

# Birding Haldimand's Lake Erie Shoreline

## Favourite Birding Hotspots

by John Miles

**General Description.** The former county of Haldimand bordered the north shore of Lake Erie from just east of Dunnville, extending west almost to Port Dover. In recent years, birders have come to know Haldimand as a good place for winter birding for hawks and owls, as well as for some southern species such as Red-bellied Woodpecker and Tufted Titmouse.

**Time of Year.** Birding can be productive throughout the year in Haldimand and it can be particularly good in fall and winter when other areas are quiet. The following is part of a route I started following back in the 60s. Some of the spots mentioned are seasonal.

### The Birds

1. Our trip starts at the junction of Highway 3 and Regional Road 18 (Sandusk Road), about 6 km east of Jarvis. Proceed south 4.4 km on Regional Road 18 to where Sandusk Creek crosses the road. This is a good spot for shorebirds in both spring and fall. The creek bottom is limestone and the water is very shallow with lots of algae. Rough-winged Swallows and the occasional Cliff Swallow nest under the bridge.

2. Continue south 2.4 km to the 2nd Concession and turn left. Proceed east for 1.6 km to Sandusk Creek. Here on the north side of the road is another good spot for shorebirds as the shallow creek bottom is about 60 metres wide and extends north for about 350 metres.

3. Travel east along the 2nd Concession 1.9 km to the hamlet of Cheapside and turn right onto Cheapside Road. Continue south 1.3 km to Regional Road 3. Turn right and travel west 1.2 km to Regional Road 62 (Brooklin Road). Turn left and go south .5 km to Sandusk Creek. This location plus the previous two often have shorebirds when none can be found along Lake Erie.

4. 2.1 km south of Sandusk Creek turn right onto Lakeshore Road and continue .3 km to Wilcox. Turn left and follow the road which goes around Peacock Point. Wilcox becomes Lakeshore Drive. On the right .8 km along is a good feeder. Wintering blackbirds have included Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Rusty Blackbird and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Accipiters and Merlins are often present in winter. Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper have been found along the rocky shoreline of the Point into mid-January. Large flocks of Greater Scaup and other waterfowl, as well as Bonaparte's Gulls and the occasional Little Gull, sometimes winter off Peacock Point in the warm water from the Nanticoke hydro electric plant. Lakeshore Drive swings back to Lakeshore Road with

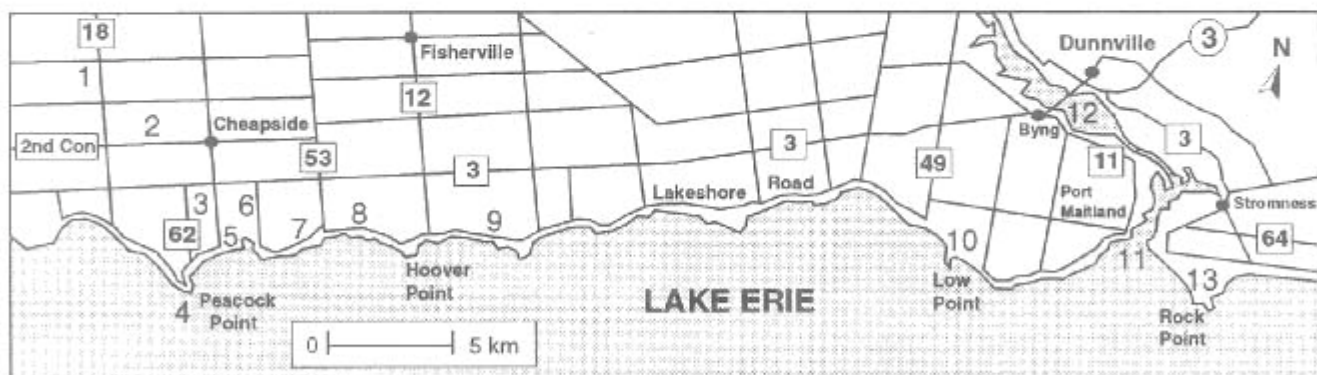
you facing east. Continue east past Regional Road 62.

5. 1 km east of Regional Road 62, turn left onto Cheapside Road and proceed .2 km to the bridge over Sandusk Creek. This can be a good spot for waterfowl in spring and fall.

6. Proceed .9 km north to Regional Road 3 and turn right. Travel east 1.1 km, turn right onto Wheeler Road, then go south 1.1 km to the entrance to Selkirk Provincial Park. Selkirk Provincial Park can be good year round. Long-eared and Saw-whet Owls can be found in the winter in the pine plantations on the west side of the park. Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Tufted Titmice are year round and nesting residents. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nest here. Six species of vireos and 31 species of warblers have been found in the park during migration. Wintering species have included Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird and Palm Warbler. In the fall, the park entrance can be very good for hawks and eagles moving west at tree top level so that many can be identified without binoculars. This hawk flight continues well into December most years. Flocks of land birds such as pipits, Eastern Bluebirds, blackbirds, Blue Jays, etc. can also be seen moving west at this location during the day in the fall.

7. 1.1 km south of Selkirk Provincial Park the road turns east and becomes Lakeshore Road again. It goes east and then turns inland at the mouth of Stoney Creek and dead ends at the Townline (Selkirk Road). This 3.8 km stretch of road offers the birder good looks at the lakeshore. Depending upon the lake level there can be many good spots for shorebirds from the foot of Wheeler Road east to the Grand River. Along the lake, most of the points that have algal growths are limestone, while many of the bays are sandy. This stretch of lakeshore has produced many good birds including large flocks of Whimbrel around May 24, plus the occasional Laughing Gull, Little Gull, Least Tern, Marbled Godwit and Piping Plover. Off-shore, rocky outcroppings offer good shorebird locations and waterfowl resting spots. In October, the fields behind the cottages often have large flocks of Eastern Bluebirds acting like flocks of American Robins on the ground. Also in May, watch these fields carefully for flocks of up to 500 Lapland Longspurs!

8. Turn right at the Townline and proceed 1.2 km to the lake. Here the road turns east and again is called Lakeshore Road. 1.7 km along Lakeshore Road, the Salvation Army's Camp Selkirk is on the left side of the road. If you ask the camp custodian you may be able to walk back to their private sewage lagoon system. There is also a very good large pine plantation at the back of the property which is used as a winter roost by Long-eared Owls. A further 1 km along



Map by Michael King

Lakeshore Road brings you to Hoover Point. The main road proceeds past a small woodlot on the south side of the road with large spruce trees on the north side. This spot is very good for small landbirds in mid-May. I have found Worm-eating Warbler and Rusty Blackbird here.

9. Turn right at Fisherville Road and go .1 km south to where Lakeshore Road continues east for 19 km following the lakeshore. There are many very good spots for shorebirds and waterfowl. 5.5 km along Lakeshore Road is a large pond and cattail marsh on the north side.

10. Turn left at Aikens Road (Regional Road 49), go north .6 km and turn right (east) 1.2 km on Kings Row Road. Turn right onto the gravel road. This road goes to the lake and the James N. Allen Provincial Park. As you enter the park there is a good woodlot on both sides of the road. Follow the road which turns west and ends at a gate. You will be at Low Point and there is a good lookout towards the west at this location. Return to Kings Row on the road you came in.

11. Proceed 3.6 km east on Kings Row to Johnson Road. This is a Short-eared Owl location in the winter late in the afternoon. Kings Row continues east for another 2.3 km where it meets Regional Road 11. Continue east into Port Maitland. The feeders on both sides of the road often have blackbirds in winter. Tufted Titmice have been found coming to these feeders. The mouth of the Grand River and the breakwall may have birds of interest. Return to Regional Road 11 and go north 5.7 km to the hamlet of Byng. Turn right on Regional Road 3 and go .8 km into Dunnville over the dam on the Grand River. The water below the dam is open all year so waterfowl are usually present in winter as well as white-winged gulls.

12. Over the dam, turn right at the stop lights and follow Regional Road 3 (Main Street) east out of Dunnville. This road follows an old Welland Canal feeder canal. The fields on the east side sometimes have shorebirds such as Hudsonian Godwits in early November. Continue through the hamlet of Stromness and 8.2 km out of Dunnville turn right onto Regional Road 64.

13. .5 km along Regional Road 64 turn left onto Downey Road and continue south 1 km to Niece Road. Turning right onto Niece Road, continue .2 km to the entrance to Rock Point Provincial Park. The south east corner of the park is a rocky point which is extremely good for shorebirds in both spring and fall. Offshore is Mohawk Island which has an active gull nesting colony. The pine plantations in the park provide winter roosts for Long-eared Owls and a Boreal Owl has been found in November. Good birding.

### Flight ID Tip

Except for hawks, ducks and a few other birds, most birders wait until a bird perches before using their binoculars to identify it. This causes many missed identifications because birds often keep on going or disappear out of sight in vegetation. Top birders instinctively look at birds in flight, even warblers. Many passerines can be identified in flight. Try it out, you'll be amazed at how much detail (shape, pattern and colour) you can see. There's an added benefit of first looking at a bird in flight; you'll be on it faster if it perches in full view!

### Baillie Birdathon 1996

by Chris Escott

OFO's celebrity birder in the 1996 Baillie Birdathon was Bruce Di Labio. Birding more than 1,000 km from the Ottawa Valley to Algonquin Park and Presqu'île, then home again, Bruce and his good friend Chris Traynor recorded a credible 160 species. Had the late May weather been warmer they might have done even better! Bruce's efforts raised \$2,130 for the Birdathon, a portion of which will be paid to OFO as the sponsoring club. Well done Bruce and Chris, and thanks to all the sponsors!

A number of other OFO members did their own birdathons, naming OFO as their club, and a portion of their funds raised will also be paid to OFO. Thanks to Maris Apse, Geoff Carpentier, Ted Chesky, Brian Gibson, Jean Iron, Don Kerr, Mike Runtz and John Schmelefske, who raised a combined \$2461.54. Your efforts help sustain OFO and are used to support projects through the Baillie Fund, the work of Bird Studies Canada, and the Long Point and Thunder Cape Bird Observatories.

## Notes from the OBRC by Rob Dobos

By now, OFO members will have seen the *Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1995* published in the August 1996 issue of *Ontario Birds*. For those rare bird reports that were not accepted by the Committee, a letter of explanation has been sent to the submitters by last year's Chairman, along with copies of the members' comments. If you submitted a bird report to the Committee late in 1995 and it does not appear somewhere in this annual report, likely it was received too late to be considered by the 1995 Committee, but will be reviewed in 1996. If you have any questions, drop me a line.

The work of the 1996 Committee is well under way. At this point, relatively fewer reports have been received by the OBRC than in the past few years. I encourage members to submit any documentations for species on the Ontario Review List to me soon. Please do not wait until the end of the year, as we are usually unable to complete a review of reports received after mid-December by that year's Committee, and the records will end up appearing in the following year's annual report about 20 months later! A number of published reports of significant rarities for Ontario over the past several years, including some birds likely seen by many observers, have yet to have any documentation submitted to the OBRC for review. A few selected examples include:

**Mississippi Kite**, 19 May 1995, Burpee Twp., *Manitoulin*

**Snowy Plover**, 27 April 1993, Strathroy, *Middlesex*

**Rufous Hummingbird**, 17 October-28 November 1995, Owen Sound, *Bruce*

**Bewick's Wren**, 13-20 May 1994, near Hillman Marsh, *Essex*

**Brambling**, 24 December 1993-15 May 1994, Hungry Hollow, *Lambton*

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch**, 16-17 March 1988, Evansville, *Manitoulin*.

If any readers have written descriptions or photographs of any of these sightings, we would greatly appreciate receiving them for review.

Please send your rare bird reports directly to me:

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