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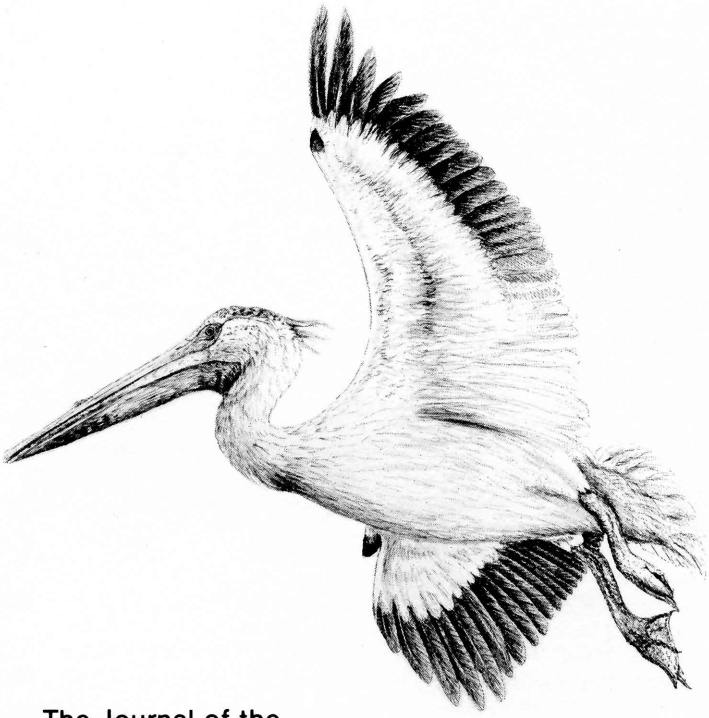

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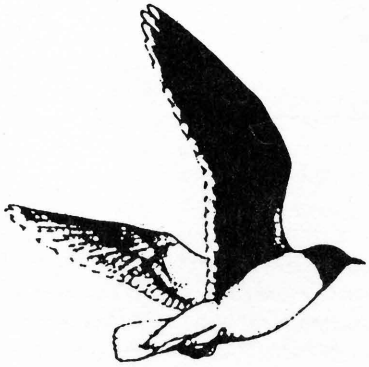
December 1991



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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". 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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Notes from the Editors

Site Guide Format Change

Two site guides have been published in *Ontario Birds* previously, and the third appears in this issue. We have had indications that these are very popular and useful features of the journal, and we hope to publish guides for more birding areas in the future.

We have received mixed signals about the preferred format for these guides, however. Some members prefer to remove their site guides, so that they may be used in the field without causing wear and tear on the rest of the journal. On the other hand, many members prefer to retain intact issues of *Ontario Birds*. Without a clear preference or consensus, we are opting to paginate the site guides within upcoming issues, rather than to format them as detachable units. This will also provide OFO with a cost saving of several hundred dollars per issue. We are willing to reconsider, if the membership expresses a clear preference. However, at the present time, we feel that fiscal restraint swings the balance in favour of direct pagination and formating consistent with the rest of the journal.

Your Support

Ontario birders now have a wider array of publications devoted to various aspects of their hobby to choose from than ever before. We at *Ontario Birds* welcome this diversity, and believe that each journal can carve out an individual niche that will serve the Ontario birding community well.

However, *Ontario Birds* is unique among Ontario-based birding publications since it is more than "just another journal". It is the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Your support of *Ontario Birds* (through membership in OFO and submitting material for publication) will result in the continued health of both the journal *and* the organization. Please keep *Ontario Birds* in mind as *the* place to publish your articles and notes on Ontario ornithology (see Editorial Policy on back cover). Your support has been excellent to date, and we want to earn and maintain it in the years ahead!

Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway, Ron Tozer,
Editors

Letters to the Editors

W.H. Hudson review revisited

In his recent review (*Ontario Birds* 9:13-15) of **The Bird Biographies of W.H. Hudson**, Bill Walker chides an author, Judith Young, for misspelling the name of the ornithologist "de Shauensee" (sic) as "Shawnses" (sic sic). In fact, the correct name is Meyer de Schauensee, as recently commemorated in the name of a new species of tanager from Peru, *Tangara meyerdeschauenseei*.

Incidentally, the correct generic names of the Blue-and-White Swallow and the Saffron Finch are *Notiochelidon* and *Sicalis*, respectively.

David Brewer
Puslinch, Ontario

Articles

Pelicans Nesting on Lake Nipigon

by
Susan Bryan

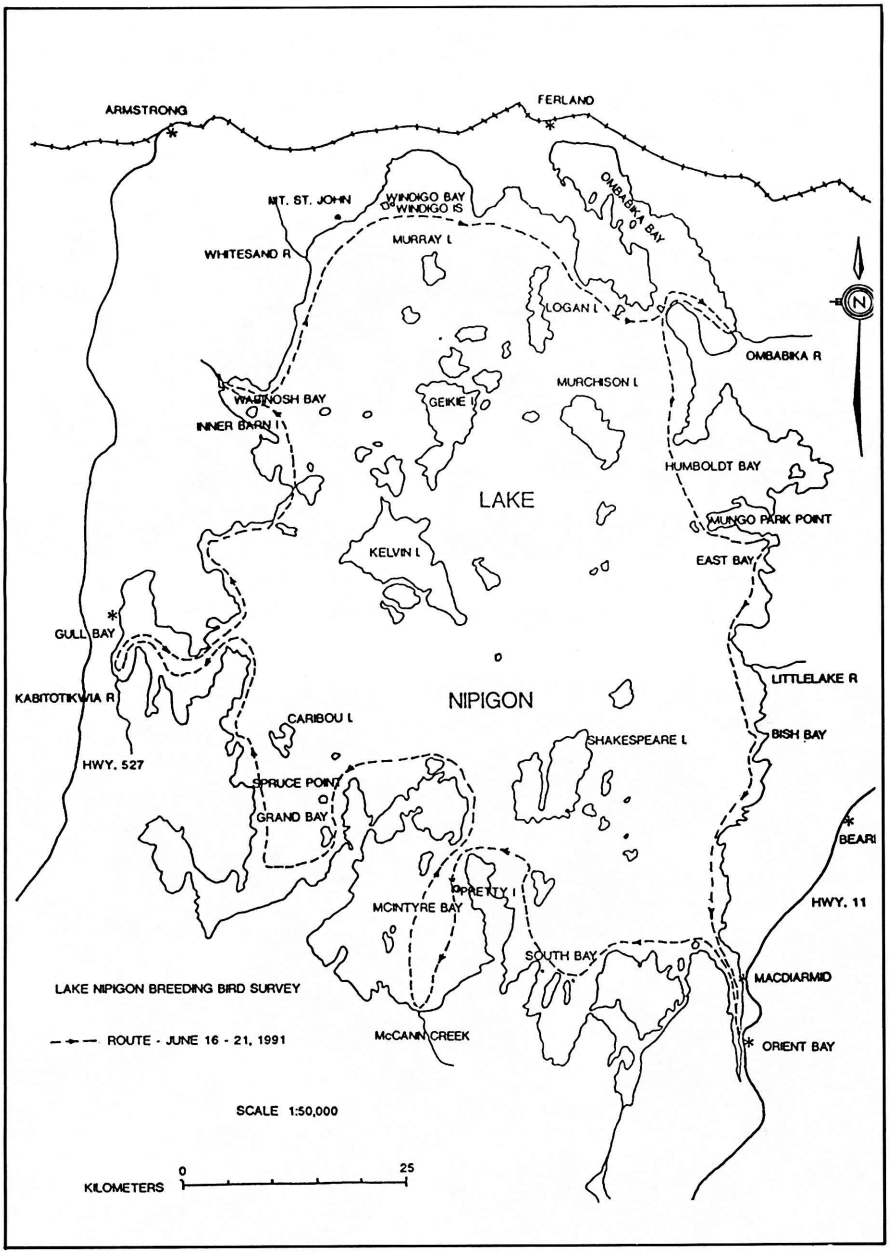
On 17 June 1991, three nests of the American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) were discovered on Pretty Island in Lake Nipigon, Thunder Bay District (see Map 1). Until now, Ontario's only known pelican nest site has been on Lake of the Woods near the Manitoba border (Godfrey 1986, Theberge 1989). With the discovery of this new location on Lake Nipigon, the known breeding range of the American White Pelican in North America is extended 500 km to the east.

The pelicans were observed by a group of six birders (Mike Bryan, Dave Elder, Nick Escott, Myra McCormick, George Williams, and the author). The group was on a five day birding expedition circumnavigating Lake Nipigon.

On 17 June, the second day of our voyage, we approached Pretty Island in McIntyre Bay (Figure 1). The island is about 2 km from the nearest mainland shore. It is a raised, largely bare, rocky island measuring about 8 m by 15 m. On the higher ground, among large squared boulders, are patches of thin bare soil. Still standing in this soil are some small, dead, deciduous trees and bushes, now quite bare of foliage. As we approached, a number of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) flew up from the rock. Sitting on the highest part of the island were three unmistakable American White Pelicans.

As we approached more closely, the pelicans took flight, circling together around the island. All three birds displayed the typical adult plumage of the American White Pelican. One of the birds had a noticeable orange fibrous plate protruding like a keel on the upper mandible (characteristic of a breeding adult). The other two birds lacked this keel. All three birds showed black discoloration on top of the head. This black discoloration is characteristic of adults which are feeding young (Figure 2).

We went ashore and proceeded to the spot from which we had seen the pelicans take off. This was on the highest part of the island, on a flat patch of spongy soil between a few squared boulders. Here we found three large circular nests, two or three times the diameter of the numerous Herring Gull nests elsewhere on the island (Figure 3). We estimated the nest rim diameter at approximately 50 cm. The nests were nothing more than shallow depressions in the soil with a slightly raised rim of dirt. In two of the nests there were eggs -- two large white eggs, heavily nest-stained, in each. The third nest was of the same size and appearance, but contained no



Map 1: Lake Nipigon Breeding Bird Survey Route, 16-21 June 1991.
Map drawn by *David H. Elder.*

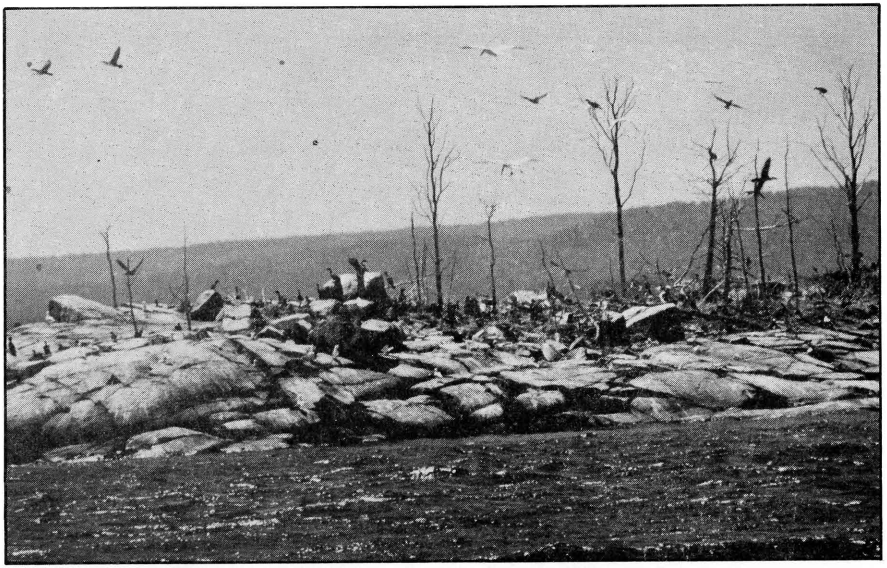


Figure 1: Pretty Island, McIntyre Bay, Lake Nipigon. Three American White Pelican nests were discovered here. Photo by *Susan Bryan.*

Figure 2: Adult American White Pelican flying with Double-crested Cormorants. Photo by *Susan Bryan.*

eggs. The three nests were close together, about a half metre of bare soil between them.

These three nests were quite different from the numerous Herring Gull and Double-crested Cormorant nests elsewhere on the island. There were approximately 50 Herring Gull nests (sparsely lined depressions on the bare rock with heaped up edges of moss and lichen) generally located lower on the island, near the water line. These nests contained brownish eggs with irregular dark brown splotches, and some downy chicks. Higher up on the rocks were approximately 100 heaped up stick nests containing the pale greenish-blue eggs of the Double-crested Cormorants. The nests of these two species were much smaller and of completely different construction than the pelican nests. Their egg size and coloration were also completely different.

During the remainder of the expedition, we sighted pelicans on three other occasions. Later on the same day, 17 June, at Krug Bay west of Mooney Point in McIntyre Bay, a further 11 pelicans were seen. There was no evidence of nesting at this site, and the birds seen were in non-breeding adult plumage (that is, no fibrous plate on the upper mandible, and no black on top of the head). Two days later, on 19 June, near the Whitesand River mouth, a group of seven American White Pelicans was seen soaring in a westerly direction over the northern part of the lake. Later that same day, on a small rocky island in Windigo Bay, nine pelicans in non-breeding adult plumage were seen. No nests were observed here. This brought the total to 30 pelicans

Figure 3: One of three American White Pelican nests discovered on Pretty Island, Lake Nipigon. Photo by *Susan Bryan.*

seen during the expedition.

A previous breeding bird survey of Lake Nipigon, completed by L.L. Snyder (1928) during the summers of 1923/24, noted no pelicans on the lake during four months of field work. The first known sighting of pelicans on Lake Nipigon was 12 years ago. Following is a listing of known pelican sightings on the lake:

June of 1979	12 pelicans	Ombabika R. mouth	Mr. & Mrs. C. Sutherland
summers 1980-91	pelicans	Ombabika R. mouth	Mr. & Mrs. C. Sutherland
summer, 1984	pelicans	Windigo Bay	F. Hardy
10 July 1989	3 pelicans	Windigo Island	A. Brennan
16 July 1990	1 pelican	Mooney Point, McIntyre Bay	P. Odorizzi R. Swainson
17 July 1990	2 pelicans	McIntyre Bay	R. Swainson R. Hartley
18 June 1991	4 pelicans	Ombabika R. mouth	R. Kushnier
2 July 1991	2 pelicans (both with keel)	Ombabika R. mouth	R. Kushnier
3 July 1991	14 pelicans flying	Ombabika R. mouth	R. Kushnier

The first recorded nesting of American White Pelicans in Ontario was in 1938 (Peck 1987) when eight pairs nested on Dream Island in Lake of the Woods (at that time, the easternmost colony in North America). Today, over 6500 pairs nest there. The Lake Nipigon colony is obviously very much in its infancy. It will be interesting to see if it grows in a similar fashion over the next fifty years.

Acknowledgements

This expedition was generously funded by a grant from the Community Wildlife Involvement Program of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and by the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund of the Long Point Bird Observatory through funds provided to the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program. Many thanks to the Nipigon District Office of the Ministry of Natural Resources for their help with finding historical data. Thank you, also, to the birders from the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists Club who conducted the field work. Thanks to Capt. Paul Odorizzi for bringing us all home safely and so comfortably on his boat. Special thanks to Dr. N.G. Escott for help in all aspects of the trip, and particularly for his help in preparing this article.

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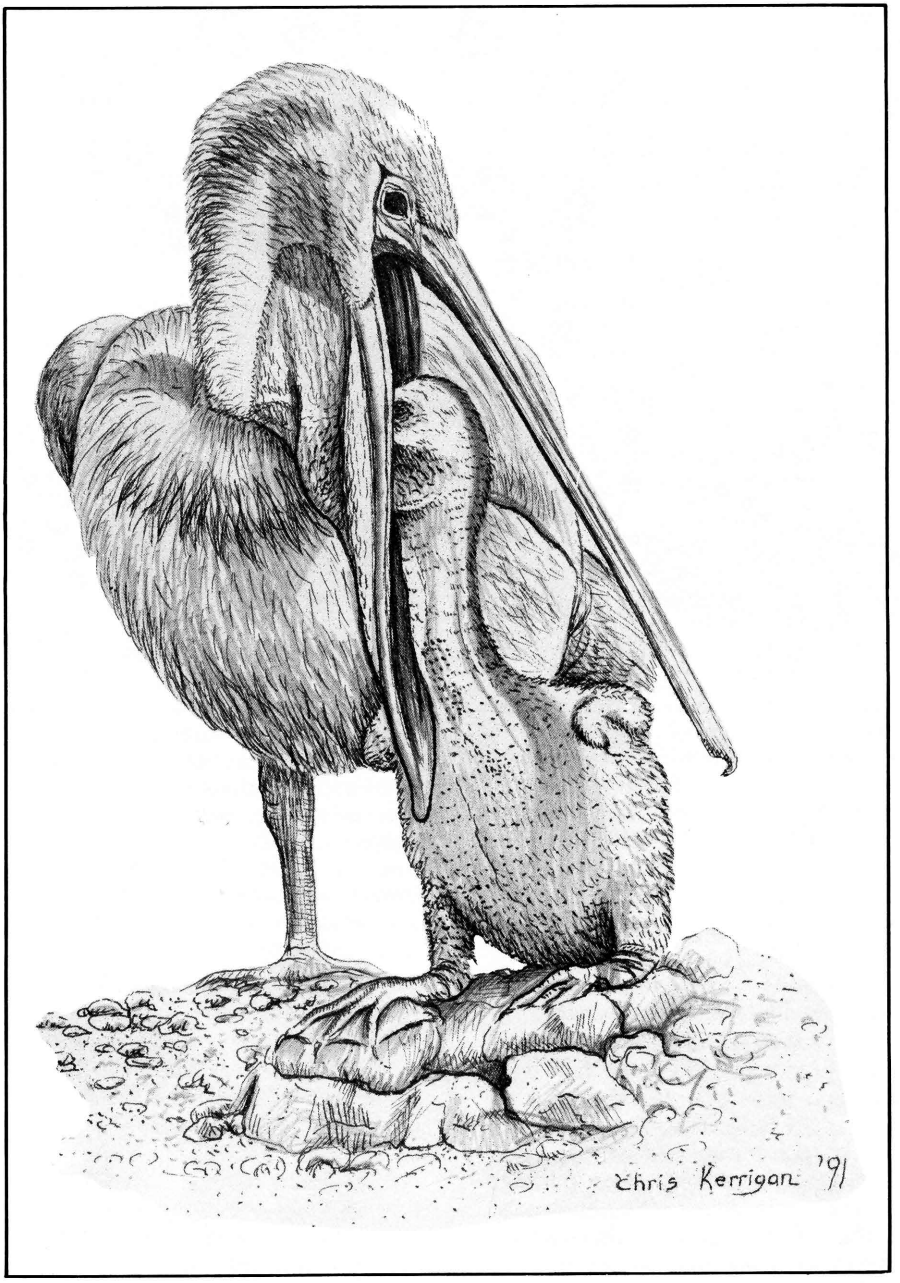

Figure 4: Adult American White Pelican feeding young. Drawing by *Chris Kerrigan*.

Black-capped Vireo: New to Canada

by
Julian R. Hough

On 27 April 1991, a female Black-capped Vireo (*Vireo atricapillus*) was observed and mistnetted at Long Point peninsula, Lake Erie, Ontario. The bird was found at the Breakwater field station which is situated at the base of Courtright Ridge, 8 km along the peninsula.

Circumstances

The vireo was seen briefly, high up in a small group of pines (*Pinus* sp.) during a busy morning of banding. Although not specifically identified during these views, my suspicions were aroused, and I later returned to find the bird caught in a nearby mistnet. Upon taking the bird out of the holding bag I immediately identified the bird as a Black-capped Vireo, a species which I had seen previously in southern Texas in 1988. Knowing that the species was endangered in North America, I suspected it to be the first record for Canada. The news was subsequently radioed in to the Old Cut field station by a very excited and shaking birder!

Once all the biometrics were taken and recorded, the bird was rested and released into the pines where it was initially discovered. It was observed briefly in the field as it made its way north-east along Courtright Ridge. The vireo was very active upon release and was subsequently lost from sight, not to be seen again. Due to the remoteness of the field station, the only other observers to see the vireo were Hillary Smith and Hilary Pittel, both voluntary migration assistants working for the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Description

The following notes are a combined description of the bird in the hand (Figure 1) and in the field. It was a small and compact vireo, slightly smaller than a White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), with a round head and thick-necked appearance. The forehead, crown, nape and ear coverts were a dark ash-grey colour contrasting with bold white lores and spectacles, which were broken just before the eye. The mantle, scapulars and rump were uniform olive-green. There were two distinct wing bars visible on the closed wing, formed by broad, yellowish-white fringes to the blackish-centred median and greater coverts. The tertials had dark, blackish centres with well-defined yellowish-white fringes. Both the remiges and rectrices were blackish-brown with distinct yellowish fringes, except for the primary tips which were noticeably browner.

The throat, upper breast and belly were dull white, whilst the flanks and undertail coverts were moderately washed with yellow. The bill was broad-based and blackish-grey in colour (slightly browner along the cutting edges). The eye was reddish-brown with a black orbital ring, and was one of the most striking features in the hand. However, this was less obvious in the field. The legs were short and stout, and dark grey

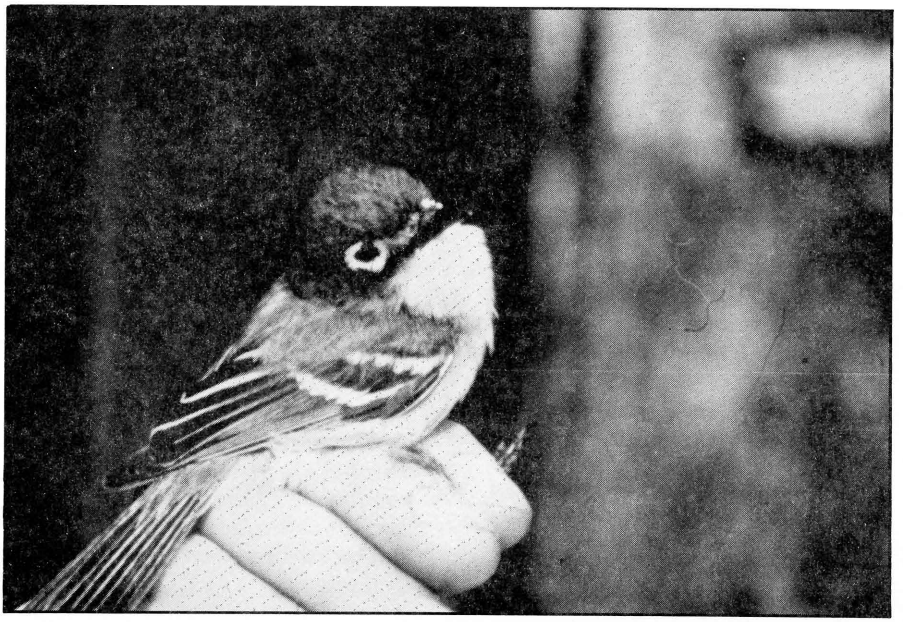

Figure 1: Black-capped Vireo in the hand, Long Point, Ontario, 27 April 1991. Photo by *Julian R. Hough.*

in coloration.

Jon Barlow (pers. comm.) states that some males can be similar in plumage to females, and that some caution should be used when sexing as plumages intermediate between the sexes may occur. However, the Long Point individual was sexed as a AHY female due to the ash-grey head, which (in the hand) showed no presence of any black or brown feathering (which would probably be shown by AHY males), and instead had distinct olive tips to all of the crown feathers.

Discussion

The weather patterns prior to 27 April were possibly correlated with the vireo's occurence, with an extensive cold front running north to south dominated by high winds and tornados. This weather system would seem a likely explanation for the bird's arrival in Canada, being caught up in the fast-moving northerly airstream.

This sighting constitutes the first record of the Black-capped Vireo for Canada, and it is the only documented extralimital occurrence of this distance for this species in North America. The only other records of Black-capped Vireos outside their breeding range are from Nebraska (J. Barlow, pers. comm.), and a sight record from Louisiana (A.O.U. 1983). The Black-capped Vireo is a restricted and local breeding species in south-west Texas, extending from Edwards Plateau eastwards across to Dallas (A.O.U.

1983) This species also breeds in two localities in Oklahoma, one of which (Blaine County) is the northernmost limit for the species in North America (Grzybowski *et al.* 1986). Previously, this species bred in Kansas, but due to their decline they have now gone from that state. Recent studies reveal that the entire population of Black-capped Vireos may hover between 250 and 500 birds, and that Oklahoma's entire adult population is fewer than 110 birds (Graham 1990).

The Black-capped Vireo was listed as endangered in 1987, this status being attributable to several factors. Perhaps the most important of these factors is habitat loss. Black-capped Vireos have a strict preference for areas where oak (*Quercus* spp.) constitutes 50 per cent of the breeding habitat. This is the case particularly in Texas where Juniper (*Juniperus* sp.) is replacing oak, and the Black-capped Vireos are declining. Nest parasitization by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) is also a significant factor in the decline of this species (Grzybowski *et al.* 1986), as well as a variety of predators such as fire ants (*Solenopsis* sp.) and Scrub Jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) which attack nests (Graham 1990). Thus, unless successful habitat management and protection from cowbirds can be effected, the future of Black-capped Vireos in North America will hang in the balance for years to come.

To summarize, the Black-capped Vireo is characterized by a small, restricted breeding population. The fact that it is a short distance migrant and therefore a species which is not overly prone to vagrancy makes this record all the more amazing and unbelievable!

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jon Barlow of the Royal Ontario Museum for much background information, and Peter Burke for his reviews of earlier drafts of this article.

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Erratum

In the article entitled "Checklist of Recognizable Ontario Bird Forms" (*Ontario Birds* 9:49-55), the section beginning with the last sentence on page 49 should read: The third part of the scientific name identifies the subspecies. In the checklist, each race is given an English name followed by its scientific name in italics.

An Apparent Common x Barrow's Goldeneye Hybrid from the St. Lawrence River

by
Paul R. Martin and Bruce M. Di Labio

Hybridization has been frequently documented in the family Anatidae, particularly in the subfamily Anatinae (Gray 1958; Johnsgard 1965, 1968). Not only has interbreeding between species of the same genus occurred, but also between different genera and even different tribes (Gray 1958; Johnsgard 1968). Despite their close relations, however, hybrids between the Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) and the Barrow's Goldeneye (*B. islandica*) have been rarely documented. There are two previous reports for Ontario of hybrid goldeneyes: a male (specimen in the Royal Ontario Museum) from the Niagara Gorge (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965); and a sight record of a possible male in Peterborough County (Sadler 1983). This paper documents an additional sight record of an apparent Common x Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid which represents, to our knowledge, one of very few in eastern North America.

On 27 November 1988, we observed an apparent hybrid adult male goldeneye at the Moses-Saunders Power Dam, both on the Canadian and American sides of the St. Lawrence River near Cornwall, Stormont County, Ontario. The bird was observed from approximately 1030 h to 1045 h, both in overcast conditions and in direct sunlight, through two telescopes (highest power 25X) and binoculars. It was observed swimming from a distance of about 150 m, and as close as 30 m while flying. Throughout the observation period, this goldeneye swam amongst a mixed raft of over 300 Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*) and 25 Common Goldeneyes, thus offering direct comparison with adult male Common Goldeneyes.

Description

At first glance, this bird appeared to be a dark Common Goldeneye drake. It was approximately the same size, or slightly larger, than the male Common Goldeneyes swimming nearby. The eye colour was typical of both goldeneye species - bright yellow with a small black pupil. Upon closer examination, however, several characteristics (head shape, facial and scapular patterns) were noted which were intermediate between the two goldeneye species (see Figure 1).

The head shape was similar to the "triangle" shape of the Common Goldeneye (Cramp and Simmons 1977), but not as pronounced. The forehead rose from the base of the bill at an angle intermediate between those of the Common and Barrow's goldeneyes. Sloping gradually back from the crown, the head feathers just above the nape projected towards the back. This projection was similar to, but shorter, than that found on adult male Barrow's Goldeneyes.

The head was dark and showed no iridescence, although nearby Common Goldeneye drakes clearly

showed green iridescence in the strong sunlight. The white crescents on the hybrid goldeneye's face were widest at the base, tapering slightly near the top. They were more elongated than those of the Common Goldeneye, curving slightly closer to the eye. The crescents were rounded at the top, extending barely beyond a line from the top of the upper mandible to the eye.

The bill was dark (perhaps black), and slightly stubbier than the bills of nearby Common Goldeneyes.

The black-and-white pattern on the scapulars was similar to that of drake Barrow's Goldeneye, except that there was more white present and the white areas were separated by thin black lines nearly identical to those found on the scapulars of adult Common Goldeneye drakes. Between the white breast and sides, anterior to the bend of the wing, there was a black "spur" that extended forward and down. This "spur" was about half the size of the "spur" typical of adult male Barrow's Goldeneyes. The flanks were white, extending back to about the end of the patterning on the scapulars. Here the sides were black beginning from the waterline diagonally backward to where the wings rested, through to the undertail coverts.

The wings appeared black at rest, but showed a white pattern in flight. The white patterns on the upperwing coverts were like those of an adult male Common Goldeneye, except for a thin black line extending half way across from the outerwing that separated the white areas in the median and greater upperwing coverts. This separation is more pronounced in adult male Barrow's Goldeneyes.

The tail was black and noticeably longer than those of nearby drake Common Goldeneyes. Average tail lengths in Palmer (1976) show the tails of drake Barrow's Goldeneyes to be shorter than those of drake Common Goldeneyes (with overlap), making the tail length of the hybrid goldeneye seem somewhat odd.

Behaviour

The apparent hybrid goldeneye was observed preening, swimming, resting and displaying, but never diving or feeding. When the entire flock of ducks was flushed by passersby, this goldeneye flew with a female Common Goldeneye. Otherwise, it was never observed to associate with any particular duck or ducks, but rather swam randomly through the flock.

The most interesting behaviour of this bird was what appeared to be a courtship display directed at no particular bird and with no female Common Goldeneyes nearby. The display was observed three times with a gap of at least several seconds between each display. In the display, the goldeneye extended its head upward and backward so that its bill was perpendicular to the water while the back of its head touched its back. The bird then threw its head directly upward into the air until its neck was fully extended. The bill remained perpendicular to the water and was kept open. The bird's bill movements suggested calling - perhaps constantly while performing the courtship, although no vocalizations were heard. This "head-throw" movement usually occurred two times per display. Between displays, the hybrid

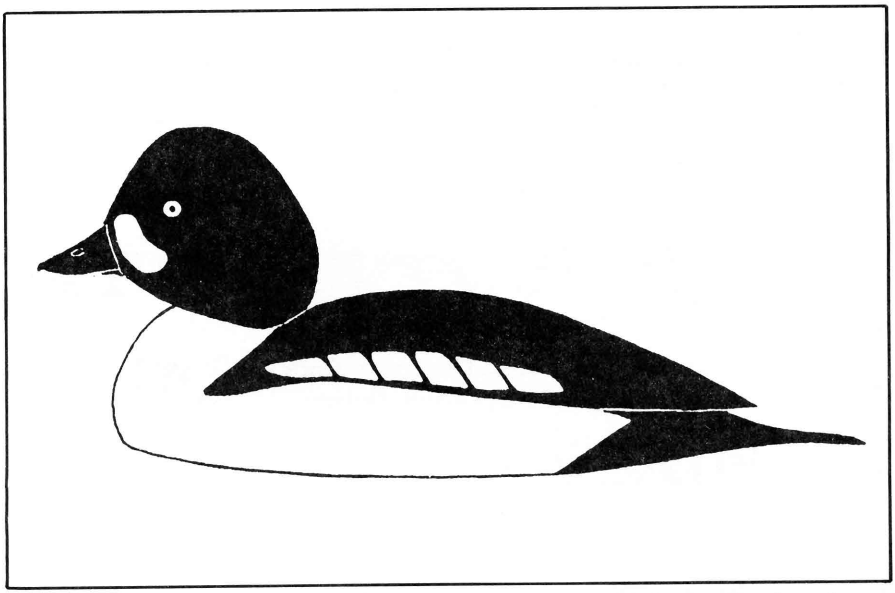

Figure 1: Presumed Common x Barrow's Goldeneye Hybrid. Drawing based on field sketches and notes made on 27 November 1988 by the authors.

goldeneye looked alert, moving about restlessly with its neck fully extended and head held high. The tail was held up at an angle of approximately 40 degrees to the water during the display and for most of the period of observation.

This display was almost identical to the "fast head-throw-kick" display of the Common Goldeneye as described by Townsend (Bent 1925), Johnsgard (1965) and Palmer (1976). The Barrow's Goldeneye has a similar display, which differs in that the head is brought back into an upright position after touching the back (Bent 1925; Johnsgard 1965; Palmer 1976). The Common Goldeneye, on the other hand, often thrusts its head straight upward, as seen in the hybrid goldeneye's display (Bent 1925; Johnsgard 1965; Palmer 1976).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Ross Harris, Michel Gosselin, and Melisa Kamibayashi for their valued assistance and constructive comments.

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In Memoriam: Bill Hutchison (1932-1991)

by
Doug McRae

On 5 November 1991, Bill Hutchison passed away. Bill wasn't widely known in the birding community, but for anyone who travelled to Moosonee, he will be remembered as having the best bird feeder in town. And for those of us who had a chance to get to know this interesting man, Bill will also be remembered as a tremendous host and friend to visiting naturalists.

Bill's feeder had many rarities over the years, but was also the mainstay for the small populations of House Sparrows and Starlings in Moosonee. In 1982, a Yellow-throated Warbler came to his feeder (see *Ontario Birds* 1:13).

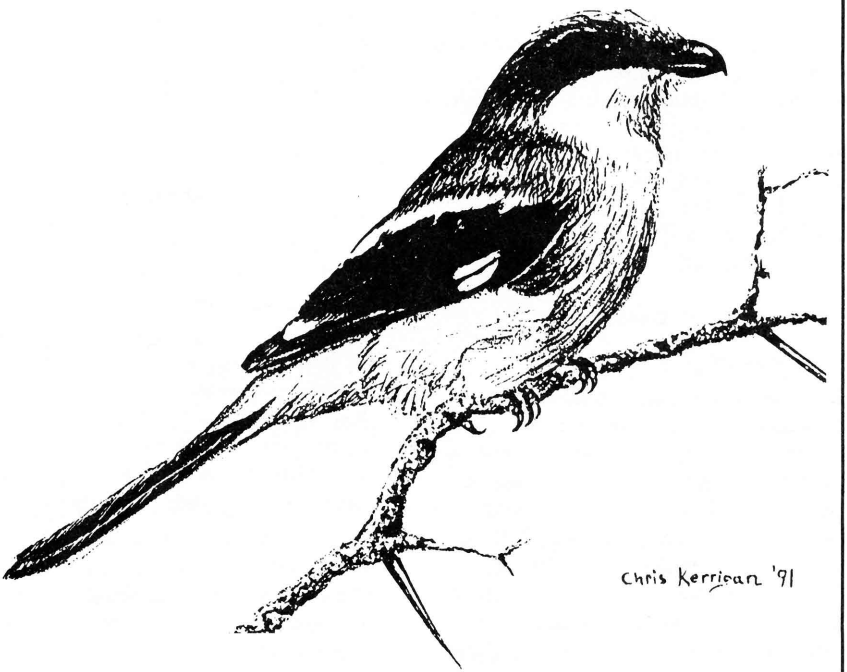
Bill was also active in many community events and organizations. One endeavour in which Bill was involved in 1991 was the development of the position of "Town Naturalist" for Moosonee. The creation of this interpretive post is just one indication of Bill's unique talents and abilities that will be so sorely missed by those of us who had the privilege of knowing him. Needless to say, our warm wishes are extended to Bill's family and friends.

Doug McRae, Box 130, St. Williams, Ontario N0E 1P0

Ontario Field Ornithologists

BIRD FINDING GUIDE #3

A BIRDER'S GUIDE to the CARDEN PLAIN



by RON PITTAWAY

MINDEN, ONTARIO

Introduction

Tired of birding the same old places? Looking for somewhere new? The Carden Plain is one of the least known birding hot spots in southern Ontario. Located east of Lake Simcoe and bordering the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, the Carden Plain or Alvar hosts field-inhabiting birds such as Upland Sandpiper and Eastern Bluebird as abundantly as they were throughout much of southern Ontario half a century ago. The Plain or Alvar takes its name from Carden Township, in northern Victoria County, which occupies the central part of the area. Only 1 1/2 hours from Toronto, Carden is one of the last "lost corners" of the old rural Ontario landscape. Its remoteness and lack of human sounds offer a temporary break from our hectic life style. This site guide takes you through scenic backroads where the birds, vast meadows of wildflowers, butterflies, herptiles, mammals, and night sounds will bring you back again and again.

General Information

Background

An alvar is a geomorphological formation of flat limestone bedrock covered with thin soils and sparse vegetation. The Carden Alvar has a number of plant species that have western or prairie affinities (Catling *et al.* 1975). See Bowles (1991) for a checklist of vascular plants. Much of the alvar is ranchland. In fact, the open habitat preferred by Loggerhead Shrikes, Upland Sandpipers, Horned Larks, and Eastern Bluebirds is enhanced and maintained by cattle grazing (Pittaway 1991). The area is lightly populated, with most human habitation concentrated in the cottage areas around Canal Lake and Lake Dalrymple.

Currently there are two large limestone quarries operating in Carden Township, and two others have recently been granted licences. Additional licence applications are expected because of public pressure to reduce mineral aggregate development on the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine.

Season

The breeding birds and spectacular wildflower meadows are best seen in June, but anytime between mid-May and mid-July will be productive. After mid-July, the heat of summer desiccates the meadows, and many birds are more difficult to find.

Insects

Bring your insect repellant just in case, but biting insects are rarely a problem compared to many other birding areas. Blackflies are present in small numbers from mid-May to early June. They may be a nuisance on humid days, especially just before sunset. Fortunately, blackflies are not active at night! Mosquitoes are rarely a problem in open areas during the day. They are most active on humid days near wetlands just after sunset.

Poison Ivy

Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*) is abundant along roadsides. Wear long pants to avoid direct contact. The best prevention is to bathe or shower with lots of soap as soon as possible after your field trip. As well, be sure to wash your clothing before wearing

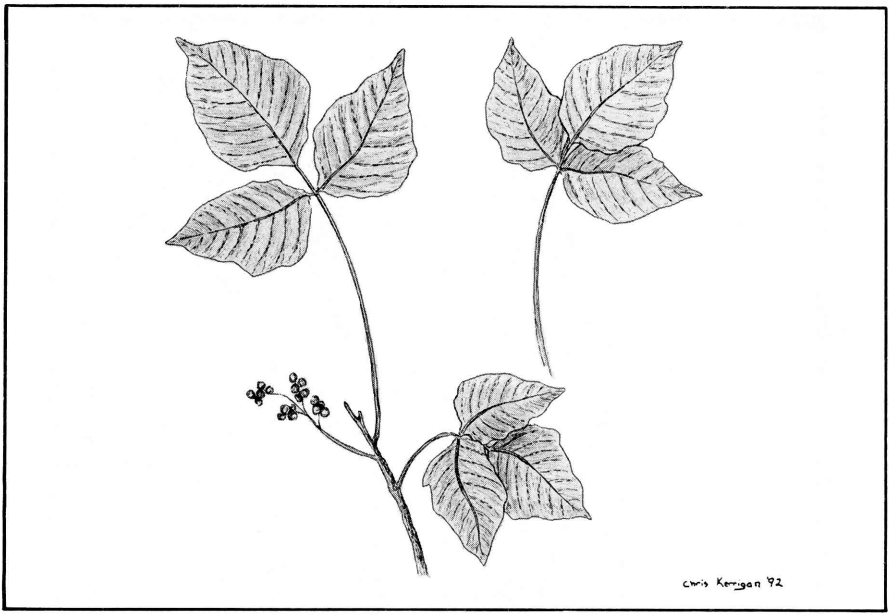


Figure 1: Poison Ivy. Drawing by *Chris Kerrigan.*

it again. Poison Ivy is easy to identify: learn to recognize its three distinctive leaflets, and avoid it. See Figure 1.

Backroads

The backroads are narrow. Fortunately traffic is usually light, but be careful not to block roads or laneways. There are some good spots to pull off or park, but be sure to check them on foot first. In spring and after heavy rains, some of the roads develop mud holes and washouts. Drive slowly, find a safe location to park, then bird the surrounding area.

Food and Accommodation

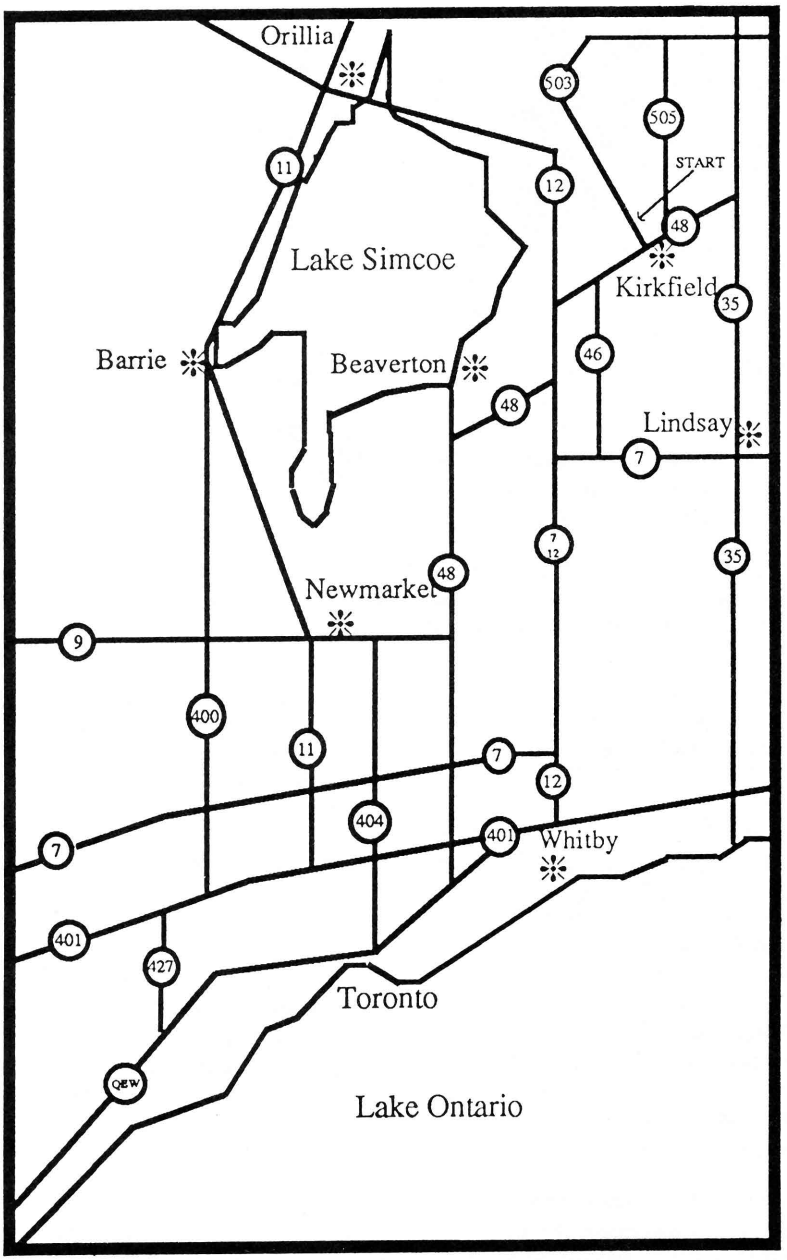
There are restaurants in Kirkfield, at the Lift Lock, and east of Highway 503 at Lake Dalrymple. Camping is available at Balsam Lake Provincial Park, 12 km east of Kirkfield off Highway 48. Excellent motels are available nearby in Lindsay and Orillia.

Birding Ethics

Most of Carden is private property. Please do not trespass. Luckily, birds are easily viewed from roads and rights-of-way. Be careful not to block the narrow roads. Loggerhead Shrikes are a rare and declining species. Do not disturb these birds, look for nests, or attempt close-up photography.

How to Get There

The site guide begins at the Kirkfield Lift Lock on the Trent-Severn Waterway. See Map #1. The Lift Lock is about a 1 1/2 hour drive (135 km) northeast of Toronto. From



Map #1: Location of Carden Plain in Southern Ontario.
Map produced by *Mike Turner.*

Toronto, take Highway 401 to Highway 404 north or Highway 48 north. If you take Highway 404, turn right (east) at the end of the highway (Davis Drive) to connect with Highway 48. Highway 48 can also be reached from the 401 via Highway 12 at Whitby. Follow Highway 48 to the village of Kirkfield. At the main intersection, turn left (north) on Highway 503 and follow the signs to the Lift Lock. The seven stops in this guide are marked on Map #2, and distances between stops are given in the route descriptions. The route is approximately 41 km in length, ending at Highway 48 about 2 km east of the junction with Highway 46 near Bolsover. The route takes you through many varied habitats. I recommend that you relax and go slowly to enjoy the birdlife at and between stops. Bring a picnic lunch and get set to experience an abundance of some of Ontario's less common birds.

Site Guide

1. Lift Lock: Km 0.0

Three km north of Kirkfield on Highway 503, you will see a visitors' parking lot on the right just after the underpass. The Trent-Severn Waterway connects Lakes Ontario and Huron by way of the Kawartha Lakes and Lake Simcoe. The facilities here include washrooms, a picnic area, and nearby restaurant. Check the swallows here for Cliff and Northern Rough-winged. Set your car's odometer at zero before departing. Distances are cumulative between stops.

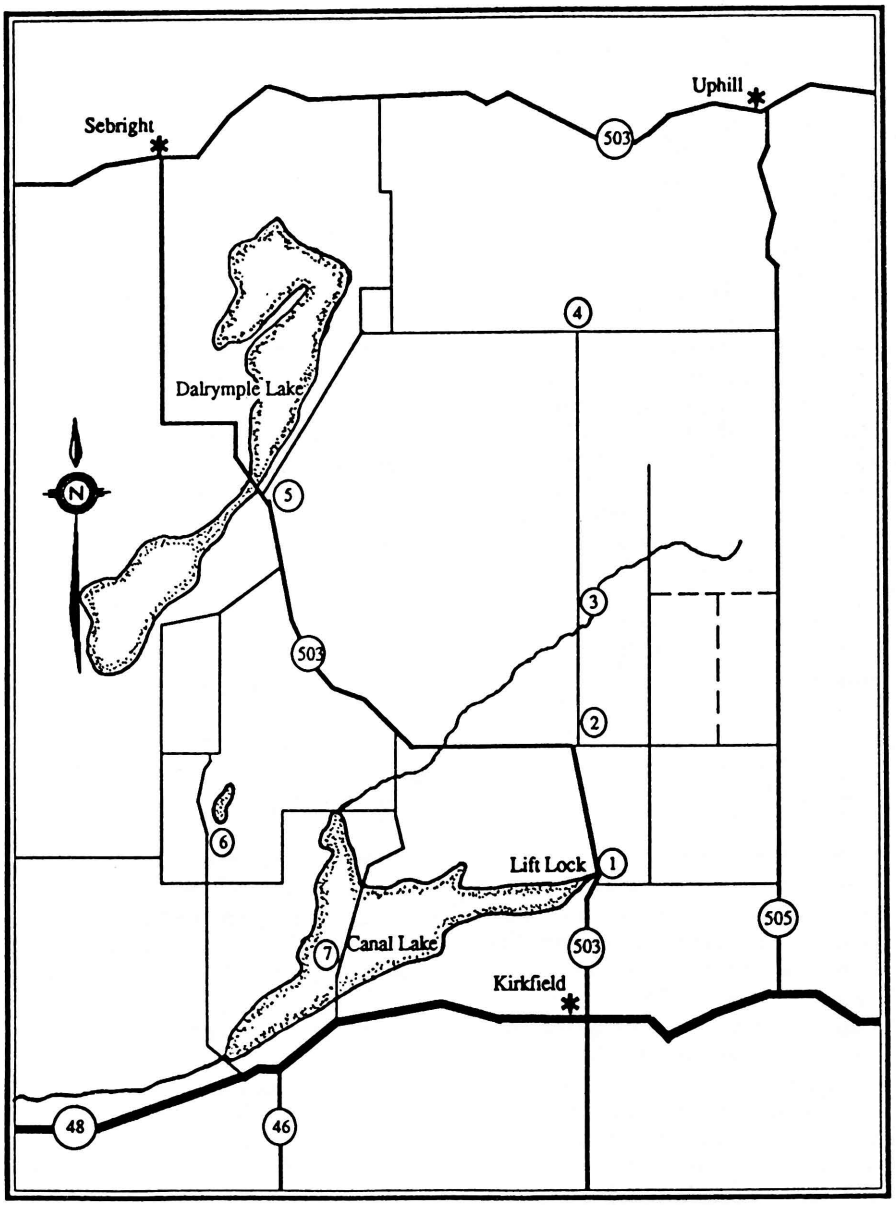
2. Concession Road 8 (unsigned): Km 2.6

From the Lift Lock drive 2.5 km north, turn right (east) onto the sideroad where Highway 503 turns sharply to the left (west). From the sideroad, turn left almost immediately on the first road and pull off on the shoulder. This unsigned road ends 9.4 km to the north at a "T" intersection (#4 on the map). You will soon discover why this is one of the most interesting birding roads in southern Ontario. At this stop, you should see Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Bluebird, Horned Lark, Vesper Sparrow, and perhaps a Red-headed Woodpecker. A pair of Brewer's Blackbirds spent several days at this corner in June, 1991.

Drive slowly north on this road, stopping frequently to enjoy the multitude of birds. Watch for Loggerhead Shrikes about 0.5 km north of the old house on the left. Carefully scan the tops of hawthorns and fence lines (Figure 2). A telescope is very helpful in viewing a distant shrike.

3. Sedge Wren Marsh: Km 5.4

You will see a pull-off on the left about 75 m before the bridge, or carefully park well to the side on the bridge itself to allow traffic to pass. This interesting wetland is one of the most reliable locations to find Sedge Wrens. They are most often found in the thick grasses and sedges north of the bridge. Walk slowly and listen for their "tip-tip-tip tititititititititi" song. They are difficult to see, but being patient often pays off. Before mid-June, this is a good spot at dawn and dusk to hear and see Common Snipe



Map #2: Carden Plain Site Tour, showing numbered stops.
Map produced by *Mike Turner*.

and American Bittern. You may also hear Virginia Rails and Soras. The thick mats of white flowers floating on the creek are White Water-Buttercups (*Ranunculus longirostris*). On warm afternoons, Northern Water Snakes (*Natrix sipedon*) can often be seen basking near the bridge.

The open wooded area south of the marsh is a terrific spot at dusk to hear and see Common Nighthawks and Whip-poor-wills. Nighthawks boom immediately overhead, a fantastic experience on a quiet evening. Taped calls of the Whip-poor-will will bring them right to you!

4. Carden "T" Intersection: Km 12.0

It is 6.6 km from the Sedge Wren Marsh to where the road ends at what is known in Carden as the "T". This section goes through a variety of dry and wet meadows and scrub forest rich in birds. Drive slowly and plan to stop several times. Listen and watch for Grasshopper Sparrows in the dry short grass meadows. Rufous-sided Towhees and Field Sparrows are frequent in the scrubby areas, and occasionally a Golden-winged Warbler or Clay-colored Sparrow can be found. Watch for patches of Prairie Smoke or Long-plumed Purple Avens, a characteristic alvar wildflower (Figure 3). The abundance of wildflowers attracts a variety of butterflies to the area. At night along this section of road, watch for the bright eyeshine of Common Nighthawks and Whip-poor-wills on the road in your headlights. Listen for coyotes or brush wolves, and if you do not hear them, try giving long, throaty wolf-like howls to get a response. (Tip: Once you are familiar with this road in daylight, try birding it in late afternoon and early evening!).

5. "T" to Highway 503: Km 21.0

Turn left (west) at the "T" towards Lake Dalrymple. It is 4.7 km to the next left turn at the Dalrymple Road. This section takes you through a coniferous forest of pine, spruce, cedar and juniper. Listen for the beautiful flute-like song of the Hermit Thrush. This evergreen forest with its Hermit Thrushes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and White-throated Sparrows lends a distinctly northern flavour to the area. Turn left at the intersection with the Dalrymple Road, and soon you will enter a cottage area on the east shore of Lake Dalrymple. There is a store here, if you need a drink, snack, or washroom break. Continue southward to the junction with Highway 503, where there is a Purple Martin colony at the house on the left.

6. Cranberry Lake: Km 29.4

Turn left onto Highway 503. The Dalrymple General Store on the left (0.5 km) has refreshments, and there are washrooms at the side. Turn right one km south of the store and proceed 1.7 km to where the road forks. Loggerhead Shrikes have frequented this area in recent years. Continue stright ahead (left) at the forks. As you proceed you will see the Miller quarry on the left. About 0.6 km south of the quarry entrance, the road crosses a creek. Sometimes this is a worthwhile stop. About 1.7 km ahead, the road turns sharply to the right. Proceed a very short

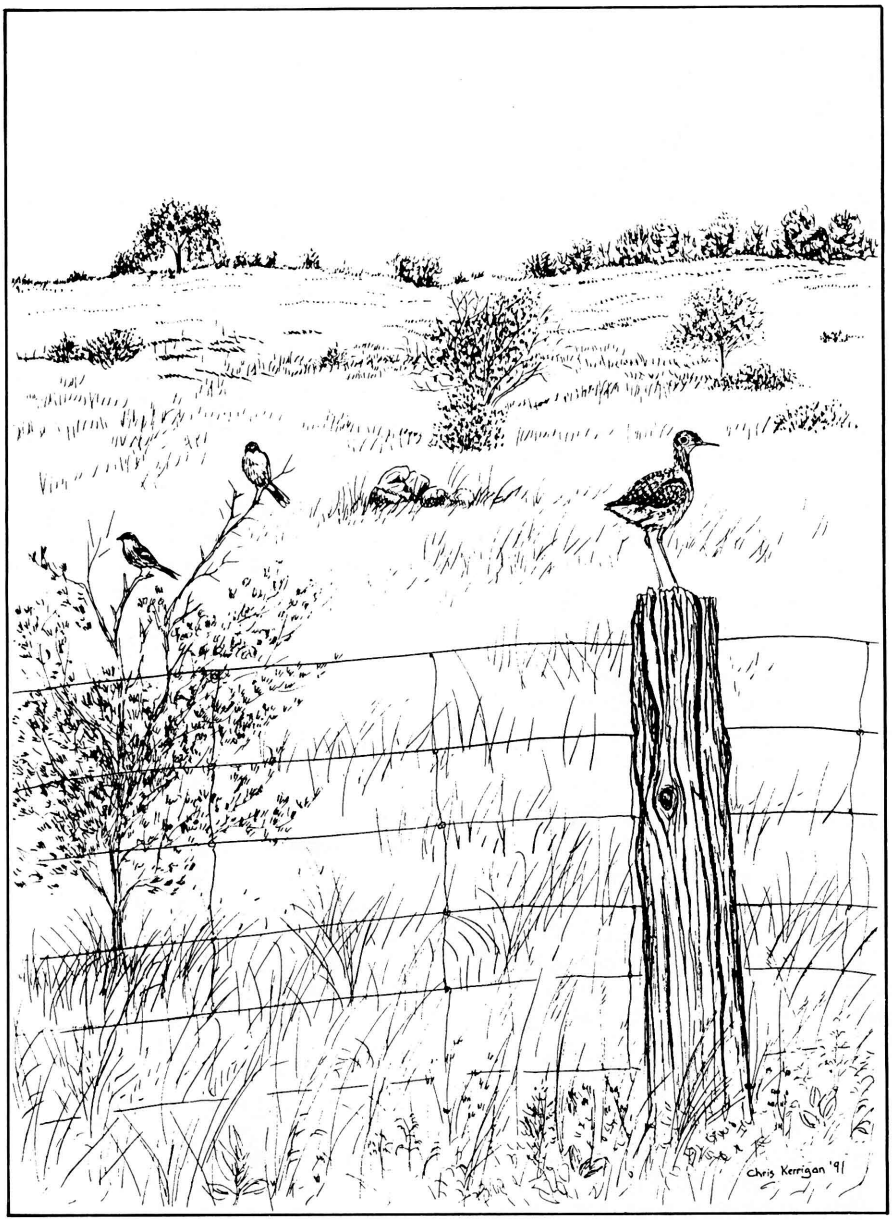


Figure 2: Typical alvar scene, with a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes in a hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.), and an Upland Sandpiper on a fence post. Drawing by *Chris Kerrigan*.

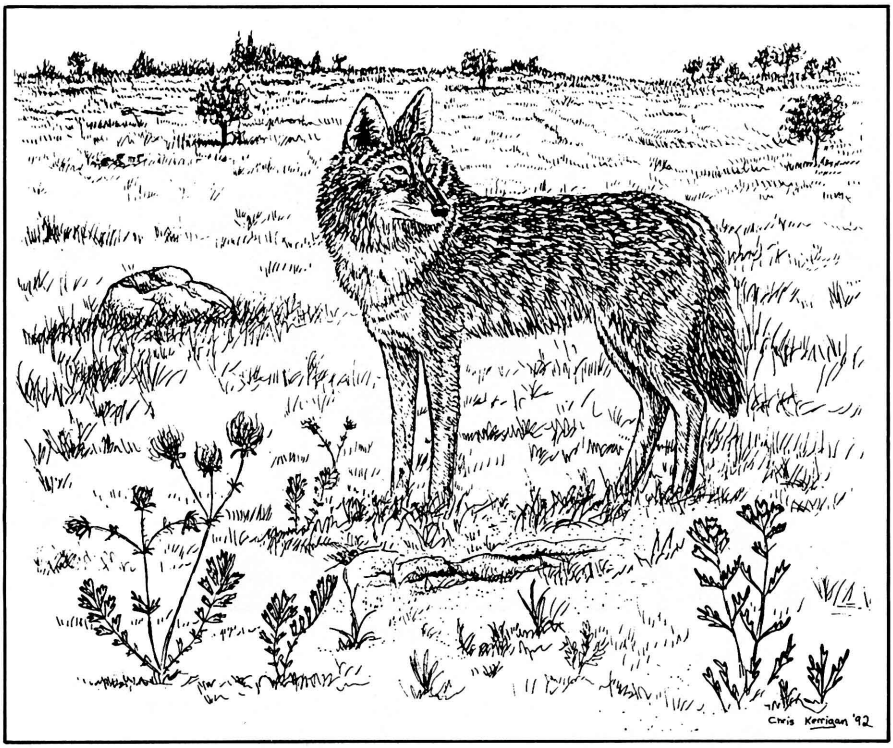


Figure 3: Carden alvar, showing Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*) on left, coyote (*Canis latrans*) in centre, and Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja coccinea*) at right. Drawing by *Chris Kerrigan*.

distance (0.2 km), and take the first very narrow road on your left. Cranberry Lake is visible in the distance. Go approximately 1.5 km to a point where the lake can be viewed from the top of a wooden-framed rock crib along the fence line. The tree immediately to the right of the rock crib is marked with two large spots of blue paint. Be careful, but standing on the crib allows a good view of the marsh and lake. You should see Black Terns flying over the lake. Listen for Marsh Wrens. Least Bitterns breed here and are occasionally seen flying over the marsh. The Gormley quarry is on the right as you proceed another 1.5 km to the next intersection. A new quarry was licenced in 1991 for the area to your left (east). It may not begin operations for several years.

The route goes left (east) from here to Canal Lake. However, if you have not seen a Loggerhead Shrike yet, it is worth spending a little time checking the surrounding area before continuing. First, from the intersection go straight (south) for 1.3 km. Scan the tops of distant trees on the left for shrikes, which nested in this area in 1991. Second, return to

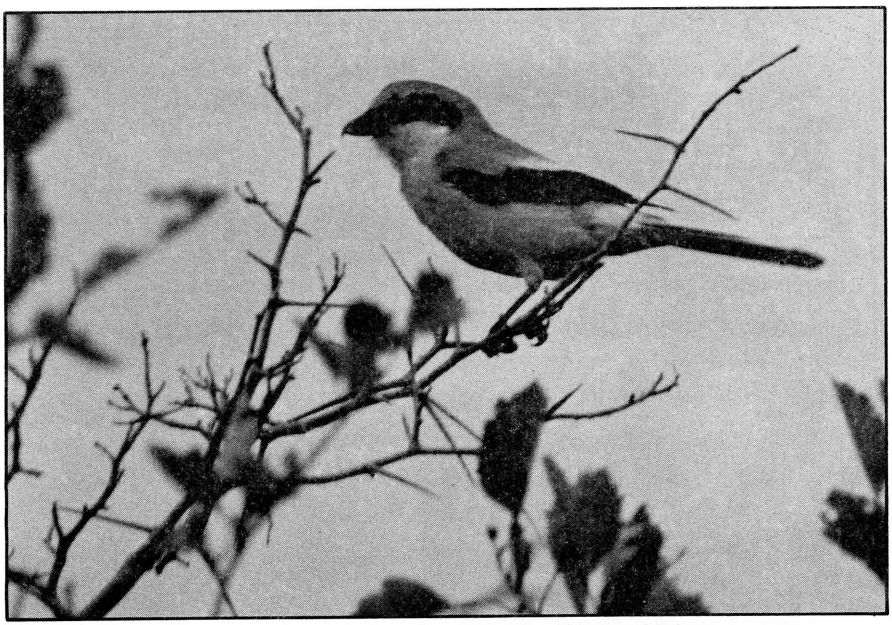


Figure 4: Loggerhead Shrike in a hawthorn on the Carden Plain. Photo by *Ron Pittaway.*

the intersection and go left (west) one km to the sharp corner. Again, scan for shrikes. Brewer's Blackbirds nested near this location in 1989. Western Meadowlark is also a possibility in this area. Now, return to the intersection to continue your tour.

7. Canal Lake Causeway: Km 38.7

Proceed left (east) at the intersection, going 5.7 km to where the road ends at a "T". Turn right (south) going 2.3 km to the Osprey's nest on top of the hydro pole at the middle of the causeway across Canal Lake. You can obtain excellent close-up views of adult and young Ospreys on the nest, right from your car. Common Terns nest on the lake and can often be seen from the causeway. Also watch for Caspian Terns and Common Loons. Continue 3.0 km to Highway 48, where the trip ends. I hope that you enjoyed the birds and will come back again.

Postscript

Another side trip to see more of the Carden Plain, or perhaps find that Loggerhead Shrike (Figure 4) which may have eluded you so far, involves turning left (east) on Highway 48 at the end of the tour described above. Proceed through Kirkfield to the junction of Highways 48 and 505. Turn left (north) on Highway 505, and bird northward to where 505 meets Highway 503 at Uphill. Then you can turn around and proceed southward again on 505, to retrace your route (and watch for birds which you may have missed the first

time). You should see many Upland Sandpipers, Eastern Bluebirds, Horned Larks, Turkey Vultures, Vesper Sparrows, Bobolinks, and Eastern Kingbirds, with a good chance for Red-headed Woodpecker and Loggerhead Shrike, as well.

Acknowledgements

The following birders provided me with much valuable advice and assistance in the preparation of this site guide: Dave Calvert, Bill Crins, Christine Kerrigan, Chris Lemieux, Peter Nevin, Doug Tozer, Ron Tozer, and Mike Turner. I am grateful to Christine Kerrigan for her marvelous illustrations, and to Mike Turner for producing the maps.

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FIELD NOTES

Recognizable Forms

Morphs of the White-throated Sparrow

by
Ron Pittaway

White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) exhibit two distinct colour morphs. Lowther (1961) named the morphs the "white-striped morph" and the "tan-striped morph" based on the colour of the median crown stripe. The (dull) tan-striped birds also differ from the (bright) white-striped birds in having duller black crowns, duller and less extensive yellow lores, less white on the throat, with heavier markings and more streaking on the breast (sometimes forming a distinct spot). Earlier field guides (Peterson 1947) mistakenly led us to believe that white-striped birds were adults while the tan-striped birds were immatures. Today, we know that isn't true, but there are some interesting complications in fully understanding these forms.

To know the difficulties of correctly identifying the two morphs, it is necessary to understand the plumages and moults of the White-throated Sparrow, and how the morphs vary with age and plumage. I will trace the development of a young bird to adult plumage, in order to explain the situation.

The first plumage (seen on the breeding grounds) is the juvenile plumage. This streaked plumage is well-illustrated in the National Geographic Guide (Scott 1987). The two morphs are indistinguishable in juvenile plumage. Juveniles moult into first winter plumage on the breeding grounds before fall migration. First winter plumage is held through the fall and winter. First winter birds are similar to adults in winter plumage. However, most white-striped morphs do *not* express (show) their plumage brightness in first winter plumage, and thus resemble tan-striped morphs. There are also many individuals which exhibit intermediate plumage (Atkinson and Ralph 1980). Therefore, only birds showing white-striped morphology can be identified with certainty in fall and winter.

In spring (March to May), first winter birds moult into first summer plumage. This plumage closely resembles adult breeding plumage. In first summer plumage, the two morphs now exhibit a bimodal distribution. That is, most birds are clearly either white-striped or tan-striped, with very few intermediates. Therefore, both morphs can be distinguished with a high degree of certainty during the breeding season.

White-throated Sparrows attain their first adult plumage in their second year, when they moult on the breeding grounds from first summer to adult winter plumage. However, many adult winter white-striped morphs do not express plumage brightness, appearing intermediate or similar to tan-striped birds. Following

the moult to adult breeding plumage (March to May), the genetically bright birds now strongly express their white-striped morphology.

In addition to their plumage variation, the two morphs also exhibit some other interesting differences. Lowther (1961) first noted that the two morphs mate selectively; that is, "white-striped birds of either sex usually pair with tan-striped birds of the opposite sex" (Knapton *et al.* 1984). Also, white-striped males defend territories in "open" habitat whereas tan-striped males occupy territories in a broader range of habitat, from "open" to "dense" (Knapton and Falls 1982).

Summary

There are two morphs of the White-throated Sparrow -- the white-striped and tan-striped morphs. The two morphs are most distinctive in the breeding season when very few intermediates occur in the population. In fall and winter, most first winter and some adult winter birds of the white-striped morph do not express plumage brightness, appearing intermediate or like tan-striped birds. Therefore, only birds which appear to be white-striped morphs can be identified with certainty in fall and winter.

Clearly, there is more to the "familiar" White-throated Sparrow than meets the eye!

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Bill Crins, Richard Knapton, Chris Lemieux, and Ron Tozer for advice.

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Notes

Breeding Habitat of the Connecticut Warbler in the Rainy River District

by
David H. Elder

The Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) breeding range in Canada extends from west-central Quebec in the east, across north-central Ontario, central Manitoba, central Saskatchewan, central Alberta to east-central British Columbia. In Ontario, it can be found north of Georgian Bay to southern James Bay, right across the province.

Generally, two distinct types of habitat are utilized in the species' Canadian range. In the eastern and central parts, black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*) bogs are preferred although some localized use of immature jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) stands does occur. In the west, open trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) woods constitute the primary habitat. Within Ontario, both types of habitat are used, with the black spruce and tamarack bog type predominating.

It is within the Rainy River District in Northwestern Ontario that both types of habitats are utilized. The Rainy River District extends from about 65 km east of the town of Atikokan to the Lake of the Woods. The eastern two thirds of the District is located on the Canadian Shield and has vegetation characteristics that are predominantly boreal. The forest cover is largely conifer with stands of jack pine occupying the drier sites and black spruce in the moister areas. Trembling aspen stands are scattered throughout, and poorly drained areas are covered with black spruce and some tamarack. It is these poorly drained boggy areas which the Connecticut Warbler frequents for breeding.

West of Fort Frances, the land is flat and there is little evidence of the Canadian Shield, which has angled to the northwest. Farming country replaces the boreal forests and woodland consists of stands of trembling aspen peppered with a few balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), black spruce and white spruce (*P. glauca*). Here and there throughout the area are large peat bogs that may be quite open or may be covered with a stand of mature black spruce. In contrast to the eastern part of the District, Connecticut Warblers generally avoid the bog areas and occupy the trembling aspen woods.

Figure 1 shows a typical black spruce bog favoured as a breeding site in the eastern part of the District. Preference is shown for bogs that consist of fairly open immature or stunted stands of black spruce. Connecticut Warblers avoid stands of thick, mature black spruce. Ground cover in the open bogs consists of various species of sphagnum mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Labrador tea (*Ledum*

Figure 1: Typical open black spruce bog in the eastern part of the Rainy River District. Photo by *David H. Elder.*

groenlandicum), bog rosemary (*Andromeda glaucophylla*), bog laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*), and leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*). Breeding males announce their presence by singing loudly from a perch part way up a black spruce. They can be very difficult to see and are often quite wary, leaving the tree long before an observer can approach closely.

Figure 2 illustrates the trembling aspen woods occupied in the western section of the Rainy River District. The woods are fairly open and have an understorey of dogwood (*Cornus* spp.), alder (*Alnus* spp.) and other scattered shrubs. Singing male Connecticut Warblers select a perch well up in an aspen, often right within the canopy. Their colours match perfectly those of the aspen foliage and considerable effort is necessary to see the bird. In contrast with the birds found in the spruce bogs, the singers in the aspens are very confiding and do not vacate their perch at the first sign of an observer. Thus, with a little patience and manoeuvring, a good view of the bird can usually be obtained.

Comparisons of the two types of Connecticut Warbler habitat are thus available to the interested observer within 160 km of each other in the Rainy River District. Interestingly enough, a confirmed nest with eggs or young of the Connecticut Warbler has yet to be found and documented in Ontario.

Figure 2: Typical aspen woods in the western part of the Rainy River District. Photo by *David H. Elder.*

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Two Incidents of Great Blue Heron Feeding on Birds

by Rob Dobos

It is widely known that the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) feeds mainly on aquatic animals such as fish, amphibians and crustaceans, and that its diet may occasionally include reptiles, small mammals and birds (Bent 1926). This report describes two unusual incidents of a Great Blue Heron feeding on birds.

The first observation, by Christine Bishop, William Crins, Kathleen Gardiner, William Lamond, Brian McHattie, Kevin McLaughlin, plus the author, occurred on 8 September 1990, at the mouth of Grindstone Creek, where it flows into the west end of Hamilton Harbour (area known as Valley Inn), in the City of Hamilton, Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. Several hundred birds, including numerous waterfowl, shorebirds, and gulls, and several Great Blue Herons were observed foraging at the mudflats and shallow waters at this site.

As we scanned the birds, we had noticed that one of the Great Blue Herons was attempting to devour a large object which appeared to be a small duck. The duck was identified as a male Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*), and was apparently still alive, as it weakly flapped its wings several times during the observation. We watched for about one half hour as the heron repeatedly attempted to swallow the duck, but could not get the teal's entire body down its throat. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, the duck was dropped onto the mudflat. The heron aggressively defended its potential meal from the other herons present, as it chased away a bird which approached too closely on a few occasions.

We did not observe the heron, which was identified as an adult bird, initially attack the teal; therefore, it is not known if the duck was sick or injured. We also did not remain long enough to ascertain if the heron was finally successful in making a meal of the teal. This would seem very unlikely, considering the difficulty the heron was having during our observation.

The second observation occurred one week later on 15 September 1990 at Windermere Basin, at the east end of Hamilton Harbour, in the City of Hamilton. Barbara Charlton, Robert Curry and the author observed, while viewing the many shorebirds present in the southwest pond of Windermere, an adult Great Blue Heron attempting to swallow a large shorebird which it held in its bill. The shorebird was evidently a yellowlegs (*Tringa* sp.), as long straw-yellow legs and a longish, straight bill dangled from the heron's mouth; however, the species could not be positively determined.

The heron repeatedly shook the yellowlegs while it was held in its bill, and tossed its head backwards, attempting to get the shorebird headfirst down its throat. However, the long legs and bill appeared to be giving the heron much difficulty in swallowing. We watched this episode

for several minutes, then returned our attention to the many shorebirds present. The heron was eventually seen to fly out of the pond; however, we did not know if it was successful in devouring the shorebird. While the heron held the shorebird in its bill, it appeared that the yellowlegs was lifeless. However, we did not know whether it had been a healthy or injured bird attacked by the heron, or a dead bird that was being scavenged.

It is interesting to note that a Great Blue Heron was observed to successfully devour a Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*) at the same site on 25 September 1987 (Kubisz 1989). The observer believed that the heron, which was a hatch-year bird, had scavenged the shorebird, rather than killing it itself. In light of the similarity of the 1987 observation to the more recent incidents (especially the one at Windermere Basin), it would be interesting to speculate that the same individual heron may have been involved in these three observations. This would be impossible to prove since no distinguishing features were observed to be able to identify the herons as the same bird. The ages of the herons observed certainly fit this speculation (a hatch-year bird in 1987, both adults in 1990). The two sites, Valley Inn and Windermere Basin, are within 10 km of each other, a distance which could easily be covered by a foraging Great Blue Heron. It seems somewhat more probable that an individual Great Blue Heron would develop the unusual feeding habit of preying on large sick birds or scavenging on dead birds, rather than two or three birds within an area developing this feeding strategy. In any event, the above observations are of interest in themselves.

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The Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program

by
Harry G. Lumsden

The restoration program is back on track and four cygnets were flying free at Wye Marsh this fall. Another seven will be released there next spring after breakup. Three of the cygnets released last spring have been flying round the general area since late summer. They left Wye Marsh on 10 December 1991 and were seen on Kempenfelt Bay near Barrie.

There are eight free-flying Trumpeters on the north-west shore of Lake Ontario. Two of these birds have lost their patagium tags. They are now nearly six years old. They carry USFWS bands, the numbers of which can be read when the birds are out of the water. All of the other released birds carry two or three digit patagium tags. There are also a few Mute Swans carrying patagium tags.

Occasionally, Trumpeters from the restoration programs in Minnesota move south-east. There are at least two records of neck-collared Trumpeters seen in the Atlantic flyway which may have crossed Ontario. There are other observations of unmarked Trumpeters in Ontario, Ohio, and New York which probably originated in the upper Mississippi Flyway. We can expect the Trumpeter Swan to occur with increasing frequency in Ontario, and it would be important to document change in status.

It would be greatly appreciated if members of OFO could report sightings of Trumpeters to the records committee, and those of marked swans to Harry G. Lumsden, 144 Hillview Road, Aurora, Ontario L4G 2M5 (416-727-6492), or to any OMNR office.

Harry G. Lumsden, 144 Hillview Road, Aurora, Ontario L4G 2M5

Book Reviews

A Field Guide to Advanced Birding. 1990. By *Kenn Kaufman.* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. xiv + 299 pp., illustrated. U.S. $22.95

Aptly subtitled "Birding Challenges and How to Approach Them", this book is the latest in the acclaimed Peterson Field Guide series, published by Houghton Mifflin of Boston. The author, well known for his identification pieces in journals such as *American Birds* and *Birding*, has compiled an assortment of the most perplexing field problems facing birders in North America, presenting them in a handy field guide format.

Chapter 1, "Challenges in Birding and How to Approach Them", serves as the introduction. Kaufman outlines the purpose of the book, and summarizes the basic rules of field identification, stressing the cautious approach to birding. He concludes the chapter with a richly diagrammed "Terminology and Bird Topography". This chapter is a good set up for what is to follow and makes interesting reading for birders of any level of experience. Chapters 2 to 35 are the heart of the book, delving into, in phylogenetic order, difficult problems not covered in a comparative sense by any standard field guide. The author presents the problem, discusses preliminary field characters, dissects the problem, and summarizes the key points. Problems involve two species situations such as "The Western Grebe Complex" and "The Dark Ibises", three or four as in "The Accipiters" and "The Medium-sized Terns", all the way up to multiple species, the dreaded "Empidonax Flycatchers". Several chapters take a generalized "how to" approach, discussing basic fundamentals of identification of shorebirds, gulls, fall warblers and sparrows. Kaufman provides all of the illustrations and the text for every chapter except for "The Dowitchers" and "The Thayer's Gull Complex", handled by Claudia Wilds and Kevin J. Zimmer, respectively. For further reading, an extensive bibliography completes the book.

I will start out by saying that this is an excellent book, one that the "keeners" have long anticipated, as it neatly brings together a significant number of concerns that have always troubled birders on the continent. What I found to be particularly delightful is that essentially every chapter in the book is of at least moderate relevance to Ontario birders. Most of the chapters are of prime interest to us. Of course, many people can think of problems which are not dealt with in the book, but the author acknowledges this in the early stages. Furthermore, all that is needed to rectify this is either an enlarged second edition or a Volume II. In the interests of constructive criticism, however, I'll nominate four quandaries not examined: female Barrow's vs. Common Goldeneye; immature Broad-winged Hawk vs. Red-shouldered Hawk; Rock vs. Willow Ptarmigan; and Eastern vs. Western Meadowlark.

Kaufman's writing style serves him well throughout the book. He shows himself to be a knowledgeable instructor who meticulously coaches

his students in solving problems. Rather than assaulting the reader with a barrage of confusing detail, he identifies the problem, provides pertinent comparative information, then gets to the point. He shies away from making too many absolute statements about identification, constantly reminding us of "pitfalls" and when to use a dose of caution. Quite simply, he comes straight across to the reader, and does so in an informative yet easy to digest manner.

I give top marks to Kaufman as an illustrator. While his artwork does not rival the breathtaking quality of a Lars Jonsson or a Killian Mullarney, it is nonetheless quite functional. He is able to stay away from exaggerating the differences between similar species in his drawings, to the point of distortion. His technique, particularly in the drawings of gulls and terns, reminds me somewhat of the work of the late P.J. Grant. Note the novel approach taken in depicting the progression of a Ring-billed Gull from juvenile to adulthood on pages 104-105. I have only a few qualms about the drawings in the book. For Pacific Loon on page 24, he does not show the "chinstrap" effect being possessed by a juvenile. This variable feature was present on both of the first year birds that I have been lucky enough to see in Ontario. On page 44, I thought the peaked look to the head of the drake Lesser Scaup is not quite right. The Philadelphia Vireos depicted on pages 226 and 228 could show a more prominent pale crescent below the eye and a less prominent eyeline. I found the breast streaking on the female Purple Finch on page 270 to be a bit too thin.

With the art of field identification having evolved to the level of today, this book is a natural result. For anyone with a keen student's attitude towards birding, indeed for the legions who simply want to put the right name to any bird they see, I heartily recommend this fine new guide.

Kevin McLaughlin, 30 Bingham Rd., Hamilton, Ontario L8H 1N4

The Bald Eagle: Haunts and Habits of a Wilderness Monarch. 1988. By *Jon M. Gerrard* and *Gary R. Bortolotti.* Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. (paperback) 177 pp. + xiv. $18.95

Few North American birds have evoked as much attention or emotion amongst birders or non-birders alike as the Bald Eagle. They have been hunted and poisoned. They have been revered, with their feathers and talons being symbols in religious rituals. They have been an inspiration to poets. The word "eagle" occurs in more than sixty place names in Ontario alone. They have been the singular subject of scientific conferences. Indeed the Bald Eagle is one of the most widely and intensively studied bird species in North America. It has been declared an endangered species and described as an "ecological litmus paper". It is the symbol of one of the most powerful nations this earth has ever

known. And, of course, the sighting of a Bald Eagle is a highlight of the day on any birder's list.

In this book, the authors have attempted to take an in-depth look at the literature on the biology and ecology of Bald Eagles and combine that information with their own extensive research to put together a highly readable and informative product. In this reviewer's opinion, they have done an admirable job.

Each chapter starts off with one of the authors' personal anecdotes dealing with field experience of Bald Eagle research. This provides an inside view of some of the highs and lows in the sometimes laborious work involving behavioural studies, and serves as an introduction to the main theme of the chapter. This combination gives the reader an excellent sense of the passion and zeal these two "eagleologists" have demonstrated over the years. It also ties the writers' enthusiasm together with the science they go on to elucidate.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, starting with, appropriately, a look at the history of the Bald Eagle in terms of its former numbers and range. The authors then move quickly into a discussion of early naturalists' problems and perceptions in sorting out this species, as there was little awareness at that time of the various plumage changes this species goes through before attaining its characteristic adult plumage of white head and tail.

One of the primary theses in these authors' research was how age and sex might influence a Bald Eagle's behaviour and ecology. Throughout most of the remaining chapters this is an integral theme.

Successive chapters deal with feathers and flight, diet and hunting/feeding techniques, nesting surveys, breeding behaviour and territoriality, nest sites and nest construction, courtship, nestling behaviour, banding, dispersal of fledged young, migration and winter distribution. The final chapter deals with the future of the Bald Eagle with respect to contaminants, habitat loss and management and reintroduction programs. The authors conclude in a guardedly optimistic way, that there is no reason to suspect that the Bald Eagle cannot adapt to the North America of today, provided there are relatively safe sources of food and places in which to rear their young.

Eleven appendices are included, ranging from measurements of males and females at various ages, to mean daily temperatures at wintering areas, to specifications for buffer zones around nest sites. Following the appendices is a "Notes" section, providing a chapter by chapter listing of references. Then comes a bibliography of more than 200 references and lastly, a topical index.

A variety of illustrative photographs and diagrams, all in black and white, are scattered throughout the book. Most of the photographs were taken in the vicinity of Besnard Lake, Saskatchewan, the location of much of the authors' research.

This book is pleasantly free of obvious errors. One of the diagrams illustrating types of flight used on migration was somewhat confusing, but overall the quality of information was excellent. A minor complaint was that, as one actively involved in

the management of Bald Eagles, I would have liked to have seen more information presented by the authors more thoroughly referenced.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone even remotely interested in this majestic species. It is in paperback form, and reasonably priced. It is written with the layman in mind, as the authors have masterfully interpreted the science so that it will open a whole new perspective on Bald Eagle biology and ecology. At the same time they have provided a wealth of information, some of it from original research, for even the most ardent student of Bald Eagle behaviour. It is one of the most easily read "reference books" this reviewer has come across.

P. Allen Woodliffe, 30 Argyle Cres., Chatham, Ontario N7L 4T8

Birds of the Canadian Rockies. 1990. By *George W. Scotter, Tom J. Ulrich* and *Edgar T. Jones.* Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. (paperback) 170 pp. $22.95

When I was a student in Hamilton a long time ago and geography was mostly about the red areas on the map of the world, I had the naive idea that the Rocky Mountains included everything west of the Alberta foothills. It was a long time before I learned otherwise, namely that the Rockies are just the first range going west, separated from numerous other ranges such as the Selkirks and Monashees by the Rocky Mountain trench, the deep valley where the headwaters of the Kootenay, Columbia and Fraser Rivers gather.

Birds of the Canadian Rockies is a pocket-sized field guide describing over 200 species that occur in those Rocky Mountains and their eastern foothills. Some of the species described here do not occur to the west and some that occur in the western mountains and valleys do not appear here.

The layout is that now found in most guides, text on the left, pictures on the right. The text by George Scotter, who wrote *Wildflowers of the Canadian Rockies*, includes a brief description of breeding plumages, notes on their habits and preferred habitat, their abundance and where and when they occur throughout the region. The pictures are from photographs taken by Tom Ulrich and Edgar Jones plus a sizable contribution from others. The quality is very good, on a par with those in the Audubon Society Master Guide.

The text descriptions and pictures are limited to breeding adult plumages even in cases where the species is only a spring and/or fall migrant. In the latter case most sightings may be of juvenile or winter-plumaged birds. The text sometimes contains descriptions of similar species which are only named there. It seemed to me that in these cases it would have been more appropriate to include both names in

the heading, with the less common species in second position. Scotter's comments on problems of separating similar species often reflect personal experience, such as the statement that, between Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, "only God can tell them apart in the field and even He may have difficulty!". He tries to sort out their very similar songs but notes that sequences can be varied, and different observers will interpret them quite differently. A review of the interpretations of the two songs found in various guides and *Birds of Canada* will confirm that statement.

Also included is a checklist of the 315 species that have been recorded in the various national and provincial parks of the region. Of these, about 220 either breed in Ontario or are regular transients, and many of the remainder visit occasionally. There is an entry for each of seven parks or regions, ranging from Waterton Lakes N.P and the Kananaskis foothills in the south to Liard River Hotsprings in the north (just west of the Rockies, but the only good checklist in the north). These are ordered alphabetically rather than by longitude, the latter of which would have given a better idea of whether each species was found in the north or south. Occurrence is limited to three categories: known to breed, recorded, and hypothetical. No indication of abundance is given so that we have to accept the authors' assessment as to which species should be included in the main text and which omitted. I suspect that in some cases the decision was based on the availability of a good photograph. The checklist gives no indication as to which species are described in the main text.

The publisher's blurb on the back cover says that "For nature lovers, backpackers, kitchen-window birders and the generally curious-minded, this easy-to-pack reference is an invaluable introduction...", and I would agree. With current North American guides describing over 800 species, trying to decide which one you may be looking at in Jasper N.P. could be a discouraging task. However, if you regularly see 200 to 300 species in a year, this book will be of help mostly in suggesting where to look for a particular species that you are hoping to add to your life list.

Bill Walker, 52 Laurier (Box 28), Deep River, Ontario K0J 1K0

Photo Quiz

by
Doug McRae

Answer to Photo Quiz in *Ontario Birds* 9 (2) : **Least Sandpiper.**

There is a stigma in birding circles that considers shorebirds too difficult to identify. Nowhere is this feeling stronger than with the "peeps" -- the smaller shorebirds. While they can be tricky, with practice it is possible to identify most individuals occurring in our region fairly easily. So, don't give up -- there is hope.

With most shorebirds, there are essentially three plumages to consider: adult breeding, adult non-breeding, and young of the year. And their identification becomes much easier if you determine the age first. Older feathers will be worn (ragged edges), faded and generally less bright, while new feathers, as seen on juveniles and spring adults, will be bright, often edged or tipped in a light colour, and give an overall "clean" look. Until recently, representation of peep plumages in field guides was often misleading or incorrect, and this has sustained the stigma.

Our bird shows very bright edgings on many of the scapulars and contour feathers, and the "clean" look of the feathers is evident. It also has fairly well-defined markings on the throat and breast; therefore, this Least is a breeding-plumaged adult. While a juvenile would have bright edgings, it would lack the crisp marking on the breast (they would be present but indistinct). Also, in very fresh feathers, there is a distinctive warm wash across the breast of young birds (which is lacking here).

So now that we have a little moult background, lets tackle the identification. The small peeps that normally occur in Ontario are Least, Semipalmated, and Western. The first two are common migrants in spring and fall, while the Western is primarily a scarce fall migrant; the latter is very rare and frequently (?) misidentified in the spring. I have not dealt with stints in this quiz since they are very rare (only one record of one species to date in Ontario), and their identification can be very difficult. There are, however, good papers and books available on that subject if you want to tackle them.

The two larger peeps, White-rumped and Baird's, can be ruled out on a few features. Both have fairly long, straight bills and very long wings that extend far out on the body. Both these features give Baird's and White-rumped an obviously leaner, tapered look, while the Least in this photograph shows the characteristic "chubbiness" of the smaller peeps. Also, the legs on this bird are light, not black as in Baird's and White-rumped. These two are also quite a bit larger so if you saw this bird beside a larger peep, the size difference would be obvious.

Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers remain to be ruled out. Western is fairly easy to eliminate. A Western should show a noticeably

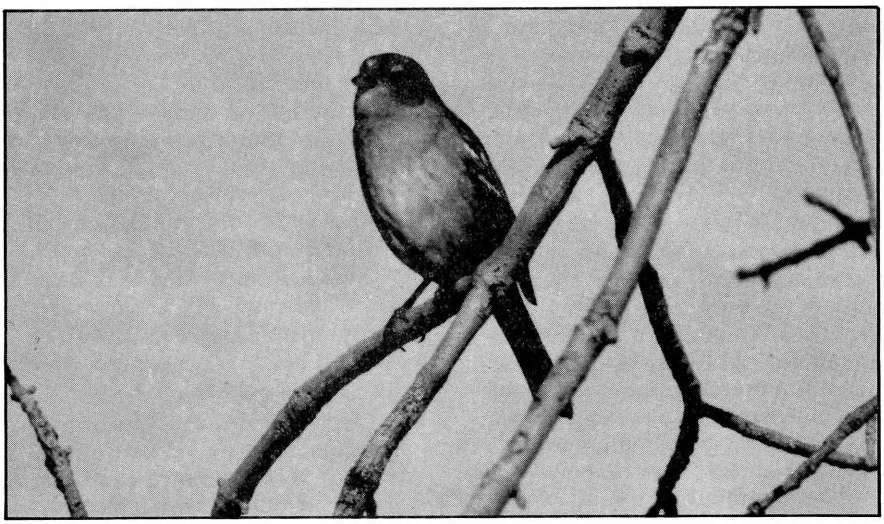
longer bill than our bird. Both Least and Western have downcurved bills, but the effect is usually slight on the Least. Western would also have extensive red/orange areas on the shoulder, and distinct, dense black markings (often arrowheads) going down the sides of the flanks to at least the legs. A Western often shows noticeably long legs, and they should be black.

Semipalmated can be ruled out on a few features. On the Least, light markings on the coverts form two light "bars" running from the shoulder over the back -- easily visible in this bird. Semipalmated does not show this bar effect. A Semipalmated would have a bill similar in length but it would be somewhat heavier and have a slight bulbous look at the tip. The Least's bill ends in a clear point, not a blob. Like Western, the Semipalmated would have black legs, not light. Young Semipalmateds can have greenish legs, but adults should be dark. Also, light-legged birds feeding in dark muck can come out with dark legs, so caution is needed when judging leg colour; but most of the time it's straightforward.

Finally, a few impressions between Semis and Leasts would be in order. Adult Semipalmated (and most juveniles) appear grey-brown in colour, while Leasts always look red-brown. The overall effect is that Semis are a paler, greyer-looking bird, while Leasts are darker. For some reason this seems to me to be most obvious when they are flying by, and is especially true of worn adults. Worn Leasts have lost most of their bright feather tips, leaving only a dark brown back. When the plumage is heavily worn, a Least will stand out as strikingly darker than a Semi.

Now for something completely different. Our next quiz bird is a passerine. Good luck.

Doug McRae, Box 130, St. Williams, Ontario N0E 1P0



Ontario Field Ornithologists

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 $20.00 Annual Membership or $400.00 Life Membership. All members receive *Ontario Birds*, the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Please send memberships to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 62014, Burlington Mall Postal Outlet, Burlington, Ontario L3R 4K2.

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