OFO NEWS

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Old and New English Names of Ontario Birds

Lists of Official Names, Misspelled and Incorrect Names, Old Names, Suggested New Names

Ron Pittaway

Introduction: This article discusses bird names in Ontario including (1) the importance of using standardized names, (2) a list of official and frequently misspelled bird names, (3) some old bird names from the literature, and (4) suggested new English bird names.

Standardized Names: The official English names of birds are standardized in North America by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list (1998) and its supplements. These names are used by the Canadian Museum of Nature, Bird Studies Canada, Royal Ontario Museum, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas and most birding organizations. There is no official checklist of Canadian bird names. It would be confusing if there were no official names. Just look at the confusion in botany which lacks an authority on the common names of plants. The AOU uses American spelling. This does not mean that Canadians are giving in to Americans, but rather that the official North American names are set by the AOU and OFO follows this convention. An updated Ontario Bird Checklist is found here: <http://www.ofo.ca/obrc/chcklst.htm>.

List of Official and Incorrect Bird Names

The following are some of the most frequently misspelled and incorrect bird names on the Ontario checklist. It is impossible to list all variations in one article because birders keep inventing new variations. To avoid the three most frequent mistakes on *Ontbirds*, remember that all official North American bird names (1) use *colored* instead of coloured and (2) use *gray* instead of grey and (3) birds named after people that end in "s" add an apostrophe "s" as in Harris's Sparrow. In the list below, the official AOU name is listed first in **bold** followed by one or more incorrect versions.

Ross's Goose. Formerly Ross' Goose. Now all birds named after people whose names end in "s" add an apostrophe "s" to the person's name as in Ross's Goose.

American Black Duck. Often shortened to Black Duck.

Northern Shoveler. Spellcheckers often suggest the incorrect spelling of Shoveller.

American Wigeon. Formerly spelled Widgeon.

Eurasian Wigeon. Formerly European Wigeon and European Widgeon.

Long-tailed Duck. Some birders use former name Oldsquaw.

Red-breasted Merganser. Incorrectly spelled Red Breasted Merganser. Omitting the hyphen and capitalizing the second word of the name is a frequent error in many bird names.

Pacific Loon. Arctic Loon until split from that species.

Tricolored Heron. Not Tri-colored Heron or Tricoloured Heron.

Black-crowned Night-Heron. Often seen with incorrect capital letters and/or hypens or lack of them.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Same as above.

Gray Partridge. In Europe its name is Grey Partridge.

American Golden-Plover. This species has had at least five different names in about 60 years. For example, Ron Tozer (pers. comm.) wrote that his first "Peterson guide (1947) called it Golden Plover; the Audubon Water Bird guide (1951) and the Golden Guide (1966) called it American Golden Plover; the next Peterson guide (1980) called it Lesser Golden Plover; the National Geographic (1983) and the Master Guide (1983) called it Lesser Golden-Plover. Now it is American Golden-Plover (AOU 1998).

Semipalmated Plover. No hyphen after Semi.

Semipalmated Sandpiper. No hyphen after Semi.

Ruff: Reeve is not an official name for the female Ruff. It is

New Ontario Birds Editors

After 16 years as Editors of *Ontario Birds*, Ron Tozer, Ron Pittaway, Bill Crins and Art Consultant Christine Kerrigan retire with the December 2006 issue. The new Editors are Ross James and Glenn Coady; Art Consultant, Barry Kent MacKay; and Layout and Printing, Judie Shore.

not in the AOU Check-list (1998) or in modern bird books. Use "female Ruff" to indicate the gender of the species.

Great Black-backed Gull. Not *Greater* Black-backed Gull. This is a common pronunciation and spelling error. The Peterson guide (1980) made this error. Since this is the largest gull in the world, perhaps it should be called Greatest Black-backed Gull.

Ross's Gull. Formerly Ross' Gull.

Eastern Screech-Owl. Note hyphen.

Northern Hawk Owl. No hyphen such as in Northern Hawk-Owl, which was its former name.

Great Gray Owl. Spelled Great Grey Owl by Europeans.

Whip-poor-will. Often misspelled as Whippoorwill and Whipoorwill and Whip-Poor-Will.

American Three-toed Woodpecker. Recently it was Three-toed Woodpecker, but was given its current name when the North American and Eurasian forms were split. Confusingly the next species is also a three-toed woodpecker.

Black-backed Woodpecker. Formerly Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker and Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: With a hyphen.

Vermilion Flycatcher: Often spelled Vermillion.

Great Crested Flycatcher. Formerly Crested Flycatcher.

Gray Jay: Not Grey Jay. Peter Whelan's column in The Globe and Mail newspaper spelled it "grey jay" despite "gray" being its official spelling.

Clay-colored Sparrow. Often incorrectly spelled "coloured" possibly due to spellcheckers.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Frequently incorrectly LeConte's without a space between Le and Conte's.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Often shortened to Sharp-tailed Sparrow because of long name. The AOU should re-name it Nelson's Sparrow and the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow should be Saltmarsh Sparrow.

Harris's Sparrow. This is the correct spelling with an apostrophe *s*. Harris' Sparrow is the former spelling.

Black-and-white Warbler. Often spelled and capitalized incorrectly as Black-And-White or Black-and-White.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Often shortened to just Rosy Finch. Mistakes include not capitalizing Finch, Grey instead of Gray and Rosy is sometimes spelled Rosey.

European Goldfinch. This legal cage bird in Canada is frequently seen as an escapee in Ontario. Note its name has not changed to Eurasian as in the next and several other species.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Formerly European Tree Sparrow.

List of Old and New Bird Names

From time to time you will come across old names of Ontario birds. Below are *some* (not all) of the most frequently encountered old and often confusing names. I went back as far as the Birds of Canada (Taverner 1937) and my first Peterson Guide (1947) to assemble this list. The old names are given first in **bold** followed by the official AOU names.

Fulvous Tree Duck is Fulvous Whistling-Duck.

Whistling Swan (in part) is Tundra Swan.

Blue Goose was formerly a full species. It is now the dark or blue morph of the Snow Goose.

European Teal (Common Teal) formerly a full species is a subspecies of the Green-winged Teal, but may be split again.

Baldpate is American Wigeon.

American Eider is Common Eider.

American Goldeneye is Common Goldeneye.

American Merganser is Common Merganser.

Hungarian Partridge and **European Partridge** are Gray Partridge.

Holboell's Grebe is Red-necked Grebe.

Harcourt's Petrel is Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.

Mexican Cormorant and **Olivaceous Cormorant** are Neotropic Cormorant.

European Cormorant is Great Cormorant.

Water-Turkey and **Snake-bird** are Anhinga.

Man-o'-war-bird and **Magnificent Frigatebird** are Great Frigatebird.

Cory's Bittern is the dark or red morph of the Least Bittern.

American Egret and **Common Egret** are Great Egret.

Louisiana Heron is Tricolored Heron.

Green-backed Heron is Green Heron.

White-faced Glossy Ibis is White-faced Ibis.

Wood Ibis is Wood Stork.

Marsh Hawk is Northern Harrier.

Harlan's Hawk formerly a full species is now a subspecies of the Red-tailed Hawk.

Audubon's Caracara is Crested Caracara.

Sparrow Hawk is American Kestrel.

Pigeon Hawk is Merlin.

Duck Hawk is Peregrine Falcon.

Florida Gallinule and **Common Gallinule** are Common Moorhen.

Mongolian Plover is Lesser Sand-Plover.

Bonaparte's Sandpiper is White-rumped Sandpiper.

Bartramian Sandpiper & **Upland Plover** are Upland Sandpiper.

Hudsonian Curlew is Whimbrel.

Red-backed Sandpiper is Dunlin.

Common Snipe is Wilson's Snipe.

Northern Phalarope is Red-necked Phalarope.

Short-billed Gull is Mew Gull.

Cabot's Tern is Sandwich Tern.

Brünnich's Murre is Thick-billed Murre.

Razor-billed Auk is Razorbill.

Richardson's Owl is Boreal Owl.

Acadian Owl is Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker and **Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker** are Black-backed Woodpecker.

Northern Three-toed Woodpecker and **Three-toed Woodpecker** are American Three-toed Woodpecker.

Trail's Flycatcher is Alder and Willow Flycatchers.

Wright's Flycatcher is Dusky Flycatcher.

Arkansas Kingbird is Western Kingbird.

Migrant Shrike is Loggerhead Shrike.

Solitary Vireo was Plumbeous, Cassin's & Blue-headed Vireos.

Canada Jay is Gray Jay. Many Canadians would like the AOU to change Gray Jay back to Canada Jay.

Short-billed Marsh Wren is Sedge Wren.

Long-billed Marsh Wren is Marsh Wren.

Brown-capped Chickadee is Boreal Chickadee.

Wilson's Thrush is Veery.

Olive-backed Thrush is Swainson's Thrush.

Water Pipit is American Pipit.

Myrtle Warbler is Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Audubon's Warbler is Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Maryland Yellowthroat is Common Yellowthroat.

Rufous-sided Towhee is Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee and formerly Red-eyed Towhee.

Pinewood's Sparrow is Bachman's Sparrow.

Slate-colored Junco, Oregon Junco, Pink-sided Junco and Gray-headed Junco are now lumped as Dark-eyed Junco.

Northern Oriole is former name for Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Orioles when they were lumped as one species.

Redpolled Linnet is Common Redpoll.

Arctic Redpoll is Hoary Redpoll.

English Sparrow is House Sparrow.

Note: For a list of AOU name changes from 1886 to 2000 <http://hometown.aol.com/darwinpage/zoo/AOUindex.htm>

List of Suggested New Names

The recently published *Birds of the World* checklist by Gill and Wright (2006) recommends the following new English names which differ from the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (1998) and its supplements. The *Birds of the World* incorporates three important rules: (1) it uses the American spelling for "color"; (2) however, it allows the use of either the American "gray" or British "grey" in a bird's name; and (3) if a bird is named after person whose name ends in *s,* then its possessive is an apostrophe *s* as in Ross's Gull. This convention is also followed by the AOU. The list below covers *only* birds on the Ontario Bird Checklist (2006). It will be interesting to see how many changes are accepted by the AOU. The AOU names are given first followed by recommended new names in **bold**.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck to **Black-bellied Whistling Duck.**

Fulvous Whistling-Duck to **Fulvous Whistling Duck.**

Green-winged Teal is split into **Green-winged Teal** and **Eurasian Teal** (Common Teal).

Brant to **Brant Goose.**

Black Scoter, formerly Common Scoter, is split into **Black Scoter** and **American Scoter.**

Ring-necked Pheasant to **Common Pheasant.**

Greater Prairie-Chicken to **Greater Prairie Chicken.**

Common Loon to **Great Northern Loon.**

Eared Grebe to **Black-necked Grebe.**

Greater Shearwater to **Great Shearwater.**

Leach's Storm-Petrel to **Leach's Storm Petrel.**

Black-crowned Night-Heron to **Black-crowned Night Heron.**

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron to **Yellow-crowned Night Heron.**

White Ibis to **American White Ibis.**

Rough-legged Hawk to **Roughleg.** This name was likely chosen because it is called Rough-legged Buzzard in the Old World. The change may offend both North Americans and Europeans.

Crested Caracara to **Northern Crested Caracara.**

Black-bellied Plover to **Gray Plover.**

American Golden-Plover to **American Golden Plover.**

Lesser Sand-Plover to **Lesser Sand Plover.**

Pomarine Jaeger to **Pomarine Skua.** While Parasitic Jaeger and Long-tailed Jaeger keep their North American names, this species European name was adopted likely because recent genetic studies indicate that it evolved from past hybridization with larger skuas in the genus *Catharacta.*

Black-headed Gull to **Common Black-headed Gull.**

Dovekie to **Little Auk.** I hope AOU does not adopt this change.

Rock Pigeon to **Common Pigeon.**

Eurasian Collared-Dove to **Eurasian Collared Dove.**

Eastern Screech-Owl to **Eastern Screech Owl.**

Northern Hawk Owl to **Northern Hawk-Owl.**

Northern Shrike to **Great Gray Shrike** or **Great Grey Shrike.**

Common Raven to **Northern Raven.**

Bank Swallow to **Sand Martin.**

Cliff Swallow to **American Cliff Swallow.**

American Pipit to **Buff-bellied Pipit.**

Yellow Warbler to **American Yellow Warbler.**

Painted Redstart to **Painted Whitestart.**

Brewer's Sparrow is split into **Brewer's Sparrow** and **Timberline Sparrow**. If the AOU accepts Timberline Sparrow as a full species, which is now a subspecies of Brewer's Sparrow, then Brewer's Sparrow on the Ontario checklist will be replaced with **Brewer's/Timberline Sparrow** because the subspecies, *breweri* or *taverneri*, of the one Brewer's Sparrow record was not determined by the OBRC (Crins 2004).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow to **Nelson's Sparrow.**

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch to **Gray-crowned Rosy Finch.**

Hoary Redpoll to **Arctic Redpoll.**

Remarks: Few of these new names are real improvements and many are hyphen changes. Standardization is a worthwhile goal so hopefully the best name changes such as Northern Raven and Nelson's Sparrow will be adopted by the AOU. However, I hope that we do not lose names such as Dovekie and Bank Swallow.

Acknowledgements: I thank Michel Gosselin of the Canadian Museum of Nature and Jean Iron and Ron Tozer for excellent comments on an earlier draft.

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Birds, Husband, Kids

Do and Don't Tips for a Birding Spouse

Cheryl Edgecombe

I started birding when I was 13 years old by joining a group at Ojibway Nature Centre in Windsor, Ontario, led by one of Canada's top birders, Paul Pratt. Little did I realize at that time what effect birding would have on my life and just how creative I could be, particularly when I was married and had children,

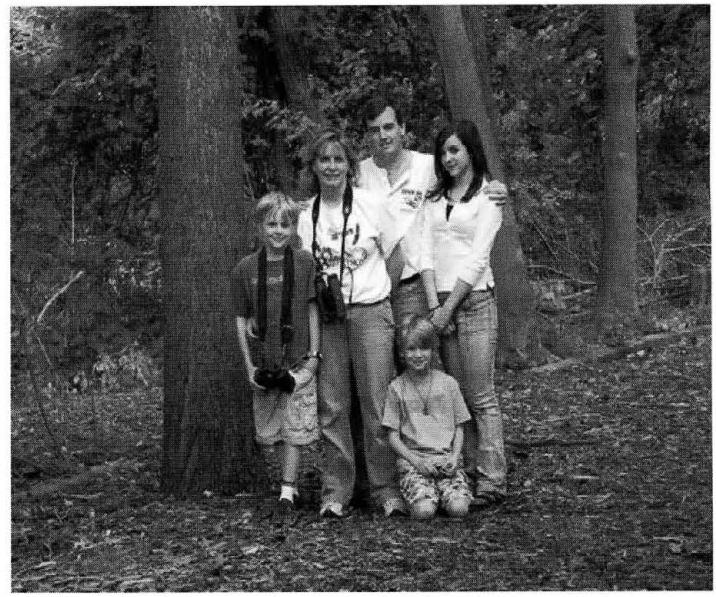
When I was younger I was obsessed with birding in a different way. Trips afield were difficult when not of driving age so mostly I relied on getting rides with others from the group. I participated in Christmas Bird Counts at Rondeau, Cedar Creek and Point Pelee and went on weekly trips to Pelee. Recently, I pulled out checklists of birds seen in those days to see if I could possibly add any to my current Ontario list as I was not listing back then.

When I was a teenager, I was hired at the Ojibway Nature Centre. This was a great opportunity to develop my knowledge of birds and other wildlife as well. Taking school groups on field trips and running day camps were the early stages of leading hikes. One of the best parts of this job was the birds that were brought to the centre for rehabilitation. I remember rescuing a Great Blue Heron stuck in the fence at the park and walking back to the nature centre with that large dagger of a bill in my hands, legs dangling below and then sticking the bird in the back room on the floor and watching it as its legs slowly spread apart as it was too slippery on the floor. Quite a funny sight but where was I going to get a box for it?

In university, I took a less active approach to birding. On a trip to Vancouver in 1986 to visit "the boyfriend", now my husband, I took out my bins for the first time. Diving over them and looking at me like I was insane, he asked, "What are you doing with those?" I guess I didn't spring it on him until then that I was a birder. He didn't know what he was in for. In hindsight, I was taking them out to look at Crested Myna, a bird no longer found in Vancouver or Canada today.

I took a hiatus from birding when I married and started a family; I was too busy and my husband traveled all the time. I now regret that I wasn't creative enough. I can't say that I became an avid, "obsessive" birder again until after I had my third child. At this point in my life I needed a diversion, some peace and tranquility to calm the nerves of parenting. In September 2000, I joined the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and thus began my passion for birding once again.

It is difficult to explain to a spouse or a child that you "have to go" when a rarity shows up. Sometimes, they just don't understand. You really have to be fully immersed in the sport. As a good friend of mine has said,



Cheryl (centre left) and husband Geoff with their three children: Kendra age 14 (right), Ben age 10 holding binoculars, and Spencer age 8 kneeling. Photo 19 September 2006.

"You don't have to be crazy, but it helps". *Ontbirds* becomes a major news source in our household and birds are things you plan your family trips around, not all of them of course but I have birded Disney World.

It's a delicate balance, marriage, working part time and birding. Many have said, "How do you get out so often? Do you work? Do your children know you exist?" I am fortunate that I have a husband who is not a 9 to 5er. Yes, he does travel a great deal, but his schedule allows for his time home and I can escape, which has worked well with rarity trips. My daughter has made some serious money babysitting during those birding emergencies. Neighbours and relatives have helped too, but they also question why you would drive 10 hours to Sudbury and back to see a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch.

Then there are times when the kids have to come too. Lunch/dinner at Hutch's at Van Wagners Beach in Hamilton and climbing on the rocks for the most part works.

I take advantage of birding the nooks and crannies around our home. Birding can be done on the way to children's activities. There are opportunities everywhere, woodlots on the way to bus stops and soccer fields. There is a shorebird spot on the way to Costco and there are two creek beds on the way to the grocery store. On this note, I have learned to grocery shop in a quick manner.

My work hours vary with migration patterns and weather systems. In spring and fall I work in the evenings, on fall jaeger days with east winds at Van Wagners

Beach, I postpone projects until the winds change direction. I do get all my work done, eventually. Trips to the bank for the company are also linked with local woodlots. At one point while I was a day care provider for children when my kids were younger, I remember pulling up to see a Townsend Solitaire with three or four day care kids in the van. Fortunately, someone was there with the bird in the scope for me, which was a bonus. Children's outings were often to the beach or to a local park with known rarities and playground equipment.

In the four years since joining the Hamilton Naturalists' Club I have become involved in volunteer activities for the club and particularly the Bird Studies Group. One of these undertakings has been the weekly Hamilton Naturalists Club Birding Report which I truly enjoy. Through hi tech internet, I have been able to do this even while away on family trips. It is also an excellent way to learn of rarities first hand and feed my obsession. My involvement in the *Birds of Hamilton* project with Bob Curry has given me a sense of birding history in Hamilton and the changes that have occurred, good and bad. I have also become very keen on "the Hamilton list" and any mention of moving the family out of the 40 km radius around Dundurn Castle is met with a big "No".

It is my hope that my family will become birders as well. Some members have expressed an interest in pursuing the sport while others just think "Why would I do that?" My husband and my three children have been very supportive for the most part. Of course, there are those times when ignorance is bliss and adventures out to the field for a rarity are just not spoken of unless asked. This is where answering the cell phone can get tricky.

Perhaps the best element of becoming an obsessive birder once again has been the amazing adventures I have had and the people I have met along the way. My best friends and my birding network have been the best part of becoming an avid birder again. I thank them for their friendship, for the laughs we have had, for the birds we have shared and for their personal support outside birding. Without them, birding would be an empty experience.

Do and Don't Tips of a Birding Parent

- Have an emergency chicken ready to plop into the crockpot for those long-haul emergency rarities. Crockpots are a necessary appliance. Fed family members are tolerant family members.
- Do not answer the phone at Van Wagners beach when you say you are at the grocery store. The sound of crashing waves gives you away.
- Always be prepared to bribe with fast food if any "birding emergencies" come up.
- Spishing should not be done after your child reaches the age of 11. Even carrying bins is uncool, so most days at the bus, they are tucked inside a jacket or a backpack.
- Be aware and ready to explain that cell phone bills also follow migration patterns. Rarities and fallouts make for greater charges. My husband actually asked me to correlate a rarity with a phone bill.
- Parks are wonderful places to play, in particular, parks that are along the lakeshore with woodlots. This allows time for both birding parent and children to play.
- Help your children discover the importance of having the outlet of a passion that allows them to break away and relax, and the value of friendships that will help them become better persons as a whole.

Cheryl Edgecombe is well known to OFO members for her weekly Thursday reports on Ontbirds *about bird sightings in the Hamilton area. She is active in the Hamilton Naturalists' Club Bird Study Group.*

Cheryl birding with her son, Ben, on 19 September 2006.

New Publication

Birding at Point Pelee

A birder's history of one of Canada's most famous birding spots

by *Henrietta O'Neill*

Price: $24.95CAN. 224 pages and numerous photographs. Published by Lorimer and distributed by Formac Distributing. Phone: 1-800-565-1975 and email: orderdesk@formac.ca

This book documents the history of birding at Point Pelee since the first known visit by a birder in 1877. There are chapters on Early Exploration, The Great Lakes Ornithological Club, Bird Banding, Bird Photography, Turning Points, Philosophical Differences, The Rise of Modern Birding, Record Keeping and Record Committees, and more.

OFO member and author Henrietta O'Neill has a supply of the books. Anyone close to her home in Leamington can contact her to pick up a copy to save shipping and handling costs.

Email: beoneill@can.rogers.com Phone: 519-322-1062

French rabbit Wine Helps Loggerhead Shrike Recovery

Tamara Burns

Winemaker Boisset's contribution to Wildlife Preservation Canada and LCBO gives the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike a chance to avoid extinction. Left to right: Gerry Kurtz, VP and Treasurer, Wildlife Preservation Canada; Elaine Williams, Executive Director, Wildlife Preservation Canada; Jean-Charles Boisset, President of Boisset America; and Tamara Burns, LCBO's Vice President, Merchandising. Photo by *Daniele Gauvin,* 29 July 2006 at the Ingersoll Loggerhead Shrike wintering facility.

The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*) is a songbird that hunts like a hawk. This grey, white and black bird is slightly smaller than a robin, with a distinctive raccoon-like black face mask and a short, sharply hooked bill. Its most interesting yet gruesome trait is impaling its prey (large insects and small rodents, snakes and birds) on anything sharp like large thorns. Unfortunately this amazing bird is also critically endangered. In 2006, there were just 17 pairs in two separate locations in Ontario. Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC) is working to implement the recovery plan for this species in agreement with Environment Canada, Ontario Region, under the Federal Species at Risk Act.

In November 2004, the LCBO established its Natural Heritage Fund to help protect Ontario's natural heritage by preserving and expanding wildlife habitat. Fifty cents from the sale of every cloth Envirobag sold at LCBO stores goes into the Fund. The Fund has already contributed to river clean ups in southern Ontario, a tree planting initiative in southwestern Ontario and support for an eagle nesting project in the Thousand Island region.

Soon, LCBO suppliers were asking if they could contribute to the Fund and have projects they could be involved with. It was a great idea and tied in perfectly with the LCBO's overall environmental strategy—an aspect of which is to work closely with suppliers to reduce package waste by 10 million kilograms per year—which can't be accomplished without supplier support.

In January 2005, Jean-Charles Boisset of France wanted to launch a new wine in Ontario in a new non-glass container. He reduced waste by packaging in a Tetra Pak Prisma carton (90% less weight than an equivalent glass bottle) and also wanted to participate in the Natural Heritage Fund. His wine was called *French rabbit.*

The LCBO started researching for a project to fit *French rabbit*, and thought what could be better than helping an endangered songbird from extinction with a breeding program? Breeding is what a rabbit does best, and the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike needed to multiply like rabbits since its numbers were declining faster than any other grassland bird in North America. From that idea, the "Saved by a Hare" project was born.

Boisset donated 50 cents from the sale of each Tetra Pak carton of *French rabbit* to the LCBO Natural Heritage Fund to support a breeding program by Wildlife Preservation Canada for the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike. The launch of *French rabbit* in August 2005 was the most successful in LCBO history with sales in the first three months of $2 million. Customers liked the convenient, resealable, unbreakable packaging and they appreciated the environmental message underlying the *French rabbit* line.

In August 2006, Jean-Charles Boisset presented, through the LCBO's Natural Heritage Fund, a cheque for $160,000 to Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC) and announced *French rabbit* will contribute a further $160,000, for a total of $320,000 from customer purchases of its Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay wines. A Pinot Noir will be added shortly, raising funds as well.

The aim of the program is to help breed captive Loggerhead Shrikes in special field cages and return them to the wild, with a goal of 500 wild pairs, enabling the species to be removed from the endangered species list. In 2005, a captive-bred female nested on the Carden Alvar, proving that the shrikes can survive, migrate and breed. WPC Executive Director Elaine Williams said Boisset's contribution helped expand the program this past year and also inspired other foundations to donate money, invigorating the community-based Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program and making expansion of effort possible.

Around the time of the cheque presentation, 110 young-of-the-year shrikes were released at two field locations in Ontario: the Bruce Peninsula and Carden Alvar.

The continued success of *French rabbit* wine will breed success for its Saved by a Hare project: helping to save an endangered songbird from extinction. So next time you are shopping at the LCBO, you may wish to consider purchasing *French rabbit* in its distinctive orange Tetra Pak Prisma carton to help the rabbit help the endangered Eastern Loggerhead Shrike.

Tamara Burns is a Vice President of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. She and her husband, Alan, are dedicated to conservation and environmental improvements.

OBRC Notes

Margaret Bain, OBRC Chair

The voting members of the 2006 Ontario Bird Records Committee are Margaret Bain (Chair), Glenn Coady, Jean Iron, Colin Jones, Kevin McLaughlin, Mark Peck (ROM Liaison), and Alan Wormington. Bill Crins is our hard-working Secretary, and Ian Richards our invaluable Assistant Secretary.

One of the main problems facing the OBRC at the present time is the low percentage of the rare birds seen across the province and posted to *Ontbirds*, the OFO Listserv, that gets reported to the Committee. Ontbirds now has a huge following among Ontario birders and reports come in from many parts of the province, not just the more heavily birded areas like Point Pelee, Long Point, Niagara, and localities close to the larger urban centres. Alan Wormington and Ian Richards set out to check this percentage of unreported rarities for 2005, and made the disturbing discovery that at least half did not have documentation submitted to the Committee.

Perhaps we have talked too much about the mechanics of reporting: the "How" to write a good report. But in these days of global climate change, the "Why" becomes even more acutely important. We need to know as much as we possibly can about bird populations and distribution in our province. Your notes, photographs, and reports submitted to the OBRC and housed at the Royal Ontario Museum become scientific evidence, helping present and future researchers understand vagrancy patterns, population surges and declines, and thus contribute to land use and conservation planning. In June 2006, Ian Richards posted a request to Ontbirds for documentation of over 100 unreported rare bird sightings from 2005. There was some response to this posting, but it was disappointingly small, so we do need all OFO members to think about the importance of rarity reports, and to send them in whenever possible, whether as the original finders or as subsequent observers. The Review List of species requiring documentation is easily accessed on the OFO website at <www.ofo.ca/obrc> and is also incorporated into OFO's pocket Ontario Bird Checklist, available from OFO Sales. There are separate lists for Northern and Southern Ontario, so some species uncommon in the North may not need to be reported in the south and vice versa. Also on the OBRC section of the OFO website is an excellent article by Peter Burke on "Documenting a Rare Bird Sighting" that covers some of the "Why" as well as the "How", and if you have never read it or perhaps have not read it for some time, I urge you to read it through.

The OBRC electronic database project is progressing well in the computer-savvy hands of Doug Woods, ably assisted by Glenn Coady. Final adjustments are being made to the data design and work will soon begin on importing past data. There will be many useful applications as well as basic data storage and retrieval, including better communications between the Secretary, the Committee, and birders involved in sightings of reportable species. One command, for instance, will help to create the data portion of the Annual Report, saving a lot of time in report preparation. We look forward to a demonstration and discussion of the program at the OBRC Policy Meeting held in Burlington in mid-October.

We also look forward to more active reporting of Review List species by OFO members. If you have never reported a rarity before, look on it as an enriching learning experience. Report forms are available on-line:

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

Or you can write as much as you like in essay form, using these as guidelines. Completed forms and digital photographs should be emailed to <obrc@ofo.ca>. Written forms, sketches, photographic prints and slides, audiotapes and videos may be mailed to:

Bill Crins, OBRC Secretary,
170 Middlefield Road, Peterborough ON K9J 8G1.

Margaret Bain, 2006 Chair of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), at the OBRC display at the OFO Annual Convention in Ottawa on 30 September 2006. Also meeting OFO members at the display were Mark Peck and Glenn Coady. Photo by *Jean Iron.*

2007 OFO Board of Directors

OFO thanks retiring directors Sandra Eadie and Bob Falconer for their service to OFO. Sandra coordinated the OFO Website for the past six years and Bob handled the OFO Certificates of Appreciation for three.

OFO welcomes new directors John Black of St. Catharines and Valerie Jacobs of Toronto. John and Valerie will share operation of the OFO Website, and Valerie will coordinate the OFO Certificates of Appreciation.

More information in February 2007 *OFO News.*

Chimney Swift and Purple Martin

Two small birds going in the same direction

Mike Cadman and Peter Blancher

The Chimney Swift and Purple Martin are among the group of aerial insectivores showing dramatic decline in Ontario according to the atlas data. New analyses using atlas data reveal not only the extent of the decline, but the pattern as well.

The tables summarize changes between the first and second atlases overall and within various regions of the province. The data are "effort adjusted" to show the comparison of first and second atlas results with the effect of effort removed. Removing the effect of effort is necessary because about 20% more effort went into the second atlas than into the first. Bolded numbers indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the percentages of squares in which the species was reported in each atlas. The percentage values in the tables are rounded, but the "differences" are based on the true values, not the rounded numbers.

Although the Chimney Swift was reported in more squares, the overall pattern of occurrence and decline is fairly similar for these two species. The highest proportion of squares in which each species is reported is the Carolinian Region in southwestern Ontario, and the percentage of occupied squares decreases to the north. Neither species breeds in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, and both were reported in relatively few squares in the Northern Shield Region.

The number of squares in which each was reported overall hasdeclined by similar amounts: 40% for Purple Martin and 45% for Chimney Swift. With the exception of the Northern Shield Region, where each species occurs in small numbers, the proportional decline increases from south to north. That is, Purple Martin was reported in 19% of the squares in the Southern Shield Region during the first atlas, but only 4% of squares in that region during the second atlas, which is a proportional decline of 78%. The proportional decline is smaller in more southerly regions. The pattern is generally similar for Chimney Swift, with the largest proportional declines occurring in the northern parts of its range, but declines are not as great as for Purple Martin.

Both species have shown a southward shift in squares where they were found, by an average of 37 km for Purple Martin and 23 km for Chimney Swift. However, the pattern of change is different. Purple Martins have withdrawn almost completely from the northern part of southern Ontario. It no longer breeds around Sudbury and only in very few squares near Sault Ste Marie and North Bay. However, the northern edge of the Chimney Swift's range in southern Ontario has not shifted significantly because, although numbers are down in the northern part of southern Ontario, there are still records in squares around Sault Ste Marie and North Bay and Sudbury, as there were during the first atlas.

Farther south, Purple Martin range has retracted away from inland areas, remaining to breed primarily around large bodies of water. Starting at Point Clark in southern Bruce County on Lake Huron and moving south, the Purple Martin breeds in a practically

Number of Squares - bolded numbers are statistically significant

Chimney Swift		Ontario	Carolinian	Simcoe-Rideau	Southern Shield	Northern Shield
No. squares with breeding evidence	1st Atlas	1,320	234	512	536	38
	2nd	838	199	345	265	29
% squares with breeding evidence	1st Atlas	**14%**	**74%**	**50%**	**60%**	8%
(effort adjusted)	2nd Atlas	**8%**	**49%**	**25%**	**25%**	6%
Absolute Difference (effort adjusted)		**-6%**	**-25%**	**-25%**	**-36%**	-2%
Proportional Difference (effort adjusted)		**-45%**	**-33%**	**-51%**	**-59%**	-31%

Purple Martin		Ontario	Carolinian	Simcoe-Rideau	Southern Shield	Northern Shield
No. squares with breeding evidence	1st Atlas	949	243	458	236	12
	2nd	601	213	329	52	7
% squares with breeding evidence	1st Atlas	**8%**	**78%**	**44%**	**19%**	2%
(effort adjusted)	2nd Atlas	**5%**	**59%**	**25%**	**4%**	2%
Absolute Difference (effort adjusted)		**-3%**	**-19%**	**-19%**	**-15%**	-0.2%
Proportional Difference (effort adjusted)		**-40%**	**-24%**	**-44%**	**-78%**	-9%

Percentage of Squares - bolded numbers are statistically significant

Chimney Swift		Ontario	Carolinian	Simcoe-Rideau	Southern Shield	Northern Shield
% squares with breeding evidence	1st	**14%**	**74%**	**50%**	**60%**	8%
(effort adjusted)	2nd Atlas	**8%**	**49%**	**25%**	**25%**	6%
Absolute Difference (effort adjusted)		**-6%**	**-25%**	**-25%**	**-36%**	-2%
Proportional Difference (effort adjusted)		**-45%**	**-33%**	**-51%**	**-59%**	-31%

Purple Martin		Ontario	Carolinian	Simcoe-Rideau	Southern Shield	Northern Shield
% squares with breeding evidence	1st Atlas	**8%**	**78%**	**44%**	**19%**	2%
(effort adjusted)	2nd Atlas	**5%**	**59%**	**25%**	**4%**	2%
Absolute Difference (effort adjusted)		**-3%**	**-19%**	**-19%**	**-15%**	-0.2%
Proportional Difference (effort adjusted)		**-40%**	**-24%**	**-44%**	**-78%**	-9%

unbroken chain of squares on the shores of Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario, and along the St Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, and Trent-Severn and Rideau Waterways. Also, it was ubiquitous on the Niagara Peninsula and in Essex, Kent and Prince Edward Counties.

The disproportionate decline of the Purple Martin at inland areas, and the decline farther north even near large bodies of water, suggest some avenues for research into reasons for the decline. Perhaps martins have remained in those areas that have the most productive or most reliable sources of flying insect food, such as large water bodies off the Shield, where fledging success and adult survival are both sufficient to maintain local breeding populations. Alternatively, the areas where the birds no longer breed might have had smaller Purple Martin populations to begin with; records were certainly more scattered in those areas during the first atlas. So their disappearance might simply reflect an evenly spread decline of absolute numbers of birds, such that marginal populations would disappear first. If that is the case, then the cause could be range-wide, rather than local, including survival outside the breeding season.

The decline of the Chimney Swift is more evenly spread, though remaining concentrations of records are evident near the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario, some in heavily urban areas such as Toronto, but others in rural regions such as Essex and Kent Counties.

Both species are heavily dependent on man-made structures for nesting. However, while there doesn't appear to have been a decline in Purple Martin nesting boxes, chimneys suitable for Chimney Swifts have declined markedly over the past half century. Most authors consider this a primary reason for the Chimney Swift's decline (Gauthier et al. in prep.). Their study in Quebec showed that, with the increase in electric and natural gas heating systems, there are fewer suitable chimneys. Furthermore many formerly suitable chimneys have been fitted with spark protectors and aluminum flues and are no longer suitable for nesting swifts.

It may be a coincidence that the Chimney Swift is declining at the same time as and with a similar pattern to the Purple Martin and many other aerial foragers. Only further research will tell.

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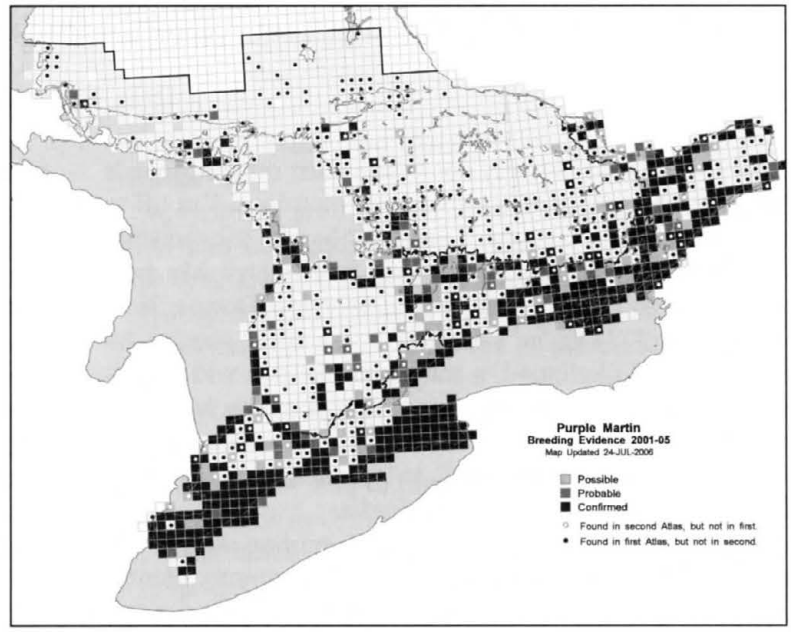
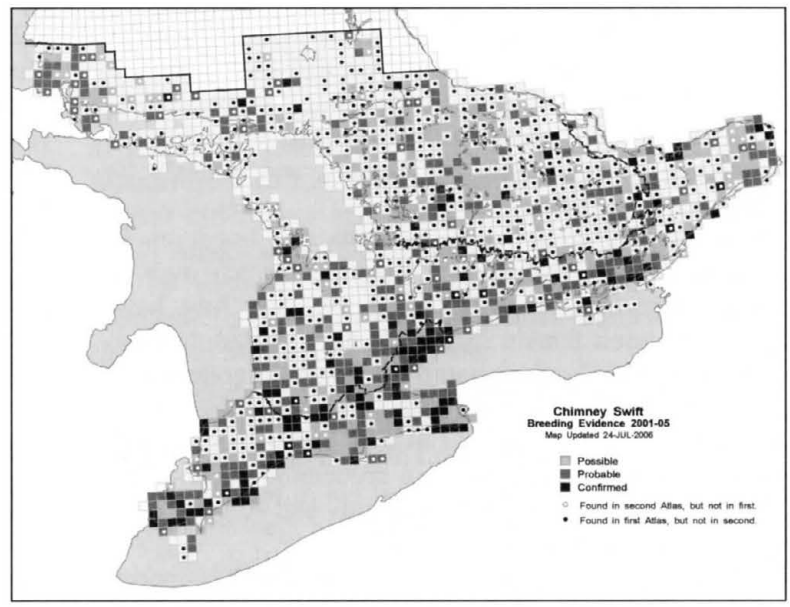
Gauthier, J., M. Dionne, J. Potvin, C. Maurice, M. Cadman and D. Busby. In Prep. Status of the Chimney Swift (Chaetura pelagica) in Canada. *Technical Report Series.* Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada.





Chimney Swift nest in chimney of Bruce Di Labio's heritage home near Ottawa. Photo by *Bruce Di Labio*, first published in *Ontario Birding*, Summer 2006.

Sewage Lagoons, Shorebirds, Falcons and Wives

Ron Fleming

I feel for my wife, I really do. While most other husbands are off to the golf course on summer mornings, I'm off to the local sewage lagoons. I imagine her in conversation with friends. "Hi, Jackie, are you free today? My husband's out golfing with his boss at Bayview Downs. How about yours?" "Oh, he's birding at the local sewage lagoons." In all likelihood, a statement like this will be followed by a pregnant pause. On its own, the term *birding* is enough to cause some eyebrow raising, but when you add the phrase "sewage lagoons" to the mix, you've pretty much guaranteed the spilling of drinks.

However, those who understand birding know that some of the best birding you can do in the summer months is at sewage lagoons. For the uninitiated, here's a quick explanation why. Shorebirds give birth to precocial young, i.e. babies that can fend for themselves soon after birth, so unlike robins and sparrows and their relatives, adult shorebirds don't have to wait long for their empty nest days to arrive. Sunday's child is riding a two-wheeler by Monday, a motorcycle by Tuesday, and is ready for college by Wednesday.

The average adult male shorebird will linger on its breeding territory for about a month to watch over its young before finally heading south. By early July, however, many adult female shorebirds have started their autumn migration. As these returning adults migrate southward from their breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic, many stop at sewage lagoons to feed and gather strength on the long journey to wintering grounds in the southern U.S. and Central America. By late July and August, juvenile birds are migrating too.

The Holland Landing lagoons just north of Newmarket were excellent for shorebirds this year, so I went there often. Low water levels with exposed mud flats created ideal conditions for shorebird stopovers and some days there were as many as 500 shorebirds scattered across the four lagoons. Notable species observed at Holland Landing this summer included an American Avocet, a Marbled Godwit, a Long-billed Dowitcher, several Short-billed Dowitchers, three Red-necked Phalaropes, a White-rumped Sandpiper, countless Lesser Yellowlegs, and more Stilt Sandpipers than I've ever seen before; it must have been a banner year for this species.

My wife's friends and many of my male cronies need to read this little article to understand why I visit the local sewage lagoons during the summer. Saturday, 19 August was no exception. It was a pleasant summer morning and I was up bright and early. When I got to the Holland Landing lagoons I soon realized that the selection of birds there was unchanged from earlier in the week, so I drove from there to Schomberg, just west of Highway 400, in search of new migrants.

Walking down the gravel roadway at the Schomberg lagoons around 9 a.m, I was disappointed when I passed a group of about 40 shorebirds flying due west, straight out of the sewage lagoon property. Like all wild things, shorebirds get startled by loud noises and anomalous movements, but, given time, they usually circle around and come back to the same general vicinity they started from. The birds flying past me looked like they had no intention of returning. I wondered what had scared them.

Quickly remembering that Merlins like to hunt shorebirds, I peeled my eyes for this feisty little falcon. A flock of busy sandpipers represents a marvelous food source for a hungry Merlin and it's no surprise that this raptor times its southern migration to match the southern movement of shorebirds. If shorebirds show up at sewage lagoons, an alert birder will sooner or later find a Merlin.

As I made the rise at the first of Schomberg's three lagoons, a falcon swooped directly across my line of vision. But this bird wasn't a Merlin. The angular feathered jet passing in front of me was twice that little hunter's size. When I got my binoculars on it, the bird soon turned its head to show a conspicuous Fu Manchu moustache and I realized that I was looking at a Peregrine Falcon!

Peregrines are large falcons and this individual was a healthy specimen. It had the classic pointed wings shared by all falcons, but its body was far bigger and brawnier than the kestrels and Merlins. It strafed the western edge of the first lagoon then cut east to blaze the southern shore, putting up more and more shorebirds as it flew. Even big Mallards lowered their heads nervously when it passed and the normally panicky Blue-winged Teal swimming near them, to their Darwinian credit, resisted the urge to flush into its sights.

The falcon moved back and forth over the southern end of the lagoon long enough for me to switch to my scope. I tracked it for about two minutes as it chased birds, demonstrating some truly remarkable accelerations. Still, despite all that fabled speed the Peregrine did not catch any of the Lesser Yellowlegs or Spotted Sandpipers scattering in front of it. The falcon's brown coloration and large size suggested a juvenile female. It bypassed the second lagoon where water levels were very high, and dropped out of view into the almost waterless third lagoon, presumably after more shorebirds. It didn't reappear.

In its wake, the birds of the first lagoon joined me in a moment of silence. For different reasons our hearts were racing. I had just seen one of the most fabled flying predators; the prey had just seen their entire feathered lives pass before their eyes. They clung to the security of the shore-

Continued on page 11

Markham's Snider Marsh

A Mini Birding Site Guide

Stan Long

Snider Marsh is a great little birding spot surrounded by suburban dwellings just west of Main Street in Markham, a rapidly expanding town northeast of Toronto. Located in an ancient beaver meadow through which flows a lazy stream, this cattail marsh, surrounded by trees, opens into a small, shallow pond where a footbridge spans its tail. This makes a good lookout from which to spy upon the life of the marsh, especially waterbirds during fall migration.

When I first discovered this oasis of green, I thought the proximity of people and their dogs and the noisy trains would scare off most wildlife, including the birds, but not so. I was surprised at the results one day, when a dog running off the leash suddenly appearing in the middle of the pond, sent all the waterbirds into the air. The Killdeers flew screaming, the yellowlegs, the Solitary Sandpipers, the peeps and ducks and geese went flying, leaving the pond deserted. The dog was called to heel, which did nothing to relieve my chagrin at losing the subjects of my interest. But I had to stand there in disbelief, for excepting a few ducks and geese, the rest of the birds returned, swooping in to resume their feeding.

Another lesson learned was when I had a Short-billed Dowitcher, a juvenile Wilson's Phalarope and some peeps in my scope and a GO train split the quiet with a most resounding hoot. The newly arrived dowitcher and I were the only ones rattled by the noise, the dowitcher making a little jump and raising its wings but continuing its sewing-machine feeding style without allowing serious interruption. So I had discovered, that even in close quarters when migrating shorebirds find a good feeding ground, it takes more than human presence, loose dogs and loud noises to dissuade them from it.

Keeping count since then, the tally of marshbirds, though the individuals may be quite few in number, has continued to climb. One Great Egret, two Virginia Rails, three species of herons, five blackbird species, seven species of ducks and 11 species of shorebirds have been recorded so far, a nice count for a small marsh in the suburbs and within walking distance of my home.

Snider Marsh is accessed by a laneway from Snider Drive across the GO tracks at the first light on Bullock. Bullock Drive runs west off Main Street in Markham.

Book Review

Bird-watcher

Geoff Carpentier

Bird-watcher. 2005. David Burnie. Dorling Kindersley Ltd., New York. Softcover. 72 pages. $14.99CAN. ISBN 0-7566-1029-X.

I recently came across a delightful little book for beginning birdwatchers, which is designed to stimulate their interest at an early age, by approaching the pastime from an information sharing and activities related perspective. My first impressions are: colourful, readable, informative, interesting, thought and action provoking and worth the low price tag.

A variety of useful and interesting information and tips is interspersed with projects designed to test ingenuity and creativity. The book opens with an interesting matching game where the reader is taught how to determine the relative size of birds. Information on essential birding equipment, using blinds, and note taking is supported by an excellent glossary of bird related terms. Plantings for wildlife, providing water, and building feeders and nest boxes offer background to help teach the basics of bird survival. Morphological and behavioural information are presented in a readable and understandable form, including snippets on classification, recognizing variability between individuals, evidence of feeding such as owl pellets, tracks, feathers and flight, courtships, calls and songs, eggs, fledging, longevity, learning, flocking and migration. A brief overview of some specialized groups is provided as an enticement to learn more. These include diving, urban, shore and night birds. The book finishes with a short section on how to help with recovery programs.

This is clearly an entry level book but it is packed with information that is stimulating, and interesting, much like all the DK books I've studied. This is a book I would highly recommend as I think it will be useful to parents, teachers and camp, scout and girl guide counsellors alike who want to instil or foster a love for and an appreciation of nature.

Continued - *Sewage Lagoons, Shorebirds, Falcons and Wives*

line vegetation as they resumed feeding.

Excited and energized by this brief connection with something pure and elemental. I took a deep satisfaction in knowing that, if I were the sort never to seek these things out, it was unlikely that they would ever come to me. My forays into the least sought-after suburban places were not frivolous; they held deep and fulfilling rewards.

It was moments like this that explained why, while other husbands golfed, I visited sewage lagoons. My wife would understand what I meant when I told her about my experience over coffee at brunch.

Ron Fleming is a teacher in Newmarket north of Toronto. Ron's reports to Ontbirds *about the great birding habitats (sewage lagoons, sod farms, marshes, fields and woodlands) in all seasons south of Lake Simcoe in northern York Region have greatly increased the birding opportunities close to Toronto.*

Changes to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds

Jim Rising

In the July issue of the ornithological journal *The Auk* 123: 926-936, 2006, the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Committee of Classification and Nomenclature published the 47th Supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds. These supplements are published annually. This supplement is an annotated list of changes to the Check-list, which generally is accepted as the official list of birds from the AOU area (Canada, Mexico, United States [including Hawaii], the Caribbean islands, and Central America). As such, the names, sequence of species, and classification of the Check-list generally is used in provincial and state lists, and many field guides, and is also followed by the American Birding Association (ABA). The Check-list Committee meets once a year to discuss changes in classification and nomenclature that have been proposed in the literature or that are necessitated by errors in previous lists. In recent years, the members of the Committee have relied more and more on communicating their views about proposed changes by email. This committee is chaired by Dr. Richard Banks of the U. S. Geological Survey and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington. Other members of the committee are Carla Cicero (Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley), Jon Dunn (Bishop, California), Andrew Kratter (Florida Museum of Natural History), Pamela Rasmussen (Michigan State University Museum), J.V. Remsen, Jr. (Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University), myself (University of Toronto and Royal Ontario Museum), and Douglas Stotz (Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago).

Jon Dunn is the only member of the committee who is not an avian taxonomist, although he is quite knowledgeable about many taxonomic matters. His special and very important role is to keep the committee informed about the validity of extralimital records and to help track 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 sparrows, cardinals, finches, tanagers, and blackbirds. Thus, when papers are published on the affinities of any species in these groups, I summarize information in those papers and other relevant papers for the committee, and recommend changes to the Check-list. The committee members then discuss these proposals and vote on the proposed changes. The committee is, and probably needs to be, conservative, so unless there is near unanimous agreement for a change, the status quo is maintained in the list. Below are some of the proposed changes that were published in *The Auk* as the 47th Supplement to the Check-list that may be of interest to Canadian ornithologists and birders.

Only a few changes in the 47th Supplement affect the species on the U.S. and Canadian lists. On the basis of differences in vocalizations (hooting), behaviour, plumage, and genetic evidence, the Blue Grouse has been split into two different species, the Dusky Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*) and the Sooty Grouse (*D. fuliginosus*), which will appear in the next edition of the Check-list in that sequence. Dusky Grouse are resident from southeastern Alaska, southern Yukon, and extreme southwestern Mackenzie south through the interior of British Columbia, southwestern Alberta, eastern Washington, and in the Rocky Mountains to eastern Nevada, northern and eastern Arizona, southwestern and north-central New Mexico, and western and central Colorado, and western South Dakota (Black Hills). Sooty Grouse are resident on coastal southeastern Alaska and British Columbia (including the Queen Charlotte and Vancouver islands) south in the coastal ranges to southern California and western Nevada. This effectively adds one new species to the AOU Check-list and to the Canadian list (Blue grouse becomes Dusky and Sooty Grouse).

A Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) was reported off the coast of North Carolina on 14 August 2004. This is the first North American record of this species, which was formerly considered to be conspecific with Cory's Shearwater (*C. diomedea*).

Another tubenose, a Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*), was seen off the coast of North America, 31 May 2004, constituting the first definite record of this species from North America. A previous Florida record had been relegated to the Appendix (species reported with insufficient evidence). The Florida bird was reported as a White-bellied Storm-Petrel (*F. grallaria*); a specimen was taken (seven were captured; reported in 1851), which was variously reported as a Black-bellied and White-bellied Storm-Petrel, but the location of the specimen is unknown, and there is doubt about whether the locality (St. Marks, Florida) was correct. *Fregetta* will follow *Hydrobates* (European Storm-Petrel) in the Check-list.

Lastly, recent research indicates that the populations of Red-breasted Flycatchers that breed in eastern Russia east across Siberia to Kamchatka, northern Mongolia, and Ussuriland are a distinct species, the Taiga Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*). Taiga Flycatchers, which are casual in the western Aleutians and St. Lawrence Island, are the Red-breasted Flycatchers that occur in the AOU region. This changes the name of the bird found in North America, but does not change the total number of birds found in

the AOU area.

The doves of the genus *Streptopelia* are a confusing lot. They are not native to the New World, but one species, the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*S. decaocto*), is now widely established and locally common in North America. A second, listed in the AOU Check-list as Ringed Turtle-Dove, has been called *S. risoria*, a name long used for domesticated populations of the African Collared-Dove, *S. roseogrisea*. Following the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, feral populations of North American Ringed Turtle-Doves will now be known as African Collared-Doves, *S. roseogrisea*. There are few feral populations of these birds in North America (e.g. Pinellas County, Florida, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico), and these appear to be entirely dependent upon humans.

Recent genetic work, based on DNA sequence data, show that the jaegers and skuas (subfamily Stercorariinae), which have traditionally been placed close to the gulls (subfamily Larinae), which they so much resemble, are really more closely related to the auks (family Alcidae) than the gulls, and are best represented as a distinct family. Thus in the next Check-list the subfamily Stercorariinae will be replaced by the family Stercorariidae, and will follow the larid subfamily Rhynchopinae, preceding the family Alcidae.

Analyses of mitochondrial and nuclear DNA of species of the shorebird tribe Tringini (yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, etc.) show that the following sequence of genera is perhaps more nearly the correct one. I will list only those genera and species that are more or less regularly found in North America:

Actitus the Common and Spotted Sandpipers.

Tringa the Green, and Solitary Sandpipers, Gray and Wandering Tattlers (at present placed in the genus *Heteroscelus*), Spotted Redshank, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Greenshank, Willet (currently placed in the monotypic genus *Catoptrophorus*), Lesser Yellowlegs, Marsh and Wood Wandpipers, and Common Redshank.

It is interesting to note that our two yellowlegs are not particularly close relatives. Much of the work on which these changes are based on was done in Allan Baker's lab at the Royal Ontario Museum.

Recent work on the mitochondrial DNA of terns has clarified their relationships. The data show that the genus *Sterna* as currently delimited is not a natural one. It is paraphyletic (composed of some but not all members descending from a common ancestor). To accurately reflect phylogeny it would have to include other taxa, including the black terns and the Inca Tern. In order to create a natural *Sterna* that is monophyletic containing all of the *Sterna* and no other taxa, it is necessary to rename many of the terns at the generic level and to remove several species placed in *Sterna* at present that should be placed in other genera. Several of these new generic names have been used in the past before they were all lumped under *Sterna* (for no apparent or at least published reason). To summarize those that will be of interest to North American students of birds, these are in the sequence in which they will appear in the Check-list:

Anous the Brown and Black Noddys (as is the current Check-list)

Onychoprion the Aleutian, Bridled, and Sooty Terns

Sturnula the Least and Little Terns

Gelochelidon the Gull-billed Tern

Hydroprogne the Caspian Tern

Childonias the Black Tern (as in the current Check-list)

Sterna the Roseate, Common, Arctic, and Forster's Terns

Thalasseus the Royal, Elegant, and Sandwich Terns

The cuckoos have also been the subjects of major revision, much based on molecular genetic analyses. Most of the proposed changes have little affect on those species that we are likely to see north of Mexico, but to summarize a few, the scientific name of the Oriental Cuckoo, which is casual in the western Aleutians, St. Lawrence Island, and the Alaskan mainland (one record), has been changed from *Cuculus saturatus* to *C. opatatus*, as a consequence of research separating *C. opatatus* and *C. lepidus* from *C. saturatus* on the basis of minor morphological differences and vocalizations. The records from North America are of *C. opatatus*.

The sequence of *Coccyzus* cuckoos has also been changed. Those changes affecting those found regularly in the United States and Canada are:

Coccyzus americanus the Yellow-billed Cuckoo

C. erythropthalmus the Black-billed Cuckoo

C. minor the Mangrove Cuckoo

These are listed in the sequence of Black-billed, Yellow-billed, and Mangrove Cuckoo in the current list.

Of special significance to those of you who travel to the Neotropics, two of the large suboscine groups (families) are merged into the Furnariidae, the Furnariidae (Ovenbirds) and the Dendrocolaptidae (Woodcreepers). At the present time, no changes in the sequence of names are proposed.

These changes effectively add four new species to the North American list, but the two that affect the Canadian list are simply name changes required by splitting former species into two or more new species. Thus the total number of species on the Canadian list is increased by one because both of the Blue Grouse (Dusky and Sooty) occur in Canada. Also, keepers of the various Canadian lists will have to rearrange of species of tringine sandpipers, terns, and cuckoos. For a complete summary of changes and an updated AOU checklist check the AOU Check-list web page:

http://www.AOU.org/aou/checklist/index.php3

Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005

Order your copy of the Atlas today at special pre-sale price

Gregor Beck, Chair, Management Board, Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas Project

It's amazing what you can do with a little help from your friends, especially if you are lucky enough to have about 2400 of them.

After several years of planning and five years of fieldwork (2001-2005), the end is almost in sight for the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project. The five atlas partners—Bird Studies Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature—are very excited to announce that the second *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* will be published on schedule in September 2007. As you read this article, atlas staff and over 100 volunteers are writing, reviewing and editing species accounts, writing other chapters for the book, preparing maps and tables, selecting photographs, and designing the book, to name just a few of the remaining tasks before the printing presses start running next summer.

The second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas ranks among the most successful, important, and exciting bird research and conservation projects ever undertaken in the Western Hemisphere. It is a stellar example of volunteerism and an exemplary demonstration of how multiple partners successfully combine their strengths and resources to deliver a massive, collaborative undertaking. Project participants logged an incredible 150,000 hours of time in the field actively searching for evidence of breeding birds in every corner of the province, from Pelee Island in the extreme south to the Hudson Bay Lowlands in the far north.

A major change and advancement since the first atlas (1981-1985) was the addition of point counts, when birders counted all birds and bird species seen and heard during a standard five-minute period. These counts were conducted at nearly 69,000 points across the province, yet another astounding figure. Because we know the exact location of each point count, the compiled results allow us to map and analyze the relative abundance of most species.

Atlas participants submitted an astonishing 1.2 million individual breeding bird records, making it a powerful foundation for the upcoming book, and for innumerable bird research and environmental management applications for many years to come. Together, breeding evidence and point count data will significantly increase the conservation value of the project, since biologists will be able to detect changes in the breeding distribution of species, and in species abundance.

The new atlas will be an essential environmental and resource management tool, helping to assess and demonstrate how regional and global environmental changes are affecting Ontario's bird populations. Atlas results will be used for species at risk recovery efforts, for numerous conservation-planning efforts across the Americas, for educational and research applications by people of all ages, and to inform environmental assessments, land-use planning, and resource management decisions.

Atlas data show significant changes since the first atlas 20 years earlier. For example, many "Carolinian" species, including Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren, have expanded northward. At the same time, "northern" species e.g. Merlin, Common Raven demonstrate southward range shifts. Some species, such as Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon are making strong comebacks. However, other species are in serious decline, including grassland species, such as Henslow's Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike, as well as many "aerial foragers," including Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Chimney Swift, and most swallows. Are these changes the result of habitat loss, climate change, pollution, or other factors? The Atlas will address some of these questions.

So what will the atlas look like? The book will be beautifully designed with full-colour, state-of-the-art maps and photographs accompanying each of the more than 300 species accounts, each written by selected experts in the field. Bound in hard cover, the book will be over 700 pages long. Each species account will include an easy to read overview of the species' breeding range and habitat, distribution and population status in Ontario (and changes from the first atlas), plus information on breeding biology and abundance. In addition, the atlas will contain information on the biogeography of Ontario, overall changes in bird populations, ranges, and trends, and an overview of atlas results. Last but not least, all participants and contributors will be mentioned by name.

The *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005*, will be an invaluable resource for birders and nature lovers in Ontario, and across Canada, the United States, and beyond. Whether you live in Ontario or elsewhere, it will be an essential addition to your library and the libraries of your birding friends and relatives.

Now is your chance to save money and to help the atlas project one more time by placing your advance order for one, two, or more copies of the book! Your advance purchase is available at special, time-limited, pre-publication discount prices. The first atlas was a national best seller, and we expect that the new atlas will exceed the 6000 copies sold last time. To reserve your copy of this incredible resource, place your advance order today.

Order your Atlas on line at:
<www.birdsontario.org>
Or use the form in the enclosed brochure.

Snyder's Great Horned Owl

Jean Iron and Erwin Meissner

Snyder's Great Horned Owl is a proposed pale subspecies that breeds in northern Ontario. In April 2006 on the annual OFO trip to Manitoulin Island we saw a pale adult Great Horned Owl on a nest in a Bur Oak. Soon after our visit, the eggs hatched and two pale young were in the nest. On 22 May 2006, Erwin Meissner of North Bay took this photo of the one remaining young showing its pale coloration.

The Snyder's race was described in 1961 by L.L. Snyder, curator of birds at the Royal Ontario Museum, who named the breeding population in northern Ontario as *Bubo virginianus scalariventris*. The name *scalariventris* means scaly or barred below. It is regarded as part of the whitish subspecies *subarcticus* occupying the Ontario portion of latter's range. However, it differs enough that most individuals can be recognized from typical *subarcticus*. Snyder's race is recognized by James (1991).

Pittaway (1993) said the large and uniform series from across northern Ontario of *scalariventris* in the Royal Ontario Museum supports its recognition as a valid subspecies. Classic individuals of *scalariventris* are distinguished from nominate *virginianus* by their distinctive grey coloration and general absence of rufous in the plumage. The facial discs are pale grey, sometimes with a tinge of rufous. From *subarcticus* which is more buffy white and less barred below, Snyder's is distinguished by its darker cold grey coloration with broader, more regular and darker bars ventrally (Snyder 1961). In winter it wanders rarely to southern Ontario. Snyder's is usually much tamer than typical southern birds.

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James, R.D. 1991. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

Pittaway, R. 1993. Recognizable Forms: Subspecies of the Great Horned Owl. *Ontario Birds* 11(2): 64-68.

Snyder, L.L. 1991. On an Unnamed Population of the Great Horned Owl. *Contribution No. 54. 1961. The Royal Ontario Museum.*

Future 2006 OFO Field Trips

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Check trip details on OFO website: www.ofo.ca

November 4 (Saturday) Grand Bend, Pinery Provincial Park, Kettle Point and Point Edward (north winds). Leaders: Maris Apse. Meet 8:30 a.m. in Grand Bend at new Sobeys parking lot on north side of Huron County Road 81 east of traffic lights at Hwy 21. From points east take Hwy 401 westbound to Hwy 402 at Exit 183. Continue Hwy 402 to Exit 81, Centre Road, and proceed north on Middlesex County Road 81 via Parkhill (after jogging left at Middlesex County Road 7). Continue on Middlesex/Huron County Road 81 to Grand Bend (about 3 hrs. from Toronto). Check map for more direct routes or from other starting points. Late fall/early winter migrants: waterfowl, gulls, jaegers, eagles, owls, passerines and resident Tufted Titmouse.

December 3 (Sunday) Niagara River Gull Watch. Leaders: Jean Iron and Ron Tozer. Meet 9:00 a.m. at Adam Beck Lookout. Check OFO website for latest directions due to construction and road closures: NEW directions: Exit QEW at Glendale Avenue overpass and follow signs to Niagara-on-the-Lake taking York Road (just past Wendy's/Tim Hortons) northeast through St. Davids to where it meets Niagara Parkway at Queenston. York Road parallels Highway 405, ending at bottom of Queenston Heights near road to Queenston boat launch. Turn right and go up hill. At Brock Monument turn left, pass flowering clock, and proceed to Adam Beck lookout.

December 10 (Sunday) Toronto Lakeshore. Leader: Dave Milsom. Meet 9 a.m. at Humber Bay Park East parking lot. Off QEW, coming from west, take exit to Park Lawn. Turn right (south). Cross Lakeshore , then turn right to parking area. Off QEW, coming from east, exit at Lakeshore. Turn right onto Lakeshore, then left at lights into Humber Bay Park East. Winter species: ducks, gulls, waterbirds, finches, raptors.

January 1 (Monday) Peterborough and Area
Leader: Dave Milsom, Gerry Ball. Meet 8:30 a.m. at Peterborough Zoo parking area. From Peterborough, go north on County Road 28 towards Trent University. Bald Eagle, Common Raven, winter finches, possible Bohemian Waxwings.

January 28 (Sunday) Ottawa Area [until noon] Leader: Tony Beck. Meet 8:00 a.m. at the Coliseum Theatre Parking Lot, northwest corner, 3090 Carling Ave. east of Bayshore. Explore Ottawa's west end for special winter birds like Snowy Owl, Pine Grosbeak, Iceland Gull, Northern Shrike, Gray Partridge and other interesting birds. Each winter is different. Our route will maximize chances of finding the most interesting birds. Trip ends at noon.

February 3 (Saturday) Fisherville Area, Haldimand-Norfolk County. Leader: John Miles. Meet 9 a.m. in parking lot of high school in north end of Cayuga on County Road 54. Hawks, owls, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, sparrows.

Spotting the America Kestrel

Easier than you thought

Derek Lyon

The American Kestrel is more common than most people think. It is the smallest North American falcon. Most birders need a good look through their binoculars to be sure of its identification. This note will show you how kestrels can be identified without binoculars, even from a moving car. One must first know that kestrel habitat is just about anywhere in Ontario in the summer, yet their range in winter is mainly south of the line from Sarnia to Cornwall. They are not found in heavily wooded areas but everywhere else, even within cities and towns. The following are clues that a kestrel may be near.

The American Kestrel has a unique manner of flight. Kestrels are falcons and they flap continuously in flight. They also glide on narrow pointed wings. Killdeer is a common falcon-shaped bird that kestrels could be mistaken for in flight. Killdeer do not glide and seem to fly on arched wings, whereas kestrels fly on straight wings then glide after awhile. Kestrels are mainly loners (except around the nest) and seldom fly in groups. So if you see a single small falcon-like bird gliding it may be a kestrel.

One thing that makes a kestrel distinctive is its body shape. You will be surprised that once you learn its body shape how easy it is to identify. The first thing to realize is that a kestrel's bill is hooked down and never protrudes, so in silhouette it doesn't seem even to have a beak. The way the neck is feathered there is no visible pinching in from the top of the head to the shoulders, the bird appears to have no neck. Look for the silhouette of a neck and beak and if you see even a hint of either, you are not looking at a kestrel. On a perched bird, a reliable identification trait is the kestrel's tail flick down then up in line with the back. They don't tail flick all the time like an Eastern Phoebe, but will at least once every few minutes or less. This behaviour quickly gets you ready to look more closely at a suspect bird even when you are too far away to see its neck and beak. Small birds know when a bird of prey is near so will not perch beside a kestrel on the same wire or tree branch. So if you see a lone erect jay-sized bird on a utility wire look closely, it may be an American Kestrel. You'll be surprised at how kestrels you identify even from a distance by using *jizz,* that is their size, shape and behaviour in flight or perched.

Renewing Your OFO Membership

Eleanor Beagan, Membership Secretary

OFO memberships continued to climb in 2006. We have 1018 memberships: 124 Life members and 894 Annual memberships. When we include all members at one address, our membership is about 1300.

Thanks to those who renew in a timely manner. This spreads the work out and keeps mailing costs down. Please keep the database current by sending change of information to me at <etbeagan@sympatico.ca>. All Annual memberships expire on 31 December 2006. Check your membership status on your mailing label.

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your renewal.

What's Inside

Ontbirds

Coordinator: *Mark Cranford*

Ontbirds with 2000 subscribers is OFO's successful listserv for reporting and receiving bird sightings. ***Ontbirds*** has revolutionized birding in Ontario.

To subscribe, go to this website and follow the directions

http://mailman.hwcn.org/mailman/listinfo/ontbirds

Questions: Contact Mark Cranford

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