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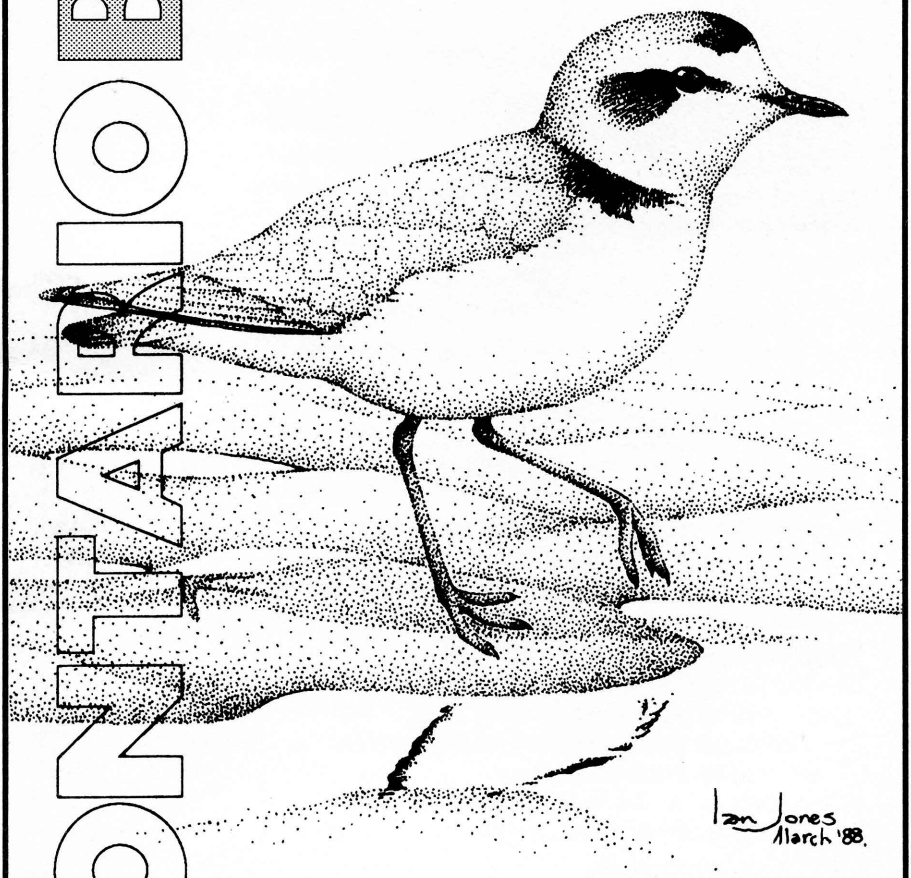

Ontario Birds

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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

Closing of the Long Point "cuts"

The dismay that any serious birder would experience upon learning that Point Pelee National Park would be off limits to the public is immeasurable. That's how I feel about the loss of Long Point's "cuts". Since May of 1987 the area has been closed. The area is patrolled and violators are being charged for trespassing. My favorite birding spot is now inaccessible.

The "cuts" are privately owned by the Long Point Company. Visitors have never been welcome, yet they have been tolerated, except during waterfowl hunting season. During spring, summer and early fall this remote area is famous for shorebirds and gulls as well as other species of birds. Some species that are difficult to see elsewhere in Ontario can be found here annually All it costs is a two mile walk. For regulars like myself (who may visit up to 100 times a year) it is a place of solitude; a place to bird seriously or recreationally; a place to search for rarities or a place to study the common.

In 1985 the "cuts" became the focus of attention when several rare tern species showed up. The increased human traffic drew the attention of the LPC wardens who complained to LPBO. No official steps were taken and visitors were undeterred. Last fall marked a drastic change.

LPC decided that its marshes were filling in. So trucks and a crane ploughed a path along the fragile dunes. The plan was to build a dyke to stop the lake from entering the marshes. By spring the dyke's construction had begun. It shocked me that no second opinion was sought, or that this valuable staging area would benefit from a dyke. LPC just did it.

The dyke was under construction in May 1987 when the Snowy Plover arrived. The men working out there witnessed the flood of observers and this was the last straw. Worries over liabilities were expressed and the "cuts" were closed.

My reasons for disagreeing with this policy are mostly selfish. I considered the "cuts" my place. I also have practical reasons in that LPBO is also barred and therefore a lot of data about migration are being lost.

Times are changing for birders. You now need a permit to enter some lagoons. Recently, a small (and possibly dangerous) faction has suggested licensing birding.

In September 1987 I visited the "cuts", hopefully not for the last time. Patrols kept me from actually getting there and the whole atmosphere had changed. The solitude one felt, along with the impression of timelessness, has been lost. This was marred by the dyke and the guards. I know that

birders are not above respecting private property, but this seems unfair. Hopefully some agreement can be worked out. Those who have been to the "cuts" will agree, those who haven't don't know what they have missed.

Tim Sabo
Weston, Ontario

Smith's Longspur article too long

I was interested to learn of the observation of a Smith's Longspur in the article entitled: "Smith's Longspur : a case of neglect" (*Ontario Birds* 5:2-20). However, I was puzzled at the extent of editorial content devoted to this article. Eighteen pages of text, comprising almost one-half of the issue, were used in what is essentially a literature review and assessment centred on a single observation of one individual bird.

While the observation is definitely noteworthy, it would seem more appropriate to limit discussion to a brief description of the sighting and plumage characteristics, referenced by a few of the most relevant citations. This would have provided additional space for other articles of broad interest.

Ted Armstrong,
Thunder Bay, Ontario

House Sparrows use snow cavern

I found interest in Martin K. McNicholl's article entitled "Communal sheltering under snow by American Tree Sparrows" (*Ontario Birds* 5:111-113).

For years we have had a bird feeder in front of our home, which hangs above some spreading junipers and some upright junipers. The feeder is in front of the living room window, providing a good view of both the feeder and the ground under the junipers.

The junipers have provided good cover for the birds using the feeder, which have ranged from House Finches to American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, House Sparrows, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals and periodically others.

During the winters of 1985-86 and 1986-87 some 12 to 15 House Sparrows made this area their home.

The junipers had been in front for close to 30 years with quite extended limbs which, in one area would be weighted down to the ground by snow. It left a cavern of sorts that varied in depth from a foot to 18 inches and the entrance was about twice the height of a House Sparrow.

At times there was no sign of any House Sparrows, but upon continuing a watch they would emerge from the snow cavern to feed on the ground under the feeder. They would return to the cavern after feeding for a period of time. I considered that these birds must roost in the snow cavern at night and on two occasions I caught them at daybreak coming out to feed.

In other years I can recall the

House Sparrows flying in to feed under the feeder and I would suspect that in these years the snow cavern accommodation was not available under the junipers.

I have enjoyed *Ontario Birds* and last year took the trip to Pembroke to observe the swallow roost.

Roy Forrester
Orono, Ontario

More reaction to Bob Rife's article

I believe that the article "Birders: as culpable as poachers" is an exaggeration, but I also believe it is time that birders did look to their ethics. Perhaps in a wider sense, this should be applied to all naturalists, both young and old.

Some of the possible solutions suggested, e.g., licenses, policing, examinations, seem less than practical, and I am sure that education will prove to be the only worthwhile approach.

Maybe we need an Ontario Code of Ethics; not just for birders, but for all naturalists, hunters and nature photographers. Perhaps it should be printed on good paper, say brown on cream, in the form of "*I do..., I promise....., I agree to....*", etc. Provide room for signatures, either family or individual, make it suitable for framing, and make it available through all clubs, parks and school conservation courses.

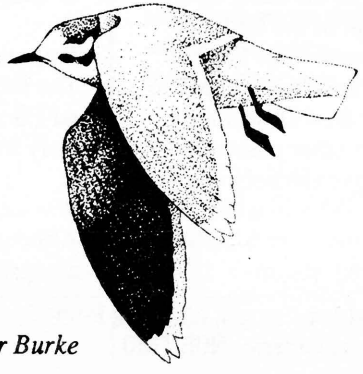
Maybe even a patch or badge would be appropriate.

Make someone proud to be more concerned with preserving our world than getting that great shot or that list addition.

Education is the best way and it works; just look at the success of the non-smoking campaigns. Who could have foreseen a few years ago that we would now have non-smoking restaurants, airplanes, motel rooms, and work areas.

Oh, I realise this would cost, but I would like to order my first 100 copies now.

Ian Heales
Campbellford, Ontario



Little Gull / drawing by *Peter Burke*

Snowy Plover: New to Ontario

by
Bev Collier and Jon Curson

On the afternoon of 4 May 1987 Curson was walking east along the south shore of Long Point, Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk, towards "the cuts", a large area of shallow water and exposed mud where Lake Erie breaches the south beach. Curson noticed a small pale plover about 100 m ahead. The bird was, at that time, approximately 0.5 km west of the first "cut". He initially presumed it was a Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), but closer inspection showed it to be a male Snowy Plover (*C. alexandrinus*), a species he was familiar with from Europe, where it is known as Kentish Plover.

Curson did not have a telescope. In order to get close enough to get a full field description, he crawled on hands and knees through the sparse vegetation on the top of the dune, until he was within 25 m of the bird. He watched the plover from 1510 to 1530 h (EST), then headed back to the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) to alert other observers. He returned approximately one hour later with Dave Beadle, Simon Mount and Dave Shepherd. George Pond and Martin McNicholl soon joined them. Despite searching for one and a half hours, they were all unable to relocate the bird. At 1930 h (EST), as dusk was approaching, George Wallace found the plover again, approximately 300 m east of the original location. He, Katie Thomas, Bob Curry, Barry Jones and John Olmsted were able to get good views before the light faded.

Early the next morning the bird was observed well and photographed at the original location by several observers. At mid-morning the plover flew into the cuts and, although it returned to the south beach a few times, it proved more difficult to find. The bird was not seen after 5 May until it was relocated on 9 May, again on the cuts. A search on 10 May was unsuccessful and, as far as we are aware, 9 May was the last date of observation.

Description

The following description is based on Curson's notes, made immediately following the observation.

Size and Shape

Although no other birds were alongside for comparison, it was

Bev Collier and Jon Curson, c/o Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0

Figure 1: Snowy Plover, 4–9 May 1987, Long Point, Haldimand-Norfolk. Photo (5 May) by *Alan Wormington*.

judged to be about the size of a Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*). It appeared slimmer than a Semipalmated Plover, with a more horizontal stance, proportionately longer legs, a slightly longer and thinner bill and a flatter crown, giving it a rather "square headed" appearance (Figure 1).

General Appearance

A decidedly pale plover, it was pale sandy brown above and pure white below, with distinct black patches on the ear coverts and sides of the upper breast and a black stripe on the forehead, separated from the eye by a white supercilium. The dark, bold colouring of these head and breast markings distinguished the bird as a male (Figures 1 and 2). The thin black bill and dark greyish-black legs were also distinctive. It fed in typical small plover fashion, running in short bursts and abruptly seizing prey from the surface of the sand. It flew twice and showed a pale brown rump, the colour of the mantle, and a darker brown tail. Both rump and tail showed white outer edges. There was a faint, conspicuous white wing bar.

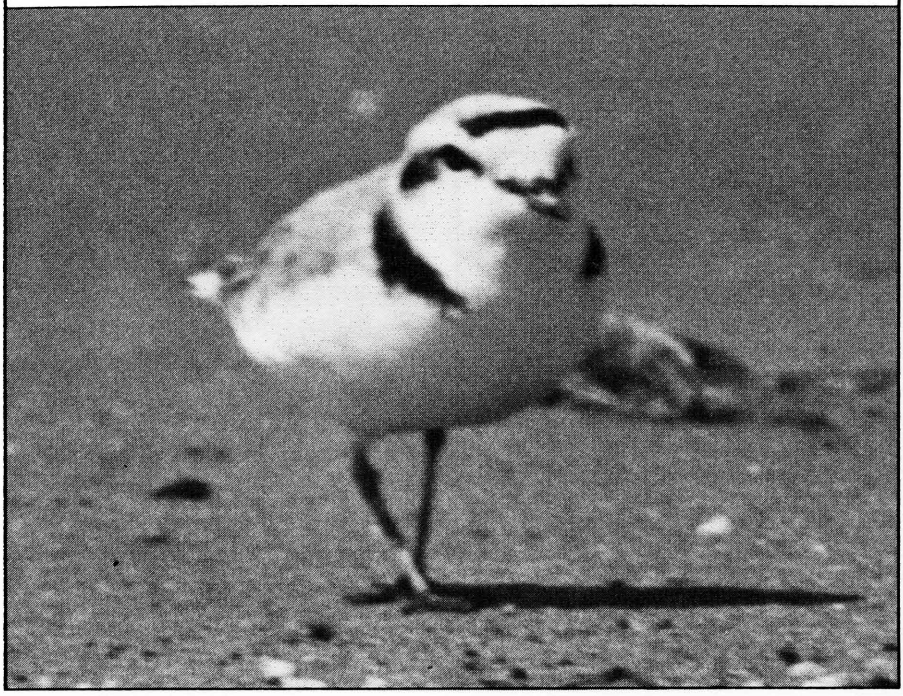
Head

The shape of the head was "squarish" due to the fairly flat crown (as opposed to the rounded crown of the Semipalmated Plover). There was a narrow black band on the upper part of the forehead and a

black patch on the sides of the face formed by a black eyeline (behind the eye only) continuous with black ear coverts. These black patches were clearly defined. The lower part of the forehead, lores and supercilium were white. The white supercilium separated the forehead band from the eye. The supercilium extended to the rear edge of the black face patch. The crown, from behind the black forehead bar to the nape, was pale sandy-brown, as were the sides of the neck. There was a narrow whitish collar separating the sandy brown crown from the upperparts. This showed best when the bird raised its head, extending the neck.

Upperparts
The mantle, rump and wings (excluding the primaries) were the same uniform pale sandy brown as the crown. This colour was approximately that of the surrounding sand and was much paler than that of a Semipalmated Plover. The primaries and the tail were darker brown. In flight, both the rump and tail showed white sides, and the secondaries were darker brown like the primaries. On the sides of the breast there was another very distinct black patch, longer than it was broad, extending on to the underparts.

Figure 2: Snowy Plover, 4–9 May 1987, Long Point, Haldimand-Norfolk. Photo (5 May) by *Alan Wormington.*



Underparts
The whole of the underparts was gleaming white, apart from the black patches on the sides of the upper breast. The white extended on to the white of the lores and head and also around the nape as a narrow white collar (Figure 2).

Bill
The entirely black bill was longer and slimmer than that of a Semipalmated Plover.

Legs
The legs were proportionately longer than those of a Semipalmated Plover. At a distance, they appeared black but at close range they were seen to be greyish-black.

Eye
The iris was dark. There was no noticeable eye-ring, so at any distance the eye seemed to merge into the black face patch. This gave the bird a "stern" rather than "gentle" facial expression.

Call
No call was heard.

Discussion

This sighting constitutes the first record of Snowy Plover for Ontario. There are two specimens of this species, both of which reportedly originated from the province in the nineteenth century. One, taken at Toronto in May 1880, was identified by Ernest Thompson Seton, but the specimen was subsequently destroyed (Godfrey 1986). The second, allegedly collected at Toronto on 6 July 1896 (James 1984), reported erroneously as 1897 by Speirs (1985) and Godfrey (1986), resides in the Royal Ontario Museum. The Ontario Bird Records Committee reviewed these old specimen reports and found them to be unacceptable (see James 1984). The 1880 report was rejected on identification and the lack of a specimen, while the 1896 report was rejected because the specimen was of questionable origin (James 1984). As such, Snowy Plover was not included on the 1984 Checklist of the Birds of Ontario (Wormington and James 1984). The Long Point bird constitutes the first record of Snowy Plover for Ontario.

Snowy Plover is a resident or partial migrant (withdrawing in winter from the extreme portions of its range) on the Pacific coast, ranging from central Washington to southern Baja California and along the Gulf coast from western Florida through Texas (Terres 1980). Migrant populations breed inland in Oregon, western California, western Nevada, Utah, eastern Colorado, southern New Mexico, southeastern Arizona, southwestern Kansas, northwestern Oklahoma and north central Texas (Peterson 1961; Terres 1980; DeSante and Pyle 1986). The Snowy Plover winters along the Pacific coast from northern Oregon south to Baja California

(Page *et al.* 1986) and along the Gulf coast from central Florida down both coasts of Central America to the Yucatan Peninsula (Pearson 1917; Peterson 1980; Terres 1980). It is vagrant in winter to the West Indies (Bond 1960; Meyer de Schauensee 1970) and as far south as Panama (Hayman *et al.* 1986) and Venezuela (Altman and Parrish 1978). The species is also considered a rare and irregular winter resident in Washington, Arizona and New Mexico (Page *et al.* 1986).

In North America, there are two distinct forms of the Snowy Plover, the paler Gulf coat form of the Gulf coast and West Indies and the darker western form of the Pacific coast and inland U.S. The A.O.U. (1957) gives these forms subspecific designations, *C.a. tenuirostris* for the Gulf form, which it calls the Cuban Snowy Plover, and *C.a. nivosus* for the western Snowy Plover. Hayman *et al.* (1986:292) describe these two races as a single subspecies, *C.a. nivosus*. Wallace felt, based on his experience with both forms, that the bird seen at Long Point was more likely the darker western form.

Table 1: Status and extralimital records of Snowy Plover in North America. Vagrant status follows that of DeSante and Pyle (1986), except in Michigan, where Payne (1983) was followed.

U.S.A.

State	Vagrant Status	Date	Number and Location	Source
Idaho	ex. rare	—	—	DeSante & Pyle (1986)
Montana	ex. rare	24 August 1959	1 Red Rock Lake	Skaar (1969)
Wyoming	ex. rare	—	—	DeSante & Pyle (1986)
Nebraska	ex. rare	17 May 1903	2 (specimens) Lincoln	Bent (1929)
Minnesota	ex. rare	—	1 —	Eckert (1983)
		undated 1981	1 Lac qui Parle	Eckert (1983)
		'summer' 1982	1 Lake of the Woods Co.	Eckert (1983)
Missouri	ex. rare	—	—	DeSante & Pyle (1986)
Arkansas	ex. rare	—	—	DeSante & Pyle (1986)
Wisconsin	ex. rare	1 June 1934	1 (collected) Kenosha	Ford (1936)
Tennessee	ex. rare	—	—	DeSante & Pyle (1986)
Penn.	ex. rare	29 June 1886	1 (collected) Berks Co.	Wood (1979)
		17 May 1986	1 Erie (Presque Isle)	Hall (1986)
Indiana	hypothetical	19 May 1980	1 (sight record) Gary	Mlodinow (1984)
Michigan	hypothetical	23 May 1963	1 Escanaba	Payne (1983)

CANADA

Province				
B.C.	ex. rare	—	1 Denman Island	Godfrey (1986)
		Apr/June 1972	1 Tofino	Hatler *et al.* (1978)
		12 July 1980	1 Queen Charlotte Ils.	Godfrey (1986)
		May 1985	1 Iona Island	Mattocks (1985)
Alberta	ex. rare	31 May 1975	1 Beaverhill Lake	Dekker (1975)
Sask.	ex. rare	May 1964	1 (specimen) Buck Lake	Wade (1964)
		June/July 1984	2 Old Wives Lake	Gollop (1986)
		July 1986	2 Old Wives Lake	Gollop (1986)

The literature contains a smattering of vagrancy records, which are summarized in Table 1. DeSante and Pyle (1986) describe "extremely rare" as having occurred ten times or less in a given state or province.

In Canada, the Snowy Plover has previously been recorded in three provinces (Table 1). There are four records from coastal British Columbia: Tofino, April to June 1972; Denman Island; Queen Charlotte Islands, July 1980; and Iona Island, May 1985 (Hatler *et al.* 1978; Mattocks 1985; Godfrey 1986). Until 1984 Saskatchewan's only record was a specimen collected at Buck Lake in May, 1964 (Godfrey 1986). In June or July 1984, two plovers were found on Old Wives Lake, in southwestern Saskatchewan (Gollop 1986). A nest discovered at this location in July 1986 established Canada's first breeding record. There is one record of the species from Alberta, where a bird was found at Beaverhill Lake on 31 May 1975 (Dekker 1975).

These records indicate that the Snowy Plover is not overly prone to vagrancy. Although it breeds regularly as far north as central Washington, at Leadbetter Point at the mouth of Willapa Bay (Wallace, pers. comm., 1987), there are only four sightings of this species from British Columbia. The species breeds along the Gulf coast of Florida as far south as Naples (Paul 1981). However, in the decade from 1970-1980 it was recorded only three times in the Florida Keys (Atherton and Atherton 1980). It is considered casual on the Atlantic coast of Florida and has not been recorded on the Atlantic coast north of that state (A.O.U. 1983). Thus, coastal populations of Snowy Plover, i.e., both western and Gulf forms, appear highly sedentary. The specimen taken at Buck Lake, Saskatchewan was identified by Godfrey as belonging to the western form (Wade 1964). The A.O.U. (1957) cites casual records of the western form in Wyoming and Nebraska. Vagrant birds in Alberta and other U.S. locations also probably originated from the migratory inland population. Considering that our plover was thought not to be a Gulf coast form, we speculate that it too was a stray from the inland breeding population.

Virtually all of the Snowy Plover vagrancy records for which we were able to obtain dates occurred during the spring/early summer. The appearance of the Long Point bird conformed to this temporal pattern.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Martin K. McNicholl for his detailed critique of the manuscript and valuable reference sources. Terrie Woodrow provided a further reference. George E. Wallace was steadfast in his encouragement and editing advice.

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Blue Jays Mimic the Calls of Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks

by
Ross D. James

Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) have long been known to mimic the calls of other birds. Some consider that they are able to reproduce the calls of many different species (Baird *et al.* 1875; Terres 1980), although they are most renowned for vocal mimicry of hawks, particularly the Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) (Nicholson 1936; Bent 1946; Godfrey 1986). The Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*) and the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) have also been included in the jay repertoire (Baird *et al.* 1875), and I can add the Broad-winged Hawk (*B. platypterus*). If jays are as good a mimic of smaller birds as they are with hawks, the habit may often be overlooked. The mimicked sound heard by a field observer might be assumed to emanate from the appropriate species, rather than from a jay that might not even be seen. But why they should mimic other birds, and particularly hawks, has not been adequately answered. The following observations, while not providing definitive answers, suggest that the habit is not of significant survival value to the birds.

On 21 July 1987, about 10 km southeast of Dwight, Muskoka District Municipality, Ontario, in an area where I have heard Red-shouldered Hawks for many years (including 1987), I was recording Blue Jays and the associated scolding by Least Flycatchers (*Empidonax minimus*) and Red-eyed Vireos (*Vireo olivaceus*) when I realized that it was the jay giving Red-shouldered Hawk-like screams, rather than a hawk itself. To my ears the jay call was a very good rendition of the hawk, except that the jay gave only single, well-spaced syllables, rather than the usual repetitive call of the hawk. Spectographs (Figure 1a, 1b) revealed that the syllables uttered by the jay (a) were similar to those of a Red-shouldered Hawk. The dominant frequency is nearly identical and the structure of the calls, including harmonics, is similar. In the second half of the call, however, the jay (a) has emphasized the lower of two simultaneous frequencies in the 2 to 3 kHz range (that soon blend together), while in the hawk call (b), this lower band

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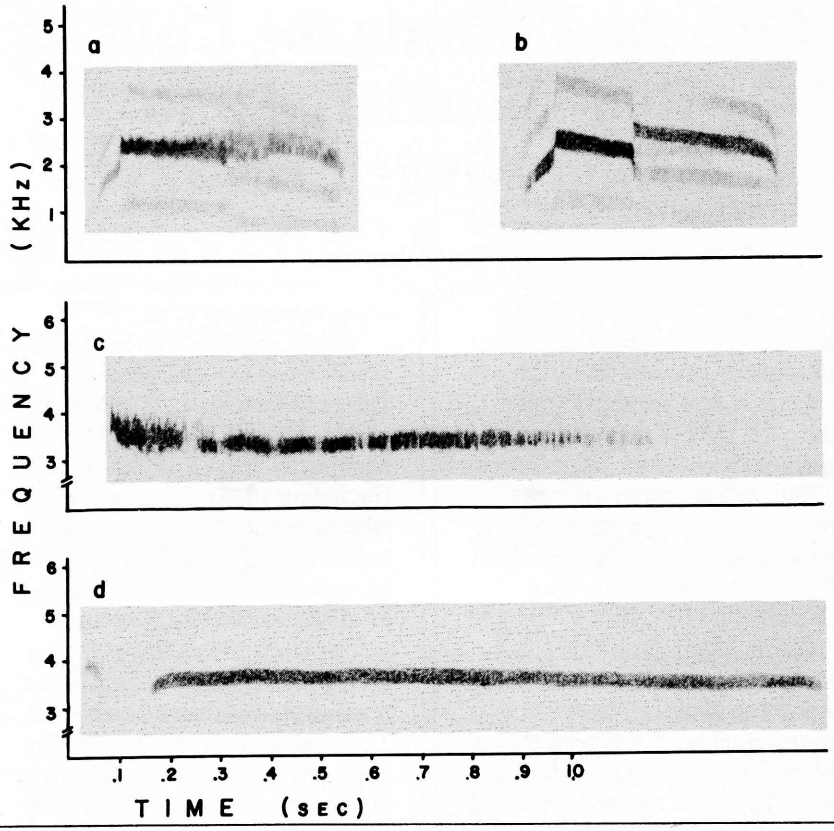

Figure 1: Sonograms (wide band) of:
(a) a Red-shouldered Hawk-like call given by a Blue Jay on 21 July 1987 in Muskoka District Municipality, Ontario (dominant frequency 2-3 kHz; durations .47 sec);
(b) a syllable from a longer call given by a Red-shouldered Hawk, recorded earlier on 21 July 1987 in the same locality as (a) (dominant frequency 2-3 kHz; duration .51 sec);
(c) a Broad-winged Hawk-like call given by a Blue Jay on 26 July 1987 in Muskoka District Municipality, Ontario (dominant frequency 4.0-4.5 kHz; duration 1.1 sec);
(d) an example of a Broad-winged Hawk call recorded 7 June 1983, in Hastings County, Ontario (dominant frequency 4.5-5 kHz; duration 1.45 sec).

has all but disappeared. The jay call is slightly shorter and noticeably less pure in tone, but given the complexity of the call, it is a remarkable resemblance.

Only five days later, as I stood recording a bird on the shore of a small lake, in the very same area, I heard what I thought was a Broad-winged Hawk calling on the other side of the lake. I expected Broad-winged Hawks, as I have also found them nesting there, and birds were present in 1987. Soon, I noticed a Blue Jay fly across the lake to land within 30 m of where

I stood. Both as it flew, and after landing in the forest, it uttered a series of calls that I would have continued to think were given by a hawk if I had not seen the jay. Sonograms (Figure 1c, d) again revealed a similar call. The jay version (c) is shorter and fades out more noticeably toward the end, but the frequency of the call is very close to the Broad-winged Hawk example (d), and there is likely variation among hawks. When given by the jay, the opening syllable is prolonged somewhat, there are small but inaudible breaks, and the call is less pure in tone, but to human ears it sounds essentially identical except for duration.

As would be appropriate at the end of July, what appeared to be family groups of jays, with young long out of the nest, were seen in this area on a number of occasions during the week these recordings were made. But on both recording occasions, lasting about one minute each, the jays giving the calls appeared to be alone, although likely within hearing distance of other jays.

There have been numerous theories put forward as to why birds in general mimic other species (see Bayliss 1982) or why jays in particular might do this (Goodwin 1976). Unfortunately there is as yet no proven reason why Blue Jays should want to mimic the sounds of hawks. The fact that jays have been doing it for decades suggests that it may happen more than just by chance. However, a jay uttering hawk calls while foraging alone in the forest late in the breeding season does not lend support to theories of enhanced sexual selection during pairing, mate identification within pairs, or of territorial defense during the mating season. And since nests were not involved in these examples, nor were the hawks present, theories relating to their use in mobbing or of enhancing threats to other birds that might be approaching nests are also not supported. The vireos and flycatchers were seemingly unaffected by the mimicked hawk calls, as they continued to scold the jays.

Perhaps the hawk calls are of value to jays at some particular time during the year. The birds that I recorded may well have been young, practicing their vocal repertoire for the future. But why should they learn hawk calls in the first place? If such calls really were of advantage to jays in conveying a more precise indication of a threat to the birds themselves or to their nest, a possible reason suggested by Goodwin (1976), why should they not mimic *Accipiter* species (Sharp-shinned Hawks *Accipiter striatus*, were also seen in these forests in 1987) rather than *Buteos* that are less dangerous to small passerines. And if the hawk calls were of value in such situations, why would all jays not quickly acquire the habit (assuming they do not, because it is not apparent to us that

all jays have this habit)?

At present, the hawk calls given by Blue Jays have no more adequate explanation than that they may be sounds that the jays could easily learn, and amount to nothing more than "copying mistakes" of no value to the jays. Goodwin (1976) indicates that mimicked sounds are often given by jays in highly emotional situations, presumably similar to those under which the jays first heard the sound. The hawk calls that I recorded then, although not given at a time of any apparent stress, may have been acquired during a period of emotional stress caused by the presence of hawks near them, at a time when they were learning their own songs and sensitive to such sounds in their environment. Calling *Buteos* could easily be near Blue Jay nests or newly flying young and could create such stress.

Perhaps the quieter nature of *Accipiters* when hunting lessens the possibility of jays acquiring *Accipiter* calls. Even more likely to preclude this possibility, however, is the fact that the *Accipiters* are going to be much more lethal to young jays. When learning calls, the jays are likely to be rather young, and better able to survive the presence of *Buteos* in close proximity.

Acknowledgements

J.C. Barlow and G.K. Peck provided helpful comments on the manuscript. M. Goldsmith and C. Sweeney typed various versions of the manuscript. I am grateful to them for their assistance.

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First Records of Roof Nesting by Ring-billed Gulls and Herring Gulls in Ontario

by
Hans Blokpoel and Blake Smith

In recent years there has been an increase in the incidence of birds nesting on roofs. Fisk (1978) provided an annotated list of reports of roof nesting and mentioned that this behaviour has been reported for eight *Larus* species, including the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) but not the Ring-billed Gull (*L. delawarensis*).

Roof nesting by Herring Gulls in the United Kingdom and Ireland has been documented by Cramp (1971) and Monaghan and Coulson (1977). In North America, Herring Gulls have nested on roofs near Boston, Massachusetts (Paynter 1963), Long Island, New York (Buckley and Buckley 1980) and in Manchester, New Hampshire (R.M. Bollengier, pers. comm.).

This note reports one case of roof nesting by Ring-billed Gulls and two by Herring Gulls in Ontario.

Ring-billed Gulls on roof of commercial building near Owen Sound

This building is located on the east side of Owen Sound, just north of the Town of Owen Sound, Grey County. The building's flat roof is approximately 22,000 m^2 in size and 7 m high. The top layer is gravel.

In 1985 there were 20 nests with eggs. Few, if any, chicks fledged because there was heavy depredation by a Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) that could reach the roof via an emergency ladder at the rear side of the building (T. Moulton, pers. comm.).

At the end of May 1986 there were more than 100 nests with eggs (T. Moulton, pers. comm.). On 12 June there were only 24 nests with eggs and there were many depredated eggs. On 19 June there were 23 adult Ring-billed Gulls and 81 nests (11 with one egg, seven with two eggs, three with three eggs and 60 empty). Fragments of egg shells

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and dried yolk were present at many of the empty nests. There were 11 depredated eggs scattered about over the roof. Raccoon scats were present on the roof and on a landing of the emergency ladder. On 23 June there were only seven nests with eggs. On 6 July there were no intact eggs or chicks and the colony had been deserted.

Virtually all of the 81 nests that were present on 19 June were built against structures (exhaust vents, gas lines, expansion joints, low platforms, etc.).

On 3 June 1987 there were two separate Ring-billed Gull colonies on the roof: one had 143 and the other 18 nests with eggs. There were no chicks or hatching eggs, nor were there any obvious signs of Raccoon predation. As in 1986, virtually all nests were located against roof structures. The nesting gulls fouled the roof with excrement, nesting materials, food remains, feathers and regurgitations of undigestable objects. The owner of the building was afraid that during a heavy rainstorm these materials would clog drain pipes, causing puddles or leaks. In addition, the gull droppings corroded the metal structures on the roof. At the request of the owner of the building, the Canadian Wildlife Service issued a permit to collect the eggs. On 8 June all eggs were collected and destroyed by staff of the Owen Sound District office of the Ministry of Natural Resources. There was no renesting after the egg collection.

Herring Gulls on roof of Grey County Mall, Owen Sound

The flat roof of the Grey County Mall is about 14,000m^2 in size and about 7m high. The top layer of the roof is gravel. Opposite the County Mall are three franchised fast-food outlets.

In 1985 there was one nest with three eggs (R. Jackson, pers. comm.). On 5 June 1986 there was one nest with two eggs and another with two eggs and one small chick. On 11 June there were four more nests (each with three eggs) and on 19 June another nest with three eggs. The gulls occupied only a small section of the roof and formed a loose colony.

The gulls apparently preferred to nest near one of the several structures on the roof rather than on the open roof itself. Of the seven nests, one was on top of a ventilation unit, three were against ventilation units, two were against gaslines and one was out in the open about 1m from a roof drain.

The nesting Herring Gulls caused problems similar to those mentioned above for Ring-billed Gulls. Under a CWS permit all eggs were collected repeatedly by the staff of the mall and at most, one chick fledged from the roof in 1986.

In 1987 there were no Herring Gulls nesting on the roof, presumably as a result of the persistent harassment in 1986.

Herring Gulls on roof at Bruce Nuclear Power Development (BNPD), Douglas Point, Bruce County

In 1985 there were 12 Herring Gull nests on the roof of the Bruce Stores building (D. Armchuk, pers. comm.). The roof, which is about 2,000m² and 12m high, is flat and its surface consists of a sheet of waterproof material, thick sheets of insulation material, and a covering layer of pebbles.

On 19 June 1986, there were 44 nests (43 empty, one with three eggs). There were 25 live, half-grown chicks and 11 dead chicks, including one which had been pecked to death and one which had been decapitated. There was also a decapitated adult gull, suggesting depredation by Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*).

Of the 44 nests, six were located against ventilation shafts, seven against 60cm² patio stones and 31 in the open. Thus, at the BNPD gulls showed a tendency to nest near structures and objects providing visual relief. The 25 chicks were grouped in a pod, except for a few that were hiding in the ventilation shafts.

In addition to fouling the roof, the Herring Gulls nesting on the roof at BNPD caused the following problems: (1) they brought in soil and seeds when building their nests, and vegetation had become established at some of the nests (BNPD staff were concerned that the plant roots might ruin the waterproof lining); (2) gulls standing at the roof's edge would defecate on the only exposed portion of the lining and thereby chemically erode it; (3) gulls pecked at and damaged portions of the insulation sheets that were not covered by pebbles; (4) chicks hiding inside exhaust vents fouled them; (5) cars parked near the building were frequently fouled; and (6) some BNPD employees were afraid to eat their lunch outside.

CWS issued a permit to destroy the eggs and to kill the chicks to alleviate the immediate problems. After the control operations, carried out by the Owen Sound District office of the MNR, on 25 June, there was no renesting.

In 1987 the Herring Gulls nested again. Under a CWS permit, BNPD staff collected all eggs once a week during May and June and no chicks were produced (D. Armchuck, pers. comm.).

The new behaviour of roof-nesting by gulls in Ontario is of serious concern because, if it becomes more widespread, considerable nuisance and damage may result. Ring-billed Gulls have already become a problem species in many parts of Ontario and now nest on many man-made urban or industrial sites (Blokpoel and Tessier 1986). If Ring-bills were to take to roof-nesting they would have ample nesting habitat along the shores of the lower Great Lakes where much industry is located. At some of these sites gulls loafing on roofs are already creating problems, and these prob-

lems would certainly be exacerbated if the gulls began to nest as well. Several large colonies (>10,000 nests) exist on the lower Great Lakes and there is little suitable nesting habitat left. This makes a change to roof-nesting even more likely.

Acknowledgements

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Early Nesting by House Finches in Ontario

by
Daniel R. Kozlovic

The breeding season of the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) commences in late February to late April from the southern to the northern extreme of the species' range (Harrison 1978). In Ontario, the majority of nesting activities take place in May and June. Here, I report on early nesting, in March, by Ontario House Finches and comment on the factors that may promote early nesting in this species.

On 19 March 1987, in a residential area of St. Catharines, Regional Municipality of Niagara, Ontario, I observed a male House Finch singing from eaves directly above a small Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*). Soon thereafter, a female finch emerged from the tree and the pair flew off. Suspecting a nesting site, I examined the tree closely and discovered a complete nest positioned about 1.4m from the ground. The cup-shaped nest was composed of coarse grasses and rootlets, its rim

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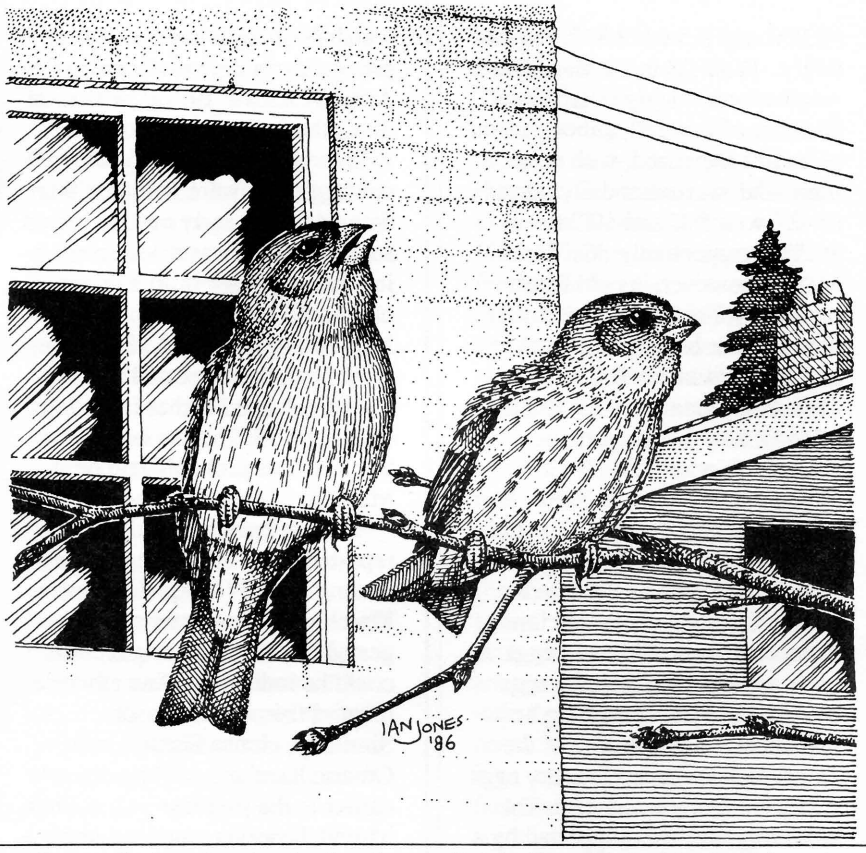

House Finches drawing by *Ian Jones*. Originally published in the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario*.

fringed with leaves of dusty miller (*Centaurea* sp.), and lined with finer grasses, a frazzled cigarette filter, and more leaves of dusty miller. On 21 and 23 March the nest contained one and three eggs, respectively. During the same period I scouted three other neighbourhoods of St. Catharines, which in previous years had been particularly active nesting areas, and found four additional nests in various stages of construction.

Two nests were located in Chinese junipers and two were in eastern red cedars (*J. virginiana*). These nests ranged in height from 1.9 to 2.2m and were being constructed of grasses and rootlets.

The weather during March 1987 at St. Catharines was mild, with an average temperature of 2.7°C. The week of 16 to 22 March had abundant sunshine and the minimum and maximum daily temperatures ranged from –7.1 to

–0.8°C and 3.5 to 12.8°C, respectively. From 23 to 30 March the weather was mainly overcast and 27.6mm of rain fell, although temperatures increased, with minimum and maximum daily ranges of -2.0 to 4.5°C and 10.2 to 19.5°C, respectively. On 31 March, however, a cold front passed over southern and central Ontario that brought snow, sleet and strong winds. The St. Catharines area received 18.8cm of snow and the temperature dropped to a low of -5.0°C.

On the day after the storm four of the five nests, including the one first discovered on 19 March, were found filled with wet, packed snow. One nest contained four eggs, two nests held three eggs each and one nest had two eggs. Remarkably, the remaining nest had survived the ravages of the storm and contained four dry eggs that were being incubated. The surviving nest was supported by a tall (3.2m) Chinese juniper that had been bound with twine in a helical fashion in order to minimize snow damage to its branches. Apparently, the tight binding of the branches had prevented snow from being blown into the tree and nest. On 14 April there were four nestlings two to three days old in the nest.

Although House Finches have been observed carrying nesting material as early as March at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Regional Municipality of Niagara, Ontario (James 1978), the earliest date on which fresh eggs had been noted previously in the province was 26 April (Kozlovic 1987a) in 1985 at St. Catharines. Four nests, two with three eggs each and two with one egg each, were found on this date. Another early nesting record for the species was a nest, containing five nestlings 11 to 12 days old, found at St. Catharines on 26 May 1983 (pers. obs.). Since the modal incubation period of Ontario House Finches is 13 days (Kozlovic 1987b), the last egg in this nest was probably laid on 2 May.

In New Jersey, Leck (1987) reported cases of House Finches nesting earlier (in April and even March) in recent years and suggested that these nesting records could be indicative of an advancement of the nesting season. Similarly, House Finches in Ontario have nested progressively earlier in the past few years. Such a trend, however, need not imply a seasonal advance of nesting. Since the eastern population has been increasing rapidly (Robbins *et al.* 1986), House Finches have recently become numerous in many regions of their new-found range. In any large population there will be variation in the onset of nesting, and more finches may now be nesting early in the season.

Weather conditions, particularly temperature, appear to have a strong influence on House Finch nesting activities. In Colorado, during spells of warm weather in autumn and winter, Bergtold

(1913) observed House Finches searching for suitable nesting sites, gathering nesting material and actively building nests. Furthermore, males, which were relatively silent during the cold months, often began to sing on mild, sunny days. However, these behaviours stopped upon the return of cold weather. The extremely early nesting activities of House Finches at St. Catharines seem to have been induced by a spell of warm weather. In 1987, southern and central Ontario experienced the warmest March since 1977, with the average temperature being two degrees above normal (Scholefield 1987). The total hours of bright sunshine was well above normal and precipitation amounts were below normal for the month. These "early spring" weather conditions persisted long enough to allow finches to reach the egg-laying stage. Unfortunately, most of the clutches froze after a sudden return of inclement weather; a consequence of early nesting that has been reported elsewhere (Nice 1957) for this species.

In addition to favourable weather conditions, food availability is believed to be important in the timing of breeding, since females may be cued to breed when they have acquired sufficient nutrients to form eggs (Perrins 1970). Experimental supplementation of food abundance has been shown to seasonally advance breeding in Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and other species (see Ewald and Rohwer 1982). Therefore, I suggest that food set out at feeding stations may also promote early nesting in House Finches. Since their introduction to eastern North America in 1940, House Finches have depended on feeders during the winter months (Elliott and Arbib 1953), and with the growth of the population, surveys have recorded a marked increase in the number of finches attending feeding stations (Burtt and Burtt 1984; Dunn 1986). For instance, flocks of more than 100 birds have been reported at one feeding station at St. Catharines (Foley 1983). Thus, early in the season, when natural food items such as seeds of weeds and grasses are not abundant, feeders may provide the critical food resources necessary for egg production. This notion is supported by the fact that three of the nests found were in the proximity of known feeding stations.

To date, these observations represent the earliest records of nesting for the House Finch in Ontario. The unusually mild weather conditions in March 1987, in concert with readily available food offered at feeders, appear to have provided a favourable environment for breeding much earlier than is usual in the season.

Acknowledgements

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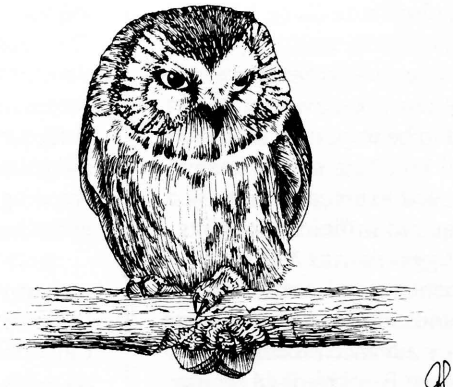

Northern Saw-whet Owl / drawing by *John Schmelefske*

Notes

Voice of the American Crow

Introduction

Even to the casual listener, the calling of the American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) has a certain pattern to it. Simplified, a caw is the sound most often given. Three caws in quick succession constitute the commonest bout heard. From previous observations, bouts of one to six caws comprise 91% of the crow's vocabulary. Once a bout of caws is completed, there is a silence (interbout period) generally lasting several seconds before another bout of caws is given. A lone crow may give a sequence of 12 bouts with only a slight variation: 3-3-3-3-3-3-3-3-2-3-3-3. At other times the bouts in a sequence may show more variation: 12-2-7-4-4-3-5-6-8. This interval of silence (negative space represented by the dash [-] in the above examples) is the specific aspect of the crow's speech pattern which I have investigated.

Thompson (1968) speculated that there might be a link between the counting ability of corvids and their vocal expression. Later, Thompson (1969a) remarked, "caws of different sequences have idiosyncratic elements which they share with few or any other sequences." In summary, he felt that caws, bouts, and sequences of bouts vary for one crow and between crows.

Methods

I confined my study to the period 2-30 March 1987. Using a stopwatch, I recorded the length of silence between bouts of caws from resident crows in Guelph, Wellington County. March, the month of nest-building, was suitable because crows are very active vocally on their territories. Caws were uttered by nest-builders in response to other crows passing through the area, ceremonial (pursuit) flights, and disputes over territory. In all I timed the length of 1185 silences (Figure 1).

I limited the periods of silence to a maximum of 60 seconds. Calling crows were perched on trees or rooftops. Usually two or three bouts were heard before timing began. Timing of a sequence generally ended with the crow flying off. The interbout periods for crows calling in flight were not included, but less than 20 interbout periods from crows calling while on the ground were included.

Results and Discussion

Some bias in the data collection resulted because a crow giving bouts of caws in quick succession was appreciated more than another crow giving bouts at 30-50 second intervals, especially when a pair of birds was doing so at the same time. Once this discrepancy was realized, some compensation was

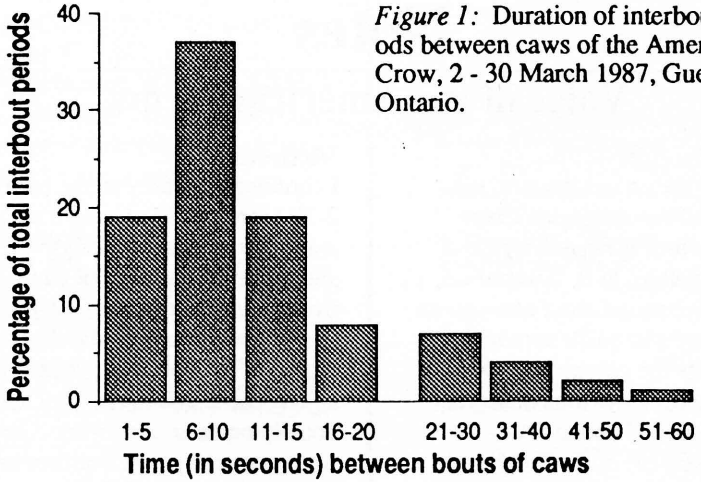

Figure 1: Duration of interbout periods between caws of the American Crow, 2 - 30 March 1987, Guelph, Ontario.

made to include the longer interbout periods.

The similarity and tone of the caws in a sequence permitted the identification of a calling crow, which assured that the full negative space was being timed. Consequently, errors resulting from cutting short the timing due to the intruding caws of another crow were minimal. As long as the crows kept their bouts and caws structured (i.e., regular), identification and timing were possible. When a territorial dispute between two or more birds began, the bouts became erratic and unstructured. When cawing in an excited manner, the crows all sounded alike, as Thompson (1969b) has pointed out. Overlapping bouts made it difficult to time the interbout periods. The data in Figure 1 are therefore based almost entirely on bouts of structured calling.

Short intervals of negative space between caws were due to the intrusion of conspecifics. It appears that the closer a crow approached to a calling bird, the shorter the period of silence between bouts of calling became. Long intervals of 40 or more seconds were generally from crows that were perched alone and engaged in another activity such as preening. The average length of time between bouts of caws recorded in this study was 12 seconds.

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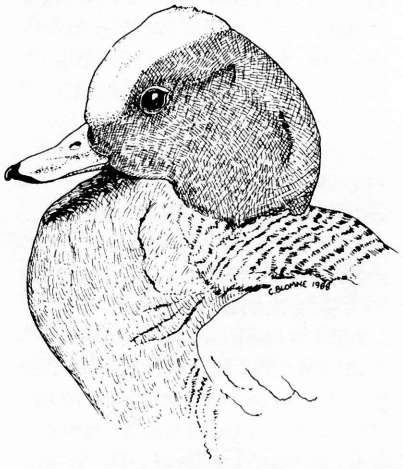
First Record of Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) in the Sudbury District, Ontario

On 6 June 1987, a male Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) in breeding plumage was observed swimming with a slightly smaller male American wigeon (*A. americana*) on Kelley Lake (46°27'W, 81°03'N), Sudbury District. Both male birds were dabbling in open water and were observed by the author and Gloria Blomme using 10 x 50 power binoculars. The tan coloured forehead and bright reddish head were easily discernible and offered ideal comparative opportunities with the closely associated American Wigeon. The cinnamon-buff colour of the chest and the grey sides of the Eurasian Wigeon were also noted. Several photographs of the bird were taken.



Male Eurasian Wigeon / drawing by *Chris Blomme*

The bird was seen again in the morning and evening of 7 June by the author, Chris Bell, John Lemon and Charles Whitelaw. Observations were maintained up to 17 June when the bird was no longer present. It was not subsequently seen.

There are few summer records of the Eurasian Wigeon in Ontario, with most birds appearing in the spring and fall (James *et al.* 1976; Speirs 1985). Goodwin (1979) reported three spring sightings in 1979 as the largest number since 1974. According to Weir (1987a), there was an average of five Ontario records each year from 1980 to 1986. A high count was obtained in the spring of 1987 with eight Eurasian Wigeons reported (Weir 1987b), most of them males.

The vast majority of Eurasian Wigeon records in Ontario are from the southern Great Lakes region, with scattered observations ranging north to Muskoka District and Ottawa, Ottawa-Carleton R.M. (James *et al.* 1976; Speirs 1985). The Kelley Lake bird represents the first record of Eurasian Wigeon in Sudbury District, and only the second for northern Ontario. Baillie (1954) cites a record from Fort William, Thunder Bay District, on 1 May 1954.

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The 1987 Loggerhead Shrike Survey

Atlas data indicate that the Loggerhead Shrike was rare in Ontario between 1981 and 1985, but also show that Ontario has the largest remaining population of the species in northeastern North America (Cadman *et al.* 1987). Because there were indications of further decline during the atlas period (e.g., Hanrahan 1987) a more detailed study of shrikes was undertaken in 1987. The goals of the project were to find as many active nesting sites as possible, to assess the 1987 population, and to lay the groundwork for further surveys to determine population trends, site fidelity, and other information that might be of value in protecting the species.

Fieldwork was undertaken by volunteer naturalists under the supervision of regional coordinators. Volunteers checked sites where shrikes had been reported previously and covered 10 x 10km atlas squares (see Cadman *et al.* 1987) containing habitat suitable for nesting shrikes.

Sixty-four volunteers spent 771 hours and travelled 11,132 km (10,758 by car or bicycle, 374 on foot) in covering 141 atlas squares. A total of 82 adult shrikes were reported from 53 sites in 34 squares. Breeding was "confirmed" at 15 sites in 11 squares, and "probable" and "possible" breeding (Cadman *et al.* 1987) were reported from 14 sites in nine squares and 24 sites in 13 squares, respectively. All birds reported were within the range defined by the atlas data, except one bird reported 80 km west of Thunder Bay. Of 145 squares with atlas data, 55 were covered during the 1987 survey and shrikes were found in 19 of these.

Using the results of the 1987 survey in conjunction with atlas data, the 1987 Loggerhead Shrike population can be estimated to be 200 birds: 71 pairs and 58 apparently unmated individuals. With no similar data for comparison, it

is not possible to determine whether these numbers represent a decline in the population since the atlas period. However, it is hoped that future surveys will help ascertain changes in shrike numbers or distribution.

Results of the survey have already been used in two projects. A researcher investigating the reason for the decline of the shrike collected data at several sites found in 1987, and the Canadian Wildlife Service is using the data on nesting locations to determine if the use of pesticides is related to the decline of the species in Ontario. Further applications will no doubt result as more information is collected.

Volunteers needed for 1988 survey

The survey is to be repeated in 1988. This year's survey will be particularly valuable in the determination of nest site fidelity. Those who participated in 1987 will be asked to continue. If you would like to take part, please contact M. Cadman, c/o Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8. Volunteers determine their own level of participation. Fieldwork is required during the shrike's nesting period — April to August — but May-June is the essential period. Key areas where surveys are needed include Bruce and Grey Counties, the area between Orillia, Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa, and the Lake of the Woods area.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to all participants in the 1987 survey — especially regional coordinators. Thanks also to World Wildlife Fund Canada for helping to fund the project.

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Michael D. Cadman, c/o Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8

Great-tailed Grackle: New to Ontario

On Wednesday, 7 October 1987, my father, Ivan Elder, drew my attention to a large brown and black bird feeding on the ground behind my residence in Atikokan, Rainy River District. The bird was feeding with a number of Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) and Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). My first impression on noting the large size, the light yellow eye, the definite light buffy stripe over the eye and the anterior brownish buff colour grading to blackish posterially was of a giant Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*). I then realized I was looking at a female of either a Boat-tailed Grackle (*Q. major)* or a Great-tailed Grackle (*Q. mexicanus*). After consulting Peterson's (1980) *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies* and the National Geopgraphic Society (1983) *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, I identified the bird as a female Great-tailed Grackle.

The bird was longer and larger than the Common Grackles it associated with. In particular, the bill and legs were noticeably strong and heavy (Figure 1). The large bill had a gentle curve throughout and little or no angle existed between the bill and forehead. The eye was light yellow and a distinct light buff line extended

Figure 1: Female Great-Tailed Grackle, 7–25 October 1987, Atikokan, Rainy River District. Photo (10 October) by *Alan Wormington.*

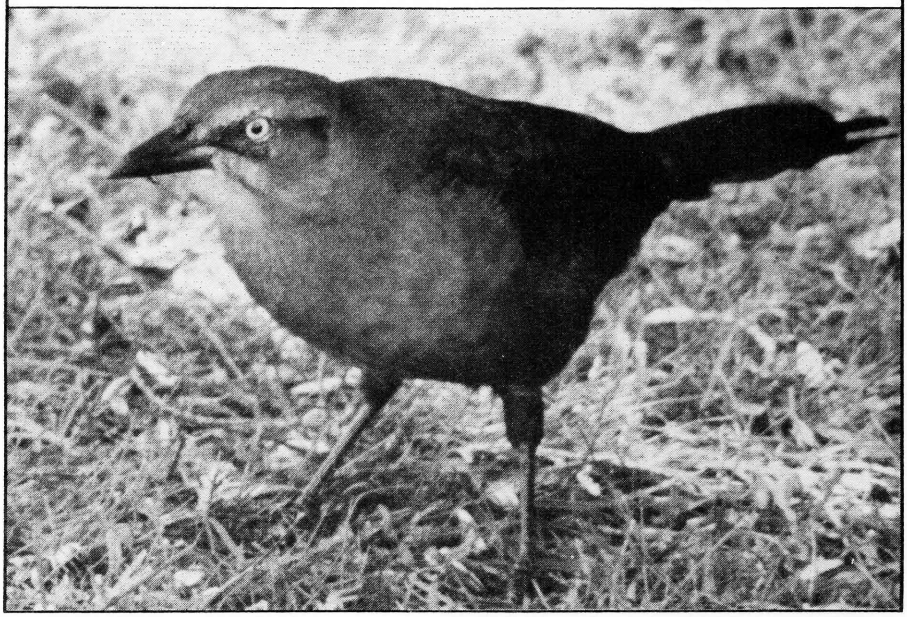

Figure 2: Female Great-Tailed Grackle, 7 -25 October 1987, Atikokan, Rainy River District. Photo (10 October) by *Alan Wormington.*

from the bill above the eye to the back of the head (Figure 1). A darkish line parallel to the light line extended from the bill through the eye. A dark malar line was quite distinct (Figure 2). The throat was light buff, grading to a warm brown on the breast and flanks. The crown was brown, grading to dark brown on the back and then to blackish on the lower back and tail. The wings were dull black. The bill and legs were black. In flight the tail was distinctly diamond-shaped, with a slightly keeled appearance (Figure 3). The bird quietly fed on the ground with other grackles and blackbirds but would respond to crowding with a threat display. It assumed an upright, stretched out posture with the bill pointing straight up, facing its opponent. The plumage was compressed and occasionally a high-pitched *"check - check - check"* call was uttered. It would immediately resume feeding after displaying and was always the winner in each encounter.

The bird was present intermittently from 7 to 25 October.

In the United States, the breeding distribution of the Great-tailed Grackle currently extends from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and southern California, north to southern Utah, southeastern Colorado and Kansas and east to Nebraska, southwestern Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana (A.O.U. 1983).

Pruitt (1975) gives details on the separation of the Great-tailed Grackle and the Boat-tailed Grackle into two species.

Figure 3: Female Great-tailed Grackle, 7 - 25 October 1987, Atikokan, Rainy River District. Photo (10 October) by *Alan Wormington.*

Differences in habitat requirements, habits, physical characteristics and range are provided, as is the range expansion of the Great-tailed Grackle northward into Kansas by the mid-1960s.

The range expansion of the species may still be occuring. Nesting had occurred as far north as eastern Nebraska by 1977 (Faanes and Norling 1981). Its presence in Illinois is limited to one record, a bird at Jacksonville, 5-7 October 1974 (Bohlen 1978: 118). There is a single Minnesota record, 19 June 1982 at Black Dog Lake, Dakota County (Egeland 1983).

In Canada, the Great-tailed Grackle has previously been recorded twice. In May, 1979, one was recorded at Cape St. James in the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia (Godfrey 1986: 554). The second record occurred on the other side of the country near Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia; the bird was a female and was present from 17 November 1983 to 8 February 1984 (Heil 1984).

The Atikokan bird constitutes the first record of the Great-tailed Grackle for Ontario and the third for Canada.

Acknowledgements

Nick Escott of Thunder Bay was kind enough to drive to Atikokan and confirm the identification of the Great-tailed Grackle. Some background information for this paper was provided by Alan Wormington.

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Can a Loon Judge What is Too Big To Swallow?

On the evening of 21 July 1987, about 1900h, my attention was drawn to an adult Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) on a small lake in Muskoka District, Ontario. I initially thought it was bathing and preening, but when observed through binoculars, it became apparent that the loon was trying to swallow a large fish. The fish seemed rather inactive by the time I began observing, for the loon was not holding it tightly all the time, but could be seen repeatedly bringing its head down toward the floating fish, with beak wide open. The loon never appeared to stab at the fish, but only to grasp it and probably to squeeze it tightly. This appeared vigorous, with the head of the loon partly submerging each time, but was done rather slowly and deliberately, not with a stabbing suddenness. Similar grasping behaviour was mentioned in connection with loons eating flounders on the Atlantic coast (Forbush 1925). It was suggested that squeezing had the effect of compressing or perhaps partly rolling up such flat fish, thus making it possible to swallow them.

Between bouts of grasping, the loon several times took the fish head first in its bill, and holding it nearly vertically above, tried to choke the fish down with vigorous lunges of the head. The loon then put its head down to the water and shook it side to side several times to dislodge the fish. A couple of times the loon seized the fish and dived with it. Whether this was an attempt to swallow under water, where swallowing normally occurs, could not be determined. No swallowing actions were noted immediately before or after diving.

After I had watched for five to ten minutes, the loon gave up trying, and just swam about the fish

for about another minute. When it began drifting away I approached in a canoe and found a smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieui*) of 30.5cm length (fork length) floating on the surface. There were no puncture wounds in the fish, although the body had received a considerable mauling and scales were dislodged in several places on the fore part of the body. This loon was apparently fortunate that the dorsal spines of the fish did not catch in its mouth or it might have choked to death on its oversized meal as have other loons (e.g., Todd 1940).

Why would a loon try to catch a fish it could not swallow? Would an experienced loon not have some appreciation for the size of prey it could consume? A loon would ordinarily seize its prey from above (Barr 1973) and perhaps in the darkness of the evening it could not judge the size accurately. But, once caught, the bird persisted in killing and trying to swallow such a large fish, indicating that it had little appreciation of how big a fish it could swallow. This observation suggests that when hungry, loons try to catch most anything they can grasp and hold, and larger fish being faster swimmers (Bainbridge 1960; Barr 1973; Beamish 1978) are ordinarily just too fast to catch. This smallmouth bass had no obvious signs of incapacity that might have slowed it down, and it certainly tasted fine to me.

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Breeding Records of the Mourning Warbler at London, Middlesex County

Neither Saunders and Dale (1933) nor Peck and James (1987) report breeding of the Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*) in Middlesex County. Jarmain and Leach (1963), however, state that this species was "found nesting along Thames River near University" at London. To supplement this report, I wish to record two instances of breeding by the Mourning Warbler at London. Evidence of breeding was noted in 1962 and 1963 on

the west bank of the Thames River as it flows through the campus of the University of Western Ontario at London. In 1962, the late Norman K. Taylor saw adult Mourning Warblers, presumably members of the same pair, feeding or attending fledgling warblers (number unrecorded) on 13 and 16 July and 2 August. In 1963, on 5 July, James A. Darley saw a female Mourning Warbler carrying food to a nest containing four young warblers which, when the author saw them later on the same day, were judged to be about five days old. The outcome of this nest was not recorded.

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Book Reviews

Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World. 1986. By *Peter Hayman, John Marchant* and *Tony Prater.* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. 412 pp., $54.85 (Cdn).

Shorebirds: An Identification Guide is an important book for birders, both in Ontario and throughout the world. No longer will we be forced to dig out arcane articles in obscure journals, or worse, try to figure out what a "winter" plumaged stint illustrated in a standard field guide really looks like. With the publication of this, the first complete review of the world's shorebirds, reliable and up-to-date information on their identification is readily available.

Shorebirds is divided into three sections. The introductory essay on shorebird identification is must reading for all birders, since the lessons that it teaches are relevant to all aspects of birding. The starting point in any identification must be a firm knowledge of the common species, and the first consideration when identifying a possible stray must be the possibility of an unusual individual of a common species. This is particularly true when dealing with shorebirds, in which complex moult and wear patterns affect appearance. "Careful, unbiased observation," the authors note, "is the key to successful identification."

The introductory essay includes a comprehensive discussion of feather topography, illustrated by some very useful drawings, fol-

lowed by notes on plumage sequences and invaluable tips on ageing - critical factors in some identifications. Other factors that can affect appearance are discussed; these include wear, albinism, discolouration, lighting and colour dyeing. In the plates and text that follow, the authors recognize the importance of "gestalt", or "jizz", but give paramountcy to the minute details which must be critically examined in order to reach definitive conclusions. In general, the speciation follows that of most conventional treatments. North American readers should note the separation of Pacific from American Golden Plover, and armchair birders will delight in yet another *Calidris* — the mysterious Cox's Sandpiper. The introduction concludes with a plea for the conservation of shorebirds and their habitat, particularly migratory stop-over areas.

In a comprehensive identification guide of this sort the plates are of fundamental importance. The paintings that Peter Hayman has executed are a tribute to his ability in capturing each bird's "jizz" and the intricacies of their plumage. Several similar species, including all important plumage variations, are illustrated on each of the 88 plates. Two very useful plates picture similar plumages of stints, providing a quick visual summary of this complex group. Facing each plate are range maps and a short text, the latter noting the most important field marks.

The main text forms the next section of the book. For each species a few introductory lines are followed by a detailed discussion on identification, voice, habits, movements, plumages, ageing and sexing, races and standardized measurements. Unlike previous articles on shorebird identification, the text is easy to read and, more importantly, hard to misinterpret. A particularly handy tool is a series of tables, located at the back of the book, summarizing the differences between difficult to identify species. The book is completed by a comprehensive bibliography, incorporating the best notes on shorebird identification.

It is hard not to be enthusiastic about this book. Nonetheless, there are a few minor problems with it. Several plates are very crowded, for example the "American Dark-legged Stint" plate has 36 pictures of two species. This profusion was necessary in order to illustrate all of the relevant plumage variations, but does make for some initial confusion. The authors have countered this by limiting the number of species per page and assigning each a number which appears in both the plates and text. The occasional painting, however, is not labeled, necessitating a careful reading of the text to determine what it represents. Another minor criticism is that one of the Least Sandpipers on the juvenile stint plate seems to be standing on the

head of a Long-toed Stint! The Semipalmated Sandpiper on the same plate is a major exception to Hayman's ability to capture the essence of most species. In the review copy I have, some of the plates are a bit dark; the Piping Plover paintings in particular fail to capture that species' "ghost-like" plumage. One item that can happily be corrected is *Shorebirds*' relegation of Jendron's Courser to the list of extinct species - not seen since 1900, it was rediscovered last year! As people use this book, errors and omissions will doubtless appear. Notwithstanding this, a careful review of the more difficult North American groups failed to unearth any errors.

Indeed, it proved to be a learning experience; how many birders are aware of the plumage detail separating juvenile Lesser from Greater Yellowlegs? (Answer: the patterning on the secondaries.) Similarly, all Ontario birders should take careful note of the variation in juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper plumages.

Ontario birders can use this book both to better understand our own native shorebirds and to familiarize ourselves with others that we might encounter in our expeditions abroad or as strays here at home. *Shorebirds* is a great read for armchair birders and an invaluable guide - no birder's library should be without it.

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The Bald Eagle in Canada: Proceedings of Bald Eagle Days, 1983. 1985. Edited by *Jon M. Gerrard* and *Terrence N. Ingram.* White Horse Plains Publishers. Headingly, Manitoba. 272 pp. $20.00 (Cdn.). Available from the publisher.

Conference proceedings on a topic as specific as Canada's Bald Eagles cannot help but contain plenty of information; even the most dedicated raptorphiles will find, somewhere in this book, new and interesting material. Naturally, there are a few dull papers in a collection of 36, and some defects as well; however, *The Bald Eagle in Canada* is worth adding to the bookshelf of anyone interested in the Falconiformes of this country.

The book is dedicated in part to Charles Broley who, at age 58, began climbing nest trees to band young Bald Eagles and continued doing so until, 2000 trees, 1200 birds and 15 years later, he had documented the DDT-induced decline of the 1950's. In fact, following the Introduction, the first of the six sections of the proceedings deals with Broley during his eagle days. There are photos of this remarkable and wiry old man standing with his rope ladder, and half way up a tree, perhaps the nest where he found the most unusual item ever - a pair of panties (called "step-ins" in those

days). Broley banded most of his eagles in Florida, but spent many of his summers in Ontario, as Gerry McKeating reports in the second paper of this section. Broley banded eagles in Ontario as well. McKeating uses Broley's information, along with historical nest records, to compare Bald Eagle nesting in southern Ontario today with the past. It's an interesting contrast, showing a dramatic decline in the 1950's from 100 plus to nine active nests in 1983. There is, of course, some hope today that change is occurring, with introductions at Long Point and, recently, an increase in the number of young fledged per active nest.

From this southern Ontario report, the reader moves into Section 2 of the book, Provincial Status Reports. This, along with Section 1, is, in my opinion, the best part of *The Bald Eagle in Canada*. Every report rightly points out deficiencies in the census techniques used and the variation in effort and money spent from province to province. In spite of these defects, I think a summary will be of interest to *Ontario Birds* readers (Table 1).

There are some provinces with first-rate banding programs. Nova Scotia stands out in terms of young banded (382 from 1978 to 1983), winter counts at bait piles, and transfer of some young for hacking in New Jersey.

In Sections 3 and 4, various Bald Eagle topics are presented (Section 3 has refereed papers, Section 4 contains non-refereed papers) including the impact of people on nesting eagles, acid rain, radio-tracking, prey selection, the effects of forest management, trapping and banding, management strategies and behavioural observations. In a paper by Bruce Ranta on eagle management in northwestern Ontario, the implementation of the *Endangered Species Act* is detailed. The Act prohibits "destroying or interfering with or attempting to destroy or interfere with the habitat of an Endangered Species (this includes the Bald Eagle)." The Ministry of Natural Resources places a 400-800 m circular "Modified Management Area" around each eagle nest (also Osprey nests and Great Blue Heron colonies) where work can be undertaken only under the terms of a Work Permit issued by the District Office. In the inner circle (200 m in diameter) there is no tree-cutting or "major disturbance"; in the outer zone most work is allowed, but only between 1 September and 1 March.

Two other papers on nest disturbance and management by James Fraser and Gary Bortolotti are well worth reading by anyone who is even casually interested in seeing nesting raptors, not just Bald Eagles, as well as by researchers who regularly climb to nests. While eagles are well-protected, other species are not, even though they too deserve the same

kind of consideration expressed in these two papers.

There is much more of interest in these sections, including a little anecdote that emphasized the peculiarly officious thinking of some government officials. During transportation by the Pennsylvania Game Commission of six eaglets from Saskatchewan, the wildlife staff were asked by U.S. Customs to declare a value for the birds and ended up paying $24.00 duty "for the privilege of helping to restore the national bird." Thank God they normally only have to deal with pesticides and acid rain!

The book is rounded out with two very brief sections on workshops and abstracts of papers.

Although there is a lot of good information in *The Bald Eagle in Canada*, there are also a lot of typographical errors, grammatical lapses and jargon. What the book needs more than anything is better editing. I counted one to two typos or mistakes in grammar per page and when I found that one of the editors actually authored a paper, the reason was apparent. The information was there, but the style was shabby and clumsy. When other contributors wrote in a similar or even worse style, their contribution apparently stayed that way. How about this on page 256, for example: "To evaluate the efficacy of communication strategy elements." YUK! On page 39, the eagle itself suffers: up to this point, the editors have chosen to write "Bald Eagles" as the standard form. To begin a sentence now, they use "BALD Eagles". Fortunately, the better authors shine through, as do the data.

There are plenty of ideas here, lots of good information and some useful insights about a bird that can inspire even non-birders. The book is worth reading.

Table 1: Bald Eagle nests in Canada (1983 estimates).

Province	Number of Bald Eagle Nests
Newfoundland	72 reported by the public (although only 15% had been checked by wildlife staff)
Nova Scotia	83 (1.72 young fledged per successful nest)
New Brunswick	12-15 (1.4 young per successful nest)
Prince Edward Island	2-4
Northwestern Ontario	128 (108 young fledged in 1983)
Southern Ontario	9 (3 or more young fledged in 1983)
Manitoba	1400 estimated
Saskatchewan	11,600 estimated
Alberta	"a few dozen"
British Columbia	number of nests unknown but about 15,000 adult birds

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Wood Notes. 1984 By *Richard Wood*. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey. 193 pp., $9.95 (paperback).

Wood Notes is another in a long series of recent publications written for the beginning birder. Authored by Richard Wood , a naturalist and long-time resident of Princeton, New Jersey, the book reflects his experience birding in the northeastern United States.

The first part of the book contains the author's thoughts about birding in general. For example, the proper place for bird identification is discussed relative to the more aesthetic qualities of each bird one sees. The advantages of keeping a diary of natural events, bird migration, and why birds sing are some of the other topics explored.

The second part deals with some of the more common species of birds found along the eastern seaboard of North America, aiming to summarize the appearance, song and behaviour of each.

The chatty style of *Wood Notes* creates a simple book that should appeal to the very casual or beginning birdwatcher. The information presented is, in most cases, correct; but I would challenge the publisher's claim that this book should be used as a supplement to any field guide. The reader would be much better off with books such as *Watching Birds: An Introduction to Ornithology* (Pasquier 1977).

The author takes great pains to extol the virtues of appreciating birds for their beauty, rather than simply listing or studying them. While his point is well taken, the apparent fear that too much investigation can ruin the aesthetic pleasures of birding leads to some disappointments.

The book is anecdotal and, in many instances, lacks substance. For example, the chapter on keeping a diary of natural events stresses the importance of keeping a notebook but says nothing about how to take notes, what kind of information to record, what format is best, etc. Other chapters could have been more detailed, and hence more useful, and still not have detracted from the book's casual style.

Species accounts are primarily of common birds of the northeastern United States. As with other parts of the book, the species accounts are primarily anecdotal and short on factual information.

Wood Notes is a book for the beginning birdwatcher. Its main purpose is to promote birding rather than to be an authoritative text. Since I assume that most OFO members already have an active interest in birds, this book will have limited appeal.

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Ontario Birds: Carolinian Issue

Following the enthusiastic response to the special "Northern Ontario" issue of *Ontario Birds* (Vol. 4, No. 3), we have decided to focus our attention on the birds which reside in the opposite end of the province — the Carolinian Life Zone. The December 1988 issue of *Ontario Birds* (Vol. 6, No. 3) will be entirely devoted to Ontario's "Deep south" — roughly that area of the province south of a line extending from Grand Bend on Lake Huron east to the Rouge River Valley of Scarborough on Lake Ontario.

We encourage anyone with Carolinian bird data suitable for publishing to write it up and submit it before 1 October 1988. Artists who work in pen-and-ink or pencil are invited to submit illustrations consistent with this theme and/or to indicate an interest in producing drawings of specific birds to accompany an article or note.

This will be OFO's second special issue; let's make it as good as the first. Send all material to Donald M. Fraser, *Ontario Birds* Editor, c/o Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9, or to my home address (listed on the inside back cover).

D.M. Fraser
Editor

Corrections

***Ontario Birds* Vol. 4(3) December 1986**

p. 115 — the correct date of the previous Ontario sighting of a melanistic Broad-winged Hawk at Grimsby, Niagara RM, is 30 April 1977, not 1978, as originally stated. Although this bird was seen with other Broad-winged Hawks, it was not in a flight of 585 birds.

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p. 46 — the caption for the photograph on this page was unintentionally omitted. It should read: Juvenile Little Blue Heron, 4–7 September 1985, Hillman Marsh, Essex. Photo by *Kathleen J. Sleight.*

p. 63 — the last two lines of Table 1 were also omitted. The bottom of Table 1 should be amended to read:

SPECIES	YEAR OF OCCURRENCE						TOTALS
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	
Gyrfalcon	4	0	1	2	0	0	7
Harris' Sparrow	0	0	2	0	3	1	6

***Ontario Birds* Vol. 5(3) December 1987**

p. 106 — a portion of the third sentence of the first paragraph under the heading "Size and Shape" is missing. The sentence should read: "Thus, the length of a male Cooper's *is about the same as a Broad-winged, while a female Cooper's* and a male Northern Goshawk are close to a Red-shouldered in size." The italicized portion was inadvertently omitted.

p. 111 — in Table 1, the spring dates for Northern Goshawk should read 1 March - 25 April, not 2 April.

Inside back cover — The postal code given for Glenn Coady, who is presently serving as Secretary of the Ontario Bird Records Committee, is incorrect. Glenn's correct postal code is M5B 2H5.

OFO Announcements

Field Trips

7 May 1988, Saturday: BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS, TORONTO ISLAND. Leader: Glenn Coady (416) 596-8109. Meet 7:45 AM at Toronto Island ferry terminal.

4-5 June, 1988, Saturday & Sunday: OFO SPRING FIELD MEETING, WYE MARSH, MIDLAND. See the enclosed flyer for details.

10-11 September 1988, Saturday & Sunday: CORNWALL DAM GULL OUTING. Leader Bruce DiLabio (613) 729-6267. This trip will be combined with a visit to Hoople Creek for shorebirds. Details to follow.

24 September 1988, Saturday: OFO PELAGIC TRIP. Leader: Bob Curry (416) 648-6895. M. V. "Macassa Bay" leaves Hamilton Harbour at 8:00 AM. Meet at the dock at the foot of Bay Street North by 7:45 AM with a lunch and plenty of warm clothing. Return 4-4:30 PM. Only 35 of 100 tickets are still available. Cost is $40 per person. Don't miss this long-awaited revival of what was once a fall tradition in western Lake Ontario.

6-9 October 1988, Thursday-Sunday: MARATHON. Fall migration North of Superior. List of birding spots between Thunder Bay and Marathon will be available for those wishing to spend an entire week in the area. Contact Coordinators Alan Wormington (519) 326-7122 or Nick Escott (807) 345-7122 for more details.