



OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

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Bohemian Waxwing
Jon Brierley / Nature's Best Creations



Waxwings & Winter Finches

By *Chris Earley*

On my University of Guelph Arboretum office wall, beside my window, there is a painting of a Bohemian Waxwing by Fenwick Lansdowne. I can imagine Lansdowne enjoying painting this bird; taking the satiny sleekness of a Cedar Waxwing, increasing the size and bulk, and topping it off with some brilliantly colourful detailing. What's been really fun this winter is not only looking at this beautiful artwork on the wall, but looking out the window and seeing the real thing.

It has been an impressive finch irruption year. Southern Ontario nyjer feeders have been emptied by thousands of Common (and some Hoary) Redpolls which add rosy colour to the similar-sized goldfinches and siskins. Another impressive irruptive finch is the Pine Grosbeak. The University of Guelph campus has yielded the soft whistles and trusting nature of these big birds. Flocks of over a hundred have been seen here gorging on crabapple fruits. Pink, gray and rusty-orange are everywhere. And while most birds seem wary of observers, these birds will often land right on a branch beside you and start eating. Their hungry focus is the key to why some birds irregularly "irrupt" or migrate south in large numbers. A lack of food in their normal winter ranges causes them to come south to look for consistent meals. By knowing what the



John Earle Black, January 1, 2008

Greetings OFO Members

I must admit that one year ago the last thing I expected to be doing was writing a letter to *OFO News* as your president. Being president is a great honor, and I am looking forward to heading the organization for two years. In fact my job is one of the easier ones on OFO. The members of the committees and the board members put in an enormous amount of time and energy insuring that the affairs of OFO run smoothly.

Over the years I have noticed the average age of people associated with nature clubs and organizations gradually increasing. In order to counteract this trend I would like to encourage all OFO members to take a young person out birding at least once over the next year. (For those of you who are already doing this please keep up the good work!) This simple action may help interest a few young people in nature.

This is the first issue of *OFO News* under new editors and I think you will be very pleased with it. The editors had a difficult time following in the footsteps of Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway who over the last 14 years made sure that *OFO News* was an unparalleled publication.

I hope to meet you in the field on one or more of the OFO field trips and to see you at the Annual Convention in the Hamilton area in October.

Good birding,
John Black

Waxwings and Winter Finches continued from page 1

seed and fruit crop is like in the fall, naturalists can usually predict if it will be a good season for seeing winter finches in the south. Most readers will no doubt be aware of Ron Pittaway's winter finch forecast; I certainly look forward to it every year! Ron and his team of informants put together an impressive report so that we know what to expect. For example, the irruption of redpolls this year was predicted because of the poor crop of birch and alder seeds. Another of Ron's predictions came true with the Bohemian Waxwings. Though they are not a finch, they, like the Pine Grosbeak, prefer mountain-ash berries during the winter and Ron et al. noted that the berry crop up north was low this year. The U. of G. is certainly the place to be when this happens. The west side of campus has rows and rows of crabapples for the grosbeaks and The Arboretum on the east side has many junipers for the Bohemians. Many Ontario birders have seen their first Pine Grosbeak and/or Bohemian here.

This winter has gone beyond all previous Bohemian sightings in The Arboretum. Starting with 2 or 3 birds in mid-November, flocks of over 20 were seen a

week later. By mid-December we had a flock of over 70. The numbers grew until a late-December a flock of approximately 190 was seen, becoming the largest flock of Bohemians recorded in the Hamilton Study Area (see Bob Curry's awesome book *Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas*). A similar-sized flock was also seen during the Guelph CBC. Guelph CBC results show that Bohemian Waxwings are not only infrequent in their large irruptions, but that these irruptions are fairly recent. Other than a couple of count week birds a few years beforehand, the Guelph CBC didn't record its first Bohemian until 1993. In 1995, 1997 and 2007 there were 237, 7 and 308 respectively. Curry notes that it wasn't until 1989-1990 that large numbers of Bohemians started to show up in the Hamilton Study Area. This is an interesting trend, especially since Pine Grosbeak sightings seem to be decreasing. I, for one, am certainly enjoying the more frequent Bohemian Waxwing sightings in our wintery world. And you can be sure that I'll be glancing out of my office window every once in a while to see if their flashy colours catch my eye.

Chris Earley is the Interpretive Biologist at the University of Guelph's Arboretum.

Carden Alvar Point Counts



The Ontario Field Ornithologists, as a partner in the Carden Alvar project, will be assisting in the fourth annual bird point count to be held on the successive Saturdays of 31 May and 7 June 2008 on the Windmill and Cameron Ranches, which are now part of the Carden Alvar Provincial Park. Monitoring will be done on established point count locations according to the protocol listed with the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. Teams of four people maximum will be assigned to record, with GPS units, birds seen and heard. Monitoring will start at 5:30 a.m. and will continue until 10:00 a.m. This is a wonderful opportunity to visit a very special grassland habitat

and to see the bird and wildflower species at their best.

In addition, during the week of 31 May to 7 June 2008, there is a roadside point count project to be covered by car that also follows the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas protocol. **Please contact Don Barnett for registration and any further details at 416-588-9724 or email him at dwb126@yahoo.ca.**

Grasshopper Sparrow / Brandon Holden

A Tribute to Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway *OFO News* Editors: 1994 – 2007

By Ron Tozer



Ron Pittaway and Jean Iron at the OFO Annual Convention at Point Pelee on 10 September 2005.

Ontario birders and the Ontario Field Ornithologists owe Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway a huge debt of gratitude for their contributions to birding in this province and beyond during 14 years of editing *OFO News* from 1994 to 2007. It was in this period that OFO experienced major growth in its activities and membership, and *OFO News* was a significant component of that success. Jean and Ron put a huge amount of time and enthusiasm into their 42 issues of *OFO News*, as with other aspects of their involvement with OFO. In expressing our appreciation for their accomplishments, I would like to briefly review some of the incredibly diverse subjects that have appeared in *OFO News* during the Iron-Pittaway years.

Remarkably, Jean and Ron wrote some of the articles and notes for ALL those 42 issues, as well as editing them! An important key to their success as editors was choosing interesting and current topics, and then securing authors to write about them from their many contacts among

Ontario birders, professional ornithologists, government biologists, and others. That Jean and Ron edited with great insight concerning the interests and knowledge of their readership was another hallmark of their success. They helped authors with ideas and literature when requested. Articles were regularly peer-reviewed to ensure accuracy and inclusion of the most up-to-date information.

Recurring features were a very popular aspect developed by Jean and Ron in *OFO News*. For example, the Profile of an Artist articles allowed us to learn about the lives and aspirations of various bird artists. Favourite Birding Hotspots, and Site Guides, introduced birders to many exciting Ontario birding areas. The BNA Authors series gave us instructive insights by several Ontario-based writers of species accounts in *The Birds of North America*. Articles about AOU Check-list committee decisions highlighted changes of particular interest to Ontario birders. Notes From the OBRC kept the Ontario birding community in touch with the

activities of the provincial records committee. Book and Product Reviews were especially helpful in evaluating the seemingly never-ending changes and improvements in the tools of birding. And, several articles about the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas which outlined methodology, results, trends, and atlassing trips in the north were very interesting.

Ron Pittaway wrote many major articles for *OFO News* over the years. His themes included identification (Small Winter Grebe ID, Small Winter Loon ID, and Shrike ID, all co-authored with Michael King), behaviour (Great Gray Owl Observations 2004-2005), and occurrence and status (Southbound Shorebirds, Fall Hawkwatching, Gull Watching Guide, Spring Warbler Migration Guide, Owling at Night, and Winter Finches). Ron's articles about Bird Protection Laws, another on Plumage, Molt and Age Terminology, and one outlining a revised Checklist of Ontario Bird Forms are important contributions to our knowledge and understanding that continue to be cited and used regularly by Ontario birders.

OFO News brought us fascinating writing concerning birders and birding activities. For instance, we learned about subjects such as: the involvement of young people, women, and spouses in birding; the feeding of birds (Should We Feed Birds, and Why Not?); birding techniques (Pishing, Squeaking and Hooting: A Guide to Attracting Birds; and How to Get Close to a Bird Without Bothering It); Big Day listing (Confessions of a Big Day Addict); and Big Years (Point Pelee 2005: A Big Year Like No Other; and Gulls of Point Pelee: Record 18 Species in 2006).

Recognized authorities wrote very instructive in-depth articles about particular species. These included: In Defence of the Cowbird; Cormorants Explode; Small Canada Geese in Ontario; Whippoor-wills and Moonshine; Short-billed Dowitcher; Why I Love Spruce Grouse; Acadian Flycatchers in Ontario Ravines; Status of the Cerulean Warbler in Eastern Ontario; Meadowlarks in Ontario; Return of the Wild Turkey; Pileated Woodpecker: "Lord God, What a Bird!"; Late Winter Red-necked Grebes: A Mystery; Cackling Goose, NOT New to Ontario; Spring

Migration of Common Loons Over Central Toronto; and Eastern Loggerhead Shrike 2007 Season Update.

We discovered more about Ontario's ornithological history and the provincial bird list through such articles as: 1905 Bird Checklist of Ontario: Comparing 1905 and 2002; Royal Ontario Museum Ghosts in the Collection; Old and New English Names of Ontario Birds; and Additions to Ontario Bird Checklist: 1982 to 2006. The relationships of birds that determine the order of their placement on the Ontario list were discussed in a very instructive article titled The OFO Checklist.

There seemed to be no end to the variety of topics in *OFO News*, as a few more examples illustrate: Hawk Herbalists; Magpie Mystery; Ducks in Synchrony; Brewer's Blackbirds: On Hold; Thieving Wigeons; Kinglet Killer; Disease in Wild Birds; Marsh Bird Lockup; Tracking Birds at Night; Hannah's Story; Ontario's Far North; James Bay Shorebird Survey; and Marbled Godwits on the Go. And, of course, there is still no end to the ways in which *OFO News* will continue to interest and educate us. The wonderful Iron-Pittaway era has concluded, but now we look forward to many more exciting issues under the direction of our new editors. **Thank you very much Jean and Ron for a great run!**

Report Colour-banded Colonial Waterbirds

There are several programs on the Great Lakes area that are colour-banding various species of colonial waterbirds. Birders should watch for colour-banded Double-crested Cormorants, Caspian Terns, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons and Herring Gulls. These birds are banded with coloured leg bands with unique combinations of letters and/or numbers. If you see any such birds, and there have been more than 24,000 cormorants so banded, please note the colour of the band, the colour of the letters/numbers, and the date and location of the sighting. They should be reported to chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca

THE 2008 OFO ANNUAL CONVENTION

Mark your calendars! The 2008 Annual Convention will be held in Hamilton on the weekend of 4 and 5 October.

Planning for the event is currently underway by committee members John Black, Cheryl Edgecombe (local liaison), Chris Escott, Chester Gryski, Valerie Jacobs, Dave Milsom and John Stirrat.

The banquet will take place in the evening on Saturday, 4 October at Chandelier Place in Stoney Creek. The invited speaker for the banquet will be author and scientist **Donald E. Kroodsma**, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Kroodsma has studied bird song for forty years and was recognized as the "reigning authority on avian vocal behavior" in the citation for his 2003 Elliott Coues Award from the American Ornithologists' Union. He has edited three scholarly volumes on acoustic communication in birds, and written more than one hundred articles in both scholarly journals and popular magazines. His recent book, *The Singing Life of Birds*, was awarded the John Burroughs Medal for outstanding natural history writing and the 2006 American Birding Association's Robert Ridgway Award for Excellence. Dr. Kroodsma's lecture, based on his book, explores how and why birds sing and how we can better understand them through their songs. Come listen to birds as you've never listened before, using what they have to say as a window to their minds, not just to identify them but to identify with them. Learn to truly listen to our most common birds in ways you never imagined possible!

This year's Distinguished Ornithologist Award will go to **Harry Lumsden**, who has been active for almost 60 years in the study and conservation of Ontario's birds. 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 a significant increase in new ornithological knowledge". The award will be presented by Ken Abraham.

Several activities are planned for Sunday, 5 October. Cheryl Edgecombe will be leading a birding trip to Van Wagners Beach and concurrently at 9:00 a.m., Donald Kroodsma will run a workshop entitled "Seeing and Hearing Birdsong" at the Lakeland Centre. He will use a computer and Raven software to explore birdsong, delighting our ears with recordings and our eyes via sonograms.

Visit the OFO website as the Convention draws closer for more details and for updates, at www.ofo.ca/convention/convention2008/index.php.

Baillie Birdathon 2007 The Results Are In!

The figures have been calculated and last year was a record setting year for funds raised by the Baillie Birdathon. Over \$203,000 was raised by Bird Studies Canada eclipsing the old record set in 2005 of \$209,000. Through pledges made to last year's OFO Celebrity Birdathon team of Cheryl and Ben Edgecombe, our organization was able to contribute over \$8,200 to that total. Some of these funds are redirected to OFO for our activities while the remainder goes to support bird research and conservation through Bird Studies Canada grants and programs.

2007 was a fantastic year for fundraising and we want to make 2008 even better. Last year's Mother/Son team was so successful that this year we have doubled the family involvement with two fathers and two sons: Pete & Rob Read and Ian & Gavin Platt. Many of you will be familiar with at least one of these OFO members and birders! Our celebrity birders will be travelling to some of the hotspots in south-western Ontario during the peak migration period in May, and this timing, combined with their skill, should produce some fantastic results!

Circulated with this issue of *OFO News*, you will find a pledge form. As in year's past, pledges can be made by species observed or as a flat rate. OFO and our celebrity would be pleased to receive your pledge, and the dollars that we raise provide much needed support for bird protection into the future.



In addition to improvement in the quality of protection provided to Ontario's SAR under the new Act, the quantity of species identified for protection is vastly increased.

Prothonotary Warbler / Barry Cherie

The future for Species at Risk in Ontario looks a little bit brighter with the coming proclamation of The Endangered Species Act, 2007

By Rob Maciver

This new provincial legislation was passed into law on May 17th, 2007¹, and is scheduled to come into force on 30 June 2008. At that time the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* will repeal the existing *Endangered Species Act* which has not received any substantial revision since its enactment in 1971.²

The old Act is a brief statute consisting of a meager six sections. The most substantive of these is Section 5 which prohibits the killing or taking, injury, interference with, or any attempt such-like, with respect to any species declared in the regulations to be "threatened with extinction". In addition, any destruction or interference with "the habitat of any species of fauna or flora" listed in the regulations is prohibited. *The Endangered*



Acadian Flycatcher / Jim Richards

Species Regulations names the species that are protected under the old legislation.³ This list contains a mere 18 species of fauna, and 24 species of flora. Ten of the 18 species of fauna listed are avifauna: Bald Eagle, Piping Plover, Eskimo Curlew, Golden Eagle, White Pelican, Kirtland's Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike,

Henslow's Sparrow, Prothonotary Warbler and King Rail. Section 6 makes it an offence to contravene the Act and provides for a maximum penalty of \$50,000 and/or imprisonment for not more than two years.

In contrast to the old Act, the new Act is a robust 58 sections together with species lists contained in five schedules. The new Act is much more comprehensive than the one it will replace and represents a vast improvement in numerous ways. To begin with, the terminology used is updated to reflect the most accurate and current scientific usage. Some of the language in the old Act is vague and outdated. For example the notion of species "threatened with extinction" found in the old Act is replaced by the

term “Species at Risk” (SAR) with its associated categories of extirpated, endangered, threatened, and special concern.

In addition to the prohibition on killing or harming of SAR, the new Act goes much further to protect SAR and their associated habitat. It makes reforms to the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) and provides much needed independence within which members can make conservation decisions free from political, social or economic influence.⁴ The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) is also now vested with the duty to ensure that a

recovery strategy is prepared for each species categorized as endangered or threatened.⁵ Each recovery strategy shall include the habitat needs of the species, descriptions of the specific threats faced by the species and recommendations for the protection and recovery of the species. The OMNR is further required to propose regulations to designate particular geographical areas as “habitat” for each species categorized as endangered or threatened.⁶ In addition to the recovery strategies and proposed regulations, the OMNR will be responsible for ensuring that a management plan is in place for each species categorized as being of

special concern.⁷ Under the new Act, landowners and other stakeholders may share in the responsibility for SAR management by entering into stewardship agreements with the OMNR and funding may be available to assist them.⁸ The Province has established the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund and pledged to contribute \$18 million from 2007 to 2010. This fund will provide grant monies to individuals and organizations who successfully apply, and this is a promising sign that the necessary budget measures will be taken to support this and other aspects of the new regime.

Under the new Act, the precautionary principle has been legislated as the standard to guide SAR management. The precautionary principle is the rule that “where there is a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat”.⁹

The monetary penalties have been stiffened under the new Act. Individuals who are convicted of an offence will now face fine of up to \$250,000 for a first offence or \$500,000 for a subsequent offence.¹⁰ Furthermore, these are maximum fines *per organism* and these amounts may be multiplied by the number of animals, plants and other organisms that are affected.¹¹

In addition to improvement in the *quality* of protection provided to Ontario’s SAR under the new Act, the *quantity* of species identified for protection is vastly increased. The OMNR will now be required to maintain the Species at Risk in Ontario List (the “List”) which shall include all SAR as classified by COSSARO. The List will be subject to timely amendment to ensure that it accurately reflects the best available information.¹² To begin with however, the List will include 75 plant species and 108 animal species (compared to 24 and 18 respectively under the previous regime). The 108 animal species include: 10 mollusks, 6 insects, 31 fishes, 8 amphibians, 18 reptiles, 25 birds, and 10 mammals. A more detailed account of the birds currently on the List can be found at Appendix 1 as well as a comparison with those Ontario bird species currently protected

Appendix 1 – A Comparison of Species at Risk Classifications

Species	Endangered Species Act, 2007	Endangered Species Regulations (old Act)	Species at Risk Act	COSEWIC Status
Greater Prairie Chicken	Extirpated		Extirpated	Extirpated
Acadian Flycatcher	Endangered		Endangered	Endangered
American White Pelican	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated		
Bald Eagle ¹	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated		
Eskimo Curlew	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Golden Eagle	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated		
Henslow’s Sparrow	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
King Rail	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Kirtland’s Warbler	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Loggerhead Shrike	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Piping Plover	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Prothonotary Warbler	Endangered	Endangered – Regulated	Endangered	Endangered
Barn Owl	Endangered		Endangered	Endangered
Northern Bobwhite	Endangered		Endangered	Endangered
Hooded Warbler	Threatened		Threatened	Threatened
Least Bittern	Threatened		Threatened	Threatened
Peregrine Falcon	Threatened			Special Concern
Bald Eagle ²	Special Concern			
Black Tern	Special Concern			
Cerulean Warbler	Special Concern		Special Concern	Special Concern
Golden-winged Warbler	Special Concern			Threatened
Louisiana Waterthrush	Special Concern			Special Concern
Red-headed Woodpecker	Special Concern			Threatened
Short-eared Owl	Special Concern		Special Concern	Special Concern
Yellow Rail	Special Concern		Special Concern	Special Concern
Yellow-breasted Chat	Special Concern		Special Concern	Special Concern
Red Knot				Endangered
Chimney Swift				Threatened
Common Nighthawk				Threatened
Olive-sided Flycatcher				Threatened
Rusty Blackbird				Special Concern

¹ South of the French and Mattawa Rivers ² North of the French and Mattawa Rivers

by the federal *Species at Risk Act*.¹³ The comparison reveals considerable similarity but not absolute congruence. There are five bird species not found on the List for which there is a strong argument that they should be included. The five species are: Red Knot, Chimney Swift, Common Nighthawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Rusty Blackbird. All five species have been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and have been classified as being at risk nationally. While the federal *Species at Risk Act* mandates that any candidate species for legal protection will be forwarded to the federal Minister of the Environment for review, the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* requires no such ministerial deliberation. Furthermore, under the new Act, it is mandatory for the List to include every Ontario species that has been classified by COSEWIC and has not yet been assessed by COS-SARO.¹⁴ There is therefore a strong presumption that these five species should be afforded legal protection in the Province of Ontario once the new Act is proclaimed.

The body of wildlife protection legislation in Canada/Ontario is a confusing

matrix of statutes that to some will appear uncoordinated. Unfortunately this is a symptom of our environmental legislation in general. While the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* will play a significant role in SAR management in the province, there are other statutes to consider. Depending on issues such as the particular species involved and the underlying ownership of the property where the habitat is located, it may be necessary to consult additional provincial legislation including the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* and *Provincial Parks and Conservation Resources Act, 2006*. The *Ontario Planning Act* and related policies may also have some influence where the interests of development and wildlife collide.

In addition, it may be necessary to consult the federal *Species at Risk Act*; *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*; and *Canada National Parks Act*. This list is not exhaustive. Each of these statutes makes a contribution toward wildlife protection, but each could benefit from more careful integration. Some indications of better integration in the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* are reflected in sections that specifically mention the *Species at Risk Act*.¹⁵

There are promising signs of overall coherence in wildlife legislation but further coordination is needed. Integration between provincial and federal statutes is particularly challenging for our legislators because of ambiguity within the Constitution with respect to which level of government has jurisdiction over environmental matters.¹⁶

These are exciting times for SAR management in Ontario. On paper, the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* is a bold revision of the law; in time we shall see whether this translates into tangible progress for wildlife protection.

¹ *Endangered Species Act, 2007*, S.O. 2007, c. 6.

² *Endangered Species Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.15.

³ *Endangered Species Regulations*, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 328.

⁴ *Supra* note 1, ss. 3-8. ⁵ *Ibid.*, at s. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, at s. 56. ⁷ *Ibid.*, at s. 12(1).

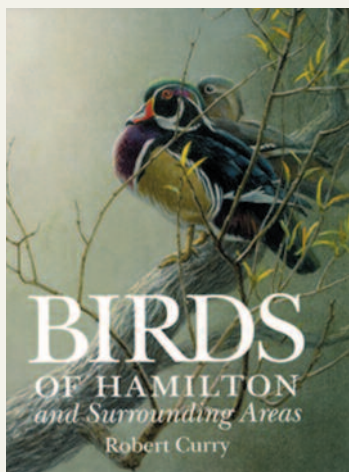
⁸ *Ibid.*, at s. 16. ⁹ *Ibid.*, at s. 11(3).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, at s. 40(1). ¹¹ *Ibid.*, at s. 40(2).

¹² *Ibid.*, at s. 7(3). ¹³ S.C. 2002, c. 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* at s. 4(2). ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, at ss. 4(2), 12(2).

¹⁶ For further information regarding Canadian environmental law and policy, including jurisdictional issues, see: Boyd, David R., *Unnatural Law: Rethinking Canadian Environmental Law and Policy*, UBC Press, 2003; see also Hughes et al., *Environmental Law and Policy*, 3rd Edition, Edmond Montgomery Publications, 2003; see also Van-Nijnatten et al., *Canadian Environmental Policy: Context and Cases*, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, 2002.



Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas

By Robert Curry

Good News! If you were unable to purchase a copy of the sold out *Birds of Hamilton and Surrounding Areas* the second printing is now available. Order your copy now, so that it arrives prior to the OFO Annual Convention which will be held this October in Hamilton. Bob Curry's 600 page hardcover book contains a comprehensive chapter on the "Birding Hotspots in Hamilton and Surrounding Areas".

Ross D. James, in his review of the book in *Ontario Birds* (Volume 25 Number 1 April 2007), said, "I looked forward to an informative and detailed compilation ... I was not disappointed." He also noted, "It is filled with ... useful information ... superb photos ... an achievement that deserves to be on the shelves of all people interested in birds of Hamilton and the wider provincial scene."

This limited second edition is available through the Hamilton Naturalists' Club website at:
www.hamiltonnature.org



2007, A Remarkable Year for Northern Saw-whet Owl Migration

By David Okines

Northern Saw-whet Owls were originally considered rare in Ontario, due to their retiring habits

Northern Saw-whet Owl / Jim Heslop

These diminutive owls breed primarily in the boreal forest, and most migrate south in the fall to winter in the US, from Pennsylvania to West Virginia. Following a good breeding season, very large numbers can be trapped at banding stations during their fall migration. With its location on the Lake Ontario shoreline at the southern tip of Prince Edward County, Prince Edward Point is along a major migratory route for these owls.

The Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN) began banding saw-whets at Prince Edward Point in 1975. The KFN used up to 42 mist nets, run most nights with good weather conditions, from late September to early November. They didn't use audio lures at that time, but rather ran their nets as "passive nets", simply opening the nets and banding what happened to fly in. Between 1975 and 1988 a total of 4,875 saw-whets was captured,



ward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO). We started to use audio lures in the last week of October 2000, and the result was 137 saw-whet owls banded in that first year. Encouraged by this initial success, a full owl monitoring program was initiated in 2001, and we began using ten 60 mm mesh-size owl nets. In 2001, 345 saw-whet owls were trapped, and it was decided to run the program annually. Since then, the numbers of saw-whets trapped have been amazing: 690 in 2002, 836 in 2003, 849 in 2004, 579 in 2005 and 432 in 2006 (Figure 1).

In the fall of 2007, a remarkable total of 1,518 saw-whets was banded. On a single night, 12 October, an incredible

Figure 1: Numbers of Northern Saw-whet Owls banded by year

Year	Number
2000	137
2001	345
2002	690
2003	836
2004	849
2005	579
2006	432
2007	1518

236 owls were banded. This is the most that has ever been caught in one night anywhere in North America. At present, PEPtBO is the best site in Canada for catching these little “furballs”.

Occasionally we trap owls other than saw-whets. Barred Owls are frequent and a record 18 were trapped in 2007. Eastern Screech-Owls and Long-eared Owls are also trapped,

but with less than six a year of each. Another species occasionally caught is Whip-poor-will with one to three banded a year.

Over the past eight years, we have banded a total of 5,386 saw-whets (a total of 10,261 for all years the site has been active). The standard banding period is or four hours, starting half an hour after sunset, but we often run all night. A large number of people have visited us during owl trapping and all are welcome to come along for a few hours in the evenings of October to see a few of these cute owls in the hand.

As reported above, 2007 had the greatest number of saw-whets captured since 1975, with almost twice as many owls trapped as the next best year (2004). In these large movement years the percentage of young of the year typically increases. For example, in the big

Figure 2: % of young birds per catch

	2003	2004	2007
Hatch Year	60%	32%	70%
2nd Year	21%	48%	23%
After 2nd Year	19%	20%	7%
Total Banded	100%	100%	100%

year of 2003, young birds comprised 60.5% of the catch (Figure 2). In contrast, young birds only comprised 31.9% in 2004, even though the total numbers trapped were similar. In 2003, second year birds made up 20.7% of the total while the following year they accounted for 48%. This indicates that 2004 was a poor breeding year and that there was a good survival of young from the previous year. In 2007, young birds comprised 70.4% of the catch and second year birds made up 23%. It will be interesting to see what the percentage rates for young and second year birds will be like in the fall of 2008, which will be largely dependent on whether the vole population remains high resulting in another good breeding season.

A member group called Sawwhetnet, consisting of 236 people across North America, has been organized to allow owl banders to communicate with each other and disseminate pertinent information. With so many people banding saw-whets, some interesting recoveries of birds banded in one location and recaptured at another are now being reported. In 2007, PEPtBO trapped 28 birds that had originally been banded in locations as widespread as Minnesota, Maine, Virginia and other parts of Ontario. We also had 32 birds that we banded that were recaptured elsewhere, including 19 birds that were banded in 2007, giving us an idea of the routes taken to reach the wintering grounds. An amazing 253 banded birds were reported recovered by the Sawwhetnet group as a whole in 2007, with some birds caught that had been banded up to six years previously. The probability of any individual bird being retrapped diminishes over time due to annual mortality rates. Through the efforts of this group of people we have

with numbers varying greatly from 83 to 779 each year. No banding took place between 1988 and 2000.

As I had been actively banding Northern Saw-whet Owls previously at both Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, near Thunder Bay, and Cabot Head Bird Observatory, near the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, it was natural to continue the banding of saw-whets when we began the fall migration program at Prince Ed-



Northern Saw-whet Owl /
David Okines

been able to learn a great deal about saw-whets and their ecology. We know that saw-whet populations tend to cycle with those of their primary prey item, Red-backed Vole, and that peak numbers have been seen at banding stations in roughly four-year cycles. We know approximate routes that these birds take to reach their wintering grounds, how far they travel, and how quickly. Some sites further south are able to keep tabs on birds throughout the winter to learn more about their winter ecology. And we have been able to monitor population changes in the species, so that over the long term we can detect trends that can be used to spearhead conservation efforts.

So if you find yourself out this way in the fall, we encourage you to take an evening to stop by and see one of these delightful little owls up close and personal.

Birding with a Samsung YP-K5 4GB MP3 Player

By Robert Stamp

After the frustration of using a little tape recorder to play owl or rail sounds over the years, I was impressed when a birding companion, after hearing a distant Mourning Warbler, quickly dialed up the sound on his Palm Pilot and blasted out the song on his large speaker that he had carried out into the field. It worked. The bird came in to investigate his loud rival. It was quick, but that speaker was more than I wanted to carry around all day.

For years my birding buddies would imitate a screech owl and draw in a distant songbird or occasionally get a response from an owl. I tried and tried to learn this technique but the best I could do was compliment their effort with my pishing.

Last fall, prior to a trip to Peru, I bought a Samsung MP3 player that had a built in speaker. Even with the protective case, the whole unit measures 10 x 5 x 2.5 cm. With the case and a plug in recharger the cost was around \$175. It hooks up to my computer and I can download any song or picture that I have in my Media Centre. They say the four GB of memory will hold 1,000 songs but I'm sure it will hold far more bird songs. The battery is good for 30 hours of music through the earphones or three hours through the speaker. You can change whether the player scrolls through your songs or repeats over and over the song you choose. The latter I find the most useful. The pictures are small and I never really use this feature. The unit has an FM radio, earphones and an alarm. The alarm is a useful travel feature that is easy to set or change when the tour guide says he wants to see you downstairs at 4:30 a.m. for an early start.

On the Peru trip I listened to music through my earphones on the airplane and even enjoyed "Cruisin' down the River" while watching for pink dolphins during our boat trip on the Amazon. Occasionally I even reviewed some of the bird songs I was hoping to hear the next day. Since the guide had his own tape recorder and microphone, as well as an iPod MP3 player, I seldom got to play any of my bird songs in the field. On one memo-

rable occasion the guide had equipment problems and I

was called upon to call in a distant Buckley's Forest-Falcon. This was one of my most coveted birds on the trip, so I had already extracted its song and saved it on a small playlist. (A 'playlist' is made in your media software and makes a song readily available.) My little unit does not have the volume of one with a separate battery-operated speaker, but it did the trick. The bird came in, calling right in front of us, but alas like many of these tropical birds it stayed out of sight.

Back in Ontario, I have already used the screech-owl recording to locate birds on Christmas Counts, and I look forward to locating more rails this spring. The unit is small enough that I can have it on me whenever I bird. I can see it being useful just to confirm the species of a song that I have just heard, without attempting to call in the bird. In fact, one of the main advantages of using an MP3 player while birding is to identify or confirm an unfamiliar song or call. Also, for species that exhibit regional variability in their vocalizations, you can download and store examples of songs from across their geographic range.

The ethics of using pishing or playback of recorded songs to attract birds can be debated extensively, but a little common sense is needed. Disturbing nesting birds is very hard to justify, but briefly teasing a few chickadees while doing a Christmas Count seems relatively harmless. Of course, we should all pay heed to the OFO Code of Ethics which includes the caveat "Tape recordings and similar methods of attracting birds may cause stress for territorial birds. They should be used sparingly and avoided in heavily birded areas."

Note: For more about the technical aspects of MP3 use, see *Digital Bird Song Players* by Paul Bisson in *OFO News* Volume 23 Number 3 October 2005.



SamsungYP-K5 / Robert Stamp

Book Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 12: Picathartes to Tits and Chickadees

2007. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David Christie.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain.

E-mail: lynx@hbw.com.

Hardcover 815 pages.

\$250.00 US CDN

(ISBN 84-96553-42-6).



Usually, I wish time would slow down, but when it comes to waiting for the next volume of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW), I get impatient!

The anticipation is almost unbearable. But enough about me...Volume 12 has arrived.

Ever wonder how many species of birds have ever lived on earth? Well, it's obviously difficult to determine, but it may have been as many as 1,634,000 according to one scientist. Fossil records persist for about 2,000 of these and upwards of 9,800 others still exist today. Let's see — that's about 12,000 accounted for — so that means that over 1.62 million species have never been described. In a detailed chapter, the authors describe the current science about fossil records, from the original avian precursors to "opposite" and toothed birds and finally modern birds. The text is interspersed with interesting graphics and depictions of what these birds looked like as they progressed from primitive to advanced. This goes a long way past the Archaeopteryx with which all of us are familiar.

The authors then dive directly into the species accounts, starting with the *Picathartes*. This is a localized family from western Africa that includes only two species — White-necked and Grey-necked *Picathartes*. These are bizarre prehistoric colonial nesters that are surprisingly elusive and difficult to find. Their populations are low and their habitat remote,

so few people have encountered them and fewer still have seen their graceful bounding gait.

As with all species accounts and family overviews in the series, the authors include information on systematics, morphological aspects, habitat, general habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, movements, relationship with man, status and conservation and a bibliography. These are supported with range maps, beautiful paintings of every species, alternate names and distributional information.

As one moves through the book, one is treated to a fascinating journey through Australasia, Africa, Europe and North America, where you will learn about the 309 species of babblers, 21 parrotbills, 5 Australasian babblers, 3 logrunners, 18 jewel-babblers and allies, 56 whistlers, 46 Australasian robins, 27 fairy-wrens, 3 bristlebirds, 63 thornbills, 5 Australian chats, 2 sitellas, 7 Australasian treecreepers, and 56 tits and chickadees. I was taken back to some adventures I've had, in Australia in particular, and was able to nostalgically revisit the sites and sights through the pages of this book.

Teasers: Is a larger species of babbler clumsier than a smaller one? Does a Bearded Parrotbill need to be hugged before it can go to sleep? Do logrunners really run on logs? Is an Ifrit really a logrunner? Do whistlers whistle? What is a fidgeting flycatcher? Which family was once called Mormon wren due to the propensity of the male to keep a harem? Should the bristlebirds really be called the logsingers? Do thornbills and scrubwrens have a drinking problem? In the wild, both the female and male Crimson Chats incubate eggs. What happens when they are bred in captivity? Why do sitellas huddle? (Hint: this has nothing to do with football). What the heck is badging?

Well, you get my gist — these books are packed with information that can be as fun as it is scientific. Enjoy reading the essays on each family as much as you enjoy the reviewing the maps and paintings.

As always, the detail in this book is extraordinary and the quality impeccable. I recommend this book wholeheartedly, as I do the entire series.

For the latecomers, Lynx is offering special deals on purchasing the entire 12 volumes published to date. The savings they offer are substantial, so you might want to consider buying in now.

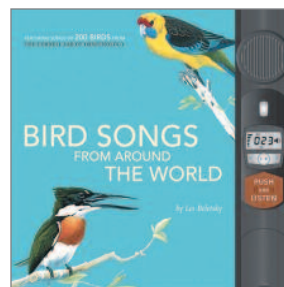
Check it out at <http://www.hbw.com/lynx/en/handbook-birds-world>, for more information.

Geoff Carpentier

Bird Songs from Around the World

2007. by Les Beletsky, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, California. 368 pages; 28 x 28 cm. \$50.00. ISBN 1-932855-61-0.

This is a sequel to *Bird Songs — 250 North American Birds in Song*, by the same author. The current volume includes 200 species from five continents (and the Pacific islands), something that limits the representation from each continent. There are 29 from North America (mainly from Central America and nothing normally from Canada), 37 from South America, 24 from Europe, 34 from Africa, 36 from Asia and 35 from Australasia. Following the format of the previous volume, there is an audio player on the extended back cover beside the text pages, with a representative song or call for each species.



Most species have a colour illustration on one page and text on the facing page, of about 20 lines. A few are only one page, with from seven to 10 lines of text. In brief,

the text usually gives some information about range, habitat, foraging habits, behaviour and description that might help in identification, relationships with other species, and perhaps rarity. There are also a few lines devoted to descriptions of songs and calls of each species. These present the usual problem of trying to describe in words what one hears. They did not always match what I heard in the playback very well.

OBRC Notes January 2008

This is definitely not a field guide — as an oversize book, it would be cumbersome in the field. The illustrations are by two experienced illustrators, David Nurney and Mike Langman. However, the birds often appear to have been hastily drawn and disproportionate at times, particularly heads and beaks. Some feet are under or oversized. But worse, the colouring of the birds is notably poor (although possibly not the fault of the illustrators). Many are garishly bright and some are just wrong. This becomes glaring when descriptions in the text do not match the illustrations. In addition, small birds are often given a full page, larger than life illustration that could be misleading in identification.

One song or call, repeated once, is available on the audio player. These are from the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, one of the foremost depositories of bird vocalizations in the world. But, here again, I was disappointed. The quality is variable, depending on the original available, but they are audible and reasonably good given the limitations of the player. It was what was presented that I found disappointing. These were supposed to be some of the “most interesting” species in the world. Some were nothing but quick squeaks or zips, or squawks of parrots. They were definitely not melodious or very interesting. There were a considerable number of calls, rather than songs, I suspect because they were shorter and could be accommodated on the limited playback device. A few seemed to have been abbreviated, or represented the shortest version available. And in one instance at least, it was impossible to tell whether I was listening to one species or two, with one in the background overlapping the other. Some tracks could be helpful to traveling birders, but they are unlikely to want to drag along this large book for so limited a selection.

Trying to cover too much (the whole world) in one volume does not work well. The book would be of some value as home entertainment. It certainly provided some of that, since there were species that I was interested in hearing. But, given the aforementioned limitations, the price will probably be more than most will want to spend.

Ross D. James

The voting members of the 2007 Ontario Bird Records Committee are Margaret Bain (Chair), Glenn Coady, Bill Crins, Rob Dobos, Jean Iron, Colin Jones, and Mark Peck (ROM liaison). Ian Richards is OBRC Secretary, with Alan Wormington as Assistant Secretary. The Annual General Meeting of the OBRC will be held at the Royal Ontario Museum on Saturday, 12 April 2008. At that meeting three members of the 2007 Committee, Margaret Bain, Glenn Coady, and Colin Jones will have completed their terms and three new members will be elected as their replacements on the 2008 Committee.

The current Committee has been kept busy by the commendable industry of Ian Richards who has been collating and circulating packages of reports with great energy. Electronic circulation and voting have greatly speeded up the whole review process. By the time of the AGM, over 150 reports will have been circulated and most of those requiring further discussion will have been recirculated, leaving only a few reports for third circulation debate at the AGM. The deadline for submitting 2007 reports was 31 December 2007, so if you have any unreported 2007 sightings of Review List species or subspecies please submit them as soon as possible, but they will be reviewed by the 2008 Committee.

At the OBRC Policy meeting in October 2007 discussion took place on whether to review reports of Whooping Cranes in the province. Since 2001, young Whooping Cranes from the reintroduction program of the International Crane Foundation at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin have been led by ultralight aircraft down to wintering grounds at Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida — once the cranes are taught this path, most return to Wisconsin on their own each spring. In November 2004, hawkwatchers at Holiday Beach were thrilled to see five adult Whooping Cranes flying past their viewing tower. Thanks to their attached radio-transmitters, the cranes were tracked eastward across southern Ontario until they got back on track by turning south towards Florida. It is entirely possible that this may happen again, especially as the Wisconsin population is prospering (even though 17 out of 18 young cranes in a Florida enclosure did not survive a huge windstorm there in February 2007). The Committee decided that wing-tagged Whooping Cranes did not require an OBRC report, though historical reports or any suggesting a possible origin from the only self-sustaining, wild population in Wood Buffalo National Park should be reviewed.

The OBRC looks forward to another successful year, and encourages birders to submit reports of all Review List species and subspecies they find, or join others in observing, in Ontario. This comes with yet another plea for as much information as possible to accompany any photographs submitted — we still receive too many “orphan” photos without any details attached! The Review List of species requiring documentation, together with an online report form, is easily accessed through the OFO website at www.ofo.ca/obrc. The Review List is also incorporated into the pocket field checklist of Ontario birds produced by OFO Publications. Online report forms and electronic photographs should be emailed to **obrc@ofo.ca**. Written forms, sketches, and photographic prints or slides may be mailed to **Ian Richards, OBRC Secretary, 501-1305 Ontario Street, Burlington ON L7S 1Y1**.

Margaret Bain,
Chair, 2007 Ontario Bird Records Committee

Caspian Tern / Glenn Barrett



Juvenile Caspian Terns

from Presqu'île Provincial Park
observed at Hamlin Beach State
Park, New York

By Chip Weseloh

On 15 June 2007, 89 flightless juvenile Caspian Terns were colour-banded at the colony at Gull Island, Presqu'île Provincial Park in Brighton, Ontario. The birds were banded in hopes of gaining insight into their post-breeding dispersal around Lake Ontario. Adult and juvenile Caspian Terns are known to roost at Snake and Salmon islands near Kingston during August and September but the nearest breeding colony is nearly 40 km away (Little Galloo Island off Henderson Harbour, NY). The question remained: could the birds observed at Kingston be coming from Little Galloo Island or might they be coming from other colonies on Lake Ontario? There are two other consistently active Caspian Tern colonies on Lake Ontario: one on Gull Island at Presqu'île Provincial Park near Brighton and the other on the Wildlife Islands at Hamilton Harbour. In past years, there has been a moderately-sized colony at Toronto Harbour, but it has only had a few nests in recent years.

As it turned out, no colour-banded Caspian Terns were observed at Snake or Salmon islands during the autumn of 2007 but four different individuals were reported by Robert Spahn from Hamlin Beach State Park, just west of Rochester, NY, on the south shore of Lake Ontario. Birds were reported on nine days between the 2nd and 22nd of August 2007. They occurred with flocks of up to

Caspian Tern banding at
Gull I., Presqu'île P.P. 15
June 2007 / Clive Hodder



78 other Caspian Terns on the beach at the Park. It is not known if the birds were roosting locally after perhaps having temporarily moved to the Hamlin Beach area or if they were commuting daily, back across the lake, a distance of approximately 73 km, to roost at the Park. Determining if the birds roosted locally would give insight into their post-fledging dispersal patterns, and it would be a good little project for Rochester birders next summer! On the 5 September 2007, one of the young Caspian Terns colour-banded at Presqu'île was sighted on the Atlantic coast near New Hanover, North Carolina.

Plans are to continue colour-banding birds at Presqu'île in 2008. Birders are encouraged to search flocks of loafing Caspian Terns during August and watch for colour-banded individuals. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is also banding young Caspian Terns, so there should be reasonable numbers of banded birds present.

If anyone observes colour-banded Caspian Terns, please report the colour of the band and its number and letter characters as well as the date and location of the sighting to chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca.



Common Mergansers usually nest in tree cavities but occasionally in banks, holes in rocks or rarely on the ground.

Photo by Jim Heslop

The Deserted Cabin On Duck Island

By Jean Johnson

The island drew us like a magnet. It was small, only a few hundred square metres at a guess. After a morning trying to sail without quite enough wind in Georgian Bay, we were hot, tired and ready for a dip. I only like dips when my feet can touch the bottom, so we let the boat drift in towards the shore, and then dropped the anchor. We let down the ladder and slipped into the water. It was unbelievably refreshing, a touch on the cool side at first and shallow enough for me to feel safe. Mike is more adventurous, and he took off in a different direction for a real swim.

Soon I was close to the little beach, and pulled myself up on to a rock, feet still in the water. I was glad I had kept my sandals on as the rocks were sharp. The sun felt warm on my skin and I soon dried out. There was an old slip coming down to the water, covered in plant debris and signs that the local waterfowl were also finding it useful. The other end of the slip was hidden by undergrowth. The island seemed to be like many others we had seen, all rocks and trees with little to distinguish it from the others. I climbed out on to the slip and looked around for Mike. Yes, there he was back on the boat, drying himself.

I walked up the slip and pushed through the bushes at the top. There seemed to be some sort of a building through the trees ahead. I turned back and shouted "Come on over here, there is a cabin through the trees. I don't think anyone else is on the island, though" Five minutes later he climbed the slip and joined me. The first thing we saw was a sort of concrete box in the ground with a wooden lid partly open. Nothing in there. "Some sort of fishing camp, maybe. Could that be a holding tank?" Mike said. I thought it was a cistern to catch rain water but there were no downspouts going into it, like the one at our place in the country.

A short gravel path led to a very small cabin, just one room by the size of it. The door was shuttered up, and we went round to the side where there was a shuttered window. Back to the path and round to the other side and there was a window with no shutter on, in fact it seemed to be open at the bottom. As I approached to peek inside, something rocketed through the gap at the bottom of the window with a loud clattering of wings. Two female merganser ducks were making a quick exit, and they nearly gave me a heart attack. I smothered a shriek but soon realized there was no danger. We peered into the gloom trying to make out the details of the room. A bed along the

side under the other window, with a gaily coloured quilt spread on it. A wooden table with two chairs, decorated with a few feathers and the occasional bird dropping. It didn't look as if anyone had eaten a meal there in a while. Mike hooked his long legs over the window sill and dropped down inside, then held out his hand to help me in too. As our eyes got used to the gloom we saw that there was a sink along the wall opposite the door, an old fashioned one with a wooden counter on each side. Here sat two chipped enamel bowls. To our amazement they were filled with grey duck feathers and in each was a clutch of warm, buff coloured eggs. Six in one, eight in the other, and we had disturbed these ducks as they sat cosily on the counter keeping each other company while incubating their eggs. On the bare lino-covered floor another duck lay dead. A mystery, as there was no indication of the cause of death.

We climbed out of the window again, starting to feel like intruders now. We were filled with questions. Who owned this place? Where had they gone? Obviously the bed was made up with its quilt ready for someone to sleep there again. Why was one window without its shutter and open to the elements — there was no screen in place. I imagined an old man, a city dweller most of the year, but spending his summers in this rustic retreat with his boat pulled up on the slip and the ducks and loons his only company. I pictured a sudden illness, a change of plans. No visit to the cabin this year. Probably some kids in a boat pulled the shutter off the window for fun.

After a few minutes, we headed back to the boat, made some sandwiches and ate them on deck, whistling for a wind. By the time we reached the marina that night, the mystery was forgotten.

Future OFO Field Trips

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

March 15 (Saturday) Long Point Area

Leaders: George Pond, Barry Jones, Jim Heslop, Bob Stamp. **Meet** 9:00 a.m. at main parking lot of St. Williams Forestry Station on County Road 24 west of the intersection with County Road 16. Waterfowl, swans, Sandhill Cranes, early spring migrants.

April 12 – 13 (Saturday–Sunday) Gore Bay, Manitoulin Island. *Pre-Registration required. **Leader:** Steve Hall. Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. **TRIP FULL**

April 14 (Monday) Spring Waterfowl Migration East of Ottawa

Leader: Tony Beck. **Meet** 7.30 a.m. along Petrie Island Causeway north of intersection of Highway 17 and Trim Road (Orleans).

April 20 (Sunday) Tiny Marsh

Leader: Ron Fleming. **Meet** 8:00 a.m. at the commuter parking lot on the south-west side of the interchange at Hwy. 9 and 400, or meet at 9:00 a.m. at Tiny Marsh Nature Centre. Take County Road 27 north past Elmvale to Simcoe Road 6. Turn left (west). Proceed to 1st Concession, Tiny-Flos Townline. Turn left (west) and go about 4 km to the Centre. Waterfowl, early spring migrants.

April 26 (Saturday) Algonquin Provincial Park

Leader: Ron Tozer. **Meet** 9:00 a.m. at the West Gate of the Park. Entrance fee. Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee.

April 27 (Sunday) Minesing Swamp

Leader: Dave Milsom. **Meet** 8:30 a.m. at Tim Hortons in Angus on Simcoe County Road 90 west of Barrie. Marsh birds, early spring migrants, shorebirds, waterfowl.

May 3 (Saturday) Rondeau Provincial Park

Leader: Maris Apse. **Meet** 8:00 a.m. at the Park Visitor Centre. Park entrance fee. Spring migrants.

May 4 (Sunday) Prince Edward Point

Leader: Terry Sprague. **Meet** 7:00 a.m. at the bird sightings board at Ducks Dive Cottages & Charters, just outside entrance to Prince Edward Point National Wildlife

Area. From Picton, take County Road 10 (Lake Street at LCBO) for 8 km to Cherry Valley, turn left at stop sign and follow for 6 km to Milford. At post office, go right on County Road 10 to the Mariner's Museum at South Bay. Go right and follow County Road 13 for 17 km to Prince Edward Point. Spring migrants.

May 24 (Saturday) Napanee area, and Amherst Island

Leaders: Kurt Henninge, Owen Weir. **Meet** 6:30 a.m. in Tim Hortons in Napanee. *Morning:* breeding birds north of Napanee: Golden-winged and Prairie Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireo, Black-billed Cuckoo. *Afternoon:* Amherst Island (ferry fee) for shorebirds, ducks, and more.

May 25 (Sunday) Leslie Street Spit, Toronto

Leader: John Carley. **Meet** 8:00 a.m. at the base of the Spit (Tommy Thompson Park) parking lot near the intersection of Leslie Street and Unwin Ave. Late migrants, breeding birds and butterflies.

May 30, 31 (all day Friday to Saturday noon) Rainy River.

*Pre-Registration required. **Leaders:** Mary and Dave Elder. **Meet** junction of Worthington Rd. 3 and Hwy. 11 about 10 km east of Rainy River (3 sideroads east of town) at 7:00 a.m. LOCAL TIME. Probable: American White Pelican, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Marbled Godwit, Sandhill Crane, Black-billed Magpie, Connecticut Warbler, Le Conte's Sparrow. Possible: Western Kingbird, Yellow Rail, Piping Plover. *Please note: Register by May 1, or trip will be cancelled. To register or request detailed information, email: mdelder@shaw.ca.

June 1 (Sunday) Carden Alvar

Leader: Ron Pittaway. **Meet** 9:00 a.m. in Kirkfield at parking lot of Lady Mackenzie School on the right of Kirkfield Road 6, about 0.5 km north of Kawartha Road 48. Trip consists of some driving, as well as comfortable walking. Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows and other grassland species.

June 8 (Sunday) Breeding Birds of Larose Forest, Ottawa

Leader: Bernie Ladouceur. 6:30 a.m. until Noon. **Meet** Dewberry Trail parking lot Dolman Ridge Road, off Anderson Road; then 20 minute drive to forest. Explore a 10,000 hectare forest that stands where sand dunes were less than a century ago. Expect to hear and see most of the 17 species of warblers, including Cape May Warbler, and many other breeding species. Breeding raptors include Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk. We may see moose.

June 8 (Sunday) Skunk's Misery, Rondeau and Blenheim Lagoons

NEW! **Leaders:** Rob Read, Gavin Platt. **Meet** 7.30 a.m. at Newbury Hospital (Four Counties Health Services) parking lot just northeast of Newbury on 5th Line/Concession Drive. Walking/driving tour. Some trails may be wet, muddy. Be prepared for mosquitoes. Cerulean and Hooded Warblers, Acadian Flycatcher, Broad-winged Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker and more on territory in one of the largest remnants of Carolinian forest in Ontario. Butterflies too. Trip ends early afternoon.

OFO Twenty-fifth Anniversary Clothing

A limited number of blue denim shirts and grey sweatshirts embroidered with the OFO logo and 25 Years are still available through OFO Sales, along with a wide range of other merchandise. Check out the OFO website at www.ofoc.ca to order checklists, decals, hats, caps, toques and T-shirts, or call Wendy Hunter at 416-964-2853. Can't find what you want? Wendy is interested in hearing of any new merchandise you think OFO should be stocking.

Ontario Winter Bird List

By Mark Cranford

Recently Blake Maybank put out a request for volunteers to compile a list of birds seen during the current winter period, 1 December, 2007 to 29 February 2008, for Canadian provinces and other distinct regions. Todd Pepper and I thought this could be fun and volunteered to produce the Ontario section.

The Ontario Winter List that we have assembled can be found on the internet at <http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/maybank/other/onwinter.htm>. The site includes links to winter bird lists for the other nine provinces as well as the Ottawa/Gatineau region, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon and Iceland. There is also a link to the Ontario section of Blake's Birding the Americas.

Included with the Ontario Winter List is a composite listing of all those species seen in previous winters, that is, which we have been able to find in

published reports. In addition to the many books chronicling various locations in Ontario, we have gone through the entire ONTBIRDS archive, a complete set of Ontario Birds Records Committee reports in Ontario Birds, all Ontario reports from the winter in Birders Journal's Cross Canada Round-up and a near complete set of Field Notes back to 1980.

While most records are not reviewed by formal committees, we have identified birds from OBRC Southern Review List that do not have accepted records for the winter period (in bold). There may be errors and omissions in the list, so if you see something odd or missing we would love to hear from you. We would also appreciate getting unpublished records. All we need is a date, location and observer. So check your records!

We hope people enjoy the list and advise us of birds missing from the current year. It will be interesting to see the results of this exercise as time progresses.

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Valerie Jacobs and Doug Woods,
Coordinators

Email: ofo@ofo.ca

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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 the world, *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**

Return undelivered mail to:

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editorial team
at OFO News.*

We would first and foremost like to echo the tribute to Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway prepared by Ron Tozer. We thank Ron and Jean for their long dedication and amazing legacy as editors of this publication. Our goal is to publish an informative club newsletter while striving for their high standards of journalism.

Your Board of Directors and News Editors will continue to use *OFO News* as a medium to disseminate information about recent and upcoming events. But, in order to keep this newsletter topical, timely and relevant, we also require your help. If you find errors, if there is a story you feel is missing or especially if you want to contribute, please contact us. We welcome your input and feedback.

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