

OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume 12, Number Two

June 1994

A nest found by a geologist in the Northwest Territories on July 7, 1992, is believed to be the first Eskimo Curlew nest reported in 130 years. It was discovered by Ken Redding of Thornhill while he was conducting a geological survey. Redding, a competent naturalist, flushed the bird, recognized it as a curlew too small to be a Whimbrel, and quickly found the nest. It contained four eggs, two of which were pipped and hatching. Redding took several pictures of the nest and eggs and then quickly left.

Eskimo Curlew Nest?

by Fred Bodsworth

Details and location were reported to the Canadian Wildlife Service. The egg pictures strongly suggest but cannot fully confirm it was an Eskimo Curlew. CWS and NWT biologists will be searching the region of the discovery this summer.

The only documented nesting of Eskimo Curlew was reported by Hudson's Bay Company factor, Roderick MacFarlane, of Fort Anderson, 250 kilometres east of the Mackenzie Delta, in the 1860s. MacFarlane recorded information on 38 nests and collected parts of 28 different sets of eggs, all of which are at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

The Eskimo Curlew, a victim of intense market hunting, in both North and South America, had virtually disappeared by the turn of the century and was believed extinct by the 1950s. It began to be seen again in the 1960s and small numbers, usually one or two birds at a time, have been reported seen every two or three years since then. Its biology, decline and recent sightings are described in *Eskimo Curlew—a Vanishing Species?* by J.B. Gollop, T.W. Berry and E.H. Iverson, published at \$9.00 by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3B4

Heron Numbers Explode

by David Agro

Great Blue Herons are increasing dramatically in Ontario. The Ontario Heronry Inventory (OHI) counted the number of breeding pairs in surveys undertaken for two years in 1980-81 and again in 1990-91. A total of 1613 colonies was catalogued, of which 928 (58%) were new since the first survey.

The number of breeding pairs rose from 5356 to 8226 (53%) in OHI sample areas. The greatest gain was in eastern Ontario where the number of pairs increased by 93%! Although the number of colonies also increased, no difference was found in the average colony size between the two inventories. In the eastern and southern sample areas, there are more colonies but with similar numbers of herons in each one.

The OHI is a project conducted by the Long Point Bird Observatory with the support of the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the World Wildlife Fund Canada.

Data for both inventories were collected by hundreds of volunteers, including many OFO members. A total of 253 people reported 471 colony sites to the OHI in 1990-91. The OHI is one of many projects where volunteer efforts benefit research and conservation of wild birds. For further information about OHI, contact LPBO, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0, (519) 586-3531

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Favourite Birding Hotspots

Palgrave

by David Milsom

General Description. This excellent birding area of mixed forest, dry rolling hills and marshland is located west of Palgrave, north of Bolton, off Highway 50, and is about a 35 minute drive from the intersection of highway 401 and 400. As you enter the town of Palgrave, turn left off Highway 50 onto 25th (Patterson) Sideroad. Go 1.3 km to the next intersection and turn right onto the 6th Line (Duffy's Lane).

Time of Year. The best times of year are summer, spring, fall and winter, in that order.

The Birds. At the corners of 25th (Patterson) Sideroad and 6th Line (Duffy's Lane), (1) Belted Kingfisher and perhaps Spotted Sandpiper can be found in the creek. As you proceed along the 6th Line (Duffy's Lane), look for Ruffed Grouse, Black-capped Chickadee and Golden-crowned Kinglet. At .8 km (2) from the intersection, a small swamp on the right often produces Least Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, and many butterfly species in late spring and summer. Another .6 km on the left lie (3) open fields surrounded by pine plantations. Nesting here are Eastern Meadowlark, Indigo Bunting, Chipping, Field and Grasshopper sparrows, Pine, Magnolia and Nashville warblers, Rufous-sided Towhee and on the right, Wild Turkey.

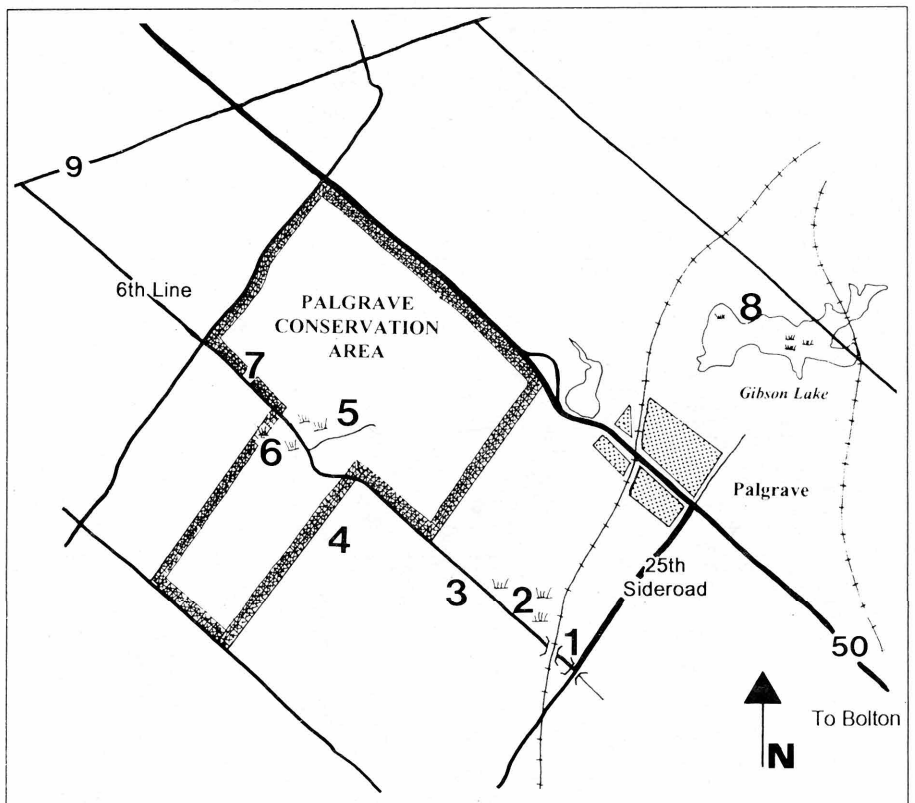
At 2.0 km (4) is a path into a deciduous wooded area, excellent for Wood Thrush, Veery, White-breasted Nuthatch, Warbling and Red-eyed vireos, Cooper's and Red-shouldered hawks in summer. Spring flowers are widespread in early May. Lincoln's Sparrow nests at the beginning of this trail. Another .2 km brings you to a parking lot on the right side of the road. Walking past the gate along the path brings you to a swampy area (5) and a beaver dam. Birds breeding here include Broad-winged Hawk, Whip-Poor-Will, Northern Flicker, Downy, Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers, Wood Duck, Alder Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Continuing from the parking area along the dirt road brings you to another very productive swamp (6) for Green Heron, Black-and-White and Yellow-rumped warblers, Pileated Woodpecker and many species already mentioned. Walking this road from the parking area is suggested for maximum reward in all seasons. Further along, Purple Finch, Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Northern Oriole, Blue-winged Teal, Great-crested Flycatcher and

Belted Kingfisher breed. There are several more swamps (7) in this 1 km stretch between the parking lot and the next main cross road (Finnerty Sideroad).

In winter, the area is often productive for irruptive species such as crossbills, grosbeaks, redpolls, siskins and other finches. Dead trees are favourite haunts for several woodpecker species including Black-backed Woodpecker in recent winters. Cedar Waxwings are regular, as are Bohemian Waxwings in certain years. Good numbers of northern warblers migrate through in May and August/September. Hawk migration is often excellent.

Returning to Palgrave, about 2.2 km east of the village, lies Gibson Lake (8), reached by following Pine Avenue from the village to Mount Hope Road where you turn right. At this intersection, a series of open fields to the east yields breeding Grasshopper and Vesper sparrows. Proceed to Gibson Lake, a stopover for many duck species on migration, including White-winged Scoter. Breeding birds include Belted Kingfisher, Pied-billed Grebe, Brown Thrasher, Green Heron, Wood Duck, several swallow species, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler and Northern Oriole. Nearby are colonies of Bank Swallows. Continue towards Bolton and look for Eastern Bluebird, Great Blue Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Red-tailed Hawk, Orchard Oriole and Cliff Swallows. I hope you enjoy the good birding this area has to offer!



From No Birds To Snowbirds

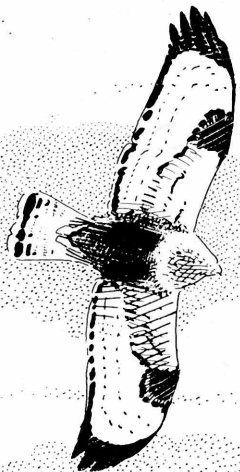
by Gerry Bennett

Anyone who has led an Ontario naturalists' club winter outing knows how disappointing it can be to go here and there (I was going to say hither and yon but cliches are out this year) without finding any interesting birds.

On January 22, 1994, our Richmond Hill outing, led by Russ Tilt, convened at daylight. By mid-morning, having combed prime areas in both Markham and Vaughan, we'd seen nothing of note, having missed such promising stakeouts as Snowy Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, and Pine Grosbeak. By 10:30 a.m. the most exciting item had been a washroom break at the Vaughan Community Centre at Islington Avenue and Rutherford Road. But we had an ace up our ornithological sleeve, a field on the north side of Rutherford, just west of Highway 27, UTM 088517, Map 30 M/13, to be exact. This spot, belonging to the Wardlaw Dairy Farm, is well-known to local winter birders because of the lush and lavish spreads of cow manure which attract hundreds of birds, sometimes.

As soon as we arrived, we started seeing remarkable numbers of Horned Larks—100 then another 100—more and more kept coming, calling

and feeding until a group consensus set the total at approximately 400, an unprecedented number for this species. Then, in came the Snow Buntings, also by the hundred, swirling over the fields. These we estimated at around 600 birds and we could all quickly spot some Lapland Longspurs with them—perhaps dozens—certainly one dozen—impossible to be certain as the flock was so active, never landing to give us a slowed-down look. As we observed this phenomenon, in came a Peregrine Falcon and plucked a bunting out of the air, carried it in its right talon, past us, and landed at the very top of a hydro tower with its prey. As we set up scopes and had a leisurely look at the falcon eating its



Rough-legged Hawk

meal, a Rough-legged Hawk flew into view and hovered as we were easily able to view both raptors in one field of vision. Hard to believe! In fact, I was glad I was not all alone, nice to have witnesses when trying to convince anyone of such a happening.

Later, we also found a Red-bellied Woodpecker which had wintered at a feeder in Maple. So, you pay your dues and collect your dividends.

New Ontario Bird Champions

by Jean Iron

On Tuesday, May 24, 1994, Tom Hince and Paul Pratt set a new Ontario Big Day record with an amazing 194 species. The previous record of 186 was set in 1979 by Tom Hince, Sandy Sutherland, Alan Wormington and Mike Runtz. The new champions drove 1200 kilometres with a 12:35 a.m. start on the Carden Alvar where Yellow Rails were their trip highlight. They hurried to Algonquin Park for the dawn chorus, high densities of breeding passerines, and northern specialties such as Spruce Grouse, Gray Jay and Boreal Chickadee. They left Algonquin at 9:00 a.m. via Carden (missing Loggerhead Shrike!) for Burlington and Windermere Basin at 1:00 p.m. to get shorebirds and lingering ducks. Next, Townsend Sewage Lagoons added 11 species of waterfowl and Eared Grebe. Wilson Tract, near Long Point, produced Louisiana Waterthrush and Blue-winged, Golden-winged and Hooded warblers. At 7:00 p.m. Hillman Marsh via Wheatley gave them gulls and shorebirds. Heading straight to Lake St. Clair, they added King Rail, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Least Bittern and Redhead. Their last bird at 10:00 p.m. was a Screech Owl. Imagine doing all this without visiting Pelee and Rondeau!

Tom and Paul attribute their achievement to the experience they gained as 1993 World Champions of Birding in New Jersey. "The key to success is in planning, based on a knowledge of habitats of breeding birds", emphasizes Tom. "The last week of May is probably the best time." He believes the optimum team number is three plus a designated driver. Next year with Bruce Di Labio and a driver, they intend to set a new record, "200 is toast", challenges Tom!



Bird Teasers

a quiz by Ron Pittaway

1. The Belted Kingfisher is protected in Ontario by the: Migratory Birds Convention Act (federal); Endangered Species Act (provincial); Game and Fish Act (provincial); none of the above?
2. What common migrant shorebird is rarely seen in southern Ontario in its juvenile (juvenal) plumage?
3. The two wingbars found on many birds are usually formed by the differently coloured tips of the: a. lesser and median wing coverts; b. median and greater wing coverts; c. lesser and greater wing coverts; d. secondaries and tertials.
4. Name the smallest shorebird in the world.
5. Which plumage immediately follows the juvenal (juvenile) plumage in the Humphrey and Parkes system of plumages and molts? Alternate; Basic; Supplemental.
6. The crissum is another name for the: uppertail coverts; nape; undertail coverts; mantle; axillars?

Answers page 8.

Shorebird Habitat at Hamilton's Windermere Basin

by
Rob Dobos

Windermere Basin is known to local birders as one of the best locations at the west end of Lake Ontario for waterbird watching, in particular for shorebirds. It is also important for staging and wintering waterfowl, and for nesting Common Terns and waterfowl species, but this article will focus specifically on shorebirds. Over the years the habitat here has been altered drastically by dredging and filling activities. However, shallow ponds and mudflats are usually available in both spring and fall migration periods for a great variety of shorebird species. Thirty species were recorded in the 1993 season, including highlights such as American Avocet, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher. Exceptional rarities found in past years include Wilson's Plover and American Oystercatcher. Such attractions draw birders from across Ontario and even the neighbouring States.

Over the past few years, I have often heard remarks from birders (both visitors and locals) expressing concern over the current filling activities destroying the shorebird habitat, and that "something had to be done". These frequent remarks prompted this article in which I will explain why the current situation exists, and what I believe the future for the shorebirds at Windermere Basin might be.

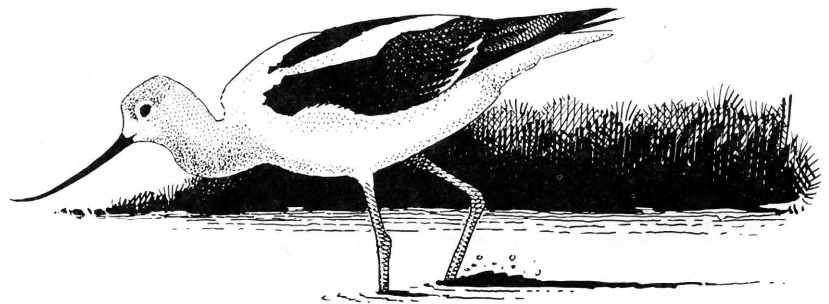
Windermere Basin is located at the southeast end of Hamilton Harbour, within the City of Hamilton, at the mouth of Red Hill Creek. Originally, this area was part of the extensive marshes found right across the south shore of Hamilton Harbour, all of which have since been destroyed by lakefilling. The Basin was artificially separated from Hamilton Harbour by lakefilling activities between 1957 and 1972. After that time, it had a surface area of approximately 40 hectares and a mean depth of 0.7 metres.

In the ensuing years, large amounts of sediments were deposited in the Basin from Red Hill Creek which drains the major watershed in the eastern part of Hamilton-Wentworth Region, an area which experienced much urban development during the 1970s and 1980s. The outfall of the Hamilton Sewage Treatment Plant is located near the mouth of Red Hill Creek, and effluents from the STP, along with other sources such as urban stormwater runoff and industrial discharges, resulted in the sediments in Windermere Basin becoming highly contaminated with toxic compounds. These sediments, which were often exposed during low water fluctuations of Lake Ontario, were also very high in

nutrients and thus supported a dense invertebrate population. The mudflats were therefore very attractive to shorebirds. Unfortunately, these birds were potentially exposed to the contaminants in the sediments. Windermere Basin had also become an unsightly mess due to the collection of debris and garbage washed down Red Hill Creek. Located adjacent to the QEW highway, it was highly visible and had become an embarrassment to Hamilton.

In 1989, government agencies cooperated on a project to "rehabilitate" Windermere Basin. This plan was carried out by the Hamilton Harbour Commission (HHC) who owns the waterlots for this area. The central portion of the Basin was dredged, dykes were built along the margins of the shores, and the contaminated sediments were placed in these cells. As a result, the open water basin was reduced to a surface area of about 20 hectares with a mean depth of 2 metres. Two large cells were created along the northeast shore adjacent to Eastport Drive. Since these cells contain contaminated sediments, they must be capped with clean fill in order to isolate the material. The sediments in the cells are also covered with water, and the capping progresses as the cells dewater. This is the filling operations that we see occurring at Windermere at this time.

The filling and dewatering activities create suitable mudflats within these cells for shorebirds. But the birds are still feeding on contaminated sediments in these cells, and are potentially exposed to the contaminants. I am not aware of any studies on the effects of bioaccumulation of contaminants by shorebirds feeding at Windermere, but detrimental effects have been seen in waterfowl at this site. Another hazard facing birds at Windermere is avian botulism, a naturally occurring bacteria which thrives in the conditions occasionally produced there. Outbreaks of this disease over the past few years resulted in die-offs of waterfowl and shorebirds at Windermere.



D. BEADLE '94.

American Avocet

Of course, birders want to see birds where they occur locally, and the natural reaction is for birders not to want to see such habitats as the mudflats and cells disappear. However, I'm sure most birders would agree that it is more important for the available habitats to be healthy for birds.

What about replacing some of the original natural habitat for shorebirds that was lost a long time ago? I believe there are still opportunities for maintaining healthy shorebird habitat at Windermere Basin in the future. The cells on the southwest side of Windermere supposedly contain relatively clean sediments and could potentially be developed for shorebirds and other wildlife.

This depends on the cooperation of the landowners and the HHC. The final use of the lands created at Windermere Basin by the dredging operations remains unresolved, with different parties holding different views. It appears that the HHC intends to use the land for industrial purposes. The City Of Hamilton is interested in developing the area as open green space. The Hamilton Naturalists' Club has been working on a proposal for the Basin and Hamilton Beachstrip areas on the Harbour which would incorporate the development of wildlife habitat and open green space along side compatible industrial uses. This proposal has gained the support of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan.

The accessibility of Windermere Basin to the public is another issue of concern. At present, the filled cells and dykes are posted, and trespassers do so at their own risk. This is largely for reasons of liability. During the breeding season, Common Terns and other waterbirds nest on the dykes at Windermere and these nesting areas are restricted, and should not be disturbed anyway. It is hoped some compromise can be worked out in the future for reasonable access to view the wildlife Windermere supports.

(Note: A version of this article appeared in *The Wood Duck*, 47: 123-124, May 1994)

Profile of an Artist

by
Katherine M. Thomas

This issue of OFO News is illustrated by David Beadle.

Dave began birding in southeast England in the mid-seventies. It soon became a "kind of job" and he spent several seasons monitoring migration at bird observatories in the U.K. After a while the urge to travel overcame him and a more adventurous period set in with lengthy trips to the forests of Borneo, the tundra of Alaska and many other places in between. During this period he visited Long Point Bird Observatory, still one of his favourite places.

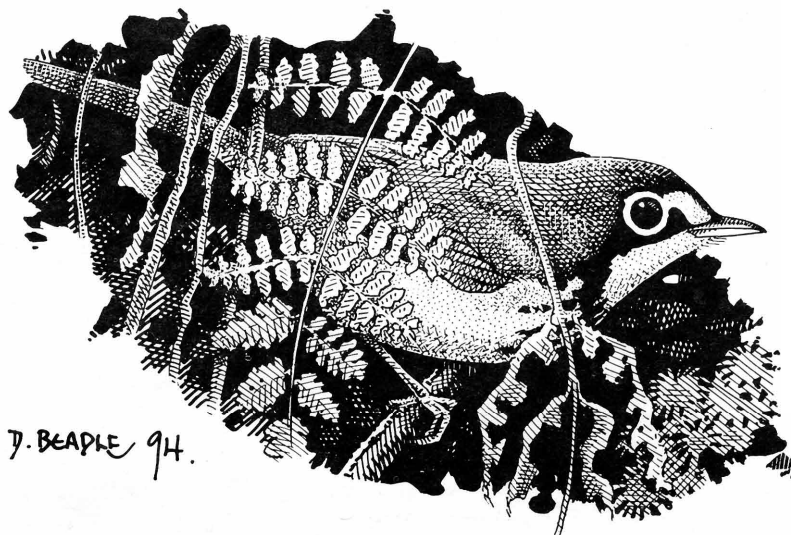
Only in recent times has bird illustration become an occupation. Dave has landed some interesting contracts and his art reputation continues to grow. He recently finished co-illustrating a guide to *New World Warblers* to be published shortly and he is currently working on the plates for a forthcoming guide to *North American Sparrows*. He is also Graphics Editor for *Birders Journal*. Of late, Dave is caught in a wave of enthusiasm for the neotropics and trips to Costa Rica, Venezuela and Ecuador are presenting a new challenge! Plans for guides to Tyrant flycatchers and Birds of Amazonia loom on the horizon. Dave would like to specialize in illustrating neotropical birds.

When not birding or illustrating Dave enjoys playing the guitar and listening to music, usually whilst dreaming of birding in faraway places.

OFO Pelagic

The OFO Board of Directors decided to run the Lake Ontario Pelagic again in October 1995, or every two years, when OFO members will be eager to venture out for Lake Ontario specialties. The 1993 pelagic was very successful, with outstanding views of Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, a flock of 8 Red Phalarope, ducks, loons and several species of gull.

In its place, two field trips are planned for Sunday October 16 to coordinate with the 1994 OFO AGM. (See **OFO trips**, page 7)



Canada Warbler

Waterfowl and Wetlands Ecology Part 2

by
Richard Knapton

Richard Knapton, Research Director, Long Point Waterfowl & Wetlands Research Fund, was a keynote speaker at the 1993 OFO Annual General Meeting and gave a presentation entitled "Ducks Mud and Mussels". This edition of OFO NEWS features 2 more research projects on which this presentation was based.

Waterfowl Diet Study

Gizzards and proventriculi have been collected from several species of ducks each fall since 1991. Diet and grit from 149 American Wigeon have been analysed (Knapton and Pauls, in press). In 1992 and/or 1993, we collected and analysed proventriculus and gizzard contents of all diving ducks (except Ring-necked Ducks, information collected in 1991), Wood Ducks, American Black Ducks (probably the most likely dabbling duck to forage for zebra mussels), Gadwall and Green-winged Teal. Most birds came from hunter-killed birds declared at the Management Unit set up at the Long Point Provincial Park Office. Several species were found to be feeding on zebra mussels. Both scaup species are taking advantage of this abundant and accessible food resource; over 90% of the 103 specimens examined so far contained zebra mussels, often with no other foods present. We are currently comparing the diets of Greater and Lesser scaup to determine the differences (if any) between them. We have found zebra mussels in most Bufflehead, all White-

winged Scoters and Oldsquaws, but only in one Redhead and one American Black Duck. Again, as in 1991, Canvasbacks and Redheads (apart from one individual) did not eat the mussels.

Zebra Mussel Research

Zebra mussel collections in 1993 showed that the mussels actually comprised about half zebra mussels and half "quagga" mussels, a rapidly invading species about which little is known. Zebra and quagga mussels are very closely related, although quaggas are reported to grow to a slightly larger size and are able to inhabit deeper, cooler water.

Interestingly, the combined number and biomass at each site analysed so far of both mussels indicate far fewer mussels than in the previous two years. Perhaps the decline in zebra mussel numbers in the western basin of Lake Erie is now occurring at Long Point; this is likely a result of a reduction in phytoplankton (the mussel's food) and maybe predation from diving ducks. Our analysis this [past] winter should reveal interesting results about what is happening to zebra mussels and quagga mussels at Long Point.

Acknowledgements were made in the February edition of *OFO NEWS*.

Literature Cited

Knapton, R. W., and K. Pauls. Fall food habits of American Wigeon at Long Point, Lake Erie, Ontario. *Journal of Great Lakes Research* (in press).

Notes from the OBRC. At the spring records meeting of the Ontario Bird Records Committee held at the Royal Ontario Museum on March 5, 1994, some changes were made to the Review List (those species which require documentation to support their acceptance and publication in the OBRC Annual Report). Effective January 1, 1994, the following species have been removed from the Review List for **Southern Ontario**: American White Pelican, Eurasian Wigeon, Gyrfalcon, Pomarine Jaeger, Laughing Gull, Varied Thrush, and Yellow-throated Warbler.

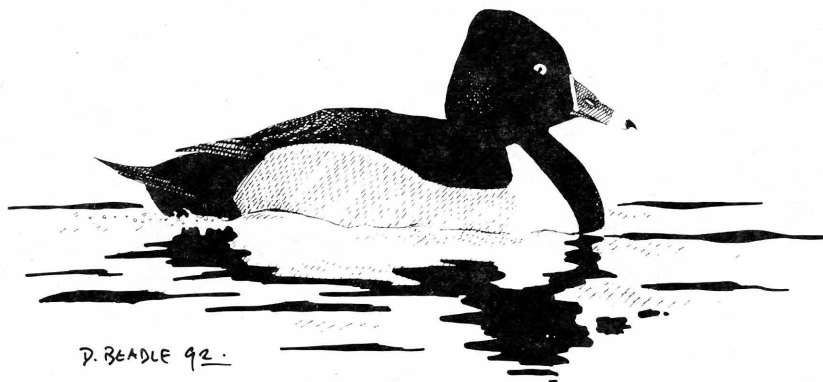
OBRC Delists Varied Thrush

by Bob Curry

These removals reflect a combination of excellent documentation received in past years and, in some cases, the fact that as "lesser rarities" many more individuals are reported to American Birds (Audubon Field Notes) than are rarity reports received by OBRC. Records prior to December 31, 1993 still require documentation and will still be published in The Report. A new Review List will be published and sent to all members in August.

We are pleased to announce two new voting members for the three-year period beginning in March 1995. They are Margaret Bain, who will have retired as secretary after completing the 1993 Report, and Rob Dobos of Hamilton.

Please send your rare bird reports to Ron Pittaway, Secretary OBRC, Box 619, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0
(705) 286 3471



Ring-necked Duck

OFO trips

This popular outing (86 people in 33 cars!) on April 23 was successful despite the rather cool, windy day, and delayed "spring" in Algonquin Park. I was

Algonquin Spring 1994

by
Ron Tozer

fortunate enough to have my offspring as "co-leaders", with daughter Laura finding a beautiful male Spruce Grouse at Spruce Bog Boardwalk

which everybody got to see, and son Douglas valiantly trying to show Boreal Chickadees hiding in thick conifers to as many people as possible! Their assistance with the logistics of leading this large group was much appreciated; next time we may have to consider splitting the participants into two sections.

A highlight for many people was feeding a Gray Jay from the hand. Meanwhile, I attempted to recount aspects of Gray Jay biology such as early nesting, food storage, and juvenile dispersal. Subsequently, we visited a Gray Jay nest, one of 17 under study by Dan Strickland this year. Unfortunately, Black-backed Woodpecker, which has been very scarce in Algonquin this spring, eluded us once again. However, we all had great close-up views of several moose, while discussing winter ticks, hair loss (the moose's, not mine!), and brainworm.

Although no one person saw all of them, we did record 58 species for the day. Quite a few people were still eager to continue birding into late afternoon, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.

Carden Alvar

by Ron Pittaway

The Carden Alvar or Plain in northern Victoria County is home to a great many grassland specialties. An alvar is a rare formation of flat limestone bedrock covered with thin soils often having a mixture of prairie-like habitats.

The June 5 outing attracted 47 people in 19 cars. Driving Carden's narrow roads can be tricky, but we were treated to superb views of the endangered Loggerhead Shrike and the elusive Sedge Wren. Other highlights were Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed and Pileated woodpeckers, Clay-colored and Grasshopper sparrows, Golden-winged Warbler, Virginia Rail (seen and heard), Common Snipe perched on a post and American Bittern. Prairie Smoke, an Alvar specialty, was at its peak, covering the meadows.

We lunched at the Kirkfield Lift Lock before continuing over the causeway on Canal Lake past the Osprey's nest to the extensive marsh along Eldon 5th Line. This marsh has one of the most easily observed Great Blue Heron colonies in southern Ontario. Here the group viewed both a Great Horned Owl nest with young and an Osprey nesting in the heronry!

The trip ended at Beaverton Sewage Lagoons with a bright female Wilson's Phalarope. 106 species, not bad for a bluebird day in June and no bugs too.

Henslow's Sparrow

On May 18, 1994, the Lieutenant Governor signed an order declaring the Henslow's Sparrow endangered in Ontario. It is the most recent bird to be protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Change of Address?

If you move, please let us know so we can update our files to ensure you receive *Ontario Birds* and *OFO NEWS* without interruption.

Future Field Trips

September 10, Saturday. Presqu'ile Provincial Park.

Meet at the park entrance 7:30 a.m. sharp. Leader: Sid Hadlington.

October 16, Sunday. Two trips!

Leslie St. Spit. Meet in parking lot 8:00 a.m. Leader: Ron Scovell.

Van Wagner's Beach. 8:00 a.m.-Noon. Meet in parking lot 8:00 a.m. Leader: Kevin McLaughlin.

November 27, Sunday.

Niagara Gull Watch.

Meet at Niagara-on-the-Lake at the mouth of the river 9:00 a.m. Leader: Bob Yukich.

Rainy River

by Terrie Smith

Sixteen birders enjoyed fine weather and minimal hordes of insects to tally 120 species on May 27-28. This was the largest OFO group to visit Rainy River, five from southern Ontario, seven from Fort Francis and four from Dryden-Ear Falls. Leader, Dave Elder, showed us Rainy River specialties including Black-billed Magpie, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, American White Pelican, Le Conte's Sparrow and Connecticut Warbler. Highlights were three Marbled Godwits at Rainy River Sewage Lagoons, Sandhill Cranes and sixteen Sharp-tailed Grouse, three of which were displaying at a lek. Several participants briefly saw one of three Yellow Rails at Big Marsh. A Western Kingbird rounded out the trip.

On behalf of OFO and those who made the long drive to Rainy River, I would like to thank Dave and his wife for an enjoyable and rewarding trip.

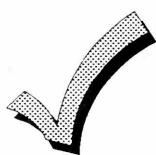
Shorebird Survey

The International Shorebird Program is looking for shorebird enthusiasts to participate in an ongoing survey program in Ontario. The fall survey starts in early July and involves 8 visits (or more!) to your favourite shorebird spot. Contact: Ken Ross, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ontario Region, 49 Camelot Dr., Nepean, Ontario K1A 0H3 (616) 952-2415

OFO's New Logo The Pileated Woodpecker

At its April meeting, the OFO Board of Directors voted to adopt the Pileated Woodpecker as OFO's official bird. The Board thanks members who submitted their views and suggestions. The majority of responses favoured a change from the Little Gull and proposed the Pileated Woodpecker. In his letter, Bob Curry comments, "The Pileated Woodpecker is quintessentially Ontarioan. A native species, it is found virtually throughout the province except north of the treeline as shown in the *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Ontario*. It epitomizes wilderness and is certainly not a backyard bird; fittingly it is not found in almost totally deforested southwestern Ontario except in isolated pockets such as at Rondeau. While it is a bird of wide open spaces, it has shown adaptability to lumbering of our forests. The Hoyt quote in the newsletter is 'bang on' as the bird is magnificent and transcends any tick on a list. The wild echoing laugh or the flash of black and white drifting away into the woods is always a thrill."

OFO NEWS will continue to use Dave Beadle's drawing. A stylized form of the Pileated Woodpecker is being developed for use on OFO stationery.



Answers to Bird Teasers

1. Ontario's Game and Fish Act protects the Belted Kingfisher. Most birds are protected by the federal Migratory Birds Convention Act. However, when the agreement protecting migratory birds was signed by Great Britain on behalf of Canada with the United States in 1916, the Belted Kingfisher was not included, so it does not fall under federal jurisdiction but under provincial. An article on Bird Protection Laws will be featured in an upcoming edition of OFO NEWS.

2. Dunlin. Most juvenile Dunlin of the subspecies *hudsonia* remain near the breeding grounds to molt into first winter (first basic) plumage before migrating south usually after mid September. However, an occasional juvenile is seen in southern Ontario in August.

3. b. median and greater coverts

4. Least Sandpiper

5. The basic plumage always follows the juvenal plumage. The Humphrey and Parkes system of plumages and molts is used by the American Birding Association. Ontario birders should acquire a working knowledge of this terminology.

6. The crissum refers to the undertail coverts. It is often used when the undertail coverts are distinctly coloured as in the chestnut crissum of the Gray Catbird.

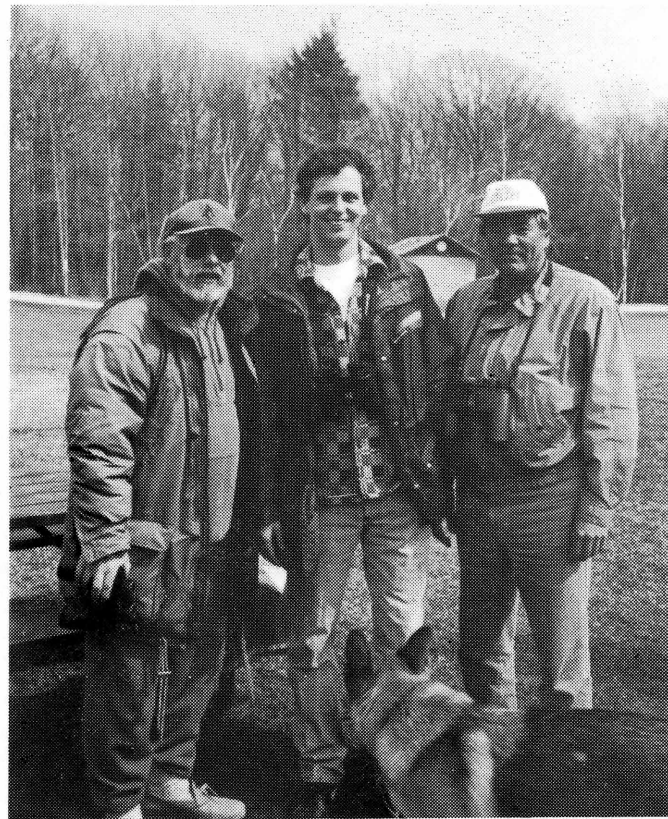
Watch for Bird Teasers by George Bryant in the next OFO NEWS.

April 15, 1994 at the Beamer Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch will be a day to be remembered. All indicators of a great day

Kite Friday by Jerry Guild

were in the making—light winds and a temperature of 10C. But by noon hopes were running thin as only about 300 birds had come through, mostly Sharp-shinned Hawks. Then word came from the point that a possible Swainson's Hawk had been seen in the valley and it had landed in a tree. Birders hastened to the tip, but the Swainson's wasn't seen again. The winds then shifted to the south and birds were really coming through in good numbers. There seemed to be strong wind currents at different levels and we experienced the sensation of strange hot and cold air masses flowing by. At 3:22 Daylight Saving Time, a group of about 20 birds came in over the "hemline" and right in the middle was an **American Swallow-tailed Kite**, a first for Beamer. We had excellent views as it passed about 30 metres overhead. A Great Egret put the final cap on the flight at 5:30 to the delight of the last three hawkwatchers. The day's total was 2246 birds. What a flight!

A rare bird report has been filed for review by the OBRC.



Photograph taken on Kite Friday.

From left to right official counter George Meyers, OFO member Paul Rose, first to see the kite and Dave Copeland.

OFO President Gerry Shemilt, 51 Montessor Drive, North York, Ontario M2P 1Z3

OFO NEWS Editors: Jean Iron, George Bryant, Gerry Shemilt
Send Newsletter correspondence to: Jean Iron, 9 Lichen Place, Don Mills, Ontario M3A 1X3 (416) 445 9297