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OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

What do birds, especially rare birds and owls, have in common with Britney Spears?

Birders, Photographers and Values

By Christina Lewis

If that seems like a strange question, then you haven't been out birding in recent years. Although the aforementioned celebrity is human, her situation bears a remarkable resemblance to those of owls and other hot or cool birds.

It is human nature to be fascinated with the unusual, the rare and the glamorous, and to join the crowd in pursuit. In spite of our big brains we are still innately both hunters and herd animals. We can be compassionate, but we are also selfish. To some extent we all want to get our picture on the cover of the Rolling Stone, or in the case of owls and other wildlife, National Geographic. But in the process we often lose sight of the big picture — the world we live in, and the other living beings around us.

Owl Be Back…Or Not

In the October 2007 issue of *OFO News*, Ron Pittaway and Jean Iron wrote a short article entitled "Paparazzi Birders". They said, "We are all paparazzi birders from the bird's point of view" and that we must all "consider our impact on the birds and their diminishing habitats". Owls in particular were not cited in this article as major targets, but they are. Some species seem very approachable, which can lead to the illusion that they are tame. The problem is that we forget, or perhaps never learn, about the lives of the birds we are pursuing for that close-up look or that candid shot.

During the Great Gray Owl irruption of 2005-2006 we were privileged to experience this phenomenal opportunity to learn about these rare visitors, their biology and ecology, and why they came south that winter. Unfortunately, rather than learning, many opted to turn this opportunity into a circus, treating these birds as objects rather than as living creatures who are really more like Greta Garbo than Britney, wanting only to be left alone. How many of the observers learned anything beyond how to point and shoot, or how to use Internet listservs to get easy directions to the latest celebrity bird? Instead of keeping our distance and respecting the owls as wild animals under stress due to a crash in their food source on their northern breeding grounds, we ganged up on them along roadsides and trampled through property posted as private, to get that crippling view or perfect photo because everyone else was doing it.

Drawing by Christina Lewis

In This Issue

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The Great Bait Debate

Have you ever secretly wanted to be Geraldo Rivera or Jerry Springer for a day? Guaranteed to spark a debate, and perhaps even start a fight — just mention baiting. This controversial activity, using live bait to lure birds especially owls is not new, but information on the Internet and the recent proliferation of paparazzi bird photographers have caused it to become almost a subculture. There are people who defend tossing out live mice and other small store-bought rodents to attract owls as harmless and even helpful, providing the birds with food just as we do for foraging passerines at backyard feeders. This seems poor justification for what is essentially self-serving behaviour, at the expense of other animals' lives. Furthermore, when we repeatedly flush a bird to get it to do something so that we can have a better look or photo, is this just not exploitation, tantamount to harassment?

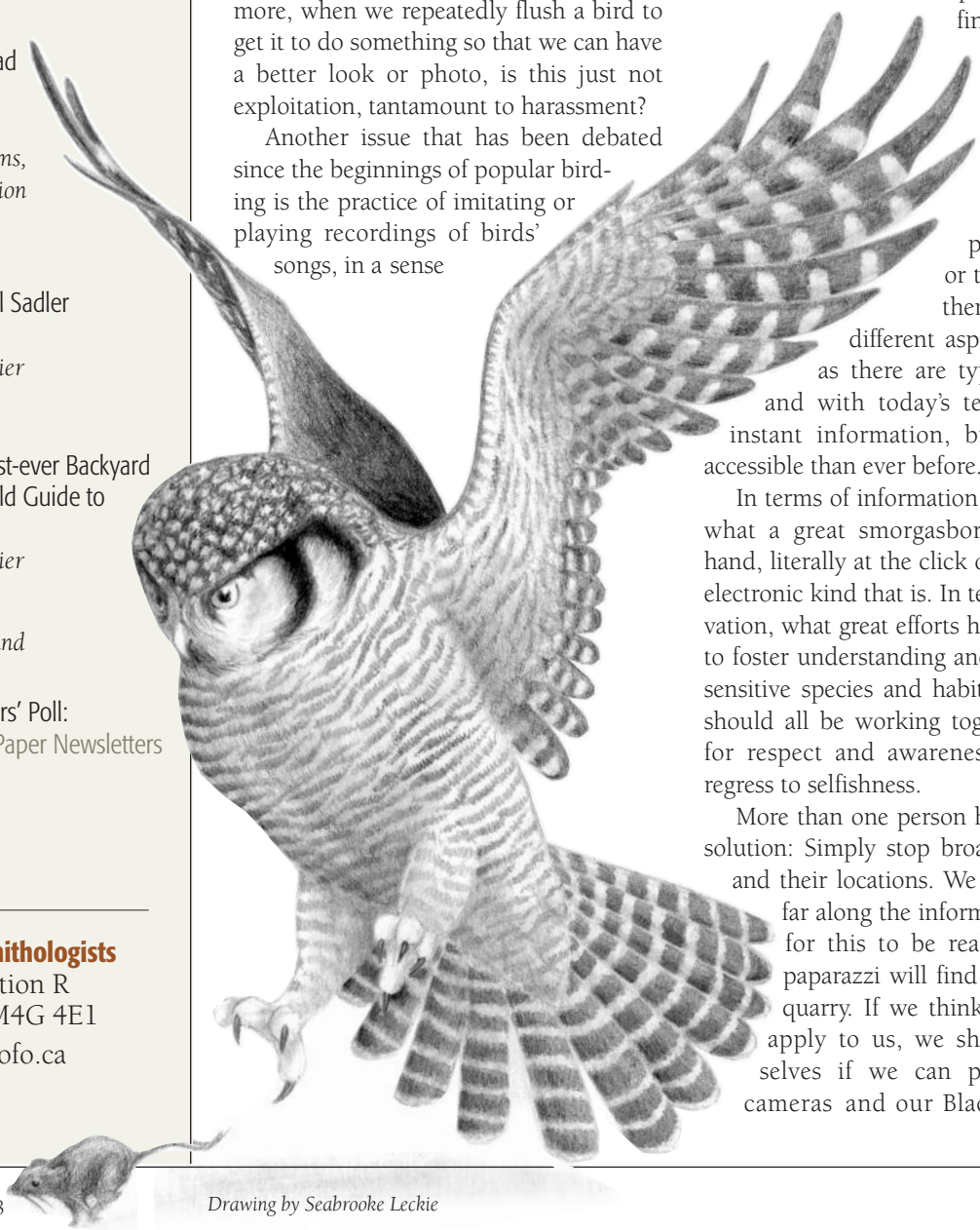
Another issue that has been debated since the beginnings of popular birding is the practice of imitating or playing recordings of birds' songs, in a sense baiting them, to get them to show. Naturally the birds are interested in who's in their space, and whether a newcomer poses a threat. Birds on breeding territory or at a nest site are very sensitive, and our disturbance does cause abandonment of nests and eggs.

The Big Tick, The Big Click, and the Big Picture

The ornithologist who studies birds in the field or in the lab, the bander collecting migration data, the casual birder, the rarity-chaser, the big lister after one more tick on the checklist, the big day aficionado, the field trip leader trying to find his/her participants more birds for their bucks, the photographer trying to get that ultimate portrait, or two, or two hundred… there are as many different aspects of birding as there are types of people, and with today's technology and instant information, birds are more accessible than ever before.

In terms of information and resources, what a great smorgasbord we have at hand, literally at the click of a mouse, the electronic kind that is. In terms of conservation, what great efforts have been made to foster understanding and protection of sensitive species and habitats? While we should all be working together to strive for respect and awareness, instead we regress to selfishness.

More than one person has offered this solution: Simply stop broadcasting birds and their locations. We have gone too far along the information highway for this to be realistic, and the paparazzi will find a way to their quarry. If we think this does not apply to us, we should ask ourselves if we can put down our cameras and our Blackberries, our



Drawing by Seabrooke Leckie

binoculars and our life lists, and find some perspective and humility. We should consider what our environment, the birds and other creatures, including people, really mean to us.

Do we really want to treat that owl, that rare bird or any creature, like Britney Spears? Are we willing to speak up and confront disrespect, to rise above the crowd, look at ourselves and question our own behaviour? To really see the big picture, and ourselves in it?

The Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club and the Ottawa RA Photo Club Nature Group have collaborated on producing a Code of Conduct for ethical behaviour around birds and their habitats. We included guidelines from the ABA and OFO Code of Ethics as well as nature photography websites. Our goal is to attempt some education and promote some awareness — and self-awareness.

We encourage everyone who goes out to enjoy nature, whatever equipment one chooses to use, to have a look at the OFNC web site at www.ofnc.ca. For a more detailed version of the code, please contact Chris Lewis at hagenius@primus.ca

Acknowledgements

I thank John Black, Bob Bracken, Jean Iron, Ron Pittaway, Pierre Gauthier and Jim Robertson (RA Photo Club Nature Group), and OFNC Birds Committee (especially Gord Belyea, Christine Hanrahan, Bev McBride, Gordon Pringle and Chris Traynor) for their valuable help with this article and the Code of Conduct.

Laughing Gull / Jim Richards

Changes to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds

By Jim Rising

In the July issue of the ornithological journal *The Auk*, the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) Committee of Classification and Nomenclature published the 49th Supplement to the AOU Check-list of North American Birds. These supplements are published annually. This supplement is an annotated list of changes to be made to the Check-list, which generally is accepted as the official list of birds from the AOU area (Canada, Mexico, United States including Hawaii, the Caribbean islands, and Central America). As such, the names, sequence of species, and classification of the Check-list generally is used in provincial and state lists, and many field guides, and is also followed by the ABA. The Check-list Committee meets once a year to discuss changes in classification and nomenclature that have been proposed in the literature or that are necessitated by errors in previous lists. In recent years, the members of the Committee have relied more and more on communicating their views about proposed changes via email. This committee is chaired by Dr. Richard Banks of the U. S. Geological Survey and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington. Other members of the committee are: Terry Chesser (U. S. Geological Survey and the National Museum of Natural History), Carla Cicero (Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley), Jon Dunn (Bishop, California), Andrew Kratter (Florida Museum of Natural History), Irby Lovette (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology), Pamela Rasmussen (Michigan State University Museum), J. V. Remsen, Jr. (Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University), myself (University of Toronto, and Royal Ontario Museum), Douglas Stotz (Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago), and Kevin Winker (University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks).

Jon Dunn is the only member of the committee who is not an avian taxonomist, although he is quite knowledgeable about many taxonomic matters. His special and very important roll is to keep the committee informed about the validity of extralimital records and to help track range extensions for the next edition of the Check-list. Other members of the committee are responsible for assessing proposed changes in the taxonomy of specific groups. For example, I am responsible for making the initial assessments of proposed changes in the taxonomy of sparrows, cardinals, finches, tanagers, and blackbirds. Thus, when papers are published on the affinities of any species in these groups, I summarize information in those papers and other relevant papers for the committee, and recommend changes to the Check-list. The members of the committee then discuss these proposals and vote on the proposed changes. The committee is, and probably needs to be, conservative, so unless there is near unanimous sentiment for a change, the status quo is maintained in the list. Below are some of the proposed changes that were published in *The Auk* as the 49th Supplement. This is the 8th Supplement since the publication of the 7th edition of the *Check-list of North American Birds* (1998). A more detailed account of the recent changes summarized here can be found on the AOU web site under "Check-List" http://www.aou.org/checklist/suppl/AOU_checklist_suppl_49.pdf

Little Gull / Jim Richards

Black-headed Gull / Tom Thomas

Bonaparte's Gull / Tom Thomas

As a consequence of revised phylogeny, based on new data, the sequence of the tinamou genera *Tinamus* and *Nothocercus* are reversed in the Check-list. The revised sequence is: Highland Tinamou followed by Great Tinamou, etc.

Recent genetic studies indicate that the flamingos are closely related to the grebes. They were formerly considered to be more closely related to the Ciconiiformes (herons, ibes, storks, etc.). Thus in the next Check-list the Phoenicopteriformes (flamingos) will follow Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*). Also, the Greater Flamingo of the New World (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) is recognized as a distinct species, the American Flamingo (*P. ruber*).

Parkinson's Petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*) is recognized as a species known from the United States on the basis of an accepted record from California, off Pt. Reyes, Marin County.

The Brown Pelicans are split into two species, the Brown Pelican (*Pelicanus occidentalis*) and the Peruvian Pelican (*P. thagus*) on the basis of its much larger size, differences in coloration of plumages and soft parts, and the lack of evidence of interbreeding between the two.

The Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) is added to the list of birds known to occur in Canada and the United States on the basis of records from Newfoundland and the Pribilof Islands, Alaska.

The Eastern Spot-billed Duck (*Anas zonorhyncha*), of which there are records from Alaska, is recognized as a species distinct from the Indian Spot-billed Duck (*A. poeciloarhyncha*) which has not been reported in North America, and thus replaces it in the AOU Check-list.

As a result of studies of mitochondrial DNA, a genus-level reclassification of the subfamily Larinae (gulls) has been proposed. The traditionally-defined genus *Larus* was found to be paraphyletic, that is, the branch on the phylogenetic tree containing the *Larus* gulls also contained some species generally placed in other genera, but not all of the species generally placed in *Larus*. Thus the present genus *Larus* has been reclassified into four different genera, leaving the species in Larus a "monophyletic" group.

Most of this proposal has been accepted by the Check-list committee, and

therefore the genera and species of gulls in the next Check-list will be as follows:

Under the heading Subfamily LARINAE:

Genus *Creagrus*
Creagus furcatus – Swallow-tailed Gull

Genus *Rissa*
Rissa tridactyla– Black-legged Kittiwake
Rissa brevirostris – Red-legged Kittiwake

Genus *Pagophila*
Pagophila eburnea – Ivory Gull

Genus *Xema*
Xema sabini – Sabine's Gull

Genus *Chroicocephalus*
Chroicocephalus philadelphia – Bonaparte's Gull
Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus – Gray-hooded Gull
Chroicocephalus ridibundus – Black-headed Gull

Genus *Hydrocoloeus*
Hydrocoloeus minutus – Little Gull

Genus *Rhodostethia*
Rhodostethia rosea – Ross's Gull

Genus *Leucophaeus*
Leucophaeus modestus – Gray Gull
Leucophaeus atricilla – Laughing Gull
Leucophaeus pipixcan – Franklin's Gull

Genus *Larus*
Larus belcheri – Belcher's Gull
Larus crassirostris – Black-tailed Gull
Larus heermanni – Heermann's Gull
Larus delawarensis – Ring-billed Gull
Larus occidentalis – Western Gull
Larus livens – Yellow-footed Gull
Larus californicus – California Gull
Larus argentatus – Herring Gull [including *L. smithsonianus* and *L. vegae*]
Larus michahellis – Yellow-legged Gull
Larus thayeri – Thayer's Gull
Larus glaucoides – Iceland Gull
Larus fuscus – Lesser Black-backed Gull
Larus schistisagus – Slaty-backed Gull
Larus glaucescens – Glaucous-winged Gull
Larus hyperboreus – Glaucous Gull
Larus marinus – Great Black-backed Gull
Larus dominicanus – Kelp Gull

Note, as indicated in the above list, the Swallow-tailed Gull is moved from the Appendix of the Check-list (listing birds reported in the Check-list area with insufficient evidence for inclusion in the main list) on the basis of a reevaluation of a bird from Monterey Bay reported in 1985 that was considered to be of uncertain origin.

On the basis of mitochondrial DNA sequence data there has been a reclassification of the Central and South American parrots of the genus *Pionopsitta*, and now those taxa found in the Check-list area are placed in the genus *Pyrilia*. The species listed in the Check-list are now *Pyrilia pyrilia*, the Saffron-headed Parrot, and *Pyrilia haematotis*, the Brown-hooded Parrot.

Remove the hyphens from the English names of *Colibri delphinae* and *C. thalassinus*, to become Brown Violetear and Green Violetear, respectively.

Change the English name of *Goethalsia bella* from Rufous-cheeked Hummingbird to Pirre Hummingbird.

Separate as a distinct species the Gray-cheeked Nunlet (*Nonnula frontalis*) of Panama and northern Colombia from the Rufous-capped Nunlet (*N. ruficapilla*) of South America. No evidence was presented for their merger, and many other classifications treat them as separate species.

Place the Golden-olive Woodpecker and Gray-crowned Woodpecker in the genus *Colaptes*. They thus become *Colaptes rubiginosus* and *Colaptes auricularis*, respectively.

The large order Passeriformes (Passerine Birds or perching birds) is divided into two large groups, the "suboscines" and the "oscines" (oscines are often called "songbirds"). The suboscines include many species in several different groups, traditionally recognized as different families (New World Flycatchers, Ovenbirds, Antbirds, Manakins, etc). Most of these suboscines are found only in the New World (indeed, most are found only in South and Central America). The affinities of the species in these groups, and indeed, the relationships among the groups themselves are not clear and frequently debated, and the limits of the groups, and the species included in each, are in the process of being reassessed, principally on the basis of new molecular data.

Recently, independent DNA sequence data sets have shown that one of these species, Sapayoa (*Sapayoa aenigma*), also known as the Broad-billed Manakin (because it was thought to be a manakin) or the Broad-billed Sapayoa appears to be a representative of a Suboscine family Eurylaimidae (the Broadbills), heretofore thought to be found only in southeast and southern Asia and Africa. The present supplement proposes that the sequence of suboscines in the next edition of the Check-list should be as follows:


Franklin's Gull / Jim Richards

Suborder EURYLAIMI: Suboscines (in part) Broadbills, Asities, and Pittas
Family EURYLAIMIDAE: Broadbills
Sapayoa aenigma – Sapayoa

Suborder TYRANNI: Suboscines (in part)
Family FURNARIIDAE: Ovenbirds, Woodcreepers, and Leaftossers
Subfamily SCLEURURINAE: Leaftossers and Miners
Subfamily FURNARIINAE: Ovenbirds
Subfamily DENDROCOLAPTINAE: Woodcreepers

Within the Dendrocolaptinae, the genus *Myrmotherula* is not monophyletic, and a new genus is named, *Epinecrophylla*, for the stipple-throated species. Thus the Checker-throated Antwren becomes *Epinecrophylla fulviventris*; this species is found in Central and South America.

Family FORMICARIIDAE: Antthrushes [not including the Antpittas]
Family CONOPOPHAGIDAE: Gnateaters
Family GRALLARIIDAE: Antpittas
Family RHINOCRYPTIDAE: Tapaculos
Family TYRANNIDAE: Tyrant Flycatchers [New World Flycatchers]

Within the Tyrannidae, on the basis of a bird photographed at Key West, Florida, 8-27 March 2007, place the Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) on the list of species reported from the United States.

The English name of *Cnipodectes subbrunneus* is changed from Brownish Flycatcher to Brownish Twistwing, in conformity with usage in many Latin American books.

Pallas's Leaf-Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*) is placed on the list of species reported from North America on the basis of a bird reported from Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, 25 September 2006.

The Song Thrush is confirmed as a species found in North America on the basis of a specimen from Greenland (1982) and a photograph of a bird found at Saint-Fulgence, Quebec, 11-17 November 2006.

Following common usage, most of the species listed in the Check-list that are called "robins" (in the genus *Turdus*) are changed to "thrushes", e.g. Clay-colored Robin becomes Clay-colored Thrush. Exceptions are the Rufous-backed Robin, Rufous-collared Robin, and American Robin; these remain "robins".

The English name of *Chlorothraupis carmioli* is changed from Olive Tanager to Carmiol's Tanager to avoid confusion with a different species (*C. olivacea*).

Following new phylogenetic information, the sequence of the tanagers of the Neotropical genus *Tangara* is changed. Many of these are found in the AOU area. The AOU web page can be consulted for the updated sequence.

The Neotropical genera *Lysurus* and *Buarremon* are merged into *Arremon*. The English names are unchanged.

The Troupial (*Icterus icterus*) is split into three distinct species. *Icterus icterus*, the only species found in the AOU area, is now called the Venezuelan Troupial.

The scientific name of the Hawaiian Anianiau is changed from *Hemignathus parvus* to *Magumma parva*. This change is based on both genetic and morphological differences.

Several proposals for changes were not accepted by the committee. Among these was a proposal to split the Orchard Oriole into two species and to move the New World finches of the genus *Carpodacus* to a genus different from the Old World species in that taxon.

Bonaparte's Gull / Jim Richards

Have You Been **Gulled** Recently?

By Randy Horvath

Everyone reading this knows what a gull is: a mostly grey and white colonial waterbird, found throughout the province, which frequently poses identification challenges and is often the subject of bird photo quizzes. This weak, tongue-in-cheek definition will suffice to conjure images of our most common gull species. But I wonder how many birders, including lariphiles, know that the word "gull" can be used as a verb?

As a teacher of English with an interest in etymology, the study of word origins and their historical development, I find this use of the word intriguing, especially as I am an avid birder, and one who enjoys gull watching to boot. When used correctly, as a transitive verb requiring a direct object, to gull someone means to deceive, trick, fool, or even cheat him or her. Although it is rarely used this way in contemporary English, it is the root of the well known adjective "gullible." Gullible literally means "able to be gulled," with the suggestion of being easily deceived, duped, and taken advantage of.

Considering how often we misidentify birds, particularly gulls, it is tempting to think that the noun and verb forms are closely related in terms of their derivation. However, it is sheer coincidence that these two English words are identical in spelling and pronunciation. The use of gull as a noun to signify the kind of bird that so many readers disdain can be traced far back in time, beyond Middle English, and possibly has its ultimate origins in the Welsh language. On the other hand, the use of gull as a verb is thought by some to derive from Old French. And, of course, we cannot blame the birds themselves for deliberately deceiving or fooling us, can we? Well, some of us may want to.

We all make mistakes, no matter our level of knowledge, skills, and expertise. So, the next time you mistake a Mourning Warbler for a MacGillivray's, a Clay-colored Sparrow for a Brewer's, or a juvenile Least Sandpiper for an adult Little Stint – go ahead and curse, if you must. Better yet, especially if there are children around, just simply confess, "I was gulled!"

Saving a Gull Impaled by Fish Hooks

By Geoff Carpentier

Freed Ring-billed Gull / Kim and Geoff Carpentier

Ensnared Ring-billed Gull / Kim and Geoff Carpentier

As my wife Kim and I strolled the boulder-strewn shore at Killbear Provincial Park near Parry Sound Ontario this past August, a pile of white feathers, seemingly out of place, caught our eye. Moving closer, we edged around the rocks and small bushes and found a semi-moribund Ring-billed Gull lying, eyes closed, on the shore. Thinking it dead or dying, we cautiously approached and were surprised to see its head rise slowly and its glazed eye stare at, almost through, us. It was then that we saw the problem. Two treble hooks from a large silver fishing lure were embedded in its beak, face and foot.

After brief scrutiny, the bird had assessed us as harmless and relaxed again, obviously weak and tired. Quickly its head fell forward and it appeared to go to sleep. Seizing the opportunity, I slowly moved towards it, hoping to catch it and remove the lure. But it was not as weak, nor as unaware, as we had anticipated and, as I approached, it rose off the beach and immediately flew strongly several hundred meters out of sight around a point of land. We felt helpless as we watched it fly with its head firmly anchored to its foot by the hooks.

Thinking it could not survive in this condition, I decided to try to find it and went on alone. I eventually spotted it, once again resting on the shore. At first it seemed deathly still, but again it became quickly alert and flew off when I approached. I decided to stand back and wait for it to resettle, as I tried to figure out how to catch it without causing it any further angst. My opportunity came quickly as it flew back to the shore, huddled down under a small bush and hid its head in its breast feathers. I approached quickly and quietly from the lakeside and was able to catch it barehanded, before it could react. Now the tricky part, what was I to do with it?

I held it gently on its back, cradling it in my arm as my fingers gingerly held the feet, more to protect the bird than me. It seemed to be calm, but each time I reached to see how and where the hooks were embedded in the face, it managed to bite me! The bite was not at all painful, but it certainly was authoritative. I decided to try to find a park staff person to assist. As it turned out I could not find one, but I did walk right onto another beach, filled with campers. They immediately spotted my prize and were most appreciative, interested and helpful. One got a pair of small wire cutters and offered them to me to help remove the barbs.

Luckily Kim was also there and together we held the bird and gingerly worked on the hooks. We had to be careful as each tug on the hooks on the foot pulled those in the face. It took a bit of careful maneuvering but we were eventually able to hold it firmly and work each barb independently. As Kim held the bird's foot or beak, I restrained the body and removed each of the four barbs on which it was impaled. The two on the foot were first and easiest and the one through the nostril followed quickly thereafter. We were able to successfully and completely remove these three hooks from the bird. The last barb had penetrated the face and proved more challenging. I decided to cut it off near the skin surface and leave the small barb in place as it was embedded too deeply in the flesh and could not safely be removed without tearing the tissue. Hopefully, it will eventually rust and the bird would be rid of the hook once and for all.

It was interesting to watch the bird's reaction, for as soon as it sensed that we were not going to hurt it, it stopped struggling and allowed us to perform the surgery. It was watchful of every move, but never flinched or tried to get away. Even after we were done, it lay in my arms and simply looked up at me.

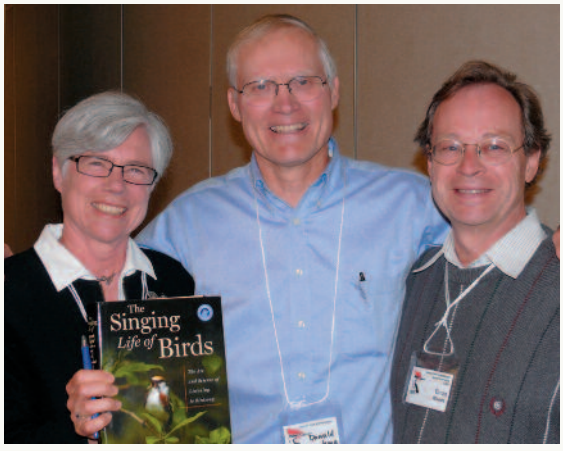
Once we were satisfied we had done all we could, I took it to the shore and set it down. It immediately drank from the lake and started tossing shoreline debris around looking for food. It clearly was very hungry and thirsty. A small boy came along and dropped some cracker bits and the gull immediately pounced on these and had its first meal in what I presume was some time. When we left, the bird was feeding well, drinking ravenously and looking for handouts. Those who watched the spectacle on the beach thanked my wife and me for caring, but for me it was the inner satisfaction that made me feel good at having played a part in saving this bird from certain death.

Ontario Field Ornithologists
Annual Convention 2008

By Jim Heslop

By all measures, the OFO Annual Convention held on 4 and 5 October 2008 in Hamilton was an outstanding success. Participants in the numerous field trips turned up 145 bird species in area woods, marshes, on its beaches and Lake Ontario.

President's Welcome — John Black / Jim Heslop



Valerie Jacobs, Donald Kroodsma and Doug Woods / Jean Iron

OFO Distinguished Ornithologist — Harry Lumsden / Jim Heslop

Attendance at the evening bird and book fair, Annual Convention and banquet at the accommodating Grand Olympia Convention Centre very nearly eclipsed that of the 25th Anniversary Convention of 2007.

Club President, John Black, conducted the Annual General Meeting in an efficient and expeditious fashion. OFO membership is growing and finances are in good order.

Ken Abraham presented Harry Lumsden with the OFO Distinguished Ornithologist Award for his lifetime contributions to the scientific study of birds in Ontario. Mr. Lumsden entreated members to take up the slack of under-funded government agencies in the study and protection of our threatened bird species at risk.

Keynote speaker, Donald Kroodsma, titillated members' ears and imaginations during his *The Singing Life of Birds* presentation and at his workshop the following morning.

Field Trip Review – Master of Ceremonies Ron Tozer and Trip Co-ordinator Cheryl Edgecombe / Jim Heslop

Congratulations to the OFO Convention Organizing Committee for an exciting two days of birding and social time. Mark your calendars for the next convention at Point Pelee 3 and 4 October 2009.

Thank You Exhibitors

OFO is grateful to the following organizations and those individuals manning their various displays at the 2008 Annual Convention.

- Bill Read's Books
- Bushnell Outdoor Products
- Flora and Fauna Nature Tours
- Guelph Field Naturalists
- Hamilton Naturalists' Club
- Kowa Optimed, Inc
- Niagara Birds
- OFO Membership
- OFO Sales
- Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas
- Quest Nature Tours
- Vortex Optics Canada
- Wild Birds Unlimited – Burlington

Rob Maciver and Hannah Badger / Jean Iron

Glenn Coady and Janice Haines / Jean Iron

Fred Bodsworth / Jean Iron

Pat Tozer / Jean Iron

OFO Certificates of Appreciation

By John Black, OFO Awards Coordinator

Each year OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to the birds and birding community of Ontario.

Again this year we have some very worthy recipients, but the list could be even longer. Please, whenever you know of a member of the public providing access to a rare bird or in some other way assisting birders, send in your nomination through the OFO website.

Recipients of the 2007-2008 awards

- Editors of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario*: Gregor Beck, Andrew Couturier, Denis Lepage and Don Sutherland for their significant contributions to the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario 2001-2005.
- Roger Gifford for graciously inviting birders into his yard to observe rare birds at his feeders.
- Rita Hall, Gore Bay-Manitoulin Airport Commission Inc. and Manager Robbie Coldwell and for their efforts and generosity in accommodating OFO members in viewing the Sharp-tailed Grouse on their lek.
- Pam and Chris Heil for their hospitality to visiting birders during the appearance of a Rufous Hummingbird at their feeder, 18 November to 1 December 2007.
- Hydro 1 – Perth Area for their care in dealing with Pileated Woodpeckers on their hydro poles.
- Valerie Jacobs and Doug Woods for their outstanding work on the development of the OFO website.
- Peter Middleton for his contribution to the Sauble Beach Piping Plovers in 2007.
- Wasaga Beach Mayor Cal Patterson and Town Council for their strong support of Piping Plovers at in their community.
- Wasaga Beach Provincial Park Superintendent John Fisher and Staff for their important efforts on behalf of nesting Piping Plovers.
- Waterdown Garden Supplies Ltd., Francois Riston, John Rocchi and Employees for welcoming birders to bird safely on their vast property.
- Mike Zander of Zander Sod Co. who for two years has encouraged us to drive onto his sod farms to get closer to shorebirds and suggested routes to avoid interfering with his work crews.

Eleanor Beagan, Gregor Beck and Don Sutherland / Jim Heslop

Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Update

By Jessica Steiner and Elaine Williams, Wildlife Preservation Canada

Young Loggerhead Shrikes / Andrew Smart

2008 was another successful year for Eastern Loggerhead Shrike recovery in Ontario.

We saw an increase in wild population numbers relative to that seen in the last few years and more than 100 juvenile shrikes were released from the field breeding program. Of great significance was the return to nesting grounds of eight birds previously released, including two from 2006. This is the first time the program has seen these birds return to breed in consecutive years and attests to the fitness of field propagated young and the valuable contribution of augmenting wild numbers. The juvenile return rate of release birds this year, at 6.4%, is many times higher than that reported for wild juvenile migratory shrikes. Almost a quarter of wild pairs confirmed in Ontario contained a released bird which is solid evidence that the field breeding and release techniques are working.

Wild Population

With 27 pairs confirmed in the province, the wild population was at its largest in the last four years. Although the relatively wet and cool breeding season likely had some negative impact on nesting, overall productivity was comparable to previous years with at least 79 young fledging in Ontario, compared to 21 pairs with 85 fledged young in 2007.

In the Carden Alvar core area, 16 pairs were confirmed and 13 of these successfully bred and fledged at least 49 young, including two or more successful

second clutches. Shrikes were observed exploiting three new territories and two that had not been recently occupied. This bodes well for the sustainability of the Carden population especially given the all time low of seven pairs seen as recently as 2006. Seven birds previously released, two in 2006 and five in 2007, were confirmed in Carden, six of which paired with wild counterparts. Five of these bred successfully contributing at least 18 young to the 2008 cohort.

Nine pairs were observed in the Napanee core area, of which six successfully nested, producing a minimum of 27 young. This local population was at an all time low of only seven pairs last year, so this slight increase in numbers gives hope that this growth will continue.

Single pairs of shrikes were confirmed outside the Napanee and Carden regions, in the historic breeding areas of Renfrew and Smith Falls. In Renfrew, three adult birds were confirmed occupying the same site and three fledglings were observed there later in the season. A single bird released in 2007 was confirmed in the vicinity of the field breeding enclosures in Dyer's Bay but no pairs were confirmed in the area this season.

An effort was made this year to trap all wild adults in order to determine individual identification and to band newcomers. Banding has occurred since 1999 but many birds have lost their coloured bands. This made individual identification and bird history nearly impossible to determine in the field. Important demographic data was being lost. Most adults were successfully trapped in 2008, providing insights into the composition of the breeding population. These activities also revealed that some of our returning release birds had lost their characteristic dark green bands suggesting that return rates for young from the field breeding program may have been previously underestimated.

Field Breeding and Release

Both the Carden and Dyer's Bay field breeding sites had a productive season which resulted in 103 juvenile shrikes being released into the wild during July and August. In captivity, field staff cared for 24 pairs. In Dyer's Bay, nine of 11 pairs bred and seven of these went on to produce second broods, with the end result being the release of 48 young from this site. At the Carden field site, nine of 13 pairs successfully bred and six had two clutches, resulting in 41 birds for release. Five pairs kept back at our Ingersoll facility also bred successfully including one double brood, and 13 young were taken to Dyer's Bay in July to be grouped with field-propagated young in preparation for release. Fifteen young, considered of high genetic priority for the captive population, were retained and will be joining our adult birds this winter at the Toronto Zoo, our Ingersoll facility or our new partner, African Lion Safari, for future participation in our breeding efforts.

All birds released from the field breeding program are banded as a group with a unique band combination denoting the year of release. This year, all birds were fitted with a colour band over a silver ID band on the left leg. Birds released in Carden received a dark green band while those in Dyer's Bay donned dark blue. We encourage birders to report band combinations on any shrikes spotted at 1-800-956-6608 or jessica@wildlifepreservation.ca .

We are continuing to radio track released young in the hopes of gaining important information on juvenile ecology and clues on migration routes and locations of wintering grounds. Last year's pilot study revealed that it was possible to track young birds equipped with tiny radio tags, weighing only 1.4 grams, both on the ground and from a Cessna aircraft. Four of the 19 birds released with radio transmitters in 2007 are known to have been taken by avian predators. Problems securing timely flights for aerial telemetry meant birds were not tracked as closely as we would have liked. But when flight time was obtained, a thorough search of Southern Ontario did not pick up any signals, strongly suggesting that the rest had successfully migrated into the U.S. This year we are building and improving upon last year's efforts and have released 20 birds with live transmitters from our Carden site. Some have already been found as far south as Victoria Corners and Hamilton.

Review of Captive Breeding and Release Program

Dr. Devra Kleiman, Senior Research Scientist at the Smithsonian Institute as well as North American Liaison to the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Reintroduction Specialists' Group, conducted an independent review of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike (ELOSH) captive breeding and release program, comparing it to six other programs. Her findings were highly favourable and she even suggested the ELOSH program would ultimately provide a model for future migratory passerine recovery programs.

Not only has the management of the ELOSH program exceeded its demographic and genetic objectives, it has done so cost-effectively with a relatively low annual budget. Success has come in a remarkably short period of time with the return and successful breeding of captive-bred released birds four years after the first releases. Dr. Kleiman's unequivocal recommendation was that the ELOSH captive breeding and release program continue for a minimum of an additional five years, noting that the program is young and most captive breeding/release programs take a minimum of 15 years before their impact on recovery can be determined.

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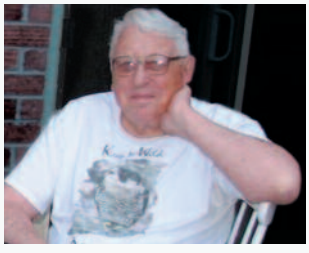
An Update on Program Funding

Thanks to the willingness of Boisset Family Estates, the makers of French rabbit wines, to allow WPC to use up to $160,000 of their $320,000 donation as "bridge" funding, we were able to launch the 2008 field season. The funds had originally been donated for the establishment of a wintering facility and expansion of the captive breeding and release program. Without their commitment, there would not have been a 2008 field season. WPC had not received any government funding commitments towards the shrike recovery effort at the 1 April launch of the season. At 31 August, WPC had not received any government cash funding for shrikes.

Wildlife Canada Preservation is grateful that the province's Species at Risk Stewardship Fund has approved $83,468 in funding towards the wild population monitoring and habitat stewardship projects. The federal Habitat Stewardship Program has approved $137,000 in funding for habitat stewardship/ enhancement, landowner contact, communications and outreach. We are hopeful that Environment Canada will secure an additional $150,000 for the field breeding and release program and maintenance of the captive population over the winter.

IN MEMORIAM
Douglas Campbell Sadler
August 6, 1916 – August 18, 2008

by Geoff Carpentier



My friendship with Doug spanned four decades and began with my sighting of a Dickcissel in Peterborough in 1973. I still remember the hesitancy in his voice as he asked me prying questions about the bird and why it was what I thought it was… luckily I was right and so began our friendship. As I grew to know Doug, I realized how broad his knowledge was and never ceased to marvel at the wealth of information he carried in his head, and not just about birds, but also about insects, plants, mammals, geology, archeology, and just about anything else to do with the outdoors and nature.

Born in London, England in 1916, Captain Douglas Campbell Sadler served with the British Infantry in World War II, where his bravery and mettle were tested when he was wounded in battle and then imprisoned in Germany for several months. After the war, he emigrated to Canada (1950), where he farmed and then later changed paths and worked in advertising. But his true passion showed when he finally turned his attention to natural history studies and educating youth. Doug took his students to nature, when he led the outdoor education program for Peterborough County, and taught them about interactions between and amongst wildlife and their dependency on the ecosystem. An astute observer and patient mentor, Doug was certainly one of the most influential teachers of interpretive natural history in Ontario. But Doug was a student as much as a teacher and in 1978, at the age of 62, he obtained his B.A. in Geography at Trent University and later was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (1988). Doug also took his skills on the road, when he toured as a guide to Yucatan, Hudson Bay, Cuba, Arizona and Newfoundland, showing that his huge knowledge of natural history was not limited to that of Ontario.

His awards are many and varied and encompass teaching, writing, natural history and civic tributes, including receiving the Commemorative Medal, 125th Anniversary of Confederation of Canada, (1992), recognition as one of the 50 people who most influenced the development of the City of Peterborough during the past 100 years, winner of the national Kortright Award for excellence in nature writing (five times) and being honoured with the Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement (2007).

Doug was involved in hundreds of natural history related surveys and monitoring programs over the years, including the first *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas*. Included amongst offices held with various organizations were President of the Peterborough Field Naturalists and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and advisor to the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority.

A prolific author and accomplished photographer, Doug wrote many books and articles on nature and natural processes, including an astounding 2300 outdoors columns over a forty year period for the Peterborough Examiner newspaper. Included amongst his many books are the *Science in Action Series* (Ryerson Press), *Studying Insects,* and *Studying Plants*, *Our Heritage of Birds: Peterborough Area in the Kawarthas* (1983), *Reading Nature's Clues* (1987), *Winter, a Natural History* (1990) and *Birds from the Ground: the Record of Archeology in Ontario* (2003).

Doug passed away peacefully on 18 August, at the age of 92, with his wife of 66 years, Joan, and his daughter, Heather, at his side. He will long be remembered for his contributions to the scientific and the lay community alike as he continually added to the natural history knowledge of Ontario and beyond. And so, I salute you Doug — a life long friend, mentor and teacher to me and to so many others. You will be missed.

Future OFO Field Trips

Dave Milsom, Trips Coordinator, **fieldtrips@ofo.ca 905-857-2235** For full trip details**: http://www.ofo.ca/fieldtrips/tripsupcoming.php**


Red-throated Loon/ Jean Iron

November 2 (Sunday)
Grand Bend, Pinery PP, Kettle Point and Point Edward
(if strong north winds)
Leader: Maris Apse.
Meet at 8:30 a.m. in Grand Bend Sobeys parking lot on north side of Huron County Rd. 81, east of traffic lights at Hwy 21.From Hwy 402 take exit 81 Centre Road and proceed north on Middlesex County 81 via Parkhill, after jogging left at Middlesex County Rd.7. Continue on Middlesex, then Huron County Rd. 81 to Grand Bend (about 3 hours from Toronto). Late fall/early winter migrants, waterfowl, gulls, jaegers, eagles and Tufted Titmouse.


Thayer's Gull / Jean Iron

November 30 (Sunday)
Niagara River Gull Watch
Leaders: Ron Tozer, Jean Iron.
Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Sir Adam Beck Generating Station overlook on Niagara River Parkway south of Queenston–Lewiston Bridge to USA. From QEW take Hwy 405 towards USA and exit at Stanley Ave. **You must exit HWY 405 at Stanley Avenue**. Turn left, crossing over Hwy 405, then immediately right onto Portage Road which parallels Hwy 405 for 3 km. At Brock Monument traffic circle take first right exit, Niagara Parkway, signed "The Falls". Follow for 1.8 km to Sir Adam Beck overlook on left.

December 7 (Sunday)
Toronto Lakeshore
Leader: Dave Milsom.
Meet at 9:00 a.m. in Humber Bay Park East parking lot. From QEW, coming from west, take the exit to Park Lawn. Go south. Cross Lakeshore Road, then turn right to the parking area. From QEW, coming from east, exit at Lakeshore Road. Turn right onto Lakeshore Road, then left at the lights into Humber Bay Park East. Winter species: ducks, gulls, waterbirds, finches, raptors.

January 1, 2009 (Tuesday)
Leslie St. Spit, Toronto
Leader: Dave Milsom.
Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking area at foot of Leslie St. Can be reached from east end of Gardiner Expressway. Bring good hiking shoes, warm gear. Owls, hawks, falcons, ducks, other wintering species.

January 24, (Saturday)
Ottawa Area (until Noon)
Leader: David Britton.
Meet at 8:00 a.m.in the Coliseum Theatre Parking Lot, northwest corner, 3090 Carling Ave., east of Bayshore. Explore Ottawa's west end for special winter birds like Snowy Owl, Pine Grosbeak, Iceland Gull, Northern Shrike, Gray Partridge, or any other interesting avian wonders. Each winter is slightly different. So, the day's route depends on where the birds are. We will follow a route that maximizes our chances of finding the most interesting birds. Trip ends at noon.

February 7 (Saturday)
Fisherville Area, Haldimand-Norfolk County
Leader: Dave Milsom. **Meet** at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the high school at the north end of Cayuga on County Road 54. Hawks, owls, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, sparrows.

Notification of membership dues increase for 2009

Due to significant higher costs of publishing and mailing, the OFO Board of Directors has increased membership dues.

Effective immediately 2009 prices will increase to:

Annual membership: Canada $35.00 USA $40.00US International $45.00US

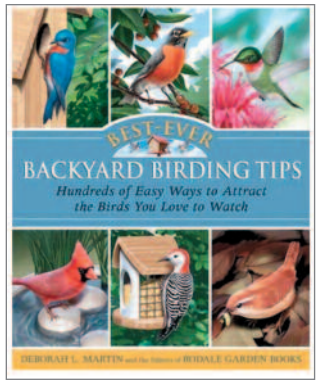
Life membership: Canada $700.00 USA $800.00US International $900.00US

Membership is on a calendar year basis and expires on December 31. If your address or other information has changed, please notify the OFO Membership Secretary, Eleanor Beagan at: etbeagan@sympatico.ca

Book Reviews

Best-ever Backyard Birding Tips

(2008). Deborah L. Martin. Rodale Garden Books, New York. Softcover. 344 pages. Review based on Advance Uncorrected Proof.



Rodale's new book on making your backyard more bird friendly is certainly a welcome, entertaining and eye-pleasing addition to the variety of books available on the market today. The concept is simple — put everything the average person might want to know about birds in their backyards into one volume. And make it concise and informative and current.

The book is divided into eleven chapters that deal with the basics of attracting birds, seeds and feeders, landscape planting for birds, encouraging insect-eating birds, building birdhouses, building water features for your yard, attracting hummingbirds, birds of prey, living with urban birds, bird behaviour and pest animals in your garden. Throughout the book, individual bird species are highlighted and described in the context of your yard. For the most part the species selected are representative and dealt with well, as each species is morphologically described and compared to similar species. Additionally, information is provided on habitat and plant preferences and some interesting facts about each species are provided.

I liked the style of writing, the numerous illustrations and the information boxes scattered throughout the text and used to highlight certain key subject areas. These latter are well thought out and presented, but other areas of interest were not covered at all or could have been better showcased, such as information on field guides, nature clubs, photography and care of and choosing optics. As with so many American publications, this one clearly has an American slant, particularly the eastern U.S. The information is relevant to Ontario feeders nonetheless.

I liked some specific features of the book, like the "5-minute Makeovers", which detail in snappy fashion with how to make your yard bird-ready in a hurry. The sections on budget-wise birding were likewise interesting and dealt with numerous subjects such as reducing your feeding costs, without sacrificing the quality of the food. The section on "Bird Myth-busters" was informative and interesting. Ever wonder whether the colour of your hummingbird feeder is what attracts birds? You might want to check out this book to find out.

That said, there were some things of which I was not so fond. I found the book to be a bit repetitive, particularly when it speaks of bird feeders and feeding, as references appear in several parts of the book citing similar information each time. I found some information that I felt was incorrect or misleading. For example, I would never think of a Song Sparrow or a Gray Catbird as a species that uses man-made nest platforms as a base for their nests. That's not to say they would never do so, but to showcase it as expected seems unrealistic. I wonder about the insert entitled "Think Outside the Cake", where alternative foods are suggested for birds. Foodstuffs such as pizza crusts, quiche and deep-fried foods are recommended, and while they may contain some nutritional value, they may also be harmful to birds, particularly if allowed to decay or go rancid. This advice should be taken with a grain of salt, so to speak.

Don't expect to learn the most technical details about birds or their behaviour, but do expect to learn lots about attracting them, feeding and caring for them to keep them coming. This is a good book to have if you're uncertain about where to start to make your yard more bird friendly. As a bonus, it is an interesting read so I recommend you consider buying a copy.

Geoff Carpentier

A Field Guide to the Birds of Peru

(2007). Thomas S. Schulenberg, Douglas F. Stotz, Daniel F. Lane, John P. O'Neill and Theodore A. Parker III. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 08540. Hardcover 656 pages. $49.50US. (ISBN-13: 978-0-691-04915-1).

Conceived in 1961, the research for and the completion of this book have taken almost 40 years. When first discussions and expeditions were held, 1542 species of birds were known for Peru. Throughout the information gathering years to the present, several of the authors were responsible for finding and identifying an amazing at least 250 additional species. This is the second detailed guide about Peruvian birds published recently, the other being *A Field Guide to the Birds of Peru* (2001) by James F. Clements and Noam Shany. So is there room for two similar books in the marketplace? First let me tell you a bit about this one.

The book follows a proven format where introductory sections deal with using the book, covering such topics as geographic variation, relative abundance, habitats, behaviour, elevational distribution, mapping, Peruvian topography

moults and plumages, seabird identification and conservation. The layout in this introductory chapter is clean and easy to read and is enhanced by five maps (i.e. political boundaries, major rivers, seasonal distribution, relief features and protected areas) and eight drawings.

The book covers the approximately 1800 species found in Peru and within 200 nautical miles of its borders. Thirteen well-known artists, including Canada's Peter Burke and David Beadle, cover this daunting task in 304 superb colour plates. The blending of the skills of these varied artists was handled extremely well and the finished product is a seamless rendering of the salient field marks of these many Peruvian birds. One feature that I liked was the fact that species or families that occurred broadly across the Americas were treated as exhaustively as those found only in Peru. Often, one finds that economy requires that wide-spread families are excluded entirely from the plates or dealt with in a cursory fashion only, not so here. For example, the paintings of the sandpipers are masterful and well detailed. Although each plate demonstrates the features of several species, none of them appear cluttered as they do in so many other field guides. The format is pleasing and easy to discern.

The accounts are necessarily brief, but informative. Every species and family gets good and useful coverage. For species-rich groups, the sections open with a brief account of the family, including salient identification features, preferred habitats and cross-references to similar or confusable families. The species accounts carry on from here and speak to size, (metric and imperial), abundance, habitat, behaviour, preferred foraging zones (e.g. canopy, ground, etc.), similar species and songs and calls. The descriptive field marks are generally not discussed here, but the accompanying plates detail these very well. Each species has a distributional, colour-coded map showing seasonal movements and areas of occupation.

How does it compare to Clements and Shany (2001)? First of all, many of the concerns I had with Clements have been improved in this volume. Specifically, in a previous review of Clements's study I wrote "To me, a few pages dedicated to defining the Life Zones better, talking about habitat types, explaining the significance of elevation to bird distribution and adding a map that shows where the non-political features of the country are would have been very helpful and would make the book much friendlier." Schulenberg and his co-authors realized this shortfall and adequately addressed these areas in their book. It does cover the subject areas reasonably well, but the detail is limited, and it still left me wanting more information on Life Zones in particular.

I liked the inclusion of the distributional maps right beside the plates, which saves time over the common format of having them elsewhere in the book. Likewise, I prefer having the species description beside the plates so that everything I need to consider, when trying to identify the species, is in one place. In Clements and Shany, the plates are stand-alone with the text separately presented and without any range maps. Schulenberg *et al*. have greatly improved the presentation in their book. While both books have beautiful plates, artistically, the ones in Schulenberg *et al.* are of a better quality though don't necessarily offer any better identification tips — they're just aesthetically more pleasing to me. Due to the fewer number of plates and more species per page, the 127 plates in Clements are busier than those in Schulenberg, making Clements more difficult to read.

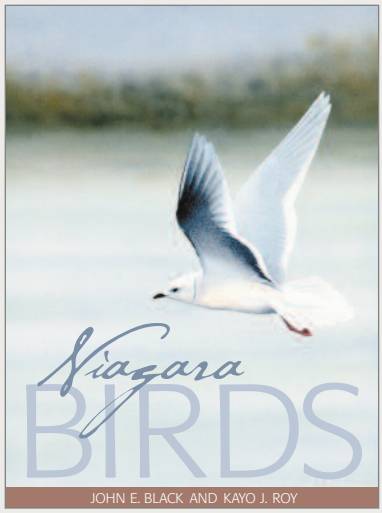
Okay let's just look at one family, the trogons and quetzals, and see how they compare technically:

- Number of species — 10 in both books (seven trogons and three quetzals),
- Common and scientific names are the same in each book,
- Male and female depictions — eight females in Clements and 10 in Schulenberg,
- Flight depictions — three species in Clements and none in Schulenberg, although I saw little value added from these flight shots,
- Accuracy of paintings — there were several inconsistencies between the two books. As an example, for the Violaceous Trogon, tail patterns varied substantially, the beak colours were different (yellow vs. charcoal/black), breast colours varied (orange/yellow vs. yellow) and the existence of a bordering white band on the upper breast was inconsistent between the books. Additionally, Schulenberg *et al.* showed the wing patterning better than Clements and Shany.

There were many other examples of these inconsistencies throughout the books. So who was correct? Who had the better paintings? Well, the short answer is both. I went to my copy of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol. 6* and studied the paintings there for the Violaceous Trogon. It agrees with Schulenberg *et al*. on many of the field marks, such as beak colour and tail patterning, but leans more towards Clements and Shany on the breast colour.

I think this is a great resource that will benefit any traveling birder. If I could only own one it would be this latest field guide. Schulenberg *et al*. is easier to read, information is more accessible, and the plates are generally more accurate and reflective of the species.

Geoff Carpentier



Coming Soon...

Niagara Birds

by John E. Black and Kayo J. Roy

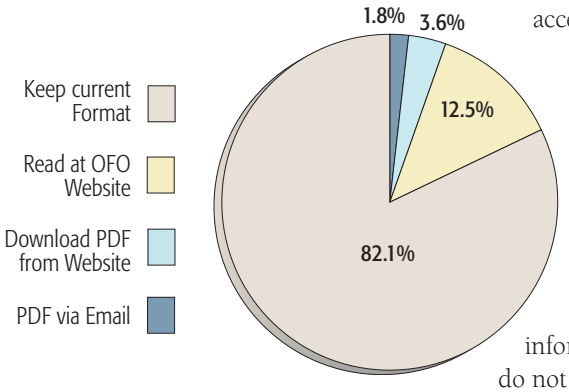
This 600 plus page book is intended for anyone with an interest in Niagara's varied avifauna. Documented here are complete accounts of the 373 species of birds that have occurred in Regional Niagara during the forty-one year period 1966 to 2006. Full data on the relative abundance, breeding evidence, and early and late dates of birds in the Region are compiled in each of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter.

Fully documented as well are the details of the numerous extremely rare stragglers to Niagara 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. Colour photographs and high quality black and white drawings of birds observed in the Niagara Region are included.

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

Results of Members' Poll:
Electronic versus Paper Newsletters

The *OFO News* would like to thank the 56 members who took the time to respond to the poll included in the June issue. As per the accompanying chart, the overwhelming choice, four to one, was to keep the current format. It seems many of us still like to curl up in our favorite chair either inside or on the back porch to do our reading. A good number archive their copies of *OFO News* and use them as a reference.



For those members who do not have access to a computer or who are on dial-up service, please rest assured that your Board of Directors will not be making any radical changes in the near future. Moreover, if changes were made, going paperless would be optional not mandatory.

We hope you find this issue an informative read and recycle if you do not file.

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Ontario Field Ornithologists

OFO News

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Ontbirds

Mark Cranford – Coordinator
Ontbirds, with over 2000 subscribers, is OFO's successful listserv for reporting rare bird sightings. Now the largest listserv in North America, *Ontbirds* has become an integral part of the Ontario birding community. Carefully follow the instructions on the OFO website to subscribe to *Ontbirds*. To contact Mark Cranford email: ontbirds @ofo.ca

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