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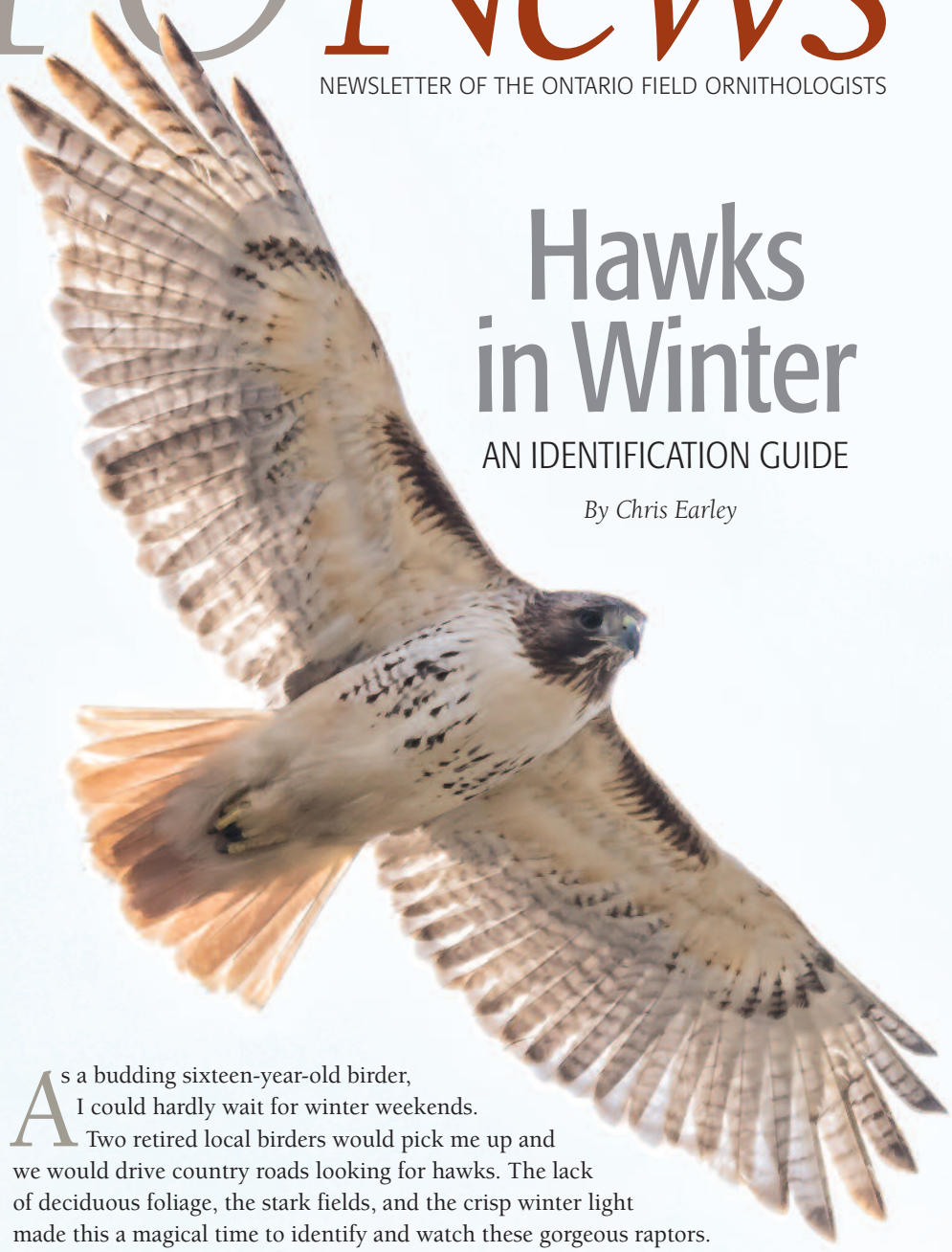
OFO News

NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS



Red-tailed Hawk
Photo by Tim Arthur

Hawks in Winter

AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

By Chris Earley

Adult Red-tailed Hawk
Photo by Karl Egressy

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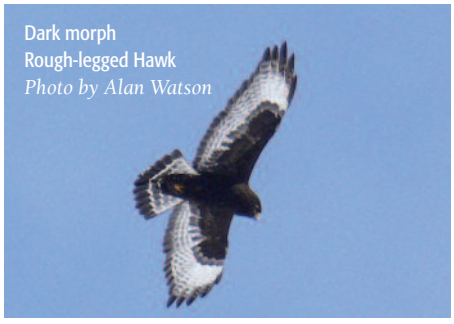
As a budding sixteen-year-old birder, I could hardly wait for winter weekends. Two retired local birders would pick me up and we would drive country roads looking for hawks. The lack of deciduous foliage, the stark fields, and the crisp winter light made this a magical time to identify and watch these gorgeous raptors. I still consider winter the best time for hawk-watching. Spring and fall hawk migration is impressive, but I like seeing raptors interacting with their environment, whether it be calmly observing a Red-tail hunting from an isolated oak on the edge of a soybean field, or experiencing the thrill of a Cooper's Hawk zipping past the feeder in my backyard.

If you really want to learn how to identify raptors, you will follow this bit of advice: Watch every Red-tailed Hawk you find very carefully

Too many birders see the red tail and then just move on to another bird. Instead, use that red tail to confirm your identification, and then look at all the other great field marks that these birds have. Check out the streaked belly band — heavy on some birds, lighter on others. Note the large majestic head, the strong legs and feet, and the overall feeling of a bulky, heavy bird — typical of hawks in genus *Buteo*. On the back, you might notice a light "V" pattern starting at

Light morph
Rough-legged Hawk
Photo by Karl Egressy



Dark morph
Rough-legged Hawk
Photo by Alan Watson

Juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk
Photo by Karl Egressy

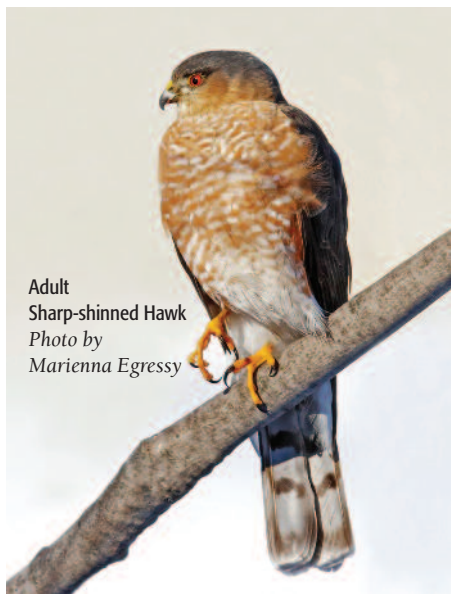
the shoulders and almost coming to a point in the middle of the lower back. This can often be seen at a far distance. On birds in flight, look for a very distinctive marking that Red-tailed Hawks have: the patagial mark. This bar is especially useful if the Red-tail is young and does not have a red tail. That's right: juvenile Red-tails do not live up to their names. Luckily for us, they still have a very distinctive tail pattern of many thin bars. If you get good at really seeing all of these amazing Red-tail field marks, you are going to notice when something is missing, and that, my friends, will help you identify the other common diurnal raptors of winter.

Rough-legged Hawk

As another *Buteo*, this hawk has a Red-tail's basic overall shape, but there are a few differences to watch for, like a smaller head, smaller beak, smaller feet, and feathered legs. Rough-legs come in two main "flavours" for your hawk-watching appetite: The common light morph usually has a dark belly band and a light head. In flight, it has prominent dark wrist patches and a light tail with one or a few bands at the tip. The dark morph is mostly dark brown, and, while less common, is definitely worth searching for on a winter hawk watching adventure. When dark morph Rough-legs fly over a snowy field on a cold sunny day, the reflected sun will highlight the white bases of the flight feathers on the wings and tail, making this one of our most magnificent looking hawks.

Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk

Together, these accipiters are our biggest challenge. Both have grey upperparts and rusty-barred underparts as adults, and brown upperparts with streaked underparts as juveniles. The Sharp-shinned is the smaller of the two — a male is about the size of a Blue Jay. As is the norm with raptors, the female is larger than the male and may be almost as big as some male Cooper's Hawks. The best way to tell the two apart is to look at the underside of the tail of a perched bird. "Sharpies" have feathers that are all a similar length. Cooper's



Adult
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Photo by
Marienna Egressy

feathers will be different lengths, with the outer two (which are the ones you see the most on the undertail) being the shortest. These guys take a lot of practice, so don't get frustrated!

Juvenile Cooper's Hawk
Photo by Karl Egressy

Male American Kestrel
Photo by Karl Egressy

Merlin
Photo by Karl Egressy

Northern Goshawk

Uh oh, another accipiter! At least the adults of this species are easier due to their black masks, white eyebrows, and thin grey salt-and-pepper breast bars. Unfortunately, the juveniles can be tricky to separate from immature Cooper's Hawks. The best identification feature is the goshawk's heavy streaks on their underparts that go right down onto their undertail coverts; Cooper's streaks are usually thinner and stop on the lower belly. As well, if you get a good look at a perched bird, the tail bands on a Northern Goshawk are often "wiggly" and may have a thin light line on their edges. This is much easier to see on the top of the tail.

American Kestrel and Merlin

When I was a kid, finding a Merlin was difficult, but now they are nesting in our suburban areas and I see them more than kestrels. Both have the falcon family's long, pointed wings, but the Merlin is a stronger bird with a very powerful flight. The kestrel may not be as athletic, but it makes up for it with its colourful plumage. When in doubt, look at a small falcon's tail: Merlins have thick dark bands separated by thin white bands. Female kestrels have many thin bands, and males have very orange tails with black-spotted, white outer tail feathers, and a thick black band on the end of the tail.

Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle

The white head and tail of the massive adult Bald Eagle are hard to miss, but juveniles can be tricky. To rule out the much rarer-to-see Golden Eagle, look for the location of white markings in the underwings. Immature Balds have white speckling throughout, including the wing linings, whereas if a Golden Eagle has white on its underwing (only on juvenile birds), it is only found at the base of the flight feathers, not in the wing linings. Immature Golden Eagles also have white at the base of their tails. Adult and juvenile Goldens also have a golden nape, but this can be hard to see, especially if the bird is in flight.

Northern Harrier

A harrier's flight style is a trademark identification feature. It flies low with is wings in a "V", teetering back and forth as it looks for a juicy Meadow Vole. Both the male and the female have prominent white rumps, but the male is a light grey bird with lovely black wingtips, and the female is brown above and streaked below. Juveniles also have a distinctive appearance in that their underparts are unstreaked and cinnamon-coloured. Discovering a harrier in any plumage as it wafts over an open meadow is always a rewarding winter experience.

So, get out there and get looking! If you have a chance, find a young birder and take her or him with you, too. Who knows, you may fan the spark that rages into a fully-fledged hawk-watching geek.

Chris Earley is the interpretive biologist at The Arboretum, University of Guelph, where he has taught a hawk workshop every year since 1994.

The Golden-winged opportunist

A remarkable warbler and a century of change in Ontario

By Emily Rondel, Bird Studies Canada *Photos by Mark Peck*

The Golden-winged Warbler's range in Ontario has shifted rather than expanded.

The Golden-winged Warbler is arguably one of the most idiosyncratic bird species in North America. Despite being intensively studied for over a hundred years, new revelations about the species are continuously published, and major assumptions about its biology are regularly challenged. This species demonstrates how little we still know about some of North America's avian life, and what ornithological mysteries might be hiding in plain sight.

Forest or field?

A basic research priority for any species is understanding its breeding habitat, but this exercise has not been simple in the Golden-wing's case. Early observers noticed that Golden-winged Warbler nests were built in early-successional shrub habitat on the margins of forests, and as a result, the bird was thought of as a pioneer generalist of recently cleared lands. However, more recent research at a larger scale has revealed that the species is associated with an overall landscape that contains 50-70% mature (and mostly) deciduous forest cover. The importance of forests to Golden-wings has been revealed by studies that show that some nest material gathering and feeding of young take place in wooded areas. These large forest areas preferred by the birds must contain open patches of recently disturbed habitat where they can create nesting sites.

Range shifting and contracting

Perhaps linked to its specific habitat needs, the Golden-wing has had a dynamic history in Ontario. In Thomas McIlwraith's 1894 *Birds of Ontario*, he asserted that "(the Golden-winged Warbler) is very seldom seen in Ontario and is not abundant anywhere." In fact, all records of the species from this time period are from the extreme south of the province, hugging the Lake Erie shoreline. However, in the 1920s, widespread abandonment of marginal farmland occurred in central Ontario. As old farms reverted to shrubland, the Golden-winged Warbler colonized them. By the 1950s, the species was increasingly reported from northern Lake Ontario and southern Lake Huron shores. In the decades to come, records of the birds came from even more northerly areas such as Gravenhurst and Peterborough, and a concurrent eastward population front advanced towards Kingston. Throughout the '70s, this range expansion continued farther, with birds being recorded from Sudbury and Parry Sound. Finally, in the early 2000s, birds were recorded as far north as the Rainy River district near the Manitoba border.

Interestingly, unlike other Ontario species' range expansions (e.g. Northern Cardinal and Turkey Vulture), Golden-winged Warblers did not simply expand their range; their entire range was shifting northward and eastward as original nesting sites in southern Ontario were abandoned — a situation unlike that of any other bird species in such a short time.

Sadly, in recent years, the former northern vanguard of breeding Golden-winged Warblers has contracted — with the exception of one seemingly stable population near the Ontario/Manitoba border — with populations in places like Sudbury and North Bay reduced compared to previous decades.

The factors driving range contractions in the north and south are likely very different. In the north, local declines likely correlate with loss of habitat owing to succession and reforestation. In the south, the expansion of the Blue-winged Warbler into the previous range of the Golden-winged Warbler seems to be a major factor. Blue-wings and Golden-wings readily hybridize, and Blue-winged Warblers eventually overtake in areas where the two species overlap.

The decline of the birds in both parts of the Ontario range may also be augmented by the possible loss of winter and migratory habitat, as in other migratory bird species. However, the extent of this threat is not yet fully understood since the complete wintering range of the Golden-winged Warbler has not yet been determined. A number of studies are attempting to fill this knowledge gap through geolocator studies, and use of stable isotope signatures from the birds' feathers.

Blue-winged Warbler

Insights from hybridization – two types of DNA, two different stories

Although hybridization occurs occasionally across all bird groups, and among certain taxa more than others, the Golden-winged Warbler is one of the few songbirds that readily and regularly hybridizes with another closely related species.

Research into the exact nature of the Golden-winged Warbler and the Blue-winged Warbler relationship has been largely limited by the genetic technology available. Birds, like humans, have two sets of DNA: nuclear DNA, which are present in the nucleus of every cell in the body and determines most of the traits and characteristics an individual exhibits, and mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which are part of the machinery of cells. Because mitochondria are passed from mother to offspring in the egg, we (and birds) only inherit this type of DNA from our mothers.

Nuclear DNA can reveal a lot more about the ancestry of individuals than mtDNA. For one, its genome is much larger, meaning that there is more DNA to look through for species-specific markers. Additionally, nuclear DNA is inherited from both an individual's mother and father, thus allowing more meaningful insights about hybridization. In spite of such advantages, it has not been possible to reliably tell Golden-wings and Blue-wings apart using traditional nuclear techniques — the material is simply too similar.

The similarity of the two species' nuclear genomes is especially interesting in light of their differences in mtDNA. The mtDNA signature of the Golden-wing and the Blue-wing are different enough from one another to imply that these are clearly two distinct species (i.e. more different than other closely related pairs of birds); however, the nuclear DNA of these species is so similar that the species couldn't be told apart in this way until new genetic technology (Next Generation Sequencing) was used in 2016 to search the entire genomes of the Golden-winged Warbler and Blue-winged Warbler for nuclear genetic markers that separated them. Broadly, the results of this exercise reveal that the genes for plumage characteristics are the only ones that have been found to be different. In other words, these two species are the same bird, but wearing different outfits.

Questions abound

There are many questions that remain to be answered about the Golden-winged Warbler. For example, if Golden-wings and Blue-wings are the same in all ways except plumage, why do such large areas of their respective breeding ranges remain distinct? Exactly what has been the impetus for the enormous range shift that Golden-winged Warblers (and Blue-wings) have exhibited? Should we start to think of these birds as colour morphs of the same species, or are there other compelling reasons for considering them separately? What does such a complex history of hybridization do to our understanding of speciation? When these broad and philosophical questions are applied to the case of a species at risk such as the Golden-wing, they acquire an urgency that goes beyond the theoretical; real birds may live or perish as a direct result of the policies that arise from these ideas. In any case, the Golden-winged Warbler will keep pushing ornithologists throughout its range to think creatively and challenge their assumptions. Through this remarkable species, we have lifted the veil of a number of larger ornithological issues.

"Brewster's" Warbler

Golden-wing birding tips

Going out to find a Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, or a hybrid? Here are a few things to keep in mind.

1. Golden-winged Warbler habitats are scattered along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield from the edge of Lake Huron (west) to the Kingston area (east). If you see appropriate shrubby (or marshy) habitat adjacent to a forest edge, stop and check it out!
2. As when detecting all warblers, listen carefully! Golden-wings have two main types of songs: Type I and Type II. Most people associate the Type I song (*beee-buzz-buzz-buzz*) with the species, but are not aware of the other version, which sounds like a cascade of buzzy tones. Familiarize yourself with both song types in order to find the species, and be mindful that Blue-wings sing a virtually identical Type II song to Golden-wings.
3. A commonly encountered myth about Golden-winged Warblers, Blue-winged Warblers, and their hybrids is that hybrid birds sing some intermediary of the parental species' songs. This myth has probably developed due to the fact that there is quite a bit of song variation in Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers. It is in fact not possible to identify a hybrid by song.
4. Keep an eye out for birds (e.g. Common Yellowthroat, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Indigo Bunting) that regularly share Golden-wing habitat in Ontario, as they can be indicators you are hot on the trail of your target bird.
5. Don't try too hard to categorize hybrids as either "Brewster's" or "Lawrence's" warbler types. Studies have shown that most of the plumage traits of these birds can be inherited by hybrid offspring independently. Many birds will not fit into the general hybrid types.

Wye Marsh

Bird friendly and birder friendly in every season

By Tom Goldsmith, Wye Marsh Operations Manager

Green Herons are among the waders that are frequently seen at Wye Marsh.
Photo by Mich MacDougall

The day I began my employment at the Wye Marsh Nature Centre it seemed almost prophetic that as I walked down a wooded trail, I encountered a juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk perched on a low hanging Eastern Hemlock branch. It had been eyeing the numerous chickadees and Mourning Doves that gathered along the path. The hawk then flew straight down the path towards the small building that would be my workplace. It was almost as if it were beckoning me deep into the marsh. I followed the little accipiter that day and have never looked back.

Wye Marsh is a 47 ha National Wildlife Area (NWA) along the Wye River southeast of Midland, Ontario. It is part of the 920 ha Wye Marsh Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. The combined space allows for a diversity in habitats, including uplands, recovering agricultural spaces, and wetlands. All play an important part for nesting species and serve as an important migration flyway for countless waterfowl, raptors, and passerines.

A number of species at risk are among the hundreds of birds that inhabit Wye Marsh NWA and the surrounding area. Threatened species include the Least Bittern and Barn Swallows in the wetlands, and Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks in some of the transitional agricultural areas. Some of the species of special concern that inhabit the area through the summer include Short-Eared Owls, Bald Eagles, Wood Thrushes, and Black Terns. Summer is also a great time to observe Common Nighthawks darting across the late afternoon sky scooping up the day's hatch of flying insects. Caspian Terns and Eastern Bluebirds are watch-list species at Wye Marsh.

Wye Marsh is perhaps best known among birders as continentally significant because of its populations of Trumpeter Swans. Beginning with a single pair of captive Trumpeter Swans just a few decades ago, as many as 150 Trumpeter Swans can now be found in the marsh. These swans are no longer captive. The best time to view the swans and take advantage of photography opportunities with them is in the winter. February and March see the onsite population at its highest. It's then that large groups gather with other wintering waterfowl near the Wye Marsh Nature Centre's Waterfowl Monitoring platform at the marsh's edge.

Bird photographers will also enjoy the many other opportunities across the property. The area immediately around the interpretive centre where feeders and the ever-jubilant chickadees are kept full is particularly popular.

Wye Marsh NWA is open year-round. In addition to the interactive display hall, the Wye Marsh Nature Centre operated by Friends of Wye Marsh provides public programming for all age groups. The Centre is a not-for-profit organization and operates in partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada and other stakeholders.

If you want to discover a great new spot to explore and bird, or if it's been a while since you have visited Wye Marsh, stop by. We welcome your visit to this National Wildlife Area. Our great network of trails and boardwalks makes for comfortable and productive birding excursions for all levels of birders.

Information about hours, directions, day use fees, and other details are at ***wyemarsh.com.***

National Wildlife Areas

There are 54 National Wildlife Areas across Canada, including 10 in Ontario. Each is home to nationally significant habitats for animals or plants. They have been established by Environment and Climate Change Canada for wildlife conservation, research, and nature interpretation. Together the NWAs protect about one million ha — an area much larger than Prince Edward Island.

President's Message

For the past three years during the Niagara Gull Event weekend, the Board spends a day discussing OFO's objectives and priorities for the coming year. Happily, we all agree on OFO's mission and core values.

OFO's Mission

Our mission, which hasn't changed since OFO was founded, is to promote and increase the appreciation and knowledge of Ontario's avifauna and its conservation.

OFO's Values

- Inclusion of all people with an interest in birds and birding, regardless of their expertise
- Science-based information and education
- Working together with other groups and organizations
- Support for the protection of birds and enhancement of their habitats

Priorities

While keeping our core services going, we are expanding our focus to include these priorities:

- Improving services for OFO members
- Expanding our activities
- Promoting birding through outreach to new groups such as young birders, families, and novice birders
- Exploring partnership opportunities

This year we've expanded our OFO Facebook community, and added more field trips and workshops, including the sold-out Moosonee Trip and Nest Finding Workshop. We republished the Ontario Checklist, and plan to reissue it more often. We inaugurated a summer camp for young birders, and many new birders continue to attend our events. Lastly, we are developing fruitful partnerships with other birding and nature groups.

We accomplish all of this through volunteers, and we cannot thank our trip leaders, editors, writers, and others enough.

The Board welcomes feedback, ideas and suggestions from OFO members! Better yet, if you don't already volunteer with us, please consider offering your time and expertise to share the joy of birding with others.

Good birding,

Lynne Freeman, OFO President
president@ofo.ca

Ontario Bird Records Committee update

By Josh Vandermeulen, OBRC Chair

Several updates to the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) have occurred over the past few months. For the 2017-18 Committee, Josh Vandermeulen is now the OBRC Chair. The other Committee members for 2017-18 are Ken Burrell, Mike Burrell (non-voting Secretary), Barb Charlton (non-voting Assistant Secretary), Bill Lamond, Tim Lucas, Blake Mann, Paul Pratt, and Don Sutherland.

Several impressive rarities were found throughout the province in the summer, including Wood Stork, Tricolored Heron, Bewick's Wren, Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Violet-green Swallow, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. The OBRC thanks everyone who made submissions, or who helped the Committee in its efforts to document Ontario's rich birdlife. Observers with records of species on the review lists, such as the species mentioned above, are encouraged to submit rare bird reports. Reports can be submitted online at **ofo.ca/site/obrcreport**. Resources such as review lists and checklists are also located on the OFO website.

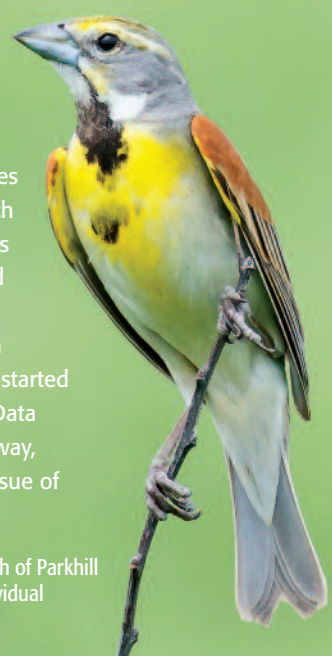
Looking ahead, two vacancies will be opening on the OBRC for the 2018-19 year. Expressions of interest and nominations are encouraged and should be submitted ahead of the spring 2018 OBRC Annual General Meeting. Specifically, the OBRC is looking for keen OFO members in good standing who are prepared to complete Committee tasks such as voting, and who have a strong record for submitting excellent documentation to the OBRC, have demonstrated expert knowledge of Ontario's avifauna, and have a clear understanding of scientific processes. Correspondence can be directed to the **OBRC@ofo.ca.**

American Ornithological Society update

The "Check-list Supplement" published by the American Ornithological Society this summer included some changes of particular interest to Ontario birders. The Yellow-breasted Chat is no longer considered part of the warbler family. Instead, it is now the only member of the new **Icteriidae** family. Thayer's Gulls and Iceland Gulls were lumped. The former is now a subspecies of the latter. The Red Crossbill has been split into Red Crossbill and Cassia Crossbill — the latter an endemic of southern Idaho. *Visit **americanornithologypubs.org** for full details.*

Taking a deeper look at this year's Dickcissel invasion

Through June and early July, there was no species reported more on Ontbirds than Dickcissel. Much to birders' delight, the majority of these sightings were of mated pairs that could be reliably found on territories much farther north and east than usual. The phenomenon was quickly dubbed an "invasion," and the *Ontario Birds* editorial team started the process of investigating this exciting event. Data collection of all 2017 Ontario sightings is underway, and you can expect an article in an upcoming issue of our partner publication, *Ontario Birds*.



This stunning male sang repeatedly on territory just south of Parkhill on June 13 2017 while a female and possibly a third individual offered excellent views. *Photo by Tim Arthur*

OFO Convention 2017

This year's Convention in Long Point and area was a success by every measure

By Paul Nicholson

Celebrating the fellowship of Ontario birders is always a highlight. The delicious Friday buffet and Saturday banquet dinner in Port Dover were well enjoyed. The presentations were thoughtful, the birding and birds were memorable, and the wall-to-wall summery weather was spectacular.

Through Friday evening's popular Birds and Beers event with Richard Pope as the emcee, members were kept well informed and entertained. Ron Ridout delivered an excellent illustrated presentation about the birds of the Long Point area. Bird Studies Canada's Stu Mackenzie spoke about the long road to and beyond the one millionth banded bird at the Long Point Bird Observatory. Doug McRae shared a harrowing story of being a castaway years ago on Presqu'ile Provincial Park's High Bluff Island, proving yet again that drama plus time can equal comedy. Finally, Sarah Rupert presented another of her notoriously challenging bird quizzes that tested and sometimes vexed each tableful of birders.

Ron Tozer kept everyone well entertained as the emcee of the Saturday evening banquet. After sharing some of the birding highlights of the day, he introduced OFO President Lynne Freeman who led OFO members through the Annual General Meeting. She reminded the participants that the OFO is run by volunteers, and she made a point of thanking the volunteers who contribute in so many different ways.

Kevin Seymour and Lynne then had the pleasure of recognizing 12 bird-minded people who had made special contributions to the Ontario birding community over the past 12 months. OFO Certificates of Appreciation were presented. *(See article on page 11.)*

Dan Strickland received the OFO's 2017 Distinguished Ornithologist Award in honour of his decades of work with Gray Jays. Describing Dan as "the recognized world authority on Gray Jays," Ron Tozer shared with Convention goers Dan's path to Algonquin Provincial Park and the many highlights of his research that is ongoing. In accepting the Award, Dan spoke passionately about our need to claim this species as our official national bird and to once more refer to it as the Canada Jay.

The keynote presentation on Saturday evening was made by Steven Price, President of Bird Studies Canada. The theme of his talk was the plan that BSC has put in place for the coming years. Taking inspiration from past conservation successes, Steven then looked forward. He provided an overview of the status of North American birds, he fleshed out BSC's key roles, and described the ongoing importance of citizen science and conservation initiatives. He concluded by describing the five ambitious BSC goals.

Steven also underlined the power of partnerships, both international and local. His organization's commitment to partnerships was in evidence through the weekend with BSC staff and volunteers leading field trips and otherwise contributing to the success of the Convention.

Claire and Mike Nelson, Pat Tozer, Jeremy Hatt, and Neeltje VanderLaan did a tremendous job coordinating on the fundraiser.

Particular thanks are extended to Bob Cermak for coordinating another successful Convention.

Several boatloads of birders travelled from Old Cut Research Station to the tip of Long Point. *Photo by Jean Iron*

Convention keynote speaker Steven Price, President of Bird Studies Canada; OFO President Lynne Freeman; and OFO Vice President Bob Cermak.
Photo by Jean Iron

A fantastic group of young birders participated this year. *Photo by Jody Allair*

OFO Convention 2017 field trips

By Ron Tozer

There were 188 bird species reported by OFO Convention 2017 participants at Long Point and nearby areas during this three-day event. That total is the highest ever recorded at an OFO Convention.

The Convention format was expanded to three days in 2012 and since then the species totals have been as follows: in 2012 at Presqui'le (178), 2013 at Point Pelee (178), 2014 in Ottawa (152), 2015 at Point Pelee (184) and in 2016 in Kingston (181).

Despite the unprecedented extended period of clear and hot days before and during the Long Point Convention, participants were treated to an excellent variety of species on the many field trips led by experienced and enthusiastic birders who knew the area and its birds well. Some of the locations visited were Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons, Port Burwell Provincial Park, Hawk Cliff, the tip of Long Point, Long Point Provincial Park, Bird Studies Canada's Old Cut Research Station and Headquarters, Big Creek National Wildlife Area, The Coves, Port Rowan Wetlands, Turkey Point Provincial Park, Silver Lake, Port Dover Pier, Townsend Sewage Lagoons, and Rock Point Provincial Park. As always at these conventions, field trip participants got to go birding in new areas and enjoyed the company and experience of other OFO members.

Among the noteworthy birds observed were Cackling Goose, King Rail, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Parasitic Jaeger, Little Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, White-eyed Vireo, Hooded Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Total species reported for the following groups are shown in parentheses: waterfowl (23), shorebirds (18), gulls (6), warblers (24), and sparrows (8). The complete species list is posted on the OFO website at **www.ofo.ca**.

Thanks again to all the organizers, Bird Studies Canada, the trip leaders and the participants for a very successful Convention.

Start planning now to attend the OFO's 2018 Convention at Point Pelee, September 28 - 30.

Feedback from Convention 2017

Consolidated by Bob Cermak

Convention attendees were asked to fill out a survey about the Convention and OFO. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback about the excellent quality of the Birds and Beers buffet on September 22, and the family-style banquet meal the following evening. Many commented that the Saturday evening presentations ran too late. OFO agrees and will ensure that this event will finish earlier in the future. A number of members asked that Convention field trips be split into smaller groups, and a few indicated that it was difficult to stay with convoys. OFO will continue to address these considerations.

Feedback was extremely positive about OFO and its services. Thank you! Regarding the format of *OFO News*, 64% of respondents prefer to receive a print newsletter rather than a PDF version. Also, 80% have a preference for reading a printed copy to reading the newsletter on our website. Similarly, 70% prefer to continue receiving a printed copy of our field trip schedule instead of reading that annual document on our website. A few commented that they would like OFO to increase advocacy for support of preservation of threatened species and habitats.

Convention prize donors

OFO sincerely thanks the many donors of raffle prizes and all who purchased tickets and generously contributed $1,775.40 to the organization.

We appreciate the efforts of Pat Tozer, Jeremy Hatt, and Neeltje VanderLaan for their help setting up the raffle tables and selling tickets. Thanks to Jeremy Hatt for finding prize donors, and special thanks to Claire Nelson for her hard work finding prize donors and organizing the raffle.

Art by Peleegirl - Sarah Rupert
Bill Read
Bill and Barbara Bowman
Bird Studies Canada - Jody Allair
Brian Hobbs
Burning Kiln Winery, St. Williams - Karen Matthews
Celestron/Kowa - Gary Stephey
Cottage North Soapworks, Port Dover
Doerksen Country Store, Port Rowan
Dover Apothecary, Port Dover
Eagle Optics/Vortex Canada - Paul Grant
Friends of Algonquin Park
Friends of Long Point Bird Observatory, Port Rowan - Diane Salter
Friends of Point Pelee and Point Pelee National Park, Leamington
Frisky Beaver Wine Company, Port Dover
Golden Belt Feeds, Simcoe
Halmo Jewellers, Simcoe
Huron Fringe Birding Festival - Norah Toth/Friends of MacGregor Point Park - Fred Jazvac
Knechtel Foods Catering, Port Dover

Robert Worona and Sharon David celebrated their good fortune following the Saturday evening Convention raffle. *Photo by Jean Iron*

Long Point Basin Land Trust, Port Rowan - Lyndsay Shular
Long Point Eco-Adventures, St. Williams - K. Marshall
Live Right Pet Supplies, Simcoe
Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation (LPWBRF) - Shirley Rothery
McGregor Point Provincial Park
Nature Conservancy of Canada - Linda Branderhorst
Norfolk Field Naturalists, Simcoe - Inga Hinnerichsen
Norfolk Tourism & Economic Development, Simcoe - Clark Hoskin
Pelee Wings Nature Store - Mike Malone
Port Dover Jewellery & Gifts, Port Dover
Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory - Cheryl Anderson
Quest Nature Tours - Justin Peter
Rettie Farm, Norwich - Martin and Kathy Parker
Ritchie Feed & Seed, Ottawa - Jim Tutton
Robert Alvo, Ottawa
South Coast Gardens, St. Williams - Kevin Kavanaugh
Southside Louie's Restaurant, Port Dover
Toronto Ornithological Club
Wilderness Places Paintings - Paul Harpley

Young birders found Gray Jays near Lake Opeongo in Algonquin Provincial Park during their July camp. This species was a life bird for some camp participants.

Photo by Quinten Wiegersma

Inaugural Alan Wormington Memorial Camp for Young Birders

By Quinten Wiegersma

On July 13, 2017, eleven budding teenaged naturalists met at the Wildlife Research Station in the heart of Algonquin Park for the first Alan Wormington Memorial Camp for Young Birders. It was led by Jeff and Angela Skevington. After getting settled into what would be our home for the next three days, we walked around a bit and discovered the Algonquin mosquitoes. Soon, the plans for the weekend were laid out, and all of the campers were excited.

The first evening we explored the Old Railroad Bike Trail. The bird highlights here were distant Barred Owls and a Northern Saw-whet Owl; however, the excitement didn't stop there. Soon after starting the walk, we stumbled across a bull Moose. Further up the trail, while listening to the Barred Owl, one member of the group found a Black Bear, and the owl was quickly forgotten. Beavers and another Moose followed suit. Heading back to our home base, some of us were lucky to spot an Eastern Wolf crossing the highway, making for the Algonquin "Big Three" mammals all on the first night.

The next morning, we set out on a canoe trip up Hailstorm Creek in Lake Opeongo's North Arm. Although the rain was coming, we set off, determined to make the best of it. We soon found Gray Jays — a lifer for some people. We made our way down the creek, coming across two Red Crossbills and nesting Sandhill Cranes. A River Otter made an appearance, too. Somewhat surprisingly, only one canoe tipped — too bad it was mine!

We woke up early the next morning to join a researcher who was studying small mammals. While we followed her as she checked the trap lines and tagged any rodents that were part of the study, a Black-backed Woodpecker showed up. The Old Airfield was next, and we were very happy with what we found: White-winged Crossbills, Boreal Chickadee, Pink-edged Sulphur butterfly, and blueberries! Later in the day, we were fortunate to get a tour of the Visitor Centre's private collections. That afternoon, some of us went with Jeff Skevington and found salamanders, including the uncommon Northern Two-lined, and then heard some of his entertaining stories from his time as an Algonquin Park Naturalist.

Our last day was another early start, but we wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Boreal birding was the plan, so we set off along Opeongo Road. Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were singing, and we soon came across a group of Gray Jays which came in to be fed. This was a highlight for the group. Before we knew it, our time in Algonquin had come to an end. Even without a Spruce Grouse sighting, the group saw 98 species of birds, plus dozens of other life form species. Many new friendships were forged and a new-found love for Algonquin has been established.

Many thanks to the Skevingtons and to camp counsellors Lynne Freeman and Lisa Bildy. Thanks are also extended to Algonquin Outfitters, and OFO's Camp Advisory Committee for organizing such an amazing outing. I hope something similar will happen next year.

Incubation of a bird camp

By Lynne Freeman

OFO's Camp for Young Birders fits our mandate to broaden bird appreciation and knowledge, and to encourage young birders who are our future.

For a long time, young birders and their parents and guardians have been telling us that they would like a camp to round out the other opportunities such as BSC's Doug Tarry Young Ornithologist's Workshop and the ABA Camps. The OFO Camp for Young Birders is complementary to the other camps. It provides Ontario teens with advanced birding skills and broader ecology and science experiences. All of this augments what they already know and makes them better birders. Best yet, the camp brings together teens from across the province to form new friendships and share their passion for nature. OFO hopes to make the camp an annual event. It fits our mandate to broaden bird appreciation and knowledge, and to encourage young birders who are our future.

The Wildlife Research Station off Highway 60 has been providing accommodation for university researchers for over 60 years. In the past few years, the station has expanded its educational programs and encourages groups to stay and enjoy the rustic cabins, learn about the research programs, and get close to nature.

"It was quite the special feeling to wake up at 4:30 AM to the beautiful birdsong in the forest that surrounded me. I really enjoyed learning from the student researchers and their fascinating projects." remarked camper Grace Dyer. "I learned so much! Not just birds, but also bugs, plants, reptiles, and mammals."

OFO gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance of Algonquin Outfitters (**algonquinoutfitters.com**) who provided a day-long canoe trip. Algonquin Outfitters supplied our canoes, paddles, PFDs, and transportation to the trip site so the campers could enjoy a unique wilderness experience.

Thanks to the four camp counsellors. Thanks too to the camp advisory board: Jody Allair, Isabel Apkarian, Lisa Bildy, Caroline Biel, David Milsom, Mark Peck, Justin Peter, and Ian Shanahan.

OFO honours 12 for bird contributions

By Ken Burrell, OFO Certificates of Appreciation Coordinator

At the September Convention, OFO President Lynne Freeman (left) **and Kevin Seymour recognized 12 people who had made special contributions to the Ontario birding community over the past 12 months.**

Photo by Jean Iron

Each year OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions to the birds and birding community of Ontario. The following are the 2017 recipients who OFO is pleased to recognize and honour with Certificates of Appreciation:

Anouk Hoedeman, for co-founding Safe Wings Ottawa in 2013, and for her tireless efforts to reduce bird mortality from window collisions through research, rescue, and education.

Brian Ratcliff, for keeping track and assisting the OBRC with rare bird records throughout northwestern Ontario over the last decade.

Mark Peck, for his years in assisting the OBRC as ROM liaison, and for providing expert opinion on records reviewed by the OBRC over the past decade.

Margaret Bain, for compiling and organizing the Ontario section of North American Birds over the past decade.

Heidi Staniforth and Kelly Moore, operators of the Tern In Bed & Breakfast, for hosting birders at their property in Leamington while a White-winged Dove visited in May 2017.

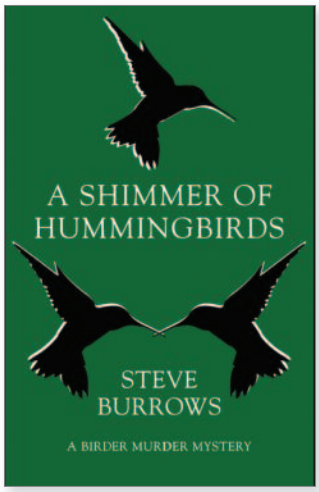
Mike Malone and Joan Walker of Pelee Wings and **Mike Wales**, for welcoming and allowing access to their properties for the many birders viewing the Magnificent Frigatebird in July 2017.

Lisa Bildy, for her generous contributions in planning and facilitating the OFO Young Birders camp.

Jeff and Angela Skevington, for volunteering as camp counsellors during the OFO Young Birders camp.

Book Review

By Geoffrey Carpentier



A Shimmer of Hummingbirds. 2017. Steve Burrows. Dundurn Press, Toronto. Softcover 372 pages. $15.95. (ISBN 978-1-4597-3530-9).

Like the first three novels in the Steve Burrows Birder Murder Mysteries, *A Shimmer of Hummingbirds* left me intrigued and spellbound right up to the last page. Unlike the first three books, however, some of the action takes place in the tropical jungles of South America.

Set partly in Colombia and partly back in Great Britain, Steve's challenge was to weave two plot lines into one cohesive book. The Colombian plot centred on Chief Insector Domenic Jejeune's apparent birding trip to find five species of endemic hummingbirds. The reality, however, was that he was there to try to clear his brother's name from a crime he admitted to, but may not have actually committed. Somehow, the hummers were a key to handling this task. The second part of the book relates to a mystery back home in England where Jejeune's arch-rival comes back to haunt him in his absence and maybe steal his job away at the same time. Marvin Laraby and Jejeune have been associates and adversaries for years, but why? And will either use their history to undermine the other?

But wait! There's another mystery unravelling as the book unfolds. Lindy Hey, Jejeune's partner, is involved in an accident that at first seems innocent. She is hurt, but fares well eventually. But was it really an accident or was Raymond Hayes involved? Faithful readers will never have heard of him until now, but rest assured he will resurface in book five. Stay tuned, for he is an evil addition to the cast of the Birder Murder Mysteries.

Steve has a great ability to combine complex plots and to somehow make sense of disparate facts. Everything he offers the reader has a purpose. Even the quirky attributes of his characters have purpose — be that to amuse, confuse, or somehow lead to a solution to the crime. And underlying all this are the birds, for in every book, birds have an essential part to play.

Without giving the heart of the book away, here are a few teasers. Laraby falls in love with one of Jejeune's associates. Does this complicate or facilitate the solving of the British crime? Laraby emerges as a great storyteller himself. At one point he speaks about cops and how they can and should do their jobs. It is a compelling analysis that drew me in completely. How can drones be used to protect birds and can they be used as a murder weapon at the same time? Does Canada have a new national bird yet? Burrows shows his support for his preferred choice. Which one did he choose? Steve shows his inner self a bit in the writing of the book. We already know he is a well-travelled birder, but his simple descriptor of himself as a birdwatcher not a bird "see-er" tells a great deal as he studies birds with an eye to understanding them. He clearly gets birds, birders, and birdwatching.

In Colombia Jejeune is tricked and falls into a pit deep in the Colombian jungle and assuredly will die, for no one is there to rescue him. In fact, no one even knows where he is, so how could they save him? If he dies, does the series end or does Laraby take over as the hero and life goes on?

If you haven't yet read any of Steve's books, you don't have to read them in order, but it does help, simply because you understand better who the key players are and how they interact and associate. Jejeune, Salter, Hey, Maik, Quentin Senior, and many more all have unique roles to play as the characters emerge in the books. *A Siege of Bitterns* and *A Pitying of Doves* are the first two books in this compelling series. Jejeune's brother is introduced in *A Cast of Falcons* and becomes a central character in *A Shimmer of Hummingbirds* as well. Each is an excellent read.

From tropical jungles to the printed page

By Geoffrey Carpentier

Steve Burrows wanted to set part of *A Shimmer of Hummingbirds* somewhere in South America. I was pleased that he joined me and a group from the Toronto Ornithological Club and North Durham Nature on a tour I had organized to explore the newly emerging ecotourism opportunities throughout Colombia. We explored many areas and saw over 500 species of birds. Included in that number are several that Steve highlights in the book as he travels with the reader along much of the ground we covered on the tour. While the mystery unfolds, Steve cleverly weaves five endemic hummingbirds into the spell-binding plot. In the field, Steve's powers of observation are remarkable, and this comes through in his writing. In fact, several details that I had initially overlooked on the journey in Colombia came rushing back through his storytelling.

The Crowned Woodnymph is one of the beautiful hummingbirds that shimmers in the subtropical lowland forests of Colombia. *Photo by Geoffrey Carpentier*

Birds and Drones

Drone tech continues to advance avian science

By David Bird

Small unmanned vehicle systems (UVS or drones) are gaining popularity among wildlife biologists and managers all over the world for conducting population surveys, tracking radio-tagged animals, sensing and observing animals in sequestered or dangerous places, mapping and monitoring wild habitats, and deterring poachers. This naturally includes avian species.

Since 2005, I, along with my graduate students and various collaborators, have experimented with using a fixed-wing UVS to survey staging flocks of Canada and Snow Geese, monitor the abundance of nesting Common Terns in a colony in Kouchibouquac National Park near Richibucto, New Brunswick, and to map breeding habitat of threatened Least Bitterns in a military wetland compound near Baie-du-Febvre, Quebec. We have also studied the potential use of rotary drones to detect heat signatures from Bobolinks near Kincardine, Ontario and Bicknell's Thrush nests; to radio-track songbirds in Quebec; and to disperse nuisance birds such as European Starlings from vineyards and blueberry crops. Furthermore, we also employed a rotary machine to record the nest contents of several raptorial bird species nesting in Saskatchewan and Montana, and monitored their respective behavioral responses. We are following up on this latter line of research by entering into a collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to produce a White Paper on the safe use of drones to census raptor nests.

Compared to using manned light airplanes or helicopters, flying drones can be cheaper, greener, less obtrusive, and much safer. (The leading cause of mortality for wildlife biologists is dying in a plane or helicopter crash.) Besides becoming an invaluable tool for researchers and conservationists, drones can also play an important role in both avian ecotourism and teaching at all levels by capturing images and video for promotional purposes on the Internet and in schools.

UVS technology is still in its infancy, however. Limitations exist in the form of regulations, costs, and in the technology itself (e.g. weather constraints, terrain, piloting skills, etc.) The 'Holy Grail' that all drone users await is the development of effective, affordable sense-and-avoid technology so that these machines can be flown "beyond visual line of sight." Once that bridge is crossed, there will be no limit to the potential that drones can bring to the world of ornithological research and bird conservation.

Dr. David Bird is the editor of the ***Journal of Unmanned Vehicle Systems*** *and Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology, McGill University.*

Join us December 2 to 3, 2017, for the Saturday workshop and Sunday field trip to meet some of Ontario's gull ID experts, and experience the spectacle of early winter gull congregations along the Niagara River.

Workshop and Gull ID Quiz
Saturday, December 2,
4:30 – 6:00 PM
LaMarsh Room, Niagara Falls Public Library on Victoria Avenue, Niagara Falls, Ontario
Pre-registration is required for this free event: Please register on the OFO website **www.ofo.ca.**

OFO Gull Field Trip
Sunday, December 3, 9:00 AM
Meet leaders Josh Vandermeulen, Marcie Jacklin, and Jeremy Bensette at the Sir Adam Beck Lookout on the Niagara Parkway.

Accommodations
A group hotel rate has been arranged at the Ramada by the River, 4367 River Road at the Whirlpool Bridge, Niagara Falls, Ontario, 905-358-5555.
Mention that you are with the OFO Birding Group to secure the special rate of $55/night (**available until November 9**). **Book early, as rooms go fast**.

For more information about the hotel, please contact Claire Nelson at **mcnelson@rogers.com.**

Little Gull *Photo by Jean Iron*

An Ontario Birds reader survey

By Chip Weseloh, Chris Risley, and Ken Abraham, co-editors of Ontario Birds

Last May, the editors of *Ontario Birds* circulated a questionnaire to 20 long-time OFO members, past editors, and authors to evaluate their level of satisfaction with and their thoughts about the current format and content of *Ontario Birds*. Most respondents were quite happy with and approving of *Ontario Birds* in its current form. Several innovative ideas and potential changes were also expressed. *Ontario Birds* will remain much as it is now with a mix of shorter notes on unusual observations, behaviours and biology of birds; longer articles on research studies and long-term monitoring or observational studies; the annual Ontario Birds Record Committee report; and the Distinguished Ornithologist Award article. Readers will notice some changes to article formats and a renewed emphasis on describing first records for Ontario. The co-editors of *Ontario Birds* will continue to make it a readable and informative journal of ornithological record for OFO.

Michel Gosselin

Profile of a Canadian Museum of Nature Ornithologist

By Ron Pittaway

Michel Gosselin examines Barred Owl specimens in 2016. *Photo by Stephanie Tessier, Canadian Museum of Nature*

Michel Gosselin began his ornithological career in Ottawa in 1978 as a Research Assistant with the National Museum of Natural Sciences, now the Canadian Museum of Nature. He retired in December 2016 as Collection Manager where he managed the National Bird Collection of over 125,000 specimens.

In his early years at the museum, Michel worked with some of the finest ornithologists in Canada including taxonomist Earl Godfrey who authored *The Birds of Canada*, taxonomist Henri Ouellet of Bicknell's Thrush fame, Arctic researcher Stewart MacDonald, artist John Crosby who illustrated *The Birds of Canada*, and ornithology technician Richard Poulin. Also working at the museum over the years were Richard Snell who studied Iceland Gulls, and OFO members Bruce Di Labio, Ross Harris, and Doug McRae.

Following budget cutbacks at the museum in 1993, Michel became the only go-to bird person at the museum, hosting researchers and fielding inquiries from across Canada and worldwide. Michel coordinated the move of the bird collection in the mid-1990s from Ottawa to the new National Heritage Campus research facility in Gatineau, Quebec, and in 2005-06 he coordinated the layout and contents of the new public Bird Gallery at the Victoria Memorial Museum in downtown Ottawa. It is the largest and most modern bird gallery in Canada with more than 500 specimens of Canadian birds.

Michel has authored or co-authored over 400 publications: popular, refereed, reports, and books. Gulls are one of Michel's longtime interests. He and co-author Normand David were the first in 1975 to discuss the field identification of Thayer's Gull, which was published in *American Birds* 29:1059-1066. Michel and I, in 2002, documented the first record of European Herring Gull in Ontario, which was published in *Ontario Birds* 20:3-6. Michel is also an accomplished artist. In 1992 he illustrated Common and Hoary Redpoll subspecies for my Recognizable Forms article in *Ontario Birds* 10:108-114.

In a letter to the editors of *OFO News* in February 2005 Michel wrote: "I find *OFO News* the most interesting Canadian bird publication currently on the market, with its always relevant topics. The recent paper on the Cackling Goose by Ken Abraham is the most informative item on this topic I have seen so far, a welcome alternative to all the controversial information that circulates on the web. The tribute by Glenn Coady about the *Last of the Curlews* by Fred Bodsworth was very informative. I read the book as a youngster, a French translation by *Reader's Digest* that my aunt ordered as part of a book club promotion. Although I cannot say that it influenced my 'career' in any way, you have to remember that there were extremely few books on the topic of birds in those years."

He is also the French Language Advisor to the American Ornithological Society's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North and Middle American Birds. This is the Committee that decides on splits and lumps, official names, and checklist order.

In retirement Michel continues at the museum as a volunteer helping with collection management. OFO is proud to have him as a member. He has in the past provided editors of *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News* with ornithological advice and information, and OFO will continue to benefit from his exceptional knowledge of birds.

Photo Quiz

Each year, as the mid-summer birding doldrums begin to give way to crisp air and cooler temperatures, many birders ready themselves for the arrival of shorebirds.

By Jon Ruddy

As strange as it may seem for birds that loiter about in open habitats, often availing prolonged close views, their identification is daunting for most people in the birding community. In order to grasp shorebird ID, one must have good knowledge of bird topography in order to critically assess both body and plumage details. The identification of this month's bird is unlocked by carefully assessing plumage details.

If you were to take a pen, could you point out the lesser, median, and greater coverts of this bird? If you're puzzled, don't fret, but do take this as a cue to revisit bird topography. It will serve you well.

Here are some basic hints that help us narrow down our options. Our quiz bird breeds in North America, and is an annual spring and fall migrant through southern Ontario. In other words, it isn't a vagrant species. Our quiz bird is not a species of phalarope or plover. Least, Semipalmated, Western, White-rumped, and Baird's Sandpipers can also be ruled out because of their small size.

Our first significant step in identifying our bird is determining its age. Is it an adult or a juvenile? Let's consider that the sighting date is September 28. Adult shorebirds migrate quite a bit earlier than do juveniles, but importantly, their plumage state by this date would range from a mixture of non-breeding (basic) and worn breeding (alternate) feathers through to entirely non-breeding (definitive basic) plumage. Essentially what this means is an overall appearance ranging from a patchy, scruffy look to a uniformly drab appearance. Our quiz bird is bright, colourful and shows beautiful scalloping throughout the upperparts. The edges to the feathers throughout the upperside are colourful and show essentially no wear at this date. With these considerations in mind, it is safe to say that our quiz bird is a juvenile.

Photo by Mark Peck

With our field guides in hand, let's consider possible species. We immediately notice that two key features to shorebird ID, the legs and the bill, are hidden from view. Is an ID still possible? Absolutely. "Western" Willet is eliminated by being pale and buffy-grey overall with low-contrast patterning throughout the upperparts. Both species of yellowlegs are eliminated by their dark brown base colour with white speckling throughout their upperparts. Solitary Sandpiper is not a match as it has quite a full, white eye ring and dark brown to the upperside with fine white spotting throughout. Spotted Sandpiper is eliminated as a possibility by the presence of a brownish upperside with boldly barred coverts, and a white shoulder spur at the side of the breast just in front of the wing bend. Upland Sandpiper is eliminated simply by both the date and the choice of habitat. Whimbrel is eliminated as a possibility by its brownish upperparts and high-contrast facial patterning consisting of strong, dark brown lateral crown stripes and pale, whitish median crown stripe. Marbled Godwit is eliminated by its buffy overall coloration with strong barring throughout the feathers to the upperparts.

Hudsonian Godwit is the closest match so far. Flipping back to the topography section of our field guide as needed, we see that juvenile Hudsonian Godwits are generally quite grey throughout the upperside and, in effect, the same could be said about our quiz bird. However, juvenile Hudsonian Godwits show barred (black and buff) tips to the scapulars, greater coverts, and tertials. On our bird, the scapulars are edged with chestnut-red, the greater coverts have fine chestnut-reddish edging, and the tertials are essentially unmarked. On the basis of this examination, our quiz bird is not a match for Hudsonian Godwit.

Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper are straightforward eliminations on the basis of their vastly different appearance. We are now left with only Red Knot, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and the dowitchers.

Juvenile Red Knot is eliminated by the essentially concolourous gray throughout their upperparts, with a beautiful scalloped effect derived from dark subterminal/pale terminal edging to the scapulars and coverts. Dunlin is most efficiently eliminated by their streaked breasts and sides, as well as their dark bellies — markings which generally vary in both extent and intensity. Stilt Sandpipers are eliminated by their crisp, pale, whitish fringing throughout their scapulars and coverts. Also, by this date, juvenile Stilt Sandpipers will have replaced a varying degree of their crisply-edged juvenal scapulars and coverts with dull-grey non-breeding (basic) feathers. One of our final possibilities, a Wilson's Snipe, is eliminated by its intricate and highly cryptic dark brown plumage and a longitudinally striped upperside.

We are left with either Short-billed or Long-billed Dowitcher. We'll approach this ID with Short-billed Dowitcher as our first possibility. This possibility immediately becomes two possibilities, as we consider that there are two subspecies of Short-billed possible in southern Ontario during fall migration: "Eastern" (*griseus*) and "Inland" (*hendersoni*). "Inland" Short-bills average the more colourful of the two. Compared to "Eastern" Short-bills, the bright terminal fringing to the scapulars, coverts, and tertials averages broader and more vibrant. "Eastern" averages thinner and has duller fringing to these areas. A very important consideration with juvenile dowitchers is examining the internal markings to the greater coverts and tertials. On "Inland" Short-bills, these markings are generally extensive and very bold. The tertials are sometimes referred to as being "tiger striped." The combination of these internal markings with the broad terminal edging throughout the entire upperparts make "Inland" Short-bills very bright to the eye, even at a distance. "Eastern" Short-bills generally have more limited internal markings to these areas, with some individuals showing only a hint of internal markings to the greater coverts and tertials. On textbook examples, this, in combination with the duller and thinner fringing to the upperparts and less orange-buff wash to the breast, lends to a much duller look overall. The patterning to the upperside of the tail differs between the two subspecies as well, with "Inland" averaging broader white/thinner black barring, while "Eastern" averages the opposite.

Going back to the photo of our quiz bird, we take a good look at the scapulars, greater coverts, and the tertials. The rich orange-buff edging to the scapulars contrasts quite strongly with the plain, greyish edging to the coverts. The greater coverts and tertials are also completely devoid of internal patterning. With these features in mind, we rightly conclude that our quiz bird is a **juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher**. It is important to note that in extreme individuals, some juvenile Long-bills may have internal orange-buff spots on the lower scapulars, and may also have somewhat of a spotted effect around the perimeter of the scapulars. Small reddish-orange spots or streaks may be seen along the tips of the tertials, as well. A look at some of the finer details reveals an un-streaked, lovely greyish wash throughout the head, neck, and upper breast. Short-bills generally show some spotting or streaking to these areas, and average more of an orange-buff suffusion. The white crescent under the eye is showing well here. These crescents average bolder in Long-bills. Though only the bill base is visible, the slight greenish tinge typical of Long-bills is coming through, with Short-bills averaging brighter to this area, often with more of a yellowish tinge.

This Long-billed Dowitcher was photographed by Mark Peck at Presqu'ile Provincial Park on September 28, 2014.

Thanks are extended to Kevin McLaughlin for his collaborative inputs on this quiz.

Ontario Field Ornithologists

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