

librarians at the ROM for access to the journals, and particularly to Charlotte Goodwin for a copy of relevant material. The figure was prepared with the assistance of Brian Boyle of the Photography Department of the museum.

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Notes

Atlantic Puffin: third Ontario record

by
Bruce M. Di Labio

On 14 October 1994, while birding at the Moses-Saunders Power Dam at Cornwall, Ontario, I observed a juvenile Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), from the observation deck on the American side of the St. Lawrence River. I first located the bird at approximately 1400 h, mid-way across the headpond above the power dam, sleeping and swimming about, slowly drifting towards the American side of the dam. I observed the bird for over two hours and it was apparent that it was in a

weakened condition. Despite the calm waters, the bird's wings were drooped, it never dove, and it spent most of its time floating along the wall of the power dam.

The following day, after a morning of high winds and rain, the puffin was finally discovered again in late afternoon from the Canadian side of the river by a number of observers. Locating a small black and white bird on such a large, open expanse of water, especially during strong winds, is very difficult. On



Figure 1: Juvenile Atlantic Puffin at Cornwall, Ontario, on 16 October 1994.
Photo by Bruce Di Labio.

16 October, the puffin was again observed on the headpond, along the dam (Figure 1). Much to our favour, the weather was calm and visibility was excellent. The bird again appeared weak and was not observed diving, suggesting that it probably had not eaten for quite some time. Late that afternoon, Lee Harper, Chris Traynor and I took a boat onto the headpond. We located the bird, which was easy to approach. It was not frightened by our close proximity and we took a number of photographs. The bird was then captured, but unfortunately died en route to the Wild Bird Care Centre in Nepean, Ontario.

I prepared a study skin of the puffin and donated it to the Canadian Museum of Nature (specimen #96697), and the record has been accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (Pittaway 1995). It was in

an emaciated condition, weighing 248.5 grams with no body fat and an empty stomach. This is a very low weight (see Di Labio and Bouvier 1986).

This individual was observed on the Ontario and New York state sides of the St. Lawrence River. It is the third Atlantic Puffin record for Ontario, and one of the few in New York state away from Long Island (Bull 1974). The first record in Ontario was of a juvenile captured near Westmeath, Renfrew County, on 15 December 1985 (Di Labio and Bouvier 1986), and the second record occurred at Detour Lake, Cochrane District, on 10 December 1991 (Bain 1993). Although a puffin was reportedly taken on the Ottawa River in October 1881 (Lloyd 1923), the specimen apparently was lost. It was neither examined by an ornithological curator nor was its identification

validated under the guidelines governing the OBRC. Thus, the status of the 1881 bird remains hypothetical, leaving the Westmeath bird as the first official record of the Atlantic Puffin in Ontario.

(Editors' Note: The Cochrane District record was mislabelled as the third Ontario record in Bain (1993). Given the unsubstantiated status of the 1881 record, which was not accepted by the OBRC, the Cochrane District record now stands as the second officially accepted record for Ontario.)

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Merlin preys on bat

by
Don Shanahan

At 0950 h on 6 September 1995, Al Boisvert and I were wader-watching at Owen Point in Presqu'île Provincial Park near Brighton. A Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) was flying regular sorties about the area. In one instance, the Merlin flew just south of us over the lake and began pursuing what I first took to be a Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Binocular examination showed the creature to be a small bat (probably *Myotis* sp.) which was fluttering in a disoriented manner some 15 to 20 m over the water.

The Merlin made several short,

casual horizontal swoops at it before striking the bat with its talons. Subsequently, the bat's fluttering became more laboured. After a Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) flew directly past the bat, the Merlin flew forth, grabbed the bat in its talons and flew west towards Gull Island.

Birds comprise more than 90 per cent of the Merlin diet (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Other prey includes insects, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals (de Smet 1984). References to Merlins eating bats aren't common in the literature, but this behaviour was mentioned by Terres (1980),

Cramp (1980), and de Smet (1984). Merlins overwintering in Trinidad are known to prey on bats (French 1991). Dekker (1972) reported a Merlin taking a Little Brown Bat (*M. lucifugus*) in Alberta.

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