

# ONTARIO BIRDS

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VOLUME 32 NUMBER 2  
AUGUST 2014  
PAGES 53 — 112

- 54 Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2013  
*By Brandon R. Holden*
- 82 Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*): New to Ontario  
*By Kayo J. Roy*
- 98 “Northern” Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima borealis*):  
New to Ontario  
*By Kevin A. McLaughlin*

Cover Illustration: Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)  
*by Barry Kent MacKay*

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# Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2013

*Brandon R. Holden*

## **Introduction**

This is the 32nd annual report of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. The first annual report (pertaining to 1982) was published in 1983 (James 1983). The OBRC reviews rare bird occurrences in Ontario based on documentation that has been submitted by the birding community, and would cease to function without this effort and support. Species and subspecies that are evaluated are based on the Review Lists for Ontario at <http://www.ofo.ca>. Any new species or first breeding records for Ontario are also reviewed. This report deals with the results of the review of 155 records by the OBRC in 2013, of which 82% were accepted. All reports reviewed by the 2013 committee will be added to the permanent file kept at the Royal Ontario Museum.

The members of the 2013 committee were Mike V.A. Burrell (Chair), Brandon R. Holden (non-voting secretary), Barbara N. Charlton (non-voting assistant to the secretary), Kenneth G.D. Burrell, R. Douglas McRae, Peter S. Burke, Mark Gawn, Ron Ridout and Bruce M. Di Labio (Figure 1). Mark K. Peck acted as Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) liaison for the OBRC.

## **Changes to the Checklist of Ontario Birds**

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) and Elegant Tern (*Sterna elegans*) have been added to the Ontario list, bringing the total Ontario Checklist to 490 species.

## **Changes to the Review List**

Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*), White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) and Anna's



Figure 1: Ontario Bird Records Committee for 2013. Left to right (standing): Kenneth G.D. Burrell, R. Douglas McRae, Bruce Di Labio, Mark Gawn, left to right (sitting) Ron Ridout, Barbara N. Charlton, Mike V.A. Burrell, not present: Peter S. Burke, Brandon R. Holden. Photo: Mark K. Peck.

Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) have been added to the North Review List following acceptance of the first records for the region. Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) has been removed from the North Review List with more than twenty occurrences in the previous five year period. Reports prior to 2014 are still requested for review.

The South Review List had the additions of Brown Booby and Elegant Tern following the acceptance of these first records for the province, as well as the addition of Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) and Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) following acceptance of these first records for the region.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*) has been added to the South Review List as the species has occurred in the South Review Zone less than twenty times in the previous five year period. Beginning in 2014, reports of Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) in the South Review Zone are no longer requested based on more than twenty records occurring in the previous five years. Reports prior to 2014 are still requested for review.

For the Subspecies Review List, reports of "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis oregonus* group) are no longer requested. This review list covers the entire province. "Bewick's" Tundra Swan

(*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) is added to this list following acceptance of the first record for the province.

Beginning in 2014, the North Review Zone has been split into two separate regions: the Lowlands Review Zone and the Central Review Zone. The boundary between the two zones is the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Hudson Bay Lowlands Ecozone boundary. The OBRC believes this change ensures that the review lists better reflect the current status of bird species in northern Ontario. The full versions of the new review lists and a map showing the review list boundaries are available on the OFO website ([www.ofo.ca](http://www.ofo.ca)) or by contacting the OBRC secretary directly ([mike.burrell.on@gmail.com](mailto:mike.burrell.on@gmail.com)). The 2014 OBRC report will be the first to utilize the three review zones.

### Listing of Records

For accepted records and records for which the identification was accepted but the origin is questionable, the following information is provided where known: year of occurrence, number of birds, the plumage and sex of each individual, dates of occurrence, location, names of contributors and OBRC file number. All contributors who have provided reports are listed; if a contributor is also a finder of the bird(s), their name is underlined. Additional finders of the bird(s) are also listed where known, even if they did not provide any documentation for review. Place names in italics refer to the county, regional municipality or district in Ontario. For accepted records, the total number of accepted records is indicated in parentheses after the species name.

Common and scientific names, as well as taxonomy, follow the seventh edition of the Check-list of North American Birds published by the American Ornithologists' Union (1998), along with its annual supplements published in the *Auk* (up to the 54th supplement inclusive; see <http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/print.php>).

In the listing of records, plumage terminology follows that of Humphrey and Parkes (1959). For a detailed explanation of plumage and moult terminology, see Pittaway (2000).

Comments following the species accounts, for those that specifically pertain to Ontario, are based on records that have been accepted by the OBRC; other reports published in the literature are not discussed here.

All records that were not accepted due either to uncertain identification or questionable origin have been listed separately. Contributors of all "not accepted" records are notified by the Chairperson. Reasons for the decision are explained, using information provided by voting members on their voting slips. Any "not accepted" record can be reconsidered by the OBRC if new or additional documentation is provided.

All documentation provided to the OBRC is permanently archived at the ROM. Researchers and other interested parties are welcome to examine any of this material evidence, by appointment. Please contact Mark Peck in writing at Department of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6; or alternatively by email at [markp@rom.on.ca](mailto:markp@rom.on.ca) or by telephone at 416-586-5523.

## Acknowledgments

The OBRC appreciates the efforts of the numerous observers who took the time to submit documentation of rare birds for consideration by the 2013 committee. We also thank the following people who assisted the committee in the acquisition of additional data and other material evidence that supplemented the information submitted directly by observers and committee members, or by providing expert opinions on material evidence submitted to the committee: James. W. Arterburn, Colin Bradshaw, Peter Burke, Glenn Coady, Steve Hampton, Alvaro Jaramillo, Stuart A. Mackenzie, Bruce Mactavish, Paul A. Martin, Anthony McGeehan, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Bram Piot, Jeff Poklen, Brian D. Ratcliff, Jeff H. Skevington, Declan Troy and Kirk Zufelt.

## ACCEPTED RECORDS

### Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* North Only (12)

**2013** – fifteen, definitive basic, 21 May, Terrace Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Mike V.A. Burrell, Alvan D. Buckley; 2013-046) – photo on file.

This is the largest number of Mute Swans recorded in northern Ontario, surpassing the previous high of five, 30 May-10 June 1988, Pukaskwa National Park (Pic River mouth), *Thunder Bay* (Coady and Wormington 1989).

### “Bewick’s” Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (1)

**2013** – one, definitive basic, 15-16 March, Ridgetown, *Chatham-Kent* (Jeremy M. Bensette, Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Jeremy L. Hatt, Mark Cunningham; 2013-012) – photos on file.

This individual becomes the first accepted record for the province of this Eurasian subspecies. Documentation submitted by Alan Wormington (via Kenneth G.D. Burrell) lists two previous reports not yet reviewed by the OBRC.



Figure 2: “Bewick’s” Tundra Swan (left) with “Whistling” Tundra Swan (right), Ridgetown, *Chatham-Kent* on 15 March 2013. Photo: Jeremy Bensette.

### **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (30)

**2012** – one, female, 20-23 October, Shirley's Bay, *Ottawa* (Jacques M. Bouvier, Paul LaGagis, found by Bruce M. Di Labio, Ben F. Di Labio, William von Herff; 2013-064) – photos on file.

The OBRC solicited comments from experts familiar with this species as the bird showed a sizable white patch at the base of the bill, raising concerns of a hybrid. The information received all indicated the bird was safely within the range of variation shown by a pure Tufted Duck.

### **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* **South Only** (23)

**2013** – one, juvenal/first basic female, *borealis*, 2-13 December, Fifty Point Conservation Area, *Hamilton/Niagara* (James A. Turland, Carole Lupton, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Barbara N. Charlton, Garth V. Riley, Mike Veltri, David Pryor, Jeremy L. Hatt, Joanne Redwood, Glenn Coady, Jean Iron, Ronald J. Pittaway, Sandra Horvath, Frank Horvath, Mark Patry; 2013-085) – photos on file.

This record proves to be the first of the *borealis* subspecies for the province. Kevin A. McLaughlin was the first to identify the bird on 4 December 2013, yet photographs proved it to be present before that date (McLaughlin 2014). The previous subspecies accepted for the province are *sedentaria* and *dresseri* (Bain 1994, Roy 2002) although the majority of records are identified to the species level only.

### **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* **North Only** (27)

**2013** – one, definitive alternate male, 29 April-5 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (James Barber, found by Brian Moore; 2013-121) – photo on file.  
– one, basic female or juvenal, 28 October, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, also found by Alan Wormington; 2013-142).

### **Smew** *Mergellus albellus* (4)

**2012** – one, definitive alternate male, 8-11 March, Long Point (Inner Bay), *Norfolk* (Ron Ridout, Joshua D. Vandermeulen; 2012-024).

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

Following an extensive review of North American records provided by Glenn Coady, the OBRC voted to accept these records without question of origin, following the majority of other records committees around North America, treating records of this species as wild vagrants.

### **Pacific Loon** *Gavia pacifica* **South Only** (56)

**2013** – one, first alternate, 16 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (David M. Bell, Brandon R. Holden, Mark Cunningham; 2013-025) – photos on file.  
– one, 23 October, Port Perry, *Durham* (Geoffrey Carpentier; 2013-053).

- one, definitive basic, 27 October-6 November, Oshawa, *Durham* (Wayne Renaud, Mary Robinson, David Pryor, Winnie W.M. Poon, found by Dan Kaczynski; 2013-060) – photos on file.

**2012** – one, 18 November, East Lake, *Prince Edward* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, found by Tyler L. Hoar; 2013-091) – photos on file.

**Eared Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* **North Only (25)**

**2013** – one, definitive alternate, 2 May, Fort Frances, *Rainy River* (Evan Timusk, Michael S. Dawber; 2013-076) – photo on file.

- four, definitive alternate, 5 May, Emo (Sewage Ponds), *Rainy River* (Michael S. Dawber, also found by David H. Elder, Alan Williams; 2013-077) – photo on file.

- two, definitive alternate, 6-7 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (James Barber, also found by Nicholas G. Escott, Sarah Penfold; 2013-133) – photo on file.

- one, definitive alternate, 22-25 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Mike V.A. Burrell, also found by Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Alvan D. Buckley; 2013-066) – photo on file.

**Western Grebe** *Aechmophorus occidentalis* **(39)**

**2013** – one, basic, 16-17 January, Point Edward, *Lambton* (G. Thomas Hince; 2013-005) – photos and video on file.

- one, basic, 26 January-11 May, Colonel Samuel Smith Park, *Toronto* (26 January, 3 March - 11 May), Sunnyside Beach, *Toronto* (3-5 February), Humber Bay, *Toronto* (15 February - 2 March), (Heiko H. Heerklotz, Howard Shapiro, John R. Carley, Anthony Vanderheyden, J. Brett Fried, Mike V.A. Burrell; 2013-003) – photos on file.

- one, alternate, 12-13 June, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe, found by Pauline Catling; 2013-048) – photos on file.

The *Chatham-Kent* individual becomes the latest spring record accepted by the OBRC for southern Ontario, surpassing an individual recorded at Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* on 23 May 2009 (Cranford 2010).

**Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* **(14)**

**2012** – one, basic, light morph, 24 November, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Andrew Keaveney; 2013-071).

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* **(1)**

**2013** – one, definitive basic female, *leucogaster*, 7 October-2 November, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (7-21 October) Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (31 October-1 November) Lowbanks, *Haldimand*; (1-2 November), (James M. Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna, Richard Poort, Leonard P. Manning, Kayo J. Roy, David Pryor, Mike V.A. Burrell, Dominic Sherony, Brandon R. Holden, Kenneth G. D. Burrell; 2013-072) – photos and video on file.





Figure 3: Brown Booby, Lowbanks, *Haldimand* on 2 November 2013. Photo: Kayo J. Roy.

The first record for the province, this individual was a strong candidate for “bird of the year” as it delighted hundreds of birders in both Ontario and New York. A genetic sample was obtained from droppings during the Lowbanks observation. Subsequent analysis of the sample by Jeff H. Skevington confirmed that the bird came from the nominate subspecies. An account appears later in this issue of *Ontario Birds* (Roy 2014).



Figure 4: Northern Gannet, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton* on 1 September 2013. Photo: Brandon R. Holden.

#### **Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (46)**

**2013** – one, definitive basic, 1 May-7 October, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (1 May, 25 July), Stoney Creek, *Hamilton* (1 September), Etobicoke (Colonel Samuel Smith Park), *Toronto* (10 September, 6-7 October), Charwell Point, *Prince Edward* (14 September), Van Wagner's Beach, *Hamilton* (5 October). (Frederick M. Helleiner, Brandon R. Holden, Garth V. Riley, David Pryor, Mike V.A. Burrell, Jean Iron; 2013-106) – photos on file.

With only three prior records, adult Northern Gannets are rarely seen in Ontario. This individual proved to be remarkably elusive during its long stay; being seen very sporadically at various locations on Lake Ontario from both Ontario and New York. It is possible that this is the same individual observed in 2012 on Lake Ontario, exclusively in New York, with irregular sightings from 1 September - 21 October (eBird 2014).

#### **Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (6)**

**2013** – one, definitive alternate, 2 May, Whitby (Thickson's Point), *Durham* (Glenn Coady, also found by Daniel S. Kaczynski; 2013-153).  
– one, 19-20 August, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden; 2013-040)  
– photos on file.

The *Durham* record is the first for Ontario away from Lake Erie. The *Hamilton* individual became the third record for Lake Ontario following the bird at *Durham* and New York State's first record at Hamlin Beach on 14 August 2013 (Puschock 2013); the observer at *Hamilton* (Brandon R. Holden) spent several days specifically searching for this species among the many thousands of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) that frequent the area at that time of year.

### **Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* (16)

- 2013** – one, 1 July, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Dawn Burke, also found by Zoe C. Burke, Gerhard Brenner; 2013-102).
- one, second basic, 7 July-29 September, (but not present continuously during this period), Leamington, *Essex* (7 July), Wheatley Harbour, *Chatham-Kent/Essex* (20-23 August, 25 September and 29 September), Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (29 September) and Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (29 September) (Jeremy L. Hatt, Leonard P. Manning, Mike V.A. Burrell, Jean Iron, Ronald J. Pittaway, found by Bill Kerr; 2013-103)
  - photos on file.

The *Essex/Chatham-Kent* individual was first found in Cleveland, Ohio, on 24 June 2013, where it was seen regularly until at least 11 December 2013 (Ohio Bird Record Committee, pers. comm.). Interestingly, a juvenal Brown Pelican had a prolonged stay in western Lake Erie in the fall of 2012 (Cranford 2013).

### **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* **North Only** (24)

- 2013** – one, definitive alternate, 1-2 May, Dorion, *Thunder Bay* (Norma Maurice, found by Ethel Nuttall; 2013-126) – photos on file.

### **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* **North Only** (7)

- 2013** – one, 3-7 June, Thunder Bay (Marina Park), *Thunder Bay* (Susan Robinson, Jan Luit; 2013-150) – photos on file.

### **Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* **North Only** (4)

- 2013** – one, definitive basic, 27 June-24 July, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, also found by David Welbourn; 2013-099)
- photo on file.

### **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* (45)

- 2013** – one, first basic, 30 April, Lindsay, *Kawartha Lakes* (Maureen McEwan, Dan Bone, also found by Lloyd McEwan; 2013-057) – photos on file.

### **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (63)

- 2013** – one, definitive alternate, 11-14 May, Cornwall (Kraft Rd. Sewage Lagoons), *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry* (Jacob K. Bruxer; 2013-031)
- photos on file.
  - one, definitive basic, 25 October-4 November, Holiday Beach, *Essex* (Karen Potts, Todd R. Pepper, Kory Renaud; 2013-137) – photos on file.
- 2012** – one, basic, 22 October-2 November, Gosport, *Northumberland* (Bruce M. Di Labio, found by Colin Griffiths, Maureen Riggs; 2013-081)
- photos on file.



Figure 5: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Lindsay, *Kawartha Lakes* on 30 April 2013. Photo: Maureen McEwan.

**White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (15)**

**2013** – one, definitive alternate, 23 April-5 May, Oxdrift, *Kenora* (23-28 April), Dryden, *Kenora* (5 May), (Carolle Eady, found by Ursula Wall; 2013-140) – photo on file.

This constitutes the first record for northern Ontario.

**Ibis species *Plegadis* spp. (63)**

**2013** – one, alternate, 1 May, Fort Frances (Pither's Point Park), *Rainy River* (Evan Timusk; 2013-127).

– one, alternate, 23-26 May, Angus, *Simcoe* (David Szmyr; 2013-097) – photos on file.

– one, basic, 21 September, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen; 2013-054).



Figure 6: Swallow-tailed Kite, Port Alma, *Chatham-Kent* on 4 May 2013.  
Photo: Mike V.A. Burrell.

**Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* (17)**

- 2013 – one, basic, 22 April, Pickering, *Durham* and Scarborough, *Toronto* (Andy McKinnon, Cat Beattie, Maria Hayes; 2013-070) – photo on file.
- one, basic, 29 April and 2-3 May, Chatham, *Chatham-Kent* (Apr 29), and Port Alma, *Chatham-Kent* to Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (4 May). (Alison Stover, Mike V.A. Burrell, David M. Bell, Brandon R. Holden; 2013-068) – photos on file.

The *Chatham-Kent/Essex* bird was located near Port Alma on the Lake Erie shoreline by Mike V.A. Burrell and Erica P. Barkley on 4 May and was subsequently tracked for nearly 30 kilometres along the shoreline, as the bird headed SW towards Point Pelee. Updates on the ONTBIRDS listserv and other media allowed for a large crowd to amass at the Visitor Centre parking lot of Point Pelee National Park that cheered as the bird eventually arrived and travelled southwards overhead. Photographs taken by multiple parties confirmed this was the same individual seen on 29 April inland at Chatham, *Chatham-Kent* by Alison Stover.



Figure 7: Snowy Plover, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* on 1 November 2013. Photo: Brandon R. Holden.

**Mississippi Kite** *Ictinia mississippiensis* (44)

2013 – one, definitive basic, 4 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Blake A. Mann, also found by Stephen R. Charbonneau; 2013-021).

**Swainson's Hawk** *Buteo swainsoni* (61)

2012 – one, juvenal, light morph, 7 September, Waterdown, *Hamilton* (J. Brett Fried; 2013-020).

**Snowy Plover** *Charadrius nivosus* (8)

2013 – one, juvenal, 1 November, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden, Jeremy L. Hatt; 2013-051) – photos on file.

The first fall record for the province, this individual was well outside the expected dates of occurrence for the Great Lakes region.

**Piping Plover** *Charadrius melodus* (84)

2013 – one, alternate, 12-13 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (William von Herff, Brandon R. Holden, David M. Bell, found by Ross M. Mackintosh; 2013-061) – photos on file.

- one, first alternate male, 15 May-7 June, Darlington Provincial Park, *Durham* (15, 19-25 May), Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (16 May, 2-3, 7 June), Toronto Islands, *Toronto* (17 May); (R. Douglas McRae, found by Tyler L. Hoar; 2013-119) – photos on file.
- one, alternate male, 18 May-16 July, South Limestone Island, *Parry Sound* (John Catto, Tim Stewart, also found by Margaret Catto; 2013-120) – photos on file.
- one, alternate, 19-20 May, Kettle Point, *Lambton* (Sean M. Jenniskens, found by Maris P. Apse; 2013-111).
- one, alternate male, 24 May, Lake-of-the-Woods (Windy Point), *Rainy River* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Mike V.A. Burrell, also found by Alvan D. Buckley; 2013-047) – photo on file.
- one, alternate, 24 May-10 June, Long Point (Peninsula), *Norfolk* (John Brett, Denby Sadler, Adam Timpf; 2013-112) – photos on file.
- one, alternate, 24-25 May, Hamilton, *Hamilton* (Barbara N. Charlton, Leonard P. Manning, Josh Nieuwenhuis, found by Robert Z. Dobos; 2013-049) – photo on file.
- one, basic, 24 November, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Jeremy M. Bensette, found by Stephen T. Pike, Richard P. Carr; 2013-118) – photo on file.

This species continues to rebound in the province, beginning with the rediscovery of nesting birds at Sauble Beach, *Bruce*, as detailed by Toews *et al.* (2008). After 2013, reports of Piping Plover are no longer requested for review by the OBRC in the South Review Zone; however the OBRC continues to solicit documentation for any records before 2014.

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* (17)

**2013** – three, definitive alternate (male, female and unknown), 5-8 May, (three on 5 May only, two thereafter), Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (William G. Harris, Jeremy L. Hatt, ; 2013-058) – photos on file.

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* **North Only After 1999** (75)

**2013** – one, definitive alternate male, 26 April, Fort Frances (Pither's Point), *Rainy River* (John Van den Broeck; 2013-022) – photo on file.

This is the eighth accepted record for northern Ontario.

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* **North Only** (19)

**2013** – one, alternate, 5 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (James Barber, Greg Kendall, also found by Lynda Sisco; 2013-130) – photos on file.

**California Gull** *Larus californicus* (65)

**2013** – one, definitive alternate, 3 February, Queenston, *Niagara* (Gavin C. Platt; 2013-104).

– one, juvenal, 29 October, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Ron Ridout; 2013-143).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* **North Only** (16)

**2013** – one, definitive alternate, 21 April, Dryden, *Kenora* (Angela Massey; 2013-034) – photos on file.

– one, juvenal, 1 October, Kapuskasing, *Cochrane* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, also found by Jeremy M. Bensette, Alan Wormington; 2013-055) – photos on file.

– one, definitive basic, 6-9 November, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Brian D. Ratcliff, Calvin Knorr; 2013-074) – photos on file.

– one, definitive basic, 9 November, Haileybury, *Timiskaming* (Michael Werner; 2013-101).

**Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus* (13)

**2013** – one, definitive basic, 1 January-3 February, Niagara Falls, Niagara and Queenston, *Niagara* (Willie C. D'Anna, James Pawlicki, Gavin C. Platt, also found by Betsy Potter; 2013-006).

– one, definitive basic, 6-11 November, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Brian D. Ratcliff, Calvin Knorr; 2013-075) – photos on file.

Incredibly, there was a different Slaty-backed Gull found in this same area of the Niagara River on 28 December 2012 (Cranford 2013). Notes on the plumage and bare part colouration helped both the observers and the OBRC in separating these two individuals. The bird from Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* becomes the first accepted record of the species for northern Ontario.

**Least Tern** *Sternula antillarum* (5)

**2013** – one, alternate, 14 May, Long Point Provincial Park, *Norfolk* (Don-Jean Léandri-Breton; 2013-008).



Figure 8: Slaty-backed Gull, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* on 8 November 2013. Photo: Calvin Knorr.

### **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* (1)

**2013** – one, first basic, 21-22 and 24 November, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (James M. Pawlicki, David Pryor, Leonard P. Manning, Brandon R. Holden, Kayo J. Roy, Glenn Coady, Jean Iron, found by Vicky Rothman; 2013-078) – photos on file.

This is the other strong candidate for “bird of the year”; birders across Ontario and New York experienced déjà vu as they travelled (respectively) to Fort Erie, ON and Buffalo, NY to see this incredible rarity. Barely a month had passed since the Brown Booby had stopped frequenting the area, providing another first record for the province. The bird was present along the Niagara River from 20-24 November, where it spent the vast majority of that time on the Buffalo waterfront. It was briefly observed by multiple observers flying out over the river across the international boundary on both 21 and 22 November and was unequivocally found resting on the Fort Erie, Ontario shoreline on 24 November, but it was not viewed in Ontario on either 20 or 23 November. A full account of this occurrence will be published in a future issue of *Ontario Birds*.

### **Thick-billed Murre** *Uria lomvia* (3)

**2013** – one, first basic, 3-4 December, Kingston, *Frontenac* (Mark D. Read, Jean Iron, Jeremy L. Hatt, Barbara N. Charlton, Frank Horvath, Sandra Horvath, David Pryor, Glenn Coady, found by Janis Grant; 2013-083) – photos on file.

This is the third record to be accepted by the OBRC. Prior to the 1960s, this species occurred with greater frequency in the province (Curry 2006).





Figure 9: Elegant Tern, Buffalo, New York, on 21 November 2013. This same individual provided the first Ontario record when it crossed the river into Canadian waters. *Photo: James M. Pawlicki.*

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (16)

- 2013** – one, basic, 10 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Brandon R. Holden, David M. Bell; 2013-024).  
– two, 27 September, north of Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Ross W. Wood, Barbara N. Charlton; 2013-093).

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* (41)

- 2013** – one, basic, 26 January-6 February, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (James T. Burk, P. Allen Woodliffe, Frank Horvath, Sandra Horvath, Blake Mann, Jeremy L. Hatt, Ric McArthur; 2013-007) – photos on file.  
– one, basic, 3 October, Hamilton, *Hamilton* (Leonard P. Manning, also found by Lisa Teskey; 2013-050).



Figure 10: Anna's Hummingbird, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* on 3 December 2013. Photo: Glenn Stronks

**Chuck-will's-widow *Antrostomus carolinensis* (28)**

- 2013** – one, basic male, 3 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Alvan D. Buckley, David M. Bell; 2013-023) – audio recording on file.
- one, basic male, 18-20 May, Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* (Stéphane Menu, John Geale, Walter Wehtje; 2013-036).
  - one, basic male, 3 June, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (Jeremy M. Bensette, also found by Dwayne Murphy; 2013-095) – audio recording on file.

**Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna* (2)**

- 2013** – one, definitive basic male, 19 September - 7 December, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Glenn Stronks, Glenn Coady, found by Sophie Wiggins, Gary Wiggins; 2013-139) – photos on file.

This is the first record for northern Ontario and only the second for the province. The first record occurred 25-30 October 2010 in Cottam, *Essex* (Wormington and Cranford 2011).



Figure 11: Prairie Falcon, Little Piskwamish Point, *Cochrane* on 2 August 2013. *Photo: Mark Field.*

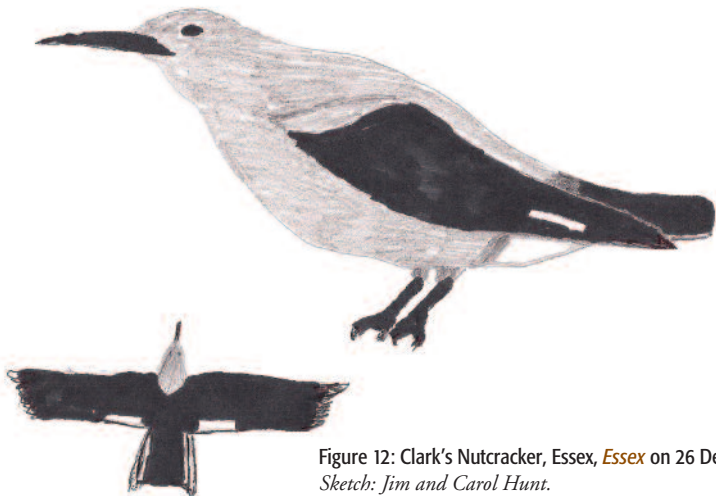


Figure 12: Clark's Nutcracker, Essex, *Essex* on 26 December 2013. *Sketch: Jim and Carol Hunt.*

**Prairie Falcon** *Falco mexicanus* (3)

**2013** – one, juvenal, 2 August, Little Piskwamish Point, *Cochrane* (Burke Korol, Mark Field, also found by Donald A. Sutherland; 2013-125) – photos on file.  
An exceptional date and location, furnishing this first record for northern Ontario.

**Western Wood-Pewee** *Contopus sordidulus* (3)

**2013** – one, first basic, 28 August, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Janice Chard, also found by Ed Jenkins; 2013-132) – photos on file.

**Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya* (15)

**2013** – one, basic, 20 April, Toronto Islands, *Toronto* (David Beadle, found by Norman C. Murr, Jay Peterson; 2013-039).

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** *Myiarchus cinerascens* (10)

**2013** – one, alternate, 29-30 May, Long Point (Old Cut), *Norfolk* (Stuart A. Mackenzie, Ron Ridout; 2013-108).  
– one, basic, 27 October, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Janice Chard, Morgan Brown, found by Avery Bartels; 2013-109) – photos on file.

**Cassin's Kingbird** *Tyrannus vociferans* (3)

**2013** – one, basic male, 28 November, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe; 2013-073) – photos and specimen (skeleton) on file at ROM.  
This remarkable record involved a slightly decomposed individual found along the south-east Beach of Rondeau Provincial Park, constituting the first individual to be recorded in Ontario since 1970 (Crins 2003).

**White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* North Only (4)

**2013** – one, first basic, 10 November, Manitouwadge, *Thunder Bay* (Tammie Hache; 2013-062) – photos on file.

**Clark's Nutcracker** *Nucifraga columbiana* (4)

**2013** – one, basic, 26 December, Essex, *Essex* (Jim Hunt, also found by Cheryl Hunt; 2013-089).

This remarkable observation provides the first record for southern Ontario.

**Fish Crow** *Corvus ossifragus* (28)

**2013** – two, basic, 11 January-2 March, Fort Erie, *Niagara* (Willie D'Anna, J. Brett Fried, found by Tim Seburn; 2013-145) – photos on file.  
– one, basic, 19 March, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Jarmo Jalava; 2013-122)  
– audio recordings on file.  
– one, basic, 27 March, Waterloo, *Waterloo* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell; 2013-015).  
– two, basic, 28 April-20 May, Oakville (one, 28 April-12 May) and Burlington (two, 5-20 May), *Halton* (Beth Jefferson, Lyn Hanna-Folkes, Terry Osborne, Joanne Redwood, Leonard P. Manning, Richard Poort, found by Christopher Burris; 2013-105) – photos, video and specimen (skin) on file at the ROM # 126744.

- one, basic, 2-6 May, Price Edward Point, *Prince Edward* (Kurt Hennige, found by Ken Edwards; 2013-147).

**2012** – one, basic, 1 January, Queenston, *Niagara* (J. Brett Fried, also found by Erika Hentsch; 2013-004).

The report from 1 January 2012 becomes the first accepted winter record for the province. The record from *Halton* involved two birds that constructed a nest that likely failed on the final date of observation. A crow specimen was collected nearby, and DNA showed it to be one of the two Fish Crows. Upon examination, the bird, a female, did not show any sign of having laid eggs (Mark Peck, pers. comm.) To be conservative the Oakville and Halton occurrences, about 1 km apart, have been treated here as both pertaining to this pair of birds. It is entirely possible, however, that the bird in Oakville represented a third individual.

### **Violet-green Swallow** *Tachycineta thalassina* (2)

**2013** – one, alternate female, 25-26 April, Britannia, *Ottawa* (Jake Walker, Bruce M. Di Labio; 2013-069) – photo on file.

This is the first record for southern Ontario. The first provincial record was at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* on 28-29 October 1992 (Bain 1993)



Figure 13: Violet-green Swallow, Britannia, *Ottawa* on 25 April 2013. Photo: Bruce Di Labio.

**Bewick's Wren** *Thryomanes bewickii* (18)

2013 – one, first basic, 25 April, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Richard Dobbins, Janice Chard, also found by Mick Townsend, Bev McLeod, John Glazebrook, Mick Wright; 2013-123) – photos on file.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Poliophtila caerulea* North Only (18)

2013 – one, basic, 24 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock; 2013-129).

**Townsend's Solitaire** *Myadestes townsendi* South Only After 2000 (78)

2013 – one, basic, 9 January-7 March, Kendall, *Durham* (Frank Horvath, Angela Monette, David M. Bell, Mark Field, Michael Williamson, Jeremy L. Hatt, Gavin C. Platt, found by Margaret J.C. Bain, Richard Pope, Paul Riss; 2013-016) – photos on file.

– one, basic, 14 October, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Edward Jenkins, also found by Julia Gulka; 2013-110).

2012 – one, basic, 11 October, Van Wagner's Beach, *Hamilton* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, found by Matt D'Arguma, Brenda D'Arguma; 2013-094) – photos on file.

To date, there are 59 accepted records of Townsend's Solitaire for southern Ontario.

**Swainson's Warbler** *Limothlypis swainsonii* (10)

2013 – one, definitive alternate, 2 May, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (Danya LeClair, also found by John Glazebrook, Mick Wright; 2013-124) – photos on file.

**Kirtland's Warbler** *Setophaga kirtlandii* (59)

2013 – one, first alternate male, 15 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Barbara N. Charlton, David M. Bell, Brandon R. Holden; 2013-028) – photos on file.

– one, alternate female, 18 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Eric W. Holden, Brandon R. Holden; 2013-026) – photos on file.

– one, alternate male, 18 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (William J. Crins, also found by Emily Slavik, Brad Steinberg, Karen Hartley; 2013-027) – photo on file.

1915 – one, first basic male, 2 October, Point Pelee National Park (Tip), *Essex* (W.E. Saunders; 2013-002) – specimen (skin) on file at the ROM # 70101.

1900 – one, first alternate male, 16 May, Toronto Islands, *Toronto* (J. Hughes Samuel; 2013-001) – specimen (skin) on file at the ROM # 22.4.201160.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** *Setophaga nigrescens* (19)

2013 – one, alternate male, 20 April, Port Glasgow (Marina), *Elgin* (Doug Zavitz, Chris Leys, also found by Sharie Zavitz, Jennifer Zavitz; 2013-152) – photos on file.



Figure 14: Spotted Towhee, Glenn Williams, *Halton* on 18 January 2014. *Photo: Luke Berg.*



Figure 15: "Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* on 15 May 2013.  
*Photo: John M. Woodcock.*

**Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus* (28)

2013/14 – one, basic male, 13 December-3 March, Glenn Williams, *Halton* (Carol Brunt, Dan Brunt, Jean Farnan, Luke Berg, Joanne Redwood, Leonard P. Manning, David Pryor, Mike Williamson, Joshua D. Vandermeulen; 2013-128) – photos on file.

**Field Sparrow** *Spizella pusilla* North Only (21)

2013 – one, 21 May, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Alvan D. Buckley, Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Mike V.A. Burrell; 2013-045) – photo on file.

**Lark Bunting** *Calamospiza melanocorys* (29)

2013 – one, first alternate male, 15 May, Clarendon, *Frontenac* (Kurt Hennige, Mike V.A. Burrell, found by Mark Saunders; 2013-079) – photos on file.  
– one, definitive alternate male, 28 May-1 June, Pickle Lake, *Kenora* (Timothy McKillop; 2013-038) – photo on file.

**Grasshopper Sparrow** *Ammodramus savannarum* North Only (7)

2013 – one, first basic, 17 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, also found by Allison Salas, Kelly Commons; 2013-098) – photo on file.

**Henslow's Sparrow** *Ammodrammus henslowii* (29)

2013 – one, 30 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, David M. Bell, Brandon R. Holden, also found by Jack Fenton; 2013-043) – photos on file.

**“Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis oregonus* group after 2011 (6)

2013 – one, basic male, 29 March, London, *Middlesex* (Lucas Forester, also found by Michelle Fletcher; 2013-033) – photos on file.  
– one, basic, 18 April, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (Barbara N. Charlton, Andrea Kingsley; 2013-088) – photos on file.  
2012 – one, basic, 30 March-7 April, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Michael T. Butler, also found by Martha L. Allen; 2013-087) – photo on file.

Reports of “Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco are no longer requested for review by the OBRC.

**“Gray-headed” Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis caniceps* group (3)

2013 – one, first alternate male, 15-16 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (John M. Woodcock, also found by David Marshall, Emma Porier, Jessica Goddard; 2013-035) – photos on file.

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* North Only (18)

2013 – one, 6-10 November, Shuniah, *Thunder Bay* (Reid Olsen; 2013-144) – photos on file.





Figure 16: Blue Grosbeak, Windsor, *Essex* on 20 April 2013. *Photo: Paul D. Pratt.*



Figure 17: Painted Bunting, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* on 29 April 2013. *Photo: Joshua D. Vandermeulen.*

**Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana* (43)

2013 – one, first alternate male, 4-6 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Reid Carter, Gloria McNeil; 2013-151) – photos on file.

**Blue Grosbeak** *Passerina caerulea* (92)

- 2013 – one, definitive alternate male, 19-24 April, Windsor (Ojibway Nature Centre), *Essex* (Paul D. Pratt, found by Tom Preney; 2013-042) – photos on file.
- one, alternate female, 20-30 April, Toronto (Tommy Thompson Park), *Toronto* (Howard Shapiro, Paul Reeves, Christopher J. Escott; 2013-100) – photos on file.
  - one, first alternate male, 28 April, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Kenneth G.D. Burrell; 2013-010)
  - one, first alternate male, 11-13 May, Pelee Island, *Essex* (Mike V.A. Burrell, found by Paul Carter; 2013-067) – photos on file.
  - one, female, 22-23 May, Toronto (High Park), *Toronto* (Robert K. Yukich, found by Jerry DeMarco, Anne Bell; 2013-090) – photo on file.

The individual from Windsor, *Essex* becomes the earliest spring migrant for Ontario, three days earlier than a male that was recorded at Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* on 22 April 1992 (Bain 1993).

**Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris* (34)

2013 – one, 29-30 April, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, David M. Bell, found by Maris P. Apse; 2013-041) – photos on file.

**Dickcissel** *Spiza americana* North Only (28)

2013 – two, basic, 2 October, Cobalt, *Timiskaming* (Joshua D. Vandermeulen, Jeremy M. Benseette, also found by Alan Wormington; 2013-056) – photo on file.

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** *Leucosticte tephrocotis* (21)

2013 – one, basic, *tephrocotis*, 24-25 February, Red Lake, *Kenora* (J. Vic Fazekas, Curt Malinsky; 2013-032) – photos on file.

**“Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni* (7)

- 2013 – one, basic male, 16-22 February, Manitouwadge, *Thunder Bay* (David M. Bell, also found by Paul Martin; 2013-018) – photos on file.
- one, basic male, 22-29 March, Shirley’s Bay, *Ottawa* (Mark Gawn, found by Michael W.P. Runtz, Jon Ruddy; 2013-131) – photos on file.
  - one, basic, 19 November, Netitishi Point, *Cochrane* (Brandon R. Holden; 2013-146) – photos on file.

The Manitouwadge, *Thunder Bay* record is remarkable in that the observers identified the bird while watching bird feeders online, via remote camera from Kingston, *Frontenac*. Computer screen-captures provided excellent documentation for the OBRC.

### Not Accepted Records: Identification Accepted, Origin Questionable

Birds in this category are considered by the OBRC to be correctly identified, but their origin is questionable. Over time, some instances involve birds that have a high certainty of previous captive origin, whereas some records placed in this category have caused considerable debate among past voting members. If new evidence suggesting wild origin becomes available, such reports may be reconsidered by the OBRC.

- 2013** – European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) one, 7-9 February, Toronto (James Gardens), *Toronto* (Ian Sturdee, also found by Paul Xamin; 2013-037) – photos on file.

### Not Accepted Records: Insufficient Evidence

The documentation received for the following reports generally was found not to be detailed enough to eliminate similar species unequivocally, or simply lacking enough detail to properly describe the individual. In many cases, OBRC members strongly felt that the species being described was likely correctly identified by the observer, however, the report received for voting was simply too limited for acceptance. These circumstances sometimes arise from unavoidable situations such as poor viewing conditions, however, some may also occur due to poor communication from the OBRC as to the material required when trying to accept observations. Improving communication and quality of materials provided by the OBRC has been a recent focus of the committee and will continue to be in the near future.

- 2013** – Pacific Loon, one, 18-19 October, Innisfill, *Simcoe* (2013-092)
- Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), one, 16 April, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (2013-149)
  - Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), one, 2 September, Demorestville, *Prince Edward* (2013-052)
  - Mississippi Kite, one, 25 September, Holiday Beach, *Essex* (2013-135)
  - Swainson's Hawk, one, 15 September, Port Stanley, *Elgin* (2013-107)
  - Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), one, 20 July, Cameron Lake, *Kawartha Lakes* (2013-019)
  - Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*), one, 30 June, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2013-009)
  - Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*), one, 11 November, Timmins, *Cochrane* (2013-084)
  - Chuck-will's-widow, one, 22 April, Long Point (Tip), *Norfolk* (2013-096)
  - Magnificent Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*), one, 26 May-3 June, Paisley, *Bruce* (2013-134)
  - Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*), one, 29 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2013-138)
  - Brown-chested Martin (*Progne tapera*), one, 9 September, Stoney Creek, *Hamilton* (2013-063)

- Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*), one, 26-27 May, Kakabeka Falls, *Thunder Bay* (2013-141) – photos on file
  - Mountain Bluebird, one, 29 May, Turkey Point, *Norfolk* (2013-013)
  - Kirtland’s Warbler, one, 4 September, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2013-136)
  - Townsend’s Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*), one, 1 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (2013-011)
  - “Ipswich” Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*), one, 15 December, Toronto, *Toronto* (2013-086) – photos on file
  - Baird’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*), one, 31 May, Gore Bay, *Manitoulin* (2013-014) – photos on file
  - Western Tanager, one, 12-22 August, Sandfield, *Manitoulin* (2013-044) – photos on file
  - Western Tanager, one, 16 September, Hamilton, *Hamilton* (2013-148) – photos on file
  - Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*), one, 15 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Chatham-Kent* (2013-029)
  - Painted Bunting, one, 7 May, Cabot Head, *Bruce* (2013-059)
- 2012** – Lesser Black-backed Gull, one, 16 October, Schreiber, *Thunder Bay* (2013-065) – photos on file
- 2010** – Great Blue “Great White” Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*), one, 14-31 August, French River, *Sudbury* (2013-082) – photos on file
- 2009** – Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*), one, 3 July, Rockton, *Hamilton* (2013-080) – photos on file
- “Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll, one, 9 April, Sault Ste. Marine, *Algoma* (2013-017) – photos on file

### **Corrections/Updates to Previous OBRC Reports**

#### **2012 Report (*Ontario Birds* 31:58-85)**

Under Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, change “(Robert Z. Dobos, Brandon R. Holden, Robert R. Curry; 2013-110)” to “(Robert Z. Dobos, David R. Don, Brandon R. Holden, Robert R. Curry; 2013-110)”

#### **2009 Report (*Ontario Birds* 28:58-86)**

Under Black Swift, change “(Brandon R. Holden, also found by Eric W. Holden, Susan K. Holden, Lauren F. Rae 2009-050)” to “(Eric W. Holden, Brandon R. Holden, also found by Susan K. Holden, Lauren F. Rae 2009-050)”

#### **2008 Report (*Ontario Birds* 27:58-79)**

Under Mississippi Kite, for the 9 September 2008 record, add a note that “The passage of remnants of Hurricane Gustav through the Great Lakes on 4-5 September is a possible cause of this record, passing through the gulf coast around the peak of Mississippi Kite

migration. A mirror record from 9 September 2008 was accepted by the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union from Hawk Ridge, MN, and a second report of a different individual there from 10 September 2008 appears to be un-reviewed (Svingen 2009)"

On page 75, change the photo credit for Figure 17: from "Photo: Kenneth A. McIlwrick" to "Photo: David M. Bell"

#### **2007 Report (Ontario Birds 26:82-107)**

Under Swainson's Hawk, change "one, juvenal, light morph, 5 October, Seacliff, *Essex*" to "one, juvenal, intermediate morph, 5 October, Seacliff, *Essex*"

Under Henslow's Sparrow, 12 May, Point Pelee National Park, change "(Eric W. Holden, also found by Brandon R. Holden)" to "(Brandon R. Holden, Eric W. Holden)"

#### **2006 Report (Ontario Birds 25:50-68)**

Under Mew Gull delete "*L.c. brachyrhynchus*" as the subspecific identity for this record

#### **2005 Report (Ontario Birds 24:54-74)**

Under Frigatebird sp., 1-2 August include Bluewater, *Huron* as an additional location where this bird was recorded and add Jacques Gravel as a contributor.

#### **2003 Report (Ontario Birds 22:54-74)**

Under Black-capped Petrel, 27 September, Waverly Beach change "(Brandon R. Holden)" to "(Eric W. Holden, Brandon R. Holden)"

#### **2002 Report (Ontario Birds 21:54-76)**

Under Henslow's Sparrow, add "also found by Eric W. Holden, Susan K. Holden" after "Brandon R. Holden"

#### **1993 Report (Ontario Birds 12:41-58)**

Under Grebe (*Aechmophorus* sp.) change the date to 10 October.

#### **1990 Report (Ontario Birds 9:18-44)**

Under the 1988 Western Kingbird, add "also found by Elisabeth Gammell, Ian M. Richards" after "Alvaro Jaramillo"

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# Brown Booby

(*Sula leucogaster*):

## New to Ontario

*Kayo J. Roy*



**Brown Booby in flight over the Niagara River on 9 October 2013. The Brown Booby is a large seabird with long, narrow, pointed wings and a bullet-shaped body. Photo: James M. Pawlicki**

### Circumstances

On 7 October 2013, James M. Pawlicki, a Buffalo area birder went birding, choosing to start his day at the tower in the downtown Erie Basin Marina that overlooks Lake Erie and a good portion of the harbour in Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The weather that day was nasty, with rain and very strong winds, remnants of a cold front that was passing through the area. From the tower, he began his study of gulls, cormorants and waterfowl. Before long, he texted to the WNYBIRDS listserv that he had just observed a Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) that he determined was a juvenile bird. At approximately 1240h, he had a brief view of a strange looking Sulidae that appeared to have a sharp



Figure 1. Brown Booby over the Niagara River off Buffalo, 7 October 2013. Photo: James M. Pawlicki

colour line between the breast and belly. Pawlicki concluded that given the poor light conditions he must have just been looking at an aberrant plumaged sub-adult Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*). Willie D'Anna and Betsy Potter arrived and he told them about his observation of this odd looking bird with this seeming demarcation line. The weather was becoming worse and was unquestionably less than optimal for viewing from the tower. Birding there became a challenge



Figure 2. Brown Booby on Donnelly's Breakwall in Buffalo on 9 October 2013. Photo: James M. Pawlicki



and the group all moved down to a more sheltered area at the base of the marina tower. After a short period of scoping the lake, Potter mentioned that she was seeing an interesting bird flying just beyond the southern extension of the Bird Island Pier breakwall. As the bird approached the observers, Pawlicki, in an incredibly excited state screamed out, "IT'S A BROWN BOOBY, IT'S A BROWN BOOBY, IT'S A BROWN BOOBY." (Figure 1). All previous Brown Booby sightings in New York State were from or near the coast of Long Island. This remarkable inland observation in western New York was truly astonishing. It was 1330h and Pawlicki had just encountered perhaps the rarest bird ever seen in western New York, at least in modern times.

It was also on this day (7 October) that Pawlicki first saw and photographed it perched on the Ontario side of the old International Railway Bridge that crosses the Niagara River just a short distance north of the Peace Bridge.

Weather conditions on this early October day were uncomfortable for birding, but in poor weather, that is when the expectation of finding an infrequent visiting gull species in the Niagara River is at its highest. In the late morning, it was raining with the temperatures at 13°C, relative humidity 93%, atmospheric pressure 100.6 kPa, winds 25-40 km/h gusting to 37-56 km/h from the southwest. By 1300h, with the rain continuing, the temperatures had dropped slightly to 11°C, relative humidity 72%, atmospheric pressure 100.6 kPa and winds 27-40 km/h with gusts increasing to 50-70 km/h from the southwest. On 7 October

2013, the total rainfall recorded for the day was 21.1 mm in the area of the Erie Basin Marina (*vide* Anthony Ansuini, United States National Weather Service, Buffalo, New York).

This adult female Brown Booby was last seen in the Fort Erie, Ontario, area on 21 October. It, however, remained in the Buffalo area until 24 October and was observed there every day except 23 October. The bird spent most of those 17 days in the United States waters of Lake Erie. Its favourite rest area was at the northwest tip of Donnelly's Breakwall, a long concrete partition 0.93 km offshore from the Erie Basin Marina (Figures 2 and 3) where the bird spent considerable time resting with a large number of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). The bird was frequently visible from the viewing tower located at the marina while it was resting on the wall and when in flight over Lake Erie.

In the late afternoon, the Brown Booby could also be observed at its favourite evening roost site, the old deteriorating Horseshoe Reef Lighthouse structure in the Niagara River, just barely on the United States side of the international border (Figures 4 and 5). On a few occasions it was again observed on the International Railway Bridge.

Observers on the Canadian side at Mather Park in Fort Erie were at a distinct disadvantage in observing the bird. Telescopes were absolutely necessary in order that at least the bird's key features could be observed when it was on Donnelly's Breakwall (1.95 km distant) or on the Horseshoe Reef Lighthouse (1.41 km



Figure 3. Brown Booby on Donnelly's Breakwall in Buffalo on 9 October 2013. *Photo: Dominic Sherony*

distant). Fortunately, a number of birders on the Canadian side were able to observe the bird in flight over Ontario waters on the many occasions the bird flew out to feed in Lake Erie. The Brown Booby was also observed flying over Ontario waters on its return from visits to the railway bridge. The bird was seen clearly in Ontario when it circled widely around the deteriorating lighthouse on its way to roost there for the night on the base of the structure. It is estimated that some 700 birders visited the Buffalo/Fort Erie area to look for this rare seabird. Pawlicki lamented as he reflected back on

the day he found this extreme rarity that “the day was one of those days when reality doesn’t seem quite as real as it is.”

With no further reports or sightings after 24 October, the fate of this rare avian visitor to the Buffalo/Fort Erie area was of major interest and concern to many birders. One week later, on the morning of 31 October, Ken Burrell and a number of other Bird Studies Canada staff and volunteers were performing a lakewatch from the tip of Long Point, off Port Rowan, Ontario, some 120 km to the west of Buffalo/Fort Erie. To their utter amazement, they encountered and

Figures 4 and 5. Brown Booby at the Horseshoe Reef Lighthouse Buffalo NY., 10 October 2013.  
*Photos by Brandon R. Holden.*





Left: Figure 6. Brown Booby off the tip of Long Point on 31 October 2013. *Photo: Janice J. Chard*  
Right: Figure 7. Brown Booby on a sandbar off the tip of Long Point on 1 November 2013.  
*Photo: Kenneth G. Burrell*

photographed an adult female Brown Booby in flight over the tip (Figure 6). Early the next morning, on 1 November, the bird was photographed on a close-by sand bar (Figure 7) where it had joined several Double-crested Cormorants and a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). The description of the bird clearly fit the Buffalo/Fort Erie bird and it was almost certainly the same individual.

On 1 November, I received a phone call from Michael Gelsing, a Buffalo resident who owns property at Mohawk Point along the Lake Erie shoreline at Lowbanks, Ontario. Gelsing told me that as he was leaving his cottage, he spotted a large dark bird on the stone covered ground directly across the road from his property. He was certain this bird was the Brown Booby. Lowbanks is



Figure 8. Brown Booby roosting on shoreline rocks in Lowbanks on 2 November 2013. *Photo: Kayo J. Roy*



Figure 9. The last place the Brown Booby was seen on the Lake Erie shore in Lowbanks, Ontario, on 2 November 2013. *Photo: Kayo J. Roy*

some 56 km east along the north shoreline of Lake Erie from Long Point, an easy return flight for a seabird.

Early the next morning, 2 November, Jean and Blayne Farnan, Robert Curry, Gerry Rising and I arrived at the cottage residences and easily found the bird in exactly the same location where it was seen the night before. The bird had not moved at all and was still hunkered down on the stone covered ground (Figure 8) directly across the road from 230 Mohawk Point Road, Lowbanks, Ontario. The bird was observed resting with its head mostly tucked under a wing or

along its back and was shivering continuously. Occasionally, it lifted its head to look around, but each time the head was up for only a few seconds as if it had no energy. While the bird seemed to be alert, it looked weak and appeared to be suffering. All five of us felt it was expiring and we needed to get it quickly to a rehabilitator. Just as I was contacting potential rehabilitators, a noisy vehicle passed by and startled the booby. It instantly leapt up to the top of the shoreline boulders (Figure 9), and moments later took flight out over Lake Erie.

The bird flew straight out over the lake, then veered right, flying southwest towards Mohawk Island or Rock Point Provincial Park. That ended any opportunity to capture the bird to get it to a rehabilitator. After observing the bird for some 65 minutes, we were understandably stunned and amazed to see it fly off, given that it appeared to be so ill. During the period of our observation, the sky was mostly cloudy and we experienced occasional light rain.

### **Description**

This last observation of the Brown Booby at point-blank range allowed for a detailed study of its plumage and structure. Its entire head, neck, upperparts, tail and upper breast were a chocolate brown colour with the head, neck and upper back being slightly darker. The balance of the underparts and the entire ventral area were pure white. The sharply contrasting demarcation separating the brown upper and white lower breast was obvious. There was absolutely no whitish colour on the bird's head. The eye was bluish with a yellow-green orbital ring. The bird's facial bare parts were a yellow-green colour that surrounded the dark-blue loreal patch. The very large bill was pale pink in colour shading to yellow-green towards the base (Figure 10). The legs and feet were bright yellow.

Fecal droppings deposited on the ground at the Lowbanks site were collected by Marcie Jacklin and sent to Agriculture Canada for mitochondrial DNA analysis that confirmed the identification of this adult female Brown Booby to be from the nominate subspecies *leucogaster* (Skevington *et al.* 2014).

In Ontario and in western New York State, a Brown Booby is unquestionably a mega rarity and totally unexpected at any time of the year. One might ask how a seabird from the Caribbean could possibly reach the eastern end of Lake Erie. Remnants of hurricanes will often displace seabirds and other bird species far inland to regions where they are normally not found. However, no hurricanes were reported along the southern Atlantic coast in the weeks preceding the bird's appearance in Buffalo Harbour. A low pressure system lasting for several days along with extremely strong winds could also relocate birds to far-away locations. In the days prior to the discovery of this Sulidae, a number of strong weather systems, possibly originating off the southeast coastline of the United States, moved through western New York and southern Ontario. This is more than likely how the Brown Booby found itself in western New York and Ontario.

This record of the Brown Booby is a first for Ontario, the Great Lakes area and also for upstate New York (Pawlicki 2014). The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) accepted the sighting (Holden 2014), which now joins only a handful of accepted inland records of the Brown Booby for all of North America. If accepted by the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), this observation will become the fourth confirmed record for the state. Three additional historical records along with five sightings from the mid-1970s and early 1990s from or near the coast of Long Island have not been adjudicated by NYSARC (Bull 1998).



Figure 10. Brown Booby photographed at close range in Lowbanks, Ontario on 2 November 2013.

*Photo: Robert Curry*

### **Vagrancy to Coastal Canada**

Brown Boobies have exhibited some vagrancy to the Canadian Atlantic and Pacific coasts in recent years, with more than a few observations reported from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia. Here are the pertinent details:

#### **Newfoundland**

**18 July 2012.** Adult, photographed on a tour boat near St. Anthony, NL, found deceased the next day on rocks along the St. Anthony harbour entrance. Unpublished (Bruce Mactavish, pers. comm.).

**4 September 2013.** Immature, photographed on a seismic ship in the Northern Grand Banks, 300 km ESE of St. John's, NL. Unpublished (Bruce Mactavish, pers. comm.).

#### **Nova Scotia**

**28 July 1941.** Photographed standing on rocks, Blanche, NS (McLaren 2012).

**27 September 2008.** Single observer sighting, Prospect High Head, Halifax Regional Municipality, NS (McLaren 2012).

**1 August 2010.** Adult, photographed as it sat aboard a whale research sloop at The Gully near Sable Island, NS (McLaren 2012).

**29 October 2011.** Immature, photographed, found deceased at Cape Sable, Shelburne Co., NS (Mills 2012).

### **New Brunswick**

**20 May 2012.** Immature, photographed on a lobster fishing boat in the Grand Manan Basin, Bay of Fundy, NB. Unpublished (Stuart Tingley, pers. comm.)

**8 August 2013.** Adult, in flight past the Sea Watch Tours vessel 'Day's Catch' off White Head Island, Bay of Fundy, NB. Unpublished (Stuart Tingley, pers. comm.)

### **British Columbia**

**20-21 October 2008.** Adult female, photographed on a fishing vessel 32 km west of the south end of Dundas Island (~55.45° N, 131.47° W), towards the eastern end of Dixon Entrance, BC (Morgan *et al.* 2009).

**29 August 2009.** Adult, two sightings (likely the same individual) from a fishing vessel off Sheringham Point and off Tower Point, Witty's Lagoon Park, Metchosin, BC. (Charlesworth 2010, Toochin 2012).

**31 August 2009.** Adult, Otter Point, Sooke, BC (Toochin 2012)

**1 September 2009.** Adult sitting on buoy off Whiffin Spit, Sooke, BC (Toochin 2012).

**23-24 August 2013.** Photographed on a commercial fishing vessel in Hecate Strait along the northwest BC coast off Queen Charlotte Island (BC Bird Alert Blog: accessed 25 August 2013).

**4 September 2013.** Adult female, photographed, 20 nautical miles west of the southern tip of Nootka Sound, BC. (BC Bird Alert Blog: accessed 6 September 2013).

**12-13 November 2013.** Adult female, photographed on a commercial fishing vessel off Ucluelet at the Nitnat outflow, north-east of Port Renfrew, BC (BC Bird Alert Blog: accessed 15 November 2013).

## **Subspecies**

There are four recognized subspecies of the Brown Booby that vary in appearance by location (Schreiber and Norton, 2002):

- *Sula l. leucogaster* (Boddaert 1783) lives along the Atlantic coast from the Caribbean north to the Bahamas, Bermuda, the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico and Central America and east to the Cape Verde Islands;
- *S. l. plotus* (Forster 1844) inhabits the north and south Pacific Ocean (including the Hawaiian Islands), the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas off northwest and northeast Australia, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden;
- *S. l. brewsteri* (Goss 1888) is located along the Gulf of California, and off the west coast of Mexico (including Clipperton and the Revillagigedo Islands); and
- *S. l. etesiaca* (Thayer and Bangs 1905) is found along the Pacific Coast south from Honduras and Costa Rica to Panama and Colombia.



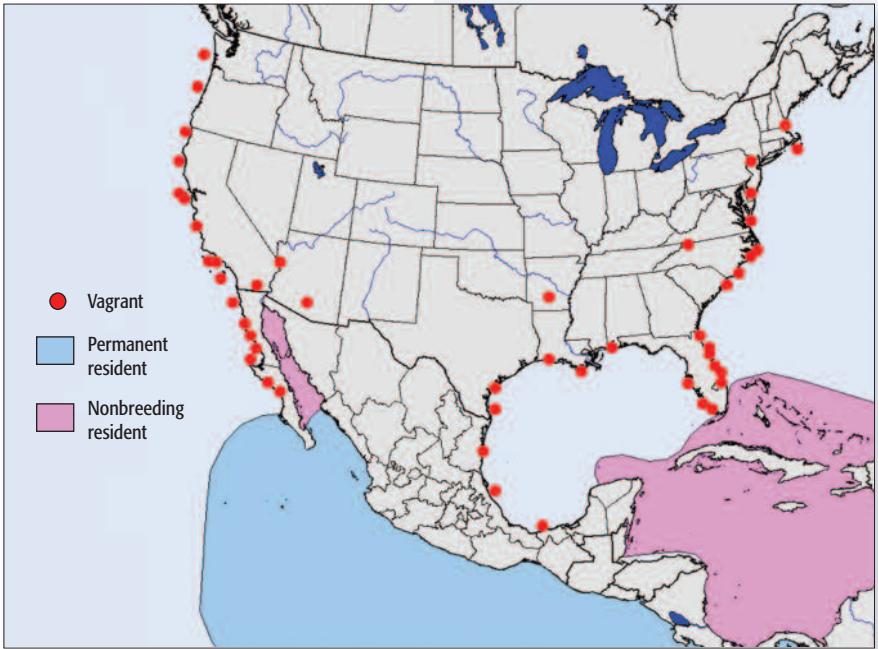


Figure 11. Map of Brown Booby range and extralimital occurrences to 2003.

Created by Terry L. Sohl, with data from NatureServe (Ridgely et al. 2003).

### Distribution and Range

The Brown Booby is a common, widespread seabird found in tropical waters throughout the world. The distribution is described as pantropical, between latitudes 30 ° N and 30 ° S, though it extends to about 34 ° S in the central Pacific. In the United States, this subtropical seabird can be sporadically found in Florida (frequently near the Dry Tortugas), but in recent years, becoming regular and expanding along the Atlantic Coast to Maine, irregularly along the Gulf Coast and increasing on the Pacific Coast from California to Oregon and Washington. Observations of the Brown Booby along the United States Atlantic and Pacific coasts have increased noticeably as illustrated above (Figure 11).

### Inland Sightings in North America

Given that the Brown Booby is strictly a seabird species, reports of inland observations in North America are enormously rare. One exception, however, is the Salton Sea, a shallow, saline lake located predominantly in the Imperial and Coachella Valleys of southeast California. Since 1966, numerous records of the Brown Booby have been documented. They reach the Salton Sea from the Gulf of California, not the Pacific Ocean, a distance of some 225-240 km (Guy McCaskie, pers. comm.).

While this 2003 map pinpoints five of the accepted inland locations across the United States where Brown Booby sightings have occurred, there have been a number of other more recent, well documented and photographed inland observations that are included here:

## California

**20 September 1946.** First inland sighting, a hatch-year male collected at the Imperial Dam on the Colorado River, Imperial County (Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Dunn 1988).

**28 July-13 August 1966.** Hatch-year, the first of numerous single and multiple sightings to follow over the years, found at the north end of the Salton Sea (Hamilton *et al.* 2007).

## Virginia

**4-28 October 2008.** Adult female, first and only inland sighting, photographed, Clayton Lake, Radford, Pulaski County, Virginia (Ealding 2012).

## New Jersey

**29 July-1 August 2012.** Adult female, first and only inland sighting, photographed, White Lake Wildlife Management Area, near Hardwick, Warren County, New Jersey (Boyle *et al.* 2013).

## Arkansas

**9-21 August 2012.** Adult female, photographed, Lake Norrell near Benton, Saline County, Arkansas (Arkansas Audubon Society 2013).

**26 August 2012.** Immature, photographed, Lake Hamilton, Garland County near Hot Springs, Arkansas (Arkansas Audubon Society 2013)

## Texas

**7 July 2012.** Adult, photographed, Lake Sam Rayburn near Powell Park, Broadus, San Augustine County, Texas (Lockwood and Freeman 2014).

**25 August - 3 September 2012.** Adult female, in flight over dam at Canyon Lake, 20 miles (32 km) north of New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas (Lockwood and Freeman 2014).

## Arizona

**13-14 August 1943.** First state record, immature, photographed, Bill Williams Arm, Havasu Lake, Havasu Lake National Wildlife Refuge, in both Mohave and Yuma Counties, Arizona (Monson 1946).

**11 August 2010.** Martinez Lake north of Yuma, Yuma County, AZ. ([abc.azfoABCReports\\_Public\\_View\\_list.aspx.org/ABCVote/](http://abc.azfoABCReports_Public_View_list.aspx.org/ABCVote/)).

**30 August 2010.** Immature, Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ. Injured and had to be euthanized, specimen at University of Arizona. This record has not been reviewed by the Arizona Bird Committee (David Vander Pluym, pers. comm.). ([http://azfo.org/ASPreports/speciesView\\_list.aspx](http://azfo.org/ASPreports/speciesView_list.aspx))

**5-14 August 2013.** The documentation for several individuals observed at Imperial Dam, Yuma, Lake Havasu and Lake Havasu City are still to be adjudicated by the Arizona Bird Committee (David Vander Pluym, pers. comm.). ([abc.azfoABCReports\\_Public\\_View\\_list.aspx.org/ABCVote/](http://abc.azfoABCReports_Public_View_list.aspx.org/ABCVote/)).

## Nevada

**27 August-5 December 1971.** Two birds, an adult and an immature, sketches made by C.S. Lawson of both birds, Las Vegas Bay, Lake Mead, Clark County, Nevada (Lawson 1973).

**16-17 February 2014.** Immature, photographed, (believed to be the same individual that spent the winter at Lake Havasu, Arizona), Cottonwood Cove, Lake Mohave, east of Searchlight, Clark County, Nevada. Unpublished (Martin Meyers, pers. comm.).

## Nebraska

**28 - 30 June 2014.** Adult male, nominate *S.l. leucogaster*, photographed, Hansen Lake, Omaha, Sarpy County, Nebraska (Swick 2014) Unpublished, pending records committee adjudication.

## Ecology

The bird's English name, Brown Booby, is a corruption of the Spanish word *Bobo*, meaning stupid, fool or simpleton, and is derived from the fact that these birds have little or no fear of humans. Centuries ago, hungry sailors gave them this name because they would land on ships and easily provide them with a meal (Koch 2012). The species name, *leucogaster*, meaning white stomach, is a reference to its striking white lower breast and belly which are sharply demarcated from the brown upper breast, body and head (Nellis 2001, Nelson 2005).

The Brown Booby is strictly marine and does not need to roost on land at night. It generally feeds in inshore waters, its diet is comprised mainly of flying fish and squid but also some halfbeak (*Hemiramphus*), mullet (*Mugil*) and anchovy (*Engraulis*) (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). In the Atlantic and Caribbean, the species often feeds near shore or in bays, but it can remain inland feeding in fresh water for months (Bourne 1955, Dorward 1962). The Brown Booby can feed in all kinds of weather including small gales (Palmer 1962). The bird plummet dives from 1-15 meters above the ocean surface or makes shallow dives at low angles to the water skimming the surface depending on the depth of food. The bird may just barely lift off the water before plunging again if food is schooled at or near the surface (Palmer 1962, Diamond 1978, Yoda and Kohno 2008). This technique is often called "plunge fishing." Breeding is seasonal in some areas but elsewhere it breeds opportunistically or more or less

continuously. Nests are usually built on the ground in the midst of vegetation on rocky islands or coral atolls (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

The Brown Booby may or may not migrate; little is known of its movements outside breeding seasons owing to lack of at sea and banding data (Schreiber and Norton 2002). Adults may disperse over a wider area than juveniles. Of 3,000 banded at Johnson Island, one was found at Pearl and Hermes Reef, northwestern Hawaiian Island (800 km to the north), one at Jarvis (1000 km to the south) and one at New Hebrides (2900 km to the southwest). Young banded in the U. S. Virgin Islands have been recovered as fledglings and subadults in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Venezuela. One adult was found in Bermuda (Schreiber and Norton 2002).

## Population and Lifespan

The global population of Brown Booby is estimated to number >200,000 individuals. World-wide, the species has declined dramatically over the past 200 years and may only be 10% of historic levels. While the species has an extremely large range and despite the fact that the population trend appears to still be decreasing, the decline is not believed to be sufficiently rapid to approach the thresholds for "vulnerable" under the population trend criterion (BirdLife International 2014). The lifespan of the Brown Booby is not well established owing to the lack of long-term banding studies. The oldest known bird lived 26 plus years, however it was banded as an adult (Simmons 1967).

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# “Northern” Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima borealis*): New to Ontario

*Kevin A. McLaughlin*

## **Introduction**

In late afternoon on 4 December 2013, I was birding at Fifty Point Conservation Area in Winona, Ontario. As I was walking along the west side trail at the lake, I noticed a small group of Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) moving away from the rocks. In with this group was a female plumaged eider which I initially took to be a King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*), although I did not examine it in detail as it was swimming into the light. I walked to the east end of the point but was troubled by something about the eider that

I could not pin down. I returned to the west side but was not able to locate the eider for several minutes. I eventually found it just off the boulder jetty that forms the channel leading into the marina. After walking over to the edge of the channel, I saw the eider again, swimming with a White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) at the channel's end on the lake. It was then that I realized that this was a female plumaged Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*). Though viewing at some distance with my 20 – 60X scope,

and the view being hampered by rough water, which only allowed for very brief glimpses, I was able to watch and photograph the eider in the fading light as it constantly dove, at times resurfacing with a bill full of mussels. Many observers were able to see and photograph the eider the next day and through until about mid-December. Extensive field study and excellent photographs of this bird leave no doubt that this represents the first documented occurrence of the “Northern” Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima borealis*) subspecies in Ontario. The purpose of this paper is to document this occurrence.

### Description

This was compiled from prolonged field studies of the bird and aided by many photographs supplied by various individuals.

**Size and shape:** This was a large, heavily built sea duck, similar in size to the White-winged Scoter it was associating with on 4 December. The head and bill

were particularly large, befitting a member of the eider family. A photo was obtained several days later showing the eider with a White-winged Scoter (Figure 1). The apparent smaller size of the eider relative to the scoter may have been an artifact of the photograph, but may also have been due to the scoter being a male in its first calendar year, showing the female eider to be somewhat smaller by comparison. I aged and sexed the scoter on the basis of the clear white head spots, enlarged bill base and seemingly impressive body size.

Figure 1. First basic female “Northern” Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) with an apparent first basic male White-winged Scoter at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 8 December 2013. Note the smaller size of the eider relative to the scoter, which may have been in part an artifact of the photograph but may have also been due to the actual larger size of the male scoter.

Photo: David D. Beadle.







Figure 2. First basic female “Northern” Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 8 December 2013. Note the dark-centred scapulars with chestnut/white fringes, slightly paler centred lesser and median secondary coverts with chestnut fringes. Also seen here are the minimally pale tipped greater secondary coverts and secondaries, along with the relatively short tertials.  
*Photo: David D. Beadle.*

**Plumage:** The eider was in female plumage. Although the plumage tone varied in different photographs, in life it gave me the impression of a dark grayish brown. However, after looking at numerous photographs, I was confounded as to how to accurately describe the basic plumage colour. The scapulars had dark centres with narrow white and chestnut tips. The feathering at the sides of the breast/belly had dark centres with narrow off-white or pale brown bars and this was mixed with plain gray feathering.

Short dark/light horizontal barring was evident on the fore breast, mixed with dark spots. This spotted effect continued on the lower breast and belly, noted when the duck raised itself up from the water, and was also seen on the rear flanks. The dark greater secondary coverts and most of the secondaries had thin, dull whitish edging, more prominent on the greater coverts. The dark-centred median and lesser secondary coverts had chestnut fringes (Figure 2).

**Head and bill:** The head was fairly uniform in colour, a hard to define grayish brown. The mildly sloping forehead was clearly separated from the top edge of the bill, and these, in combination, imparted a lengthy gestalt. The crown was darker and contrasted with a whitish eyebrow which began in the lores and continued over the dark eye, broadening as it reached the back of the head. The pale eyebrow was mixed with thin dark streaking and it seemed to include a vague pale crescent above the eye itself. The bill was thick and long, lacking any trace of concavity, and was largely lead

gray in colour. The swollen tip, including the nail, was a creamy pale colour which contrasted with the rest of the bill, particularly in front-on views. The dorsal portion of the upper mandible narrowed as it approached the base, ending in two thin, short, pointed frontal lobes. The upper edge of the lateral bill feathering, which extended forward from between the lower edge of the frontal lobes and the lateral lobe of the bill, came to a slightly rounded point below the basal part of the nostrils. A narrowing strip of bill below the lateral feathering extended back to the gape (Figure 3).

Figure 3. First basic female “Northern” Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 8 December 2013. Evident in this photograph are the broad, streaked eyebrow, the narrow, sharply pointed, relatively short frontal bill lobes and the relationship of the distal feathering on the bill side versus the basal portion of the nostril, where the feathering extends right adjacent to the basal portion of the nostril (unlike a female King Eider, where this feathering falls well short of extending to the base of the nostril). Note the gray bill colour with a paler tip and the lack of concavity to the bill. Also shown is the effect of forehead and bill not forming a straight lined single unit at the confluence of the bill and forehead as in the other Canadian subspecies of Common Eider. Photo: David D. Beadle





Figure 4. First basic female “Northern” Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 5 December 2013. Note the white axillars, along with white on the median and several greater under secondary coverts. Also evident are the densely spotted underparts.

Photo: Mike Veltri

**Underwings:** Best determined from photographs, were pale gray except for the axillars, under medians and a few inner under greater secondary coverts, which were white in contrast (Figure 4).

**Age determination:** Several factors led me to a conclusion that this eider was in its first calendar year, best termed a female in first basic plumage (Humphrey and Parkes 1959). The most compelling of these factors was the lack of heavy dark barring along the side of the body, on the

fore breast and the underparts. Instead, these areas were composed of a profusion of dark spots and many short, pale-tipped dark bars. In all of the photographs that I examined of older females at different times of the year, the intensity of dark/light body barring on those individuals was prominent, to say the least. On the present eider, there was only a faint white edge running along the tips of the greater secondary coverts and the tips of some secondaries (Figure 2). I noted that adult females consistently

showed more or less obvious white wing bars on these tracts. Another factor was the pattern on the side of the head, specifically the broadening whitish eyebrow which started in the lores and extended to the back of the head, offset by the darker crown (Figures 2 and 3). By and large, I found that adult females only showed a small buffy crescent adjacent to the top of the eye. Some showed a short, poorly defined eyebrow, but in no photograph did I find an adult female with an eyebrow resembling the Fifty Point bird. Photographs demonstrated that adult females possess a rather uniformly patterned head with little contrast between the side of the head and the crown. The last age determinative

character involved the structure of the tail feathers. The visible rectrices in the photograph of the diving bird were retained juvenal feathers, showing a notched appearance that was most like Figure 3 in Pittaway and Lorimer (2001). They were broad basally and tapered slightly to the tip which had two points on either side of the central shaft. There were no apparent replaced, pointed, adult-type rectrices on the spread tail (Figure 5). This, along with the complete lack of recently acquired strong body barring, supported the eider being in first basic plumage rather than it having undergone any discernible amount of first prealternate molt.

Figure 5. First basic female "Northern" Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 8 December 2013. In this unusual photograph, note the spread tail of the diving eider showing retained juvenal rectrices. Each feather has two points on either side of the central shaft. *Photo: David D. Beadle*





Figure 6. Definitive basic female “Pacific” Common Eider (*S. m. v-nigrum*) at a nest on Jenny Lind Island, Nunavut, on 1 July 1998. The massive head, with an essentially straight line combination of forehead and bill, is evident. Note especially the broad extension of feathering over the bill, which terminates in a distally rounded point. Also showing, and characteristic of this subspecies, is the very narrow amount of bill surface visible below the lower edge of the lateral bill feathering. *Photo: Glenn Coady*

### Canadian subspecies of Common Eider

Of the seven subspecies of Common Eider found across the Holarctic region, four occur in Canada, as follows:

***S. m. dresseri***. (Atlantic Eider). Other names for this subspecies include American Eider, Canadian Eider and Southern Eider. It breeds from Groswater Bay, on the south-central Labrador coast (where it intergrades with *borealis*) south to Massachusetts (Goudie *et al.* 2000). In winter, *dresseri* is found along the Atlantic coast and is casual as far south

as Florida (Goudie *et al.* 2000). The vast majority of previous records of Common Eider from southern Ontario pertain to this subspecies.

***S. m. sedentaria***. (Hudson Bay Eider). Breeds and overwinters on open waters within Hudson Bay and James Bay (Gilchrist and Robinson 2000). A few are found in the vicinity of south Baffin Island and on the Labrador coast. This subspecies is very scarce outside of this region, although a specimen exists from Nebraska (Mlodinow 1999). Three

individuals were seen, with one first winter male collected, at Navy Island, Ontario on the Niagara River, south of Niagara Falls on 21 November 1936 (Palmer 1976, Goudie *et al.* 2000). A scant few other individuals in southern Ontario have been considered to be this subspecies (Glenn Coady, pers. comm.).

***S. m. v-nigrum.*** (Pacific Eider). This subspecies breeds from Coronation Gulf, Nunavut (east to Jenny Lind Island), west along the coast of the Beaufort Sea and Bering Sea, Alaska (Kodiak, Cook Inlet, Glacier Bay) and the Aleutian Islands. It also breeds in eastern Asia, including St. Lawrence and Commander islands and the Kamchatka Peninsula (Goudie *et al.* 2000). It winters on ice-free waters around the Bering Sea (Goudie *et al.* 2000). It has occurred east to Newfoundland, with a relatively recent record at Cape Spear in 1995 (Mactavish 2014). There are also several records for Manitoba. The first record for the Western Palearctic recently occurred in Norway (Amundsen and Garner 2014). *V-nigrum* now remains the only Canadian subspecies that has yet to occur in Ontario.

***S. m. borealis.*** (Northern Eider). Breeds from Groswater Bay, south-central Labrador and possibly as far south as northern Newfoundland, north around Ungava Peninsula, along Hudson Strait, west to at least Southampton Island and north to Ellesmere Island. It also breeds in west and northwest Greenland. Some arctic Canadian breeding *borealis* winter in southwest Greenland and southern Labrador (Goudie *et al.* 2000). Populations of *dresseri* and *borealis* winter

together in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Mendall 1986). It has strayed inland to Saskatchewan (Last Mountain Lake, Riceton), as well as to Alaska (Point Barrow) and Great Britain. This is the smallest of the four Canadian subspecies. (Goudie *et al.* 2000).

### Subspecies discussion

My experience has been that the colour of body plumage is not particularly useful in the determination of subspecies in the female Common Eider. Moreover, as detailed above, I consider this eider to be a young of the year and I have not found anything to support a typical colour for that age class. Using size as a yardstick is tenuous at best, as there was nothing to compare this duck with other than to a nearby White-winged Scoter (Figure 1). The most useful feature for subspecies delineation involves aspects of the head and bill. I have found through photographic research that *borealis* differs from the other three Canadian subspecies via the impression given by the combination of relative bill and forehead angle, along with the resulting head shape. In *borealis*, the forehead is quite clearly discrete from the top of the bill, that is to say, two separately visible units, forehead and bill, are readily discernible and positioned in an obtuse angle in relation to one another (Figure 3). This contributes to a decidedly round-headed gestalt that is present in this subspecies. The other three subspecies have more of a straight line confluence of the bill and forehead, imparting a wedge-shaped effect to the head, with *v-nigrum* perhaps being the most obvious in this respect.

The extent and shape of the frontal lobes at the base of the bill is another critical separating feature (Mendall 1986, Knapton 1997). These lobes have also been referred to as “processes”. My own term in the past, especially, for example, when comparing the two species of scaup, has been “bill pointers”. From all of the diagrammatic and photographic references that I have consulted, the closest and perhaps easiest fit for the Fifty Point eider, in utilizing frontal lobe structure, is female *borealis*. The frontal lobes on the Fifty Point eider were short and decidedly pointed at the base (Figure 3). The other subspecies that comes closest in this respect is *v-nigrum*, as it shares the acutely pointed frontal lobe bases with *borealis*. A photo was supplied to me showing a pale-plumaged definitive basic female *v-nigrum* on a nest in the Canadian Arctic (Figure 6). Several compelling features involving the head and bill are evident in this photo. The head appears strikingly massive. Augmenting this, there is a profound impression of a straight linear merging of the confluence of the bill and forehead. The lateral bill feathering is distinctive and does not create a look akin to that of the other subspecies, but rather recalls more a female Spectacled Eider (*Somateria fischeri*) in that respect, due to the broad forward

extension of the feathering. The feathering extends down from the base and nearly abuts the back end of the nostril, continuing down in a broad rounded point, covering much of the bill surface below and behind the basal part of the nostril. Although the angle of the photograph precludes full assessment of the frontal lobe structure, a very narrow, basally pointed effect is suggested.

A definitive basic female Common Eider (*sedentaria*) photographed in Churchill, Manitoba in June (Figure 7), shows two age related characters: heavy barring along the sides, as well as a pair of conspicuous white wing bars, these on the tips of the greater secondary coverts and secondaries. More important are the subspecific supportive features involving the head and bill. The appearance of the lateral bill feathering and position with respect to the nostril is very similar, if not identical to that of the Fifty Point *borealis*. The distal part of the feathering is essentially pointed and terminates below the rear portion of the nostril. There is also a moderate amount of bill visible below the bottom line of lateral feathering, comparable to *borealis* and *dresseri* but markedly different when contrasted with *v-nigrum*. The bill itself is long and the frontal lobes are broad and end relatively close to the eye in a rounded

Figure 7. Definitive basic female “Hudson Bay” Common Eider (*S. m. sedentaria*), at Churchill, Manitoba on 15 June 2011. For age, note the heavy barring on the sides and fore breast, along with the conspicuous white wing bars, with the bar on the greater secondary coverts broader than the secondary bar.

Subspecies identification is aided by the long, moderately broad frontal bill lobes which end in a rounded base, along with the unison of bill and forehead in an essentially straight line. Separation from the similar *dresseri* is enhanced by the non-migratory habits of *sedentaria*, with birds of that subspecies, including this individual, being confined in winter to the open waters of Hudson Bay and James Bay.

Photo: David Hemmings







Figure 8. First alternate female "Atlantic" Common Eider (*S. m. dresseri*), Burlington, Ontario on 17 January 2001. The lack of obvious dark barring on the foreparts and the absence of white wing bars assist in ageing this female as first alternate. Note the distal bill side feathering/nostril position, similar to that of both *sedentaria* and *borealis*. The frontal lobes are somewhat broader than in *sedentaria*, with both subspecies possessing a rounded base to the lobes. Also evident in this photo is the blending of bill top and forehead to form an essentially straight edged line. Photo: Kayo Roy

terminus. As in *v-nigrum*, the straight-edged top surface of the bill essentially melds in a linear confluence with the forehead to form one unit.

A first alternate female *dresseri* spent the winter of 2000-2001 along the lakeshore off Hamilton and Burlington (Figure 8). I aged this richly-coloured bird as first alternate on the basis of the broad, fresh chestnut fringes to the dark brown mantle and scapular feathers and the strong vertical dark brown/rich buff barring on the body sides. The lack of barring on the fore breast and the absence of white wing bars were separating characters from a definitive alternate female. The distal bill feathering versus nostril position was quite similar to both

*borealis* and *sedentaria*. The frontal lobe make-up was most similar to the non-migratory *sedentaria*. My own research has shown that female *dresseri* has somewhat broader frontal lobes throughout when compared to *sedentaria*. As with the previous two described subspecies, the top edge of the bill formed an essentially straight line in combination with the forehead.

When seen in life or in photographs, particularly in side view, characters involving the head can be difficult to judge on any female Common Eider encountered. One needs to obtain optimum views and carefully examine at all angles, the makeup of relative forehead/bill angle, frontal lobe structure

and lateral bill feathering/nostril position of any female plumaged individual, in order to correctly ascertain the subspecific identification of any particular *v-nigrum*, *borealis*, *sedentaria* or *dresseri* Common Eider. The often close range views, supplemented by a suite of excellent photographs of the Fifty Point eider over a span of nearly two weeks, permitted a confident and consistent identification of the so called 'Northern Eider'.

After I first reported this bird on 4 December, I was contacted by James Turland of Kincardine on 5 December, asking me to help him identify a female eider that he and his group had seen off Fifty Point Conservation Area on 2 December. Four photos were taken by Carole Lupton on that day. The photos clearly showed the bird to be a female plumaged Common Eider, most certainly the same one present from 4 December on. I promptly advised James as to the identity. James subsequently sent me his report, along with the photos, which I forwarded to the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Figure 9. First basic female "Northern" Common Eider (*S. m. borealis*) at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton-Wentworth/Niagara on 8 December 2013. Note how the lateral bill feathering darkens distally and appears to end short of the nostril. This artifact was apparent in certain lighting conditions and in other photographs. Upon closer examination, the correct forward feather extension can be made out, ending below the rear portion of the nostril. Also evident in this photograph, is the subspecific determinative contrast of the rounded head, including a slightly angled forehead, and the straight-lined upper bill, with a very easily discernible obtuse angle formed between the two.  
*Photo: Barry Cherie.*

I was able to confidently identify this duck as a female plumaged Common Eider in fairly mediocre light in late afternoon on 4 December. This was done with the eider in rough water and diving frequently at a moderate distance of several hundred feet. The distinctive structure, particularly involving the head and bill, was quite evident.

The next morning I saw the eider just off the rocks of Fifty Point at much closer range. I became concerned about one feature on the bird that had me thinking about a possible hybrid eider. This involved the critical issue of the forward extension of feathering on the side of the bill with respect to the position of the nostril. It appeared that, in some lighting conditions, the pale feathering on the bill sides ended in a rounded terminus short of the base of the nostril (Figure 9).



This character would be more appropriate for King Eider, and arguably for a hybrid involving the two species. Such Common Eider x King Eider hybrids have been described (Pettingill 1959, Palmer 1976, Trefry *et al.* 2009). However, all other features looked to be correct for Common Eider. I voiced my concerns to several other observers present and also posted to the ONTBIRDS listserv about this a short time later.

Within a couple of hours, I received four photos from Garth Riley, who had been present earlier in the day. His close range photographs showed the relative positions of the feathering and nostril quite well. These photographs revealed that the distal point of the bill side feathering was slightly darker than the remainder, at least with the eider in certain lighting and relative head positions. This had then created an artifact, making it appear to me in life that the darker tip of the feathering was actually part of the bill, being somewhat similar in colour to it. Garth's photos and those of others taken at close range, showed the darker distal bill feathering going forward, ending in a point below the basal 20 to 30 percent of the nostril. Thus, a diagnostic character was indeed present which eliminated a putative hybrid eider, along with a female plumaged King Eider. I quickly reposted to ONTBIRDS to clear up any confusion.

Jean Iron photographed this eider at close range on 6 December. She and Ron Pittaway were the first observers to recognize this bird as belonging to the subspecies *borealis*. Of greater importance was that through careful research they were also able to confidently state that this eider represented the first known record of *borealis* for the province of Ontario.

This record was accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee as the first occurrence of a *borealis* Common Eider for Ontario. It was accepted as occurring from 2-13 December 2013 at Fifty Point Conservation Area, Hamilton/ Niagara (Holden 2014).

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