

# ONTARIO BIRDS



Ronald Scovell 1999

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# Ontario Field Ornithologists

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Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever-growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), publishes a newsletter (*OFO News*) and a journal (*Ontario Birds*), operates a bird sightings listserv (ONTBIRDS, moderated by Mike Street), hosts field trips throughout Ontario, and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn.

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership rates can be obtained from the address below. All members receive *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*. Please send membership enquiries to: **Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 455, Station R, Toronto, Ontario M4G 4E1**

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## Ontario Birds

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The aim of *Ontario Birds* is to provide a vehicle for documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles and short notes on the status, distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in Ontario, as well as location guides to significant Ontario birdwatching areas, book reviews, and similar material of interest on Ontario birds.

Material submitted for publication should be on computer disk, or type-written (double-spaced). Please follow the style of this issue of *Ontario Birds*. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Submit items for publication to the Editors at the address noted above.

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Cover Illustration: Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)  
by *Ron Scovell*

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## *Letters to the Editors*

### **Gulls Eating Voles**

In response to Gerry Cuccio's letter regarding Ring-billed Gulls eating meadow voles (*Ontario Birds* 17: 1), during the 1960s and 1970s, it was a common sight here to have flocks of Ring-billed Gulls follow the tractor and plow in the fall of the year, snatching earthworms and anything else that might become exposed as the earth was turned. I recall numerous occasions when Ring-billed Gulls would be seen devouring live meadow voles as they scampered along the bare furrows within a few feet of the rear of the plow. These they would swallow whole; other times the gulls took flight with the meadow voles in their beaks and consumed them during flight. The birding was often quite profitable during fall plowing as the occasional Red-tailed Hawk would also join in on the feeding frenzy.

Terry Sprague  
Picton, Ontario

### **Crossbills Eating Ash**

Re: Ron Tozer's note on White-winged Crossbills eating ash (*Ontario Birds* 17: 27-29), we have observed this behaviour as well in Algonquin Park. On 7 March 1999, we were birding the Mew Lake Campground on a cold (-10°C), sunny day. In one of the fire pits, a pair of White-winged Crossbills was pecking in the ashes. We were able to approach them within 2 m, and confirmed they were eating bits of ash. The female lingered longer, presumably eating more ash, before the pair flew off. They seemed quite unperturbed by our presence and left only when it seemed they had their fill of ash and/or charcoal. There were several winter campers at the site, so several fire pits had ash in them. We didn't notice any other "ash eaters", but we only birded the area for about an hour. As many people know, in March there were many crossbills in the Parkway Corridor, likely breeding. It was common to see them eating grit or salt at the side of Highway 60.

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