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ARTICLES

Cover Illustration: Pyrrhuloxia *by Barry Kent MacKay*

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Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2011

Mark H. Cranford

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) evaluates documentation it receives of any record of a species or recognizable form that is on the Review List for Ontario (see www.ofo.ca). In addition, it reviews documentation relating to new species, new subspecies and new breeding species for the province. This 30th annual report details the results of the adjudication of 133 records by the OBRC during 2011, of which 109 (82%) were accepted.

A total of 162 observers submitted documentation for review by the 2011 Committee. Written reports were often accompanied by photographs (mostly digital images, but also some prints), as well as field notes and sketches. As noted in recent years, the trend toward submission of photographic evidence only, with little or no supporting written evidence, is an ongoing problem. This makes it much more difficult for the Committee to compile dates of occurrence and other requested information. In addition, many details and circumstances associated with an observation, such as behaviour, comparisons to nearby birds and vocalizations, cannot be determined from photographic evidence alone. As such, we urge observers to submit written reports with their images submitted to the OBRC. For those submitting photos to the Ontario Field Ornithologists' (OFO) website, please send the same photos, along with written documentation, directly to the OBRC Secretary. That being said, the OBRC reserves the right to use, as evidence, photographs that have been posted on the OFO website. Guidance regarding the documentation of rare birds can be found on the OBRC page of the OFO website (www.ofo.ca).

Figure 1: Ontario Bird Records Committee for 2011. Left to right (back): Don Sutherland, Doug McRae, Ross James, Glenn Coady, Ken Burrell, Alan Wormington, left to right (sitting): Mark Cranford, Brandon Holden, Mike Burrell.
Photo: Mark K. Peck.

The members of the 2011 Committee were Glenn Coady (Chairperson), Mark H. Cranford (non-voting Secretary), Alan Wormington (non-voting Assistant to the Secretary), Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Michael V.A. Burrell, Brandon R. Holden, Ross D. James, R. Douglas McRae and Donald A. Sutherland (Figure 1). Mark K. Peck acted as non-voting Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) liaison for the OBRC

Changes to the Checklist of Ontario Birds

Pyrrhuloxia (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) was added to the Ontario list, bringing the total to 487 species. In addition, northern Ontario had its first accepted record of Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*).

Changes to the Ontario Review List

Pyrrhuloxia is added to the Review List for southern Ontario while Black Vulture and Lark Sparrow are removed. Least Tern is added to the Review List for northern Ontario while Eastern Towhee and Lark Sparrow are removed.

Changes to the Recognizable Forms Review List

The Recognizable Forms Review List was reviewed at the spring 2012 OBRC meeting on 1 April. The following criteria were established to guide the process to add or delete forms:

1. There must be at least one accepted OBRC record before listing.
2. Rarity must be demonstrated (less than five occurrences per year).
3. Colour morphs are not to be reviewed.

The following 'taxa' are removed from the List

- "Bewick's" Tundra Swan – criterion 1
- Dark-morph Broad-winged Hawk – criterion 3
- "Western" Red-tailed Hawk – criterion 2
- "Richardson's" Merlin – criterion 1
- "Coastal" Willet – criterion 1
- "Greenland" Iceland Gull – criterion 1
- "Scandinavian" Lesser Black-backed Gull (nominate *fuscus*) – criterion 1
- "Red-shafted" Northern Flicker – criterion 1
- "Appalachian" Black-throated Blue Warbler – criterion 1
- "White-winged" Dark-eyed Junco – criterion 1
- "Purple" Common Grackle – criterion 1

The following taxon has been added to the List

- "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco

Listing of Records

In the following species accounts, the total number of accepted records to date is indicated by a single number in parentheses. Accepted records are arranged taxonomically by their English and scientific names following the Seventh Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds (AOU 1998) and subsequent supplements (42nd to 52nd; see www.aou.org/checklist/north/). Date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, sex, plumage, and location are provided when known. Place names in italics refer to a county, regional municipality or district in Ontario; they also appear in colour. The plumage terminology used here follows that of Humphrey and Parkes (1959). For a detailed explanation of plumage and moult terminology, see Pittaway (2000). Complementing H&P plumage designation, an age designation in parentheses may be used where appropriate. The names of all contributors who provided documentation in the form of a specimen, photograph, video, sound recording or written description of the bird in the field are listed, while those contributors who are known to be the discoverers of the bird are also underlined. Additional discoverers of the bird are also listed (if known), even if they did not submit documentation. The OBRC file number is shown in parentheses at the end of each record.

The Committee attempts to verify documented information prior to the acceptance and publication of a record, but occasionally inaccuracies will occur. Anyone with pertinent information that would correct or strengthen a published record, such as date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, plumages, location, discoverers, etc., is urged to communicate this to the Secretary. In addition, there may be dates quoted in other sources that differ from those listed by the OBRC — these discrepancies are corrected whenever possible.

All records that were not accepted because of uncertain identification or questionable origin are listed separately. Contributors of all "not accepted" reports receive a letter from the Chairperson

explaining the reasons for the decision, along with copies of the comments written by voting members. A "not accepted" report can be reconsidered by the OBRC if new evidence, in the form of additional documentation, is submitted to the Committee for review.

All reports submitted to the OBRC are kept on permanent file at the ROM. Researchers and other interested individuals are welcome to examine any of the filed reports at the ROM, by appointment only. Please contact Mark K. Peck, Department of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6 (e-mail: markp @rom.on.ca or telephone 416-586-5523).

Acknowledgements

The OBRC appreciates the efforts of the numerous observers who took the time to submit documentation of their observations of rare birds for consideration by the 2011 Committee. We also thank the following people who assisted the Committee in acquiring additional data and other material evidence that supplemented the information submitted directly by observers and Committee members, or by providing expert opinions on evidence submitted to the Committee: Margaret J.C. Bain, David H. Elder, Nicholas G. Escott, Jean Iron, Stuart A. Mackenzie, James M. Pawlicki, Ronald J. Pittaway, Brian D. Ratcliff, Ron Ridout, Kayo J. Roy, John M. Woodcock, Ross W. Wood and Doug Woods.

OntBirds continues to be a useful source of information pertaining to rare birds that appear in the province; this listserve of the Ontario Field Ornithologists is moderated by Mark H. Cranford. In addition, the photographic pages on the OFO website, maintained in 2011 by Frank and Sandra Horvath, provide an excellent source of documentation for rarities. These sources of information make the Secretary's job of securing documentation much more efficient. During 2011, Alan Wormington, in his role as Assistant to the Secretary, provided valuable assistance in tracking down documentation for reports. I also wish to thank all members of the 2011 Committee for their support and assistance during the year.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

Common Eider ***Somateria mollissima*** **South Only (22)**

2011 – two, definitive basic female (adult) or first basic (immature), 21 September, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (R. Douglas McRae; 2011-059) – photos on file.

– one, definitive basic female (adult) or first basic (immature), 1-4 October, Chub Point, *Northumberland* (Margaret J.C. Bain, Ossie Tee; 2011-060) – photos on file.

Harlequin Duck ***Histrionicus histrionicus*** **North Only (23)**

2011 – one, definitive basic female (adult) or first basic (immature), 22 October, Cameron Falls, *Thunder Bay* (Gregory N. Stroud; 2011-128) – photo on file.

– one, definitive alternate male, 9-10 December, Pukaskwa National Park (Manito Miikana peninsula), *Thunder Bay* (Aaron A. Pervais, Michael T. Butler, also found by Derek S. Bedford; 2011-104) – photo, video on file.

Willow Ptarmigan ***Lagopus lagopus*** **South Only (1)**

2011 – one, definitive alternate male molting into definitive basic during stay (adult), 8 June – 30 November, Darlington, *Durham* (Wayne Holroyd, Jean Iron, Ron Pittaway, Luc S. Fazio, Kevin R. Shackleton, Rob Rushton, Ebrahim Patel, found by Jeff Reid; 2011-095) – photos and video on file.

Completely unexpected but not unprecedented, as one was collected near Whitby on 15 May 1897 (Fleming 1907). A reported irruption last winter south to Rouyn, Quebec (R.J. Pittaway, pers. comm.), may have included this bird as an extreme overshoot 500 km south of the nearest winter report.

Pacific Loon ***Gavia pacifica*** **South Only (49)**

2011 – one, first basic/first alternate (immature), 9-11 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Rhondda M. James, Jean Iron, found by Robert Z. Dobos; 2011-114) – photos on file.

Figure 2: Willow Ptarmigan Darlington Generating Station, *Durham* from 8 June to 30 November 2011. *Photo: Wayne Holroyd* (8 June).

Figure 3: Northern Gannet release at Van Wagner's Beach, *Hamilton* on 26 October 2011.
Photo: Gavin C. Platt.

– one, basic, 19 October, Chub Point, *Northumberland* (Margaret J.C.Bain; 2011-043) .
– one, definitive alternate/basic (adult), 31 October – 2 November, Oshawa, *Durham* (Jean Iron, found by Daniel S. Kaczynski; 2011-121) – photos on file.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (32)

2011 – one, alternate, 4-8 April, Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Etobicoke, *Toronto* (Bernard L. Monette, Alvan D. Buckley; 2011-005) – photos on file.

Western/Clark's Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis/clarkii* (8)

2011 – one, 13 March, Tommy Thompson Park, *Toronto* (James R. Boccia, Christopher K. Boccia; 2011-004) – photos on file.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (44)

2011 – one, juvenal, 26 October, Dundas, *Hamilton* (found by Daniel Oakes; 2011-108) – photo on file.
The "photo on file" refers to a photo taken by Gavin C. Platt, while the bird was in captivity.

Figure 4: Neotropic Cormorant (on left), Wheatley, *Essex* on 24 April 2011. *Photo: Brandon R. Holden.*

Neotropic Cormorant ***Phalacrocorax brasilianus*** **(3)**

2011 – one, definite alternate (adult), 24-27 April, Wheatley Harbour, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden, Alan Wormington, Joshua D. Vandermeulen, Mike V.A. Burrell, Christopher J. Escott; 2011-006) – photos on file.

– one, definite alternate (adult), 17-18 May, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Ross W. Wood, found by Richard Dobbins, Glenn Reed; 2011-110) – photos on file.

Least Bittern ***Ixobrychus exilis*** **North Only (2)**

2010 – two, 1 June (2), 9 June (1) Dryden, *Kenora* (Darlene J.M. Salter, also found by Joanne Bridgewater; 2011-078) – photos on file.

Great Egret ***Ardea alba*** **North Only (14)**

2011 – one, 20 July, Pukaskwa National Park (Pic River mouth), *Thunder Bay* (Martha L. Allen, found by Wayne S. Michano, Derek S. Bedford; 2011-040) – photos on file.

Little Blue Heron ***Egretta caerulea*** **(73)**

2011 – one, definitive alternate, 27 May, Erie View, *Norfolk* (Scott D. McIntosh, also found by Susan M. McIntosh, Jason S. McIntosh; 2011-025) – photos on file.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron ***Nyctanassa violacea*** **(43)**

2011 – one, definitive alternate, 1 June, Windsor, *Essex* (Karen J. Morgan; 2011-094) – photo on file.

Figure 5: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Windsor, *Essex*, on 1 June 2011. *Photo: Karen J. Morgan.*

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (59)

2011 – one, definitive alternate, 27 April, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden, Kenneth G.D. Burrell; 2011-013).

– one, definitive alternate, 14 May, Port Lambton, *Lambton* (Blake A. Mann; 2011-018) – photos on file.

– one, definitive alternate, 19 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Peter M. Kyne, Micha V. Jackson, found by T. Sobat; 2011-019) – photos on file.

– two, definitive alternate, 23 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Blake A. Mann; 2011-020) – photo on file.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (11)

2011 – two, definitive alternate (adults), 28 May, Collingwood, *Simcoe* (Peter Saliba; 2011-048).

– one, first alternate (immature), 4-13 July, Carp, *Ottawa* (Ben F. Di Labio, Bruce M. Di Labio, Paul Lagasi; 2011-109) – photos on file.

Dark Ibis species *Plegadis* sp. (62)

2011 – two, 31 March and 14 April, Warings Corner, (31 March) and Big Island (14 April), *Prince Edward* (R. Terry Sprague, found by John DeVries, Arlene DeVries; 2011-033).

– one, 23 July – 10 August, Lakeview Heights, *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry* (Robert B. Scranton, Dawn Scranton, Paul R. O'Toole; 2011-038) – photos on file.

Figure 6: Plegadis Ibis at Lakeview Heights (Cornwall), *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry* from 23 July to 10 August, 2011. *Photo: Dawn Scranton* (28 July)

– one, 22 August – 15 September, Whitby (Cranberry Marsh), *Durham* (Barry S. Cherriere; 2011-132) – photos on file.
– five, 9 September, Port Rowan, *Norfolk* (Stuart A. Mackenzie; 2011-070).

2010 – one, 22 May, Mississauga (Rattray Marsh), *Peel* (Andreas H.I. Jonsson; 2011-057).

The well-photographed and documented bird from Cornwall illustrates the difficulty of assigning age and species to Dark Ibis. Determination to species level for this group is not always possible (Kaufman 1990).

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* North Only after 2011 (75)

2011 – one, 29-30 March, Grimsby, *Niagara* (29 March), and Dundas, *Hamilton* (30 March) (Barry S. Cherriere; 2011-125) photos on file.
– one, 14 April, Scarborough, *Toronto* (Walter T. Fisher; 2011-010).
– one, 5 November, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, *Essex* (Cindy E.J. Cartwright, also found by Stephen R. Kolbe, Robert C. Pettit, R. James McCoy; 2011-072).

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis* (41)

2011 – one, first basic (immature), 24 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Garry T. Sadler, also found by Linda J. Sadler; 2011-028) – photo on file.

2010 – one, juvenal, 8 September, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, *Essex* (James M. Pawlicki; 2011-065).

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (55)

2011 – one, light morph, first basic (immature), 7 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Peter S. Burke, Alvaro P. Jaramillo, also found by Karl R. Konze; 2011-014) – photo on file.
– one, light morph, first basic (immature), 2 October, Long Point (Old Cut), *Norfolk* (Avery L. Bartels, also found by Andrew T. Cox, Tom M. Finch; 2011-067).

Figure 7: First basic Mississippi Kite at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex,* 24 May 2011. *Photo: Garry T. Sadler* .

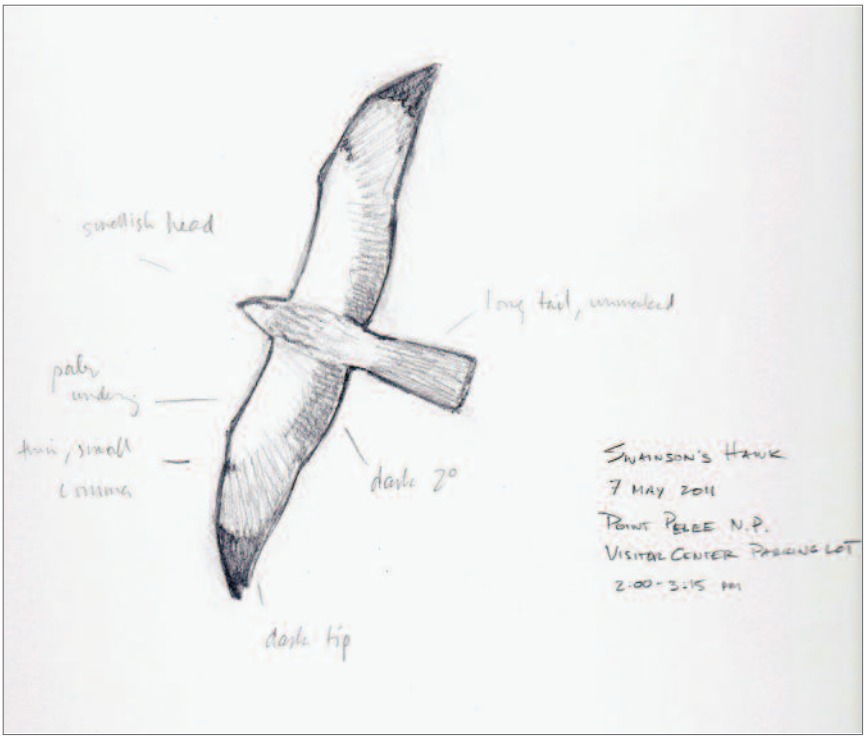

Figure 8: First basic Swainson's Hawk, 7 May 2011 at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*. *Sketch: Peter S. Burke.*

Figure 9: Purple Gallinule, 14-23 May 2011 at Kincardine, *Bruce*. *Photo: James A. Turland* (23 May).

"Western" Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicus calurus* (2)

2011/12 – one, first basic (immature), 29 December – 4 February, Oshawa, *Durham* (Bethany Linton, Keith Linton; 2011-113) – photos on file.
This was an exceptionally well-documented bird.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (17)

2011 – one, definitive basic, 14-23 May, Kincardine, *Bruce* (Stewart Nutt, James A. Turland, found by Adrian Bick; 2011-001) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal, 9-15 October, Port Weller, *Niagara* (John E. Black, Daniel R. Salisbury, Christopher J. Escott, Kayo J. Roy, Kenneth G.D. Burrell, William W. Watson, Marcie L. Jacklin, Peeter Musta, Willie C. D'Anna, Sandra L. Horvath, also found by Paula Clark, Philip Downey, Carol Horvat, John Stevens, Katherine Stoltz; 2011-045) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal, 16 October, Burlington (Hendrie Valley), *Halton* (James Thomson; 2011-046) – photo on file.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* (73)

2011 – one, definitive alternate male, (adult), 7 May, Toronto Islands, *Toronto* (Gavin C. Platt; 2011-107).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (29)

2010 – one, definitive alternate, (adult) 17 May, Blenheim, *Chatham-Kent* (Garry T. Sadler; 2011-098) – photo on file.

Figure 10: Purple Gallinule at Burlington (Hendrie Valley), *Halton* on 16 October 2011. *Photo: James Thomson.*

Figure 11: Curlew Sandpiper at Blenheim, *Chatham-Kent* on 17 May 2011. *Photo: Garry T. Sadler.*

Figure 12: "Common" Mew Gull at Cobourg Harbour, *Northumberland* on 23 March 2011. *Photo: Jean Iron.*

Figure 13: Slaty-backed Gull at Niagara Falls, *Niagara* from 3-13 December 2011. *Photo: James M. Pawlicki* (8 December).

Mew Gull ***Larus canus*** **(25)**

2011 – one, *brachyrhynchus*, definitive basic, (adult), 13 February, Cobourg, *Northumberland* (R. Douglas McRae, Bruce D. Parker; 2011-061) – photos on file.

– one, *canus/heinei*, definitive alternate, (adult), 23 March, Cobourg, *Northumberland* (Jean Iron, Chris McConnell, Bruce D. Parker, found by Sarah A.E. Petrasek; 2011-058) – photos on file.

Lesser Black-backed Gull ***Larus fuscus*** **North Only (9)**

2011 – one, definitive alternative molting to basic, (adult), 25 August, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Mark W. Jennings, Brandon R. Holden; 2011-089) – photos on file.

Slaty-backed Gull ***Larus schistisagus*** **(8)**

2011 – one, definitive basic, (adult), 3-13 December, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Kevin A. McLaughlin, Jean Iron, Bruce M. Di Labio, Ben F. Di Labio, Jay McGowan, James M. Pawlicki also found by Robert L. Maciver, Hannah G. Maciver; 2011-063) – photos on file.

2010 – one, definitive basic, (adult), 24-29 December, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Jeffrey H. Skevington, Rohan A. van Twest; 2011-023) – photos, video on file.

Least Tern ***Sternula antillarum*** **(4)**

2011 – one, definitive basic, (adult), 10 May, Atikokan, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder; 2011-090) – photo on file.

This is the fourth accepted record for the province and the first for northern Ontario.

Figure 14: Least Tern on 10 May 2011 at Atikokan, *Rainy River*. *Photo: David H. Elder.*

Figure 15: Razorbill at Ottawa, *Ottawa* from 22 October to 1 November 2011. *Photo: Tony F.M. Beck.*

Arctic Tern ***Sterna paradisaea*** **South Only (20)**

2011 – one, definitive alternate, (adult), 28 May, Ottawa, *Ottawa* (Mike V.A. Burrell; 2011-049) – photos on file.

This record fits the expected spring pattern of this species migrating through southern Ontario.

Pomarine Jaeger ***Stercorarius pomarinus*** **North Only (35)**

2011 – one, juvenal, 9 November, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Mike V.A. Burrell, also found by Brandon R. Holden, Barbara N. Charlton, Kenneth G.D.Burrell; 2011-111).

Razorbill ***Alca torda*** **(10)**

2011 – one, juvenal or first basic, (immature), 22 October – 1 November, Ottawa (Deschenes Rapids), *Ottawa* (Mark Gawn, Tony F.M. Beck, Bruce M. Di Labio, Ben F. Di Labio; 2011-091) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal or first basic, (immature), 10 November – 3 December, Niagara-on-the-Lake, *Niagara* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, David M. Bell, Michael M. Morgante, Willie C. D'Anna, William W. Watson, Joe Mitchell; 2011-092) – photos on file.

The Ottawa bird is the third record away from Lake Ontario; one was found on Dore Lake, *Renfrew* (Wormington and Curry 1990) and another bird is a specimen record for Rideau Lakes (1950).

The Niagara bird was initially reported in American waters on 8 November 2011 by Joshua C. Stiller.

Eurasian Collared-Dove ***Streptopelia decaocto*** **(14)**

2011 – one, basic, (adult), 14-18 May, Devlin, *Rainy River* (Michael S. Dawber; 2011-127) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal or first basic, (immature), 7 September, Sault Ste. Marie, *Algoma* (Les Piccolo; 2011-129) – photo on file.

The September bird is interesting; to date there has not been confirmed breeding established in the province.

White-winged Dove **Zenaida asiatica** **(37)**

2011 – one, 2 June, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Ross W. Wood; 2011-119).

– one, 4-7 September, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Michael T. Butler; 2011-101) – photos on file.

Figure 16: Barn Owl at Whitby, *Durham* on 17 December 2011. *Photo: Heather Rademacher.*

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (8)

2011 – one, female, (adult), (found dead, fresh) 17 December, Whitby, *Durham* (Heather Rademacher; 2011-122) – photos on file, specimen (skin) ROM #125667.

Chuck-will's-widow ***Caprimulgus carolinensis*** **(23)**

2011 – one, 14 May, Stratford, *Perth* (Stephen J. Thorpe; 2011-024) .

Lewis's Woodpecker ***Melanerpes lewis*** **(9)**

2011 – one, 28-30 May, Chaput Hughes, *Timiskaming* (Daniel E. Miller, Wendy L. Brennan, Michael J. Leahy; 2011-008) – photos on file.

Say's Phoebe ***Sayornis saya*** **(13)**

2011 – one, 3 June, Amherst Island, Lennox and *Addington* (Peter A. Read; 2011-037) – photos on file.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher ***Tyrannus forficatus*** **(59)**

2011 – one, 8 June, Lorraine, *Niagara* (Blayne E. Farnan, also found by Jean M. Farnan; 2011-056) .

Bell's Vireo ***Vireo bellii*** **(12)**

2011 – one, nominate *bellii*, first basic, (immature), 13 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, Jean Iron, Luc S. Fazio, Bruce M. Di Labio; 2011-115) – photos, video on file.

Clark's Nutcracker ***Nucifraga columbiana*** **(3)**

2011 – one, 25 October, Vickers Heights, *Thunder Bay* (Sue Langer; 2011-062).

Fish Crow ***Corvus ossifragus*** **(17)**

2011 – two, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden; 2011-022) – photo on file.

– one, 25 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington, also found by Michael J. Nelson; 2011-076) – photo on file.

– one, 31 May, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Ross W. Wood, also found by Dylan Lerch, Sylvia Mills, Christopher A. Sukha, Teresa Janer; 2011-100) – photos, audio on file.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher ***Polioptila caerulea*** **North Only (17)**

2011 – one, male, 14-15 May, Moosonee, *Cochrane* (Christina J. Nielsen; 2011-131) – photos on file.

Mountain Bluebird ***Sialia currucoides*** **(35)**

2011 – one, female, first basic, (immature), 19-24 March, Vinemount, *Hamilton* (Cheryl E. Edgecombe, Robert Z. Dobos, David R. Don, Barbara N. Charlton, Barry S. Cherriere, Donna Sheppard, Frank G. Horvath, Sandra L. Horvath; 2011-021) – photos on file.

– one, male, definitive basic (adult), 8-11 May, Moosonee, *Cochrane* (Eric B. Marcum, Audrey Nowicki, Steven J. Marson, Christina J. Nielsen; 2011-015) – photos on file.

Figure 17: Lewis's Woodpecker at Kirkland Lake, *Timiskaming* from 22-30 May 2011. *Photo: Daniel E. Miller.*

Figure 18: First basic Bell's Vireo on 13 May 2011 at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*. *Photo: Alan Wormington.*

Figure 19: First basic, female Mountain Bluebird from 19-24 March 2011 at Vinemount, *Hamilton*. *Photo: Sandra L. Horvath* (22 March).

Figure 20: Black-throated Gray Warbler at Hamilton, *Hamilton* from 14 December 2011 to 1 January 2012. *Photo: Mike Veltri* (15 December).

Townsend's Solitaire ***Myadestes townsendi*** **South Only After 2000 (71)**

2011 – one, 19 March, Bedford Mills, *Frontenac* (Mark E. Chojnacki; 2011-003).

– one, 24-30 April, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Donald N. Pye, Blake A. Mann, P. Allen Woodliffe, also found by Patricia A. Pye, Helayne Rivard, Marcel Rivard; 2011-012) – photos on file.

Swainson's Warbler ***Limnothlypis swainsonii*** **(9)**

1982 – one, 6 May, Cambridge (Preston), *Waterloo* (William G. Wilson; 2011-030) .

Well-written, detailed report with sketch.

Kirtland's Warbler ***Setophaga kirtlandii*** **(51)**

2011 – one, male, alternate, 2 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Richard G. Snider, also found by James E. Heslop, Robert W. Stamp, Barry D. Jones; 2011-088) – photos on file.

– one, male, first alternate, (immature), 6 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Martha L. Miller, Jack H. Alvo, Richard K. Day, Ben F. Di Labio, Bruce M. Di Labio, Alan Wormington, also found by Frances N. Alvo; 2011-086) – photos on file.

– one, male, alternate, 8 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Karl T. Heide, Peter S. Burke, Bruce M. Di Labio, Rhondda M. James, also found by Randal S. Heide; 2011-035) – photos on file.

– one, male, first alternate, (immature), 10 May, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Mike V.A. Burrell, Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Brandon R. Holden, also found by James G. Burrell, Eric W. Holden, Jennifer L. Bock; 2011-044).

– one, male, first alternate, (immature), 11 May, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk* (John Lamey, Ron Ridout, Stuart A. Mackenzie; 2011-085) – photos on file.

– one, 13 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Bruce M. Di Labio, found by Ross Beatson, Andrea Beatson, Wendy J. Hunter; 2011-130) – photo on file.

The 2 May bird was record early for the province.

Black-throated Gray Warbler ***Setophaga nigrescens*** **(18)**

2011/12– one, male, first basic, (immature), 14 December – 3 January, Hamilton, *Hamilton* (Cheryl E. Edgecombe, Mike Veltri, Mark H. Cranford, Mike V.A. Burrell, found by Robert Z. Dobos; 2011-120) – photos on file.

Yellow-breasted Chat ***Icteria virens*** **North Only (8)**

2011 – one, female, definitive alternate, (adult), 4 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, also found by Christopher A. Sukha, Patricia L. Burri; 2011-084) – photo on file.

Spotted Towhee ***Pipilo maculatus*** **(27)**

2011/12– one, male, definitive basic, (adult), *arcticus*, 12 November – 7 May, Longlac, *Thunder Bay* (Frederick J. Jennings, Joshua D. Vandermeulen, Jude Tulla; 2011-097) – photos on file.

2011 – one, male, first basic, (immature), 15 January – 8 May, Port Burwell, *Elgin* (Leonard P. Manning, Cliff Dickenson, Jean Iron, found by Aaron B. Allensen; 2011-009) – photos on file.

2010 – one, female, first basic, (immature), 28 October – 8 November, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Mike V.A. Burrell, found by Avery L. Bartels; 2011-123) – photo on file.

Eastern Towhee ***Pipilo erythrophthalmus*** **North Only Before 2012 (19)**

2011/12 – one, male, first basic, (immature), 30 November – 6 January, Sioux Lookout, *Kenora* (Marlie A. Squires, Douglas J. Squires; 2011-103) – photos on file.

2011 – one, female, first basic, (immature), mid-January – 3 May, Murillo, *Thunder Bay* (Wendy Kehoe; 2011-064) – photo on file.

– one, male, 22 October, Englehart, *Timiskaming* (Mark W. Milton, Serge Gendron, also found by Tom Milton, Pamela Milton; 2011-073) – photo on file.

– one, female, first basic, (immature), 26-27 October, Manitouwadge, *Thunder Bay* (Tammie B. Hache; 2011-080) – photos on file.

Field Sparrow ***Spizella pusilla*** **North Only (19)**

2011 – one, first basic (immature), 9-10 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, also found by Calvin E. Knorr, Hannah D. Woodcock, Mike C. Ward, Patricia L. Burri; 2011-083) – photo on file.

Lark Sparrow ***Chondestes grammacus*** **Before 2012 (96)**

2011 – one, 2 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Rosalee A. Hall, David J. Milsom, found by Cody R. Law, Thomas G. Thomas; 2011-116) – photos on file.

– one, first basic (immature), 5-8 May, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Ross W. Wood, also found by Mick J. Townsend; 2011-118) – photo on file.

– one, 14 May, Swastika, *Timiskaming* (Michael J. Leahy; 2011-002) – photo on file.

– one, 30 May, Hamilton Harbour, *Hamilton* (Kevin A. McLaughlin; 2011-087).

Henslow's Sparrow ***Ammodramus henslowii*** **(25)**

2011 – one, alternate, 29 April, Long Point (Old Cut), *Norfolk* (Stuart A. Mackenzie; 2011-069).

– one, alternate, 6 May, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Scott Hulme, also found by Nathan G. Miller, Brett D. Woodman, M. Elaine Gosnell; 2011-106) – photo on file.

– one, alternate, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Gerard J.D. Phillips, found by Michel Striganuk; 2011-124) – photo on file.

Western Tanager ***Piranga ludoviciana*** **(40)**

2011 – one, male, first alternate, (immature), 19 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Kyle E. Holloway; 2011-016) – photo on file.

– one, male, 22 May, Windsor, *Essex* (Murray A. Shields; 2011-017) – photo on file.

Figure 21: Western Tanager at Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* on 19 May 2011.
Photo: Kyle E. Holloway.

Figure 22: First alternate male Blue Grosbeak at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* from 31 May to 1 June 2011.
Photo: Patricia L. Burri.

Figure 23: Orchard Oriole at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* from 31 May to 4 June 2011. *Photo: Patricia L. Burri.*

Pyrrhuloxia *Cardinalis sinuatus* (1)

2004/05– one, female, first basic (immature), 23 December – 1 January, Eagle, *Elgin* (Reinhold J. Pokraka, Christopher J. Escott, Barry S. Cherriere, Peter S. Burke, found by Walter Wojick; 2011-117) – photos on file.

This report reviewed as file 2005-056 was deferred by the 2005 Committee (Crins 2006). Recent state first records in Wisconsin, Montana, Oregon and Utah support a developing pattern of vagrancy that has been accepted by the 2011 Committee. Pyrrhuloxia is added to the Ontario list of naturally occurring birds on the basis of this record.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* (84)

2011 – one, female, first alternate (immature), 31 May – 1 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Patricia L. Burri, John M. Woodcock, also found by Christopher A. Sukha, Calvin E. Knorr; 2011-081) – photos on file.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (31)

2011 – one, male, definitive alternate, 10-12 May, 9 km WSW of Stafford, *Renfrew* (Donna Chase, Sean Chase; 2011-052) – photos on file.

– one, male, definitive alternate, 10-14 May, Coldwater, *Simcoe* (David J.K. Ellis; 2011-053) – photo on file.

– one, male, definitive alternate, 12-18 July, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Michael T. Butler, found by Robert C. Ellis; 2011-039) – photos on file.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana* North Only (21)

2011 – one, male, definitive alternate, (adult), 13-19 July, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (John E.Van den Broeck, Michael S. Dawber, Jeffrey W. Dyck; 2011-075) – photos on file.

2010 – one, male, first alternate, (immature), 11-13 May, Sioux Lookout, *Kenora* (Marlie A. Squires, also found by Douglas J. Squires; 2011-102) – photos on file.

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius* North Only (12)

2011 – one, male, first alternate, (immature), 31 May – 4 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Patricia L. Burri, also found by John M. Woodcock, Christopher A. Sukha, Calvin E. Knorr; 2011-082) – photos on file.

– one, male, first alternate, (immature), 2-5 June, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Michael T. Butler, also found by Martha L. Allen; 2011-042) – photos on file.

– one, first basic, (immature), 23 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock; 2011-126) – photo on file.

Figure 24: Basic Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *(littoralis)* at Stepstone, *Thunder Bay* on 22 November 2011. *Photo: Brian D. Ratcliff.*

Figure 25: "Hornemann's" Hoary Redpoll at North Frontenac, *Frontenac* on 25 February 2011. *Photo: Amy Kay.*

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis* (17)

2011 – one, nominate *tephrocotis*, 16 March, Dillon, *Parry Sound* (Edie L. Outram-Verite, also found by Daniel L. Verite; 2011-007) – photo on file.

– one, basic, *littoralis*, 22-26 November, Stepstone, *Thunder Bay* (Brian D. Ratcliff, found by Eugene S. Kideres, Barbara E. Horth; 2011-079) – photos on file.

"Hornemann's" Hoary Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni* (2)

2011 – one, nominate *hornemanni*, 8 January, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Michael T. Butler; 2011-054) – photos on file.

– one, male, definitive basic, (adult), nominate *hornemanni*, 24 February – 14 March, North Frontenac, *Frontenac* (Amy Kay; 2011-055) – photos on file.

Deferred Records: Identification Accepted, Wild Status Deferred

2011 – Smew (*Mergellus albellus*) one, male, 26-28 December, Whitby, *Durham* (Jim Robinson, Ann Brokelman, Glenn Coady, Paula Coady, Jean Iron, Winnie W.M. Poon, James M. Richards, Kayo J. Roy, Stuart Immonen, Paul Reeves, Anthony B. Vanderheyden; 2011-096) – photos on file.

This species does exhibit a tendency to wander and there are two accepted records for the province (Roy 2001). However, consensus could not be reached regarding wild origin. Three members of the current committee have agreed to research the wild status of Smew and report to the 2012 committee.

Figure 26: Male Smew at Whitby, *Durham* on 26 December 2011. *Photo: Jim Robinson.*

NOT ACCEPTED RECORDS

Not Accepted Records: Identification Accepted, Origin Questionable

Birds in this category are considered by the Committee to be correctly identified, but their origin is questionable. These birds may have escaped or may have been released from captivity. However, if new evidence suggesting wild origin becomes available, such reports may be reconsidered by the Committee.

2011 – Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), one, adult, 17 April, Chatham, *Chatham-Kent* (Ralph Reinhardus, also found by Jan Reinhardus; 2011-050) – photos on file.

This species is routinely raised in captivity and is occasionally released to the wild. There is no evidence of breeding or long term survival in the wild.

1961 – Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*), two, adult, 20-21 August, Port Colborne (Yacht Harbour), *Niagara* (Daniel R. Salisbury, Robert F. Andrle, found by Richard Brownstein; 2011-133) – photos on file.

The record was originally accepted as natural occurring wild birds (Wormington 1986). Compelling evidence from multiple sources confirmed that the sighting occurred in 1961 and not 1962. In addition, two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks escaped from a Buffalo area zoo weeks prior to the sighting (Black and Roy 2010). This record also includes corrected information regarding both year of occurrence and dates of observation (see "Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports").

Not Accepted Records: Identification Uncertain

The documentation received for the following reports generally was found not to be detailed enough to eliminate similar species unequivocally. In many cases, Committee members felt that the species being described probably was correctly identified, but that the details provided in the report, perhaps due to factors such as the conditions during the observation, were insufficient. It should be noted that any of these reports may be re-submitted if additional documentation becomes available.

2011
- Common Eider, three, 22 May, Whitby, *Durham* (2011-066).
- Western Grebe, one, 16 May, Long Point (Hastings Drive), *Norfolk* (2011-068).
- Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), one, 19 August, Toronto Harbour, *Toronto* (2011-036).
- Little Blue Heron, one, 22 May, Aurora, *York* (2011-026).
- Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), one, 10 July, Pearl, *Thunder Bay* (2011-105).
- Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*), one, 8 November, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (2011-112).
- Curlew Sandpiper, one, 10 October, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2011-074).

– Mew Gull, one, 6 August, Paskwachi Point, *Cochrane* (2011-077).
– Arctic Tern, one, 17 October, Ottawa, *Ottawa* (2011-099).
– Barn Owl, one, 14 November, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (2011-034).
– Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*), one, 15 October, Long Point, *Norfolk* (2011-047).
– Fish Crow, four, 1-4 July, Bob's Lake, *Frontenac* (2011-041).
– Townsend's Solitaire, one, 3 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2011-032).
– "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler, one, 23 May, Algonquin Provincial Park (15 km marker on Highway 60), *Nippising* (2011-029).
– Henslow's Sparrow, one, 20 March, Toronto, *Toronto* (2011-011).
– Blue Grosbeak, one, 13 May, Paisley, *Bruce* (2011-027).
– "Hornemann's" Hoary Redpoll, one, 9-22 February, Elgin, *Frontenac* (2011-051).

2010 – Mew Gull, one, 17-20 December, Queenston, *Niagara* (2011-031).

2004 – Arctic Tern, four, 30 October, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (2011-071).
– Arctic Tern, one, 5 November, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (2011-093).

Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports

2010 Report (Ontario Birds 29: 106-148):

- under Glossy Ibis, change number of accepted records from 53 to 55.
- under White-winged Dove, change number of accepted records from 34 to 35.
- under Hummingbird species *Selasphorus*, change number of accepted records from 12 to 11.

1985 Report (Ontario Birds 4: 3-18):

- under Fulvous Whistling-Duck, change year from 1962 to 1961 and date from 20 Aug to 20-21 Aug.

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New Niagara Falls Great Egret colony produces late nestlings

Bill Watson

Introduction

In 2011, Great Egrets (*Ardea alba*, henceforth egrets) nested for the first time at a mixed colony of Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*, henceforth night-herons), Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auitus*, henceforth cormorants) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) above Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls in Ontario. Seasonally, this was a very late nesting; young egrets did not fledge until well into September. In this paper, I give details of the discovery of these egret nestings, compare egg, hatching and fledging dates with the currently accepted dates for these stages in New York and Ontario and speculate on the reasons for such late nesting.

Methods

The main nesting island (#3) is the largest of three islands (known locally as "Weseloh Rocks") located immediately downstream and medially of the large stranded barge on the Canadian side of Horseshoe Falls, approximately 400 m above the lip of the Falls (Figure 1). I made observations from Goat Island on the New York side of the Falls as well as from the Canadian shore near the Engineerium Building just opposite from the barge. I noted the numbers (and nests when visible) of night-herons, cormorants and egrets. Observations were made from one or both of these locations on 30 June, 29 July, 1, 17 and 26 August and 6 and 9 Sept. I also received observations from Celeste Morien (CM), Dave Van de Laar (DVL) and Chip Weseloh (CW).

Figure 1. Points of observation and nesting islands (Rocks #1, 2 and 3) at Niagara Falls, see text.

Results

2010: The main island was visited on 26 April by helicopter by CW *et al.* (pers. comm.); they reported 47 cormorant nests, 280 night-heron nests and 21 Herring Gull nests but no Great Egrets or their nests. On 5 May, from Goat Island I observed at least 140 night-herons and 22 of their nests and 124 cormorants and 51 cormorant nests on Rocks # 1, 2 and 3 above the Horseshoe Falls (distance and foliage obscured my view of the colony, and these counts represent only a fraction of the birds and nests in the colony). There were no reports of any egrets using any of these three islands in 2010.

2011: On 21 April, I counted 172 night-herons and 243 cormorants on the main island, but I saw no Great Egrets. On 1 May, CM *et al.* (pers. comm.) counted 40 night-herons there from Goat Island but also did not see any Great Egrets. On 3 May, CW *et al.* again visited the main island island by helicopter and reported 135 cormorant nests, 434 night-heron nests and 13 Herring Gull nests; still there were no egrets or their nests. Thus, on 20 May 2011, I was surprised to find 12 Great Egrets at the colony, four of which appeared to be sitting on nests! There were at least 61 night-herons, 168 cormorants and 86 cormorant nests.

Over the next 10 weeks, I confirmed that at least two of the egret nests continued to be active on 30 June and 8 July. Viewing from Goat Island on 29 July, I could see as many as seven Great Egrets and, more importantly, three of them were crouched on a nest and were nearly full-sized nestlings.

Returning at mid-day on 1 August, to Goat Island, I observed that the three Great Egret nestlings were very active with strong wing flaps combined with jumping up and down, but not showing the ability to hover over their nest. There was still some down on their heads. I drove to the Canadian side of the River and observed from just north of the Engineerium Building. I could see an adult Great Egret standing over a nest with what looked like about two inactive downy Great Egret nestlings. I also noticed another Great Egret nest with four medium-sized nestlings. Below this nest was a third Great Egret nest containing three smaller and very inactive downy nestlings. Although I realize that observational duplication is possible, I think (because of the numbers of young on each nest and ages of the nestlings) that I viewed four active Great Egret nests with a total of 12 nestlings.

Three weeks later, on 17 August, there appeared to have been a disruption in the colony; the birds were not in their normal positions. I observed four egrets on one nest (based on previous observations one of the four was probably an adult with three full size nestling). Through the foliage I observed two adults, one of which could be seen feeding a nestling. With other egrets between the two nesting locations, I observed as many as 11 Great Egrets (compared to only six seen on 1 August). However, when I observed the colony from the Canadian side I was disturbed, because I could not see any nests where I had observed four nests with a total 12 nestlings on 1 August. The maximum number of egrets observed on this day from the Canadian side was three adult Great Egrets. Perhaps the foliage was too great or the egrets had moved more into the interior of the woody vegetation.

On 26 August, observing from Goat Island and based on the egrets' feeding activity and position of various nests and nestlings, there appeared to be five egret nests on the islands (four on the main island and one on a smaller island to the west). On 6 September, DVL reported, "It appears that some of the egrets have left their nests above the Falls and moved to Dufferin Islands" where he spotted three egrets "roosting in the trees" (DVL pers. comm.) On 7 September, he again reported two egrets at Dufferin Islands and two "in the trees on the other island" (colony).

On the morning of 9 September there were no egrets on the island when I arrived at Goat Island. Within 15 minutes a single Great Egret appeared at the largest island where most of the night-herons and cormorants nested. Two more arrived shortly and there was a flurry of feeding and bill grabbing and pulling activity. The first egret (a parent?) flew from the island and was quickly pursued by the two (fledglings?)

egrets. It appeared that all of the nestling Great Egrets had fledged.

2012: In late March, a Great Egret was reported near the Niagara Falls colony, and on 31 March, I counted 23 Great Egrets and five occupied nests and witnessed copulation at the colony. A helicopter visit to the island on 25 April established that there were about 47 Great Egrets present with 17 nests on the main island and four more nests on the next island closer to Canada (CW, pers. comm.). On the very early date of 3 May, an adult Great Egret was observed feeding two half-grown nestlings. The final tally as seen from Goat Island (with vegetation obstruction) for 3 May was 25 adults, two nestlings, and thirteen nests. Obviously, observations are very limited from afar.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although foliage made observations difficult and individual nests were not always directly observed (*i.e.* some nest locations were only inferred when the nestlings were old enough to leave the nest and approach the adults during feeding), there were probably at least five nests and 13 nestlings. It appears that all the young Great Egrets fledged between 26 August and 9 September 2011. All 13 nestling Great Egrets were observed at the colony on 26 August and there were no indications then that any of them could yet fly. As there were two fledglings still returning to the colony to be fed by an adult on 9 September, the last of these nestlings probably had fledged fairly close to the 9 September date, perhaps 6 September (+ or – 3 days).

The seasonal lateness of this egret nesting, hatching and fledging can be put in perspective if we examine the stated phenology dates for Great Egrets in Ontario. LePage *et al.* (2007) states the early and late nest dates as 20 April and 1 August, respectively. Peck (2007) notes that "egg dates in Ontario range from 28 April to 24 June (peck and James 1993a). Incubation periods range from 23 to 27 days, and variable fledgling dates range from 21 to 34 days, with young leaving and returning to the nest to be fed. Young achieve flight ability at seven to eight weeks of age (McCrimmon *et al.* 2001)."

Across the border, New York atlas data from 2000–2005 provided revised early and late egg, nestling, and/or fledgling dates for nearly all species. Thus, for the Great Egret, McGowan and Corwin (2008) have revised egg dates ranging from 27 April to 7 July and revised nestling dates of 21 May to 11 August. The incubation period is 25 to 28 days, while the time for young to fly is much longer than reported in the Ontario Atlas at 35 to 42 days (Cadman *et al.* 2007).

Working backwards, if we assume a fledgling date of 6 September and the mean periods of 25 days for incubation and 27.5 days for a nestling period (LePage *et al.* 2007), we arrive at very late dates of approximately 15 July for egg laying and 9 August for egg hatching, which are well beyond the late egg date of 24 June (LePage *et al.* 2007).

However if we substitute seven to eight weeks (mean = 53 days) as the nestling period (McCrimmon *et al.* 2001), the egg laying date would be June 20. If we again use the assumed fledgling date of about 6 September and mean incubation and nestling periods of 26.5 and 38.5 days, respectively, the eggs were laid about 3 July and hatched about 29 or 30 July. Again, well beyond the late egg date for Ontario of 24 June. For the most part, they also exceed the late egg date of 7 July in the New York Atlas (McGowan and Corwin 2008).

What could cause these late egg, nestling and fledgling periods at the egret colony at Niagara Falls? Where did the egrets come from? If they came from a pre-existing egret colony, the most likely source is Motor Island, which is also on the Niagara River, about 20 km upstream and, on 24 April 2011, had 56 egret nests (pers. obs.). The next nearest breeding colonies of Great Egrets are at Tommy Thompson Park in Toronto Harbour (seven nests in 2011 (McDonald 2012)), 69 km north of Niagara Falls, and two larger colonies (> 60 nests) in southern Georgian Bay (at Collingwood) and eastern Lake Huron (at Southampton), about 150 km away (CW, pers. comm.). There are no other breeding colonies within 240 km in any other direction.

If the egrets came from Motor Island, what could have caused them to leave there so late in the breeding season and result in some of them forming a new egret colony above the Canadian Falls? A very likely factor was the

Great Egrets *Photo by Ann Brokelman*

cormorant control measures taken by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) on Motor Island in May and June 2011. On six dates at approximately weekly intervals between 5 May and 14 June, several NYSDEC staff shot approximately 334 cormorants on Motor Island; .22 rifles with subsonic shot and 12 gauge shotguns were used. At the time of the shooting, there were at least 798 cormorants (399 nests) residing on

Motor Island. However, only 334 cormorants were killed, so at least 464 were frightened away. It is possible that the nesting Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Great Blue Herons (*Ardea heriodias*) on the colony were also frightened away by the human intrusion and discharge of firearms. (Since its inception in 1995, the Motor Island colony had steadily increased in size until 2011 when there were maximum counts of 56 nests (24 April) and 140 individuals (4 May); however, in 2012 the maximum counts were 43 nests and only 53 individuals.) The intrusion on Motor Island by the NYSDEC and firing of 250 .22 and 265 12 gauge rounds could possibly explain the decrease in Great Egrets there and why the Niagara Falls, Ontario, colony formed so late in the breeding season.

Re-nesting of disturbed species is not unusual; Watson and Adams (2006)

state: "It should be noted that NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has been attempting to minimize cormorant reproduction on the Reef Lighthouse and Strawberry Island sites (USFWS Public Resource Depredation Order 50 CFR 21.48), and these management efforts very likely have prompted repeated re-nesting attempts and the unusually late nesting dates reported here."

In 2012, the Niagara Falls colony produced record early nestlings, as contrasted with 2011 when it produced record late nestlings. The early dates are well before the early nestling date of 21 May in New York State and early nest date of 20 April in Ontario. Based on the large size of the nestlings, the eggs may have already been laid when the five occupied nests were observed 31 March.

Why were very early nestling dates occurring at the Niagara Falls colony, but not at the Motor Island colony until 21 May? Since both colonies are on the Niagara River and are fairly close to one another, one would expect similar breeding dates. I believe the answers to this question can be found in the species of colonial waterbirds found nesting at each colony. In 2012, at the Niagara Falls colony, where Great Blue Herons do not nest, Great Egrets nested on the south side of the island, away from co-nesting cormorants and the smaller night-herons. However, at the Motor Island colony, the Great Blue Heron is a predominant nesting species among the Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and, sometimes, Double-crested Cormorants. In a carefully detailed study (Watson 2001) to determine early egg dates of Great Egrets during the first six years of the existence of the Motor Island colony (1995 – 2000), aggression by Great Blue Herons towards nesting Great Egrets was observed on 5 May 1996, 23 April 1998 and 19 April 2000. The Great Egrets would build a nest and an adult would be sitting in an incubating position on that nest for a week or more, but then in the next day's observation the same nest would be occupied by a Great Blue Heron that would ultimately produce Great Blue Heron chicks and not Great Egret chicks. Later, it appeared as though the Great Egrets would suspend or delay their nesting until all of the Great Blue

Herons had established their nests. This behavior could explain why Great Egrets would nest earlier at Niagara Falls (where there were no nesting Great Blue Herons).

In conclusion, this observational study established the first nesting of Great Egrets on the Canadian side of the Niagara River just above the Horseshoe Falls in 2011. It also provides a rationale for the very late nesting in 2011 (*i.e.* human disturbance at another colony) and for the very early nesting in 2012 (*i.e.* the lack of co-nesting Great Blue Herons and any aggressive interactions with the egrets).

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Eastern Bluebird
Sandra and Frank Horvath

Manipulation of caterpillars for consumption by Eastern Bluebirds

Kevin S. Dance

IT WAS A SURPRISINGLY WARM and sunny day on 15 November 2011. The following observations took place in Oxford County, just outside of the small village of Drumbo.

Unfortunately, I was at my desk working on a report, and was not outside enjoying one of the last warm days of fall. At around 13:00hrs, I took a brief moment to look out my window, into the backyard. A bird quickly caught my gaze as it fluttered across the backyard and landed in an apple tree (*Malus* sp.). Knowing it wasn't just a House Sparrow (Passer domesticus) or an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), I quickly ran to get my binoculars which were sitting in another room. By the time I came back, there was a bird perched on the metal fence in front of the tree.

Before long, the bird flew from the fence to the ground where it pecked at the ground and then quickly flew into a Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) tree only 5m in front of the back sliding door out of which I was looking. It was a male Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). By this time, I noticed three other bluebirds in the backyard, either on the metal fence or in the trees near the fence.

I quickly put the binoculars on the bird that flew into the locust tree. It had a grayish brown caterpillar in its bill and was looking around. Then it suddenly lowered its head and adjusted its hold on the caterpillar, which was still moving. Then, to my surprise, it started to beat the caterpillar against the tree branch on which it was perched (the branch was approximately 1.75m above the ground). The bluebird was holding onto the back quarter of the caterpillar. I quickly thought to start counting how many times it was hitting the caterpillar against the branch. Moving its head back and forth at about a 45-degree angle, it kept hitting the caterpillar against the branch, stopping only to occasionally look quickly from side to side. It would then re-adjust the caterpillar in its bill, only to start beating it again. The sun was above and behind the bluebird as I watched which made me able to observe something that at a different view point or time of day I would not have been able to see. About halfway through the time I observed this bird, I saw a liquid being knocked out of the caterpillar, the sunlight reflecting liquid droplets as they flew through the air. I was greatly astounded by this. Two thoughts ran through my mind, was this bluebird perhaps beating the caterpillar against the branch for some reason other than to just kill it before eating it or was this meant to expel the excrement that is in the caterpillar or to expel toxins that the caterpillar uses as a defence. Either way I saw this as a remarkable behaviour evolved to deal with caterpillars.

In the end, I observed this bluebird hit the caterpillar a total of approximately 118 times, before it swallowed it. This I thought was a bit of overkill, since less than halfway through this process I noticed the caterpillar did not move during the times when the bluebird would stop and quickly readjust its hold on the caterpillar or during the three occasions it laid it on the branch for a few seconds before picking it up again. Shortly after finishing its meal the bluebird flew out of the locust tree, moving around the backyard with the other bluebirds. I continued to watch the bluebirds, hoping to see another bird catch and eat a caterpillar.

Before long I observed another male bluebird fly up from the ground and land in the same locust tree, with what appeared to be the same type of caterpillar. This bird sat on a branch approximately 2m above the ground. The male bluebird showed the same behaviour as the previous bird, it banged the caterpillar again and again against the branch it was perched on, but while it

was readjusting it in its beak, the bluebird dropped the caterpillar. The bluebird immediately flew down to the ground after it, found it and flew back up to the tree. It quickly began the behaviour once again, and continued to do so after the caterpillar was clearly not moving any more. I counted this bird hitting the caterpillar against the tree branch 130 times.

After this observation, the group of bluebirds moved around the backyard and then to the front of the house, where they sat in a maple tree (*Acer* sp.) preening and not foraging. After about fifteen minutes I observed another bluebird which was perched in a maple tree fly down to the ground, grab a caterpillar and fly up to another maple tree. The caterpillar this bird caught was a small inchworm type of caterpillar which was smooth, and greyish-brown in color. When this bird landed in the maple tree, before long it began rearranging the caterpillar in its bill by opening and closing its mouth, not using the branch it was perched on at all. Then suddenly, while rearranging the caterpillar in its mouth, the bluebird fumbled it and the caterpillar fell down to the ground. This bird surprisingly did not dive after it to pick it back up, it just sat in the tree looking around as if nothing happened.

Before long the bluebirds moved back around the house, once again to the backyard. I observed a female or immature bluebird which was perched in the locust tree fly down and land on the grass. It hopped two times reached forward and grabbed a caterpillar in its bill and flew back into the locust. Due to the light conditions, I could not find the bluebird for one or two minutes. When I found where it had landed, it was on a branch 3m above the ground. The bluebird was holding the caterpillar at one end, with three quarters of it hanging out of its bill, and banged the caterpillar five times in the same back and forth motion I had observed previously. The bluebird then stopped, placed the caterpillar on the tree branch, picked it back up, adjusted its hold on it by opening and closing its beak and moving its head in the direction it was trying to adjust its hold. The caterpillar by this time was no longer moving on its own. The bluebird adjusted its hold one last time, banged the caterpillar three more times against the tree branch and then quickly swallowed it whole.

After observing what I thought to be a very interesting and unusual feeding behaviour, several questions regarding bluebirds ecology and some of the specific behaviours I observed, came to mind. I wondered whether or not caterpillars are a main food item for bluebirds, as I considered infrequent handling of caterpillars might explain what I thought to be excessive beating of them against branches.

Bluebirds are known to be largely insectivores, with as much as 68% of their yearly diet being insects, the remainder being wild fruits including cherries, raspberries, and blackberries, dogwood, sumac, serviceberry, poison

ivy, and elderberry (Ritchison 2000, Martin *et al.* 1961, Beal 1915). Beal (1915) examined the stomach contents of 855 Eastern Bluebirds, which were collected over every month of the year in the United States. His data indicated that around 10.5% of the Eastern Bluebirds diet over the year was Lepidoptera (in the form of caterpillars and moths). This was the third largest of the insect groups that comprised their diet. The largest part of their insect diet was Orthoptera (grasshoppers, crickets, katydids), with beetles being the second largest (Beal 1915). Pinkowski (1977) considered food items of >2cm as large food items for Eastern Bluebirds. It is therefore not surprising that the bluebirds I observed were foraging on large, high protein food (caterpillars) in November, which is invaluable to supplementing their fat stores to help them get through cold nights. According to the literature, caterpillars form a regular part of a bluebird's diet, and therefore the behaviour I observed was not likely due to inexperience in consuming caterpillars.

Although the feeding behaviour of the Eastern Bluebirds I observed was new to me, some of the behaviours I observed have been noted by others. The literature on Eastern Bluebirds indicates that they regularly hunt from low perches (Pinkowski 1977). The foraging tactics bluebirds use include dropping from a perch, flycatching, gleaning, flight gleaning and hopping on the ground (Ritchison 2000, Pinkowski 1977). The foraging behaviours I described, in my observations of the Eastern Bluebirds capturing caterpillars during the autumn, were dropping from a perch and hopping on the ground. Pinkowski (1977) indicated that the relative frequency of the various foraging tactics employed by Eastern Bluebirds varied between seasons, but the main tactic used in all seasons was dropping from a perch.

With caterpillars comprising a regular part of the bluebird diet, the obvious question to me was what are the reasons for beating caterpillars so aggressively against their perch? Is it to expel bad tasting toxins, to make the body more pliable for ingestion, or possibly remove hairs from the body of the caterpillar? Why would they beat a soft-bodied invertebrate like a caterpillar so many times? I also wondered what the liquid I saw expelled from one of the caterpillars could possibly be.

In the literature, I was able to find some general references to both Eastern and Western (*Sialia mexicana)* Bluebirds being known to commonly beat invertebrate prey against perches before consumption (Stern 2007). The articles I was able to find, which contained detailed descriptions of bluebirds beating their prey against their perch, were of rare observations where bluebirds were observed catching vertebrate prey. Pinkowski (1974) observed an Eastern Bluebird catch a shrew, which was taken in the bluebird's bill to a perch where it held the shrew by its head and repeatedly banged it against branches. Pinkowski

noted the shrew was dead in 3 to 4 minutes, but the bluebird continued to bang the prey after it was dead.

Pinkowski (1974) also noted that the shrew was always held and manipulated by the beak, and never by the feet. Similarly, Stern (2007) observed a Western Bluebird catch a lizard that was on a fence post, by only using its bill. The bluebird landed on the fence post on which it caught the lizard on and banged the lizard's head on the post twice. Flanigan (1971) observed an Eastern Bluebird carrying a 20 cm snake in its bill; the bluebird landed on the roof of a low building and beat the snake against the roof for several minutes.

I was not able to find any detailed information in the literature on how Eastern Bluebirds manipulate caterpillars or other specific invertebrates for ingestion. Ritchison (2000) noted that Eastern Bluebirds use one of two methods to subdue/prepare their prey, either they beat the prey against a perch or holding prey in their bill they apply pressure with the cutting edges of the bill. Richison (2000) indicated generally that food preparation can include the bluebird removing legs and wings of some insects and that they may also crush the head and thorax. The rationale for why the bluebirds must prepare their prey was not noted (i.e. whether it is to remove indigestible parts or to make the prey easier to swallow) nor was how preparation may vary for different prey items.

I was, however, able to find some references to other bird species which beat prey against perches such as the bee-eaters (family Mercopidae), which predominantly eats bees (Brooks 1989). In the case of bee-eaters they are not immune to the venom in the stingers and sacs of bees, so with their long bill they beat and rub their prey against a branch or stone (Brooks 1989). In doing this, they cause the venom, fragile body parts, and some fluids to be expelled from the body allowing once toxic prey to then be eaten relatively whole (Brooks 1989)

As I suspected, the behaviour I observed was very likely the result of a very purposeful preparation of the caterpillar before it was eaten.

I knew generally that some species of caterpillars and butterflies contain toxins, such as the Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), which make them an undesirable prey item so I looked into this as a possible reason for the behaviour I observed (Schappert 2004). Caterpillars are the larval stage in the life cycle of butterflies and moths and as they are very vulnerable at this life stage many have developed special protective adaptations including being very hairy, spiny or due to their host plant contain bitter or poisonous juices that are distasteful to predators (Carmichael and Vance 2004, Morris 1980). The two caterpillars I saw being eaten were medium to large in size and were partly

hairy. I believe the caterpillars I observed the bluebirds eating were either Fall Webworm (*Hyphantria cunea*) or Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*). This assumption is based on their appearance and the widespread occurrence of these species in late summer and early fall. These two species are not particularly hairy or spiny. Therefore, the behaviour I observed was not due to caterpillars being spiny or very hairy (like a banded woolly bear caterpillar [*Pyrrharctia Isabella*]). After my observations of the bluebirds, I searched the backyard for 20 minutes but could not find a specimen of the caterpillar to identify. I guess my inability to find a caterpillar to identify is a good testament to the bluebird's keen eyesight and ability to see near-ultraviolet (UV) light which can enable them to more readily spot some prey items.

As a common protective adaptation in caterpillars is to contain some kind of poisonous or distasteful juices, I suspect that this is one of the main reasons for the repeated beating of caterpillars prior to consumption. Certain moth caterpillars are known to spit repellent liquid at their enemies, which is stored in the gut (WTMA no date). The liquid is extracted from their food plants and stored in a special part of their gut ready for use when needed. As I observed liquid being expelled from a caterpillar during the process of beating it against a branch, this seems like a logical explanation for the behaviour.

Perhaps the excessive beating of caterpillars against a perch for over a hundred times is the bluebird's attemp to eliminate as much of the toxins or repellent liquids as possible prior to consuming the prey item. An interesting question then is whether the behaviours I observed to prepare caterpillars for consumption are an inherent behaviour or a learned behaviour which is taught to young birds by the adults.

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Trumpeter Swans, Wye Marsh.
Courtesy of Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre

Recent history of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario and Quebec and their status in 2010-2011

Harry Lumsden, Raymond Kingdon, Beverly Kingdon, Kyna Intini and Julie Kee

Introduction

EVERY FIVE YEARS, resource agencies across North America cooperate in a continent-wide inventory of Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*). In 2010, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Conservation Authorities, staff from Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre and volunteers of the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Team contributed data from Ontario. The purpose of this paper is to put on record recent observations of

Trumpeter Swans in Ontario and Quebec and the results of the inventory.

The history of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario is an interrupted one. The original breeding population was extirpated probably in the late 18th or early 19th century. The species survived only in western Canada and the western United States. The last known migrant in Ontario was shot in 1886 at Long Point (42° 34 N 080° 15 W) on Lake Erie (Lumsden 1984). In the 1980s, Trumpeter Swans started to appear in northwestern Ontario. These originated from restoration programs in the mid-western United States. Minnesota's Hennepin Parks program started in 1979, followed by their Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) program in 1982, the Michigan DNR program in 1982, the Wisconsin DNR program in 1987, and the Iowa DNR program in 1995. Ontario started restoration in the southern part of the province in 1982 and finished in 2006.

Methods

In northwestern Ontario, MNR field crews flew summer helicopter surveys over areas where breeding swans had been documented in the past. In eastern Ontario, the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority conducted the same kind of aerial surveys.

The southern Ontario population of swans now breed in an extensive area from Lake Erie north into the edge of the boreal forest. Resources are lacking to survey these breeding grounds comprehensively. This stock of swans winters mostly in restricted areas north and south of Lake Ontario.

All released swans and those wild-hatched birds which we could catch were marked with yellow patagial tags with a black three digit inscription. In 2009, we used ratios of tagged to untagged birds to estimate total numbers of swans (Lumsden 2010). This gave an erroneous result because of the difficulty of detecting all those which had lost their tags but still carried their leg bands. We abandoned this technique in 2010, when we used the number of swans that

Table 1: Results of aerial surveys of Trumpeter Swans in eight Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Districts in Northwestern and one in Eastern Ontario in 2010.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO POPULATION	WHITE SWANS*	CYGNETS	TOTAL
Kenora District	102	44	146
Red Lake District	2	4	6
Fort Frances District	43	27	70
Dryden District	19	12	31
Atikokan District	6	13	19
Thunder Bay District	2	5	7
Sub-Total	**174**	**105**	**279**

EASTERN ONTARIO POPULATION	WHITE SWANS*	CYGNETS	TOTAL
Kemptville District	37	17	54
Total	**211**	**122**	**333**

*breeders, nest-failed adults and subadults

were counted at 34 winter sites. This was adjusted to account for an estimate of swans that wintered in the U.S. based on the record of the occurrence of wing-tagged birds.

Results

Trumpeter Swans range north in northwestern Ontario well beyond settled areas into the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Limited resources do not permit a systematic survey in this vast area. The aerial inventory was focused on areas of highest density and is anecdotal in form and limited to accessible areas. The results of aerial surveys in the summer of 2010 in six MNR administrative districts (Kenora, Red Lake, Fort Frances, Dryden, Atikokan and Thunder Bay) and eastern Ontario in Kemptville District are presented in Table 1. They show that the greatest number of swans (146) was detected in

Trumpeter Swan, Wye Marsh. *Catherine Lewis, Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre*

LAKESHORE SITES	WHITE SWANS*	CYGNETS	TOTAL
LaSalle Park - Burlington	158	45	203
Kelly Lake	7	1	8
Oshawa	11	8	19
Bluffers Park	17	10	27
Wellers Bay	7	0	7
Port Dalhousie	1	0	1
Whitby	13	—	13
Huntsville	1	0	1
Mountsberg	8	—	8
Presqu'ile	2	—	2
Humber Bay	2	0	2
Port Colborne	2	0	2
Newcastle	1	0	1
Bowmanville	1	0	1
Lakefield Beach	3	0	3
Amherst Island	4	—	4
Subtotal	**238**	**64**	**302**
RIVER SITES	WHITE SWANS*	CYGNETS	TOTAL
Port Severn	3	0	3
Severn River	11	6	17
Marmora	5	4	9
Seabright	3	0	3
Glen Morris	15	—	15
Nith River	5	—	5
Hespeler	*7*	—	*7*
Tilbury	1	0	1
Magnetewan	2	0	2
Washago	40	22	62
Subtotal	**92**	**32**	**124**

* breeders, nest-failed adults and subadult

Table 2: Number of Trumpeter Swans (identified as white swans* or cygnets) by habitat in Southern Ontario.

Kenora District and the smallest number (seven) was found in Thunder Bay District. In Table 2, the number of swans counted in winter at 27 sites, listed by habitat type, in southern Ontario is shown. On lakes, the greatest number (203) was found at LaSalle Park in Burlington and several areas reported only single swans. Table 3 presents counts of swans on seven ponds in southern Ontario with aeration equipment and one spring fed site where the swans were fed. Numbers at these sites ranged from a high of 51 at Wye Marsh to a low of three at Erin.

Table 3: Counts of Trumpeter Swans where they are fed on ponds with aeration equipment.

LOCATION	WHITE SWANS*	CYGNETS	TOTAL
Wye Marsh	47	4	51
Erin	2	1	3
Onendaga Farm	14	3	17
Newmarket	1	4	5
Leaskdale	1	6	7
Aurora 1	5	2	7
Aurora 2	12	4	16
Lemonville (spring fed)	5	3	8
Subtotal	**87**	**27**	**114**

Trumpeter Swans, Wye Marsh. *Courtesy of Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre*

Discussion

Kenora District

The first brood to be found in this district was reported west of Kenora by Dave Schneider in 1989. Bruce Ranta and Lil Anderson found eggshell debris in 1993 where nesting had been reported in 1992. In 1993, local cottagers reported a brood of three cygnets on Deception Creek (49° 45 N 094° 50 W). Bruce Ranta and Mike Dawe checked, but could not find them (L. Anderson, MNR files) but a single bird was reported carrying a leg band. Lil Anderson and Joan Sauve found a brood of seven cygnets on Split Lake (50 ° 25 N 094° 06 W) in 1994. The female was marked with an orange wing-tag. She had been released at Field Lake in Minnesota in 1990 (Anderson *et al.* 1996). In 2005, over 500 km north of Kenora, an Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas field crew found a brood on Little Sachigo Lake (54° 09 N 092° 11 W) (Cadman *et al.* 2007). In the same year, Fred Zroback searched an area south of Oak Lake (50° 26 N 93° 50 W) and found 57 Trumpeter Swans (31 white swans, 26 cygnets). White swans are defined as adults, nest-failed breeders and subadults. In 2006, in the same area, he found 72 birds (44 white swans, 28 cygnets) and in 2010 (Table 1), the count was 146 swans, suggesting a steady and rapid increase (MNR files).

Red Lake District

Many swans were seen here from 2007 – 2009. In 2010, a brood with four cygnets was photographed by Reg Plett on McDowell Lake (52° 15 N 092° 45 W) over 300 km north of Kenora (MNR files).

Fort Frances District

The first Trumpeter Swan we know of in this district was reported in 2001. In 2005, eight cygnets and 12 white swans were seen by Darryl McLeod in the Rainy Lake area. One parent was marked with a red neck collar but the inscription could not be read. This colour had been assigned to Iowa. Four swans with yellow collars were seen in Fort Frances in 2006. Only one, near Off Lake, marked 69A, photographed on 8 June 2006, could be read (D. McLeod, MNR files). This was a female hatched in 2004 at Crex Meadows, Wisconsin (P. Manthey, pers. comm.). A helicopter survey flown in 2006 yielded 67 white swans and three nests in which incubation was still in progress. On 28 June 2010, the search found seven broods and 29 white swans for a total of 70. (Table 1).

Dryden District

A pair nested on Kaiashkamin Lake in 2007. On 28 June 2010, three more broods were found and 13 white birds for a total of 31 (M. Mosley, MNR files).

Atikokan District

In 2006, swans were seen in this District but breeding was not confirmed until 2010, when Amy Goodwin reported 19 swans (Table 1) (M. Mosley, MNR files).

Thunder Bay District

In 2007, a pair of swans nested on the Ontario side of the Minnesota-Ontario border on Rose Lake. In 2008, this pair nested on Arrow Lake (B. Ratcliff, MNR files). One parent was carrying a red neck collar marked 3H7. This female, hatched in 2004, was released near Drakesville in Davis County, Iowa. It was banded on 14 May 2005 (D. Hoffman, pers. comm.). In 2010, a pair of Trumpeter Swans with five cygnets (Table 1) appeared on 3 October on Lang Lake, 3.5 km northeast of Upsala. They were found by Bob Steward (B. Ratcliff, MNR files). The parents were marked with yellow neck collars, Y26 and U13. They had been marked in Wood County, Wisconsin in 2006 and Price County in 2007, respectively (P. Mathey, pers. comm.).

Sault Ste. Marie District

Don Meyer found two broods of Trumpeter Swans in 2005 on St. Joseph Island, containing four and six cygnets (H. Lumsden, unpublished data). In 2006, Marcel Pellegrini found a brood with two cygnets on Wabatongushi Lake (48° 20 N 084° 13 W) (K. Abraham, MNR files). In 2010, a single swan was seen by Don Hall in the spring. In summer, Eden Boyko flew a survey covering the area from St. Joseph Island to Lake George, but did not find any Trumpeter Swans. She found only Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*). Two pairs had five and one cygnets and a single parent was leading five cygnets (E. Boyko, MNR files).

In Figure 1, the distribution of nests and flightless broods of Trumpeter Swans in northwestern Ontario seen since 1989 is mapped. Some of these locations support more than a single brood and have been used for many years. All the swans in the northwestern population leave Ontario for the winter. Most of them overwinter in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but some may go further south.

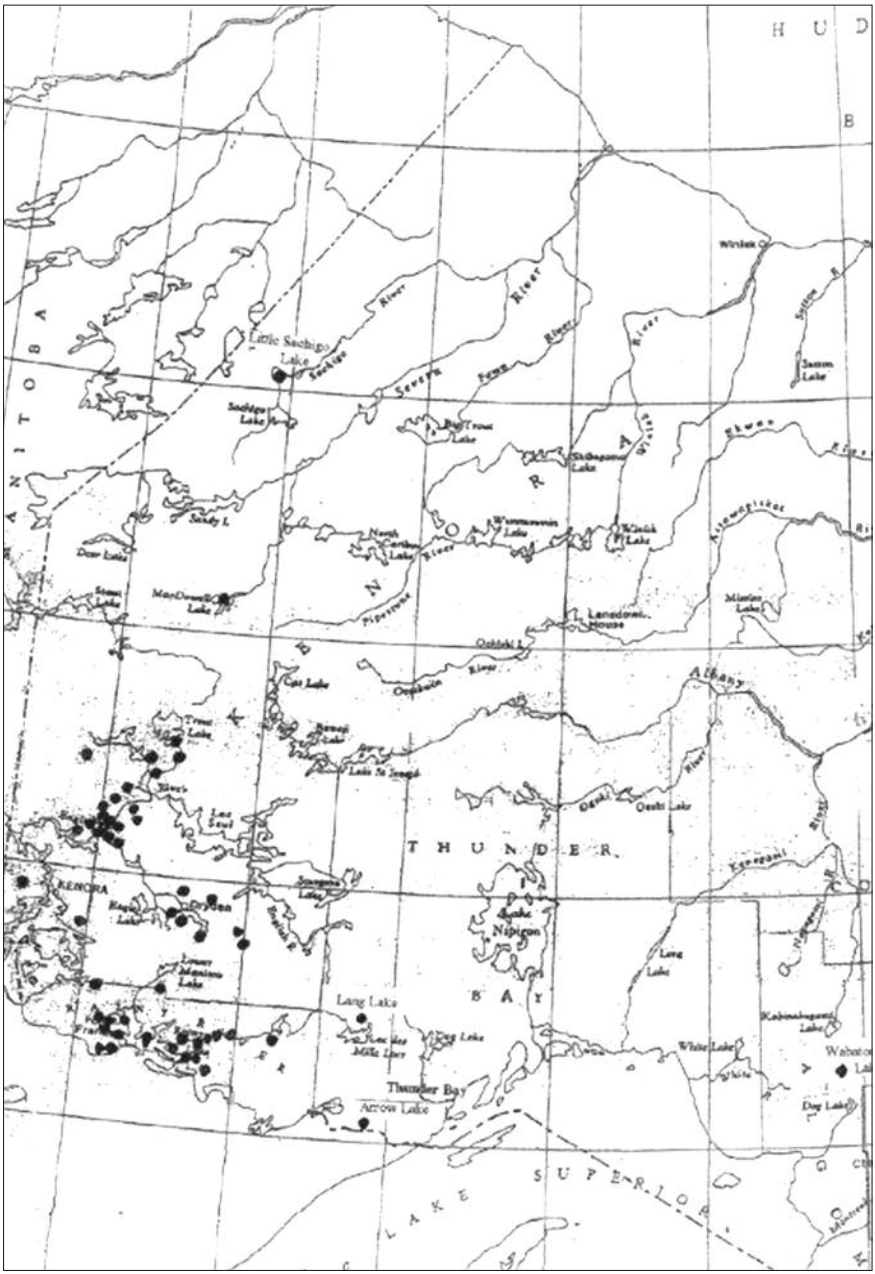

Figure 1. The distribution of nests and flightless broods of Trumpeter Swans in northwestern Ontario seen since 1989

The aerial survey carried out in summer by Eric McIntyre in part of Parry Sound District found 22 swans, but these are not included in the southern Ontario totals. The ground counts are presented in Table 2. Ten of these locations were on rivers and 16 were on lake shores. At 11 locations, the swans were fed. Table 3 presents counts made at seven locations where the ice was controlled with aeration equipment and one where a very strong spring kept the water open. At all seven of these, the swans were fed.

The question arose, how many swans were missed in southern Ontario. There were two locations on the Grand, three on the Thames and one on the Speed rivers, which usually held wintering swans in the past. We received no reports from these sites in 2010, although there were likely some birds there. Eight wing-tagged swans were reported from the U.S., one from Minnesota, one from Maryland, one from West Virginia, one from Wisconsin, two from Pennsylvania and two from New York. There were also seven unmarked swans reported, six from New York and one, the first, from Maine.

Quebec

In Quebec, tagged swans had been reported for some years along the Ottawa River at Tea Lake, near Temiscaming, Fabre, Remegny and Duparquet (H. Lumsden, unpub. data). We received an unusual report of two trumpeting swans that were flushed from a blueberry barren at Bergeronnes, (48° 15 N 069° 39 W) on 8 August 2010 (P. Welch, pers. comm.). This locality is near the shore of the St. Lawrence River about 30 km northeast of Tadoussac. The first Trumpeter Swan nesting in Quebec since Barnston's report (Barnston 1860) was at Joutel (49° 50 N, 78° 33 W), 192 km northeast of Kirkland Lake (J. Fréchette, pers. comm.). In 2010, this pair, with tags 963 and E81 and with their two cygnets, wintered at LaSalle Park (44° 18 N 079° 51 W) in Burlington, Ontario, 830 km to the south.

Kemptville District

Trumpeter Swans in this District were first reported on 16 June 1996 by Winona Barker. Two birds were seen on Hudson Bay (44° 41 N 076° 17 W), Big Rideau Lake (D. Cuddy, MNR files). They probably came from New York State where feral Trumpeter Swans had been breeding for some years. In 1997, they returned and nested successfully (A. Mess, pers. comm.). They also bred there in 1998 and 2000 (I. Aikman, pers. comm.) and again in 2009 (K. Intini, unpubl. data). To strengthen this new breeding population, releases of captive-raised swans were made at Portland (1999), Brockville (2000) and near Kingston (2003). Stefan Foerster found three breeding pairs in the Brockville area, raising five cygnets in 2002 and 10 cygnets in 2003. In 2004, they bred on Mud Lake and in 2005 at Bellamy Station, McIntosh Mills, Jellyby, Mud Creek and Lees Pond (Cataraqui Conservation Authority Files).

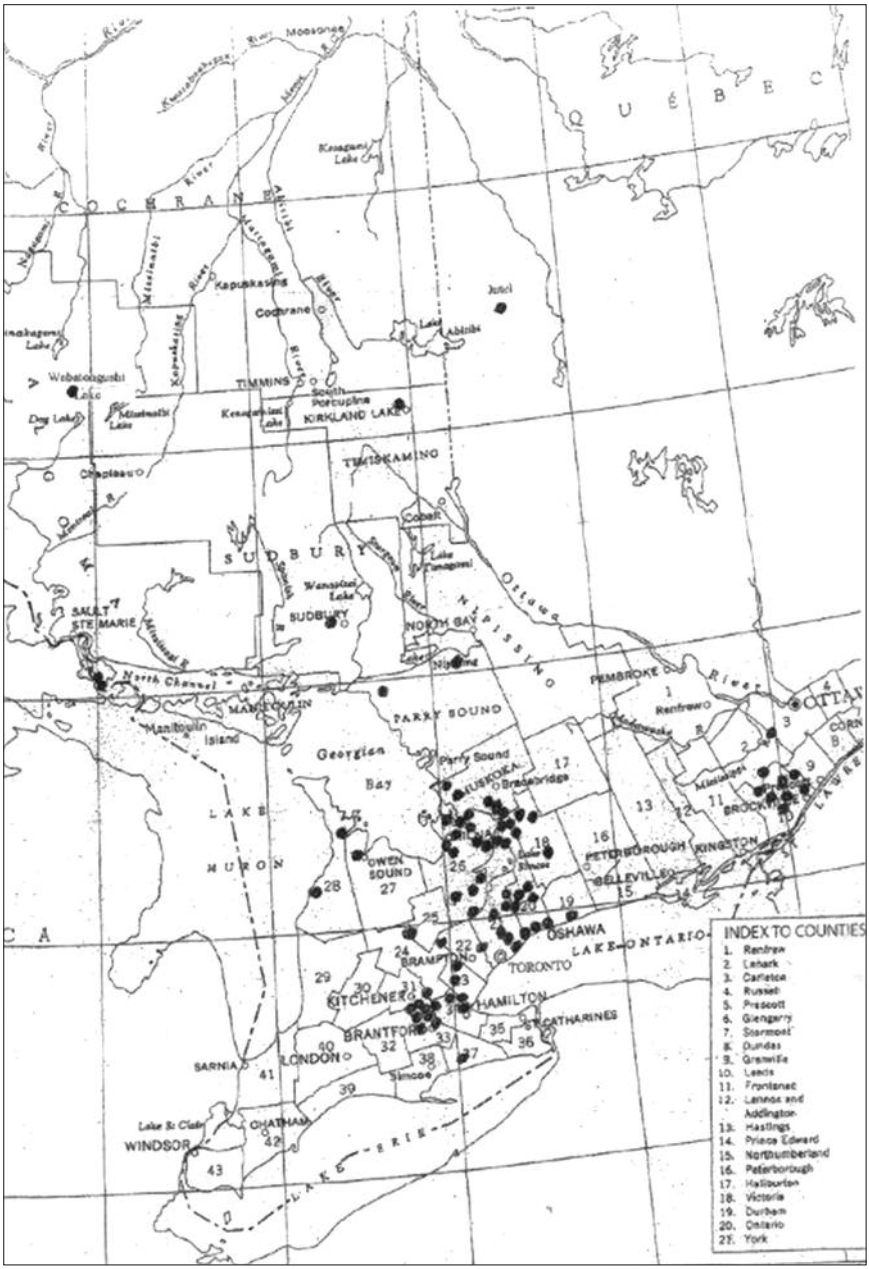

Figure 2. The distribution of Trumpeter Swan nests and flightless broods reported since 1993 in southern and eastern Ontario . Some locations support as many as three nests annually.

On 10 June 2010, Stefan Forester flew a survey and found 13 cygnets and 35 white swans in the area north-west of Brockville. On 27 June, a brood with four cygnets was found by Jeff Skevington on the Jock River west of Ashton (C. Lewis, pers. comm.). The inventory total for Kemptville District in 2010 was 17 cygnets and 37 white swans, total 54. We have no evidence that this population exchanges birds with those in southern Ontario.

Conclusion

The swans of the northwestern region of Ontario, as part of the Wisconsin-Minnesota population, can be considered to be self-sustaining. They can be expected to increase in density and to expand their range to the north. On aerial surveys in 2010, 279 Trumpeter Swans were counted. In eastern Ontario, in a similar survey, 54 swans were found.

The southern Ontario population has been increasing steadily. There is extensive range to the north and east in Quebec into which they may spread as the population builds. Ground counts at 34 locations in the winter of 2010-2011 with an estimate of birds wintering in the U.S. gave a total of 540 swans. The total number of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario counted in 2010 was 873. Much suitable nesting range in northwestern Ontario was not surveyed and some swans were probably missed in southern Ontario.

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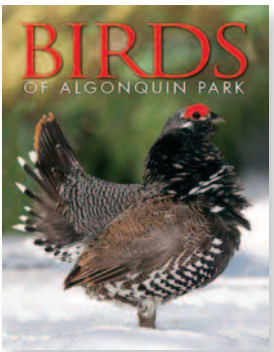
Book Review



Birds of Algonquin Park
By Ron Tozer. 2012. The Friends of Algonquin Park, Whitney, Ontario. 474 pp. ISBN 978-1-894993-51-7. $49.95

As one of eastern Canada's most famous birding spots, Algonquin Provincial Park has been a magnet for amateur and professional field ornithologists for decades. A vast piece of Boreal-like landscape geographically displaced into southcentral Ontario, Algonquin has provided the first taste of The North for virtually all southern Ontario birders and millions of other visitors.

Having spent the majority of his adult life involved in investigating the avifauna of Algonquin, author Ron Tozer is universally recognized as the individual best situated to produce the long awaited treatment of Algonquin's birds. So the million dollar question is, does this book do that?

Let me cut to the chase: this *is* the comprehensive, authoritative and definitive treatment of the birds of Algonquin Park for which we have been waiting for literally decades. It is a magnificent achievement and must be in the library of anyone serious about the ecological values of Algonquin Park or ornithology in southern and central Ontario. Now let me say why that's the case.

At its core, *Birds of Algonquin Park* is a traditional regional bird treatment, providing a species by species accounting of all 278 species of birds known to have occurred here (144 breeding) to the end of 2011. It stands out from every Canadian regional bird treatment that preceded it, however, by the sheer volume of data reviewed. The species reviews are founded upon the tens of thousands of individual sightings by park interpretive staff, researchers and park visitors that have been dutifully recorded at the Algonquin Park Museum since the 1960s. This unprecedented richness of data permitted Tozer to produce accurate and detailed observational histories and status statements for each species. The data base is so rich, in fact, that seasonal activities are analyzed in two 25 year segments (1961-1985 and 1986-2010), illustrating changes in bird behaviour and status over half a century. This provides insightful, statistically significant assessments of the importance of these changes.

Each species treatment is organized seasonally, with remarkably detailed discussions of changes in the behaviour and status of that particular species through

the year. This is followed by a review of historical status as determined from published and manuscript records going back into the 19th Century. Following the review of breeding and migration data through the two 25 year periods, each species treatment is concluded with a discussion of population trends. The latter not only uses original park data but employs a comparative analysis of the two sets of Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas data (1981-1985 and 2001-2005).

The species treatments are quite spectacular in their depth and authority. The observation data for all secondary reports are supported by citations to published sources. A concerted effort has been made to place the Algonquin population of each species into a larger regional, national and continental perspective. This is all achieved very successfully. Masterful pen and ink sketches by Dawn Sherman also greatly enhance the visual appreciation of many species treatments. Tozer includes often fascinating sidebars throughout the species accounts (once a park interpreter always a park interpreter?). This eclectic collection of taxonomic, ecological, physiological and behavioural 'nuggets' highlights Algonquin research in particular and the special biological nature of birds in general.

Key observations that support patterns and trends are listed in a table at the end of each species treatment, identifying the appropriate site(s) and observer(s). This not only is useful factual documentation but will be especially interesting for long-time park birders. They will enjoy seeing the names of individuals they might not have heard from in decades, sobered by the listing of others no longer with us and reminded of their own experiences (did I really see 225 flickers one day in August 1989? And why was I counting them anyway?). We may have long forgotten some of the details but Tozer wrote them all down and so here they are.

The book is beautifully designed and presented with clear, readable type on good quality paper and in an easy to follow layout. The photography is quite stunning, with a variety of photographers contributing amazing images of both representative and rare species. The text is virtually free of typographical or labelling errors. I found only a single misspelled word in all of the species accounts (on page 345, Ron).

The core of species accounts is followed by a seasonal status bar graph that economically summarizes the patterns described in the previous 350 pages and then a statistical analysis of the wealth of migratory data for the two 25 year study periods. The latter valuable analysis was compiled by Douglas Tozer, the author's son and a significant contributor in his own right to Algonquin bird data. (I can't resist noting that Doug wasn't even a fledgling when the elder Tozer started this project).

A thorough review of the important contribution of Algonquin's Christmas Bird Counts is welcome, reminding readers what a *real* winter bird count is all about. The glossary of terms, gazetteer of Algonquin place names and a

review of introduced species that follow, however, are less successful. The need for the first two in a regional guide is unconvincing and the content of the latter, describing the thankfully failed effort years ago to introduce various game birds, would seem more appropriate in the body of the text. A section with photos supporting various rare bird reports is a nice feature, however. *Birds of Algonquin Park* is wrapped up with a thorough list of cited references and an effective index to the species accounts.

This book is very much written by a keen birder for keen birders. The "Where to Go Birding" section underscores that, as do birding stories that are sprinkled through the text. Like the one about the author missing the Yellow-breasted Chat in October 1981 by mere seconds — an event that clearly still rankles him!

In conclusion then, it's all perfect, right? OK, darn close. But since Tozer is no longer critiquing my interpretive presentations I will hazard identifying some issues that would have benefited from additional consideration.

For starters, the "Where to Go Birding" section seems overly optimistic. While Spruce Grouse is indeed "*likely to be found on the Opeongo Road*" (pg. 14), for example, that's unlikely to be the experience with the majority of birders searching for this elusive species. And since the "Finding Specialities" that follows this casts its net so broadly as to include the ubiquitous Common Raven, would it not have been consistent to include treatments of less easily found breeding northern species such as Lincoln's Sparrows and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher? And as the Park presents a physically challenging landscape even along the Highway 60 corridor, readers should have been advised to exercise safety considerations appropriate to travel and investigation in such an expansive, wild landscape.

The introductory portion of the book is surprisingly slim. That's a shame as such material is valuable for putting a particular place into a larger context. The ecological make-up of Algonquin is summarized in half a page of text (pg. 7), for example, offering little insight into the make-up of the landscape upon which this complex avifauna depends. Similarly, the rich history of ornithological investigation here (pg. 41-42) is rushed through in a

page and a half. A whole lot more of both would have put contemporary birding activity into a much better context.

There is almost no mention of voucher specimens supporting Algonquin Park bird records. At one time there was a substantial bird specimen collection preserved at the Park. It would have been good to have the scope of that collection identified and its location provided, if it is no longer preserved in the Park Museum.

Most importantly, I would have appreciated more exploration and synthesis of some of the major themes that come up over and over again in the comprehensive species' accounts. How about stand-alone discussions of such things as the conservation needs and trends for Algonquin's birds? The implications of climate change (not just the reporting of migrational and breeding date shifts)? The ornithological implications of the forestry industry — by far the most ecologically negative and controversial human influence on Algonquin Park birds? Future expectations/ predictions for the state of Algonquin bird life? The role of fire and other natural agents of change?

To be fair, Tozer did not set out to address these and he very successfully accomplishes all of the goals he did establish. That's quite remarkable. Still, it is the success of what was accomplished that makes me wish he had expanded those goals further.

Ontario birders and field ornithologist have been blessed in recent years by the production of arguably some of the best regional bird guides ever published on this continent. Bob Curry's 2006 *Birds of Hamilton* is one of these, John Black and Kayo Roy's 2010 *Niagara Birds* is another and now Ron Tozer's *Birds of Algonquin Park* makes it a hat trick. The only negative I could imagine coming from this is that they've set the bar so high that others may be intimidated to attempt their own contribution. It's a wonderful problem to have, isn't it?

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Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It formed in 1982 to unify the ever-growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC); publishes a newsletter (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*); operates a bird sightings listserv (ONTBIRDS), coordinated by Mark Cranford; hosts field trips throughout Ontario; and holds an Annual Convention and Banquet in the autumn. Current information on all of its activities is on the OFO website (www.ofo.ca), coordinated by Doug Woods. Comments or questions can be directed to OFO by e-mail (ofo@ofo.ca).

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership rates can be obtained from the address below. All members receive *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*.

Please send membership enquiries to:
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