



# OFO NEWS

Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

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## Distinguished Ornithologist

by Jean Iron

### Crow or Raven?

by Ron Pittaway

New birders often ask me what is the best way to tell an American Crow from a Common Raven. Experience with the two is necessary before most birders feel comfortable distinguishing them. Ravens are bigger, but size is an unreliable field mark unless the two species are together which is not often! Calls are one of the best distinctions. Crows give a distinct *caw* that is usually unmistakable; ravens croak, honk, gurgle and more, but they do not *caw*.

In the mid-1980s, I noted a behaviour of crows that is not exhibited by ravens. It is a very useful for identification. Crows habitually flick their folded wings and fan their tails. This "wing-tail flicking" is done one to three times, especially just after perching. Wing-tail flicking is a characteristic behaviour of crows and is done throughout the year. It is easily seen at long distances. Interestingly, wing-tail flicking is apparently not done by ravens, given many years of personal observations in Haliburton County and those of Ron Tozer (pers. comm.) in Algonquin Park. I've seen ravens occasionally slowly shuffle their wings, but this action is much different from the rapid flicking action of crows.

Wing-tail flicking is particularly helpful in separating crows from ravens perched at a great distance when size and shape are difficult to judge. Often it is only the wing flicking that is noticeable because of the distance or angle of view. The absence of flicking is not completely diagnostic of ravens, but since crows do it so frequently, its absence is a strong clue. Practise watching for wing-tail flicking in crows. Next time you're in an area where their ranges overlap, you'll have developed another way of separating the two species.

Both Ron Tozer and I have noted the presence or absence of wing-tail flicking in other species of North American crows and ravens. Ron Tozer reports that Fish Crows do wing-tail flicking the same as Common Crows. I've noted that Northwestern and Mexican Crows also flick just like Common Crows. As expected, the Chihuahuan Ravens I've seen in Arizona and Texas did not wing-tail flick.

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The Board of Directors of the Ontario Field Ornithologists recently created a new award: **The Distinguished Ornithologist Award**. This award will be granted from time to time to individuals in recognition of outstanding contributions to the study of birds in Ontario and Canada. The first recipient of the new OFO award will be W. Earl Godfrey, dean of Canadian ornithologists and author of *The Birds of Canada*. The award will be granted to Earl Godfrey on 18 October 1997 at the OFO Annual General Meeting in Burlington.

Earl Godfrey became Curator of Ornithology at the National Museum of Canada in 1947. Previously, he studied with Robie W. Tufts in his home province of Nova Scotia and later with the noted taxonomist Harry C. Oberholser in the United States. In Ottawa, Godfrey began a series of surveys across Canada. His research led to a number of papers on distribution and taxonomic revisions. The publication of *The Birds of Canada* in 1966 (revised edition 1986) with over 200,000 copies sold, continues to be the most popular reference on Canadian birds.

Retired in 1976, Earl Godfrey is an active birder around Ottawa. He continues his taxonomic research and is describing a new subspecies of the Swamp Sparrow.

Now in his mid-80s, we hope that Earl Godfrey will be able to attend the AGM so that OFO members will have the opportunity to meet him.

### Mini Bird Quiz

1. What Ontario shorebird is thought to carry its downy young in flight?
2. What two Ontario shorebirds feed their young for a time after hatching?

*Answers page 7*

# Birding in Grey-Bruce

## Favourite Birding Hotspots

by Dave Fidler

**General Description.** Grey-Bruce has a great selection of diverse habitats such as forests of upland hardwoods, mixes of coniferous and deciduous bush, lowland forests and swamps, brushy overgrown fields and much good farmland. As well, there are many small inland lakes, an extensive Great Lakes shoreline and some cattail and small sedge marshes.

**Time of Year.** Late May and early June bring the last of the spring migrants that nest further north such as shorebirds, thrushes and warblers. At the same time, local nesting gets into full swing.

**The Birds.** The following are some of my favourite birding areas in Grey-Bruce. Don't forget to take along some insect repellent or a mosquito headnet for protection from biting insects. The earlier you get out in the morning, the more successful you will be at finding birds.

### 1. The Glen

Take Grey Road 1 north from Owen Sound, turn west (left) just south of Owen Sound Golf Course onto Grey Road 17 and continue for 6.5 km. The entrance to *The Glen* is clearly indicated by a sign and a yellow metal gate. Park here and walk into the area on a well-marked trail. *The Glen* is a 656 hectare property owned by Grey-Sauge Conservation Authority (GSCA). This is a beautiful area for a walk through mixed hardwoods and some conifers leading to open fields, brushy overgrown fields and a flooded swamp. At the swamp, there is a control dam that was installed as a cooperative effort between GSCA and Ducks Unlimited. This structure assists in controlling water levels to enhance waterfowl reproduction. Changing the water levels in a swamp or marsh regenerates the vegetation and enriches the habitat for ducks and other wetland birds.

Species in *The Glen* include: Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-

Tailed Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Sora, Spotted Sandpiper, Black-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Peewee, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Tree Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Winter Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole and American Goldfinch.

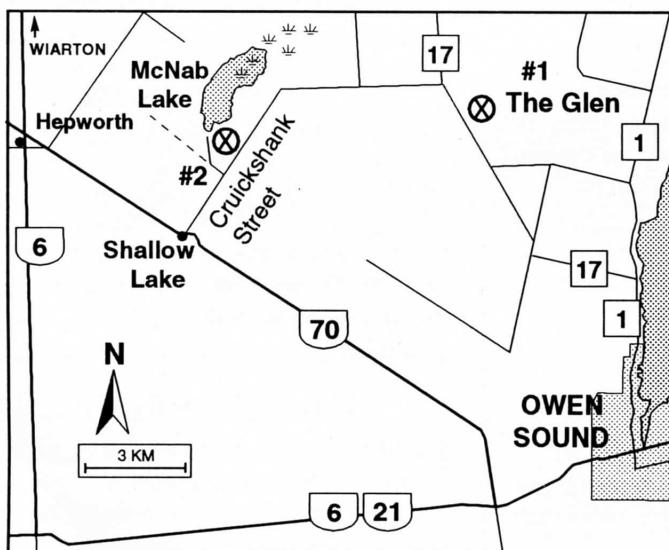
### 2. McNab Lake

Take Highway 70 to Shallow Lake, turn northeast on Cruickshank Street (the road to Francis Lake) for 1.9 km. *McNab Lake* is a 462 hectare property owned by Grey-Sauge Conservation Authority and is one of my favourites for migrants and nesting species. The road into this area, which I suggest you walk, proceeds for about 250 to 300 metres to a fork in the road. The right fork takes you to the lake where you may launch a canoe. Straight ahead from the fork is an area for forest and forest fringe birds. The habitats of *McNab Lake* are varied with some mature and second growth hardwoods, many conifer plantations, flooded treed swamps and white cedar bush. Near the easterly end of the lake is a wonderful high ridge of hardwoods with a flooded swamp on one side and a treed slope to the lake on the other side. The lake itself is relatively open at the westerly end and has extensive cattails and sedges in the easterly end. This trail leads you to the west end of the lake. Certainly the best way to explore *McNab Lake* is by canoe.

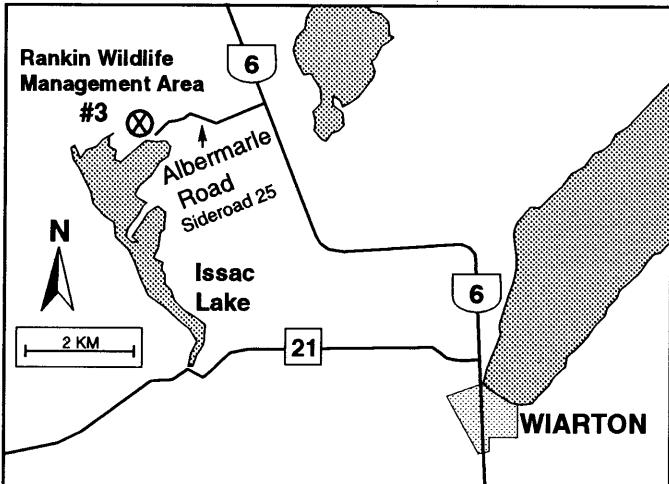
All the species listed for *The Glen* can be found at *McNab Lake*, with a number of significant additions: Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Black Tern, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Marsh Wren, Nashville Warbler and Northern Waterthrush. *McNab Lake* is one of the best places in Grey-Bruce to hear the loud rolling hollow rattle call of the Sandhill Crane, and if you are very lucky, you may see one!

### 3. Rankin Wildlife Management Area (RWMA)

Take Highway 6 north for 9.5 km from the traffic light in Wiarton. Turn west on Albermarle Sideroad 25 for 1.2 km. This 165 hectare parcel of land is owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources. On the north side of the road is a sedge marsh with scattered willow and on the south side is a mix of sedge, cattail marsh and flooded swamp bordering Isaac Lake. As you continue along the road past the buildings you find a brushy sidehill leading to open fields and the boat launch for Isaac Lake. This



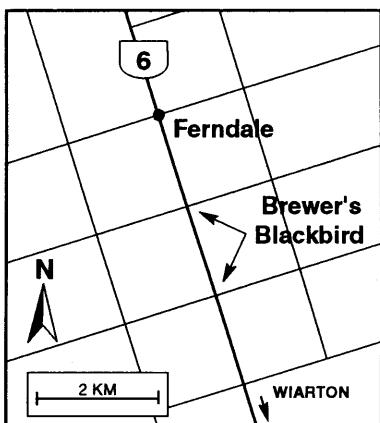
Map by Michael King



Map by Michael King

is part of an extensive wetland surrounded by open fields and consequently birds can be found that we have not encountered at the previous locations. Species that you will probably add to your list are American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Northern Harrier, Common Snipe, Eastern Phoebe, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Sedge Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark.

#### 4. Ferndale Flats



Map by Michael King

Brewer's are distinguished from Red-winged Blackbirds by their posture, which appears much more erect, and Brewer's give the appearance of having longer legs.

#### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Andrew Jano of the Ministry of Natural Resources for providing map information.

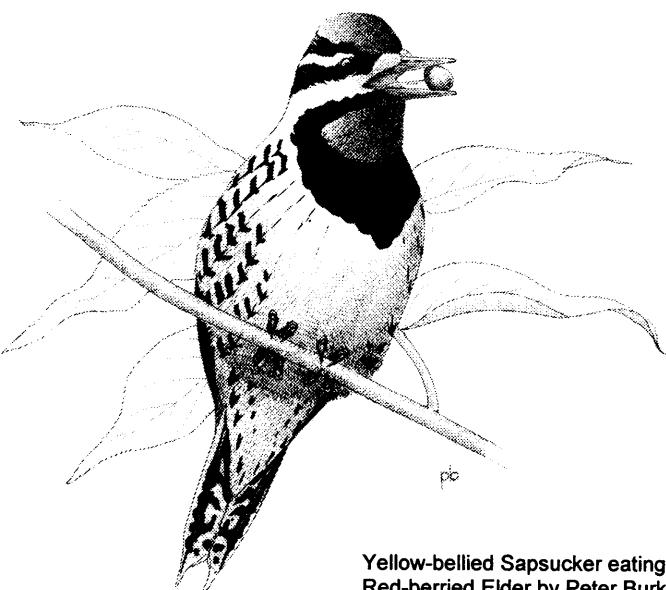
#### Taverner Cup

World Series Champion Bruce Di Labio and his team of Jim Harris, Chris Traynor and driver Dan Pierson won the first Taverner Cup with 180 species on 24 May 1997. Bruce says the key to winning is having the best route and a designated driver. Their route was Ottawa, Algonquin, Presqu'ile, Chaffey's Locks and back to Ottawa. Runner-up team with 176 species was Mike Runtz, Doug McRae, Peter Burke, Colin Jones and their designated driver. Teams from all over Ontario are expected to participate in next year's second Taverner Cup.

## Elderberry Birds

by Ron Pittaway

When the fruit of the Red-berried Elder (*Sambucus racemosa* ssp. *pubens*) ripens in mid-July, there's no better place to observe shy woodland birds. For instance, on 14 July 1996, Jean Iron and I birded Mount Madawaska in the Ottawa Valley west of Renfrew. A good road goes to the top where there is a communication tower and interesting sideroads to explore. This quiet landscape with its interspersion of mixed forest, scrub and openings is superb for songbirds. Between the openings, clumps of Red-berried Elder in fruit were loaded with birds. In addition to Cedar Waxwings and American Robins, which we normally associate as fruit eaters, we saw Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Gray Catbird, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Veery, Hermit Thrush and even a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker all eating the juicy red berries. There seemed to be a sense of panic among birds as if they were saying "get them while they last".



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker eating Red-berried Elder by Peter Burke

Seeing kingbirds and tanagers eating berries seems surprising because we usually think of them as insect eaters, but in fact they are mainly fruit eaters during the winter while in the tropics.

Red-berried Elder is one of the few native shrubs with ripe fruit for birds in mid-summer. It is identified by its opposite, compound leaves (each leaf usually with five leaflets) and cone-shaped clusters of small red berries. Broken stems show a brown pith. It is locally common along roadsides and forest openings in southern Ontario, cottage country and Algonquin Park, becoming infrequent in northern Ontario.

In late August and September, also watch for Common Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). Its fruit is prized by 43 species of birds according to the Peterson's guide to trees and shrubs. It is identified by its opposite, compound leaves (each leaf usually with seven leaflets). Broken stems show a white pith. The berries are purplish black in flat topped or slightly rounded clusters. It grows in open wet edges of creeks and meadows of southern Ontario north to Lake Nipissing.

If you find patches of elderberries this summer, stake them out, you'll see lots of birds.

# Boreal Chickadee

*in*

## The Birds of North America

by Margaret McLaren

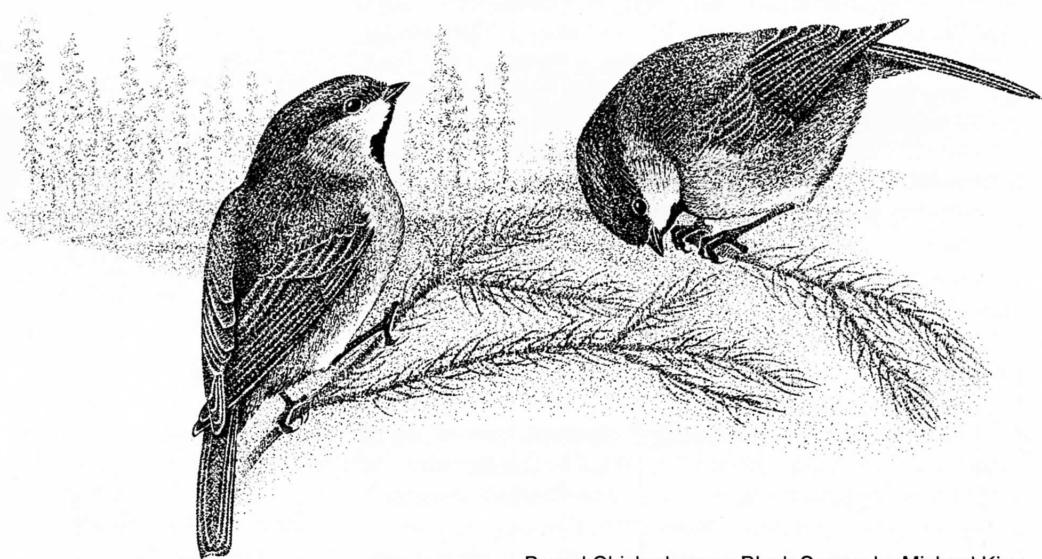
That I would be an author of a species account in *The Birds of North America* never crossed my mind until I received a telephone call from Millicent (Penny) Ficken. She and Jack Hailman, two US researchers who have done extensive work on communication and behaviour in chickadees, were approached by *The Birds of North America* editors to complete the Boreal Chickadee account. Since my two papers in the mid-1970s remain the only major papers on Boreal Chickadees in the scientific literature, Penny and Jack thought that I should be invited to participate. Penny's detective work in locating me from a several times out-of-date address on my papers paid off since I was able to bring unpublished information from Ontario researchers (including Ross James, now retired from the Royal Ontario Museum and Dan Welsh then of the Canadian Wildlife Service) to the task.

I have been interested in birds in general and chickadees in particular for as long as I can remember. One of my earliest memories is of watching the Blue Tits in the half coconut attached to our garden fence in England. This early fascination with birds stayed with me through my later childhood in Canada but my interest was soon transferred to our Canadian species and especially the Black-capped Chickadee. However, when I went to graduate school and was casting about for a Master's project, it seemed that far too much was already known about Black-caps—and this was before Susan Smith had published her work on the intricacies of chickadee society! Boreal Chickadees were clearly poorly known. There were mentions of them in many 'birds of' publications, but there were only notes from the early part of the century in the main scientific literature. Also, I had seen them in Algonquin Park, an accessible location with facilities for graduate students at the Wildlife Research Station. Most people who had worked in Algonquin, however, advised me that my chosen species was far too sparse in the park to provide enough information for a thesis. Only Ray Stefanski, still a colleague at the Ministry of Natural Resources, advised that Boreal Chickadees were reasonably common in the park. Since Ray had reason to notice, having done his own Master's on Black-capped Chickadees in Utah before coming to the University of Toronto, I chose to accept his view.

In fact, in parts of Algonquin dominated by spruces, Boreal

Chickadees are almost as common as Black-caps. They are easily overlooked, though, as they are much less vocal than Black-caps and most people are unfamiliar with their relatively frequent *chit chit* call. This call is often given when a Boreal Chickadee is slightly agitated. I heard it in mild territorial conflicts, during intraspecific conflicts over food, and from birds startled by the sudden appearance of another chickadee. The *chit* call and the *chickadee-dee* call (which rarely has more than two *dees* in this species) are by far the easiest way to find Boreal Chickadees.

Finding nests is easiest early in the spring and very difficult



Boreal Chickadees on Black Spruce by Michael King

after incubation begins. As spring progresses, Boreal Chickadee pairs can be found feeding together on material fallen onto the remaining snow at the base of spruces and other conifers. Several of my study pairs lived around the edges of the Algonquin airfield and I could regularly find them by walking along the roads and trails, listening for calls, including the *seep* call that is similar to the parallel contact call in the Black-capped Chickadee. At other seasons it could be frustrating to discover that I had just spent 10 minutes searching the branches only to find a Black-capped Chickadee. However, in spring, as the snow was melting, Boreal Chickadees were easy to find as they fed on the remaining snow under spruces and other conifers.

By early May, the pair is actively searching for a suitable nesting cavity and usually feeds in the general vicinity of a cavity they are excavating. Sooner or later, both will cease feeding and fly to the cavity for a bout of excavation. The amount of time that a pair takes to excavate a cavity depends very much on the state of the stump or dead branch chosen. In very soft wood, a pair can dig a hole 20 cm deep in a day. When

the wood is harder, it may take 10 days to fully excavate the cavity. The birds do not seem to have any particular appreciation for the structural integrity of their chosen cavity. They will abandon what appear to be perfectly sound cavities yet nest in rotten birch stubs that are held together only by bark.

One pair excavated a cavity in an aspen stub for several days before abandoning it. A pair of Black-capped Chickadees subsequently nested successfully in this cavity. Another pair of Boreal Chickadees nested in a very rotten birch stub. Their young were forced to leave the nest three days before normal fledging when the bark supporting the cavity gave way. These young could not actually fly but they were quite able to avoid capture by me. They were either lucky or also able to avoid other predators since they were still near their nest site and flying well several days later.

Algonquin Park is the very southern edge of the Boreal Chickadee's range in Ontario and only supports the numbers it does because it is perched on the Algonquin Dome. The higher altitude of the Dome has allowed development of coniferous habitats normally found only further north in the true boreal forest where Boreal Chickadees are much more widespread.

Being a true bird of the boreal forest has put the Boreal Chickadee high on the list of potential "indicators of sustainability" for forestry in Ontario. Since the Brundtland Commission put forth the idea of sustainable development and the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro endorsed the concept, many countries and their natural resource industries have been looking for ways to demonstrate that they are operating sustainably. In Canada, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) has recommended a list of "indicators of sustainability", which, if met, would give forest companies a green stamp of approval. In Ontario, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFS) requires companies cutting trees on Crown land to plan within the context of a series of "indicators of sustainability" drawn from the CCFM list. One Ontario indicator is "habitat for selected wildlife species".

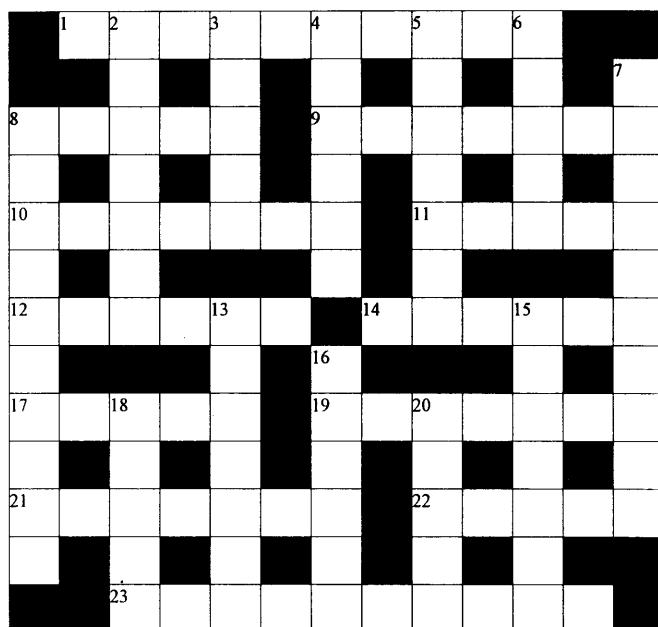
The Boreal Chickadee has a number of characteristics that make it a suitable species for an indicator. It is a hole nester and forestry activities often result in fewer old dead trees, and therefore, fewer holes being available for hole-nesting birds. It is a permanent resident, which means that population changes must result from some factor in Ontario and not be the result of a change in a tropical wintering area. And, finally, it is dependent on spruce forests, especially in winter. Researchers Dan Welsh and Lisa Venier with the Canadian Wildlife Service and Canadian Forest Service have been working on a viability model for Boreal Chickadees and, while their work is not yet complete, it suggests that the increase of boreal mixed wood habitats at the expense of pure spruce is not good for Boreal Chickadees.

The emphasis on more holistic forest management is good news for Boreal Chickadees and other forest birds. It resulted from pressure from the public for management of forests for more than just wood products, and even Ontario's business-oriented Conservative government has made no effort to change the more ecologically oriented approach heralded by the CFS. Nevertheless, to ensure that the benefits of the new approach are realized for birds and other forest species, birders and other environmentalists must continue to remind forest companies that the forest is more than just trees.

*Margaret McLaren is a biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in Peterborough.*

## Crossbird Puzzle

by Gerry Bennett



### Across

1. This bird cuts the *surface*
8. See 14 across
9. Like a wet hen (could be earring)
10. So right! (2 words)
11. Good night, fairy bluebird
12. Set in—like an egg in a nest
14. With 8 across—where little apteryxes come from (3 words)
17. Heron—to Caesar
19. Has warbler and sparrow for namesakes
21. Ahead of
22. Regurgitates (like a vulture feeding young)
23. Duck or tarpaulin returned

### Down

2. Surnia
3. The answer is a goose
4. Common African nest architect
5. Birdbanding
6. She's queen of France
7. Inexperienced Fringillid
8. Gulls that might interrupt a catnap
13. White-throated robin (or Persian)
15. Possibly Jewish
16. Where to find Spanish birds
18. Kind of column (but not about birds)
20. Neotropical grackle

*Answers page 7*

## World Champion Birders

OFO congratulates the Canadian team who won the 14th Annual World Series of Birding in New Jersey on Saturday 10 May 1997. The team comprised Bruce Di Labio, Tom Hince, Paul Pratt and designated driver Glenn Gervais, all of Ontario. They saw a total of 217 species in the state. The runner-up team was last year's winner, the Birder's World team, with 211 species. This is the third championship for the Canadian team who won in 1993, 1995 and 1997. In this international competition, teams record by sight or sound as many species as possible from midnight to midnight.

*The teams collectively raised over half a million US dollars for bird conservation.*

# Woodcock Woodlands

by Ron Pittaway

Eastern populations of the American Woodcock are dropping by about three percent a year according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Ontario populations are declining too, but not as sharply as more eastern ones. Why? The reason is changing habitat due to urban development, selective logging (fewer clearcuts), better control of forest fires, but mostly because of maturing forests (plant succession).

The American Woodcock is a sandpiper adapted to the forest floor of young forests up to 30 years old. Prime woodcock habitat includes: young open deciduous (hardwood) woodlands for nesting; alder and aspen (poplar) thickets on soft moist ground to allow probing for earthworms by day; and clearings in the forest for twilight courtship displays and for roosting at night. Woodcock avoid peatlands, pure coniferous and mature deciduous woodlands.

Woodcock habitats and populations increased because of the openings and young forests that followed pioneer logging, uncontrolled forest fires and land clearing by settlers. Now many of these habitats are growing out of the early stages of succession needed by woodcock. The American Woodcock is unlikely to become threatened in Ontario, but we can expect further declines because of habitat changes.

Many of the conditions responsible for the loss of woodcock habitat cannot be changed, but we can do some habitat management to stem the decline. As an example, in 1996 the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre north of Minden was funded by The Ruffed Grouse Society to improve habitat for American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse. Frost Centre staff prepared a plan for the habitat management. Four areas were cut. First, a one hectare overgrown plot was cleared. Fifteen years ago this plot provided habitat for two displaying males, but none in recent years. This area will be maintained as a permanent opening (singing ground) for woodcock. Nearby, a two-fifths hectare plot was clearcut to regenerate Trembling Aspen. Two smaller plots were also cleared to create forest openings. Most of the Frost Centre's 24,000 hectares is heavily forested, so these clearings are not threatening forest birds, but benefiting those species dependent on open areas in the forest.

## Courtship Call and Song of the American Woodcock

Males do their spectacular sky dances twice a day at dawn and dusk from mid-March to early June. The evening display starts about 20 minutes after sunset on clear nights or about seven minutes earlier on cloudy evenings. The display period lasts 30 to 40 minutes until dark, but may go on and off all night when the moon is bright. Each sky dance lasts about one minute. Usually there are 10 to 20 flight displays before dark. The morning display begins about one half hour before sunrise.

Listen for the nasal nighthawk-like *peent* call coming every few seconds from the ground in an open area. This call is often mistaken for a Common Nighthawk long before it has returned from the south! At close range, listen for the muffled *hiccup* call just before the *peent* call. You will soon hear a continuous twittering whistle of the wings and probably see the male as he makes his first rise into the air. Fluttering in circles overhead, it looks like a bat and the twittering becomes faster. The twittering sound is made by air rushing through the three outer primaries which are stiffer and much narrower than the others. The height of the spiral is about 60-90 metres. At the apex of its spiral and during the steep zigzagging plummet back to the ground, the male utters a clear liquid chirping song, which intensifies and fills the night air. This song lasts 10-12 seconds and ends sud-



American Woodcock calling on the ground and flight display pattern  
by Michael King

denly just before landing. Back on the ground, the *peenting* calls resume, followed again and again by sky dances. Rarely heard is a sharp *cac-cac-cac* that is given by rival (chasing) males.

## How to Hear and See an American Woodcock

Pick a mild evening with no wind. Find a quiet area with a mixture of young forest and scattered openings. Try to avoid wet areas with loud singing frogs.

The trick to seeing a woodcock is to locate a male's singing ground by listening for its ground call and aerial song. Each time it flies overhead, move closer to the spot where it lands after each flight. Make an angled approach and take advantage of trees and shrubs to obscure your silhouette. Stand perfectly still and wait for the woodcock to drop back to the ground. In more open areas, you will have better results if you kneel. Since the ground is often damp, you will feel more comfortable if you wear rain pants to kneel. When you are about 20 metres from the woodcock, wait until it calls, then carefully shine a flashlight on the spot. Aim the beam to the side of the woodcock, not directly into its eyes. In my experience, woodcock seem unaware of the light and continue to call and strut. Using binoculars, you will get superb views of the Timber Doodle. Please do not approach the birds too closely or bother them if they seem disturbed.

# OFO trips

## **Future Field Trips**

**October 5 (Sunday) Presquile Provincial Park. Leader: Doug McRae. Meet at Beach 4 Parking Lot at 8:00 a.m.**

**October 19 (Sunday) Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton. Leader: Rob Dobos.**

Meet at Hutch's Restaurant on Van Wagners Beach at 8:00 a.m. Jaegers and gulls.

**October 25 (Saturday) Holiday Beach.** Leader: Paul Pratt. Meet at the hawk viewing tower at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area on County Road 50 (3 km south of Malden Centre, 30 km west of Kingsville) at 9:00 a.m.

## **Answers to Mini Bird Quiz**

*from page 1*

1. The female American Woodcock is reported to carry its young, one at a time, on flights by holding them between its legs or by pressing them against its body with its legs and bill for further support. They probably move them from dry woodland nesting sites to moist feeding areas where there are more earthworms. The woodcock's well-developed leg muscles and tendons suggest they play a role in carrying downy young.

2. In most shorebirds, the newly hatched young instinctively feed themselves with a parent watching over them. However, the female American Woodcock feeds earthworms to its young for some time after hatching. The young start probing the ground when they are about three days old. In the Common Snipe, the adults divide up the brood, with each parent rearing one to three chicks separately. The chicks are fed by an adult for the first few days, before learning to feed themselves.

## **Answers to Crossbird Puzzle**

from page 5

**Across** 1. Shearwater 8. Kiwis 9. Angrier  
10. Too true 11. Irene 12. Inlaid 14. Eggs  
of 17. *Ardea* 19. Bachman 21. Earlier  
22. Retch 23. Canvasback

**Down** 2. Hawk Owl 3. *Anser* 4. Weaver  
5. Tagging 6. Reine 7. Greenfinch 8.  
Kittiwakes 13. Iranian 15. Semitic 16.  
Iberia 18. Doric 20. Carib

## **Sharp-tailed Grouse at Gore Bay**

**by Jerry Guild**

At 5:00 a.m. on 19 April 1997, 13 hardy OFO members met their hosts, the Friends of Misery Bay, at the Gore Bay Airport. In small groups at dawn, we visited a blind set up at a long established Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. As we approached the blind, the grouse dispersed from their display area. When everyone settled in, they returned, all 50 of them, chattering and jumping, seemingly in great confusion, then slowly quietening down until there was silence. Soon their mating and ritual courtship dancing and chattering started again. The males lowered their heads and ruffled their feathers, while rapidly stamping their feet and inflating their purple neck patches to produce a low booming sound. This magnificent sight was repeated several times.

Afterwards, several local club members took us to other smaller leks and areas of birding interest. The group saw 24 Sandhill Cranes, a Pileated Woodpecker and a Bald Eagle. Later we heard Barred Owl and American Woodcock calling at dusk with Hale Bopp in the sky.

We would like to thank Doreen Bailey, Steve Hall, Terry Land and the Friends of Misery Bay for treating us to early morning coffee, refreshments and a short presentation on the history of the lek at Gore Bay. The Friends have a keen interest in protecting the Sharp-tailed Grouse population on Manitoulin Island. Previously Greater Prairie-Chickens bred on Manitoulin Island, but they are gone now because of changing habitat and hybridization with Sharp-tailed Grouse. Our visit opened up a new birding area for OFO members. We are all looking forward to next year's Manitoulin trip.

# Prince Edward Point

**by Terry Sprague**

The destination for this field trip on Saturday 18 May 1997 was originally set for Sandbanks Provincial Park, but poor birding at the park during the previous week resulted in an unanimous decision to head for Prince Edward Point. Approximately 30 OFO members were in attendance for the field trip.

Because of the cool, rainy weather throughout much of early May, warbler migration was still slow at the Point although repeated visits to the Point Traverse woods yielded 19 species of warblers and vireos during the course of the day. Among the more interesting finds were Yellow-throated Vireo, Northern Parula, Tennessee Warbler and Blackpoll Warbler. Also found at the Point were Swainson's Thrush, Lincoln's Sparrow and plenty of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, two pairs of which were nesting. Palm Warblers were still about and there were still lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers. Two immature Bald Eagles were seen on Middle Road, a few kilometres west of Prince Edward Point.

The field trip coincided with the first annual Prince Edward County Birding Festival. Also present were members of the Brighton Presqu'ile Field Naturalists, Prince Edward County Field Naturalists and Quinte Field Naturalists, along with birders from Vermont and Montreal. With 332 species of birds recorded in the county, Prince Edward County is an excellent spot for spring birding.

**The Blenheim Sewage Lagoons** are now accessible to birders with a permit. Please apply in person or by letter to: The Town Clerk, Box 2128, 35 Talbot Street West, Blenheim ON N0P 1A0 With your permit you will receive the combination to the lock on the gate.

*OFO appreciates the cooperation of the town of Blenheim.*

ANSWER

**Lake Ontario Pelagic?** Shaker Cruise Lines now runs a passenger ferry between Toronto and Port Dalhousie (St. Catherines), leaving 5 Queens Quay West in Toronto. The one way trip takes about one and a half hours. On weekends and some weekdays, a Niagara River cruise goes to Queenston. The ferry is a stable and comfortable converted coastguard vessel, and birders are permitted on the outside deck. Several birders recently tried the ferry and think it has possibilities in the fall for jaegers and other migrants. Cost: \$27.00 round trip. Niagara River tour add \$10.00 from Toronto. For the schedule, fares and more information, call (416) 364-3938 or toll free 1-888-VIA-LAKE.

## Notes from the OBRC

by Ron Tozer

The Ontario Bird Records Committee held its Annual Meeting at the Royal Ontario Museum on 22 March 1997. The meeting was primarily devoted to final decisions on records still under review. Two new species were added to the Ontario Checklist this year, namely Bicknell's Thrush and Bullock's Oriole, while Eared Grebe was accepted as a new breeding species for the province. Details of these and other records will appear in the Annual Report to be published in the August issue of *Ontario Birds*.

Unfortunately, a number of reports were received too late in 1996 for review, and so have been carried over for consideration by the 1997 Committee. Any questions about the status of a report submitted that does not appear in the Annual Report should be directed to the Secretary. For those rare bird reports that were not accepted by the Committee in 1996, a letter of explanation (along with copies of the members' comments) will be sent to the submitters by the Chair.

Bob Curry and Ron Pittaway were elected to the OBRC for three year terms starting in 1998. Bob has had three previous terms as an OBRC member (1982-84, 1986-88, and 1992-95), while Ron has had two (1984-87 and 1991-94). Both of these very experienced and knowledgeable birders have served as OBRC Chair and Secretary, and we are extremely fortunate to have them return to the Committee. Ron Tozer was selected as Chair for 1997, and Rob Dobos has generously agreed to continue as Secretary.

We would like to make a special request for submissions of reports for the following sightings:

### Black-capped Petrel sightings in September 1996.

Some reports have been received, but we would like more to get a complete picture of occurrences.

### Cinnamon Teal, April 1995, female and hybrid male at Rattray Marsh

### Tufted Duck, January-February 1996, female at Toronto Harbour

### Mississippi Kites, May 1996, at Point Pelee

### Baird's Sparrow, July 1996, at Rainy River

As always, we strongly encourage observers to submit reports of their sightings to the OBRC in order to document properly the status of rare birds in Ontario. Review List species are indicated on the new *Field Checklist of Ontario Birds 1997* (a free copy was mailed with your April issue of *Ontario Birds*).

Please send your rare bird reports directly to:

Rob Dobos, OBRC Secretary  
1156 5th Concession Road West, RR 2  
Waterdown ON L0R 2H2  
E-mail: rob.dobos@ec.gc.ca

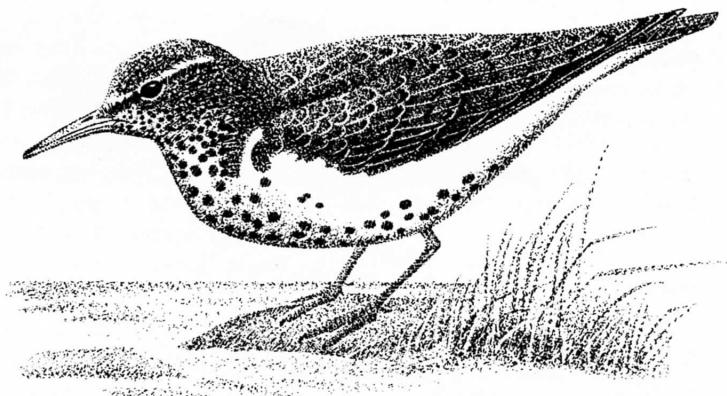
### 1997 OBRC Members

Ron Tozer (Chair), Rob Dobos (Secretary),  
Margaret Bain, Dave Brewer, Peter Burke, Nick  
Escott, Richard Knapton and Don Sutherland

## Portrait of an Artist

Michael King

by M.A. Groenenberg



Spotted Sandpiper by Michael King

Michael was raised by a mother who is an artist and a father interested in nature. Under their influence, Michael's lifelong passions have flip-flopped. As a child he was fascinated with birds; he would lie on the lawn under a blanket covered with bread crumbs in order to feel the birds hop on top of him. However, as a teenager his main focus was making art, primarily drawing and sculpture. Eventually, he attended and graduated with honours from the Ontario College of Art.

After exhibiting at several galleries, Michael made an abrupt about-face and for the last 15 years, birds have been his primary focus. His most notable travels include a half year birding stint in Mexico and Guatemala and a transatlantic sailboat voyage.

Only last year has he combined his two preoccupations, nature and art making, and this has allowed him to see both in a new and more thoughtful way.

Michael's other interests include dragonflies and macrophotography.

In this and previous issues of OFO NEWS, Michael illustrated birds to complement many articles. Also, he designed the maps for *Favourite Birding Hotspots*.

## OFO on the Net

For the latest from OFO, visit our Web Page

[www.interlog.com/~ofo](http://www.interlog.com/~ofo)

E-mail: [ofo@interlog.com](mailto:ofo@interlog.com)

maintained by David Catrall and John Barker

Our Web Page has had over 12000 visitors since its inception in July 1996

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