

ONTARIO BIRDS



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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 (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*), hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

Current President: Jean Iron, 9 Lichen Place, Don Mills, Ontario M3A 1X3 (416) 445-9297 (e-mail: jeaniron@globedirect.com).

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Ontario Birds

Editors: Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway, Ron Tozer

Editorial Assistance: Jean Iron, Ross James, Doug McRae

Art Consultant: Chris Kerrigan

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The aim of *Ontario Birds* is to provide a vehicle for documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles and short notes on the status, distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in Ontario, as well as location guides to significant Ontario birdwatching areas, book reviews, and similar material of interest on Ontario birds.

If possible, material submitted for publication should be double-spaced and typewritten. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Please submit items for publication to the Editors at the address noted above.

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Articles

Yellow-throated and Solitary Vireos in Ontario: 1. Introduction and Behaviour of Unmated Males

by

Ross D. James

Introduction

I began studying Yellow-throated Vireos (*Vireo flavifrons*) in the summer of 1966 as I pursued graduate studies at the University of Toronto. The project expanded to include the comparative behaviour of Solitary Vireos (*V. solitarius*) in 1969 (James 1973). One or both of these species were the objects of varying amounts of field work until 1979. Several papers were published detailing some of the behaviour of these vireos and others are in preparation, but many observations pertaining to aspects of their life histories have remained in field notes.

My interest in Yellow-throated Vireos was recently rekindled when asked to coauthor the life history account for the Birds of North America project (Rodewald and James, in prep.). But, even those accounts are limited in what can be included. Several articles should nicely complement and expand upon aspects of the lives of these vireos.

At first glance, Solitary and Yellow-throated Vireos might seem very different. However, they are similar in size and bill proportions and both have prominent "spectacles" and wing bars. If one added a lot more yellowish coloration to a Solitary Vireo it would be relatively easy to transform it to the other species. Both species have always been considered closely related, were placed together in systematic listings,

and even placed in a separate subgenus (*Lanivireo*) by themselves (Hamilton 1958, American Ornithologists' Union 1957). In studying these two species, it became very apparent that many aspects of their life histories and behaviour were similar. It seems appropriate to consider them together here.

Yellow-throated Vireos occupy the deciduous forests of eastern North America, reaching their northern limits in southern Ontario. They are by no means common in Ontario, and are unfamiliar to many. They are found mainly where extensive areas of deciduous forest remain, such as along the Niagara Escarpment or near the southern edges of the Precambrian Shield (James 1987). The observations on this species come largely from Ontario; some additional field work was done in northwestern Pennsylvania, with minor observations elsewhere in eastern North America.

Solitary Vireos nest across Canada and in the highlands of eastern and western North America, south into Central America. It is the only vireo to make considerable use of coniferous forests (Hamilton 1962) in Canada and elsewhere, but is also found in mixed coniferous/deciduous forests, and even pure deciduous woodland in some places to the south of us (James 1979). In Ontario, they nest through much of the Boreal and Great Lakes/St.

Lawrence forests, with relatively few south of the Muskoka/Haliburton latitude.

Because of habitat and distributional differences, there is little chance of contact between the two species here. In the eastern United States, there is considerably more opportunity for them to be found nesting close together, possibly even in adjacent territories. Most, however, are still separated by elevational differences or habitat preferences (James 1979).

Most observations on Solitary Vireos were made in Muskoka District, Ontario, but I also observed them in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, as well as a few times in other places in northern Ontario, Arizona, Texas, and Belize.

Spring arrival

Although reported as early as late April in Ontario, most Yellow-throated Vireos arrive in the last two thirds of May. As population densities are typically low, some males may still be wandering in search of a mate through much or even all of June. Despite moving farther north to nest, Solitary Vireos arrive one to two weeks earlier on average than their southern neighbours. Early arrivals may appear by about mid April, with large numbers by early May. Most seem to have paired and started nesting within a relatively short period during the second two weeks of May. A few may not find mates until early June.

In both species, males arrive and settle in an area before they find a mate. However, some females follow close behind, such that some pairs are mated with nests well under way before other males have arrived and settled on a territory.

Territories

Unmated males of either species, usually not encumbered by close neighbours, may wander as far as 0.8 km over several days and easily to half that distance on any one day. Probably they would not range nearly as far if population densities were high. They generally stay in the tops of the tallest trees, singing persistently while foraging. Five to ten minutes may pass before they fly to another tree. Once mated, they seldom seem to range more than 100 m from a nest, if surrounded by appropriate habitat. They will range farther if habitat is more linear or irregular.

Solitary Vireos usually seem very aptly named, for there can be considerable distance between pairs and seldom any rivalry between pairs. But Yellow-throated Vireos were much the same and because of the low densities, I seldom saw territorial disputes in either species. At the approach of a neighbouring male, there may be no chasing at all, only continued or resumed singing until the other moves away. But if any bird comes close to a nest, it will be chased away quickly. Chases are typically silent and the chasing bird has its body feathers well spread out to the sides between actual chases (see Figure 1). At least a few notes of song or other calls will invariably be heard from the territory defender when the chase is over.

Once nesting is under way among all birds, territorial defense is almost nonexistent. The ranging over larger areas when unmated, followed by a decrease in area used after pairing, further lessens conflict in an already sparse population with much apparently suitable habitat unsettled.

In one instance involving Solitary Vireos, I observed a mated pair of birds defending a territory. This pair, with an already completed nest, was drawn to the edge of their territory by a singing bird that I had been watching as an unmated male. After the pair chased the male out, another silent bird was seen being chased by both members of this pair. This silent bird soon flew over to the territory where the unmated male was singing, and I shortly observed that male displaying to this silent bird, and after a brief interval, commencing nest building activities, accompanied by this

now obviously female bird. This indicates rather clearly, not only that both members of a pair may defend the territory, but also that monogamy is definitely the mating system here, as previously indicated for both these species (Verner and Willson 1969).

Behaviour of unmated males

Unmated males of both species tend to sing continually throughout the day at a fairly rapid rate of about one song every two seconds (James 1978). The persistence and speed of singing will wane gradually if they remain unmated

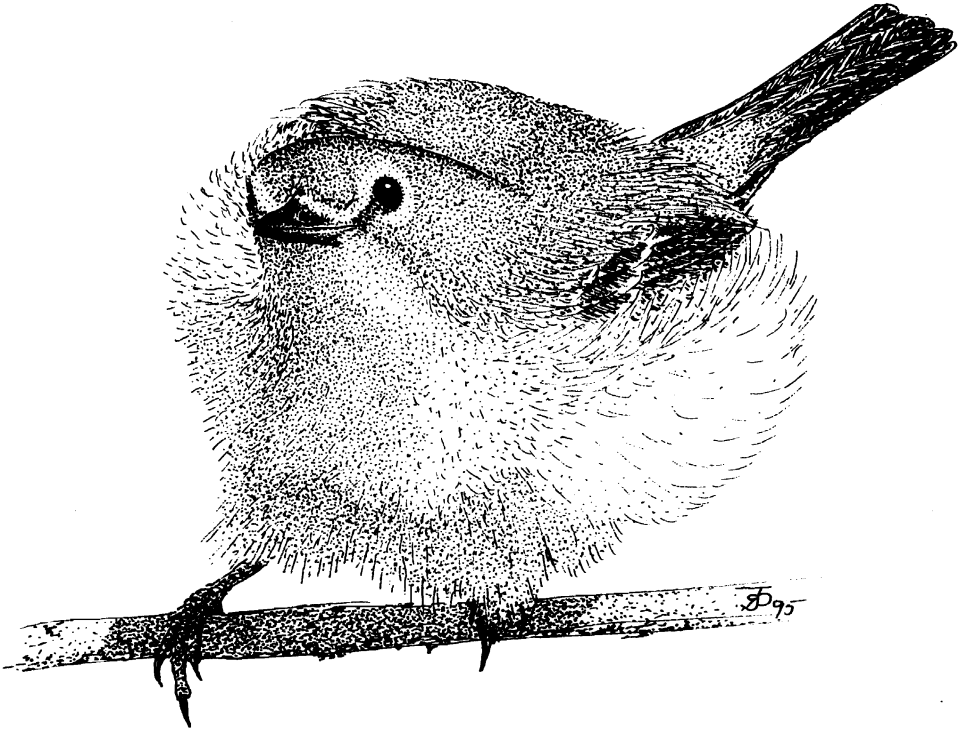


Figure 1: Drawn from a slide of a Yellow-throated Vireo responding to a tape recording of its own song, this shows the body feathers ruffled all around, causing the bird to appear much larger. This I have referred to elsewhere as a *moderate-intensity spread*. A *low-intensity spread* involves head feathers only, and a *high-intensity spread* ruffles both head and body feathers. The tail is never fanned at such times.

for a long period. They sing mainly high in trees where sound is likely to carry farther.

Yellow-throated Vireos tend to remain high in trees all the time and it is difficult to see clearly what they may be doing other than foraging. But, certainly some, and probably all males, will spend some time looking for nest sites (James 1978). Solitary Vireo males also search for nest sites when unmated, but because they nest closer to the ground, it is usually more apparent when they change activities and come lower in the forest to look for sites. Males of both species, when they have found a possible crotch, will become silent for a while, examining it closely. They hop from side to side, or in and out along the twig, and rotate their bodies side to side while their heads are down where they can see the site clearly.

After each examination, they suddenly begin to sing more quickly than normal and intersperse their song with other calls such as trills and *cheee*'s. These calling bouts last only a few seconds before the bird flies off to resume foraging and singing at the more usual rate.

Within a day or two it is apparent that sites have been chosen, as males return to them periodically to re-examine them and call there. They may also begin to carry some nest material and start to build a nest (James 1978). In the case of Yellow-throated Vireos, males typically seem to have three or four sites chosen. Only one may get any nest material, or if two or three get some, one gets more than the others. But, all three or four sites will be visited from time to time, although again one is usually favoured with more visits than the rest.

For Solitary Vireo males, there appear to be fewer sites chosen (but my sample size is small for either species). They usually choose one site and start to build there. One male, however, definitely visited two sites fairly regularly while concentrating on one. However, in both species only the barest minimum amount of material is added, so that the site with the most would not even be evident if it were not for the actions of the males at these sites.

The nest sites of Solitary Vireos, if there are more than one, are usually fairly close together, within 10 to 30 m of each other. Yellow-throated Vireos spread them somewhat more, perhaps within 75 m of each other. All nest material can be added quickly, even within a few hours of one day. If the male still does not have a mate by this time, he generally does not add any more material. But, in the succeeding days he continues to visit the sites periodically, examines them again, pulls at a bit of nest material if there is any, and gives bursts of songs and calls.

Some males of both species, however, do not appear to start nests. They may return to particular trees many times and probably are looking at sites there, but will not carry any material as far as can be seen. Some do not even appear to visit particular trees, but just wherever they happen to be in the territory, they give a burst of fast song and calls, probably at a place that might serve as a nest site. The persistent singing most of the time, and the bursts of calling, rather clearly indicate that the male is unmated whether at a nest site or not. But, the behaviour of males once a female appears, clearly suggests that most, if not all, have preselected at least one site. It is just very difficult to follow

some birds closely enough to be certain whether they have not selected, or just not revealed, the locations by starting to build or by returning repeatedly to a particular place. Some males are quite sensitive to watching, and one even gave alarm calls when I tried to follow.

Discussion

There are relatively few detailed studies of the behaviour of other vireo species, and details of unmated male behaviour are scanty at best. Territorial patrolling while singing persistently is common behaviour in many vireos, as well as many other passerine birds. However, in only one other species of vireo so far studied is there any indication that nest building by unmated males is to be found.

Male Black-capped Vireos (*V. atricapillus*) also begin a nest prior to pairing (Graber 1961). As will be seen (more in a succeeding article), the preselected nests are of importance in Solitary and Yellow-throated Vireos once a female arrives. The significance to male Black-capped Vireos is unknown at present. However, it is another vireo with prominent "spectacles" and wing bars and additional study will likely reveal a similar function as in these two species.

Acknowledgements

Financial support for studies of these vireos came in part from the National Research Council of Canada in grants to J.C. Barlow, in part from the Royal Ontario Museum, and in part from my own pocket. The greatest appreciation goes out to the countless vireos that tolerated my peering into their lives.

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Ross D. James, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6.

Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1995

by
Robert Z. Dobos

Introduction

This is the 14th annual report of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The members of the Committee in 1995 were Margaret Bain, Robert Curry (Chairperson), Robert Dobos (Secretary), Ross James, Kevin McLaughlin, Dennis Rupert, Donald Sutherland and Alan Wormington. Ross James also serves as Museum Liaison to the OBRC.

Approximately 160 records were reviewed during 1995. Of these, 124 were accepted, for an acceptance rate of about 78 percent. Four species were accepted and added to the Ontario bird checklist: White-faced Ibis, Prairie Falcon, Black-tailed Godwit and Varied Bunting. Another species, Spotted Towhee, is retroactively added to the list as a result of taxonomic changes made by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) (see below). The official Ontario list now stands at 465 species. Added to the list for northern Ontario are Brown Pelican, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker and Painted Bunting. No new provincial breeding species were added in 1995.

OBRC records are archived at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Researchers and other interested persons may examine filed reports and Committee decisions at the ROM by appointment. Please contact Brad Millen, Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6, or call 416-586-5519.

Listing of Records

The format of this report follows that used in previous annual reports. Accepted records are listed by their English and scientific names following the AOU Check-list (1983) and its supplements to date, except Ross's Goose and Ross's Gull. Following the names, a binomial numbering system appears. The first number indicates the total number of accepted records (by the OBRC) prior to 1 January 1982 (the formation of the OBRC); the second is the total number of accepted records from 1982 to 1995 (including those listed in this report). An asterisk in place of the first number indicates that documentation was not required for the occurrence of these species prior to 1982.

Date(s) of occurrence, number of birds, sex, plumage, age and location(s) are provided when known. Counties, Districts and Regional Municipalities are shown in italics. All contributors of documentation are listed. Contributors who were known to be the finders of the bird are underlined. Finders who did not submit a report are also listed when known.

Every effort has been made to verify information published regarding a record; however, it is inevitable that some inaccuracies may still exist. We would welcome any corrections or updates to make these records more exact. Where dates or other details listed here differ from those quoted in other published sources (for example,

Birders Journal or *Audubon Field Notes*), we have used the most accurate available information.

All records that were not accepted because of uncertain identification or origin are listed separately. Submitters of all "not accepted" reports receive a letter from the Chairperson explaining the reasons for the decision, along with copies of the comments of the voting members. These reports are also kept on permanent file at the ROM. A "not accepted" record can be reconsidered by the OBRC only if new evidence is submitted to the Committee for review.

AOU Changes

As a result of taxonomic and nomenclatural changes published in the "Fortieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds" (AOU 1995), a number of changes to the bird checklist for Ontario have occurred. Changes to the English names are: American Swallow-tailed Kite becomes Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*); and, Common Black-headed Gull becomes Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*). Scientific name changes include: Great Egret, to *Ardea alba*; and, American Golden-Plover, to *Pluvialis dominicus*. As the result of a taxonomic revision, the subspecies of Sharp-tailed Sparrow which occur in Ontario are now in the species Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*).

Rufous-sided Towhee has been split into Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), common through much of southern Ontario, and the western Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*). The OBRC has previously accepted records of Spotted Towhee

from northern Ontario. These accepted records are: one female, 10-17 November 1990, Silver Islet, *Thunder Bay* (Curry 1991); and, one male, 27 October - 3 November 1984, Atikokan, *Rainy River* (Wormington 1986). Thus, Spotted Towhee can be added to the Ontario checklist on this basis. The OBRC would like to continue to receive reports of Spotted Towhee from both southern and northern Ontario for review.

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*) has been elevated to the rank of species distinct from Gray-cheeked Thrush (*C. minimus*). There are reported to be sightings and specimens attributed to this species for Ontario (Pittaway 1996); however, these will require review and acceptance by the OBRC before this species can be added to the Ontario list. The Committee expects to review some of these reports during 1996.

Northern Oriole has been split into Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*), common through much of the south of Ontario, and Bullock's Oriole (*I. bullockii*). There are reported to be records of Bullock's Oriole for Ontario (James 1991); however, these will also require review and acceptance by the OBRC before being added to the official checklist. We encourage the submission of documentation for any past and future sightings of this species to the OBRC for review.

Acknowledgements

The OBRC would like to thank the many observers who submitted reports, photographs and sketches in 1995. The following people are also thanked either for soliciting and forwarding reports

from others or assisting the Committee in other ways: Pamela Burns, Allen Chartier, Glenn Coady, Ed Czerwinski, Willie D'Anna, Dave Elder, Nick Escott, Dave Fidler, Jean Griffin, Leo Heyens, Tom Hince, Karl Konze, E.R. MacDonald, Jon McCracken, Sheldon McGregor, Ron Pittaway, Paul Pratt, Paul Prior, Jack Reinoehl, Ron Ridout, Kayo Roy, Doug Sadler, Gerry Shemilt, Roy Smith, and Allen Woodliffe. I would also like to thank the 1995 OBRC members for their assistance and cooperation throughout the past year, and for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this report.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory of Dennis Rupert who, sadly, passed away on 8 August 1996. Dennis had served three terms on the OBRC, from 1984-86, 1989-91 and 1993-95, and was Chairperson in 1986. He was also the Quebec-Ontario Christmas Bird Count Regional Editor for *Audubon Field Notes*. A long time birder, he was the discoverer of many significant rarities in southwestern Ontario over the past several decades (e.g., Lewis's Woodpecker, White Ibis, Magnificent Frigatebird, Ross's Gull). Dennis will be sorely missed by the birding community.

Accepted Records

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* South Only (3/13)

1995 - one winter adult, 11 November, Niagara Falls, *Niagara* (Steve Kelling, also found by Tom Nix, Jeff Wells).

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (0/8)

1995 - one, 16 April, Whitby, *Durham* (Rayfield Pye, Margaret J.C. Bain, Alfred L. Adamo).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (2/13)

1994 - one juvenile, 30 December, Dundas Marsh, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (James Heslop).

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* (0/1)

1994 - one adult, 16 June, Schumacher, *Cochrane* (Richard Moore, Barbara Riordan, also found by Walter Cheguis).

- one adult, 15-18 July, Devil Lake, *Frontenac* (Peter Griffin) - photo on file.

The Schumacher report establishes the first record for northern Ontario. Coincidentally, two American White Pelicans (*P. erythrorhynchos*) were also present at this site at the same time.

The 1994 OBRC annual report lists four separate occurrences of an adult Brown Pelican in 1994, although the possibility of these reports pertaining to a single bird is discussed (Pittaway 1995). An update to one of those occurrences based on recent evidence reviewed by the Committee, is provided later in this report under the "Updates/ Corrections" section. The two occurrences listed above fit into a pattern with the other occurrences resulting in no overlap of dates for those records. Additional sightings of Brown Pelican in Ontario during the summer of

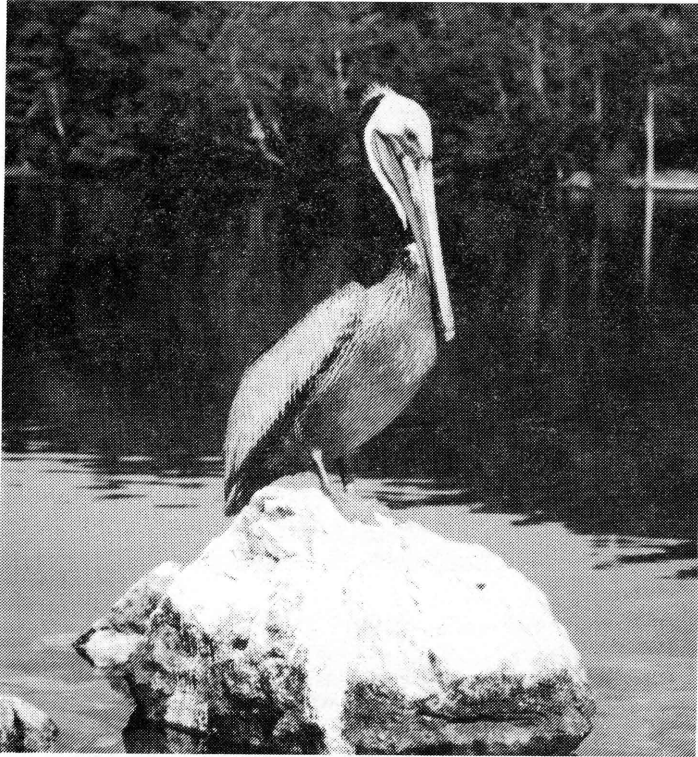


Figure1: Brown Pelican at Devil Lake, *Frontenac* from 15 to 18 July 1994.
Photo by *Peter Griffin*.

1994 which have not yet been documented for the OBRC are mentioned by Ridout (1994). Also, an adult bird was present at Point Mouillee State Game Area, Michigan, at the west end of Lake Erie on 5-11 June 1994 (Chu 1995), which again fits nicely into this pattern. Given that this large, conspicuous species is capable of covering large distances in a short time, a single bird is presumed to have been responsible for all of these sightings, and no evidence has come forward to suggest otherwise. Therefore, although the occurrences in 1994 will be listed separately for convenience of reporting, the Committee will consider these to pertain to a single bird, and thus there is only one accepted record of Brown Pelican for Ontario up to this date. The Committee would appreciate any further documentation on additional sightings to help clarify the picture. Known sightings in 1994 for which documentation has not been received include those at Hamilton Harbour (*Hamilton-Wentworth*), Grand Bend (*Lambton/Huron*), Kamaniskeg Lake (*Hastings*) and Sharbot Lake (*Frontenac*). An older photographic record from the Niagara River in 1971 (James 1991) has yet to be considered by the Committee.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* North Only (2/6)

1995 - one, 20 August, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, found by Tom Tough) - photos on file.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* North Only Until 1991 (1/20)

1995 - one adult, 13 May, Gros Cap, *Algoma* (C. Anthony Walker, also found by James Evans and Ray Garreau).

- two adults, 14 May, Turkey Point, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Ron C. Ridout, also found by Anne Marie Ridout, Robert Bateman).

- one, 18 May, Port Lambton, *Lambton* (Blake A. Mann).

1994 - one adult, 26 May, Port Royal, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Ron C. Ridout).

1993 - one adult, 10 May, Scarborough, *Metropolitan Toronto* (Gareth Watkins, also found by Carol Watkins).

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* (7/24)

1995 - one adult, 13 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Kent* (Tony F.M. Beck).

1994 - one juvenile, 19 July, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Robert H. Hall-Brooks).

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* (2/17)

1995 - one adult, 22 April, Oshawa, *Durham* (Matthew L. Holder, also found by Robert Nisbet, Michelle Meloche).

This is the earliest accepted record for Ontario.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* (5/21)

1995 - one adult, 11 May, Bruce Lake, *Muskoka* (Dan Burton, found by Russ Harvey, Peggy Harvey) - photo on file.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (2/20)

1995 - one, 12 May, Nanticoke, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (H. Michael Street).

- one adult, 15-17 May and 10-14 June (not observed between these periods), Port Perry, *Durham* (Winnie Yung, Margaret J.C. Bain, David Worthington, Brian Henshaw) - photo on file.

- one adult, 19 and 28 September (not observed between these dates), Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Barry Cherie, Kevin A. McLaughlin, also found by Peter Thoem, Robert L. Waldhuber) - photo on file.

Ibis species *Plegadis sp.* (3/20)

1995 - two, 13 May, Long Point Provincial Park (Old Cut), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Ron C. Ridout, also found by Anne Marie Ridout, Audrey E. Heagey).

- one, 17 September, Toronto, *Metropolitan Toronto* (David D. Beadle).

- one, 1 October, Rondeau Park (townsite), *Kent* (William J. McKitterick).

1993 - two, 12 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (William G. Lamond).

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (0/2)

1995 - one first summer, 20-21 July, Darlington Nuclear Generating Station (20-21 July), and Bowmanville (21 July), *Durham* (Rayfield Pye, Brian Henshaw, Margaret J.C. Bain, Michael Tate) - photos on file.

- one adult, 21 September, Etobicoke, *Metropolitan Toronto* (James P. Coey, found by Michael DeLorey).

These are the first and second records for Ontario of this long overdue species. Based on plumage differences, it would appear that these two observations involved different birds. The diagnostic red eye colour was clearly noted in both occurrences.

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* South Only (2/39)

- 1995 - 15 *frontalis* (adults + 3-4 immatures), 18 February - 8 March, Hamilton Harbour, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Kevin A. McLaughlin).
 - one immature *frontalis*, 26 February - 11 March, Hamilton Harbour, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Kevin A. McLaughlin).
 - 36, 15 April, Kentvale, *Algoma* (Edward Czerwinski, C. Anthony Walker) - photos on file.
- 1994 - one immature *frontalis*, 19-22 March, Port Royal, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Ron C. Ridout).
- 1993 - two adults, 28-29 November, Point Pelee National Park (28 November) and Kingsville (29 November), *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

1995 was a banner year for this species in Ontario, with many reported sightings not yet reviewed by the OBRC. The 15 birds at Windermere Basin, Hamilton Harbour, on 18 February 1995 are the earliest spring migrants for the province to date. This flock was joined for a period by another bird, which remained a few days longer after the flock had departed. The flock of 36 birds on 15 April 1995 near Kentvale on St. Joseph Island is the largest group of Greater White-fronted Geese found in southern Ontario so far.

The Prairie subspecies (*frontalis*) is the more expected subspecies in Ontario. The Greenland race (*flavirostris*) should be identified with caution. As noted by Wormington (pers. comm.), immature *frontalis* can cause some confusion in field identifications during spring migration, since its bill colour may appear to be either pinkish or orange at this time of year. Only very well-described birds are assigned to subspecies in this report.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii* South Only (0/9)

- 1995 - one adult white morph, 15-21 March, Sault Ste. Marie, *Algoma* (Edward Czerwinski, Sam Rosa, James Evans, C. Anthony Walker) - photos on file.
 - one adult white morph, 15 April, Kentvale, *Algoma* (Edward Czerwinski, C. Anthony Walker).
 - one immature white morph, 19-25 November, Sarnia, *Lambton* (Dennis F. Rupert, also found by Sarah Rupert) - photo on file.
- 1994 - one adult white morph, 1-3 December, Sarnia, *Lambton* (Dennis F. Rupert, found by Hank Neinhuis) - photo on file.

The bird at Sault Ste. Marie in March 1995 was accompanied by a second white morph goose which was suspected by the Committee to be a hybrid Snow x Ross's goose based on photographic evidence.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* (0/3)

- 1995 - one male, 6-10 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (L. Keith Johnson, Pamella Johnson, Nicholas G. Escott, Douglas J. Graham).

This is the third record for the province, and the first for northern Ontario. All records have involved spring migrants.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* (0/10)

- 1995 - one adult male, 2-3 May, Listowel, *Perth* (Don Dowden, Robert E. Copeland).

This bird was accompanied by a female teal which, however, was not observed well enough by the observers to determine species.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (0/15)

- 1995 - one female, 8 January - 16 April, Hamilton Harbour (8 January, 4 February and 7-16 April) and Winona (5-7 March), *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Curry, also found by John L. Olmsted).
- one male, 21-28 January, Sombra, *Lambton* (Dennis F. Rupert) - photo on file.
 - two males, 3-22 April, Hamilton Harbour, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (John Hannah, also found by Sue Walton).
 - one male, 7-29 October, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, found by Geoff Gooding).

The Thunder Bay bird is the first record of this species for northern Ontario.

Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* South Only (2/8)

- 1995 - one "adult" male, 3-4 June, Fifty Point Conservation Area, *Niagara* (Kevin A. McLaughlin).
- 1994 - one first winter male, 1 November, Van Wagners Beach, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (Robert Z. Dobos).

There has been a dramatic increase in records of this species in recent years, mostly from the west end of Lake Ontario. These birds have been associated with the thousands of other sea ducks commensurate with the zebra mussel explosion in the lower Great Lakes. The population of origin of these birds (i.e., Atlantic coast or Arctic/Hudson Bay) is open to conjecture, as views obtained in the field have precluded individuals being assigned to subspecies.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* North Only (0/15)

- 1995 - two, 20 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by A. David Brewer).
- 1994 - one female or immature male, 15 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David P. Boyle).
- one female or immature male, 28 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David P. Boyle, also found by David Shepherd).
 - one female or immature male, 11 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David Shepherd, also found by Nancy Parish).
 - one female or immature male (different bird from above), 11 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David Shepherd, also found by Nancy Parish).

This species is proving to be a regular migrant at Thunder Cape on Lake Superior.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* (1/7)

- 1995 - one, 24-27 May and 7 June (not observed between these periods), Walsingham (24-27 May) and Long Point Tip (7 June), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Ron C. Ridout, Steve Ogle, Leo J.R. Boon, found by Rick Bell) - photo on file.

Although about 40 km distant and 10 days apart, the bird photographed at the tip of Long Point was considered to be the same one that had lingered previously at the Wilson Tract area near Walsingham.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (8/22)

- 1995 - one juvenile light morph, 9 September, Port Stanley, *Elgin* (Barry Cheriére, also found by Tom Bolohan, Ross Tucker, Su Ross).
- one adult light morph, 23 September, Toronto, *Metropolitan Toronto* (Norman C. Murr, Hugh G. Currie, also found by Jim Griffith).

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis* (0/4)

- 1995 - one immature (one year old) light morph, 21 May, Gore Bay, *Manitoulin* (Ronald R. Tasker, also found by Mary Tasker).

This is the fourth accepted record for Ontario, all since 1990. All of these have been spring records, ranging from 17 March - 21 May; three of the four have involved immature birds.

Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus* (0/1)

1995 - one, 19 April, Beamer Memorial Conservation Area, *Niagara* (Roy E.C. Baker, Jerry H. Guild, Michael H. King, Terry Osborne, David Worthington, also found by George A. Meyers, James Fairchild, Jack Ryan).

This represents the first accepted record for Ontario. The bird was well seen by the hawk counters at the Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch, who observed it fly in and land nearby with a meadowlark in its talons! There was no compelling evidence to suggest that the bird was not of wild origin.

Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis* (1/2)

1958 - one, 17 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Harold H. Axtell, also found by Rachel C. Axtell).

This is the third record for the province accepted by the OBRC, but predates the other two by almost 30 years. The supporting description by Axtell of the distinctive calls of this bird, which were heard repeatedly, was deemed by the Committee to be adequate documentation for this occurrence. A number of earlier, apparently undocumented sight records are cited by James (1991).

Purple Gallinule *Porphyryula martinica* (4/4)

1995 - one juvenile male, 4 October, Scarborough, *Metropolitan Toronto* (Elizabeth Kellogg, collected by Niki Panagakos) - photos on file, specimen (skin) in ROM (#159600).

This unfortunate bird was picked up in a weakened condition in an urban backyard, and brought to a rehabilitator, where it was photographed, and later put down. This record represents the earliest accepted fall date.



Figure 2: Juvenile Purple Gallinule picked up in weakened condition at Scarborough, *Metropolitan Toronto* on 4 October 1995. Photo by Elizabeth Kellogg.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* South Only (1/31)

1994 - one adult, 21-24 April, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (Steven M. LaForest, found by Maruis Teeuw, Don Tyerman, Kathy Nicholl).

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* (7/41)

1995 - six adults, 19 April, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Mary Lou Chomyshyn).

- one, 5 August, Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Jochen Dierschke).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (0/1)

1995 - one juvenile, 10 September, Port Perry, *Durham* (A. Geoffrey Carpentier, Anders Brodin, Roy B.H. Smith, Hugh G. Currie, David Worthington, Patrick Stepien-Scanlon, Michael H. King).

This is a first record for Ontario, well documented by multiple observers who noted (amongst other features) the diagnostic white underwing linings. At Port Perry, the bird was seen at both the Nonquon Sewage Lagoons and the Lake Scugog causeway.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* North Only (0/2)

1994 - one, 13 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David P. Boyle, also found by J. Brian, Alex Escott, A. Pearson, J. Saunders, David Shepherd).

- one juvenile, 20 August, Sable Island, *Rainy River* (Donald S. Graham, also found by David H. Elder).

These are the first two records accepted for northern Ontario. There are very few other observations known for this region.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (0/17)

1995 - one adult, 5 August, Whitby, *Durham* (Margaret J.C. Bain, also found by Alf Lisk).



Figure 3: Adult Ross's Gull at Port Weller, *Niagara* on 26 February to 1 March 1995. Photo by *Kayo J. Roy*.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (0/5)

1995 - one adult, 26 February - 1 March, Port Weller, *Niagara* (David J. Milsom, Kayo J. Roy, Craig S. McLaughlan, also found by Roy E.C. Baker) - photos on file.

1994 - one winter adult, 18 December, Port Weller, *Niagara* (Robert Z. Dobos, Barbara N. Charlton, Kevin A. McLaughlin) - specimen (feathers) in ROM (#159517).

These are the fourth and fifth records for Ontario (all since 1983). The 18 December 1994 bird was found during a Christmas Bird Count. The discoverers watched it go to roost at dusk on the shoreline, where it remained past dark. The next morning, birders searching for it found only its remains where it went to roost, mostly a pile of pink feathers! Tracks in the sand next to it indicated that a Great Horned Owl had made a meal of this Arctic wanderer, to the dismay of many birders. Incredibly, another Ross's Gull was found at precisely the same location only two months later, and was added as a lifer or Ontario bird by many who saw it during its four-day stay. Ross's Gulls also present in the northeast during the winter of 1994-95 were at: Montreal, Quebec, 1-11 December (Aubry and Bannon 1995); Cape Vincent, New York (at the head of the St. Lawrence River), 4 January 1995; and Lake Cayuga, New York, 13 January 1995 (Paxton et al. 1995).



Figure 4: First winter Ivory Gull on the St. Clair River at Courtright, *Lambton* 23-26 December 1995. Photo by *James N. Flynn*.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (15/6)

1995 - one first winter, 12-19 November, Lake Dore, *Renfrew* (Michael Tate, Kayo J. Roy, found by M. Flugel, K. Hooles) - photos on file.

- one first winter, 23-26 December, Courtright, *Lambton* (Blake A. Mann, James N. Flynn, Ignaz Wanders) - photos on file.

These are the first records for Ontario since 1990. Photos indicate that different birds were involved in these two sightings.

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* (1/2)

1995 - one first winter, 4-7 November, Sweets Corners, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (John B. Miles, William C. D'Anna, Kayo J. Roy, also found by C. Ann Miles, Mark Cranford, R. Dermer, Joanne Harris) - photo on file.

This is the third accepted record for Ontario. All three have been along the Lake Erie shoreline, which is not surprising considering the number of records on the U.S. side at the west end of the lake (Wormington 1996). This is the first autumn record for the province, and the first involving an immature bird. Interestingly, there were other reports of immature Least Terns during the autumn of 1995 on the lower Great Lakes at Hamlin Beach, New York (west of Rochester) on 25 October, and at Dunkirk Harbour, New York (southwest of Buffalo) on 5 November and early December (Paxton et al. 1996) (not two adults as in Miles (1996)). It is likely that this flurry of late fall 1995 records was the consequence of hurricane Opal which skirted the lower Great Lakes on 5-6 October.

Band-tailed Pigeon *Columba fasciata* (3/3)

1995 - one, 25 April, Kenora, *Kenora* (Eva Baier).

This is the sixth accepted record for Ontario, all occurring during fall migration. James et al. (1976) list at least three other fall records not yet reviewed by the Committee.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* (2/3)

1995 - one immature, 16 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, Nicholas G. Escott, also found by Marek Klich, David Okines, Kathy Palko) - photos on file.

This is the fifth record for Ontario. This bird was trapped and banded by Thunder Cape Bird Observatory (TCBO).



Figure 5: Immature White-winged Dove trapped and banded at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* 16 August 1995. Photo by *Nicholas G. Escott*.

Burrowing Owl *Speotyto cunicularia* (0/5)

1995 - one, 13 May, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Nicholas G. Escott, found by Ken Bishop, Ellen Bishop) - photo on file.

This bird was found and captured in an urban yard in Thunder Bay. It was in good condition, and was flown to Manitoba where it was released (Escott 1995). This is the fifth accepted record by the OBRC, although several older records (James 1991) have not been reviewed.

Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* (*/5)

1994 - two (probable territorial pair), 14-21 May (male), 21 May (female), Rondeau Provincial Park, *Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe, Robert Dawson) - photo on file.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (2/9)

1995 - one female, *circa* mid-September to 30 October, Oakville, *Halton* (T. Sysiuk) - specimen (skin) at ROM (#159603).

Lewis's Woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis* (1/1)

1995 - one, *circa* 15-25 May, Englehart, *Timiskaming* (Valerie Piotrowski) - photos on file.

1972/73 - one, 27 October and 6 February-10 March (not observed between these periods), Point Pelee National Park (27 October) and Windsor (6 February-10 March), *Essex* (Dennis F. Rupert, Alan J. Ryff, James W. Wilson, Alan Wormington) - photos on file.

These constitute the second and third records for Ontario. The Point Pelee and Windsor occurrences are considered by the Committee to pertain to the same bird, especially since these were the only known occurrences of this species in eastern North America during the winter of 1972-73. The first Ontario record was one at Langtry's Bridge (near Emo), *Rainy River*, on 27 May 1934 observed by Edgar Sullivan (Snyder 1938). This is generally considered to be a valid record; however, since no description exists of this bird, it cannot be reviewed by the OBRC. Thus there are only two accepted records by the OBRC to date as indicated in the numeric summary above.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* (1/6)

1994/95 - one, 24 November-13 January, Cressy Marsh, *Prince Edward* (Steven M. LaForest, Alan Wormington, found by I. Ferguson, M. Ferguson) - photos on file.

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* (8/56)

1995 - one, 10 May, Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior).

- one, 31 May, Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Graeme Gibson, also found by Leo J.R. Boon, Richard Groves, Susan Gustafson, Patricia N. Lent, Steven R. Ogle).

- one, 3 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by Brian E. Dalzell, David Okines).

- one, 7 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by Brian E. Dalzell, Marek Klich, Kathy Palko).

- one, 7 September, Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

1994 - one, 28 September, Marathon, *Thunder Bay* (Keith D. Wade).

- one, 1-2 October, Shebeshkong, *Parry Sound* (Jean M. Niskanen, also found by Ted Coulter).

The bird at Long Point on 10 May 1995 is the earliest spring record for Ontario.

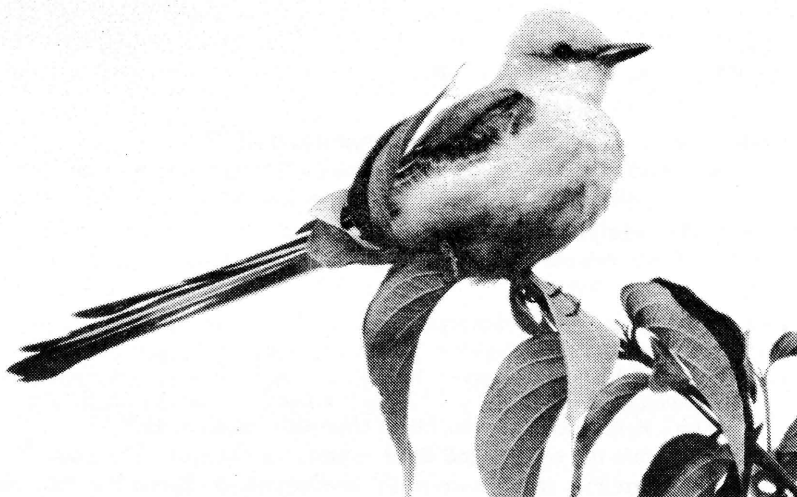


Figure 6: Adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* from 12 September to 15 October 1995. Photo by Alan Wormington.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (3/32)

- 1995 - one, 13 May, Tobermory, *Bruce* (Carole Capling) - photo on file.
 - one, 15 May, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Sheldon McGregor, also found by Julia McGregor).
 - one, 26 May, Copetown, *Hamilton-Wentworth* (David G. Wilson, also found by John Jesseau).
 - one adult, 7-10 July, Walsingham, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Stephane Bonneville, Jamie Fenneman, Greg Kubica, Stuart Mackenzie, Matthew Mills, Gavin C. Platt, Peter S. Burke Kayo J. Roy, found by Peter Carson) - photo on file.
 - one adult, 12 September-15 October, Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* (Thomas P. Hurst, Alan Wormington) - photos on file.
 - one, 12 October, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Kevin Hannah, also found by David Okines, Jul K. Wojnowski).

1995 was an excellent year for this species in Ontario. The July Walsingham bird was found in a rehabilitated prairie habitat recently established on an old tobacco farm, surely a stamp of approval on the quality of this conservation effort from this bird of the open plains!

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* (1/4)

- 1995 - one, 5 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Paul McKenzie, Bill Cowart, also found by Hank Benoit, John Bergstrom, Steve Walter, Laurie Yorke).

This is the fifth accepted record for Ontario. All have been at Point Pelee National Park during spring.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* (0/11)

- 1994 - one, 14 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Kent* (P. Allen Woodliffe).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea* North Only (2/7)

1991 - one immature, 11 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Julie Cappelman) - photo on file.

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* (2/11)

1994 - one male, 30 October, Pass Lake, *Thunder Bay* (Annette van Niejenhuis, also found by Brian Moore) - photos on file.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* (4/23)

1994/95 - one, 26 December - 6 April, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Allan G. Harris) - photos on file.

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius* North Only After 1993 (5/48)

1995 - one female, 2 October, Atikokan, *Rainy River* (Donald S. Graham).

Sightings in southern Ontario after 31 December 1993 no longer require documentation by the OBRC.

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* North Only (0/2)

1994 - one adult, 29 September, Rosspport, *Thunder Bay* (Barbara N. Charlton, Robert Z. Dobos).

This is only the second record for northern Ontario. The first involved an immature at Marathon on 13 October 1986 (Wormington 1987a).

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (2/6)

1994 - one, 18 October, Fifty Point Conservation Area, *Niagara* (Robert Z. Dobos).

This represents the first accepted fall record for Ontario. Interestingly, a Bell's Vireo was also at Cape May, New Jersey on 30 October - 3 November 1994 (Boyle et al. 1995), one of the very few fall records for the northeast.



Figure 7: One female Blue-winged Warbler at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* on 29 May 1992. Photo by *David Shepherd*.

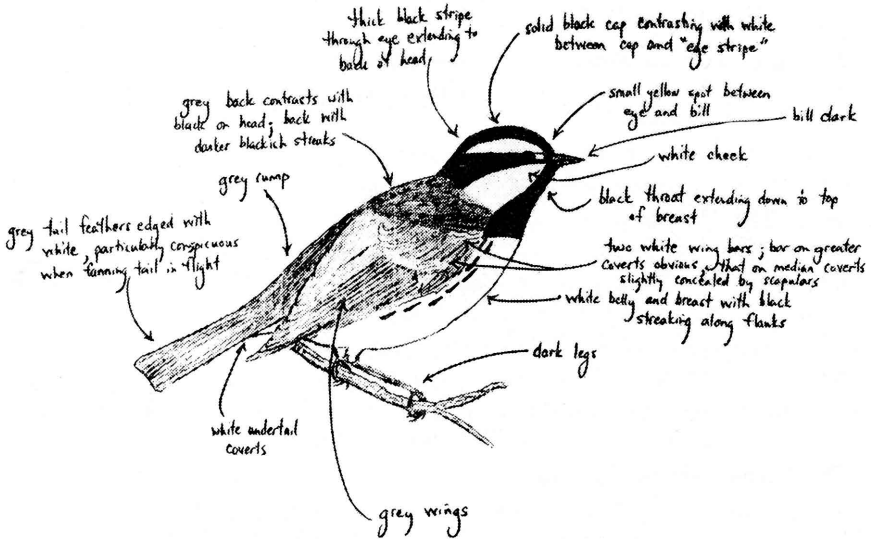


Figure 8: Male Black-throated Gray Warbler at Arkell, Wellington 25-30 April 1995. Drawing by Colin D. Jones.

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus* North Only (1/1)

1992 - one female, 29 May, Thunder Cape, Thunder Bay (David Shepherd) - photo on file.

This bird, the second accepted record for northern Ontario, was banded by TCBO. The other accepted record was on 8 October 1979 at Marathon, but was preceded by an undocumented sighting at Moosonee on 2 October 1979 (Wormington 1987b).

"Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler

Dendroica coronata memorabilis/auduboni (*/3)

1995 - one male, 24 April, Rock Chapel, Hamilton-Wentworth (Robert Curry, found by Brian Pomfret).

Black-throated Gray Warbler *Dendroica nigrescens* (4/4)

1995 - one male, 25-30 April, Arkell, Wellington (Colin D. Jones, Robert Curry, also found by Richard Russell, Kim Simpson).

There are now eight records of this species accepted by the OBRC, plus two undocumented records which were previously summarized (Wormington and Curry 1990). This is the earliest spring record for Ontario.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica* North Only After 1993 (17/58)

1989 - one male, 3 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Marvin S. Smout, also found by Anne Smout, Jim Lafler, Mary Lou Lafler).

The OBRC no longer requires documentation for occurrences of this species in southern Ontario after 31 December 1993.

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* (7/8)

1995 - one female, 21 May, Point Pelee National Park, Essex (Denys R. Gardiner, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Alan Wormington).

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* North Only (0/1)

1993 - one immature female, 26 September, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David Shepherd) - photo on file.

This bird, banded by the TCBO, stands as the only record accepted by the OBRC for northern Ontario. An originally accepted record at Makwa Lake, *Sudbury*, on 1 June 1982 (James 1984) was re-evaluated and subsequently not accepted by the Committee (Wormington 1985). A record for July 1975, northeast of Wawa (Baxter 1985), has yet to be reviewed.

Swainson's Warbler *Limnithlypis swainsonii* (1/4)

1995 - one, 13 May, Rondeau Provincial Park, Kent (Blake A. Mann, Terry Smith, Raymond J. Pershing) - photos on file.

This is the fifth accepted record for Ontario. All of these records have ranged between the dates of May 6-28.

Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens* North Only (2/2)

1993 - one female, 13 September, Point Porphyry, *Thunder Bay* (David Shepherd) - photo on file.

This bird was banded by the TCBO at Point Porphyry on Porphyry Island, and is the fourth accepted record for northern Ontario.



Figure 9: A second year old male Western Tanager banded at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* on 17 May 1995. Photo by *Jul K. Wojnowski*.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* (2/11)

- 1995 - one second year (first alternate) female, 15 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by David Okines, Marek Klich) - photo on file.
- one second year (first alternate) male, 17 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by David Okines, Marek Klich) - photo on file.
 - one, 15 October, Pickering, *Durham* (Matthew L. Holder, Andrea Kingsley).

The two birds at Thunder Cape were mist-netted and banded by TCBO. There was an incredible "invasion" of this species in the upper mid-west during May of 1995, with 18 birds reported in Minnesota, three in Wisconsin, and two in Michigan (Granlund 1995), and an additional three in southeastern Manitoba (Koes and Taylor 1995).

Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* (7/26)

- 1995 - one adult male, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Darlene Friedman)- one male, 20 May, Long Point (Squires Ridge), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Jeffrey Robinson, also found by E. Paul Ashley).
- one male, 21 May, Snug Harbour, *Parry Sound* (Pat Poppleton, also found by Ann Poppleton, Tom Poppleton).
 - one female, 1 June, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Alan Wormington).

1994 - one female, 3 May, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David Shepherd, found by Julie Cappelman).

The bird at Point Pelee on 1 June 1995 is the latest spring migrant for Ontario. The Thunder Cape bird is only the second record for northern Ontario.



Figure 10: A female or immature male Varied Bunting, the first for Ontario and Canada, banded at Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* on 7 May 1995. The curved culmen is noticeable in this photo by *D. Steve Anderson*.

Varied Bunting *Passerina versicolor* (0/1)

1995 - one female or immature male, 7 May, Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior, D. Steve Anderson, also found by Alejandro L. Llanes, Daysi Rodriguez Batista, Barbara Sanchez Oria, Lorraine Brown, Jen Heal) - photos on file.

This remarkable record, of a bird mist-netted and banded by the Long Point Bird Observatory, is a first for Ontario and likely for Canada. A pattern of vagrancy for this species, as summarized by Prior (1995), provides evidence for a wild origin. This includes a record of an adult male collected at Locke, Michigan, on 18 May 1874 (Barrows 1912).

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (2/4)

1995 - one adult male, 12-14 May, Keewatin, *Kenora* (Larry Winslow, Judy Winslow) - photo on file.

This, the sixth accepted record for the province, is a first for northern Ontario.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana* North Only (1/6)

1995 - one female, 6 June, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Brian E. Dalzell, also found by David Okines, Jul K. Wojnowski).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (4/37)

1995 - one, 21 April, Long Point Tip, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (W. Allan Ogden).

- one, 12 May, Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* (Scott Lawson, also found by Lloyd Paul).

- one, 30 August, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (David J.T. Hussell, Jul K. Wojnowski, also found by Christa Beckmann, David Okines).

- one, 12 September, Long Point (Squires Ridge), *Haldimand-Norfolk* (Stephen C. Votier).

1994 - one, 18 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex* (Paul Fast, G. Brock May) - photo on file.



Figure 11: Female Lark Bunting banded at Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* was present from 15 May to 10 June 1995. Photo by Eric A. Machell.

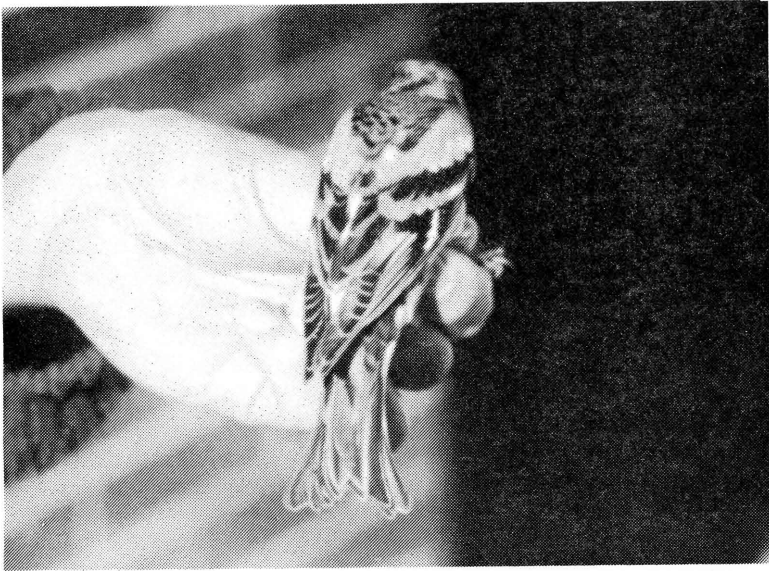


Figure 16: Adult winter male Brambling at Dorland, *Oxford* on 12 November 1993.
Photo by *William G. Lindley*.

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* (3/18)

1995 - one adult female, 15 May - 10 June, Prince Edward Point, *Prince Edward* (Eric A. Machell)
- photos on file.

- one male, 14 June, McGinnis Creek, *Rainy River* (John Van den Broeck, Roger M. Simms).

1994 - one male, 21 May, Forfar, *Leeds and Grenville* (Moreen V. Ready, also found by Lloyd Stone, Ross Stone).

The Prince Edward Point bird was mist-netted and banded.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (1/5)

1993 - one adult winter male, 12 November, Dorland, *Oxford* (James M. Holdsworth, William G. Lindley) - photos on file.

This is the fifth of six records for Ontario. The previously published occurrence at Black River, *Kenora*, 18-20 April 1994 (Pittaway 1995) is the sixth Ontario record. The Dorland bird was found stunned after flying into a window, taken indoors overnight, then released unharmed the next day.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis* (1/4)

1995 - one male *tephrocotis*, 22 January - early March, Sapawe, *Rainy River* (David H. Elder, Donald S. Graham) - photo on file.

This is the fifth accepted record for the province, all in northern Ontario, and the second one present during the winter of 1994-95.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Uncertain

In most reports listed below, the documentation provided was found to be insufficient to establish the identity of the species claimed. In very few cases did the Committee consider that the identification was actually an error. Any of these reports may be resubmitted for further review if new supporting evidence is provided.

- 1995 - Pacific Loon, one, 24 November, Niagara Falls, *Niagara*.
 - Brown Pelican, four, 27 July, Hamilton, *Hamilton-Wentworth*.
 - Greater White-fronted Goose, one, 15 April, Burpee, *Manitoulin*.
 - Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), one, 14 October, Valens, *Hamilton-Wentworth*.
 - Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), one, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Mississippi Kite, one, 15 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), one, 17 May, Hillman Marsh, *Essex*.
 - Curlew Sandpiper, one, 7 October, Point Clark, *Bruce*.
 - Bicknell's Thrush, one, 6 October, Whitby, *Durham*.
 - Bell's Vireo, one, 10 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler, one, 30 April, Whitby, *Durham*.
 - Hermit Warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*), one, 9 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Kirtland's Warbler, one, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Kirtland's Warbler, one, 26 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Kirtland's Warbler, one, 4 September, Long Point Provincial Park (Old Cut), *Haldimand-Norfolk*.
 - Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), one, 10 June, Rondeau Provincial Park, *Kent*.
 - Blue Grosbeak, one, 14 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Blue Grosbeak, one, 22 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Blue Grosbeak, two, 28 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Lark Sparrow, one, 6 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
 - Bullock's Oriole, one, 13 May, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- 1994 - Great Cormorant, one, 27 May, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*.
 - Black Vulture, one, circa 20 May, Millar Creek Conservation Area, *Peterborough*.
 - Swainson's Hawk, one, 3 October, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, *Essex*.
 - Swainson's Hawk, one, 8 December, Port Stanley, *Elgin*.
 - California Gull, one, 7 December, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*.
 - Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), one, 17 November - 7 December, Tobermory, *Bruce*, photos on file.
 - Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, one, 23 April, Point Pelee National Park, *Essex*.
- 1993 - Black Vulture, one, 8 April, Millbrook, *Peterborough*.
 1992 - Black Vulture, one, 7 October, Sheep Island, *Northumberland*.
 1989 - Prairie Falcon, one, 24 August, Holiday Beach Conservation Area, *Essex*.
 1985 - Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*), one, 11 May, Stoney Point, *Essex*.
 - Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), one, 15 September, Holiday Harbour, *Kent*.
- 1973 - Prairie Falcon, one, 6 October, Claremont, *Durham*.
 1962 - Prairie Falcon, one, 30 September, Burlington, *Halton*.

Not Accepted Records

Identification Accepted, Origin Questionable

Records in this category are those considered by the Committee to be likely escaped birds or birds released from captivity. However, as with all submissions to the OBRC, such records may be reviewed at any time should new information arise suggesting a wild origin.

Prairie Falcon

1976 - one, 18 December, Long Point Flats, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (David Broughton, also found by A. David Brewer, Rob Copeland).

There was a known escape of a Prairie Falcon at the Toronto airport shortly before this observation, which raised enough doubt as to the origin of this bird.

Updates/Corrections to Previous OBRC Reports

1994 Report (*Ontario Birds* 13: 46-65)

- under Brown Pelican, 20 July 1994, change to: "18-24 July, Newboro (a.k.a. Clear) Lake, *Leeds and Grenville* (Paul Van Luit, Robert Worona)."
- under Greater White-fronted Goose, 26-27 March 1994, remove: "Kano".
- under Tufted Duck, 26 December 1993, change "Hamilton Bay, Hamilton" to: "Windermere Basin".
- under "Acknowledgements", change: "Leo Heynes" to: "Leo Heyens".

1993 Report (*Ontario Birds* 12: 41-58)

- under Black-throated Gray Warbler, change bracketed numbering to: "(4/3)".

1991 Report (*Ontario Birds* 10: 43-63)

- under Black Vulture (1991), add: "and 15 February...and Hall Glen, *Peterborough*...(Cathy Forgie, also found by Clifford Ballantine)."

1990 Report (*Ontario Birds* 9: 18-44)

- under Rosy Finch, change bracketed numbering to: "(0/1)".
- the following record was omitted from the list of "Unaccepted Records, Identification uncertain": "1990-Black-headed Grosbeak, one, 3-7 November, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay*, photo on file."

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Robert Z. Dobos, 1156 5th Concession Road West,
R.R. 2, Waterdown, Ontario LOR 2H2

Historical Notes from Northern Frontenac County

by

Ross D. James

In the autumn of 1993, I received from Denise Wilkins, Park Naturalist at Bon Echo Provincial Park, a package containing field notes on 8 x 5 inch cards from northern Frontenac County. These notes were compiled by R. (Bob) V. Lindsay, who lived at Arden (44°43'N, 76°56'W) in Frontenac County. Most notes were of his own observations, but he also was in contact with numerous local residents or cottagers who contributed additional information.

He had consulted the diaries of Edwin Beaupre who lived at Sharbot Lake just after the turn of this century. From this source, observations by Beaupre and C.J. Young, some of which were included in Macoun and Macoun (1909), were noted on these cards, mainly from 1902 and 1903. Lindsay's own observations began as early as 1922, although there are very few notes recorded until 1931. He seems to have been most active during the first half of the 1930's. There are no notes of his own between 1935 and 1944 (he had apparently moved to Toronto), but observations resumed in 1945 and continued until 1963, rarely beyond.

From Lindsay's notes, I was able to make out nearly 350 nest record cards for the Ontario Nest Records Scheme (ONRS). In addition to those, I have gleaned a number of observations that are worth making available to a wider audience.

The area of his records was almost entirely confined to the northern part of Frontenac County. Trans Canada Highway 7 runs east-west through three

townships (Kennebec, Olden, Oso) and most of his observations were from these counties, although he made visits to other areas farther north. The original notes from which the following were taken have been deposited in the Archives of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Brown Pelican, *Pelecanus occidentalis*:

On 26 September 1933, he reports watching one for several minutes flying about Big Clear Lake (44°43'N, 76°55'W) beside Arden, apparently looking for food. There seems a reasonable probability that the identity of the bird was correct as he notes the wide expanse of the wings, the neck drawn back, legs not trailing, and the enormous beak among other things. The main concern would be the origin of the bird. Might there have been birds in flying condition in a zoo at that time? Lindsay reports sending a number of species to the Riverdale Zoo in Toronto around this period, including American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*), and Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) as if it were a relatively common practice. I am unaware of a local zoo from which a Brown Pelican might have come. However, they are certainly capable of flying long distances. The species has occurred in Ontario a couple of times in recent years when a less common species than it was then, suggesting it may well have been a wild bird.

Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*: Observations as late as 1963 give no indication of Canada Goose nesting in northern Frontenac County as they are today, with the ever burgeoning populations in southern Ontario.

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*: None were noted in the area in 1935, and a note made in 1950 indicates that it was only "in recent years" that any were to be found nesting in northern Frontenac County.

American Black Duck, *A. rubripes*: It was reported breeding through the period of his observations.

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser*: He found a nest with 9 hatched and one addled egg (a family of 9 young was within a couple of hundred metres) under a large slab of rock on a ledge only 6.5 m from an occupied Peregrine Falcon nest. An old cedar stump, 1.5 m from the merganser nest, was regularly used as a plucking station by the falcons. A few of the old bones left by the falcons had been incorporated into the merganser nest. This was in July 1932 at the northern end of Crow Lake (44°42' N, 76°37' W), at the same eyrie where Beaupre had collected peregrine eggs about 1904 (Beaupre, 1922).

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*: Lindsay considered it to be an accidental visitor in 1935. He was aware of only 2 occurrences, both immediately to the south of his area of interest. However, by 1946 it had become regular, but still scarce, near the Highway 7 corridor where it is a regular sight today.

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*: It was a regular resident in the southern part of the county early in this century

(Weir 1989), but was obviously scattered about the northern part as well, where none was present in the 1980s. Lindsay had reports compiled from various people indicating they had seen nests at Buckshot Lake (45°00' N, 47°04' W), Miller Township (prior to 1960); Norcan Lake (45°10' N, 76°52' W), North Canonto Township (until about 1955); and Kennebec Lake (44°44' N, 76°58' W), Kennebec Township (in the period 1945 to 1947). Observations of birds at Long Schooner Lake (45°06' N, 76°59' W), Miller Township, and "Burle" Lake (Brule - eds.), Miller Township (prior to 1930), suggest it may have nested there. Definite evidence of nesting came from Sharbot Lake (44°46' N, 76°41' W) where a nest was reported in 1903 (Young 1904); Big Gull Lake (44°50' N, 76°57' W), Clarendon Township, where a pair was noted on a nest in the spring of 1933; and from Crotch lake (= Cross Lake, 44°55' N, 76°48' W), Palmerston Township, where it was reported for many years prior to 1933, and again prior to 1938, and for many years prior to 1960 when two young were seen in a nest there.

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis* / Red-shouldered Hawk, *B. lineatus*: The Red-tailed Hawk was obviously considered quite scarce in the early 1930s. Lindsay was making notes at that time of individual birds seen. The Red-shouldered Hawk was considered more plentiful. By 1962, he reports greatly reduced numbers of Red-shouldered Hawk and that Red-tailed Hawk had become about as common. Today, Red-tailed Hawk greatly outnumbers the other.

Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa umbellus*: From about 1924 to 1928, it was apparently so scarce that "few hunters would think of shooting any". But by 1932 and 1933, he reports it was again abundant and that thousands were illegally shipped to outside points, including hundreds to three of the largest hotels in Toronto.

Spruce Grouse, *Dendragapus canadensis*: It was "fairly well known" to pioneers, and could usually be found in "heavy coniferous swamps" throughout the northern part of the county until the mid thirties. He considered that it could still be found in some spruce swamps in 1935, and cites a bird shot in 1933 within 16 km of Arden. It is doubtful if there is any breeding population there today.

Gray Partridge, *Perdix perdix*: Small groups of eight birds were apparently released near Arden and Sharbot Lake in July of 1933, but declined and disappeared in succeeding months. More were seen in 1959, probably from another local release.

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*: Although nesting reports in the area go back to 1903 (Macoun and Macoun 1909), Lindsay considered it very uncommon in 1933 and still quite uncommon in 1961, where it is plentiful today.

Passenger Pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*: Lindsay interviewed several older inhabitants of the district who remembered large flocks in spring and autumn in the 1870s, but had no recollection of nesting in northern Frontenac County.

However, one of the most interesting notes came from a letter (no

indication of where it might now be found) written to C.W. Nash by Dr. C.K. Clarke (for biographies see McNicholl 1994), dated 7 August 1903. It says "Yesterday, I saw the Rev. C.J. Young of Sharbot Lake, and he gave me the following note regarding wild pigeons - 'I heard that a few wild pigeons had been seen near Clarendon (44°50'N, 76°39'W), on the Kingston and Pembroke Railroad. I investigated the matter and interviewed several regarding it. From what I learned the pigeons have bred in that locality for some years. Three years ago yesterday, (Aug. 6th) nine were observed by Mr. Bowles in a field. I went with Mr. Bowles to the same field and saw one mature bird. There was not the slightest doubt about its identity. I am familiar with the Mourning Doves and could not confuse the birds'."

This rather clearly suggests that Passenger Pigeon probably did nest in northern Frontenac County at one time, and that a few birds were still present in 1900. Although that was only two years prior to the last reliable report for the species in Ontario (Fleming 1903), the latest known nesting for Ontario (two years previously in 1898) was apparently also in Frontenac County in the Kingston area (Mitchell 1935), making the above seem quite a reasonable observation.

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*: In the spring of 1960, a neighbour reported finding a fledgling flicker at the base of a poplar stub. There were three other fledglings in a cavity located 2.5 m high. All had their throats cut open, presumably the work of a weasel.

Bank Swallow, *Riparia riparia*: A deep gravel pit near Mountain Grove (44°44'N, 76°51'W) had attracted a large colony in 1962. There were approximately 200 holes on the west wall and 350 on the east. A pair of Red Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) had dug a den about 200 m from this colony. This den was visible from the window of a farm house where the owner, Percy Gray, had watched the foxes raise five young. The foxes were sometimes seen coming to the Bank Swallow colony and digging holes down from the top to the swallow nests. Lindsay counted 28 holes at the top of the west bank on 4 July where the foxes had raided the nests.

Cliff Swallow, *Hirundo pyrrhonota*: On 23 June 1963, when visiting a farm close to Arden, he heard a commotion at a Cliff Swallow colony which had a row of nests under the eaves along the south side of a barn at a height of 8.5 m. There, Lindsay found a Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) clinging to the wall of the barn with its head inside a nest, eating the downy young swallows. He destroyed the snake (22 rifle) that measured about 73 cm long. He was informed that several days later a second snake was seen at the nests. No one interfered with the second snake, and the swallows abandoned the colony apparently because of the snake predation.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*: According to an elderly resident, interviewed in 1963, ravens were once fairly common all through northern Frontenac County. However, once the White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) was logged out in the 1870s, the ravens soon disappeared. Others began reporting ravens near Arden again about the mid

1950s, and today it has reoccupied northern Frontenac County (Cadman et al. 1987).

Tufted Titmouse, *Parus bicolor*: Lindsay reports one for two days in late March 1962 at his feeding station, with chickadees and nuthatches. This was evidently one of numerous sightings through southern Ontario during that winter.

Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*: On 8 July 1933, he examined the body of an adult bird that a cottager had forcefully removed from the gullet of a large Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) that had been swallowing it. How the frog had been able to catch the bird is open to speculation. Although Bullfrogs are known predators of birds, a bird of this size and this species in an open marsh situation seems rather unusual.

Gray Catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*: He reports a bird in apparent good health at his feeder on 19 February 1961. At that point, assuming it had been in the area all along, it had survived temperatures of -33°C and -35°C.

European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*: Lindsay found the first nest in the Arden area in 1926, the same year the first nest was reported for the Kingston area (Weir 1989).

Peck and James (1987) report starlings in a near-colonial situation with five nests in the same tree. Lindsay reports it in an even more colonial situation with five nests in the same 40 room Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) house at his place in Arden in 1963.

Prairie Warbler, *Dendroica discolor*: On the north side of Kennebec Lake for over two miles, rises a steeply inclined shore for upwards of 30 m. Fires had

swept across this slope sometime early in the century, removing most of the trees. It had then become overgrown with low scrubby oak, poplar, juniper and viburnum, providing good habitat for Prairie Warbler. Lindsay was aware of a colony there at least as early as 1933. He visited on 4 and 19 June 1933, hearing three males on each occasion. His next entry was in 1947 when he notes three visits in June. On 29 June in a walk of "less than a mile" he reports 26 adults (presumably both males and females) and saw 8 young representing at least 3 broods. In 1948, he attempted to census the colony on 20 June and counted 12 singing males in a "half mile" walk. This would work out to 48 pairs over 2 miles (3.2 km), but he then says he estimated a pair "about every 100 yards over a distance of 2 miles" or only about 35 pairs. In 1950, on 11 June, he again counted birds and noted 20 singing males within a "one mile stretch" (therefore perhaps 40 all together).

By 1960, he notes that trees had become much larger and were densely clothing the slope, and because of succession, the warblers were much less common. On 11 June 1960, he heard only 2 singing males and on 19 June also only two. His final note was in 1963 when on 22 June he heard 3 males and found a total of only 6 or 7 pairs.

This colony, then, was most active for a period of 30 to 40 years during the appropriate stages of succession. The Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program has reports of a few birds still present in 1989, so birds may persist for many years after the habitat has become less than ideal at a traditional site.

In his typed notes, Lindsay always refers to this colony as being on

Kennebec Lake. However, in the speech he gave to the Toronto Ornithological Club in 1935 (copy of part with the field notes), he refers to it as being on Cross Lake. Bob Trowern, who was noted to be with Lindsay in 1947 at the Prairie Warbler colony, also referred to it as being on Cross Lake (on ONRS cards). The only Cross Lake listed in the gazetteer near Arden, is only an embayment of the Salmon River, and not nearly large enough or of the appropriate topography to have been the location of this colony. Lambert and Smith (1984) speculate that the Cross Lake locality was the same as the Kennebec Lake site and Lindsay's notes seem to confirm this.

Lindsay also reports finding a small colony at a place called Evergreen Mountain (45°08'N, 76°55'W), in North Canonto Township. He visited there on 27 May 1961 and heard three singing males, but speculates that there may have been more. This is a previously unreported site.

Northern Cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*: The first report Lindsay had for Arden was "about 1935", but then not again until "probably May 1949", more than a decade later. The third date he listed was 20 April 1963. There are still relatively few cardinals in northern Frontenac County.

**Common Grackle, *Quiscalus quiscula*/
Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*:** Common Grackles were reportedly somewhat scarce about Arden early in the century. Around 1925, the grackle definitely was outnumbered by the Red-winged Blackbird. However, by mid century the reverse was true.

Other observations:

To the ever growing documentation of the destruction of birds by house cats could be added the following item. In 1932, a neighbour reported that their cat "often" brought back young American Bittern from a marsh near their house. In 1933, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) nest with 2 eggs situated 3.6 m above ground in a poplar tree was destroyed by a cat. In 1948, a neighbour informed him their cat had apparently killed an adult Northern Flicker. A fledgling Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) from a nest in a front entryway was killed by a cat while the other five young escaped.

Lindsay notes quite a few species taken in leghold traps. These were usually muskrat traps set in the wetlands, but others were noted. Such occurrences were no doubt fairly common in the early 1930s. Among the birds taken were American Bittern, Turkey Vulture, Northern Goshawk (mink and muskrat traps), Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*), Sora (*Porzana corollina*), Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio* - weasel trap), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus* - pole trap), and Red-winged Blackbird.

And to the list of passerine birds singing inappropriate songs, he has four examples. On 12 May 1963, he noted a Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) singing similar to a "Myrtle Warbler" (*D. coronata*). On 10 June 1961, he heard a Black-throated Blue Warbler (*D. caerulescens*) singing so much like a Black-throated Green Warbler (*D. virens*) that he almost passed it off as the latter. On 20 June

1948, he heard what he took to be a Prairie Warbler singing its usual song, but ending it with a near-perfect rendition of a Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) song. On locating the bird he was astonished to find it was a Field Sparrow. On 11 July 1953, he heard a Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) that ended its usual song by adding on a very good rendition of a Northern Parula (*Parula americana*) song.

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Ross D. James, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6.

Notes

Unusual Nestings of the Winter Wren

by

Ron Tozer

The Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) has an extensive range in the "Northern Hemisphere of both the New and Old Worlds" (Godfrey 1986). In North America, it typically nests in a hidden cavity within the earthy upturned roots of a fallen tree, under rotted stumps or tree roots, in mossy hummocks or in rocky crevices (Harrison 1975, Terres 1982, Godfrey 1986). This note reports on Winter Wren nestings which involve the use of buildings, in marked contrast to the normal situation reported for this species.

On 26 July 1987, Don Beuprie showed me an active Winter Wren nest containing at least three large young, located in a small woodshed behind his leasehold cottage on Cache Lake in Algonquin Provincial Park (Canisbay Township, Nipissing District). The nest was built in the space between a beam and the roof of the woodshed, and was the typical bulky mass of twigs, grass and mosses, lined with hair and feathers (Harrison 1975). Access to the building was gained through various openings. The site was in a mature mixed forest of Sugar Maple, Eastern Hemlock, American Beech, White Birch, White Spruce, and Balsam Fir, bordering Cache Lake.

On 17 June 1995, Don Beuprie again reported finding a Winter Wren nest at Cache Lake, this time located on the cottage itself! The nest appeared to be abandoned, although apparently not

due to human disturbance, since the cottage was unoccupied prior to the nest discovery. The nest had been built above a window between the rafters of the overhanging roof (which provided shelter from above), and was supported on the outward side by a shutter on the window. Again, the nest was of typical construction, and contained large quantities of *Sphagnum* moss which had apparently been collected from the only nearby source, a large pot of moss in which sundew (*Drosera* sp.) was being grown.

The nest held five cold eggs (with another broken egg on the ground below) when I collected it on 1 July 1995. It was located 2.1 m above the ground, and measured as follows: outside diameter 12.0 cm, inside diameter 5.5 cm, outside depth 5.5 cm, and inside depth 3.0 cm. Apart from being somewhat vertically compressed due to the available space, the nest was of normal size for this species (Peck and James 1987). Nest data were deposited in the Ontario Nest Records Scheme.

Remarkably, an additional, partially constructed Winter Wren nest (comprised entirely of *Spagnum* moss) was discovered at this same Cache Lake cottage site in the fall of 1995 (Don Beuprie, pers. comm.). It was located in a sand-sifting box that was hanging on the outside wall of a small shed behind the cottage.

Discussion

Peck and James (1987) reported on 26 Winter Wren nests in the Ontario Nest Records Scheme, and all but one were in typical locations (e.g., fallen tree roots, holes in tree stumps and fallen logs, under a bank in a ditch, in moss on a rock, and on a rock ledge). The one exception was situated "under live birch roots growing under a building", but even that nest was not directly associated with the structure. A literature search yielded only one account of a Winter Wren nest in North America that involved a building. In 1874, Baird, Brewer and Ridgway reported a Winter Wren nest "built in an unoccupied log-hut, among the fir-leaves and mosses in a crevice between the logs" that had been found by William F. Hall in Maine (cited in Bent 1948).

The fact that the highly unusual Winter Wren nests associated with buildings in Algonquin Park were found at the same location is also noteworthy. Could the same male and/or female have been involved in both years? Clapp (1976) cited a banded Winter Wren in Holland that lived to five years and nine months as a longevity record for this species. The nests at Cache Lake were eight years apart, and hence there seems very little chance of either member of the original pair surviving that long. However, the 1987 nest did fledge young, and so a descendant of that pair (with the inclination to use buildings

for nesting) could possibly have been involved in 1995.

Finally, the Winter Wren commonly utilizes buildings as nest sites in Europe (Cramp 1988), even though this habit is apparently so rare in North America.

Acknowledgements

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Ron Tozer, Spring Lake Road, R.R.1, Dwight, Ontario P0A 1H0

An Unusual Warbling Vireo Nest and Egg

by

Ross D. James

On 31 May 1995, I watched a female Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) gathering nesting material along the banks of the Beaver River, about 2 km northeast of Sunderland, Durham Regional Municipality. She appeared to be gathering nest lining, among the grasses and sedges close to the ground. Accompanied by the male, she flew to a nest in a row of scattered Silver Maples (*Acer saccharinum*) along the bank. The nest was fairly typically placed, about 5 m high, on a small side branch off a main upright trunk, near the centre of the tree, about two-thirds the total tree height.

I visited the nest again on 14 June and found only a single egg in the nest. This seemed to have been a long time to finish the nest and begin laying, but the egg appeared fresh. I also noted that the egg appeared to be longer and thinner than usual for this species.

I returned to check the nest contents just over a week later on 22 June, and was surprised to find only the same single egg in the nest. The birds were present and agitated, and the egg was warm. However, it was obviously infertile, being as clear and pinky white looking as a fresh egg. The female had obviously been incubating for almost two weeks already, a single egg that would never hatch. I collected the nest and egg (ROM #509606), relieving them of a futile pursuit.

The nest was typical of Warbling Vireos in size and shape. What was somewhat unusual is that the birds had used small Canada Goose (*Branta*

canadensis) feathers in the construction. The geese are numerous along the river and feathers easy to find. Although the use of a few feathers in nest lining has previously been reported in Ontario, their use in the main part of the nest has not (Peck and James 1987). Bent (1950) notes one nest with feathers from the eastern U.S.A. The Sunderland nest had at least a dozen feathers about 3 to 4 cm long visible on the outside of the main body of the nest, as well as eight visible in the lining.

Even more unusual was the single egg. It measured 21.5 mm x 11.2 mm. This is 1.2 mm longer than the longest and 2 mm narrower than the narrowest extremes of a sample of 50 eggs measured by Bent (1950).

While only speculation, it is likely that this was the first egg ever laid in the first nest built by this female. Among domestic chickens, the first egg laid is likely to be the most atypical, being abnormally long and narrow; as more eggs are laid, the eggs become progressively rounder toward the normal shape (Romanoff and Romanoff 1949).

Warbling Vireos will ordinarily re-nest in a new nest after the loss of a nest. However, this pair moved from the area after the nest was taken, and I was not able to see whether she produced more normal eggs and a larger clutch in a subsequent nest.

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Ross D. James, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum,
100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6.

Yellow Rail in Mersea Township, Essex County

by

Alan J. Ryff

My first encounter with a Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) in the lower Great Lakes happened on the sunny day of 11 October 1995. About 1230 h, I was walking across a field located 1.6 km southeast of Leamington in Mersea Township, Essex County. The field lies between County Road 33 and Sturgeon Creek, the major drainage system to the northwest of Point Pelee National Park. The entire field was dry on account of the unseasonably low rainfall. I was searching for migrant sparrows, in particular Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*). As I crossed a stretch of tall grass, a Yellow Rail flew up before me. With weak wing beats and dangling legs, it flew just above the grass for about 30 m and then dropped back into the grass. Its secondaries immediately caught my eye; they were white. Otherwise, the upper surface of the wings - as well as the upper surface of the body, head and neck - appeared black. This darker coloration indicates first basic plumage. Adult plumage is lighter due to the broad tawny margins on the feathers of the back, tertials, and scapulars (Ripley 1977). The bill was shorter than the

head. The overall size of this rail was obviously smaller than that of a Sora (*Porzana carolina*). Yet its body was stockier and its wings were longer than those of a House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

I decided not to approach where the Yellow Rail had landed lest I disturb it. At about 1630 h, I showed Alan Wormington the location of the Yellow Rail, but we failed to flush it. However, Wormington (pers. comm.) flushed it on 12 October.

Without a tractor or a bird dog, the Yellow Rail is exceedingly difficult to observe or flush (personal experience in Michigan, New Jersey, Florida and Texas). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Yellow Rail "is among the most infrequently encountered of all the birds known to breed" in Ontario (Cadman et al. 1987). There are only four or five records of Yellow Rail in the Point Pelee area (Alan Wormington, pers. comm.).

Nevertheless, migrating Yellow Rails probably have regular stop-over sites along the north shore of Lake Erie. The migrants would take shelter in deep grass having an abundance of food,

where they would fatten up before continuing their southward flight, which could cross 80 to 150 km of Lake Erie, depending on the direction taken.

The above Yellow Rail flew out of a large patch of Canada Blue-joint grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*). A native species, Canada Blue-joint grows in wet places (Dore and McNeill 1980). It is abundant in the boreal forest (Dore and McNeill 1980) and grows in the supratidal meadow-marshes along the coast of James Bay (Riley and McKay 1980). This coastland is part of the Yellow Rail's breeding stronghold in Ontario (Cadman et al. 1987). The range of Canada Blue-joint extends southward to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario (Dore and McNeill 1980). Thus, the migrating rails of the Hudson Bay Lowlands would find a familiar refuge in the Canada Blue-joint of southern Ontario. Also, Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) was growing along the

margins of the above patch of Canada Blue-joint. In Ontario, the range of this moisture-loving species coincides with that of Canada Blue-joint (Dore and McNeill 1980).

Most likely, if birders searched patches of Canada Blue-joint and Reed Canary Grass, especially near Lake Erie in October, the number of records of Yellow Rail would rise sharply.

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Alan J. Ryff, 20201 East Ten Mile Road, St. Clair Shores, Michigan 48080.

Remembering Roger Tory Peterson

by
Jim Wilson

In the early sixties, while President of the Detroit Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, I was able to attend the latter society's conventions in Seattle and Milwaukee. There, with the customary dignitaries, the familiar Roger Tory Peterson was always in evidence. I can remember to my surprise when getting on an elevator in Milwaukee, Mr. Peterson was the sole occupant; and how, in my

awestricken state, I could only muster a muffled "hello" for the man who had made birdwatching such an enjoyable hobby for thousands, including me. In his field guides, by using an arrow or two to point out the salient features of the bird in his illustration, he made bird identification easy for beginners. At the time I wanted to thank him, yet hesitated to approach this quiet, reserved, withdrawn-looking man.

Several years later, that opportunity arose once more when it was agreed the members of the Rare Bird Committee of Point Pelee National Park would act as hosts to conduct Roger, and his attractive wife, Virginia, to some of Pelee's interesting birding locations. (Virginia did the range maps in the back of his field guide that was to be published later.) At the designated time, with the CBC film and sound crews at the ready, I found my young son, Jim, and I were the only ones present to walk with the Petersons and his several hundred admirers. At the outset as we walked the Nature Trail towards the tip of the Point, I became aware of his excellent "ear" for birds. Ahead of us, on the narrow trail, a distant Cerulean Warbler sang which caused him to come back to me to ask if many Ceruleans came through Pelee on spring migration. I answered that we always received a few, "just like the one you heard up the trail just a second ago". We had a friendly, little chuckle over that incident.

After the walk through the woods, the famous "sparrow field", and the Point, we paused where our guest autographed field guides. Not only his "own" received his signature, but also many of Chandler Robbins' field guide, "Birds of North America", that was very popular at the time. He signed these amicably, and to my delight, at the

end, didn't hesitate to place his name on the flaps of several cigarette packages. This was when any feelings of awe that I had possessed for him those many years disappeared, for here I saw a regular fellow like the other birdwatchers I knew.

Near Hillman's Marsh, in a water-filled ditch where we were observing one of the rails, page 275 of "Robbins Field Guide" floated on the still water, where, at the top of the page, an illustration of the brilliant Hooded Warbler gazed up at us. Naturally, a few minutes of jovial buffoonery ensued among those present before our departure from this spot!

A sumptuous lunch followed our long morning of birding, yet the last minute or two will always remain with me when Roger Peterson told me I was one of the best at identifying birds by song with whom he had been birding recently. Thus, if I become completely deaf to bird sound some day, I can always cherish that compliment from the "Great Birdman"!

One last thought on this famous, gentle man occurs whenever anyone looks reluctantly through my ancient, scratched telescope. I jokingly chide them, "Don't scoff at that old thing! Roger Tory Peterson once looked through there!"

Jim Wilson, Box 385, Dorset, Ontario P0A 1E0.

Northern Shrike Kills Bird Over Water

by
Bruce M. Di Labio

On 11 November 1995, while birding at Prince Edward Point, Prince Edward County, I observed (through my Kowa scope) a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) approximately 200 m offshore chasing a small passerine, probably a redpoll (*Carduelis* sp.). The pursuit lasted a few minutes, with the small bird attempting every maneuver possible to evade the shrike. Unfortunately for the small, tiring bird, the shrike maintained its attack. At least two attempts were made by the shrike to capture the bird. The first was unsuccessful and the redpoll escaped, but on the second attempt the shrike grabbed the bird with its bill and feet simultaneously. At first the redpoll flapped frantically in an attempt to

escape, but within seconds the small bird ceased to move and the shrike changed direction, flying towards Timber Island with the redpoll secured in its feet.

Based on Cade (1967), shrikes have rarely been reported hunting over a body of water. Typically during migration and on the wintering grounds, shrikes hunt small rodents over open fields or pursue small birds at feeders. One wonders if this shrike's hunting method was a learned behaviour to be repeated or a chance occurrence.

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Cade, T.J. 1967. Ecological and behavioral aspects of predation by the Northern Shrike. Living Bird 6: 43-86.

Bruce M. Di Labio, 44 Helmsdale Drive, Kanata, Ontario K2K 2S3.

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Photo Quiz

by

Ron Pittaway



The quiz bird is a **Bicknell's Thrush**! It is clearly a thrush in the genus *Catharus*, one of either Veery, Swainson's, Hermit, Gray-cheeked or Bicknell's. The extensive and heavy spotting on the breast should eliminate even the *salicicola* subspecies of the Veery. Swainson's has dark lores and usually a bold eyering; a broad supraloral stripe (not always present) connects to the eyering. Hermit Thrushes usually have well-defined, narrow eyerings, and the bicolored bill is less contrasting. Our bird is either a Gray-cheeked or a Bicknell's Thrush. Both have inconspicuous eyerings, or incomplete

eyerings (with whitish brackets slightly over and behind the eyes) like the quiz bird. We can't be sure which species it is in a black-and-white photograph, but the more extensive pale base of the lower mandible suggests Bicknell's. Fortunately, I have in front of me colour slides showing side, front and back views of this bird. The inner two thirds of the lower mandible is a fairly bright pale yellow, indicating Bicknell's. The dorsal view shows a warm, back and a hint of chestnut on the tail. In the Gray-cheeked (subspecies *aliciae*), the back and tail are more grayish olive. The side view shows rufous edges to the primaries

and outer secondaries, another good indicator of Bicknell's. This banded Bicknell's Thrush was photographed by Doug McRae on 17 May 1980 at Prince Edward Point near Kingston. After handling many thrushes that day, Doug reported that it was small in the hand and measurements supported its identification as a Bicknell's Thrush. Measurements are on file with the Kingston Field Naturalists' Club. Doug has agreed to have his photographs reviewed by the OBRC and the KFN will be asked for the measurements. The OBRC will be reviewing specimen and photograph records of Bicknell's Thrush. A record must be accepted before it can be added officially to the Ontario checklist. The status of Bicknell's Thrush in Ontario is still unknown. In summer, it is found in Quebec north of Ottawa and Pembroke. As I mentioned in *OFO NEWS* 14(2):1 and 8, it is "probably a rare but regular spring and fall migrant in Eastern Ontario." There is a remote chance that it may breed in Ontario. A search of suitable habitat in northeastern Ontario is needed.

Diagnostic field marks of non-singing Bicknell's are being tested and more identification articles are expected in birding journals. Currently, the best article on the identification of Bicknell's Thrush is by Ian McLaren in the October 1995 *Birding* 27(5): 358-366. Concern has been expressed about the field identification of Bicknell's; for example, David Agro's letter in the December 1994 *Ontario Birds* 12 (3): 85 and P. William Smith in the August 1996 *Birding* 28 (4): 275-276. But note the remarks of Ned Brinkley (*Birdchat*, 26 February 1996); "there are a few people currently concerned about

variation in plumage of *minimus* and *aliciae* Gray-cheeks, but it is interesting (if one hears the preliminary reports correctly) that most of the people working against a notion of identifiable Bicknell's are working with museum skins. I find in spring migration that I am able to detect Bicknell's by its distinctive song, and that (so far) 100% of Bicknell's detected first by ear have conformed to Henri Ouellet's description of Bicknell's plumage. The same, so far, has been true of non-Bicknell's Gray-cheeks." Fortunately, breeding Bicknell's are easily identified by a combination of range, song, calls, habitat and field marks.

Finding Bicknell's Thrush:

Bicknell's Thrush is the most elusive and sought after of the new species recently announced by the American Ornithologists' Union (*Auk* 112 (3): 819-830), based on the studies of Henri Ouellet (*Ontario Birds* 11(2): 41-45; *Wilson Bulletin* 105(4): 545-572). In early July 1996, Jean Iron and I searched for Bicknell's in Quebec. We heard but did not see them! However, we learned a few lessons about finding (and seeing) them which should be of interest to birders planning to look for them in 1997. On 7 and 8 July, we checked Mont Sir Wilfrid (near Mont Laurier) in the Laurentians north of Ottawa. After the pavement ends, the last 11 km are along a service road to three communication towers at the summit, elevation 806 metres (2645 feet). Jean's Toyota barely made it up the narrow, steep and bumpy road to the top. Getting there is the easy part; finding Bicknell's Thrush is the hard part. We experienced wind, rain, and fog. Having arrived at the summit in late afternoon, we waited

over four hours until dusk before the thrushes started calling and singing. We heard several Swainson's, but no Bicknell's. Before dawn the next day, we again ascended Mont Sir Wilfrid. The weather was a little better, still windy and misty, but not as nice as lower down the mountain. Again we heard many Swainson's but no Bicknell's.

We drove back to Aylmer, Quebec (near Ottawa), where we visited Michel Gosselin at the new headquarters of the Canadian Museum of Nature. Michel showed us the Bicknell's locations on the range map in the new *Quebec Breeding Bird Atlas*. He suggested we try Mont Megantic (1100 metres or 3600 feet) in the Eastern Townships, because there's a good paved road to the observatory at the top.

Compared to Mont Sir Wilfrid, Mont Megantic is easy to find and drive to the summit. There's inexpensive accommodation and food at the hotel in Notre Dame des Bois, along Highway 212. It is 12.5 km from the hotel to the observatory at the summit. Go north following the signs to Parc du Mont Megantic and the observatory. The last 1.5 km to the top has the best habitat. We heard Bicknell's Thrushes at the observatory and along the road at the big bend, 1.5 km below, where there's a good pull off. We heard mostly call notes. There are lots of Swainson's in the same habitat and at lower elevations, but their song and call notes are quite different. Bicknell's call note is a slurred *ve-eer*, suggesting a Veery, but more nasal and higher pitched. Bicknell's has another call note, like the first, but louder and piercing. Swainson's call is a much different emphatic *wick*. We heard only one Bicknell's singing. It

sang three times near the observatory, just before dark on 9 July. We seemed out of luck in seeing one this year, but we're going back next year after what we learned.

Back in the Ottawa area, I related our experiences to my old birding friend, Rick Poulin. Rick, formerly of the Canadian Museum of Nature, worked with Henri Ouellet on Bicknell's Thrush. Rick recommended several things to improve our chances of seeing Bicknell's next year. First, go during the first three weeks of June because singing drops off quickly afterwards, whereas Swainson's sing well into July. Second, use the songs from Monty Brigham's *Bird Sounds of Canada*, Vol. 2 CD # 2 Track 15, to attract them. Do not use Gray-cheeked songs; they will not attract Bicknell's. If tapes are used sparingly and with discretion, I see no problem using them in areas that are not heavily birded. Also, learn the Veery-like call notes to detect the presence of Bicknell's on territory. Best times are dawn and dusk when they are most active and vocal. Watch also for Bicknell's during the day in late June and July, when they are foraging for food to feed young. Note that Swainson's Thrushes are common in Bicknell's habitat at Mont Sir Wilfrid and Mont Megantic, but we encountered no Veeries or Hermit Thrushes. Finally, *Catharus* thrushes are tough birds to see on the breeding grounds. They are birds of the shadows and often sing from hidden perches. Have you ever tried to spot a singing Veery or Hermit Thrush?

The mountaintop habitat of Bicknell's Thrush is often described as "scrub spruces". However, on Mont

Sir Wilfrid and Mont Megantic the coniferous forest is 99 percent Balsam Fir, not spruce. The most common deciduous tree is White Birch at both locations. Keep in mind that mountaintop weather is variable, often windy and misty. It can be cold too, so take warm clothes. If you plan to go next year to get Bicknell's for your

Canadian and ABA lists, be sure to contact me for exact directions. I hope that I have intrigued you to attend the OFO Annual General Meeting on 19 October. Meet ornithologist Dr. Henri Ouellet and learn more about Bicknell's and other *Catharus* thrushes from the world's foremost expert. Don't miss this experience.

Ron Pittaway, Box 619, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0

Editors' Note:

Bob Curry will be back doing the Photo Quiz in the December issue. Bob welcomes photos to analyze in future issues. If you have a favourite photo that would prove challenging to readers, please contact Bob or the editors.

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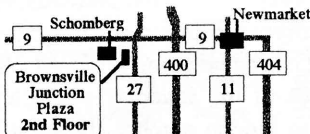
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