

Book Reviews

A Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario. Revised Edition, 1995. By *Clive E. Goodwin.* University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Ontario. Softcover, xii + 477 pages, 41 maps, bar charts. \$24.95 Canadian.

This recent release is a much needed "completely revised and updated edition" to the very popular first edition of this book published by the same author in 1982. In a province as heavily populated and developed as Ontario, at least in the south, the status of birding areas may change fairly often, necessitating frequent updates to a bird-finding guide. I am sure that many other Ontario birders have used Goodwin's first edition as much as I have, especially as a beginning birder, to learn about interesting birding sites wherever I have travelled in Ontario. I always felt that there were a few problems with that guide that I wished could be improved upon, and so it was with some interest that I awaited the release of this revision. For my review, I have concentrated on the chapters dealing with the areas that I am most familiar with, primarily those in the Golden Horseshoe area and southwestern Ontario, and most of my comments which follow use examples from these areas.

This book is organized into 20 chapters dealing with: an introduction on how to use the book; an overview of Ontario and its avifauna; 16 chapters dealing with different regions of the province, which is the meat of this book; sundry information for visitors to Ontario; a systematic species list; an appendix of scientific names of plants, mammals and reptiles

mentioned in the text; and an index of bird species and place names referred to in the text.

The biggest change from the first edition is the size - this second edition has almost twice as many pages; therefore, a great deal more information has been added. The biggest improvement with this version is the organization of the areas of the province into more numerous smaller chapters. The first edition had only six areas, using boundaries which were confusing. Birding sites in these areas were listed in alphabetical order using the name of the nearest community. This had made it very hard to locate birding sites nearby in a larger vicinity for a birding trip to an area. The 16 area chapters used in this book are divided into groups of 1-5 adjacent counties/regional municipalities/districts. Within each chapter, birding sites are organized around major cities or towns, natural features or major highway routes. Sewage lagoons not already discussed are grouped together at the end of the chapter. The treatment of northern Ontario was rather weak in the first edition, and this has been beefed up with almost twice as many pages devoted to it (excluding the Rainy River area which has a separate chapter in both editions). Another big improvement over the first edition is the increase in the number of maps (41 vs. 12). A map of southern

Ontario showing all the counties/regional municipalities/districts was a necessary addition.

Despite the improvements over the first edition listed above, I have many problems with this book. First of all, the quality of the maps is very poor. With some of them it is difficult to distinguish roads from waterbodies and municipal borders, and not all of the major highways or even larger communities in any given area are shown.

The thickness of the book will be a concern for some birders, particularly visitors wishing to travel light. Surely, a concern of any birder travelling to a new distant area is that only a limited number of books can usually be carried, and the size and weight of this one may be a factor against it being useful in the field. Also, the paper and cover stock used for this book are not very durable, and it may not stand up well to the rigors of field travel. Many of the newer bird-finding guides (including the ABA Lane Series) use a coil ring binding which is very handy for allowing the book to be held open at the pages desired while on the go. Unfortunately, the standard glued binding was used here, but the thickness of the book may not have allowed for a coiled ring binding.

A book of this nature can be out-of-date very quickly, and this one, unfortunately, already has a lot of out-of-date information. I understand that there were some delays in seeing this book to print; however, no updates appear to have been made during the lag period. Information provided on entrance fees, schedules or accessibility in some cases have

changed over the past year, making some of the information provided here incorrect. Examples include the Pelee Island Ferry details, Point Pelee National Park fees, and the list of bird hotline phone numbers (e.g. over the past year the provincial/Long Point line has been cancelled, and the numbers have changed for the Durham and Ottawa lines).

The first edition had a number of mistakes, which I had hoped would have been corrected in this version. Of the ones I could readily remember, only one had been corrected (directions to Aylmer Wildlife Management Area). Some examples of the ones which were repeated again include the following: the Bruce Peninsula to Manitoulin Island ferry is incorrectly referred to as the "Tobermory to Little Current" ferry, which actually runs between Tobermory and South Baymouth; directions to Rankin Resource Management Unit on the Bruce Peninsula incorrectly state to take Albemarle Sideroad 25 east from Hwy. 6 to Isaac Lake, but Isaac Lake is in fact west of Hwy. 6; for Puslinch Lake in Wellington County, it incorrectly states that "Pinebush Road runs down the west of the lake"; however, Townline Rd. runs down the west side of the lake from an exit off Hwy. 401; Woodland Cemetery in Hamilton is incorrectly called "Woodlawn Cemetery", an irritating error perpetuated by some people living east of the Credit River - let's set the record straight here once and for all; it's Woodland Cemetery!

Despite the delays, the book appears to have been rushed to print, evidenced by the rather poor editing,

resulting in a large number of typographical errors and numerous mistakes in the information. Some examples of erroneous information (not in the first edition) include: directions to the Wilson Tract area in Haldimand-Norfolk incorrectly say to continue "east" 2.1 km on Regional Rd. 42 from Hahn Marsh to Regional Rd. 23 - this should be "west"; farther on in this paragraph, it incorrectly refers to Concession IV, which runs through the Wilson Tract area, as "Concession VI"; in the Table of Contents, the Index is listed as starting on page 453 when it actually starts on page 451; in my copy, chapter 18 dealing with Rainy River ends abruptly on page 343 in mid-sentence and page 344 is blank!

The treatment of the area chapters is quite variable. The author acknowledges input from a number of local birders for specific chapters or areas, or cites local bird-finding guides from which information was drawn. These chapters are typically the most thorough and well done. Other chapters would have benefited from the author seeking such contributions from other local people who know the areas well. Chapters which I think suffer from this neglect include those dealing with Hamilton, Essex/Kent, Niagara, Waterloo Region and sections of Haldimand-Norfolk, in particular. The chapter given the most thorough treatment is that dealing with the Greater Toronto area, even though the author refers the reader to his other publication dealing specifically with this area in much greater detail. I would like to have seen the same level of detail offered to other areas as well. However, a more detailed guide for a province the size of Ontario would

have resulted in the size of this book being enormous. Perhaps improvements in type size, exclusion of the systematic list (see below), and more economical treatment of the overview descriptions could have been employed to produce a more compact volume with more thorough information on good birding sites.

Despite the apparent increase in information on birding sites in this version, quite a few locations which were listed in the first edition do not appear in this book, including a surprising number of excellent sites, such as: Kingsville Sewage Lagoons; Selkirk Provincial Park; Woolwich (a.k.a. Floradale) Reservoir near Elmira; Short Hills Provincial Park in Niagara Region; Grimsby (a.k.a. Winona) Sewage Lagoons; and the town of Atikokan, which is not even shown on the map, yet it has been the site of many outstanding rarities, including several provincial firsts.

In addition to those mentioned above, there are quite a few good birding sites which are not mentioned in either edition, including: the Big "O" Woods at Comber (excellent for passerine migration in spring, even when Pelee farther south can seem to be quiet); Hullet Provincial Wildlife Area, a 2200 ha wetland area near Clinton in Huron County; the Hagersville/Fisherville/Cayuga area of Haldimand-Norfolk (excellent for winter birding, particularly raptors); the Grand River trail south from Cambridge to Paris (excellent access to the Grand River forests); Shoreacres Park, Burlington; Bronte/Burloak Woods, Oakville; and the Lake Ontario shoreline east of Hamilton to Grimsby, even though it can be just as productive as the lakeshore northeast from Burlington,

for which detailed information is given.

Dumps are rarely mentioned, despite the fact that many are excellent for gulls in particular, or other winter birds. Some examples of dumps not mentioned that are checked with some regularity and have produced interesting birds include those at Nepean, Thunder Bay, Niagara Falls, Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, and Tobermory.

One of the major problems with the first edition, which has not been remedied in this version, is that while detailed directions to many sites are given, in too many cases little information on the interesting birds to look for at those sites is provided. Heavy reliance is given to the overview section of the province's birdlife, which lists typical species that occur in major habitat types, and attempts to highlight regional and seasonal differences. As a result, the birding potential of many excellent sites is not well described for my liking. Some notable examples follow. The Welland Canal piers at Port Weller are simply rated as "good for waterbirds", which hardly indicates the incredible vantage one gets for viewing Lake Ontario from the end of the piers, which can be very exciting during fall and early winter, and does not consider its function as a migrant passerine trap particularly during spring. Woodland Cemetery at Hamilton is written off as merely providing "good views of the west end of Hamilton Bay". This site is known as one of the best places around to view diurnal migration in both spring and fall of everything from waterfowl, loons (regular flights of Red-throateds), gulls, and, raptors

to passerines. The Lake Erie shoreline between Fort Erie and Port Dover can provide excellent shorebirding during the fall when lake levels are low, and incredible rarities have turned up over the years. This potential is barely alluded to under brief references for Rock Point Provincial Park and Morgan's Point. There are many other access points that are not mentioned.

When visiting any public birding site, it is useful to know of any specific information sources indicating what birds have recently occurred, such as sightings boards or log books maintained by nature centres, and a few are mentioned throughout this guide. However, a few important ones that were missed include the sightings board at the Long Point Bird Observatory's Old Cut Visitor's Centre, and the bird sightings book at the Crossroads Restaurant at Comber.

Directions to some sites are not very precise, or known access points are not mentioned. This may make it hard for visiting or beginning birders to find such sites. From the directions given, I doubt that one would find Schaefer's Woods in Waterloo, or Chippewa Landfill in Thunder Bay. Access from the west side of the Queenston Hydro Reservoir is not mentioned, nor is the access road to the bottom of the Sir Adam Beck Generating Station on the Niagara River.

Some statements or descriptions are misleading or incorrect. To say that Lee Brown's waterfowl area near Long Point is "no longer very productive" is ridiculous, as Eurasian Wigeon and Greater White-fronted Geese have turned up there almost

regularly in spring amongst the numerous waterfowl staging in the area. Regarding access to the Royal Botanical Gardens properties at Hamilton, the author states that "the present situation is rather ambiguous". It certainly isn't, and the information could easily have been found by contacting the RBG. Dundas Marsh is stated to have "a small colony of Black-crowned Night-Herons" implying that they nest. This species certainly feeds and roosts there, but I am not aware of any nesting ever occurring at Dundas Marsh. As for Hamilton, Goodwin finds it "easy to get lost here". Maybe that explains why this section is treated rather poorly.

Reference to specific occurrences of rarities is inconsistent throughout the text. Few are mentioned, although the author says in the introduction that more have been used than in the first edition, but the ones selected seem haphazard. I would have preferred more mention of specific rarities, especially for known migrant traps, since this would help to illustrate the birding potential of these areas, and might entice a visit to an otherwise dull-sounding location.

Over 90 pages of this book are devoted to the systematic list. This consists of an annotation for each species which has occurred in Ontario, interspersed with small bar charts for regularly occurring species (but also some rarities) showing status over the year. This system replaces the table from the first edition that listed the seasonal status for both southern and northern Ontario for each regular species, followed by a list of rarities that have

occurred. I much prefer the simpler approach used in the first edition to that used here, which I find to be of limited value to the birder. The author claims that the systematic list is "intended as a guide for the birder, not as a definitive statement of status". Fine, then I would expect more specific direction provided on how, when and where to locate and encounter birds, in particular species of interest to the visiting birder or hard to find species for Ontario birders.

The status designations used include eight categories: abundant, common, fairly common, uncommon, rare but regular in specific areas, rare, occasional, and exceptional. I find the differences between these categories difficult to understand as they are described. For example, "common" is defined as "usually widespread and normally easy to find on most field trips, but more localized and/or in smaller numbers than the preceding (abundant)"; whereas "fairly common" is defined as "seen regularly in suitable areas, but localized or usually in small numbers, or moving through quickly". Sound confusing? The status designations are not applied consistently, in particular to rarities. Most species that I would consider to be vagrants are listed under the annotations as "exceptional", which is defined as "has occurred, but not to be expected". However, for species with only one record for the province, exceptional is not (usually) used. Instead, the annotation will say "one record" followed by the date (not including the year). Why bother? The location of the record is also not included, so why not just also list

these as "exceptional" as well. Just to be inconsistent, for some species with more than one record, it states "two records", followed by some dates (in some case with the year). What a mess! The species listed also include a few that are not on the provincial checklist maintained by the Ontario Bird Records Committee, such as Greater Flamingo, Barnacle Goose, Prairie Falcon, and Brewer's Sparrow, and are followed by some commentary about origin or validity. If this list is not meant to be a definitive statement of status, why mention these at all?

Getting back to the usefulness of this systematic list to the birder, let's use one species as an example. Louisiana Waterthrush would likely be a desirable species for visiting birders from the rest of Canada and to newer Ontario birders. The systematic list describes it as a rare and very localized summer resident, primarily in the Long Point, Rideau Lakes and Niagara Escarpment areas, but no specific locations are given here. Using the index, the references to this species in the text are all very general, with only three specific locations mentioned, but no detailed directions are provided to locate this species at any of the sites. This is

typical of this guide, and many birders will find this lack of detailed information frustrating.

There are essentially two groups of users of a bird-finding guide: visiting birders and resident birders. When considering buying this book one should decide how useful it is to them. For the visiting birder, this is the only book which deals with all of Ontario, therefore it will be a desired reference. However, more specific bird-finding information should be sought by the visitor for any given area, and a number of good local site guides are available, as well as many local site articles in publications such as *Ontario Birds* or in publications of local naturalists clubs. For Ontario birders, the beginning birder will find this book useful to help identify where to go birding in any given area. With more experience, you will rely less and less on such a source. For the experienced Ontario birder who has travelled the province to some degree, this book has very little to offer over the first edition, other than an improved organizational format to the site descriptions. The many deficiencies of this book are quite irritating, and the money can probably be better spent on other bird books.

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LAST OF THE CURLEWS

The bestselling classic by OFO member Fred Bodsworth has been reissued by Counterpoint Books of Washington, D.C. This book is a "must read" for birders and all who care about endangered species. Ask for it at your favourite bookstore using ISBN 1-887178-00-7, 192 pages including illustrations, approximately \$20.00 Canadian.

A Birder's Guide to the Sault Ste. Marie Border Area. 1995. By Edward Czerwinski. The Sault Naturalists of Ontario and Michigan, P.O. Box 21035, 292 Northern Ave. East, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6B 6H3. Softcover, 29 pp., \$6.75 Canadian.

This new bird-finding guide provides detailed information on where and when to find the characteristic birds and the specialties of the Sault Ste. Marie area. Ten areas on the Canadian side of the border, and six areas on the American side, are covered, with excellent maps, explicit directions, and comments on the species to be expected at various times of the year. In the area descriptions, emphasis is placed on species that would attract local and visiting birders, including Harlequin Duck, Bald Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sandhill Crane, Northern Hawk Owl, Great Gray Owl, and Connecticut Warbler. The author also comments on areas which he feels are under-birded, but that are potentially promising.

It is clear after reading this guide that the Sault Ste. Marie area is excellent for wintering raptors and for boreal species. However, during the breeding season, the area provides opportunities to see both northern and southern species in close proximity. A total of 288 species has been recorded in the area. Although the author characterizes the avifauna as predominantly boreal, the presence of extensive deciduous forests in the area leads to the occurrence of some southern species such as Red-shouldered Hawk (St. Joseph Island, Ontario and the Whitefish Point area, Michigan) and Red-bellied Woodpecker (St. Joseph Island and Gros Cap, Ontario), among others. Rarities are also mentioned in appropriate site

descriptions. Some of these include Yellow-billed Loon (Corbeil Point, Ontario), Lark Bunting (Sault Waterfront, Ontario), and Black-throated Sparrow (Whitefish Point, Michigan).

The middle page of this guide contains a key map that guides the user to the more detailed site descriptions and maps. Logically, this map should have been at the beginning of the guide, before the site descriptions. However, once the user knows where it is, it's easy to use. The detailed maps do not have scales, but the text provides exact distances, road names, and other directions. There is only one area mentioned in the text that lacks a map. This is within Area 1 (St. Mary's River Rapids and the Canadian Sault locks), where River Road follows the river. In one other case (Area 6: Desbarats Sewage Lagoon and Gibboney Lake), the name of a road (Lake Huron Rd.) has been omitted from the map.

Other aspects of the production of this guide are quite good. There are a few typographical errors (Great Gray Owl is spelled as "Grey" and "Gray" in different places in the text). In one place, the text is split by an illustration, which doesn't work too well as far as lay-out is concerned. At the end of the guide, some species of special interest are cross-referenced with sites of occurrence. However, there are a few inconsistencies, such as a listing of Red-shouldered Hawk for Area 11 (Whitefish Point, Whitefish Harbour,

and Vermilion) which is not mentioned in the text. However, these are minor problems that do not detract from the usefulness of this guide.

Maps, directions to birding sites, and discussions of expected species are the keys to a good bird-finding guide. This guide succeeds on all counts. I have visited several of the sites in this guide (mostly before this

guide was available), and I can attest to the fact that the Sault Ste. Marie area has much to offer to the visiting birder (and to naturalists in general). Had this guide been available then, it would have enhanced my appreciation of some of the sites, as well. I think that local birders will also find lots of useful information in this guide. It is well worth having.

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A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors. 1995. By Brian K. Wheeler and William S. Clark. Academic Press, San Diego. Hardcover, 223 pages including 375 colour photographs. \$44.95 Canadian.

Hawkwatching has attracted a huge number of followers in recent years. This has resulted in two quite different specialty hawk identification guides in North America. In 1987, the Peterson series published *Hawks* (the best guide for diagnostic field marks) also by Clark and Wheeler. Then in 1988, Pete Dunne et al. published *Hawks in Flight*, the best guide for jizz identification. Most hawk identifications are usually a combination of the field marks and jizz. Just go to Cranberry Marsh, High Park, Beamer, Hawk Cliff or Holiday Beach to watch the experts identify hawks and you will be hooked. Now we have a colour photographic guide that complements the other two guides; it is absolutely the ultimate visual guide to all the vultures, kites, accipiters, buteos, eagles and falcons of North America.

The colour photographs and text emphasize the identification, plumages, ages, sexes, subspecies

(races) and colour morphs (phases). The trend is to record more of this vital information at major hawk watches. Remember that this is a photographic guide so the text is concise with little new information not already found in the aforementioned guides. The text is organized in a consistent way for each species and is easy to follow and understand.

Starting at the beginning and working through the book, I comment on its many strengths and a few weaknesses. On page xiv the authors say they have adopted the Humphrey and Parkes plumage terminology, but use juvenile and adult where the equivalent H & P terms for hawks are juvenal and definitive basic. The term subadult is used in the guide and it is not a Humphrey and Parkes term. Basic is the only Humphrey and Parkes term in the guide and its use is restricted to describe plumages between

juvenile and adult of eagles, Swainson's Hawk and Crested Caracara. So why claim to use Humphrey and Parkes terminology when it is not used for most species?

The glossary defines specialized terms used in the book. Two terms not used in the guide are immature and colour phase. They are replaced by juvenile and colour morph, respectively, changes that are gaining acceptance because these terms are more precise. Interestingly, subspecies is not defined in the glossary. The definition of morph could have been expanded to say that morphs are not correlated with age, sex or subspecies. The concepts of subspecies and morph should have been fully defined and differentiated because they are used extensively throughout the book. I agree with the authors that Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (page 83) is a colour morph and not a subspecies as currently recognized, but they cite no reasons or authorities. For a discussion of Krider's, see *Ontario Birds* 11: 23-29. The definition of plumage on page xvi is missing and has been replaced by the definition for bib, a glitch of our word processing era!

Anatomical and descriptive terms used to identify hawks are clearly shown using arrows on photographs of hawks. Note that the arrows pointing to the axillaries and breast are reversed in Figure 1. Not all names of species follow the official American Ornithologists' Union Check-list. For example, with Peregrine (Falcon), and (American) Swallow-tailed Kite, the parts in brackets are omitted.

There is a layout problem that should have been corrected. The text

for at least 18 species starts on the right page with bold photographs of the previous species (often a very similar one) on the left page. For example, the text for Swainson's Hawk is on page 63, yet on the opposite page there are distracting photographs of Short-tailed Hawks. This awkward arrangement is not found in other field guides.

Detailed captions containing extremely valuable information accompany each of the 375 photographs and describe identifying marks, plumage and age, sex, morph, and subspecies. However, the photograph of the Northern Goshawk at the top of page 40 is a subadult, not an adult, because it clearly shows retained juvenile tail feathers and secondaries. The bird at the top left of page 140 labelled a juvenile male Taiga Merlin is an adult male. The Black Merlin on page 140 is probably a melanistic Taiga Merlin if photographed in Texas, or a location error. For a discussion of Black Merlins, see the August 1994 issue of *Ontario Birds* 12: 74-80. Captions on pages 153 and 195 say the juvenile Peale's Peregrine Falcon was photographed in New York State. I wonder if this is an error or a released bird or a very dark *anatum*, because Peale's is a West Coast subspecies.

The text on page 136 says that Merlins do not hover when in fact I have occasionally seen Taiga Merlins hovering on the breeding grounds. The behaviour of many species is often quite different on the nesting grounds than on migration. Page 82 says that typical Eastern Red-tailed Hawks have white throats. However, many northern Red-tails in the East

of the proposed subspecies *abieticola* have dark throats like Western Red-tails. This form breeds across Canada from Nova Scotia to Alberta and is intermediate between typical Eastern and Western Red-tails. Heavily pigmented individuals of *abieticola* are often called Western Red-tailed Hawks in the East. See discussion of this form under Eastern Red-tailed Hawk in *Ontario Birds* 11: 23-29.

Does the Swainson's Hawk, unlike other North American buteos, have a distinct Basic I plumage as stated on page 63? The existence of a first basic plumage in this species is disputed by Palmer (1988) in the *Handbook of North American Birds*. Birds labelled as Basic I on pages 66, 71 and 190 may represent juveniles undergoing a delayed or protracted molt to adult plumage. Some molt cycles are individually variable.

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The last quarter of the book consists of two sections. The first section (14 pages) treats nine vagrants like the White-tailed Eagle, but also includes the Hawaiian Hawk which is unique to the islands but never a vagrant to the mainland. The second section (28 pages) effectively treats 14 "Raptor Identification Problems" like Cooper's versus Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Golden versus non-adult Bald Eagle, reusing selected photographs from the main species' accounts with different captions.

If you are a hawkwatcher you probably already own this guide. Once again, Brian Wheeler and Bill Clark have collaborated to produce their second superb hawk guide, the finest pictorial guide ever on diurnal raptors.

PUBLICATION NOTICE

The Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF), a nonprofit organization not to be confused with the federal Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) agency, has recently published eight national recovery plans for eight species of birds: Whooping Crane, Harlequin Duck, Ferruginous Hawk, Roseate Tern, Marbled Murrelet, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Loggerhead Shrike and Baird's Sparrow.

These reports contain invaluable information such as range, breeding details and causes of decline, as well as government policy and recovery plans to save each species from extirpation in Canada. Artwork in each Recovery Plan is by Christine Kerrigan, OFO member and art consultant to *Ontario Birds*.

Recovery Plans are available free of charge by writing to the Canadian Wildlife Federation, 2740 Queensview Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2B 1A2.