ONTARIO BIRDS

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Ontario Field Ornithologists

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 (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*), hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.
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All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership rates can be obtained from the address below. All members receive *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*. Please send membership inquiries to: **Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 62014, Burlington Mall Postal Outlet, Burlington, Ontario L7R 4K2.**

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The aim of *Ontario Birds* is to provide a vehicle for documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles and short notes on the status, distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in Ontario, as well as location guides to significant Ontario birdwatching areas, book reviews, and similar material of interest on Ontario birds.

If possible, material submitted for publication should be double-spaced and typewritten. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Please submit items for publication to the Editors at the address noted above.

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by *Ross D. James*

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Letter to the Editors

Review Criticized

I was astonished by the lengthy review of Clive Goodwin's *A Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario* (*Ontario Birds* 13: 77-82). One page of review and five more mostly carping criticism.

By its very nature, an extensive guide for the whole of Ontario will be deficient in some respects. Dwelling on such defects to the exclusion of its obvious merits is destructive. Last minute revisions are impractical and expensive (ever built a house?). Clive Goodwin deserves great credit for producing a second edition after only 13 years -- Pettingill took 25!

After publication of the first edition, many birders wrote in with corrections and suggestions, all of which were graciously acknowledged by the author. Seemingly, the reviewer did not do likewise. Pity.

Birders visiting the United States seldom travel without their ABA Lane guides. Modern systematic lists with bar codes are far superior to the old four seasons system. Especially so with fast moving migrants (e.g. Fox Sparrow). Goodwin has taken much trouble with his systematic list and subjected it to review by none other than three of the province's top authorities: James, Weir and Ridout. I am glad he has followed ABA's example, and visiting birders will find it invaluable (locals too) despite the reviewer's scepticism. Many other criticisms deserve rebuttal, but I will cite only two:

1. Lack of precise directions for locating Louisiana Waterthrush. *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* classes this bird as "rare", with only three nesting sites being in any form of protected area. All other sites are on private land. *Ontario Birds at Risk* calls it "threatened". Need I say more?

2. Now for the hilarious Woodlawn/Woodland storm-in-a-teacup. Likely Goodwin was mislead here by using *local* sources. OFO's excellent "Bird Finding Guide #1: Birding in the Hamilton Area" in *Ontario Birds* 8 (3) has no less than three references to Woodlawn Cemetery. This guide was written by a Hamiltonian, but alas, his collaborator lived east of the dreaded Credit River! As Ed Mirvish might say, "a touch of humbility" was needed here.

I suggest that most experienced, as well as novice, birders will welcome this second edition of *A Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario* and find it helpful, if only for hot-line birds in unfamiliar areas. I consider my money very well spent.

Gordon Bellerby
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Ontario

Articles

Fort Severn 1940 - with Cliff Hope

by
Ross D. James

Introduction

On a third trip in as many years to the remote northwestern parts of Ontario, Cliff Hope visited Fort Severn, a small native community on the banks of the Severn River about ten kilometres inland from the Hudson Bay coast (Figure 1). Hope's trip remains the only extended trip specifically to study bird life there, and many significant observations resulted from it.

Hope left Toronto with the same travelling companions that accompanied him to Attawapiskat Lake in 1939, L.A. Prince and W.B. Scott (James 1994). They left on 4 June, going by train to Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Melville, Saskatchewan, and then northeast to The Pas and Ilford, Manitoba. They remained in Manitoba for a week, finally flying to Fort Severn on 15 June, along the Sachigo and Severn Rivers. The rivers initially follow a channel between fairly high banks. Some 80 km from Sachigo Lake, the route entered the Hudson Bay Lowland; numerous small lakes of the shield country gave way to vast stretches of muskeg.

Fort Severn was a community of only about 90 Cree Indians. The Hudson Bay Company manager, Jack Wilson, was the only non-native person there. The HBC post consisted of five buildings in a one acre clearing about ten metres above the river on the river bank. The ROM party set up "camp" in one of the HBC warehouses.

Hope describes the country immediately about the post as a mass of stunted willows. Large islands in the river were covered with a nearly impenetrable growth of gnarled and dwarfed willows. The river shores, subject to tidal action, had wide mud and gravel shores, backed by grassy flats with gravelly pools and then dense growths of poplars and willows on higher banks. To the west of the town was open spruce-tamarack muskeg.

Up river from the post, the riverbanks were often more precipitous, some reaching 15 m high, with chunks falling away here and there as water eroded the bases. The tops of the riverbanks were well wooded with spruce forests, some trees as large as 30 cm in diameter. Sphagnum moss and reindeer lichen carpeted the forest floor. The river islands only had poplars and willow, some of the poplars on larger islands reaching substantial size, as well. Back from the better drained banks, away from the river, the country became more of a black spruce muskeg.

About halfway to the coast from the town, the last trees were seen on the flat "barrens" extending to the bay. Patches of stunted willows and alders fewer than 30 cm high

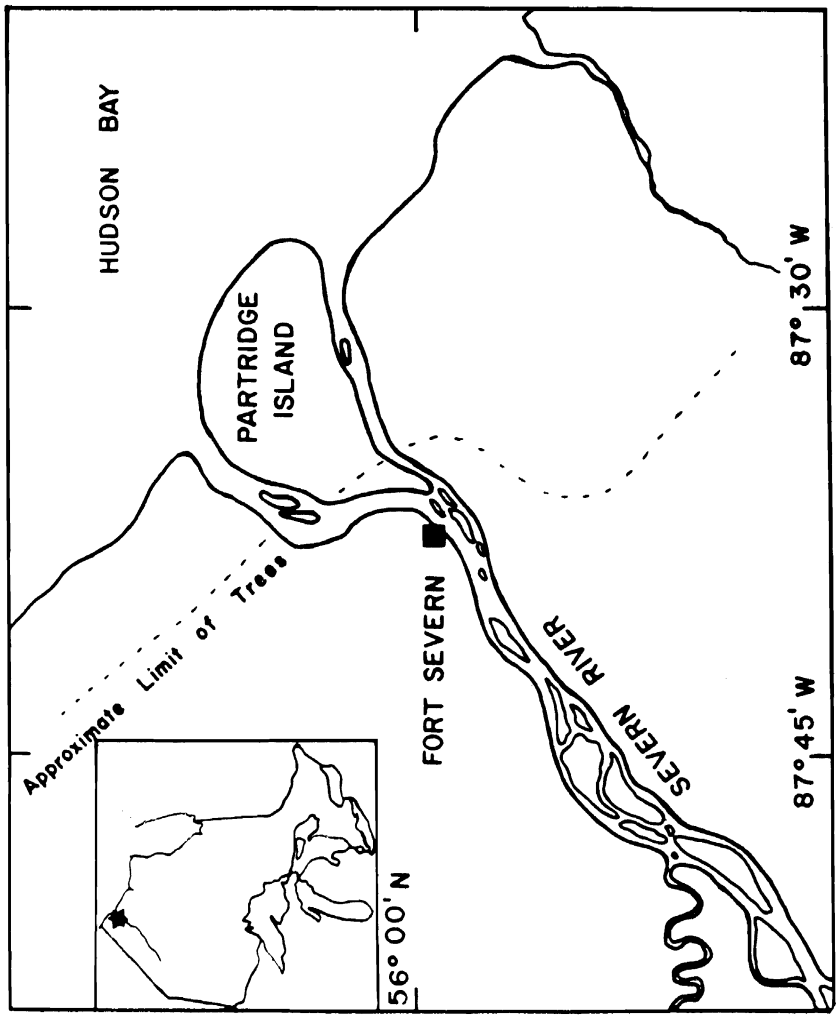

Figure 1: Map of the Fort Severn area, Ontario.

persisted for some distance amid open areas of "grass". This was dotted with innumerable pools, ponds and streams. The willows became more stunted and pools more numerous closer to the coast, until finally only "coarse grass" remained, over which high tides flowed. Finally, wide mudflats bordered the bay. Open water extended out several kilometres to the ice cover still present offshore.

Travel was largely on foot; thus he might have encountered more things along the coast if he had been more mobile. He was able to walk to most available habitats, however. Several canoe trips were made with Jack Wilson's canoe to coastal areas and once up the river for about 12 km. He obviously had no spotting scope, so many birds off or along the coast could not be identified. They had to contend with mosquitoes in warmer weather, but these did not seem to limit activities. Persistent cold rains were probably more of an impediment initially, and they experienced 5 cm of snow on 19 June.

They left Fort Severn on 23 July, some 38 days after arrival. They had intended to stay about another week, but the schooner M.S. Severn, that was to take them to Churchill, Manitoba, arrived early. They spent most of the night packing in order to be able to leave with the ship the next day. The following day, they were still weaving their way through floating ice on Hudson Bay as they travelled northwest.

Again I have indicated, for each appropriate species in the following accounts, by "#" that specimens were preserved in the ROM, and by "*" that nesting/breeding was clearly documented. Details are on specimens or nest record cards in the museum.

Species Accounts

Red-throated Loon, *Gavia stellata:* # Rare; he saw two flying on 1 July, one swam down river on 15 July and two were brought to him from the coast on 12 July.

Pacific Loon, *Gavia pacifica:* # Not seen by Hope at all; the only evidence he had of it was a wing brought in by an Indian from a bird taken near the coast on 3 July.

Common Loon, *Gavia immer:* # Fairly common; from one to as many as 30 seen on most days. Most were in small groups on the open bay or flying over and swimming on the open river. He had no indication of nesting and most, if not all, were likely nonbreeding birds.

Horned Grebe, *Podiceps auritus:* # Also never seen by Hope; wings and feet of two taken locally were brought to him on 2 July.

American Bittern, *Botaurus lentiginosus:* *# Relatively rare, the usual being only one heard on about one quarter of the days. A bird brought to Hope on 17 June was a female with several ruptured follicles in the ovary, indicating local nesting. He heard one occasionally in spruce-tamarack bogs near town through most of his stay there.

Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias:* # The skin of a bird taken 1 September of the previous year was given to Hope.

Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis:* *# Common, with flocks of as many as 200, but was generally inconspicuous most of the time. Several downy young were brought to him on a couple of occasions.

Green-winged Teal, *Anas crecca:* *# Very rare; a skinned and dried head was brought to him on 9 July, and on 16 July a female was taken with a partially shelled egg that would soon have been laid, indicating local breeding.

American Black Duck, *Anas rubripes:* # Rarely seen anywhere but on the mudflats bordering Hudson Bay and only a very few were identified. There were many unidentifiable ducks far offshore, however, more of which could have been nonbreeding birds of this species.

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos:* # Even rarer than the black duck; only four were identified, and a couple more brought to him, all in mid July, suggesting that most, if not all, were nonbreeding birds summering on the coast.

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta:* *# Thinly distributed in the muskeg and along the river and bay shores. Although not many were seen, a sizeable breeding population was present, as numerous young of various sizes were brought to Hope on a couple of occasions.

American Wigeon, *Anas americana:* *# Less numerous than pintail, however a breeding population was present. A female had an egg ready for laying on 18 June and ducklings were brought to Hope on 9, 10 and 21 July.

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila:* # Rare; seen on only two occasions (22 June and 1 July) with no indication of breeding. Birds were also brought to him on 18 June and 19 July, suggesting some were probably there all summer.

Lesser Scaup, *Aythya affinis:* Very rare; only one pair was seen on a small bog pond on 24 June.

White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta fusca:* Seldom seen, but apparently common; two flocks of 40 to 50 birds and two groups of three on the river were the only encounters. Many of the offshore birds could also have been scoters of this or another species.

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator:* Rare; he saw only two males and a female-plumaged bird together on the river on 29 July.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus:* # Rare, and no evidence of nesting was found. However, from one to three were seen on eight days through July, indicating summer residency.

Northern Harrier, *Circus cyaneus:* Fairly common in coastal areas where he saw as many as ten one day. From one to four were seen on about one third of the days there.

Rough-legged Hawk, *Buteo lagopus:* A single individual on 17 June flying over the river shores within a couple of kilometres of town was the only observation.

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius:* Prince reported seeing one on 20 June for the only observation.

Merlin, *Falco columbarius:* *# Rare; seen on only four occasions, but he was able to find two nests. One appeared to be an old crow nest in a patch of stunted spruce west of town, and the other was on an island in the river in a much larger spruce tree south of town.

Spruce Grouse, *Dendragapus canadensis:* *# Rarely encountered; a female with a brood on 3 July, and a female and half grown young found by Scott on 17 July.

Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus:* *# Fairly rare; he saw only one in a bog on 20 June, and when leaving he saw five from the boat at the river mouth. Natives brought him several others on two occasions, one a female, 18 June, that had ruptured follicles to indicate local laying had taken place.

Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis:* # Very common in the marshes near the coast. Hope spent the night of 16/17 July out there and estimated hearing about 100 birds. The party was able to creep up on several, at least one of which was clearly seen by flashlight.

Sora, *Porzana carolina:* Heard calling only once in a grassy marsh within 2 km of town.

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus:* *# A common species along river shores with mud flats and gravel bars, often including scattered "grass" patches. He located three nests and saw one group of recently hatched young. Although these nests were not the first reported in the province (Peck and James 1993), they provided the first specimen evidence of nesting in Ontario. Contrary to what was reported in Peck and James (1983), and repeated by Hussell (in Cadman et al. 1987), Hope collected both eggs and downy young in Ontario prior to Manning's collecting of young at Cape Henrietta Maria in 1947 (Manning 1952). The eggs from much earlier nests at Moose River in 1860 may have been collected, but, if so, the whereabouts of the specimens is apparently unknown (Todd 1963).

Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferus:* Rare; heard on only three occasions, twice shortly after arrival and once a month later.

Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca:* # Rare, with small numbers of migrants appearing on coastal mudflats after 10 July.

Lesser Yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes:* *# Relatively few and thinly scattered as far as observations in June were concerned, but by mid July substantial numbers (100+) had begun to congregate on coastal mudflats. On 8 July he had a very agitated pair in a grassy slough in spruce-tamarack muskeg northwest of town, but could not find the young he felt were there. The following day an Indian brought him a downy young to finally confirm breeding by this species.

Solitary Sandpiper, *Tringa solitaria:* Rare; he saw only two on 7 July, both flying overhead.

Spotted Sandpiper, *Actitis macularia:* *# Common along river shores; he found a couple of nests and one group of recently hatched young.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus:* *# Rare, apart from migrants. A single female brought to Hope on 3 July had an incubation patch, ruptured follicles and a still enlarged oviduct, clearly suggesting local breeding. On 11 July on coastal tundra, he encountered two very agitated pairs and thought he heard young, but could not locate them. The only other observation was of about 30 near the coast on 17 July.

Semipalmated Sandpiper, *Calidris pusilla:* Virtually absent; he identified two along the river shore on 1 July for his only observation.

Least Sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla:* *# Common on the tundra. On 1 July he found two recently hatched young with parents and flushed a male from three fresh eggs. A well feathered young with parents was also found on 17 July.

Pectoral Sandpiper, *Calidris melanotos:* # Encountered only as migrants along the coastal area on 17 July; he saw about 15 that day.

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago:* *# Widespread and seen regularly, but uncommonly. He found a single egg in the muskeg on 21 June that may have belonged to this species and a recently flying juvenile on 20 July also indicated local breeding.

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus:* *# Reasonably common in shallow tundra pools near the coast. It was undoubtedly breeding, although only ruptured follicles and brood patches tended to confirm that.

Long-tailed Jaeger, *Stercorarius longicaudus:* # Rare; encountered on only three occasions over the period, once a group of five along the river shore on 20 June.

Bonaparte's Gull, *Larus philadelphia:* # Seen along the river in groups of three to eight on only three occasions in June, and no evidence of nesting was apparent.

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus:* # Uncommon for the most part, with one or two seen most days. The only suggestion of local breeding was some young of the year in a small flock with adults near the river mouth as Hope departed the area.

Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea:* *# Sporadically seen, usually only one or two, but after mid July, as many as a dozen near the coast. Breeding was indicated by a bird that contained an egg nearly ready to lay, brought to him on 18 June.

Northern Hawk Owl, *Surnia ulula:* # Single birds were noted on 21 June and 1 July.

Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus:* *# Fairly common, with one to three birds, and occasionally more, seen on half the days there. A nest with five young was found 19 July in a dry patch of stunted willows on Partridge Island.

Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon:* Only a single bird was reported to Hope on 3 July.

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus:* *# Seen on two occasions near tree line, and up river several kilometres, a nest with large young was found 7 July for the only other observation.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, *Empidonax flaviventris:* *# Uncommon in the spruce forests up river; he flushed a female from a nest on 15 July.

Alder Flycatcher, *Empidonax alnorum:* *# Common and seen virtually every day; he found a nest partially constructed on 15 July that later had eggs.

Least Flycatcher, *Empidonax minimus:* Heard calling only once in a poplar grove on Partridge Island on 19 July.

Horned Lark, *Eremophila alpestris:* *# Locally uncommon along the gravel flats of the river. He was probably late for much nesting activity. Two flying and full-grown juveniles were seen 9 July.

Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor:* Absent except for two birds observed about the Hudson Bay post on 23 June.

Bank Swallow, *Riparia riparia:* # Noted 9 July (four birds) apparently trying to excavate in a sandy patch along the river near Fort Severn, but not subsequently seen there. Two more were seen near Partridge Island 17 July.

Cliff Swallow, *Hirundo pyrrhonota:* # Three birds were noted investigating the eaves of buildings on 2 July. One bird was brought to Hope later in the day. No other sightings were made.

Gray Jay, *Perisoreus canadensis:* *# Uncommon, but frequently observed throughout the stay. Juvenile-plumaged birds were no doubt locally raised.

American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos:* *# Fairly common, with as many as ten seen on a couple of occasions. He found a nest with small young on 17 June.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax:* Absent except for a single individual flying over the tundra on 10 July.

Boreal Chickadee, *Parus hudsonicus:* *# Rare near the community, more usual in spruce woods up river. A juvenile with a parent was encountered 22 July.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus calendula:* # Uncommon in spruce woods, but he was unable to confirm breeding.

Gray-cheeked Thrush, *Catharus minimus:* *# Fairly common in the area; he was taken to a nest in stunted willows near camp on 2 July by Indian boys. He revisited the nest in the evening to get a good look at the adult before collecting the first nest found in the province. He also came upon a brood of young out of the nest on 15 July.

Swainson's Thrush, *Catharus ustulatus:* *# Uncommon in black spruce muskeg, yet he was able to locate two nests, 29 June and 7 July.

Hermit Thrush, *Catharus guttatus:* Almost absent; he heard only one in full song in the spruce muskeg on 3 July.

American Robin, *Turdus migratorius:* *# Commonly seen, yet characteristically difficult to confirm as a breeder. Adults feeding fairly large young on 6 July provided the only breeding evidence.

American Pipit, *Anthus rubescens:* # Very rare; he recorded them only twice and a bird was brought to him on another occasion.

European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris:* # Was not noted alive, but he found the desiccated remains of one in the outhouse of the Hudson Bay post on 17 June to verify that it had occurred.

Tennessee Warbler, *Vermivora peregrina:* # Fairly common throughout; however, evidence of nesting eluded him.

Orange-crowned Warbler, *Vermivora celata:* # Not nearly as numerous as the preceding species, but a substantial population was obviously resident there in summer. Again breeding evidence was not found.

Yellow Warbler, *Dendroica petechia:* *# Common in the dense willow scrub. Nests were found on three occasions in early July.

Yellow-rumped Warbler, *Dendroica coronata:* *# Uncommon, usually only encountered up river in spruce woods. A nest and eggs were located 2 July by Prince.

Palm Warbler, *Dendroica palmarum:* # Rarely encountered, but a brood patch on one bird suggested the possibility of local breeding.

Blackpoll Warbler, *Dendroica striata:* *# A common species in spruce-tamarack muskeg. He watched a female go to a nest on 2 July, and Indian boys showed him another nest on 17 July. These were the first two nests recorded in the province.

Northern Waterthrush, *Seiurus noveboracensis:* *# One of the commonest species there, seen virtually every day. He found a nest on 29 June and observed adults feeding recently fledged young on 12 July.

Wilson's Warbler, *Wilsonia pusilla:* # Fairly common, seen almost as often and in similar numbers to the preceding species. Although it undoubtedly bred there, he did not encounter evidence of that.

Rufous-sided Towhee, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus:* # A single vagrant male was encountered 29 June, seeming "strangely out of its element" in a spruce bog.

American Tree Sparrow, *Spizella arborea:* *# Very common among stunted willows. He found two nests on 1 July.

Savannah Sparrow, *Passerculus sandwichensis:* *# A very common species in any "grassy" patches along rivers or in open muskeg. He found nests on three separate days, and recently fledged young on several other occasions.

Le Conte's Sparrow, *Ammodramus leconteii:* Rare, encountered on only four occasions; however, he found at least six in one "grassy" patch on the tundra. Although no doubt breeding, the only evidence seen involved an agitated male on 8 July.

Fox Sparrow, *Passerella iliaca:* *# A common species seen virtually every day. Young of the year were out of the nest by the 25th and 26th of June. He was subsequently shown a nest with a small young on 17 July that could have been a second nesting.

Song Sparrow, *Melospiza melodia:* *# Also common and seen virtually every day. He found a nest with eggs on 27 June and encountered a juvenile bird on 13 July.

Lincoln's Sparrow, *Melospiza lincolnii:* *# Uncommon in muskeg areas. A nest found 24 June was identified next day as belonging to this species.

Swamp Sparrow, *Melospiza georgiana:* *# Uncommon, usually encountered only once or twice on about half the days there. He found two nests, one 25 June and one 3 July.

White-throated Sparrow, *Zonotrichia albicollis:* *# Common throughout the muskeg areas. Nests with eggs were found 16 and 21 June. Double brooding is suggested by another nest with eggs found 20 July.

White-crowned Sparrow, *Zonotrichia leucophrys:* *# A common species seen virtually every day. Nests with eggs were found 18 and 25 June.

Harris's Sparrow, *Zonotrichia querula:* # Was an exceedingly rare bird at that time. He saw only a single bird on 28 June. That one, however, was a female with the "bare belly of an incubating bird", suggesting that nesting may have been in progress nearby.

Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis:* # Uncommon, although at least one was seen most days. He noted no evidence of breeding, however.

Smith's Longspur, *Calcarius pictus:* *# An uncommon bird on the tundra. The first time he encountered them was on 22 June and he flushed a female off a nest, providing the first reported for this species in Ontario.

Snow Bunting, *Plectrophenax nivalis:* # Very rare and unlikely to have been breeding. A single female 17 June and two males 1 July, all feeding on the river mudflats, were the only observations.

Rusty Blackbird, *Euphagus carolinus:* # Uncommon and seldom seen until mid July when a group of 30 including flying juveniles was seen. Although the young were probably locally raised (short-tailed), they were well able to fly.

Pine Grosbeak, *Pinicola enucleator:* # Rare; he encountered singles on two occasions, and once a group of five. A male with enlarged testes and a female with an incubation patch, both on 3 July, suggested local breeding.

White-winged Crossbill, *Loxia leucoptera:* Seldom seen; however, flocks of 25 on 24 June and 200 on 6 July indicate that local occurrence was to be expected.

Common Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea:* *# Fairly common in tundra areas; he found three nests in July.

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus:* # Rare; however, three or four were occasionally seen about the Hudson Bay post. His notes give no indication of surprise at their being there.

Several people had previously made casual observations of birds at Fort Severn. These were officers of the Hudson Bay Company stationed there, beginning with Andrew Graham in 1771 (Manning 1952). Graham collected a small number of mammals, birds and fish that were described by Forster (1772), among them the type specimens of Great Gray Owl, Boreal Chickadee, and White-crowned Sparrow. There were a number of other observers over the years, but the dates and specific localities of collecting activities seem to be somewhat uncertain for many (Manning 1952). However, most of the nonpasserine and many of the passerine species encountered by Hope in 1940 had previously been

recorded either in the environs of the fort itself, or in similar habitats in nearby areas along the coast. Hope's trip was an important one, nonetheless, as he was the first to travel to that part of the province specifically to study the bird life there, and many significant observations were made. Even where a species had previously been recorded, there was virtually no information on abundance or breeding status available.

Manning (1952) provided a list of species recorded at Fort Severn (and other places along the Hudson and James Bay coasts) from previously published accounts, but not including Hope's observations. Manning himself did not arrive at Severn until 15 August and thus, was too late in the season to add many passerine species to the list. Singing would have largely ceased for the year, birds would have been molting and rather inconspicuous, and some could even have migrated out of the area. Also, Manning apparently did not spend any time far enough inland to be among any habitats with significant numbers of large trees. Although Hope did not record even all species previously seen there, he gathered new information about many of them and he was able to add many species to the list of those known to frequent that part of the province in summer.

One nonpasserine species found easily by Hope, but surprisingly not mentioned anywhere near Fort Severn by Manning, was the Common Snipe. Northern Flicker also was not mentioned, but would have been harder to find. Among the passerine species not included by Manning, but which were recorded by Hope, were: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Common Raven, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Palm Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Le Conte's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Although Le Conte's Sparrow might have been difficult to find, most of the others would seem to have been conspicuous enough that it is surprising that they were not previously recorded.

He also made the first summering records of Harris's Sparrow, that might have just been extending its range into that part of the province. He noted the first nests of Gray-cheeked Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler and Smith's Longspur for the province, and finally established Semipalmated Plover as a nester in Ontario. He had the first strong evidence of Whimbrel breeding, and eventually what proved to be the first breeding evidence of Lesser Yellowlegs was obtained there (see James 1992). He found that both House Sparrows and European Starlings had succeeded in penetrating to even this remote settlement by that time. He recorded a number of species there that were not subsequently found during the breeding bird atlas project of 1981-1985 (Cadman et al. 1987), including: Spruce Grouse, Sora, Northern Hawk Owl, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Cliff Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, Le Conte's Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak and White-winged Crossbill. The Spruce Grouse, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Swainson's Thrush he even confirmed breeding and any of the others might have been, although

some may be sporadic there.

Hope also recorded Horned Grebe and American Kestrel, both of which have subsequently been found there. On the other hand, several species have since been recorded that he did not see. Some are probably more recent arrivals (Ross's Goose, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, and Clay-colored Sparrow) or have recolonized subsequent to being decimated by shooting during the fur trading era (Tundra Swan and Sandhill Crane). Various migrant shorebirds and waterfowl, Peregrine Falcons and Gyrfalcons might have been seen had he been there longer, or had access to a spotting scope. A number of species not seen are rarer there and could easily have been missed in any one year, including: Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Great Horned Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Chipping Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin. However, he did not see Oldsquaw, Common Merganser, Hudsonian Godwit, Dunlin, Parasitic Jaeger, or Barn Swallow where there seems a higher probability that he might have.

The most commonly seen species among the nonpasserines were Common Loon, Semipalmated Plover, and Spotted Sandpiper. Canada Goose was also locally very numerous, but seldom encountered, while Lesser Yellowlegs and Herring Gulls were regular but somewhat less common. Among the passerines, Savannah Sparrow and American Tree Sparrow appeared to be the most numerous. Only slightly less numerous were Alder Flycatcher, American Robin, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

Although Hope spent considerably less time at Fort Severn than at Lake Attawapiskat (see James 1994), his list of species was marginally longer. This could easily be accounted for by the greater numbers of waterfowl, shorebirds and nonpasserines in general, more readily visible in the open habitats near the coast. At both places, Common Ravens were almost totally absent. Apparently they were considered pests by trappers (Comeau in Manning 1952) and many may have been trapped unintentionally or even shot.

Among the most abundant species at both Attawapiskat and Severn were Spotted Sandpiper, Alder Flycatcher, American Robin, Yellow Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and Song Sparrow.

More time and effort could undoubtedly add more to the observations already made at Fort Severn in this subarctic environment. However, Hope's trip stands as the most extensive and informative effort to date.

Acknowledgements

The contents of this paper could not have been provided without the journals (#'s 13 and 14) of Cliff Hope maintained in the archives of the Royal Ontario Museum. Thanks are also extended to L.A. Prince and W.B. Scott, along with unnamed native people, who added materially to the observations and specimens he recorded. I am grateful to the

librarians at the ROM for access to the journals, and particularly to Charlotte Goodwin for a copy of relevant material. The figure was prepared with the assistance of Brian Boyle of the Photography Department of the museum.

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Notes

Atlantic Puffin: third Ontario record

by
Bruce M. Di Labio

On 14 October 1994, while birding at the Moses-Saunders Power Dam at Cornwall, Ontario, I observed a juvenile Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), from the observation deck on the American side of the St. Lawrence River. I first located the bird at approximately 1400 h, mid-way across the headpond above the power dam, sleeping and swimming about, slowly drifting towards the American side of the dam. I observed the bird for over two hours and it was apparent that it was in a weakened condition. Despite the calm waters, the bird's wings were drooped, it never dove, and it spent most of its time floating along the wall of the power dam.

The following day, after a morning of high winds and rain, the puffin was finally discovered again in late afternoon from the Canadian side of the river by a number of observers. Locating a small black and white bird on such a large, open expanse of water, especially during strong winds, is very difficult. On

Figure 1: Juvenile Atlantic Puffin at Cornwall, Ontario, on 16 October 1994. Photo by *Bruce Di Labio.*

16 October, the puffin was again observed on the headpond, along the dam (Figure 1). Much to our favour, the weather was calm and visibility was excellent. The bird again appeared weak and was not observed diving, suggesting that it probably had not eaten for quite some time. Late that afternoon, Lee Harper, Chris Traynor and I took a boat onto the headpond. We located the bird, which was easy to approach. It was not frightened by our close proximity and we took a number of photographs. The bird was then captured, but unfortunately died en route to the Wild Bird Care Centre in Nepean, Ontario.

I prepared a study skin of the puffin and donated it to the Canadian Museum of Nature (specimen #96697), and the record has been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (Pittaway 1995). It was in an emaciated condition, weighing 248.5 grams with no body fat and an empty stomach. This is a very low weight (see Di Labio and Bouvier 1986).

This individual was observed on the Ontario and New York state sides of the St. Lawrence River. It is the third Atlantic Puffin record for Ontario, and one of the few in New York state away from Long Island (Bull 1974). The first record in Ontario was of a juvenile captured near Westmeath, Renfrew County, on 15 December 1985 (Di Labio and Bouvier 1986), and the second record occurred at Detour Lake, Cochrane District, on 10 December 1991 (Bain 1993). Although a puffin was reportedly taken on the Ottawa River in October 1881 (Lloyd 1923), the specimen apparently was lost. It was neither examined by an ornithological curator nor was its identification

validated under the guidelines governing the OBRC. Thus, the status of the 1881 bird remains hypothetical, leaving the Westmeath bird as the first official record of the Atlantic Puffin in Ontario.

(Editors' Note: The Cochrane District record was mislabelled as the third Ontario record in Bain (1993). Given the unsubstantiated status of the 1881 record, which was not accepted by the OBRC, the Cochrane District record now stands as the second officially accepted record for Ontario.)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lee Harper for the use of his boat, Laurie Di Labio, Ross Harris and Liz Stevenson for reviewing the manuscript, and Cendrine Huemer for typing the manuscript.

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Merlin preys on bat

by
Don Shanahan

At 0950 h on 6 September 1995, Al Boisvert and I were wader-watching at Owen Point in Presqu'ile Provincial Park near Brighton. A Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) was flying regular sorties about the area. In one instance, the Merlin flew just south of us over the lake and began pursuing what I first took to be a Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Binocular examination showed the creature to be a small bat (probably *Myotis* sp.) which was fluttering in a disoriented manner some 15 to 20 m over the water.

The Merlin made several short, casual horizontal swoops at it before striking the bat with its talons. Subsequently, the bat's fluttering became more laboured. After a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) flew directly past the bat, the Merlin flew forth, grabbed the bat in its talons and flew west towards Gull Island.

Birds comprise more than 90 per cent of the Merlin diet (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Other prey includes insects, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals (de Smet 1984). References to Merlins eating bats aren't common in the literature, but this behaviour was mentioned by Terres (1980),

Cramp (1980), and de Smet (1984). Merlins overwintering in Trinidad are known to prey on bats (ffrench 1991). Dekker (1972) reported a Merlin taking a Little Brown Bat (*M. lucifugus*) in Alberta.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Al Boisvert, Doug McRae, and Ron Tozer for helping me compile this note.

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OFO Bird Finding Guide #5

A Birder's Guide to the Rondeau Provincial Park Area

by
P. Allen Woodliffe

Introduction

The deep, southwestern part of Ontario has some exciting possibilities for birding. In spite of, or perhaps even because of the extensively developed landscape, the few natural areas of any size, such as Rondeau Provincial Park, provide significant attractions for migrating, breeding or visiting birds.

There is a great diversity of habitats, including sandy beaches, rich southern hardwood forests, oak savannah, woodland sloughs, a sizeable marsh and a large, productive inland bay, all of which contribute to bird diversity. Many species just barely make it into southern Ontario. Those that do are almost sure to be found at Rondeau. Also, because of Rondeau's location on the southern Great Lakes and proximity to the midwest, species more common farther west are found here regularly. And of course, most birds migrating north find Rondeau an ideal resting and feeding stopover for their travels. As a result, 333 species of birds have been recorded in the Rondeau checklist area. One hundred and thirty-four of these have been confirmed as breeding, with an additional twenty or more species having at least some breeding evidence. Indeed, during the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas of 1981-1985, the atlas square that included most of Rondeau contained the highest number of birds with breeding evidence in the whole province!

This site guide will, through maps and written descriptions, give visitors plenty of information with which to plan a trip to Rondeau, whether just for a day or, better yet, for a week. Visitors must bear in mind that the time of year as well as weather conditions of the day, will of course play a major role in determining what birds will be found.

General Information

1) Weather

The weather is changeable, and it is said that more weather forecasters lose their jobs in this part of the world than areas with a more continental climate.

By mid-March, the ice of Rondeau Bay and nearby Lake Erie has disappeared. Warmer days usually occur in April, along with the first big waves of migrating passerines. May is occasionally cool and wet, ideal for holding down migrants, but it can just as often be hot, with temperatures in the upper 20s to low 30s Celsius. June through mid-September often continues this warm weather trend, and the humidity increases as well. Occasionally this hot, sultry weather will spawn some very turbulent

thunderstorms. Late September and October are cooler, with usually the greatest number of clear, sunny skies of the year. November until mid-December is fraught with grey, wet, sometimes stormy conditions. The silver lining of this type of weather is that this is when most of the rare waterbirds show up.

The first blasts of winter can occur by early December, but it can just as easily dissipate and be well above freezing throughout the rest of the month. Southern Ontario, being in close proximity to large bodies of water, means high humidity and that, combined with the winter winds, makes the temperature feel much colder than the thermometer reads. Precipitation is just as often of the liquid kind as the frozen stuff, and snow seldom lasts for more than a couple of weeks, although one must be prepared for cold stretches as well.

2) Insects

Insects are a definite part of the fauna of the Rondeau area, and it is fortunate that they are! Many bird species, from swallows to flycatchers, nighthawks to kestrels, screech-owls to woodpeckers, cuckoos to gnatcatchers and vireos to warblers rely quite heavily on these insects for food.

Most of the insect species present will not be noticeable to the majority of birders. However, a few may be problematic, depending on the time of the day or season. There are at least eight species of mosquitoes known for Rondeau, and different species hatch at different times of the season, starting after the first hot and humid periods by late May. They are the greatest nuisance in early morning or at dusk. Deer flies and horse flies feed along wooded trails as well as open grassy areas during the hot, sultry weather. Stable flies, which are similar in appearance to the common house fly, are most noticeable along the beach areas in mid to late summer. They like ankles especially, are difficult to swat, and have a nasty bite! They do not often draw blood, probably because one is quick to strike out at them before they have a chance.

One critter that haunts long grassy areas and can be an annoyance is not an insect but an arachnid. Chiggers are the larval stages of mites, and are so small that they are difficult to see with the naked eye. You are most likely to encounter them during the hotter weather from June through August. Evidence of them usually appears several hours after walking through these grassy areas. At first you may notice a slight reddening of the skin at an area where there is a slight restriction of clothing, such as ankles, knees, waistband, etc. This reddened area eventually results in a very itchy rash. The critter by this time has secreted an enzyme to dissolve a bit of your skin's outer layers and has situated itself just below the surface where it feeds on the brew. The itch can last for several days, and a lotion with an anti-histamine is usually quite effective. People have differing sensitivities to chiggers, and although they can be quite bothersome to some, other people are not affected at all. One precaution if you know you are in chigger country is to tuck your pantleg into your socks, and spray a bit of insect repellent on your socks. In addition, when leaving an area potentially having chiggers, give your legs a brisk rubdown, which will

often crush their fragile little bodies before they have a chance to burrow in. Taking a shower as soon as possible after getting out of the field will also help reduce the likelihood of experiencing their aggravating habits.

Wood ticks are present in small numbers, and would most likely be encountered in spring. Lyme disease has not been detected within the park.

3) Where To Stay

Camping:

Rondeau Provincial Park
(519-674-1750)
The Summer Place Marina and Campground (519-674-2326)
Rondeau Shores Trailer Park
(519-674-3330)

Bed & Breakfast:

Morrison Manor
(519-674-3431)
Ridgeland B&B
(519-674-2461)

Motels (Blenheim):

The Queen's Motel
(519-676-5477)
The Silver Motel
(519-676-5156)

Both the towns of Blenheim and Ridgetown have stores and services one might normally require, including restaurants. A grocery store and seasonally operated dining facility are just outside the Park entrance.

4) How To Get To Rondeau Provincial Park

(see Regional Overview map)

Rondeau Provincial Park is located in the extreme southwestern part of Ontario, approximately 115 km east of the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit, and approximately 275 km southwest of Toronto. Regardless of the direction, travel along Highway 401 is the normal access, leaving it at Exit 101. Take County Road 15 south, crossing Highway 3, and continuing south on Highway 51 to the Park entrance.

5) Private Property

Much of the property in the Rondeau area is privately owned. Landowners, especially in the residential area immediately north of Rondeau Provincial Park, have heavily posted their property and have made efforts to enforce it. Please respect these property rights and leave landowners with a good image of birders. Most birding opportunities described in this guide will cover public or at least unposted land, or can be done from public roads.

6) Maps

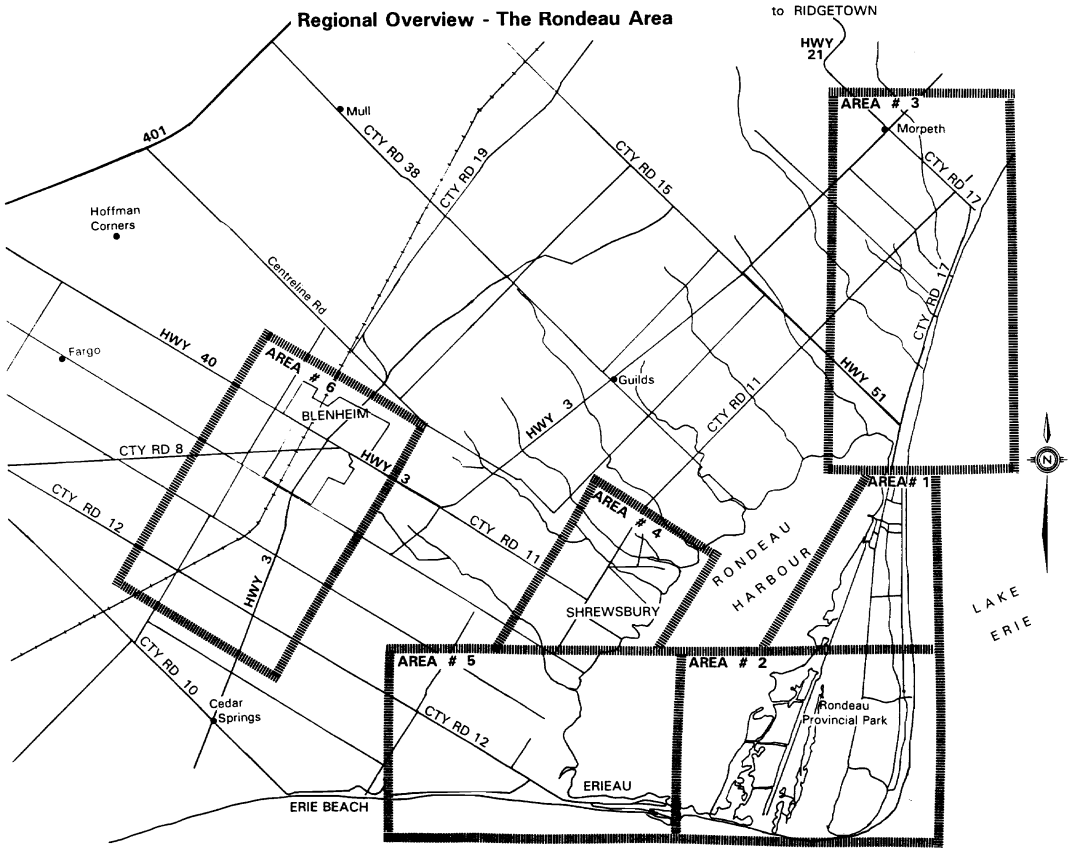
Topographic maps at 1:50,000 may be useful on your visit to Rondeau. The following sheets cover the Rondeau Provincial Park area:

Ridgetown 40-I/5
Chatham 40-J/8

Most larger urban centres will have one or more outlets for these maps (e.g. bookstores) and may be available from them or from:

CANADA MAP OFFICE
615 Booth Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E9

Sketch Map:


Regional Overview - The Rondeau Area
to RIDGETOWN
HWY 21
AREA # 3
Morpeth
CTY RD 17
401
Mull
CTY RD 38
CTY RD 19
CTY RD 15
Hoffman Corners
Centreline Rd
HWY 40
Fargo
AREA # 6
BLENHEIM
HWY 3
Guilds
CTY RD 11
HWY 51
CTY RD 8
CTY RD 12
AREA # 4
AREA # 1
RONDEAU HARBOUR
LAKE ERIE
SHREWSBURY
AREA # 5
AREA # 2
CTY RD 10
Cedar Springs
Rondeau Provincial Park
ERIEAU
ERIE BEACH

Breeding Bird Specialties of the Rondeau Provincial Park Area

Common - a virtual guarantee to be found if searched for in suitable habitat at appropriate time of year;
Uncommon - should be found if searched for in suitable habitat at appropriate time of year;
Rare - may be found if searched for in suitable habitat at appropriate time of year;
Very Rare - a bonus, but don't count on finding it.

Least Bittern - uncommon summer resident, Rondeau Provincial Park marshes.

Northern Shoveler - uncommon migrant and summer resident, Blenheim sewage lagoons.

Ruddy Duck - common migrant and uncommon summer resident, Blenheim sewage lagoons.

Bald Eagle - uncommon permanent resident, seen from almost anywhere in Rondeau, but especially from the Marsh Trail.

King Rail - rare summer resident, marshes of Rondeau and occasionally the wet, grassy fields and marshes near Shrewsbury.

Wilson's Phalarope - rare migrant, and very rare summer resident, but does not nest every year. Blenheim sewage lagoon.

Forster's Tern - common migrant and summer resident, Rondeau Bay and marshes.

Black Tern - uncommon migrant and summer resident, Rondeau marshes.

Red-headed Woodpecker -uncommon migrant and summer resident, open woods and sloughs of Rondeau.

Red-bellied Woodpecker -uncommon permanent resident, mature woods of Rondeau.

Pileated Woodpecker - rare permanent resident, mature woods of Rondeau.

Acadian Flycatcher - rare migrant, seen most frequently in late May to early June. Very rare summer resident. Occurs in beech/maple forests of Rondeau, but has not been recorded breeding every year.

Carolina Wren - uncommon permanent resident, but populations may vary depending on severity of previous winter weather conditions. Occurs near forest edges and cottage area.

White-eyed Vireo - rare migrant and very rare summer resident. Occurs at shrubby forest edges of Rondeau.

Yellow-throated Vireo - uncommon migrant and summer resident, open oak forests of Rondeau.

Cerulean Warbler - uncommon migrant and summer resident, open pine/oak forests of Rondeau, especially along Harrison Trail.

Prothonotary Warbler - common summer resident, larger sloughs of Rondeau.

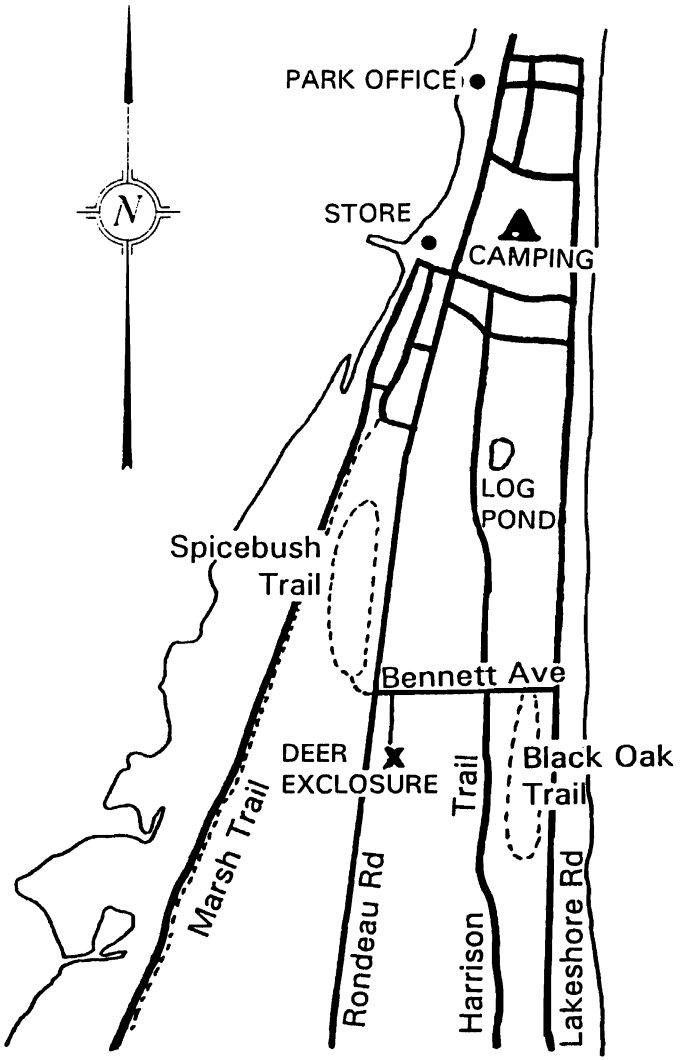
Yellow-breasted Chat - rare spring migrant, and very rare summer resident, shrubby tangles at forest edges, Rondeau.

BIRDING AREAS

Area #1 - North Part of Rondeau Provincial Park (see Area #1 map)
This part of Rondeau is the narrowest, and many of the birds that land at the south end of the park will make their way through the north

Sketch Map:
NORTH PART OF RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Area # 1



end. The public boat ramp and dock can be excellent vantage points for viewing numerous ducks on Rondeau Bay in spring. About 1.6 km south of the campground, along Rondeau Road, is the Spicebush Trail. It is a 1.5 km trail loop set in a lush beech/maple forest, with the west side being more swamp-like. Typical hardwood forest species, such as Red-eyed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Redstart, Hairy Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch occur in this area. Red-bellied Woodpecker is frequently seen along this trail, and Acadian Flycatcher is occasionally present. The wetter, west side of the trail is more open, with Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-capped Chickadee, Great Crested Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird often observed. Green Heron and Brown Creeper are occasionally seen. After dark, the trail's parking lot is one of the most convenient and reliable locations from which to get Eastern Screech-Owl to respond.

The forest and edges immediately southwest of the maintenance compound (immediately east of the main picnic area) can be very productive for passerines in spring, especially late in the day. Birds that arrived at the south end of the park and have worked their way northward through the forest are often observed during the last couple of hours before sunset in a sort of feeding frenzy, as they stock up for the next leg of their migration. The oaks and maples that are flowering attract insects, which in turn may attract hundreds of birds of several dozen species, especially warblers.

The Black Oak Trail loop is situated near the east end of Bennett Avenue. It is best birded in the spring, as migrating warblers are attracted to the opening flowers of the numerous oaks along the trail.

Also along Bennett Avenue is one of the two deer exclosures in the Park, the other being just south of Gardiner Avenue. Each exclosure was erected in 1978, and is easily accessed via a short trail from the road. The exclosures are worth visiting for two reasons. Firstly, they provide a vivid example of what can happen to a rich, southern hardwood forest when a population of White-tailed Deer is allowed to remain at abnormally high levels for many years. Secondly, the vegetation inside the exclosures is more normal compared with the dearth of a ground and shrub layer outside. These exclosures therefore act as a bit of an island, and bird species requiring a dense lower level vegetation, such as Ovenbird and Wood Thrush, are more apt to be found here. Interestingly enough, later season migrant Hooded Warblers and Kentucky Warblers have occasionally been found in the vicinity of these exclosures, as well.

Along Harrison Trail, about 0.6 km south of the campground, is an old barn beside a clearing in the forest. Immediately south of the barn is an area referred to as the Log Pond. In spring, especially when the cottonwoods and willows adjacent to the pond are in flower, this area can attract a surprising number of early migrant passerines.

About 0.4 km south of the park store, and just west of the main picnic ground, is the entrance to the Marsh Trail. This trail provides the best access to the 1000 hectare

marsh, and is excellent for hiking or biking. I would recommend the latter form of transportation if you are interested in going the full distance (7 km each way).

This trail deserves careful attention, as many of the park's rarities have been observed here. Sage Thrasher, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Tricolored Heron, American Avocet, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Dickcissel, Cinnamon Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Peregrine Falcon, Little Gull and Common Black-headed Gull are some of the rarities that have appeared here. In addition, there are a number of regular goodies that can be found along the trail, such as Bald Eagle, Least Bittern, American Bittern, Common Moorhen, Forster's Tern and Black Tern.

The first kilometre or so of the trail has shrubby, wooded vegetation dominating the east side, with open water, mud flats (depending on seasonal fluctuations of the water levels) and dense cattail marsh occurring on the west side. Common bird species are Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Kingbird, Northern Oriole, Warbling Vireo, Swamp and Song Sparrows, Great Crested Flycatcher and Mallard, with occasional Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Green Heron and Great Blue Heron, as well. Eventually, the trail gets beyond the wooded sections to where there is extensive marsh on both sides. Willow Flycatchers occupy the scattered shrubs, and the stands of cattails provide a breeding haven for both bittern species, Sora, Virginia Rail, and occasionally King Rail, coot, moorhen, Black and Forster's Terns and of course numerous Red-winged Blackbirds and Marsh Wrens. The park's resident Bald Eagles are more frequently observed perched in a tree or flying over the marsh. Over the last couple of kilometres of the trail, the marsh widens and becomes more open. The trail ends within about 200 metres of the south beach, giving one a look at numerous gulls, terns and other waterbirds.

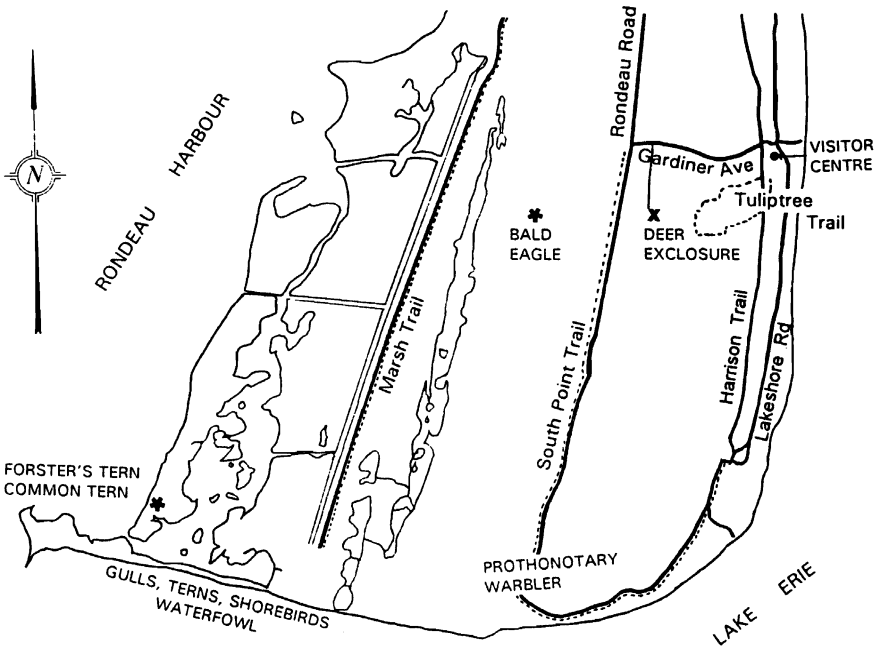
The water levels in the marsh are quite shallow, and as the summer progresses, numerous mudflats appear. These provide ideal conditions for wild rice beds to establish, and there are often dozens of hectares of wild rice scattered throughout. By late summer, the rice seed matures and begins to fall, corresponding with the migration of Soras. On occasion, literally hundreds of Soras can be heard peeping in the rice beds, in response to the splash of a tossed stone.

The waterfowl migration begins with the first breakup of ice, usually by late February. Ducks, geese and swans can be seen from the marsh trail, sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands, both spring and fall. By early April, only those that breed, and a few lingerers are present, and in early summer relatively few are seen. By late July, many of the resident and local Mallards, Blue-winged Teal and Wood Ducks gather together in post-breeding flocks. Water levels often drop by late summer, providing good shorebird habitat scattered throughout the marsh right up until freeze-up.

Area #2 - South Part of Rondeau Provincial Park (see Area #2 map) The south part of Rondeau, jutting out into Lake Erie, is the most

Sketch Map:
South Part of Rondeau Provincial Park

Area # 2



extensive and contains the greatest diversity of habitats. It is here, especially along the South Point Trail, that most local birders concentrate their time. Indeed, whether you have three hours to spend in the Park, or three days, your time would be well spent covering part or all of this trail. Most of Rondeau's rarities have appeared along this trail, or the parts of the park accessed by this trail. Eared Grebe, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Little Blue Heron, Harlequin Duck, Glossy Ibis, Piping Plover, Laughing Gull, Black Skimmer, Bewick's Wren, Summer Tanager, Swainson's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow are just a few of the rarities that have turned up in this portion of Rondeau.

The South Point Trail actually has two access points, one at the corner of Rondeau Road and Gardiner Avenue, the other at the south end of Lakeshore Road. The latter access is recommended. Near the beginning, there is a fair bit of low vegetation, usually good for Rufous-sided Towhee, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher and Yellow Warbler. The dogwood is particularly good for attracting warblers and thrushes during the autumn migration. As the vegetation begins to open up farther

down the trail, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee and occasionally Red-headed Woodpecker are found. The trail crosses a couple of wide sloughs at the very south end of the Park. These sloughs are excellent for Belted Kingfisher, Green Heron and one of the bird species Rondeau is probably best known for - the rare Prothonotary Warbler. Rondeau is undoubtedly the breeding capital of Canada for this brightly coloured denizen of the woodland sloughs, with upwards of 40 pairs present in an average year.

You have a choice at this most southern part of the trail. One option is to retrace your route to the starting point, but hopefully you will have time and energy to either follow the Lake Erie shoreline and go west towards Erieau, or continue along the paved portion of the trail. If you follow the shoreline west, after about 500 m, you will reach the marsh. From this point and for the next 2.5 km or so the narrow sand barrier that separates the lake from the marsh and bay seldom gets more than 40 m wide. At the extreme west end of the sandspit is a channel that separates Rondeau Provincial Park from Erieau. This walk provides excellent opportunities for viewing a variety of waterfowl, gulls, terns, cormorants, herons and shorebirds. The endangered Piping Plover used to nest here but in recent times only single birds are seen on rare occasions. Least and American Bitterns are seen or heard in the south end marshes, and Black-crowned Night-Heron, Sora and Virginia Rail are occasionally seen skulking at the edge of the cattails. On one of the islands at the very southwest part of the marsh, Forster's and Common Terns nest. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls are two of the most recently discovered nesting species for Rondeau, and they nest either on the south beach or one of the islands along the marsh edge.

If you continue along the paved portion of the trail, you will travel through open woods and some of the most mature beech/maple forest in the park. In the more open areas are excellent opportunities for viewing breeding species such as Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow- and Black-billed Cuckoos, Gray Catbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler and possibly White-eyed Vireo and Carolina Wren. In the more mature forest are species such as Pileated Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, American Redstart, Cerulean Warbler and, occasionally, Acadian Flycatcher. During migration literally dozens of species of passerines can be observed.

This trail continues north until, after about 3.0 km, it joins with Gardiner Avenue. You can then travel east along the road as far as the Visitor Centre and then return to your starting point by heading south along either Harrison Trail or Lakeshore Road. You may want to check the lakefront for waterbirds or stop in at the Visitor Centre to see what birds of interest have been reported. The open area around the Centre usually has Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird, Red-headed Woodpecker and Northern Oriole. Cooper's Hawk and Cerulean Warbler nest regularly along Harrison Trail, and

Chuck-will's-widow, when present, has most frequently been heard after dark between Harrison and Lakeshore south of the Visitor Centre.

The entire loop described in the past few paragraphs is approximately 8 km, if one is walking more or less in a straight line, and not counting a side trip out along the south beach.

One other part of the park to consider while in this area is the Tulip Tree Trail. It is a one kilometre trail, handicap accessible, which begins and ends at the Visitor Centre parking lot. American Redstart, White-eyed Vireo and Pine Warbler can sometimes be found near the trail entrance. It winds through a section of pine/oak forest and beech/maple forest with, as its name suggests, some impressive tulip trees along it as well. There are a number of boardwalks crossing several sloughs, providing access to prime Prothonotary Warbler and Wood Duck habitat. The park's first nesting record of Hooded Merganser and Winter Wren were noted along the biggest slough. It is an excellent trail to see migrating passerines, but nothing that one would not expect to see along the South Point Trail.

Area #3 - North of Rondeau Provincial Park (see Area #3 map)

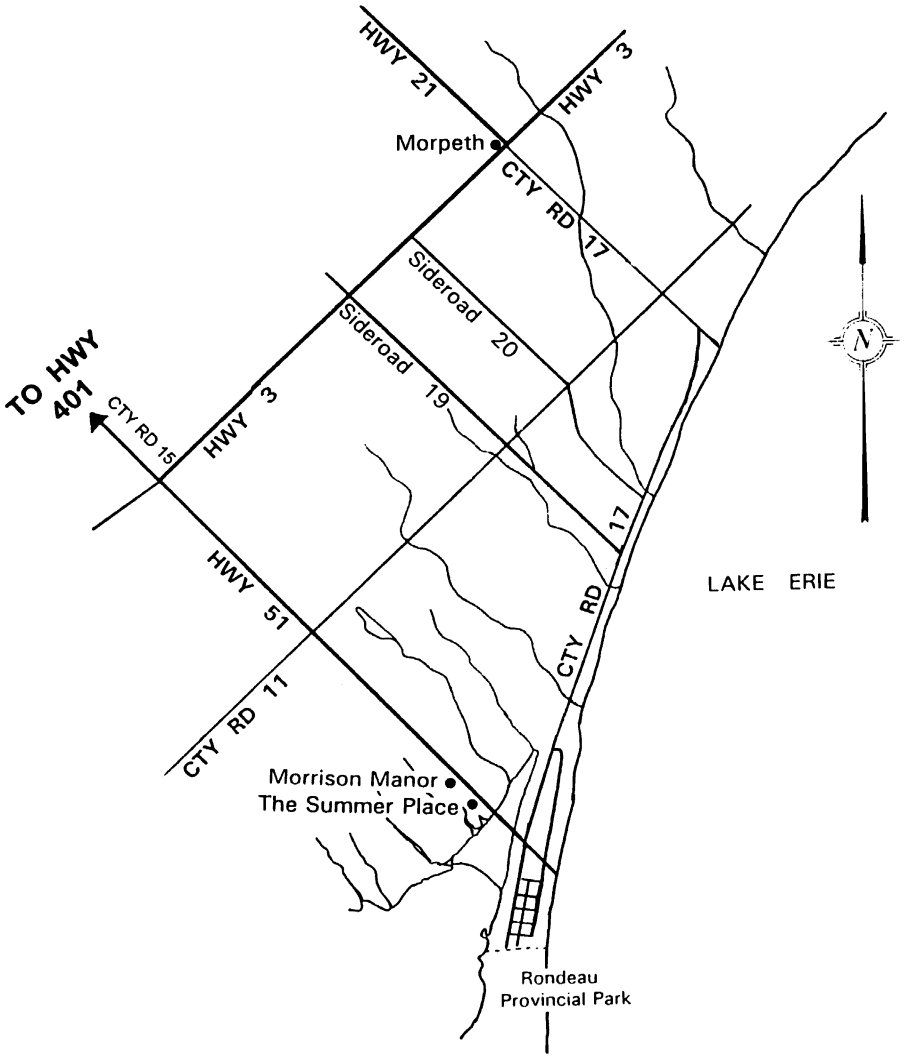
The unincorporated village of Rondeau Park immediately north of the Provincial Park boundary has retained a fair percentage of original vegetation. The streets crisscrossing the area provide excellent access, and can provide quite good birding opportunities. There are parking areas and accesses to the lake at the east end of most streets. However, please keep in mind that property off the streets is private, so ensure you stick to the streets.

Along Highway 51, 1.1 km north of the park entrance, there is privately owned marsh/swamp visible on either side of the road. Water levels vary, but there often is suitable habitat for a number of herons, egrets, waterfowl and shorebirds. Parking along the roadway at this precise point is quite restricted, so park only along the roadway south of the marsh and walk along the narrow road allowance to get the best views. Also, at the northeast corner of the intersection of Highway 51 and County Road 17, is a well known flowering tree. Every year, usually during the first week of May, it is in full flower, and attracts numerous hummingbirds, warblers and orioles. In fact, it is probably the most reliable location to find Orchard Oriole at that time of year.

If you continue north from Rondeau along County Road 17, the road follows the Lake Erie shoreline. In the first 3.5 km, there are three small creeks flowing into the lake, each one having a small wetland associated with it near the mouth. Although species such as Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Mallard, Wood Duck, Marsh Wren and occasionally shorebirds are the most likely bird species to be found here, rarities such as Snowy Egret and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron have turned up in recent years. At 3.8 km, the road begins to turn inland, as it climbs some of the cliffs that are typical of the north Lake Erie shoreline. These cliffs provide an excellent vantage point to survey the lake for loons, grebes, scoters, diving

Sketch Map:
NORTH OF RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Area # 3



ducks and gulls, especially in the spring and fall.

Just as the road turns northwest towards Morpeth is an excellent opportunity to view migrating hawks in the autumn. Most hawks, especially buteos, prefer not to cross large bodies of water and so on their southward migration in the autumn, tend to follow the north shoreline until they can cross over, most often near the mouth of the Detroit River south of Amherstburg. On days when there is a moderate or brisk wind blowing from the northeast, north or northwest, these migrating hawks often "pile up" along the shoreline and follow it southwest. Literally thousands of hawks pass by at anywhere from treetop level to out of sight. From late August to early October, a number of Blue Jays and monarch butterflies can also be observed migrating under these same weather conditions. Park along the road allowance or along a quiet sideroad within 200 metres or so of the shoreline for the best results.

Area #4 - Shrewsbury
(see Area #4 map)
On the north side of Rondeau Bay is the village of Shrewsbury. The village itself doesn't offer a lot for the visiting birder, but the scrubby areas throughout the village and the streets leading to the bay and marsh edges can be profitable. Large numbers of waterfowl, especially, can be observed from this access from late February through early April and, to a lesser extent, from late autumn until freeze-up.

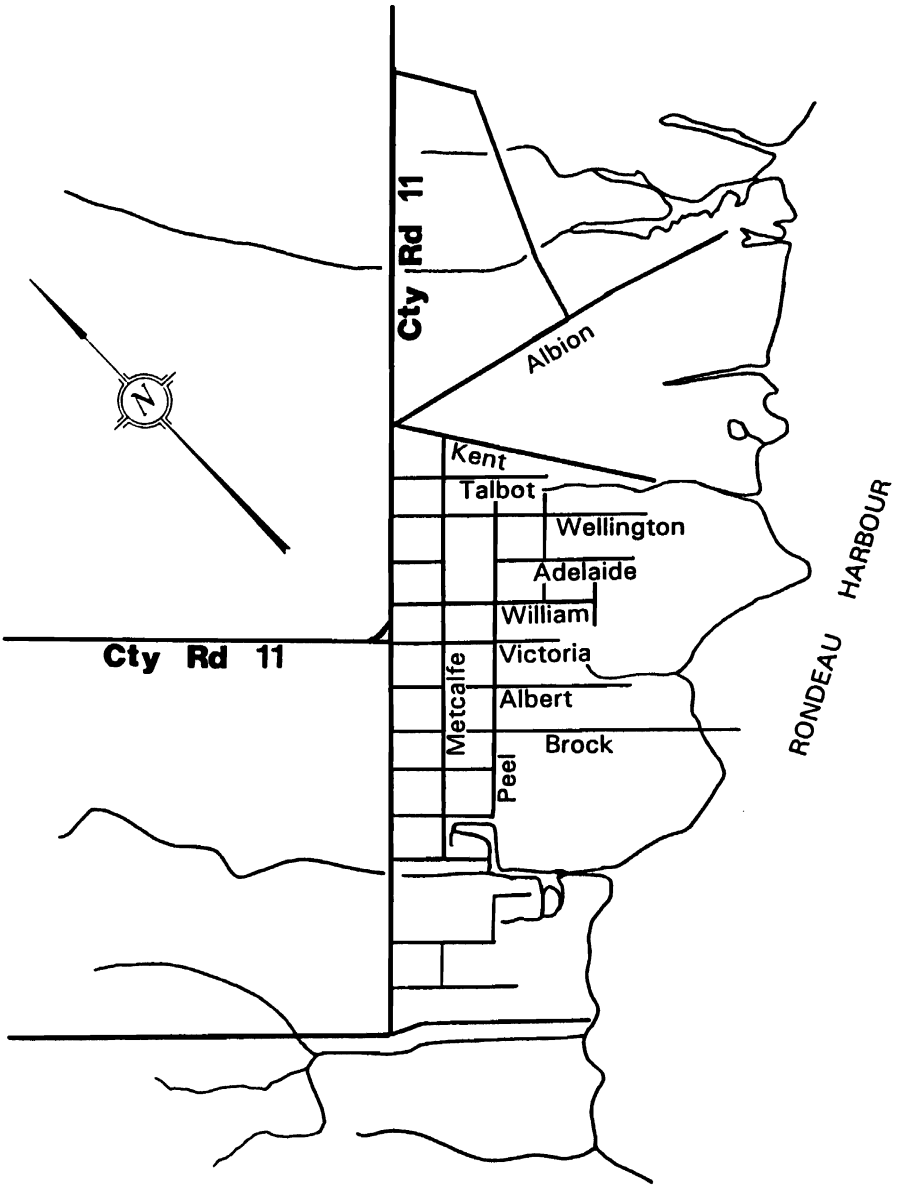
To get to Shrewsbury from Rondeau, follow Highway 51 north of the park for 3.8 km, to the hamlet of New Scotland. Turn left (west) on County Road 11. The fields along this road are often used by swans, geese and ducks in March. Freshly ploughed fields in May attract Black-bellied Plover and occasionally American Golden-Plover and Ruddy Turnstone. After 7.4 km you will be at Shrewsbury. A number of streets lead southeast towards Rondeau Bay and adjacent marshes. Some of the best ones are Kent, Brock and Albert Streets.

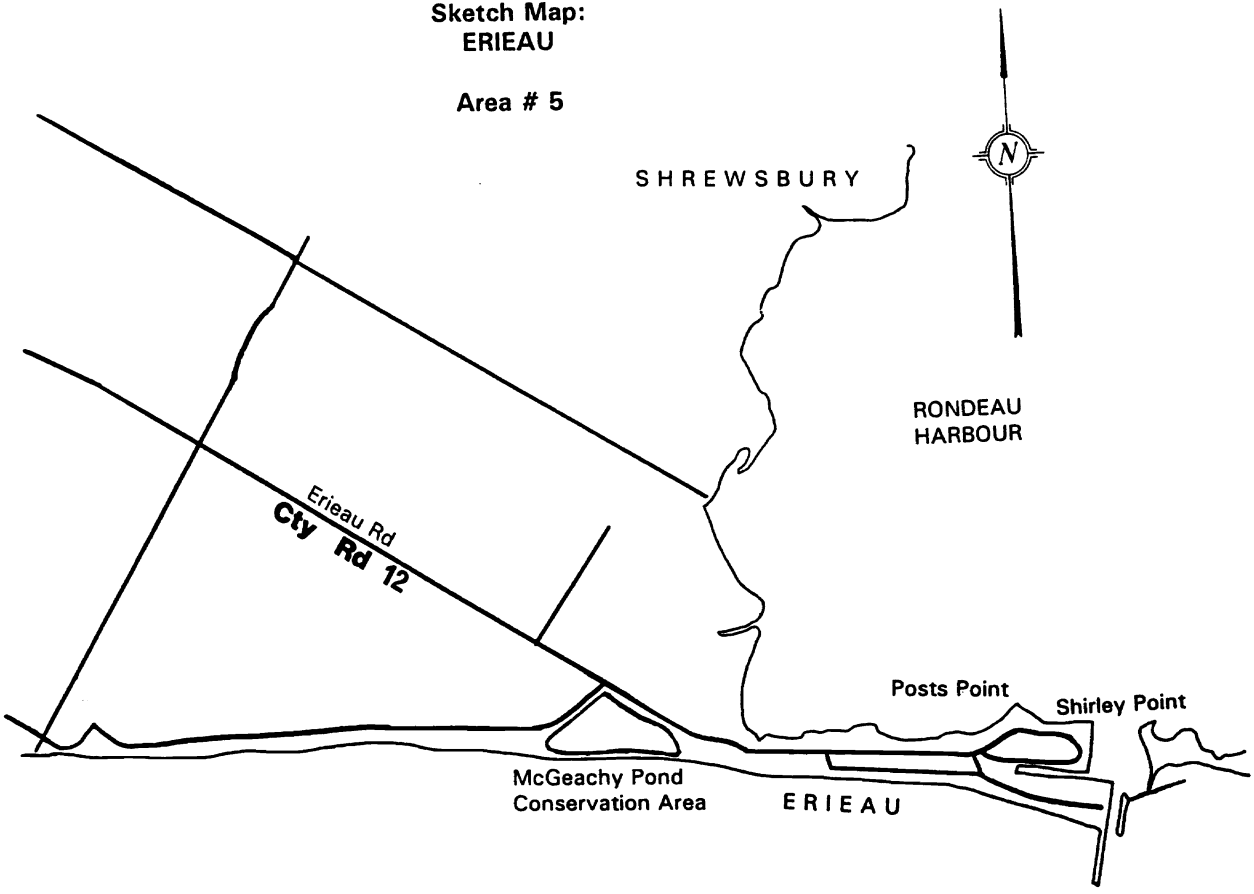
Area #5 - Erieau
(see Area #5 map)
The village of Erieau is on the western peninsula separating Rondeau Bay from Lake Erie. Its economy is almost entirely based on commercial and sport fishing as well as boating and cottaging.

To get to Erieau from Shrewsbury, leave County Road 11 at the stop sign where it turns northwest towards Blenheim, and continue southwest along the New Scotland Line for 1.3 km to Fargo Road. Turn right (northwest) for 2.0 km to the Bisnett Road, and then turn left (southwest). Follow the Bisnett Road for 2.8 km to the Erieau Road (County Road 12). Turn left onto County Road 12. After 2.8 km, you will be at McGeachy Pond Conservation Area. Because of its proximity to Lake Erie, this small wetland can attract a surprising diversity of birds. At least some waterfowl can be found anytime there is open water. Shorebirds can be found when there is suitable mudflat or exposed shoreline habitat. The third week in May is when Whimbrel migrate through the area, and a few are sometimes observed resting on the mudflats. Gulls often loaf on the shoreline, and coot,

Sketch Map:
SHREWSBURY

Area # 4




Sketch Map:
ERIEAU
Area # 5
SHREWSBURY
N
RONDEAU
HARBOUR
Erieau Rd
Cty Rd 12
Posts Point
Shirley Point
McGeachy Pond
Conservation Area
ERIEAU

moorhen and rails can occasionally be seen skulking amidst the cattails. Even the black muck fields in the vicinity of McGeachy Pond should be checked for shorebirds and gulls and, when water is present, waterfowl. Rarities that have been recorded here include Snowy Egret, King Rail, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, Glossy Ibis, Laughing Gull, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Eurasian Wigeon, American White Pelican and even Burrowing Owl!

From McGeachy Pond, continue along County Road 12 for another 3.4 km into Erieau, following the One Way road along the lakeside cottages to a T-intersection. Turn right and continue to the Government Pier alongside the Erieau channel. Parking at the pier is usually no problem, but occasionally it can be a bit busy. It is a popular short-term destination for people wanting to watch the commercial fishing tugs and numerous power and sail boats coming and going through the main channel, or to fish from the pier. Fortunately, it is also a great spot from which to observe birds. Hundreds and sometimes thousands of gulls and terns can be easily observed resting on the pier, the rocks or the water. Numerous waterfowl may also be present, especially in spring and late fall. Major movements of Bonaparte's Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants and diving ducks can be seen over the lake from the relative comfort of one's car. Shorebirds occasionally use the pier, especially if the wind is such (e.g. NW-NE) that the algae are exposed. Snowy Owls have been observed from here, sometimes sitting on a gravel pile or harbour post, or sometimes observed in the Rondeau marsh to the east or on the Park's south beach.

The spring and fall are the two best times to visit this location, especially when a storm is raging or immediately after a storm. Waterbirds seeking shelter from the heavy seas of Lake Erie may take refuge in the harbour. Indeed, it is usually at these times that species such as Harlequin Duck, Red-necked Grebe, Common Eider or King Eider have turned up. On one occasion, even a Black Skimmer put in an appearance for about five days! Red Phalarope occurs irregularly in the fall, and Purple Sandpiper can be found on the pier or rocks almost annually anytime from late October until at least mid-December. However, a note of caution is in order: the lake can be very rough, causing water to wash over the pier. In addition the pier can be slippery when wet. THEREFORE, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO WALK OUT ON THE PIER DURING THESE TIMES. More than one unsuspecting person has been swept to their death from this pier.

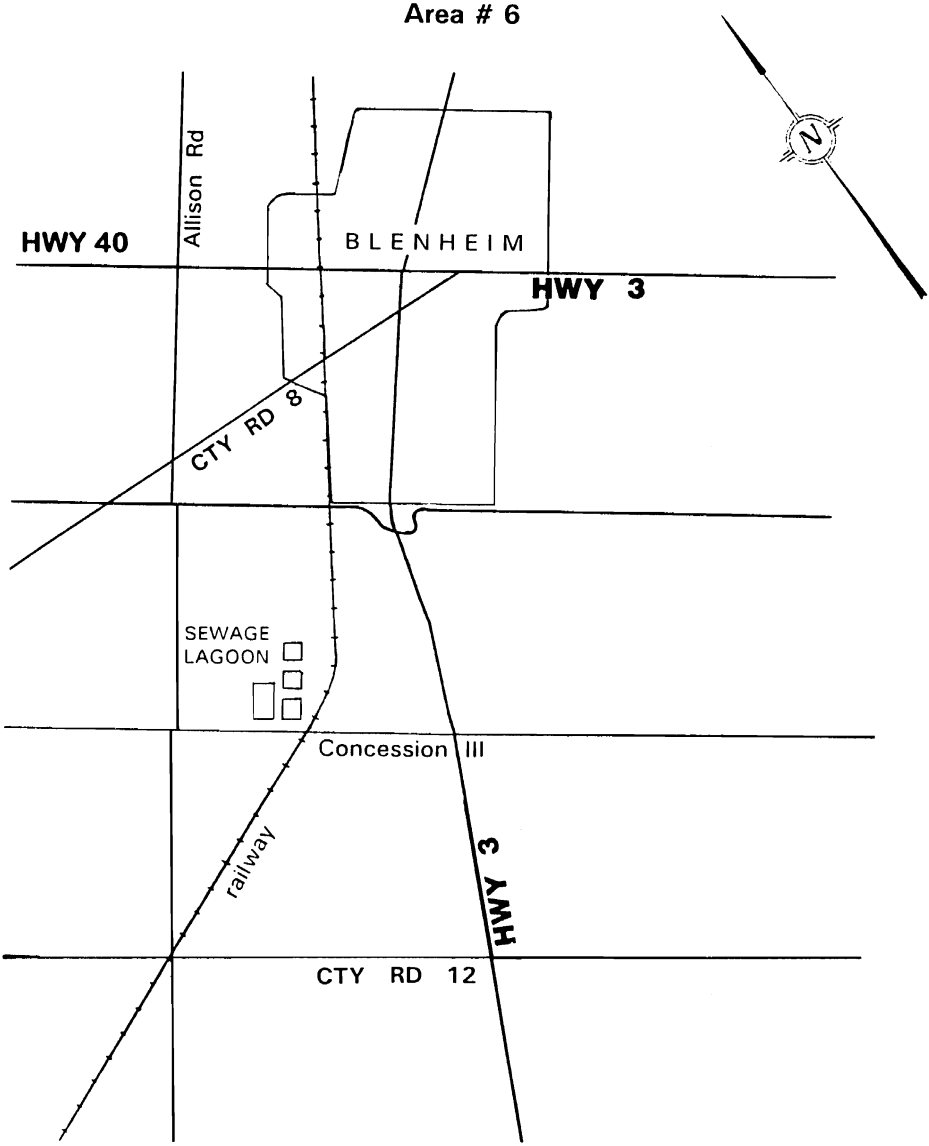
Area #6 - Blenheim Sewage Lagoon (see Area #6 map)

A birding trip to the Rondeau area wouldn't be complete without a visit to the Blenheim Sewage Lagoons. Perhaps they don't sound like the best place to have your lunch, but lots of birds would disagree! The nutrient-rich waters, mudflats and edges provide a rich, tasty banquet for dozens of species of birds, whether they are just passing through or remaining to nest.

To reach the lagoons from Erieau, head north along County Road 12.

Sketch Map:
BLENHEIM SEWAGE LAGOON

Area # 6



After 7.1 km north of McGeachy Pond, you will come to Highway 3. Turn right (east) on Highway 3 for 1.4 km until you come to the intersection of Concession 3. Turn left (north) on Concession 3 and travel 1.1 km. After you cross the railroad tracks, you will see the sewage lagoons on your right. As you approach the lagoons, you will notice signs ranging from "No Trespassing" to "Trespassing By Permit Only". Although no birders have run into problems in the past few years that I am aware of, there was a time in the mid 1980s when birders were charged with trespassing. It is therefore advisable to obtain a written permit from the clerk at the Blenheim Municipal Office. This office is located in the downtown section of Blenheim on the north side of the main (Talbot) street, about half way between the two main sets of traffic lights. If you are not able to stop in at the office during normal office hours, you might try writing in advance to the Clerk, Town of Blenheim, Blenheim, Ontario, N0P 1A0.

Once you have obtained permission to access the lagoons, take your time to check all four of the lagoon cells. Water levels and the amount of vegetation in each cell will likely vary, therefore influencing what birds are present. Virtually all of the herons, rails, shorebirds and waterfowl species on the Rondeau Provincial Park bird checklist have put in an appearance at the lagoons, but the only shorebirds to nest are Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. Nesting waterfowl are Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck and Northern Shoveler. Rarities recorded here include Piping Plover, American Avocet, King Rail, Eurasian Wigeon, Ruff, Snowy Egret, Franklin's Gull, Little Gull, Laughing Gull, Eared Grebe, Red-necked Grebe and Red-necked Phalarope.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Sharon Korpan for preparation of the maps.

A Checklist of Birds of the Rondeau Provincial Park Area

__Red-throated Loon
__Common Loon

__Pied-billed Grebe
__Horned Grebe
__Red-necked Grebe
__Eared Grebe

__Northern Gannet
__American White Pelican
__Double-crested Cormorant

__American Bittern
__Least Bittern
__Great Blue Heron
__Great Egret
__Snowy Egret
__Little Blue Heron
__Tricolored Heron
__Cattle Egret
__Green Heron
__Black-crowned Night-Heron
__Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

__Glossy Ibis

__Fulvous Whistling-Duck
__Tundra Swan
__Trumpeter Swan
__Mute Swan
__Snow Goose
__Brant
__Canada Goose
__Wood Duck
__Green-winged Teal
__American Black Duck
__Mallard
__Northern Pintail
__Blue-winged Teal
__Cinnamon Teal
__Northern Shoveler
__Gadwall
__Eurasian Wigeon

__American Wigeon
__Canvasback
__Redhead

__Ring-necked Duck
__Tufted Duck
__Greater Scaup
__Lesser Scaup
__Common Eider
__King Eider
__Harlequin Duck
__Oldsquaw
__Black Scoter
__Surf Scoter
__White-winged Scoter
__Common Goldeneye
__Barrow's Goldeneye
__Bufflehead
__Hooded Merganser
__Common Merganser
__Red-breasted Merganser
__Ruddy Duck

__Turkey Vulture
__Osprey
__Mississippi Kite
__Bald Eagle
__Northern Harrier
__Sharp-shinned Hawk
__Cooper's Hawk
__Northern Goshawk
__Red-shouldered Hawk
__Broad-winged Hawk
__Red-tailed Hawk
__Rough-legged Hawk
__Golden Eagle
__American Kestrel
__Merlin
__Peregrine Falcon

__Ring-necked Pheasant
__Ruffed Grouse
__Wild Turkey
__Northern Bobwhite

__Yellow Rail
__Black Rail
__King Rail
__Virginia Rail

__Sora
__Common Moorhen
__American Coot

__Sandhill Crane

__Black-bellied Plover
__American Golden-Plover
__Semipalmated Plover
__Piping Plover
__Killdeer

__American Avocet

__Greater Yellowlegs
__Lesser Yellowlegs
__Solitary Sandpiper
__Willet
__Spotted Sandpiper
__Upland Sandpiper
__Eskimo Curlew
__Whimbrel
__Hudsonian Godwit
__Marbled Godwit
__Ruddy Turnstone
__Red Knot
__Sanderling
__Semipalmated Sandpiper
__Western Sandpiper
__Least Sandpiper
__White-rumped Sandpiper
__Baird's Sandpiper
__Pectoral Sandpiper
__Purple Sandpiper
__Dunlin
__Stilt Sandpiper
__Buff-breasted Sandpiper
__Ruff
__Short-billed Dowitcher
__Long-billed Dowitcher
__Common Snipe
__American Woodcock

__Wilson's Phalarope
__Red-necked Phalarope
__Red Phalarope

__Pomarine Jaeger
__Parasitic Jaeger
__Long-tailed Jaeger

__Laughing Gull
__Franklin's Gull
__Little Gull
__Common Black-headed Gull
__Bonaparte's Gull
__Ring-billed Gull
__California Gull
__Herring Gull
__Thayer's Gull
__Iceland Gull
__Lesser Black-backed Gull
__Glaucous Gull
__Great Black-backed Gull
__Black-legged Kittiwake
__Caspian Tern
__Common Tern
__Forster's Tern
__Black Tern
__Black Skimmer

__Thick-billed Murre

__Rock Dove
__Band-tailed Pigeon
__Mourning Dove
__Passenger Pigeon

__Black-billed Cuckoo
__Yellow-billed Cuckoo

__Barn Owl
__Eastern Screech-Owl
__Great Horned Owl
__Snowy Owl
__Northern Hawk Owl
__Burrowing Owl
__Barred Owl
__Long-eared Owl
__Short-eared Owl
__Northern Saw-whet Owl

__Common Nighthawk
__Chuck-will's-widow
__Whip-poor-will

__Chimney Swift
__Ruby-throated Hummingbird

__Belted Kingfisher

__Red-headed Woodpecker
__Red-bellied Woodpecker
__Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
__Downy Woodpecker
__Hairy Woodpecker
__Three-toed Woodpecker
__Black-backed Woodpecker
__Northern Flicker
__Pileated Woodpecker

__Olive-sided Flycatcher
__Eastern Wood-Pewee
__Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
__Acadian Flycatcher
__Alder Flycatcher
__Willow Flycatcher
__Least Flycatcher
__Eastern Phoebe
__Great Crested Flycatcher
__Western Kingbird
__Eastern Kingbird
__Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

__Horned Lark

__Purple Martin
__Tree Swallow
__Northern Rough-winged Swallow
__Bank Swallow
__Cliff Swallow
__Barn Swallow

__Blue Jay
__Black-billed Magpie
__American Crow
__Common Raven

__Black-capped Chickadee
__Boreal Chickadee
__Tufted Titmouse

__Red-breasted Nuthatch
__White-breasted Nuthatch
__Brown Creeper

__Carolina Wren
__Bewick's Wren
__House Wren
__Winter Wren
__Sedge Wren
__Marsh Wren

__Golden-crowned Kinglet
__Ruby-crowned Kinglet
__Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

__Eastern Bluebird
__Townsend's Solitaire
__Veery
__Gray-cheeked Thrush
__Swainson's Thrush
__Hermit Thrush
__Wood Thrush
__Eurasian Blackbird
__American Robin
__Varied Thrush

__Gray Catbird
__Northern Mockingbird
__Sage Thrasher
__Brown Thrasher

__American Pipit
__Cedar Waxwing

__Northern Shrike
__Loggerhead Shrike

__European Starling

__White-eyed Vireo
__Bell's Vireo
__Solitary Vireo
__Yellow-throated Vireo
__Warbling Vireo
__Philadelphia Vireo
__Red-eyed Vireo

__Blue-winged Warbler
__Golden-winged Warbler
__Tennessee Warbler
__Orange-crowned Warbler
__Nashville Warbler
__Northern Parula
__Yellow Warbler
__Chestnut-sided Warbler
__Magnolia Warbler
__Cape May Warbler
__Black-throated Blue Warbler
__Yellow-rumped Warbler
__Townsend's Warbler
__Black-throated Green Warbler
__Blackburnian Warbler
__Yellow-throated Warbler
__Pine Warbler
__Kirtland's Warbler
__Prairie Warbler
__Palm Warbler
__Bay-breasted Warbler
__Blackpoll Warbler
__Cerulean Warbler
__Black-and-white Warbler
__American Redstart
__Prothonotary Warbler
__Worm-eating Warbler
__Swainson's Warbler
__Ovenbird
__Northern Waterthrush
__Louisiana Waterthrush
__Kentucky Warbler
__Connecticut Warbler
__Mourning Warbler
__Common Yellowthroat
__Hooded Warbler
__Wilson's Warbler
__Canada Warbler
__Yellow-breasted Chat

__Summer Tanager
__Scarlet Tanager

__Northern Cardinal
__Rose-breasted Grosbeak
__Blue Grosbeak
__Indigo Bunting
__Dickcissel
__Rufous-sided Towhee
__American Tree Sparrow
__Chipping Sparrow
__Clay-colored Sparrow
__Field Sparrow
__Vesper Sparrow
__Lark Sparrow
__Lark Bunting
__Savannah Sparrow
__Grasshopper Sparrow
__Henslow's Sparrow
__Le Conte's Sparrow
__Sharp-tailed Sparrow
__Fox Sparrow
__Song Sparrow
__Lincoln's Sparrow
__Swamp Sparrow
__White-throated Sparrow
__White-crowned Sparrow
__Harris's Sparrow

__Dark-eyed Junco
__Lapland Longspur
__Snow Bunting

__Bobolink
__Red-winged Blackbird
__Eastern Meadowlark
__Western Meadowlark
__Yellow-headed Blackbird
__Rusty Blackbird
__Brewer's Blackbird
__Common Grackle
__Brown-headed Cowbird
__Orchard Oriole
__Northern Oriole

__Pine Grosbeak
__Purple Finch
__House Finch
__Red Crossbill
__White-winged Crossbill
__Common Redpoll
__Hoary Redpoll
__Pine Siskin
__American Goldfinch
__Evening Grosbeak

__House Sparrow

P. Allen Woodliffe, 30 Argyle Cres., Chatham, Ontario N7Z 4T8

Recognizable Forms

Morphs of the Parasitic Jaeger

by
Ron Pittaway and Peter Burke

Introduction

Parasitic Jaegers (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) are seagoing pirates during the nonbreeding season, making their living by robbing gulls, terns and other seabirds by forcing them to disgorge or drop their prey. Seeing a Parasitic Jaeger accelerating Peregrine-like, swiftly pursuing a tern until it drops its fish, then catching the fish in mid-air before it strikes the water, is an unforgettable sight. On their tundra breeding grounds, they also prey on small birds, eggs and young birds, lemmings, and invertebrates such as insects and spiders. Skuas and jaegers, subfamily Stercorariinae, are unique among birds in having the combination of strong, sharply hooked claws and fully webbed feet.

In Canada, the Parasitic Jaeger breeds in the Arctic south to northern Ontario (Godfrey 1986). It is a "rare summer resident along the Hudson Bay coast" of Ontario (James 1991). The Parasitic Jaeger is a rare to locally uncommon migrant in southern Ontario, mainly in the fall on the Great Lakes from late August to mid-November. Two of the best places to see jaegers in southern Ontario are Lake Ontario from Van Wagner's Beach at Hamilton during east or northeast winds, and Lake Huron at Sarnia during north or northwest winds. Directions to Van Wagner's Beach and Sarnia are in Goodwin (1995), and there is an excellent site guide to seeing jaegers at Sarnia in *OFO NEWS* (Rupert 1995). Parasitic Jaegers are casual in spring in southern Ontario.

Adult Parasitic Jaegers are variable in appearance, but generally occur in three colour morphs (phases): light, intermediate and dark. See Figure 1. Our classification of adult morphs is based on the descriptions in the genetic studies of O'Donald (1983) and O'Donald *in* Cooke and Buckley (1987). Juvenile morphs are also variable in appearance; see the light, intermediate and dark morph juveniles illustrated in Figure 2.

In this article, we discuss the distinguishing features, frequency and distribution, and genetics of the three morphs of the Parasitic Jaeger in Ontario. Discussion is restricted to adults in breeding plumage and juveniles because these are the two age classes normally seen in Ontario. The best references on the identification of all three jaeger species are Olsen (1989), Kaufman (1990), Harrison (1983), Cramp (1983) and Harris et al. (1989).

Taxonomy

No subspecies (races) of the Parasitic Jaeger are recognized because differences between populations are slight. However, there is a marked geographical variation in the

frequency of the morphs between populations. For example, in Canada the dark morph makes up about 40 per cent of the breeding population in Labrador and less than one per cent in the Canadian High Arctic (Cramp 1983). See the discussion on the distribution and frequency of the morphs under Morph Genetics.

Plumage, Molts, Ages and Sexes

Sexes are alike in all plumages. Almost all birds seen in Ontario are in juvenile (juvenal) or adult breeding (definitive alternate) plumage. Jaegers molt twice a year. The postjuvenile (first prebasic), postbreeding (second and later prebasic) and prebreeding (prealternate) molts take place mainly on the oceanic wintering grounds far south of Ontario (Cramp 1983). Some very limited postbreeding molt (scattered pin feathers) begins on the breeding grounds (Parmelee et al. 1967). Parasitic Jaegers molt their pair of central tail feathers only once a year, during the complete postbreeding molt. However, the other two jaeger species molt their central tail feathers twice a year, replacing them in the postbreeding molt and again during the partial prebreeding molt (Cramp 1983). Olsen's (1989) statement that all three jaeger species molt their central tail feathers twice a year is questionable regarding the Parasitic Jaeger. Like large gulls, Parasitic Jaegers probably attain their first adult breeding plumage at four years of age (Todd 1963, Cramp 1983). Other ages between juvenile and adult breeding plumages are normally not seen in Ontario because most Parasitic Jaegers spend at least their first two years at sea (Cramp 1983). Subadult birds, probably in second summer plumage, are casual in southern Ontario in late spring. As well, there is a subadult (exact age not reported) in the Buffalo Museum of Science that was collected by Harold Axtell on 26 November 1960 at Fort Erie, Niagara (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965). See the illustration of a light morph subadult on page 143 of the National Geographic Guide (Scott 1987). Third summer birds are essentially like adults, but at close range show some barring on the wing linings and have shorter tail projections. For a full discussion of plumages, see Cramp (1983).

Morph Genetics

O'Donald *in* Cooke and Buckley (1987) provided strong evidence that the three morphs of adult Parasitic Jaegers are under the control of a single gene. This gene has two alleles (forms), one for light coloration and one for dark coloration. Light morph birds have two alleles for light coloration, inheriting one light allele from each parent. Similarly, dark morph birds inherit two dark alleles. Intermediate morph birds have one light allele and one dark allele. The allele for dark coloration is incompletely dominant over the allele for light coloration. Therefore, most intermediate morph birds (heterozygotes) are more like dark birds in appearance. Compare the intermediate and dark morph birds in Figure 1. A similar situation occurs in the Snow Goose where most intermediate morph birds (heterozygotes) are closer in appearance to blue morph than white morph birds (Pittaway 1992).

A pure dark bird mated to a pure light bird should produce only intermediate morphs. A pair

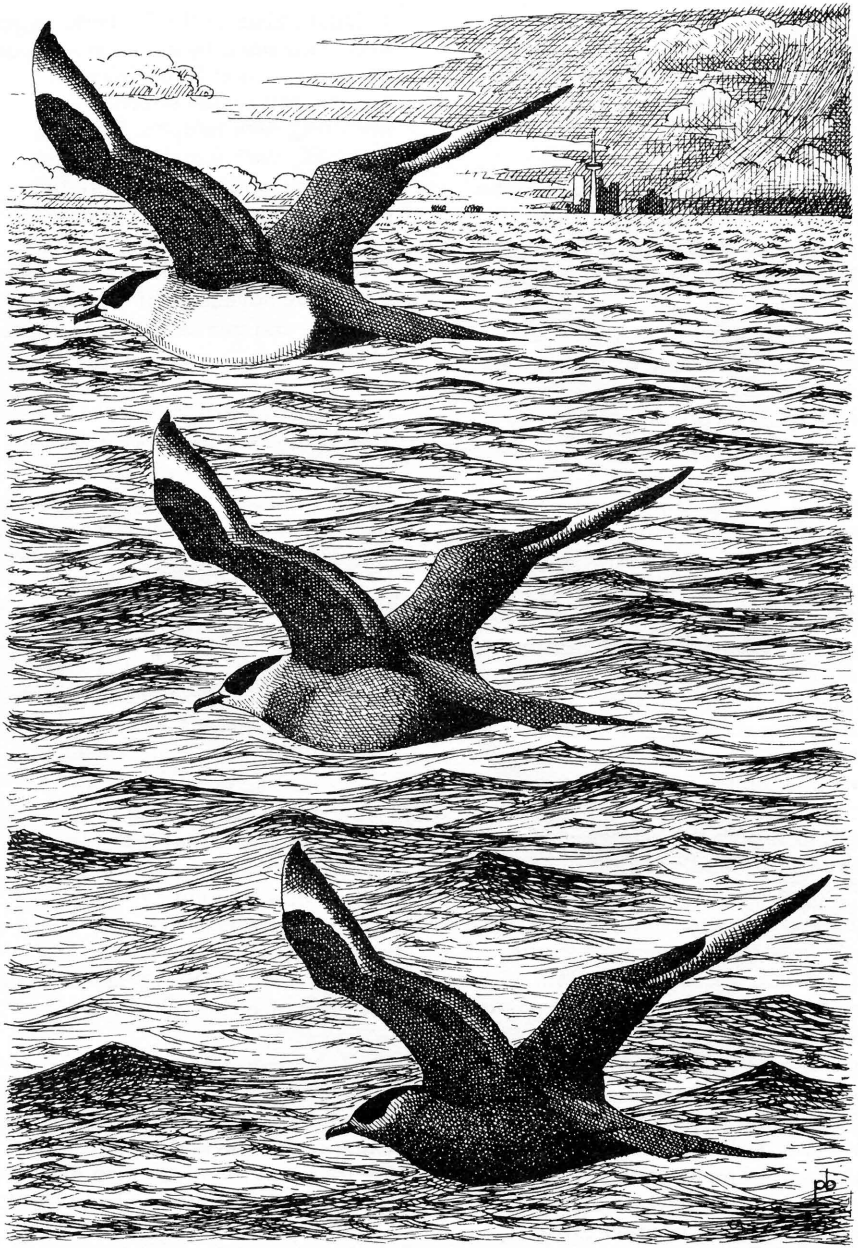


Figure 1: Adult Parasitic Jaegers: light morph (top), intermediate morph (middle), and dark morph (bottom) at Van Wagner's Beach, Hamilton. Drawing by *Peter Burke*.

comprising a dark and an intermediate morph should produce only dark and intermediate morphs in a ratio of one dark to one intermediate. Similarly, a pair of light and intermediate birds should produce only light and intermediate morphs in a ratio of one to one.

Genetic studies by O'Donald *in* Cooke and Buckley (1987) indicate that all light morph adults are homozygous (pure), whereas the darkest intermediate birds often are homozygous, and some dark morph birds are heterozygous (alleles for both dark and light coloration). As well, colour changes between the darkest intermediates and dark morphs "occur from one breeding season to the next", showing that morph coloration is "partly developmental in origin".

The frequency of the dark morph varies between populations and shows an interesting pattern. Generally, dark birds are common in coastal and southern parts of the breeding range (for example, 40 per cent dark in Labrador, 60 per cent dark in Britain, 89 per cent dark in southern Iceland). Light birds predominate at inland continental sites (for example, about 100 per cent light in central Russia) and in the high Arctic (for example, about 100 per cent light in the Canadian Arctic islands), sometimes almost to the exclusion of the dark birds (Cramp 1983). The distribution of the morphs agrees with Gloger's Rule. The rule says that dark pigments in feathers increase in humid parts of the breeding range, whereas lighter pigments prevail in dryer areas (Terres 1982).

In addition, O'Donald *in* Cooke and Buckley (1987) showed that polymorphism in the Parasitic Jaeger was maintained by a combination of natural selection favouring light morphs and sexual selection favouring dark morphs. Females, especially dark females, prefer to mate with dark males (assortative mating). Therefore, dark males take less time to find a mate and they breed earlier than light birds, gaining a selective advantage of "earlier breeding and increased reproductive success".

Light Morph Adults

Most adult Parasitic Jaegers seen in Ontario are light morph birds. For example, in northern Ontario, Bruce Di Labio (pers. comm.) observed nine light morph adults on 15 September 1994 at Shipsands Island (near Moosonee) at the south end of James Bay during strong northeast winds. In southern Ontario, Rupert (1995) reported that 90 per cent of the adults seen at Sarnia at the south end of Lake Huron were light morphs.

Typical light morph adult Parasitic Jaegers are mainly white on the throat, breast and belly; they may have a gray band across the breast like the bird in Figure 1. The undertail coverts are usually darker but may be whitish. See the illustration of a light morph adult on Plate 39 in Godfrey (1986).

Dark Morph Adults

Dark morph adult Parasitic Jaegers are much rarer than light morphs in Ontario. See the bottom bird in Figure 1 and the illustration of a dark morph adult in flight on Plate 39 in Godfrey (1986). Many dark morph adults are uniformly dark brown with the cap being only slightly darker. Dark morph birds have not been

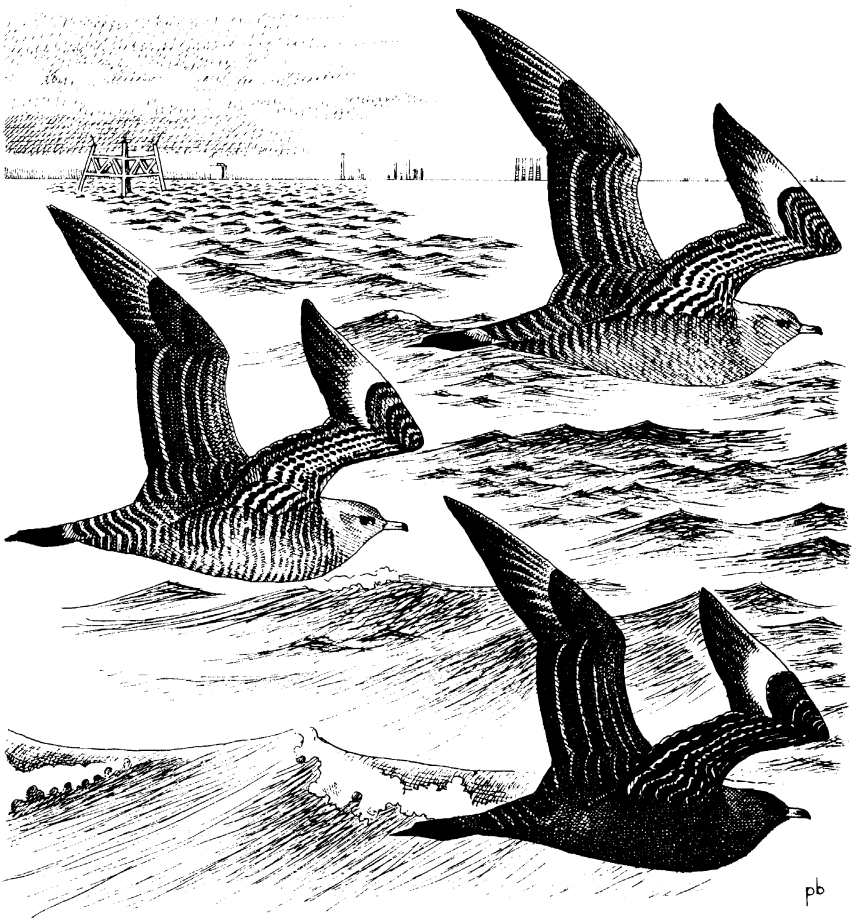


Figure 2: Juvenile Parasitic Jaegers: light morph (top), intermediate morph (middle), and dark morph (bottom) at Van Wagner's Beach, Hamilton. Drawing by *Peter Burke*.

reported breeding in northern Ontario to our knowledge. At Churchill, Manitoba, Jehl and Smith (1970) state that the breeding population "consists entirely of light- or intermediate-phased birds, but a few dark-phased individuals occur in migration".

Describing the 1974 Hamilton boat trip on 22 September, Curry (1974) wrote, "About twenty minutes out from the Canal, the familiar excited cry of 'Jaeger' rang out. All eyes peered to port. It was a dark bird flying left - probably an immature Parasitic? But a closer look revealed a ramrod straight thin tail and a dark cap against smooth, dark brown underparts, revealing it as the first dark-phase adult Parasitic Jaeger most of us had ever seen locally". Rupert (1995) reports that 10 per cent of the adults seen at Sarnia are dark morph birds. This percentage is higher than at Hamilton and elsewhere on the Great Lakes.

Intermediate Morph Adults

Intermediate morph adult Parasitic Jaegers are variable, but most are closer in appearance to dark morph adults because the gene controlling dark coloration is incompletely dominant over the gene for light coloration. See Figure 1. A few intermediates show a distinct junco-like hood and dark undertail coverts contrasting with a white belly. Plate 55 in Harrison (1983) illustrates a pale intermediate showing a very dark chest band contrasting with a white throat and belly. Note also that the intermediate morph adult illustrated on Plate 64 in Cramp (1983) is a pale extreme in our classification, being much paler than most intermediates.

Based on his genetic studies, O'Donald *in* Cooke and Buckley (1987) describes intermediate adults as "dark with a variable amount of lighter plumage around the cheeks, collar and breast; the bases of the breast and belly feathers are white. Those intermediates with a very white base to their belly feathers show a distinctly lighter belly compared to the dark birds, who have no white base to their belly feathers. But the darkest intermediate birds cannot always be distinguished from the dark birds, except by examination of the belly feathers; even then, dark intermediates merge into darks in a continuous sequence".

Intermediate morphs are rarer than light morphs in Ontario. Their status is unknown because many intermediates were probably called dark morphs in the past.

Juveniles

Parasitic Jaegers retain their full juvenile plumage during fall migration in southern Ontario. The molt to first winter plumage takes place on the wintering grounds. Figure 2 shows typical light, intermediate and dark morph juveniles. See also the perched intermediate morph juvenile on Plate 39 in Godfrey (1986). Most juveniles seen in Ontario are light or intermediate in coloration, but often appear dark at a distance over water.

Juveniles usually outnumber adults on the Great Lakes. For example, Rupert (1995) reported over an 18 year period that two-thirds of the Parasitic Jaegers seen at Sarnia were juveniles. On the 23 September 1973 Hamilton boat trip, Curry (1974) reported that 23 jaegers were seen, "none of which was adult". Bob Curry (*in litt.*) noted that "Most

years juveniles outnumber adults considerably but a closer look at the data reveals a more interesting temporal pattern. The majority of adult Parasitics at Hamilton occur in September and very early October while most birds seen later than this are juveniles. Thus, in some years adults outnumber juveniles in September in the ratio of 3:2, but taking into consideration the entire season juveniles will almost always greatly outnumber adults''. Interestingly, more adults than juveniles have been seen in Ottawa over the years (Bruce Di Labio, pers. comm.), perhaps indicating that Ottawa is nearer the main route of adults from James Bay to the Atlantic (Michel Gosselin, pers. comm.).

Morphs of the juvenile are highly variable, ranging from light to dark, the main difference being the extent of barring on the undersides. Cramp (1983) describes three morphs: light, barred (intermediate) and dark. Distinguishing juveniles from adults at a distance is difficult to impossible. At close range, typical light and intermediate morph juveniles are streaked on the head and neck, barred below, and edged with rufous above and below. The pointed central tail feathers are short and project only slightly beyond the others. Extremely dark morph juveniles are uniformly sooty-black and are difficult to separate from dark morph adults unless the length of the tail projection or fresh juvenile plumage can be seen.

The seqence of colour changes from juvenile to adult is complex and poorly understood. Olsen (1989) notes that dark juveniles may become light adults! Readers are referred to Cramp (1983) and Olsen (1989) for more information on plumages and morphs. See also the excellent article and illustrations by Jonsson (1984) on the identification of juvenile Pomarine (*P. pomarinus*) and Parasitic Jaegers.

Summary

Adult Parasitic Jaegers occur in three colour morphs: light, intermediate and dark. Most adult Parasitic Jaegers seen in Ontario are light morph birds, whereas intermediate and dark morph adults are decidedly rarer. Genetic studies indicate that intermediate morph adults are darker and more like dark morph birds in appearance than the intermediates described and illustrated by most authors. Our illustration of an intermediate morph adult is therefore more typical of a genetically intermediate bird. Juveniles also occur in three morphs. Juveniles seen in Ontario tend to be light or intermediate in coloration, but often appear dark at a distance. Juveniles usually outnumber adults on the Great Lakes in fall.

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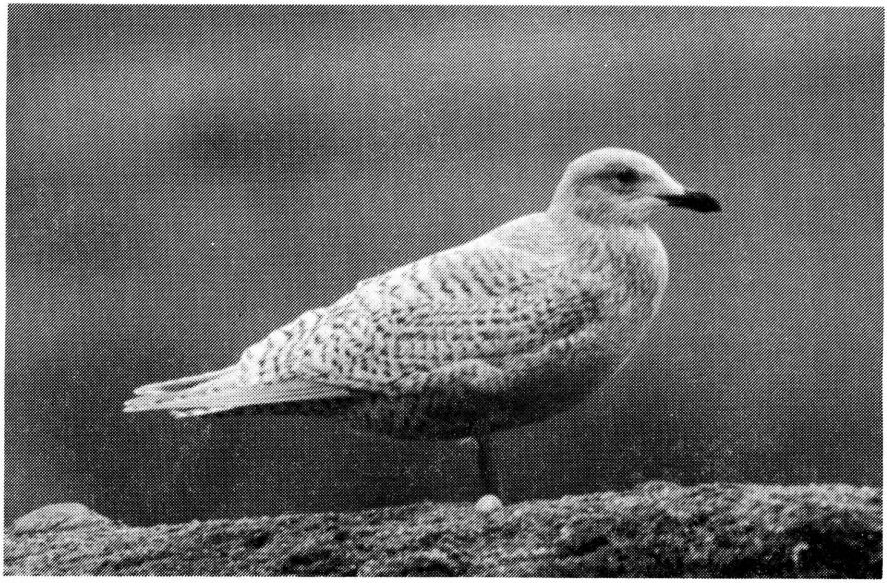
Photo Quiz

by
Bob Curry



One of the aspects I like about our photo quiz as compared to some others is that ours generally shows an entire bird in a not unusual pose and not obscured by vegetation or other birds. The task for reader and analyst alike is then to review what one understands about a species group in comparison to the subject rather than play some kind of detective game in which, it is my sense, the analyst is able to "see" things on the bird because she/he has been told the identity even though it frequently requires an unusual stretch for the reader to see some of said features.

About the only thing unusual about this large larid is that there are no congeners present for direct comparison. Nonetheless, there are plenty of structural and plumage features on this bird to make a definite identification. Doubtless, most readers will immediately recognize that this is a white-winged gull in which the folded primaries are much lighter than the remainder of the upper parts. This, essentially, limits the choice to Glaucous or Iceland Gull.

Our bird is off-white or greyish white overall, most back and wing feathers have a blackish bar or spot resulting in a speckled appearance and the underparts are washed with a slightly darker shade of grey. These features together with the dark bill indicate that this is a first basic plumaged bird or a first winter bird to use the older term which,

especially in the case of gulls, I cling to anachronistically. The plumage appears to be extremely fresh with no feather wear or fraying of primary tips which suggests that it is early in the winter. Both Glaucous and Iceland have this general colour and pattern in their first winter.

Overall, this bird appears rather neatly proportioned and tapered elegantly from a moderate bill and head in smooth lines to the wing tips. Glaucous Gull is chesty and the secondaries and tertials are bulkier so that there is more abrupt and less tapered extension of primaries beyond this.

When observing animals we are drawn inexorably to the head and eyes as this is how we all interface with the environment. In these features our two species are diagnostically different. Glaucous Gull has a long stout bill which has a considerable hook to the upper mandible at the tip. Bill length (measured from the farthest extension of feathering on the upper mandible) is at least half head length in Glaucous and at most half head length in Iceland. In addition to being not as long, the bill on Iceland Gull is less robust than on Glaucous. In first winter Glaucous Gull, the basal two-thirds of the bill is pale pinkish and the distal third is black. In similarly aged Iceland Gull the bill appears almost entirely black, although there may be some lightening to dark brown near the base. On Glaucous Gull the forehead and crown are flatter; on Iceland these features are more rounded and consequently the eye is more centred - all of which lend Iceland a more gentle visage and Glaucous a more aggressive one.

Two features about the folded primaries are diagnostic in the photo bird. The primary extension beyond the tail tip is greater than bill length; in Glaucous the tail extension is at most equal in length to bill length and usually is shorter. Secondly, a close examination of the folded primaries shows darkish subterminal spots. Glaucous Gull never has these. So our bird is an **Iceland Gull**, apparently of the subspecies ***L. glaucoides kumlieni***. The bill seems quite robust for Kumlien's Gull and the head not as rounded and domed above the eye which suggests that this is a male.

The nominate subspecies of Iceland Gull *L. g. glaucoides*, breeds in Greenland, winters mainly in the western Palearctic, and is extremely rare in Ontario (see Ontario Birds 10: 24-26). It is worth noting that grey markings on the primaries of lightly pigmented Kumlien's Gulls, both immatures and adults, are often notoriously difficult to detect. At the end of the cline, darkly pigmented Kumlien's Gulls overlap, in many ways, Thayer's Gulls — but perhaps that is a matter for a later photo quiz.

(Editors' Note: This Iceland Gull was photographed by Doug McRae at Washburn Dump near Kingston, Ontario in late November.)

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