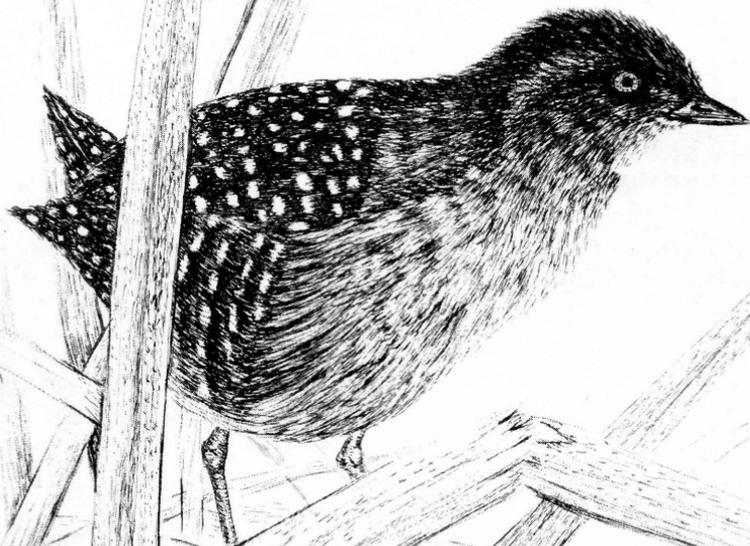


# ONTARIO BIRDS



The Journal of the  
Ontario Field  
Ornithologists

Volume 9 Number 2  
August 1991

Chris Kerrigan '91



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

**Secretary**

**Ontario Bird Records Committee**

c/o Ontario Field Ornithologists  
Box 1204, Station B  
Burlington, Ontario  
L7P 3S9

Publication costs of *Ontario Birds* are partially offset by an annual grant from the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund. OFO gratefully acknowledges this generous support.

## Ontario Birds

*Editors:* Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway  
Ron Tozer

*Editorial Assistance:* Margaret Bain

*Design/Production:*

Centennial Printers (Peterborough) Ltd.

All items submitted for publication should be sent to:

**The Editors, Ontario Birds**

c/o Ontario Field Ornithologists  
Box 1204, Station B  
Burlington, Ontario  
L7P 3S9

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.

## 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". 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*.

## Table of Contents

### **Letters to the Editors**

- Adjudication and publication of records of unusual subspecies 17  
*James Holdsworth*

### **Articles**

- Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1990 18  
*Bob Curry*
- Evidence of Pair Bonding between Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) and American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) 45  
*Beth Jefferson*

### **Recognizable Forms**

- Recognizable Forms of Ontario Birds 49  
*Ron Pittaway*

### **Photo Quiz**

- Doug McRae* 55

Cover illustration: Black Rail by *Chris Kerrigan*

## Letters to the Editors

### Adjudication and publication of records of unusual subspecies

It is about time that *Ontario Birds* joined the twentieth century and followed the example of California (among others) Records Committees and journals; that is, the documentation of unusual subspecies and races of birds not normally found in Ontario.

At present, there is no forum to properly analyse and document records of unusual subspecies. *Ontario Birds* has already stated its reluctance towards receiving such records and, I believe, this is a mistake. If such records are considered valueless by Ontario's only true ornithological records committee, then observers will be lax in their note-taking when discovering a wayward subspecies. This, in turn, muddles the picture concerning the status of said subspecies, especially if this subspecies is, one day, elevated to full species status. There will be no catalogue of data to study, no details concerning historical sightings, no possible way to properly ascertain such a bird's provincial status.

*American Birds*, which should serve as an alternate repository for such records, provides basically useless information. The Ontario regional editor constantly expresses his reluctance to print records of subspecies and, while this may be wise for difficult to identify subspecies, it is retrograde thinking from a historical point of view. It is a fact that a great many subspecies are field-identifiable, and a vagrant subspecies of some locally common

bird is arguably as rare as a full species far from its normal range. Some would argue that such records constitute excessive minutia, but this is the route that birding is headed, and *Ontario Birds* should get its collective head out of the sand, looking ahead, not behind.

I present a case study: the "Yellow" Palm Warbler (*D. p. hypochrysea*) appears to be a rare but regular fall vagrant in S.W. Ontario based on personal observations. I have three recent fall records: Oct. 5/85 (1), Oct. 6/86 (1), Oct. 13/87 (2), all at Pittock Lake, Oxford Co. There appears to be a tight "window" of perhaps regular occurrence based on the above records, but who really knows? Looking back through years of *American Birds* fall reports reveals extremely few records (the above records failed to pass the editor's axe and did not appear in print), and no such records appear in *Ontario Birds*. (Is it) A true vagrant or perhaps a regularly occurring fall migrant? With the cursory amount of information available, no conclusion can be drawn. This is true of virtually every non-regularly occurring subspecies in Ontario.

This brings to light another issue: a total lack of continuity concerning records printed in *American Birds* and those found in *Ontario Birds*. Numerous time, I have seen Ontario records of vagrants appear in *American Birds* with such comments as "Ontario's first", only for the record to be summarily rejected by the OBRC. There should be some rapport between the Ontario regional

editor of *American Birds* and the OBRC, so that such incongruities don't continue. Considering the much larger readership of *American Birds* (now in its new, hideous, and glamorized version), one must ask which organ represents the final say considering Ontario bird records? Surely, it is the OBRC, but the readers of *American Birds* hear not of the OBRC's decisions concerning records in *AB*. A union of sorts between these two journals would prevent such major discrepancies and give North American birders an authoritative view of Ontario bird records.

James Holdsworth  
Woodstock, Ontario

**Editors' Note:** The Ontario Bird Records Committee, not *Ontario Birds*, adjudicates rare bird records in Ontario and determines which birds are to be reported. Consequently, Mr. Holdsworth's suggestions for changes in reporting policy are more appropriately directed to the OBRC. However, the Editors recognize a growing interest in "recognizable forms" among Ontario birders, and as a result, have instituted a new feature on this subject. See page 49 in this issue for a checklist.

## Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1990

by  
Robert Curry

This is the ninth annual report of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Published herein are the records that were received and reviewed by the Committee during 1990. In total, 187 records were assessed, the identification of which 165 (about 88%) were found to be acceptable. Observers are to be commended for their increasing levels of skill in both observing and describing rare birds.

A review of North American bird records committees in *Birding* by

Roberson (1990) indicated that we are following the same procedures as similar groups across North America and elsewhere. Unfortunately, there remain certain portions of the province from which very few submissions are received despite requests for existing reports of review list species. We estimate about 30 records annually are not reported and are missing from the central archives maintained at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). The OBRC encourages readers of this report to please submit reports for all review