

OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume 12, Number 3

October 1994

Using data from Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys and migration count statistics, researcher John Hagan (1993) reported in *The Auk* 110(4):863-874 a "precipitous" decline of

Towhees Tumble

by Jean Iron

the Rufous-sided Towhee over a twenty-five year period in the eastern United States.

The highest rate of decline is in New England where in 1989 the towhee population was only 13% of what it was in 1966.

The Rufous-sided Towhee is not a long distance migrant so is not affected by the destruction of the tropical forests. It winters primarily in the southern United States where wintering habitat is reported to be still in good supply. So, why is there a decline? Hagan believes that the sunny scrublands, the towhee's preferred nesting habitat once commonplace in the Northeast, are overgrowing and changing to shady mature forests. While the eastern subspecies of the Rufous-sided Towhee is in sharp decline, the western populations (several different subspecies) are thriving.

A similar decline in Rufous-sided Towhees is occurring in Ontario. Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) data from 1961-1988 (David Hussell pers. comm.) indicate an overall decline rate of 4.1% per year. In 1988, the Ontario towhee

population had declined to 32% of its 1961 population. The steepest declines were in the 1970s. David Hussell (pers. comm.) reports that from 1988 to the present "there is no sign of a return to earlier levels". Helen and Spencer Inch in *The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* (1987) found the Rufous-sided Towhee to be less abundant than was expected.

Suitable habitat in Ontario for Rufous-sided Towhees has undoubtedly shrunk over the past 30 years (Mike Cadman pers comm. and David Hussell pers. comm.) due to changes in land use. Intensified agriculture in the southwest has left only a few scattered small woodlots and streamsides. Abandoned farmland in other areas is growing into mature forests.

What can we do? We probably can't do much. The towhee was a winner when the forests were cleared during the last century and it may now be a victim of changing land use practices and plant succession. It is unlikely to become threatened or endangered. There are still many areas in Ontario where birders can observe towhees in good numbers. LPBO continues to monitor the population changes of the Rufous-sided Towhee.

I would like to thank Peter Burke, Mike Cadman, David Hussell, Jon McCracken and Ron Pittaway for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article.

What's Inside

Page 1	Towhees Tumble
	Ontario's Bird
	OFO's Logo
Page 2	Favourite Birding Hotspots ♦ Algonquin Park's "East Side"
Page 3	Profile of an Artist
	Bird Teasers
	Notes from the OBRC
Page 4	Bird Protection Laws
Page 6	Unfamiliar Sounds from Familiar Birds
	Answers to Bird Teasers
Page 7	OFO Code of Ethics
Page 8	Turkeys in the Straw
	OFO trips ♦ Presqu'île
	OFO Position Available
	Certificate of Appreciation

Ontario's Bird

It is a little known fact that Ontario now has a provincial bird. The Legislature passed Bill 147 on 23 June 1994 designating the Common Loon as our province's official bird.

OFO's Logo

The OFO Executive adopted two designs of the Pileated Woodpecker. A black and white Pileated in flight sets off OFO's new stationery, and a Pileated head in red, black and white is featured on the envelope for *Ontario Birds* and on promotional items such as OFO pins and tee shirts. Special thanks to Peter Burke for his superb drawings.

Favourite Birding Hotspots

Algonquin Park's "East Side"

by Ron Tozer

General Description. Algonquin Park's "East Side" presents excellent birding in habitats of White Birch, poplar, Black Spruce bogs, and extensive stands of Red, White and Jack Pine. Consult the recently revised Park Checklist for frequency and time of occurrence of birds (Tozer 1994), and Runtz (1993) for more information on the area's fascinating flora and fauna.

Access to this part of Algonquin Park is via the Sand Lake Gate (see map): turn south off the Highway 17 bypass onto Renfrew County Road 26 (3.5 km west of Forest Lea Road, and about 9 km west of Pembroke); travel about 300 m, then turn right (west) onto the Achray Road (Renfrew County Road 28), and drive 26 km to Sand Lake Gate. From southern Ontario it is shorter to follow Highway 62 through Alice, then turn left (north) onto Renfrew County Road 26, and proceed to the Achray Road. It is easy to miss the turn off Highway 62 just after you pass a tall communications tower. Since there are no gas or food services inside the Park, fill up at the gas station on the corner or at the Algonquin Portage Store on the Achray Road, 21 km before Sand Lake Gate.

The Achray Road is paved for the first 9 km. Starting where the pavement ends, every kilometre is marked with a black and white sign. I will describe the location of good birding sites using these kilometre markers.

Time of Year. The "East Side" can be good for finding most of Algonquin's resident "northern" birds at all seasons. Highlights of spring and summer include 20 species of breeding warblers. In winter, the expected "finches" are regular, and Bald and Golden eagles, Great Gray Owl and Northern Hawk Owl have been seen.

Good Birding Sites. Stop at Sand Lake Gate (km 17.5) to buy and display on your dash a permit for Park use. Look for Red Crossbills around the gate, and watch all along the road for both crossbill species, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin and Purple Finch picking up grit.

The 1.5 km long Barron Canyon Trail at km 28.9 goes along the top of a spectacular gorge bordering the Barron River. Listen for Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Northern Waterthrush and Common Yellowthroat singing from the talus slopes in the canyon. Barn Swallows and Eastern Phoebe nest "naturally" on rock faces far below the trail.

Turn left (south) at km 37.8 and go 4.8 km to Achray Campground on Grand Lake which may have interesting waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds. Check the campground for Pine Warblers and Red Crossbills.

Stop at Pretty Lake (km 54.5) if you still haven't found Gray Jay or Black-backed Woodpecker. Listen here after dark for Great Horned and Northern Saw-whet owls, and try

howling for Timber Wolves.

The extensive stands of Jack Pine from km 65 to 70 are excellent for Spruce Grouse. At dawn they may be picking up grit right on the road. You should walk through the area searching and playing tapes since males become active in response to female calls. Other species here include American Kestrel, Hermit Thrush, Gray Jay, Lincoln's Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. After dark, Common Nighthawks and Whip-poor-wills are numerous, especially at km 66.

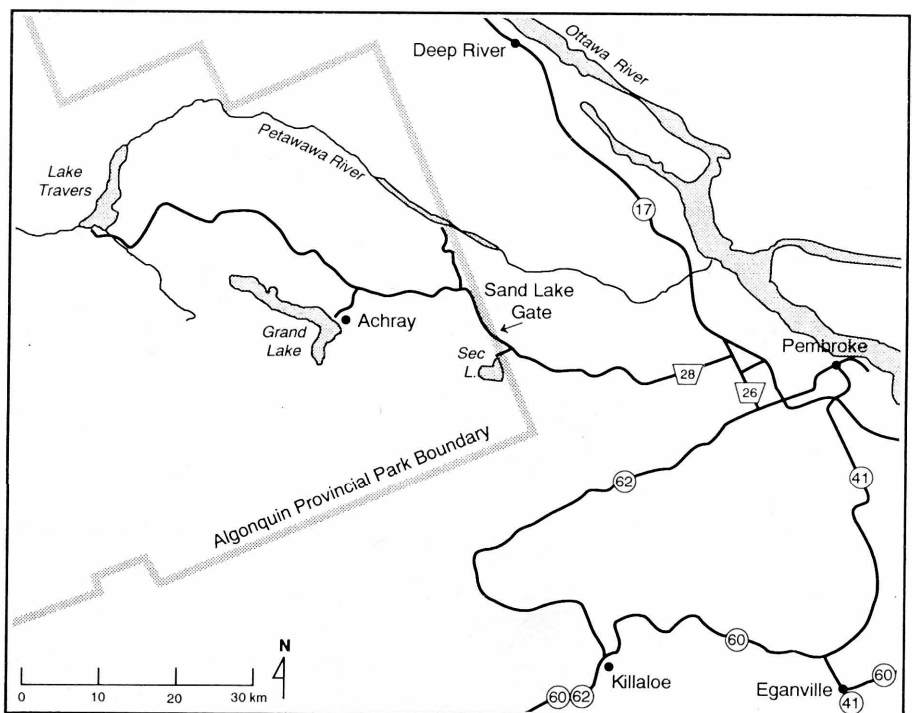
Park well off the road at km 69.4, and walk in 1.5 km on a road leading north to the old Pembroke Lumber Company mill site on Lake Travers, watching for Spruce Grouse all the way. Check the marsh on your left soon after you reach the open field area for grebes and ducks. The field usually produces Merlin, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow and Vesper Sparrow. Follow the road to a point overlooking Lake Travers, and scan for unusual waterbirds. The Park's only sightings of Great Black-backed Gull and Forster's Tern were made here on the same day!

Check the pond on the left (south) side at km 72 for Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser. The Poplar Rapids Bridge over the Petawawa River just beyond km 72 marks the limit of public vehicular travel. Now you can turn around and head back the 54 km to Sand Lake Gate, looking for anything you missed earlier and enthusing over all the great birds you have seen, I hope!

References

Runtz, M.W.P. 1993. The Explorer's Guide to Algonquin Park. Stoddard Publishing Co. Ltd., Toronto.

Tozer, R. 1994. Checklist and Seasonal Status of the Birds of Algonquin Provincial Park. The Friends of Algonquin Park, Whitney, Ontario.



Profile of an Artist

Peter Burke

by
Jennifer Burke

This edition of OFO NEWS is illustrated by Peter Burke

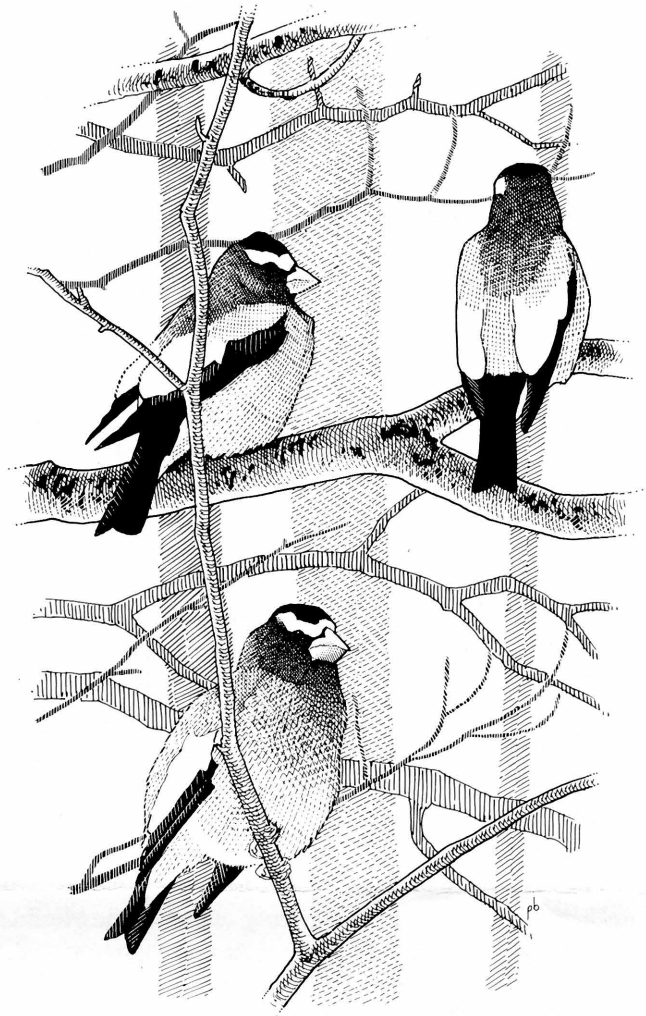
Peter's early fascination with dinosaurs evolved into a passion for birds at age six, and it progressed with his love of drawing and painting to a career in illustration. His young interests benefitted from a longtime friendship with Doug McRae and encouragement from letters exchanged with Fenwick Lansdowne. At age twelve Peter illustrated Doug's birding column in the *Kawartha Sun*, and he exhibited in the Buckthorn Wildlife and Art Festival.

Peter has been a member of OFO since its inception. While at the University of Guelph, he worked summers as a naturalist in Algonquin Provincial Park. There he did illustrations for *The Raven* and more recently he illustrated the Park's 100th anniversary book *The Best of The Raven*. Peter has also worked at Long Point Bird Observatory where this summer for a week he taught a group of young ornithologists.

After completing an Honours Degree in Biology, Peter "hit the road" birding and working in Papua New Guinea, and birding in Thailand, Singapore, Mexico, Argentina and Ecuador. His soft spot, he professes, is still northern Ontario where he worked for the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Ministry of Natural Resources and at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory.

Peter has illustrated covers and articles for *Ontario Birds* and *Birders Journal*. A future project will be illustrating a book on New World Tyranids and Icterids where he will use his preferred watercolours as well as pen and ink.

At present Peter is residing in Lakefield and he is illustrating a book for Project FeederWatch by Erica Dunn.



Evening Grosbeaks

Bird Teasers

a quiz by George Bryant

1. What bird with an annual abundance of 2-3 million in Canada has not been recorded nesting in Canada?
2. What happens to young Brown-headed Cowbirds raised by House Finches?
3. What green-plumaged bird has occurred in Ontario?
4. What bird has the greatest proportion of its nesting range in Ontario?
5. What two bird families directly produce food to feed their young?

Answers Page 6

Notes from the OBRC

by Bob Curry

Not unlike socio-political life during the summer in Canada, news from the Ontario Bird Records Committee is limited. However, there are a few items of interest.

1. OFO is one of several stakeholders in *Birds at Risk*, a new program initiated by Long Point Bird Observatory to coordinate the monitoring of threatened species and habitats. We are pleased to announce that OBRC member Richard Knapton with a wealth of experience in bird monitoring methods is the OFO representative on the *Birds at Risk* Advisory Committee.
2. The FON and OFO have produced a revised *Ontario Field Checklist of Birds*. Ross James and the remainder of the OBRC assisted in this update.
3. The OBRC will hold its annual policy meeting on 26 November 1994. Some changes to the operating by-laws will be made official at that time. Pre-selection of candidates for three positions for a three-year term beginning in 1996 will be made.
4. This is a reminder to get your 1994 rarity reports in as soon as possible. In addition, we urge you to dig out those old pre-1981 records and memories, however brief, for submission as historical records. Remember, they don't have to be the kind of detailed reports which many birders submit today, but they must have been previously published. A note on the circumstances and anything you can remember about the sighting will help to establish an historical designation.

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

Bird Protection Laws

by
Ron Pittaway

I have often heard birders say that birds are protected by law. Which laws protect birds? What is prohibited? Who enforces bird laws? What are the penalties? In Canada, jurisdiction over birds is divided between the federal and provincial governments. In what follows, I discuss the federal and provincial laws which protect and regulate the use of birds in Ontario.

Migratory Birds Convention Act (Federal)

This is the most important law protecting birds in Canada. Most birds in Ontario are protected by this Act. The *Migratory Birds Convention Act (MBCA)* was completely updated for the first time in June 1994. The new Act strengthens the enforcement provisions and significantly increases the penalties. The original *MBCA* was passed in 1917 to meet the terms of an agreement signed with the United States to protect birds such as waterfowl and shorebirds that were being subjected to uncontrolled hunting. Also included were "good" birds such as most songbirds, considered beneficial to humans because they eat insects and weed seeds. However, birds deemed at that time to be vermin or harmful to humans such as hawks, owls, crows and cormorants were left under provincial jurisdiction. The name "Migratory" is somewhat misleading because some migratory birds like the Merlin are *not* protected by the *MBCA* while some non-migratory species like the Downy Woodpecker are! The birds covered by the *MBCA* in Ontario are: loons, grebes, shearwaters, fulmars, storm-petrels, gannets, anhingas, herons, bitterns, ibises, storks, swans, geese, ducks, rails, gallinules, coots, cranes, shorebirds, jaegers, gulls, terns, skimmers, alcids, pigeons, doves (except Rock Dove), cuckoos, goatsuckers, swifts, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, tyrant flycatchers, larks, swallows, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, wrens, kinglets, gnatcatchers, thrushes, mockingbirds, thrashers, catbirds, pipits, silky-flycatchers, shrikes, vireos, wood warblers, tanagers, cardinals, sparrows, buntings, meadowlarks, bobolinks, orioles and finches. The *MBCA* generally does *not* protect introduced species such as the European Starling and House Sparrow, but it does protect Mute Swan and European Goldfinch. See the *Game and Fish Act (Ontario)* for birds regulated by the province.

Except under the authority of a permit, the *MBCA* prohibits the hunting, collecting, trapping, mist-netting and banding of birds, the collecting of eggs and nests, the possession of birds found dead and the keeping of captive birds. Permits to possess or collect migratory birds are issued by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) but these permits are virtually impossible for an individual to obtain. However, permits are issued to agencies that work with birds such as the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Canadian Museum of Nature,

Royal Ontario Museum and universities. Hunters may possess or have their migratory gamebirds mounted by a taxidermist under the authority of their Migratory Bird Hunting Permit. Taxidermists must have a permit from the CWS for migratory birds.

The *MBCA* regulates the hunting of ducks, geese, rails, American Coot, Common Moorhen, American Woodcock and Common Snipe in Ontario. Regulations governing open seasons and possession limits of migratory gamebirds are set each year. Currently there are *no* hunting seasons for Harlequin Duck and King Rail in Ontario. The decision to close the seasons on these species was based on a recommendation by the MNR and the CWS because of their vulnerably low numbers.

Enforcement of the *MBCA* in Ontario is handled jointly by the CWS, MNR and RCMP. The maximum penalties are: (1) for a corporation a \$250,000 fine and (2) for an individual a \$100,000 fine or imprisonment for five years or both.

An excellent publication entitled "Birds protected in Canada under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*" is available free. Write to Publications, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa K1A 0H3 or phone (819) 997-1095.

Endangered Species Act (Ontario)

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act (ESA)* currently protects nine species of birds and their habitats in Ontario: American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Piping Plover, Eskimo Curlew, Loggerhead Shrike, Kirtland's Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow. Under the *ESA*, it is prohibited to wilfully kill, injure or interfere with an endangered species, or to interfere with or destroy the habitat of an endangered species. Note that the habitat of an endangered species is also protected! The key word in this Act is "wilfully". Therefore to obtain a conviction, the Crown must prove that the defendant acted intentionally.

Conservation Officers with the MNR are chiefly responsible for enforcement. A person convicted under the *ESA* "is liable to a fine of not more than \$50,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years, or to both."

There is *no* federal *Endangered Species Act*.

Game and Fish Act (Ontario)

All birds are covered by this Ontario law but in practice it applies to those species and offences not covered by the federal *MBCA*. Birds protected by the *Game and Fish Act (GFA)* are: pelicans, cormorants, vultures, ospreys, kites, eagles, hawks, caracaras, falcons, partridges, pheasants, grouse, ptarmigan, turkey, quail, owls, kingfishers, jays, nutcrackers, magpies and ravens. Crows, cowbirds, blackbirds, starlings

and House Sparrows are *not* protected by the *GFA*, except in provincial parks and Crown game preserves. Rock Doves are also *not* protected because they are introduced domesticated birds gone feral. However, one must have a hunting licence to hunt even unprotected birds. In addition, the *GFA* regulates the seasons and limits of gallinaceous birds; that is partridge, pheasant, grouse, ptarmigan, turkey and quail, which may be hunted with a provincial hunting licence. Interestingly, the *GFA* allows the killing of birds, except birds protected by the *MBCA* and the *ESA*, in defence of property. For example, farmers do not need a licence to kill a hawk attacking their chickens.

The *GFA* prohibits the hunting, trapping and collecting of birds without the proper licence or scientific permit. Importantly, the use of poison to kill birds is strictly prohibited. Furthermore, the Act prohibits the taking or possession of eggs and nests of those species protected by the Act without a permit.

You may possess birds (but *not* birds protected by the *MBCA*) found dead that were killed by natural or accidental causes. In general, dead birds in your possession must be reported to the MNR within five working days, except birds of prey which must be taken to the MNR for inspection within two working days. For example, if you find a dead owl hit by a car, the MNR may issue you a permit to keep the bird or to have it mounted by a taxidermist, provided an inspection shows the bird died accidentally or of natural causes. However, hunters may have their gallinaceous gamebirds mounted under the authority of their provincial hunting licence.

Falconry and the possession of birds of prey are regulated by the *GFA*. Wild birds may *not* be captured in Ontario without a permit from the MNR. However, birds of prey that originated outside the province or were hatched from captive stock may be possessed without a permit, provided they were taken legally in another jurisdiction. Falconers must have a hunting licence to hunt with a bird of prey and are subject to the same seasons and possession limits as other hunters.

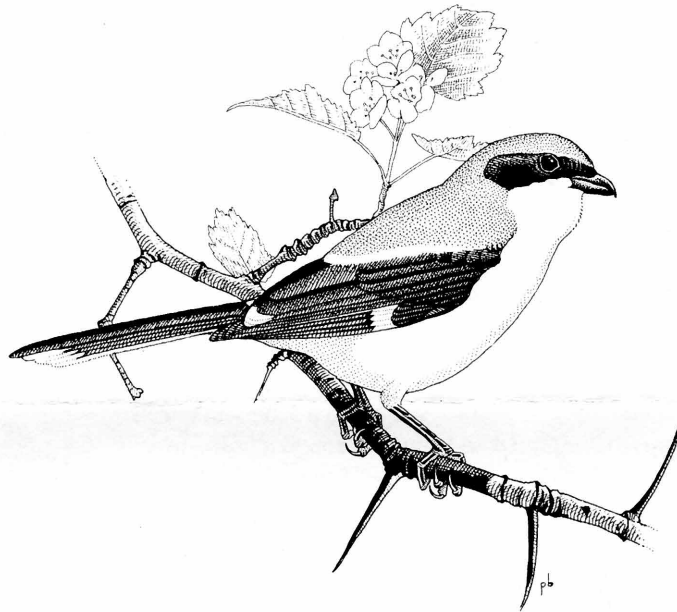
Enforcement of the *GFA* is done mainly by Conservation Officers employed by the MNR. The maximum penalty is a fine of not more than \$25,000.

National Parks Act (Federal)

National parks such as Point Pelee are administered by the Canadian Parks Service. All birds in national parks are fully protected by the *National Parks Act (NPA)*. Species such as crows, blackbirds, starling and House Sparrow which are *not* protected by law elsewhere are given full protection by the *NPA*. Duck hunting was last permitted in Point Pelee National Park in 1988. Enforcement of the *NPA* is the responsibility of federal Park Wardens and the RCMP. The penalty is a fine up to \$2000 or six months imprisonment or both. Four species are given special protection in national parks: Whooping Crane, Piping Plover, Peregrine Falcon and Gyrfalcon, and the penalty increases to \$150,000.

Provincial Parks Act (Ontario)

Provincial parks such as Algonquin and Presqu'ile are administered by the MNR. The *Provincial Parks Act* does *not* protect birds. Nevertheless, all birds in provincial parks are fully protected by the *MBCA*, the *GFA* and the *ESA*. Birds like crows, cowbirds and House Sparrows which are *not* protected elsewhere are protected in provincial parks and Crown game preserves by the *GFA*. However, waterfowl hunting is permitted in some provincial parks such as Presqu'ile and Darlington subject to regulations made under the *GFA* and *MBCA*. Enforcement in provincial parks is the responsibility of provincial Park Wardens,



The endangered Loggerhead Shrike is protected by the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act* and provincial *Endangered Species Act*.

Conservation Officers and the OPP.

Criminal Code (Federal)

It is a criminal offence to wilfully and without lawful excuse kill, maim, wound, poison or injure a bird, or for anyone to cause or permit unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to a bird. Both wild and domestic birds are protected. Enforcement of criminal offences related to birds is the responsibility of the police and humane societies. The penalty is a fine of not more than \$2000 or to imprisonment for six months or both.

I hope this brief account answers many of your questions about bird protection laws. Bird law is a complicated matter and cannot be covered in its entirety by this short article. Please contact me if you have any further questions. Ron Pittaway, Box 619, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0 or (705) 286-3471.

Unfamiliar Sounds from Familiar Birds

by Monty Brigham

Monty Brigham has been working with bird sounds for over 35 years. He is well-known for his preparation of *Bird Sounds of Canada, Volumes 1-3*, a set of audio tapes and CDs which follow the arrangement of Earl Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada*. This is the first of three articles by Monty on bird sounds. Many sounds discussed in these articles have the corresponding tape or CD track number in brackets to help you.

The study of bird sounds is a fascinating subject. It takes time and patience to learn the familiar songs and calls of North American birds. Once you know them, you can focus on more unusual sounds. Here is an analysis of several bird species based on my recordings and observations to alert birders that identifying birds by song or call is often very tricky.

Hawks

The Red-shouldered Hawk is frequently imitated by Blue Jays. If you listen carefully to the "hawk" cry, other Blue Jay-like sounds become apparent, giving away the jay's identity. Throughout most of the year, whether in Florida in winter or Ontario in spring, the identification of Red-shouldered Hawks based on calls is reliable. However, in mid-summer the situation changes. This is when juvenile hawks leave the nest but remain in the immediate area. They still depend on the parents for food and cry noisily whenever the adults appear. The calls of young Red-shouldered Hawks are identical to those of the adults. This is not the case with young Red-tailed Hawks. They call like Red-shouldered Hawks; there is no raspy quality so typical of adult Red-tailed Hawks. To my ear there is no difference between the normal Red-shouldered Hawk call and the cry of a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk. I make sure I see the bird!

Thrushes

On an Ottawa Christmas Bird Count a number of years ago, I heard a "che'wink" call from a nearby spruce tree. I walked up to it, around it and almost through it trying to see the bird. I never did find it. "It must be a Rufous-sided Towhee" I thought. But when I was cross-examined that night when the results were being compiled, my only identification mark was the "che'wink" call. A bird of this scarcity in winter should at least be seen to be included on the CBC, so my "observation" was rejected. Since that time I have recorded the "che'wink" call from Hermit Thrushes, a species which is more likely than the Rufous-sided Towhee to be found in the Ottawa area in winter. I am not sure about the function of this sound but it seems to be some form of alarm call. The recording, Vol 2 CD #2 Track 17.2, was made in Alaska when the thrush was chased by another bird. I heard this sound again when I invaded the courtship area of several singing male Hermit Thrushes.

On another occasion, I was recording the song of a Hermit Thrush when suddenly he changed his tune. The fluty notes became high-pitched "chezzee" sounds, identical to the familiar sounds of Cedar Waxwings. A few seconds later, a Sharp-shinned Hawk landed in the tree a few metres from the thrush. There is no question this sound is an alarm call (Vol 2 CD #2 Track 17.4).

In the next issue I will discuss interesting and confusing calls of the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and some owls.



Female Rufous-sided Towhee

Answers to Bird Teasers

1. Huge numbers of Western Sandpipers migrate along the coast of British Columbia. They nest no closer than Camden Bay, Alaska, about 220 km west of the Yukon border, according to Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada*.

2. Almost all birds which feed on vegetable matter when adults, feed insects and other arthropods to their young. The nestlings require protein for quick growth. Exceptions to this include crossbills and House Finches which provide a slurry of ground-up seeds to their young. Young Brown-headed Cowbirds fostered by House Finches cannot survive on this diet and perish. Studies show that Brown-headed Cowbirds in the East are already avoiding House Finch nests, despite only 30-40 generations of cowbirds since House Finches colonized eastern North America.

3. To my mind there is only one truly green bird—the female Painted Bunting. Female Scarlet Tanagers are really olive above and yellowish below. Many passerines look greenish in the fall but not year round, e.g. Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Blackpoll Warbler and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

4. This is a subjective answer which involves comparing breeding range maps from various sources. The Connecticut Warbler has about one-half of its nesting range in Ontario. The balance is spread over western Quebec, northern Minnesota and in a narrow band across the prairie provinces to northeastern B.C.

5. Pigeon and flamingo families share this feature. The parents produce crop-milk for their young. This substance is formed from cells which are sloughed off from the inner surface of the crop and is very rich in fat and protein. These cells are regurgitated to the chicks and form the whole diet of the young.

Watch for a Crossbird Puzzle by Gerry Bennett in the next OFO NEWS

OFO CODE OF ETHICS

As the number of birders increases, we must all make every effort to act in a positive and responsible way. We must also convey a responsible image to non-birders who may be affected by our activities. Most people appreciate birds but this appreciation can be quickly destroyed by the irresponsible actions of a handful of birders.

In the past a code of ethics was not considered necessary, but times have changed and as more and more pressure is put on our environment it is essential to do whatever we can to lead by example. Each of us must show consideration to other birders, landowners, habitat, birds and other wildlife at all times. We are ambassadors of birding and our actions today will reflect the respect we receive in the future.

▶ **The welfare of the birds *must* come first.** Whatever your interest, from scientific study to listing, always consider the impact of your activity on the bird. Respect bird protection laws. We are all responsible to ensure we abide by them at all times.

▶ **Habitat protection.** Habitat is vital for the existence of birds and we must ensure that our activities cause minimum damage to the environment. Use trails to avoid trampling vegetation.

▶ **Keep disturbance to a minimum.** Although some birds can tolerate human activity, this varies from species to species and from season to season. Use common sense and extreme caution around nests. Migrants may be tired and hungry and should not be kept from resting or feeding. When photographing birds, study their reaction and if they become agitated, back off. Avoid the use of flash photography on owls. Tape recordings and similar methods of attracting birds may cause stress for territorial birds. They should be used sparingly and avoided in heavily birded areas. Do not deliberately flush birds. Patience is often rewarded.

▶ **Rare breeding birds.** If you discover a rare breeding bird, do not feel under any obligation to report your find to other birders. Record the details of your discovery. You may wish to file the nest with the Ontario Nest Records Scheme at the Royal Ontario Museum. Avoid visiting known sites of rare breeding birds unless they can be viewed from a distance without disturbance.

▶ **Rare birds.** Rare migrants or vagrants are the species most sought after by birders. If you discover a rarity, consider the circumstances carefully before releasing the information. You must take responsibility for the decision to release the find. You should consider whether an influx of birders will disturb the bird, people or other species in the area; whether the habitat will be damaged; and where people will park. Inform the landowner of the find, explain what may happen and obtain permission to tell other birders. Ask the landowner for a list of dos and don'ts, for example, where birders may stand to get a good view and what restrictions there may be on time of day. Also ask which areas are off limits. If you decide to release the news, give precise directions and instructions. If possible include a phone number. At all times make as little noise as possible. Remember, most non-birders will be surprised by the number of visitors who wish to see a rare bird.

▶ **Respect the rights of landowners and occupiers of land.** Before entering an area, be aware of the rules about access such as by-laws of Conservation Authorities, National and Provincial Parks, and Regional Authorities. Many landowners and authorities allow birders access to areas normally off limits. Always act in a responsible way and if you are asked to leave, do so immediately. Do not block gateways or cause damage to fences, and leave gates as you find them. Do not obstruct people who may be working in these areas.

▶ **Have proper consideration for other birders.** When telephoning for information, do so at reasonable hours of the day. Try not to disrupt other birders' activities or scare the birds they are watching. Many other people enjoy the outdoors; do not interfere with their activities. Be polite to other birders and helpful to beginners. If you see people obviously disturbing birds or significantly damaging habitat, explain to them the effect of their actions but be courteous, they may not be aware of the effect they are having.

▶ **Increase our knowledge about birds.** Keep notes of your sightings and send them to area compilers. Send rare bird reports to the Secretary, Ontario Bird Records Committee.

▶ **When birding in other countries, provinces or regions.** Find out if there is a local code of ethics or any special rules that should be respected.

Turkeys in the Straw

by Gerry Bennett

In the past few years, sightings of Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) in the western edge of York Region have become rather common. Where have they come from? Are they countable on birders' records?

Turkeys have been breeding successfully in the wild in the northeast corner of Peel which abuts York for at least the last three decades. Joan Donnelly of the 2nd Line east of Albion (Glen Haffy Road), has lived most of her life in that area and advises that turkeys have been wild there for at least thirty years.

From Orangeville to Palgrave and from Highway 9 south to the 25th (Patterson) Sideroad, these birds are numerous enough to be considered by some human residents as nuisances. In winter it is possible to have twenty or more turkeys coming to your feeder. How would you like these decorators on your lawn every day? To some their presence is acceptable, even exotic; but to others, enough is enough. There is a distinct polarization of local opinion. Some Albion residents have appealed to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to eliminate, or at least reduce, these populations. Also, the turkeys attract poachers. Some residents resent intruders, especially the gun-carrying type. Others welcome them as turkey-oriented liberators.

Places to see turkeys in Peel Region are: Glen Haffy Conservation Area, the 3rd Line (Centreville Creek Road) between 25th (Patterson) Sideroad and Highway 9, and along Aviation Road south of Highway 9.

In the late 1980s, turkeys were seen in King Township and the City of Vaughan, the two westernmost municipalities of York Region. A farmer on the King/Vaughan Line between Kipling Avenue and Highway 27 had six birds in the winter of 1989/90. I saw my first Vaughan Wild Turkey on 20 April 1990. By then they were reported from the 7th Concession of King, from Nobleton to Kleinburg along Highway 27 and in the Boyd Field Centre on Islington Avenue, 2 km south of Kleinburg. Official chroniclers of local records were reluctant to consider them "wild" as they might be released by the MNR.

In the winter of 1991/92, a few "big birds" were regularly feeding in an unharvested soy bean field on the east side of Islington Avenue just south of Kleinburg and up to thirty turkeys roosted at night in tall pines along the Humber River in Kleinburg. Sometimes they were pestered by crows, perhaps being mistaken for some strange kind of owl.

In the spring of 1994, a flock of seven birds moved in at the entrance to the Kortright Centre. Also, three turkeys were seen in spring of 1994 in the Kipling Ravine, south of Woodbridge, the most southerly location we know and within sight of Toronto.

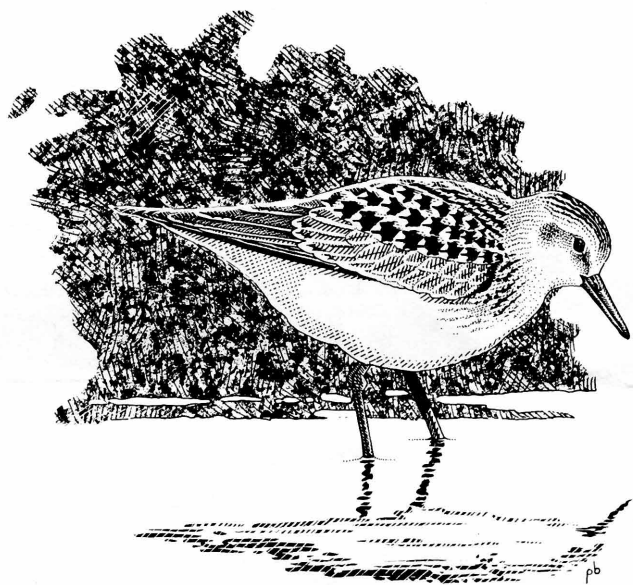
I believe these birds are "range-extenders" from the Albion stock. Sightings plotted chronologically on a map indicate that the turkeys came from a northwest direction towards Palgrave. The Albion birds are very dark, appearing black at a distance, and they have a unique shape to the fawn patch in the wings. Birds in King and Vaughan have very similar plumages. However, we do know there were turkeys released in York Region in the 1980s. Even so, more than five generations have occurred by now. So, countable or not? Only the turkeys know for sure, and all they do is gobble!

OFO trips

Presqu'ile

by Terrie Smith

Under the leadership of Sid Hadlington, 26 birders converged on the beaches at Presqu'ile Provincial Park on Saturday 10 September, a day of sunny skies but cool temperatures. Shorebirds were at low numbers due to a Merlin and several Sharp-shinned Hawks which were patrolling the beach. We also saw 17 American Pipits. Inland it was warmer and we counted pockets of fall warblers including Mourning Warbler and Northern Parula. Passerines were around the Calf Pasture and the Lighthouse. A return to the beaches in the afternoon produced Sanderlings, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk harassing a Broad-winged Hawk. In all 76 species were recorded.



Juvenile Sanderling

Future Field Trips Nov. 27, Sun. Niagara Gull Watch. Meet at Niagara-on-the-Lake at the mouth of the river at 9:00 a.m. Leader Bob Yukich.

OFO Promotion

The OFO Board of Directors is looking for a highly motivated person to promote OFO. If you are interested in helping out please contact Gerry Shemilt, OFO President, 51 Montessor Drive, North York, Ontario M2P 1Z3. Tel: (416) 226-3580

Certificate of Appreciation

On behalf of the members of OFO, the Executive will award a CERTIFICATE of APPRECIATION to people or organizations who contribute, assist or otherwise help the Ontario birding community. If you wish to nominate someone for this award, send the details explaining the circumstances to the OFO President.

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