



OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS



Wild fledgling Loggerhead Shrike, Carden Alvar
Photo by Jean Iron

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Recognition for Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Volunteers

Wildlife Preservation Canada hosted the annual dinner in Kirkfield on 24 August 2011 to recognize volunteer and landowner involvement in the recovery of Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes in the Carden Alvar area. *By Dan Bone*

I was there, along with other birders and OFO members, because of my Grassland Bird Survey work. Many local landowners also attended; some of them (we all hoped) to receive Gold Pins recognizing that they had a breeding pair of Loggerhead Shrikes on their properties for the first time. Recognition dinners were also held in Dyers Bay and Napanee.

Although Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC) held the dinner to thank volunteers such as me, I went there to thank them, to show my solidarity with the staff. The last few years have been an uphill battle for them, with disappointing results despite much hard work and good planning. I went to this event to be with them, to encourage them to continue this

vital research. Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes are teetering on the brink of extirpation in the Carden area and recovery efforts must continue so that these unique songbirds will have an opportunity to bounce back if given a few good years of favourable conditions. And we are not even sure what those favourable conditions might be. What makes these birds choose some areas and not others? What happens on the wintering grounds, and where are the wintering grounds anyway? There is so much to learn.

The event started at 4:45 p.m. with an optional tour of the Carden Shrike Field Breeding and Release site on the Turnbull property, now with a conservation easement limiting land usage. I couldn't attend this year but I am told that everything is much the same as last year when I did attend, except that the staff have a new trailer, donated by the Turnbolls, to increase living quarters. About 20 people signed up this year to see the cages built around real hawthorn trees in a real cow pasture with real cows and a bull in typical alvar habitat (i.e. poison ivy and cow patties everywhere). Viewing was limited to within 100 metres of the cages in keeping with the field work protocol designed to limit habituation and stress on the breeding pairs and fledglings. Binoculars and telescopes were available and provided good views of the birds. Over at the food shed there

were close-up looks at live mealworms, crickets and mice. This food is for the shrikes, of course, and is presented to the birds in special feeding bins. Don't know what the field workers ate but it wasn't likely as fresh as this. When I was there we asked lots of questions of the field workers and got lots of good answers. I wanted to ask the staff about living in close quarters in a small house in the woods with questionable water and limited electricity but I was too polite. It would make a good reality TV show I would imagine.

At 6:00 p.m. the cash bar opened back at the Lions Club hall. Birders got to meet landowners and the city folk mixed with the rural residents. Jean Iron and Eleanor Beagan were there and I had a good chat with a couple that own the property on the corner of Kawartha Lakes Rd. 48 and Prospect Rd. We didn't actually have a square dance but it felt like it.



Clockwise from left:
Carden Shrike Field Breeding and Release facility staff: Angela Capelle, Alex MacPhail, detail of Angela banding a shrike.

Photos by Janice Lapiere

Loggerhead Shrike captive breeding cages at Turnbull Ranch, Carden Alvar. Photo by Jean Iron
Appreciation Dinner guests viewing captive bred Loggerhead Shrikes at Turnbull Ranch.

Photo by Jean Iron



There were 37 wild fledglings this year in Carden compared to 39 in 2010 so there is still a very good chance of reversing the downward slide...

Shortly after 7:00 p.m. the buffet opened, catered by the Kirkfield Lions Club. It was good, country fare and the choice of beef as the entree was very appropriate (demanded almost) considering the close relationship between cattle ranching and Loggerhead Shrike habitat.

As the main course was winding down, Tara Imlay, the Species Recovery Biologist for WPC, introduced the Carden field workers who took turns reporting on the season's activities and results. They stood, all in a row, a little nervous, casually elegant and so very young. They were turned out in relative finery, given that I usually saw them in field fatigues at 7:30 in the morning. For me, one of the perks of doing volunteer work is to meet these young members of the recovery team and help them solve problems. As an old retired teacher I miss the staff room banter and being part of a team. This helps. They remind me of the energetic, optimistic, student teachers I used to mentor. And these young people lead such interesting — albeit uncertain — lives, jetting from jungle to boreal forest, to Texas scrub to Alaskan muskeg as the field work contracts change.

Angela Capelle outlined the breeding flock data: 12 pairs, 10 of which bred; six of these produced second clutches. Over all, they had successful breeding but the numbers were down.

Alex MacPhail informed us of the concerns regarding breeding flock mortality of the young and adults that started in past years and continued this season. The causes are uncertain and cage modifications and rearing practices are being tweaked and considered by WPC staff and experts from the Toronto Zoo and the Ontario Veterinary College. Some of this year's young were selectively kept back for

breeding stock instead of being released. This has been a plus as it has bolstered the genetics of the breeding flock in areas where the breeding lines were under represented.

Janet Lapierre, all sparkly despite repeated bouts with poison ivy, gave us the results of the wild breeding pairs. Janet is the WPC field biologist for the Carden area this year. Hard to be sparkly and optimistic when reporting that only 13 pairs were found breeding in the wild this year, down from 17 last year and 18 the year before. No landowners received gold pins this year as there were no new nesting sites on private property. But there were 37 wild fledglings this year in Carden compared to 39 in 2010 so there is still a very good chance of reversing the downward slide if we/they get some breaks in research and in the weather. And WPC didn't get any research breaks this year. Forty-three geolocator-equipped birds were released in Ontario (24 in Carden) in 2010 and 49 the year before (42 in Carden). One of these birds returned this spring and, like last year's two returnees, after recapture, the geolocator was found to have malfunctioned and only two months of data, covering only the initial stages of migratory movements, was retrieved. To her credit, Elaine Williams, executive director of WPC operations, did not stand on her chair and curse the research gods at the top of her lungs. Somebody should have. Can't WPC catch a break? The geolocators were supposed to record the time and date of every sunrise and sunset from which latitude and longitude could be calculated thereby revealing where the birds had spent the winter. We need to know where the Carden birds spend the winter. Winter habitat could be one of the problems.



Landowners are being financially rewarded for Loggerhead Shrike nests on their properties.



Adult wild Loggerhead Shrike, Carden Alvar. Photo by Jean Iron

Seven Loggerhead Shrikes were released at Carden this year: five were Carden hatched birds and two were hatched in Dyers Bay and transported here for release. Four of these birds were equipped with geolocators and are identified by silver over red bands on the left leg with nothing on the right leg. We need lots of volunteers to find these birds if they return next spring in mid April.

There is speculation that the birds may be pecking at the devices or it could just be bad luck as 20% of the devices have proven to fail anyway. No one knows for sure but WPC is investigating possible causes over the winter.

Janet finished by thanking the volunteer birders and landowners for their support. She added that the support is appreciated every year but this year it was especially important to the WPC staff because of the less than stellar results. It was heartfelt.

Tara Imlay will release the official report for the 2011 season soon. Watch for it on the OFO website or the WPC website where you can also read the 2010 release.

Some interesting and positive news came from Ron Reid, Carden Program Coordinator at Couchiching Conservancy, the organization that manages the Cameron Ranch. Landowners are being financially rewarded for Loggerhead Shrike nests on their properties. The Gosling Project, new this year, rewards landowners having breeding shrikes on their property by paying \$20 per acre for shrike habitat occupied. Using the Ministry of Natural Resources protocol of a 400 metre radius around a nest tree, a landowner with all of the circle falling on his or her land and all of it suitable habitat could potentially receive \$2,000. Usually, the circle fell on two or more properties. With 13 nests, this involved about 25 properties with four of them being public lands such as the Cameron Ranch. Of the remaining landowners, four were quarry operators leaving about 15 regular landowners, most of them farmers, that could be offered funds. Five of these landowners have applied and taken advantage of the Gosling Project funds this year. Payments have ranged from \$200 to \$1,600. Funds not used this year will be carried over into 2012. Ron offered the quarry operators com-

pensation, just to keep things fair, but so far they have not made application.

Ron set up a committee of local landowners to plan the distribution of the \$12,000.00 provided by the benefactor, Phillip Gosling of Guelph, Ontario. Two of these farmer advisors had had breeding shrikes in other years, and as it turned out, there was no conflict of interest in 2011 because the shrikes did not nest on their properties this season. Ron Reid pointed out that similar payments for ecological services are made in other countries: in China for removing steep hillsides from production and replacing the crops with trees and in the United States for taking marginal land out of production to create conservation reserves or set-asides. In the case of Carden, the funds are to support the continuation of beef farming, as the pastures are fundamental to Loggerhead Shrike habitat and many beef farmers are decreasing the size of their herds or getting out of the business entirely.

The door prize draw took place as we maneuvered around the side table for the perfect piece of pie. At stake was a gorgeous photo of an Eastern Loggerhead Shrike, photographed and donated by Larry Kirtley. Paul Laver, a local good guy, won it. There is much appreciation and affection for Paul amongst the WPC field staff. In March and April, when it can be cold and windy, they bunk in at the Laver residence, and later, when they move into the little house in the woods at the Breeding Field Site, Paul shows up with his tools to fix any manner of problems.

Maybe Paul should have a look at those geolocators. He's pretty handy and we sure need them.

See you on the alvar next April... viewing lots of Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes.

Dan Bone is the OFO representative on the Carden Alvar Advisory Committee

The Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary – Virginia Commonwealth University, recently announced that a Whimbrel they called “Machi” was killed by hunters on Guadeloupe.

End of Two Whimbrels

By Roy John

Machi had been tracked by satellite for two years flying over 44,000 km between its breeding grounds in the Hudson Bay Lowlands to the wintering grounds on coastal Brazil. It had flown through Tropical Storm Maria and made landfall on Montserrat before flying to Guadeloupe. A second satellite tagged Whimbrel, Goshen, that nested in Hudson Bay was also shot in Guadeloupe on the same day.

The eastern Whimbrel population has declined by an estimated 50% in 25 years. Many thousands of shorebirds are shot annually in the French West Indies, which have no bag limits and little concern for endangered and species-at-risk. Three Caribbean islands continue to operate "shooting swamps" and are not part of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act [meant to protect cross-border migrants]. Immediate evaluation of the hunting pressure on shorebird populations there is urgently needed. Ontario Field Ornithologists is one of many international groups to express its concerns in writing to the governments of Guadeloupe and France.

These birds were part of a migration study and had made non-stop flights of more than 3,000 kilometers. One flight alone was more than 5,700 kilometers. After Machi encountered the tropical storm it stopped to rest on Guadeloupe. Other years it had flown directly from Virginia to Paramaribo, Suriname. It normally wintered near Sao Luis, Brazil

It is disturbing to think that one of the 125 Whimbrel sightings I had earlier this year starting its migration in our north, could have been these poor creatures. This spring I visited many Caribbean islands where these wetlands provide some great bird habitat. Yet they obviously have a dark side.



Top: Machi being fitted with satellite transmitter in August, 2009. Photo by Bart Paxton
Bottom: Tracking map of Machi (2009-2011).

NGOs and tropical conservation

Too little is being done to conserve nature in the tropics despite its importance for human welfare and biodiversity.

By Anne B. Lambert

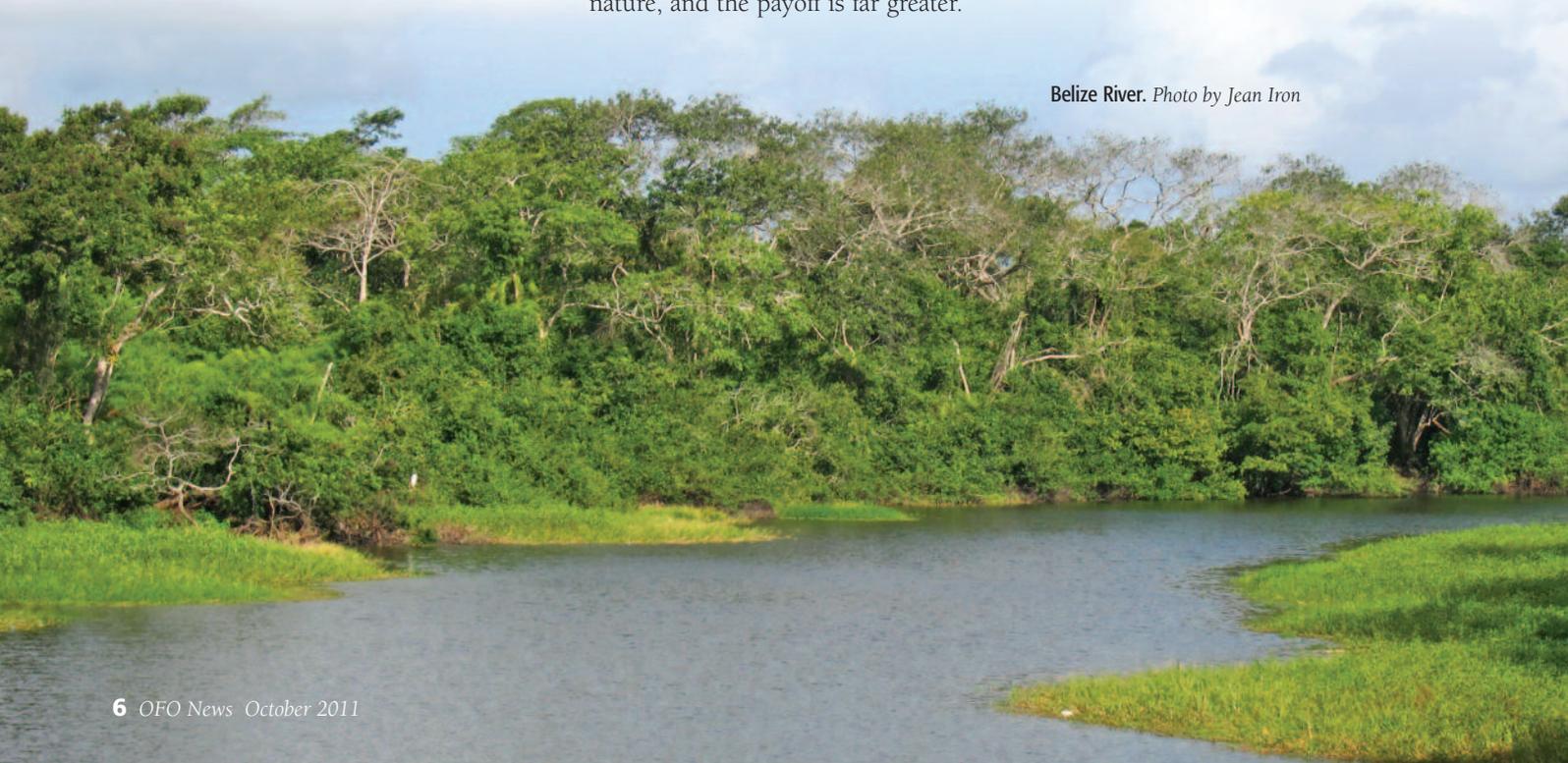
A recent analysis shows no decline in the rate of biodiversity loss and that indicators of pressures on biodiversity have increased (Butchart *et al.*, 2010). On average, 52 species of mammals, birds, and amphibians move closer to extinction each year, but this rate of deterioration would have been at least one-fifth greater in the absence of conservation efforts (Hoffman *et al.*, 2010). Habitat loss is the main driver of biodiversity loss. Deforestation was lower in the last decade than in the preceding one, but continues “at an alarming rate” in many countries, according to the FAO’s (Food and Agriculture Organization) 2010 Global Forest Resources Assessment. Biodiversity is also being impacted by climate change, over-exploitation, invasive species and pollution.

We may be tempted to respond with despair and resignation, yet now more than ever we have the ability, individually and collectively, to make a difference. Biodiversity loss could be greatly reduced with a combination of increased government support (especially from wealthy nations) for conservation, market responses to the benefits supplied by nature, and — the focus here — increased action by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The problem is that there is money to be made by converting natural habitats for agriculture, logging, other resource extraction, and urban and industrial development, while it generally doesn’t pay — though it ought to — to leave them intact. Those are valid economic activities. But so is conserving nature, and the payoff is far greater.

The ecosystem services provided by nature include carbon sequestration and climate regulation, watershed protection, prevention of erosion and flooding, pollination, and natural waste and water treatment. These have been conservatively estimated to value \$33 trillion a year (Costanza *et al.*, 1997). Payments for ecosystem services, including REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), will be increasingly important and could eventually completely fund nature conservation. In the meantime, money donated to conservation NGOs translates into more nature nailed down and secured for the day when population growth and unsustainable resource use are relegated to history.

Belize River. Photo by Jean Iron





Protection of tropical wintering habitats is crucial for the survival of Ontario's migratory songbirds such as the Magnolia Warbler, *Photo by Frank and Sandra Horvath* and the Northern Parula Warbler. *Photo by Sandra and Frank Horvath*

Hope for conserving tropical nature



The support of Canadians for conservation in Canada is commendable and should continue. But we also must support conservation in the tropics where biodiversity and threats to it are greatest and where financial resources are limited. It's time for Canadians to get in the game.

The International Conservation Fund of Canada

An organization has started whose sole aim is to further nature conservation in the tropics and other priority areas. The International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC) was founded in 2007 and

American NGOs

Americans have been supporting US-based NGOs doing international conservation to the tune of over \$1.2 billion a year. These include the big ones – The Nature Conservancy, WWF US, the Wildlife Conservation Society and Conservation International – but also smaller NGOs doing excellent work. Laudable conservation work in Latin America is being done, for example, by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), the Amazon Conservation Association, and World Land Trust US, with recent annual expenditures respectively of \$6.3M, \$3.1M and \$1.8M. In its first 15 years, ABC (which began in 1994) was involved in creating 35 reserves in Latin America covering over 250,000 acres (>100,000 ha) and with over 2000 recorded bird species (American Bird Conservancy, 2009). Seventeen of these reserves are Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, rated as global priorities for protecting threatened species.

International NGOs

Britain and Europe also have strong international conservation organizations such as Fauna and Flora International, IUCN Netherlands, World Land Trust and Birdlife International. And there are now many national and local conservation organizations in developing nations.

Canadian NGOs

Canadians have shown a strong willingness to support conservation by donating to Canadian NGOs. Recent annual revenue of \$103 million was taken in collectively by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, World Wildlife Fund Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Wildlife Conservation Society Canada and the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada. But nearly all the programs and spending of these organizations is within Canada.

became a registered charity in 2009 (hence donations from Canadians are tax deductible).

ICFC focuses on direct conservation action, and now has seven ongoing projects in six countries. The largest involves enabling the Kayapó indigenous people to protect their officially ratified territories which span 106,000 km² (an area larger than Nova Scotia) of tropical forest in Brazil's southeastern Amazon. Other work includes a priority land purchase (Guatemala), creating conservation trust funds to provide long-term finance for two conservation success stories (Peru and Costa Rica), working with a small, highly effective NGO in Sulawesi (Indonesia), and working with communities to protect critical habitat for the desert elephants of Mali.

There is no shortage of opportunities to carry out top-notch conservation internationally. Dollars go a long way in tropical conservation and we at ICFC already have a sense of solid accomplishment. How much more we're able to accomplish will depend on the support of Canadians.

Anne B. Lambert
International Conservation Fund of Canada
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OFO's 2011 Annual Convention

Justin Peter leading a group at the Tip of Point Pelee

By Lynne Freeman



Photo by Jean Iron

The 2011 Annual Convention was held at Point Pelee on the weekend of 17-18 September. Over 200 birders flocked to the field trips led by the experts to famous local hot spots. Early birders had the privilege of joining Sarah Rupert, Point Pelee Park Naturalist to count migrating monarch butterflies on Friday night. Although the weather was cool and windy, especially on Saturday morning, birders persevered and ended up with a tally of 175 species. Rarities included a Swainson's Hawk, Parasitic Jaeger, Snow Goose, Snowy Egret and a Loggerhead Shrike.

OFO President John Black welcomed everyone to the convention and Master-of-Ceremonies Ron Tozer presided with his usual wit. Banquet attendees were treated to a fascinating and entertaining speech by keynote speaker Mark Peck on the history of ornithology in the Hudson Bay Lowlands which included his own personal history studying birds and battling bugs in the region. Bob Curry presented the well-deserved Distinguished Ornithologist Award to David Brewer.

Many thanks to the Convention Organizing Committee for putting together this eagerly awaited event. Many thanks also to the Point Pelee Park management and staff for their warm welcome and support of birders and OFO and to Sarah Rupert for organizing the field trips. And last, but certainly not least, thanks to the trip leaders who shared their expertise and made the convention a success.

Mark your calendars now. The 2012 Annual Convention will be held at the Best Western Hotel in Cobourg in the Presqu'île / Prince Edward Point area on 15-16 September.

Top: Mark Peck, Keynote Speaker;
Sarah Rupert, Field Trip Organizer;
Doug Woods, OFO Membership
Secretary and Website Coordinator

Photos by Art Haines

Right: Janice Haines.
Photo by Art Haines;

David Brewer, Distinguished
Ornithologist; Bruce and 14 year old
son Ben Di Labio, trip leaders

Photos by Jean Iron



OFO Certificates of Appreciation

Each year OFO recognizes individuals and organizations who contribute to the birds and birding community of Ontario. Again this year we have many very worthy recipients. Whenever you are aware of an individual or an organization providing access to a rare bird or in some other way assisting birders, please send your nomination to the OFO website.

2010-2011 Award Recipients

Mark Cranford for his many years of careful attention to the OFO listserv ONTBIRDS and his recent transfer of the site to a new host.

The Staff of Darlington Nuclear Generating Station for organizing the successful viewing of the Willow Ptarmigan on 12 June 2011.

Brian Henshaw and the Staff at Beacon Environmental for planning the successful viewing of the Willow Ptarmigan on 12 June 2011.

Jayne and Sean Douglas, Ridge Road Estate Winery for hosting birders at the winery during the stay of the Mountain Bluebird 19-24 March 2011.

Elmer and Bev Ewert for allowing birders to park in their driveway and observe the Varied Thrush coming to their feeder.

Ginny Moore who, throughout the winter of 2010-2011, provided substantial amounts of food for Evening Grosbeaks and a warm welcome for the birders who came to see them.

Ric and Anne McArthur for graciously hosting the hundreds of visitors who came to see the Yellow-throated Warbler in their yard in Rondeau Provincial Park.

Steve and Joanne Sprague for helping visitors to their home to see the Harris's Sparrow at their feeder.

James Turland and Family for helping visitors to their home to see the Painted Bunting.

The Finney Family for helping visitors to their home to see the Spotted Towhee.

Ivor Williams for his time and expertise in helping to develop the new Membership section of the OFO website.

John Black — OFO Certificates Coordinator

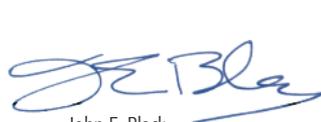
Ontario Field Ornithologists 2010 Financial Statements

Balance Sheet 31 December 2010

ASSETS			LIABILITIES and MEMBERS EQUITY		
	2010	2009		2010	2009
Cash in Bank	\$ 34,235	\$ 43,417	Prepaid Membership Dues	\$ 22,264	\$ 20,103
Ontario Savings Bonds	30,000	20,000	Accounts Payable	\$ 1,576	\$ 3,534
Convention Deposit	500	710	TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 23,840	\$ 23,637
Accounts Receivable	3,761	4,775	MEMBERS EQUITY		
GST Receivable	4,328	1,294	Balance beginning of Year	\$ 52,826	\$ 41,792
Inventory	5,981	3,818	Net Income for Year	2,347	12,754
Accrued Interest	208	2,449	Less prior year adjustment	-	(1,720)
			Balance end of Year	\$55,173	\$52,826
TOTAL	\$ 79,013	\$ 76,463	TOTAL	\$ 79,013	\$ 76,463

Income and Expense Statement Year Ended 31 December 2010

INCOME			EXPENSES		
	2010	2009		2010	2009
Membership Dues	\$ 33,494	\$ 33,837	Printing and Mailing-		
Donations	7,969	6,259	Journal <i>Ontario Birds</i>	\$ 26,749	\$ 22,733
Baillie Birdathon	5,865	350	Newsletter <i>OFO News</i>	14,064	12,773
Advertising	7,844	9,178	Administration		
Sale of Merchandise	2,524	2,612	Bank charges	279	247
Interest	783	995	Birdathon	148	73
Sale of Publications	108	285	Board expenses	147	81
Annual Convention (Net)	488	1,148	Donation	2,750	-
Inventory adjustment	2,163	3,818	Postal box rental	190	174
			Membership expenses	809	702
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 61,238	\$ 58,482	OBR Committee	284	370
			Office postage and stationary	1,455	2,043
			Sales expenses	519	112
			Liability insurance	3,027	2,992
			Awards	-	149
			Field Trips	1,386	266
			OFO Website and Ontbirds	3,488	1,455
			Purchase of Merchandise	3,606	1,558
			TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 58,891	\$ 45,728
			TOTAL INCOME	\$ 61,238	\$ 58,482
			NET ANNUAL INCOME	\$ 2,347	\$ 12,754


John E. Black
President


Brian W. Gibbon
Treasurer


John Catto
Auditor



Hosting a Rarity A Golden-crowned Experience

Photo by Jim Thode

I had left work early on 29 April 1986 with a terrible headache. I had gone to the physicians then the pharmacy and was finishing a late supper at home watching the feeder when I noticed a “different” bird that was to dominate the next six days of my life and have an effect on my birding reputation for years to come.

By Dan Bone
(aka The Golden-crowned Sparrow)

Even after 25 years, upon being introduced to a birder on the side of the road somewhere, they will sometimes exclaim. “I know you...you’re the Golden-crowned Sparrow”.

Back then, in my kitchen, I wasn’t sure of the identification except that it was different. I was a novice birder but an experienced feeder of birds and nothing like this had presented itself before. Definitely a sparrow and with a large patch of yellow-gold on its head. I grabbed my Peterson Guide to the East and quickly found the picture of my bird. Perfect match. No doubt. Easy id but the range was wrong. Western bird. Must phone somebody. The only number I could get was Beth Jefferson’s. She led birding walks for the Toronto Field Naturalists. At the time I had never heard of the Toronto Ornithological Club but I knew of a few locally famous birders whose walks I had infiltrated down at the Spit or in High Park.

They didn’t know me.

I phoned Beth Jefferson and she asked a few cautious questions about field marks. She said she would make some calls and send some birders to give their opinions. She didn’t seem excited. I know now, through personal experience, that she had been fooled before by novice birders making breathless observations that turned out to be common birds.

It was a pleasant evening and the kids were playing outside. We lived on a cul-de-sac bordering the Humber River Ravine in Toronto and the neighborhood children roamed at will through the backyards.

I rushed out and found them at the front of the house busily making a fort under the Magnolia tree. I must have raised my voice and looked dangerous because they all listened as I explained that they could not play in our backyard.

I turned to seven year old Stephanie, my daughter's best friend, and told her to keep her kitty cat indoors...or else. She cried. I didn't care.

As the sun was beginning to set, the doorbell rang. It was Bob Yukich and his wife Karen. I knew him from watching him lead birding outings and I was impressed that he was at my door but worried that the bird might have left for the night.

We quickly went into our kitchen — a do-it-yourself home renovation project with wall-to-wall picture windows — and waited. I explained the pattern of behavior I had observed.

"It comes from there, under the spruce, and goes to the hedge and returns to the spruce after one or two minutes".

He looked unimpressed. It was getting darker. He mentioned that they had been on their way to a funeral home to pay respects but had come here instead. I was getting a glimpse into the priorities of the avid birder. He also mentioned that he had seen the last Golden-crowned Sparrow in Ontario on the Toronto Islands a few years before but it hadn't stayed long and few if any birders were able to confirm it. It was pretty dark now. I was feeling darker.

All of sudden it flashed by the window and appeared in the hedge just as I had predicted. Binoculars snapped up and in a millisecond Bob pronounced it a Golden-crowned Sparrow and asked for the phone.

This was before the Internet, and I think before Hugh Currie's phone information hotline. The Ontario Field Ornithologists organization was only four years old. So Bob phoned someone who phoned others who phoned others. We opened a bottle of wine. It was the third-ever record for Ontario and the first spring record of a bird in breeding plumage.

After a fitful night I woke at dawn and went to the kitchen for a glass of orange juice. Standing at the fridge in my underwear I saw movement outside in the yard.

A birder was standing near the deck with binoculars pointing into the backyard indicating that the bird had returned. He waved discreetly. I recognized him. I pulled on some pants and went to the door to introduce myself. I had observed Glenn Coady from the back of a birding group he had been leading on an outing to Humber Bay East. To this day, every time I encounter Glenn, I am transported back to our shared moment on my deck and I know I can count on Glenn's friendship. Guess we bonded or something.

Glenn was very helpful. He explained how interesting this bird was and that it would draw a lot of birders and that I should warn my neighbors about what was unfolding and that I should prepare a guest book. He didn't mention anything about wearing pants all the time but I had figured that out all by myself.

Had to go to work. My wife got the kids and me all dressed and fed and into the car, and as I was backing out of the drive, a car lurched into my path and screeched to a halt.

I braked and piled out of the car accusing the fellow of almost causing an accident.

"I know", he said, "I was afraid you were going to leave before I could talk to you about the bird. I'm Norm Chesterfield".

I had heard about this guy. A retired mink farmer from the Wheatley area, at that time he had the record World Bird List. Turned out he needed the Golden-crowned Sparrow for his provincial list and had driven half the night to get to my house. My insights into the birder mentality continued to grow.

At work things did not go well. I was teaching third grade at the time and the students were taking advantage of my distracted mood. At recess I looked down and noticed that I was wearing one blue sock and one green sock. At least I had pants on. I huddled with my fellow staff members, made a deal in which they would cover my classes, and went home and joined the other birders on my deck. It was a wonderful day. I began to think of myself as some sort of famous guy. A journalist from London,

Ontario was calling. Peter Whelan of the *Globe and Mail* birding column called. The neighbours were curious. I liked the attention and the bird kept putting on a show.

Towards the middle of the week I began to have delusional thoughts. Perhaps it was the lack of sleep, perhaps it was the sustained excitement or perhaps it was just part of the process of becoming a birder but I began to think that the Haida Nation from British Columbia was communicating with me through this tiny bird. How else could I explain that this creature had found my backyard out of all the feeders in Ontario?

Knowledgeable people opined that a massive storm in the southern states had blown many rarities into the northeast and that my bird was one of them. There was speculation that my terrible headache had been brought on by these extreme weather conditions. But I knew better: I was chosen.

Yes, and I was temporarily nuts.

About this time my wife talked darkly about throwing sticks at the bird. I could see her point. We were exhausted. Almost 200 birders had signed the guest book but many more had visited without signing and many had made return visits. Then the birders became fewer and fewer as their phones rang about other interesting birds.

On the seventh day it didn't show up. I thought it was over.

In June of that spring I convinced myself that a Bullock's Oriole had a territory in the ravine behind our house. I phoned Glenn Coady. It had seemed easy the first time and now I craved some more excitement.

Standing under a tree in the ravine Glenn was gentle in pointing out that the Baltimore subspecies of the Northern Oriole (that's what we called them then) was quite variable. He never mentioned this again.

It was over. Except when I meet the older birders.

Taxonomic Update

52nd Supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds

By Robert Maciver

The American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds is considered by OFO to be the authoritative standard of taxonomic classification and distribution of all species recognized to occur in the AOU area.* Any amendments to the Check-list are automatically adopted by OFO and amendments to the Ontario Checklist are implemented accordingly.

In July 2011, the 52nd Supplement to the AOU Check-list was published. This is the 11th Supplement to the most current edition of the AOU Check-list (7th edition, published in 1998). The 52nd Supplement contains a summary of decisions made by the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature — North and Middle America, between April 1, 2010 and April 15, 2011.

The most notable aspect of the 52nd Supplement for many Ontario birders will be the major reclassification of the Wood Warblers. This year's supplement continues the recent trend of taxonomic revision in the light of biochemical (i.e. DNA) analyses. The following is a summary of the changes to the AOU Check-list that are relevant to species with a record of distribution in Ontario.

The New World population of Common Moorhen has been split from the Eurasian population and renamed Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) on the basis of differences in vocalizations as well as differences in bill and shield morphology. The Eurasian species will retain its scientific name (*G. chloropus*) formerly shared with the New World population as well as its common English name (Common Moorhen).

Snowy Plover, formerly considered to be conspecific with Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) of Eurasia is now recognized as a unique species. The new scientific name is *C. nivosus* however it will retain its common English name. The rationale for this "split" is difference in male advertisement calls, morphology, and divergence in mitochondrial and nuclear DNA. Research indicates that the affinities between Snowy, Kentish, Peruvian, Red-capped and Javan Plover are yet to be fully resolved.

Several genera formerly included in the Thrush family (Turdidae) have been transferred to the Old World Flycatcher family (Muscicapidae) on the basis of recent comparative analyses of nuclear and mitochondrial DNA. What this means for the Ontario Checklist is the addition of the Old World Flycatcher family which was previously unrepresented in the Province, and the relocation into that family of Siberian Rubythroat and Northern Wheatear, formerly included with the Thrush family.

Whereas last year the 51st Supplement resulted in significant reclassification at the taxonomic ranks of the family and order of certain non-passerine species, the 52nd Supplement is noteworthy for its significant reclassification at the genus level within the family of New World Warblers. The genera *Wilsonia*, *Parula*, and *Dendroica* are no longer recognized, and most of the species formerly in those genera have been transferred to the genus *Setophaga*. The linear sequence within this family has also been significantly rearranged in order to

accommodate the results of recently published nuclear and mitochondrial DNA analyses.

All other amendments to the AOU Check-list as a result of the 52nd 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 52nd Supplement, the total number of species recognized to occur within the AOU area has risen to 2,078. 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 52nd Supplement is available online at: <http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/index.php>.

* 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.

Erratum

In OFONews Volume 29, Number 2, a discussion of bird distribution ("The Next Ontario Bird," p. 11) failed to mention that Baird's Sparrow has already been recorded in Ontario. The author apologizes for any confusion. Thank you to the Chair of the OBRC for bringing this error to our attention.

Book Reviews



Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 15: Weavers to New World Warblers

2010. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David Christie. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. E-mail: lynx@hbw.com. Hardcover 879 pages. \$287.11US ISBN 978-84-96553-68-2

The HBW project is finally winding down. It looks like this will be the 3rd last volume of this series. The last of the regular accounts, for Tanagers to New World Blackbirds, will come out in Volume 16 next year, and then an update (Volume 17) will include everything new since the first volume was published. It's been a long time in preparation, but the outcome continues to be incredible. A parallel project on *Handbook of the Mammals of the World* will be producing Volume 2 of that 8-volume set in June.

The book opens with its traditional article on a topic of importance. This one is about conservation and threats to the world's birds. It focuses on some touchy issues. Some of the tragic facts include:

- Grassland species in North America have declined by 28% since 1968, arid-land species (e.g. Scaled Quail) by 27%, and forest species (e.g. eastern populations of Kentucky Warbler) by 27%. Eighteen species went extinct between 1975 and 2000 worldwide, and three more are known or suspected of having become extinct since 2000. But beware the "Romeo" effect, where a species thought to be extinct, is subsequently rediscovered (e.g. New Zealand Storm-petrel).

- At least 40% of all the species in the world have declining populations.
- Major threats include soybean farming (particularly in South America), corn cultivation (for biofuels), coffee (understory plantings disrupt some natural plants from regenerating, but do provide habitat for birds, mammals and insects), cocoa (responsible for huge areas of deforestation in Africa), and oil palm (43% of the best selling branded products in Britain contain components of palm oil, grown on deforested rainforest land).
- Fisheries techniques and the opening of new fishing grounds account for huge impacts to seabirds, as longline fishing and harvesting of Subantarctic species threaten seabirds worldwide.
- Tower kills (e.g. wind turbines, communication towers, radio and TV towers, etc) account for up to 40 million avian deaths in U.S. annually according to one study.

And the list goes on... this is a must read chapter for people who truly want to know what's happening with the world's birds.

Now onto happier thoughts — here's what's covered in the book: Weavers 116 species), Whydahs and Indigobirds (20 species), Waxbills (134 species), Vireos (52 species), Finches (144 species), Hawaiian Honeycreepers (23 species), Olive Warbler (1 species), and New World Warblers (116 species). As in all previous volumes the coverage for each species includes detailed information on taxonomy, distribution, subspecies, habitat, food and feeding, breeding, movements and status and conservation. Wonderful photos and painting and detailed maps complement each entry.

Did they continue to meet the high standard they've set in past volumes? Let's look at two examples.

Redpoll complex — the coverage for the two species is extensive and takes up over two full pages of text... that's over 4000 words. I won't say it's perfect, but it is done well. If I had to pick out one fault, I would say the painting of the Hoary doesn't clearly show the bill size differential between the two species and they don't depict the size difference well between a Hornemann's and a Southern Hoary.

I think it would have been better if they had included at least six more paintings to better show male vs. female, Common vs. Hoary, *exilipes* vs. *hornemanni* and *rostrata* vs. *flammea*.

Waterthrushes — I like the way they both pictured and differentiated between the two similar species in the book. Did you know the Northern may take fish and small clams as part of their winter diet and that it eats smaller prey than the Louisiana?

Well, for me — they did just fine. So now, run to your computer and order yours now.

Geoff Carpentier
11 Strattonville Road,
Port Perry, Ontario, L9L 1W7

Antarctic – First Journey: A Traveller's Resource Guide

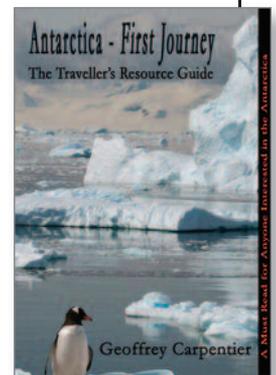
2009. Geoff Carpentier.
Avocet Nature Services,
Ajax, Ontario, Canada.
359 pp., \$33.50 CAD
Paper. ISBN 978-1-
897474-36-2

Editor's note: Both Seabrooke and I had difficulty finding a reviewer for this book.

Therefore we are publishing, with the permission of the editor, a review originally published in The Canadian Field Naturalist Volume 123, page 188.

I have known Geoff for more years than I care to remember. He tells some quirky jokes — groaners really — but he is a great birder. He has written, not a guide to wildlife, but a guide to how to go to this marvellous continent. He covers Antarctica, the Falklands, South Georgia and the sub-Antarctic and Tierra del Fuego. And yes, his humour comes through.

If you plan to go to Antarctica — and you should — you need to read this book first. It details all the of the prerequisites you need to know to turn this from a trip to an adventure. He begins with the items you should consider before you depart. For example he has a packing checklist that is very close to the one I have developed and used successfully



myself for for many years. This is followed by the questions you should ask when choosing a cruise and a ship. He points out the difference in experiences you will have between the smaller expedition ships and the huge cruise liners. One additional item that has bothered me recently is the increasing use of the big liners in ice-laden waters. They are not ice-rated ships and I shudder at the thought of evacuating some thousands of people if an accident happened. My friend was on the *MV Explorer* when it sank with about 150 people and they were lucky to suffer only a harrowing ordeal.

The author not only covers travellers requirements for staying healthy in extreme cold, motion sickness and similar “normal” problems, but the hazards of penguin poop, snow blindness and *Zodiac* safety. He goes carefully through a comprehensive list of Antarctic (and actually Arctic) phenomena, especially the fascinating science of ice. Carpentier explains the how and the why of expected tourist behaviour in this region.

There is a chapter on the dominant wildlife in the south. While this is well done, it does not have the depth and breadth of a full field guide. The author has also provided a guide to all the important areas and islands in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. Many of these have very interesting histories and Carpentier has really done his homework and this provides an enjoyable read. Finally he summarizes the region’s history. This cannot be detailed (Amundsen gets a quarter of a page), but it will give readers an overview and should stir them to read more.

While I would not categorize this as photo book, there are a lot of good photos. These are not always the usual subjects like wildlife and scenery, but some of the more oddball sights like cryoturbated rock or a page in a historic journal. For those of us who have made the trip it is the photos of fuzzy brown penguins on Salisbury Plain or the yawning Leopard Seal that will be most endearing.

My one complaint is that the book does not have an index. In a book where there are so many individual items of information that I want to check, this an

annoying omission. There are also some materials that are really basic and I wondered why they were included. Are there really adventure tourists who do not know how to find north or to read latitude and longitude or understand wind chill?

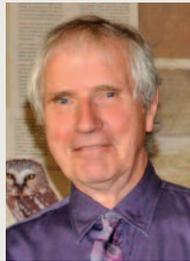
Small informational boxes are scattered throughout the text. These contain essential facts, fun, trivia, anecdotes and notable quotes. There are also some scratchy cartoons and a string of the authors poems. This, along with Carpentier’s writing style, makes the book feel more like a guide to Antarctic trivial pursuit. But do not let this overshadow the book’s value as a valuable resource. It does really contain all you need and all

you should know before you go. I would take a good wildlife guide (such as *A complete guide to Antarctic Wildlife*, by H. Shirihai, Princeton University Press) and this book on any trip. This would hold if its your first or nth trip. I also think inveterate travellers to anywhere would find many parts of this book useful. Finally a lot of people will find this a fun book to have — so you can confound people with your knowledge of frazil over rime or the non-location of the Emerald Isle.

Since this review was first published a complete index was made available on Geoff’s website at no charge.

Roy John
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Recent OFO Retirees



John Black, OFO President

John is retiring as President after four years of strong leadership. During his tenure OFO continued to flourish in all its activities. John

brought many personal qualities to the position. He enjoyed being in touch with the membership and responded promptly to requests and issues. He chaired the OFO Certificates of Appreciation Committee for six years. John will continue on the Board as Past President, drawing on his years of experience to advise the new Board.

By Jean Iron. Photo by Janice Haines



Wendy Hunter

Wendy was elected to the OFO Board of Directors at the 2005 Annual Convention. She served for two terms — a total of six years. For most

of her tenure on the Board, Wendy was in charge of OFO sales. In this role she looked after the ordering and selling of OFO merchandise. An especially appreciated

contribution was her attendance at a great many of the OFO field trips with her small car packed full of merchandise. We are very much indebted to Wendy for her commitment to the ongoing success of OFO.



Chris Escott

Chris was elected to the Board of Directors at the 1995 Annual Convention. His sixteen years of service to OFO make him one of

the longest serving members of the Board in the history of our organization. Over the years, he served on many Board committees. In 1999 he took on the role of Vice President, and in 2005, President. In 2006 he was a member of the OFO Baillie Celebrity Birder Team. He retired as President in 2007, but as Past President, he continued to make substantial contributions to the running of OFO, in particular to the organization of the annual convention. He also provided valuable advice to the members of the Board. His calm and organized approach will be greatly missed.

By John Black. Photos by Jean Iron



Nikon

Photo Quiz

Sponsored by Nikon Canada

By Willie D'Anna

Photo by Sam Barone

Our quiz bird for this issue is obviously a songbird and fortunately, it is perched right out in the open. Only a slim branch hides any of the bird. Of course the angle does not allow for the upperparts to be seen well but part of the hindneck, back, and wing coverts are still visible. So, with this quiz I am not as diabolical as I might like to be. This should be fairly straightforward.

With most birds, size and shape are the best features to focus on with your initial view. So, starting there, we note a bird that seems short and not particularly large, but I admit that I am uncomfortable making such a judgment when the only thing to compare it with is a branch that looks slender but is still of unknown size. Shape seems to be more of a sure thing. The conical bill is small and sharply pointed and the tail is strongly notched. The head is somewhat squarish, possibly due to feathers of the rear crown being slightly raised.

Although not a colorful bird, the plumage shows well in this photo. The head is mostly brown with an indistinct whitish supercilium (eyebrow). The auriculars (ear coverts) show a brown patch

set off by a pale cheek below the eye. Fine black streaks are present throughout the head, obscuring the supercilium and pale cheek area. The ground color of the ventral body is mostly white with a little warm brown or buff along the side of the breast. It is extensively streaked with black, all the way to the undertail coverts. Those streaks really contrast. The back seems to be gray with thin black streaking and the wing coverts are black with two off-white wingbars. To complete the assessment, we should note that the feet and the eyes are dark.

The conical bill directs us to consider the sparrows, finches, and some other smaller groups. The notched tail will eliminate many of the sparrows. The presence of wing bars will help to rule out just a few birds. The black streaking, however, rules out a number of birds. Combined with that rather weak face pattern, these field marks rule out all of the sparrows, as well as longspurs, towhees, buntings, and grosbeaks. Among the finches, I only see female House Finch and Pine Siskin as bearing

a resemblance to our quiz bird, noting that a female Purple Finch would show a stronger facial pattern.

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Pine Siskin usually shows some yellow in the wings and tail but those areas are not visible here. A closer look at the bill however, points strongly to Pine Siskin instead of House Finch, as the former is known for its sharply pointed bill. Those contrasting black streaks below also suggest that species, as House Finch shows blurrier streaks. Finally, the squarish head is a more subtle character in support of Pine Siskin. Although not always present, the raised crown feathers give a look that seems characteristically like a Siskin and unlike a House Finch. So, even though we are unable to see the "classic" Pine Siskin character of yellow edging in the wings and tail, we can still identify this bird. Sam Barone took this lovely portrait of a **Pine Siskin** on 8 December 2007 at the arboretum in Guelph, Ontario. Sam does not currently have a web site but hopes to have one in the near future.

Although the bird's identity in this photo quiz was no doubt immediately apparent to many, there may have been some, even a few experienced birders, who had trouble with it. I see this species every fall, spring, and most winters at our feeding station. Yet, there are times when I look out at our sunflower feeders and I am momentarily unsure of a

lone individual, which surprises me considering how much experience I have had with them. This Pine Siskin, even with its wings and tail mostly hidden, is not as difficult as many that I have seen. The high quality of the photo is a big reason for that. Often, this species is less striking, especially in low light situations. Immature birds are often much buffier below, with streaking that is not quite as contrasting as on the adults. And when birds are feeding, the bill can be surprisingly difficult to see well, perhaps partially hidden by the hull of a sunflower seed, or in such constant motion that it is difficult to get a handle on it. Even that "classic field mark" of yellow in the wings and tail can be so indistinct as to seem non-existent, further blurring the distinctions with a House Finch. And yet, if we consider size, shape, and plumage, and not just the "classic" field marks, a confident identification of this species can usually be made. Of course, having other birds at your feeder to compare it with makes things much easier. The second photo is another Pine Siskin, a juvenile that I digiscoped at our feeder on 12 July 2011. This bird illustrates how difficult some of these individuals can be, especially when there is nothing to compare it with.



Carden Bluebirds in 2011

By Herb Furniss

April and May were cool and wet. Without food the Eastern Bluebirds didn't nest. As a result they were at least three weeks late starting. However they made up for it with many second nestings resulting in 135 fledgings in 2011. This is about average and Don Parkes and I are well pleased with our results.

This is our 26th season on the Carden Alvar. To date we have fledged 2905 Eastern Bluebirds. As always we look forward to next year.

Photo by Jean Iron