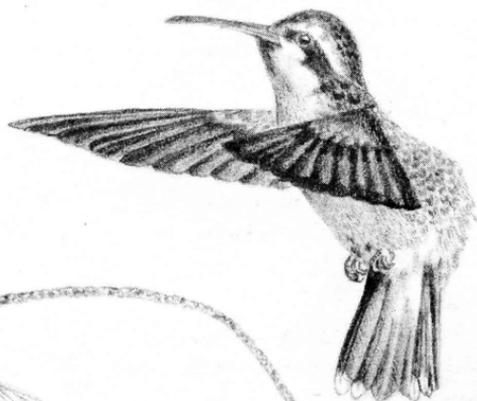


ONTARIO BIRDS

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Ronald Scavell 1990





Reports of rare birds (those for which the OBRC requires documentation—see supplement to *Ontario Birds* 5[3]) should be sent to:

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Ontario Birds

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Material should be double-spaced and typewritten if possible. All submissions are subject to review and editing. Camera-ready galley proofs will be sent to authors only if specifically requested on submission.

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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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Letters to the Editor

Birding ethics

I read with interest a recent letter to *Ontario Birds* regarding the problems of dealing with the impacts of so-called twitchers. I am writing to alert Ontario birders to the problems that undoubtedly lie ahead.

In the United Kingdom, where I cut my birding teeth, we have had to deal with this problem and have done so with some success. The efficient hotline system there means that a rarity of the Broad-billed Hummingbird level will usually result in 2000 birders present on the first weekend day. Probably fewer than 50 visited the Wilson's Plover on its first day in Hamilton recently. However, it is entirely likely that in the not-too-distant future many more birders will be taking part in these exciting ornithological events regardless of what one might think of the scientific value of extralimital records.

There is no doubt that organization is the key. In my experience, however, the responsibility for measures of control do not lie with the hotline system, but rather with the local birding community or the observers who released the information. In the case of the hummer I understand that a number of days elapsed before the news was out. It would not have been difficult to arrange for a

makeshift tape to have been laid out to mark a no-go area, especially as the site was obviously going to be stressed and likely the bird also. The property owners were not adequately prepared for the onslaught by the person(s) who released the news. The hotline's function should be to pass on information regarding what measures have been taken, how to abide by those measures, and where to park, etc., along with the site directions. I can think of only a very few instances where this type of mitigating measure was thought to have been unable to cope with the situation (one was a tattler at the end of a single track road some several miles long!).

Certain photographers can provide a somewhat more persistent problem. They must also abide by the regular boundary marking (which can be a physical feature). The attitude of birders towards those who deliberately flout locally imposed measures is important. If you see anyone unduly pressing the bird or entering the no-go area, tell them to get the hell out and report their actions to all of the birding organizations and insist that they do not use their work in any publications. Back in the UK the physical well-being of any photographer who chased a rarity off would be in serious doubt!

The British birding community has long since left behind the anti-

twitching letters, recriminations, and arguments and replaced them with sound organization and some forethought; we need to do the same. The British experience shows that in many situations it is simply not enough to rely on "civilized adults" — that is a cop out.

Brian Henshaw
Pickering, Ontario

1990 Point Pelee path policies need revision

There are a number of flaws in the restrictive path policy instituted at Point Pelee this year.

Firstly, there are not enough approved paths in the area from the Visitors' Centre to the top, or in Tilden's Woods. The huge billboard at the entrance to Tilden's Woods is an eyesore that should be removed.

Secondly, the policy should not apply to the area of the park from the Visitors' Centre to the park gates where relatively few people birdwatch. During the first week of May 1990 birders in the Blue Heron section of this area of the park were ordered by park staff to leave the woods, and to walk along the road. This is not a safe policy for pedestrians.

Point Pelee has a number of rare trees such as hop tree, blue ash, dwarf hackberry, and Kentucky coffee-tree. Restrictive path use is not necessary to protect trees, is it?

Prickly pear cactus is a rare plant at Point Pelee as well as in the Rainy River area. What are the other rare plants at Point Pelee that

the path, road, beach-only policy for walkers is protecting? Does the restrictive path policy exist to protect native plants, introduced plants, or both these categories of flora? The most common plant from the Visitors' Centre to the tip is the white-flowering garlic mustard, an introduced species. If the policy is to safeguard it and other introduced plants, why was a large stand of black locust trees (an introduced species of plant) cut down at the south end of Ander's field, which is a few hundred yards south of where the visitor trains are parked at night?

After visiting Point Pelee National Park, I went to Rondeau Provincial Park. After visiting both locations, my belief is that deer pose a far greater hazard for the plants at Point Pelee than do people. Rondeau Provincial Park is visited by only a few campers and birders in April and May. From the surface of the ground to as high as a deer can reach, most vegetation has been consumed by Rondeau's large deer herd. Point Pelee should consider a policy of deer control rather than a policy of people control in order to protect the vegetation of the park.

My suggestions to allow greater freedom for walkers in Point Pelee National Park are as follows:

1. More approved paths in the area from the Visitors' Centre to the tip, and in Tilden's Woods. Better still would be the freedom to walk anywhere in these areas. A visit in August or September to areas

where there have been temporary birding trails in the spring reveals no trace of the paths! One would need a machete to get through these areas.

2. If the paths are deemed necessary, birders should be granted permission to leave a path in search of a calling or singing bird that is off the path.

3. Adopt a plant protection policy similar to the one that is used along the Bruce Trail, a 700km-long path. Restricted areas with rare plants are outlined with wide yellow tape. The English, French, and botanic names could be given so that the public may observe and learn about them. This labelling policy could and should be extended to the more common plants and trees outside the restricted areas.

John L. Olmsted
Hamilton, Ontario

If you wish to express your opinion pro or con about Point Pelee's path policy or any other policy write to the following

*address: H. R. Thomson,
Superintendent, Point Pelee National
Park, R. R. #1, Leamington, Ontario,
Canada, N8H 3V4.*

Blue/Golden-winged Warblers

Further to J. M. Holdsworth's letter (*Ontario Birds* 7:41-42) on alternative songs of these warblers, there is an added confusion. On the OFO Long Point trip led by Barry Jones (12 May 1990) in the Wilson Tract a Golden-winged Warbler was found singing a pure two-syllable Blue-winged song. This bird appeared to be a normal male Golden-winged Warbler with black throat, white chest and belly — definitely neither a Lawrence's nor a Brewster's. All nine members in the group saw and heard this bird's unusual song. Identification of Blue-winged Warblers by song alone would therefore seem to be unreliable. No Blue-winged Warbler singing Golden-winged songs were noted!

Gordon Bellerby
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

Erratum

In Table 2 of "Are Pine Grosbeaks increasing at bird feeders in Ontario" (*Ontario Birds* 7:90) a line was left out at the bottom. Please note the correct Table 2 in its entirety below.

Table 2: Ten-year average OBFS figures for Pine Grosbeak and possible competitors at feeders. Abundance (A), percent of feeders visited at least once in season (%), and regional rank in abundance at feeders (R).

	North			Central			South		
	A	%	R	A	%	R	A	%	R
Pine Grosbeak	2.5	51	6	0.2	14	19	0.03	3	21
Evening Grosbeak	12.2	88	1	13.4	89	1	3.3	46	5
Blue Jay	3.1	89	4	4.7	95	4	2.7	94	9