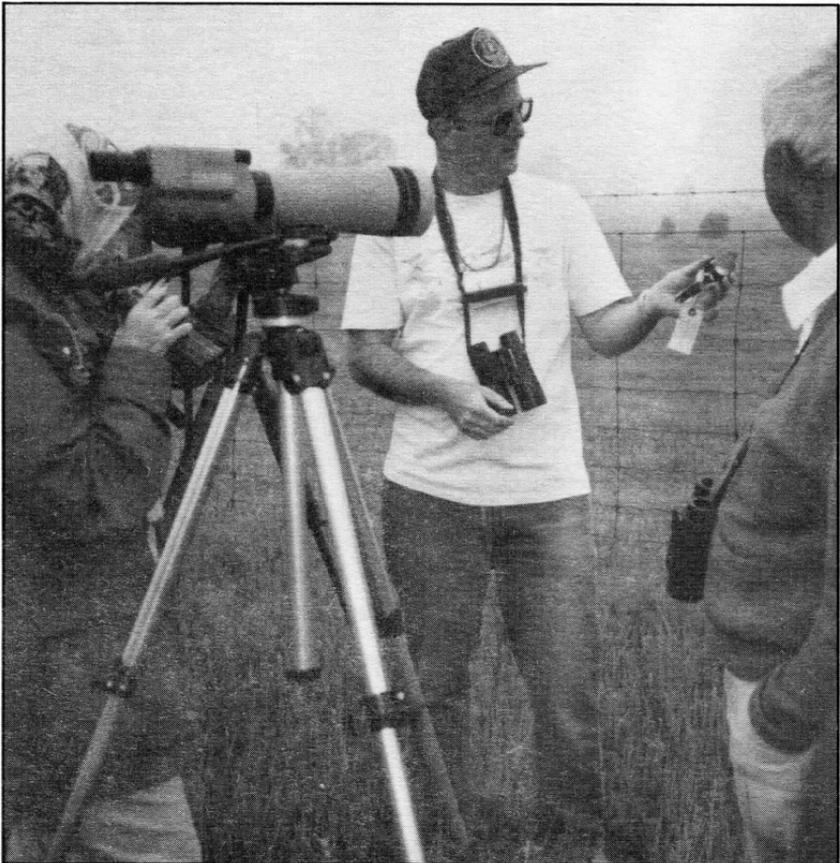


**OFO**



**ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS**



Carden Plains, June 1992

*Photo by J. Guild*

# OFO



OFO NEWSLETTER NUMBER 27

Volume 10 November 1992

I find it never fails to amaze me how fast the fall migration starts and ends, and how we are forced to face several months of birdless [comparatively at least] forests and fields. Birdless, yeah sure! A friend just called [it's 6:30 a.m.!!!] to advise that a Slaty-backed Gull has been identified at Niagara Falls and he was going to see it, leaving in 30 minutes. Unfortunately, due to promises made to my son, I cannot go today, but I hope it stays a few days. I trust many of the Newsletter readers will understand my predicament.

## **For those of you who may have forgotten:**

Your membership dues are now payable. If you find a renewal notice enclosed with this Newsletter, please forward your monies as soon as possible to us. We have, once again held the line on costs and kept the fees the same as for the last two years, with the exception of our American and overseas members.

## **Enclosures:**

In this Newsletter, you will find two brochures from Celestron International, advertising their product line of accessories of interest to our members. Efstonscience Inc. of Toronto approached us asking if we would release our mailing list to them so they could make this mailing themselves. The Board decided some time ago that we would not give out our mailing list to other organizations. However, we believe that, if we are approached with information of interest to and of benefit to our members, we will make efforts to advise the membership. Efstonscience agreed to pay for this mailing [approximately \$500.00] in exchange for enclosure of their information.

From time to time, we are likely to receive similar requests. The Board wants to know how you feel about these enclosures being included with the Newsletter or Journal. I can assure you that the types of information we will attach will be of interest to you **only with respect to your birding activities.**

### **The Annual General Meeting {AGM}:**

Once again we held a successful annual meeting at Erindale College in October. Approximately, 120 members took advantage of our program offerings. Not only did the meeting run on time, but the information presented was interesting, educational and informative! Ron Tasker offered an excellent talk on the perils of birding in New Guinea, Ron Pittaway spoke in detail about Recognizable Forms of Ontario birds, Bob Curry ran an, as always, challenging Bird Quiz and Swish Maintenance sponsored the Photo Quiz once again. As an aside, and since it will never happen to me again ... I got 20/20 on the Bird Quiz! I wish I could do as well in the field!

The winners of the Swish Maintenance Photo Contest this year were: (1) Jim Flynn for his Red-headed Woodpecker; (2) Bruno Kern for a Northern Goshawk; (3) Jim Flynn with a Green-backed Heron and (Hon. Mention) Jim Richards' photo of an Eastern Bluebird. Congratulations to the winners and thank-you to Swish for sponsoring us again this year. There has been some concern expressed by members that professional photographers should not be permitted to enter the Swish Maintenance Photo Contest, since it was originally designed to allow a forum for amateurs to compete. The Board agrees and in 1993, we will likely restrict entry to amateur photographers. The criteria to determine an "amateur" status are yet to be determined. We're sorry if this causes any concern to some members, but we must operate in the spirit of the original intent of the competition.

So may people deserve thanks for helping out with

the set up, organization and running of the meeting. To all of them I would like to extend my sincere thanks and those of the Board. However, one individual deserves special mention. Ron Scovell organized the accommodations and the meeting, ran the Book Sale and administrated the successful pelagic trip on Sunday, October 18th.

Sunday's boat trip was attended by 100 people, all eager to view those off shore rarities. One hundred and twenty five loaves of bread were carried on board to use as "chum" to attract the gulls to our wake! While the numbers of rarities was limited to about three Parasitic Jaegers, a Red-throated Loon, a couple of distant unidentified phalaropes, a couple of Merlins, a Peregrine Falcon, and all three scoters, the weather was fabulous, at least for the morning and early afternoon [at which time a blizzard and/or rain storm overtook us]. Regardless it was a great outing enjoyed by all. We have already booked the boat for 1993 ... so I hope to see you there.

Bill Walker, Joy Mowatt and Manley Maltby donated the proceeds of the sale of their books at the Book Sale to OFO. This type of financial contribution is not only appreciated, but one of the reasons that we have been able to keep our membership dues from increasing.

#### **President's Report Presented to the AGM:**

For years now I've sat out there with you and listened to the President speak about our accomplishments and goals. It's always been entertaining, but like you, it's hard to appreciate all the work that goes into running an organization of this size and covering such a diverse and geographically separated client group.

One cannot appreciate the dedication and time commitments involved until one actively participates in the process. Of course, having sat on the Board for most of our eleven years of

existence, I perhaps gained better insights into these procedures than some of you, who have not had the opportunity to do so, have.

Throughout the last year, I have heard some accolades expressed about our progress and performance, but unfortunately I have heard many negative things stated about us as well. I find this distressing since I firmly believe this is a worthwhile organization and fully support it.

The Board has been working very hard over the last two years to identify our shortfalls and to incorporate the ideas you have presented to us to bring us up to your perceived expectations of performance. This is an onerous task that will take time to accomplish. Already we have made some progress to this end.

We try harder to present a personable interaction with new members through the efforts of our membership secretary.

We have been involved in fundraising activities with groups such as the Long Point Bird Observatory.

We bring you services such as useful and productive field trips and the Swish Maintenance Photo Contest.

We try to use your membership funds to the best advantage. Currently we are dealing with Canada Post to try to attain Second Class Postage status. This will save us hundreds of dollars annually, if we get it. The Board members give, not only their time, but collectively hundreds of dollars annually in making phone calls, travelling to events and meetings and paying for such services as postage and photocopying at their own expense.

We represent you at organizational meetings and committees to better protect birds. Members have sat on the Boards of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, the MNR Habitat Based Wildlife Project in

northern Ontario and currently on the CWS Project to monitor bird populations.

We try to address timely issues such as birding etiquette, trespass and hunting issues in Provincial Parks, to name a few.

We have revised the format of the Journal to better serve the needs of our membership.

We have likewise encouraged an evolution of the Newsletter to provide you an entertaining forum for attaining birding news and hopefully to learn about birds and better understand the social and environmental pressures they face.

We continue to work on the publication of Special Publication No. 1 ... History of Ornithology in Ontario.

But we're not done ... we have some ideas, but so do you ... We're listening and will continue to listen, if only you'll tell us what you want. So don't be shy. Talk to us today.

I hope you enjoy yourself, make new friends or renew relations with old ones and maybe even learn something. Thank-you for coming.

#### **In the News and Other Stuff:**

- 1) In the last Newsletter, I mentioned that Thomas Dyke keeps records of birds for the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists. I inadvertently failed to mention that Nick Escott keeps the official records for the Club and acts as Regional Editor to American Birds with respect to local sightings.
- 2) Bill Crins advises that the following books are available for review in Ontario Birds. If you are interested in undertaking the review of any of these books please contact Bill through the OFO mailing address:
  - (i) Peregrine Falcons by Candace

Savage (1992)

- (ii) A Guide to Feeding Winter Birds in Ontario by Bob Waldon (1991)
- (iii) The Birdwatcher's Book of Lists (Eastern Region) by Lester Short (1992)

- 3) Erica Dunn of Project FeederWatch submitted the following article for publication:

Counting Birds at Feeders ... A continent wide network of volunteer observers is making valuable new discoveries about the birds that visit our feeders. Nearly 8000 dedicated observers all across North America are participating in Project FeederWatch, a volunteer natural history survey of the numbers and kinds of birds at backyard feeders.

Sponsored by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the Long Point Bird Observatory, Project FeederWatch was launched in 1987, with the aim of learning which species come to bird feeders, why they come and in what numbers. By documenting the habitat and food characteristics that are preferred by each species, why population fluctuations occur can be determined.

Over the past four years, 225 bird species have been monitored at feeders. From a vagrant Rustic Bunting, a rarity from Siberia, at a feeder in Vancouver to Greater Roadrunners eating hamburger in Arizona, an amazing variety has been recorded enjoying the largesse. Mammals visit as well with a list of over 70 species documented, including shrews, armadillos and Black Bears.

Volunteers are recruited from the general bird feeding public. Participants receive an instructional package outlining procedures to be followed to ensure the

scientific integrity of the data. A biannual FeederWatch Newsletter features timely summaries of the project results. The Newsletter also carries articles on birdfeeding tips, the winter ecology of the species visiting feeders and noteworthy observations from participants.

About 75 species patronize feeders regularly, visiting more than 20% of feeders in at least one U.S. state or Canadian province. The most widespread is Dark-eyed Junco, which visits over 80% of all feeders.

Project FeederWatch combines research and learning in a survey in a manner that ensures participant dedication. One observer who suffered a heart attack and missed a count, wrote to the organizers ensuring it wouldn't happen again! Another observer purchased dead horses to feed Turkey Vultures! Project FeederWatch data can show whether a widespread change in numbers has really taken place or whether the change at a feeder results from local events.

If you can identify the common birds at your feeder, why not join Project FeederWatch? Participants are particularly being sought from remote or poorly represented areas. If interested send your name, address and registration fee of \$16.00 to Project FeederWatch, Long Point Bird Observatory, Box 160, Port Rowan, NOE 1M0.

The Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) advises that the illegal trade in wild animals and plants is growing in leaps and bounds, while effective legislation to control the senseless destruction of wild species is bogged down in parliament. You can help by urging the Federal Government to pass the Wild Animal and Plant

Protection Act. You are requested to consider writing to Brian Mulroney to this end. For more information on the legislation and its implications, write to the CNF, 453 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6Z4.

- 5) Have you seen a Bald Eagle in winter? If you have or do this winter, what was it feeding on and where? The answer to this question will be of great help to our work in understanding the routes by which toxic chemicals get into eagles' eggs. Surprisingly, very little information is available on Bald Eagles in the Great Lakes' Basin, despite the prominence of this species. Information needed includes: (1) the type of food being utilized (i.e. deer, mammal carcass, ducks, gulls, fish, etc.), (2) the area in which the eagle was hunting (i.e. lake, river, woodlot, etc.), (3) date and general location, (4) location of overnight roosts, so that regurgitated pellets can be collected. Please contact Chip Weseloh or Pete Ewins at Canadian Wildlife Service, CCIW, Box 5000, Burlington, Ont. L7R 4A6 [telephone: 416-336-4968].
  
- 6) Dave Deiter recently wrote to solicit support for the protection of the ancient forest of the Caren Range on the Sechelt Peninsula of British Columbia, which is being threatened by logging. If you want more information or advice as to how you can help, contact the Friends of Caren, c/o Dave Deiter, General Delivery, Egmont, British Columbia, VON 1N0.

#### **Field Trips:**

The recent field trip to the Niagara River in search of gulls, was, as always well attended. About 40 participants were treated to excellent views of several gull species, a Red Phalarope, a Brant, two late swallow species, Tree and Rough-

winged, and the usual Niagara specialities.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the 1993 program for your perusal and consideration.

#### **Short and Tweet:**

- 1) John Carley wrote to relate a story of a Blue Jay observed in Toronto on April 11, 1992. He watched the bird at the edge of a neighbour's driveway, hopping, jumping, pouncing and pecking at something on the ground. Observation revealed that the target was a small rodent, that finally succumbed after about a minute. It was carried about 25 feet to a flat horizontal limb of an adjacent tree. The jay stood on the rodent, periodically pecking and jabbing at it, and picking it up in its bill and shaking it. Eventually, the bird flew away pursued by two other Blue Jays. The species of mammal could not be determined and whether or not it was actually eaten could not be ascertained. However, this observation is consistent with those reported by Bent in his Life Histories series, in that the Blue Jay will eat almost any kind of digestible food.
  
- 2) Margo Holt observed an adult Loggerhead Shrike on April 18, 1992 in Matchedash Township. On May 1, 1992 she watched a pair in the same area, speculating that breeding might be undertaken. By May 22nd, a nest in a dead hawthorn was found, actively tended by the adults. On June 7th, three young, well feathered, were being fed by the adults. A small passerine was impaled on a nearby thorn bush, and the adults were observed repeatedly carrying parts of it to the awaiting young. The ultimate survival of the young was not reported. This species is under severe decline throughout most of its eastern Canadian range, so it is reassuring to hear of successful nesting in Ontario.

## **Beginner's Column:**

### **Black-backed vs. Three-toed Woodpecker**

Formerly, these two species of birds have been known by many different names including, the American Three-toed and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker for the former and the Arctic Three-toed and Northern Three-toed Woodpecker for the latter.

Either species may be found in Central Ontario during the winter, but the Black-backed is by far the most likely. In fact it regularly nests as far south as Peterborough County.

Superficially, the two species are quite similar, but with a little practice, they can readily be separated in the field. As with most woodpecker species, they have distinctly pointed beaks, cling to the sides of trees and are black and white in colour.

The backs of these species are never pure white as in the more common species of southern woodpeckers. In the Black-backed, as the name implies, the back is pure black, almost always! A few years ago, I observed a Black-backed at Presqu'ile that had a small amount of white barring on the lower back, but this was probably due to the age of the bird or some unusual pigmentation of the feathers. In the Three-toed, the back is either grayish, with heavy dark cross barring or simply mottled gray. Most of the wing will appear black, but careful study will show some white speckling near the primaries in both species. The tail is generally black with distinct white outer tail feathers in both species.

The face pattern will resemble that of Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, in that it has white stripes surrounding dark cheeks. The Three-toed has an obvious moustache mark that extends well past the

cheek onto the neck. This mark on the Black-backed is much shorter and extends downward to the shoulder. The Black-backed also has a distinctive white line over the eye that goes back and then down to the shoulder. This line on the Three-toed is usually indistinct.

The sexes of both species are respectively quite similar. The male always sports a yellow cap, usually more extensive in the Black-backed than in the Three-toed. Both females have black caps. The undersides of both species appear mostly whitish or grayish, with fairly heavy barring along the sides.

If the opportunity presents itself, you will be able to see that, unlike most birds, they only have three toes, all pointing forward. In other woodpeckers, with four toes, two point forward and two backwards. The tail is therefore very important to the three-toed species for support. They feed very quietly, carefully picking small pieces of bark off the tree and searching below for food items. Often they will remain on one tree for several days, methodically combing the surface and sometimes peeling every inch of bark from it! Watch for these intriguing birds this winter.

#### **Board of Directors (1993):**

Geoff Carpentier (President), Gerry Shemilt (Secretary), Alec Dobson (Treasurer), Ron Scovell, (Past President), Jim Coey (Publicity), Jerry Guild (FON Rep. & Publicity), Sid Hadlington (Bird-a-thon & Membership Secretary), Terrie Smith (Field Trips), Mike King (Director), Jean Iron (Director) and George Bryant (Director).

I would like to welcome the newcomers to the Board, and thank the returning members for their continued support and thank those who are now retiring from the Board for their efforts over the last year. Particularly, Bill Walker, who was our Membership Secretary, deserves special accolades. His efforts in this front line job are most commendable. Single handedly, he revamped our membership lists and computerized our

operation. Thanks, Bill, and good luck with your new pursuits.

**Back Issues (continued from last Newsletter):**

Volume 6, Number 1, April 1988

Snowy Plover: New to Ontario, Blues Jays Mimic the Calls of Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks, First Record of Roof Nesting Ring-billed and Herring Gulls in Ontario, Early Nesting by House Finches, Voices of the Am. Crow, First Record of Eurasian Wigeon in Sudbury District, the 1987 Loggerhead Shrike Survey, Great Tailed Grackle: New to Ontario, Can a Loon Judge What Is Too Big to Swallow, Breeding Records of Mourning Warblers at London, Ontario.

Volume 6, Number 2, August 1988

OBRC Report, Status of Colonial Waterbirds Nesting at Hamilton Harbour, Gull Behaviour at Maple, Ontario, Colonial Waterbird Nesting at Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Wing-tail Flicking as a Means of Distinguishing Crows from Ravens.

Volume 6, Number 3, December 1988

Exotics on the Doorstep, Summary of the Status of Breeding Hooded Warblers in Ontario, First Breeding Record of Lawrence's Warbler in Ontario, Kentucky Warbler Breeding in Ontario, Male Golden-winged Warbler Attends Blue-winged Warbler Nest, Further Evidence of Breeding Summer Tanagers in Canada, an Ontario Specimen of Carolina Chickadee, First Nest Record of White-eyed Vireo in Ontario, Early Spring Date for Red-necked Phalarope, an Unusual Barn Swallow Nest in Elgin County.

Volume 7, Number 1, April 1989

The Ontario Great Gray Owl Invasion of 1983-84, Common Ravens in Toronto, Winter Bird Frequencies at an Urban Conservation Area, Intraspecific

Aggression and Nest Site Tenacity of Eur. Starlings, Behavioral Identification of Wilson's Warblers, Yellow-headed Blackbird Nesting at Thunder Bay, First Dickcissel Record for Sudbury District, Western Kingbird Nesting in Rainy River, Short-eared Owl and Red-tailed Hawk Attempt to Rob Northern Harrier.

Volume 7, Number 2, August 1989

OBRC Report, Ontario Great Gray Owl Invasion 1983-84 cont'd, Common Raven Nesting in Eastern Ontario, Pine Grosbeaks Using Bird Feeders, Ross' Goose Nesting on Akimiski Island, Semipalmated Sandpiper Captured by Turtle, Short-billed Dowitcher Breeding on Akimiski Island.

Volume 7, Number 3, December 1989

Doris Speirs, Wilfred Botham, Pine Grosbeaks at Bird Feeders, Birds on Fighting Island, Detroit River, Marsh Nesting by Common Terns at Toronto, Unusual Feeding Behaviour of Great Blue Heron, Burdock: a Hazard to Golden-crowned Kinglets, Observation of Bald Eagle Predation of Double-crested Cormorants, a Newly Reported Colony of Common Terns, Photo Quiz.

Volume 8, Number 1, April 1990

OBRC Report, Broad-billed Hummingbird: New to Ontario and Canada, Correction to Pine Grosbeak Article.

Volume 8, Number 2, August 1990

Spruce Grouse, Roof Nesting Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Identification and Status of Eagles and Vultures. Nesting of White-winged Crossbills in Oxford County, Nesting of Red-breasted Nuthatches, Budding by Bohemian Waxwings.

Volume 8, Number 3, December 1990

Wilson's Plover at Windemere Basin, Palm Warbler

Nesting in NW Ontario, Additions to Bird List of Wellington County, Starling Movement in Ontario, Probable Red-tailed Predation on Herring Gulls, Threat Display of Black-capped Chickadees, Possible Reasoning by a Downy Woodpecker, Approaching Oblivion.

Volume 9, Number 1, April 1991

Ecological Consulting, Recognizable Forms - Cedar Waxwings, Ontario's Second Ross' Gull, Birding Guide to Rainy River.

Volume 9, Number 2, August 1991

OBRC Report, Pair Bonding Between Common Raven and Common Crow, Recognizable Forms of Ontario Birds.

Volume 9 Number 3, December 1991

Pelicans Nesting on Lake Nipigon, Black-capped Vireo: New to Canada, Apparent Common x Barrow's Golden-eye Hybrid, Birding Guide to Carden Plain, Morphs of the White-throated Sparrow, Incidents of Great Blue Herons Feeding on Birds, Breeding Habitat of the Connecticut Warbler, Ontario Trumpeter Swans, Photo Quiz.

Well, that's it. Hope you enjoyed it. Good Birding.

Geoffrey Carpentier, Newsletter Editor, 964 Weller St., Peterborough, Ont., K9J 4Y2  
OFO P.O. Box 62014, Burlington Mall Postal Outlet, Burlington, Ont., L7R 4K2