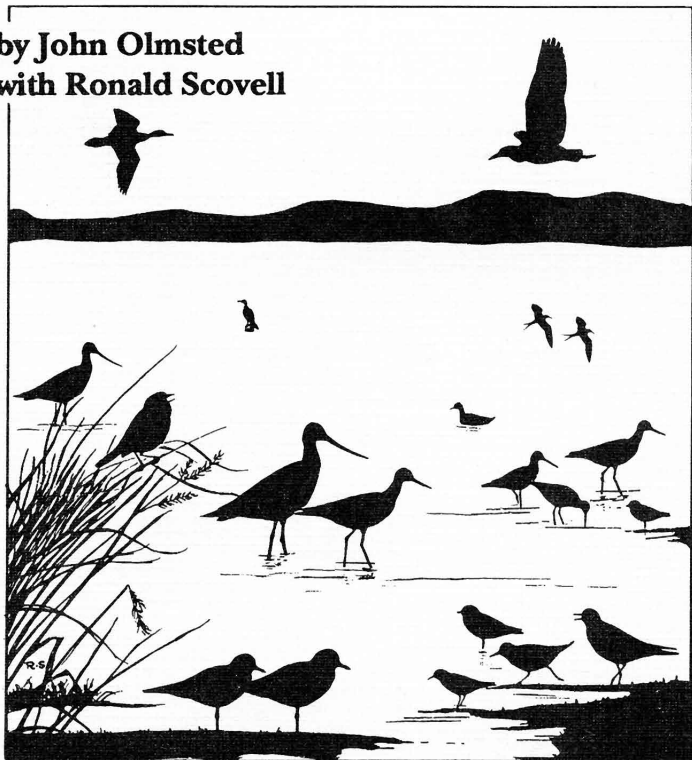


Ontario Field Ornithologists  
**BIRD FINDING GUIDE #1**

# **BIRDING IN THE HAMILTON AREA**

by John Olmsted  
with Ronald Scovell



#### ***4. TOWNSEND SEWAGE LAGOONS***

- From the centre of Jarvis, at the junction of Hwy. 3 and 6, proceed west on Hwy. 3 for 2.5km to Regional Road 69.
- Turn right and go 1.5km north.
- Just past the CNR tracks, turn left (west) onto a gravel road.
- After 1km, the entrance to the lagoons is on your right (north). The Ministry of the Environment has provided a parking lot.
- Walk north to view 4 large lagoons, for ducks, shorebirds and marsh birds in the northeast lagoon, which has a number of reed beds.

***HAMILTON AREA BIRDING HOTLINE IS (416) 648-9537***

It is updated Thursday evenings.

## BEVERLY SWAMP LOOP (HALF-DAY) (SEE MAP INSERT)

### 1. CONCESSION 8

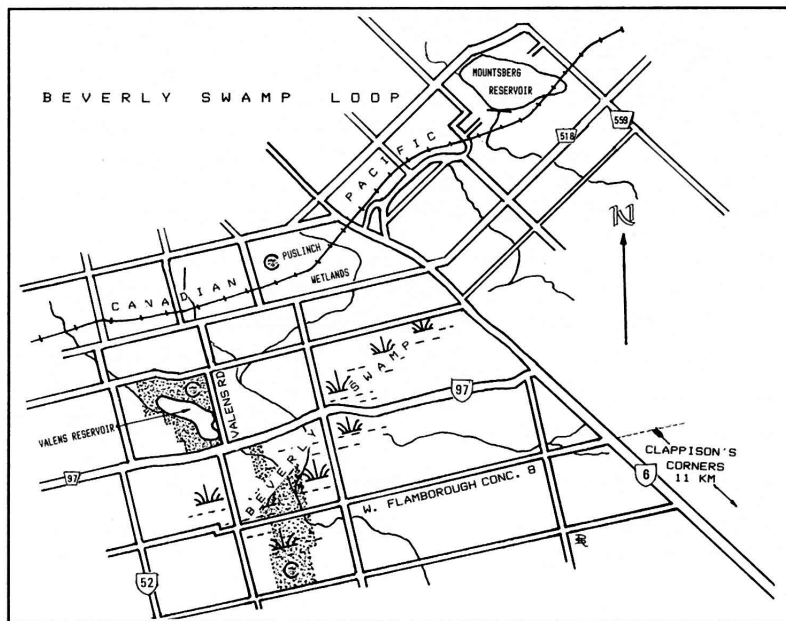
- From Clappison Corners, which is the junction of Hwys. 5 and 6, proceed north on 6 for 11km to West Flamborough Concession 8.
- Turn left and continue west 6.4 km to the heart of the swamp.

*Explore the areas of wet woodlands both to the north and south of the road for nesting species such as Barred Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Acadian, Willow and Alder Flycatchers; Winter Wren, Yellow-throated Vireo and White-throated Sparrow.*

### 2. VALENS RESERVOIR

- Go west on Concession 8 to the first intersection, Valens Rd., and turn right. Drive north to the next crossroads, Hwy. 97.
- Turn left and drive west 1km to the Valens Conservation Area.

*Roads within the conservation area give access to vantage points on the west side of the lake, which may have 20 species of waterfowl in the spring. Walk through the campground area at the northwest corner of the lake for passerines.*



- Return to the entrance of the Conservation Area, turn left on 97 and drive back (east) to Valens Rd.
- Turn left (north) for 1 km, and check the reservoir on the left and the marsh on your right.

### **3. PUSLINCH WETLANDS RESERVE**

- Continue north on Valens Rd. to the second crossroad.
- Turn right (east) and after 1km turn left (north again).
- Drive .3km to the CPR rail line.

*Park and walk along the tracks both east and west through the sedge and marsh area. Good area for rails; some years there are Sedge Wrens.*

### **4. MOUNTSBERG RESERVOIR**

- Return south .3km, then turn left and travel east 3.5km to Hwy. 6.
- Cross the Highway and continue east on Regional Road 518 for 5km, to Regional Road 559.
- Turn left (north) onto 559 and continue past (at 1.5km) the entrance to the Conservation Area.
- At the north end of 559, you are forced to turn left onto a gravel road that parallels Hwy. 401. After 1.5km, there is a lookout tower on your left at Blue Heron Marsh.

*This is a good vantage point for viewing the north end of the lake, excellent for waterfowl spring and fall. If water levels are low, this area can be excellent for shorebirds from July through September. As well, you can bird the marshes on either side of the road for the next kilometre, until the road comes to a creek.*

- .5km past the creek, turn left and drive south on a winding road until you see a sign for the dam. Turn left for 1.5km to the dam, a good lookout for the southern part of the lake.
- Retrace your route to the last left turn; at that junction turn left (south), and cross the CPR tracks at the next intersection.
- Turn left and drive 1.5km to Regional Road 518.
- Turn right (west) and drive 2.5km to Hwy. 6.
- Turn left and drive south 16km to junction of Hwys. 5 and 6 to complete the loop.

## ANCASTER LOOP (4 HOURS)

### 1. SULPHUR SPRINGS

- Take the Mohawk Rd. exit west from Hwy. 403. Drive west along Mohawk until it ends at Hwy. 2 (Wilson St.). Turn left and drive 1.5km south to the first stoplight at Sulphur Springs Road.
- Turn right and follow Church St. west 2km, until it dead ends. Turn right again and follow the twisty road down into the valley.
- Where the first stream crosses the road, turn right into a parking area provided by the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority. Follow the Valley Trail out of the lot to the Hermitage, a large stone ruin, then down into the Sulphur Springs Creek Valley.
- From the Valley Trail, take the Monarch Trail that climbs out of the valley into an apple orchard. Switch to the Orchard Trail, passing the Merrick field house with its many feeders, circling back to the parking lot.

*Good in spring for migrants, and in summer for breeding birds, in winter this is Hamilton's best spot for winter finches.*

### 2. MINERAL SPRINGS AND MARTIN'S LANE

- Leave the parking lot and turn right (west) along Sulphur Springs Rd., which turns right after .3km. Do not take the turn, continue straight ahead (west). You will pass the headquarters of the Hamilton Conservation Authority before reaching the hamlet of Mineral Springs, at 3km.

*Park on or near the bridge to check the many feeders in the area. Walk Martin's Lane to the south. The road is not open to vehicles. After a walk of 2km you will reach a very sheltered area on your left, good in winter. A further 2km walk will bring you to a more open area, just before the road becomes suitable for vehicles from the south. This is an excellent area for Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. In 1979 a Lawrence's Warbler was reported from this location. In 1979 a resident singing male Hooded Warbler was found where the road begins its climb to the south.*

## **JERSEYVILLE AREA (GRAY PARTRIDGE)**

*The area east of Hamilton and above the escarpment has long been the best area in southern Ontario to see Gray Partridge. Unfortunately the exact location changes every few years. Currently the area which presents the best chance to see these elusive birds is the area immediately around Jerseyville.*

- Take Hwy. 403 west from Hamilton towards Brantford.
- Exit north (right) on Copetown Road and go 2km to Jerseyville Rd.
- Turn left for 4.6km to Field St.
- Turn right onto Field St.

*The area to look for the partridge is a square bounded on the east by Field St., the north by Towerline, the west by Lyndon and the south by Jerseyville. Look in fields with corn stubble, creek beds, near barns, apple orchards and in the vicinity of the cemetery on Jerseyville Rd. They often sit motionless in small flocks, resembling a clump of rocks.*

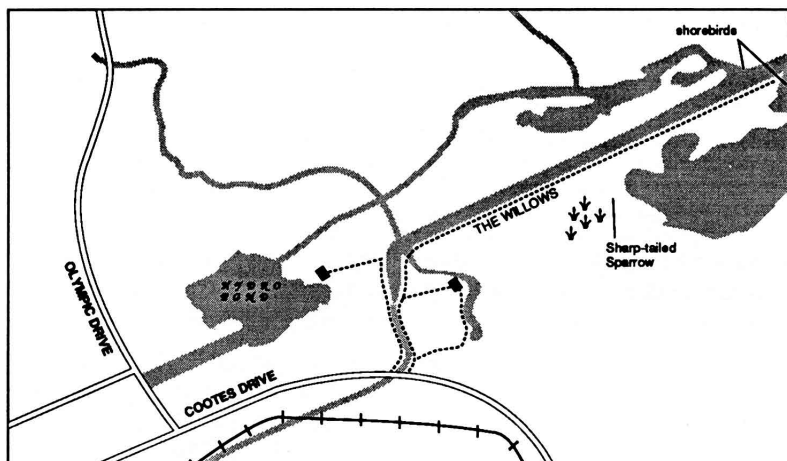
*On your return, you could stay on Jerseyville Rd. right into Ancaster and pick up Hwy. 403 at Mohawk Rd. in Ancaster. On this route look for orchards. They will attract Robins and Waxwings, and some winters Pine Grosbeaks. Farmers often spread strips of manure on their fields in late winter. These strips attract Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs.*

## **DUNDAS MARSH (FULL DAY) (SEE MAP INSERT)**

### **1. SOUTH SHORE: PRINCESS POINT TO UNIVERSITY LANDING**

- Exit Hwy. 403 at York Blvd.
- At the first traffic light turn right on Dundurn St., travelling south.
- At the next light, turn right onto King St., and travel west, soon to cross a large bridge.
- At the next street, Macklin, turn right and go north for 2km. Macklin ends at the Princess Point parking lot. Park.

*Check the mudflat and the Point itself. Look west up the marsh for waterfowl. You are able to follow trails along the south side of the Dundas Marsh all the way to McMaster University. Check out Caleb's Walk, Kingfisher Point and University Landing. Kingfisher Point provides a good look at the southern portion of the marsh.*



## 2. SPENCER'S CREEK, DUNDAS HYDRO POND, THE WILLOWS

- Return on Macklin to King St. Turn right and head for 1 block.
- Turn left and go north on Paradise for 2 blocks.
- Turn right and go west on Main St. (Hwy. 8) for 3km, past McMaster University.
- After 3km, turn right at the traffic lights onto Cootes Dr.
- After crossing Spencer's Creek at 2km, park on the shoulder of the road.

Walk north on the west side of the creek; in 1km you'll come to the hydro pond on your left. A bridge crosses the creek to the east bank. From here it is a short walk to Paradise tower and a longer walk along the creek to the east, out to the centre of the marsh. At the end of "The Willows" (with low water) is a mudflat that attracts ducks, gulls, terns and shorebirds.\* A gap at the halfway point out to The Willows is just past an area of cattail marsh (on the south side) that is visited in early October by Sharp-tailed Sparrows. It is the last area of cattail before the water. Walk the area between the small open pond and the water's edge, and watch for small 'short-tailed' sparrows to flush ahead of you.

Most Falls provide excellent opportunities for godwits, phalaropes, Golden Plover, L-b. Dowitcher, White-rumped and Western Sandpipers, and occasionally Willet and Avocet.

### 3. THE ARBORETUM AND THE NORTH SHORE

- Continue west on Cootes Dr. 1km to the first stoplight, Olympic Dr. Turn right and go north for 3km to York Rd.
- Turn right again and travel east 2km to Old Guelph Rd.
- Turn right again (south) for 2km, just past the railway bridge, and drive to the Arboretum on your right.
- Turn right again (west now); the road dead-ends in a circular parking lot just past the Nature Interpretive Centre of the Royal Botanical Gardens.

*In winter, the numerous fruiting trees are good for Cedar Waxwings, and Robins. From the parking lot, take the trail to Bull's Point to view the north shore of the Dundas Marsh. A dirt road running north from the circular parking lot leads to an area of several fruiting trees. Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks have been seen there occasionally.*

## HAMILTON HARBOUR

### 1. WEST END (LAX LANDFILL, VALLEY INN, THE CEMETERIES, LA SALLE PARK)

- For birding the west end of Hamilton Harbour, it's convenient to start at the Lax Landfill. To reach the Landfill, exit Hwy. 403 at York Blvd. Continue on York to Bay St., roughly 4km.
- Turn left (north) and drive 2km.
- Cross over the major rail lines, then turn left and travel west to the first street, Strachan.

*The landfill is on your right just before reaching the CNR rail lines and the shore. The large gates are not locked. This is a migrant trap and a good viewing spot for the southwest end of the harbour.*

- From the Lax Landfill, birding continues at Valley Inn. to get there, return to the High Level Bridge via York Blvd.
- Cross the bridge, and take the second right, Valley Inn Road.
- Cross the bridge at the bottom of the hill and turn left.
- Cross a second, smaller bridge and park 100m ahead on the right.

*To the right (east) starts the Toll Gate Trail. Below the beginning of the trail there is usually a large mudflat where there are often shorebirds in migration.*



*Look for the short side path on the right which leads down to a convenient viewing platform. Further along the trail, under the large bridge and continuing up the valley, is a good spot for late fall migrants.*

- When you leave the Toll Gate Trail area, drive over the small bridge, take Valley Inn Rd. up the hill on your left to Woodlawn Cemetery.

*There are several areas in the cemetery which provide viewing sites over Hamilton Bay. Good in migration for **Tundra Swans, loons, grebes (including Western), geese, and divers.** The tall trees attract **Bald Eagles and Ospreys** as well as large flocks of **warblers, sparrows and other passerines.***

- From the Roman Catholic Cemetery to the east of Woodlawn, drive northeast along Plains Rd., 2.5km to La Salle Park Rd.
- Turn right and follow the road south to its end at the La Salle Park dock. This is a good viewing point for waterfowl.
- Return to North Shore Blvd., and turn right, through the park.

*In the northeastern portion of the park, across North Shore Blvd., there is a mature woodlot that has had interesting species such as **Tufted Titmouse, Varied Thrush, Black Vulture and Carolina Wren.***

## **2. EAST END (HYDRO ISLANDS, HYDRO PONDS AND WINDERMERE BASIN)**

- Coming along the QEW from the direction of Toronto, take the exit for Eastport Dr., which is after the Hwy. 403 interchange and just before the Skyway Bridge.

The harbour is on your right. When you first come to it, look for the Hydro islands, 3 small islands that once bore hydro towers. Check for **gulls, terns, ducks and shorebirds.** Take care parking and viewing from the roadside along this route.

- After scanning the islands continue straight along the road and you will pass the Centre for Inland Waters.
- Cross the lift bridge over the canal.

*Three kilometres further east, on your right, are ponds separated from the main harbour by low dikes. These are the Toll Gate Ponds. Adjacent to them is a landfill site. At the western end of the western pond is a group of trees that host **Double-crested Cormorant and Black-crowned Night Heron** colonies. Both ponds are favourites for ducks. The east end of the east pond often has mudflats, good for shorebirds. The landfill area has large gull and tern colonies. This is the site of Ontario's first **Snowy Egret** nesting.*

- Continuing about 2km from the Toll Gate Ponds you will come to Windermere Basin, in the south east corner of the harbour.

*This is a favourite spot for large flocks of wintering ducks. Presently, it is being drastically modified by man, but it is always worth a look. At the east end of the basin, Red Hill Creek empties into the harbour. In winter, this is a good spot for ducks and herons — both Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons are possible here.*

## **LAKE ONTARIO SHORELINE: OAKVILLE TO HAMILTON**

### **1. BRONTE HARBOUR (MOUTH OF BRONTE CREEK)**

- Take Bronte Rd. south off of the QEW down to the lake in the centre of Bronte.

*Check the lake on both sides of the pier. The harbour is good for wintering gulls and ducks.*

### **2. THE SHELL PIER**

- Leaving Bronte Harbour, turn west on Hwy. 2 for 2 km until you come to the pier of the Shell Refinery. There is parking here on the lake side of the highway.

*The Shell Pier is another spot to look for gulls and ducks. On the north side of the highway, Shell Park can be good for landbirds during spring migration.*

### **3. PIG AND WHISTLE TAVERN**

- .5km from the Shell Pier parking lot, there is a good viewing point for ducks and swans across from the Tavern.

### **4. APPLEBY LINE**

- The shoreline can be reached by turning left off of Hwy. 2 and proceeding to the end of the road. Appleby Line is 1.5km west of Shell Park.

### **5. SHOREACRES CREEK**

*If you feel like a short walk to break the monotony, there is a stretch of “undeveloped parkland” exactly halfway between Appleby and Walker’s Lines. You can walk from Hwy. 2 along the Creek right to the Lake. The mouth of the Creek attracts many dabblers.*

## 6. WALKER'S LINE

- The shoreline can be reached by turning left off of Hwy. 2 and proceeding to the end of the road. Walker's Line is 2km west of Appleby Line.

## 7. SIOUX LOOKOUT PARK

*1.1km from Walker's Line, there is a parking lot on the south side which affords an excellent viewing area for ducks.*

## 8. GUELPH LINE

- The shoreline can be reached by turning left off of Hwy. 2 and proceeding to the end of the road. Guelph Line is .9km west of Sioux Lookout Park.

*Appleby, Walker's and Guelph Lines are good lookout points for the the Lake. In April, Appleby and Walker's are especially good for Red Necked Grebes.*

## 9. VENTURE INN AND SPENCER SMITH PARK (FOOT OF BRANT STREET)

- About 2km west of the Guelph Line, turn left off Hwy. 2 to the parking lot.

*These are two more locations for checking Lake Ontario. They are good for ducks and for gulls if there are strong northeast winds in the fall.*

## 10. BURLINGTON CANAL

- At the west end of Spencer Smith Park, turn left along Beach Blvd. and drive about 2km until you reach the shipping canal. Park in the dead end area just west of the canal, or on the property of the Inland Waters Centre.

*Walk along the pier out into Lake Ontario. Check the small woodlot on the Burlington (east) side of the canal for spring or fall migrants. The beach on this side is often good for shorebirds. Check the rock piles in late fall for Purple Sandpipers.*

## 11. VAN WAGNER'S BEACH

- Proceed east along Beach Blvd. and Van Wagner's Beach Rd. at the traffic lights for 5km to the 'Lakeside Rentals' building used by sail board enthusiasts. This is the most popular viewing site.
- Van Wagner's can also be reached directly from the QEW. Exit at Woodward Ave. and exit immediately to the Beach Blvd. turnoff.

- Go under the QEW and turn right at the traffic lights. Drive 1.1km to the parking lot where the 'Lakeside Rentals' building is on your left.

*Best time of year is in September and October, when there are east or northeast winds. At this time Black-legged Kittiwake and Sabines Gulls, and all 3 species of both Scoters and Jaegers are possible.*

## **12. VAN WAGNER'S BEACH PONDS**

*Opposite the beach lookout are 2 ponds dissected by an old railway bed. Check ponds for shorebirds, ducks and herons. The areas around the ponds are often good for passerine migrants in the fall. There is a good birding walk between the ponds along an old rail line. It can be reached by walking east around the near pond and proceeding around an old residence at the east end of the pond.*

## **13. FRUITLAND ROAD**

- Exit the east end of Van Wagner's Beach area via Hwy. 20 to QEW, heading east toward Niagara Falls.
- After 5.2km, take Fruitland Rd. to the Lake.

*A new housing development here has built a pier into the lake which serves as a good lookout. Check the undeveloped fields for small pools. They attract shorebirds in spring and fall.*

## **14. FIFTY POINT CONSERVATION AREA**

- Head east on the QEW 6.1km to 50 Point Rd.
- Take this road north to the North Service Rd.
- Then drive east to the entrance of the Conservation Area.

*Check out the marina area for ducks in winter. Wonderful vantage point to east of the mouth of the harbour for spring and fall water birds. Woodlot east of the marina is good for passerines in the spring and fall. Tell the attendant at the toll booth that you are going in to look for birds. They will probably not charge admittance.*

## **HAWK WATCHING IN THE HAMILTON AREA**

### **1. GRIMSBY PARK**

- Located 9.2km east of Hamilton via the QEW. Take Christie Rd. exit south through town and up the escarpment.
- Turn right at the top of the hill and drive west 1.6 km to the Conservation Area.
- Turn right to parking lot area. This is the location of the well-known Grimsby Hawk Watch.

*Best months are March, April and May.*

### **2. WOODLAWN CEMETERY**

*Best viewing is at the eastern end with open fields along the bluff. See West End Hamilton Harbour for location*

### **3. MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT PARKING LOT**

- From Hwy. 403, exit onto Hwy. 6 heading north toward Guelph.
- At traffic light 400m up, turn right and drive east 100m; park in adjacent lot on right.

### **4. TOP OF CLAPPISON CUT**

- From the parking lot, turn right onto Hwy. 6 and head north 1.9km to the top of the escarpment.
- Turn right (east) at the Town of Flamborough sign, onto a gravel road that then turns south to the edge of the escarpment. Park just past the long white commercial building on your left (east).

### **5. HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE**

- Exit from Hwy. 403 at York Blvd.
- Once on York Blvd., cross the bridge and pull off to park in the lot on the right (west) side. Park in the adjacent cemetery if it is no longer possible to park in this lot. Areas on the other side of the bridge are also good.

*September and October are the best months of the year for these last four locations.*

## OTHER NEARBY BIRDING SPOTS

### 1. SMITHVILLE SEWAGE LAGOONS

- From the centre of Town, i.e. Hwy. 20 and Regional Road 14, drive east 2km on Hwy. 20 to the first road on the right (south).
- Proceed 500m to the bridge over the creek. Park 200m past the bridge.
- Walk in the lane on the left (east) side of the road 1km, to the 3 lagoons.

*Good for ducks in the spring, and may be good for shorebirds in spring and fall if there are low water levels.*

### 2. TAQUANYAH CONSERVATION AREA

- Cayuga is at the junction of Hwys. 54 and 3. Drive 5.3km west on Hwy. 3; turn right (north) almost immediately and cross the CNR tracks.
- After 1km, reach the southwest corner of the Conservation Area.

*A spring-fed creek flows in from the west. In winter Common Snipe and Great Blue Herons often linger here. Excellent shorebirding east of the road in the fall, when water levels are low. Area possibilities include Eastern Bluebird, Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Pine plantations have sheltered several species of owls.*

### 3. JARVIS SEWAGE LAGOONS

- Continue west 18.3km on Hwy. 3 to Jarvis.
- On the left (south) side of the road there is a sign for a car wash. Drive in the gravel lane on the west side of the car wash, heading south.
- After 1km. park and walk east (on your left) to 2 lagoons, new in 1989.
- Then drive south .2km to 2 original lagoons.

*Good for ducks and for shorebirds with the low levels of ponds.*

## **ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS**

*Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever-growing numbers of bird-watchers across the province and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members.*

*OFO publishes a newsletter and a journal (Ontario Birds), hosts field trips throughout Ontario, oversees the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC), and holds a Spring Field Meeting as well as 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 OFO. Membership dues are \$20.00 for an Annual Membership or \$400.00 for a Life Membership. Please send memberships or inquiries to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P. O. Box 1204, Station B. Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.*

*Bird Finding Guide #1: Birding in the Hamilton Area, by John Olmsted.*  
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