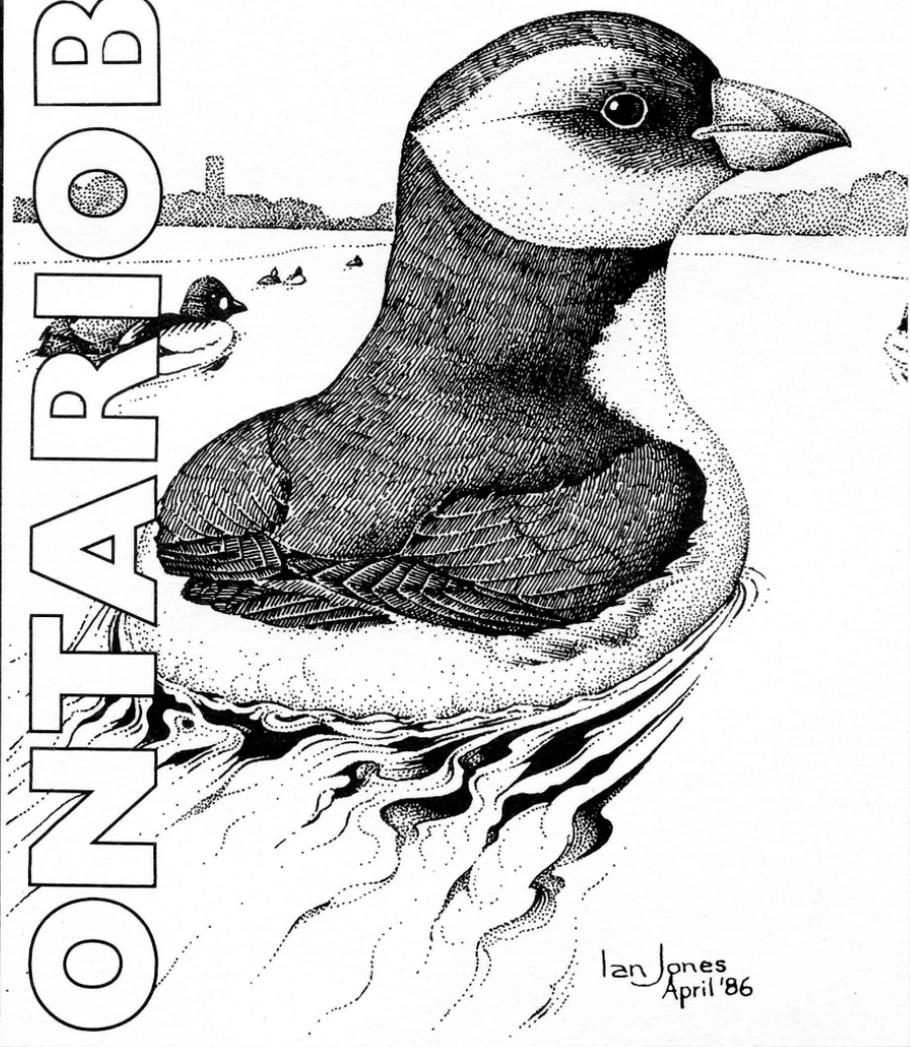


# ONTARIO BIRDS

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Ian Jones  
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## Ontario Birds

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## Editorial Policy

*Ontario Birds* is the journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Its aim is to provide a vehicle for the documentation of the birds of Ontario. We encourage the submission of full length articles or short notes on the status of bird species in Ontario, significant provincial or county distributional records, tips on bird identification, behavioural observations of birds in Ontario, location guides to significant birdwatching areas in Ontario, book reviews and similar

material of interest on Ontario birds. We do not accept submissions dealing with “listing” and we discourage Seasonal Reports of bird sightings as these are covered by *Bird Finding in Canada* and *American Birds*, respectively. Distributional records of species for which the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) requires documentation must be accepted by them before they can be published in *Ontario Birds*.

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Cover Illustration: Atlantic Puffin by *Ian Jones*

## Letters to the Editor

### Unsubstantiated records in the literature

Distributional notes serve two main functions—to summarize and evaluate existing information and to solicit additional information, especially records that are buried in note books. When I have prepared such papers, I have always attempted to compile *all* published and other readily available information, including records that have not been substantiated and those which are clearly false. The purpose of including the latter is to dismiss them so that subsequent compilers will not believe them to be merely overlooked. I include unsubstantiated records as such because I do not think that they can be dismissed outright without further information, though they cannot be considered as valid records either, while such information is lacking. Thus, in a more general treatment of the birds of a particular geographic area, such records would generally be excluded. I also hope that their inclusion will elicit additional details by which others may evaluate the record.

My review of winter records of Swainson's Thrush in Ontario (*Ontario Birds* 3:64-67, 1985) elicited additional details of a 1967 record in London from Professor Emeritus W.R. Jarman, who compiled the count. Prof. Jarman unfortunately interpreted my comment "not questioned by the compiler" to indicate that he

had not questioned the observer of the bird as to its validity, whereas I intended to indicate that he had not questioned the observation in print (and therefore presumably believed it to be valid) in contrast with the St. Thomas records that were categorized as "inconclusive." In fact, as I presumed, he did have the bird checked. It was first reported about 15 December by the late John Huggins, and later confirmed by J.W. Leach, migration secretary of the local naturalists club for 14 years. The bird was last seen on 20 December (the first day of the count period in 1967). I thank Prof. Jarman for putting these details of dates and observers on record and apologize for any inadvertent slight to his reputation implied by the wording in my article.

Martin K. McNicholl  
Port Rowan, Ontario

### Books for the Ontario birder—35 years ago

I was interested in Don Fraser's recommendations listed in "On Building a Balanced Library for the Ontario Birder" (*Ontario Birds* 3:100-104, 1985) because it took me back 35 years!

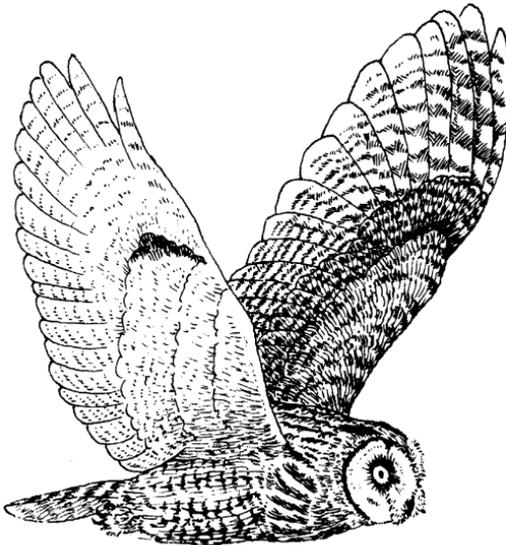
I thereupon engaged in a lengthy research and produced the enclosed copies of my column in Huntsville's *The Forester*, for which I began writing in 1951. Readers may be interested in the changes due to books having become out of print or improved by newcomers.

William C. Mansell  
Mississauga, Ontario

**Ed. Note:** The following excerpt is taken from Mr. Mansell's column of Dec. 6th, 1951 and outlines what he considered at the time to be the requisite books for the beginning Ontario birder:

"The present day beginner has the choice of two books (one of which comes in two volumes) of excellent quality. Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds" revolutionized bird study. Now in it's second revised edition, I prefer it for sentimental reasons, at least. The illustrations are by Peterson himself, Houghton, Mifflin are the publishers; and it retails for \$4.00. Of more recent appearance are the "Audubon Bird Guides" by Richard H. Pough. The two-volume set (Water Birds and Land Birds) are illustrated by Don Eckelberry. They sell for \$3.50 each and are published by Doubleday. Each volume is about the size of Peterson's guide, thus requiring two pockets for field transportation, but the illustrations are superior.

For home reference there are three volumes combining both biographies and excellent color portraits. Gilbert Grosvenor edited the two-volume "Book of Birds" published by the National Geographic Society and illustrated by Allan Brooks. The major North American species (some 700) are covered. "The Natural History of the Birds of Eastern and Central North America," by E.H. Forbush, is not so wide in geographical scope but contains more complete pen sketches. Louis Agassiz Fuertes, Brooks and Peterson are the artists. Fuertes also illustrated "Birds of America," something along the lines of Forbush's work but not so complete. "The Birds of Canada," by P.A. Taverner, falls short in illustrations (Brooks and F.C. Hennessey) and is really more for collectors. Frank M. Chapman's "Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America" is definitely so but a necessary part of any bird library. There are many other worthwhile volumes of less general scope."



*JH*

Short-eared Owl

ARTIST: John Schmelefske