

ONTARIO BIRDS



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Ontario Field Ornithologists

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*), hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting in the autumn. Current President: Gerry Shemilt, 51 Montessor Drive, North York, Ontario M2P 1Z3.

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 inquiries to: **Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 62014, Burlington Mall Postal Outlet, Burlington, Ontario L7R 4K2.**

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.

If possible, material submitted for publication should be double-spaced and typewritten. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Please submit items for publication to the Editors at the address noted above.

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Cover Illustration: Eastern Screech-Owl
by *Christine Kerrigan*

Letters to the Editors

Gyrfalcons and Snowy Owls

Further to Don Shanahan's "Gyr Falcon harassing a Snowy Owl" (*Ontario Birds* 12: 80-81), I discovered the following reference in my bird literature. Heimo Mikkola (1983) in *Owls of Europe* reported that "a Gyr Falcon has once, at least, killed a Snowy Owl in Europe", citing the source as Meinertzhagen (1959) in *Pirates and Predators: the Piratical and Predatory Habits of Birds*.

Jim Forrester
Barrie, Ontario

Thrush Quiz Opinion

I am writing to comment on the *Catharus* thrush pictured as the Quiz Bird in the April 1994 *Ontario Birds* (12: 40) and the solution in the next issue (12: 83-84). The identification was left as uncertain, between Hermit and Swainson's Thrush, and rightly so. The identification of *Catharus* thrushes is more problematic than most birders realize or acknowledge, particularly when one considers the range of geographical variation.

My experience with several forms of Veery, Swainson's and Hermit Thrush is that the facial markings are diagnostic and consistent. I won't talk about the Veery as Bob Curry convincingly eliminated that species. Swainson's Thrush has dark lores and a buff supraloral stripe, which connects with the similarly coloured eye ring. The Hermit Thrush has paler lores, and a buff or grey supraloral stripe which usually does not connect with the contrastingly

paler eye ring. As well, the eye ring on a Hermit Thrush is thinner and "crisper" than that of the Swainson's Thrush, particularly along the lower eye lid. The eye ring on the Swainson's is wider, but "fuzzier" at the edges than the neat eye ring of the Hermit.

The photo shows a bird with a crisp eye ring that is paler than the pale supraloral stripe. This stripe is also not fully connected to the eye ring. My opinion is that the quiz bird is a Hermit Thrush, not a Swainson's Thrush.

Alvaro Jaramillo
Burnaby, British Columbia

Pileated Eating Dogwood

I was interested to read the note by Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway on a Pileated Woodpecker observed eating Red-osier Dogwood berries (*Ontario Birds* 13: 28-29), and wish to add three similar observations.

I received three different reports of Pileated Woodpeckers eating dogwood berries between 9 and 23 September 1990, in the Thunder Bay area. Several features of these sightings are similar, including the occurrence of this feeding activity in backyards and at cottages, rather than in the deep forest. As with the sighting described in the note, the birds appeared quite tame and preoccupied; one observer thought the bird appeared "drunk".

Nick Escott
Thunder Bay, Ontario