

OFO



ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

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OFO NEWSLETTER

With the heat of summer now upon us, and the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas now completed, many of us are searching our minds to think of new ways to occupy our time, in a season that, this year at least, is truly mundane. Few exciting finds have been made, and few field projects are ongoing. Perhaps our members can create their own studies, and submit reports to Ontario Birds.

The Annual General Meeting, held this spring at Presqu'ile Provincial Park, is rated as a huge success. Over 70 OFO members attended the meetings and talks, scoured the fields for surprisingly few birds, and harassed the campers. Dr. Ron Weir and Doug Sadler gave entertaining and informative talks on Prince Edward Point Saw-whets and archeological evidence of bird remains respectively. Field trips to the Murray Marsh, Owen Point, the Calf Pasture and Jobe's Lane were well attended and productive. Well over 120 species of birds were observed. For many the opportunity to hear the song of Brown Creepers was a new experience. Please read the enclosed flyer for information on the fall AGM to be held in Scarborough this year.

Food for Thought: I'm sure that many of you are aware that Starlings are superb mimics. Have you ever noticed that they do an excellent Killdeer impersonation - but only in late December and January? Why? Have any of you heard them mimic Killdeers at other times of year. Let me know, please. Do you know of other species that temporally imitate species?

Quebec Breeding Bird Atlas: This Atlas is now in its third year and going strong. Amongst others, the CWS and the Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds have supplied logistical and financial support for this ongoing project. As was the case in Ontario, hundreds of observers headed by 35 Regional Co-ordinators, have been canvassing the province for breeding records. Space does not permit a chronicling of their finds, but the White-winged Black Tern returned this year with love in its eyes. To participate in the project or to obtain more information write to the Quebec Breeding Bird Atlas, CWS, 1141 Route de l'Eglise, C.P. 10100, 9th floor, Ste. Foy, P.Q., G1V 4H5. This group produces a beautiful and truly informative Newsletter that would be of interest to many of us.

Costa Rica: Ron Ridout has supplied an interesting account of the OFO field trip to Costa Rica in March of 1986. Ron writes: Costa Rica - the name is almost mythical to naturalists who dream of humid tropical rainforest alive with unusual creatures. This past March, 20 OFO birders from Ontario, Michigan and Indiana took a 23 day tour led by Terry Pratt of Topflight Nature Tours to many of the National Parks and Nature Reserves in Costa Rica. Virtually every life zone from the hot Caribbean Lowlands to the treeless paramo in the central mountain range were visited. From viewing the dawn display of the Bare-necked Umbrellabird to sitting in the darkness on a lonely Caribbean beach as a 1500 lb. Leatherback Sea Turtle laid her eggs to mist-netting Puffbirds and Fishing Bats the tour absorbed the participants. Often the choices were difficult to make - should we study the Swallow-tailed Kites soaring overhead, the Blue-throated Goldentail probing the Passion flowers in front of

us, or the giant Blue Morpho flitting about the clearing. During the trip we travelled the length and breadth of the country, observing what is being done to preserve the land in its natural state, yet at the same time witnessing the destruction by fire and axe of virgin forest. The urgency of the problem convinced the group to donate \$400.00 to buy land near the Monteverde Nature Preserve, which will be maintained in its original state for posterity. At thirty dollars per acre, the group helped purchase over 13 acres, which will be designated the OFO Tract. All members of OFO will be hearing more about what they can do to help in the near future. An estimated 5500 photographs were taken during the trip. Production is under way to show a multi-projector, sound-synchronized audio-visual presentation at the AGM in October. Over 540 species of birds were observed during the trip, which will be repeated this spring (Ed. note: see enclosed brochure for more information). So if you're planning a trip to the "Rich Coast" stay tuned.

Field Trips: Costa Rica: April 1987 - see enclosed flyer.

Toronto Islands: September 7, 1986. This field trip designed for beginners will be led by Glenn Coady and Chip & Linda Weseloh. Meet at the Toronto Island Ferry Terminal at 8 a.m.

Moosonee: September 18-23, 1986. The trip will depart from Cochrane on September 19 at 10:00 a.m. (Sept. 18 will be a travel day for participants to get to the train terminal). Sat., Sun., and Monday will be spent birding the Moosonee area and Shippagan Island, with Tues. as a travel day back to Cochrane. Accommodation is arranged at the Lily Pad Guest House (705-336-2353) and the Polar Bear Lodge (705-336-2345), but call for reservations please. For information on train schedules, call Ontario Northland in Toronto at 416-965-4268. This field trip will be run in conjunction with the Moose River Naturalists, who will also sponsor a joint indoor program with OFO. For more information contact Sylfest Muldal at 705-336-2478 or Ken Abrahams at the Ministry of Natural Resources Office in Moosonee. The itinerary will be the same as that published in Ontario Birds Vol. 1 No. 1.

Membership: As of June 10, 1986, the paid membership for OFO was 475 members of which 112 are life members. Local birders are encouraged to convince their peers to join. If you are affiliated with a local club and need brochures for distribution, contact the Executive at the post office box.

Christmas Bird Counts: As some of you are aware, Canadians are becoming disgruntled with the affect that the American dollar has on the fee charged to participants in Canadian CBCs. The organizers of the Counts in New York have advised that effective this year, Canadians can pay in Canadian dollars (\$3.00) rather than American. This will mean a savings of about \$1.05 for each Count participated in.

Binoculars: I recently had the opportunity to evaluate a new pair of binoculars supplied by Swift Instruments Inc., 952 Dorchester Ave., Boston, Mass., 02125. Specifically, the Osprey Mark II binoculars are a pair of armoured, 7.5x42, fully coated binos with a five yr. warranty. Supporting literature specifies that the following features are standard: Body made of lightest alloys for reduced weight, prisms are metal anchored for shock resistance, prisms are slotted for best resolving power, objective lenses utilize full light gathering capacity, sealing resists dust and moisture, low reflective coating on lenses increases light transmission and protects lenses, UV coating gives "squint-free" viewing and retractable eyecups assist eyeglass wearers. I found the binoculars comfortable to use, lightweight, even after a day's use and totally reliable. The approximate minimum focussing distance was about 13 feet. The clarity of the image is superb, even in bright light and shaded situations. Focussing is simple with the large, ridged central focussing ring. The claimed resistance to moisture problems was only

superficially tested in that I took them out on a hot steamy day and birded under what I considered trying conditions. Although my eyeglasses steamed up continually, the binoculars did not. They remained totally clear and useful throughout. The eyecups are particularly advantageous to me, as mentioned, I wear eyeglasses. They are soft and pliable enough to restrict any light seeping in around the edges, but rigid enough that they will not break down rapidly. The only flaw that I could find in the binoculars centers around the lens caps and neck strap. The ocular lenses are fitted with a one piece cap that is threaded through the neck strap. I found that although this was useful to quickly cover the lenses in wet weather, this cover seemed to slide down the strap and get in the way. It is easily removed however, if this becomes a nuisance or for use in good weather. The strap itself is of a high quality blend that will not break or crack. However, the neck guard supplied is very small and tends to cut into the neck a bit after prolonged use. Retailing for a reported price of \$297.00 Canadian, I found these binoculars versatile, reliable, comfortable and easy to focus, providing clear undistorted images. I would recommend that if you're looking for new binos, that you take a look at these before making a decision.

Calls for Information: (1) Gypsy Moths - Recently, I have been involved with monitoring the spread of Gypsy Moths throughout parts of eastern and central Ontario. As a personal project, I have become interested in what these hairy little caterpillars are being eaten by. The literature suggests that 38 species of birds feed on these critters in one or more of the life stages. So far I have documented eight species feeding on the caterpillars - B.C. Chickadee, Yellow-thr. Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Rose-br. Grosbeak, Rufous-sided Towhee, Common Grackle and Red-winged Blackbird. If anyone has information on further personal observations could they write to me, specifying the date, location, species involved and life stage of the insect. Care should be exercised that it is this species being utilized for food and not some other feeding in the same trees. Circumstantial evidence of feeding was obtained for about 20 other species so far.

(2) Jim Hayes (33 Harley Place, Saddle Brook, N.J., 07662) is seeking information on the Ruff in spring in North America. Specifically, he wants to get detailed descriptions of sighted birds so he can compare individuals, and try to trace their migrations routes which he suspects originate in the mid-Atlantic states, sweeping along the Great Lakes and heading north and west to Alaska.

(3) Stuart Mellany (Natural Heritage League, 2nd Floor, 77 Bloor St., W., Toronto, M7A 2R9) is attempting to determine if interest exists for a field project in the province for a natural areas protection network. He lists six goals for the study that include speaking to landowners to identify significant areas and the need for preservation, community awareness programs, collecting biological information, watching these areas for degradation or illegal activities, providing input into Official Plans and zoning applications, and lobbying local politicians for support.

(4) House Finches are being leg-banded with coloured bands in an effort to determine dispersal and migrational patterns. Anyone seeing these birds is requested to contact the Bird-banding Office, CWS, Ottawa, K1A 0E7 or the Long Point Bird Observatory.

OFO Questionnaire: The Executive recently sent a questionnaire to 175 past members of OFO requesting information on why they did not renew their subscriptions. Sixty were returned of which 24 had forgotten and sent renewals along. Of the remainder the following reasons were listed - membership fee too high (2), future plans uncertain (2), not interested enough in birds (1), belong to too many organizations (7), do not like the journal (2), do not like field trips (0), do not have enough meetings and field trips (0) and do not feel involved in the organization (5). How do you as paid up members feel. I know your comments are valued and respected. Please

take the time to drop us a line and let us know how you feel about the way your Executive is running your club. All comments will be kept in confidence and carefully evaluated before we throw them out. Seriously, your comments are important to us.

Prince Edward County: Terry Sprague has sent along the following article for your information. Prince Edward County, because of its location in Lake Ontario, is a natural catchall for birds migrating in the spring and fall. Birds tend to pile up after crossing the lake in the spring and use the varied habitat to rest and feed. In the fall, the reverse is true as birds wait for favorable weather before crossing the lake. The peak of migration occurs about mid-May when 150 or more species may be found. Varied habitats from ponds to sheltered woodlots, sandy beaches, mudflats, and open lake provide ample opportunities to see most kinds of birds in the area. The county is fortunate in having some of the best marshlands in the province that prove very rewarding to the canoeing birder. A total of 318 species have been known to occur in the county. The Birds of Prince Edward County by Terry Sprague and Ron D. Weir and published by the Kingston Field Naturalists discusses the history and status of these species. For visiting birders, contact Terry or Ron for best spots and "Bed and Breakfast Prince Edward County", Box 1500, Picton, K0K2T0 for accommodation information.

Rio de Janeiro: John Cartwright writes of his recent adventures in Rio. With direct air transport between Toronto and Rio, exciting possibilities exist for travel to this neo-tropical area. Two areas are easily accessible - the Pantanal is a vast area of marshes, grasslands and swamps in western Brazil and Itatiaia National Park is a large remnant of the southeast mountain forest. Car rentals are available at the airport and bus transport is reliable and available. In six days last August on the road into Pantanal I saw 164 species including Hyacinthine Macaw, 2000 Jabiru, Plumbeous Ibis, and Bare-faced Currawong. Birding on foot near a comfortable hotel, I had 105 species including Sharpbill, 13 species of Tanagers and several SE Brazil endemics. Accommodation in the Pantanal is basic but cheap. At Hotel Santa Cruz the rate is \$6.00 per night, while at Hotel Santa Rosa do Pantanal, halfway through the park is \$35.00 per day for full board. In Itatiaia the rates were \$35-40 for a room and first rate meals. Outside of Rio few people speak English, so a working knowledge of Portugese is an asset. For further information contact John at 1055 Talbot St., London, Ont., N6A 2V9. For reservations at the Pantanal hotels contact: Selva Viagens & Turismo, Rua Barao de Melgaco, No. 3.494, Cuiaba, Brazil, and for the Hotel do Ype in Itatiaia, contact Hotel do Ype, Parque Nacional do Itatiaia, C.P. 83647, Itatiaia RJ, Brazil. A travel agent will make arrangements for you but he is expensive (Christoph Hrdina, Andre Safari and Tours Ltda., C.P. 7020, 71619 Brasilia, DF, Brazil.)

New Address: For members of the Geoff Carpentier Fan Club, please note that my new address is 964 Weller St., Peterborough, Ont., K9J 4Y2.

And in closing... OFO T-shirts are still available in small, medium and large and let's go camping in this one for \$10.00. Order yours today, Christmas is only five months away!

Members are invited to complete their sets of back issues of Ontario Birds for: Vol. I (2 issues) - \$10.00, Vol. II (3 issues) - \$10.00, and Volume III (3 issues) - \$13.00, or order all three volumes for only \$33.00, payable to Ontario Field Ornithologists.