

Book Reviews

1998 Peterborough County Natural History Summary. 1999. By *Peter S. Burke, Colin D. Jones, Jennifer M. Line, Michael J. Oldham and Peter J. Sorrill.* Peterborough Field Naturalists, Natural Heritage Information Centre, and Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. Softcover, 219 pages. \$10. (ISBN 0-7778-8506-7)

This annual summary of local natural history observations is similar to those previously produced in the province for Durham Regional Municipality and Victoria County. However, this volume establishes a new level of excellence for the "genre" in Ontario. The authors/compilers brought exceptional competence to their various subjects: Birds (Peter Burke), Mammals (Jennifer Line), Amphibians and Reptiles (Mike Oldham), Butterflies (Colin Jones), Dragonflies and Damselflies (Colin Jones), and Vascular Plants (Mike Oldham and Peter Sorrill). Each section (except for plants) presents compiled observations for 1998 and relates the sightings to the known status of each species for Peterborough County. The Checklist of Vascular Plants in this volume is the first ever compiled for the county. The participation and resources of the Peterborough Field Naturalists, the Natural Heritage Information Centre (MNR), and Trent University facilitated a scope

(e.g., computer-generated occurrence maps) not previously attained for this type of compilation in Ontario. The text was also enhanced by the inclusion of black and white drawings and photographs by Madeline Austen, Peter Burke, Kim Caldwell, Mike Oldham, Michael Runtz and Don Ryckman. Finally, the authors deserve praise for their rapid production of the summary (March, 1999).

I found all the sections of this exceptional work to be of high quality. My suggestions for improvement in future issues of the summary are relatively minor. The maps of Counties and Townships (page 85) and Water Bodies (page 86) presented in the chapter on Amphibians and Reptiles would have been useful references for all sections of the book if they had been included in the Introduction. A map indicating the southern boundary of the Canadian Shield in Peterborough County (again in the Introduction) would have assisted in the interpretation of the various floral and faunal records.

In reviewing this book for *Ontario Birds*, I paid particular attention to the section on birds compiled by Peter Burke. I found it to be an informed, well written and interesting appraisal of the 1998 (and overall) status of birds in Peterborough County. Burke is to be particularly commended for his

attention to age, plumage and subspecies in the accounts. I detected only rare cases of apparently missing data (e.g., no dates provided for the first spring reports of Red-shouldered Hawk and Blackburnian Warbler), and typographical errors (e.g., Whip-poor-will, *not* Whip-Poor-Will; *Carpodacus not Cardopacus*; and winter of 1997-98 *not* 1998-99, in the Cedar Waxwing account).

This publication is an important contribution to our knowledge of

the flora and fauna of Peterborough County and Ontario. Such a summary serves as a benchmark to document future environmental changes through impacts such as global warming, acid precipitation and exotic species. Ontario birders will find this natural history summary to be an interesting and informative reference, inviting comparisons with their home areas. It is to be hoped that it may inspire other jurisdictions to develop similar compilations.

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A Birder's Guide to Point Pelee (and Surrounding Region). 1999.

By *Tom Hince*. Wild Rose Guest House, Wheatley, Ontario. Softcover, 189 pages. \$24.95. (ISBN 0-9685310-0-8)

Birders accustomed to using birdfinding guides in the Lane/ABA series will recognize a familiar format in this new guide to birding at Point Pelee National Park and nearby areas. The book features a wire coil binding which allows it to lie flat when in use, and an extended backcover which serves as a "bookmark". There are 46 attractive black and white photographs of birds and birding locations, by Jim Flynn, Tom Hince, Ethan Meleg and Paul Pratt, plus 16 maps providing excellent details for most areas discussed.

The Introduction includes helpful information concerning Pelee's

regional context, habitats, best birding times, accommodation options, weather, hazards, and birding pitfalls. The first section under "Birding Areas" is devoted to detailed descriptions of birding locations and likely species to be found within Point Pelee National Park. The next section contains such information for "birding sites within 15 minutes" of the park (e.g., Hillman Marsh, Wheatley Harbour, and Kopegaron Woods), followed by similar descriptions for sites "within 1 hour" of Pelee (e.g., Ojibway Park complex, Tremblay Beach Conservation Area, and Comber). All of these descriptions include clear directions for locating the sites, keyed to the numerous maps provided. A final section has brief introductions to areas "farther afield" that are "often linked with a visit" to Point Pelee (e.g., Pelee Island, Rondeau Provincial Park,

and Algonquin Provincial Park). Briefly annotated lists of amphibians and reptiles, and mammals for the sites in Essex County described in the book are also included. An extensive list of web sites pertaining to the region is another valuable feature.

An appendix titled "Birds of Particular Interest" provides "brief narratives on the status, local distribution and habits of selected species and groups of birds that occur in the region". This feature will be invaluable for the many visiting birders with a list of "wanted" species. Another helpful aspect is a bar graph showing the seasonal status and abundance of the 378 bird species recorded for the Point Pelee Birding Area and nearby Essex County.

Tom Hince brings a refreshingly candid writing style to this book. The information and personal insights provided reflect his advanced knowledge as a veteran birder, and more than a decade of employment as a Point Pelee National Park birding expert. Hince acknowledges the contribution of a long list of birders in the development of the book, and particularly Paul Pratt who authored sections on the Ojibway Park complex, Ruscom Shores, and the Detroit River.

I strongly recommend this guide to anyone birding the Point Pelee area, from the first time visitor to the veteran of many years. It provides very helpful information on birding locations and accurate appraisals of the birds likely to be found.

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PUBLICATION NOTICES

Warblers of Ontario. 1999. By *Chris G. Earley*. Point Pelee Nature Series, Lithosphere Press, Guelph, Ontario. Softcover, 96 pages. \$7.00 (ISBN 0-920345-34-4)

This attractive, informative, and very inexpensive little book (pocket-sized for easy use in the field) was commissioned by The Friends of Point Pelee. It is an excellent guide to the identification of Ontario's warblers, featuring superb colour photographs by several well known photographers (e.g., Jim Flynn, Robert McCaw and Jim Richards). For each of Ontario's 35 regularly occurring warblers, the book provides up to seven photographs illustrating plumages by age, sex, and season, and a summary of key field marks. A section on an additional ten "vagrants and stragglers" provides single photographs and brief comments on their status. At the end of the book, groups of photographs and tables of field marks are presented to illustrate similar looking warblers in potentially "confusing" fall plumage.

Finally, photos of adult males in spring for the 35 regular warbler species are presented in a collage for direct comparison.

Special features include: Chris Earley's commendable selection of quotes from "earlier writings on warbler behaviour and identification", which provide dramatic and richly descriptive language rarely seen today; "nature notes" concerning the behaviour and ecology of each species; and a bar graph on the seasonal status of warblers at Point Pelee National Park. The top corners of pages are coloured to correspond with the throat colour of adult spring males, to help beginners locate them in the book for comparison purposes.

I strongly recommend this book to all Ontario birders with an interest in our beautiful warblers. Earley has created a well written, thoroughly researched, and effectively organized field guide. And The Friends of Point Pelee are to be congratulated for producing this valuable book, and wisely making it available to a large audience at such a low price. *Ron Tozer*

Mushrooms of Ontario and Eastern Canada. 1999. By *George Barron*. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta. Softcover, 336 pages. \$26.95. (ISBN 1-55105-199-0)

In this easy to use and attractive new guide, George Barron (retired University of Guelph mycologist) describes and illustrates 609 species of fungi that are "widespread, common or of striking appearance" in north-eastern North America. The book features 875 colour photographs. To identify a mushroom, the reader may first place it in one of nine groups (Slime Moulds, Sac Fungi, Puffballs and friends, Bracket Fungi, Jelly Fungi, Coral Fungi, Tooth Fungi, Boletes, or Gill Fungi), utilizing a pictorial key featuring four photographs in each group, showing the range of fungi types it contains. Once the correct group has been determined, identification to genus (and often species) can be made by leafing through the illustrations of species in the group, or through use of dichotomous keys to genera.

While dealing primarily with identification, this guide also provides fascinating information on the life history, ecology, and edibility of the mushrooms. Barron writes well in a style that is easily understood by the "non-expert" in this field. This book is highly recommended to Ontario birders wanting to know more about those colourful mushrooms that we all see in our birding travels. *Ron Tozer*