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N SHAW '86...



Ontario Birds

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Editorial Policy

Ontario Birds is the journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Its aim is to provide a vehicle for the documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles or short notes on the status of bird species in Ontario, significant provincial or county distributional records, tips on bird identification, behavioural observations of birds in Ontario, location guides to significant birdwatching areas in Ontario, book reviews and similar

material of interest on Ontario birds. We do not accept submissions dealing with "listing" and we discourage Seasonal Reports of bird sightings as these are covered by *Bird Finding in Canada* and *American Birds*, respectively. Distributional records of species for which the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) requires documentation must be accepted by them before they can be published in *Ontario Birds*.

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Letters to the Editor

OBRC guidelines questioned

A questionable element in the evaluation policy of the Ontario Bird Records Committee was evidently highlighted in the interesting article by B. Di Labio and J. Bouvier in your last issue (*Ontario Birds* 4:19-21, 1986). In their report of the first confirmed record of Atlantic Puffin for Ontario, they point out that the 1881 record from Ottawa is suspect, in part, because "... the specimen was apparently never examined by an ornithological curator of a major institutional collection. . .", and that this contravened a requirement of the OBRC in such cases. Should we be surprised, however, that it was not examined by such a person back then? I'm not, since I can't think of *one* ornithological curator anywhere in Canada at that time or for quite a few years to come. John Macoun was only brought to Ottawa as the first government 'naturalist' in 1882 and it wasn't until he retired in 1911 that Percy Taverner was hired as the *first* federal government ornithologist. I don't believe that the situation was much more advanced than that elsewhere in Ontario and/or Canada. Do we then dismiss all records based on now-missing specimens because they were 'only' examined by the likes of J.H. Fleming, W.E. Saunders, G.R. White, etc.? Conversely, will any such cases today be accepted in the future just because someone with

the title of curator of an ornithological collection examined them? I doubt that our descendents will be so automatically trusting on the basis of a job title.

Surely the point here is that some record of a qualified ornithologist of standing having examined the specimen should be quite satisfactory. Nothing in this world is 100% but that should be acceptably close. In the case of the Ottawa River record of Puffin in 1881, I'll happily throw in my lot with the likes of John Macoun, Percy Taverner, W.E. Godfrey and the A.O.U. Checklist Committee—all of whom accept White's original identification.

Dan Brunton
Ottawa, Ontario

Reply to Dan Brunton

Mr. Brunton has apparently not read the guidelines which he has criticized. The section which he finds questionable, and cited inappropriately in the Di Labio-Bouvier article, deals with *Specimens Missing from Major Institutional Collections* where no written description or photograph exists. Is evidence of prior examination by the ornithological curator responsible for the collection then so unreasonable? The White Collection, where the 1881 puffin apparently resided, obviously was not that of a major institution. For specimens in such private collections the OBRC guidelines call for a complete

description or photograph, which applies to both missing *and* extant specimens.

However, the guidelines are not inflexible, and where justified by unusual circumstances, alternate treatments may well be applied. Regardless of the treatment, for all records reviewed by the OBRC, it must first be established that the record does in fact pertain to Ontario, and to gain acceptance, there must be proof of correct identification. Perhaps, for records such as the 1881 puffin, the OBRC should accept the opinion of a qualified, contemporary expert as proof of correct identification. But, for the 1881 puffin, nothing of substance exists. The specimen has been missing since at least 1923, a description apparently does not exist, the collection data are obscure, and it cannot be established if someone qualified ever examined it. (Our apologies, but G.R. White, W.H. Scott and E.G. White, in whom Mr. Brunton has placed so much faith, are unknown to us). These are the reasons why the OBRC cannot consider this record.

A number of possibilities exist which are not ruled out by the limited evidence available. The specimen may have been collected on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River; the bird, being an immature, could have been a species of puffin other than Atlantic; worse yet, the collection data may have been falsified (as has been shown for old, supposedly Ontario specimens of Snowy Plover).

Of course, Mr. Brunton—or anyone else—is at liberty to believe the correctness of the 1881 puffin record and cite it in literature is so desired. However, the OBRC cannot add a species to the official Ontario checklist based on such slim evidence, just as we cannot accept a modern record based on someone stating “I saw a Reddish Egret yesterday”, without providing a written description, photograph or specimen to support such a claim. Based on the criteria advanced by Mr. Brunton, Carbonated Warbler (Audubon) should be placed on the checklist for Kentucky, and Small-headed Warbler (Wilson, Audubon) should be added to the lists for Kentucky and New Jersey!

The main purpose of the OBRC is to bring about a high standard of documentation of rare bird occurrences, and to place the received material on permanent file for the benefit of future researchers. We hope the above comments answer the questions that have been raised.

Dennis Rupert
Chairman, OBRC

Alan Wormington
Secretary, OBRC

The Occurrence and Identification of Swainson's Hawk in Ontario[©]

by
Bruce W. Duncan

Introduction

Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) are rare visitors to Ontario, most often being seen on migration. This paper examines the occurrence of the species in the province and compares it with reports from the rest of eastern North America as well as the migration in the west. Descriptions of the two colour phases, both as adults and immatures, are included to assist in field identification.

Occurrence in Ontario

Sixteen records of Swainson's Hawk in this province have been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. In addition, two specimens, one in the National Museum of Natural Science, Ottawa and the other in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. have been obtained in Ontario. All are listed in Table 1.

These records appear to involve spring and fall migrants, mostly light phase birds, with the majority being seen in the autumn. Since the three late nineteenth century

specimens, there have been only two sightings prior to 1975 and 13 from 1975 to 1985.

Since the Swainson's Hawk is a western species with a summer range in the prairies and a winter home in the pampas of Argentina, this paucity of Ontario records is hardly surprising. In Figure 1 and Table 2 additional sightings¹ for the eastern part of the continent north of Florida are indicated. The map is not a complete record of Swainson's Hawk sightings but does give an indication of where, when and how frequently they have occurred. It also permits comparison with the Ontario records.

Figure 1 indicates locations and seasonal occurrence of 108 eastern North American records of Swainson's Hawks. Of these, 20 were aged and 24 had colour phase recorded. Table 3 summarizes these along with ages and colour phases of Ontario birds.

The figures in Table 3 are not of much significance since the majority of non-Ontario sightings, bandings and collections were not

¹ These records come from various state and provincial avifaunas, regional reports for *American Birds*, Hawk Migration Association of North America site reports and personal communications from a number of raptor experts. For this paper, I am assuming that these identification are correct.

Table 1: Records of Swainson's Hawk in Ontario: 1881-1985.

Date	Location	Age & Colour Phase	Source
10 Apr. 1977	Grimsby, Niagara Region	adult, light	Wormington (1986)
14 May 1984	Point Pelee, Essex Co.	immature, light	Wormington (1985)
19 May 1983	Rainy River, Rainy River District	adult, light	James (1984)
22 May 1894	Willowdale (Toronto), York R.M.	adult (female)*, dark	Wormington (1985)
25 May 1982	Moose River mouth, Cochrane District	adult, light	Wormington (1985)
5 Sep. 1890	Toronto, York R.M.	immature (male)*, light	Wormington (1985)
13 Sep. 1975	Port Stanley, Elgin Co.	immature, light	Wormington (1985)
15 Sep. 1980	Port Stanley, Elgin Co.	adult, light	James (1984)
15 Sep. 1981	Holiday Beach, Essex Co.	adult, light	James (1983)
19 Sep. 1976	Port Stanley, Elgin Co.	adult, light	Wormington (1985)
19-27 Sep. 1984	Rock Point Prov. Park, Haldimand-Norfolk R.M.	immature, light	Wormington (1985)
26 Sep. 1984	Port Rowan, Haldimand-Norfolk R.M.	adult, light	Wormington (1986)
3 Oct. 1933	Bellview, Ottawa-Carleton R.M.	immature (female)*, light	M. Gosselin (pers. comm.)
3 Oct. 1976	Port Stanley, Elgin Co.	immature, light	Wormington (1985)
20 Oct. 1985	Port Stanley, Elgin Co.	adult, light	Wormington (1986)
22 Oct. 1933	Burlington, Hamilton-Wentworth R.M.	— — —, light	Wormington (1985)
27 Oct. 1983	Rainy River, Rainy River District	adult, light	James (1984)
undated 1881	Moose Factory, Cochrane District	adult, intermediate	J. Dean (pers. comm.)

* Sexed birds were collected and are housed in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (Specimens #35982 and 35987) and National Museum of Canada, Ottawa (Specimen #25687)

aged nor did they have colour phase noted. In order for a record to be accepted by this province's Bird Records Committee, colour phase and age would probably be necessary. In fact, only one of Ontario's sightings lacks an age or colour phase.

Most of the eastern sightings of Swainson's Hawks are of the light phase, which is the commonest colour in the eastern part of the breeding range. For example, Munro and Reid (1982) write, "Dark phase Swainson's Hawks

are uncommon in Manitoba (Gardner 1971), Saskatchewan (Pittman 1943) and Wyoming (Dunkle 1977) but become more abundant in Washington (Bowles and Decker 1934) and California (Sharp 1902)." In the summer of 1984, I saw only one dark phase bird out of 100-plus in a week-long excursion to eastern Colorado. The further west one goes, the more dark phase Swainson's Hawks one sees.

Dunkle (1977) also found that the preference of Swainson's Hawk

for a mate of the same colour was significant ($p < 0.05$) although not universal. Because of this scarcity of breeding by light x dark pairs, a union which presumably produces "intermediate" offspring on occasion, the great majority of birds seen are classifiable as "light" or "dark". Alternatively, the so-called "intermediate" phase may be an erythristic or reddish phase, separate from the light and dark phases (Brown and Amadon 1968).

Dates of Occurrence

How do the dates of eastern sightings elsewhere compare with Ontario's? Ontario records are as follows:

Spring (5 sightings):

10 April - 25 May.

Fall (12 sightings):

5 September - 27 October.

At approximately the same latitudes (i.e., Quebec, Maine, Vermont, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts), the following results were obtained:

Spring (15 sightings):

31 March² then

20 April - 31 May.

Fall (15 sightings):

22 August² then

9 September - 1 November.

(There are also single winter records from Rhode Island and Massachusetts and one summer record from Rhode Island).

Ontario's records fall within the extremes noted to the east of us.

When these occurrences are graphed along with Michigan records, which are also at the same latitudes, (Figure 2) there appear to

be two peaks for both spring and fall migrations. The data are, however, scanty and become even more meagre if only known-age birds of this group are plotted (Figure 3). There is some indication that in general, immatures precede adults during the fall, as is true for Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) at these latitudes (Duncan 1983). Remember, though, that this statement is based on only 17 occurrences. The trends of more adults vs. immatures and the earlier sightings of immatures in spring are based on only nine occurrences and are, therefore, even more speculative than statements concerning the fall migration.

Just west, in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, again at similar latitudes, sightings made mainly from the major hawk lookouts and banding stations (Hawk Ridge, Minnesota; Cedar Grove, Wisconsin; Little Suamico, Wisconsin and Whitefish Point, Michigan) are as follows:

Spring (5 sightings):

4 April - 19 May.

Fall (41 sightings):

31 August - 21 October.

These data are taken from Beebe (1933), Green and Janssen (1975), Mueller and Berger (1959), Wood (1943), J. Baumgartner (pers. comm.), D. Brinker (pers. comm.) and D. Evans (pers. comm.). Most of the Ontario sightings fall within these dates, although there are one spring and two fall records later than these.

² Since 31 March and 22 August are exceptionally early dates, they are separated from the more typical dates above.

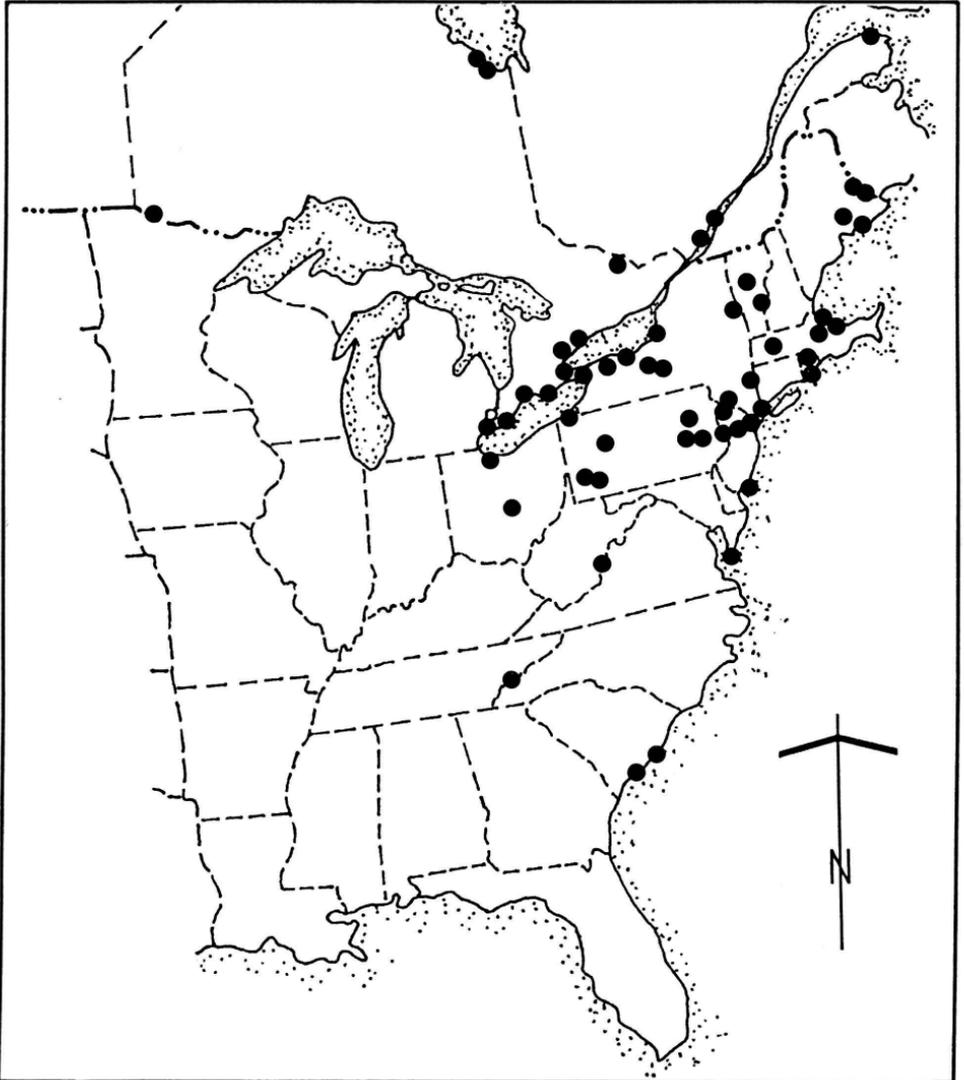


Figure 1: Occurrence of Swainson's Hawks in eastern North America (excluding Florida): 1871 - 1985.

	PROVINCES AND STATES														Total
	ON	PQ	ME	VT	NY	RI	MA	PA	OH	NJ	VA	WV	SC	TN	
Spring	5	2	2	1	6	2	2	1		1					22
Summer		1				1			1	2					5
Fall	12	1	2	1	6	1	3	14		33	1	1	2	1	78
Winter							1		1						2
Undated	1														1
TOTAL	18	4	4	2	12	4	6	15	2	36	1	1	2	1	108

Swainson's Hawks in the west typically migrate in large flocks, travelling as far as 15,000 km each way over a period of about 70 days (Houston 1982). To give some indication of the timing in the usual migratory pathways, Table 4 presents spring and fall dates at different latitudes. At the same latitudes as Ontario's (42°N and north) spring arrivals occur after mid-April. Ontario's records follow a similar pattern with the exception of one slightly earlier sighting (10 April 1977 at Grimsby; Table 1). Western fall departures are mostly complete by late September; however, one third of Ontario's fall records are in October.

To the south and east of Ontario, at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania and Cape May, New Jersey (latitudes 38 - 40°N), Swainson's Hawks are seen in November (5 records) as well as earlier in the fall (see Table 2). Some of these birds may winter in southern Florida (latitude 25°N), where migrants noted in *American Birds* for the past ten years have occurred as follows:

- September—1 record (on the 4th; described as "very early").
- October—4 records.
- November—30 records (no later than the 21st).

These data are taken from Eds-corn (1976), and Atherton and Atherton (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984).

As many as 100 Swainson's Hawks have been seen over several days in early November in southern Florida (e.g., Miami in 1952) and 25 were sighted on 7 November 1947 at Boca Chica Key

(Sprunt 1952). Some birds, mostly immatures, winter in the Keys and southern tip of the Florida peninsula (Sprunt 1952). It is possible that most of the Swainson's Hawks seen in the east winter in Florida or continue southward in late fall from island to island in the Gulf of Mexico.

Post-Breeding Dispersal

From all of the above it is apparent that in eastern North America, the fall migration (if it can be called such) of Swainson's Hawks is more protracted than in the west at similar latitudes. It is my belief that birds seen as far east as southern Ontario are juveniles wandering from their natal area, second summer birds also wandering, and birds whose "directional instinct" or migratory orientation is different from the "norm". Newton (1979) discussed these differing migratory directions in hawks:

"Suppose that the birds from a certain breeding area have heritable tendencies to fly in particular directions at migration time and back again in the spring, but that these directions differ from bird to bird. Some birds will then reach suitable areas and many will survive to breed again. Others will reach less suitable areas and fewer will survive, and yet others will reach unsuitable areas and die. Thus those with the most rewarding directional tendencies will perpetuate themselves, and in this way the migratory habits of a population could become fixed (p. 186)."

The few Swainson's Hawks that are seen in winter in the north-eastern United States would

Table 2: Eastern Records of Swainson's Hawk north of Florida
(excluding Ontario): 1871-1984.

Province/State	Date	Locality	Source
Quebec	"spring" 1894	near Montreal	David (1980)
	28 Apr. 1981	near Valleyfield	David (pers. comm.)
	22 Aug. 1982	Rivière-aux-Rénards, Gaspé	David (pers. comm.)
	17 Sep. 1925	Ste. Anne-de-la-Pérade	David (1980)
Maine	Apr.-May 1977	Moosehorn NWR	Vickery (1978)
	19 May 1888	near Bangor	Brewster (1893)
	15 Sep. 1886	Gouldsboro	Brewster (1893)
	6 Oct. 1892	Calais	Brewster (1893)
Vermont	23 May 1915	Hartland	Bent (1937)
	9 Sep. 1980	Winhall	Kibbe (1981)
New York	31 Mar. 1982	Derby Hill	Klabunde (1983)
	26 Apr. 1979	Derby Hill	Klabunde (1980)
	3 May 1970	Etna	Bull (1974)
	20 May 1979	Braddock Bay	Klabunde (1980)
	24 May 1980	Derby Hill	Klabunde (1981)
	31 May 1980	Derby Hill	Klabunde (1981)
	9 Sep. 1920*	Lake George	Bent (1937)
	1 Oct. 1889	Brockport	Beardslee and Mitchell (1965)
	14 Oct. 1892	Cornwall	Dutcher (1893)
	— Oct. 1877	Onondaga Co.	Bull (1974)
Rhode Island	1 Nov. 1975	Port Jervis	Paxton <i>et al.</i> (1976)
	28 Feb. 1971	Tiverton	Conway (1979)
	29 Apr. 1976	Matunuck	Conway (1979)
	"summer" 1934	-----	Conway (1979)
Massachusetts	14 Nov. 1964	Matunuck	Conway (1979)
	20 Apr. 1872	Hamilton	Bent (1937)
	29 May 1892	Essex	Bent (1937)
	10 Sep. 1979	Mount Tom	Vickery (1980)
	12 Sep. 1876	Wayland	Bent (1937)
	28 Oct. 1889	Salem	Bent (1937)
"winter" 1871-1872	-----	Brewster (1893)	
Pennsylvania	18-20 Apr. 1969	Alleghany Co.	Wood (1979)
	4 Sep. 1978	Presque Isle State Park	Hall (1979)
	5 Sep. 1901	Westmoreland Co.	Todd (1940)
	9 Sep. 1982	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
	19 Sep. 1982	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
	19 Sep. 1982	Wind Gap	Paxton <i>et al.</i> (1983)
	20 Sep. 1971	Berks Co.	Wood (1979)
	26 Sep. 1980	Luzerne Co.	Boyle <i>et al.</i> (1982)
	29 Sep. 1977	30 km west of Hawk Mountain	Buckley <i>et al.</i> (1978)
	13 Oct. 1977	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
	17 Oct. 1966	Jefferson Co.	Wood (1979)
	22 Oct. 1969	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)

Table 2: (continued)

Province/State	Date	Locality	Source
Pennsylvania (continued)	23 Oct. 1984	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
	26 Oct. 1979	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
	22 Nov. 1981	Hawk Mountain	L. Goodrich (pers. comm.)
Ohio	4 June 1978	Ottawa NWR	Thompson (1983)
	31 Dec. 1977	New Lexington	Thompson (1983)
New Jersey	23 Apr. 1981	West Orange	Leck (1984)
	5 Aug. 1983	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	28 Aug. 1982	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	11 Sep. 1981	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	12 Sep. 1978	Livingston	Leck (1984)
	12 Sep. 1982	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	16 Sep. 1973	Cape May	Clark (1976)
	20 Sep. 1980	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	23 Sep. 1980	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	24 Sep. 1981	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	26 Sep. 1981†	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	29 Sep. 1977	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	29 Sep. 1980	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	"23-30 Sep. on" 1984‡	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	2 Oct. 1981	Montclair Hawk Lookout	R. Kane (pers. comm.)
	4 Oct. 1981	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	5 Oct. 1977	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	5 Oct. 1982	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	7 Oct. 1982	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	10 Oct. 1982	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	22 Oct. 1947	Oradell	Leck (1984)
	23 Oct. 1971	New Vernon	Leck (1984)
	26 Oct. 1976	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	27 Oct. 1976	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	29 Oct. 1977	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
	31 Oct. 1980	Hunterdon Co.	Paxton <i>et al.</i> (1981)
	9 Nov. 1981	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)
17 Nov. 1975	Cape May	Clark (1976)	
19 Nov. 1978	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)	
28 Nov. 1976	Cape May	P. Dunne (pers. comm.)	
Virginia	20 Oct. 1979	Fisherman Is.	Scott (1980)
West Virginia	16 Sep. 1897	White Sulphur Springs	Surber (1898), Hall (1983)
South Carolina	9 Nov. 1980	Seabrook Is.	Legrand (1981)
	— Nov. 1935	Bull's Is.	Sprunt and Chamberlain (1949)
Tennessee	27 Sep. 1980	Look Rock, Chilhowee Mtn.	Hall (1981)

* Two birds were collected.

† Three birds on this date.

‡ Five birds during this time.

Table 3: Age and colour phase of Swainson's Hawks recorded in eastern North America north of Florida

Location	Age			Colour Phase			
	Immature	Adult	Not Recorded	Light	Dark	Inter-mediate	Not Recorded
Ontario	6 (33.3%)	11 (61.1%)	1 (5.6%)	16 (88.9%)	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Other Provinces & States	10 (11.1%)	10 (11.1%)	70 (77.8%)	14 (15.6%)	9 (10.0%)	1 (1.1%)	66 (73.3%)

probably not survive to pass on this tendency to offspring. Browning (1974), in an analysis of winter specimens, bandings and band recoveries of Swainson's Hawks in the United States, found that 82% of 38 records were immatures. He writes: "Immature birds of many species . . . are known to depart from the distribution patterns of adults (p. 866)." In the case of Swainson's Hawk, I believe that this is probably because many of them die before reaching breeding age, particularly those choosing wintering areas with much more severe weather than Argentina. The few adults are the survivors who may pass along the trait to their offspring.

Smith (1985) suggests additional and more immediate reasons for these hawks not leaving North America but notes that they are speculative:

- 1) They are unable to obtain sufficient food to put on migratory fat; many of the Swainson's Hawks overwintering in North America are subadults (Browning 1974), suggesting that insufficient experience in prey capture might be a factor.
- 2) Certain individuals may not be "required" to migrate; that is, their food supply is

apparently sufficient for them to make only a minor movement.

- 3) The deposition of sufficient migratory fat may not make a flight mandatory. Should such individuals encounter a "favourable" situation, they might remain.

Besides birds with a different directional instinct from the norm, recently fledged Swainson's Hawks may also drift east before the usual migratory period in the fall. Holt and Frock (1980), through recoveries and retraps of juvenile Red-tailed Hawks banded in Ohio, show that some wander north and east in late summer. Brinker and Erdman (1985) discuss this northeasterly dispersal of young Red-tailed Hawks in relation to the prevailing winds of late summer and early fall. They write:

"The strong southerly [wind] flows of June and July drift some dispersing immatures northward into the upper Midwest . . . During late summer and early autumn, the influence of the southerly trend sinks south and westerly winds drift birds eastward towards the Great Lakes shorelines or the northwest-southeast trending prairie-forest border. This will tend to drift dispersing immature Western Red-tailed Hawks

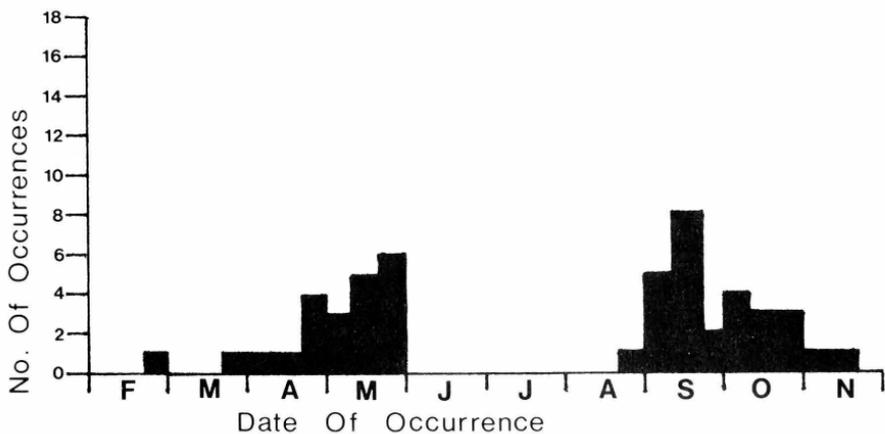


Figure 2: Date of occurrence (by 10-day period) of Swainson's Hawk in eastern North America at latitudes similar to Ontario (including Ontario).

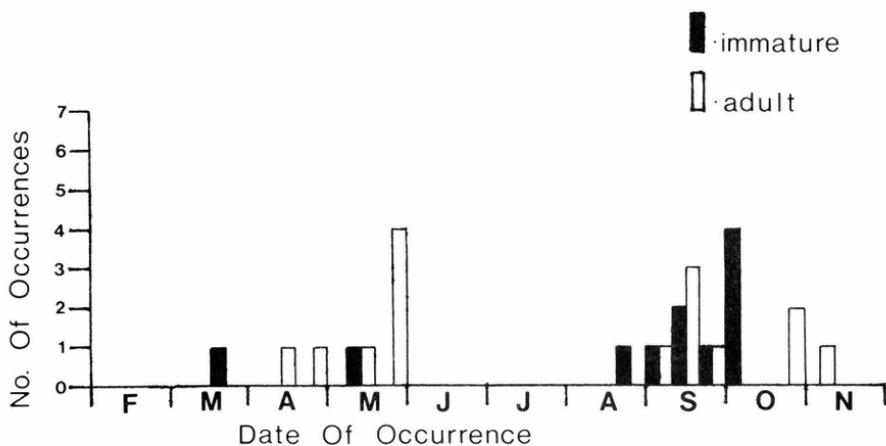


Figure 3: Date of occurrence (by 10-day period) of known-age Swainson's Hawks in eastern North America at latitudes similar to Ontario (including Ontario).

[subspecies *calurus*] and Krider's Red-tailed Hawks [subspecies *krideri*] eastward. This is one of the reasons for occasional observations of plains species such as the Swainson's Hawk in eastern Wisconsin . . . Along with this late summer shift come the first cold fronts that act as triggers for migrant birds (p. 125)."

Swainson's Hawks, as mentioned, are also "pushed" by the winds as they wander from their nest sites. The only evidence of the distances involved in this drift comes from two nestlings banded in Saskatchewan (at about 105°W longitude) in July, 1946 and July, 1953 and recovered in Alabama (87°W longitude), 2,600 km SSE in October, 1946 and in Wisconsin (92°W longitude), 1,300 km SE in October, 1953—both "direct" recoveries (Houston 1968).

Wandering immatures encountering the Great Lakes would, like all of the soaring hawks in North America which are reluctant to cross large bodies of water, be concentrated along the northern

and western shorelines during fall migration. Those that go north of Lakes Superior and Huron would probably end up migrating through Ontario, Quebec and the most northeasterly states. Some might cross at Sault Ste. Marie into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Others that drift east past the southern shorelines of Lakes Michigan, Erie and Ontario might be seen during migration along the Appalachians or Atlantic coastline (two more strong leading lines for this species). The 22 August 1982 immature collected near Rivière-aux-Rénards in the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec (N. David, pers. comm.) and the 5 August 1983 unaged individual seen at Cape May, New Jersey (P. Dunne, pers. comm.), both considered very early fall migrants, were more likely wind-dispersed wanderers still drifting.

Yearling Swainson's Hawks, moulting during the summer from immature to adult plumage, normally do not nest and would be more prone to drift with the winds

Table 4: Migration dates of Swainson's Hawk in western North America

Latitude	Location	Spring	Fall	Source
50° & north	Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba	usually past mid-April	all leave by early September	Salt & Salt (1976)
42-45°N	Wyoming	18 April-3 May	23 August-20 September	Bent (1937) Dunkle (1977)
about 39°N	Colorado	11 March (early)-20 April	25 August-8 October	Bent (1937)
about 35°N	Oklahoma	16 April (peak)	mid-late September	Donohue (1980, 1981)
35°N	New Mexico	-----	1-29 September	Hoffman (1982)
about 30°N	Texas	18 March (early)-5 May	mid-September-mid-October	Donohue (1979a, b; 1982), Sexton (1983a, b; 1984, 1985)
about 90°N	Panama	March-early April	mostly October-early November	Ridgely (1976)

than would nesting adults on territory. I believe that most of the adults seen in the east in fall are these non-nesting birds in fresh plumage. I also think that more drifting immature than adult Swainson's are sighted in the east simply because the young birds are inexperienced in migration, while even yearlings have made the round trip once. They thus may somehow 'know' that eastward dispersal is not a particularly appropriate behaviour for a bird that should move to Argentina for the winter. Note that I am distinguishing these migrants from the wintering birds in the east discussed earlier. A possible explanation of why the majority of Ontario sightings involve adults is provided below.

An interesting test of the above hypothesis would be to examine the number of dark phase adult vs. immature birds seen in the east. These are, in general, the westernmost members of the Swainson's Hawk population and so would need to drift furthest in order to appear in the east during fall migration. If, according to my thinking, juveniles wander with less reluctance than adult-plumaged birds, then the ratio of immature to adult dark phase Swainson's appearing in the east should be higher than the ratio of immature to adult light phase birds since the latter would probably be travelling considerably shorter distances. Unfortunately, ageing a dark phase Swainson's Hawk as it flies by is not always easy. This is a question that specimens and banding data may answer. Of all the fall records I have researched, none of the dark

phase birds has been aged.

Spring Sightings

Spring records of Swainson's Hawks are less frequent than fall records. This is understandable, since the fledgling and yearling dispersal of late summer and early fall has no concomitant in spring and mortality during winter has also reduced the population. The April and May sightings may refer to hawks from southern Florida or birds drifting northeastward on strong winds away from the traditional western flyway. A single Swainson's Hawk in this situation might easily attach itself to a group of Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*), another flocking migrant, and come northeast with them (Figure 4). This phenomenon is not unknown, particularly where flocks of the two species migrate together such as Panama (Ridgely 1976). Again, I believe that most birds would be immatures who have not migrated north before. What information I have however, does not support this: of six birds aged, four were adults, and two were immatures. However, identification of light phase adults is much easier than immatures.

Summary

The records of Swainson's Hawk in the east show a great increase in sightings, beginning in the 1970s.

There are several reasons for this:

- 1) There are far more skilled observers in the field now than 15 years ago.
- 2) Hawk watching and banding at concentration points have become extremely popular and daily observations throughout the spring and fall migrations



Figure 4: Migrating Swainson's Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks, Costa Rica, March 1986. Photo by Ron Ridout.

are made by very expert observers.

- 3) Swainson's Hawks are gradually expanding their nesting range eastward.

Before the prairies were settled, this bird was the common buteo of the countryside (e.g., Manitoba before 1892; see Thompson 1891) until settlers began persecuting it as a "henhawk". With changing attitudes, education, tree planting in previously untreed areas (see Gilmer and Stewart 1984) and protective legislation, the bird has recently nested in places such as Winnipeg (Munro and Reid 1982), eastern Illinois (Keir and Wilde 1976) and eastern Minnesota (Johnson 1982), where it had been absent for many years. There are

even recent unconfirmed summer reports from the Rainy River/Lake-of-the-Woods area of western Ontario.

Identification

Swainson's Hawk is about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk but in flight shows longer, narrower, more pointed wings. During soaring, the wings are held in a slight dihedral, shallower than that of Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) or Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). I noticed a few birds in Colorado occasionally rocking during flight.

Light phase adults (Figures 5 and 6) are distinctive and shown well in all the field guides. (Ignore the *Audubon Society Field Guide to*

North American Birds: Eastern Region (Bull and Farrand 1977) which claims that the tail is brown.) Watch for dark, barred flight feathers contrasting with white to buffy wing linings, an extensive brown breast band, whitish throat and grey tail that at a distance appears darker at the tip, shading to paler grey towards the base. The breast band is extremely variable in extent, very often not extending onto the belly but sometimes covering both breast and belly and becoming fine tawny bars on the lower belly and legs. The back is a fairly uniform dull brown or grey-brown and lacks the white markings of the Red-tail. There may be fine (less than 5 mm) tawny or rufous edges to some back and wing covert feathers. A white area on each side of the rump and upper tail is visible in flying birds, both adult and immature light phase, when seen from above.

At close range the tail banding of light phase adults can be seen: the grey-brown tip, dark sub-terminal bar that is twice the thickness of the others in the tail,



Figure 5: Adult light phase Swainson's Hawk, Texas, March 1977. Photo by Barry Cheriére.

and the fine, wavy bars from there up. The base colour pales proximally. Perched, the bird's folded wings appear quite pointed and extend virtually to the tip of the tail. The tarsi are feathered halfway down in front only and are bare and yellow below that. The breast band is typically reddish-brown although this varies. There is a narrow whitish area behind the cere, sometimes continuing as a superciliary stripe.

Dark phase adults (Figure 6) appear to be fairly uniformly dark brown in body and flight feathers. The underwing coverts have a variable amount of rufous in them (lacking in flight feathers) although this may be almost impossible to see in the field. The tail is the same as for light phase but may have a wider subterminal dark bar. There is usually a small light area behind the cere. Dark phase Rough-legged Hawks (*Buteo lagopus*) are superficially similar but the pale flight feathers distinguish them readily. Immature western Red-tailed Hawks (subspecies *calurus*) may be a problem since they also appear regularly but in small numbers in Ontario. These birds differ in flight style and wing shape and have pale wedge-shaped areas ("wing windows") in the primaries (as in immature eastern Red-tails (subspecies *Borealis*)), lighter coloured flight feathers and some rufous in the chest and belly. The rufous colouring is not usually visible on a flying bird. The tail is brown with fine dark bars above and below.

Immature dark phase Swainson's (Figure 7) present a more mottled appearance than adults.

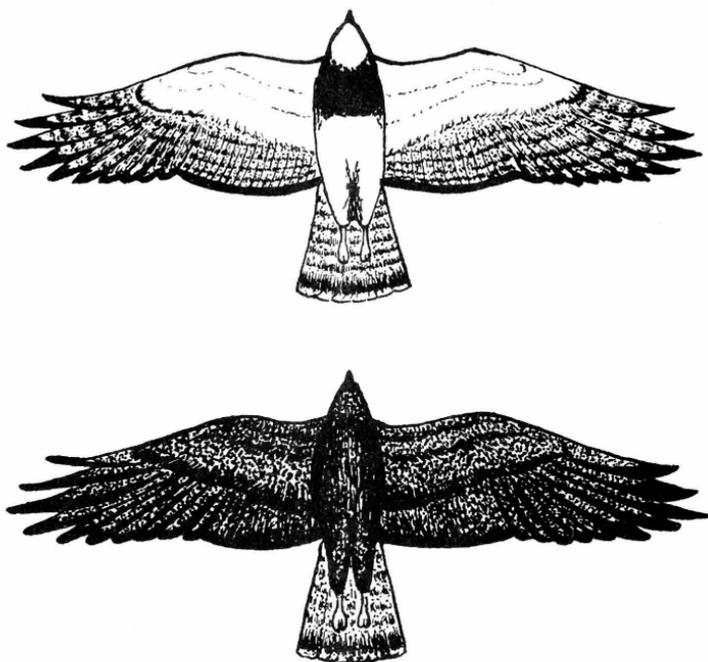


Figure 6: Adult light phase Swainson's Hawk (*top*) and adult dark phase Swainson's Hawk (*bottom*). Drawings by Ron Ridout.

Irregular light speckling or splotching occurs on the head and underparts, most often the neck, chest, upper belly and flags. These birds vary from very dark with a few light speckles to many light splotches in the areas mentioned. In the lightest individuals of this phase, the underwing coverts have irregular streaks of black-brown on a paler background, grading to rufous mottling on a dark background in the darkest. They usually show a light forehead and superciliary stripe and the tail is the same as in the light phase.

Immature light phase birds (Figures 7 and 8), probably the commonest type seen in the east, show the two-toned underwing pattern—dark flight feathers with

pale coverts. They have a pale area in the forehead, light superciliary stripe and whitish throat; some are extensively buffy on the head.

Dark brown "whiskers" extend from the corners of the beak down the sides of the neck and widen to form the breast band. Up close, this can be seen to be mottled with large diamond-shaped marks and is variable in extent. The dark mottling extends down the sides in variable amounts and ends as fine bars on the flags and undertail coverts, again in variable amounts. The tail is similar to that of an adult light phase. The back and especially the upper wing coverts tend to be more mottled than those of adult birds. The edgings are often paler, accentuating this

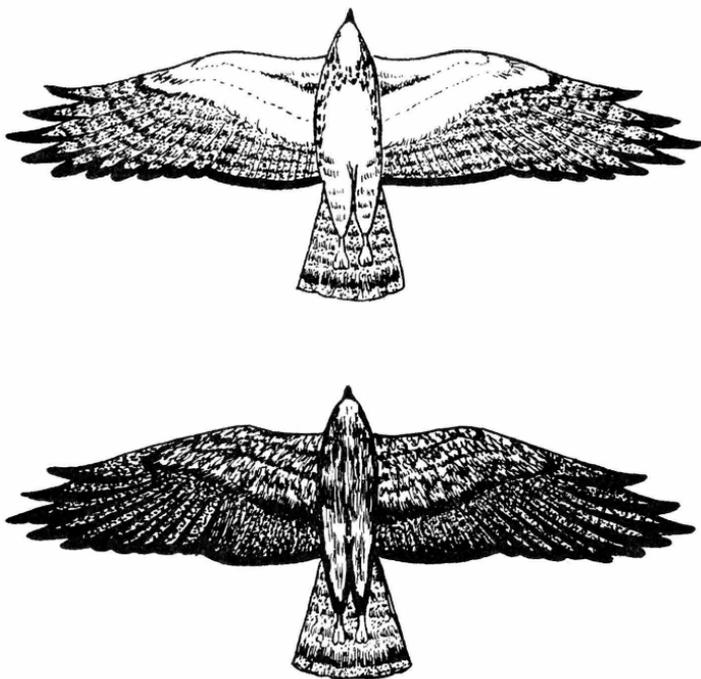


Figure 7: Immature light phase Swainson's Hawk (top) and immature dark phase Swainson's Hawk (bottom). Drawings by Ron Ridout.

mottled effect.

The adult intermediate or "rufous" phase of Swainson's Hawk is like the light phase except that heavy rufous barring extends from the breast band down to the tail and includes the side and leg feathers. There are apparently gradations from light to intermediate to dark phases. I cannot distinguish intermediate from others in immature plumage when examining museum specimens but have noticed some gradations between light and dark phase birds. Perhaps this variability may in some cases actually be the "typical" plumage of an immature in intermediate phase. Since I have seen these intermediates only as museum specimens and do not

know of any studies of them, I cannot say with certainty that they constitute a consistent colour phase, that they are the result of light x dark parentage or that there is a typical immature form.

I think the fact that 9 of 18 Ontario records refer to light phase adult Swainson's Hawks is the result of that age/colour phase being quite easy to identify while the others are not. A light phase adult will be more readily called as such by most birders but the less easily identified age/colour phases will often be put down as "unidentified species". Hopefully this situation will change as knowledge of the field marks becomes more widespread.

If you want to see a Swainson's

Hawk in Ontario, try the Rainy River/Lake-of-the-Woods area in spring and early summer, a spring hawk lookout in the south or, better still, one of the major lookouts in fall. I would recommend Hamilton, Hawk Cliff or Holiday Beach in mid-September when the Broad-winged Hawk flocks pass through. Scan the kettles for a larger buteo and examine it carefully . . . and



Figure 8: Immature light phase Swainson's Hawk banded at Hawk Cliff, Port Stanley, Elgin Co., 13 September 1975. Photo by Gary Mulawka.

remember that discovery favours the prepared mind.

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An Observation of 'Richardson's' Merlin in Ontario

by
Alan Wormington

On 28 February 1986 MaryLou Chomyshyn discovered a sitting Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) at the Blue Heron Picnic Area within Point Pelee National Park, Essex Co., Ontario. She summoned additional observers who were also able to view the bird. Although this Merlin was described as looking 'odd' (Tom Hince, pers. comm.), a subspecific determination of the bird was not considered at the time.

What was almost certainly the same Merlin was observed nine days later, on 9 March 1986, in the barren 'Onion Fields' north of the Park (approximately 5 km from the original observation point) by the author and Keith J. Burk. The bird was perched almost at the top of a small isolated tree adjacent to one of the area's gravel roads. In our car we were able to approach the bird very closely—to within approximately 10 m. After about a minute's observation (using binoculars) the bird became noticeably restless and eventually flew south over the fields, not to be seen again. When first seen we immediately noticed the unusual colour pattern of the bird; our later-recorded description matched the characteristics given for an

adult male of the subspecies *Falco columbarius richardsonii*, otherwise known as 'Richardson's' Merlin (Bent 1938: 86-89; Taverner 1940: 147-148). The unlikely possibility exists that our bird was an extreme aberrant of the normally-occurring eastern race *F.c. columbarius*, but for such a hypothetical bird to match *richardsonii* so closely seems very remote.

Description

Some of the features that identified the bird simply as a Merlin include the following: the bird was about the size of an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) but in build was proportionately more stocky. The longish and square-ended tail was dark with numerous narrow white bands. The wings were clearly pointed. The thin eye ring was bright orange and the small strongly-hooked bill was orange-based and blue-tipped. The legs were bright yellow. In flight the bird flew barely inches above the ground at a remarkable speed—'like a bullet.'

The following observed features were inconsistent with the typical eastern subspecies *columbarius*: The upperparts (wings and mantle) were totally very pale blue-grey,

Alan Wormington, R.R. #1, Leamington, Ontario N8H 3V4

much paler than the dark slate-blue of eastern birds. The pale head consisted of a light-cream ground colour with limited light brown streaking; lacking was the heavy streaking, dark 'moustache' mark and suggestion of a dark or darkish cap typical of eastern birds. The underparts showed an intricate pattern of pale rufous-brown and white, less dense than eastern birds. (The above differences were further reinforced when I observed a typical male Merlin perched at close range on 4 April 1986, also at Point Pelee).

Range and Status of the Subspecies

This is apparently the first record of the 'Richardson's' Merlin in Ontario. Neither James *et al.* (1976) nor Godfrey (1986) mention the subspecies for Ontario. Furthermore, a check of Merlin specimens in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (courtesy of Ross D. James) and the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa (Bruce M. Di Labio) revealed no Ontario specimen of *richardsonii*.

Richardson's' Merlin is the breeding subspecies of prairies and the aspen parkland belt from southern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan and extreme southwestern Manitoba south to northern Montana and North Dakota (A.O.U. 1957: 121; Godfrey 1966: 103). The normal wintering range extends from Wyoming and South Dakota south to northern Mexico and Texas (A.O.U. 1957; Oberholser 1974: 260). Extraliminally the subspecies has been recorded west to southern British Columbia and east to Iowa,

Illinois and Missouri (A.O.U. 1957). More recently in Iowa (Dinsmore *et al.* 1984: 111-112), Richardson's and eastern Merlins are thought to occur as migrants in possibly equal numbers, but it is noted that most Iowa observers do not attempt to separate the two subspecies.

The Point Pelee bird is considered a winter visitor since winter conditions prevailed prior to, and during, the period when the bird was present, and also because the earliest valid date for a spring migrant in the Point Pelee area is 20 March (in 1979; Wormington 1979: 7), fully 20 days after the initial observation date of the *richardsonii* individual. Furthermore, the prolonged stay of the bird is inconsistent with what would be expected for a spring migrant.

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Notes

Eurasian Jackdaw: New to Ontario

At 1200 h on 13 April 1985, I was driving east on Victoria Street, south of Highway 401, between Oshawa and Whitby, Durham R.M. The CN Railway tracks run just south of this road, and on top of one of the hydro poles beside the tracks I noticed as a silhouette against the sun what I assumed to be a small raptor, perched, pecking at something held in its claws. The bird looked too large for an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) and too small for an American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). Out of interest I swung south on Thickson Road, under the railway bridge, to be able to see the bird with the sun behind me. I think I actually laughed aloud at the absurdity of finding that it was a Eurasian Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), a bird with which I am very familiar from visits to southern England.

The bird was obviously a crow, but a small, grey and black one. The body plumage was glossy black, as was the crown of the

head, but the nape and cheek were silvery grey. The overall impression was of a neat, trim bird without the rather shaggy plumage of many American Crows. I watched the bird somewhat nostalgically for a few minutes until it flew off westward with a quick, almost hurried, wingbeat and a couple of familiar, high-pitched "kyow kyow"s. I attempted to follow the bird by road but traffic was too dense to keep up with it. It rested briefly on wires further down the railway line but was then lost to view.

I did not make notes on the Eurasian Jackdaw's plumage and characteristics at the time of this sighting because its identity was so obvious to me, and also because at the time I assumed that it was an escaped cage-bird. We are well trained in the Toronto area to accept, regretfully, that most records of unusual corvids (e.g., Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*)) rarely refer to wild birds. Knowing that in many countries in Europe

the jackdaw is kept as an amusing pet, I assumed it had recently been brought to Canada and then gone free. I therefore made only casual mention of the bird to others, until it became obvious from reading and conversation that its status as a wild bird should be given more serious consideration. A report was submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee which was duly accepted and represents the first record for Ontario (Wormington 1985).

Several factors contributed to this acceptance, including an acknowledged increase in numbers of Eurasian Jackdaws in Europe in the past few decades, and an apparently spontaneous range extension to North America, possibly via Iceland, since 1982 (Smith 1985). In 1984 at least six separate reports of Eurasian Jackdaws were made from the Atlantic coast of North America—from Miquelon and Nova Scotia south to Rhode Island and Nantucket, Massachusetts. Concurrently, commercial trade and quarantine regulations in North America have become much stricter, and it is unlikely that more than a very few Eurasian Jackdaws have been kept or raised in captivity in Canada or the United States for several years.

The most significant observation, however, was the influx in November 1984 of 52 jackdaws at Port-Cartier, Quebec on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Yank and Aubry 1985). These birds probably reached Labrador

by natural means and moved south in response to the onset of winter conditions. However, on the hasty premise that these birds had travelled across the Atlantic Ocean in the hold of a ship, and might pose a threat to native North American birds such as occurred with the introduction of the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), the Quebec Fish and Game Department ordered their extermination. Because Eurasian Jackdaws do not appear on any list of protected species, the Canadian Wildlife Service did not voice an objection, and by late March 1985 most of the birds had been shot or poisoned.

The Eurasian Jackdaw seen in Whitby on 13 April 1985 could well have been a survivor from this Quebec massacre. Unfortunately, in spite of intense scrutiny of hundreds of crows in the Whitby area over the next couple of weeks, the jackdaw was not seen again, nor was it reported by anyone else. It will be interesting to follow the progress of this hardy and intelligent species in its quest for new territories in the New World.

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Wild Turkey / drawing by Ron Ridout

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) is well-established in the county, but the only truly native gamebird present is the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*). In the last century the Spruce Grouse (*Dendragapus canadensis*) was probably resident in the upper Grand River valley, but was extirpated in the second half of the century (Cringan 1963); the last record was of one "taken" near Guelph on 25 November 1898 (Klugh 1906). However, it appears likely that a third species of grouse may have been resident in those days; the early settlers referred to a variety of upland game species, using various arcane and (to us) totally unhelpful names such as "birch partridge". Cringan (1963) surmised that either the Greater

Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) or the Sharp-tailed Grouse may have been present at that time. John Arkell clearly cannot have been referring to the Ring-necked Pheasant, since this species was not introduced to eastern North America until 1887, when the first birds were released in New Jersey (Bent 1960), but nevertheless would have been familiar with them from his experiences in England. Since the most characteristic feature of a "pheasant", to birdwatcher and non-birdwatcher alike, is a long pointed tail, it is highly unlikely that so acute an observer as Arkell would have referred to the Greater-Prairie Chicken by this name. It is thus very probable that Arkell's "pheasants" (which, incidentally, he noted as being "rather numerous") were in fact Sharp-tailed Grouse. This would constitute the only evidence for the occurrence of this species in Wellington County that we presently have.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Mrs. Cleo Melzer of Puslinch Township for having brought John Arkell's letter to my attention.

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Magnolia Warbler Breeding in the Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario

On 24 June 1983, while conducting wetland inventories near Guelph Junction, approximately 1 km southwest of Campbellville (Town of Milton), S.M. Griffiths, M.J. Sharp and the author encountered a female Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), much agitated, and carrying a bill full of bright green insect larvae. Confident that a nest could be found, the observers patiently followed the movements of the female warbler to a point where she disappeared into a dense clump of cedar, from which, upon closer approach, could be heard emanating the distinctive begging calls of nestling birds. A brief search resulted in the discovery of a nest containing three young. Interestingly, at no time, either preceding or following the discovery of the nest, was a male Magnolia Warbler either heard or seen.

On 27 June, DAS returned to the site with Martin Wernaart to investigate the possibility of banding the nestling warblers. Upon our arrival at around 1115h, a male Magnolia Warbler could be heard singing intermittently from an area of dense cedar and tamarack. Although the young warblers proved too small to band,

a mist net was nevertheless erected and in due course both the male (#1580-87898) and female (#1580-87899) warblers were netted, banded, photographed, and released.

The habitat in which the nest was found at Guelph Junction may be described as a regenerating wet meadow/white cedar-tamarack swamp interface. The meadow, which as recently as 1979 was only about 50% vegetated by saplings and tall shrubs, is now almost closed by a dense regeneration of eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*), and to a lesser extent, by trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*), and willow (*Salix bebbiana*). The nest, located in a dense copse of ca. 8-10m cedars, and situated 2.25m above the ground near the end of a up-turned lower bough of a smaller cedar, was loosely constructed of dried grass stems and lined with black rootlets.

When the site was revisited by DAS on the morning of 13 July, a male Magnolia Warbler could be heard singing repeatedly. On 15 July, as there was no sign of either adults or young, the nest was collected and is now deposited in

the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

The nest reported here apparently constitutes the first such report for Magnolia Warbler in Halton Region (ONRS; Brooks 1906) and the Hamilton area generally (ONRS; McIlwraith 1860; A. Wormington, pers. comm. 1984) and one of the few recent reports for southwestern Ontario, where they are evidently very rare. In adjacent Wellington County, Brewer (1977, pers. comm. 1983) has not encountered it as a summer resident. Nor is the author aware of any recent summer records in the neighbouring counties and regions of Hamilton-Wentworth, Brant, Waterloo and York.

Recent summer records of Magnolia Warbler have, however, been reported from Middlesex County and the Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk to the west and southwest of Halton, respectively. In Middlesex, ca. 115km west of Halton, a territorial male Magnolia Warbler was discovered in June 1983, in a "middle-aged" conifer plantation bordering the Dorchester Swamp, east of London (M. Gawn, pers. comm. 1985). This record is significant in view of the belief held by earlier local authorities that this species "possibly bred", in the vicinity of London (Morden and Saunders 1882; Saunders and Dale 1933).

In Haldimand-Norfolk, ca. 95km southwest, this species has been encountered regularly in summer, at least since the 1930s, particularly, but not exclusively, in the extensive, mature conifer reforestations associated with the

Provincial Forestry Station near St. Williams and Turkey Point. There are three recent records of singing and, in at least one instance, territorial male Magnolia Warblers associated with white pine (*Pinus strobus*)—white cedar woodland on the Long Point peninsula (McCracken *et al.* 1981).

A search of both the literature and the Ontario Nest Records Scheme reveals that the Magnolia Warbler, although rare, may have been a more widespread summer resident in southwestern Ontario, occurring south to Kerwood [Middlesex Co.] (Beattie 1924); Listowel [Perth Co.] where a nest containing two eggs was collected by Wm. L. Kells, on 7 June 1882 (Kells 1882); [Wellington Co.], where it was then regarded as a "... scarce summer resident and breeder" (Klugh 1906a, 1906b); [Dufferin Co.] "common summer resident" at Orangeville (Calvert 1909), nest containing three eggs and a cowbird egg discovered in a cedar, 11 June 1927, by P. Harrington (ONRS; Diary No. 25, P. Harrington [1925-33]); and, Musselman's Lake [York R.M.] where a nest containing four eggs (ROM #7015) was collected by W.V. Crich, 5 July 1944 (ONRS).

In view of the recent discovery of a nest in Halton Regional Municipality reported here, and their presence during the breeding season in both natural and planted coniferous woodlands in Haldimand-Norfolk and Middlesex, Magnolia Warblers should be searched for and reasonably expected to occur in the larger cedar swamps and older conifer plantations in the southwestern counties of Ontario.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. R.D. James for providing access to the ONRS and other records housed in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Mark Gawn for providing details of his 1983 Middlesex County record; Brenda Axon, for allowing the use of data collected while under contract to Halton Region Conservation Authority.

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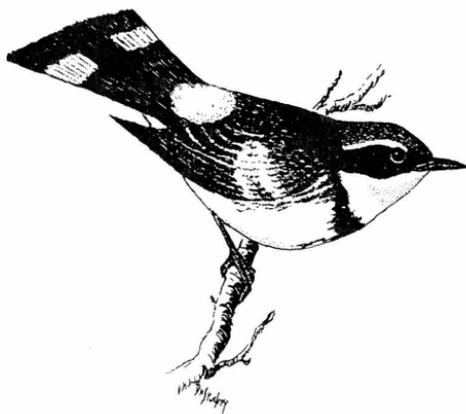
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Magnolia Warbler / drawing by Dan Stuckey

Great Blue Heron Swallows a Branch

In late September 1984, a young male Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) was found uninjured but critically starved at a small lake near Battersea, Frontenac Co., Ontario (about 25km north of Kingston). He was barely able to stand up, totally apathetic and died almost immediately upon arrival at Verona.

A post-mortem into the strangely shaped abdomen revealed the stomach rigidly distorted by a smooth thick branch which reached from the lower neck to just past the tips of the two os pubis bones of the pelvis (Figure 1). The

piece of wood measured 300mm long by 45mm at its narrowest diameter, to 67mm at its greatest diameter, and was covered with rather thin bark that was beginning to deteriorate. The upper end of the branch had begun to erode a small area of the esophagus. The long-empty intestines, displaced behind the stomach, resembled coils of pale translucent plastic; the rest of the organs were fairly healthy. Surprisingly, a few nematodes were still found surviving in the stomach.

The heron had a 460mm wing

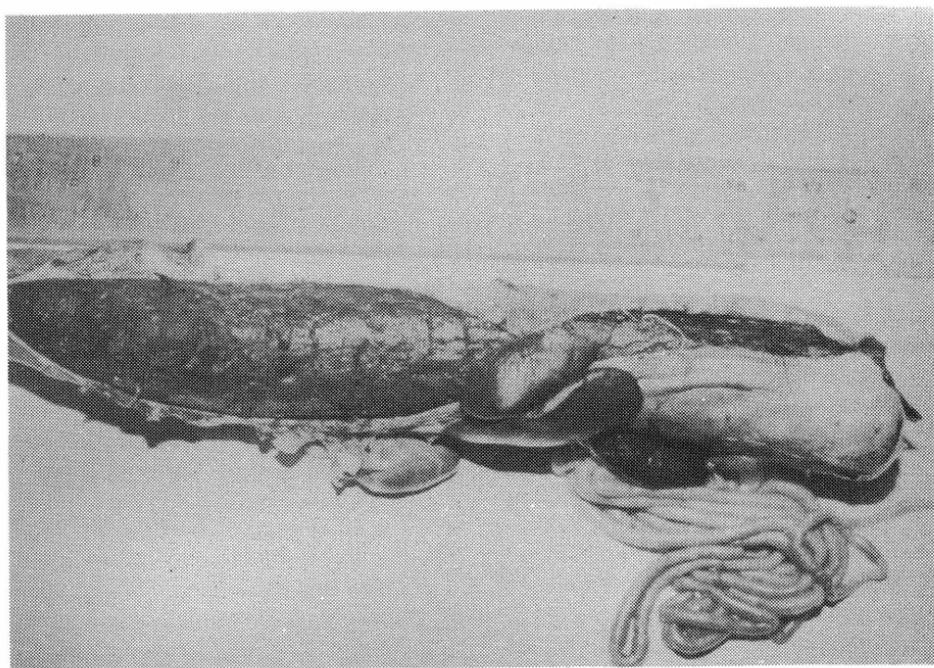


Figure 1: Branch in the stomach of Great Blue Heron.

chord, and weighed only 1565g with his burden; the branch itself was just over 415g. I have recorded other captive herons eating more than that weight at a sitting, as well as swallowing fish over 300mm long.

I suspect that the heron may have been fishing in murky water and quickly swallowed what he mistook for a large dark fish. As it probably caused no distress, he did not regurgitate it.

Kit Chubb, Avian Care and Research Foundation, Box 182, Verona, Ontario K0H 2W0

Book Reviews

Editor's Note: The recent publication of J. Murray Speirs' *Birds of Ontario* marked the first detailed account of the province's avifauna in 100 years. Given that this long-awaited work has generated widespread interest among Ontario birders, a decision was made to include two reviews. Although this represents a departure from the norm, it was felt to be warranted due to the sheer magnitude of the two-volume work and the somewhat differing viewpoints expressed by the two reviewers. A version of Bruce Di Labio's review originally appeared in *Trail and Landscape* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Sept.-Oct. 1986) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

Birds of Ontario. 1985. By Dr. J. Murray Speirs. Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., Toronto. Vol. I, 538 pp., \$49.95; Vol. II, 986 pp., \$24.95.

When first presented with the opportunity to review *Birds of Ontario*, the challenge was met with enthusiasm. However, as I began my research, the magnitude of the endeavour was almost intimidating. The overwhelming size of the books (538 pages in Volume I and 986 pages in Volume II) presented some problems.

The concept of the books is certainly intriguing. Long overdue, this compilation of Ontario's avifaunal data should be accepted eagerly by birders and researchers.

However, Dr. Speirs might have received deserved uniform acclaim had he published the two volumes separately, for, in fact, he has produced two books so radically different that it is difficult to accept them as Volumes I and II of the same publication.

Not since McIlwraith wrote his *Birds of Ontario* in 1886 has anyone attempted to document in one publication the status and history of Ontario's birds. Fifty years, tens of thousands of notations, thousands of hours of field work and hundreds of cited observers

have been melded to produce these two volumes.

As it is my impression that each volume is designed for a different market and audience, I will deal with each separately in this review.

Volume I, intended primarily as a coffee table book on birds, is full of colourful and generally attractive photographs of most of Ontario's birds. It is difficult to find fault with the format of the book as it is so very simple. Photographs of birds appear opposite a brief description and anecdotal comment on the species. Species follow the new taxonomic order of the A.O.U. Checklist (6th Edition) and are generally in conformance with the official Ontario checklist as of the end of 1984. The additions of "unofficial" species for Ontario are discussed in the review of Volume II.

However, even cursory examination of the book will reveal serious flaws. Dr. Speirs has relied far too heavily on a small nucleus of photographers to provide pictures of the birds. This leads to several photos that are sub-standard or totally unacceptable for a publication of this nature. Problems with lighting, focussing and sometimes even identification arise as a result. Why Dr. Speirs did not contract other photographers remains a mystery. Many fine pictures of some of the bothersome species do exist, or could easily have been commissioned.

One cannot overlook errors in fairness to the readers. The photos of the Baird's Sandpiper and the Hairy Woodpecker appear to be Pectoral Sandpiper and Downy

Woodpecker, respectively. While the picture on page 326 is unquestionably that of a Bank Swallow colony, where are the birds themselves? Finally, the Black Vulture must belong to the Australian subspecies for it surely is flying upside down.

Fully 100 species are not illustrated at all. One wonders why greater effort was not expended to obtain these missing photos of sometimes very common species. Further, even if good photographs were not available, why leave large blank sections in the book where they would have appeared. This leads to a starkness and distracting appearance that detracts from the quality of the product.

The birder unfamiliar with Ontario might reasonably assume that one quarter of all the best birding spots lie within 50 km of Toronto since the map on the inside front cover shows eight of the listed 36 birding spots within this zone. However, many significant areas such as Sarnia, the St. Clair marshes and Presqu'île, to name a few, are not even mentioned.

In summary, for the serious bird student or birder, the book offers little useful information, beyond the obvious advantage of possessing another photographic reference to be used for species evaluations. One must admit that although some species are poorly represented, most of the photographs are concise and clear and occasionally spectacular. For the armchair birder, many reminiscences will be evoked as one thumbs through the pages. For them, at least, the aesthetic value

of the book far outweighs the negative aspects.

Volume II presents information on significant records, seasonal patterns, breeding dates and anecdotal comment on all of Ontario's bird species. Dr. Speirs is to be commended for the incredible effort that must have been expended over many years to collect the data that were collated and organized to build the body of the book.

As with any document of its kind, certain flaws show up once an attempt has been made to use the book. Dr. Speirs states that the purpose of the book is "to give a picture of each of the birds that have been known to occur in Ontario up to the end of 1984, where they have been found, when they have occurred at each season . . ." Well, generally speaking, he has met his goal! Consideration must, however, be given to the use of the book in this context.

Researchers must be concerned that the author has ignored several significant records and sources of information and included several species not currently accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. In the former case, although the vast majority of records do appear, additional research would be required to produce a definitive statement in a published report on the occurrence of any species in Ontario. Simply stated, the book cannot be assumed to be complete in this regard, even within the temporal limits stated. While no attempt will be made to outline all of the records ignored, as that list would surely be flawed, comment is

necessary regarding added species.

Seventeen species are listed in the book that, based on the data presented, are not included on the "official" Ontario list. While the observers of these birds undoubtedly believed that they saw the species in question, the origin of the bird, the validity of the sighting and the lack of or flawed documentary evidence have all contributed to their exclusion from the Ontario checklist.

The following species are assumed escapees: Scarlet Ibis, Bean Goose, Barnacle Goose, Prairie Falcon and Mountain Chickadee. The Magnificent Frigatebird involved a secondhand report with incomplete details. The Baird's Sparrow, Western Wood-Pewee, Wilson's Plover, Swainson's Warbler, Great Skua and Roseate Tern were reported with inadequate details. The geographic origin of the Snowy Plover is questionable and the Brewer's Sparrow was judged to be a hybrid by the National Museum of Canada. The Carolina Parakeet cited was based on sketchy details and the Atlantic Puffin specimen is unlocatable. Since the time of writing, one record of the Atlantic Puffin and the Swainson's Warbler have been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee, and archeological evidence of Carolina Parakeet has been discovered. Additional reports of Long-billed Curlew, Roseate Tern and Baird's Sparrow are presently being reviewed by the OBRC.

While Dr. Speirs obviously evaluated each species for inclusion, one wonders why other known or presumed escapees such

as the American Flamingo, Blue Tit and Monk Parakeet were not included for the sake of completeness. As he has seen fit to include some obvious escapees in the text, why not list them all? If it was Dr. Speirs' intention to list all species recorded in Ontario, perhaps an addendum listing these species would have been more useful. At any rate, the qualifiers for each of the questionable species are variable. Some are listed as hypothetical or given other designations in the text, but not always. How is the reader to know which species are considered valid and which are under suspicion? While I personally agree with some of Dr. Speirs' conclusions, I feel that we must rely on the decisions of the Ontario Bird Records Committee to preserve continuity. All species not on the "official" list or still under review should have been so designated.

The other major flaw in the book is in the omission of many records because local or regional publications were not consulted. Many of these books exist and would have contributed significantly to the completeness of the book. As a result, the 1981 Spotted

Redshank record from Lakefield and the 1981 Northern Fulmars at Netitishi were ignored completely, in addition to many others.

Finally, a brief explanation of the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey maps would be advantageous. For example, what does "+" mean? This symbol appears on several of the maps.

Had Dr. Speirs concluded each species account with a brief summary of its status in Ontario, geographically and seasonally, many of the inconsistencies would have been alleviated.

All this aside, the book provides a good summary for almost all species with accounts that are generally accurate and complete. This exhaustive treatise represents a useful, and most importantly, interesting summary of our birds. One other reviewer has stated that "Birds of Ontario (Vol. II) is a reference book, not bedtime reading, and yet in the latter capacity I find it somewhat compulsive". So too will be your experience, I'm sure. Dr. Speirs is to be congratulated for his work in the production of this long overdue book, one that is highly recommended for any birder's library.

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Birds of Ontario. 1985. By Dr. J. Murray Speirs. Natural Heritage/
Natural History Inc., Toronto. Vol. I, 538 pp., \$49.95; Vol. II, 986 pp., \$24.95.

The publication of a provincial bird book is always an impatiently awaited event within birding circles. Prepublication announce-

ments of *Birds of Ontario*, which included laudatory remarks by Roger Tory Peterson, heightened the anticipation. The book, when it

finally arrived, proved to be a disappointment.

The work is in two volumes. Both are attractively and durably bound, and outwardly would make a handsome addition to any bookshelf. But wait. Before you pay the \$49.95 for Volume I and \$24.95 for Volume II a closer look at their contents is in order.

Volume I, after a very short introduction and a long list of acknowledgements, contains a species by species listing of all (?) the birds recorded in Ontario. On the right-hand page is the bird's scientific name, a short note on its distribution, and an equally short section describing the physical characteristics of the bird. Usually, there are two species per page. On the left-hand facing page there appears a photograph of the species with the English common name. The taxonomy and species order follow the most recent AOU checklist (6th edition, 1983). The 538 page volume ends with an index of the common names only.

At 986 pages, Volume II is nearly twice as thick but contains no photographs, which probably explains its lower price. In this volume, each species is again listed in AOU order. Both common and scientific names head each account. The text usually begins with some comments on the species' distribution, range, and habitat, followed by an equally brief summary of the main identification features. The heart of the text is a listing of selected records of each species by season. Some accounts end with banding returns. Measurements and references complete each section.

At the end of the text is a Literature Cited section, and the volume ends with two indices, one of common names and the other scientific names.

Based on the above description, one might imagine that the two volumes are an important contribution to the knowledge of bird life in Ontario. Other reviewers have found the book praiseworthy and to be recommended to both novice and expert. Their remarks seem unsupportable when the book is examined in detail.

Let's begin with Volume I. The primary justification for this volume seems to be as a vehicle for the photographs. There is always a problem with photographs, specifically with the variation in quality. Some of the photographs in this book are very good, others border on unrecognizable. The Purple Sandpiper (p. 184) looks like it was taken in evening twilight during a blizzard. Is that really a Lincoln's Sparrow (p. 492) or a Tennessee Warbler (p. 406)? Identifying them from the photographs would be tricky. There are no birds at all in the Bank Swallow photograph. The picture of the Glaucous Gull (p. 214) is really a photograph of a number of gulls in what appears to be a flooded field. The Glaucous Gull is, according to the caption, "The white gull standing, with Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls". Of the four or more white gulls in the photograph (two standing, two sitting), one must take the author's word that they are (all?) Glaucous Gulls. The picture was taken too far away to be sure. A better picture of

Glaucous Gulls is on page 212 over the Iceland Gull caption. The two white-winged gulls (one adult, one immature) in that picture are both Glaucous Gulls.

Species that are not illustrated have a blank space where their photograph would be. A quick count revealed that nearly 25% of the species were lacking a picture. This, along with some short species accounts on the facing page, leaves a lot of expensive, empty white paper. The most notable example of wasted space is the Carolina Parakeet account (pp. 244-245). This extinct species is given only six lines of text, which leaves the two pages devoted to it almost completely blank. Included in the group of birds with no photograph are Purple Martin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Gray Partridge, all of which should have been easy to obtain. A province-wide solicitation of photographs would surely have turned up many of the missing species and undoubtedly would have provided better pictures than some that were included.

In what was apparently a lapse in proof reading, the picture labelled as a Hairy Woodpecker (p. 290) is clearly that of a Downy. The mislabelled Glaucous Gull has already been mentioned. In a very blurred photograph on page 180, the bird called a Baird's Sandpiper is really a Pectoral Sandpiper. On page 492, an overexposed photograph labelled Swamp Sparrow is really a Palm Warbler! Such errors should have been caught by a reviewer prior to publication.

Most of the significant

information appears in Volume II. It repeats almost word-for-word the text of Volume I and adds some details on the seasonal distributions of each species. The information on seasonal occurrence is mostly taken from the author's personal records, records from acquaintances, and published records, mainly from *American Birds*.

The choice of records is selective and inconsistent. It is difficult to see the value in long lists of sightings when no pattern is illustrated or no point is made. What is the significance in stating a summer record of a nest of a Red-winged Blackbird with four eggs at Black Rapids near Ottawa on 4 June 1921 and neglecting a spring record of a Spotted Redshank at Lakefield sewage lagoon near Peterborough on 7 May 1981, only the second record for Ontario? Was it simply missed? This seems unlikely, particularly since the *American Birds* issue in which the Spotted Redshank record was published, and even highlighted, is given as a reference in the Literature Cited section of Volume II.

There are many examples of overlooked records. The author does not cite any winter records of Purple Gallinule. One was found in Ottawa on 29 December 1973, and the record was published in *American Birds*. The specimen is now in the National Museum of Natural Sciences collection. Speirs cites that issue of *American Birds* as a reference elsewhere. An eider collected in Ottawa was identified as a Common Eider by G.R. White, and the record was

published in *The Auk* in 1890. In 1923, Hoyes Lloyd corrected the identification to King Eider. (The mounted specimen is still in the Carleton University collection.) The author has called it a Common Eider despite the correction in a publication that he cites in his own book. These are but a few examples of the numerous errors and omissions to be found.

Issue must also be taken with a couple of "species" that the author has included or excluded from his list. He discusses the Herring x Great Black-backed Gull hybrid in some detail. No mention is made of the Herring x Glaucous Gull hybrid, of which there are several museum specimens and which may be the more common hybrid in Ontario. The Brewer's Sparrow is listed on the basis of a single record in late March 1980. Photographs of the bird (which was released alive) were later examined by Dr. W.E. Godfrey of the National Museum of Canada, who determined that it was definitely not a Brewer's Sparrow and most probably was a Chipping x Clay-colored Sparrow hybrid. This conclusion, published by R. Poulin and B. Di Labio (*Birdfinding in Canada* 9:10-12, 1982) was overlooked by Speirs.

Several things are notable by their absence. The Literature Cited section contains no mention of *The Birds of Presqu'île* by R.D. McRae, or either edition of *The Birds of*

Prince Edward County by R.T. Sprague (and R.D. Weir). Both books contain a wealth of information apparently not used by the author. The National Museum of Natural Sciences specimens mentioned were only those records that were available in the published literature.

The point of detailing only some of the mistakes is to warn readers that the book should not be considered as a standard reference text for Ontario birds. It is really a personal compilation by the author and is by no means a definitive and comprehensive study of bird distribution and status in Ontario.

An attempt to write a book on the bird life of Ontario would be an extremely difficult task given the size of the province, the variety of habitats, and the patchy distribution of birders. A definitive text would require the help and cooperation of many hundreds of active and knowledgeable amateur birders along with the involvement of numerous professional ornithologists in and outside of Ontario. Such a book has still to be attempted.

OFO Announcements

1986 OFO Annual General Meeting

The 1986 OFO Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 25, 1986 at the Scarborough Civic Centre. Mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend what promises to be our best AGM ever! For details refer to the information package which accompanies this issue.

Call for Nominations— OFO Board of Directors

Nominations are now being accepted from individuals wishing to serve on the OFO Board of Directors in 1987. Nominations must be submitted in writing and must be signed by the consenting nominee. The slate of directors shall be approved by a majority vote of the members at the Annual General Meeting. Nominations should be sent immediately to Donald A. Sutherland, OFO Nominating Committee Chairman, Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.

Field Trips

22 November 1986, Saturday: Niagara River Gull Outing. Meet at the park at the mouth of the river at Niagara-on-the-Lake at 8:00 AM.

February 1987, Owl Prowl. We're planning two outings, simultaneously, in Toronto and Kingston. Details in the next newsletter.

April 1987, OFO Field Trip to Costa Rica. For further information see the flyer in the last newsletter.

For the latest details on any of these events call Glenn Coady (416-766-8350) or Linda Weseloh (416-485-1464).

Corrections to *Ontario Birds* Vol. 4 (1):

- p. 2 — the drawing by John Schmelefske is that of a Long-eared Owl, not a Short-eared Owl.
- p. 36 — the text in the left hand column was inadvertently transposed; lines 25 to 47 should read from the top of the column, followed by lines 1 to 24.

Ontario Field Ornithologists

The Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the *Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC)*, publishes a newsletter and a journal, *Ontario Birds*, hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds a Spring Field Meeting and an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership dues are \$13.00 Annual Member or \$260.00 Life Member. All members receive *Ontario Birds*, the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Please send memberships to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.

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