

Ontario



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This summer was remarkable more for the weather than the birding. After a prolonged and cold spring, summer did arrive, heralded by a major storm system that pounded the northern and central parts of the province in early June. As much as 30 cm of rain fell in some areas in less than 24 hours, and the resulting flooding isolated communities, washed out roads and highways, and filled basements. Shoreline-nesting birds were adversely affected throughout the Region, as rapidly rising water levels flooded nests. As a result, few Common Loon nests were successful. July was a month of very high temperatures and humidity, particularly in the southern part of the province. Birding became an effort. Nevertheless, birders worked hard on the second year of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project and by being out, turned up a number of interesting birds including Eared Grebe, Black-headed Gull, White-winged Dove, a possible White-

collared Swift, Chuck-will's-widow, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Abbreviations: G.T.A. (Greater Toronto Area); L.P.B.O. (Long Point Bird Observatory); N.P. (National Park); O.B.R.C. (Ontario Bird Records Committee); P.P. (Provincial Park); S.T.P. (Sewage Treatment Ponds); T.C.B.O. (Thunder Cape Bird Observatory).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A lingering Red-throated Loon at the Tip of Long Point 2 Jun was unusual for the season. Heavy rains during the first part of Jun throughout the n. and cen. parts of the province raised water levels just at the time waterbirds and waterfowl were nesting along shorelines. In Algonquin P.P., all Common Loon nests on Smoke L. were inundated and subsequently lost (EK). In the nw., loon production was down significantly. Long Point had 3 Horned Grebes 20 Jul+, the first Jul record for the area (DG et al.). Red-necked Grebes again nested along L. Ontario from the G.T.O. to Bronte, some using small artificial islands anchored offshore and tolerating

continuous pleasure-boat traffic (m. ob). One nest contained 10 eggs, indicating that the species does on occasion "dump" eggs. In the Sudbury area, 2 pairs nested on Kelley L. (JL). **Eared Grebes** were again present on the Emo S.T.P., with 4 noted 1 Jun and 2 on 7 Jun (DHE, CM, GM). A single was at the Rainy River S.T.P. 1 Jun (DHE, CM, GM). The Emo birds may have attempted to nest, but no evidence of success was found during visits later in the period. Double-crested Cormorants nested for the first time in Algonquin P.P., with 4 nests on an island in Opeongo L. in early Jun (TM) and a single nest on Merchant L. 25 Jul (DS). The Opeongo nests were destroyed by fishermen. An American White Pelican was at Shoreacres Park, G.T.A. 6 Jun (AM, *vide* TAC). Great Egrets nested for the first time in the G.T.A. Three nests were found in a Black-crowned Night-Heron colony on the Leslie Street Spit 20 Jun (m. ob.). At least 4 young fledged from two of the nests. A Cattle Egret was found at the Blenheim landfill 8 Jul (KB), and another was found along the Murray Canal, e. of Brighton 31 Jul (PC). An imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron was at Kelley L., Sudbury 21 Jun, and several ads. were reported from Manitoulin I in Jun (CB). An ad. white-morph Snow Goose lingered at Grafton until 4 Jun (MB), and the last Brant of a large flock in Cobourg Harbour left 3 Jun (MB). A pair of Trumpeter Swans nested near Lively for the 3rd year and had 4 cygnets 21 Jun (JL). Tundra Swans stayed in the s., with one near Selkirk P.P. 1 Jul (JM) and another at Hillman Marsh near Point Pelee N.P. 4 Jul (DJW), an unusual summer record for the area. Canvasbacks were again present during the nesting season on the Leslie Street Spit, but no young were noted (RBHS). A female with recently hatched young was found 11 Jul at the Oshawa Second Marsh (TH) for the first Durham Region nesting record. A Ring-necked Duck at Selkirk P.P. 5 Jul (JM) was unusual, and an unexpected Surf Scoter was present on Little L. near Brighton 7-18 Jul (DM). Ten Long-tailed Ducks off Rock Point P.P. 7 Jul were an interesting summer record (HK). Six Ruddy Ducks at Hillman Marsh 7 Jun were presumed late migrants (AW), while 11 at the Rainy River S.T.P. 1 & 7 Jun with several displaying males suggested possible breeding (DHE, CM, GM). Similarly, a flock of 5 with displaying males was on the Warton S.T.P. 26 Jun (JJ).

VULTURES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Ospreys had a good summer on the Bruce Pen., with five active nests, an encouraging



White-winged Doves continue to appear well out of range across much of the continent. This bird spent 7-20 (here 9) July 2002 at the St. Clair National Wildlife Area, Ontario. *Photograph by Alan Wormington.*

situation (JJ). A pair that nested on top of a tall grain auger on a farm near London in 2001 was enticed this year to use a nest platform placed nearby to avoid the farm machinery (PR). Bald Eagles had 5 active nests in the Long Point area (L.P.B.O.) throughout the period. A nest near Delaware along the Thames R. failed (PR), but a successful one near Wiarton was the first in the area since the 1950s (JJ). Another nest in Lambton County fledged 2 young, the first for that area in 40 years (AM). Breeding Broad-winged Hawks are scarce in sw. Ontario, making a nest found near Skunks Misery, *Middlesex* noteworthy (PR). Four American Kestrels flying over Seacliff near Point Pelee N.P. 23 Jul were record-early fall migrants (AW). A pair of Merlins nested successfully in Presqu'île P.P. for the first time in many years (FH et al.). The Sudbury area had four pairs of nesting Peregrine Falcons, including a pair that used a site on an abandoned smelter chimney 66 m above the ground (JL).

A Sora nest with 4 eggs found in Algonquin P.P. 23 Jun was the first for the park (RT). Two American Avocets at Peacock Pt. 28 Jul were a nice summer find (DG). A Western Willet was seen 1 Jun at Horseshoe Bay and what was likely the same bird 2 Jun at Burgoyne (MEC). An Upland Sandpiper was found at Hanmer, near Sudbury in mid-Jun, the first for the area in many years (CW).

A tardy flock of 47 Sanderlings was at the tip of Point Pelee N.P. 1-3 Jun, a good count for the late date. By early Jul, southbound shorebirds were being seen across the province. Numbers of expected species built slowly through Jul, with a noteworthy Baird's Sandpiper at Kettle Point 15 Aug (AR). A Whimbrel was seen on and off for a week starting 16 Jul (AR), and by 22 Jul 9 Ruddy Turnstones were at the Grand Bend S.T.P. (AR).

JAEGERS THROUGH CROWS

The fall jaeger season got off to a nice start with the discovery of an ad. Long-tailed Jaeger at Kettle Point 15 Jul (CB) that was followed by another on 18 Jul (AR). By mid-Jul, large numbers of Franklin's Gulls had built up in the se. corner of the Lake of the Woods, n. of Rainy R., with 5000 being the most reported (DL). The large numbers likely resulted from birds moving e. after nesting failures in s. Manitoba due to flooding in Jun. Two ad. Little Gulls 10 Jul were record-early fall migrants for Point Pelee N.P. (AW). A **Black-headed Gull** in definitive basic plumage was at the Tip of Point Pelee N.P. 26 Jul (RCR). Lesser Black-backed Gulls summered along the Great Lakes, with a first-summer bird at the Tip of Point Pelee N.P. 7 Jun (AW), a second-summer bird at the same location 26 Jun (RCR), and 2 at Peacock Point 6 Aug (DG). A Glaucous Gull at Rondeau P.P. was last seen in mid-Jul (m. ob.).

A **White-winged Dove** stayed 7-20 Jul at the St. Clair National Wildlife Area (DP). Northern Hawk Owls bred again in the Thunder Bay area, with four nests found during the period (NGE). Most surprising was the discovery of an injured **Chuck-will's-widow** in Point Pelee N.P. 5 Jun (AW). An astonishing report of a **White-collared Swift** was received from Rondeau P.P. 10 Jun (TR). If accepted by the O.B.R.C., it would be a new species for the provincial list. The nearest record to the Region comes from adjacent Michigan, also in spring. An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Rondeau P.P. 10 Jun (SC) was likely moving north, while another 3 Aug at Selkirk P.P. was heading south. Late-migrating single Acadian Flycatchers were found at Point Pelee N.P. 2 Jun (FJU) and 7 Jun (AW).

Work on the Acadian Flycatcher/Hooded Warbler Recovery Programme continued this summer, and while final results are not complete, encouraging numbers of Acadian Flycatchers were found across the s. of the province. A Willow Flycatcher seen and heard at Sudbury 2 Jun was unusual for the area (CW, CB). A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was at Sandhill 14-30 Jul (PG) and at one point was observed sitting in an old Eastern Kingbird nest. A territorial White-eyed Vireo was present at Long Point throughout the period (L.P.B.O.). Two Common Ravens were seen and the calls of young heard near Udora 7 Jul (DB), an indication of the continuing south-

ward movement of the species as a breeding bird. A Horned Lark of the race *praticola* was at Algonquin P.P. 12 Jun. A common breeder in s. Ontario, this race has been rarely observed in the park except as an early spring migrant (KC, DT, RT).

WRENS THROUGH FINCHES

Carolina Wrens benefiting from two mild winters were present and breeding in the G.T.A. in unusually high numbers throughout the period. At least 5 singing males were noted, and a pair was feeding fledged young 13 Jun at Snug Harbour on the Toronto Is. (FP). A House Wren in Algonquin P.P. 18 Jun was the first in 10 years. Forest maturation and the disappearance of small settlements probably contributed to the decline of this formerly common breeding bird (MR, DT). A remarkable 110 nests and 235 occupied territories were found in the G.T.A. during the ongoing Northern Mockingbird Study (*vide* RBHS). Many cases of 2nd, 3rd, and even 4th nestings by the same pair were recorded. Farther n., a single bird was found in Algonquin P.P. 21 Jun, where it is but a rare visitor (JD, CR).

A Black-throated Blue Warbler was at Point Pelee N.P. 23 Jun, an unusual summer record (AW). A Blackpoll Warbler found 13

Jun in Algonquin P.P. was on a record-late date (CJ) and likely the result of the very late spring. To the nw., a strong warbler movement was still ongoing during the 2nd week in Jun along the e. shore of the Lake of the Woods (DHE). At least 20 Cerulean Warbler territories were found in Skunks Misery during the period, a remarkable and encouraging number (PR). Single Worm-eating Warblers were found 1 Jun in the Bachus Woods (L.P.B.O.) and 4 Jun at Point Pelee N.P. (FJU).

Birders on an Ontario Field Ornithologists field tour 16 Jun to the Bruce Pen. were treated to a singing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (JM), quite unexpected for the area and time of year. Surprisingly, another found at the Tip of Point Pelee N.P. 7 Jun was of the subspecies *alterus* (AW), only the 2nd spring record for this subspecies. A Dickcissel was at the Tip of Point Pelee N.P. 3 Jun (DKS). Western Meadowlarks have all but disappeared in the Rainy R. area, where they were a common breeding bird in the pastures and hayfields even five years ago. No obvious changes in the field habitat have occurred, so whatever has caused the decline could be on the wintering grounds or the migration route (DHE). A Yellow-headed Blackbird at Point Pelee N.P. 14-21 Jul was a very unusual summer record (VB, BC et al.), while another on the

Bruce Pen. 5 Jun was likely a lingering migrant (DL). An Orchard Oriole nest with 2 attending ads. was a nice find 23 Jun at Park Head on the Bruce Pen. (JJ) and one of the very few breeding records for the area. A record-late Purple Finch remained 27 May—2 Jun at the Tip of Point Pelee N.P. (DKS, GB, DB).

Cited observers (subregional coordinators in boldface): **Margaret Bain**, Dorothy Balkwill, Gary Balkwill, Dennis Barry, C. Bell, Valerie Blazeski, Carole Buck, **Keith Burk**, Bernie Campbell, Phil Careless, Michael E. Carlson, Steve Charbonneau, Kevin Clute, Thomas A. Crooks, Jason Dombroski, **David H. Elder**, **Nick G. Escott**, Denys Gardner, Don Graham, Phylis Graydon, Fred Helleiner, Tyler Hoar, Colin Jones, **Joe Johnson**, Esther Keyser, Harris Klick, Dan Lee, **John Lemon**, D. Lewington, Alistar MacKensie, Chris Martin, Gord Martin, Arlene McCaw, Trevor Middell, **John Miles**, Dave Mudd, Frank Pinilla, Don Perks, **Pete Read**, Tristan Rheinallt, **Ian Richards** (L.P.B.O.), **Alf Rider**, Ron C. Ridout, Chris Robinson, Michael Runtz, D. Keith Sealy, **Roy B.H. Smith**, Dan Strickland, Doug Tozer, **Ron Tozer**, Fred J. Urie, Dean J. Ware, C. Whitelaw, **Alan Wormington**.



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