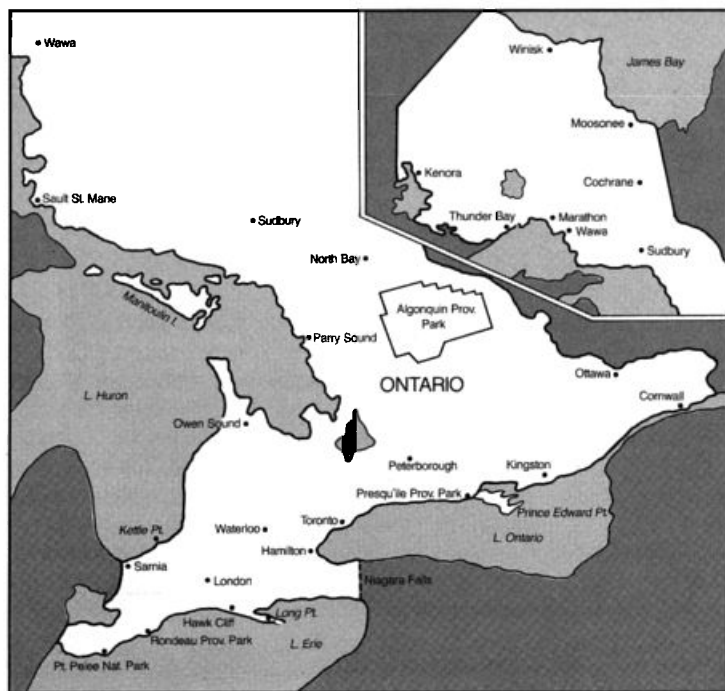


# Ontario



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**H**ot, dry summer weather continued through August across most of the province. A little much-needed rain fell near the end of August and increased through September. Cool north winds towards the end of September helped migration on its way, but October and November remained unusually mild. Even north of Lake Superior, permanent snow did not arrive until the last week of November.

In spite of the widespread drought across the country, waterfowl numbers were generally excellent. Fall raptor migration started rather earlier than usual in southern Ontario but was otherwise unremarkable. Water levels in the Great Lakes were extremely low, providing substantial littoral habitat, but this was not reflected by many high shorebird numbers. Jaeger passage along the Great Lakes was light, and the mild fall weather markedly delayed the usual late-fall build-up of gulls on the Niagara River. The mild weather also encouraged many passerines, especially vireos and warblers, to linger much later than usual. Very poor cone crops in the boreal forest led to an early flight of winter finches into the south of the province, but most of these birds had moved even farther south by mid-November.

**Abbreviations:** C. A. (Conservation Area), K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists), L.P.B.O. (Long Point Bird Observatory), P.P.N.P. (Point Pelee National Park). Place names in *italics* refer to counties, districts, and regional municipalities.

## LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Prince Edward Pt. on L. Ontario had an imm. Pacific Loon 16 Oct (JHE, BR) and an ad. 4 Nov (RDW, K.F.N.). On L. Erie, there were 705 Common Loons off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 19 Oct (AW), a record high for the area, and 265 Pied-billed Grebes at Erieau 6 Oct (JB), also a record count. After several initial setbacks, Red-necked Grebes nested successfully on Kelly L., Sudbury, where a pair raised 4 chicks in Aug (JL); 2 Red-necked Grebes at P.P.N.P. 29 Sep (GML, BKE) were rare for the area. A juv. Eared Grebe at the Casselman S.T.P. 1-2 Sep (BB, CL) was the 3rd record for the Ottawa area; another Eared Grebe was at the Wawa S.T.P. 19-22 Sep (RZD). Single Western Grebes were on the Wabigoon R., Dryden 11 Sep (CE) and off the e. beach at P.P.N.P. 3-21 Nov (RH, PDP et al.).

A **Manx Shearwater** found dead at Shirley's Bay on the Ottawa R. 26 Aug (BSq, *vide* BDL) is now housed at the Museum of Nature in Ottawa and represents the first record for Ontario. Single juv. Northern Gannets were seen off Fifty Pt., *Niagara* 6 Oct (SM), off the Leslie St. Spit, Toronto 7 Oct (TF), flying w. up the Ottawa R. 8 Oct (BB, CL, BL, JS, MT), and off Confederation

Park, Hamilton 24 Nov (BSC). Three American White Pelicans were photographed at Simon L., Lively 7 Sep (S&MW) for the 2nd *Sudbury* record, and an imm. was at Mission Bay, *Thunder Bay* 9 Sep (H&IW); the imm. pelican at Sarnia 29 Sep-14 Oct (DP, m. ob.) could well have been the same bird seen on Pelee I. 18 Oct (BP et al.) A record-high count of 13,000 Double-crested Cormorants came from Hillman Marsh, *Essex* and adjacent L. Erie 25 Aug (DJW); the 5000 Double-crested Cormorants at Windy Pt., Lake of the Woods 19 Sep (DHE, BRA) represented an impressive pre-migration build-up for the area, again underscoring the continuing, rapid expansion of this species across the province.

An American Bittern at Flamborough 4 Nov was late (BCh). Great Egrets continued to be widely reported, with a high count of 85 at P.P.N.P. 1 Sep (DJW). A juv. Snowy Egret found at Muddy Creek, *Essex* 20 Aug moved that day to Wheatley P.P., where it stayed until 30 Aug (DJW, m. ob.); another was at the St. Clair N.W.R. 9-15 Sep (BM). A Little Blue Heron was found on the Bruce Peninsula, n. of Ferndale 21 Aug (PM) Cattle Egrets were widely reported in ones and twos 21 Oct-30 Nov, mostly in the s., but there were 2 in Thunder Bay (*vide* NGE), 2 in Sault Ste Marie (*vide* BK), and 2 on Manitoulin I. (*vide* JL) in Nov. Perhaps the most widely viewed and photographed birds of the period were the 3 juv **Wood Storks** found on Pelee I. 9 Aug and obligingly remaining there until 22 Sep (DDJ, m. ob.) They constituted the 11th record for the province and were part of a large post-breeding dispersal of young Wood Storks to ne. North America.

Turkey Vultures continue to expand their breeding range in the province: 2 fledglings outside an inaccessible nest cave on the Lower French R. 15 Sep (BH) confirmed breeding at the n. edge of the s. Ontario population. Fall migration numbers have also escalated: Holiday Beach Migration Observatory tallied a one-day record 4950 vultures 30 Oct, and a record season total of 31,157.

## GEESE THROUGH RAPTORS

An ad. Greater White-fronted Goose was at Kingsville, *Essex* 12 Nov (DJW). An ad. white morph Ross's Goose was found at Kingsville 19 Oct (DJW et al.) and was joined by another on 22 Oct (KAM et al.), with both birds seen intermittently through 30 Nov+. On 28 Oct, one of them was noted at nearby P.P.N.P. for the Park's 5th record (AW). Trumpeter Swans from introduction programs in Ontario and Minnesota bred successfully as far n. as Lively (JL) and *Rainy River*, where there were still 2 birds near Atikokan 27 Aug (DHE). Rondeau Bay held a pair of Eurasian Wigeon 21 Oct (DJW). High

waterfowl counts included a record 1200 Green-winged Teal at P.P.N.P. 11-20 Oct (AW), 52,000 Greater Scaup off Kingston 5 Nov (K.F.N.), and a record 28,000 Lesser Scaup at P.P.N.P. 17 Nov (AW). Harlequin Ducks arrived unusually early in s. Ontario and were seen throughout the period at many locations on the shores of L. Ontario and L. Erie, where 2 at P.P.N.P. 8 Oct were record early (AW, STP). The 26,000 Long-tailed Ducks tallied at Prince Edward Pt. 4 Nov (K.F.N.) were surpassed by the 50,000 off the Hamilton/Burlington lakeshore 6 Nov (RZD). There were up to 3 Barrow's Goldeneyes in the Remic Rapids on the Ottawa R. 8 Oct+ (m. ob.).

Hawk migration at the main monitoring sites was good but not exceptional. A late Osprey was at Hay Bay, *Prince Edward* 4 Nov (K.F.N.). A Swallow-tailed Kite frequented the Hillman Marsh area 11-13 Sep (AS, CW, m. ob.). The mild weather may have encouraged Broad-winged Hawks to linger longer than usual before heading south: record late for P.P.N.P. was a juv. Broad-winged 20 Oct (AW), but even later were single juvs. at Burlington (KK) and at L.P.B.O., both 4 Nov. An ad. light-morph Swainson's Hawk flew over P.P.N.P. 30 Sep (DJW, ICP et al.). An ad. dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk was at P.P.N.P. 2 Oct (RLW, KAM, AW, BSC, LC), and another was noted over Hamilton 4 Nov (BCu, GS), a juv. Krider's Red-tailed Hawk frequented Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* 16-30 Nov+ (MFM, m. ob.) In contrast to the late lingerers, unusually early Rough-legged Hawks were at Amherst I. 11 Sep (BR, JHE), Oxdrift, *Thunder Bay* 18 Sep (CE), and P.P.N.P. 1 Oct (AW, KAM, RLW, DKS). The juv. Merlin at P.P.N.P. 5 Aug (KJB, SC) was a record-early fall migrant there.

## RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Yellow Rail was flushed from long grass during a sparrow survey at Walsingham, *Norfolk* 17 Aug (AT), and a King Rail was at Big Creek Marsh 6-12 Aug (L.P.B.O.). Common Moorhen numbers were extremely low in most of the province, with not a single report from P.P.N.P. in the entire year, but there were 6500 American Coots at Shrewsbury, *Chatham-Kent* 4 Nov (JB). The 1766 Sandhill Cranes at Spring Bay, Manitoulin I 20 Oct (m. ob.) were a record one-day count for Oct.

Apparently new to Ontario, a juv. **Solitary Sandpiper** of the w. race *cinnamomea* was at Sturgeon Creek 3-4 Aug (AW, m. ob.), and a second juv. of the same race was discovered in the nearby "Onion Fields" 4-5 Aug (AW, m. ob.). A juv. Willet was at Hillman Marsh 1 Aug (DJW), and another was at Big Creek Marsh 21 Sep (JF). Single juv. Marbled Godwits were at Hillman Marsh 4-17 Aug (KO, JPK, m. ob.), Sturgeon Creek 15 Aug (IW), and Big Creek Marsh 27

Aug-3 Sep (m. ob.). White-rumped Sandpipers appeared in record numbers, with an amazing 90 at Presqu'île P.P. 25 Sep (RDM) and 65 at Sturgeon Creek 1 Oct (AW, KAM, RLW). Hillman Marsh held 1300 Pectoral Sandpipers 3 Aug (AW). Purple Sandpipers were relatively easy to find at several lakeshore sites from 27 Oct onward, with a high count of 7 at Port Weller 27 Oct (BA, ASm). Record-late fall migrants for P.P.N.P. were the 13 juv. Stilt Sandpipers at Sturgeon Creek 29 Oct-2 Nov (AW et al.). Very rare for Algonquin P.P. were 4 Buff-breasted Sandpipers on the exposed mud of drought-stricken Radiant L. 25 Aug (JD, MB).

## JAEGERS THROUGH MURRES

Jaeger passage was relatively light this fall—of note was a Parasitic Jaeger on Lake of the Woods 20 Sep (BRa, DHE), only the 2nd record for *Rainy River*. Long-tailed Jaegers reported were all juvs. and included one flying along the beach at Presqu'île P.P. 22 Aug (DSh), a dark-morph young bird off Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton 24 Aug (RZD), and one found dead at Van Wagners Beach 27 Sep (BCu, GS), likely from a collision with hydroelectric wires; a juv. jaeger, probably another Long-tailed, flew over Big Porcupine L., Algonquin P.P. 24 Sep (KC, MC), a very rare sighting for the Park.

An ad. Little Gull was noteworthy at Sault Ste. Marie 16 Nov (*fide* BK). Among the first of the Niagara rarities, single Black-headed Gulls were at Queenston 24 Nov (GB) and Niagara Falls 26 Nov (DDT). Because of the mild fall weather, there were still 39 Bonaparte's Gulls at Rainy River 13 Nov (DHE). Presqu'île P.P.'s first California Gull was a basic ad. on the beach during fierce sw. gales 25 Oct (RDM, MR); the now-expected California Gull in the Niagara R. gorge returned 11 Nov (BPO, WD'A). Farther n. than usual were an imm. Great Black-backed Gull at Thunder Cape 17 Sep (JW), an ad. at Nipigon 22 Sep (RZD), 4 over Algonquin P.P. 9 Oct (FP), only the 2nd record for the Park, and one at the Sudbury dump 21 Nov (CB). There was a good flight of Sabine's Gulls in the s. in the first half of Sep, with a high count of 7 at Van Wagners Beach 2 Sep (BSt, BSm, MC); a juv. Sabine's Gull photographed in heavy rain on Big Porcupine L. 24 Sep (KC, MC) was the first record for Algonquin P.P. A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake was on the breakwall at Sunnyside, Toronto 20 Oct (GC), and Van Wagner's Beach had singles 30 Oct (DL), 17 Nov (KAM et al.), and 27-30 Nov (JO et al.).

An unidentified **alcid** seen off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 19 Oct was probably a Dovekie, based on its very small size and fast, whirring wingbeats, but caution is warranted in light of recent records of Ancient and Long-billed Murrelets in

eastern North America (AW). On 4 Nov, three **murres** flew past Prince Edward Pt. so fast that it was impossible to identify them as to species (MHE, RDW).

## PIGEONS THROUGH NUTHATCHES

Another first for Algonquin P.P. was the ad **Band-tailed Pigeon** photographed at a feeder in Rock L. Campground 13-16 Sep (E&LM, Br&BsW). An imm. **White-winged Dove** was banded at the Tip of Long Pt. 19 Oct for the 2nd L.P.B.O. record (MH, VB, HR).

Snowy Owls were seen in good numbers in the s. by early Nov, but many of these birds were starving; 4 had reached P.P.N.P. by 27 Nov (AW et al.). Two of the Northern Hawk Owls belonging to the family of 4 at Alfred, *Prescott-Russell* were still around 5 Aug (JBo), and a juv. bird was near Pass L., *Thunder Bay* 3 Sep (AE); in the nw of the province, plentiful voles, mice, and shrews supported an influx of Northern Hawk Owls later in the fall, including one in Atikokan 10 Nov (DHE). Three different Great Gray Owls were seen in or near Algonquin P.P. late Aug-late Oct (*fide* RGT), possibly lingerers from last winter's flight, given the apparent lack of sightings elsewhere in s. Ontario.

Unusually late at P.P.N.P. were a Whip-poor-will 4 Nov (DJW, STP) and a Chimney Swift 2 Nov (FJU). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** visited a feeder at Chelmsford, Sudbury 22-30 Oct (G&DD, CWh; ph.). There were at least 4 Red-headed Woodpeckers on Manitoulin I. in Oct (m. ob.) The first Red-bellied Woodpecker for Algonquin P.P. was a male, documented on video at feeders in the Mew L. Campground 16-20 Oct (FB, m. ob.). Red-bellied Woodpeckers were surprisingly far n. during the 2nd half of Nov, with one at a Trout L., *North Bay* feeder (*fide* DT) and a male and 2 females at feeders in *Algoma* (*fide* BK)

An Acadian Flycatcher called for most of the day at the Toronto Bird Observatory banding site on Muggs I. 1 Sep but may have eventually fallen prey to a Sharp-shinned Hawk (PNP). Single Western Kingbirds were at Singing Sands, *Bruce* 1 Sep (SD), Humber Bay, Toronto 26 Oct (BY), and Britannia C.A., Ottawa 30 Oct (MG)—this last bird flew across the Ottawa R. to Deschênes, Québec, where it remained until 7 Nov (*fide* CL). A **Gray Kingbird** at P.P.N.P. 4 Aug (DEP, JHG et al.) was the 3rd for the Park and the 6th for Ontario.

There were up to 6 White-eyed Vireos at L.P.B.O. mid-Aug to mid-Sep. Several vireo species lingered late in the mild fall weather, with a White-eyed Vireo at P.P.N.P. 25 Nov (MH, LP), a Warbling Vireo at Kingston 23 Nov (HE), a Philadelphia Vireo at Wheatley P.P. 11 Nov (DJW), and single Red-eyed Vireos in Toronto 3 Nov (CSAM) and Brighton 4 Nov (IS). Blue Jay

migration was heavy, with a record 48,200 tallied in five hours at Seaciff, Essex 29 Sep (AW, WGL, MWJ). Many swallows and martins also delayed their departure south, with a Purple Martin at Shrewsbury 22 Oct (KAM), a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at P.P.N.P. 9 Nov (AW, KAM, RLW, HTO), a Bank Swallow at Seaciff 17 Oct (AW), and a Barn Swallow at Long Pt. 15 Nov (L.P.B.O.).

There was a major movement of Black-capped Chickadees through *Thunder Bay* in early Sep, with several hundred seen daily at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, and large numbers reported also from Duluth, MN (*vide* NGE); 400 were tallied at the Tip of Long Pt. 2 Oct (L.P.B.O.). A Tufted Titmouse was unexpected at Prince Edward Pt. 23 Oct (RTS). White-breasted Nuthatches were in unusually good numbers in many areas across the province, especially n. of L. Superior (*vide* NGE).

### THRUSHES THROUGH WARBLERS

There were 180 Eastern Bluebirds in Woodland Cemetery, Hamilton 20 Oct (RZD)! Single Townsend's Solitaires were found in a crab-apple tree s. of Peterborough 27 Oct (PB), in black-thorn bushes at Presqu'île P.P. 27-30 Oct (FH, m. ob., ph.), at Copetown, Hamilton 4-11 Nov (SMG, m. ob.), and at Long Point P.P. 18-23 Nov (DG, m. ob.). Three Gray-cheeked Thrushes banded n. of Rainy River 18 Sep (DHE, BR) were considered rare in the area, but may have been overlooked in the past among the large numbers of migrant Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes. A male Varied Thrush spent the whole day at a feeder in the Northumberland County Forest 2 Nov (KD) but had left by the next morning.

At least one Northern Mockingbird could be found in Thunder Bay to the end of Nov (BT). American Pipits moved s. early, with one at Cobourg harbor 24 Aug (CEG) and 3 there 27 Aug (MJCB). A very early Bohemian Waxwing was at the Two Rivers Airfield, Algonquin P.P. 26 Sep (BKO, BM).

A Nashville Warbler of the w. race *ridgwayi* ("Calaveras Warbler") was closely observed in Presqu'île P.P. 18 Sep and noted to be pumping its tail, unlike nominate birds (DSh). Star of the fall warbler season was a **Virginia's Warbler**, the first for Northern Ontario and the 4th for the province, banded at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory 29 Aug (*vide* NGE). A late Northern Parula lingered at Presqu'île P.P. until 13 Nov (CEG, JG), an Audubon's Warbler was at Sheguiandah, Manitoulin I. 6-7 Nov (GG, CB), and L.P.B.O. banded its latest Black-throated Green Warbler 5 Nov. Single Yellow-throated Warblers were at Bath, *Lennox and Addington* 28 Oct-7 Nov (D&GG, m. ob.) and Barrie I., *Manitoulin* 1-2 Nov (RC). Migrant Palm

Warblers of the eastern race *hypochrysea* were unusually widely reported: P.P.N.P. had only 2 previous records, but this year there were 11 reports there in the 2nd half of Oct (AW et al.), with at least 2 more in the Ottawa area (BDL), 3 in Toronto (*vide* RBHS), and other scattered observations. A late Bay-breasted Warbler was banded at Long Pt. 3 Nov (L.P.B.O.). Twelve hundred Blackpoll Warblers was a high one-day count at Long Pt. 11 Sep (L.P.B.O.). A total of 23 Connecticut Warblers was seen or banded at L.P.B.O. 20 Aug-23 Sep (m. ob.). A hatch-year female Hooded Warbler was unexpected at Colonel Sam Smith Park, Toronto 16 Sep (GC).

### TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

The imm. male Summer Tanager on territory in the Wilson Tract at Long Pt. through the summer was last reported 3 Aug (L.P.B.O.); a female Summer Tanager was in Shell Park, Bronte 20 Oct (CJE, NGE); and Dryden had its first record, a male at a feeder 22-26 Oct (RD, AA), so far the most northerly record of Summer Tanager for the province.

A Spotted x Eastern Towhee hybrid was banded at the Tip of Long Pt. 23 Oct (MH, CH). Rarely seen in migration, 2 Clay-colored Sparrows were in P.P.N.P. 28 Sep (BKE, GML), and an ad. was along railroad tracks in Windsor 21 Oct (RH). A well-watched Lark Sparrow was near Newburgh, *Lennox and Addington* 24-30 Nov+ (BRi, PJG, m. ob.). Single Le Conte's Sparrows were at the traditional site in the long grass of the Two Rivers Airfield, Algonquin P.P. 4 Oct (MRu) and at the Tip of Long Pt. 18 Oct (MH), with 2 more at P.P.N.P. 22 Oct (AW). The passage of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the s. was fairly light, perhaps due to the dry conditions, but there were 8 at Dundas Marsh, Hamilton 29 Sep (RZD).

Algonquin P.P. had at least 6 Northern Cardinals, most at feeders, 18 Oct-5 Nov. This species occurs in the Park primarily as a very rare late-fall wanderer, apparently involving mostly first-year birds in dispersal; the last multiple sightings were in 1993, but there were fewer individuals then than this year (*vide* RGT). These observations are probably part of the general northward expansion of cardinals in the province and accompany several reports from *Thunder Bay* and *Algoma*, with at least one bird as far nw. as Atikokan 4 Nov (JZ). There was a Dickcissel at Prince Edward Pt. 14 Oct (RTS); an ad. female Dickcissel visiting feeders in Ottawa 5-30 Nov+ (G&RJ) provided only the 3rd record for the Ottawa area. The 2 pairs of Brewer's Blackbirds in P.P.N.P. 21 Oct (AW) were the 10th fall record for the Park.

Beginning in Oct, there was a good southerly movement of several finch species, including

Purple Finches, White-winged Crossbills, and Pine Siskins. Feeders were busy for a while, but even in s. Ontario there was a poor cone crop almost everywhere, and most of these birds had proceeded even farther s. before mid-Nov. Common Redpolls were numerous and widespread somewhat later than the other finches and stayed longer. Occasional Hoary Redpolls were found among the Common Redpolls, often at feeders, but a redpoll flock regular for much of Nov on the weedy headland at Cobourg harbor appeared to include 2 distinct Hoary Redpolls, one of the more expected *exilipes* race and the other a large, very pale *hornemanni* (MJCB, CEG, m. ob.).

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