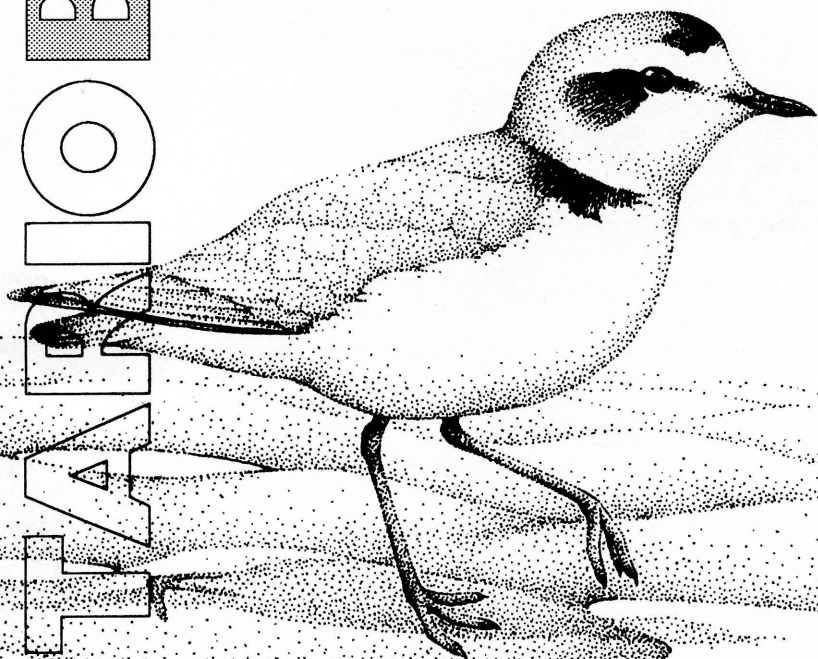


# ONTARIO BIRDS

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Ian Jones  
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## Ontario Birds

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## Editorial Policy

*Ontario Birds* is the journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Its aim is to provide a vehicle for the documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles or short notes on the status of bird species in Ontario, significant provincial or county distributional records, tips on bird identification, behavioural observations of birds in Ontario, location guides to significant birdwatching areas in Ontario, book reviews and similar

material of interest on Ontario birds. We do not accept submissions dealing with "listing" and we discourage Seasonal Reports of bird sightings as these are covered by *Bird Finding in Canada* and *American Birds*, respectively. Distributional records of species for which the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) requires documentation must be accepted by them before they can be published in *Ontario Birds*.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Closing of the Long Point "cuts"

The dismay that any serious birder would experience upon learning that Point Pelee National Park would be off limits to the public is immeasurable. That's how I feel about the loss of Long Point's "cuts". Since May of 1987 the area has been closed. The area is patrolled and violators are being charged for trespassing. My favorite birding spot is now inaccessible.

The "cuts" are privately owned by the Long Point Company. Visitors have never been welcome, yet they have been tolerated, except during waterfowl hunting season. During spring, summer and early fall this remote area is famous for shorebirds and gulls as well as other species of birds. Some species that are difficult to see elsewhere in Ontario can be found here annually. All it costs is a two mile walk. For regulars like myself (who may visit up to 100 times a year) it is a place of solitude; a place to bird seriously or recreationally; a place to search for rarities or a place to study the common.

In 1985 the "cuts" became the focus of attention when several rare tern species showed up. The increased human traffic drew the attention of the LPC wardens who complained to LPBO. No official steps were taken and visitors were undeterred. Last fall marked a

drastic change.

LPC decided that its marshes were filling in. So trucks and a crane ploughed a path along the fragile dunes. The plan was to build a dyke to stop the lake from entering the marshes. By spring the dyke's construction had begun. It shocked me that no second opinion was sought, or that this valuable staging area would benefit from a dyke. LPC just did it.

The dyke was under construction in May 1987 when the Snowy Plover arrived. The men working out there witnessed the flood of observers and this was the last straw. Worries over liabilities were expressed and the "cuts" were closed.

My reasons for disagreeing with this policy are mostly selfish. I considered the "cuts" my place. I also have practical reasons in that LPBO is also barred and therefore a lot of data about migration are being lost.

Times are changing for birders. You now need a permit to enter some lagoons. Recently, a small (and possibly dangerous) faction has suggested licensing birding.

In September 1987 I visited the "cuts", hopefully not for the last time. Patrols kept me from actually getting there and the whole atmosphere had changed. The solitude one felt, along with the impression of timelessness, has been lost. This was marred by the dyke and the guards. I know that

birders are not above respecting private property, but this seems unfair. Hopefully some agreement can be worked out. Those who have been to the "cuts" will agree, those who haven't don't know what they have missed.

Tim Sabo  
Weston, Ontario

### Smith's Longspur article too long

I was interested to learn of the observation of a Smith's Longspur in the article entitled: "Smith's Longspur: a case of neglect" (*Ontario Birds* 5:2-20). However, I was puzzled at the extent of editorial content devoted to this article. Eighteen pages of text, comprising almost one-half of the issue, were used in what is essentially a literature review and assessment centred on a single observation of one individual bird.

While the observation is definitely noteworthy, it would seem more appropriate to limit discussion to a brief description of the sighting and plumage characteristics, referenced by a few of the most relevant citations. This would have provided additional space for other articles of broad interest.

Ted Armstrong,  
Thunder Bay, Ontario

### House Sparrows use snow cavern

I found interest in Martin K. McNicholl's article entitled "Communal sheltering under snow

by American Tree Sparrows" (*Ontario Birds* 5:111-113).

For years we have had a bird feeder in front of our home, which hangs above some spreading junipers and some upright junipers. The feeder is in front of the living room window, providing a good view of both the feeder and the ground under the junipers.

The junipers have provided good cover for the birds using the feeder, which have ranged from House Finches to American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, House Sparrows, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals and periodically others.

During the winters of 1985-86 and 1986-87 some 12 to 15 House Sparrows made this area their home.

The junipers had been in front for close to 30 years with quite extended limbs which, in one area would be weighted down to the ground by snow. It left a cavern of sorts that varied in depth from a foot to 18 inches and the entrance was about twice the height of a House Sparrow.

At times there was no sign of any House Sparrows, but upon continuing a watch they would emerge from the snow cavern to feed on the ground under the feeder. They would return to the cavern after feeding for a period of time. I considered that these birds must roost in the snow cavern at night and on two occasions I caught them at daybreak coming out to feed.

In other years I can recall the

House Sparrows flying in to feed under the feeder and I would suspect that in these years the snow cavern accommodation was not available under the junipers.

I have enjoyed *Ontario Birds* and last year took the trip to Pembroke to observe the swallow roost.

Roy Forrester  
Orono, Ontario

### More reaction to Bob Rife's article

I believe that the article "Birders: as culpable as poachers" is an exaggeration, but I also believe it is time that birders did look to their ethics. Perhaps in a wider sense, this should be applied to all naturalists, both young and old.

Some of the possible solutions suggested, e.g., licenses, policing, examinations, seem less than practical, and I am sure that education will prove to be the only worthwhile approach.

Maybe we need an Ontario Code of Ethics; not just for birders, but for all naturalists, hunters and nature photographers. Perhaps it should be printed on good paper, say brown on cream, in the form of "I do..., I promise....., I agree to....", etc. Provide room for signatures, either family or individual, make it suitable for framing, and make it available through all clubs, parks and school conservation courses.

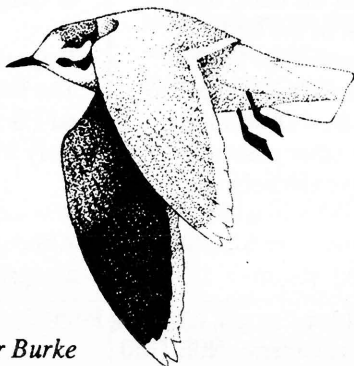
Maybe even a patch or badge would be appropriate.

Make someone proud to be more concerned with preserving our world than getting that great shot or that list addition.

Education is the best way and it works; just look at the success of the non-smoking campaigns. Who could have foreseen a few years ago that we would now have non-smoking restaurants, airplanes, motel rooms, and work areas.

Oh, I realise this would cost, but I would like to order my first 100 copies now.

Ian Heales  
Campbellford, Ontario



Little Gull / drawing by Peter Burke