

AOU Splits

We have heard rumours that the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) has split several species. Nothing is official yet because the announcement will be published in the 40th Supplement to *The Auk*, probably late this fall.

OFO NEWS has learned that the Northern Oriole will be split back into Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Oriole. The Rufous-sided Towhee also will be split back into the Rufous-sided Towhee and the Spotted Towhee. Congratulations to those lucky birders who saw the Spotted Towhee at Harold Axtell's feeder in December 1976.

Bicknell's Thrush, formerly a subspecies of the Gray-cheeked Thrush, will be a full species. See Henri Ouellet's article "Bicknell's Thrush in Ontario" in *Ontario Birds* 11(2): 41-45. Note that the illustration on plate 56 in Godfrey's (1986) *The Birds of Canada* of the Gray-cheeked Thrush appears to be a Bicknell's Thrush.

Most surprising of all is that we will have two or even three species of Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

Plan to keep Thayer's Gull as a separate species. The AOU is still evaluating the Iceland/Kumlien's/Thayer's complex. However, most authorities now consider the complex to form one species. Eventually we expect to see Thayer's lumped with Iceland Gull.

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OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume 13, Number 2

June 1995

Whoo-eek, Whoo-eek Male or Female ?

by
Ron Pittaway

Once endangered, the Wood Duck is now fairly common and still increasing in Ontario. It is usually difficult to observe in its woodland habitat of swamps and beaver ponds. Often the best means of identification is a series of squealing calls *whoo-eek, whoo-eek, whoo-eek*, quite discernible from a distance, as it flushes in and out of sight among the flooded trees.

Male and female Wood Ducks are often flushed together making it difficult to determine which individuals are actually doing the calling. So which sex of the Wood Duck gives the diagnostic *whoo-eek* call? The literature is confusing. It is the male according to Bent's (1923) *Life Histories*, Kortright's (1942) classic *Ducks, Geese and Swans*, and Peterson's (1980) eastern field guide. However, Peterson's (1947) earlier eastern guide, Palmer's (1976) *Handbook of North American Birds*, and the *National Geographic Guide* (1987) all say it is the female. Terres (1982) in the *Audubon Society Encyclopedia* reports that the female utters a loud *whoo-eek* that is also attributed to the male by some observers!

Who is correct and why the confusion? I asked bird sound expert Monty Brigham and waterfowl biologist Ted Gadawski of Ducks Unlimited who did his Master's on the Wood Duck. Both Monty and Ted said that only the female gives the distinctive loud *whoo-eek* call. Confusion may have arisen from early descriptions of calls attributed to the male in Bent (1923) that were later repeated.

You can hear the *whoo-eek* call of the female Wood Duck and the male's soft siskin-like *jeeeeee* call on Peterson's (1990) tape *A Field Guide to Bird Songs of Eastern and Central North America*. Listen also to the female's call on Monty Brigham's *Birds of Canada* recordings (Vol 1 CD #1 Track 20).

OFO's Celebrity Birdathon

Celebrity birder Mike Runtz and Doug McRae recorded 168 species on Friday 26 May 1995, between Algonquin Park and Presqu'île. Mike and Doug's best finds were Louisiana Waterthrush and Kentucky Warbler near Peterborough, Yellow Rails on the Carden Alvar, and all the boreal species in Algonquin including Spruce Grouse, White-winged and Red Crossbills. Mike thanks all his birdathon sponsors.

Favourite Birding Hotspots

Luther Marsh

by David Brewer

Luther Marsh, or Luther Lake, can be regarded as the source of the Grand River. It is a very large area, comprising about 7,000 hectares, of which more than 2,000 are open water. Although a man-made feature (it arose when the headwaters of the Grand River were dammed in 1952), it is probably the richest inland marsh in Ontario.

The main body of water lies midway between Highways 9 and 89 to the south and north, and Wellington County Road 16 to the west and Highway 25 to the east. The main accesses to the area can be reached by travelling west on Highway 9 from Orangeville or east on Highway 9 from Arthur. There is no public transit to the marsh; a vehicle is essential, and a canoe is very useful. The marsh is split between Wellington and Dufferin Counties, and is administered by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The ornithological interest of the marsh lies in three different areas: the open water itself, and especially the numerous islands and floating bogs therein; the surrounding woodlands, many of them very wet; and Wylde Lake, an extensive area of raised bog in the southeast corner.

By canoe. By far the best way to see most of the interesting species in the marsh is by canoe. A permit is required to put any boat onto the lake from the break-up (usually April) until the end of July, and can be obtained by calling the GRCA in Cambridge (519) 621-2761 ahead of time. A word of caution concerning canoeing: the lake can become treacherous very quickly if a wind springs up, especially from the southwest. There have been two drowning fatalities in the lake in recent years, so watch the weather.

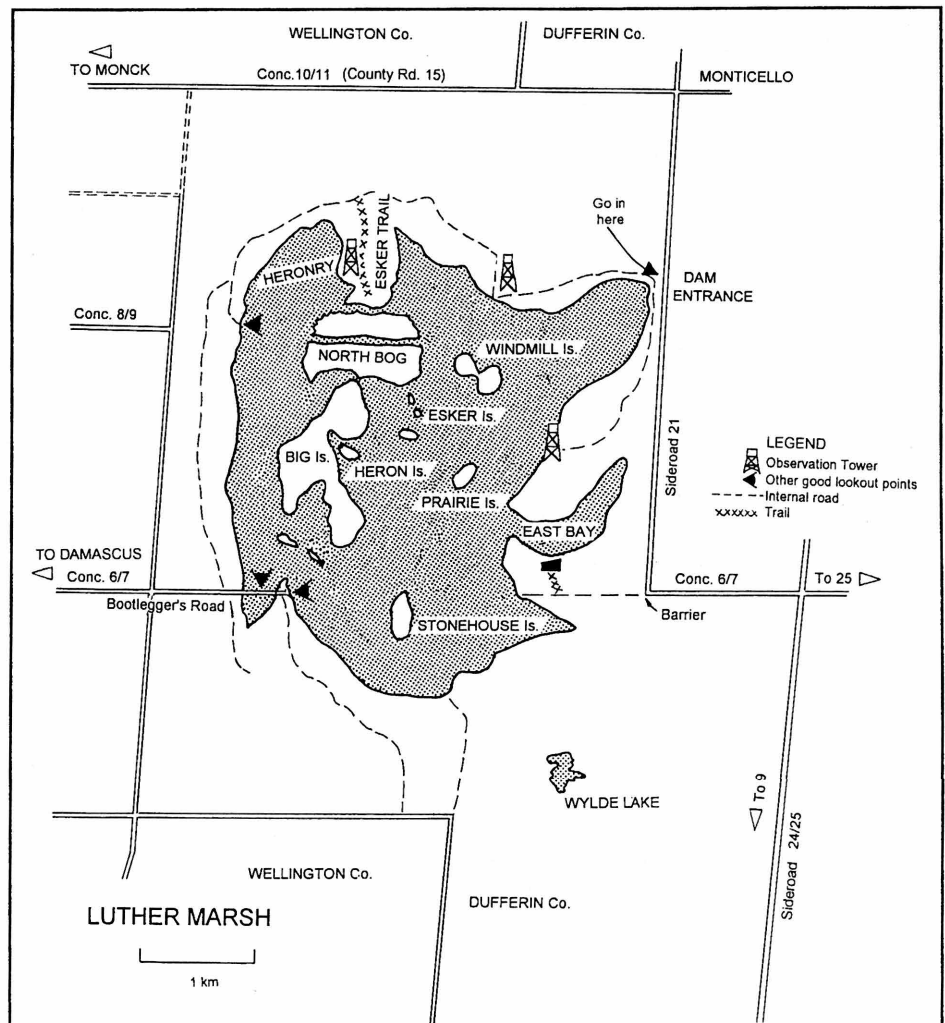
There are two main canoe access points, depending upon wind direction. With a westerly wind, the best access is via a drowned road known locally as the Bootlegger's Road. The Bootlegger's is reached by turning east from County Road 16 at the village store in Damascus and going about 3 km until the road disappears into the lake. Launching here, one can travel north, up either side of Big Island to the North Bog, giving a view of an extensive heronry (close access is prohibited). In calm weather it is possible to skirt the North Bog and investigate the other small islands such as Windmill, Esker and Prairie. A second route from the Bootlegger's involves heading east, around Stonehouse Island and the marshes fringing the southwest shore of the

lake; this is particularly good for Least Bitterns.

A second launch from the dam area or the internal road leading south from the dam, gives access to East Bay and the north end of Wylde Lake. This should only be attempted in calm conditions.

Note that there are restricted areas for canoes, all based on sound considerations of wildlife conservation. These include the heronry, some islands and the immediate vicinity of Osprey nests, all of which are on artificial nest-sites. Also note that the floating bogs should not be landed on, unless you wish to become a fossil for the edification of future generations, since they are bottomless mires covered by a thin skin of vegetation.

On foot or by car. Without a canoe the marsh still offers good birding. A good overview may be had from the Bootlegger's Road, and from the area south of the dam where there is an observation tower about 1.5 km south of the gate (this stretch of road is usually drivable). The well-marked dam entrance is about 2.2 km south of Monticello on Sideroad 20/21. From the dam an internal road (not open to vehicles) runs all the way



Profile of an Artist Barry Kent MacKay

by
Yvonne Sheppard

President: Canadian Society for Endangered Birds

This issue of OFO NEWS is illustrated by Barry Kent MacKay

around the north and west side to the Bootlegger's. The first several kilometres of this are worth walking since they pass through good wet woodland in places, and a second observation tower is located about 2 km in. Continue on the internal road and where it turns south, a trail through excellent deciduous woodland (sign-posted "Esker Trail") leads down to a third tower overlooking the north end of the lake. Following the internal road a further 1.5 km brings you to the drowned eighth/ninth concession, which gives another view of the heronry. Continuing 1.8 km brings you to the Bootlegger's Road where you turn left towards the lake. On the last little hill before descending to a causeway, a track on the right (south) leads to an interesting little slough a couple of hundred metres in. The county's first Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was seen here.

Other good areas not needing a canoe are: the wet woodlands on either side of County Road 15 (Concession 10/11) midway between Monck and Monticello; the southern shore of East Bay where a blind has been built by the Guelph Field Naturalists' Club; and the drowned eastern extension of the Bootlegger's Road. The latter two areas are accessible from Highway 25 by travelling west on East Luther Concession 6/7, or from Highway 9 by travelling north on East Luther Sideroad 24/25. To get to the blind, walk west along Concession 6/7 of East Luther, past the barrier, and walk north along the first fire breaks in the pines north of the disused road.

Wylde Lake is an extensive area of tamarack woodland of a very good boreal aspect. Access is from Highway 9, 7.3 km west of Highway 25 and 11.5 km east of Arthur (Highway 6) where a dirt road leads 5.3 km north from Hwy 9 (actually the Wellington/Dufferin county line). The road takes a sharp left turn; at this point Wylde Lake is to the right (east). It is a large area, easy to get lost in. There are significant numbers of breeding Lincoln's Sparrows and other boreal species here.

Breeding Birds of Luther. Great Blue Heron, a large colony; American Bittern, in most reedbeds; Least Bittern, especially at southern end; Great Egret, sporadic nester; Double-crested Cormorant, probable; up to 15 species of duck, though many are sporadic; regular breeders include American Wigeon, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, Redhead; less regular are Canvasback, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and Hooded Merganser; Common Loon, 1-2 pairs most years; Red-necked Grebe, formerly but may no longer breed here; Osprey, up to seven pairs; Wilson's Phalarope, Windmill, Heron and Prairie Islands; American Coot; Virginia Rail and Sora in reedbeds, especially on islands; Black Tern, formerly abundant, now only a few pairs mostly near Stonehouse Island and the North Bog; Marsh Wren, all reedbeds; Sedge Wren, sporadic and variable; Lincoln's Sparrow, Wylde Lake; Yellow-rumped Warbler, pine plantations; Louisiana Waterthrush (one record of a singing bird).

In addition, after the spring thaw the lake holds large quantities of migrant ducks such as Bufflehead and both scaup. There is good habitat for migrant shorebirds during the fall draw-down, especially on the edges of the floating bogs.

Hunting is allowed from late September to mid-December, and the area is not recommended during this period.

Interesting records for the Wellington section of the marsh would be greatly appreciated by Bryan Wyatt, 63 Woodland Glen Road, Guelph, ON N1G 3S3.



Wild Turkey

Where to Find Ontario's Birds

Members will be pleased to hear that Clive Goodwin's completely revised and updated **A Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario** is now in nature stores, bookstores and at BJ Sales (905) 668-0241 (Publisher: University of Toronto Press).

Owl's Well That Ends Well

by
George Naylor

On Sunday 16 August 1992, my wife Sharon and I had a unique experience. About a year earlier, I volunteered my services to Mary Ellen Hebb, Kay McKeever's assistant at the Owl Foundation (OF). I offered to assist in the release of fledgling owls produced by the captive breeding program.

In early August, Mary Ellen called to inform us that there were three young owls ready for release in mid-August. When I inquired about the species to be released, my pulse took a jump, **Barn Owls!**

Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*), a cosmopolitan species, relatively common in other parts of the world, are extremely rare in southern Ontario. Southern British Columbia and southern Ontario represent the northern limits for this species in our hemisphere. *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Ontario* (1987) confirmed only four nests in Ontario during the five years of field surveys from 1981 to 1985, and as an historical perspective, the Ontario Nest Records Survey reported only 29 nests up to 1980.

Mary Ellen informed me that Barn Owl releases had met with very little success to date. Barn Owls are somewhat migratory and may retreat from the northern limits of their breeding range in winter. The recapture in Pennsylvania of a Barn Owl banded and released by the OF may indicate that some of these birds are migrating out of the province. Predation by Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls is another huge obstacle facing young Barn Owls after release. The combination of unfamiliar territory and inexperience has resulted in a high mortality rate.

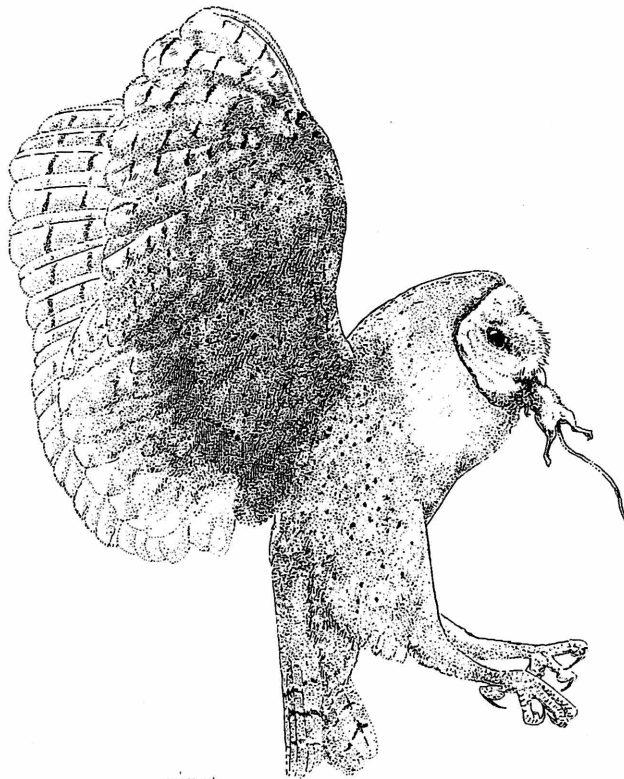
Mary Ellen asked me to scout around and find a suitable release site, suggesting these parameters: "Open areas with large uncultivated fields where a good prey base exists, but without large adjacent woodlots where Great Horned Owls may reside. These fallow fields might also have abandoned barns or buildings with openings to the outside, or small isolated conifer stands where the young Barn Owls could roost in safety during their first few critical days of freedom."

I reasoned that areas where Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers usually wintered might be a suitable release site.

Starting at Hamilton and working my way south toward the north shore of Lake Erie, I found a number of areas that might be suitable but less than ideal. Finally I settled on an area with the most positive characteristics and the fewest negatives. The release site would be east of Hagersville in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Haldimand Regional Road 20 and Cheapside Road. The large uncultivated field contained two dilapidated farm outbuildings and a small bushy area with a few deciduous trees where the farmhouse must have been. Immediately to the north was a small scrap yard that has traditionally been good for Short-eared Owls, and more open fields north and east of Regional Road 20. To the west lay a large powerline corridor that bisects the site. Only one small woodlot was in the immediate area.

A few weeks later we received a call from Kay McKeever informing us that the release date was dusk on Sunday August 16, weather permitting, and asking us to be at the Owl Foundation at 4:00 p.m.

Sunday morning rain and threatening thunderstorms cleared by the afternoon. Sharon and I arrived at the Owl Foundation, which is off Victoria Road in Vineland, Ontario. The OF headquarters comprise a former fruit farm owned by the McKeever family adjacent to Twenty Mile Creek, near Jordan Harbour in the heart of the Niagara fruit growing region. From the parking lot we walked to the rambling stone and wood house built at the top of the bank of the creek. Kay's husband, Larry, escorted us to the sunroom which was filled with a collection of knick-knacks and owl memorabilia. The walls were covered with letters, plaques and testimonials citing Kay's achievements. From the sunroom, the entire bank of the creek was covered with wire and wooden cages, some several storeys high. Here the work of rehabilitating injured owls is performed and the captive breeding program is monitored, mostly with injured owls that were too badly hurt to be released. The confusing nature of the centre is not due to lack of care or planning but to the commitment to a labour of love and to the evolution of program that is pioneering in nature. A small noise above caused me to look up, and in one corner of the sunroom



Barn Owl

ceiling sat an Eastern Screech-Owl. In another was a Long-eared Owl with one ear tuft. Just then, Kay came into the room, introduced herself and escorted Sharon and me on a tour.

We first went to the monitoring room where close circuit cameras accessed all cages. Remote monitoring of the birds is necessary because all the injured birds are wild, and the young birds produced by the captive breeding program must be exposed to a minimum of human contact to avoid imprinting. Outside we toured the owl cages where evidence of human disregard for these magnificent birds surrounded us. We saw owls that had been shot or hit by cars; owls that were casualties of powerlines; owls emaciated from starvation or chemical exposure, or victims of leghold traps; the majority in need of care, not resulting from the vagaries of nature but from human intervention. Common species such as Eastern Screech and Great Horned Owls are in residence along with uncommon, rare and declining species such as Flammulated, Spotted and Burrowing Owls, sent from across the continent. Migrant northern owls such as Snowy, Boreal, Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls are there as well, driven south in their wintertime search for food but ending up the beneficiaries of the skill of Kay and her staff.

The simple looking plastic-coated wire and wood cages belie a complicated, well-designed evolutionary technology that allows the injured birds to fly and exercise. Partitions can be removed to allow a community of birds free choice in the selection of a mate, then closed off to isolate the breeding birds during egg-laying, incubation and rearing of the young.

Kay explained fascinating facts about owl biology, predation by feral cats, and the logistics of maintaining the mouse colony, the main source of food for the residents. Kay introduced us to "Granny", a Spectacled Owl from Central America. Granny had been imprinted by human contact and is destined to live out her life earning her keep as a foster mother, brooding and caring for young owls. Kay believes Granny is at least 25 years old now, almost blinded by cataracts, yet still responsive to Kay's voice.

At 6:00 p.m. it was time to catch and band the Barn Owls if we were to release them at dusk. The birds had gone through a training period where they learned to recognize live brown mice as food and develop some skill at catching them. Any thought that these birds were not wild disappeared when Kay and I entered the cage. The screeching birds fled from us to the farthest corner. Kay reached out with a fishing net and nimbly captured each owl as it flew across the ceiling of the cage. Thank goodness for leather work-gloves because one bird tried diligently to remove one of my fingers as I held it while Kay installed the identifying leg band and Sharon recorded the band number. With three young Barn Owls safely stored in individual cardboard boxes, we headed towards Hagersville and the release site.

Sharon and I reached the abandoned farm at RR 20 and Cheapside Road at about 7:45 p.m. We carried the three boxes down the overgrown lane and prepared to release the birds. I opened the first box and when the young owl flew out, it flew north toward the scrap yard and across RR 20. I realized the bird's first objective was to get away from me, so the direction it was facing was the direction it flew. The next two birds were

released facing the abandoned barn. One flew toward the building and landed on the tin roof. It was harassed by a few starlings and when a loose piece of sheet metal rattled in the breeze, the young owl flew south and landed in the weedy field out of sight. The last bird released flew toward the old barn and right into the open peak of the roof. We drove around until dark but didn't see the Barn Owls again.

It had been quite a day! A number of jumbled thoughts and emotions crowded in: respect and admiration for Kay's life's work in such a noble cause; the majesty and power of these beautiful enigmatic birds, especially when one feels the vibrant energy of beak and talon; and the sadness of knowing that these birds are unlikely to survive, balanced by the hope that humans are made better for the effort. I wish to thank Kay McKeever and Mary Ellen Hebb of the Owl Rehabilitation and Research Foundation for such an uplifting experience.

Postscript: As of May 1995, nothing is known of the fate of these three Barn Owls. The discovery of a banded released owl too often involves the mortality of the bird. On a recent trip past the October 1992 release site, I discovered that the larger of the two abandoned outbuildings had been torn down.

Since the initial release in 1992, I have done three additional Barn Owl releases, including the Barn Owl that had been found in Toronto with falconer's jesses on its legs. As of this writing, none of the released birds has been sighted. Because suitable and safe release sites are always a challenge to locate, we are now pleased to have permission to release on a site with an excellent barn and adjacent fields. Four more releases are planned for late May 1995. Two of the owls will find their freedom at the new location, the other two at Hagersville.

Individuals or organizations wishing to support the Owl Foundation should write to: The Owl Foundation, RR 1, Vineland Station, Ontario L0R 2E0

Bird Teasers by Hugh Currie

1. We know that Musk-oxen form a defensive circle facing out. What Ontario bird does the same when roosting?
2. What is the only Ontario gull that can dive on the wing and swim underwater to capture food?
3. Two of our woodpeckers often perch cross-wise on a branch. One is common in Ontario, the other very rare. Name them.
4. What bird, which has occurred in Ontario though never nested here, builds a paved approach of small stones to its nest?
5. There are 14 species that have occurred in northern Ontario (north of 47 degrees latitude) but not in southern Ontario, according to the 1994 OBRC Review List. How many can you name?
6. What Ontario birds have a comb on their middle toe?
7. What two Ontario birds have two colour morphs that occur only in the female?

Answers page 7.

OBRC

by Bob Curry

The Annual Meeting of the Records Committee was an all-day session at the Royal Ontario Museum on Saturday 4 March 1995. Close to 200 reports have been processed for 1994, the details of which will appear in the 1994 Annual Report to be published in *ONTARIO BIRDS* later this year. Several new Ontario birds will appear in that report.

This note will not pre-empt the report but it does seem relevant to inform you that House Finch is no longer a write-up bird for northern Ontario. It now seems to have established "outposts" in many of the northern communities along the Trans-Canada Highway and rail lines west to the Manitoba border (or is it eastward from there!).

For three members the March meeting was their final one. As mentioned previously, Ron Pittaway will be stepping down as secretary after a total of eight years of (not consecutive) service. Richard Knapton has completed four years of service and Ron Tozer retires from a second three-year term. Members owe a debt of gratitude for the tireless, and mostly thankless, work of these retiring members. Why not say so to them, next time you see them in the field? Committee membership for 1995 was listed in the last (February) edition of *OFO NEWS*. The Committee has been honing and fine-tuning its Operating Guidelines over the past several years and they probably will remain workable for some time to come. If you wish to know anything about the procedures of the Committee, including details of how records are examined and how decisions are made, you may acquire a copy of the 16 page document by writing to me at 92 Hostein Drive, Ancaster, ON L9G 2S7.

Send your rare bird reports directly to Rob Dobos, OBRC Secretary, 178 Cedarbrae Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 4S3 or to Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 62014, Burlington Mall Postal Outlet, Burlington, ON L7R 4K2.

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 that follow the arrangement of Earl Godfrey's **The Birds of Canada**. Many sounds discussed in these articles have the corresponding tape or CD track number in brackets to help you.*

Meadowlarks. The first meadowlark I recorded was a Western in the mid-1970s. It sat on the fencepost beside my car and sang its heart out. All I had to do was roll down the window, stick out the microphone, and turn on the record button. I recorded my first Eastern Meadowlark 20 years later! The reason is the Eastern Meadowlark is so shy that I could never get close enough to make a proper recording. When I shared this story with Tony Beck, a well-known photographer, I was amazed to hear about his similar experiences. The difference in temperament between these two species is so noticeable that it could be used as a "field mark". An approachable meadowlark is probably a Western and a skittish nervous bird is more likely to be an Eastern Meadowlark.

Warblers. Would you be surprised to learn that warblers can mimic the songs of other warblers? My first introduction to this phenomenon occurred in Quebec's La Verendrye Park (north of Ottawa) some 20 years ago. I was studying a Nashville Warbler singing a Tennessee Warbler's song. This was in an area where both species nested. On another occasion when walking the Alaskan Highway outside Dawson in the Yukon I heard a strange warbler. After a few moments of searching I found a Yellow Warbler singing the song of a Northern Waterthrush! If you listen to the Yellow Warbler on Vol 3 CD #1 Track 7.3, you will be able to compare the song to that of the background bird—the Northern Waterthrush. I think that whenever singing males of different species are within earshot of each other they can learn to sing each other's song. This capacity to mimic makes the art of field identification a little more challenging!

Sparrows. Let us carry our discussion of mimics, where the mimicking species occupy the same nesting habitat, to situations where they don't. The dry trill of the Chipping Sparrow is well-known. But I have heard Chipping Sparrows copy the songs of Clay-colored Sparrows and Orange-crowned Warblers. In both cases the mimicked species was not in the same area. Did the sparrow learn the song during migration when the other species were present and singing? Or do Chipping Sparrows learn to sing the proper way by practising with whatever comes from their vocal chords and it just happens to sound like another "trilly" singing species?



Eastern Meadowlark

World Champion Birders

OFO congratulates Paul Pratt, Bruce Di Labio, Tom Hince and driver Glenn Gervais (police officer) for setting an all time record of 225 species to win the 1995 New Jersey World Series of Birding. Their best birds were Pacific Loon and 32 species of warblers. They began in the Appalachian Mountains in the far northwest part of the state, going to Cape May and finishing at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge where the light was fantastic for seeing waterfowl and shorebirds. The Ontario team beat over 50 other teams!

What To Know When Buying Binoculars

by Vitus Schilling of Leica Camera

This is the first in a series for birders considering the acquisition of binoculars.

PORRO-prisms vs ROOF-prisms

Binoculars are essentially two telescopes that magnify an image onto the retina of the human eye. In their simplest form, such telescopes consist of a converging (bi-convex) objective lens that projects approaching light rays into its focal point, from which an eyepiece lens (ocular) collects these light rays and magnifies them into the observer's eye. Here they are perceived inverted and laterally reversed.

Simple telescopes for astronomy still use such an upside-down and reversed image. However, for terrestrial observation it is necessary to incorporate an element that reverses these light rays to make the image look normal. This is achieved with a set of prisms that come in various shapes and arrangements. The term "prism binoculars" stems from converting a telescope for astronomy into one for terrestrial use. This was first achieved by the Italian surveyor PORRO who, in 1854, patented the prism system that was named after him. Such binoculars are the classical shape and are still known and available as "PORRO-prism binoculars".

Over the years, the design of binoculars has undergone updates and changes, particularly in the type or shape of prisms, which changed the size and shape of binoculars. ROOF-prisms permit the designer and optical engineer to create a much more compact and somewhat lighter pair of binoculars.

To the annoyance of the optical engineer, light rays behave in a different manner when passing through a ROOF-prism compared to a PORRO-prism. Both reverse and upright the image, but a ROOF-prism splits each light wave into two partial or half waves. Unfortunately, one half undergoes a slowdown in its travel speed, which is termed "out of phase". A specially developed coating applied to all ROOF-prism surfaces guides the slower half wave motion back on track, bringing it "into phase" again. This "P-coating" ensures maximum contrast and fatigue-free observation over extended periods. Therefore, when buying ROOF-prism binoculars make sure they come with "P-coating".

Most people find that ROOF-prism binoculars are more comfortable to handle than PORRO-prism binoculars, but how does the image quality compare? Are there qualitative differences between the two systems? The answer is clearly "no".

Answers to Bird Teasers

1. Northern Bobwhite 2. Black-legged Kittiwake (See Bent's *Life Histories* and *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* (1977) 3. Lewis's Woodpecker and Northern Flicker 4. Rock Wren 5. Rock Ptarmigan, Inca Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Common Poorwill, Green Violet-ear, Western Wood-Pewee, Dusky Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Clark's Nutcracker, Sprague's Pipit, Black-throated Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Crested Caracara (accepted by the OBRC for the south in 1994 after the review list was published) 6. Birds in the family Caprimulgidae: Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Chuck-will's-widow, Lesser Nighthawk and Common Poorwill; bitterns; herons; and Common Barn Owl, have a pectinated (toothed like a comb) middle claw called a feather comb. See the *Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by Terres (1982) for more discussion about the purpose of this feather comb. 7. Eurasian Wigeon and Spruce Grouse. See *National Geographic Guide* (1987).

Future Field Trips

September 9, Saturday. Presqu'île Provincial Park. Meet at the Lighthouse Parking Lot at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Sid Hadlington.

September 30, Saturday. Cornwall, Robert Moses Power Dam & Area. Meet at Tim Horton Donuts on Highway 138 at Brookdale in Cornwall at 9:00 a.m. Leader: Bruce Di Labio. Bring proof of Canadian citizenship to enter US.

October 15, Sunday. Lake Ontario Pelagic. Now leaving Toronto at the foot of Jarvis St. at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Ron Pittaway.
SOLD OUT

OFO trips

Petroglyphs

by Geoff Carpentier

One of the coldest days of the year was 5 February 1995, when I led 23 hardy OFO members to the park and the ridge at Nephton Mines. Few birds were seen because of the strong north-west winds and the bitterly cold temperatures (-45C), but we found Bald Eagles, Red Crossbills and Common Ravens. The group enjoyed seeing Fisher tracks in the park.

Fisherville

by Gerry Shemilt

On a cold but beautiful 12 February, 24 people turned out for the trip to Fisherville, an outstanding area at this time of year for birds of prey. The group saw 85 Red-tailed Hawks, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, 4 Northern Harriers, 7 American Kestrels, 4 Long-eared Owls, a Saw-whet, a Great Horned, and an amazing 25 Short-eared Owls. Other highlights included 2 Vesper Sparrows, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, Snow Bunting, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, plus many other wintering species. Many thanks to leader John Miles who knows the area "like the back of his hand".

Algonquin

by Ron Tozer

A full range of weather (sun, cloud, rain and snow flurries) on 22 April actually made for pretty good birding on this year's Algonquin Park outing. An enthusiastic group of 81 birders in 33 cars accompanied Doug and Ron Tozer across the Highway 60 corridor, tallying 65 species for the day. Highlights included a male Spruce Grouse at Spruce Bog Trail which was a life bird for many, a male Black-backed Woodpecker excavating a nest hole, a Gray Jay at its nest, close views of beautiful Red Crossbills, and a Pine Siskin nest. A few people heard Boreal Chickadees, but seeing these elusive northern waifs will have to wait until next time.

Red-shouldered Hawk Update

by Jean Iron

The Red-shouldered Hawk is Ontario's most colourful buteo, especially when migrants are seen over snow-covered fields in mid-March. Once a common breeder in southern Ontario, the forest-loving Red-shouldered Hawk has been displaced by the more open country-loving Red-tailed Hawk. Today, the stronghold of Ontario's breeding Red-shouldered Hawks is the forested southern edge of the Canadian Shield from Parry Sound and Muskoka to Kingston north to the Ottawa Valley and the south edge of Algonquin Park.

The Canadian population of Red-shouldered Hawks is estimated at 2000 to 5000 pairs and is stable or increasing (*Bird Trends*, Number 4, Winter 1994/95). It is designated as "vulnerable" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and as "rare" in Ontario by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). Red-shouldered Hawks are protected by the *Game and Fish Act* in Ontario.

Because it is a species of special concern, the MNR has developed guidelines for nest and habitat protection in areas designated for forest operations on Crown land. Areas allocated for harvest (logging) or other activities (e.g. roads) are surveyed by MNR staff prior to any harvesting activities. Nest sites of Red-shouldered Hawks are protected by establishing an Area-of-Concern (AOC) around active nests. The AOC consists of a reserve and a modified area. The reserve area has a radius of 150 metres (7 hectares) around an active nest where no cutting or road construction is allowed. The modified area consists of an additional area (21 hectares), often an irregular shape, three times as large as the reserve, which may include alternate nests. Alternate

nests outside the reserve are also protected by a reserve of one tree length away from the nest. No disturbance during the period March 1 to July 31 is allowed in either area; however, trees may be selectively cut in the modified area during the non-breeding season as long as a canopy closure of 70% is maintained (MNR Fact Sheet on Red-shouldered Hawks and Mike Turner, pers. comm.).

Are these Areas-of-Concern working? Preliminary results of a monitoring study conducted by the MNR between 1989 and 1993 suggest the AOC guidelines are effective. "Nest sites cut with the guidelines appear to be reused as frequently and produce as many young as nest sites that did not receive any cutting" (Brian Naylor, pers. comm.). There is more good news. In the past loggers usually took most of the largest and best trees (high grading), leaving stands of smaller trees that were less suited to forest hawks like the Red-shouldered. For example, using a blended approach to management that includes Area-of-Concern protection and lighter selection cuts, a MNR study in Carleton Place District predicts that the supply of suitable and optimal Red-shouldered habitat on Crown land in Carleton Place District should increase over the next twenty years. The future for the Red-shouldered Hawk in Ontario looks promising.

The information in this article was largely taken from Red-shouldered Hawk Habitat Supply Analysis for Lanark and Algonquin Park Timber Management Plans in OnLine Central Region Science and Technology, Winter 1995, published by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Bird Trends is published annually and is an excellent resource for people interested in birds. It is available free by writing to Migratory Birds Conservation Division, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3.

The Pileated Corner

The Pileated Woodpecker is OFO's official logo and Canada's largest woodpecker, inhabiting forested areas across the continent. At the turn of the century as the forests were cleared, its numbers had dwindled so low that many feared it would be doomed like the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Then in the 1920s, its population rebounded and it reappeared in areas once deserted. Maybe it adapted to smaller woodlots and more human interference, the reasons are uncertain. Today in Ontario the Pileated seems to be more common. This shy elusive bird of the deep woods is now occurring in city parks and ravines. It is even coming to feeders.

Pileated can be pronounced PIE-leh-ated or PIL-eh-ated. The name of the genus comes from the Greek *Dryocopus* meaning a "wood cutter" and the species name from the latin *pileatus* which means "crested". The Pileated has had many colourful and aptly descriptive names, *log-cock*, *cock-of-the-woods*, *black woodcock*, *black woodpecker*, *king-of-the-woods*, *laughing woodpecker*, *woodhen*, *Johnny-cock*.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is currently developing guidelines for the protection and management of the Pileated Woodpecker on Crown lands subject to the *Environmental Assessment Act*. OFO NEWS will announce in the next issue how members can participate in the MNR's study of the Pileated Woodpecker.



Pileated Woodpecker

1995 Peregrine Falcon Inventory

The Peregrine Falcon is endangered in Ontario, and has not nested here for several recent decades. Ontario will participate in a nation-wide inventory of the Peregrine Falcon population in 1995. Information on active nests, occupied territories, birds seen during the breeding season (April-August), number of young, and leg bands will help establish the status of Ontario's population. Please report sightings to your local Ministry of Natural Resources office or to Ted Armstrong, MNR, 435 James Street South, Thunder Bay, ON P7E 6E3. (807) 475-1127, fax: (807) 473-3023. Information is confidential.

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