

# OFO



## ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

Number 5. February 1985.

### OFO NEWSLETTER

Welcome to another literary adventure, sponsored by your Executive of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. As our group enters its third year of existence, our ambitions for 1985 and your birding enjoyment are paramount in our thoughts. An exciting program is, at this very moment, being planned by our new trip co-ordinator. Special plans are also imminent for a "Blitz Day". The "Journal" is being compiled by our editors...

I should like to thank Don Fraser, who has, since its inception, produced the Club's Newsletter. He's turned in his pen to pursue more exciting prospects, such as baby diapers.

At the last Executive meeting held in Toronto, the new Board of Directors assembled for their first meeting. Work assignments were assigned as follows: Geoff Carpentier (Newsletter Editor), Ted Cheskey (Publicity), Verne Evans (Treasurer), Luc Fazio (Secretary), Mike McEvoy (Field Trips), Doug McRae (OBRC), Mike Oldham (Vice-Pres.), Mike Runtz (Membership), Don Sutherland (President), Chip and Linda Weseloh (Editors - Ontario Birds), Ron Ridout (Past President). In addition, Don Sutherland will act as our rep. to the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. We need someone to be our Representative to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. The job entails attendance at Board meetings, and reporting back to the OFO Board. Please contact Luc Fazio if you can help. Luc Fazio has now completed the new OFO Directory (Jan. 1985). This concise volume, beautifully illustrated, lists OFO members who are willing to lead field walks or speak at gatherings. A detailed coding system will inform the reader about the speaker's areas of expertise, preferred locations, type of service offered, etc. Copies may be obtained by writing to OFO, for a small sum (\$2.00), which will offset our production costs. No library should be without one. It will even fit into a Christmas stocking - clever!

#### Birds of the Petawawa National Forestry Institute.

OFO members, William and Caryl Clark, of Pembroke, have compiled an 'economy edition' checklist of the birds of the PNF.I. This two paged, mimeographed checklist was prepared from data compiled between January 1981 and July 1984. A total of 183 species are listed, with letter abbreviations indicating seasonal and breeding status. The authors hope to stimulate greater interest and awareness of the 100 sq.km. estate, and would welcome any additional information on the area. A more conventional and elaborate checklist is presently being prepared. Enquiries should be directed to: William and Caryl Clark, 206 Alfred St., Pembroke, Ont., K8A 3A3.

#### Announcements:

- (1) Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO): The LPBO is currently compiling its 1985 Directory of Co-operative Naturalists' Projects. The Directory is designed to publicize projects that rely on volunteer help. Inquiries should be directed to Joy and Clive Goodwin, Directory of Co-operative Naturalists' Projects in Ontario, 45 Larose Ave., Apt. 103, Weston, Ont., M9P 1A8.
- (2) LPBO: LPBO is again sponsoring the Ontario Bird Feeder Survey. Obviously, this year's project has been running for some weeks. However, you may be able to assist by inputting data you may have accumulated, or by assisting in the compilation of data submitted by other observers. If you care to assist in any way, you should contact the LPBO at P.O. Box 150, Port Rowan, Ont., NOE 1M0.

Baillie Bird-a-thon: As some of you will remember, last year some OFO members birded in May as part of the Baillie Bird-a-thon, and forwarded their allowable pledges to OFO for its use. The direct result of this was a third volume of Ontario Birds in 1984. This most worthwhile fund-raising project has, over the years raised thousands of dollars to support volunteer projects across Ontario. Many of these ongoing schemes could not persist without this funding. OFO members are asked to participate in one of two ways with this project: (a) Support a sponsored birder when a request is made, and (b) bird yourself for the 'good of the cause'. If you can see fit, 25% of the monies you raise may be allocated to OFO for informational or educational projects presented through the journal. Ron Ridout and Linda Weseloh will again be organizing the OFO fund-raising drive. Inquiries may be directed to them.

#### Calls for Information:

(1) Snow Buntings: For the last few years, the Ontario Bird Banding Association (OBBA) has been conducting a study of the winter movements of Snow Buntings. Birds are banded and marked with pink, blue, yellow or green dye. Any sightings should be reported to Wayne Ferguson, 28 Livingston Rd., #79, Scarborough, Ont., M1E 4S5. Details of the sighting should be included - date, location, colour and size of the flock where the bird was found.

(2) Cliff Swallows: Dr. T.D. Galloway of the University of Manitoba is currently studying a group of fleas (Ceratophyllus) found in Cliff Swallow nests. The fleas apparently overwinter in the used nests. Dr. Galloway is interested in knowing the locations of any nests in Ontario, so a survey can be conducted, to establish the status of this presumably uncommon species in the Province. Inquiries or information should be forwarded to Dr. Galloway as soon as possible c/o the Entomology Dept., Univ. of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Man., R3T 2N2. For those of you who are concerned, the good doctor will return your fleas to you on request.

(3) House Finches: As most of you are aware, House Finches have, for the last few years been staging a dramatic expansion throughout southern and central Ontario. The OBBA is conducting a study on the colonization of the species in Ontario. Birds are being banded (colour) and released back into their territories. Any one seeing a colour-banded bird is asked to contact the Canadian Wildlife Service, Bird Banding Office, Ottawa, Ont., K1A 0E7. Individuals with 25 or more House Finches are requested to contact the OBBA House Finch Project, c/o S. Smith, R.R.#3, Brantford, Ont., N3T 5L6, if you want a team to band birds at your home.

#### OFO Great Gray Owl Study

Doug McRae has submitted the following Interim Report on a study conducted during the winter of 1983-84 under the auspices of a grant provided by the World Wildlife Fund Canada.

"In January 1984, a \$1000.00 grant was awarded by the World Wildlife Fund Canada to Mr. R.D. McRae and Dr. R.D. James, of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO), to co-ordinate a province-wide study of the Great Gray Owl incursion during the winter of 1983-84. This species, considered rare by COSEWIC, has been little studied - especially under winter "invasion" (conditions). Our study dealt with various aspects of the birds' biology, ... behaviour... distribution and chronology of the movement(s). Data on hunting methods and success rates were collected from field observers. Information on food (preferences) were obtained through the examination of pellets, stomachs of salvaged birds and field observations. The age and sex ratio of the birds were studied through the examination of birds captured for banding and specimens. Fourteen birds were banded ... from mid-February to mid-March. (Recorded data included) moult condition, weight, size and the colour of the soft parts... Although the data are still being analyzed it is clear that the invasion of 1983-84 is the largest ever recorded in Ontario, with many hundreds of birds involved... Unlike previous invasions, the survival





Members are reminded that your 1985 dues are now payable. Tardiness will not be tolerated. (\$13.00/ year or \$260.00 Life Membership). OFO relies completely on your support for funding. Canvas your friends and associates, if you can, and solicit their support through subscriptions of their own. Never lend anyone your "Ontario Birds"... make them buy their own!"

Information is on file with the editor of this newsletter regarding volunteer projects with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in northern Ontario. Many seasonal positions are available in these job training opportunities.

Third Annual General Meeting of OFO was a resounding success. It was held in Toronto at the McLaughlin Planetarium on Sat. October 27, 1984. Over 80 people attended this year's meeting, adding to its success. The morning session was devoted to annual reports by the Board of Directors. Treasurer Verne Evans announced that annual membership dues had increased to \$13.00 to help cover the cost of producing three issues of Ontario Birds, Membership Secretary Mike Runtz that as of Oct. 26, OFO's membership stood at 467 - 106 life and 361 annual. According to Doug McRae, the OBRC reviewed approximately 200 rare bird reports in 1984. Bob Curry followed with a brief discussion on how to write a rare bird report.

The OFO Board of Directors was ratified and will include three new faces in 1985: Geoff Carpentier of Peterborough, Ted Cheskey of Waterloo and Mike McEvoy of Oshawa. They will replace the retiring Bill Crins, Ron Ridout and Don Fraser, all of whom served on the Executive since its inception.

The acclamation of Kevin McLaughlin of Hamilton and Ron Pittaway of Minden filled the two vacancies on the OBRC.

The afternoon session was highlighted by two slide talks. Mary Gartshore spoke on the birding in the montane forests of the Camaroons, where she recently travelled as part of an expedition organized by the British Museum of Natural History. Jim Rising followed with an informative discussion of oriole, flicker and grosbeak hybridization on the Great Plains.

To conclude the meeting, Barry Kent MacKay's original pen and ink sketch of a Hermit Warbler (used as the cover of Ontario Birds Vol. 2 No. 1) was raffled off. The winning ticket was held by Alan Wormington.

An evening get together at Locke House was also well attended and featured a buffet dinner followed by refreshments and topped off with a generous dose of "animated discussion".

On Sunday, field trips to local birding spots were offered. Bob Curry and Bill Crins led 30 people on a tour of Dundas Marsh and the east end of Hamilton Harbour. Highlights included a late Barn Swallow, an Osprey, a Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 3 Long-billed Dowitchers and a Red-shouldered Hawk. Fifteen people attended a walking trip to the Leslie Street Spit under the guidance of Don Fraser and Don Sutherland. Despite the unseasonably warm temperatures, only 48 species were observed. Sightings of note included a Merlin, Lapland Longspur, 5 White-rumped Sandpipers and a late Semipalmated Sandpiper.

George Peck has been confirmed as the keynote speaker at the Spring General Meeting. Plan to attend this premiere event at Pelee N.P. on Sat., May 13, 1985 at the Visitor Center. George will speak on the Breeding Birds of Ontario. As usual, that Saturday is also the OFO Bird-a-thon Day. A Round-up will be presented at the evening session.

Late Takes: Stay tuned to our next newsletter to see how you can get an original Ridout print just by sponsoring the OFO Celebrity Birder for 10¢/species or more.