the province and in a field of interest where much has changed in the past half century. This is a compilation of the efforts of many people who have contributed to bird observations in the county, and in particular to the coordinating committee that compiled and edited this book.

The book opens with a series of essays. These cover various topics including: a century of change in the Elgin County birding scene; the Elgin County Naturalists and the Elgin County nature clubs; the history of Bald Eagle populations, including map locations and specific comments on each known nest of more recent years; the story of Hawk Cliff, with tables of monthly and seasonal totals of species observed from 1995 to 2002; the Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station, with tables of numbers banded from 1969 to 2002, and a list of interesting recoveries; the return of Wild Turkeys, and the repopulation of Eastern Bluebirds; the discovery of the first nest of Hooded Warbler in Canada; the Chimney Swifts of St. Thomas; and of a hybrid between White-throated Sparrow and a Dark-eyed Junco found in Elgin County. These make for some very interesting reading before even getting to the main part of the book.

The essays are followed by 44 pages of colour photographs of some of the breeding birds of Elgin County, taken by Ron Kingswood and William Rayner, resulting from their efforts to document the breeding birds of the county. The photographs are of high quality, a testament to the time and effort they have expended in the past decade and a half of their endeavors.

The species accounts are presented in an interesting way, covering where possible, three time periods. Frank Farley's comments of 1891 open each of 190 accounts where Farley had information on the occurrence and status for birds in Elgin County. Then the species accounts of Brooman in 1954 are presented for each of 247 species. The third period gives specific data and anecdotal comments for the current list of 333 species recorded in Elgin County. These cover abundance, seasonal occurrence, distribution, unusual sightings, and comments on changes over the years. This across-time presentation provides a fascinating comparison of the record of birds in the county. Where rarer species are known, the list of records is included. Where possible each account concludes with some summary statistics: early dates, average dates, peak dates, last dates, information from the first Atlas of breeding birds, with any notable changes since then, and Christmas Bird Count data.

Following the species accounts is a table of "Firsts, Lasts and Nexts" that provides a summary of the dates and locations for the first known records for county rarities, and the number of subsequent records. This table is accompanied by six pages of photographs of unusual first sightings in the county.

The penultimate section of the book is an extensive series of tables outlining the Christmas Bird Counts over 50 years by the West Elgin Nature Club, and the St. Thomas Field Naturalists.

The final section concerns birding in Elgin county. There are sections on birding highlights (Bald Eagles, Bank Swallows, Whimbrels, Tundra Swans, and the autumn hawk and diurnal migrant passage); a birding calendar year, and a county bird finding guide. The guide includes maps and comments on each area highlighted.

In addition to the photographs mentioned, there are a number of black and white drawings and a few other photographs sprinkled through the book. It is an attractively presented book. It seems well scanned for typographical errors, as I noted only very few. The minor quibbles I may have had with the way a few things were worded scarcely detract from the overall enjoyment of the book. This is a very worthwhile addition to the library of anyone with an interest in Ontario birds.

The first printing was sold out. A second printing is now available. Copies are available at Open Air Books and Maps in Toronto. Phone: 416-363-0719.



# 100 Years Ago in *The Auk* An Untrustworthy Observer (AUK 15, No. 2, 1898)

## EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':

"Dear Sirs: Those members of the A.O.U. who were present at the meeting last November will doubtless recall a paper read by Mr. Edwin Irvine Haines entitled 'The Summer Birds of the Catskill Mountains with remarks upon the Faunae of the Region.' The paper indicated a 'chumminess' on the part of the birds that enabled the writer to fairly rain down records of species that ordinarily, during the summer season, are satisfied to keep out of the Catskills. Several sets of eggs of the Solitary Sandpiper (*Totanus solitarius*), Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), and Ipswich Sparrow (*Ammodramus princeps*) had been obtained, while such species as the Hudsonian Chickadee (*Parus hudsonicus*), and White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) had been found hobnobbing with the equally abundant Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) and Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*). A tray of skins, chiefly without labels and in winter plumage, was exhibited in support of the many extraordinary discoveries of which the above are samples. On asking Mr. Haines for the loan of his birds, he informed me that a portion of them had been sent to Dr. Merriam in Washington, but the following were submitted to me, viz.: White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Golden-crowned Kinglet (*R. satrapa*), Hermit Thrush (*Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*), Gray-cheeked Thrush (*T. aliciae*), Bicknell's Thrush (*T. a. bicknelli*), Olive-backed Thrush (*Turdus ustulatus swainsonii*), Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*), and Pigeon Hawk (*Falco columbarius*). Mr. Haines assured me the Thrushes had all been obtained between the middle of June and the middle of July; the other birds (the Kinglets represented by no less than seven specimens) bore labels indicating capture in the Catskills on various dates between June 10 and June 19, 1897. Suffice it to say, not one of these birds was in breeding plumage! This statement will, I think, be borne out by Messrs. J. A. Allen and D. G. Elliot, who also examined them.

"Now the point of all this is that Mr. Haines's ornithological statements are not in accordance with facts, and as he has figured in print a number of times during the past year of two, it is but natural to view all of his work with suspicion. One article 'The Kinglets and their Distribution' (*The Osprey*, 1, Feb. 1897, pp. 73-75), asserts that he has found both species breeding in the Catskills. As a matter of fact his "June" birds are *not* breeding birds. It is not likely now that his additions to the Catskill fauna will ever be published, nor will the breeding of Brännich's

Murre (*Uria lomvia*) at New Rochelle, N.Y., as announced on a program of the Linnaean Society of New York, become a record, but it is time to put a check to such perverted ambitions, and while I am quite unbiased by any personal animus, I feel that my fellow members of the A.O.U. should be warned against a person who has shown himself to be so eminently undeserving of credence."

Yours very truly,

JONATHAN DWIGHT, JR.  
New York, N.Y.  
Feb. 21, 1898

**Editors' Note:** Under the heading *100 Years Ago in The Auk*, the above letter was reprinted in *The Auk* 115 (2):554, 1998. *The Auk* is the journal of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU). *The Auk* is one of the most respected ornithological journals in the world. To find out more about the American Ornithologists' Union and to research back issues of *The Auk*, see [www.aou.org/](http://www.aou.org/)

## Ontario Shorebird Conservation Plan

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) has issued the *Ontario Shorebird Conservation Plan*. The 48 page plan includes 27 maps and 14 photographs. Of 40 species of shorebirds that breed routinely in Canada, 22 regularly breed in Ontario, including significant proportions of the populations of seven species. Key staging sites used by migrating shorebirds, such as Presqu'île, are identified. The plan outlines the steps needed to conserve shorebirds and their habitats in Ontario. Partners with CWS in the plan are MNR, OFO, BSC, DUC, and Gateways Centre.

Ross, K., K. Abraham, R. Clay, B. Collins, J. Iron, R. James, D. McLachlin, and R. Weeber. 2003. *Ontario Shorebird Conservation Plan*. Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada. Cat No. 0-662-33933-9. ISBN CW66-222/2003E.

Free hard copies of the shorebird plan are available in person or by e-mail, phone and fax from: Canadian Wildlife Service, 4905 Dufferin Street, Downsview ON M3H 5T4. Email: [Wildlife.Ontario@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Wildlife.Ontario@ec.gc.ca) Phone: 416-739-5830 or Fax: 416-739-5845  
[www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/plans/shorebirdplan-e.html](http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/plans/shorebirdplan-e.html)

# Atlassing the North in 2004

Mike Cadman

At the time of writing (mid-August), Atlas data are pouring into our computer and our office from atlasers all over the province. It's hard to tell right now how good a year it's been for the atlas overall, but we do know that it was a tremendous year for atlas coverage of the north. 2004 was undoubtedly the biggest year for bird surveys in remote northern Ontario in history. Seventeen trips, most of about two weeks duration and involving 4 people each, took place in 2004, primarily in the Hudson Bay Lowland, but also in the northern boreal forest region and to islands in Lake Superior.

Thanks very much to everyone involved in these trips. Despite abnormally cool, wet weather, and some "interesting" activities (e.g., two groups had to be rescued during a bad storm on the tundra of Hudson Bay), the year was a great success in the far north.

Each trip is different, but the reports from the trips

give you an idea of what's involved. Don Sutherland and Glenn Coady are both veterans of northern (and southern) atlassing. Their articles, which follow, describe two of those 17 trips. Numerous other reports are available, often with photos, on the atlas web page [www.birdsontario.org](http://www.birdsontario.org); look under Get Involved/Going North/Photos and stories of atlassing in the north.

There is still plenty to do in the remote north in 2005, the final year of the atlas. Most of the remaining work is in the northern boreal forest region. This will involve flying in to work out of northern communities or canoeing remote rivers. If you're interested in taking part, please fill in an application on the atlas web page, under Going North, or drop us a line at the office: [atlas@uoguelph.ca](mailto:atlas@uoguelph.ca). Serious planning will get going in the late fall of 2004.

A quick reminder, please get your atlas data in asap, so we can plan work throughout the province for 2005.

## An Atlas Adventure on the Lower Shamattawa and Winisk Rivers

Glenn Coady, Gerry Binsfeld, Karl Konze and Mark Peck

An atlas team consisting of Mark Peck, Glenn Coady, Gerry Binsfeld and Karl Konze travelled to the Hudson Bay coast 10-22 June 2004 to get atlas data from blocks 16FF and 16FG, the lower Shamattawa and Winisk Rivers.

After driving overnight to Timmins from Toronto, we were flown to Peawanuck via Air Creebec. We were met there on a beautiful, sunny and warm afternoon by Maurice and Nick Mack of Wild Wind Tours, who the atlas office had hired to provide transportation and guide service. As quickly as we were able to transport all of our gear and supplies to the Winisk River from the airport, Nick took us by small motor boat about 25 km up the Shamattawa River along with our two canoes. On the trip up the river two early highlights on this first day were a Golden Eagle nest with two downy young and a very picturesque Common Raven



Smith's Longspur, singing male, Flagstaff Point, Kenora District. 15 June 2004. Photo by Mark Peck.

nest with large young, built in a low, recessed cliff ledge (both in square 16FF09—Peawanuck).

Upon our arrival at the far side of square 16FF07, we set up camp beside the river and began to atlas the boreal forest and muskeg habitats on either side of the river for the next few days. The weather was colder than normal for the season and mostly overcast, but most birds were quite actively singing and displaying. One morning we actually observed a light snowfall. In our 41.5 hours of coverage in this square, we found

breeding evidence for 60 species of birds and completed 32 point counts. Highlights in this square included: Ontario's fourth documented nest of Solitary Sandpiper with 3 eggs; both species of yellowlegs, displaying Semipalmated Sandpiper, agitated Hudsonian Godwit; Pine Grosbeak and a pair of White-winged Crossbills. We



Sharp-tailed Grouse. The nest was located at Shamattawa River, Kenora, Ontario. 16 602955 6083822 (North American Datum 1983). 13 June 2004. Photo by *Mark Peck*.

found the large numbers of Spotted Sandpipers along the river quite remarkable, making it easy for Mark to find a nest and eggs.

Having provided adequate coverage for square 16FF07, we canoed down the river to the next square, 16FF08, and set up our second camp on the west bank of the river, right next to a Common Raven nest with young. Once again we concentrated on doing point counts in the representative habitats within the square by walking away from the river about 3 km on either side, through boreal forest that eventually gave way to extensive muskeg. In our 69.5 hours of coverage in this square, we found breeding evidence for 63 species of birds and completed another 32 point counts. Highlights in this square included Ontario's fourth documented nest of Sharp-tailed Grouse with 7 eggs, a nest and eggs of Sharp-shinned Hawk (one of Ontario's most northerly nest records), nest and eggs of Merlin in a nest on the ground, pairs of Surf Scoter and Willow Ptarmigan, a nest and eggs of Green-winged Teal, and an Arctic Tern nest.

On June 15th we atlassed our way back down the Shamattawa River to its confluence with the Winisk River. Using our satellite phone, we contacted our guide Nick in Peawanuck to rendezvous with us there. Nick met us with his motor boat and took us down the Winisk River to near its mouth at the Hudson Bay coast. We observed flocks of all three scoters, paired Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, many Bonaparte's Gulls and Arctic Terns, and several Bald Eagles along the way.

We set up camp on the east bank of the Winisk River a couple of kilometres to the west of the abandoned Winisk airport. We camped here for seven days, exploring both the treeline boreal habitat near the Winisk airport in square 16FG12 and the thin strip of coastal tundra found near the coast at Flagstaff Point in square 16FG22. For the majority of our time at the coast the weather was colder than normal for the season, but conditions were

still suitable for very productive point counting. In our 90 hours of coverage in square 16FG12, we found breeding evidence for 76 species of birds and completed 29 point counts. Highlights in this square were 2 nests of Whimbrel, Golden Eagles hunting near Flagstaff Point, a nest of American Kestrel above the frame of the sliding door of the hangar at the Winisk airport (a very northerly nest for this species), a pair of Least Sandpipers copulating near a nest scrape, a Killdeer nest on the Winisk airfield, a Wilson's Snipe nest and eggs, nests of both Fox Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow, and two Caribou on the airfield. In a series of tundra ponds we saw feeding flocks of Hudsonian Godwits and Short-billed Dowitchers that likely represented non-breeding birds or failed breeders. On June 18th three Pacific Loons flew inland over our camp from the Winisk delta, likely to breeding ponds far inland.

In the coastal square 16FG22 we provided 27 hours of coverage and found breeding evidence for 61 species of birds and completed 29 point counts. Highlights in this square included a Dunlin nest with 4 eggs, many displaying Smith's Longspurs, Le Conte's and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, American Pipits, and a large flock of migrant Red Knots at Flagstaff Point.



Whimbrel at nest, Winisk, Kenora District, 20 June 2004. Photo by *Mark Peck*.

In total, our group observed 112 species of birds in the Hudson Bay Lowland in 2004, and both of these atlas blocks are now the first blocks near coastal Hudson Bay with breeding evidence for more than 100 species. Despite the unseasonably cold weather (willow and alder trees were still leafless on June 21) we all enjoyed ourselves immensely and were very grateful to be chosen again for a northern atlassing expedition. We would like to thank Mike Cadman and Nicole Kopysh for making the arrangements for our trip, and our guides Nick and Maurice Mack for their assistance and companionship.



# Atlassing Trip to the Pen Islands, Hudson Bay, Ontario

Don Sutherland

Between 23 June and 7 July 2004, Jon McCracken, Ron Ridout, Colin Jones, Don Sutherland, Martyn Obbard and Peter Burke atlased four squares in two 100-kilometre blocks in the vicinity of the Pen Islands on Ontario's Hudson Bay coast.

The Pen Islands, comprising East Pen Island (actually part of Nunavut) and West Pen Island (not really an island but a spit), are located along the shore of Hudson Bay just a few kilometres east of the Manitoba border at 56° 50' N, 89° 54' W or roughly 1600 km northwest of Toronto.

One of the most remote locations in the province, the Pen Islands have received relatively limited coverage by visiting birders and ornithologists. Perhaps the most significant prior contribution to our knowledge of the region's birds was made by Dave Shepherd and Greg Poole who spent 4-18 July 1985

camped on the mainland opposite East Pen Island conducting fieldwork in support of the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas.

Departing Timmins on 23 June in an OMNR Twin Otter, we made the roughly 5-hour flight northwest to the Pen Islands with brief stops in Moosonee and Peawanuck to refuel. As we flew north, skirting thunderstorms and dodging fog banks, we were struck by the number of lakes still with substantial ice, the numerous large snowdrifts conspicuous against the largely brown landscape, and the pack ice on Hudson Bay, stretching unbroken to the horizon.

Arriving at our destination at around dinnertime, we quickly unloaded our gear and the plane took off, making one low flypast before disappearing over the horizon to the southeast, bound for Peawanuck. Sorting through the pile of Rubbermaid tubs, 'action packers' and various packs, we scrambled first to erect what was to be our principal shelter for the next two weeks, a canvas

prospector tent and orange tarpaulin suspended by eight 2X4's, and then set up our personal tents. Surveying the surrounding landscape as we ate dinner, it was clear that spring was indeed very much delayed; the landscape resembled late March or early April in the south, complete with 1-2 metre snow drifts to the lee of the larger ridges, leafless birches, willows and tamarack and strong choruses of both Wood and Chorus frogs.

By both design and luck, our camp was conveniently located within 200 metres or so of the boundary between two squares (16CH79 and 16CH89) and within 4km of the boundary between blocks CH and CJ. Located six or so kilometres inland from the coast, to the west of Oosteguanako Creek and within four or five kilometres of the Manitoba-Ontario border, our camp was perched on a treeless ridge elevated only a metre or so above



Encampment on the remote Pen Islands, June-July 2004. Photo by Ron Ridout.

the surrounding landscape. One in a parallel series of former marine beaches extending inland from the coast, the ridge supported only a sparse Lapland Rosebay-Crowberry-Blueberry-Mountain Avens lichen-heath vegetation and a few krummholz-spruce and was surrounded by a combination of wet to very wet graminoid tundra, hummocky tundra, shallow ponds and willow-lined lakes. Aside from the ribbon of spruce lining the banks of the nearby creek, the treeline was just visible on the horizon, 6-10 km to the south.

Over the course of our two week stay we easily exceeded the minimum coverage requirements for block CH and achieved reasonable coverage for block CJ. We spent considerably more time (271 hours) atlasing the 'home' block CH, conducting 94 point counts and amassing a total of 101 species with breeding evidence found for 98 of those. Block CJ, with only the extreme southern edge of two squares containing mainland, received less attention (36 hours) and fewer point counts

(27), resulting in a total of only 54 species of which breeding evidence was found for 38 species.

Most species were only in the initial stages of breeding at the time of our arrival; however, our stay coincided perfectly with the peak of shorebird display and for the first week to 10 days we were serenaded day and night by the aerial calls of Stilt Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wilson's Snipe, Least Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit and Whimbrel. Aside from point counting, we concentrated our efforts on up-grading breeding evidence and nest searching. In all, our searches resulted in the discovery of 110 nests of 29 species. Among the many highlights were the discovery and documentation of a Stilt Sandpiper nest and three nests of Hoary Redpoll, both firsts for the province. Other nest highlights included: Ontario's fifth Hudsonian Godwit nest, sixth Parasitic Jaeger nest, seventh Greater Scaup nest, seventh through ninth American Golden-Plover nests and eighth Red-necked Phalarope nest, together with nests of Pacific Loon, Tundra Swan (3), Willow Ptarmigan (2), Least Sandpiper (11), Dunlin (12), American Tree Sparrow (2), Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow (5), Smith's Longspur (3), Lapland Longspur (1) and Common Redpoll (3). A Harris's Sparrow in 16CJ80 and an extralimital, non-breeding Mourning Dove seen on several occasions in 16CH89 were additional highlights.

For the most part, the weather during our stay wasn't much of a factor, though it was generally cool and windy. Temperatures ranged from nighttime lows in the negative single digits with a couple of heavy frosts to daytime highs in the low twenties. However, on the night of 24 June a gale blew in from the northwest and with the



American Golden-Plover at nest. Photo by Ron Ridout.

temperature hovering around 0°C we endured 70-80 kph winds, driving rain, sleet, wet snow and flapping canvas. Huddled in our tents or in the lee of our cook tent for 36-hours, we sipped hot tea and just tried to keep warm, very thankful we'd brought along our winter clothing. By the time we departed on 7 July all but the remains of a few drifts had disappeared, the ice was gone from all the lakes and ponds and the pack ice was starting to push away from the coast. The tundra was starting to green up, willows and dwarf birch were starting to flower and leaf out and the Lapland Rosebay was nearing its peak of flowering, turning the ridgetops a rosy-pink.

Funding from the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research, Canadian Wildlife Service, Bird Studies Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in support of the trip is gratefully acknowledged.

## Hawks and Owls of Eastern North America

Jean Iron

**Hawks and Owls of Eastern North America.** 2004. Donald S. Heintzelman. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London. Hardcover, 213 pages. US\$29.95.

The author has been active in raptor studies and conservation for 50 years. This is a real raptor book because it covers both hawks and owls. Most books called raptor guides cover only hawks and relatives in the order Falconiformes plus vultures and condors. This book interestingly does not cover vultures, which are usually grouped with hawks in most hawk guides.

Chapters cover raptor ecology, hawk migrations, owl migration and invasions, raptor conservation, citizen sciences, raptor watching, Osprey and Northern Harrier, Kites, Eagles, Accipiters, Soaring Hawks, Caracaras and Falcons, Barn Owls and Typical Owls. The factual information in each species account is supported by a thorough study of the published literature. It includes habitat, distribution, food habits, nesting and life cycle, behaviour, migration, and population. These concise headings allow one to find information quickly. There are many high quality and well-chosen black-and-white and colour photographs by numerous photographers, including OFO member Alan Wormington.

This is an excellent source book for basic and accurate information on the hawks and owls in Eastern North America, including eastern Canada. I recommend this book to teachers, nature schools, and people interested in hawks and owls. Birders will find it a fine supplement to their field guides.

# Changes to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds, 2004

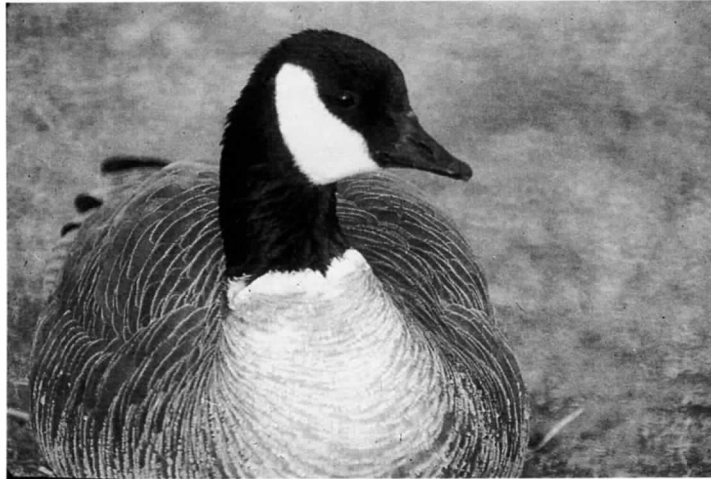
Jim Rising

In the July 2004 issue of the ornithological journal *The Auk* the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Committee on Classification and Nomenclature published the 45th Supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds. Recently, these supplements have appeared annually. This supplement is an annotated list of changes to be made to the Check-list, which is accepted as the "official" list of the birds from the AOU area (Canada, Mexico, United States, and Central America; Greenland will be covered in the 8th edition). As such, the names, sequence of species, and classification of the Check-list generally are used in provincial and state lists, and in many field guides; it also is followed by the American Birding Association. The Check-list Committee hopes to complete the 8th edition of the Check-list in 2010 (the 7th edition appeared in 1998). The 8th Edition will also contain information about subspecies (the last edition of the Check-list to contain such information was the 5th, which came out in 1957).

The Check-list Committee meets once a year to discuss changes in classification that have been proposed in the literature or that are necessitated by errors in previous lists. These meetings occur at the annual meeting of the AOU, which this year took place in August on the campus of Laval University in Quebec City. In recent years, the members of the Committee have relied more and more on communicating their views about proposed changes via e-mail. This committee is chaired by Dr. Richard Banks of the U. S. Geological Survey and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The other committee members are: Carla Cicero (University of California, Berkeley), Jon Dunn (Bishop, California), Andy Kratter (Florida Natural History Museum, Gainesville), Pam Rasmussen (Michigan State Museum, East Lansing), Van Remsen (Louisiana State Museum of Natural Science, Baton Rouge), myself, and Doug Stotz (Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago). Van and Doug are also on the committee that produces the "official" list of South

American birds.

Jon is the only member of the committee who is not a practicing avian taxonomist, although he is quite knowledgeable about many taxonomic matters and, as many of you know, knows a great deal about North American birds, their variability, vocalizations, etc. As such, his input to the committee is a great value, but his special role is to keep the committee informed about the validity of extralimital records and to help keep track of range extensions for the next edition of the Check-list. Other members of the committee are responsible for assessing proposed changes in the taxonomy of specific groups. For example, I am responsible for making the initial assessments of proposed changes in the taxonomy of tanagers, cardinals, sparrows, blackbirds, and finches. When new information about the taxonomy of members of these groups is published, I summarize the papers and make recommendations about changes to the Check-list. The other committee members, then consider these changes, and often (probably usually) review the original papers, then express their opinion about the proposed changes. The committee is, and probably should be, extremely conservative, so unless there is near unanimous support for a change, the status quo is maintained in the list. Sometimes we defer recommending a change, even if we think that it is justified, pending the publication of the results of ongoing research. Changes inconvenience people (and often irritate them), but flip-flopping is even more inconvenient (and irritating). Below are some of the changes proposed by the 45th supplement that may be of special interest to Canadians.



Cackling Goose at Whitby in Durham Region on 21 February 1988.  
Photo by Glenn Coady

The Great-winged Petrel (*Petrodroma macroptera*) is added to the list on the basis of two photographically documented records off the coast of central California. The Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) is split into two species, *Branta canadensis*, which will retain the English name of Canada Goose, and the Cackling Goose (*B. hutchinsii*). This change has often been suggested in



the past on the basis of differences in vocalizations, nesting habits, timing of migration as well as in size and colour (Cackling Geese are quite a lot smaller), and this separation is now also supported by several different genetic studies. The name "Cackling Goose" is one of several that have been used for these birds in the past. In fact these genetic studies indicate that the closest relatives of the Cackling Goose are the Brant (*B. bernicla*) and the Barnacle Goose (*B. leucopsis*) and the closest relative of the Canada Goose is the Hawaiian Goose or Nene (*B. sandvicensis*). To reflect this, the new sequence of species is Brant, Barnacle Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, and Hawaiian Goose. The subspecies included in the Cackling Goose are *B. h. hutchinsii* (Richardson's Goose), *leucopareia* (Aleutian), *taverneri* (Taverner's), and *minima* (Cackling). Those included in the Canada Goose are *B. c. canadensis* (Atlantic Goose), *interior* (Interior), *maxima* (Giant), *moffitti* (Western), *parvipes* (Lesser), *fulva* (Vancouver), and *occidentalis* (Dusky).

Change the English name of *Charadrius mongolus* from Mongolian Plover to Lesser Sand-Plover. This is to agree with common current use in the Old World. Add to the North American list *C. leschenaultii*, the Greater Sand-Plover, on the basis of a well-documented individual found at Bolinas Lagoon, Marin County, California in the winter and spring of 2001.

Add the Cuban Pewee (*Contopus caribaeus*) (also known as the Greater Antillean Pewee or the Crescent-eyed Pewee) to the list of birds known to occur in the United States on the basis of a couple of recent records from Florida. Add the Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) to the list of birds found in North America on the basis of a well-documented record from Alaska. There also is an old specimen of this species from Greenland. Add Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) and Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) to the North American list on the basis of records from St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, both from September 2002. Add the Eastern Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*) to the list. This was formerly treated as a race of the Yellow Wagtail, which should be taken off the North American list.

The Committee did not accept a record of the Rufous-tailed Robin (*Luscinia sibilans*) from the western Aleutians, Alaska, because the photograph is not definitive, or a record of the Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) from south-central British Columbia. The identification of this individual is not questioned, but the origin of the bird is not clear. We also rejected the record of Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) from Southampton Island, again, not because of any doubt

about the identification, but because we did not feel confident that they were natural vagrants as opposed to escapes.

Among proposed taxonomic changes that we considered, but rejected or deferred were the following: (1) A proposal to split *Dryobates* from *Picoides*. We generally think that the genus *Picoides* is too inclusive, but want to wait for a complete reexamination of its limits before splitting it up. (2) A proposal to merge the two New World magpies into a single species. (3) A proposal to merge Bicknell's Thrush with Gray-cheeked Thrush. (4) A proposal to split the Yellow Warbler into two or more species. We agreed that revision of these warblers is needed, but thought that it was premature to do so with the data at hand. (5) A proposal to split the Seaside Sparrow into two or four species (East Coast, Dusky [extinct], Cape Sable, Gulf Coast). This proposal was not based on any recently-published information, but rather was made because the grounds for lumping the Dusky and Cape Sable Sparrows into Seaside Sparrow were never stated, and some genetic analyses done several years ago indicate a separation between the east coast and Gulf coast birds could be justified, and there are also differences in appearance. Dusky are more closely related to the Gulf coast birds than the eastern ones. (6) A proposal to split the Fox Sparrows pending the presentation of some research in progress. We rejected (unanimously) a proposal to change the English name of *Riparia riparia* from Bank Swallow to Sand Martin. And, lastly we rejected proposal to change the English names of species of *Myioborus* from Redstart to Whitestart.

The following spelling changes in scientific names were required for grammatical reasons: *Butorides striatus* to *Butorides striata*, *Lagopus mutus* to *Lagopus muta*, *Lagopus leucurus* to *Lagopus leucura*, and *Actitis macularis* to *Actitis macularius*.



Five Cackling Geese with Canada Geese at Markham on 8 October 2004.  
Photo by Jean Iron

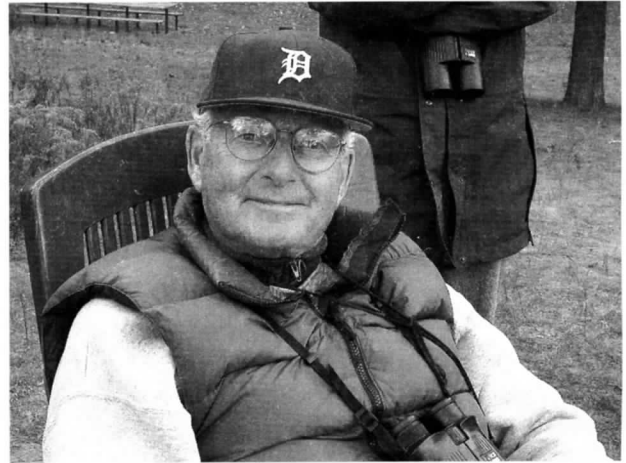
## 2004 OFO Awards

Each year, OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to the birds and birding community of Ontario. This year we have a long list of people and organizations to thank and present with an OFO Certificate of Appreciation. The recipients of the 2004 awards are:

- **David Cattrall** of King City for compiling the 21-year *Index to Ontario Birds*, 1983-2003, on the OFO website
- **Barry Kent MacKay** for his support of OFO with cover illustrations for *Ontario Birds* and his dedication to conservation
- **Phyllis MacKay** in recognition of her sixty years of tireless devotion as the avian Florence Nightingale
- **Dorothy Armstrong and her son, Larry Armstrong** for welcoming birders on their land to view the Gray Flycatcher near Cayuga in December 2003 and January 2004
- **Tammy and Ted Bilous** and **Sarah and Sam Bilous** of London for their kind hospitality to birders visiting to see the Band-tailed Pigeon in December 2003
- **Denzil and Shirley D'Mello** of London for their kind hospitality to visiting birders, and for feeder construction and maintenance for the Band-tailed Pigeon in December 2003
- **Gerry Meacham** of London for his feeder maintenance for the Band-tailed Pigeon in December 2003
- **Alex and Judy Eberspaecher** of Oakville for their hospitality to birders and reporting a Hooded Warbler in April 2004
- **Wayne Griese and Karen Richter** of Pakenham for their warm welcome to birders for the Black-headed Grosbeak in December 2003
- **Bob and Iris Jurmain** of Pakenham for their warm welcome to birders who came to see the Black-headed Grosbeak at their feeder in December 2003
- **Elizabeth Kenrick** for her assistance to birders seeking a rare gull at the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre in November 2003
- **Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre** for their kind welcome to visiting birders seeking a rare gull in November 2003
- **Dr. E.R. and Mrs M.R. Yendt** of Kingston for their kind hospitality to visiting birders and tireless efforts to nourish a Rufous Hummingbird in the winter 2003/4
- **Bruce MacKenzie** in recognition of his selfless and persevering commitment to preserving the Grimsby Lakeshore Wetland
- **Ian Barnes** of Hidden Valley Campground for their hospitality to visiting birders viewing the Painted Bunting at Normandale in August 2004
- **Jim And Linda Whiting** for their kindness and hospitality to birders viewing the Painted Bunting at Normandale in August 2004
- **Paul And Anna-Marie Smith** of Flamborough for welcoming birders to view the Varied Thrush in April 2004

Bob Falconer and Jean Iron, OFO Awards Coordinators

## Don Barnett Retires



Don at the High Park Hawkwatch in Toronto.  
4 October 2004. Photo by Jean Iron.

Don Barnett was an OFO Director for two years. He coordinated Field Trips and Advertising. Don arranged expert leaders and compiled the schedule for OFO's field trips. Don contacted present and potential advertisers in *Ontario Birds*. Advertising revenue is important to OFO because it helps pay for *Ontario Birds* in colour. Don is passionate about preserving habitat for grassland birds on the Carden Alvar and continues as OFO's representative on the management plan for the Cameron Ranch and subsequent purchases. We wish Don well. He will be missed.

### OFO Annual Convention & Banquet

### Point Pelee

10 and 11 September 2005

Mark your calendars for another exciting weekend of field trips, book sale, exhibits, speakers, and evening banquet. On Saturday and Sunday, experts will lead groups of convention participants to several of the best birding locations in the Point Pelee area. Watch for further details and registration in upcoming issues of *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*.

# The Sibley Field Guides to Birds of Eastern and Western North America

Geoff Carpentier

**The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America.** 2003. David Allen Sibley. Alfred A. Knopf, New York and Random House of Canada Ltd., Toronto. C\$29.95, softcover. There is a western counterpart guide.

This newest book set from Random House Canada is not just a republication of the popular *Sibley Guide to the Birds*. Albeit it is a condensed version of the original, but clear thought and purpose were applied to come up with what Sibley calls the “ideal guide to bird identification”. The original book dealt with both eastern and western species in a single volume. This set now breaks these out into eastern and western regions. This will assuredly be a boost to the novice who might have found the first book somewhat daunting and perhaps a little too big to carry around. These newer compact versions measure only 20 x 12 centimetres in size and will easily fit into many pockets. However, the downsizing has compromised the quality of these books.

Since both books are laid out in the same manner and each deals with the species in the same way, I’ll deal with them jointly. Both are clearly written and beautifully illustrated by Sibley. The books begin with a brief primer on birds and how to use these books. They include information on bird classification, birding tips, geographic variations and subspecies, molt and plumage, ethics, extinct species, bird topography and conservation.

The layout of the plates and text is unique and extremely pleasing and utilitarian. Most other books cram as many species onto a page as possible and intersperse images as space permits. Text generally appears on the facing page as does the distribution map. In this case, Sibley has gone to the next level and introduced a new concept where the images for each species are presented in a half page format, where text and map and paintings are side by side on the same page. Textual highlights to assist in identification are included beside the images of the birds. This makes for a compact and readable format where the confusion of which bird is which is gone. Even the novice can clearly relate the species to the field marks described. Sibley’s artistic talent continues to impress art aficionados and novices alike. The paintings are superb and accurate. Each plate shows several poses of the species depicted and focusses on sitting and flying birds in adult and juvenal plumages and pictures birds from above and below in flight—a feature I have not seen before in guides but which will be amazingly useful to birders. A host of poses is offered for each species. The Pine Grosbeak plate, for example, shows six images of the bird, including two subspecies and the redpoll complex is represented by 10 images. The book is illustrated with over 4600 paintings.

At the start of each family of birds, Sibley has included a comparative study of all the species in the group for quick reference in side by side comparative fashion, with a quick reference to the page on which the species is detailed in the guide. In some cases he breaks this out into subgroups [i.e. dabbling vs diving ducks] for better comparisons. He did something a little peculiar with some of the families, which I think I like but it takes time to understand his purpose. He shows first winter females for each of the wood warblers and sparrows, but not males. I think that in this case, I would have preferred that he show the females on one table and added another for the males. This would greatly assist the novice birder. This said, this is a very nice addition that will show benefit to new and experienced birders alike.

An interesting and useful addition is the inclusion of several insets that describe special features, i.e. “Golden (Yellow) Warbler”; unique populations, i.e. Ipswich Sparrow; hybrids, i.e. buntings; races and forms, i.e. Mallard vs Mexican duck; separating similar species, i.e. Eared vs Horned Grebe; characteristics of flight, i.e. shearwaters; exotic species for comparison, i.e. flamingos; and many more.

Sibley has added so many unique features to this series that he may very well revolutionize the field guide industry much as Peterson did so many years ago. This series is definitely worth owning and the price is certainly reasonable. If you already have the *Sibley Guide to Birds*, it doesn’t matter because you’ll want to own it and these two as well.

## Your 2005 OFO Membership

**Please check expiry date on the envelope of your OFO mailing for your membership status. Enclosed is the 2005 membership renewal form and an envelope.**

**Send change of postal address, email address and phone number to the memberships secretary.**

**Eleanor Beagan, Membership Secretary  
PO Box 455 Station R  
Toronto ON M4G 4E1**

**Phone: 416-423-3535  
Email: [etbeagan@sympatico.ca](mailto:etbeagan@sympatico.ca)**



# **Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Chile**

**Geoff Carpentier**

**Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Chile.** 2004. Manuel Marin, Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. E-mail: lynx@hbw.com. Softcover 141 pages. US \$15.75. ISBN 84-87334-59-8.

This excellent book follows on the success of Checklists for Argentina and Belize recently published by Lynx Edicions. It is current, comprehensive and meticulously researched, and summarizes historical information and meshes it with current data to produce the most accurate checklist of the birds of Chile to date. To ensure accuracy, an extensive re-evaluation of historical records and a re-examination of critical museum specimens was undertaken to ensure that the status of the 438 species described for Chile is accurately reflected. An in-depth analysis of 34 hypothetical species and a re-evaluation of 10 species now considered erroneous is offered as well.

The layout is simple and readable, and the text is in both in Spanish and English throughout. This reflects that two distinct populations would choose to use the book—the Spanish speaking South American based research community and the English speaking world travelling birder.

The brief introduction includes information on how to use the book, but adds useful notes on political boundaries. Seven Life Zones: Tropical Desert, Mediterranean, Valdiviana, Austral, Patagonian and Oceanic, are described for the country and a flavour of species to be found in each is offered. Species are separated into one of seven categories, primarily based on their migrational habits or rarity. This is very different from abundance or seasonal distributional codes usually provided for species in most checklists. I think a combination of the two formats would have provided more information that would have been very useful to the travelling birder, who could then better assess the likelihood of finding a particular species, without taking away from the readability of the book. I found it difficult to determine how non-migratory or endemic species were categorized. A series of simple maps shows the 12 political regions and the eight Life Zones to help with perspective.

A nicety is added for the ardent listers, who have favourite places to go in Chile or who want to categorize the birds by Life Zone. A blank template is included so the area or zone of interest can be described by the birder as he/she chooses and a code assigned. The code could then be applied to the eight blank boxes provided for each species described to facilitate personal record tracking. Twenty-six pages of tables follow where every family and species is detailed. Each page is attractively laid out with

the scientific name and common name of each species in both English and Spanish in the left most column. This is followed with the Life Zone(s) where each species is known to occur (upper case letters) or where they have occurred but are rare or extirpated (lower case letters). And finally a code is provided for many species regarding its status in the country, i.e. type of migrant, endemic, introduced, etc. The table is clear and concise and provides ample room for observers to track their personal lists.

The balance of the book provides informative and interesting notes on each of the 34 hypothetical, 84 rare, 10 “erroneously cited”, 34 with taxonomic or nomenclature changes, 17 endemic or near endemic and 9 introduced species. The book closes with an excellent bibliography.

This is another excellent book produced by Lynx Edicions that is well worth owning, whether or not you plan to travel to Chile.

## **A case for A Ululation of Loons**

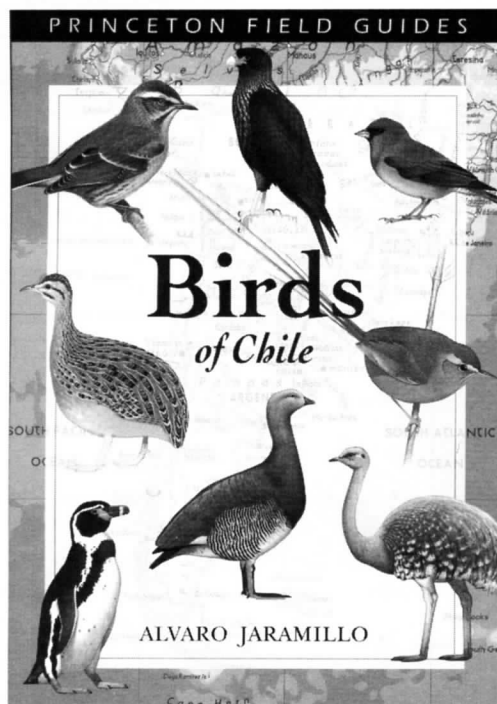
**Stan Long**

Lists of group names for various animals and birds have been embedded in the English language since the year dot, most of them now belonging to arcanum but still considered worthy of remembrance. I imagine it would be difficult to say when the last of these were invented, many of them being relicts of the hunting experience when firearms first became popular: “a Wisp of Snipe”, for instance, or “a Spring of Teal.” Recently I heard someone on a TV nature program who was insisting that the group name for Common Loons is “a raft.” Well and good. When found in large numbers on the larger lakes of Ontario and elsewhere, raft is a fair description for these mostly silent gatherings. Raft is a new name for large congregations of loons though it has been used for a long time as a group name for ducks. But I do not see why raft should be emphasized as the only name for a gathering of loons especially when two quite distinct group behaviors can be seen in this species. Anyone who has observed small groups of them on the northern lakes at the beginning of their fall migration must have heard them calling to each other in a series of wails that sets the echoes ringing. I suggest that when three or more loons join in this, then another group name such as the evocative word ululation would be well-suited to describe their outcry. Geese have two group names: “a gaggle”, for a flock on the ground, and “a skein”, for a flock in the air. So why not have “A Ululation of Loons” as a term for describing the group calling of Common Loons heard in the fall?

## Birds of Chile

Ron Pittaway

**Birds of Chile:** 2003. Alvaro Jaramillo and illustrated by Peter Burke and David Beadle. 240 pages and 96 colour plates. Princeton University Press. Softcover \$29.95 US.



This is a true field guide. It covers the identification of 460 species found in Chile, including its offshore islands such as Easter Island. Also included are the Antarctic Peninsula, adjacent islands, Falkland Islands and South Georgia, bringing the species treated total to 473.

The introduction contains essential information on habitats and eco-geography, migration and vagrancy, notes on seabirds, field identification tips, plumage and molt, conservation, topography diagrams and a glossary.

As with all top field guides, the illustrations are on the right hand page with identification text and range maps on the facing page for easy use. The text also covers voice, behaviour, and habitat. The high quality illustrations are by two of the world's finest bird artists, Peter Burke and David Beadle.

A really useful feature is the information at the top of each page facing the colour plates. It tells how the ages and sexes differ and gives additional behavioural and taxonomic points that help confirm the identification. I also really like the several text inserts such as "Ageing Gulls, Terns and Jaegers".

The author, Alvaro Jaramillo, and artists are OFO members and well-known to Ontario birders. This is one of the best ever field guides. It would make an excellent Christmas present for any birder.

## OFO Board of Directors Welcomes

Carol Horner and Chester Gryski

Carol Horner and Chester Gryski, both of Toronto, were elected for three-year terms to the OFO Board of Directors at the Annual Convention in Oakville on 2 October 2004.

Carol is an ultrasound technician at North York General Hospital in Toronto. She has been birding for seven years and an OFO member for three. Carol loves birding in Thickson's Woods, where she finds peace in this jewel in an industrial area. Her favourite birds are warblers, though she likes all birds and wants to see as many as possible. She is keen to learn new information about birds. Her most wanted birds are Kentucky Warbler and Gray Partridge. Carol is often in the field digiscoping.

Chester is a lawyer in Toronto. He has been birding actively for seven years and an OFO member for seven. As a child growing up in Hamilton, Chester had a keen interest in birds. Chester enjoys birding in Ontario's birding hotspots such as Algonquin Park, Amherst island, Hay Bay and Prince Edward Point. He has a country home in Lennox-Addington. Chester loves seabirds and travels from Gaspé to the Queen Charlotte's in his quest for pelagic species.

## Future OFO Field Trips

Dave Milsom, Field Trips Coordinator

Phone 905-857-2235

Email: [milsomdave@hotmail.com](mailto:milsomdave@hotmail.com)

**\*Note change of meeting place, November 28 (Sunday) Niagara River Gulls.**

**Leaders: Ron Tozer and Jean Iron.**

Meet at 9 a.m. at Sir Adam Beck Generating Station overlook on the Niagara River Parkway south of Queenston Bridge to US. Exit Highway 405 at the Niagara River Parkway and turn right (south for about 1.5 km. Glaucous, Iceland, Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed and other gulls.

**January 9 (Sunday) Petroglyphs Provincial Park.**

**Leader: Geoff Carpentier.**

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the park entrance. Go north on Hwy 28 from Peterborough past Lakefield and Burleigh Falls to Woodview. Just north of Woodview turn right on Northey's Bay Road and go 11 km to the park entrance. Bald and Golden Eagles, Common Raven, Gray Jay, winter finches, possible Bohemian Waxwings.

**February 5 (Saturday) Fisherville Area, Haldimand-Norfolk County. Leader: John Miles.**

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot of the high school in the north end of Cayuga on County Road 54. Hawks and Owls.

# Is the Loggerhead Shrike a Habitat Specialist?

Ron Pittaway and Jean Iron

Worldwide some species of shrikes are declining, but others are stable. Why? Takagi (2003) studied Bull-headed Shrikes (*L. bucephalus*) and Brown Shrikes (*Lanius cristatus*) in Japan. The stable Bull-headed Shrike was a habitat generalist; its territories were in various habitats and it nested in a variety of plant species. The declining Brown Shrike was a habitat specialist; its narrow habitat requirements were natural grasslands with shrubs and it also nested in shrubs. After reading Takagi's study, we now realize that the declining Loggerhead Shrike (*L. ludovicianus*) is a habitat specialist. This is the most important limiting factor.

As a habitat specialist, the Loggerhead Shrike has restricted breeding requirements. It nests in unimproved rough pasturelands. This habitat was abundant 75 years ago, but it has changed to intensive farmland or reverted to forest or been lost to urban sprawl.

The specialized breeding requirements of Loggerhead Shrikes comprise expanses of grassland with scattered shrubs (usually hawthorns or prickly red cedars) with grasses kept short by cattle grazing. If cattle grazing ceases, Loggerheads will disappear. For example, we know of three locations on the Carden Alvar where shrikes nested until recently. These areas did not change, except that cattle grazing stopped, causing grasses to grow too tall for shrikes. In another area grazing stopped and the shrikes disappeared, but now a pair is back because the cattle are back too.

Habitat fragmentation is a big problem, which is why large areas such as the 2869 acre Cameron Ranch and 1600 acre Windmill Ranch on the Carden Alvar are so vital. The Cameron Ranch had 6 pairs of shrikes last summer. We must act soon to save the Napanee Alvar and Smiths Falls Alvar and areas in Grey and Bruce counties and on Manitoulin Island.

Of the 13 pairs (25 in 2003) on the Napanee Alvar in 2004, 6 pairs were on pastureland rehabilitated under the federal habitat stewardship program. The challenge of sustaining populations of the Loggerhead Shrike is to maintain enough rough pasturelands for this *habitat specialist*.

**Acknowledgements:** We thank Robert Wenting, Chair of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Team, for 2004 survey results and information on habitat stewardship.

**Literature Cited:** Takagi, M. 2003. Philopatry and habitat selection in Bull-headed and Brown shrikes. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 74(1):45-52.

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**Publications Mail Agreement Number**

**40046348**

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**ISSN 1200-1589**

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Printed by Paragon dpi  
Toronto