

Articles

Breeding Birds of Ontario: Nidology and Distribution Volume 1: Nonpasserines (First Revision - Part B: Vultures to Phalaropes)

by

George K. Peck and Ross D. James

Breeding Bird Species

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

71 nests representing 24 provincial regions. Nest records have more than doubled, primarily in southern Ontario, and suggest that the northward expansion of this species is continuing. Recent new nesting regions were Dufferin (1989), Essex (1988), Grenville (1991), Parry Sound (1992), Peterborough (1986), and Wellington (1992).

Several recent nests have been in or under deserted farm buildings.

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, at least 36 days.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*

893 nests representing 25 provincial regions. The huge increase in nest records was due primarily to the submission of 392 cards from the Lindsay district of the Ministry of Natural Resources. These cards covered the years from 1978-86 and were mainly from the counties of Northumberland, Peterborough and Victoria.

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

489 (837 nests) representing 21 provincial regions. Many records have come in from the Lake of the Woods and Red Lake/Lac Seul areas of Kenora District, where the species currently appears to be doing well. Early nest records have been obtained from Bruce (1937), Lambton (1947), and Nipissing (1929). A recent first nesting from Algoma (1986), and an active nest in Grey (1992) have been reported.

Outside diameters of 22 nests ranged from 0.8 to 3 m (2.5 to 10 ft), with 11 averaging 1.5 to 1.9 m (5 to 6.3 ft); inside diameters of 16 nests ranged from 0.5 to 1.2 m (1.5 to 4 ft), with 8 averaging 0.9 to 1.1 m (3 to 3.7 ft); outside depths of 19 nests ranged from 0.5 to 3 m (1.5 to 10 ft), with 9 averaging 0.9 to 1.2 m (3 to 4 ft). Nest measurements varied from year to year depending on the extent of additions and subtractions over the period of use.

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, at least 36 days.

EGG DATES 27 nests, 26 February to 28 June (28 dates); 14 nests, 3 April to 28 April.

Breeding Distribution

In southwestern Ontario, along Lake Erie in Essex, Kent, Elgin, and Haldimand-Norfolk, the Bald Eagle had almost disappeared in the 1960s and 1970s. Only a few scattered pairs nested, mostly unsuccessfully, in Elgin, Essex and Kent during the 1970s, and by 1980 only three non-producing pairs remained in the area. Nest reports from Grey in the 1960s (Goodwin 1966; D. Linn, pers. comm.) were the only other breeding evidence from southern Ontario at this time. Since 1980, due to re-establishment efforts by the OMNR and others, the species is apparently making a slow recovery. By 1992, 11 nests produced 15 young in southern Ontario.

Northern Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*

252 nests representing 39 provincial regions. Nest records have been added from Haldimand-Norfolk (1988), Shagamu River in Kenora (1990), Lanark (historical - 1888), Manitoulin (1986), Muskoka (1954), Parry Sound (1985 - not 1986 as in Appendix A), Renfrew (1984), and south of Gogama in Sudbury (1992).

A 1992 nest from Winisk, Kenora District, had an outside diameter of 25.4 cm (10 inches) and an inside diameter of 15.2 cm (6 inches).



Figure 1: Adult Osprey at nest with small young. Unlike the Bald Eagle and some other raptors, the Osprey has shown continuous breeding success in Ontario. Photo by G.K. Peck.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*

79 nests representing 23 provincial regions. A 1977 nest record erroneously designated as Halton, was actually in Wellington. New nest records have been received from Brant (1989), Moosonee in Cochrane (1987), Elgin (1984), and Haldimand-Norfolk (1986). An early (1938) nest record from Keezhik Lake, Kenora District has come to light.

A rather small nest had an outside diameter of 40.6 cm (16 inches); inside diameter, 14 cm (5.5 inches); outside depth, 24.1 cm (9.5 inches); inside depth, 7 cm (2.8 inches).

EGGS 44 nests with 3 to 6 eggs; **3E** (5N), **4E** (16N), **5E** (22N), **6E** (1N)

Average clutch range 4 to 5 eggs (38 nests).

EGG DATES 43 nests, 30 April to 30 June (49 dates); 21 nests, 30 May to 8 June.

Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*

109 nests representing 29 provincial regions. Early nest records from Elgin (1950), and Northumberland (1902) have been acquired, as well as more recent nests in Haldimand-Norfolk (1985), Nipissing (1991), Oxford (1983), Victoria (1981), and Waterloo (1985).

Outside diameters of 4 nests ranged from 48.3 to 76 cm (19 to 29.9 inches); inside diameters of 5 nests ranged from 15.2 to 40.5 cm (6 to 16 inches); outside depths of 2 nests were 20.3 and 27.9 cm (8 and 11 inches); inside depths of 3 nests ranged from almost flat to 6.4 cm (2.5 inches).

EGGS 62 nests with 2 to 7 eggs; **2E** (3N), **3E** (22N), **4E** (19N), **5E** (17N), **7E** (1N).

Average clutch range 3 to 4 eggs (41 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, ca 38 days.

EGG DATES 66 nests, 19 April to 8 July (80 dates); 33 nests, 15 May to 31 May.

Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*

148 nests representing 29 provincial regions. In 1988 a nest in Haldimand-Norfolk, a nest record in Oxford (1992), plus other recent nests (see Appendix A, Volume 2, Peck and James 1987) indicate that this species continues to nest in southern Ontario despite decimation of many forested areas. Nest numbers have more than tripled in the past decade.

Outside diameters of 12 nests ranged from 43 to 106.5 cm (17 to 42 inches); inside diameters of 4 nests ranged from 23 to 53.5 cm (9 to 21 inches); outside depths of 5 nests ranged from 20 to 70 cm (7.9 to 27.6 inches); inside depths of 2 nests were both 7.6 cm (3 inches).

EGGS 61 nests with 1 to 5 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (10N), 3E (40N), 4E (10N), 5E (1N).

Average clutch range 3 eggs (40 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, at least 36 days.

EGG DATES 43 nests, 1 April to 10 June (51 dates); 22 nests, 25 April to 6 May.

Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*

389 nests representing 34 provincial regions. Old nest records have been added from Elgin (pre-1936), Essex (pre-1936), Haliburton (1941), Hastings (1912), Prescott (1966), and Timiskaming (1956). Recent nests were reported from Haldimand-Norfolk (1985), Manitoulin (1989), and Nipissing (1990).

Broad-winged Hawk, *Buteo platypterus*

188 nests representing 33 provincial regions. Additional nest records have been acquired from Elgin (1984) and Haldimand-Norfolk (1976) in southwestern Ontario where this hawk is not a common breeding species.

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*

1030 nests representing 42 provincial regions. Recently nests have been reported from Haliburton (1989), and near Gogama in Sudbury (1987).

Rough-legged Hawk, *Buteo lagopus*

6 nests representing 1 provincial region.

One nest had an outside diameter of 65 cm (26 inches); inside diameter, 25 cm (9.8 inches); outside depth, 50 cm (19.7 inches); inside depth, 3 cm (1.2 inches).

Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*

8 nests representing 1 provincial region. In 1981 at a new site near Kiruna Lake, Kenora, 2 unoccupied nests were found, near each other on a rock face. The eighth provincial record was at Sutton Gorge, Kenora in 1991, where the site has been at least intermittently occupied since the 1950s.

Three nests had outside diameters ranging from 150 to 200 cm (59 to 78.7 inches); outside depths, 30 to 300 cm (11.8 to 118 inches).

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*

341 nests representing 41 provincial regions. Recently added nesting regions were Bruce (1982) and Waterloo (1985).

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*

81 nests representing 11 provincial regions. Nests have been reported from Ekwan Point in Kenora (1990), north of Sudbury in Sudbury District (1984), and near Gogama also in Sudbury (1991).

Outside diameters of 5 nests ranged from 30.5 to 89 cm (12 to 35 inches); outside depths of 4 nests, 12.5 to 30 cm (4.9 to 11.8 inches); inside diameters of 2 nests were 25 to 26.7 cm (9.8 to 10.5 inches); inside depths of 2 nests were 3.8 and 5 cm (1.5 and 2 inches).

EGGS 39 nests with 1 to 5 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (1N), 3E (8N), 4E (14N), 5E (14N).

Average clutch range 4 to 5 eggs (28 nests).

EGG DATES 30 nests, 16 May to 5 July (33 dates); 15 nests, 30 May to 15 June.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*

66 nests representing 13 provincial regions. Recently more historic breeding and active nest records have come to light. Nests were at Eugenia Falls (1940) and Kimberley (1930) in Grey; Diamond Lake (1957) in Hastings; South Lake (1938) in Leeds; Elk Lake (1936) in Muskoka; Hogan Lake (1910) in Nipissing; Clear Lake (1937) in Renfrew; and the earliest provincial nest was at St. Ignace Island (1849) in Thunder Bay. New regional breeding records without nest data were from Bon Echo Lake in Lennox and Addington and from Scarborough Bluffs in York.

All nests were on cliffs except the 1983 nest of a released pair at Arnprior in Renfrew, which was on a church tower.

EGGS 35 nests with 2 to 5 eggs; 2E (7N), 3E (8N), 4E (18N), 5E (2N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (18 nests).

EGG DATES 29 nests, 29 April to 12 June (33 dates); 15 nests, 1 May to 20 May.

Gray Partridge, *Perdix perdix*

18 nests representing 9 provincial regions. Old nest records have been obtained from Glengarry (1958) and Wellington (1960).

Willow Ptarmigan, *Lagopus lagopus*

30 nests representing 1 provincial region. In 1990, 2 nests were found near the mouth of the Little Shagamu River, Kenora, and in 1991 near the mouth of the Brant River, Kenora, 6 nests were found. EGGs 30 nests with 1 to 12 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (2N), 4E (2N), 5E (2N), 6E (3N), 7E (6N), 8E (6N), 9E (5N), 11E (1N), 12E (1N).

Average clutch range 7 to 9 eggs (17 nests).

EGG DATES 30 nests, 8 June to 17 July (37 dates); 15 nests, 26 June to 14 July.

Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa umbellus*

344 nests representing 45 provincial regions. In Appendix A, Volume 2, we stated that our breeding record for Prescott County was an error. We now have a 1966 nest record from Prescott.

Sharp-tailed Grouse, *Tympanuchus phasianellus*

2 nests representing 2 provincial regions. An adult with 6 young at Winisk, Kenora (1984), was the first breeding record for the north coast (Weir 1984), and other northern breeding records (see Appendix A) have been noted. The Twin Falls record in Appendix A was on the Abitibi River and not the Albany. A recent breeding record (adult with 8 young) was reported in 1993 from Gore Bay, Manitoulin (Bailey, pers. comm.).

Wild Turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*

11 nests representing 5 provincial regions. A 1972 nest record from Simcoe County, and 7 nests from Haldimand-Norfolk (1984), have been added. All these nests are from released birds, which in a few areas are reported to be currently expanding.

EGGS 8 nests, 10 to 14 eggs; 10E (1N), 12E (3N), 13E (1N), 14E (3N).

EGG DATES 9 nests, 7 May to 11 August.

Northern Bobwhite, *Colinus virginianus*

15 nests representing 4 provincial regions. Breeding records have been reported from Haldimand-Norfolk (1972), and Middlesex (1986).

Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

4 nests representing 4 provincial regions. On 29 May 1982 the fourth Ontario nest, containing 6 eggs, was found near Richmond, Ottawa-Carleton. The nest was located in a fen and situated in a clump of dried grasses.

EGG DATES 4 nests, 29 May to 30 June.

King Rail, *Rallus elegans*

14 nests representing 6 provincial regions. An early nest record from Middlesex (1942), and a breeding record from Grey (1987) have been obtained.

Virginia Rail, *Rallus limicola*

213 nests representing 28 provincial regions. The Lennox & Addington and Renfrew records reported in Appendix A were breeding records. A nest record has been added from Waterloo (1986).

Sora, *Porzana carolina*

250 nests representing 31 provincial regions. Nest records from Bruce (1984) and Welland (1962) have been added.

More incubation periods (2 nests of ca 20 days, 1 of at least 19 days) have been reported. Because incubation commences before clutch completion, many erroneous periods have been reported in the literature for this species (Nice 1954).

Common Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus*

491 nests representing 25 provincial regions. An early (1938) nest record for Bruce County, and a 1962 nest in Welland County have been added for this southern Ontario breeding species.

American Coot, *Fulica americana*

451 (462 nests) representing 19 provincial regions. The nesting record for Oxford County referred to in Appendix A was actually a breeding record. Bruce (1938), Essex (1982), and Welland (1969) are



Figure 2: Virginia Rail at nest in marsh near Lake St. Clair, Kent County, in extreme southwestern Ontario. Photo by G.K. Peck.

recently added nest records.

The largest egg clutches (12 to 18 eggs) may be the product of 2 or more females.

Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis*

8 nests representing 3 provincial regions. In the past decade a nest near Cochrane in Cochrane District (1983), 2 nests near Winisk in Kenora (1992), and a nest near Sandfield in Manitoulin District (1982) have been added to the ONRS files. Breeding records from Spohn Tp. in Rainy River (1989), Russell (1988), Nakina in Thunder Bay (1992), and Waterloo (1992) have been received. A report, as yet not in ONRS files, of nesting and breeding in southern Algoma in 1978-9 (Tebbel and Ankeny 1982), has been published.

One nest was on a mat of vegetation over a floating bog, another was raised 12.7 cm (5 inches) above water, and a third was in leatherleaf above water with a depth of 15.2 to 30.5 cm (6 to 12 inches). One nest was described as very flat. Outside diameter of 1 nest was 122 cm (48 inches); inside diameter, 76 cm (29.9 inches); outside depth, 30 cm (11.8 inches); inside depth, 29 cm (11.4 inches). EGG 6 nests, each with 2 eggs.

EGG DATES 7 nests, 7 May to 12 June.

American Golden-Plover (Lesser Golden-Plover), *Pluvialis dominica*

6 nests representing 1 provincial region. Since 1978 there have been 4 more nests found near Radar Site 415, Polar Bear Provincial Park, Kenora. The nests were on dry, heath/lichen tundra, and each contained 4 eggs.

Inside diameters of 5 nests ranged from 10 to 12.5 cm (3.9 to 4.9 inches); inside depths of 3 nests ranged from 4 to 5 cm (1.6 to 2 inches).

EGG DATES 6 nests, 23 June to 8 July.

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*

47 nests representing 2 provincial regions and an island in James Bay (NWT). An historical record (1860) of a nest at Moosonee, Cochrane District (Todd 1963) has come to light, and nests were recently found near the mouths of the Brant (1991) and Shagamu (1990) Rivers, both in Kenora District. Since nest records have more than doubled, additional new data is summarized below.

Outside diameters of 5 nests ranged from 9 to 11 cm (3.5 to 4.3 inches); inside diameters of 9 nests ranged from 6.5 to 9.9 cm (2.6 to 3.9 inches); inside depth of 1 nest was 1 cm (0.4 inches).

EGGS 40 nests, 1 to 4 eggs; 1E (1N), 2E (1N), 3E (6N), 4E (32N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (32 nests).

EGG DATES 43 nests, 4 June to 30 July (57 dates); 22 nests, 22 June to 1 July.

Breeding Distribution

Although it was stated in Volume 1 (Peck and James 1983) that breeding was first substantiated in 1947 and that the first nests were found in 1948, nests were actually found at the mouth of the Moose River (1860), at Fort Severn (1940), Cockispenny Point (1942), at the mouth of the Kabiskaubakau River (1942), and Big Piskwamish Point (1947).

Piping Plover, *Charadrius melodus*

120 (121 nests) representing 12 provincial regions. An early (1934) nest record from Wentworth has been added. No nests have been reported since 1987 when 2 nests each with 4 eggs and 2 empty scrapes were located on Sable Island, Lake of the Woods, Rainy River District.

Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferus*

1356 nests representing 48 provincial regions. New nests along our provincial coasts were at Longridge Point in Cochrane (1991), and at Ekwan Point (1990) and the mouth of the Shagamu River (1990), both in Kenora.

Lesser Yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes*

3 nests representing 1 provincial region. The first Ontario nest (1938) has now been discredited (James 1992), and the actual first nest is the one found in 1990 at the mouth of the Shagamu River, Kenora. In 1992, the second and third provincial nests were found near Winisk, Kenora. Thus all records, including the 1940 breeding record (collection of flightless young) at Fort Severn in Kenora, are near the Hudson Bay coast.

The 3 nests were in open black spruce ridge areas with a lichen ground cover. All nests were depressions in the lichen, and 1 was at the base of a small tamarack, and another at the base of a burnt spruce. Two of the nests were in a recent burn.

EGGS 3 nests, each with 4 eggs.

EGG DATES 3 nests, 9 June, 9 June, 23 June.

Spotted Sandpiper, *Actitis macularia*

749 nests representing 46 provincial regions. Nests were reported from the Little Abitibi River in Cochrane (1985), and the mouth of the Shagamu River in Kenora (1990).

Upland Sandpiper, *Bartamia longicauda*

62 nests representing 20 provincial regions.

EGGS 55 nests with 1 to 4 eggs; 1E (1N), 2E (2N), 3E (7N), 4E (45N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (45 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 3 nests: 1 of 20 days, 1 of 21 days, 1 of at least 21 days.

Eggs were laid at daily intervals.

EGG DATES 53 nests, 7 May to 9 July (72 dates); 26 nests, 28 May to 8 June.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*

10 nests representing 1 provincial region. In 1990, 3 nests were found just east of the mouth of the Little Shagamu River, Kenora.

Nests were depressions on the ground, usually on hummocks and in grasses or moss. Nest materials, if any, were of dead sedge stalks and coarse grasses. Nests were unlined or were sparsely lined with fine grass stems and a few leaves.

EGGS 9 nests with 2 to 4 eggs; 2E (2N), 3E (2N), 4E (5N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (5 nests).

EGG DATES 10 nests, 8 June to 17 July (13 dates); 5 nests, 26 June to 28 June.

Hudsonian Godwit, *Limosa haemastica*

1 nest representing 1 provincial region. On 10 June 1992 the first Ontario nest containing 1 egg was found and photographed near Winisk, Kenora (55° 28'N & 85° 46'W) by G. Moraal during a MNR goose survey.

The nest was located in a wet, grassy meadow with a few tamarack trees. The nest was a circular depression in moss and grass.

Semipalmated Sandpiper, *Calidris pusilla*

16 nests representing 1 provincial region. A nest was found on Cape Henrietta Maria in 1985, and 3 others near the mouth of the Brant River in 1991, in Kenora District.

EGGS 16 nests with 3 to 4 eggs; 3E (3N), **4E** (13N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (13 nests).

EGG DATES 16 nests, 12 June to 2 July (19 dates); 8 nests, 24 June to 29 June.

Least Sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla*

9 nests representing 1 provincial region. A nest was found near the mouth of the Brant River, Kenora, in 1991.

EGGS 9 nests with 3 to 4 eggs; 3E (3N), **4E** (6N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (6 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, 19 days.

EGG DATES 9 nests, 19 June to 21 July (10 dates); 5 nests, 26 June to 1 July.

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*

10 nests representing 1 provincial region. Recent nests were on the coast just southwest of East Pen Island, and near the mouth of the Brant River, both in Kenora.

Outside diameter of 1 nest was 9 cm (3.5 inches), and it was situated on a sedge hummock that had a diameter of 40 cm (15.7 inches).

EGGS 8 nests with 2 to 5 eggs; **2E** (1N), **4E** (6N), **5E** (1N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (6 nests).

The 5 egg clutch was most unusual (Cramp and Simmons 1983), and may or may not have been the product of more than 1 female; it was being incubated.

EGG DATES 9 nests, 13 June to 21 July (13 dates); 5 nests, 25 June to 27 June.

Stilt Sandpiper, *Calidris himantopus*

An undocumented first nest of this species found by R.I.G. Morrison on 20 June 1976 near radar site 415, Kenora District, has been reported (Cadman *et al.* 1987). Confirming detailed data of this record has been requested by the ONRS, but has yet to be received.

Short-billed Dowitcher, *Limnodromus griseus*

1 nest representing 1 provincial region. On 10 June 1992 the first Ontario nest containing 4 eggs was found and photographed near Winisk, Kenora (55° 27'N & 85° 47'W) by G.J. Soulliere during a MNR goose survey (see page 109).

The nest was in a wet, open fen between spruce ridges, and was placed on a sedge hummock having a height of 0.3 m (1 ft). The nest was formed entirely of sedge stalks.

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*

88 nests representing 29 provincial regions. Recent new nestings were reported from Huron (1989), north of Ekwan Point in Kenora (1990), and near Winisk in Kenora (1992).

Outside diameters of 3 nests ranged from 12 to 15.2 cm (4.7 to 6 inches); inside diameters of 7 nests ranged from 9 to 13.5 cm (3.5 to 5.3 inches); outside depth of 1 nest was 5 cm (2 inches); and inside depths of 4 nests ranged from 3 to 7.6 cm (1.2 to 3 inches).

EGGS 81 nests with 1 to 4 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (2N), 3E (7N), **4E** (70N).

Average clutch range 4 eggs (70 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 1 nest, 19 days.

EGG DATES 80 nests, 24 April to 26 July (91 dates); 40 nests, 22 May to 14 June. All late egg dates (July) were from northern Ontario nests.

American Woodcock, *Scolopax minor*

290 nests representing 41 provincial regions. The most northerly Ontario nest was found in 1981 at Little Abitibi Lake, Cochrane (49° 24'N & 80° 33'W). Other nest additions were from Manitoulin (1988) and Muskoka (1983).

Outside diameters of 3 nests ranged from 10 to 14 cm (3.9 to 5.5 inches); inside diameter of 1 nest was 10 cm (3.9 inches); and inside depth of 1 nest was 2 cm (0.8 inches).

INCUBATION PERIOD 3 nests: 1 of at least 20 days, 2 ca 20 to 21 days. Eggs were laid at daily intervals.

Wilson's Phalarope, *Phalaropus tricolor*

56 nests representing 11 provincial regions. Nest numbers have more than tripled in the decade, due in large part to the delayed contribution in 1984 of 32 cards by V.L. Sinclair from North Point and Big Piskwamish Point, Cochrane, covering the years 1976-7.

EGGS 50 nests with 1 to 5 eggs; 1E (1N), 3E (7N), 4E (42N), 5E (1N).

The 5 egg clutch is highly unusual.

Average clutch range 4 eggs (42 nests).

EGG DATES 51 nests, 18 May to 4 July (67 dates); 25 nests, 4 June to 14 June. Eggs were usually laid at daily intervals.

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*

7 nests representing 1 provincial region. Nests found at Radar Site 415 (1984) and on Cape Henrietta Maria (1985) (see Appendix A) in Kenora, provided some of the following information.

Inside diameter of 1 nest was 7 cm (2.8 inches); inside depth, 3.5 cm (1.4 inches).

EGGS 7 nests, each with 4 eggs.

EGG DATES 7 nests, 22 June to 4 July (10 dates).



Figure 3: A Short-billed Dowitcher incubating four eggs. The first provincial nest of this species was located near Hudson Bay, Kenora District, in 1992. Photo by G.K. Peck.

Literature cited

Note: The applicable nomenclature changes set out in the Thirty-ninth Supplement of the AOU Check-list (A.O.U. 1993) have been incorporated.

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- George K. Peck, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6.
- Ross D. James, Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6.

Some Notes on the Breeding Birds of Lake Nipigon, Thunder Bay District, Ontario

by

Nicholas G. Escott and Susan Bryan

Little is known about the birds that nest on Lake Nipigon, its islands and shores. The only systematic study was done by L.L. Snyder in the summers of 1923 and 1924 (Snyder 1928). The present study was undertaken, in part, to obtain data for the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program.

Six volunteer birders chartered a diesel cruiser out of Orient Bay for a five-day period in each of two consecutive summers: 16-21 June 1991 and 5-10 July 1992. During these two trips we circumnavigated the lake, visited the islands in the centre of the lake, and checked all the major bays and rivermouths.

Much of our time was spent on board, and the water, shores and islands were constantly scanned with binoculars. Nesting islands and other interesting sites, such as rivermouths and sand beaches, were approached more closely by outboard motor boats, permitting landing in many of these areas.

We recorded 107 species of birds during our two trips; this compares to 97 species found by Snyder during his two summers on the lake. The status of many of these species remains unchanged. Some species, however, appear to have changed in abundance. Several of these species are discussed in the following