

# ontario region



## RON RIDOUT

The summer of 1998 was the hottest on record across most regions of the province. Prolonged periods of above-average temperatures began in early June and continued well beyond the end of the reporting period. Rainfall was normal through the first half of the period, but began to drop below average amounts by period's end. Such conditions were close to ideal for breeding. May's warm temperatures and ideal conditions for migration meant that there were (with some exceptions) few lingering spring migrants left in June.

Several rare breeding species, that have been monitored for up to a decade by Bird Studies Canada's Ontario Birds at Risk program, improved their situations over recent years. The results of these surveys are summarized within this report.

As always, notable rarities were few within the summer period, but included Brown Pelican, White Ibis, and Sprague's Pipit. All rarities mentioned in this report are subject to the approval of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (O.B.R.C.).

**Abbreviations:** Pelee (*Pt. Pelee N.P. and vicinity*); Algonquin, Presqu'île and Rondeau are Provincial Parks. Place names in *italics* refer to counties, districts, or regional municipalities.

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

The Great Lakes cover such a vast expanse that it is difficult to know the exact status of species such as Red-throated Loon and

Horned Grebe, both of which breed far from these bodies of water but individuals of which may summer on the Great Lakes in far greater numbers than we know. Red-throated Loons seen during the period included one at Long Pt. June 6 (DW, Kme, CM), Hamilton June 7 (KM), Mississauga June 14 (KM), Burlington July 25 (KM), and Darlington P.P., *Durham*, July 31 (TH). Horned Grebes involved four at Rondeau June 7 (KB, SC), two at Bronte June 14–July 26 (KM), one at Burlington June 17–July 25 (RC), and one at Toronto June 20 (MG). American White Pelicans away from the northwest included one at Dundas June 4–July 31 (WS, m.ob.); Hillman Marsh, *Essex*, June 19 (DWa); and three at Windsor July 1–8 (GG, v.o.). Ontario's first **Brown Pelican** since summer 1994 was found near the mouth of the Detroit R. in mid-June, and then at Windsor in late June (DD). Double-crested Cormorant nests at Hamilton totalled 867, nearly double 1997's total (CW).

A Least Bittern at Leason Marsh, *Manitoulin*, July 15 (CB) was at the limit of the species' range in the province. Five birds reported on a marsh monitoring route at Rondeau June 1 (KB, JB) was considered a good number of this difficult-to-observe species. A Great Egret at Thunder Bay July 1 (DB) was exceptional that far north. All other reports came from s.w. locales. Rare mid-summer reports of Snowys included one at Dundas July 7 (DD, GM) and Toronto July 19–29 (*vide* RS). Last of the spring influx of Cattle Egrets included one each at Toronto June 2 (GC, KK); Amherst I., *Lennox Addington*, the same day (JE); and at Long Pt. June 15 (PP). Black-crowned Night-Herons at S. Baymouth June 7 (CB) and Kelley L., *Sudbury*, July 11 (CBI) were at the limit of the species' range. The *Sudbury* bird was particularly notable. A **White Ibis** flying N over Pelee I. June 27 (EM, DH) furnished Ontario's 5th record of this southern species.

A Tundra Swan at Sky L., *Grey/Bruce*, June 10 (JJ) was both very late and n. of the species' migration corridor. A Greater White-fronted Goose at Gore Bay June 18–24 (Rca, TL) provided one of the few June records for the province, while a Snow Goose which summered at Kanata June 15 through the period (BD) was also excep-

tionally unusual. For the 2nd consecutive year, a female Redhead (presumably the same bird) raised a brood at Hamilton's Windemere Basin. She was seen July 18 with six downy young (KM). A female Harlequin Duck was seen at Toronto as late as June 7 (RS), while a late female Black Scoter was seen off Burlington June 13 (KM). Common Goldeneyes that appeared to be summering well s. of their breeding range included a pair at Toronto June 28 (AA), an ad. male at Pelee July 7 (AW), and another male at Bright's Grove July 11 (AR). A male Bufflehead at Blenheim June 1–July 17 (m.ob.) was equally unusual. Four Ruddy Ducks at the same sewage lagoons June 1–July 15 (m.ob.) fit the pattern of this species' preference for breeding on sewage lagoons, though no proof was found in this case.

## OSPREY TO GULLS

Despite apparently suitable habitat in several areas, Ospreys have not nested in the Region roughly from Hamilton to L. Huron and s.w. to Pelee in decades. Therefore 2 different nests, one at Dundas (m.ob.) and another near Cayuga (m.ob.), were exceptional. Early migrants included birds at Rondeau July 12 (JB, KB, SC) and Hillman Marsh July 20 (AW). The s. Ontario Bald Eagle success story continued in 1998. Fourteen pairs produced a modern record 24 young. Four additional pairs were unsuccessful. All this came despite concerns over contaminant loading in older birds. A Merlin at Grimsby July 26 (AW) was considered a very early fall migrant. Urban Peregrines enjoyed another successful breeding season. Five pairs in the south successfully fledged young. At least two of the young were killed in their first few days of flight when they collided with windows. In the north, 12 nests were reported in *Thunder Bay* district, while another pair was found at Killarney Provincial Park (JL).

A calling Yellow Rail was discovered at a new location in *Peterborough* June 6 (PB). King Rails included three at the traditional St. Clair National Wildlife Area June 13 (JM et al.), a bird at the tip of Long Pt. June 12 (MB), and one at Selkirk July 25 (JM). Sandhill Cranes continued breeding at the now established s. Ontario locations. A pair

with young (found dead) in *Peterborough* June 6 (PB) furnished that county's first evidence of breeding. Another pair with two downy young was found at Mississippi Mills, *Lanark*, July 1 (CBe).

The only Piping Plover of the spring in the south was seen on a crowded beach at Cobourg June 3 (CG). The species continues to cling to its breeding status in the province. A nesting pair and another single male were observed at L. of the Woods July 1 (BM, SC, PC). Two Am. Avocets at Amherstview June 20–25 (VM) were well east. Another appeared at Blenheim July 19 (JB, KB). An early fall migrant Greater Yellowlegs was at Binbrook June 28 (KM). Also exceptionally early Lesser Yellowlegs included individuals at Amherstview (RDW) and Hamilton (RC), both June 20. Four Semipalmated Sandpipers at Tavistock June 18 (JMH) were record-late spring migrants there. Fall migrant W. Sandpipers included two at Wahnapiatae July 24 (RM) and Alfred July 30 (BD). With the last northbound Least record-late at Salford June 14 (JMH), less than a week later the first southbound arrivals included individuals at Amherstview (RDW) and Blenheim (AW, SP) June 20. Two juveniles at Lakefield July 23 (PB) were very early. Late northbound White-rumpeds included singles at Tavistock June 13 (JMH), Smithville June 13–14 (KM, RD, MM), and Hamilton June 13–14 (KM). The only Ruff of the summer was a male at Parkhill July 26 (DS). Twenty Wilson's Phalaropes at Embrun June 6 (TG) furnished a notable count, while an early fall migrant arrived at Blenheim July 6 (JB, KB).

A count of 500 Franklin's Gulls at L. of the Woods June 20 (GCa) was the highest reported there in many years. Five Little Gulls, including a juvenile, at Rondeau July 12 (KB, JB) raised the possibility of breeding there. A juv. Bonaparte's at Pelee July 20 (AW, HO) was record early. A first-summer Iceland Gull at Bronte June 14 (KM) was very late, as was a Glaucous at Maple June 10 (GB). Individual Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported at Long Pt. June 2 (JLi), Selkirk June 2 (JM), Ottawa June 11 (BD), Pelee June 24–July 8 (AW), and Erieau July 27 (JB).

#### TERNS TO MIMIDS

A count of 433 Caspian Tern nests at Hamilton Harbor June 3 (CW) makes that colony one of the largest (if not the largest) in the province. A total of 261 Com. Tern nests in the same heavily industrialized harbor helps make it one of the major colonial

nesting sites in the province. Numbers of Forster's remained low in the southwest, a result of continued above-average lower Great Lakes levels.

A newly fledged N. Saw-whet Owl found at Coon L., *Peterborough*, June 27 (PB, DAS) supplied that county's 2nd breeding record. For the 3rd consecutive year, a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers nested successfully well to the east in *Leeds Grenville*, raising three young (WH). Breeding was suspected in Newcastle when a young bird was observed July 19 (EA).

An extensive survey conducted by Bird Studies Canada (B.S.C.) across s.w. Ontario for Acadian Flycatchers produced 22 singing males (DM). Apart from some of the traditional sites, the search discovered several of the birds in small creek valleys along the L. Erie shoreline from *Norfolk* through *Elgin* to *Kent*. An additional six males were also independently reported, including one each at Toronto June 9–10 (TS, GCa et al.) and Mt. Hope July 1 (MS). The surveyors also found 13 nests. These numbers undoubtedly represent the highest tally ever recorded in the province, but are also a result of the first-ever extensive search. Two singing Willow Flycatchers at Burwash June 8 (CWh) were at the limit of the species range. Early fall migrant Leasts included individuals at Pelee July 3 (AW) and Burlington July 10 (RC, GS). Last of the spring W. Kingbirds were seen at Toronto June 6–13 (AR, m.ob.) and Thunder Bay June 6 (JLr). One n. of Rainy R. June 29 (BM, SC, PC) was within the species' limited breeding range in the province, but no evidence of nesting was found.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch at Pelee June 14 (FU) was record-late at that s. location. A Mt. Bluebird at Rainy R. July 9 (RSi) was probably less than 100 mi from the breeding range in Manitoba, and with plenty of suitable habitat in the area, the possibility of nesting is not that remote. The first southbound Swainson's Thrush was quite early at Pelee July 15 (AW). Veerys and Wood Thrushes at Pelee both totaled four singing males, an increase over previous years (RR). Thunder Bay's wintering N. Mockingbird was last seen June 28 (m.ob.). A nesting pair in Beckwith Twp., *Lanark*, in July (ET) furnished that area's first breeding record.

#### PIPITS TO BLACKBIRDS

An Am. Pipit at Tavistock June 3 (JMH) was record late. Following on the heels of *Thunder Bay's* first **Sprague's Pipit**, Rainy R. recorded its 3rd with a bird there July 6

(Jla, RSi). Loggerhead Shrike numbers rebounded somewhat from 1997's dismal showing. Thirty nesting pairs and an additional eight single birds were monitored by B.S.C. and the Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Team. All but one pair were in the known breeding areas. A pair on Manitoulin I which raised three young (TL) was the exception. With many of the Pelee's former shrubby area's beginning to mature into taller forest, natural succession may be having an adverse effect upon White-eyed Vireo populations in the park. A total of four singing males found represented a very low number (AW). Since Pelee harbors the only concentration of this species in Canada, some management may be necessary to ensure its continued existence.

With such a warm, pleasant spring, there was an interesting mix of late spring departure and early fall arriving migrant warblers. The early fall migrants may be easily explained by the advanced season, but why would some of these birds choose to linger on their way north? Perhaps, like humans, some birds are always late. Very early Tennessee Warblers included a male at Windsor July 5 (PPr) and three birds at Pelee July 15 (AW). A N. Parula lingered at Pelee until June 3–4 (FU). Two Yellow Warblers at Pelee's tip June 24 (AW) were considered early migrants. Normally absent during the summer months, a Chestnut-sided Warbler maintained a territory at Pelee June 3–25 (FU, v.o.). A Magnolia Warbler at Pelee June 24 (FU) was record late there, while single Black-throated Blues and Black-throated Greens at Rondeau June 14 (BM) pushed the envelope. Surprisingly, with what would appear to be some suitable habitat, a Pine Warbler at Rondeau June 29 (AW, SP) was considered a rare summer visitant at that park. A Blackpoll at Pelee June 22 (FU) set the record-late spring date there. A Black-and-white there June 9 (RR) was late as well.

A B.S.C. survey of known and possible nesting sites of Prothonotary Warblers found approximately 18 males and 15 nests. The majority of these nests were in nest-boxes placed in suitable habitat specifically for the species. After shifting to *Norfolk* in 1997, the main concentration was once again at Rondeau, with at least 6 pairs and possibly as many as 11 males. Numbers in *Norfolk* remained stable. The species is obviously responding positively to the nest-box program, a very encouraging sign for its future in the province. Two different pairs of Hooded Warblers were found in the Dundas valley June 21 (RC, GS). A Canada

Warbler at Pelee July 31 (JI,RP) furnished a record-early fall arrival there.

A Grasshopper Sparrow at Pelee June 15 (AW) was record-late. The only Henslow's Sparrow reported during the summer was a lone singing male in *Haldimand* July 14 (JM). The outlook for this species is bleak indeed. A Dark-eyed Junco at the tip of Long Pt. July 15 (MB) was exceptional at that location in mid-summer. A Yellow-headed Blackbird at Garson June 9 (RM) was unusual at that n.e. location. Also unusual in that region of the province were individual W. Meadowlarks at Algonquin June 3 (CJ) and Ten Mile Pt., *Manitoulin*, June 21 (CB).

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# appalachian region

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**B**ird populations may or may not have been low this summer, but clearly the birder population was very low. The material received for this report used only 59% of the computer space used in the spring report. It was, however, a season with a number of interesting events. The weather was certainly benign. At the Pittsburgh weather station both months were slightly cooler than normal. June was much wetter than average with an excess rainfall of 3 inches, but July was drier than average with a deficiency of 1.7 inches.

The spring migration continued into the first week of June and even somewhat later, giving rise to many record-late dates. Despite the heavy rains of June most species appeared to have successful nesting seasons, and there were several first or second local breeding records. Only a few shorebirds, the usual advance guard of the fall migration, had arrived by July 31. More than the average number of long-legged waders arrived in the post-breeding period. An unusual number of waterfowl (ducks, grebes and coots) summered in the Region, although most of these were non-breeders. The highlight of the season was the extensive breeding, or presumed breeding, of several passerine species south of their normal range. It was almost as if some birds shifted from the migratory mode to the breeding mode before they completed the north-bound flight.

A number of species which breed in the higher elevations showed increased populations at the limits of their range. Several of these species have disjunct populations in the Hocking Hills in southeast Ohio, where a series of deep ravines offer a cool, more northerly habitat. This area has not been reported before, so the numbers were compared with what might be expected as judged by the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas.

**Abbreviations:** B.L. (*Brainerd Levee, Hamilton Co., TN*); G.S.M.N.P. (*Great Smoky Mountains N.P.*); M.C.F.H. (*Minor Clark Fish Hatchery, Rowan Co., KY*); M.L.W.A. (*Mosquito L. Wildlife Area, Trumbull Co., OH*); P.I.S.P. (*Presque Isle*



**This adult Pacific Loon in alternate plumage at Hanover, York County, Pennsylvania, on June 14, 1998 was the first record for both the state and the Appalachian region. Features that support Pacific versus Arctic Loon include the pale, frosty appearance of the back of the head, slender proportions of the bill and neck, and lack of a prominent white patch along the flank. Photograph/Nick Pulcinella**

*S.P., Erie Co., PA*; P.N.R. (*Powdermill Nature Reserve, Westmoreland Co., PA*); S.H.L. (*South Holston L., Washington Co., VA/Sullivan Co., TN*); Y.C.S.P. (*Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana Co., PA*).

## LOONS THROUGH IBIS

A **Pacific Loon** was reported from York, PA, June 14 († ph. NP). If accepted by the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee this provides a Pennsylvania