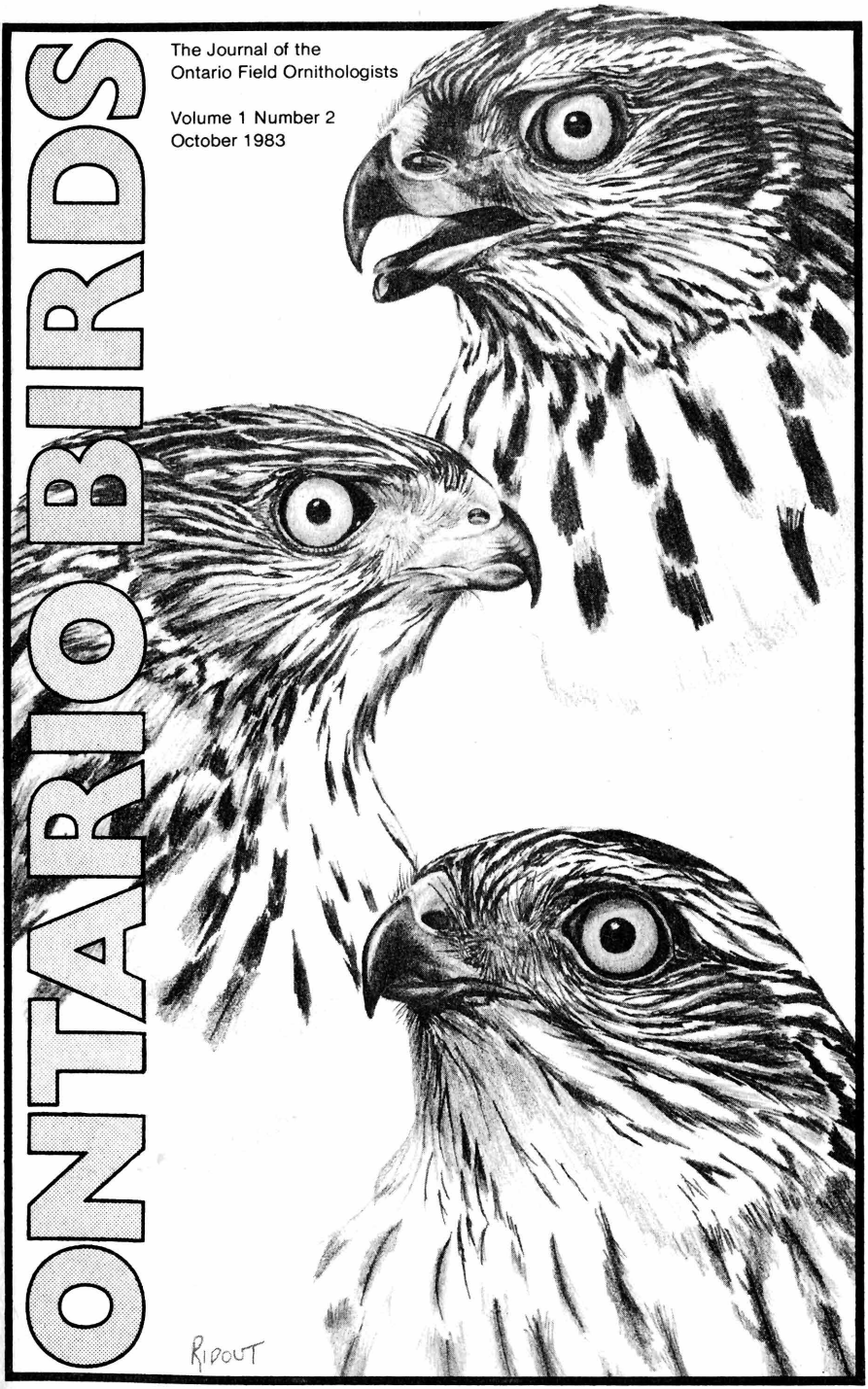
ONTARIO BIRDS

The Journal of the
Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume 1 Number 2
October 1983



Ontario Birds
Vol. 1 No. 2 October 1983 Pages 41–76

Table of Contents

Cover Illustration: Accipiters by Ron Ridout. Top to bottom: Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk

Letters to the Editors

The following are excerpts from the OFO questionaire and letters received since Volume 1 Number 1 of *Ontario Birds.*

Editors:
Congratulations on a super first issue of *Ontario Birds.* I look forward to more of the same in Volume 2.

Jim Heslop
Port Dover, Ontario

Editors:
I like it that OFO includes everyone interested in birds. As a birder I am a novice, but I enjoy the association with people from whom I can learn more.

As for the journal, I thought it was charming and I enjoyed it immensely. The articles were concise and easy to read rather than being of the type one must plough through. The drawings and the photographs were also well done.

Taina Makinen
Mississauga, Ontario

Editors:
OFO and *Ontario Birds* are both excellent ideas, long overdue. Personally, I would love to see *Ontario Birds* approach *Western Birds* even moreso than *Blue Jay*, although the latter is by no means a poor model. Although there is some danger of duplication with other publications and this could pose some editorial problems in choosing articles, I feel that *Ontario Birds* is of perhaps more value in providing an outlet for many previously hidden observations from dedicated and skilled amateurs who wish to publish, than being merely another journal to read and learn about the birds of Ontario.

R. Harris
Toronto, Ontario

Editors:
As someone interested in birds and ornithology in an amateur capacity, it's an exciting idea to have a vehicle for publishing accounts of my own observations when they might be unique or valuable to others. Every effort should be made to encourage people to send in their observations in the form of a note or article.

It will be hard to maintain a high standard for *Ontario Birds* without becoming too rigid and just another technical journal. Good luck.

Unsigned

Editors:
Good wishes and a long life to *Ontario Birds*, and congratulations to the Editorial team. How nice to see a well produced and interesting new journal.

J.T.R. Sharrock
Editor, *British Birds*
Bedford, U.K.

Editors:
I think it's a great organization and the only hope I have is that *Ontario Birds* can come out at least four times a year and maybe six or more. I will devour each issue.

Unsigned

Identification of Accipiters in Ontario

by
Bruce W. Duncan

Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*), Cooper's Hawks (*A. cooperi*) and Northern Goshawks (*A. gentilis*) can best be seen in Ontario during the spring and fall hawk migrations along the shorelines of the Great Lakes. However, they are present in various parts of the province at all times of the year, their relative abundance varying with seasons and locations. For example, Alan Wormington (*pers. comm.*) stated that in winter Cooper's outnumber Sharpshins in southern Ontario by a ratio of 2 or 3:1. In migration, by contrast, the ratio is 20 or more Sharpshins for each Cooper's seen along Lakes Erie and Ontario.

My experience with these birds includes seven years of banding them during the spring and fall migrations (Duncan 1981, 1982) and examination of skins in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and the National Museum of Natural Science, Ottawa. In this paper, I will concentrate on the identification of "flyby" accipiters, those most commonly seen at lookouts such as Hawk Cliff, Beamer Conservation Area or Point Pelee. First, however, I feel it incumbent on me to comment on the 1979–1982 *American Birds* article and letters by Helmut Mueller, Dan Berger and George Allez on one side and Bill Clark and Pete Dunne on the other regarding field identification of the species. The original article by Mueller *et al.* (1979) was correct and helpful in one way (*viz.* that there is no overlap in size among the three species) but misleading in others. Clark and Dunne (1979) pointed out the errors. One of the contentious issues concerned the question of what is a "field mark". I don't particularly agree with an *a priori* definition since it inevitably is restrictive and invites rejoinders composed of exceptions due to individual variation, moult, viewing conditions and any other number of variables. To argue over what constitutes a field mark in somewhat similar species such as the accipiters is a waste of time. It is far better to be aware of as many characteristics as possible to improve the chance of a positive identification in difficult circumstances or to allow detailed comparative study when ideal conditions present themselves.

Although many other species of raptor might be mistaken for an

Bruce W. Duncan, Box 512, Caledonia, Ontario N0A 1A0

accipiter, I am going to deal with the commonest problems – mistakes with the genus itself, and will leave birds like immature Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) and Red-shouldered Hawk (*B. lineatus*) unmentioned. Most Sharpshins, Cooper's and Goshawks are seen at hawk migration lookouts as they fly past and are often first spotted at a distance. The following should be looked for as they move closer:

Size

As Mueller *et al* (1979:237) point out, there is no overlap in size among the three species and almost none between the sexes of each species. Weight, which they use to distinguish the species, is a less useful characteristic than length for field observers. The accipiters compare in length approximately as follows with other species: Sharpshin male to Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta Cristata*); Sharpshin female to Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*); Cooper's male to Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*); Cooper's female to American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*); Goshawk to Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). Since the sexual size dimorphism is less pronounced in Goshawks than in the other two species, I have lumped both sexes. Redtails vary in length by about the same amount as Goshawks.

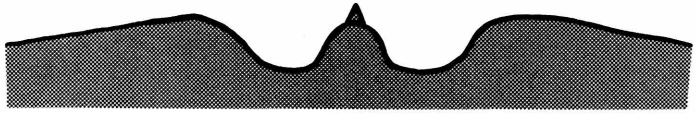
The difference in length also means a difference in weight between the sexes and more so between the species. This factor affects flight style as Mueller *et al* (1979) point out. Sharpshins have a "fluttery" wingbeat compared to the stronger, slower and more "purposeful" Goshawk wingbeat. However, Sharpshins and Cooper's do not differ so distinctly and can be easily mistaken. Cooper's *occasionally* appear stiffer-winged like a falcon although this is best seen in a face-on profile. To my eyes, they usually do not have a slower wingbeat than Sharpshins. All three species soar a lot when conditions are favourable.

Head

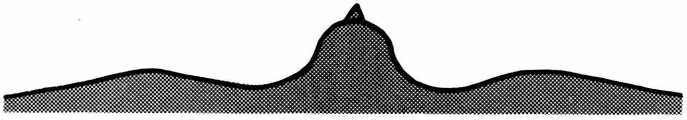
Two excellent distinctions between Sharpshins and Cooper's are the head size and its position relative to the front of the wings. Sharpshins have a smaller head compared to their body size than do Cooper's. The leading edges of the wings of a Sharpshin from the wrist inward make a shallow U shape. If you draw an imaginary straight line from one wrist to the other, only part of the head of the Sharpshin will extend beyond. In Cooper's, the wings are much straighter from the wrist to the base of the wing, ie: the wrist "sits" further back and usually allows all of the head to extend in front (Figure 1). Mueller's photographs on pages 236 and 237 show both the more massive Cooper's head and the wing shape differences very clearly. Both characteristics are useful in the field. I have not seen a sufficient number of Goshawks to notice any difference in their head silhouettes from Cooper's Hawks.

Tail

The Sharpshin's tail can appear notched (most commonly in males)



A.



B.

Fig. 1. For Sharp-shinned Hawks (A) only a portion of the head extends beyond an imaginary line connecting the wrists; in Cooper's Hawks (B) most of the head extends beyond that line.

or squared across (most commonly in females) when the tail is not fanned. The Cooper's tail, even when closed, is rounded and when fanned assumes an arc of a circle whose radius would be smaller than the circle of a Sharpshin's fanned tail (Figure 2). The Goshawk's tail, according to Bill Clark (unpubl.) is more wedge-shaped.

To quantify this apparent difference in "squaredness" or "roundedness", I measured tails of Sharpshins, Cooper's and Goshawks in 1981, 1982 and 1983, recording the difference in length of the outer rectrix compared to the centre rectrix in folded tails. I found the following: Sharpshin male – outer rectrix averaged 2.3 mm shorter than centre rectrix; Sharpshin female – difference averaged 5.5 mm; Cooper's male – difference averaged 22.7 mm; Cooper's female – difference averaged 27.5 mm; Goshawk male – difference averaged 23.4 mm; Goshawk female – difference averaged 30.7 mm. These differences are consistent from bird to bird within the species and sex. The difference in tail shape between Cooper's and Sharpshin is quite noticeable in "flyby" birds. It can be complicated, however, by moult, especially with fall migrants in

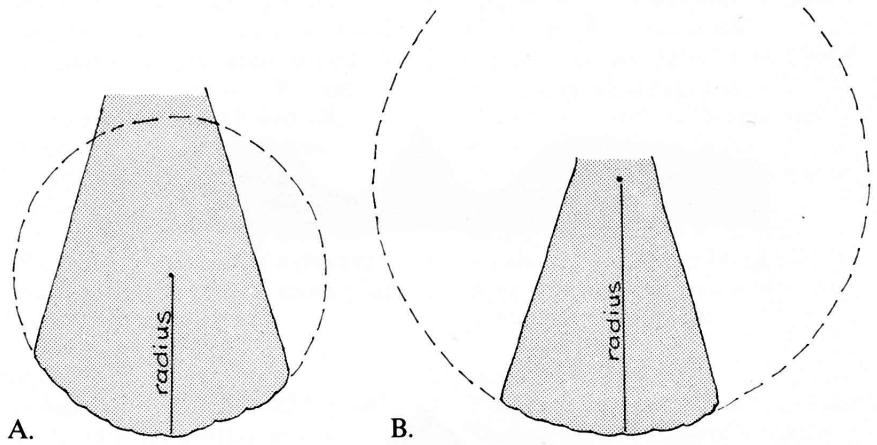


Fig. 2. The tail of a Cooper's Hawk (A), when fanned, assumes an arc of a circle the radius of which is smaller than that of a Sharp-shinned Hawk (B).

their third or more calendar year. These birds almost always show some wing and/or tail moult during passage through southern Ontario. The tail differences are, nevertheless, good species distinctions.

Another aid in identifying Cooper's and Sharpshin is the terminal white band on the tail which is much narrower in Sharpshins. This band is actually pale grey below and white above and needs good backlighting to be seen clearly. My measurements for this characteristic show the following: Sharpshin male – average width of ventral surface terminal band 1.8 mm; Sharpshin female – average width: 2.1 mm; Cooper's male – average width: 9.7 mm; Cooper's female – average width: 9.8 mm. The band width is, of course, complicated by wear (but remember that these measurements are a mixture of new rectrices and old, from immatures as well as moulting and non-moulting adults) and by lighting conditions. One word of caution: by spring, a full winter's wear may have reduced the Cooper's white band considerably which makes it a less useful characteristic than in the fall. From museum specimens I noted that Goshawks also have a white band at the tail tip approximating in width the Cooper's band. However, the white is confined more to the centre of each feather, narrowing to the outsides, thus giving a broken effect to the band. The Cooper's is more uniform in width on each feather and appears as a neater, unbroken band. Again, these distinctions are complicated by wear. Incidentally, the photographs in Mueller *et al.* (1979) show both tail differences (roundedness and terminal band) very nicely.

Immature Plumage

Immature accipiters can be a problem, with the most difficult being Cooper's and Sharpshins. All of the characteristics mentioned above apply to both adults and immatures and are extremely useful especially on bright days.

All three species are brown above, white with brownish streaks below and have a brown-banded tail. The immature Goshawk has the white eyeline of the adult and although the occasional Cooper's and very occasional Sharpshin have this, on the Goshawk it is a consistent mark. The standard field guides show it well. Immature Goshawks often appear pale-backed with an even lighter coloured head because of buffy or cinnamon edges to the feathers of the head, neck and back. Feathers of the head and neck have creamy-white bases. Cooper's Hawks appear darker-backed and tawny or rufous-headed due to chestnut edges to the back feathers which become more rufous on the head and neck. Also, the large white bases of the nape feathers may partially show through, reinforcing the lighter neck-head effect and its contrast to the back. Immature Sharpshins appear more uniformly dark brown on the back, neck and head since the feathers are edged more narrowly (1 mm average although wider on the neck) and are chestnut on all the dorsal surfaces. There is no lighter colour to the head and neck as in the other two species. A few Sharpshins do have narrow rufous edges to the head and neck feathers but the basic dark brown still predominates. Although the feather edges wear over the winter, these features are still noticeable but sometimes not as pronounced in the spring.

Underneath, young Cooper's Hawks are whitest; the other two species are generally creamier in background colour. This "cream" fades to "milk" over the course of the winter on many birds. Goshawks are streaked with dark brown marks, 4 – 8 mm wide on the chest, belly *and* undertail coverts. Cooper's have narrow streaks, 2 – 4 mm wide that do not extend as far down on the body; sometimes the belly is clear; the undertail coverts are always unstreaked. It has *fewer* streaks than does the Sharpshin which has many "teardrop" shaped marks on the chest and extending to the belly; the undertail coverts are unmarked. The "flags" (feathers at the base of the legs) are marked in all three species. My impressions in the field are: Goshawk – wide streaks from chest to tail, creamy base; Cooper's – same number of streaks but narrower and only to the belly, whiter base colour; Sharpshin – many more and heavier streaks extending only to the belly. Base colour not as noticeable because of heavier streaking but creamy to white.

Adult Plumage

The adult Goshawk is distinctive and its back colour considerably paler than in the other two species. Cooper's and Sharpshins are similarly marked with males generally having bluer and females browner backs. Underneath, the Sharpshin is usually more heavily marked with orange or brown-orange bars; Cooper's has pure orange bars on white. But these

differences are inconsistent and of little use under most field conditions.

The best distinguishing feature of the Cooper's Hawk is the dark "cap" which contrasts with the paler back. The head and neck feathers are slate-black ending abruptly in a neat line at the upper back, which is slate-brown or slate-blue. There is a clear and sharp demarcation. The Sharpshin's head and neck are also slate-black, males often showing a bluish tinge. The back is the same colour or very close to it, thus not producing any "cap" effect. This is a good feature on low-flying adults.

Timing of Migration

The majority of Sharpshins precede the majority of Cooper's which precede the majority of Goshawks in the fall migration. This order (commonest to scarcest) also describes their abundance in the autumn flight in southern Ontario. In the spring, the timing is reversed.

At Hawk Cliff, Sharpshins come through in the largest numbers around 15–25 September with 85% appearing between 10 September and 10 October. Cooper's Hawks are most abundant from 30 September to 10 October with 85% appearing between 20 September and 25 October. In the spring, the peak Sharpshin flight is from 20–30 April at Beamer Conservation Area at the west end of Lake Ontario and for Cooper's from, 7–20 April. Fully 85% of each species passes through in the 3 to 4 weeks around these dates. I do not have as precise data for Goshawks because of their lower numbers, but November is traditionally the Goshawk month although the flight begins by mid-October. In spring, the peak dates range from 20 March to 10 April. Goshawks "invade" the south every ten years or so. The 1981–82 and 1982–83 winters witnessed the most recent incursion, but a small number, mostly immatures and usually 25 or fewer, can be seen annually between these irruptions.

On a very good Sharpshin day at Hawk Cliff in the fall, over 2,000 can be seen. A big Cooper's day will produce 50 birds or more. In the spring, typical numbers for good days are 500 or more for Sharpshins and over 10 for Cooper's.

Miscellaneous

Occasionally, perched accipiters are seen. The head size of Sharpshins versus Cooper's is best noticed by comparing the portion and amount of space taken up by the eye. Pramstaller and Clark (1979) describe this well: Cooper's eyes are placed forward on the side of the head and the eyes take up a small amount of head area; Sharpshin eyes are placed centrally on the side of the head and take up a considerable amount of head space.

The Sharpshin's tarsus is very slender (hence the name) while that of the Cooper's is stouter and the Goshawk's quite robust – almost of Red-tailed Hawk thickness. Sharpshins have a completely unfeathered tarsus, Cooper's have feathering on the upper third and Goshawks are

feathered to about halfway.

Although there will always be accipiters that go unidentified because of many factors, most are identifiable on the basis of size, head-wing silhouette, tail shape and plumage characters. With practice, size appreciation can be easily accomplished without other birds in the sky and can allow those with experience to sex many birds (especially Sharpshins which show the greatest sexual size dimorphism of any North American raptor) as they fly by. The keys are, as with all bird identification, careful observation and experience.

Literature Cited

Clark, W.S. and *P.J. Dunne.* 1979. Letter to the editor. American Birds 33: 909.

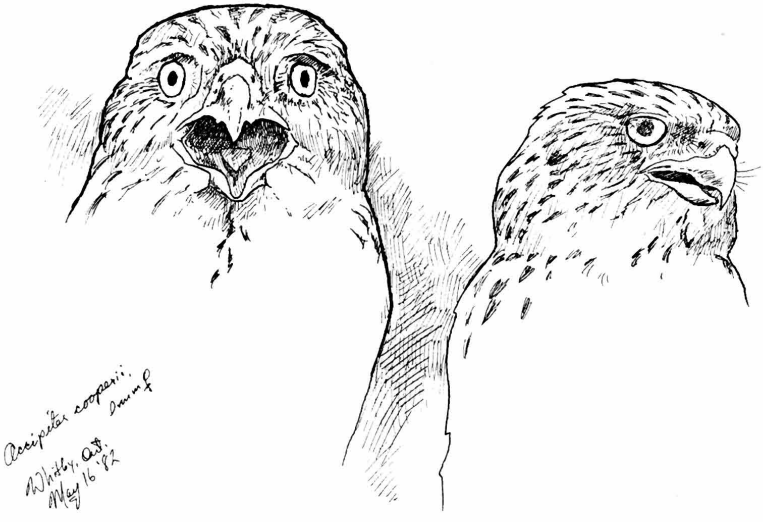
Duncan, B.W. 1981. Cooper's Hawks banded at Hawk Cliff, Ontario, 1971–1980. Ontario Bird Banding 14: 21–32.

_____. 1982. Sharp-shinned Hawks banded at Hawk Cliff, Ontario, 1971–1981: analysis of the data. Ontario Bird Banding 15: 24–41.

Mueller, H.C., D.D. Berger and *G. Allez.* 1979. The identification of North American accipiters. American Birds 33: 236–240.

_____. 1982. Letter to the editor. American Birds 36: 340–341.

Pramstaller, M.E. and *W.S. Clark.* 1979. Letter to the editor. American Birds 34: 216–217.



BARRY KENT MACKAY

A Birding Site Guide to Rainy River/ Lake-of-the-Woods

by
Ron Ridout

The Rainy River/Lake-of-the-Woods region is an area unique to birding in Ontario. This small parcel of cultivated land, sandwiched between the boreal forests of Manitoba to the west, Minnesota to the south and Ontario to the north and east, attracts western birds in numbers and variety found nowhere else in Ontario.

Situated in the southwestern corner of northwestern Ontario, this region, lying just off the Canadian Shield, has been farmed since the last century. The soil is too poor and rocky for agriculture and now much of the area is returning to its natural state or is being used for pasture. This type of habitat, interspersed with large aspen stands, sedge marshes, and tamarack bogs, provides ideal surroundings for many birds found much further west.

Black-billed Magpies, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Western Meadowlarks and Brewer's Blackbirds can be found in the scrubby pastures. Le Conte's Sparrows, Sedge Wrens, Sandhill Cranes and Yellow Rails frequent the large marshes. White Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorants nest on isolated islands on Lake-of-the-Woods as have Piping Plovers and American Avocets.

The town of Rainy River is best reached by car travelling west from Ft. Frances on Hwy 11 or south from Kenora on Hwy 71, which meets Hwy 11 east of Rainy River. The region is best explored with the aid of the topographic map entitled Rainy River 52 D/15 and 52 D/10, Scale 1:50,000. Most of the species described herein may be found within the area of Ontario shown on this map.

The following description takes you on a driving tour of the region and points out many of the reliable spots for observing the specialties of this area. However, it may be said that any stop on any of the many sideroads crisscrossing the region can prove rewarding.

A word of caution at this point. It is wise to travel with an eye on the gas gauge from time to time and to have a spare tire and jack in the trunk. Gas stations are few and far between and most of the roads are gravel and some may be quite rough (depending on the time of year).

Ron Ridout, 407A 1011 Dundas St. E., Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 4A5

This tour of the area has its auspicious beginning at the Rainy River sewage lagoons. Turn north off Hwy 11 on the sideroad just east of the railway station. After crossing the railway tracks you will see a dirt road to the left. The lagoons are a few hundred metres down this road. Shorebirds and ducks are present in migration and in late May up to 450 Wilson's Phalaropes have been counted.

Returning to the sideroad, turn left (north) and drive to the first crossroads (1.3 km). Turn left again and travel (1.5 km) until you come to an aspen woodlot on your left and open fields to your right. Two singing Sprague's Pipits were found in these fields in June of 1980. The woodlot harbours Connecticut Warblers and Eastern Bluebirds in breeding season.

Another 0.5 km to the west you will come to Hwy 600, the main north-south road of the region. Turn north and drive slowly, watching the fields and fence rows for open country species such as Western Kingbirds and (Krider's) Red-tailed Hawk which have been seen on numerous occasions. Western Meadowlarks are common throughout the region's open fields and Easterns are occasionally heard. In breeding season it is a good idea to stop often and listen. Upland Sandpipers are heard more often than seen and the Sprague's Pipits were discovered in this fashion.

North on Hwy 600 (3.2 km) you'll come to River Road. This is the beginning of a 30 km loop which leads west to the Rainy River and then north through various habitats before turning back east to rejoin Hwy 600. Go west on River Road (1.6 km) and you will pass an ill-defined

C. AND L. WESELOH

American Avocets have been found on Sable Island.

crossroad. The grassy track to the north leads into willow and alder thickets which may yield a few Golden-winged Warblers in late May and June. This track should be travelled only in dry weather.

Approximately 6 km to the west of Hwy 600 is the Rainy River. River Road follows the river north here for a short distance and it is an excellent point to scan for ducks and herons. As well, the oak woods along the bank here are a favourite with Red-headed Woodpeckers.

Going north from the river you pass through extensively cultivated fields which hold large flocks of longspurs in early spring. These should be scanned carefully for rare species. Smith's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs may yet be found in this way.

Approximately 4 km after leaving the river, the road turns left to cross Wilson Creek, then almost immediately turns north again. The marshy area of the creek and the woods along its banks are worth checking for migrants and breeding birds in their respective seasons.

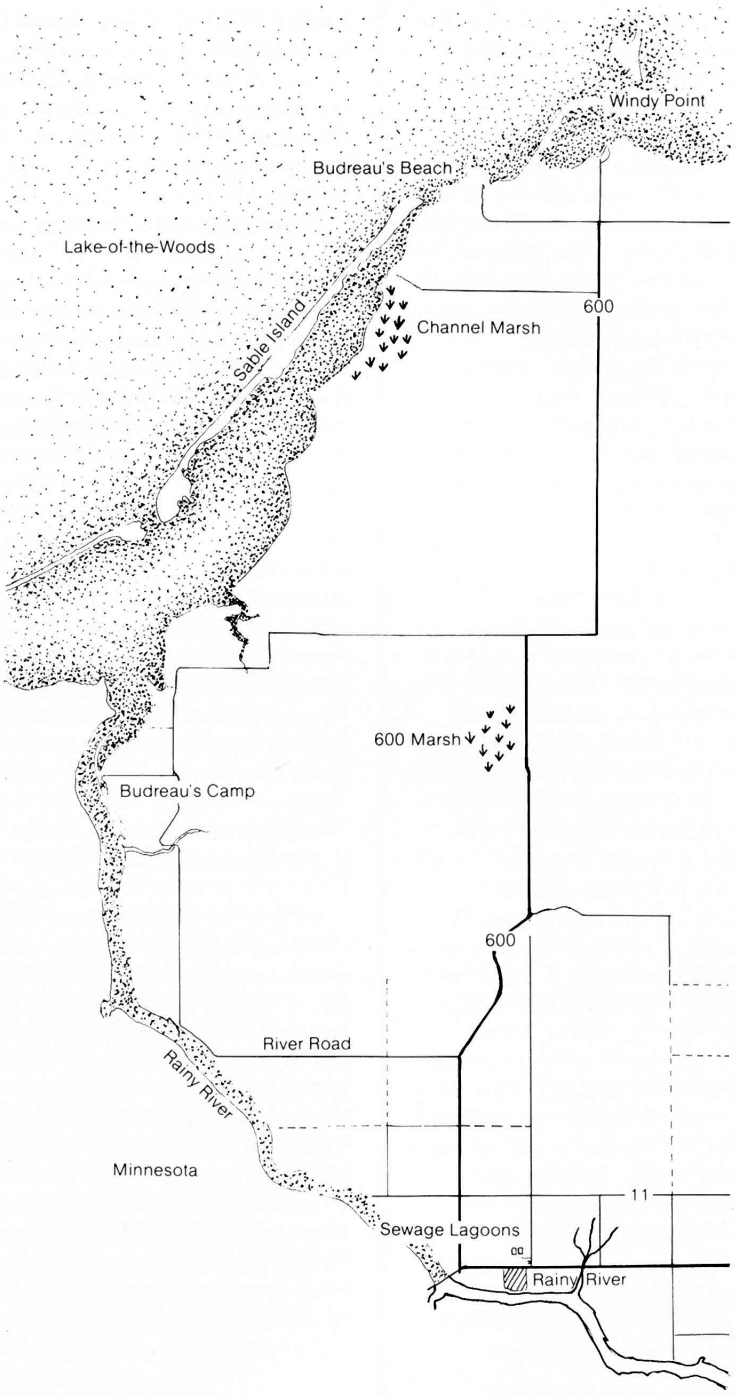
North of Wilson Creek (1.8 km) a road runs west to Oak Grove Camp, which lies on the bank of the Rainy River. Migrants travelling along the river pass through the open oakwoods here and are more easily seen. A trail leading south from the camp through the woods along the river provides an enjoyable walk. Many varieties of western plants grow here, including Hill's Oak, a species rare in Ontario.

Back out on River Road and 2 km north of the Oak Grove Road, a dirt track to the left leads down to a gas dock on the river. The marsh here is favoured by Yellow-headed Blackbirds. In April, when the ice is still on the lake, the open water here harbours large concentrations of ducks, cormorants and pelicans.

A few hundred metres to the north of this track, the River Road turns east for 2 km, then north for 0.8 km and then finally east again. At this second right turn, the fields on either side of the road usually contain feeding flocks of blackbirds including Brewer's and Yellow-headed. Sandhill Cranes are often heard or seen flying on the north side of the road at this point.

Travelling east (6 km), you will rejoin Hwy 600 at the point where it makes a 1.6 km jog to the east before it turns north again. Two km north of this left (northward) turn in the highway, you will see a grassy clearing on the left (west) which often yields Sharp-tailed Grouse. A further 6 km north brings you to a sideroad leading west. This dirt road runs 5 km to Lake-of-the-Woods and provides an excellent view of Sable Island just across the channel. The extensive sedge marshes to the south have held Yellow Rails, Le Conte's Sparrows and Sandhill Cranes. An excellent article by Paul Pratt entitled, "Stalking the Yellow Rail" in the May 1981 issue of *Birdfinding in Canada* discusses the habitat requirements and proper method of seeing this rare and elusive bird.

Returning to Hwy 600 continue north for 1.6 km. The highway


Windy Point
Budreau's Beach
Lake-of-the-Woods
Sable Island
Channel Marsh
600
600 Marsh
Budreau's Camp
600
River Road
Rainy River
Minnesota
11
Sewage Lagoons
Rainy River

turns east here but you will want to continue north on the road which leads back to the lake and the government wharves.

Scan the lake here for White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and various species of ducks. In the autumn, Bald Eagles often sit in the trees on Windy Point to the northwest. The Windy Bay Lodge provides accommodation from May to October.

Back at the stop sign where Hwy 600 goes east, turn right on the gravel road which goes west. Travel as far west (2.6 km) as it goes before turning north to the lake (1 km). The road eventualy ends at a rocky hill. Park here and walk over the hill to a windswept view of Lake-of-the-Woods. The woods here are known as Budreau's Woods and yield a variety of migrants in the spring and fall.

In the spring when conditions are right, hawks migrate overhead as they follow the shore of the lake north. A path through the woods leads to Budreau's Beach which runs off in a crescent to the southwest. It is often good for shorebirds in both migrations. A rocky point, visible at the far end of the beach, provides a fine view of the north end of Sable Island. The land here is private, so it is best to obtain permission to cross, if the owners are present. This is another spot for waterfowl concentrations when the ice is still on the lake in the spring. In May and June, scan the beaches of the island for shorebirds. Piping Plovers are usually present though somewhat difficult to see and rare waders such as Marbled Godwits, American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts have been found. Later in July thousands of Franklin's Gulls loaf on the beaches of the island. It's best to allow a good deal of time to cover this spot as it is one of the best stops in the region.

Returning to Hwy 600, go east for 11.6 km to Hwy 621. Lake-of-the-Woods Provincial Park is located 5 km to the north on Hwy 621. Campsites are available there. Hwy 621, south of its junction with Hwy 600, runs through several kilometres of boreal forest which offers such northern species as Common Raven, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee and three-toed Woodpeckers. You will eventually return to Hwy 11 by travelling straight down Hwy 621. Here you turn west (right) to return to Rainy River. All of the sideroads between Hwys 621 and 600 can prove fruitful. One should always be scanning the woodlots and fields for Black-billed Magpies. They have nested along Worthington Road 3, which is three sideroads east of Rainy River.

Another important spot worth checking is the Hwy 600 marsh, which borders Hwy 600 for 2 or 3 km. The best access point is 13.5 km north of Hwy 11. The marsh has been more or less dry for three or four years but still produces Sharp-tailed Grouse, Le Conte's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens in late May and June. It is easily walked to the west of the road. To the east lies a large tamarack bog. Sandhill Cranes have been heard calling from it and may nest here. In April of 1982 two Great Gray Owls were heard calling at this spot.

These are just a few of the spots worth birding in the area and they have proved reliable over the years. However, half the enjoyment of birding in the Rainy River district is the chance to explore new areas and actually play a part in expanding the knowledge of the region.

Most of the Rainy River area is private property, so the usual rules of owner's rights and respect for them should be observed. Whenever possible, you should obtain permission to enter from the nearest residence. All of the specific spots mentioned have tolerated birders in the past and should continue to do so in the future as long as common sense and courtesy are used. Most of the region can be covered adequately from public roads by driving slowly and observing carefully.

Hazards are few, with the exception of insects. Mosquitoes and black flies are prevalent in season but by no means intolerable. Perhaps the worst are the wood ticks, which are teeming in the fields and marshes and tenacious when they dig in. The best way to fight them is to tuck your pants inside your socks before venturing into any field.

Accommodations are available in Rainy River at the CN Hotel. Oak Grove Camp and the Windy Bay Lodge have light housekeeping cabins, which should be reserved ahead of time and camping is available at Lake-of-the-Woods Provincial Park and Oak Grove. It bears repeating that this region of Ontario is sparsely populated so birders should travel with a first aid kit and an emergency parts kit in the car.

As for the time of visit, each season seems to bring a different group of birds to the area. Early spring has its buildup of waterfowl on open stretches of water, raptor movements up the shore of the lake and flocks of longspurs in the fields. Late spring sees the movement of passerines through the aspen and oak woodlands and shorebirds flock along the beaches of the lake. Summer hosts a variety of nesting western species unusual in Ontario, as well as occasional summer wanderers such as Black-necked Stilt. Autumn follows with the fields full of sparrows, each flock seeming to contain half a dozen Harris' Sparrows. Double-crested Cormorants mass on the lake before suddenly leaving for the south in groups of two to three hundred.

The surface of the avifauna of Rainy River has just been scratched and continued investigation should turn up species not only rare but quite possibly new for Ontario.

A similar version of this site guide will be appearing in the forthcoming book, *A Guide to Birding in Canada*, edited by J. Cam Findlay, published by Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton.

Large Numbers of House Finches in St. Catharines, Ontario

by
Mary Ellen Foley

Most people are familiar with the story of the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) in eastern North America. Since their release in Long Island, New York, in 1940, these birds have spread in all directions, though with a bias towards the southwest, the Atlantic coastline, and major river valleys (Mundinger and Hope 1982).

During the past few years, Ontario, like many other areas in the east, has experienced an influx of House Finches. Data from recent Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in Ontario indicate that House Finches are present in several cities across the province. The implication of these data is that most Count areas are experiencing only moderate yearly increases of House Finch numbers (Table 1). But in fact, St. Catharines has undergone a dramatic jump in the size of its House Finch population. St. Catharines, which until December 1982 did not participate in an official CBC (although the Peninsula Field Naturalists has conducted them for its own purposes since 1954), hosts almost as many House Finches as all of the other Count areas in the province put together.

House Finches first showed up on a St. Catharines CBC in 1980, when five were recorded. By the next year, the number had jumped to 81, and in 1982, there were at least 196.

No-one has yet been able to explain why the number of House Finches is exceptionally large in St. Catharines. This article will present observations on the birds' history and behaviour in the city and on the three feeders in St. Catharines which attract them in record numbers.

In 1980 the first House Finch was seen in St. Catharines, at the feeder of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Kingdon, in the south part of the city. It was in 1980, as well, that a female House Finch was seen at our home (Sean and Mary Ellen Foley) in St. Catharines. At the time, we lived, like the Kingdons, south of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW). The changes in feeders in the Foley garden, and the incidence of House Finches at them over the next year, are recorded in Table 2.

Mary Ellen Foley, 32 Maplewood Drive, St. Catharines, Ontario L2M 3P1

Table 1 Number of House Finches on Christmas Bird Counts in Ontario, 1979–1982[1].

	1979	1980	1981	1982
Blenheim	0	0	0	+[2]
Hamilton	0	0	0	95
Kingston	0	8	33	51
Kitchener	0	0	0	2
London	0	0	2	15
Long Point	0	0	0	2
Niagara Falls	10	6	7	28
Oshawa	0	0	4	1
Ottawa-Hull	0	1	0	0
Point Pelee	0	0	3	0
Port Hope	0	0	0	+
Presqu'ile	0	0	0	5
Richmond Hill	0	0	1	0
St. Catharines	0	5	81	196
St. Thomas	0	10	3	29
Toronto	0	0	6	2
Woodhouse Twp	0	0	0	2
	10	30	140	428

1. From American Birds, Vols 34(4), 1980; 35(4), 1981; 36(4), 1982; and Dennis Rupert (*pers. comm.*), respectively.
2. + = Recorded during Count Period, number not recorded.

Table 2 Characteristics of feeders and visits by House Finches in the Foley garden in St. Catharines, south of the QEW, April 1980–April 1981.

1980

2 feeders: both with mix

12–20 April	1 female
20 May	1 male

1981

4 feeders: 1 sunflower, 1 distelfink (niger seed and white millet), 2 mixed

21–25 Feb.	1 male, 1 female
26 Feb. – 3 Mar.	3 males, 2 females
5 Mar. – 18 Apr.	As above, joined by 1 orange-variant male, all coming 3–5 times a day
18–20 Apr.	3 males
20–25 Apr.	5 males
25–28	7 males
29 Apr.	8 red males 2 orange-variant males, 4 females

In May 1981, 20–24 finches came regularly to our feeders. As far as we know, that was the largest number of House Finches coming to any feeder in St. Catharines at that time.

In June we moved 3.2 km away (as the House Finch flies) to the north part of the city (separated from the south part by the QEW). The record from then until the present is given in Table 3.

Table 3 Characteristics of feeders and visits by House Finches in the Foley garden, north of the QEW, September 1981 to February 1983.

1981	
	2 feeders: 1 sunflower, 1 mixed
Sept.	no House Finches
October	5 feeders: 2 sunflower, 2 mixed, 1 distelfink
7 Oct. – 8 Nov.	1 male
8 Nov.	7 feeders: 2 more sunflower feeders added
9 Nov.	4 males
11 Nov.	5 males, 1 female
21 Nov.	20 (sexes weren't counted after this)
23 Nov.	25
18 Dec.	65
1982	
1 Jan.	66
8 Jan.	89
29 May	The first fledgling appeared at the feeder. From this time until 20 September, we observed at least 10 families, with two to five flying but still downy, young (at least 30 fledglings), coming to the feeder.
10–22 June	1 yellow-variant male, often seen feeding a female
20 Sept.	The last fledgling of the season seen at the feeder
October	9 feeders: 1 more sunflower feeder, and 1 niger stocking added
27 Oct.	40
20 Nov.[1]	86
26 Nov.	over 100
12 Dec.	70
1983	
2 Jan.	45
12 Jan.	82
4 Feb.	80
5 Feb.	138 (perhaps the largest number observed at any feeder in eastern Canada)

1. City wide count of House Finches at feeders held.

On 20 November 1982, the Peninsula Field Naturalists organized a simultaneous feeder count of the finches, at three specified times of the day. The highest count — 225 — was recorded at 3:30 pm. Seventy-nine per cent of that number were found in the area of the city north of the Queen Elizabeth Way, although the number of feeders reporting from both north and south was almost equal (21 in the north, 18 in the south). Of that 79 % in the north, 87% were at three feeders.

By late 1982, two other houses in St. Catharines had been recording large numbers of House Finches. In the 1980–81 season, Sam Rossetto had two feeders, attracting approximately 12 House Finches regularly. By the winter of 1982–83, he had added six more sunflower feeders. These attracted 40–50 House Finches daily, and occasionally as many as 90.

Even more dramatic population increases occurred at John and Sue Feurtado's feeders. From two feeders in 1981 (attracting only 3 House Finches), they progressed to seven in December, 1982: six sunflower feeders and one distelfink. On 12 December, 16 House Finches arrived; on 13 December, there were 38; and by 22 December, there were 50. Several times in January of 1983 they had as many as 70, and on the 15th of that month, had 80, their greatest number ever.

In addition to the increasing numbers of House Finches wintering in St. Catharines, House Finches are now breeding there in significant numbers. The first recorded nesting of the House Finch in eastern Canada occurred at Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1978 (James 1978). In June 1980 a pair nested successfully and brought the fledglings to the Kingdon's feeder in St. Catharines (I. Kingdon, pers. comm.). During this past summer (1983), Dan Kozlovic, a Masters student in ornithology at Brock University, found 65 House Finch nests in St. Catharines, although his search was limited to a small (3.8 sq. km) area in the north part of the city.

Feeders at three residences in the St. Catharines area now regularly attract more than 50 House Finches each. These residences have several things in common. They are all in the north end of the city, which was still being farmed relatively recently (unlike the south), and has, I believe (although I haven't gone so far as to count them), more fruit trees (many of them unsprayed), lining the streets, in parks, and on private property. They all have a large number of feeders — the Feurtados have seven, Sam Rossetto has eight, and the Foleys have nine. At all three homes, there was a disproportionate jump in House Finch numbers when feeders were increased. The majority of feeders in each yard dispense sunflower seeds. All three offer at least a little mixed seed. Most of the sunflower seed feeders conspicuously display the sunflower seeds in large amounts. All three gardens offer several tray-type sunflower seed feeders, which allow the House Finches to crowd onto them — something they seem to like to do. Two of the gardens offer trays on the ground, which are extremely popular, and at the third garden, the majority of the

finches are found eating on the ground anyway. Seed is never allowed to run out at any of the feeders.

One cannot resist speculating on the reasons for the House Finches' attraction to St. Catharines. The same climate which enables the Niagara peninsula to grow grapes may have been an influence. It has also been suggested (A.L.A. Middleton, *pers. comm.*) that, in their natural progression northward (working their way around the lakes), they reached St. Catharines at a time when, by sheer coincidence, ideal weather conditions and an unusual abundance of food made it perfect for breeding. Since then they have simply returned (or stayed) to breed in the place where they were previously successful. If this is the case, then as these conditions fluctuate, or return to normal, the number of House Finches here will dwindle or, at least, cease to accelerate.

The behaviour of House Finches in California (where they are notorious for their destruction of soft fruit crops) may help to explain the presence of the finches here in the Niagara area, where there are so many fruit trees. Many feeders, offering large amounts of seed, particularly sunflowers, also may play a large part in attracting the finches.

At Brock University, Dr. Richard Knapton is beginning a programme of colour-banding St. Catharines' House Finches. The results, we hope, will provide a lot of new and surprising information about this little finch, and will afford us the rare and exciting opportunity of charting the rapid expansion of a species into new territory.

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgements are due to Audrey Barnesley, Richard Knapton, Sam Rossetto, Sue and John Feurtado, A.L.A. Middleton, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Kingdon, the Foley family (who have become so good at counting), and the many people with feeders in St. Catharines for providing data and assisting in the preparation of this report.

Literature Cited

Goodwin, C.E. 1980. Ontario Region. Amer. Birds. 34: 890–892

James R.D. 1978. Nesting of the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) in Ontario. Ont. Field Biologist 32: 30–32

Mundinger, P.C. & S. Hope 1982. Expansion of the winter range of the House Finch: 1947–79. Amer. Birds 36: 347–353.

Ontario Birds in 1984

At least two issues of *Ontario Birds* will be published in 1984. If sufficient material is submitted, a third issue will probably be published. Deadline for the next issue is 31 January 1984.

A Large Crow Roost in Essex County

by
D.V. Chip Weseloh

It is well known that during autumn and winter, the American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) often forms large communal roosts (Bent 1936, Haase 1963, Goodwin 1973). In recent years, for example, roosts of 10 000, 20–50 000 and 200 000–300 000 crows have been reported from Kentucky (Peterjohn 1982), Pennsylvania (Hall 1982) and Kansas (Williams 1981), respectively. In Ontario, the crow is a common summer resident throughout the province, an abundant migrant and a common winter resident in the south (James *et al.* 1976). Its numbers in winter are well illustrated by Christmas Bird Counts from Hamilton, Ontario where, for the years 1973–1982, numbers have ranged from approximately 1 600–7 000 and have been the highest recorded in Canada for that period.

In spite of the relative abundance of the American Crow in winter, at least in southern Ontario, little information is available on the sizes or locations of roosts. The purpose of this note is to document the size and location of a large winter roost of crows which I observed in Essex County in extreme southwestern Ontario.

During the winter of 1978/79 I visited the garbage dumps in Essex and Kent counties on a bimonthly basis. On 22 November 1978, I noted 200–300 crows at each of two large dumps at Leamington and north of Harrow but did not have time to locate their roost(s). On 6 December, I was at the Harrow site before sunrise. At 0720h large numbers (400–500) of crows began arriving at and flying over the dump from the north. By car I backtracked the crows along their flightline [which was continuous and heavy (300–400 crows/200 m)] to a woodlot approximately 300 m north of the junction of Hwys 3 and 23 just south of the community of Essex. At 0733h there were approximately 500 crows sitting in a nearby ploughed field and good numbers in the woodlot. I was not sure if this was the actual roosting area or if it was only a primary dispersal area. At any rate all

D.V. Chip Weseloh, 1391 Mt. Pleasant Road, Toronto, Ontario, M4N 2T7

birds seemed to be eminating from here and it was impossible to trace their flightline any farther.

That evening, at 1610h, I revisited the woodlot but noted only about 200 crows in the trees and none in the fields. While driving backroads I discovered a woodlot (on the farm of L. Casagrande, approximately 5 km southwest of the 3/23 junction), in which several hundred crows were already sitting and into which others were descending; still others were flying between the woodlot and a ploughed field 300 m to the north. At 1631h I estimated a minimum of 20 000 crows at this pre-roost site. At 1640h I returned to the woodlot north of the 3/23 junction and witnessed literally thousands of crows coming into the woodlot along four flightlines from the south, southwest, north and east. From 1648 to 1728h I counted and estimated the numbers of crows arriving at the woodlot along the two flightlines from the south and southwest only. Rates of arrival along these two flightlines ranged from approximately 300–800 crows/minute. During the 40 minute census period, over 25 000 crows arrived at the roost from these two flightlines alone! Considering that I was counting crows along only two of the four flightlines — albeit the two most dense — and that my count period probably extended over only about half of the crows' arrival time, I would estimate, that there could have been 50 000 to 75 000 crows at the roost.

I have been unable to find any reference to the age or previous size of this Essex crow roost, but a landowner living adjacent to the area said that crows had used the woodlot for a roost since at least 1954 (when he moved to his present location). Also, in 1975, J.P. Kleiman reported 75 000 crows from Essex County in November (Goodwin 1976). There is no mention of a roost but presumably these birds were affiliated with the Essex roost described above. On several occasions I have since searched for additional crow roosts in Essex county but always without success.

When considering the winter distribution of the American Crow in Canada, a roost of the size described here takes on potential national significance. According to the 79th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), the largest number of crows on any CBC in Canada was reported at Hamilton, Ontario (Anderson 1979). There, 4 000 crows were counted at their roost. The second largest number in Canada was at Chilliwack, B.C. (913) and the second largest number in Ontario was at London (542).

The Essex roost does not lie within the boundary of any CBC but rather is 19 km outside the count of the Pt. Pelee CBC. In 1978, the Pt. Pelee CBC tallied only 350 crows, the fifth largest number in Ontario. It is unlikely that the number of crows at the Essex roost had diminished greatly between my visit on 6 December

and the CBC on 24 December. Instead it would appear that only a small portion of the crows at the Essex roost dispersed into (or were counted in) the Pt. Pelee count area. Hence the majority of the crows from the Essex roost were not represented in the Pt. Pelee CBC, or in any other CBC for that matter.

I am unfamiliar with crow roosts or winter crow populations at Chilliwack, London or any of the 7 other locations across Canada that recorded more than 350 crows on the 1978 CBC. However, I have visited the Hamilton roost, though not until late January when numbers could have been somewhat reduced over the levels in December. My impression, in late January, was that the Essex roost was several times larger than the Hamilton roost. If this were true, and depending upon whether the other Canadian and Ontario counts of crows represented roost or non-roost counts, the Essex crow roost may be the largest one in Ontario and quite likely in Canada.

Literature Cited

Anderson, R.R. 1979. Summary of highest counts of individuals for Canada. Amer. Birds 33: 708–709.

Bent, A.C. 1936. Life histories of North American jays, crows and titmice. Part 2. U.S. National Museum Bulletin 191. Dover Reprint Edition. 495 pp.

Goodwin, C.E. 1975. Ontario Region. Amer. Birds 29: 48–53.

Goodwin, D. 1973. Crows of the World. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 353 pp.

Haase, B.L. 1963. The winter flecking behaviour of the Common Crow (*Corvus Brachyrynchus* Brehm.). Ohio J. Science 63: 145–151.

Hall, G.A. 1982. Appalachian Region. Amer. Birds 36: 293–295.

James, R.D., P.L. McLaren and J.C. Barlow. 1976. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario. Life Sci. Misc. Pub., R. Ont. Mus.

Peterjohn, B.G. 1982. Middlewestern Prairie Region. Amer. Birds 36: 298–301.

Williams, F. 1981. Southern Great Plains. Amer. Birds 35: 313–315.

Wanted...

good quality
black and white photographs
of birds occurring in Ontario
for use in future issues of
***Ontario Birds*.**

Send photographs or availability list to the Editors.

An Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) at Whitby

by
D. James Mountjoy and R.D. McRae

On 29 October 1982, Mountjoy received a phone call from Dr. Margaret Bain reporting what she believed to be a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*). She observed the bird earlier that day along the road leading to the east side of Cranberry Marsh in the Lynde Shores Conservation Area at Whitby. Although Dr. Bain is an experienced birder, her views of the bird had been hampered by vegetation. She noted that the bird did not have white outer tail feathers, raising the possibility that it was an even more exotic species. Mountjoy telephoned McRae and we agreed to meet in the area where it had been seen. We independently searched the road down to the marsh without seeing any flycatchers. While returning along the road we flushed a medium-sized passerine from a bush at the edge of the road. As it flew toward a small woodlot we could see rusty tones before the bird disappeared into the vegetation. We followed the bird into the woodlot and attempted to photograph it as it foraged in rather dense brush. Eventually it left the woodlot and flew back to the bushes along the road edge. We followed the bird as it moved slowly southward, and here McRae photographed it, having identified it as an Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). By 1700h the light was beginning to fade so we decided to leave and try to contact other birders.

The next day more than 150 birders searched unsuccessfully for the flycatcher, and despite efforts on subsequent days, the bird was not relocated. However, the bird may actually have been present for several days. On 27 October, John Sabean saw a bird in the same general area that he tentatively identified as a Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*), although he realised that it did not look quite right for that species. After viewing the photographs of the Whitby bird, Sabean stated that they appeared to be of the same bird.

Although there were no other birds close enough to the Ash-throated Flycatcher to offer a direct comparison, we both felt that it was slightly larger than an Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*). The silvery-white throat

D.J. Mountjoy, 79 Burk Street, Oshawa, Ont. L1J 4C1
R.D. McRae, 623 Homewood Avenue, Peterborough, Ont. K9J 4V4

was quite striking and blended into a rather pale grey breast. The belly was light grey with a yellow wash. The wings were generally brown with two buffy wing-bars and pale edgings on the secondaries. Rusty colouration was visible on the primaries, even when the bird was perched. The tail appeared dark brown above but some rustiness was noted on the underside. This rust colour was visible from above only when the bird spread its tail as it took flight. The back was dull brown with the head being slightly darker, especially on the forehead and crown. The head had a high domed appearance due to the long crown feathers, which were sometimes ruffled by a breeze. The bill was dark except for a small fleshy area at the base of the lower mandible.

The bird made no vocalizations during the period of observation. It spent most of its time in fairly dense vegetation including bushes and the lower branches of small trees. Only rarely did it perch more than 2 m above ground, usually staying between 1 to 1.5 m up and occasionally it was almost on the ground. The flycatcher regularly made short flights and appeared to pick insects off the leaves and branches while in flight or briefly hovering. The tendency to remain close to the ground and to glean insects from the vegetation has been noted as a behaviour characteristic of Ash-throated Flycatchers (Murphy 1982).

This is the second of three observations of this species in Ontario and the only one with material evidence. The first record

R.D. MCRAE

The Ash-throated Flycatcher at Whitby.

for the province was of a bird seen by Wilfred Botham at Point Pelee National Park on 24 and 25 November, 1962 (James 1983). Ontario's third Ash-throated Flycatcher was discovered at Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area just nine days after our sighting (see elsewhere in this issue). Late October and early November of 1982 proved to be a very productive period for rare flycatchers in southern Ontario as a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*) and a Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) were found at Deep River and Ottawa, respectively, in addition to the two Ash-throated Flycatchers. These observations emphasize the importance of carefully scrutinizing any apparently familiar species seen outside its normal dates of occurrence, keeping in mind the possibility that a similar rare vagrant might be involved.

We would like to express our thanks to Margaret Bain and Ronald G. Tozer for reading and making comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript.

Literature Cited:

James, R. D. 1983. Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1982. Ontario Birds 1: 7–15.

Murphy, W.L. 1982. The Ash-throated Flycatcher in the east: an overview. American Birds 36: 241–247.

Notes

First Record of Double-Crested Cormorant Nesting on Eastern Lake Erie

In recent years the number of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) nesting on the lower Great Lakes has been increasing. The known colonies, up until this year, have included three islands in eastern Lake Ontario and three islands in western Lake Erie (D.V. Weseloh, pers. comm.). For eastern Lake Erie there have been no confirmed records of breeding even though, in recent years, there have been small numbers of summering Double-crested Cormorants with a maximum of 15 individuals on

P. MINEAU

Young cormorants

Mohawk Island on 23 May 1981 (A. Schaffner and A. Clark, pers. obs.).

On 18 May 1983, A.R. Clark and Arthur Schaffner visited Mohawk island (located approximately 13 kilometers southeast of Dunnville, Regional Municipality of Norfolk-Haldimand) to census the Herring and Ring-billed Gull (*Larus argentatus* and *L. delawarensis*, respectively) populations. As the boat approached, 65 Double-crested Cormorants took flight from the island with a number of the birds circling and landing nearby on the lake. On the island, Clark and Schaffner found and photographed 12 cormorant nests thereby documenting the first breeding record of this species on eastern Lake Erie. The nests, eight of which contained eggs, were located along the southeastern edge of an area of higher ground in the vicinity of Herring Gull nests.

On 15 June 1983, P. Madore, J. Planck, and J. Robinson of the Canadian Wildlife Service visited the island. They found a total of 16 nests (3 w/0 eggs, 1 w/2 eggs, 5 w/3 eggs, 4 w/4 eggs, 2 w/3 young, and 1 w/3 young and 1 egg). Some of the eggs in the nests were pipping. In addition they noted several eggs out of nests, some intact and others broken. The investigators conducted their census quickly in order to minimize the disturbance. They observed several adults back on their nests within two to three minutes after they moved away, with other birds returning before they reached their boat.

A third visit to the island was made on 3 August 1983 by D.V. Weseloh, A.R. Clark, A. Schaffner, and L. Measures in hopes of banding the young cor-

morants. Although 20 Double-crested Cormorants, including one probable young of the year, were noted on and around the island, there were no non-flying young. At this time the nests were heavily overgrown with vegetation and did not appear as if they had been used recently. Weseloh felt that very few birds, if any, had probably fledged. He also felt that such poor success was consistent with a new colony and the number of visits the island had probably received from boaters (and biologists).

Of additional note is that Mohawk Island is a National Wildlife Area and visits between 1 April and 31 July are prohibited without a permit.

The authors would like to thank Gerald McKeating for the permits to visit the island and D.V. Weseloh for his data and comments.

Arthur R. Clark, Buffalo Museum of Science, Humboldt Parkway, Buffalo, New York 14211.
Paul Madore, Janet Planck, and Jeffrey Robinson, Canadian Wildlife Service, 152 Newbold Court, London, Ontario N6E 1Z7.

An Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) at Prince Edward Point

On Sunday morning, 7 November 1982, during the annual Fall Round-up of the Kingston Field Naturalists at Prince Edward Point, Marg Brown, Ruby Rogers, George Vance and the author studied a Myiarchus flycatcher superficially resembling a Great-Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*). It was feeding actively in the field along the lee side of the woodlot immediately southwest of the harbour within the National Wildlife Area. The flycatcher spent virtually all its time within one m of the ground perching atop stout weeds or bushes and flying to the ground. It did not catch insects in flight, but captured them from foliage, a behaviour not typical of Great-Crested Flycatchers. We were able to approach within 10 paces and study for about half an hour the following field marks. The white on the chin and throat extended to the side of the neck becoming grey and merging into brown. The upper breast was also white and the mid-breast a creamy white. The lower belly was creamy white washed with pale lemon yellow, which was strongest in the vent area.

Both mandibles were dark right to the face and each was of equal

length giving the appearance of a relatively small bill. The head was unmarked brown, but darker than, and showing slight contrast with, the back. The feathers on the crown were ruffled slightly as though back combed. The upper side of the tail was brown and lacked any rufous. The underside of the tail displayed a rich rufous, easily seen when the bird perched or took flight. Two white wing bars and white edging along the secondaries gave the bird a smart appearance. A rich rufous patch in the outer secondaries was also evident.

During the observation, the bird was suspected of being an Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), but only the new Peterson's eastern field guide (Houghton-Mifflin) was on hand which is limited in its treatment of *Myiarchus* flycatchers. Our strategy then was to make detailed notes on field marks and drawings in order to facilitate later identification with suitable reference material. Such an identification confirmed Ash-throated Flycatcher. The critical features were the small, all dark bill, white chin and throat, and the colour of the tail – brown above, rufous below.

The breeding range of the Ash-throated Flycatcher extends from central Mexico north to Oregon and east to central Texas where it inhabits desert, scrub and pine-oak woodlands. Murphy (Amer. Birds 36:241–247, 1982) summarized its occurrences east of the Mississippi River and notes that in recent years it has been a regular fall visitor. Prior to 1970, Ash-throated Flycatchers were recorded only 12 times in the east, but more than 20 times since then. Most sightings have been between September and December with peak numbers in November and early December. The Prince Edward Point bird constitutes the third record for Ontario and the first for the Kingston region. Judging from the photograph of the Ash-throated Flycatcher at Whitby (see earlier article) which showed a fair amount of pale colouration along the side of the neck, it is unlikely these were the same individual.

Ron D. Weir, 294 Elmwood Street, Kingston, Ontario K7M 2Y8

Sight Record of a Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) in Ontario

At 1230h on 3 January 1982, I located an immature Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*). The bird was in a small cattail (*Typha* sp.) marsh in the town of Gosport, Northumberland County. The bird was near a Tree Sparrow (*Spizella arborea*) and a Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). I watched it for about three minutes from a distance of 25 m. The bird then flew north some 30 m to another cattail marsh.

I then called Fred Helleiner and Sheldon McGregor to observe this unusual sparrow. We observed the bird with the aid of 7×50 binoculars from a distance of 20 m for approximately three minutes. Light conditions were good from an overcast but bright sky. The bird was last seen that day by me feeding on the berries of Bittersweet Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*).

The most startling field mark noticed immediately was a yellow forehead. This yellow was most intense at the base of the upper mandible and faded in intensity moving back to the median line. Outlining the yellow forehead was a dark brown 'eyebrow' which ran along the crown of the head well above the eye. The crown, particularly at the back of the head, seemed to have a reddish-brown tinge. There was a faint eye ring. The bird's bill was a pale pink to bone colour with a faint mustache coming down from the lower mandible. The breast was a dull white with no markings. Two faint wing bars were also noted. The back of the sparrow was a light brown, not a reddish-brown as in the Tree Sparrow. The bird appeared marginally larger than the nearby Tree Sparrow. The only noise heard was a single call note which sounded similar to that of a Tree Sparrow.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow was seen by many other observers from 4–15 January 1982 as it regularly visited a feeder in Gosport (Amer. Birds 36:291, 1982).

A detailed sighting report was submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee and was subsequently accepted by the Committee in February of 1983 as the first authenticated sight record for the province (Ont. Birds 1: 13, 1983). The only other known record for the province is an unsubstantiated record for North Bay on 16 April 1974 (Amer. Birds 28: 798, 1974)

The nesting range of the Golden-crowned Sparrow in Canada is the mountains of British Columbia and western Alberta. However they are casual east of the Rockies in Alberta, Sas-

katchewan and northwestern Mackenzie. (Godfrey, W.E. 1966. Birds of Canada, Nat. Mus. Canada, Ottawa)

Extralimital Golden-crowned Sparrows have also occurred in Wisconsin, New York, Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, North Dakota, Louisiana, Connecticut, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Japan. Nova Scotia has had two records since the publication of Godfrey's Birds of Canada (1966). On 9 October, 1967 an adult bird was seen on Sable Island (McLaren, I.A. & C. Bell, 1972. Birds of Sable Island, Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax). Another adult bird was seen from 8–15 May 1977 at Turtle Lake, Queen's County, Nova Scotia (Amer. Birds 31: 976, 1977).

Christopher G. Harris, 11 Letitia St., Barrie, Ontario L4N 1N7

Book Reviews

Breeding Birds of Ontario, Nidiology and Distribution, Volume I: Nonpasserines. 1983. By *George K. Peck and Ross D. James.* Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. xii + 321 pp. $25.00

Breeding Birds of Ontario, Nidiology and Distribution, Volume I: Nonpasserines by George Peck and Ross James, is the first definitive book on the province's breeding birds since Baillie and Harrington wrote their two part work "The Distribution of Breeding Birds in Ontario" in 1936 and 1937. At that time 210 breeding species were recognized. A wealth of information has accumulated over the past 46 years, thanks especially to the Ontario Nest Records Scheme (ONRS), launched in 1956. Drs. Peck and James have used data from some 80,000 nest cards submitted up to 1980. Of these, 17,757 were processed for their first volume. In addition they have surveyed both the pertinent scientific literature as well as the publications of Ontario's various naturalists' clubs. As of 1980, the cut-off date for the present work, some 283 breeding species are listed for Ontario of which nine are considered hypothetical.

This volume describes 143 breeding species from loons to woodpeckers inclusive. The order follows the Fifth A.O.U. Checklist (1957) with associated supplements up to and including 1976. Perhaps the authors weighed the advantages of adopting the Sixth edition (1983) against the disadvantages of the inherent delay that would result. The figures num-

ber 184 in all, of which 142 are maps. The 42 photographs, all black and white, show various nests, habitat types and birds. Forty of these were taken by the authors. The text contains 37 line drawings of birds, all prepared by Ross James. The drawing of the Semipalmated Plover is reproduced on the soft front cover.

The five forest and physiographic regions of Ontario are defined in the introduction. The authors wisely remind the reader that Ontario's area is double that of France and five times that of the British Isles. The format for each species, with few exceptions, has all the information on nesting and the breeding distribution on the right hand page opposite its distribution map on the left. This makes for easy reading. Each account of the nidiology is subdivided into four sections *viz* records, eggs, incubation period and egg dates. Detailed descriptions of the species' breeding habitat, nest location and nest description are given in the records section. In the eggs section, the number of nests, the number of eggs each nest contained and average clutch size are listed.

The symbols used on the distribution maps denote contemporary or historical records, each categorized by documentation or sight record. On each map is also shown a helpful distance legend. A single page at the end of the species accounts is devoted to four of the species reported breeding in Ontario without supporting material evidence. An alphabetical listing by common name is given of the plant species mentioned in the text, while the index contains both the common and scientific bird names.

The text is free of typographical errors, at least I did not detect any. However, in three locations on page 7, items 7, 8, 9, a singular verb is used with the word data, the plural form of datum. On page 53, the authors refer to *Chen rossii* as Ross's Goose rather than Ross' Goose. This is the only occasion where they have strayed from A.O.U. nomenclature.

A mixup has occurred on page 121 for the Marsh Hawk, where the first two sentences of paragraph three are the same as for the Osprey 123, paragraph four. Nests of the Marsh Hawk are not bulky structures of sticks and branches. This paragraph should begin as follows with the corrected text supplied to me by Dr. James: "Nests were scanty to bulky platform mounds usually with flat tops. They were placed on the ground or on surrounding flattened vegetation. A few nests were described as depressions and some had slightly hollowed bowls."

The strength of the book lies in its important contribution in summarizing the nesting information reported in the ONRS. These data will prove invaluable for nest finding. Among the many useful tips are that 92% of all Common Flicker nests and 98% of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nests reported were in deciduous trees. Only 6% of all flicker nests were found in living trees, while the Hairy Woodpecker nested noticeably earlier than either the sapsucker or Downy Woodpecker.

Missing information on the

breeding distribution maps must be interpreted with great caution. As the authors point out, the bulk of records in the ONRS reflect in their distribution a correlation with the distribution of contributors. This has resulted in more records from densely populated areas than from less densely populated ones. Wide expanses of the province are without human settlement or even visitation. In addition, many naturalists will not report nestings of certain species (especially the large raptors) to the ONRS for fear of disturbance. These handicaps will be mostly, but probably not entirely, overcome by the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas programme running from 1981–85 and should provide the most complete information on Ontario's breeding bird distribution heretofore known.

This first volume is an essential addition to the library of any serious Ontario ornithologist and naturalist. It is a first class production and good value for $25.00. Volume II is awaited eagerly.

Ron D. Weir, 294 Elmwood Street, Kingston, Ontario K7M 2Y8.

Information Wanted

Seasonal Summaries of Bird Sightings in Ontario: In their journal, *American Birds*, the U.S. National Audubon Society publishes seasonal summaries of birds seen throughout North America. There are 26 reporting regions, of which Ontario is one. The aim of *American Birds* is to summarize the significant ornithological events of each season. These include characteristics of migration, important movements and numbers, extra-limited records, breeding information and other occurrences of note. Anyone with the ability to identify birds and record observations accurately may participate. Simply send your observations to the sub-regional editor in your area (see below) or, if none is listed, directly to the Ontario editor.

The reporting seasons for *American Birds* are as follows: **Spring** – 1 March to 31 May; **Nesting** – 1 June to 31 July; **Autumn** – 1 August to 30 November; **Winter** – 1 December to 29 February. Your report should reach the sub-regional editor within 10 days of the close of each season.

There is no official connection between *American Birds* and the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). If the material you are sending to your sub-regional editor

for inclusion in *American Birds* contains reference to species for which the OBRC requires documentation (see OBRC Reference Lists), make a separate submission to them.

For more information contact the Ontario editor:
Dr. Ron Weir, 294 Elmwood St., Kingston, Ont., K7M 2Y8. Sub-regional editors to contact (listed by county beginning in extreme eastern Ontario):

STORMONT, DUNDAS & GLENGARRY; PRESCOTT & RUSSELL; OTTAWA-CARLETON (incl. metropolitan Ottawa); **RENFREW; LANARK:** Mr. Bruce Di Labio, 62 Grange Ave., Ottawa, Ont., K1Y 0N9.

LEEDS & GRENVILLE: Mr. David Warner, St. Lawrence Islands National Park, Box 469, Mallorytown, Ont., K0E 1R0.

FRONTENAC (incl. Kingston & the islands); **LENNOX & ADDINGTON:** Ron Weir, as above

PRINCE EDWARD: Mr. Terry Sprague, R.R.#1, Demorestville, Ont., K0K 1W0.

NORTHUMBERLAND: Mr. E.R. (Ted) McDonald, 18 Fraser St., Port Hope, Ont., L1A 2A1.

PETERBOROUGH; VICTORIA: Mr. Doug C. Sadler, R.R. #4, Peterborough, Ont., K9J 6X5.

HALIBURTON (incl. Algonquin Prov. Park); **NIPISSING** south: Mr. Ron Tozer, Spring Lake Road, R.R. #1, Dwight, Ont., P0A 1H0.

NIPISSING: north (incl. North Bay); Mr. Gary F. Clay, 17 Merlin Ave., North Bay, Ont., P1A 3V6.

PARRY SOUND; MUSKOKA: Mr. Robert Bowles, Box 816, Gravenhurst, Ont., P0C 1G0.

DURHAM: Dr. Margaret Bain, 210 Byron St. N., Whitby, Ont., L1N 4M9.

TORONTO METROPOLITAN AREA: Mr. Arn Dawe (Toronto Ornithological Club), 56 Coles Ave., Woodbridge, Ont., L4L 1L9; Mrs. Margaret Wilson (Pickering Field Naturalists), 1374 Tatra Dr., Pickering, Ont., L1W 1K6; Mr. B. Parker (Toronto Field Naturalists), Townhouse 66, 109 Valleywoods Rd., Don Mills, Ont., M3A 2R8.

YORK: Arn Dawe, as above.

SIMCOE: Mr. Cliff J. MacFayden, 159 Owen St., Barrie, Ont., L4M 3H8.

DUFFERIN: Mrs. Susan Howlett, R.R. #1, Orangeville, Ont., L9W 2Y8.

PEEL: Arn Dawe, as above.

HALTON; HAMILTON-WENTWORTH (incl. metropolitan Hamilton): Mr. Kevin A. McLaughlin, 30 Bingham Rd. Hamilton, Ont., L8H 1N4.

NIAGARA: Dr. Richard W. Knapton, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ont., L3S 3A1. (reporting records from the Buffalo Ornithological Society is Dr. R.F. Andrle, Buffalo Museum of Science, Humboldt Parkway, Buffalo, New York, 14211, U.S.A.)

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK (incl. Long Point): Mr. Roy B.H. Smith, Long Point Bird Observatory, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont., N0E 1M0.

BRANT: Volunteers needed.

WATERLOO; WELLINGTON: Mr. Stan Kozak, 632 Woolwich St., Guelph, Ont., N1H 3Y2.

GREY; BRUCE: Mr. Joe Johnson, Box 556, Wiarton, Ont., N0H 2T0.

HURON: – Volunteers needed.

PERTH: Mrs. Maureen P. Davis, R.R. #2, Stratford, Ont., N5A 6S3.

MIDDLESEX; ELGIN; OXFORD: Mr. W.R. (Bill) Jarmain, 795 Commissioner's Rd. W., London, Ont., N6K 1C1.

LAMBTON; KENT; ESSEX: Mrs. N.T. (Alice) Kelley, 3681 Forest Hill Dr., Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 48013, U.S.A.

TIMISKAMING: Mr. Percy W. Richter, Box 293, Virginiatown, Ont., P0K 1X0.

MANITOULIN; SUDBURY: Mr. John C. Nicholson, 863 Prete St., Sudbury, Ont., P3E 3X9.

ALGOMA: Mr. Tom D. Marwood, 31 Garden River Road, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., P6B 5Y7.

COCHRANE: Mr. Ted Armstrong, Box 2265, Cochrane, Ont., P0L 1C0.

THUNDER BAY EAST: Mr. Michael C. Jones, Pukaskwa National Park, Box 550, Marathon, Ont., P0T 2E0.

THUNDER BAY WEST: Dr. M. (Myra) J. McCormick, 286 N. Algoma St., Thunder Bay, Ont., P7A 5A6.

RAINY RIVER: Mrs. Shirley Peruniak, Quetico Provincial Park, Ministry of Natural Resources, Atikokan, Ont., P0T 1C0.

MOOSONEE AREA: Dr. Ken F. Abraham, Ministry of Natural Resources, Box 190, Moosonee, Ont., P0L 1Y0.

Corrections

The following corrections should be made to Ontario Birds Volume 1 Number 1:

P. 8, Col. 2, last line: Netititishi *should read* Netitishi

p. 11, Col. 2, line 17: **1892** *should read* **1982**

p. 16, Col. 2, line 14: 20°C *should read* −20°C

p. 34, Col. 1, line 1: 21 May 1979 *should read* 21 May 1978

line 32: On 23 May *should read* On 24 May

OFO Announcements

The following are announcements of upcoming OFO activities. They have been arranged for *members* of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Because space may be limited at any of these functions be prepared in some way to identify yourself as an OFO member. Reports on past OFO activities will appear in the newsletter.

12 November 1983 – Gulls at Niagara
This trip is geared specifically to help the *beginner* sort out the confusing masses of gulls to be found in the Niagara gorge at this time of the year. Among the huge numbers of Ring billed, Herring & Bonaparte's Gulls, we will be looking for Little, Franklin's, Black-headed, Thayer's, Glaucous, Iceland & Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Occasionally a Sabine's Gull turns up along the river. The group may also look for local specialties such as Tufted Titmouse or House Finch.

Meet in Niagara-on-the-Lake at 9:00 a.m. at the mouth of the Niagara River. There is a good sized parking lot there adjacent to the park that faces the river mouth. Leader will be Ron Ridout.

Early March 1984 – Ivy Lea and Wolfe or Amhurst Island
Ivy Lea is noted for such specialities as American Turkeys and Bald Eagles while the islands often play host to large numbers of wintering owls and hawks. More details of this trip will be announced in the next newsletter.

Late May – Early June 1984 – Rainy River/Lake-of-the-Woods
The Moosonee field trip was so well received that we are now planning another ambitious Ontario trip: this time to the Rainy River/Lake-of-the-Woods region. The area is a long way from southern Ontario and either expensive or time consuming to get to; driving time from southern Ontario is 20+ hours. Scheduled air travel can only take you as close as Kenora or Ft. Frances car rentals are available at both locations. Tenting and limited commercial accommodation are available. Further details will appear in the next newsletter.

Typist Wanted:
OFO needs a person to do occasional typing. Contact the Editors. 1-416-485-1464.

Ontario Field Ornithologists

The Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the *Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC),* publishes a newsletter and a journal, *Ontario Birds,* hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting.

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership dues are $10.00 Annual Member or $200.00 Life Member. All members receive *Ontario Birds,* the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Please send memberships to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.

Board of Directors

President — Ron Ridout, 407A–1011 Dundas St. E., Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 4A5

Vice-president — Bill Crins, 412–1180 Forestwood Dr., Mississauga, Ontario L5C 1H8

Treasurer — Verne Evans, 2164 Sunnybrook Ct., Oakville, Ontario L6L 1P4

Secretary — Doug McRae, 623 Homewood Ave., Peterborough, Ontario K9J 4V4

Membership Sec. — Don Fraser, 152 Patterson St., Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 4Y8

Editors — Chip and Linda Weseloh, 1391 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Toronto, Ontario M4N 2T7

OBRC Representative — Don Sutherland, 350 Inglewood Dr., Toronto, Ontario M4T 1J6

Director — Sarah Wood, 231 Rosemary Lane, Ancaster, Ontario L9G 3K6

Director — Michael Runtz, 191 John St. N., Arnprior, Ontario K7S 2P1

Ontario Birds

Editors: Chip and Linda Weseloh
Design/Production: Carol Fox
Copy Editor / Production: Heather Lang-Runtz
Editorial Assistants: Bill Crins, Doug McRae, Don Fraser, Helen Piilonen, Jon Cormier, Don Sutherland

All items for publication should be sent to:

The Editors
% Ontario Field Ornithologists,
Box 1204,
Station B,
Burlington, Ontario,
L7P 3S9

Material should be double-spaced and type-written if possible.

We wish to acknowledge the use of the facilities of **Didier Fiszel Dessinateur Graphiste Inc.** in the preparation of *Ontario Birds*.

Editorial Policy

Ontario Birds is the journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Its aim is to provide a vehicle for the documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles or short notes on the status of bird species in Ontario, significant provincial or county distributional records, tips on bird identification, behavioural observations of birds in Ontario, location guides to significant birdwatching areas in Ontario, book reviews and similar material of interest on Ontario birds. We do not accept submissions dealing with "listing" and we discourage Seasonal Reports of bird sightings as these are covered by *Bird Finding in Canada* and *American Birds,* respectively. Distributional records of species for which the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) requires documentation must be accepted by them before they can be published in *Ontario Birds*.