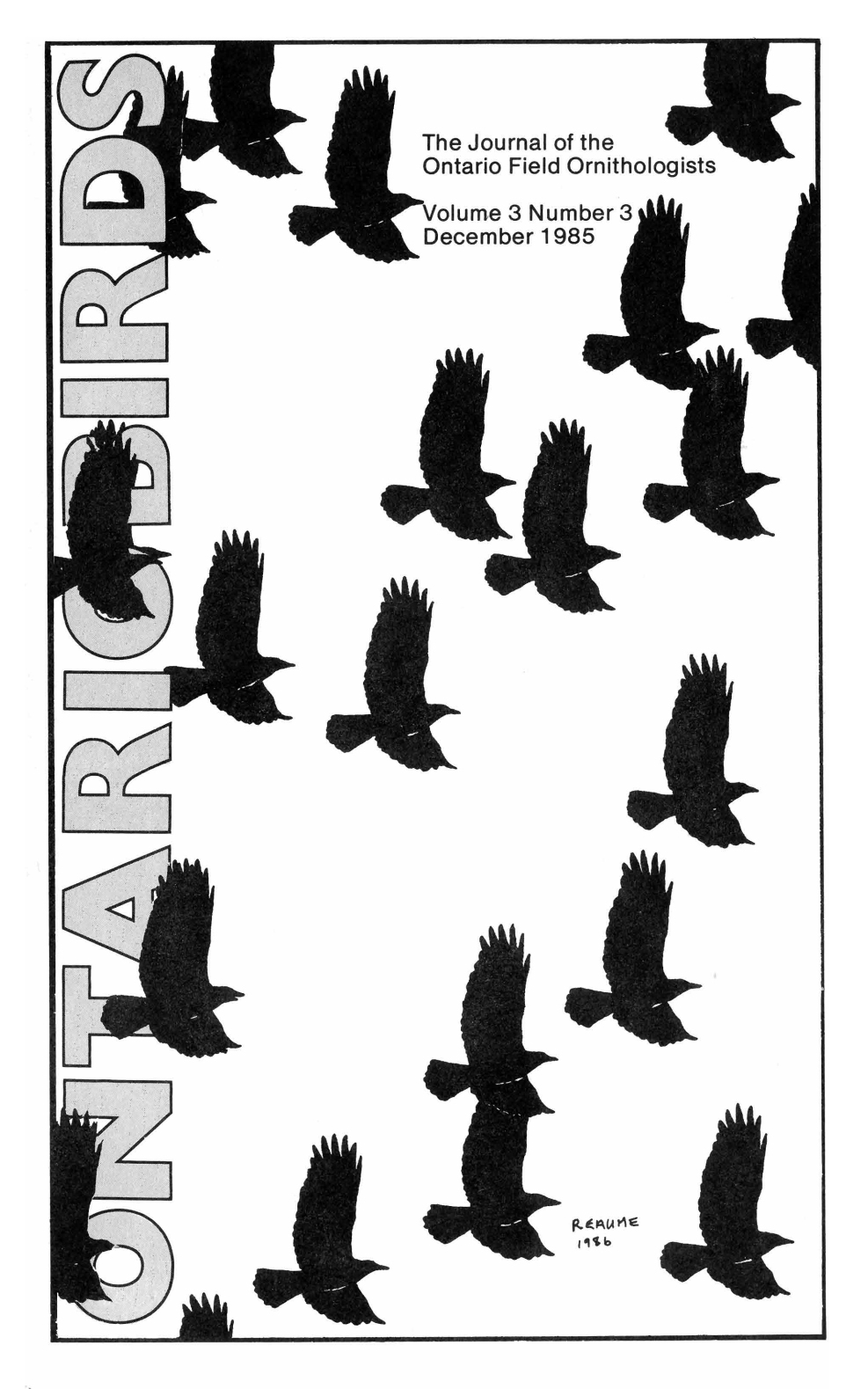


ONTARIO BIRDS



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Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Ontario Field Ornithologists

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

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership dues are \$13.00 Annual Member or \$260.00 Life Member. All members receive *Ontario Birds*, the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Please send memberships to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.

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Cover Illustration: Crows by Tom Reaume

Letters to the Editors

Overcrowding at Point Pelee

I agree with your correspondent Virgil Martin's comments on the overcrowding at Pt. Pelee National Park (*Ontario Birds* 3:41). I also agree that there are many other good birding areas and it would be logical for OFO to hold its Spring Meeting at a site other than Pt. Pelee. However, I find Mr. Martin's smug tone of voice unbecoming to OFO.

Last spring while walking on De Laurier Trail, my husband and I joined another birder pursuing rarer warblers. We were all loaded down with optical and camera equipment and nonchalantly wearing our 100 in 100 buttons (gold). A woman approached us and excitedly pointed out some lovely 'golden birds' we might want to photograph. We too muffled our chuckles. But retrospectively I realized how wrong we were in our attitude. Our desire for the rare had made us forget to appreciate the merely beautiful.

There was a time, and for some of us not long ago, when we were novices. Let's not become elitists and forget that birding is and should be an activity that can be enjoyed just as much by a person with a Life List of 100 as a Life List of 1000. Don't shun the novices, they may become hooked and one day be pointing out the birds to you!

Victoria Lister Carley
Toronto, Ontario

Bird roosts in St. Catharines—Niagara Falls Region

In response to your request for information on bird roosts, here is a synopsis of the numbers and species I have turned up so far in the St. Catharines—Niagara Falls region:

Mourning Dove: a roost of 650 in a 100 x 50 square metre scots pine plantation in St. David's.

American Robin and European Starling: a roost of these two species is located at the northeast corner of York Road and Concession 2, just east of St. David's, in a 300 x 100 square metre area of hawthorn, apple trees and willows. On 12 November there were between 400 and 500 Robins and between 25,000 and 30,000 Starlings there.

I checked under the Garden City Skyway, the Queenston Bridge and the Rainbow Bridge over the Niagara River for roosting birds—surprisingly, no birds other than a handful of Rock Doves were roosting under any of these bridges.

Richard Knapton
St. Catharines, Ontario

Video Cassette Birding Tapes

I have always felt that the strength of the field guide is to have a side by side visual comparison of family members, and also detailed comparison of the difficult to visually identify species such as: gulls, hawks, "peeps", and *Empidonax* flycatchers. This form

of family charts with very similar species together on facing pages has not been followed much lately. An overall view of family to family comparisons, and rapid in-family scanning has thus been lost. The loss is mainly to beginners, and in the field.

I have purchased four video cassette birding tapes to date. I have encountered either much time spent on very common birds, or a rapid look at everything that has been called AOU certified. Most tapes do provide bird calls with the bird in view. The tape medium has the potential to show the bird in typical postures, flight, habits, changing appearance of the field marks, "the jizz". If one tape could be spent on but one problem group such as the peeps, ah then perhaps the authors would have developed a new level of guide! Packaging, not utility, again seems the main concern.

Ken Brandes
Hamburg, N.Y.

Eds. Note: Several of our members (the Editors included) have commented that they have not seen video cassette birding tapes. We invite Mr. Brandes, or any other member(s) familiar with them, to do a review of one or more for *Ontario Birds*. Please check with us beforehand to avoid duplication.

Do snakes hear bird sounds?
I enjoyed Reid Wilson's note on nestling predation by an Eastern Fox Snake (*Ontario Birds* 3:73-75), however I would like to comment on his conclusion that

nestlings are "... probably easily found by the loud chirping at the nest". All snakes lack external ears, and while this does not entirely prevent them from hearing sounds transmitted through the air, it does greatly restrict this ability. As a general rule, most snakes appear to have a moderate ability to detect very low pitched sounds but their sensitivity decreases rapidly above 500 Hertz (*Wever, E.G.* 1978. *The reptile ear*. Princeton Univ. Press.). I think that it is safe to say that most begging calls from nestling birds have frequencies well above 500 Hertz, and that snakes must be using other cues to locate nests. Whether they are responding to odours or using some other sense is an interesting question and one which I cannot answer.

D. James Mountjoy
Kingston, Ontario

Roosting or loafing Mourning Doves?

I am contributing this note to you with regards to the Topic of Note for the December issue. I am not exactly certain how a roost is defined; if it must be a permanent, daily inhabited location, then this sighting is inappropriate to the topic, as it concerns an isolated occurrence. At any rate, the sighting was one I made on 22 December 1981 on the Weston Golf Course. On this date near midday, I observed the presence of 272 Mourning Doves perched in the trees at the golf course. At the commencement of my observation, doves were flying in from various directions. When the birds'

movements had subsided, I was able to make my count. The weather conditions at the time of this observation were overcast skies with very little wind, a temperature of 2°C, and wet snow on the ground from an overnight accumulation of about 1½" (3¾ centimetres). I had previously never recorded and have since never recorded any one group of Mourning Doves of this or anywhere near comparable size.

Mark Kubisz
Rexdale, Ontario

Eds. Comment: Mr. Kubisz poses an interesting question, "What is the definition of a roost?" As one who has studied various aspects of roosting for nearly 20 years, I usually equate roosting with sleeping; a roost is where birds sleep and, as a verb, to roost is to sleep (or to be at a roost attempting to sleep). Most birds roost at night but a few, goatsuckers, owls, etc., roost during the day. Of course, some birds are gregarious and roost communally, like crows, gulls, starlings, etc., while others roost solitarily, e.g. chickadees, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Winter Wrens, etc. So, what do you call groups of normally diurnal birds which are sitting around during the day, e.g. gulls on a golf course, Mourning Doves in a tree, etc.? Many ornithologists would refer to these as *loafing* birds and the areas where they are loafing are usually called their *loafing grounds*. The various authorities provide some light: the Audubon Encyclopedia of Birds says a roost

is a place where groups of birds sleep (it does not define the word as a verb) and Webster calls a roost (1) a perch, and hence (2) a resting place, whereas to roost is to perch or rest. He refers to "loaf" as "to spend time in idleness". Thus for Mr. Kubisz, I think he saw a loafing flock of Mourning Doves. The next question is, "Where do they roost (in the Rexdale area)?"

**Damage caused by woodpeckers:
a recent review**

Perhaps as a final note/summary to the Topic of Note on damage by woodpeckers, some of our readers may be interested in a short review of the subject which recently came to my attention. The reference is given below and deals with such topics as: Why woodpeckers make noise and attack siding, control measures, and a new chemical repellent for woodpeckers and birds that attack windows, houses and people. There is an extensive bibliography.

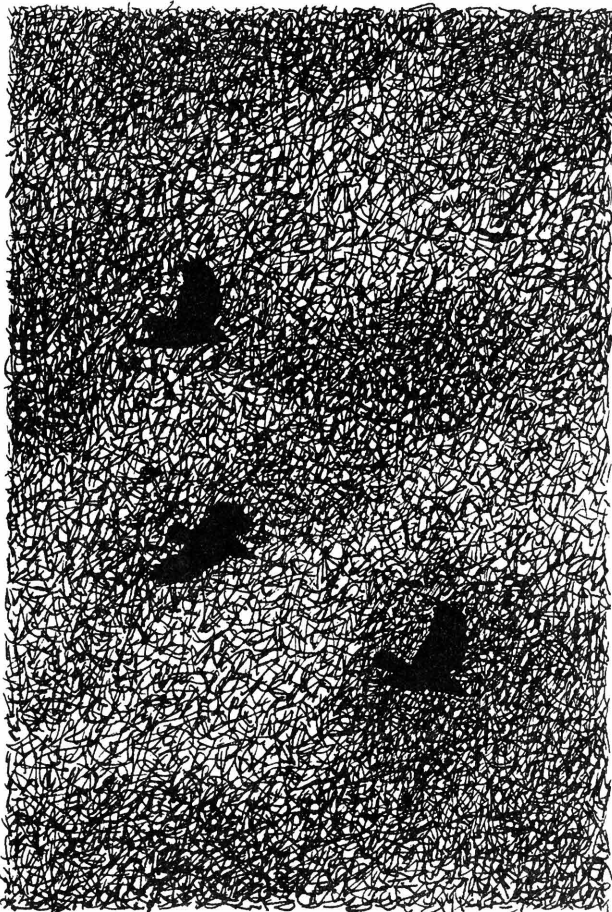
Dove, L.E. 1985. Birds that attack houses. Urban Wildlife Manager's Notebook #7. Supplement to Urban Wildlife News Vol. 8, No. 3 Summer 1985. Available for \$0.50 from the National Institute for Urban Wildlife, 10921 Trotting Ridge Way, Columbia, Maryland 21044.

Don Fraser
Newmarket, Ontario

issue. However, those things will come with age. *Ontario Birds* is evolving in a very positive manner. And for that we thank you, our members. Keep up the good work. Be on the lookout for events, ideas and observations that will make good articles and notes. It has been a pleasure, and a bit of work, putting out the first volumes of *Ontario Birds*.

We welcome Don Fraser as the new Editor of *Ontario Birds*. Don has worked with us almost since that first day at the Jolly Miller. He knows the strengths and weaknesses of *Ontario Birds*. We are confident that he will continue the former and improve on the latter.

Good Birding,
Chip & Linda Weseloh



REAUME