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Barry Kent MacKay

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Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2006

William J. Crins

Introduction

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) evaluates documentation it receives of any record of a species or recognizable form that is on the Review List for Ontario (see www.ofo.ca/obrc). In addition, it reviews documentation relating to new species, new subspecies, and new breeding species for the province. This 25th annual report deals with the results of the review of 118 records by the OBRC during 2006, of which 76% were accepted. All reports reviewed by the committee are kept on permanent file at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).

A total of 135 different observers submitted documentation for review by the 2006 committee. Written reports often were accompanied by photographs (generally digital images, but sometimes prints). As noted in recent years, the trend toward submission of only photographic evidence, with little or no supporting written evidence, continues. Such records often are problematic. For example, it is difficult for the OBRC to compile complete dates of occurrence, and often there are details and circumstances associated with an observation that cannot be ascertained from photographic evidence alone (e.g., behaviour, comparisons with nearby birds, features hidden from view when the photograph was taken). We continue to urge photographers to submit written reports to accompany their images submitted to OBRC. Those submitting photos to the OFO website also should take the time to send the same photos,

Figure 1: Ontario Bird Records Committee members for 2006. Left to right, Alan Wormington, Jean Iron, Kevin McLaughlin, Ian Richards, Glenn Coady, Margaret Bain, Colin Jones, Bill Crins, Mark Peck.
Photo: Mark K. Peck

along with written documentation, directly to the OBRC. However, the OBRC reserves the right to use posted photographs as evidence. For further information on the kinds of information that should be included in the written report, refer to the guidance that is provided on the OBRC page on the OFO website (**www.ofo.ca/obrc**).

The members of the 2006 committee were Margaret J. C. Bain (Chair), William J. Crins (non-voting Secretary), Glenn Coady, Jean Iron, Colin D. Jones, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Mark K. Peck (also serving as Royal Ontario Museum liaison), Ian M. Richards (non-voting Assistant to the Secretary), and Alan Wormington (Figure 1).

Listing of Records

The format for listing the number of accepted records for each species remains the same as that used in recent years (e.g., Crins 2006). A single number is used to indicate the total number of accepted records of a Review List species. Accepted records are arranged taxonomically by their English and scientific names following the Seventh Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds (AOU 1998) and subsequent supplements (42nd to 48th; see www.aou.org/ checklist/index.php3). Date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, sex, plumage, and location(s) are provided when known. Counties, districts, and regional municipalities are shown in colour. The plumage terminology used here follows that of Humphrey and Parkes (1959). For a detailed explanation of plumage and molt terminology, see Pittaway (2000). The names of all contributors of documentation are listed. Those contributors who are known to be the discoverers of the bird also are underlined. Others present when the bird was found who did not submit reports are listed when known. This year, the committee decided to resurrect the inclusion of the OBRC file number with each record; these appear in parentheses at the end of each record.

The committee attempts to verify documented information prior to the acceptance and publication of a record, but it is inevitable that inaccuracies creep in from time to time. The committee welcomes written communication to the Secretary from anyone with pertinent information that would correct or strengthen any record. There may be occasions where dates or other listed details in a record differ from those quoted in other published sources. These discrepancies are corrected when possible.

Those records that were not accepted because of uncertain identification, or origin, are listed separately. Contributors of all "not accepted" reports receive a letter from the Chair explaining the reasons for the decision, along with copies of the comments obtained from the voting members. A "not accepted" report can be reconsidered by the OBRC if new evidence, in the form of additional documentation, is submit-

ted to the committee for review. Researchers and other interested individuals are welcome to examine any of the filed reports at the ROM, but an appointment is necessary. Please write to Mark K. Peck, Department of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6 (e-mail: markp@rom.on.ca or telephone 416-586-5523).

Changes to the Review List

One new subspecies has been added to the official provincial list and to the review list for southern Ontario, "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*). In addition, Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) and Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) have been added to the review list for northern Ontario. The provincial species list remains at 479 species.

Several species have been dropped from the review lists, effective 1 January 2007. These include Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) and Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) from the southern Ontario review list, and Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) from the northern Ontario review list.

Acknowledgements

The OBRC appreciates the efforts of the numerous observers who took the time to submit documentation of rare birds for consideration by the 2006 committee. We also thank the following people who assisted the committee in the acquisition of additional data and other material evidence that supplemented the information submitted directly by observers and committee members, or by providing expert opinions on material evidence submitted to the committee: David H. Elder, Nicholas G. Escott, Michel Gosselin, Matthew T. Heindel, Julian R. Hough, Paul E. Lehman, Stuart A. Mackenzie, Ian A. McLaren, Bruce D. Mactavish, David A. Martin, Ronald J. Pittaway, Peter Pyle, Brian D. Ratcliff, Ron Ridout, James D. Rising, Kayo J. Roy, Donald A. Sutherland, and Ronald G. Tozer.

The committee continues to be indebted to Mark H. Cranford for his ongoing efforts in ensuring that ONTBIRDS (listserv of the Ontario Field Ornithologists) remains a useful source of information on rare birds appearing in Ontario. In addition, the photographic pages on the OFO website, maintained in 2006 by Carol M. Horner, provide an excellent source of documentation for rarities. These sources of information make the Secretary's job of securing documentation much more efficient. During 2006, Ian M. Richards served in the role of Assistant to the Secretary. Ian's valuable assistance in tracking down documentation for reports has been very helpful to the OBRC. I also wish to thank the members of the 2006 committee for their support and assistance during the year.

Accepted Records

Ross's Goose ***Chen rossii*** **South Only Before 2007 (51)**

2006 two definitive basic, white morph, 1-5 March, Welland, Niagara (John O'Neal, Kayo J. Roy, Rick Johnston, David J. Milsom; 06-081) – photos on file.

2005/06 two definitive basic, white morph, mid December - 23 February, Point Abino, Niagara (Richard A. Cudney, Kayo J. Roy; 06-032) – photos on file.

2005 one definitive basic, white morph, 11-28 November; 11-20 November, Merlin, Chatham-Kent; 28 November, Sturgeon Creek, Essex (Adam J. Hall, Rosalee A. Hall; 06-051) – photos on file.

Pacific Loon ***Gavia pacifica*** **South Only (32)**

2005 one juvenal, 1-4 December; 1-2 December, Duffins Creek; 4 December, Moore Point, Durham (Ronald J. Pittaway, Jean Iron; 06-061) – photos on file.

Western Grebe ***Aechmophorus occidentalis*** **(21)**

2006 one 6 May, Mississauga, Peel (Derek Lyon, also found by Jennifer Lyon; 06-101).

one basic, 18 November, Pinery Provincial Park, Lambton (Blake A. Mann; 06-102) – photos on file.

one basic, 29 November, Minet's Point, Simcoe (James P. Coey, also found by Nigel Shaw; 06-111) – photos on file.

Manx Shearwater ***Puffinus puffinus*** **(2)**

2006 one 31 August – 1 September, Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton and Burlington Beach Halton (Barry S. Cherriere, John Stirrat, Cheryl E. Edgecombe, Ben Edgecombe; 06-112) – photos on file.

This incredible discovery must rank as the bird of the year. It was seen by several observers, unlike the first record for the province, which involved a dead bird found floating in the Ottawa River at Lac Deschênes, Ottawa, on 26 August 2001 (Roy 2002). Cherriere (2007) published an account of this observation.

Figure 2: Manx Shearwater present at Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton, and Burlington Beach, Halton, from 31 August to 1 September 2006. *Photo: Barry S. Cherriere*

Northern Gannet ***Morus bassanus*** **(34)**

2006 one juvenal, 8 January, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-082).

2005 one juvenal, 11 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-041).

one juvenal, 27 November - 4 December, Port Credit and Clarkson, Peel, Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton (Donald E. Perks, Robert Z. Dobos; 06-052).

one juvenal, 4 December, Port Ryerse, Norfolk (David Okines, also found by Audrey Heagy; 06-021).

Fascinating details concerning the Port Ryerse bird were provided by David Okines in an Ontbirds posting (4 December 2005). This bird was observed being attacked by an adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), which attempted to lift it from the water in its talons over a 15-minute period. The eagle was unsuccessful in lifting it, but the Northern Gannet was not seen again, and was presumed to have died.

Anhinga ***Anhinga anhinga*** **(3)**

2005 one definitive basic, male, 23 September, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, Essex (Claude Radley, also found by Robert C. Pettit, R. James McCoy, Brent Schlenk, Pat Schlenk, Fred J. Urie; 06-001).

This bird was seen on 18 September 2005 at Lake Erie Metropark and then Pointe Mouillee State Game Area in Michigan, at the latter location apparently flying in from Ontario (Alan Wormington, pers. comm.). The fact that it was seen on a later date at Holiday Beach indicates that it returned to Ontario after these two Michigan sightings.

Little Blue Heron ***Egretta caerulea*** **(57)**

2005 one, definitive alternate, 2-4 June, Kincardine, Bruce Ralph Knowles, Jim Mittelholtz; 06-023) – photos on file.

Tricolored Heron ***Egretta tricolor*** **(37)**

2006 one 6-12 August, 28 August – 3 September;
two definitive alternate, 13-27 August; Niagara Falls Niagara (Kayo J. Roy, William W. Watson, Andrew Don, John Nishikawa, Barry S. Cherriere, Raymond J. Barlow, Gabriel Lau Kin Jock, Kenneth W. Newcombe, Derek Lyon, Rick Lauzon, John Ralston, Sam Barone, found by Barbara N. Charlton, Robert Z. Dobos; 06-113) – photos on file.

It is unknown whether the bird that was first seen on 6 August was the same bird that remained until 3 September.

Figure 3: Definitive alternate Tricolored Heron at Niagara Falls, Niagara, from 6 August to 3 September 2006. *Photo: Kayo J. Roy*

Cattle Egret ***Bubulcus ibis*** **North Only (20)**

2005 seven basic, 29-31 October, Fort Frances, Rainy River (Linda L. Wall, found by Bruce Caldwell; 06-011) – photo on file.
one 1-6 November; two, juvenals, 7-10 November; Slate River Valley, Thunder Bay (Mark Conboy, found by Brian J. Moore; 06-012) – photo on file.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron ***Nyctanassa violacea*** **(38)**

2006 one definitive alternate, 5-10 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, found by Marianne B. Reid; 06-114) – photos on file.

Glossy Ibis ***Plegadis falcinellus*** **(46)**

2005 seven definitive alternate, 3-4 May, Fonthill, Niagara (Dayna Lee; 06-033).
one alternate, 13-16 May, Hillman Marsh to Point Pelee National Park, Essex (John G. Cummings, Brenda Cummings, Brandon R. Holden, Carol M. Horner; 06-002) – photos on file.

one definitive basic, 29 October - 7 November; Cranberry Marsh (29 October), Duffins Creek (5-7 November), Durham (Gabriel Lau Kin Jock, found by Rayfield Pye and J. Douglas Lockrey; 06-003) – photos on file.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (4)

2006 one definitive prebasic molt, 2-3 October, Erie View; 3 October, Houghton Centre, Norfolk (Ron Ridout, Michael J. Nelson, found by Steve Wilcox; 06-116) – photos on file.

This bird was a member of a flock of 11 dark ibises that appeared in Erie View, Norfolk, on 2 October 2006. This is the latest record of a White-faced Ibis in Ontario.

Figure 4: White-faced Ibis in definitive prebasic molt at Erie View, Norfolk, from 2 to 3 October 2006.
Photo: Ron Ridout

Ibis species *Plegadis* sp. (40)

2006 ten 2-3 October, Erie View; 3 October, Houghton Centre, Norfolk (Ron Ridout, Michael J. Nelson, found by Steve Wilcox; 06-115) – photos on file.

2005 two 29 May, Big Creek Marsh, Norfolk (Kenneth G. Burrell, also found by Stuart A. Mackenzie) (06-042).

one 21 September, Dundas Marsh, Hamilton (Doug Mannen; 06-083).

It should be noted that the incorrect date of 20 September has been published (Bain 2006) for the Dundas Marsh bird.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* (52)

2006 one basic, 4-5 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, Chatham-Kent (Ross W. Wood, Denise Dykema, also found by Emily Slavik; 06-071) – photo on file.

one basic, 14 June, Dunbarton, Durham (Mike Williamson; 06-072).

The inaccurate location of Scarborough, Toronto, has been published (Cranford 2007) for the Dunbarton bird.

Swallow-tailed Kite ***Elanoides forficatus*** **(14)**

2006 one basic, 31 May, Crosby Lake, Leeds and Grenville (Pete Stothart; 06-036).

"Dark Morph" Broad-winged Hawk ***Buteo platypterus*** **(2)**

2004 one definitive basic, 19 September, Port Burwell and Port Stanley, Elgin (Kenneth G. Burrell, found by David A. Martin; 06-084).

The dark colour morph of the Broad-winged Hawk appears to be extremely rare in Ontario. The committee has accepted one previous report of this morph, observed at Woodstock, Oxford, on 18 August 1992 (Dobos 1998). A small number of unreviewed reports exist, including one by Escott (1986), who provided a good description of a bird of this morph that he observed near Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay, on 7 May 1985. Escott (1986) included a brief discussion of the only other report known to him at the time, observed at the Grimsby, Niagara, hawk watch on 30 April 1978.

Purple Gallinule ***Porphyrio martinica*** **(13)**

2006 one juvenal, 6 February, Apsley, Peterborough (unknown finder; 06-055) – photo on file; specimen (skin and wing) in ROM (#104804).

This most unusual winter record involved a bird that was found alive but emaciated, with a fractured tarsometatarsus, and unable to stand, under a discarded Christmas tree. It was taken to a Peterborough veterinary clinic, and then the Toronto Wildlife Centre, where it did not survive (Kate Siena, pers. comm.).

Wilson's Plover ***Charadrius wilsonia*** **(3)**

2006 one first alternate, 26-27 May, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Northumberland (R. Douglas McRae, Rick Lauzon, William J. Edmunds, Allyson Parker, also found by Bill Gilmour; 06-104) – photos on file.

This third documented record for Ontario fits the pattern of mid- to late May occurrences summarized by Crins (2005). Both previous records were from the Hamilton area. It should be noted that a report of this species from this location on 17 May has not been substantiated by any evidence.

Figure 5: First alternate Wilson's Plover at Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Northumberland, from 17 to 28 May 2006.
Photo: William J. Edmunds

Piping Plover ***Charadrius melodus*** **(58)**

2005 one alternate, male, 21 May – 8 June, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Northumberland (Melissa Rose, William J. Edmunds; 06-062) – photo on file.

one juvenal, 17-21 August, Rock Point Provincial Park, Haldimand (Mary Schuster, William W. Watson, Barry S. Cherriere, also found by Lucy Saruyama; 06-013) – photos on file.

Black-necked Stilt ***Himantopus mexicanus*** **(14)**

2006 two definitive alternate, 11-15 April, Brighton, Northumberland (J. Barry Robinson, Margaret J. C. Bain, Jim Dixon, Tony F. M. Beck, William J. Edmunds, Anita Edmunds, Ken Kingdon; 06-056) – photos on file.

The date of 10 April has been published (Holder 2006) for this record, but that date is now considered to be invalid.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (26)

2006 one definitive alternate, female, 23-31 May, Townsend, Haldimand (Carol M. Horner, Brandon R. Holden, Barry S. Cherriere, William W. Watson, found by James Lees; 06-073) – photos on file.

Mew Gull *Larus canus* (19)

2006 one definitive alternate, *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, 31 March, Wheatley Harbour, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-037) – photos on file.

Figure 6: Mew Gull in definitive alternate plumage at Wheatley Harbour, Essex, on 31 March 2006. *Photo: Alan Wormington*

California Gull *Larus californicus* (46)

2006 one first alternate, 29 June, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-039).

2005/06 one definitive basic, 11 November – 3 January, Queenston, Niagara (William W. Watson, found by Willie D'Anna, Betsy Potter; 06-025).

2005 one definitive basic, *L. c. albertaensis*, 11 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Robert L. Waldhuber, also found by George M. Naylor; 06-024) – photos on file.

one second basic, *L. c. californicus*, 22 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-038).

Once again, a definitive basic bird appeared on the Niagara River from 11 November 2005 to 3 January 2006. It is quite likely that the same individual has been returning to this location for several years, although in some years, more than one individual is present (see Crins 2005). The total number of reports cited above likely includes some duplication involving the same bird in different years.

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus* (3)

2006 one third basic, 22-26 January, Wheatley Harbour and Hillman Marsh, Essex (Alan Wormington, Brett Groves, found by Dean J. Ware; 06-085) – photos on file.

This third basic bird was well documented, with excellent photographs. A brief account of this record has been published (Anonymous 2006). The two previous records involved definitive basic birds in Niagara Falls, Niagara, from 24 November to 29 December 1992 (Bain 1993), and in Toronto, Toronto, from 2-9 January 1999 (Roy 2000).

Figure 7: Third basic Slaty-backed Gull at Wheatley Harbour, Essex, from 22 to 26 January 2006. *Photo: Brett Groves*

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (29)

2006 one juvenal, 8-13 January; 8-11 January, Hillman Marsh, Essex; 12-13 January, Wheatley Harbour, Essex/Chatham-Kent (Adam J. Hall, Rosalee A. Hall, Sarah E. Rupert, Robert Epstein, David T. Pavlik, Michael A. Savino, Robert A. Horvath, Alfred H. Rider, Tim Lenz, Michael J. Nelson; 06-086) – photos on file.

one definitive basic, 28 March, Pembroke, Renfrew (Mark Dojczman; 06-074) – photos on file.

An article on the Hillman Marsh/Wheatley Harbour record has been published (Hall and Hall 2006). The Pembroke bird represents one of the few records of Ivory Gull in definitive basic plumage in southern Ontario (Alan Wormington, pers. comm.).

Figure 8: Definitive basic Ivory Gull at Pembroke, Renfrew, on 28 March 2006. *Photo: Mark Dojczman*

Arctic Tern ***Sterna paradisaea*** **South Only (12)**

2006 one definitive alternate, 18 May, Long Point (Tip), Norfolk (Ron Ridout; 06-117) – photos on file.

1989 one first basic, 11-19 November, Fort Erie, Niagara (Robert F. Andrle, Michael F. Galas, William W. Watson, Willie D'Anna, Gerald R. Rising, Joseph Gula, Jr., found by Eirik A. T. Blom, Wayne Klockner; 06-040) – photos on file.

A photograph of the Fort Erie bird taken by Tim Sabo has been published (Weir 1990); in the same journal issue, the first date of occurrence was incorrectly published as 12 November.

Long-tailed Jaeger ***Stercorarius longicaudus*** **South Only Before 2007 (40)**

2005 one juvenal, light morph, 22 October, Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Robert Z. Dobos, J. Bruce Falls, Eric W. Holden; 06-063) – photo on file.

Black Guillemot ***Cepphus grylle*** **South Only (1)**

2006 one first basic, *C. g. ultimus*, 14-21 November, Massey, Sudbury (Cameron McGregor, John G. Lemon, David Bell, Christopher J. Escott, Joe Houle, Jean Iron, Ronald J. Pittaway; 06-118) – photos on file.

This bird is considered to be of the eastern Arctic subspecies *ultimus* because of its extreme whiteness (R. J. Pittaway and J. Iron, pers. comm.). This is the subspecies that breeds along the coasts and islands of Hudson Bay; it is known to have bred once in Ontario, on Manchuinagush Island, Polar Bear Provincial Park, Kenora (James 1987, 1991). Pittaway (2007) wrote a brief account of this record, including its possible demise at the hands of a Bald Eagle.

Figure 9: First basic Black Guillemot at Massey, Sudbury, from 14 to 21 November 2006.
Photo: Joe Houle

Chuck-will's-widow ***Caprimulgus carolinensis*** **(18)**

2006 one basic, male, 1 May, Wheatley Provincial Park, Chatham-Kent (Andrew Keaveney; 06-015).

This report represents the earliest spring record in the province.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (18)

2006 one definitive basic, male, 13-14 July, Port Colborne, Niagara (Kayo J. Roy, found by Mary E. McNeil; 06-106) – photo on file.

Hummingbird species *Selasphorus* sp. (8)

2006 one basic, female, 7-9 May, Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay (Susan Bryan, Brian D. Ratcliff; 06-105) – photos on file.

2005 one basic female or first basic, 18 November – 9 December, London, Middlesex (Shay Redmond, Cindy E. Cartwright, found by Alice Kenzie; 06-016) – photo on file.

The Thunder Bay bird is the only spring record of a *Selasphorus* hummingbird in the province. A DNA sample was obtained from the London bird during the banding process, but the comparative evidence differentiating Rufous Hummingbird from Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*) has not been forthcoming.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus* North Only Before 2007 (17)

2006 one basic, male, 30 May, Rainy River mouth, Rainy River (David H. Elder, found by Linda Budreau; 06-091).

Although the specific dates are not known, this bird had been coming to the Budreau feeder at Oak Grove Camp for much of the spring (Linda Budreau, pers. comm., to David H. Elder). This may well have been one of the same birds that nested in this vicinity in 2005 (see Crins 2006).

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* (11)

2006 one basic, 28-29 April, Long Point (Tip), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, Kenneth G. Burrell, also found by Peter Coo; 06-092) – photo on file.

2005 one basic, 7 May, Bruce Peninsula National Park (Crane Lake Road), Bruce (Virgil Martin; 06-017) – photos on file.

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens* (7)

2006 one alternate, 26 April, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock; 06-076) – photos on file.

This bird was banded at Thunder Cape and the photographic details enabled the exclusion of Nutting's Flycatcher (*Myiarchus nuttingi*) as a possibility. In the OBRC's report for 2000 (Roy 2001), the comment was made that all previous Ash-throated Flycatcher records would require the caveat that Nutting's Flycatcher had not been eliminated. This is the first record of Ash-throated Flycatcher in northern Ontario.

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* Before 1998 Only (74)

1996 one alternate, 2 July, McGinnis Creek, Rainy River (Blake A. Mann, also found by Stephen R. Charbonneau, Roger M. Simms; 06-064) – photo on file.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (52)

2006 one definitive alternate, male, 29 April, Iroquois Falls, Cochrane (Lars Hildebrandt; 06-119) – photos on file; specimen (skin and wing) in ROM (#110659).

2005 one 14 September, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Douglas R. Brown, Josh Sayers; 06-065) – photos on file.

one definitive basic, male, 23-27 October, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock, also found by Maureen Woodcock, Mark Conboy; 06-019) – photo on file.

Figure 10: Alternate Ash-throated Flycatcher at Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay, on 26 April 2006.
Photo: John M. Woodcock

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (9)

2006 one 20 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, Chatham-Kent (Stephen R. Charbonneau, Blake A. Mann; 06-107).

This is the first accepted record of this species in 12 years, the last being a bird observed on 18 October 1994 at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Niagara (Dobos 1996).

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* (11)

2000 one basic, 20 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, Chatham-Kent (James T. Burk, Blake A. Mann, also found by Stephen R. Charbonneau; 06-066).

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva* (49)

2005 two 6 November, Long Point (Old Cut), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Douglas R. Brown; 06-026).
one 7 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, also found by Adam J Hall; 06-043).
two 7 November, Long Point (The Coves), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Catherine Craig; 06-027, in part).
four 7 November, Long Point (The Coves), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Catherine Craig; 06-027, in part).
twelve 7 November, Long Point (The Coves), Norfolk (Michael D. Boyd, also found by Catherine Craig; 06-027, in part).
two 7-8 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, also found by Adam J. Hall, Rosalee A. Hall; 06-044).

one definitive basic, 9 November, West Lake, Prince Edward (Viviane Jennings; 06-057) – photos on file.
one 9 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-045).
one 11 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, also found by Kevin A. McLaughlin, Robert L. Waldhuber, George M. Naylor; 06-046).
three 11 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, also found by Henrietta T. O'Neill; 06-047).
one 12 November, Lynde Shore Conservation Area, Durham (Theo Hofmann; 06-048).
twenty 12 November; fourteen, 13 November; six, 14 November; Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-049).
one 16 November, Stoney Creek, Hamilton (Barry S. Cherriere; 06-028, in part).
one 16 November, Stoney Creek, Hamilton (Barry S. Cherriere; 06-028, in part).

The three sets of birds observed on 7 November 2005 at The Coves, Norfolk were incorrectly reported to have been seen on 8 November 2005 (Bain 2006). The two reports from Stoney Creek, Hamilton on 16 November 2005 involved individual birds seen 40 min apart, both flying west along Lake Ontario, so these constitute different records.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (29)

2002 one 17 August, Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma (Les Piccolo; 06-007) – photos on file.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* South Only After 2000 (58)

2005 one basic, 3 November, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington; 06-050).

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* (13)

2006 one 24-27 February, Port Weller, Niagara (Brian R. Ahara, Kayo J. Roy, William W. Watson, Michael F. Galas, Barry S. Cherriere, Karl Egressy, Brandon R. Holden; 06-088) – photos on file.

This is the first winter record for the province.

Figure 11: Sage Thrasher at Port Weller, Niagara, from 24 to 27 February 2006. *Photo: Barry S. Cherriere*

Kirtland's Warbler ***Dendroica kirtlandii*** **(36)**

2006 one definitive alternate, male, 21 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, Rosalee A. Hall; 06-120) – photos on file.

Figure 12: Definitive alternate male Kirtland's Warbler at Point Pelee National Park, Essex, on 21 May 2006. *Photo: Rosalee A. Hall*

Prairie Warbler ***Dendroica discolor*** **North Only (3)**

2006 one first alternate, male, 20 June, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock; 06-078) – photos on file.

Previous accepted records of Prairie Warbler in northern Ontario include single birds at Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay, on 26 September 1993 (Dobos 1996) and at Atikokan, Rainy River, on 27 May 1998 (Dobos 1999).

Swainson's Warbler ***Limnothlypis swainsonii*** **(8)**

2006 one male, 12 May, Toronto, Toronto (Attila Fust; 06-109).

Western Tanager ***Piranga ludoviciana*** **(21)**

2006 one definitive female or first basic, 15 August, Harris Hill, Rainy River (Kenneth G. Burrell, also found by Michael V. A. Burrell, James Burrell; 06-095).

Green-tailed Towhee ***Pipilo chlorurus*** **(5)**

2006 one definitive basic, male, 10 June, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock; 06-079) – photos on file.

Figure 13: Definitive basic male Green-tailed Towhee at Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay, on 10 June 2006. *Photo: John M. Woodcock*

This bird was banded at Thunder Cape, and its band number subsequently was read at a feeder at Mountain Lake, Cottonwood Co., Minnesota, in November 2006, where it remained until at least March 2007 (Alan Wormington, pers. comm.). The distance between these two locations is approximately 700 km. This is the first record of this species in northern Ontario, and the first in the province since 1986 (Wormington 1987).

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* (20)

2005 one basic, male, 4 May, Long Point (Courtright Ridge), Norfolk (Kenneth G. Burrell, also found by Matt Hindle, Benoit Genereaux; 06-089).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (74)

2005 one 20-23 April, Lappe, Thunder Bay (Brian D. Ratcliff, found by David Christianson; 06-009) – photos on file.

one 30 May, Electric, Chatham-Kent (P. Allen Woodliffe; 06-010).

"Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis princeps* (1)

2005 one first basic, 17-27 December, Port Stanley, Elgin (Robert A. Hubert; 06-090) – photos on file.

This is the first record of an "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow from Ontario, and the farthest inland from the Atlantic coast. Previous to this, the farthest inland record had been from Quebec City, Quebec (Bannon et al. 2003a, 2003b). Ian A. McLaren (pers. comm. to Ronald J. Pittaway), an expert on this subspecies, examined the photographs, and corroborated the identification and age of this bird.

Figure 14: First basic "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow at Port Stanley, Elgin, from 17 to 27 December 2005. *Photo: Robert A. Huber*

Grasshopper Sparrow ***Ammodramus savannarum*** **North Only (4)**

2006 one 29 May, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (John M. Woodcock; 06-080) – photo on file.

The occurrence of this bird in late May at Thunder Cape fits the pattern of late May to early June occurrences there since 1997 (*see* Crins 2006).

Henslow's Sparrow ***Ammodramus henslowii*** **(12)**

2006 one alternate, male, 17 June – 1 July, north of Kirkfield, Kawartha Lakes (Bruce Wilson, Rick Lauzon, Derek Lyon; 06-121) – photo on file.

one alternate, male, 8 July – 9 August, North Bruce, Bruce (Michael E. Carlson, Cindy E. Cartwright, Fred Jazvac, Brett Woodman, Dave Schaus, Gayle Schaus; 06-122) – photo on file.

2005 two alternate, males, 19 June - 7 July, Dealtown, Chatham-Kent (P. Allen Woodliffe, found by Alan Wormington, Keith J. Burk, E. Jane Burk; 06-058) – photos on file.

Chestnut-collared Longspur ***Calcarius ornatus*** **(2)**

2006 one first alternate, male, 25 May, Markham, York (Stan Long, Robert Curry, Theo Hofmann; 06-096).

This is the second record of this species that has been accepted by the OBRC. The first record was of a bird observed on 29 April 1991 in Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, Thunder Bay (Bain 1992). James (1991) lists two additional reports that have yet to be examined by the Committee, one from Sudbury, Sudbury, on 17 April 1978, and another from Kingston, Frontenac, on 2 May 1972.

Black-headed Grosbeak ***Pheucticus melanocephalus*** **(5)**

2005 one definitive alternate, male, 23-24 August, Howe Island, Frontenac (Sharon David; 06-068 – photo on file.

This is the first fall record for the province and is considerably earlier than expected for western strays.

Blue Grosbeak ***Passerina caerulea*** **(63)**

2006 one first alternate, male, 15 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Kevin Seymour, also found by John Nishikawa, Rob Miller, Wayne King, Mark Brubacker; 06-110).

2005 one first alternate, male, 26-28 May, Port Hope, Northumberland (Roger Frost, William J. Edmunds; 06-029) – photo on file.

Figure 15: First alternate male Blue Grosbeak at Port Hope, Northumberland, from 26 to 28 May 2005. *Photo: William J. Edmunds*

Orchard Oriole ***Icterus spurius*** **North Only (3)**

2006 one definitive basic, male, 31 May – 4 June, Harris Hill, Rainy River (Cheryl Gauthier, Gary Gauthier; 06-097).

2005 one definitive basic, male, 28 May – 7 July, Harris Hill, Rainy River (Cheryl Gauthier; 06-030) – photos on file.

These two records, in the same location in consecutive years, probably involved the same bird. The only previous accepted record for northern Ontario occurred on 25 September 1986 at Terrace Bay, Thunder Bay (Wormington and Lamond 1987).

Not Accepted Records
Origin Uncertain

Birds in this category are considered by the committee to be correctly identified, but their origin is suspect. These birds may have escaped or may have been released from captivity. However, if new evidence suggesting wild origin becomes available, such reports may be reconsidered by the committee.

2006 Whooping Crane *(Grus americana)*, two, 15 April, Ennismore, Peterborough (David Barnim; 06-103). These two Whooping Cranes carried satellite transmitters that confirmed that they were part of the flock that had been introduced into Wisconsin as part of the recovery efforts for this species and wintered in Florida.

Black-billed Magpie *(Pica hudsonia)*, one, 2 April, near Craigsholme, Dufferin (Jack Wilhelm; 06-077).

Black-billed Magpie, one, 8-9 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Alan Wormington, Nicholas Topolnycky, Barry S. Cherriere, Brandon R. Holden, Rosalee A. Hall, also found by William G. Lamond, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Jean Iron; 06-094) – photos on file.

Common Chaffinch *(Fringilla coelebs)*, one, male, 7 May, Atikokan, Rainy River (David H. Elder; 06-098) – photos on file.

European Goldfinch *(Carduelis carduelis)*, one, 11 March, Sarnia, Lambton (Larry Parker; 06-060) – photo on file.

European Goldfinch, one, circa 17-19 June, Sapawe, Rainy River (Jim Koroscil, Jean Koroscil; 06-099).

European Goldfinch, two, 21 October, Toronto, Toronto (John Carley, Michael Dryden, also found by Lynne Dryden; 06-100) – photo on file.

The phenomenon of Eurasian songbird sightings continues, but there is still no evidence that these birds have become established in the province. However, documentation of these records helps to confirm the extent of these releases or escapes, and evidence may emerge in the future indicating a pattern of true vagrancy in some of these species.

2005 European Goldfinch, one, 15 May, Geraldton, Thunder Bay (Loraine Zawierucha; 06-059) – photo on file.

European Goldfinch, one, 20 November, Pickering, Durham (Rosemary Harris; 06-070) – photos on file.

1986/87 Barnacle Goose *(Branta leucopsis)*, one, definitive basic, male, winter 1986 - 87, Port Credit, Peel (David T. C. Ambridge; 06-031). This Barnacle Goose was banded near Monkton, Maryland on 19 April 1985.

Not Accepted Records
Identification Uncertain

The documentation received for the following reports generally was found not to be detailed enough to eliminate similar species unequivocally. In a great many cases, committee members felt that the species being described probably was correctly identified, but that the details provided in the report, perhaps due to the circumstances of the observation conditions, etc., were insufficient. It should be noted that any of these reports may be re-submitted if additional documentation becomes available.

2006 Band-tailed Pigeon *(Patagioenas fasciata)*, one, 29 March, Hullett Wildlife Management Area, Huron (06-075).
Black-chinned Hummingbird *(Archilochus alexandri)*, one, 29-30 June, near Lynden, Hamilton (06-087).
Gray Flycatcher *(Empidonax wrightii)*, four, May-June, Kinburn, Ottawa – photos on file (06-006).
La Sagra's Flycatcher *(Myiarchus sagrae)*, one, 8 September, Whitby, Durham (06-018).
Cassin's Vireo *(Vireo cassinii)*, one, 11 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex – photos on file (06-093).
Sage Thrasher, one, 24 May, Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay (06-108).

2005 Great Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax carbo)*, one, 4 December, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara (06-022).
Little Blue Heron, one, 14 May, Wallaceburg, Chatham-Kent (06-034).
Swallow-tailed Kite, one, 19 May, Algonquin Provincial Park (Lake Kioshkokwi), Nipissing (06-035).
Prairie Falcon *(Falco mexicanus)*, one, 9 October, Port Stanley, Elgin (06-054).
Pomarine Jaeger *(Stercorarius pomarinus),* one, 16 October, Haileybury, Timiskaming (06-004).
Lesser Black-backed Gull *(Larus fuscus)*, three, 22 November, New Liskeard, Timiskaming (06-014).
Arctic Tern, one, 14 July, Port Hope, Northumberland (06-005).
Black-throated Gray Warbler *(Dendroica nigrescens)*, one, 5 September, Burlington, Halton – photos on file (06-008).

Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports

2005 Report (Ontario Birds 24: 54-74) – under Sage Thrasher, 31 May and 10 June, add "Stéphane Menu" after "Michael E. Carlson".

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When Orioles Turn Red

Dan Derbyshire and *Tom Flinn*

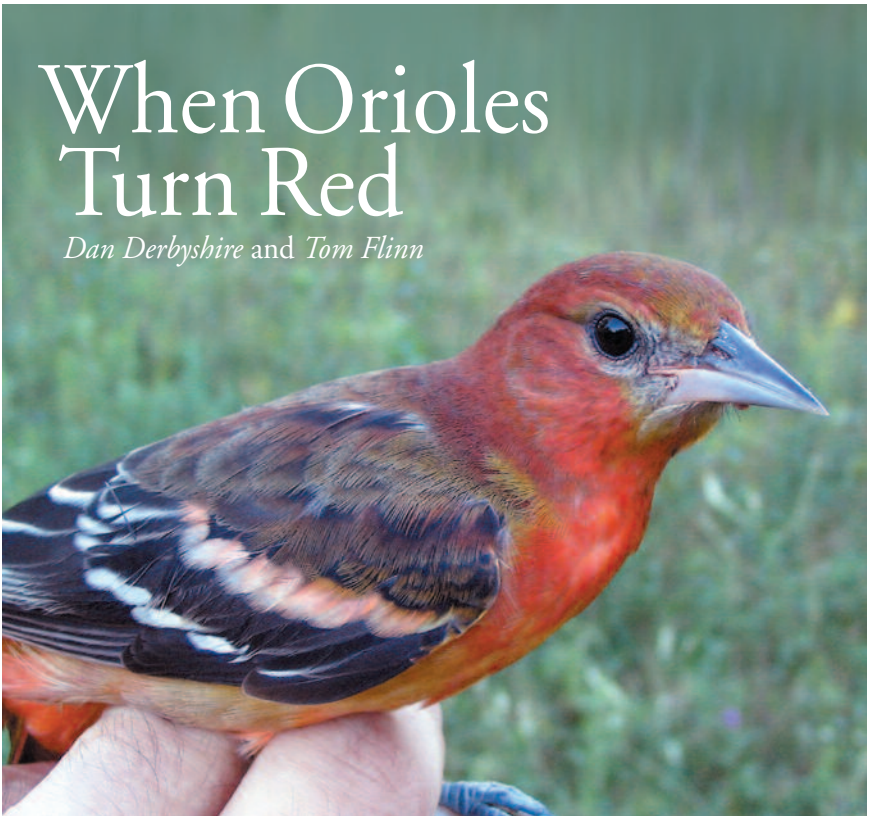

Figure 1: Baltimore Oriole at Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station, Toronto, ON, 22 August 2005. *Photo: Dan Derbyshire*

In August 2005, a Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) that had unusual reddish hues to its plumage was captured at the Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station in Toronto. The authors believe that this aberrant colouration was caused by something in the diet of this bird.

While some degree of colour variation is found in many species of birds, a search of the literature has revealed no described instances of diet-induced erythrism (reddening) in Baltimore Oriole involving the carotenoid rhodoxanthin. To elucidate this possibility we will look at the following topics: the area where the bird was captured, a description of the bird's aberrant colouration, a general look at how birds attain the colours they exhibit, the involvement of rhodoxanthin in colour variation of Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) and its suspected role in colour variation in some other species.

Background

Tommy Thompson Park is the largest area of natural habitat that exists on the central Toronto waterfront. The park, commonly considered Toronto's "urban wilderness", was designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International in recognition of the significant numbers of nesting and migratory birds that can be found there. Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station (TTPBRS) was established by Toronto and Region Conservation to deliver monitoring, research and educational programs focused around birds and the environment. The migration monitoring program at TTPBRS includes daily standardized mist-netting, banding, census and point counts during spring and fall seasons.

A Red Oriole

An unusual looking first year Baltimore Oriole was captured and banded early on the morning of 22 August 2005. This individual showed pronounced red colour variably distributed throughout the head, breast and undertail, with some lighter red hue present in the greater coverts, back and belly (see Figure 1). The bird was briefly examined, photographed and released, without any clarity as to the nature of its aberrant colouration. Another bird with less obvious red colouration had been captured earlier that same week. While it had been dismissed as an isolated oddity, a bird that had perhaps been stained, the appearance of the second and much redder bird gave notice that further investigation was warranted.

In first basic plumage one would expect the areas that were significantly reddened would be coloured yellow to pale orange. Within most species there is a range of colour variation that would be considered normal for a given plumage. On a broad scale, this colour variation can delineate recognizable forms, such as races or colour morphs. On an individual level, the colour(s) of some birds of a given species will appear 'brighter' than others in the same plumage. However, the bird in question was significantly redder than would be expected in any plumage attained by Baltimore Oriole.

Colour in Birds

The significance of colour in the life of a bird cannot be overstated. The subtleties of feather colour, or lack thereof, have implications for mate selection, social status, camouflage and differentiation.

Colours in birds are mainly produced in three ways, either structurally (blue, white), chemically (red, yellow, orange) or both (green). There is no pigment that produces the vivid colour of the male Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). The feathers only appear blue to the eye due to a complex structure within the feathers and how that structure reflects light. This type of colour is therefore structural instead of chemical.

Another example of structurally generated colour is the shimmering green and purple iridescence of the Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*).

Birds exhibit a phenomenal range of colours which in most cases are derived from chemical compounds called pigments. There are two basic types of pigments involved, melanins and carotenoids. Melanins are produced endogenously (*i.e.* from within) and are the pigments that produce brown, black and gray plumages. Carotenoid pigments are usually obtained exogenously (*i.e.* externally) from food sources. These carotenoid pigments are responsible for the warmer colours of red, orange and yellow in North American birds. There are many sources of carotenoids and they can be found in both plant and animal material consumed by birds. After ingestion some carotenoids are deposited into feathers in an unmodified form. Carotenoids may also be chemically modified by birds to produce new compounds, allowing a greater range of colour possibilities. Species such as the Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) take carotenoids obtained from their diet and modify them to produce red compounds called 4-keto-carotenoids to attain the red hues in their plumage (McGraw *et al.* 2001). Other modified compounds, called canary xanthophylls, are responsible for the bright yellow colours of many species including American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*) (McGraw *et al.* 2001).

Figure 2: Orange tail band on Cedar Waxwing at TTPBRS, Toronto, ON, 26 August 2005.
Photo: Dan Derbyshire

Origin of "Orange-Tailed" Cedar Waxwings

Beginning in the early 1960s, some Cedar Waxwings started appearing with rectrices that were orange-tipped rather than the usual yellow-tipped (Figure 2).

The initial appearance of this phenomenon was a mystery, although the suspicion was that it was related to a change in diet. The onset of the colour change roughly coincides with the species population doubling in size from 1965-1979, although aberrant colouration was noted prior to 1965.

The first orange-banded Cedar Waxwing in the Cornell University Vertebrate Collection is from 1961 (Witmer 1996).

By the late 1980s, chemical analysis of orange-coloured tail tips had recovered a carotenoid with a deep red hue, named rhodoxanthin. This pigment was generally believed to be acquired directly from the diet and deposited unmodified (Hudon and Brush 1989). This discovery was unusual in that 4-keto-carotenoids are responsible for most of the red-coloured feathers of North American birds. The only areas coloured red on Cedar Waxwings are the 'waxy' red tips on the end of the secondaries, and the pigment responsible for that is a 4-keto-carotenoid named astaxanthin (Brush and Allen 1963).

Rhodoxanthin is present in small amounts in several plant species native to North America, including conifers and yews. However, if the source of rhodoxanthin in the aberrantly-coloured waxwings was from a native species, one would expect that they would have always had orange tail bands. Analysis of possible introduced sources of rhodoxanthin revealed that the chemical is found in the berries of Morrow's Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*), a non-native species (Brush 1990). The berries of Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*), another introduced species, were not tested, but based on its close relationship to Morrow's Honeysuckle, and the fact that the two species readily hybridize in the wild, it is believed that they also contain rhodoxanthin (Mulvihill *et al.* 1992, Witmer 1996).

Honeysuckles (genus *Lonicera*) comprise more than 180 species of fruit bearing shrubs or vines. Non-native species of honeysuckle ("bush" honeysuckles) were first introduced to North America in the 19th century. During the 1950s, the shrubs were endorsed by the U.S. government as a viable plant for restoring wildlife habitat, which led to a dramatic range expansion and increase in abundance of the plants. The increase in numbers of these fruit-bearing ornamental shrubs has been credited as being a factor behind the population increase of the Cedar Waxwing in the mid-20th century (Witmer 1996).

Confirmation that rhodoxanthin found in honeysuckle berries could redden the tail tips of Cedar Waxwing came when Witmer (1996) conducted feeding experiments in the controlled environment of an aviary. Rectrices replaced when the berries of Morrow's Honeysuckle were fed to the waxwings were orange-tipped, and those produced after a switch to a rhodoxanthin-free dog chow diet were yellow-tipped.

In the case of the Cedar Waxwing the tips of the rectrices are normally pigmented yellow by canary xanthophylls (McGraw *et al.* 2001). Rhodoxanthin is so closely chemically related to the canary xanthophylls that it can be deposited unmodified using the same chemical pathways that would normally mobilize and deposit canary xanthophylls. Research on erythristic Cedar Waxwings has revealed that reddening occurs only at the onset of feather growth, when rhodoxanthin (red) mixes with canary xanthophylls (yellow) to produce orange-

coloured tail tips. This type of diet-induced erythrism can only occur during a moult of feathers normally pigmented by carotenoids and when the diet contains rhodoxanthin or some other red carotenoid. The most common introduced source of rhodoxanthin is "bush" honeysuckles.

Juvenile Cedar Waxwings with orange tail bands have been noted commonly over the past four years of banding at TTPBRS. Many of these individuals were so recently fledged that it is almost certain they were born at Tommy Thompson Park where bush honeysuckles are abundant and widespread.

Figure 3: White-throated Sparrow with orange lores at TTPBRS, Toronto. ON, 1 October 2006. *Photo: Dan Derbyshire*

Cases of Diet-induced Colour Variation

Since the initial discovery of erythristic Cedar Waxwings, several other species have been described with aberrantly reddened plumage. Only those tracts of feathers that are yellow or orange, meaning they are pigmented by carotenoids, have been warmed or reddened. None of the unusually reddened feathers from species other than Cedar Waxwing have previously been formally tested for the presence of rhodoxanthin. The assumption has been that the aberrant colouration is related to rhodoxanthin in the diet.

After Cedar Waxwing, the species most frequently documented in the literature as exhibiting colour aberration believed to involve rhodoxanthin is White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*). The only area of bright yellow on White-throated Sparrow is the lores, and over the years there have been several published reports of the lores being orange. The earliest description in the literature of White-throated Sparrows with orange lores comes from New York state in 1994 (Brooks 1994). Other reports have come in from Michigan (Craves 1999) and Pennsylvania (Leppold and Mulvihill 2006). Single White-throated Sparrows with orange lores were banded at Tommy Thompson Park in the falls of both 2005 and 2006 (see Figure 3). The rate of incidence of erythrism in White-throated Sparrows at Tommy Thompson Park is much lower than in Cedar Waxwings (personal observation). Powdermill Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania has reported Kentucky Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats with aberrant orange colouration

(Mulvihill *et.al.* 1992). Powdermill has also reported cases of erythrism in Scarlet Tanager and Yellow Warbler (Leppold and Mulvihill 2006). In all cases birds were moulting when honeysuckles were fruiting and available.

A New Species Involving Rhodoxanthin-induced Erythrism

Tartarian Honeysuckle and Morrow's Honeysuckle are common at TTPBRS and 2005 was a bumper year for the berry crop (Figure 4). Nest searching at Tommy Thompson Park during that summer revealed a Baltimore Oriole nest 15 metres above a dense patch of bush honeysuckles. Monitoring of this nest made it clear that these adults were relying on honeysuckle fruit as the primary food source for either the young, for themselves, or both. Feeding flocks consisting of waxwings, orioles, robins and other species were observed gorging on these berries during the first few weeks of August. These observations suggest that various species will feed heavily on honeysuckle fruit during both the breeding season and early autumn migration period. The period from late summer into fall is the time of active prebasic moult for most passerine species, including Baltimore Oriole. We cannot be certain that the unusually reddened Baltimore Oriole captured and banded on 22 August was reared

Figure 4: Honeysuckle berries at TTPBRS, Toronto. ON, in 2005. *Photo: Dan Derbyshire*

at Tommy Thompson Park, however, the necessary circumstances were in place for making that a strong possibility.

Parkes (1993) describes five instances of erythristic Baltimore Orioles from the northeastern United States. One is a bird he banded on Great Gull Island, N.Y., in 1985. His subsequent search for similarly affected specimens in museum collections turned up three more individuals in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH 54807, 521485 and 789515). Two were collected in New York state, but AMNH 521485 lacks any collection data. His final instance is a bird banded at Block Island, R.I., in 1988. Parkes states that the aberrant colouration was likely diet related but did not have chemical analysis to confirm which pigments actually caused the reddening.

The story of aberrantly coloured orioles in Canada became more intriguing when further reports of "red" Baltimore Orioles surfaced in fall 2005 from Ste-Catherine, Quebec, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. The individual from Halifax caused a stir in the local birding community as the bird was first incorrectly identified as a Flame-colored Tanager. The trend continued in fall 2006, when two individuals from TTPBRS and as many as twelve individuals from McGill Bird Observatory in Montreal, Quebec, were captured, showing varying degrees of atypically warm plumage.

Unpublished results of chemical analysis, performed by Dr. J. Hudon of the Royal Museum of Alberta, show that rhodoxanthin was present in some of the feather samples collected at McGill Bird Observatory in 2006. Baltimore Oriole now joins Cedar Waxwing as the only North American species where aberrant colouration has been chemically proven to be the result of rhodoxanthin deposition. Note that this does not mean that every Baltimore Oriole with aberrantly reddened plumage necessarily obtained it through the ingestion of rhodoxanthin.

Conclusions

The emergence of orange-tailed Cedar Waxwings in the 1960s coincided with the rapid spread of bush honeysuckles at that time. The diet of Cedar Waxwing is more dependant on fruit than any other species in North America and, therefore, it is not surprising that they would take advantage of a new and readily available source of berries. What is surprising is the appearance (or at least documentation) in the early 1990s of colour aberration, postulated to be linked to rhodoxanthin, affecting other species such as White-throated Sparrow. The sudden appearance of "red" Baltimore Orioles in Canada in 2005 and 2006 is likewise mysterious. The Baltimore Oriole is a known frugivore, although their diet during the summer months relies more heavily on insects (Rising and Flood 1998). Knowing this, it is unclear as to why this species would suddenly appear with plumage

effects from deposition of rhodoxanthin roughly half a century later than the Cedar Waxwing. Since no feather samples were collected from the 2005 TTPBRS bird it cannot be proven that the cause of its aberrant colouration was the deposition of rhodoxanthin. However, the circumstantial evidence seems to point to this bird as the first documented example of rhodoxanthin-induced colour variation occurring in Baltimore Oriole in Canada. While that assertion can ultimately neither be proven or disproven, the 2005 TTPBRS bird did set in motion a chain of interest and research that resulted in the confirmation of rhodoxanthin-induced colour variation in a new species.

Acknowledgments

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The Sandhill Cranes of the Rainy River Area of Ontario

Dave Elder

Figure 1. A recently hatched Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*) hides in the grass near Rainy River, Ontario, 2 June 1989. *Photo: Kayo Roy.*

The far-carrying ringing bugle call of the Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) is one of the characteristic bird sounds in the Rainy River area in northwestern Ontario. The Sandhill Crane is found as a breeder, a migrant, or a winter visitor, over much of North America, being absent from only the east-central and northeastern parts of the continent (Tacha *et al.* 1992, Sibley 2000). In Ontario, Sandhill Cranes breed throughout the province, from the Hudson Bay Lowlands in the north, to the shores of Lake Erie in the south (Tebbel and Ankney 1982, Pedlar and Ross 1997). The species has become more evident in the southern part of the province during the past 20 years (Lumsden 1987, Sandilands 2005). Six subspecies of Sandhill Cranes have been recognized (Walkinshaw 1965, Lewis *et al.* 1977). Of these, two subspecies are found in the Rainy River area, with *G.c. tabida* (Greater Sandhill Crane) present as a breeder and *G.c. rowani* (Canadian Sandhill Crane) present as a spring and fall migrant.

Discussion

The Greater Sandhill Crane is a fairly recent addition to the avifauna of the Rainy River area. As the area was settled and land cleared for farming from the late 1800s to the present, habitat suitable for Sandhill Cranes was created. This new habitat was found and colonized by adventuresome cranes from breeding populations in northern Minnesota. A faunal survey of the Rainy River area carried out in 1929 does not make note of the species (Snyder 1938). Just when they arrived is not precisely known but from my own observations, they were fairly common from Emo westward in the early 1970s. Lumsden (1971) indicates they were present every year by the mid 1960s,

and I suspect they may have been there for a decade or more by then.

The Greater Sandhill Crane winters in family groups in Florida. By mid-April, breeding pairs, sometimes still accompanied by a young bird of the previous year, arrive in the fields, fens and bogs in the Rainy River area. Often the ground is still snow-covered but the birds appear to have sufficient fat reserves to see them through to final snow melt. In a year with a late spring, several pairs may come together in ploughed fields, where the dark soil has hastened snowmelt and affords some feeding opportunities. However, the pairs tend to keep well separated from one another, and sometimes will respond to the urge to call and dance.

The pairs move to their breeding territories as soon as snow melt permits. The cranes use a wide variety of habitat for nesting sites including: cattail (*Typha* sp.) marshes, wet meadows with scattered willow *(Salix* sp.), drier hayfields, and bogs and fens with scattered Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*) and Tamarack (*Larix laricina*). Two eggs are usually laid on a nest consisting of a mound of vegetation gathered from the immediate area. The non-incubating parent is always nearby, feeding and alert for danger. On hatching, the young are lead away from the nest by their very protective parents. Although two eggs are laid and hatch, it is rare for more than one young to survive. The young birds are very aggressive toward each other from the time of hatching, and in most cases only one survives the constant sibling conflict to reach adulthood. The young are nearly full grown and flying by mid-August, and by early September the family groups have left the area for their wintering grounds in Florida.

The Canadian Sandhill Crane uses the Rainy River area as a stopover during spring and fall migration, between wintering grounds in New Mexico and Texas, and breeding areas in the boggy lowlands south and west of Hudson Bay and James Bay. Flocks of this subspecies, sometimes as many as 100 birds, use the large fields of the Rainy River area as overnight stops during their spring and fall migrations. The *rowani* flocks usually appear later in the spring than the breeding *tabida*, and can sometimes be seen well into May. This later arrival is likely linked to the delayed snow melt on their more northerly breeding grounds. Likewise, in the fall, southbound flocks are usually noted in late September and early October, well after *tabida* have left.

I have observed the behavior of several spring flocks of *rowani* over the years. The birds usually chose the largest field they could find on which to spend the night, no doubt as a means of easier predator detection. On sunny mornings the birds of the flock do not do much. Some food searching goes on and a few enthusiastic individuals engage in calling and short bouts of

dancing. As the air warms a general restlessness pervades the flock and so on, with much calling, a few birds launch into flight. This activity is infectious and the rest of the flock soon follows, with the entire group slowly spiraling upwards in flapping and gliding flight to a significant altitude. Then, still calling, they drift off to the north in a "kettle" in the laid back manner of migrating cranes. Migrating cranes seldom display the migratory urgency and determination of other species such as waterfowl. The flocks of *rowani* are more common in the spring than the fall. This may be related to weather patterns that encourage a more westerly drift during the fall migratory period. It could also be a reflection of food availability, in the harvested grain fields in southern Manitoba and points south, that the birds have learned to use.

Conclusion

The two subspecies of Sandhill Crane using the Rainy River area exhibit distinct differences. The breeding Greater Sandhill Crane, having wintered in Florida, arrives to begin nesting in mid to late April. By early September the family groups have started to move south. Both spring and fall migration involves only pairs or family groups. Larger aggregations are a factor of coincidence, or the influence of a traditional stopover location with good food supplies, with the family groups maintaining a comfortable distance between each other. The visiting spring and fall migrant, the Canadian Sandhill Crane, arrives from New Mexico and Texas in late April through late May, usually in flocks of 50 or more individuals. The flocks rest overnight and, weather permitting, move on the next morning. Feeding seems to be incidental in the resting flock. Flocks again appear in the area in late September and October, but are usually not seen as frequently as in the spring. There is some suggestion the breeding *tabida* are somewhat larger in size than the migrant *rowani*, but I have not been able to see the difference in the field. Indeed, although some authors recognize *rowani* as a separate subspecies based on size considerations (Lumsden 1971, Walkinshaw 1973, Lewis *et al* 1977), others have questioned the validity of this separation, since there is a continuum of size between the two subspecies, with overlap in measurements (Tacha *et al.* 1985). However, in western Rainy River the two forms are distinctive in arrival and departure times, as well as in numbers seen, coming from two distinct wintering areas.

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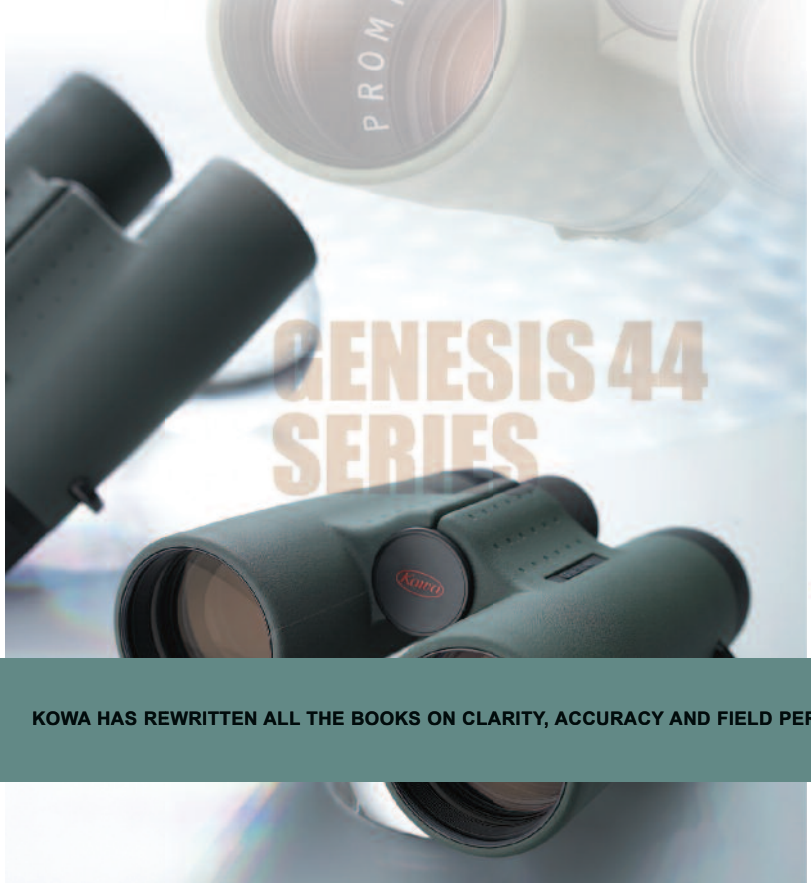

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Breeding Season Records of Dickcissel in the Greater Toronto Area

Glenn Coady

Introduction

The Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) is an abundant and obligate breeding specialist of the prairie grasslands of the American Midwest, where it has also successfully adapted to similar secondary agricultural habitats that have largely replaced much of the former natural grassland. Its core breeding range extends throughout the grasslands from southeastern South Dakota, southern Iowa, and west-central Illinois, to northeastern Texas (Figure 1). It breeds annually in lower numbers in peripheral areas of its breeding range from eastern North Dakota, and the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, south to southern Texas and southern Louisiana (Figure 1). Beyond these areas, the Dickcissel is merely a sporadic breeder, usually as a result of erratic, drought-induced irruptions from its core range (Temple 2002).

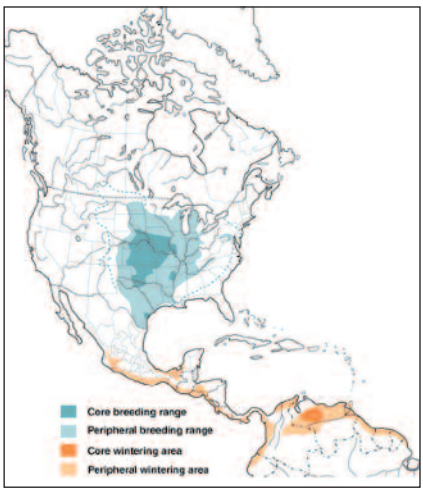

Figure 1: Breeding and wintering range of the Dickcissel. *Reproduction courtesy of The Birds of North America, Inc.*

In the nineteenth century, its range formerly expanded eastward into newly created agricultural grasslands from New England south to the Carolinas. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it had retracted westward again, as most of these farmlands were abandoned and gradually reverted to forest (Rhoads 1903).

The Dickcissel is a Neotropical migrant that winters in northern South America, concentrated principally in the llanos of central Venezuela, where its total population has been estimated to exceed six million individuals (Basili and Temple 1999).

In Ontario, the Dickcissel has traditionally been a rare and episodic breeding bird. Saunders and Dale (1933) reported that: "the Dickcissel occurred more or less frequently and regularly in the south-western counties up to 1895", suggesting that it may have been more common in southwestern Ontario during the species' nineteenth century period of eastward expansion. Breeding was first confirmed in Ontario when nests were discovered in Essex (1884), Elgin (1885) and Middlesex (1895) counties (Peck and James 1987). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, breeding evidence has been obtained in at least twenty-five different years, across almost every decade, and spanning the counties, regional municipalities and cities of Essex, Chatham-Kent, Lambton, Bruce, Elgin, Middlesex, Haldimand, Dufferin, Wellington, Niagara, Hamilton, Halton, Peel, York, Durham and Ottawa. Although breeding has been confirmed in the majority of these areas, some of these occurrences have also involved territorial males that likely remained unmated.

The purpose of this paper is to provide details of possible and confirmed breeding records of Dickcissel in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and to illustrate the rarity of the species in the GTA. The Greater Toronto Area is defined as the City of Toronto (formerly known as Metropolitan Toronto) and the Regional Municipalities of Halton, Peel, York and Durham and the adjacent Canadian waters of Lake Ontario.

Figure 2: Male Dickcissel at the Elgin Mills old field, Richmond Hill, *York Regional Municipality*, on 16 July 1988. *Photo: Glenn Coady*

Breeding Season Records in the Greater Toronto Area

The Dickcissel is an exceedingly rare breeding species in the GTA. It is a very rare spring and fall migrant and winter visitant (when it has most frequently been discovered at feeders among flocks of House Sparrows — *Passer domesticus*).

The first instance of possible breeding evidence for the Dickcissel in the GTA involved an apparently unmated, territorial male, seen and heard singing in suitable alfalfa field habitat, in Streetsville, Mississauga, *Peel R.M.*, by Margaret H. Mitchell on 25 May 1945 (Mitchell 1946).

Prior to 1988, there were no confirmed breeding records of Dickcissel in the GTA (Goodwin 1988). Then, on 28 June 1988, Norm Murr discovered a territorial male Dickcissel while surveying Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*) in the former Elgin Mills old field habitat (east of Yonge St., about 100 metres west of the Canadian National Railway line and 300 metres south of 19th Avenue, now the Harrington Park subdivision; 17 626108 4863048, NAD 1983; 43°54′35″ N, 79°25′46″ W) in Richmond Hill, *York R.M.* It was in an area of hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) scrub adjacent to the fallow field (Figure 2). The next day he observed both a singing male and an adult female there. He noted the singing male each day until 2 July 1988, when he observed both adult Dickcissels and two recently fledged young. Both adults and two large, capably flying juveniles were seen by Harry Kerr and the author on 16 July 1988. This was the last date that any of these birds were seen. Despite a thorough search of the nearby fields and shrubs, no used Dickcissel nest was located. No Dickcissels returned to this site in 1989. This represents the first confirmed breeding record for Dickcissel in the GTA.

It is interesting to note that 1988 was a year with an extensive and prolonged drought in the core of the Dickcissel breeding range that corresponded with one of the largest summer Dickcissel irruptions noted up until that time (Temple 2002). In Ontario, this impressive irruption was likely associated with hundreds of individuals, with breeding evidence (including an unprecedented 29 nest records; Ontario Nest Records Scheme data) from at least seven counties (Weir 1988).

Bob Curry and Gary Crossman discovered a singing male Dickcissel on 25 June 1989, on the Ninth Line in Mississauga, *Peel R.M.* Although seen by many observers until 13 July 1989, no female was ever observed, and this record presumably involved an unmated male (Curry 2006).

On 8 June 2005, Donna Sheppard and Joyce LeChasseur were surveying fields, often noted for Grasshopper Sparrows, at the north end (a few hundred metres southwest of the corner of Dundas St. and Tremaine Rd.) of Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton R.M.*,

when they discovered a singing male Dickcissel (Figure 3). On 11 June 2005, several observers (Terry Osborne, Ken Newcombe and Sue Suess) reported hearing two separate male Dickcissels singing in this area. Harry Kerr and Jim Griffiths noted both a male and female Dickcissel at this location on 16 June 2005 (Figures 3 and 4). These birds were subsequently observed by hundreds of birders. Neil and Shirley Macdougall observed the female (accompanied by the male) carrying nest material on 17 June 2005. A nest with four unmarked, glossy, pale blue eggs was discovered by the author on 27 June 2005 (Nest location: 17 597786 4807937, NAD 1983; 43° 25′4.6″ N, 79° 47′31.5″ W). This nest was situated 0.96 metres above the ground in a 2 metre tall hawthorn bush. The nest was primarily constructed of dried grasses and lined with a finer layer of plant fibres and rootlets. The nest had an outside diameter of 11.5 cm, an inside diameter of 6.5 cm, an outside depth of 10.0 cm, and an inside depth of 5.8 cm.

left; Figure 3: Male Dickcissel at Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton Regional Municipality*, on 9 June 2005.
Photo: Ken Newcombe

above: Figure 4: Female Dickcissel at Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton Regional Municipality*, on 17 June 2005.
Photo: Ken Newcombe

Figure 5: Habitat of Dickcissel territory at Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton Regional Municipality*, on 28 June 2005. *Photo: Mark K. Peck*

This represents the only nest record of Dickcissel for the GTA (see Ontario Nest Record Scheme card #192001). This nest and the surrounding habitat were photographed by Mark Peck on 27-28 July 2005 (Figures 5 and 6). Mark Peck noted that the nest still contained four eggs on the evening of 2 July 2005, but by the evening of 7 July 2005, it contained two small young and two eggs, and both adults were seen carrying food for the young (Figure 7). When the nest was found to contain two young and two eggs (still not hatched) on 10 July 2005, the remaining two eggs were collected for the Royal Ontario Museum by Mark Peck. One of these eggs was intact (and presumably infertile), while the other egg had a small nail puncture and a half-

Figure 6: Nest and eggs of Dickcissel pair at Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton Regional Municipality,* on 27 June 2005. *Photo: Mark K. Peck*

Figure 7: Male Dickcissel carrying food for young at Bronte Creek Provincial Park, *Halton Regional Municipality*, on 9 July 2005. *Photo: Sandra and Frank Horvath*

developed embryo inside. Two large young were observed being fed in the nest by the female at 10:15 a.m. on 12 July 2005 by the author, but by 11:15 a.m. the nest was empty, and the female was observed taking food to the two begging young in different areas in the adjacent grasses. Both adult Dickcissels and the two juveniles were last seen at 9:00 a.m. on 16 July 2005 by Teresa Santos and the author. The used nest was collected by the author on this date. The nest and eggs were deposited in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM # 506934). No Dickcissels returned to this site in 2006.

Figure 8: Male Dickcissel at Uxbridge, *Durham Regional Municipality,* on 3 July 2006.
Photo: Jean Iron

A singing male Dickcissel was found on the 4th Concession (about 2.3 km. north of Ashland Rd., just north of the community of Sandford) in Uxbridge, *Durham R.M.* on (17 641718 4892548, NAD 1983; 44° 10′20″ N, 79° 13′38″ W) 2 July 2006 by Bob Yukich. This territorial male was seen by many observers near extensive fields of Timothy grass until it was last reported by Bruce Aikins on the morning of 9 July 2006. It apparently left the area as the surrounding hay fields were cut between 6-9 July 2006 (Worthington 2006). It is possible that this bird had already lost an earlier nest to hay cutting, but more likely it represented an unmated male. This bird was photographed by Jean Iron on 3 July 2006 (Figure 8).

Summary

There have been five breeding season records for Dickcissel to date in the GTA: one confirmed successful nest record from *Halton R.M.*; two possible breeding records, likely representing unmated territorial males, from *Peel R.M.*; one confirmed breeding record, where fledged young were noted, from *York R.M.*; and one possible breeding record, likely representing an unmated territorial male, from *Durham R.M.*

The lack of any records from the City of Toronto is likely due to the scarcity of suitable remaining grasslands there. Further breeding records of the Dickcissel will undoubtedly be documented within the remaining grasslands of the GTA if systematic searches of suitable habitat are undertaken during years of known Dickcissel irruptions into southern Ontario. It will be interesting to see whether ongoing climate change will exert deleterious effects on the grassland habitats in the core range of the Dickcissel in the coming decades, and whether that could serve to alter the frequency and magnitude of future irruptions.

Acknowledgements

Norm Murr and Harry Kerr provided data from their field notes regarding the breeding record at the Elgin Mills old field site. Bob Yukich provided data from his field notes on the Dickcissel record near Sandford. Roy B.H. Smith provided a data report from the database of the Toronto Ornithological Club Records Committee. Sandra and Frank Horvath, Jean Iron, Ken Newcombe and Mark Peck kindly provided photographs used to illustrate this article. Glenn Murphy of the Royal Ontario Museum prepared the nest and eggs collected from the Bronte Creek Provincial Park site. The editors of The Birds of North America, Inc. generously granted permission to reprint the range map from the Dickcissel account.

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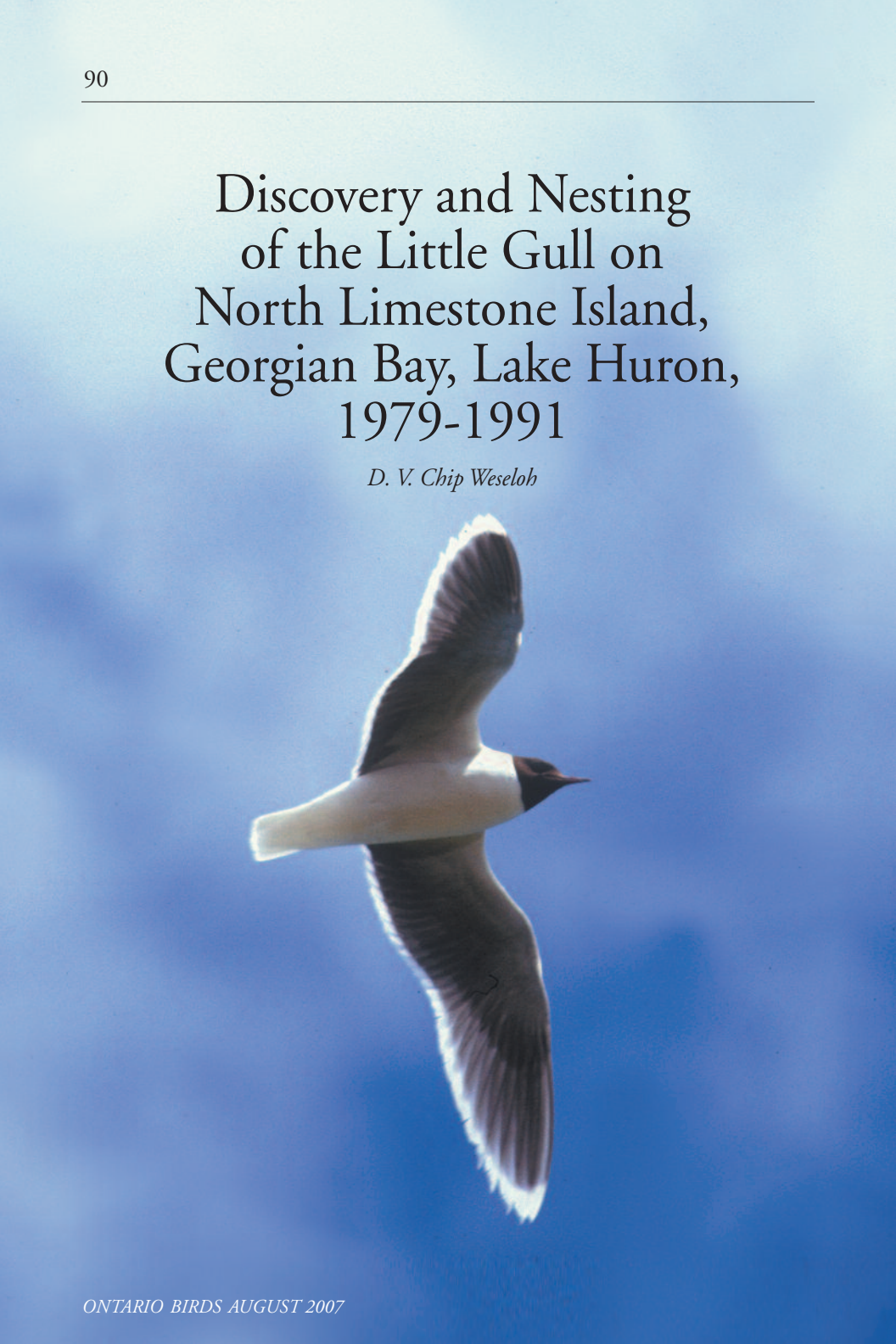
Discovery and Nesting of the Little Gull on North Limestone Island, Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, 1979-1991

D. V. Chip Weseloh



Introduction

The Little Gull (*Larus minutus)* is a rare breeding bird in North America. It has bred "locally…along the Great Lakes in northern Wisconsin (Manitowac and Brown counties), northern Michigan (Upper Peninsula) and southern Ontario (Rondeau, Pickering, Toronto and Parry Sound) and in Manitoba…" (A.O.U. 1983). [The Pickering and Toronto locations cited above should more properly be Whitby and Oshawa, respectively (Tozer and Richards, 1974).] It has also been found nesting in the St. Lawrence River in Quebec (Bannon 1983) and in southern Minnesota (Schladweiler 1986). Most of these sites had confirmed nestings of Little Gull for one to two years only, while the maximum duration was five years. In Ontario during the 1960s and early 1970s, Little Gulls were found nesting at Second Marsh in Oshawa (Scott 1963), at Rondeau Provincial Park near Blenheim and at Cranberry Marsh at Whitby (Richards 1973, Tozer and Richards 1974, Speirs 1985). Since the early 1970s, Little Gulls have also been found nesting at Bassett Island near Wallaceberg (Rider 1979), North Limestone Island near Parry Sound (Goodwin 1981; Weir 1983, 1984, 1989; this paper) and at two sites near the James/Hudson Bay coastline in extreme northern Ontario (Carpentier 1986, Weseloh 1987, 1994). Of these seven known nesting sites in Ontario, that at North Limestone Island appears

Figure 1. *left and inset:*
Adult Little Gulls in flight showing the distinctive black underwing.
Photos: Richard Joos

to be the one which has been used most often and most consistently (Weseloh 1994). The purpose of this note is to document the nesting status of Little Gulls on North Limestone Island since 1979, when they were first discovered there, and to provide details of their discovery and disappearance. An update on current findings of Little Gulls in eastern North America is also given.

Methods

North Limestone Island (NLI) is located in east-central Georgian Bay, approximately 25km WNW of Parry Sound, Ontario; it is 11 km offshore, due west of the nearest point of mainland at Dillon. The island itself measures approximately 1100m x 400m. Since 1985, the island has been designated a Provincial Nature Reserve (J.Gardiner, pers. comm.). Since at least 1979, it has been visited opportunistically by different observers in a variety of capacities, *e.g.* by local cottagers (*e.g.* John and Margaret Catto, Reid and Margaret Wilson), by ornithologists engaged in local research (*e.g.* Quinn 1981), by Canadian Wildlife Service researchers censusing waterbird colonies (*e.g.* Weseloh *et al.* 1986, Blokpoel and Scharf 1991), by birdwatchers during organized outings and by staff of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources — Parry Sound office. Most visits were made during the last two weeks of June but in some years occurred as early as May or as late as August/September. NLI is a fairly remote location: access to it can be difficult and, until recently, it was not visited by ornithologists on a regular basis. Since 1980, the island has been included in the three Great Lakes-wide decadal surveys for nesting colonial waterbirds coordinated jointly by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: 1980 (Weseloh *et al.* 1986), 1989 (Blokpoel and Tessier 1997) and 1997 (CWS, unpubl.). Other colonial waterbirds found nesting on NLI since 1980 have included as many as 117 pairs of Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), 15^{+} pairs of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) (both in 1980) and 1339 pairs of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) (in 1998) (Weseloh *et al.* 1986; Blokpoel and Tessier 1997; CWS unpubl.).

In most years when I visited North Limestone Island (1981-1991), I first searched for the presence of Little Gulls by traversing the small marsh on the north shore of the west end of the island. Adult Little Gulls (Figure 1) were seldom seen to flush from this area but they were noted easily (by their black underwing) flying overhead among the hundreds of Common Terns that nested in the immediate area. Nesting by Little Gulls was then confirmed by withdrawing from the area and noting where they resettled in the vegetation and then finding the nest. Although Little Gulls always nested near the Common Terns, they always nested in a slightly different habitat. Common Terns nested on dry ground in short vegetation near water; Little Gulls nested in very shallow water (2–5cm) in thick short vegetation (sedges).

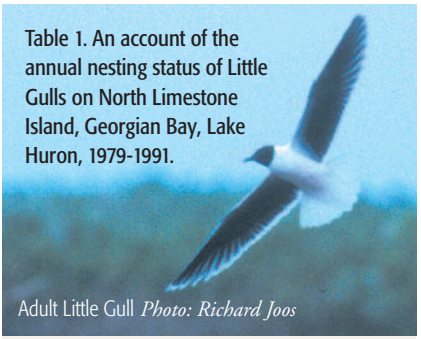
When nests of Little Gulls were confirmed, I recorded contents and their condition. I did not usually make subsequent trips to the island in a given year, so the final outcome of most nesting attempts was not determined. With the apparent abandonment of NLI by Little Gulls by 1991, I no longer visited the island regularly.

Results and Discussion

A detailed listing of the annual nesting status of the Little Gull on North Limestone Island from 1979 to 1991 is given in Table 1. Unconfirmed or probable nestings were not included in an earlier tabulation and one confirmed nesting had been overlooked (cf. Weseloh 1994). There are records of Little Gulls on NLI in nine of the 13 years from 1979 to 1991. In seven of those nine years, three or more adults were seen. Single individuals were reported in 1985 and 1990; five adults were seen in 1984 and seven in 1989. The only years the island was visited and Little Gulls were not seen were 1980 and 1991; in the latter year, Common Terns had already vacated the island (see below).

A total of six confirmed nests was found on NLI in four different years: 1979, 1983, 1984 (two nests) and 1989 (two nests). In addition, based on the presence and behaviour of adults, I am reasonably confident that Little Gulls also nested on NLI in 1981 and 1987 but I did not locate a nest. They may have nested there in 1986. Thus, based on field observations, Little Gulls probably nested at the NLI site in six, perhaps seven, of the years 1979 – 1991.

Table 1. An account of the annual nesting status of Little Gulls on North Limestone Island, Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, 1979-1991.



Adult Little Gull *Photo: Richard Joos*

1979: 8 July: Visited by Margaret and John Catto, and Tom and Jim Quinn; 4 adult Little Gulls display nest defence behaviour. Returned on 10 July when 1 chick was found and adults were photographed (Mills 1981; Speirs 1985). Status: a minimum of 1 nest produced at least 1 young.

1980: 17 May: Observer present – not familiar with Little Gulls, status unknown.

1981: 1 June: Three Little Gulls fly overhead and swoop at me as I walk through the marsh area on the northwest side of the island. I could not locate the nest or confirm nesting although I saw the birds land in the marsh vegetation on several occasions. Status: Probably at least 1 nest.

1982: No known records.

1983: 25 June: One nest found with 2 young and 1 pipped egg; 4 adults present. I could not relocate nests or any young on 14 July. Status: 1 nest hatched 2 and probably 3 young.

1984: 16 June: One nest with 3 eggs; 3 adults present. Status: 1 nest 3 eggs, fate unknown.

1984: 21 July: Five adult Little Gulls seen, 1 nest with 3 eggs (J. Gardiner, pers. comm.). Probably a different nest from the one found on 16 June. Status: a second nest with 3 eggs in 1984, fate unknown.

1985: 25 May: At least 1adult flying over the island (J. Gardiner, pers. comm.).

1986: 27 May: Three adults noted by H. Blokpoel (Blokpoel & Scharf 1991, J. Gardiner, pers. comm.) while censusing Common Terns but no attempts were made to locate nests.

1987: 23 June: Four adults circle overhead during search of traditional nesting area. No nests found in quick search but presumably there is at least 1 nest, possibly 2. Status: 1-2 probable nests.

1988: No known records.

1989: 6 June: Two nests with 3 eggs each; 7 adults present. I could not relocate nests on 25 June. Status: 2 nests, 6 eggs.

1990: 7 June: One adult observed but no sign of nesting (P. Ewins, pers. comm.). Visited by me on 23 June but no Little Gulls seen.

1991: No Little Gulls seen but Common Tern colony deserted North Limestone Island and appeared to move to South Limestone Island where several hundred Commons had begun nesting.

The Nest Site

In the years that nesting was confirmed or suspected, the Little Gulls had built their nest, or focused their activity, on the southern edge of a small, shallow (ephemeral) marshy area on the north side of the west end of the island (Figure 2). The marsh was about 30 by 20m and was set back about 30 – 40m from the north shore of the lake behind a very gradually-sloping, broad limestone beach. It is probably fed or maintained by water from the lake that would reach it during heavy gales. The marsh typically dried out in

Figure 2. North Limestone Island: the marshy area adjacent to which the Little Gulls nested. *Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada; Photo: Chip Weseloh*

August. However, I have never noticed any indication that the marsh or the nesting area of the Little Gulls had been awash recently or severely eroded by storm action. There was substantial and well-rooted shrubby vegetation between the marsh and the lake and a good growth of sedges (*Carex* sp.), Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and other grassy and herbaceous vegetation around the marsh. On my visits, the water depth in the marsh ranged from approximately 10 to 30cm deep and in some years it was mostly wet, shallow mud. The substrate was solid limestone and there was very little soil. Northern Water Snakes (*Natrix sipedon*) were often seen in the same area and they may have posed a predation threat for the gull/tern eggs or small chicks.

The nest site characteristics of the Little Gulls on NLI were typical for the species throughout its range, *i.e.* in or near to standing freshwater, usually in marshes, river basins, near lakes or along coasts (Bannon 1983, Cramp and Simmons 1983, Ewins and Weseloh 1999). However, the more general location,

i.e. on an offshore island, is unusual, at least for the Great Lakes. The six other recorded breeding locations in Ontario and the six cited in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Manitoba (see above), were all located on inland or coastal marshes; none were on offshore islands. The Quebec site was in a small patch of vegetation in a river (Bannon 1983).

Phenology and Egg Measurements

From the NLI records, and those given by Tozer and Richards (1974), it is possible to construct a general nesting phenology of Little Gulls in southern Ontario. Nests with eggs have been found during 1-3 and 10-12 June. Single two-egg and three-egg clutches are known from 1 June, indicating that the first egg laying must have occurred at least as early as 30 May. The latest date of egg laying (not including suspected relaying – see below) comes from a pipped egg on 5 July 1971 (Tozer and Richards 1974). Backdating the 21 day incubation period, gives a date of 14 June for egg laying and the onset of incubation, which starts with the first egg. Hence, the egg laying period extends from at least 30 May (or earlier) to 14 June. This is a slight extension of the major egg laying period as identified by Peck and James (1983). Nests with incubated and apparently still-viable eggs have been found as late as 21 July 1984 (Table 1), which represents a laying date at least as late as 30 June; presumably this represents relaying.

The earliest evidence of hatch comes from 25 June 1983 (Table 1) when two young (Figure 3) and one pipped egg

Figure 3. Comparison of young freshly hatched Common Tern chick (left) and Little Gull chick (right). Notice the latter is much darker. *Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada; Photo: Chip Weseloh*

were found. Pipped eggs have also been observed on 2, 5 and 6 July. The latest dates for the occurrence of flightless young are 8 July 1971 (Tozer and Richards 1974) and 10 July 1979 (Table 1). The occurrence of viable eggs on 21 July (Table 1) suggests that flightless young could be seen as late as early to mid-August.

Egg measurements were taken or located for 20 Little Gull eggs from eight clutches from southern Ontario. The average egg measurements were 41.1mm x 29.9mm. These compare with the average for Europe of 42mm x 30mm (Cramp and Simmons 1983).

Details of Initial Discovery

The details of the discovery of Little Gulls nesting on North Limestone Island have never been published, though Mills (1981) cites some details without giving the locale. Also, unfortunately, we do not know when Little Gulls first nested on NLI but it may have been in 1979, when the first known nest was located there. John and Margaret Catto, who initially found Little Gulls on the island, have a cottage 20km NE of the Limestone Islands, near Lookout Island, Pointe au Baril. They visited North and South Limestone Islands regularly, as a family outing (with Margaret's mother, K.D. Ketchum, a keen birder), once or twice a year, usually in July. They visited NLI for many years prior to 1979 but never noticed any Little Gulls. On 8 July 1979, they observed four small gulls with black underwings as they walked around the island, but had no idea what they were (J. and M. Catto, pers. comm.). Later that day, they encountered Jim and Tom Quinn on South Limestone Island, where they had been encamped since April, and described their unusual gulls. The Quinns immediately went to NLI with the Cattos and located and confirmed the identity of the gulls. Both parties returned to NLI on 10 July, when a chick was found and photos were taken. J. Catto (in litt. to C. Goodwin) reports,

"The 4 adults [Little Gulls] showed considerable agitation, swooping, circling and diving over the little gap in the shrubbery. This was the *only* area that they were interested in. This area was about 50 feet from the lake, on the very edge of the common tern colony. A rough estimate of the tern colony would be about 500 to 1000 birds. There were no other gulls in evidence around the colony."

"Tom Quinn, who sighted the chick with us, was quite positive that its markings and general colouration were quite different to any of the gull or tern chicks that he had seen… We are quite certain from the gulls' behaviour around the nesting area (they were down as low as 20 to 30 feet over our heads), that they were in fact nesting there. The nest was not identifiable as the chick was running in the bushes and reeds."

The Future of the Little Gull on the Limestone Islands

In the early 1990s, the future of the Little Gull on NLI was anything but bright. Peter Ewins, a co-worker, visited the island on 7 June 1990 and noted one adult, but there was no indication from its behaviour that it was nesting (although it could have failed already). I visited the island on 23 June 1990 and saw no Little Gulls. Furthermore, the Common Terns (ca. 861 nests in 1989, CWS unpubl.) which had nested on NLI since at least 1979, began to abandon the island in 1990 (J. Catto, pers. comm.) and had vacated it completely by 1991. This abandonment was probably a very significant factor as far as the Little Gulls were concerned. The usual nesting associates of Little Gulls in North America include Common, Forster's (*Sterna forsteri*), Arctic (*S. paradisaea*), and/or Black (*Chlidonias niger*) Terns (Tozer and Richards 1974; Rider 1979; Weseloh 1987, R. Joos, pers. comm.). On this continent, Little Gulls almost always nest with one of these marsh or wetland nesting species (but not Quebec — see Bannon 1983).

The Common Terns from NLI appeared to have moved only 3km to South Limestone Island while others may have gone 10km north to the Blackbill Islands and to Doran Rock (pers. obs. and J. Gatto, pers. comm.). Although South Limestone Island is well vegetated, there is not the same marshy, emergent, sedge-dominated vegetation as there was on NLI. The two more northerly sites are mostly bare rock. Hence, although suitable habitat persisted on NLI and nesting associates were present on SLI and nearby islands, the necessary combination of these two components did not then occur at any one location. This probably spelled the demise of that small but persistent nesting colony of Little Gulls. Burke Korol (in litt.) reports that Parry Sound MNR staff, members of the Parry Sound Naturalists Club and other keen birders have visited the islands from one – three times per year during May-July every year since 1991 (except 1998 and 2004) (N=22). So, even though Common Terns have at least sporadically returned to nest on NLI *(e.g.* 1339 nests in 1998, CWS unpubl.) there have been no further sightings of Little Gulls on the island. It would appear that they have vacated the island completely.

A Great Lakes Perspective and Current Canadian Status

The known history and status of the Little Gull in the Ontario-Great Lakes Region and in Canada and North America has been documented periodically (Tozer and Richards 1974, Weseloh 1994, Ewins and Weseloh 1999). The current paper provides new and detailed information on confirmed and probable nestings at North Limestone Island, which now appears to have been the most frequently used known nesting site in Ontario during the 1962-1989

period. It also makes available sufficient data which, when combined with previous records (Tozer and Richards 1974), permit the calculation of a more detailed nesting phenology of the Little Gull in the Great Lakes Region than was previously possible. In this manner, a more complete history and ecology of this species in Ontario and North America is accumulating. Unfortunately, the Little Gull has not been known to nest in the Great Lakes Region since 1989. This situation has not changed in more than nearly two decades and, as of 2006, Little Gulls appear to have abandoned completely the NLI site (B. Korol, pers. comm.) as well as the entire Great Lakes region as a nesting bird.

This brings us to the present day and the question of what is the current status of the Little Gull in Ontario, given there were no confirmed breeding records during the recent Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, and it might be concluded that it no longer breeds here (Joos and Weseloh, in press). However, the Hudson Bay Lowlands are a very large area and they could still be nesting there.

There are at least four areas of current interest in Little Gulls in Ontario. First, in the early 2000s, as a result of making extended morning observations (from sunrise to 1000 hrs) at Oshawa Second Marsh, 50km east of Toronto, during April and early May, Tyler Hoar and Richard Joos recognized that large numbers of Little Gulls gathered at this site daily with the hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*). On 25 April 2002 and 1 May 2003, 114 and 116 Little Gulls, respectively, were counted flying into Oshawa Second Marsh over the morning hours (Joos and Weseloh 2004). The appearance there of that many Little Gulls followed almost immediately the seasonal decline in numbers at the Niagara River (Bellerby *et al* 1999). It seemed logical that in their spring migration, Little Gulls moved to a more northerly stop over site from the Niagara River (where they roosted at the mouth of the River) to Oshawa Second Marsh as the spring season progressed. The precise location of the local roosting site(s), which facilitated the use of the Oshawa Marsh, is not known. The Oshawa site is used for feeding, loafing and aerial courtship (Joos *et al.* 2004). The consistency of the gull's appearance at this site prompted the establishment of an annual Little Gull Viewing Week-end in late April 2004; substantial numbers of Little Gulls were recorded there in 2004 and 2005 (Weseloh *et al.* 2004; unpubl. data). However, changes to the water levels in the marsh following the spring of 2005, and the resultant flooding and elimination of specific loafing locations, have coincided with the approximate 70% decline in the number of Little Gulls which now use the site at that time (R. Joos and C. Weseloh, unpubl. data).

Secondly, the late winter-early spring appearance of Little Gulls on the Niagara River has been known for many years,

as has their late spring appearance at Churchill, Manitoba (Bellerby *et al.* 1999, Jehl 2004). They are also known to gather and stage at the mouth of the Moose River, near Moosonee, Ontario in mid-late May and early June (D. McRae, G. Coady, pers. comm.). However, nothing was known of a staging or migrational loafing area between Lake Ontario and these arctic/subarctic locations. This data gap may have been partially filled when, in early May 2001, Brian Dorr reported 20 Little Gulls in a flock of Bonaparte's Gull near St. Martin's Shoal in the Les Chenaux area of northwest Lake Huron (B. Dorr, pers. comm.). Subsequently, this area was searched for Little Gulls in May 2005 and 2006. On 17 and 18 May 2005, among the thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls that were present, at least 16 Little Gulls were noted (R. Joos and C. Pekarik, unpubl. data). Unfortunately, one year later, during 16-18 May 2006, there were no large flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls in evidence and no Little Gulls were observed (R. Joos, unpubl. data). However, continued searching of that area and all of the North Channel, in spring, is certainly warranted.

Thirdly, it has been stated that there were no known/published nestings of Little Gulls in North America in the 1990s (Ewins and Weseloh 1999, Joos and Weseloh 2001). Happily, this must be qualified somewhat in that Jehl (2004) recently published evidence of one to three pairs of Little Gulls nesting annually at Churchill, Manitoba, in the mid-late 1990s. The situation in the 2000s is even more encouraging. During at least five of seven years from 2001-2006, four to eight active Little Gull nests were located in the Churchill area (R. Joos, unpubl. data). The traditional North American breeding grounds of the Little Gull, if such grounds exist, are proving very elusive to discover. Nesting records from the Hudson Bay lowlands of Manitoba (McRae 1984) and Ontario (Carpentier 1986) led McRae (1989) to speculate that Little Gulls may regularly inhabit the low arctic and boreal regions of Canada, a vast, under-explored area of many small ponds of the type which Little Gulls may find ideal for nesting. However, no nesting in the Ontario portion of this area was found during the 2nd Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, 2001-2005 (Joos and Weseloh, in press). The new nesting sites in the Churchill area may or may not prove to be the long-sought traditional breeding areas.

Lastly, a fourth area of interest concerns the status of the Little Gull in Lake Erie, especially near Port Rowan during November storms. On two dates, 7 November 1989 and 25 November 2002, very large numbers of Little Gulls were counted flying westward past the pier at Port Rowan, 266 and 250, respectively (D. Sutherland, pers. comm., Ewins and Weseloh 1999, R. Joos, unpubl. data). For such a rarely-encountered bird, the numbers of Little Gulls occasionally observed at singular locations at singular times are

impressive: 78 per day in spring on the Niagara River (Bellerby *et al.* 1999), 91 in February off the outer banks of North Carolina (Davis 1995) and the records of 200-300 individuals cited above. These numbers lead one to ponder, what might be the size of the North American population of Little Gulls? It is a species that has been reported in ones and twos in nearly all the states and provinces of North America (Ewins and Weseloh 1999) and the largest single numbers at one time are 250-266 (see above). Based on these numbers, it has been suggested that there may be as many as 400 individuals continent-wide in North America (Joos and Weseloh 2004). Other researchers may deem this number speculative, but it was made based on the best available knowledge at the time, and was the first attempt at estimating a population figure for North America. Only more investigation would tell if it is was a reasonable estimate.

As final note in this regard, perhaps one should be prepared to distinguish between the breeding and non-breeding populations of Little Gulls in North America. For example, the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) which is not known to breed in North America, appears at various east coast landfill sites in numbers up to more than 200 individuals at once (Driver 2004, Post and Lewis, 1995). Perhaps there is only a small breeding population of Little Gulls in North America and during late summer those birds are joined by or supplemented with birds from Asia and/or Europe, as has been discussed before (Baillie 1963, McRae 1989, Ewins and Weseloh 1999).

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the various people who accompanied me to NLI over the years: Christine Bishop, Rob Dobos, Mike Kassera, Margie Koster, Martin McNicholl, Pierre Mineau, Ralph Morris, John Struger, Stan Teeple and Reid and Margaret Wilson. In piecing together the history of Little Gulls on North Limestone Island, I received valuable unpublished information and/or comments on previous drafts of the text from John and Margaret Catto, Reid and Margaret Wilson, Jim Quinn, Peter Ewins, Richard Joos, Kathy Dickson and Jim Gardiner. Richard Joos provided details for much of the new information in the 2000s, for which I am grateful. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Technical Operations Division at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters for logistical support (It's hard to get to NLI without a boat!)

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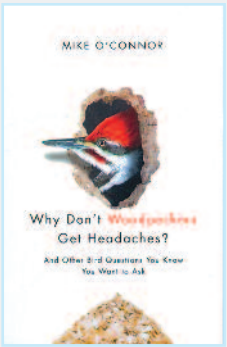
Book Reviews

Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches?
2007. *Mike O'Connor.*
Fitzhenry and Whiteside,
Markham, Ontario.
210 pages,
14 x 21.5 cm. $14.95.
ISBN 978-1-55455-041-8.



This is a Canadian edition of a compilation of some of the questions and answers the author has dealt with as the owner of a Bird Watchers store, and author of a newspaper column, on Cape Cod. It deals with things an average backyard bird watcher might want to know, including: ways to attract birds to the yard, food for them, feeders, birdbaths, basic binoculars and birding books, dealing with more aggressive birds and squirrels, some identification problems, a selection of species people seem to want to know more about, and an assortment of "odd topics". The book is very much intended for people with casual interest in birds they may see in their back yard.

The answers to the questions seem more concerned with entertaining than in providing information. They are wordy and sometimes leave one wondering what the answer was. There are some statements, not meant to be humorous, that I would question, but there are no source references. Apparently some of the information even comes from eavesdropping at a bus stop. In general, the information that is there is sound, but if you want serious answers to questions, there are better places to look. For beginning birders, for people just interested in enjoying birds at home, and for those that will enjoy something humorous to read about birds, this is entertaining, and will provide basic information on a variety of topics.

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In Memoriam

Kenneth Carroll Parkes (1922 – 2007)

Ron Pittaway

Kenneth C. Parkes, Curator Emeritus of Birds at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, died on 16 July 2007 at the age of 84. He was born on 8 August 1922 in Hackensack, New Jersey. He grew up in the New York City area and was interested in birds at 6 years of age.

Ken Parkes was one of the important North American ornithologists of the twentieth century, publishing more than 500 articles. Birders learned more from him than from most professional ornithologists because he published regularly in birding magazines and ornithological journals, including three articles in *Ontario Birds* (Parkes 1985, 1988a, 1996).

After obtaining a doctorate degree in ornithology from Cornell University, he joined the Carnegie Museum as Assistant Curator of Birds in 1953, becoming Curator in 1965 when he succeeded the legendary Clyde Todd, author of *Birds of the Labrador Peninsula*. Ken Parkes retired at age 74 on 1 January 1997, but unfortunately illness prevented him from doing much ornithological work after retirement.

For me, Ken Parkes's most important paper was "An approach to the study of molts and plumages" coauthored with Philip S. Humphrey (Humphrey and Parkes 1959). The Humphrey and Parkes system can be used anywhere in the world because it is not linked to age, season or the breeding cycle. Once mastered, it is a joy to use.

His authoritative articles on aging, plumage and molt terminology, and subspecies particularly interested me. However, he also was an authority on hybrid warblers and Neotropical birds, and he birded in 35 countries. One publication that I learned much from was his detailed review of the "Identification Guide to North American Passerines" by Pyle *et al.* (1987) in the *Auk* (Parkes 1988b).

Ken Parkes was the conscience of editors, ornithologists and birders. He often wrote letters to editors of birding journals correcting errors. The late Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Canada, told me that Ken Parkes was very "strict" about publishing accurate information on birds.

The Carnegie Museum is a long-time institutional member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists and Ken Parkes was an avid reader of *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*. I feel fortunate to have benefited from discussions with him and to have corresponded with him. He always answered my questions quickly. Ornithology and birding lost a great member with the passing of Kenneth C. Parkes.

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Nikon PHOTO QUIZ

Sponsored by Nikon Canada

Glenn Coady

This photo quiz features a bird with long, pointed wings, a sharply-pointed, bright red bill, a black crown from bill to nape, a grayish breast and belly, a silvery-gray dorsal surface to the wings, and a long tail.

It is probably fair to say that most birders would instantly recognize this bird as one of the ten species of terns that have occurred in Ontario.

With few exceptions, terns in Ontario are seen in two different age classes: adults or juveniles. It is rare to find sub-adult terns in southern Ontario, since most remain on their wintering grounds until they return north for the first time as breeding adults. Adults are seen most frequently in breeding plumage in spring and summer, but many attain non-breeding plumage prior to their fall migration away from Ontario (Black Tern and Forster's Tern being good examples).

Based on this bird's entirely dark crown from the base of the bill to the nape, its complete complement of uniformly fresh looking and fully grown primaries, its long, unworn tail feathers, and the lack of any hint of a dark carpal bar on the upper surface of the wing, we are able to reliably age this tern as an adult in breeding plumage.

Both the Black Tern and the accidental White-winged Tern are easily eliminated from consideration. Unlike this quiz bird, both of these species are very short-tailed and have a uniformly black head and breast in breeding plumage.

The accidental Sooty Tern is also quickly eliminated from further consideration, since it is a much darker tern across the surface of the wings in all plumages than this bird.

The accidental Least and Sandwich Terns are both easily eliminated by our quiz bird's entirely red bill. The adult Least Tern in breeding plumage is unique among North American terns in having a bright yellow bill. The adult Sandwich Tern has a very long, narrow, black bill with a pale ivory tip.

Both of the large, crested terns — the Caspian Tern and the accidental Royal Tern — have much larger, thicker, dagger-like bills than our quiz bird. They also have shorter, less deeply-forked tails and lack gray underparts.

Our quiz bird is, therefore, one of the three medium-sized species of terns that regularly breed in Ontario: Common Tern, Arctic Tern or Forster's Tern.

A variety of characters allow us to eliminate Forster's Tern from further consideration. Forster's Tern has an orange-based bill with a black tip, quite unlike the all-red bill of our quiz bird. Additionally, the bill of a Forster's Tern is thicker along the entire length than the very thin bill we see on this bird. Forster's Tern also has all-white underparts that contrast markedly with the upperparts. This bird has a very gray breast and belly that appear concolour to the dorsal surface of the wing. The outer primaries of Forster's Tern in breeding plumage tend to be whiter than seen on this bird.

Our quiz bird is, therefore, either a Common Tern or the similar Arctic Tern. Quite an assortment of characteristics should allow reliable separation of these two species.

One striking difference between Common and Arctic Terns is the length of the legs. Arctic Terns have much shorter legs than Common Terns, but in this instance that distinction is not going to be too helpful, since the legs are entirely covered by grasses. Certainly the bird appears to be short-legged though, with the belly nearly on the ground, giving a very Arctic Tern-like presentation. However, we will need more solid criteria to be confident.

Arctic Terns have finer bills than Common Terns, and this bird appears to have a very fine bill that is more consistent with an Arctic Tern. Arctic Terns generally show an entirely coral-red bill in breeding plumage, whereas Common Terns have a prominent black tip to their more orange-red bill. The all-red bill of our quiz bird is better for an Arctic Tern. However, bill colour should be used cautiously, as a supporting feature. Some Arctic Terns develop black tips to their bills and (as Ron Pittaway has previously noted in OFO News) some Common Terns in summer can show all-red bills, lacking the black tip.

The primary patterns of these two species are also important in separating them. As we have a view of both the dorsal surface of one wing and the ventral surface of the other, this will be of

great value to us. Common Terns show a distinct dark wedge on the dorsal surface of the central primaries that becomes increasingly prominent throughout spring and summer through wear. Arctic Terns show uniform gray upperparts, and lack this dark wedge altogether. In this respect, our quiz bird is more like an Arctic Tern as well. On the underside of the outermost primaries, Common Terns have wide dark tips, whereas Arctic Terns show much finer dark tips. Again, our quiz bird is more consistent with Arctic Tern for this feature.

Common Terns generally show darker secondaries in contrast to the underwing lining, whereas Arctic Terns have very whitish secondaries which do not tend to contrast with the underwing coverts. Our quiz bird clearly shows the latter pattern.

Common Terns generally have shorter tails than Arctic Terns. At rest the tails of Common Terns usually do not project beyond the wingtip, whereas the tails of Arctic Terns routinely do project beyond the wingtips. This feature becomes less useful late in the season as the long outer tail feathers become quite abraded (or sometimes missing altogether). Even though our quiz bird has both wings up, we can see that it has a very long tail (giving it a decidedly Long-tailed Jaeger-type jizz), that will almost certainly extend beyond the folded wings at rest.

Arctic Terns tend to have smaller, rounder heads than Common Terns, which tend to have flatter crowns. The very small, rounded crown of our quiz bird also supports Arctic Tern.

Arctic Terns also tend to have more extensive black caps than Common Terns, extending further through the lores, leaving a much narrower area of white between the gape and the edge of the black cap. We see this Arctic Tern-like feature very well on this bird.

The gray underparts of Arctic Terns are more extensive than on Common Terns. Most of the side of the head of an average Common Tern is white, with the gray underparts extending up to the upper breast only. In Arctic Terns this gray colouration extends further up

onto the neck and head, leaving a narrow, highly contrasting area of white limited to the cheek area just below the dark crown. Our quiz bird clearly shows this latter pattern.

In general, the gray underparts are a bit paler than the upperparts in the Common Tern, whereas the two are more concolour in the Arctic Tern. Our bird appears to show the latter pattern, again supportive of an identification of Arctic Tern.

All the field marks we have examined have been more consistent with an identification of Arctic Tern rather than Common Tern.

This adult **Arctic Tern** was photographed by Mark Peck on 5 July 2007 at Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island, Nunavut.

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Ontario Field Ornithologists

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