

OFO



ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS



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OFO



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Happy Summer! Or what there has been of it. Since the migration ended, birding has generally been slow, but I have it on good authority that it will soon improve. In fact, the shorebirds have started moving already. I guess the sad news is that I suspect that many of the Arctic breeders may not produce many young this year, if the conditions have been as stressful up there as they have been in the south.

We're testing a new format for the Newsletter. Let me know if you like it.

For those of you who may have forgotten:

Our address changed earlier this year. The Post Office will no longer forward incorrectly addressed materials. The correct address appears at the end of this Newsletter.

Oops, speaking of forgetting ...

Some time ago, a member wrote to me offering free legal advice to OFO, if we should ever need it. As I am wont to do, I put the letter "in a safe place" for reply. Well, my

hiding place was so safe, I can't find the letter now. Would that individual please accept my apology for not acknowledging his/her letter, and be kind enough to recontact me? I have a new hiding place now - I got an in-basket for my basement office! Offers of this kind are very generous and much appreciated by the Executive of OFO.

In the News:

- 1) Dave Sheppard of the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) advises that he has been appointed as Co-ordinator of a project sponsored by the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop a survey technique for monitoring Ontario's owls, with a goal to generate population indices. More information will be forthcoming from the LPBO. Parties who may have information of use to the project who may want to participate in 1993 should contact Dave c/o the LPBO, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, N0E 1M0.

- 2) Bev Collier, Co-ordinator of the LPBO's Ontario Heronry Inventory (OHI) forwarded a copy of their most recent Newsletter. One hundred and four people surveyed 240 colonies in 1991. OHI staff and Ministry of Natural Resources staff added data on an additional 470 colonies. The OHI has now catalogued 1613 colonies in Ontario. It appears that establishment rates for new colonies are greater than extinction rates for historical ones. The results indicate that heronry populations are in fact

increasing generally across the province. If you would like more information on the results of the survey or would like to participate in 1993, contact Bev at the LPBO address listed above.

- 3) In September, 1991, Japan banned the use, sale, export or possession of mist nets used to capture birds. Annually, the Japanese were catching up to 3,000,000 birds per year for consumption. This action was undertaken in response to an International Council for Bird Preservation resolution. The import of frozen birds from other countries is still permitted, but the Wild Bird Society of Japan has targeted this activity for abolition.
- 4) The Public Advisory Committee of the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan has developed a mandate to re-establish, protect and maintain the integrity of the ecosystem for the Niagara River. A great deal of background information has been prepared in anticipation of projects to involve the public in the deliberations. If you are interested in this beautiful and diverse watershed and would like to know more, participate or just find out what is going on, contact Valerie Crombie, Community Liaison Co-ordinator at (416) 374-8113 [collect calls accepted].
- 5) The Ministry of Natural Resources has prepared an information package on the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in Dorset. This residential natural resources education centre provides the general

public, educational facilities and special interest groups with the opportunity to learn more about the Province's resources and their management. For information on their programs and facilities, contact Chris Lemieux at the Ministry of Natural Resources, Frost Centre, Dorset, Ontario, P0A 1E0.

- 6) York College has sent the following request: "Request for Reprints on Owls. Authors of articles or publications dealing with owls and wishing them to be listed in the second edition of a Working Bibliography of Owls of the World are asked to send reprints to: Dr. Richard J. Clark, The Owl Bibliography, c/o Department of Biology, York College of Pennsylvania, York, Pa, USA, 17405-7199".
- 7) Looking for an interesting holiday. Why not visit Montserrat's Foxes Bay nature preserve in the West Indies? Home to the rare Montserrat Oriole, and thousands of wading birds, this preserve was established in 1979. For information, contact Melaine Communication Group, 33 Niagara St., Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1C2.
- 8) The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) has just published its most recent Newsletter. Data collected is being used to monitor population trends and to determine priorities for work in the area of non-game conservation. In Canada, 294 routes were surveyed in 1991, covering all provinces and territories. For more information, contact the Canadian Wildlife

Service at the National Wildlife Research Centre,
Ottawa, Canada, K1A 0H3.

- 9) The Atlas of the Mammals of Ontario is going strong in 1992. The organizers are looking for your data or participation. Contact them at 519-885-1211, ext. 3237.
- 10) The Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) recently donated its Conrad Island property to the Province of Nova Scotia. This vital piece of land was the last block of land needed to complete the proposed Conrad Island Provincial Park, part of the Cole Harbour/Lawrencetown Coastal Heritage Park System.
- 11) A new Wilderness Reserve has been created on Northern Baffin Island. The federal government and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut made this announcement. The 22,000 square kilometre park covers three land masses. With the inclusion of this park, 22 of Canada's 39 natural regions are now represented within the National Parks system.
- 12) The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recently announced that the Tundra race of the Peregrine Falcon has now been officially downgraded from "threatened" to "vulnerable", the least serious category. This is good news and reflects the efforts of many individuals across Canada to help endangered species.

- 13) Dare Foods, a Canadian biscuit company is among 25 firms buying rainforest products from Cultural Survival, a consortium developed to protect the rainforests. The products - mostly nuts, oils and exotic fruits - are purchased directly from the Indians and rubber tappers. Companies agree to charge 5% above market price for the products and give a share of profits to their Amazonian suppliers. Great idea and congratulations to Dare and Cultural Survival.
- 14) The Ministry of Natural Resources has recently released a report on the Rare Species Mapping Project (1988-1992), Central Region. The project is designed to contribute to the informed stewardship of those species. For copies of the report, contact the Ministry of Natural Resources at Natural Resources Information Centre, Room M1-73, Macdonald Block, 77 Wellesley Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2C1.
- 15) Donald Davis [3815 Bathurst St., Apt. 2, Downsview, Ontario, M3H 3N1] is attempting to launch a campaign to get the Presqu'ile Provincial Park Management Plan back on track. He believes it is being held up pending a decision on hunting in this Natural Environment Park. He believes that hunting is an inappropriate activity in a facility of this type. If you would like to be involved in the review process, want to know more about the park or merely want to contact Don regarding land use activities, write to him at the above address.

- 16) The Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program (ORBBP) has just published its June Newsletter detailing progress on the project. Fifty-eight species are being studied as part of the endeavour. Special surveys for 1992 include one to determine the status of the rare Henslow's Sparrow. For more information contact the ORBBP at the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Rd., Don Mills, Ontario, M3B 2W8.
- 17) Ken Brandes recently wrote with some detailed information on the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge near Buffalo. This rich avian area is poorly studied, but harbours many species uncommon in Ontario. Contact me if you would like a location map and checklist of the area. Include a SASE please.
- 18) If you plan on travelling in the Thunder Bay area, you might want to contact Thomas Dyke [1118 E. Ridgeway St., Thunder Bay "F", Ontario P7E 5J1] for the status and presence of uncommon species. Thomas keeps accurate records of sightings for the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists.
- 19) Looking for a fund-raising idea. Why not consider Harlequin Graphics' nature apparel? These beautiful garments may be purchased off the rack or specially designed for your group. Contact them at 2025 McLean Dr., Vancouver, B.C. V5N 3J9
- 20) The Ministry of Natural Resources has just released its report on the Ecological Survey of Rouge Valley

Park. A copy may be obtained from the address listed under item 14 above.

- 21) The American Birding Association has another idea for fundraising activities. They have prepared a wholesale catalogue of natural history publications. Details are available from them [Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, 80934-6599].
- 22) Flora and Fauna Fieldtours mailed a copy of their Newsletter detailing events from the past months and outlining forthcoming activities. If you're interested, contact them at 232 Belair Dr., Bolton, Ont L7E 1Z7.
- 23) The Owl Rehabilitation Research Foundation published their Newsletter (April 1992) outlining their successes for the past few months. Kay and Larry's unfailing efforts have done so much for raptors in Ontario. The Newsletter is long and newsy, so I'll not try to summarize it here as I couldn't do it justice. Contact the ORRF at R.R. #1, Vineland, Ontario, L0R 2E0.

Short and Tweet:

- 1) The Ontario Heronry Inventory reported some interesting food items at Great Blue Heronries. These included a muskrat, birds, mice, snakes, salamanders, butterflies and grasshoppers. Obviously, these birds aren't too fussy about what they eat!

More on Longevity:

As a follow-up to information I provided in the February Newsletter, I can now add these additional data for your interest:

- 2) Bruce Di Labio of the Canadian Nature Federation advises that he and Val Bernard Ladouceur published an article in Trail and Landscape [Vol. 16. No. 5] that describes the history of a male Barrow's Golden-eye which wintered in Ottawa from 1973 to 1981, finally not returning for the winter of 1981-82.
- 3) My Common Grackle returned to my Mount Batten tree for the fourth year to nest. It made only minor repairs to the nest it has used since its discovery in 1989, and successfully raised young early this summer.
- 4) My American Robin, true to form, built a nest on the eavestrough downspout beside my house. This is the seventh year she has chosen this spot. As always, she only raises her second brood here!

Field Trips:

We have had a most successful spring, sponsoring several outings that were well attended, by both people and birds.

The Algonquin adventure, held under the leadership of Ron and Doug Tozer in late April was attended by sixty birders. Highlights included two most co-operative Spruce Grouse

that "pecked at people's shoelaces", and a Gray Jay nest, amongst 63 species identified.

The Rainy River trip, May 29, 1992, led by Dave Elder was attended by four Northern Ontario residents. It would have been worth it to be there. The 112 species identified included 25 Sharp-tailed Grouse at a lek, a Western Kingbird, a pair of Eared Grebes, a Northern Mockingbird, two Marbled Godwits, a Tundra Swan, and all the usual rarities - White Pelicans, Sandhill Cranes, Western Meadowlarks, Sedge Wrens, LeConte's Sparrows, Brewer's Blackbirds, Black-billed Magpies, Clay-coloured Sparrows and Yellow-throated Vireos.

The trip to Carden Plains led by Ron Pittaway on June 7, 1992 attracted about forty participants. This area of Ontario is fascinating and holds many natural features that are rare elsewhere in Ontario. Eighty-one species were found and included Upland Sandpiper, two Osprey nests, Black-billed Cuckoo, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, two Loggerhead Shrikes, and Grasshopper Sparrows.

With our Thanks ...

The following individuals have recently made donations to OFO to help us in our causes and projects:

Raymond Beskau, Susan Bryan, David Cattrall, J. Charlebois, J. Cranmer-Byng, Bill Crins, F. Deiter, Bill & Marilyn Doekes, Bruce Duncan, Dave Elder, B. Gibson, Doug Harding, Mary Ellen Hebb, Dave Hussell, Allen Johnson, Wayne Kinsella, Ivars Kops, A.V. Mason, J.E. Mason, Jim McAllister, Ariel McLean, T.R. Murray, C. Parcell, J. Poklen, Frances Rew, J.K. Reynolds, David Schaus, Helen

Smith, Lloyd Taman, Stanley Teeple, Bernie VanDenBelt, Bill Walker and Don Wiens.

Thank-you to all these generous people.

Mark this date ...

October 17, 1992, Erindale College, Mississauga - OFO Annual General Meeting.

Other Stuff of Interest:

The Bird-a-thon from OFO's perspective was disappointing. Few members sponsored the OFO birders and only about \$500.00 was raised. Regardless, we are most appreciative of those birders who birded for OFO and for those individuals who sponsored them.

A last note on trespass: Brian Henshaw, Co-Editor of the Durham Bird Report advises that he has had continuing concerns with birders and others who have driven into the Port Perry Sewage Lagoons on occasions when the gates have been unlocked. Birders are reminded that only authorized vehicular traffic is permitted in this facility. The municipality is tolerant of birders walking the site however.

Beginner's Take Note:

The Board decided to add a new column to the Newsletter. This is designed for those of you who are just starting out or for those of you that may not feel confident identifying certain species of birds.

Gray-cheeked Versus Swainson's Thrush

Most of the fourteen species of thrushes recorded in Ontario are readily identified. Of these, only eight are recorded annually in the Province. Of these latter, two are very similar and cause considerable confusion to novices and some "expert" birders.

The Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes are both dull brown-backed birds that breed in Northern and North-central Ontario respectively. Both are noticeably smaller than the familiar Robin. Their proportions and postures are similar, leading one to immediately recognize them as thrushes. The breasts and belly are generally white, with relatively heavy blackish or dark brown speckling across the throat and upper breasts.

The diagnostic features used to separate the two species are subtle, but readily recognizable in the field. The Swainson's always shows a complete buffy eye ring and cheek, contrasting sharply with the brownish crown. Some buffy coloration extends down onto the throat. In flight, a pale wing stripe may be seen running lengthwise through the wing. The Gray-cheeked has a sometimes obvious gray cheek. However, more often, the cheek colour is not obvious, and appears as grayish or even brownish. It lacks a buffy eye ring and cheek however.

Neither species "bobs" its tail, as the Hermit Thrush so frequently does. Both the Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes are secretive in migration, despite the fact that they are common and numerous migrants throughout southern Ontario.

As with most thrushes, they migrate at night, filling the sky with their monosyllabic or two syllabled calls. The Gray-cheeked migrates later in the spring and fall than the Swainson's, but overlap occurs in mid-May and mid-September.

They'll be migrating soon, so dash out if you're bored and test your new found skills. Good Birding.

Back Issues:

From time to time we offer members the opportunity to purchase back issues of Ontario Birds. Realizing that many of you might not be aware of the contents of these volumes, I would like to offer a summary herein:

Volume 1, Number 1, April 1983

OBRC Report, Yellow-throated Warbler at Moosonee, Shrikes, Guide to Thickson's Woods, Ornithology for Oxford County, Great Horned Owl Nest Construction, Boreal Owl Feeding, Painted Bunting in Ontario, Hummingbird Migration, Breeding Birds of Prince Edward County, Fall Flight of Woodcock.

Volume 1, Number 2, October 1983

Identification of Accipiters, Site Guide to Rainy River, House Finches in St. Catherines, Crow Roosts in Essex County, Ash-throated Flycatcher in Ontario, Double-crested Cormorants Nesting on Lake Erie, Golden-crowned Sparrow in Ontario.

Volume 2, Number 1, April 1984

George Webster North, OBRC Report, Great Lakes Ornithological Club, Ontario Bird Checklist, Breeding Birds of Ontario, Site Guide to Amherst and Wolfe Islands, Swallow Roost at Pembroke, Brambling in Ontario, Loggerhead Shrikes, New AOU Checklist, Bird Names, Crow Roost at St. Catherines.

Volume 2, Number 2, October 1984

OBRC Report, Siberian Rubythroat in Ontario, Henslow's Sparrow, Rare Bird Reports, Kirtland's Warbler Breeding in Ontario, Winter Veery Record, Gray-cheeked Thrush Winter Record.

Volume 2, Number 3, December 1984

Prairie Warbler in Ontario, Ross' Gull in Ontario, Lesser Goldfinch in Ontario, Small Passerines Trapped in Spider Webs, Feeding of Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Volume 3, Number 1, April 1985

OBRC Report, Mongolian Plover in Ontario, Carolina Parakeet in Ontario, Site Guide to Petroglyphs Provincial Park, Camera Lens Cases, Nesting of Gray Catbirds.

Volume 3, Number 2, October 1985

Great Lakes Ornithological Club, American Crow in Ontario, Swainson's Thrushes Winter Records, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher in Winter, Snowy Owls, Early Starling

Nesting, Black-backed Woodpecker Nesting, Snake Predation on Yellow Warblers, Snakes and Warblers, Woodpecker Damage to Buildings.

Volume 3, Number 3, December 1985

Birds of Little Sachigo Lake and Thorne-Sachigo Rivers, A Birder's Library, Sexing Gnatcatchers, Partial Albinism in Crows, Chimney Swifts, Crow Roost in Thunder Bay, Chatham Crow Roost.

Volume 4, Number 1, April 1986

OBRC Report, Atlantic Puffin in Ontario, Birds and Urbanization, Winter Finches, Foods of Black-capped Chickadees, Foods of Selected Wintering Species.

Volume 4, Number 2, August 1986

Swainson's Hawk in Ontario, "Richardson's" Merlin in Ontario, Eurasian Jackdaw in Ontario, Caspian Terns, Historical Wild Turkeys and Sharp-tailed Grouse, Magnolia Warbler Breeding, Great Blue Heron Swallows Branch.

Volume 4 Number 3, December 1986

Birds of Caribou Island, Nesting Merlins, Interspecific Territories of Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos, Indigo Buntings' Fall Vagrancy, Ring-billed Gulls in Thunder Bay, Little Gull Nesting, Melanistic Broad-winged Hawk, Black-billed Magpie Nesting, Solitary Sandpiper Breeding in Northwest Ontario, Red Squirrel Preying on Robin.

Volume 5, Number 1, April 1987

Smith's Longspur, Site Guide to Prince Edward County, White-eyed Vireo in Northern Ontario, Orchard Oriole in Northern Ontario, Caspian Terns Using Landfills in Migration.

Volume 5, Number 2, August 1987

BBS Summary, OBRC Report, Snowy Egret Breeding in Ontario, Aerial Foraging Birds, Feeding of Crows, Scavenging Shrikes, Screech Owl in Sudbury, Red-winged Blackbirds Breeding in Urban Settings.

Volume 5, Number 3, December 1987

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher in Ontario, Breeding Birds of NW Ontario, Nesting of Crows, Immature Hawks, Subsurface Sheltering of Tree Sparrows, Albino Rufous-sided Towhee, Cowbird Parasitism of House Finches.

I'll finish this list in the next Newsletter, doing Volumes 6 through 10. If you're interested, back issues can be purchased for:

Volume 1: 2.50/issue or 5.00/volume

Volume 2: 2.50/issue or 6.00/volume

Volume 3: 2.50/issue or 6.00/volume

Volume 4: 2.50/issue or 6.00/volume

Volume 5: 2.50/issue (No. 2 soldout)

Well, that's it. Hope you enjoyed this treatise. Good Birding this fall. I hope to see many of you at the Fall Annual General Meeting.

Geoffrey Carpentier, Newsletter Editor, 964 Weller St., Peterborough, Ont., K9J 4Y2
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