



OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

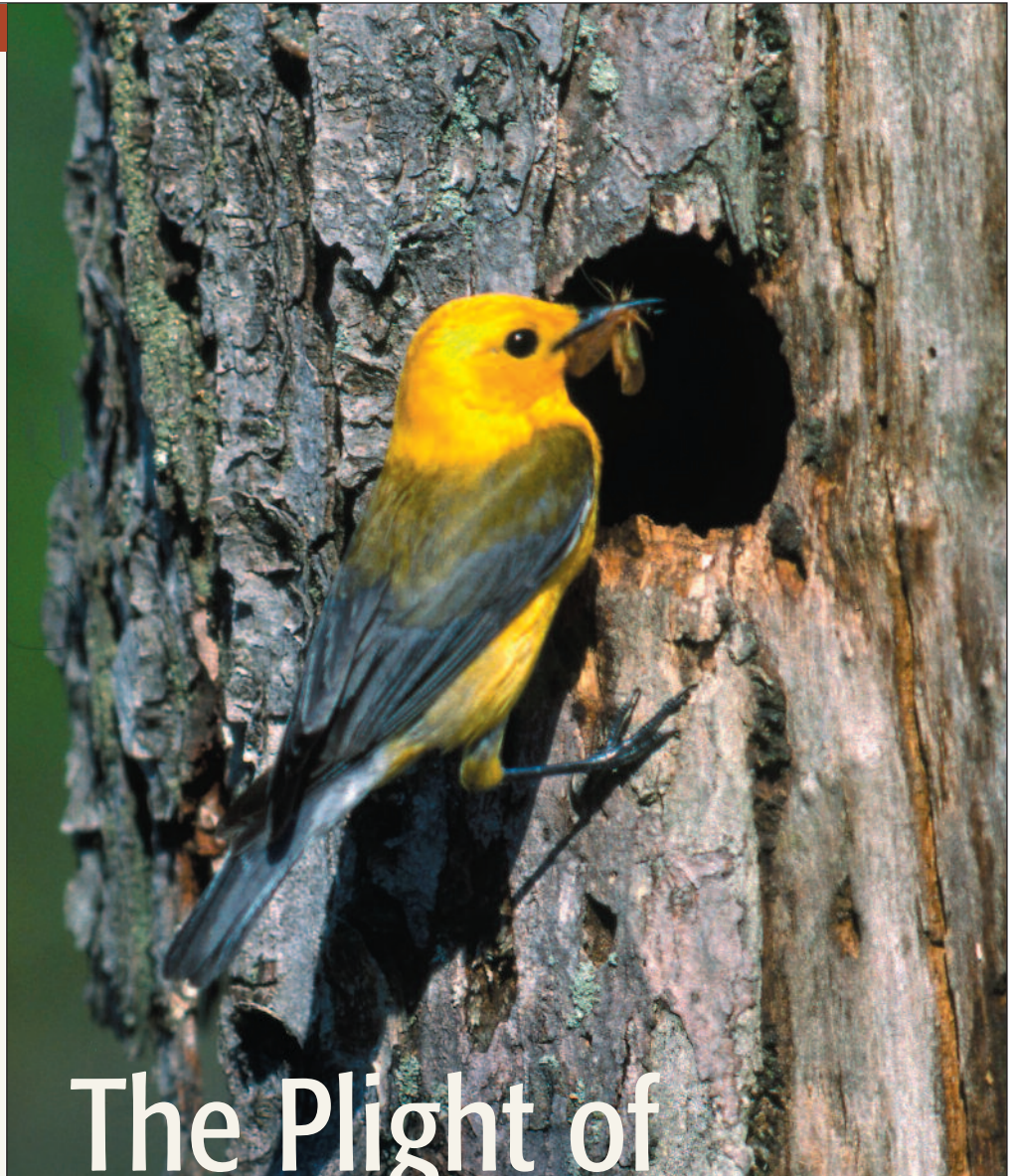
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The Plight of the Prothonotary

Rare and strikingly beautiful, birders in Ontario place the Prothonotary Warbler high on their list of must-see species during spring migration.

by Jon McCracken, Bird Studies Canada

Prothonotary Warbler / Allen Woodliffe

HERE, PROTHONOTARIES most regularly nest in small numbers at locations around the Lake Erie shoreline — Point Pelee, Pelee Island, Holiday Beach, Rondeau, Wheatley, Long Point — and in the Hamilton area. Farther inland, breeding season occurrences are very rare.

The Prothonotary is increasingly becoming one of Canada's rarest breeding birds, having suffered significant range-wide declines over the last several decades. It is designated as Endangered nationally and provincially, and is protected by the federal *Species at Risk Act* and Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*.

Rondeau Provincial Park has long been celebrated as being the Prothonotary "capital of Canada." In the 1930s, the park was said to support upwards of 100 territorial males. While this figure is now believed to be an overestimate, the species was common in the park at least through the 1950s. In the early 1980s, the Ontario population was estimated at a maximum of 80 territorial males. More recently, however, annual targeted surveys since 1997 have yielded maximum estimates of only 22 territorial males in 2002 and 2003. Since then, the population has dipped to no more than 10 pairs, despite more than a decade of recovery efforts.

So, what's going on and why is this species so difficult to recover?

Recovery Activities

A recovery team was established in 1997 to develop and implement a national recovery strategy. Since then, a nest box program has been in place at about a dozen key locations in southern Ontario, mostly where the species has an historical record of occupancy. Prothonotaries readily accept nest boxes and the program did seem to result in an encouraging population increase during its first 5 years or so. However, nest site availability is not a major factor limiting Prothonotary populations in southern Ontario. Indeed, from its outset, the nest box program has been regarded mostly as a stopgap measure to help forestall further population declines by bolstering nesting success.

In addition to the nest box program, there have also been a series of small-scale habitat restoration/creation projects in southern Ontario.

Key Threats and Limiting Factors

Ongoing range-wide loss and degradation of swamp forest habitat, both on the breeding grounds and the wintering grounds, are the primary threats facing this species. Though increased conservation attention has been paid to wetlands on the breeding grounds in recent decades, threats are growing increasingly severe on the wintering grounds.

In winter, the Prothonotary Warbler has a particular affinity for mangrove forest. As such, the majority of its wintering population occurs within a narrow coastal zone around Central America and northern South America. Mangrove forest is among the most threatened habitats on earth. It is succumbing to increasing pressures from coastal resort developments, charcoal production, and industrial shrimp-farming operations.

The population decline itself also brings into play a series of inherent biological attributes that collectively conspire to make recovery of the Prothonotary Warbler exceptionally challenging in Canada and the northeastern U.S.

Studies have revealed that overall nest success in Ontario appears to be fairly typical of the species. It is generally quite good, except at sites where success is severely constrained by House Wren "vandalism," which is the case elsewhere in the Prothonotary's range in the northeast (see below).

A colour-banding project showed that site fidelity of adults was fairly typical, and demonstrated that population interchange occurs between the breeding sites in Ontario. However, this work also showed that the southern Ontario population is dominated by older birds, suggesting that recruitment (e.g., through immigration from the adjacent U.S.) is relatively weak, a feature that seems to be characteristic of passerines at the periphery of their breeding ranges. Moreover, results from Long Point Bird Observatory's long-term banding program demonstrated that the annual pool of spring migrants arriving in Ontario is consistently skewed towards males, another feature that is likely characteristic of edge-of-range species. Both of the above characteristics (poor recruitment and a skewed sex ratio) work to act against population viability.

Challenges for Peripheral "Edge of Range" Species

A population viability analysis demonstrated that persistence of the Prothonotary population in Canada is reliant on a low level of regular immigration of adults (especially females) from the U.S. To make a real contribution to the Canadian population, these immigrants must find mates and successfully breed. Because the U.S. serves as the source population for "rescue" of the Canadian population, anything that impairs this rescue effect is a serious issue for the species' continued persistence here.

The core of the Prothonotary Warbler population breeds in the southeastern U.S. At the northern part of its range around the U.S. portion of the Great Lakes, it occurs in relatively small numbers in scattered locations in NY, OH, PA, and MI. As a result, there is a relatively small pool of potential immigrants for Ontario to draw upon. Prothonotary populations in these border states are themselves likely maintained in part by immigration of birds from farther south. As long as the core population remains more or less intact, peripheral populations in the northern U.S. and southern Ontario can be maintained.

The trouble is that the species has been declining significantly within its core range. When this happens, peripheral populations begin to experience range contractions inward from around the edges — effectively creating a population implosion, further impeding chances of rescue.

Small, scattered populations like we see in the case of the Prothonotary Warbler are also exposed to something called the "Allee Effect." Where populations (and pockets of suitable habitat) are small and fragmented, this density-dependent effect simply reduces the probability of a bird being able to locate a suitable mate. An unbalanced sex ratio, like we see in Ontario, further results in poor pairing success. Unmated birds do not contribute to the viability of a population.

House Wren Competition

One of the intriguing things about the Prothonotary Warbler is that its centre of abundance in the southeastern U.S. does not overlap with that of its chief nest

competitor — the more northerly ranging and much more aggressive House Wren. Roughly from Tennessee northward into southern Ontario, House Wren abundance and competition increase enormously.

This isn't just about simple competition for nest sites. House Wrens are extremely aggressive and relentlessly persistent. They build multiple "dummy" nests in addition to their functional nest, and often bring off three broods in a season. In the process, they vigorously oust any competing species, and effectively usurp all cavities within their territories. Moreover, House Wrens readily puncture eggs of competing species and will even kill nestlings and adults.

One natural barrier that stands in the way of wrens is large, unbroken tracts of forest, which they mysteriously avoid. Few such tracts now remain in southern Ontario. Even in seemingly large forested areas like Rondeau, House Wrens are very problematic. Although large, Rondeau's forests are naturally fragmented by the series of open sloughs that provide lots of edge habitat for wrens. The major blow-down event that occurred there in 1998 created hundreds of canopy openings that wrens gravitate towards. The park's cottage community inadvertently also bolsters the local wren population through what is otherwise a well-intended provi-

sion of large numbers of nest boxes in perfect wren habitat. Surveys show that at least 100 pairs of wrens nest within the Rondeau cottage community alone. From there, wrens spill out into the more natural areas of the park.

Climate Constraints

Being a southern species, the Prothonotary Warbler would be predicted to extend its range northward in response to climate warming. Indeed, an overly simplistic statistical model predicts just that. However, the model doesn't take into account the importance of precipitation (projected to decrease around the Great Lakes), nor the negative effects that climate change are predicted to have on the wintering grounds (sea levels and hurricane activity are both projected to increase in coastal areas in Latin America), nor range-wide responses of serious competitors like House Wrens. This is not to say that the Prothonotary Warbler is not heavily influenced by climate. It most definitely is. But climate is much more than temperature.

Survivorship on the Wintering Grounds

The recovery team has been supporting intensive research activities in mangrove forests in Costa Rica since 2001, spearheaded by John and Maureen Woodcock, using an international protocol that is

designed to monitor winter survivorship of neotropical migrants. Several things stood out from a recent analysis of results: 1) survivorship of female Prothonotaries was significantly less than males; and 2) an overall decline in survivorship was seen during the 6-year time series. While not conclusive, these results suggest that demographic constraints are occurring at some point during the Prothonotary's non-breeding period.

Conclusion

The Prothonotary Warbler has likely always been a fairly rare breeding species in Ontario owing to climate constraints. Its numbers here are increasingly limited by relatively large densities of an aggressive competitor (House Wren), and by a paucity of suitable nesting habitat. Its continued persistence here increasingly depends on what happens in the U.S. and Latin America. Low, and likely falling, levels of immigration from the adjacent U.S. can be expected to continue, given persistent population declines in the core of its range due to ongoing loss of breeding and wintering habitat.

An Endangered species is loosely defined as one that is at imminent risk of extinction or extirpation. Sadly, the Prothonotary Warbler in Canada seems to meet that definition all too well.

The Ontario Nest Record Scheme

By Cindy Cartwright

THE FIRST NEST RECORD SCHEME (NRS) was started in Great Britain in 1939 by the British Trust for Ornithology. The North American Nest Record Scheme was begun by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology prior to the various provincial schemes and was intended to be a storing house for data from all North American schemes. Unfortunately, interest in this program lapsed and few records from Ontario were ever transferred there. The Ontario Nest Record Scheme (ONRS) was started in 1956 by George Francis and Jim Woodford at the Royal Ontario Museum. Since then it has continued to be operated by the ROM. George Peck took the helm



Chipping Sparrow nest / Dan Derbyshire, Frontenac Bird Studies

in 1966, and he still manages it today along with his son Mark.

Of Ontario's 297 nesting species, 290 are represented by nest records collected since the ONRS began. Over 150,000 nest records are on file at the ROM for non-colonial nesters. When colonial species are included, data is available on a total of over 4,500,000 nests. The collection of nest data serves many purposes. Information is gleaned on breeding ranges, egg dates, clutch size, cowbird parasitism, incubation periods, nesting

sites and habitats, and hatching and fledging success and failure. Often the records also provide information on nest dimensions, height, substrate species, and other characteristics.

This data provide us with an understanding of the requirements of each species not only to nest, but to nest successfully. In the 1980s, George Peck and Ross James compiled the information provided on some 80,000 nest records collected by the ONRS up to 1980 and made it available in a series of species accounts published in two books, volumes 1 and 2 of *Breeding Birds of Ontario: Nidology and Distribution*. Revisions and an Appendix have appeared in past issues of OFO's *Ontario Birds* from 1993 to 1999. These publications remain an invaluable resource to birders. An updated edition is planned in the next few years which should have twice the amount of data as is in the original two volumes.

The data collected by the ONRS has been computerized and is available to anyone for research projects and conservation interests. It has been used as an information source by environmental and government organizations, ornithological books, studies, and university students. ONRS data was referenced frequently for the recent *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005*, is included in many of the *Birds of North America* series species accounts, and has been cited in many other publications on North America's birds. Practical application of the data might include documenting nesting dates of species that use hayfields to determine safe periods for

haying activities, or understanding what sort of nest trees Red-headed Woodpeckers prefer to better advise management and restoration efforts. Even documenting common nesters such as Chipping Sparrows or American Robins can provide us with important insight into how human activities and phenomena such as climate change effect bird populations.

The ONRS continues to collect data on Ontario's nesters every year. It relies on voluntary contributions of data from birders around the province. Participating in the ONRS can be as simple as completing a single card, or turning it into a personal mini-project based on individual interests. Nest record cards are welcome for everything from bluebirds on nest box trails, to the vireo nest overhanging a country road you travel regularly, to the robin in the spruce tree in your backyard. Start your own personal project to find and document nests of all of the species in your favourite local park, or encourage your local naturalists' club to start a project. Or just keep a pad of paper handy so you can jot down information on nests you happen across. Every nest is valuable, no matter the species or location, or how many other cards you submit.

Data can be entered online at the Birds Ontario website (address below) or by mailing handwritten cards to the ROM (official pre-printed cards may be requested from the ONRS for this pur-

pose). I prefer to use the cards because I can carry them with me on return visits and only enter the data once. Also, when you find a nest you have the card available so it's easy to remember what data you need to record. As with any undertaking that has the potential to affect the lives of wildlife, caution and common sense should be used when documenting and monitoring nests. Remember that Blue Jays and crows have keen eyes, and raccoons and foxes keen noses, and your presence at a nest may not go unnoticed. Also, the parent birds will be subjected to a certain amount of stress from being flushed from the nest and having a person standing by it. Try to limit the time you spend at a nest, do your best not to touch the substrate or vegetation with your hands, and when you leave continue in the same direction as when you approached, rather than turning around and retracing your steps such that you leave a dead-end scent trail leading right up to the nest.

The ONRS is a very worthwhile project and I hope all OFO members will consider participating. More information on the project, including how to sign up or request paper nest cards, is available at the official ONRS website:

Birds Ontario: www.birdsontario.org/onrs/onrsmain.html

The author wishes to thank George Peck for his invaluable assistance in preparing this article.

New OFO Memberships 2010

Michael Agueci, Toronto	Harriet Cummings, Collingwood
Cheryl Anderson, Picton	Ruth Dale, Toronto
Chandler Andrews, Guelph	Brian Daly, Ottawa
Albert & Marguerite Annen, London	Shirley Donald, Orillia
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Gillian Shields & Carlos Barbery, Gatineau	Bev Easton, Huntsville
Richard Beatty, Guelph	Judy Eberspacher, Oakville
Alban Beaulieu, Ottawa	John & Betty Essey, London
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Patrick Blake, Ottawa	David Farrell, Toronto
Dian Bogie, Brampton	Michael Ferguson, Oshawa
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Mike Burrell, Heidelberg	Richard Frank, Rockwood
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	Sheila Hall, Lakeview
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 Nigil Haroon, Toronto
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 James Holdsworth, Woodstock
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A wheelchair-friendly birding trail at Point Pelee National Park. *Seabrooke Leckie*

Birding for the Disabled

By Don Peuramaki

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES some of the pluses and minuses for people who pursue birding activities primarily with two types of wheeled locomotion. Since I use a wheelchair and also do a lot of birding by car (especially in winter months) I've realized that these modes of transportation influence the way that one goes about birding, but do not limit the possibility of seeing as wide a range of birds as anyone else. On the downside, every bird reported may not be "twitchable" because of deep snow, fallen logs, loose sand or mud, ditches or steep ravine slopes. But, to compensate, you'll find that you can hone your observation and detective skills and find many of those rarities yourself.

In the Toronto area, where I do most of my birding, places like the Toronto Islands and Tommy Thompson Park (the Spit) are flat and provide a lot of variety throughout the year. Though they don't require an automobile, they are essentially day trips. The ravine trail system in the Don Valley is also fairly accessible from points such as Sunnybrook Park, and can provide good birding opportunities, though generally there is less variety and abundance there than on the lakeshore. Humber Bay, Ashbridge's Bay, and High Park also have easy access and wheelchair-friendly trails. The city's cemeteries are another option and can, at times, attract a good selection of birds, especially during migration and winter.

Both the Burlington-Hamilton area to the west and the Whitby-Ajax area to the east can fill in many of the ecological/bird habitat gaps that are not available or are hard to access within Toronto itself. Many of these cities' parks and cemeteries can also be productive. There are many spots along the lakeshore where it is possible to park and access the water for birding. The Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington has a well-maintained trail system. In Ajax, the fields along Halls Road can be easily birded from the car, and Lynde Shores Conservation Area has some wheelchair-accessible trails.

Outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), many provincial parks and conservation areas have paved or gravel trails. Pres'quile Provincial Park is a good place to explore. If you like camping, the Shield country of Bon Echo P.P. is a possibility, as are Pukaskwa National Park on Lake Superior, or the Saint Lawrence Parks. Point Pelee National Park is easily accessible, with a gravel trail leading all the way down to the tip. The Ojibway Nature Centre near Windsor has a good trail system that tours through native grassland habitat.

Driving country roads can be just as productive as birding along a trail system. In winter, open agricultural fields and scrubby second-growth can be great for finding birds such as Rough-legged Hawk or Northern Shrike. Except for the well-known Owl

Woods, most of Amherst Island can be birded from the car and can be exceptionally productive for Snowy Owls and other winter specialties. The Short-eared Owl population at the Raptor Reserve in Haldimand is easily observed from the road. The roads between Chaffey's Locks and Frontenac Provincial Park are an interesting and productive summer drive, turning up many local specialties including a high population of Cerulean Warblers. The Carden Alvar is a good area for alvar and grassland specialties, and is similar to the many nature-oriented driving loops which are more common in the United States.

Many birders underestimate the value of the automobile as a blind. Whenever I approach a potentially interesting area, I make a point of slowing down, observing carefully and then stop and scan around before getting out of the car. Even birds which tend to be skittish will often put up with the proximity of an inanimate object and continue on with their natural routine. An opening car door, followed by the emergence of a potentially predatory birder will often change a bird's behaviour radically. Owls will often freeze, stop hunting and switch to alert mode. Longspurs, Snow Buntings and other roadside foragers usually flush as soon as a car door opens, and then require an intensive search to relocate. Just the slam of the car door closing may drive birds away.

Finally, don't turn your nose up at backyard bird-watching. Because birds are migratory, you don't always have to go to the birds; they may come to you, where you can enjoy them from the comfort of your own home. At my home in the heart of downtown Toronto I've had Cape May warbler stop over on the 30th floor roof of my building, have had Gyrfalcon rocket through, and listened to bugling Sandhill Cranes pass by. Suburban yards set out with seed and water can attract a good variety of birds in all seasons. Plant your garden with native flowers and fruit-bearing shrubs to attract species that might not come to feeders. Consider that a large proportion of vagrant species reported in the winter months are discovered at feeders in backyards.

People with a disability needn't be discouraged from pursuing a pastime such as birding. Access to popular destinations and other nature areas is improving every year. Birders confined to wheelchairs or otherwise restricted in ability have the opportunity to find or see the same birds as anyone else. The key is just to get out and bird. The more you learn, the more predictable things become, but rarities may show up any time, and surprises are always around the corner.

Piping Plover
Rob Maciver

Where are Ontario's Shorebird Reserves?

By Rob Maciver

To date, none of Ontario's important shorebird habitat has been designated as a shorebird reserve pursuant to the WHSRN.

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is a system of shorebird reserves that exists across the continents of North America and South America to protect the critical habitat that is needed by shorebirds at various stages of their life cycle; be it breeding, migrating or overwintering. Ontario is a vast province that includes important shorebird migration staging areas such as Presqu'île Provincial Park in southern Ontario, as well as shorebird breeding habitat to the north in the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Surprisingly, despite a rich and significant supply of shorebird habitat, to date none of Ontario's important shorebird habitat has been designated as a shorebird reserve pursuant to the WHSRN.

This current state of affairs is particularly regrettable since the idea for an international series of protected areas linking key sites for shorebirds throughout their ranges was originally proposed by Guy Morrison of the Canadian Wild-

life Service in 1982. The idea arose out of the realization that many shorebird species depend on a chain of critically important sites to complete their annual lifecycle, and that for conservation to be successful, all of the links in the chain needed to be protected. Subsequently this idea was adopted and developed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 1985 and has gone on to be implemented widely throughout many nations across the Americas. The conservation strategy that has resulted is now formally known as WHSRN. The first site accepted into the network was the world famous shorebird stopover site contained in Delaware Bay, USA. Nominated jointly by the governors of the states of New Jersey and Delaware, Delaware Bay was designated and named a site of hemispheric importance for shorebirds in November, 1985. Today the WHSRN is governed by a Hemispheric Council that is composed of twenty members representing such

organizations as Birdlife International, Canadian Wildlife Service, Manomet Center for Conservation Science, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pronatura (Mexico). In Canada the body responsible for oversight and implementation of the WHSRN is the Canadian Shorebird National Working Group (CSNWG).

Currently the Network has 82 sites in 13 countries, and spans from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. Within the Network, there are three categories of Sites/Landscapes that reflect the importance of the location for shorebirds: Hemispheric Importance, International Importance, and Regional Importance. To be designated as a Site of Hemispheric Importance, a candidate location must attract at least 500,000 shorebirds annually, or 30% of the biogeographic population of a particular species. Sites of International Importance must attract at least 100,000 shorebirds annually, or 10% of the biogeographic population of a

particular species. Sites of Regional Importance must attract at least 20,000 shorebirds annually, or 1% of the biogeographic population for any single shorebird species. Once designated, the WHSRN provides support to the reserves in the form of technical training for biologists and managers, technical assistance in particular management issues, educational outreach and resources, local and regional monitoring of shorebirds, and assistance to secure funding for site projects.

The first location in Canada to be designated under the WHSRN was the Bay of Fundy, which was deemed a Site of Hemispheric Importance in 1987. Currently there are five other locations in Canada that have been incorporated into the WHSRN representing 253,776 hectares of identified critical habitat, none of it within Ontario.

The critical importance of Ontario's shorebird habitat is waiting to be fully acknowledged. In 2003, the Canadian Wildlife Service prepared a policy document entitled the *Ontario Shorebird Conservation Plan (OSCP)* (www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/plan/shorebirdplan-e.html) which identified goals and objectives for conservation of Ontario's shorebirds. Listed as a top conservation and management priority in the OSCP was the need to develop an inventory of sites used by migrating shorebirds and to link these sites to the WHSRN and Important Bird Area (IBA) programs. Designation under WHSRN brings attention to the importance of particular sites, and of shorebird habitat generally, and WHSRN designations ought to be pursued for those areas such as Presqu'île and the Hudson Bay Lowlands, as well as other potential sites across the province.

A designation under the WHSRN is not a panacea for the complex problems associated with shorebird conservation and management. Conservation challenges will remain, but WHSRN designation represents political recognition for important areas of habitat. Without such instruments of political recognition, our overall ability to prevent loss of habitat through development or other human-caused degradation is impaired.

Ontarians have recently experienced a huge shorebird conservation success in the return of the Piping Plover to its historical breeding locations on the shores of the Great Lakes. This should be cause for celebration and encouragement. Let us leverage this success into further conservation action by taking steps to conserve Ontario's shorebird habitat through (among other things) the designation of WHSRN reserves within our borders.

The Ontario Shorebird Survey

Monitoring a declining bird group

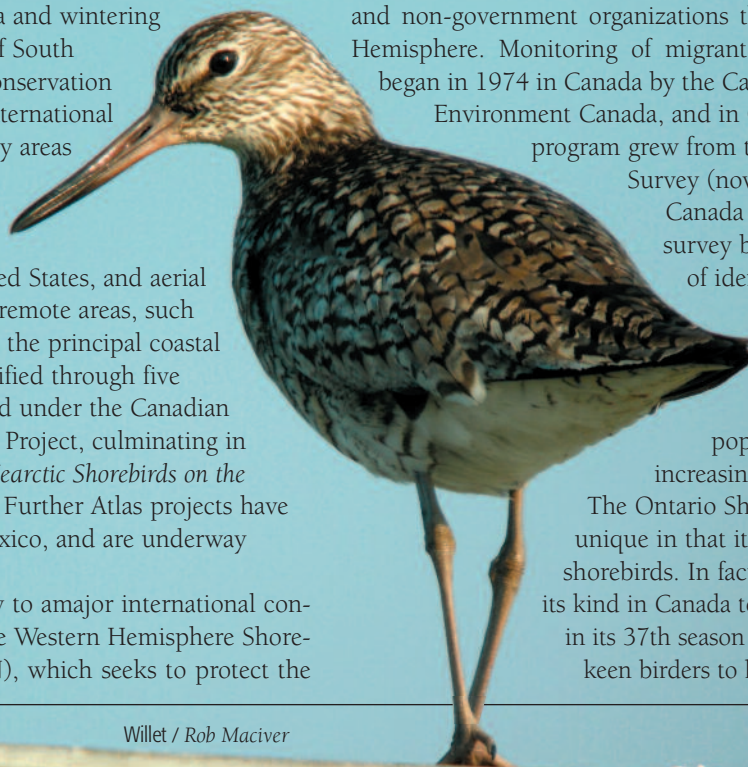
By Christian Friis

SHOREBIRDS ARE AMONG THE MOST SPECTACULAR migrants. Some species routinely travel between breeding grounds in arctic North America and wintering grounds as far away as the tip of South America in Tierra del Fuego. Conservation of shorebirds has required an international research effort to identify the key areas used by the birds throughout their ranges. In North America, volunteer survey networks operate in Canada and the United States, and aerial surveys are used to cover more remote areas, such as James Bay. In South America, the principal coastal wintering areas have been identified through five years of aerial surveys conducted under the Canadian Wildlife Service Shorebird Atlas Project, culminating in the publication of the *Atlas of Nearctic Shorebirds on the Coast of South America* in 1989. Further Atlas projects have recently been completed for Mexico, and are underway for Panama.

This research has led directly to a major international conservation initiative known as the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), which seeks to protect the

key areas used by the birds throughout their migration ranges. This concept has now been endorsed by many government and non-government organizations throughout the Western Hemisphere. Monitoring of migrant shorebird populations began in 1974 in Canada by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, and in Ontario this monitoring program grew from the Maritimes Shorebird Survey (now known as the Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey). This survey began with the intention of identifying areas important to shorebirds during spring and autumn migrations. Since then, monitoring shorebird populations has become an increasingly important objective.

The Ontario Shorebird Survey (OSS) is unique in that it surveys inland migrant shorebirds. In fact, it is the only survey of its kind in Canada to do so. The OSS is now in its 37th season and is looking to recruit keen birders to help out with the survey.



The Canadian Wildlife Service coordinates and manages the data of the OSS. Fieldwork is carried out by volunteers who attempt to visit sites every two weeks between late April and early June in spring, and between late July and late October in autumn. Sites have been chosen by volunteers, normally as locations where shorebirds were found in good numbers or because of easy access. Despite this bias, sites are well distributed across the province. Many sites are located along the shores of the Great Lakes, while others are found at local sewage lagoons. As a result of the spread of sites across the province, we can better understand shorebird distribution and migration. In addition, the dependence of shorebirds on coastal and wetland habitats makes them an excellent indicator of the health of an environment on which many human activities depend.

Today, the need to continue gathering information is still strong, especially in light of recent indications that numbers of several shorebird species are declining in eastern Canada and the U.S. — information obtained through analysis of data from the shorebird surveys conducted across North America (Howe et al. 1989, Morrison et al. 1994, Morrison et al. 2001). A recent reanalysis of the OSS data from 1974-2009 indicated that declining trends, identified about 10 years ago in a previous analysis (Ross et al. 2001), continue today and are potentially more severe. Six species showed significant declines over the last 20 years. All are boreal and temperate breeding shorebirds (with the exception of Spotted Sandpiper) found in Ontario.

Your participation in the OSS can make a real contribution to the future conservation of shorebirds and wetlands. Sites are available to interested birders, and surveys can be started this July. For information on available sites, methods, and details concerning the OSS contact Christian at Christian.Friis@ec.gc.ca or 416-739-4908.

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A Happy Ending

By Susan Ross



I STOOD IN MY YARD at the Leamington Marina, viewing again the devastation wreaked by the tornado: huge trees uprooted or broken; windows smashed; roofs torn off or caved in; my 120-foot chain-link fence flat on the garden, as if run over by a bulldozer. A pair of frantic Tree Swallows pulled my eye to where their nest box must be, pressed into the ground below the fence.

Friends helped pry up the fence enough for me to open the box lid. Inside, four newly hatched babies popped their tiny beaks open, waving their little bald heads on scrawny necks. I cut the box free from the fence and wired it onto a garden sculpture nearby. Within minutes both parents had crammed themselves into the box to check on the chicks. A week later, as we continue to clean up after the storm, they are busy shuttling food to their quickly-growing children. In the midst of a disaster, a small ray of hope and joy.

Photos by Susan Ross

COMING THIS FALL...

Niagara Birds

by John E. Black and Kayo J. Roy

This 700 page book is intended for anyone interested in Niagara's varied avifauna. Features complete accounts of the 373 species of birds that have occurred in Regional Niagara during the forty-one year period 1966 to 2006. Full data on relative abundance, breeding evidence, and early and late dates of birds in the Region are compiled in each of the four seasons.

Fully documented as well are the details of numerous extremely rare stragglers that have made their way into the Region over the many years that records have been kept. Added to all of the above are numerous articles highlighting other avian activity that has taken place in Niagara. Highly qualified, prominent members of Ontario's birding community write these articles. Beautifully illustrated with colour photos and black and white drawings.

For more information: contact Niagara Birds Attn: Kayo Roy, 13 Kinsman Court, Fonthill, ON L0S 1E3 Email: kayoroy@niagara.com, Tel: 905-892-4433



Distinguished Ornithologist Award 2010

Erica Dunn & David Hussell

By Ron Pittaway, Ron Tozer, Bill Crins (Distinguished Ornithologist Nominating Committee)

THE OFO BOARD OF DIRECTORS is pleased to announce that Erica Dunn and David Hussell, wife and husband, will be the recipients of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award in 2010. While their careers and accomplishments are quite individual, their interests have been entwined, making it very appropriate to recognize them together with the Distinguished Ornithologist Award.

Erica Dunn and David Hussell began their academic careers in ornithology as graduate students at the University of Michigan in the 1960s. David studied clutch size determinants in Arctic passerines and Erica studied avian physiological ecology. Both continue to publish scientific articles, each on a wide variety of topics.

David was a founder of the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) 50 years ago, and he started the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory in 1991.

Much of David and Erica's early research took place at LPBO, where they acted as mentors to dozens of students of ornithology, often those who worked as volunteers at the LPBO. They are firm believers in the value of data gathered by volunteers, and established LPBO's leadership in organizing scientifically valuable surveys such as migration monitoring, the Ontario Heronry Inventory, Great Lakes Beached Bird Survey and others. David started a detailed study of breeding Tree Swallows, a study that is one of the longest running in North America and which is now providing information about the effects of climate change on the breeding phenology of birds. Erica started the Ontario Bird Feeder Survey and later expanded it into the international Project FeederWatch. David has been a pioneer in the use of migration counts to monitor small bird and raptor populations, and both he and Erica have played key roles in developing and promoting the concept, observation standards and analysis procedures that led to founding of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and the Raptor Population Index program.



The Distinguished Ornithologist Award is “granted to individuals who have made outstanding and authoritative contributions to the scientific study of birds in Ontario and Canada; who have been a resource to OFO and the Ontario birding community; and whose research on birds has resulted in many publications and a significant increase in new ornithological knowledge”.

In the mid 1970s, David became the first director of the LPBO which is now part of Bird Studies Canada. At LPBO, he organized the first North American Birdathon, fun and competitive events that raise funds for bird research and through the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for amateur projects that enhance the conservation and awareness of birds throughout Canada.

David was involved in organizing the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, 1981 to 1985, undertaking numerous committee, chairmanship, authorship and editorial roles. Erica authored several species accounts in the first Atlas, and played a larger role in the second Atlas, 2001 to 2005, serving on the Technical Advisory Committee and writing some of the text on methods.

Erica was a key player in the establishment of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, and served as its third President. That organization presented its Doris Huestis Speirs Award to Erica and David in 2001 for outstanding contributions, both separately and together, in advancing the science of ornithology. Erica and David also have been active in the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), and Erica served on numerous AOU committees and was AOU President from 2006 to 2008.

Erica and David recently retired as Research Scientists from the Canadian Wildlife Service and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, respectively. They now live in Simcoe, Ontario, close to Long Point on Lake Erie and continue their research on birds. They have been OFO members since 1986.

Erica Nol of Trent University will present the Distinguished Ornithologist Award to Erica Dunn and David Hussell at the evening banquet of OFO Annual Convention on Saturday, 25 September 2010, at Port Dover. A detailed article by Erica Nol based on her presentation and an award ceremony photo will be published in the December 2010 issue of *Ontario Birds*.



Understanding Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is well established in Ontario, and is becoming an increasing risk to anyone who spends time in the outdoors, or who has pets that spend time in the outdoors.

By Allen Woodliffe

LYME DISEASE IS A RELATIVELY NEW phenomenon, having first been noted from the community of Lyme, Connecticut in 1975. (Birders may recognize this name, as Roger Tory Peterson lived in nearby Old Lyme, CT in his later years.)

Lyme Disease (LD) is the result of infection by a bacterial spirochete known as *Borreliosis burgdorferi*, first identified in 1982 by Dr. Willy Burgdorfer. In North America it is the Deer Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) that is the main carrier of LD, although emerging research indicates that other species may be carriers as well. Deer ticks at all stages feed on the blood of warm-blooded animals. Since ticks are found in grassy and shrubby habitat, small rodents and birds are often the target. The similar-looking American Dog Tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) is widespread in Ontario and not known to transmit LD.

Knowing how to protect yourself from LD begins with an understanding of the tick's life cycle. In the spring, the eggs hatch and the microscopic tick larvae search out their first blood meal, generally from birds or rodents. They remain in this stage until the following spring, when they molt into the nymphal form and again seek out a blood meal. A few months later, by that autumn, they molt again and spend their second winter in the adult form. With the melting snow and warming temperatures they

begin to search out a host for a blood meal and a few weeks after, lay their eggs and then die. Some of the ticks that might climb aboard are extremely small: the nymphal stage of the deer tick is not much larger than the head of a pin, while others may be as small as the period at the end of this sentence. This is where the greatest risk lies, as adults are usually large enough to be discovered quickly

and removed, frequently before they have even bitten the host, but nymphs may not be found at all.

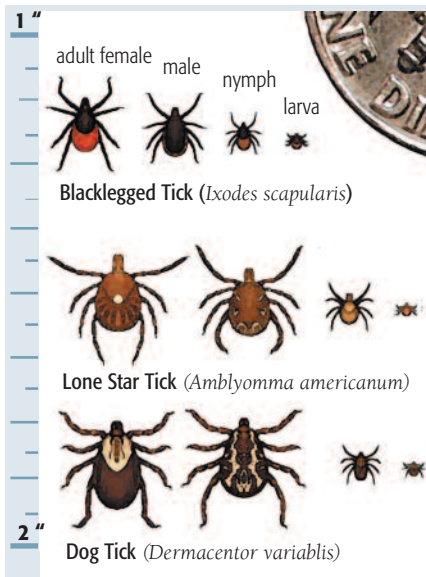
Deer ticks can be found in a wide variety of habitats. Though usually associated with grassy and shrubby areas, they may also occur, to a lesser extent, in woodlands. Even resting on that convenient fallen log just off the trail can be hazardous, as the ticks may inhabit decomposing wood.

Initially it was believed that in Ontario, LD was restricted to the Long Point area. Whether or not this may have been true at the time, it is no longer the case today. Although the hotspots for LD may be concentrated in natural areas along the north shore of Lake Erie, such as Long Point, Rondeau and Point Pelee, it is now also known from places along Lake Ontario and has been recorded from many localities farther inland from the shores of the Great Lakes. People have contracted LD from the natural areas and parks in larger urban centres as well. This shouldn't come as a great surprise; after all, birds often pick up ticks and can easily transport them from one area to another during migration. Vacationers and daytrippers may be accompanied by their pets, who might also unsuspectingly act as transport when they return from the hotspots to their home area.

Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacteria, so not all bites will result in a LD infection. Additionally, it usually takes several hours (some sources indicate as long as 36-48 hours) of active feeding by the tick to transfer the spirochete to your body. Careful removal of the tick within this period, even if it has already become attached, may prevent infection.

Symptoms

Symptoms of the first stage of LD may include a rash that eventually appears like a bull's-eye anywhere from 4-10 days or more at the location of the tick bite. However, it is estimated that only about 30% of victims ever notice the rash. Seldom hot or itchy, it doesn't draw attention to itself, and rashes occurring on the scalp or other hidden parts of the body may be difficult to



Comparison of the different stages of three species of ticks. Female deer ticks show a dark "back" with a paler, often orange-toned, abdomen while dog ticks are the reverse, pale "back" and darker abdomen. Dog ticks are usually larger as adults, though larval and nymphal stages are approximately the same size.

Image adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a department of the Government of the United States; www.cdc.gov.



Author Allen Woodliffe has contracted Lyme Disease three times. This is the rash that accompanied the third infection and is an example of the typical bull's-eye rash seen at the site of the bite.

detect and therefore overlooked. More likely, the first symptoms of LD to be noticed include those that are very similar to a severe case of the flu: fatigue, aching muscles, chills, sore throat, eyes that are sensitive to light, etc. In fact, some LD specialists advise that if you ever experience distinctive flu-like symptoms at a time of year when the flu does not normally occur (late spring through early fall) and you have recently been in a place where ticks may occur, there is a good chance that you are experiencing the first stage of LD.

Treatment

Antibiotics, if used soon enough during the first stage and for a sufficient amount of time (usually for approximately four weeks) are believed to successfully eliminate the spirochetes. The difficulty is that antibiotic treatment will only work if the disease is diagnosed in time. However, even without antibiotics, the first stage symptoms will gradually disappear, though the bacteria will still be present. This happened to me in early September 1976 following a severe flu. In my position as the park naturalist at Rondeau Provincial Park, I spent many hours each week crawling around prime tick habitat in my search for the flora and fauna of the park, so I was more likely to be a victim than the majority of the population. Unfortunately, LD was something that hardly anyone knew about at that time, and so it went untreated.

Just because the first stage symptoms disappear does not mean that the dis-

ease has gone away. Nothing could be further from the truth! It simply means that it has moved through the bloodstream within one's system. Once this happens it becomes much more difficult to detect, confirm and treat. Lyme Disease is often called the 'great imitator'. People with LD have been wrongly diagnosed with such things as chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, gastroesophageal reflux disease, fifth disease, Sjogren's syndrome, lupus, early Alzheimer's disease, colitis, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, prostatitis, psychiatric disorders, encephalitis, sleep disorders, thyroid disease and numerous others. Sometimes symptoms can be so severe as to be nearly debilitating. It is important to understand that these various diseases often have no connection whatsoever to LD. However it is an indication of the variability of the second stage of this disease that it can affect so many organs and systems in the body in so many ways, wherever the bacteria happens to settle in. Symptoms may be so confusing and so persistent even when "treated" (for the wrong condition, of course) that some doctors may throw their hands in the air and declare it to be psychological, or worse: for instance, one woman whose son was bedridden with the disease was accused of Munchausen's-Syndrome-by-proxy, injuring or poisoning him for attention.

The understanding and treatment of LD in Canada is only just emerging. Guidelines and information provided by Public Health Canada Agency have not been as progressive as they need to be to successfully lead the battle against LD. Instead, they rely on outdated and poorly designed information, some of which has come from agencies in the U.S. As a result, many in the medical profession here in Canada, especially in areas away from recognized LD hotspots, are not well-versed in diagnosis, testing and treatment of this confusing medical nightmare. The current method used for testing for LD in Ontario is generally considered to provide inaccurate or inconclusive results at best, and diagnoses usually must rely on an assess-

ment of clinical symptoms, especially during those critical first few weeks. Quite often it is up to the patient to request consideration of LD as a possible diagnosis. With little in the way of awareness campaigns or public information, and what there is frequently incomplete or misleading, patients are often not aware of the disease to know to inquire with



Prevention

Perhaps the most important message you can take from this article is that if you are an

active

birder in Ontario, and spend time in some of the recognized birding

hotspots, you will almost certainly encounter a tick that is carrying the infectious *Borrelia* bacterium. This awareness is the first step towards keeping safe. Additional steps you should take, regardless of where you might be birding, are:

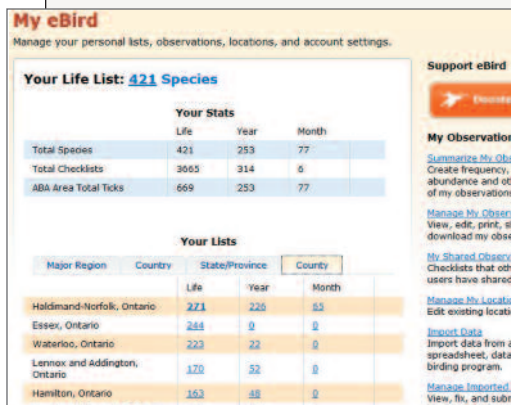
- wear light-coloured clothes to make detection of a tick on the fabric easier.
- tuck pant legs into your socks, and wear fine-weave socks; coarse-weave socks can enable the tiny nymph stage of ticks to go right through.
- spray your socks, lower pant legs, etc., with a repellent containing DEET. An effective alternative is to use a clothing treatment for your field clothes. This requires using a spray with permethrin as an active ingredient, and is available from some of the major outdoor stores such as Cabelas. But follow the directions carefully.
- upon leaving an area where ticks are likely to occur, remove all clothing and do a through tick check as soon as possible. Watch for freckles that appear to be moving. A hot shower as soon as you arrive home may wash away crawling ticks, but will not remove attached ticks.
- if you encounter a tick attached to your skin, removal as soon as possible is important. Be very careful to use tweezers to grasp the head of the tick at the point of contact, and slowly pull it to force the tick to release its grip. Squeezing the body of the tick may have the effect of injecting some of the bacteria, if present, into your bloodstream. Petroleum jelly, fingernail polish and other "home remedies" generally don't work, and may also damage the tick. Save the tick in an airtight container, especially if it has begun to engorge with your blood, so that you can take it to a health unit for testing.

There are many sources of additional information on LD here in Canada and in the U.S. The best starting point for Canadians is the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, which includes many other related and useful links: www.canlyme.com.

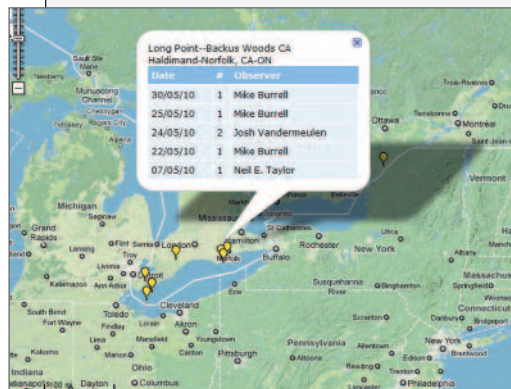
CTV's investigative reporting series W5 also recently did a program on Lyme Disease in Canada. You can view archived versions of the show at <http://watch.ctv.ca/news/w5/>

eBIRD

birding: the next generation By Mike Burrell



eBird automatically keeps all of your lists for you. It breaks them down by province, country, and county and by life, month and year.



eBird can display powerful maps for a given species. Shown here is the map for Cerulean Warbler observations in Ontario in 2010 (note Kingston area sightings are blocked by the bubble). Clicking on any pushpins displays details on the exact dates and observers.

The types of birders are as varied as the species they watch, and each of them has their own reasons, motivation, and methods for doing what we all love to do: watch birds. But in 2002, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society launched **eBird**, a new, online tool that is designed for every birder, no matter what type you may consider yourself. Shortly after, in 2006, Bird Studies Canada launched the Canadian portal, **eBird Canada**. Since then, more than 2700 users have entered over 230,000 checklists, reporting detailed occurrence data for at least 550 species in Canada alone. Take notice everyone, as this is the future of citizen science and birding's jump into

the 21st century. eBird now covers the entire western hemisphere plus New Zealand and is slated to go worldwide.

Why do I think eBird is the future of birding? It can serve many different functions such that it should appeal to every birder, whether you are a government scientist looking for distribution of a species-at-risk, a lister wanting to keep detailed country, province, or county lists, a backyard birder who wants to look up when exactly it was that you had your first Cape May Warbler in your yard, a travelling birder who wants to know where Snail Kites have been seen in the last month before they head to Florida, or even the high school student who wants to find out what type of birds they could see in a local park. eBird can do all of that and more.

How does eBird work?

eBird is essentially an online database that anyone can contribute bird sightings to. Sightings are uploaded in the form of checklists. Each checklist has detailed information on the date, location, and effort. To submit a checklist, users create an account on the eBird webpage. Based on the location and date a user specifies for their checklist, filters are applied to flag rare species or high counts for that location and date – a feature especially useful for beginning birders. Flagged records are examined by volunteer reviewers who may contact the user for more information before the record is accepted (i.e. allowed into the public database). Even if your record is not immediately accepted into the public database, it will always appear in your personal account. From the records that are accepted into the public database, a variety of statistics can be performed; the most commonly used is frequency. Frequency is calculated for each quarter of a month and is the percentage of checklists submitted that contains a given species for a given area.

What's in it for me?

You might be thinking that eBird just sounds like extra work, with the benefits seeming to go mostly to others. At first, you might have to keep regularly reminding yourself to enter your checklists. But if you make it part of your birding routine, it is no different than keeping a birding journal. The great thing is you can take it as seriously as you want to; some people submit checklists every day while

others submit only one or two a month. When away from internet access, I keep my sightings in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which can be directly uploaded to eBird at a later date. Once you begin using eBird, you will quickly come to realize the benefits of it.

Detailed list keeping

Because all submitted checklists have the date and location, eBird automatically does what most (very costly) commercial bird listing software already does – keeps every kind of list you can think of. eBird can generate year and life lists for any specific location(s), county/district/regional municipality, province/state, or country. You can then explore these lists in detail; for instance, I can display my Ontario life list, and then see that I saw my first Kentucky Warbler at Point Pelee National Park on May 7, 1996. I could then click on Kentucky Warbler and get a list of all of the dates/locations where I have seen it in Ontario, or I could click on Point Pelee National Park and see my life list for that location, or I could click on the date and see the complete list of birds I saw that day.

Bird-finding in the 21st century

Another great use of eBird is to find birds of interest. This is of use to both travelling and local birders. Most readers will be familiar with *OntBirds*, the rare bird email alert system run by OFO. While *OntBirds* is reserved for provincial rarities, there are often times when birders are interested in knowing about the presence of less rare species that might not meet the criteria to have been posted on *OntBirds*. Also, there may be many birders who are not OFO members or aren't aware of *OntBirds*, but do use eBird to keep track of their sightings, including the species you're interested in. eBird offers a couple tools for just this sort of function. First, eBird has an email alert system, which is still being developed. Currently, you can subscribe for a specific province or state and an automatic email will be sent to you whenever someone reports a species to eBird that you have not seen in the province you specified. The email is complete with a link to a map showing the location of the sighting. Some people may be concerned about reporting sensitive species; eBird suggests you wait a couple of weeks before entering sensitive species records or to be less specific with the location.

eBird also is a great tool for travelling birders. Many readers will be familiar with seasonal checklists (such as those from Long Point and Algonquin, which have bar graphs for each species depicting the relative abundance throughout the year). eBird can instantly generate seasonal bar graphs for any location, county, province, or country. That means if you are going to Florida in February, you can create a checklist of species for the specific counties in Florida where you will be and see the frequency of checklists each species has been reported on for that time and location. You can even take it one step further and click on a particular species to view a map showing recent and older sightings for whatever time period and location you specified.

This technology is becoming quite accessible, with apps for iPhones and hopefully other smart phones, meaning you can have access to all of this right in the field. On a recent trip to the southwest, a friend of mine logged on to one of the apps for eBird on his iPhone. He was able to ask for a map showing any rarities that had been reported nearby – it led him to his lifer – Lawrence's Goldfinch.

Getting started with eBird

Obviously, the first thing you'll need is a computer with internet access. The Canadian portal is available at www.ebird.ca. You'll have to register as a new user and create a login name and password. Once you have an account, you can start exploring the data or submitting your own observations. eBird is equipped with import tools, so if you have been using another program to keep your sightings, you should be able to import them into eBird, or, at the very least, export your older records from your software to a spreadsheet and import that. Each time you enter a checklist for a new (to your account) location, you will have to tell eBird where the new location is. The best way to do this is to use the Google maps interface within eBird to select a public birding location (known in eBird as a 'HotSpot') or a new location that you can name. Another great tool to be aware of in eBird is checklist sharing. This can significantly reduce the amount of checklists you enter if you often go out birding with other people. If a group goes out together, one person can enter the data and then share that checklist

with everyone else – after you accept the checklist into your account, it will show up the same as if you had each entered it on your own.

I hope you will consider becoming a regular contributor to eBird. If you start asking around, you will be surprised at the number of birders who have already begun using it. As birders we are all out there collecting valuable data, no matter our level of expertise. Think of the amount of data that we can contribute every time one of us records our observations. If eBird existed 50 years ago, we could have a complete record of all of the changes to bird's ranges and abundances; now that it does exist it provides an opportunity to track the next 50 years. If we as a group are keeping good records, it provides much more power to justify our hobby.

I would be happy to help get you started, or answer any questions you may have about eBird. You can reach me by email at michofski@hotmail.com.

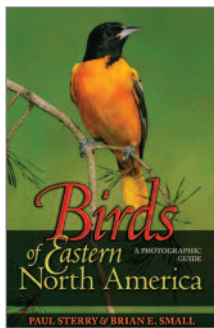
Book Reviews

Birds of Western North America: A Photographic Guide

2009. Paul Sterry & Brian E. Small. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

Birds of Eastern North America: A Photographic Guide

2009. Paul Sterry & Brian E. Small. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.



This two-volume set continues with the trend to produce more photo-based guides, incorporating high quality digital images, created by some of North America's top wildlife photographers. Both Sterry and Small are well respected worldwide for their mastery with the camera. The scope of the two-volume set is ambitious — covering the entire western and eastern halves, respectively, of mainland North America (excluding Mexico) and the Arctic and Subarctic territorial islands of the U.S. and Canada (excluding Hawaii).

Each book is similarly laid out with introductory pages that include information on how to use the book, bird topography with an accompanying abbreviated glossary, information on plumage, habitats, migration and movements. Following this are the primary identification plates — 186 in western guide and 149 in the eastern one. Each volume adds five and four plates, respectively, for "Out of the Ordinary" species. The accounts themselves provide standard information on each species, such as common and scientific name, identification characteristics, voice, status and

habitat and observation tips. Each account is accompanied by a range map produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and of course, photographs — lots of them. Each species has at least two photos depicting, adult vs. immature, male vs. female or forms and morphs.

For novice to intermediate birders, this book will become a very useful resource and will be both informative and entertaining, but, for advanced birders, it falls short. There are too many gaps in the information provided and the species covered are not inclusive enough to sate the appetite of the more serious birders. Here are some of my concerns and observations:

There is a huge overlap between the eastern and western species covered in each volume and this results in much duplication. All of the introductory information is duplicated in both volumes, including the use of most of the photographs of species in common. In fairness, the western guide does show western forms and morphs, while the eastern does the opposite, so some effort was made to reflect regional variations of widespread species.

The range maps are well done and depict both summering and wintering grounds. I found that more detail showing migration routes between the breeding and wintering grounds would have been helpful. While the ranges shown are generally very good and have incorporated recent data from the many atlases that have been undertaken across North America, two species jump out at me: the maps for the Trumpeter Swan and Bald Eagle are outdated and do not reflect the recent expansion, across Ontario in particular.

The photographs are very good in most cases and care was taken to choose ones that actually show as many key identification features as possible. The authors and photographers are to be commended. Some plates however, such as the swifts, depict species where the identifying characteristics are not easily recognized.

Perhaps the biggest flaw with the book is the cursory treatment of certain species, and worse still, the omission of others. It's unclear why the "Out of the Ordinary" plates depict the species chosen and not others, or even why they are included at all. There are many species that could fall into this category, and for the most part the majority of these have been ignored in favour of such oddities as Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Green Parakeet and Rufous Hummingbird in the eastern guide, and Ruddy Shelduck and California Condor in the western volume.

The books do have value, however, as a resource for many of the more common North American species, but should not be construed to be an inclusive representation of all the species that might be encountered. Many of the photos are excellent and will be a useful asset to assist in bird identification.

Geoff Carpentier



The Bird Detective: Investigating the Secret Lives of Birds

2010. Dr Bridget Stutchbury.
HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
Hardcover, 272 pages, \$32.99

For any bird or nature enthusiast who also occasionally enjoys sneaking a peek at the latest issue of *The National Enquirer* while in line at the

grocery store, *The Bird Detective* may be the book for you. Over ten chapters, Dr Stutchbury takes us into the "bedrooms" of the birds from all over the world.

Dr Stutchbury shares her personal experiences of many years spent in the field researching various aspects of bird behaviour. We learn why certain birds cheat on their mates, sneaking off their territories to have a secret rendezvous with a neighbouring male and why others remain monogamous. The book also tells us how and why some species of birds "divorce" to try to increase their breeding success, what females find attractive about males (with vivid descriptions of mating rituals and plumage), the differences in the parenting efforts between males and females of certain species, why some birds live in groups and the demands that migration places on the breeding season.

One of the most interesting parts of the book was the apparent differences between the behaviour of birds breeding in the temperate regions of North America versus the habits of birds who remain in the tropics year round. Why are birds who migrate north more prone to cheating than the more monogamous species in the tropics? Another aspect of the book I really found refreshing was that Dr Stutchbury was able to refrain from using overt anthropomorphism, a trap easy enough to fall into when writing about animal behaviour. She uses words like "divorce" and "cheating" to make the situation relatable on human terms but stops short of personalizing the birds.

Dr Stutchbury relates all this wonderful information about bird behaviour and then quickly sobers us by describing how human activities can have a significant effect on many of these behaviours and, consequently, the health and populations of birds across the world. To list a few: habitat loss and destruction affect tropical and migrating birds, long-line fishing activities affect albatross populations, and climate change is shifting migration routes. As with her last book, *Silence of the Songbirds*, the author continues to make us think about the effects our choices have on the lives of birds.

By Steve Gillis

Ontario Field Ornithologists 2009 Financial Statement

Balance Sheet 31 December 2009

ASSETS

	2009	2008
Cash in Bank	\$ 43,417	\$ 33,770
Ontario Savings Bonds	20,000	20,000
Convention Deposit	710	450
Accounts Receivable	4,775	3,350
GST Receivable	1,294	1,890
Inventory	3,818	—
Accrued Interest	2,449	3,174

TOTAL \$ 76,463 \$ 62,634

LIABILITIES and MEMBERS EQUITY

	2009	2008
Prepaid Membership Dues	\$ 20,103	\$ 20,842
Accounts Payable	\$ 3,534	—
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 23,637	\$ 20,842
MEMBERS EQUITY		
Balance beginning of Year	\$ 41,792	56,913
Net Income for Year	12,754	(15,121)
Less prior year adjustment	\$ (1,720)	—
Balance end of Year	\$52,826	41,792

TOTAL \$ 76,463 \$ 62,634

Income and Expense Statement Year Ended 31 December 2009

INCOME

	2009	2008
Membership Dues	\$ 33,837	\$ 24,560
Donations	6,259	9,114
Baillie Birdathon	350	1,926
Advertising	9,178	10,269
Sale of Merchandise	2,612	3,633
Interest	995	2,682
Sale of Publications	285	277
GST Rebate	—	1,654
Annual Convention (Net)	1,148	—
Inventory adjustment	3,818	—

TOTAL INCOME \$ 58,482 \$ 54,115

EXPENSES

	2009	2008
Printing and Mailing-		
- Journal Ontario Birds	\$ 22,733	\$ 36,705
- Newsletter OFO News	12,773	13,207
Administration	2,464	5,016
Annual Convention (Net)	—	2,372
Awards	149	358
Checklists	—	2,263
Field Trips	266	929
Liability Insurance	2,992	2,884
OFO Website and Ontbirds	1,455	1,175
Purchase of Merchandise	1,558	2,266
Stationery	\$ 1,338	\$ 2,266
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 45,728	\$ 69,236
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 58,482	\$ 54,115

NET ANNUAL INCOME \$ 12,754 \$ (15,121)

John E. Black
President

Brian W. Gibbon
Treasurer

John Catto, Audit Committee

Nikon Photo Quiz

Sponsored by Nikon Canada

By Willie D'Anna



Photo by Sandra and Frank Horvath

Skill Level: Beginner

THIS ISSUE'S PHOTO QUIZ INCLUDES two birds that appear very similar in size and plumage. The bird on the right is inserting its bill into the bill of the bird on the left. This makes me immediately suspect that the bird on the right is an adult and the one on the left a juvenile, and in all likelihood, the same species is involved. Although it is not unknown for adult birds to feed fledglings or nestlings of other species, it is very rare, so we will start with the assumption that we are dealing with one species and then attempt to confirm this later on.

At first glance, this quiz may look easy to many readers. Two birds clinging to a tree trunk in a vertical posture, these could only be woodpeckers, nuthatches, or creepers. A perusal of the field guide quickly narrows the choices further to the two similar species, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker. The white unbarred back shown by the bird on the right confirms this and rules out all of the other woodpeckers.

Voice is often the best and quickest means to separate these two species. The Downy gives a gentle flat "pic" while the Hairy gives a higher sharper more forceful "peek". However, in the quiz, lacking auditory cues, we need to find visual clues. The bill length is the first character that experienced birders look for. Downy has a relatively shorter bill than Hairy, which is pretty easy to tell on most individuals. However in this case, neither bird is showing its bill well enough for this to be determined.

The relative bill length of these two species is normally such a reliable and often-used field mark that many of us are not in the habit of looking for other characters. For those situations where the bill cannot be seen well or when we are dealing with that rare individual bird with an equivocal bill length, we can

look at the white outer tail feathers. These are *normally* barred or spotted on Downy and plain white on Hairy. Looking at the presumed adult bird, we see unbarred outer

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

tail feathers. That makes these two Hairy Woodpeckers, right? Well, unfortunately it is not that simple because Downy Woodpeckers sometimes show only a small black spot or even lack markings entirely on the outer tail feathers, or at least do not always show the marks in this view. The barring is often more noticeable on the underside of these feathers because one can see the entire outer tail feather from below, whereas we may only see the outer webs of those feathers from above.

During the course of this discussion, some of you have no doubt been studying the outer tail feathers on the presumed juvenile. We can see the top side of the outer right tail feathers at an oblique angle. It appears that there may be something on these feathers but it is unclear what these markings are. We are now down to the outer left tail feathers of the juvenile. Finally, we can see something definitive. There is a black bar visible on the outermost feather, which would not be shown by a Hairy Woodpecker. Knowing this and looking at the right outer tail feathers once more, we can convince ourselves that the marks just visible are very likely the spots or bars of a Downy Woodpecker. We can further confirm the ID by noticing that it

Woodpecker. Birders who have The Sibley Guide will note that he suggests that a noticeable tuft of feathers above the base of the bill, like that shown by the juvenile here, is supportive of Downy Woodpecker. However, I have found this character to be extremely variable, with some Hairys showing very prominent nasal tufts, so I have not gotten to the point where I am comfortable using this as a field mark. If you have a different opinion about this based upon field experience, I would appreciate hearing about it.

Can we determine for sure that the bird on the left is a juvenile, as we assumed? The fact that we can see the bars on the outer tail feathers is a supporting piece of evidence. The adult bird may lack spots or bars because they have worn off by summer but a juvenile should have them while still being cared for by an adult. But really, the strongest evidence is what we have already noticed — the bird on the right appears to be feeding the bird on the left. Finally, this does not appear to be a case of mate-feeding, as neither bird appears to have the red nape patch of an adult male; it is the male that feeds the female in such instances and the bird on the right, doing the feeding, is clearly a female.

A second photo of the same two birds, taken just after the first photo, shows the classic short Downy Woodpecker bill on both the adult and juvenile, as well as an even more obvious tail bar on the juvenile, further confirming that we have reached the correct identification. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers have a similar range with Hairy occurring throughout the province and Downy occurring in all but the northern Hudson Bay lowlands. Both are familiar birds in large parts of the province, with Hairy more prevalent in the deep woods and Downy more likely in open areas, but there is extensive

overlap in habitat preference. Although Downy Woodpeckers are common at bird feeders, especially suet, Hairy Woodpeckers also partake of this easy resource. These two photos of an adult female **Downy Woodpecker** and a juvenile were taken by Sandra and Frank Horvath at Port Loring, Ontario on 11 June 2008.

lacks a black spur on the side of the upper breast coming from the shoulder, which Hairy Woodpecker usually shows. Having identified the juvenile, it is easy to confirm the adult must also be a Downy Woodpecker by virtue of its very similar size, as a Hairy Woodpecker would appear considerably larger than the juvenile Downy



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