



OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

Hawk watches are a great place to compare species of hawks, and to study the difference between adult and juvenile birds or variations in plumage.



Sharp-shinned Hawk
Ann Brokelman

In This Issue



Cooper's Hawk
Ann Brokelman

- 1** Is that a Sharpie or a Coop?
- 5** The Sydenham Field Naturalists
- 6** News from OFO President
- 7** OFO Convention 2012
- 8** My First Summer Birding
- 10** Taxonomic Update
- 11** Common Raven Nesting in Toronto
- 13** Book Reviews
- 15** Photo Quiz
- 16** Tools of the Trade

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Is that a Sharpie or a Coop?

By Cindy Cartwright

SNOWY OWLS, SNOW BUNTINGS, and wintering waterfowl. Warbler hotspots in the spring. Shorebirds on mud flats and at sewage lagoons in late summer. Nature has a progression and birders follow it. So where do they go in the fall and what are they looking for? For new birders who don't already know the answer, here's a hint — “Is that a Sharpie or a Coop?” That's right, we're hawk watching along with many other people who never look at birds any other time of the year.

The geography of southwestern Ontario has a funneling effect on migrating raptors. Moving south across the flat farmland to the north, the birds arrive at Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and are forced to turn southwest along the shore to avoid crossing open water,

until they reach the Detroit River. Migrating raptors can be observed at almost any location along the north shore of either lake that has an open view of the sky.

It's more fun and a great learning opportunity to witness the spectacular migration with company. Beginning birders and new visitors to a hawk watch site can expect to be greeted with a smile and a friendly hello. Many counters and regular volunteers will also take a moment to ask where you're from and if you need help identifying the birds. They will also explain the various landmarks used at that particular hawk watch so newcomers are not left wondering which tree is “The Maple” or the “Merlin Tree”. There are more than 1,000 hawk watching sites across North America



Red-tailed Hawk
Ann Brokelman



Broad-winged Hawk
Ann Brokelman



Merlin
Ann Brokelman

and some are casual locations without protocols or regular daily coverage. Others are well-established with years of data. The key sites during fall in Ontario (from east to west) include Cranberry Marsh in Whitby, High Park in Toronto, Hawk Cliff at Port Stanley, and Holiday Beach Migration Observatory southeast of Amherstburg.

Holiday Beach Migration Observatory (HBMO) is one of the best-known hawk watching sites in North America. It is listed in many birding guides and magazines as one of the premier destinations to visit. According to Kenn Kaufman, famous field guide author and birding expert, the only sites in North America that rank higher are Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania and Cape May, New Jersey. For almost 40 years, volunteer observers at Holiday Beach have worked hard to provide full coverage of the fall hawk migration during daylight hours from the beginning of September to the end of November.

The hawk tower where the daily count takes place is located on the north shore of Lake Erie within the Holiday Beach Conservation Area. This was formerly a provincial park and is now operated by Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA).

The 40 foot structure was donated by Detroit Edison in 1988 and ERCA provided the funding to move the tower and have it reassembled on the current site. Holiday Beach and Big Creek Marsh, located west of the hawk tower, are recognized internationally as an Important Bird Area. Raptor and passerine banding are also conducted here each fall. Additional information can be found at www.hbmo.org

Birds have a natural rhythm and there are specific times during the migration period that you should visit a hawk watch if you hope to see a good number of a specific species. Generally speaking, smaller hawks such as kestrels and long-distance migrants tend to move earlier than large raptors like the Rough-legged Hawk.

There are 15 regularly occurring raptor species observed in Ontario each fall. The following table from Holiday Beach outlines the peak times to view these species, keeping in mind that birds do not carry calendars. Numbers of each species build up to and then taper off after the peak. Early or late migrants of most species can be seen throughout the fall migration period.



Northern Harrier
Ann Brokelman

SPECIES	ANTICIPATED PEAK MIGRATION	HIGHEST DAILY COUNTS
Broad-winged Hawk	mid-September, approx. 15th to 20th	30,000 to 100,000
Osprey	mid-September	20 to 30
Bald Eagle	mid-September	10 to 20
Sharp-shinned Hawk	mid to late September	1,500 to 2,500
American Kestrel	mid to late September	550 to 1,100
Merlin	mid-September through early October	10 to 15
Northern Harrier	mid-September into October	100 to 200
Turkey Vulture	mid-October	2,500 to 5,000
Red-shouldered Hawk	last half of October	250 to 450
Peregrine Falcon	late September, early October	10 to 20
Cooper's Hawk	mid to late October	100 to 200
Northern Goshawk	late October through early November	less than 30
Red-tailed Hawk	late October to mid-November	1,500 to 3,000
Golden Eagle	late October through mid-November	15 to 35
Rough-legged Hawk	late October through late November	40 to 70

From previously published Holiday Beach Migration Observatory data to 2009

Second year Bald Eagle
Ann Brokelman



A birder in the right place at the right time may see four very large dark raptors in the sky on the same day.

With good light and a perfect view it is easy to separate species of hawks and eagles. It takes a more work with poor light, distance, a bad angle or simply inexperience.

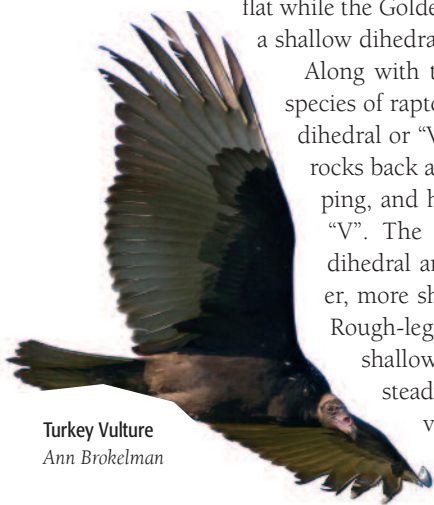
Sometimes it's a matter of waiting for the bird to move closer, bank or change direction. Other times you have to rely heavily on general impression, size and shape and search for the specific fieldmarks.

What is that big black bird in the distance? In October there are four main possibilities — Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Turkey Vulture, or dark morph Rough-legged Hawk. Of course it's possible to find a rarity such as Black Vulture, particularly with the recent northern expansion of its range, but the regularly occurring species should always be considered first.

Rough-legged Hawk is included in this comparison because it is a species of *buteo* that regularly occurs as a dark morph, and size can be difficult to estimate when looking at a single dark bird in the distance.

An adult Bald Eagle is often easy to identify — a flying plank with a white head and tail. But what about the juvenile birds? How do you tell if it's a Bald or Golden? Begin by checking the location of the white feathers on the underside of the wing. An immature Bald Eagle appears mottled with dirty white feathers across the belly and underwing coverts into the axillary area. The very visible white patches on the underside of a Golden Eagle wing are located in the base of the flight feathers, mostly the primaries. Next compare the head and bill — the Bald Eagle's appear much larger than the somewhat smaller head and bill of the Golden Eagle because it holds the leading edge of its wing in a straight line while the Golden Eagle has a slightly shrugging posture. And note the position of the wings. Juvenile Bald Eagles, like the adults, tend to hold their wings very flat while the Golden Eagle almost always shows a shallow dihedral.

Along with the Golden Eagle, two other species of raptors soar with their wings in a dihedral or "V" shape. The Turkey Vulture rocks back and forth in flight, rarely flapping, and holding its wings in a deeper "V". The Golden Eagle has a flatter dihedral and a steady flight with slower, more shallow wing beats. While the Rough-legged Hawk also flies with a shallow dihedral, the wing motion is steady and deeply arched with a visible stiff wrist action.



Turkey Vulture
Ann Brokelman



Rough-legged Hawk
Ann Brokelman



Second year Bald Eagle
Ann Brokelman



Juvenile Golden Eagle
Don Wigle



Turkey Vulture
Ann Brokelman



Osprey
Ann Brokelman

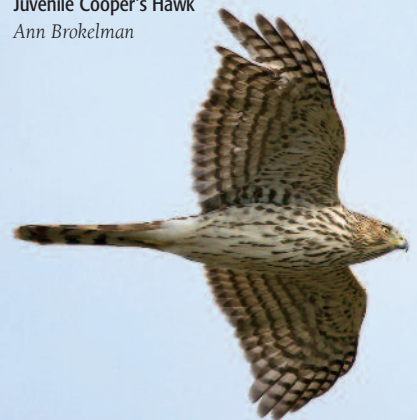


Red-shouldered Hawk
Ann Brokelman

Rough-legged Hawk
dark morph
Bob Pettit



Juvenile Cooper's Hawk
Ann Brokelman



The Turkey Vulture in flight appears two-toned with very dark brown to black underwing coverts and a grayish to silvery appearance to the underside of the flight feathers. The underside of the darkest Rough-legged Hawk is also two-toned but the flight feathers are more white in appearance with the dark trailing edge, even in the blackest of dark morphs. The dark carpal patches can sometimes be observed on the underwing of dark morph rough-legged hawks if the lighting is adequate and the bird is close enough.

The identification tips in this article will help you to correctly identify these large black birds most of the time. Never rule out a species strictly based on the calendar date.



American Kestrel
Ann Brokelman

And remember that no matter how many years you spend staring at the sky and watching the fall migration of raptors, there will always be an occasional bird that you can't identify. There is nothing wrong with recording it as "unknown".

I highly recommend that every birder visit a hawk watching site during the fall migration at least once in their lifetime —

it's an experience you won't forget. Information about other North American hawk watching sites is available on the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) website at www.hmana.org

Special thanks to Dave Fidler for teaching me how to separate immature eagles in flight when I started hawk watching 10 years ago.

Here are some hawk watching sites that post regularly on Ontbirds or report to HMANA. Check with local OFO members to find out about other hawk watches in your area.

- Holiday Beach Conservation Area, Windsor area, www.hbmo.org
 - Innisfree, Innisfill Contact Garth Baker, birdguy69@gmail.com
 - Hawk Cliff Hawkwatch, Port Stanley, www.ezlink.ca/~thebrowns/HawkCliff/index.htm
 - Rosetta McClain Gardens Raptor Watch: <http://raptorwatch.blogspot.ca/>
- Directions and information about these three sites are available at www.greatertorontohawkwatch.com
- Iroquois Shoreline Raptor Watch – North Whitby
 - Cranberry Marsh Hawk Watch – Whitby
 - High Park Hawk Watch – Toronto

For a complete Fall Hawkwatching Guide visit the OFO website: <http://www.ofo.ca/webapp/site/page/view/articles.hawkwatching>



The Sydenham Field Naturalists

By Larry Cornelis, Past President

FOUNDED IN 1985, the Sydenham Field Naturalists (SFN) club has grown into an instrumental leader in the field of natural heritage preservation and conservation in the Lambton-Kent region. Older members of OFO may recall the Kent Nature Club, founded in 1930 and becoming a charter member of the former Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature) in 1931. However the Kent Nature Club folded in the early 1980s, leaving a void in the former Kent County. There remained a suitable interest in a local nature club, however, resulting in the formation of the Sydenham Field Naturalists.

In recent years, the club has assisted in numerous acquisitions of key ecological properties to benefit both wildlife and local citizens. Some significant sites include Bickford Oak



Clear Creek Forest
Tufted Titmouse
Allen P. Woodliffe

Woods, Reid Conservation area and Clear Creek Forest. In the town of Wallaceburg, the SFN negotiated a purchase agreement and raised the necessary monies to protect an eleven acre site now known as Wallaceburg Sycamore Woods (WSW). Due to the low forest cover of Chatham-Kent (3%), WSW shines as an ecological gem boasting rare Carolinian species, large old growth trees, and species at risk. Following the success of the WSW campaign, the club worked with the municipality to restore and expand another natural heritage site in Wallaceburg, now known as Wallaceburg Pawpaw Woods. Ecological restoration work has already begun here and visitors are awe struck by the understory grove of over 100 pawpaw trees.

News from OFO President

IT'S THE FALL SEASON, an exciting time to go birding. This is a time to witness the seasonal movements of regular migratory species whose populations are now boosted by newly recruited hatch year birds. It is also a time when the vagrancy associated with post-breeding dispersal and extreme weather events can bring unexpected surprises into our region. There has certainly been some excitement recently at places like the Calf Pasture and Wheatley Harbour.

It was a delight to see so many of our members at this year's annual convention that took place on 14-16 September in Presqu'île Provincial Park and environs. The experimental Friday bird outings and evening social events turned out to be a huge success and are likely to be repeated at future conventions. The "Big Sit" hosted by Bill Gilmour in his yard ("Asa Wright North") adjacent to Presqu'île was also very popular and provided a more relaxed venue to socialize while birding. It was very inspiring to see the youth involvement at this year's special events that were targeted at young birders, and we anticipate that OFO will schedule more events in the future that cater to this demographic.

I want to remind everyone of the many OFO field trips that remain this fall, and to encourage members to come out and participate, especially beginners. The point of these events is not only to find birds, but also to have fun and to renew friendships and acquaintances.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to solicit your feedback about how the organization could function better and to welcome any advice to make OFO an even better bird club. I am strong in my conviction that although birding is obviously about the birds, it is more fundamentally about the people who do the watching, so please get in touch and let your voice be heard.

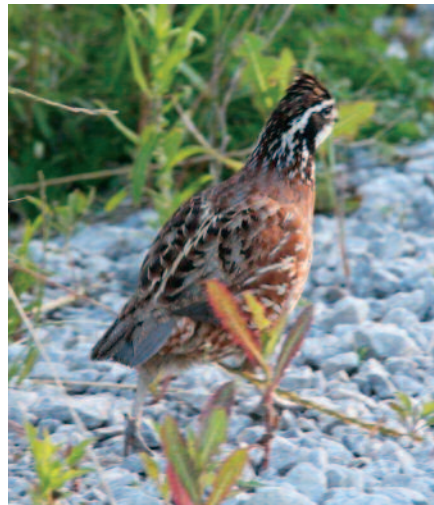
Yours truly,
Robert Maciver
OFO President
robert.maciver@gmail.com



Kneeling: Tom Chatterton, Blake Mann, Larry Cornelis and other SFN members on a field trip. Allen P. Woodliffe

Currently, the club is working to protect the 34 acre Peers Wetland, known locally as "Chicken Island". Partnering with the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation and the Friends of the St. Clair River, SFN is leading the fundraising campaign to acquire this natural heritage site on the eastern edge of Wallaceburg. The Peers Wetland has a diversity of habitats, boasts species at risk and has been a favourite birding spot for club members. The club is very proud of its preservation work in the Wallaceburg area.

SFN is also proud of the natural heritage education it brings to the community through indoor and outdoor programs. Presentations by experts on various natural heritage topics are open to members and the general public alike. Nature tours/walks are lead by expert naturalists, biologists and ecologists. The Wallaceburg/Walpole Island Christmas Bird Count, now in its 27th year, has been hosted by the SFN almost since inception. The highest number of species for the count is 89 which occurred in 2005 and highlight species include Northern Bobwhite, Black-necked Stilt, Lark Sparrow and Barrow's Goldeneye. An Ivory Gull was narrowly missed one year. Often, this count boasts the highest number of Tufted Titmouse in the province with 70 being the record high in 2003. Experienced club birders such as Blake Mann and Larry



Northern Bobwhite / Blake Mann

Cornelis, have located many rare birds (e.g. Sage Thrasher and Black-necked Stilt) over the years attracting birding enthusiasts from both near and far including many OFO members. Birding plays a big role in club activities and members frequent nearby Rondeau Provincial Park, Point Pelee National Park and St. Clair National Wildlife Area for the excellent birding.

The future of the SFN looks bright. Membership is currently over 100 strong thanks to the efforts of Club President Denise VandeVeire and Membership Chair Shirley Fry.

To learn more about the SFN, visit the club website at www.sydenhamfieldnaturalists.ca or like us on Facebook.

Birders Celebrate OFO's 30th Anniversary

By Lynne Freeman Chair, OFO Convention Committee



Patrick Biel, Caroline Biel and Isabel Apkarian

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR birders from across Ontario flocked to Cobourg, Presqu'île Provincial Park and Prince Edward Point for the 2012 OFO Convention. This year's convention started on Friday so attendees could enjoy three days of birding and workshops. Friday's events were a huge success and as well attended as the rest of the weekend. On Friday night, a standing room only crowd enjoyed entertaining and informative presentations by Doug McRae and Bruce Di Labio on shorebirds and by Ben Walters on his research in Northumberland Forest. Friday outings and workshops may be a permanent addition to the convention.

The fun continued on Saturday and Sunday with hikes exploring Prince Edward Point, the Cobourg-Port Hope waterfront, Presqu'île Provincial Park, Brighton Constructed Wetlands and other hotspots. Bill Gilmour generously hosted a Big Sit in his spectacular garden adjacent to Presqu'île Provincial Park. About 40 species of birds were enjoyed by all as they sipped coffee and chatted with old and new friends. For the first time, activities were offered for young birders. Ben Di Labio (15), son of noted Ottawa birder Bruce Di Labio and an accomplished birder in his own right led five other young birders on a hike which ended at Bill Gilmour's house for a delicious BBQ.

Robert Maciver, the OFO President opened the banquet and conducted an impressively efficient AGM. Ron Tozer was emcee and presided over the program with his usual wit. This year's recipient of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award was Jim Richards. Glenn Coody intro-



Ben Walters greeting birders at the Northumberland Forest hike

duced Jim and his impressive accomplishments, including leading the 20 year fight to save the Oshawa Second Marsh from development.

Michael Runtz gave the keynote speech, a funny but true run down of why we bird and the reasons for our obsession. People were still laughing the next day!

Many people worked very hard to put this year's convention together. Sincere thanks go to the following:

- The Convention Organizing Committee who worked for a year to organize the event
- Bill Gilmour, Doug McRae and Bruce Di Labio who organized the trips and workshops
- The 19 trip leaders who shared their expertise and bird finding skills
- Alvan Buckley who gave the Convention's first ever Digiscoping Workshop

- The Friends of Presqu'île for hosting a BBQ lunch on Saturday and Sunday for hungry birders
- Bill Gilmour's family for cooking and baking delicious treats for the Big Sit and Young Birders
- Roger Tessier and the staff at the Best Western Cobourg Inn who kept smiling and serving when five times the number of expected people showed up on Friday night
- Peter Burke who provided the beautiful drawing of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper for the brochure
- Our raffle ticket sellers who tirelessly sold tickets and gave away yellow dots
- Ron Tozer for presiding over the festivities and bringing the banquet to a close on time

Next year's convention will return to Point Pelee. See you there!



Juvenile Broad-winged Hawk

My First Summer **Birding**

I started birding this summer and I can't believe how many birds I've seen



Red-eyed Vireo

*Article and photos
by Isabel Apkarian*

IT ALL STARTED WHEN I saw a bird called a White-throated Sparrow at my house in Toronto in the spring. These sparrows are regular in Toronto during migration. I was very excited and started wondering what other birds I could see so I started exploring around our cottage in Port Severn.

One of the places I went to is an abandoned golf course which was previously under construction. The area is a little marshy with forest around it. At first, I went there in the afternoon, and did not see much. The next time I went early in the morning, and saw much more, including Common Yellowthroats, Pileated Woodpeckers and a

Northern Flicker. Another place I went to is Wye Marsh, which is a conservation area close to Midland. There is a boardwalk right in the middle of the marsh that leads to a lookout. There is a variety of birds and some of the birds I saw included a "Traill's" Flycatcher and a Brown Thrasher.

I also went to Matchedash Bay, where I was very excited to see Killdeer, which I was not expecting. Killdeer are usually found at sandy places and Matchedash Bay is not a sandy place. I also got a picture of an Osprey landing on a branch. It was very exciting to see the Osprey dive and catch a fish.



Counterclockwise: Common Loons, American Redstarts, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Pileated Woodpeckers

Other birds I saw include a Green Heron and a Northern Harrier. Another lucky find was the Great Blue Heron rookery where I hope to get pictures of young herons next year.

Six Mile Lake is a lake whose water flows into Gloucester Pool. I went to the Six Mile Lake Provincial Park, where I saw many birds, including a Red-eyed Vireo and a juvenile Broad-winged Hawk. I was very excited to get pictures of the hawk so close.

Tiny Marsh is a large marsh with cat-tails throughout. It was exciting to get a picture of a fish losing a fight with a Pied-billed Grebe. Some of the other birds that I saw at Tiny Marsh included a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron and a Black-and-white Warbler.

Close to my cottage is Lock 45, which is the last lock on the Trent-Severn Waterway before Georgian Bay. I was surprised



at the number of birds I saw there. Some birds I saw include a Spotted Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron and Belted Kingfisher. I found it cute how the Belted Kingfishers were looking at their parents fishing.

Throughout the summer, I had many incidental sightings. Some included Turkey Vultures, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, a Red-tailed Hawk, American Redstarts and a Baltimore Oriole. It was exciting to take a picture of a Baltimore Oriole

I like this picture of Pileated Woodpeckers. One of them seems to be telling the other one to 'back off'!

in flight. Also, it was exciting to get a Red-tailed Hawk with its wings spread open. Of course, birding around Gloucester Pool would not be complete without spotting a Common Loon.

It has been a great summer and I have seen over 100 different species of birds this summer. I discovered many places to go birding around Gloucester Pool. I am 14 years old and would be interested to go birding with someone my age. If you are interested please e-mail me at: GPBirding@hotmail.com.

Taxonomic Update

53rd Supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds

By Robert Maciver

THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION Check-list of North American Birds is recognized by OFO as the authoritative standard of taxonomic classification and distribution of all species recognized to occur in the AOU area.* Any amendments to the Check-list that pertain to bird taxa with a history of occurrence in Ontario are automatically adopted by OFO and amendments to the Ontario Checklist are implemented accordingly.

In July 2012, the 53rd Supplement to the AOU Check-list was published. This is the 12th Supplement to the most current edition of the AOU Check-list (7th edition, published in 1998). The 53rd Supplement contains a summary of decisions made by the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature – North and Middle America, between 15 April 2011 and 1 May 2012.

This year's supplement continues the recent trend of taxonomic revision in the light of biochemical (i.e. DNA) analyses. The themes of this year's Supplement are "radical raptor re-org" and "genus rearrangus". The following is a summary of the amendments to the AOU Check-list that also result in modifications to the Ontario Checklist.

Of major significance in the 53rd Supplement is the reclassification of the Order Falconiformes, which includes the Caracaras and Falcons, to a position of proximity to the Orders Psittaciformes (parrots) and Passeriformes (passerines). This rearrangement implies that species such as American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon are only distantly related to

taxa in the Order Accipitriformes, such as Bald Eagle, Sharpshinned Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. As a corollary of this, the most coherent explanation for the commonality of features and adaptations that we most readily associate with both Orders (e.g. talons, hooked bills) is that these adaptations evolved independently in both lineages.

As a purely editorial amendment, the scientific name corresponding to Purple Gallinule has been amended from *Porphyrio martinica* to *Porphyrio martinicus*. The change to the suffix of the specific name brings it into conformity with the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

The genus *Anrostomus* has been restored, and now includes several taxa of nightjar formerly of the genus *Caprimulgus*. In particular, Chuck-will's-widow and Eastern Whip-poor-will have been reassigned and now have the scientific names *Anrostomus carolinensis* and *Anrostomus vociferus* respectively.

Hummingbird taxa within the subfamily Topazinae have undergone a significant rearrangement at the generic rank, though the only resulting alteration to the Ontario Checklist is the placement of Broad-billed Hummingbird to a position immediately following Rufous Hummingbird.

Likewise, the wrens (Family Troglodytidae) have undergone a major reorganization in the sequence of its associated genera. Also, as a result of a four-way split of the genus *Thyrothorus*, Carolina Wren is now monospecific to that genus (i.e. it is the only remaining species within that genus).

Remaining with the theme of generic change, Purple, Cassin's and House Finch have been reassigned to the genus *Haemorhous*. Thus, these "American rosefinches" are now formally distinct at the generic rank from other rosefinches in the genus *Carpodacus*.

All other amendments to the AOU Check-list as a result of the 53rd Supplement pertain to species that are extralimital to the Province of Ontario (i.e. there are no records of occurrence in Ontario). As a result of the 53rd Supplement, the total number of species recognized to occur within the AOU area has risen by five to a total of 2,083. The total number of species on the Ontario Checklist is unchanged.

The complete AOU Checklist of North American Birds including the full text version of the 53rd Supplement is available online at: <http://www.aou.org>.

* The AOU area is that geographic area that includes North and Central America from the North Pole to the boundary of Panama and Colombia, including the adjacent islands under the jurisdiction of the included nations; the Hawaiian Islands; Clipperton Island; Bermuda; The West Indies, including the Bahama Islands, the Greater Antilles, Leeward and Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles (ending with Grenada); and Swan, Providencia, and San Andrés Islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Greenland is not presently included in the AOU area, although it was included in the past and will likely be included again in the near future. All species for which there is a published record or report of occurrence within the AOU area are included in the AOU Check-list.

More Fall Migrants *By Cindy Cartwright*

DIVE, DIVE, HIDE IN THE TREES — as the flock of several hundred Blue Jays suddenly takes cover, experienced hawk watchers scan the skies looking for the raptor that the jays have identified as a threat. Raptors are not the only birds migrating and being counted in large numbers at hawk watches across Ontario. In late September and early October it's not unusual to count up to 50,000 Blue Jays in a single day. The skies can be filled with swallows and swifts. Occasionally more than 200 hummingbirds are counted in a day. As the season progresses, Eastern Bluebirds, America Goldfinches and other finch species, such as siskins and grosbeaks move past. Dragonflies and butterflies, particularly Monarchs, also migrate in large numbers at some sites.



A young raven sitting on the hydro tower adjacent to a pine/spruce woodlot along the Woodland Trail.

Common Raven Nesting in Toronto 2012

Article and Photos by Dave Worthington

In 2012 a pair of Common Ravens *Corvus corax* was found nesting in the Woodland Park area of Rouge Park. This park is in the extreme NE corner of Toronto with the entrance located at Steeles Avenue and Reesor Road. Common Ravens have not been known to have successfully nested in Toronto since the mid 1800s.

IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY reports suggest Common Ravens were much more prevalent in southern Ontario. Over time, with extensive clearing and human persecution Common Ravens almost entirely disappeared from the region. It was not until well into the 20th century that it became apparent that their recovery was underway. Since the first atlas the Common Raven has continued its dramatic southward range expansion. The most impressive change was a three fold increase in evidence of nesting in the Lake-Simcoe-Rideau region which lies just north and east of

Toronto. There have been a number of Raven nest records in the GTA in recent years but this is the first successful nesting record in the City of Toronto.

On 16 March 2012 while birding in Rouge Park, I heard a Common Raven calling. I followed the sound and came across two Common Ravens sitting on a hydro tower adjacent to a planted pine/spruce woodlot along the Woodland Trail. This is an area with a mix of forest and meadows with Little Rouge Creek running along the east side. (http://www.rougepark.com/explore/park_map.php)

A pair of Common Ravens had attempted to nest here in early March 2009 but the nest was found to have been abandoned later that month.

On March 22nd I returned to the area. As I entered the woodlot a Common Raven flew out and began calling. It was soon joined by another and they both circled overhead calling frantically. I searched the wooded area and was able to locate a large stick nest about 10m up in a spruce tree. The nest was well hidden and hard to see due to the closeness of the trees in this planted woodlot. I placed a piece of material on one of the lower branches so that I would have an easier time locating the nest on future visits.

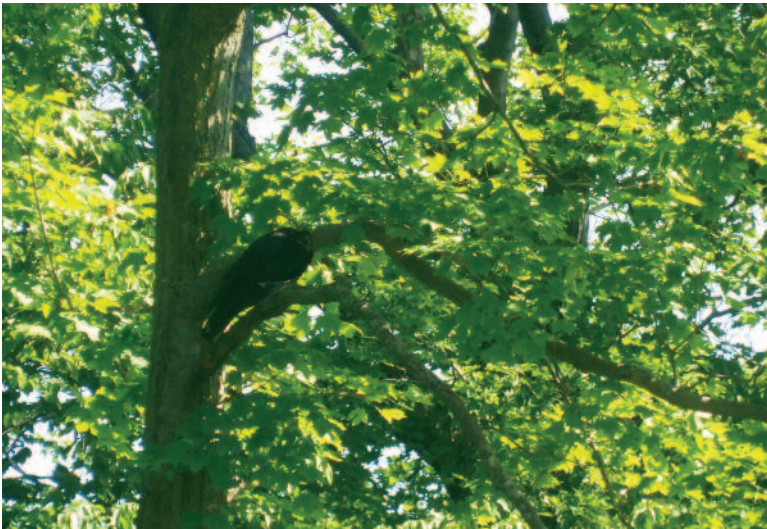
When I returned on the 28th and entered the woodlot I could see a Common Raven sitting in the nest but as I approached it quickly flew from the nest and left the woodlot. It then began calling and circling in the adjacent open field.

Over the next seven weeks I visited the nest site a number of times. Each time as I entered the woodlot one or both of the adults would fly about calling. As the view of the nest was obstructed I was not able to see any activity in the nest.

On May 24th when I approached the area again I saw one adult flying about calling. When I observed the nest I could clearly see three young birds sitting quietly in it. They were fully feathered and looked almost ready to fledge.

On the 30th when I went back to check on the young, the nest was empty and I could not locate any of the birds in the surrounding area.

Then on June 7th when I was in the park I could hear Common Ravens calling down in the valley beside the creek which is just north of the woodlot. I walked down into the forested valley area following the sound and came upon one of the young calling loudly to a nearby adult. The adult quickly flew off but the young bird remained, sitting quietly on an open branch about 4 m off the ground. Searching the area I found



Above: One of three recently fledged Common Ravens
 Below: Well concealed nest high in a spruce tree
 Bottom: Woodlot in Rouge Park near Woodland Trail



a second young bird quietly sitting nearby. As I continued to look for the 3rd fledgling the two birds flew up the slope towards the open area. I walked up the hill and found a young bird sitting on the hydro tower where I had originally seen the two adults back in March. The 2nd and 3rd young birds soon appeared and landed in the nearby trees.

I certainly enjoyed following the progress of these young birds and look forward to watching an increasing number of Common Ravens nesting in the Toronto area. Now that American Crows are being joined by Common Ravens from the north and with many reports of Fish Crows from the south we will have to pay closer attention when we observe a large black bird in the sky.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Roy B. Smith for his input and helpful suggestions.

Further Reading

Cadman, M.D., P.J.F. Eagles and F.M. Helleiner (Eds.) 1987. Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Long Point Bird Observatory. University of Waterloo Press, Waterloo, Ontario. 617p.

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Editor's Note

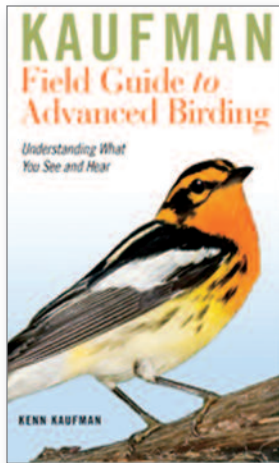
Bird bands and other markers can be reported through the North American Bird Banding Program website.

The website to report bird bands is
www.reportband.gov

To report other markers please follow this link:
http://www.reportband.gov/recwobnd.cfm?au_type=Unknown#top

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 or call 1-800-327-BAND (2263)

Book Reviews



Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding.

2011. Kenn Kaufman. Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt. Boston and New York. Softcover 447 pages. \$21.00US. ISBN13: 978-0-547-24832-5.

In 1990, Kenn Kaufman produced his classic book *Advanced Birding* that set the North American birding societies on their ear. Here was a book that went beyond the basics and introduced birders of all levels to the finer points of identifying the “hard to identify” birds — be they loons, grebes, dowitchers, jaegers, empids, gulls, or thrashers, etc. Now, 21 years later, he has produced the sequel, the *Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding*. Actually it's not a sequel at all, but rather a totally new book.

Kaufman, a world renowned expert birder, is also a top notch teacher. I had the opportunity to spend almost three weeks with him and his wife, Kimberley, in Antarctica, the Falklands and South Georgia a couple of years ago. What a wonderful experience it was as both freely shared their time, energy and knowledge on those snowy shores.

Kenn's new book is a masterpiece that will teach birders of all levels much about birds. Rarely do I take a bird book and read it cover to cover, as they are meant as reference books after all. But in this

case, I was compelled to do so, in part because I knew what a wealth of knowledge he possessed and I was anxious to learn more. I was not disappointed, nor will you be.

Kenn essentially takes us back to basics — no beyond basics — he takes us back to the beginning. Do we learn by rote, memorizing every detail, or do we learn by observing the bird, its features, habitat, behaviour, interactions and calls? Too often, we try to learn by the former means — memorize and then memorize some more. Bad idea, especially as you get older or travel more. There's just too much to learn.

Kenn's approach is to take in all you see and blend it into a complete picture of the bird. Develop relationships between habitat and behaviour, coupled with field marks and song and you will better learn about and remember birds. That's it in a nutshell. Sounds simple — well it is — sort of. But it takes a lot of time and practice to be a great birder.

Kenn took me back in time and I think I'm better for it — I still don't have any hair, but I do understand birds better now.

His introduction is enlightening and demonstrates a basic concept that many nature teachers don't ever grasp. Teach about birds in general before you try to teach field marks for specific birds. As he says, many teachers simply rhyme off field marks for each of the many species of birds found in North America as part of their curriculum. He prefers to teach you why a sparrow is a sparrow and what major groups exist and why they're similar or dissimilar. Then over time, you can extrapolate this knowledge to identify each sparrow you see — practice makes perfect. I have unknowingly used this technique for many birds when I travel. When I go to a new continent or country, it is important to quickly assign a bird seen to a family of birds. Knowing a parrot, swallow, shorebird or a sparrow immediately makes narrowing down the ID much easier. Kaufman explains the principles of his concept — an integrated approach to identifying birds — using clues, impressions, habitat and field marks to lead to the identification. He also makes a compelling case for identi-

fying subspecies and morphs, too often overlooked by many birders.

Now comes the meat of the book. A chapter is dedicated to his 13 principles and the 11 pitfalls of field identification. Ensuing chapters deal with bird topography (34 pages long), molt terminology (not for the weak-hearted as this compelling chapter is 17 pages long), behaviour and voice, identification beyond the species level, birding by age group (the birds, not the birders), subspecies and geographic variation, and finishing with a handy chapter on resources and bird identification techniques. But we're not done yet — we're only up to page 140 — over 300 more to go!

The balance of the book deals with special identification challenges — waterfowl, winter loons, seabirds, herons and egrets, diurnal raptors, shorebirds, gulls, terns, jaegers, owls, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, flycatchers, warblers and sparrows. But don't expect to be able to identify every species within these broad groups. Kaufman's mission is to follow his mantra and teach you how to identify the various species/groups of birds you will encounter, not to identify them for you. These chapters are chock full of facts and information that will assuredly make you a better birder.

One omission, at least from my perspective, was a discussion in the waterfowl section as to how to deal with the Cackling Goose complex. This was the perfect opportunity to deal with this thorny subject. Oh well, maybe in the next edition.

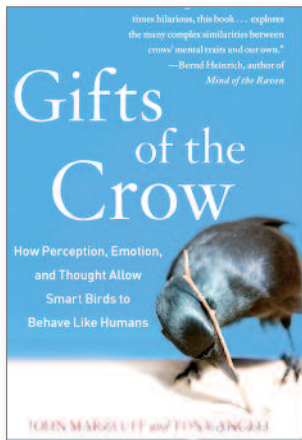
All in all, a great book and a worthwhile purchase. Enjoy becoming a better birder.

By Geoff Carpentier

Gifts of the Crow.

2012. By J. Marzluff and T. Angell. Free Press [Simon and Shuster Inc.], 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. ISBN: 10:143919873X. \$25 USD, 297 pages, Cloth.

Earlier this year, I was at Point Pelee National Park watching a host of exotically coloured warblers. They sang their delightful, tinkly songs and stripped their share of tree-eating pests. And yet,



simplistically speaking, this is all they do — sing, breed and eat. Never anything more. I am more fascinated by birds that entertain and the much despised crows are like teenage boys, usually up to something.

I was glad I had recently attended some presentations on the human brain, as the authors begin this book with an explanation of how the crow's brain works (and follow this up with a substantial appendix). It is a bit eerie to realize how similar to us they are. The authors then describe how the throat and brain work together to imitate human speech. It truly is imitation and not mimicry as the book goes on to show.

The authors' chapter titles describe the book's content well [Language, Delinquency, Insight, Frolic, Passion, Risk Taking, and Awareness]. By quoting the results of research and well-documented

observations, they show the amazing talents of crows. In this book the main focus is on the black crows. There are some accounts of magpies and a few jays get honourable mentions, but it is the like of the American Crow that takes centre stage.

The research shows that crows can remember individual faces and know who is a friend or enemy. They harass people they do not like. This information is shared with others so the conspiracy can continue. When next you see some crows, try and pick out individuals and, later, see if you can relocate them. You may never know each crow, but they know you. Last winter I had an American Tree Sparrow at my feeder. By taking careful notes I found I had thirteen different birds that were all coming one at a time. Identifying individual crows may be more difficult but I think it can be done.

Crows have a great (and long) memory, used when caching food, but so do other animals like squirrels and woodpeckers. Crows are craftier though and use sleight of beak to disguise where they really hide their treasures. They also practice other deceptive behaviours in tactical ways to get or protect food. Perhaps their most astonishing behaviour is their use of tools and the way they solve problems using these tools. By such innovative planning, they use humans to get at new food sources. Perhaps the most important characteristic is the way they adapt to changing conditions. This puts crows on

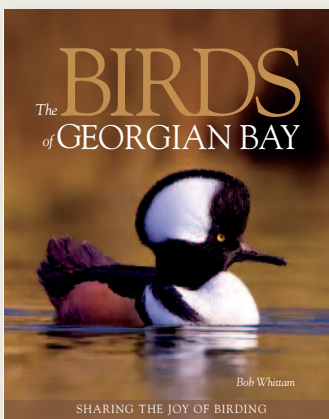
a par with the great apes and it appears to be a genetic attribute.

All this intelligence is used to avoid being shot, run over or harassed while gleaning a rich supply of food and other valuables from humans. They train us to put out food and, when we do not, they scold us. They recycle from our waste and use our urban constructions to their benefit. When the serious side of life is covered, they become regular crows and simply have fun. The authors have compiled observations of incidents from around the world to show how they deduce a crow's brain power. The stories they tell are fascinating and great fun. You do not have to be a fan of crows to enjoy this book, and you will likely gain a great deal of respect by the end of it.

As an aside, the book is illustrated by black-and-white drawings. The birds are well depicted in the book, but the humans are poorly drawn.

Crows are clearly on a rising learning curve. So maybe Hollywood — Alfred Hitchcock [The Birds] and perhaps Franklin Schaffner [Planet of the Apes] — was right. After we humans have destroyed ourselves with our expanding greed, the Earth will become the Planet of the Crows. This a great book for all people interested in wildlife and those who study brains. It was a fun book to read.

By Roy John



The Birds of Georgian Bay

Sharing the Joy of Birding

Discover the birds of this famous vacation region from Egrets to Eagles and from Kingbirds to Catbirds. Written by Bob Whittam, Executive Director Emeritus of the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre in Midland, this beautiful new book includes detailed information on common birds, identification and behaviour. Includes delightful anecdotes from more than 50 years of carrying binoculars. Fully illustrated with superb colour photography.

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240 pages, hardcover, 7.5" x 9.5"
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www.thebirdsofgeorgianbay.com

Nikon Photo Quiz

Sponsored by Nikon Canada

By Willie D'Anna



Photo by Ken Newcombe

CONTEXT IS SO IMPORTANT WHEN IDENTIFYING BIRDS — the time of year, the location, the habitat. The photo for our quiz offers minimal information about those things and it also does not tell us much at all about the bird's behaviour. The bird itself is not a snap identification either, even when you do have all that additional information. So, this is a challenging photo quiz and if you want to become proficient in Ontario birds, this is one species that you need to learn, as it is not rare.

This bird looks on the small side to me. However, on a lone bird, especially in a photo, size can be difficult to assess so let's hold off on that judgment and consider shape first. The head looks rounded, the neck is short, the body looks small and compact, and the bill is short and pointed. The left leg looks short and very thin and the feet look small. This appears to be a songbird and these features reinforce the impression that it is small. The short thin pointed bill has me thinking "warbler", which narrows the field of choices down considerably.

When dealing with a warbler, birders love to look for wingbars — and for

good reason. The presence or absence of wingbars can quickly narrow the choices down even more. It looks like there might be a white upper wingbar but I am not picking up a lower wingbar. As is often the case with photos, even an excellent sharp photo like this one can be deceiving and it is best not to put too much stock in that observation because of the oblique angle of viewing. So we look for other clues. The bird is off-white below with thin blackish streaks that cross the breast. There is an off-white supercilium (eyebrow) and malar (the area just below the gray cheek), a thin grayish eye line, and a yellowish patch on the side of the back of the head. The crown is gray with some darker feather tips and the cheek patch is gray. There is a thin whitish eye-arc within the gray cheek. The left leg, visible just before it is covered by the white flank feathers, is blackish, as is the bill. The feet look dark above and may be pale below but it is difficult to say for certain. The iris is dark. The wing appears to show some pale greenish or yellow edging on the greater coverts (below the upper wingbar).

An advertisement for Nikon binoculars. It features a pair of black binoculars on the left, a monarch butterfly on a yellow flower in the center, and the Nikon logo and website address on the right. The text includes: "Nikon BINOCULARS", ".clearer, brighter image", ".highest quality materials", ".heavy duty construction", ".superb handling", "Nikon", "www.nikon.ca", and "Naturally BETTER".

OFO News

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That distinct streaking across the breast rules out a number of warblers. If we just look at the streaked warblers in the field guide, some are easy to rule out by their face pattern, such as Black-throated Gray, Yellow-throated, Kirtland's, Black-and-white, Canada, Ovenbird, and Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes. For simple reasons the following are also ruled out: Yellow, Prairie, and Magnolia (too yellow below), Townsend's and Black-throated Green (brighter yellow supercilium and thick yellow eye-arc), Palm (bright yellow undertail coverts), and Orange-crowned (never this boldly streaked). Although somewhat similar to the quiz bird, Pine Warbler can also be ruled out by its less distinct streaking.

The remaining options are Blackpoll, Yellow-rumped, Cape May, Blackburnian, and Cerulean. Of these, Cape May seems like the best match. Cape May always has streaking across the breast, never just confined to the sides as in Cerulean, Blackburnian, and almost all Blackpoll Warblers.

Rare immature female Blackpolls can show fine spotting across the breast but never the distinct streaks shown by this bird. Almost all Yellow-rumped show distinct yellow patches on the sides of the breast. Juvenile Yellow-rumped are more distinctly streaked, like the quiz bird, and may lack the yellow breast patches. While they can show a pale area on the side of the neck, they never show a distinct yellow patch there. So, we are left with **Cape May Warbler**. This lovely female was photographed by Ken Newcombe at Point Pelee, Ontario on 11 May 2004. It is worth keeping in mind that the drabest Cape May Warblers, especially in fall, can show even less yellow than this bird does. They can also have much less distinct grayish streaking that appears blurred, although it always extends across the breast. One character that we have not discussed is the all black bill, which appears to be another useful field mark for helping to rule out immature Blackburnian, Cerulean, and Blackpoll Warblers.

Tools of the Trade Laser Pointer

By Roy John



SOME YEARS AGO I was given a red laser pointer. This was a great tool when making presentations, to point out features on a slide or places on a map in a dim room. The power of a laser is given as milliwatts (mW), with brighter beams increasing with output. The red laser was too weak to use outside in sunshine and it also took some odd-sized, expensive batteries.

Two years ago, I noticed my local dealer [Focus Scientific, Ottawa] had a more powerful, green laser. I bought one, powered by two regular AAA batteries. The green light works well, as the human eye is most sensitive at low light levels in the green region of the spectrum (wavelength 520–570 nm). It has a momentary-power switch, so you cannot accidentally leave it on. This is important, as the increased brightness means a shorter battery life.

When I first started using it in the field, some people had as much trouble seeing the green light in the bush as they did the bird I was trying to show them. I eventually realized that I should point the light to an identifiable reference point (e.g. an obvious branch or tree trunk) then move it closer to the bird. I never point at the bird itself, but at a place about 20 cm away. I stop at the branch with the bird on and, if people still cannot see it, I move the light slowly along the branch until the light is close to the bird. I must be doing something right, because a friend heard a man at Pelee this spring say "we need the guy with the green light."

I sometimes hand the light to another person to point out a bird. Once when I did so, a lady immediately turned it toward her face, but I grabbed it back before she turned it on. Now I warn people that a laser light can cause serious eye damage.

My red laser taught me not to leave the batteries in place; they were invariably dead when I needed to use it. For my green laser, I take the batteries out at the end of the day. This is a convenient process, as I keep them in the laser case that has two slots for batteries.

I have used my light to point out birds, flowers, insects, reptiles and amphibians. It has been a really useful tool. There were many in my group at Pelee this year, who would have had great difficulty seeing the red and grey morph Screech-Owls, if it had not been for this device.