



OFO's Celebrity Birders 2017

Jeremy Bensette, Dan Riley and Josh Vandermeulen

Dan and Josh and Jeremy will be completing a Big Day within the confines of the Point Pelee count circle sometime in mid-May, and look forward to raising funds for OFO in the Great Canadian Birdathon.

Jeremy Bensette

Born and raised in Leamington, Essex County, Jeremy is one of the only year-round resident birders and naturalists of the Point Pelee Area, where he takes full advantage of the region's prime wildlife opportunities. He works for Bird Studies Canada as a contract wildlife biologist, guides tours both privately and for the Friends of Point Pelee, and takes part in countless volunteer projects for conservation through public outreach, education, and clubs such as the Essex County Field Naturalists and the Ontario Field Ornithologists. He is a regional reviewer for eBird data, a member of the newly formed Point Pelee Bird Records Committee, and a member of the Vortex Birding Pro Staff team. This year (2017) Jeremy is attempting an 'all-out' birding "Big Year" in Ontario, in which he hopes to break Josh's 2012 record! Birders may cross paths with him virtually anywhere in the province, though it's probably less work to keep up with his adventures through his blog or Facebook.

Dan Riley

Dan is a birder from the Toronto area who currently works as a wildlife biologist. His love of wildlife and the natural world started at a young age and has continued to grow. His birding career began with annual family vacations to Point Pelee National Park for spring migration; since 1991, he has only missed one spring at the park. Sparked by a birding trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands in 2001, he has travelled around the world



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in pursuit of birds and other wildlife. Working as a wildlife guide in Costa Rica after finishing high school took his knowledge and love of Neotropical birds to new heights. Some of his most recent voyages have been to such far-flung destinations as Colombia, Australia, West Africa and Brazil. He has recently developed a passion for wildlife photography and rarely leaves the house without his binoculars and camera. Dan's other interests include fishing, hiking and reading. Dan hopes to continue to expand his knowledge of birds both in Ontario and around the world and to share his passion with others.

Josh Vandermeulen

Growing up in Cambridge, Ontario, Josh was interested in nature from a young age as he explored the swamps and woodlands at the northern edge of the Carolinian zone, primarily in search of reptiles and amphibians. His interest in birds was piqued around the time he began his studies at the University of Guelph and

has taken off in the years since. In 2012, Josh attempted a "Big Year" in Ontario, seeing a record 343 species while living out of his car for much of the year and criss-crossing the province in pursuit of birds. Since then, Josh has enjoyed learning about birds and other wildlife further afield, while continuing to participate as an active member of the Ontario birding scene. In recent years he has traveled to Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Cuba, Morocco, Spain and Portugal in search of birds.

Currently, Josh works as a full-time biologist while also guiding for Worldwide Quest Nature Tours. Josh is the regional editor of the winter season *North America Birds* journal, an eBird reviewer, and a voting member of the Ontario Bird Records Committee. He recently moved to Niagara Falls with his fiancée, Laura and he enjoys birding and herping in that diverse part of the province. One of Josh's passions is to share his love of the natural world with others.



2017 Great Canadian Birdathon Pledge Form

OFO's Celebrity Birders: Jeremy Bensette, Dan Riley and Josh Vandermeulen

Please print clearly and fill in all blanks. Tax receipts will be issued for amounts over \$10. Please make cheque payable to "Great Canadian Birdathon"

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Pledged: Flat amount \$ _____ OR \$ _____ per species

Please return completed pledge forms to:

Bird Studies Canada, PO Box 160, 115 Front Rd, Port Rowan, ON, N0E 1M0

To make a contribution online, go to: www.birdscanada.org, click on "Support Us", then under "Great Canadian Birdathon" click on "Sponsor a Birdathon Participant" and enter the participant's first name as "OFO Celebrity."

The Great Canadian Birdathon (formerly the Baillie Birdathon) is the oldest sponsored bird count in North America. Your tax deductible donation supports Bird Studies Canada, various bird observatories and monitoring programs such as the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey. It supports the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund which provides grants primarily to amateur field ornithology researchers. A portion of all donations pledged for the OFO Team will be returned to OFO and will be specifically earmarked to the OFO Young Birders Program.



Ontario Field Ornithologists