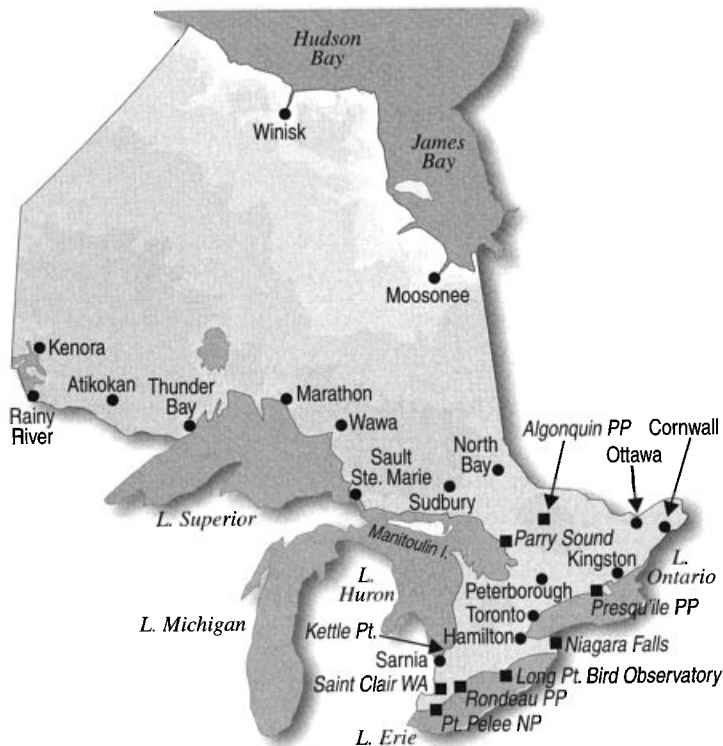


# Ontario



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After one of Ontario's coldest and longest winters in recent years, the spring provided little relief. March continued where February left off, with very cold conditions that allowed ice to linger much longer than usual in small lakes and bays. Arrivals toward the end of the month were confronted with this intense cold, and mortality of landbirds such as Tree Swallows and Eastern Phoebes was apparently high. April and May were considered fairly seasonal in northwestern Ontario, but much of southern and eastern Ontario suffered through a continuation of wet and cold conditions throughout the season, punctuated with occasional short periods of milder, more seasonal weather. Although there were some days when warm winds blew from the south, much of the peak migration period was subjected to cool north and east winds. Overall, migration was thought to be anywhere from one to two weeks behind the norm, with migration continuing well into June.

Few fallouts were noted by Ontario birders, and overshoots of southern species were not as numerous as usual, but the spring was not without its highlights. Such birds as Eurasian Collared-Dove and White-faced Ibis excited southern Ontario birders, but the jewel of the spring had to be the Brewer's Sparrow caught and photographed at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, which would represent the first confirmed provincial record if accepted.

**Abbreviations:** B.S.C. (Bird Studies Canada); C.A. (Conservation Area); L.P.B.O. (Long Point Bird Observatory); N.P.H. (Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch); Pelee (Point Pelee National Park, Essex); P. E. Pt. (Prince Edward Point, Prince Edward); s. l. (sewage lagoons); T.C.B.O. (Thunder Cape Bird Observatory). Place names in *italics* refer to districts and regional municipalities as well as to counties.

### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loons were noted at the usual locations in small numbers, with the largest observed concentration being 20 off Confederation Park, Hamilton-Wentworth 20 May (LE). An imm. Pacific Loon was reported from P. E. Pt. 14 May (LP), and an alternate-plumaged ad. appeared on the w. side of the Tip of Pelee 16 May (BME, PK et al.). The 96 Horned Grebes at the Tip of Long Pt., Norfolk 25 Apr (L.P.B.O.) provided a record-high

count for the area. Much earlier, Red-necked Grebes began returning to s. Ontario in Feb and early Mar, confronted with harsh conditions and extensive ice. For example, one early individual foraged in a small open stretch of Junction Cr. near Lively, Sudbury 7-21 Mar (JL), and an unfortunate bird found newly dead on a frozen L. of Two Rivers in Algonquin P.P., Nipissing 19 Mar was the earliest ever recorded in the park (BSt, RS). Later in the season, Red-necked Grebes were seen in good numbers, with a high count of 1028 at the Leslie Street Spit, Toronto 19 Apr (GC); up to 3 were in the Pelee area during May (m. ob.), and at least one pair was again seen nesting at Bronte Harbour, Halton during early May (GE). A single Eared Grebe kept company with a female Ruddy Duck in the Rainy River sewage ponds 29-31 May (SH et al.).

An ad. Northern Gannet was seen flying past P. E. Pt. 10 Apr (JHE), and 2 ad. American White Pelicans soared from the Tip of Pelee to the park's visitor center 23 May (WJC et al.). S. Ontario hosted good numbers of Great Egrets during the period, the earliest arriving 24 Mar at Hamilton Harbour (FH). To the n., Rainy River had its 3rd ever Great Egret, at Atikokan 9 Apr (m. ob.). Other single birds were on St. Joseph I., Algoma 18-27 Apr (KM) and at Thunder Bay 27 Apr (MT). Single Snowy Egrets appeared in May, including birds at Carp, Ottawa 3 May (RH), at the Tip of Pelee 9 May (JRC, RZD), at Horseshoe Bay, Bruce 20-23 May (FJ, m. ob.), and on Amherst I. 21-27 May (TM et al.). An ad. Little Blue Heron was s. of Sparrow Field, Pelee 13 May (DJM et al.), and up to 3 Cattle Egrets were in the Pelee area, with one at Gore Hill 26-27 Apr (TP et al.) and 2 w. of Wheatley Harbour 2-3 May (DJW et al.). A Glossy Ibis was seen in a small marsh in Ottawa 17 May (MA), but the only other reported ibis of the spring was one at Pelee, initially seen flying into Sanctuary Pond 4 May (AW); the bird was refound at Sturgeon Creek, Essex 5 May and identified as an ad. White-faced Ibis (m. ob.).

Two pairs of *frontalis* Greater White-fronted Geese were at Sturgeon Creek, Essex 23 May (DJW et al.), and an ad. was in a farm field near Ottawa 21 Apr (BB, CL). Up to 6 Ross's Geese were reported in s. Ontario this spring: an ad. was near Navan, Ottawa 26 Mar (RB), another was at Coyote Pond in Markham, York 1 Apr (SL), 2 ads. were at Bourget, Prescott and Russell 12 Apr (BB, CL, PM, BS), and another 2 were at the Townsend s. l., Haldimand 12 Apr (SB, NM). A Barnacle Goose of unknown provenance was photographed in farm fields near Ottawa 20-21 Apr (RP), and an unbanded imm. Trumpeter Swan was n. of North Russell, Prescott and Russell 23-27 Apr (JM, m. ob.); a tagged Trumpeter Swan, which had wintered in nearby Lake of Bays, returned to Little Joe L., Algonquin P.P. 1 May (m. ob.). There was a peak count of over 10,000 Tundra Swans at

Port Rowan, *Norfolk* 21 Mar (L.P.B.O.), and one photographed at Brulé L. 10–17 May (KC et al.) was very rare for Algonquin P.P. Single male Eurasian Wigeons were at Port Royal, *Norfolk* from 23 Mar to mid-May (DT et al.) and at Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 27 Mar (FHe, m. ob.). Additionally, single hybrid Eurasian x American Wigeons were at Hillman Marsh, *Essex* 29 Mar–1 May (DJW, m. ob.) and at Port Royal 12 Apr (RR).

This spring, other hybrid ducks were at Hillman Marsh, including a male American Wigeon x Mallard 29 Mar (DJW), a male Mallard x Northern Pintail 12 Apr (AW), and a male Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler 29 Apr (AW). Manitoulin I.'s 2nd record of Cinnamon Teal was furnished by 2 near Evansville 25 Apr (DB, LB); a male was at Chippewa, Thunder Bay 15 May (BMo).

An ad. male Tufted Duck was at Shirleys Bay, Ottawa 30 Apr–7 May (HT, m. ob.), the first for the Ottawa Valley. The ad. male King Eider on L. Ontario off Stoney Cr. remained until 11 Mar (m. ob.), and an imm. male was in the same area 2–28 Mar (AG, m. ob.). A female Common Eider at the Tip of Pelee 10 May (KAM et al.) and 19 May (GTH et al.) supplied Pelee with its 2nd spring record. Pelee's 2nd spring Harlequin Duck record, an ad. male, was at the Tip 18 Apr (JS et al.). The overwintering female Harlequin Duck at Remic Rapids, Ottawa remained until at least 21 Apr (m. ob.). The rapids also hosted at least one male and one female Barrow's Goldeneye during the winter and early spring, with courtship behavior seen on 15 Apr (m. ob.). Other Barrow's Goldeneyes included a male off Bronte, *Halton* 9–11 Mar (BC, m. ob.), another male at Rideau Ferry, *Lanark* 26–31 Mar (EL), and a pair at Wolsey L. on Manitoulin I. 12–13 Apr (JI, CB et al.). Provincially rare as breeders, two courting pairs of Ruddy Ducks at the Rainy River s. l. 30 May (m. ob.) were also rare for the District.

### RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The first Mississippi Kite for e. Ontario was an ad. bird seen flying over Ottawa 1 May (MG); Pelee had an ad. on 6 May (CE, WL, DRD, FM et al.) and an imm. 13 May (FP, BMD, KAM et al.), while Rondeau P.P., *Kent* had an ad. 13 May (SM, JF et al.) and a subad. 25 May (BAM, SC, KJB, JB). An imm. Mississippi Kite at Grimsby, *Niagara* 14 May (GM) provided the Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch with its 2nd record. Although park naturalists had long suspected Bald Eagles were nesting in Algonquin P.P., the first proof of breeding in the park was supplied by park staff who photographed a pair nest-building near Dickson L. 30 Apr (m. ob.). A rare Krider's Red-tailed Hawk was seen at Grimsby 13 Apr

(N.P.H.), and a Rough-legged Hawk lingered late on Amherst I. 25 May (m. ob.). An imm. Golden Eagle flew over West Beach 6 May (RZD), and a white-morph Gyrfalcon was reported at Grimsby 11 Mar (*vide* BM).

It was a good spring for people wishing to hear Yellow Rails in s. Ontario. Up to 6 were at the Wylie Road marsh, *Kawartha Lakes* during May (m. ob.), and single birds were



Rare in Ontario at any season, this Little Blue Heron was south of Sparrow Field, Point Pelee 13 May 2003. Photograph by Alan Worrington.

heard at Presqu'île P.P. 10–24 May (FHe, m. ob.) and at Rondeau P.P. 25 May (KJB). A very early Sora was reported from near Port Bruce, *Elgin* 24 Mar (RK, *vide* DAM). Amazingly, Pelee's first Common Moorhen in almost three years was a bird at Pelee Marsh 27–30 Apr (JBa, RM, SMa et al.). The Black-bellied Plover at Hillman Marsh on 11 Apr was record early for the Pelee area (AW). Perhaps the last Piping Plover in Ontario, a banded individual was seen at the se. corner of Lake-of-the-Woods 31 May (m. ob.). A Lesser Yellowlegs was record early at Pelee, present in the Onion Fields 19–22 Mar (AW) at the beginning of a warm spell. S. Ontario enjoyed a fruitful spring for Willets, with birds appearing on the shores of both L. Erie and L. Ontario. The 38 at Fish Pt. 4 May (RT) were record high for Pelee I., and they may have been the ones located at Hillman Marsh the next day (AW et al.). In total, approximately 76 individuals were seen at Pelee this spring. Elsewhere, 17 Willets were at Turkey Pt., *Norfolk* 5 May (RC, GS), 2 were at Presqu'île P.P. 6 May (m. ob.), and 6 were at LaSalle Park in Burlington on the same day (KN). Two record-early Whimbrels were at the Tip of Long Point 27 Apr (CF et al.). Marbled Godwits appeared at Hillman Marsh during May, with one 1 May (JBa, FJU et al.), 5 on 15 May (GA), and one 23 May (m. ob.); Hurkett, *Thunder Bay* hosted another 27 May (NGE). Manitoulin I. had a Western Sandpiper at the Mississagi Lighthouse 24 May (CB). Very rare in spring in the Pelee area, 5 Stilt Sandpipers at Wheatley P.P., *Kent* 12 May (AW, CHG et al.) represented the area's highest ever spring

count. Pelee's 12th Ruff was an orange ad. male at Wheatley P.P. 7–13 May (GTH et al.). Another orange male was at Embrun s. l., *Prescott and Russell* 10–13 May (ET, m. ob.). The bitterly cold and frozen conditions seen in early Apr caused many migrant Wilson's Snipe and American Woodcocks to be seen desperately foraging in roadside ditches and backyards; stories of dead, frozen birds were widespread. Later in the spring, the 200+ Wilson's Phalaropes at the Rainy River s. l. 30 May was a good count (m. ob.).

### JAEGERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Cootes Paradise, *Hamilton* had a Parasitic Jaeger 4 May (RV), and another was at T.C.B.O. in late May (T.C.B.O.). Single Laughing Gulls were at Newcastle Harbour, *Durham* 19–26 May (EA, MJC, m. ob.), at Wheatley Harbour 20 May (GTH), at the Tip of Pelee 20–21 May (BLM, TAH et al.), and at West Bay, Manitoulin I. 27 May (RCA, ph.). A Franklin's Gull was at the B.S.C. Headquarters in Port Rowan, *Norfolk* 6 May (DT et al.). Numbers of Little Gulls swelled at Oshawa Second Marsh during Apr, peaking at 116 on 3 May (TH, RJ), and an ad. Black-headed Gull was at Wheatley Harbour 31 Mar–6 Apr (AW et al.). The earliest-ever Bonaparte's Gulls to return to the Ottawa area were the 14 found to the e. of the city 29 Mar. Several Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at a number of typical locations in s. Ontario, but Thunder Bay had its first ever with an ad. at Mission I. 5 May (BMo). A Caspian Tern at Big Creek N.W.A., *Norfolk* 29 Mar was record early for the Long Pt. area (PR). An Arctic Tern was at Oshawa Second Marsh 25 May (TH et al.), and 2 others were identified at Long Pt. P.P. 31 May (BJ, JH, CF, RR et al.).

Three Eurasian Collared-Doves were in s. Ontario during the spring. One was found at Marysville, *Hastings* 5 May (BR) and stayed to at least 31 May, exhibiting nest-building behavior (m. ob.). Others were at Rondeau P.P. 8–24 May (AW, m. ob.) and at Pelee 13 May, the area's 2nd record (BMD et al.). A White-winged Dove was at Presqu'île P.P. 15–17 May, the first for *Northumberland* (WG, m. ob.). Amherst I. had a late Snowy Owl 6 May (VPM), and a Great Gray Owl was at Newburgh, *Lennox and Addington* 2 Mar (SCo). Long Pt. had up to 3 Chuck-will's-widows, including 2 early singles at the Tip (CF et al.) and at Long Pt. P.P. 1 May (TW, DL, RR, SW), and one at the Tip 28 May (CF et al.); another was at LaSalle, *Essex* 15 May (PDP). The first Belted Kingfisher to overwinter successfully in Algonquin P.P. survived until at least 22 Mar, at Tea L. Dam (CBo). A Red-headed Woodpecker was record early 13 Apr at Wheatley Harbour (PDC). Oak Grove Camp on the Rainy R. had a calling Red-bellied Woodpecker 29 May (RT), which may have been the same bird as in 2002. Although Pileated Woodpeckers are not rare in much of

Ontario, they are seldom seen in sparsely-treed Essex. The individual seen at Pelee 4 May (MWPR, SER, WAM) was the first record there since 1963. Holiday Beach, Essex hosted probably the same bird 15 May (IC, MAB et al.).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH MEADOWLARKS

Early flycatchers at Pelee included 2 different Acadian Flycatchers 3 May (DJM, DAM et al.) and a Willow Flycatcher 6 May (FJU). The 512 Least Flycatchers at Pelee 16 May were individually counted and represent an all-time record count for the area (FJU). Many Eastern Phoebes succumbed to the harsh conditions during early Apr, with some areas reporting fewer breeding birds than normal. A Say's Phoebe was near Silver Water, Manitoulin I. 12 May (DB). A well-described imm. male **Vermilion Flycatcher** was reported from a farm near Cayuga, *Haldimand* 19 Apr (JD) but disappeared before others could see it. A Black-billed Magpie was at Guelph, *Wellington* 18 Mar, but its provenance is uncertain (SM). A Fish Crow was seen feeding with a second-year Bald Eagle at the entrance to Pelee 12 May (GC), and Rondeau P.P. had another 14 May (AW, SD, BK).

The first returning Tree Swallows were early, at Mayfield, *Peel* 16 Mar (AP, DD) and at Hamilton Harbour 17 Mar (RZD); the 238 in the Pelee area 29 Mar (STP, AW) provided a record-high count for Mar. Additional early swallows included a Northern Rough-winged Swallow 29 Mar at the Tip of Pelee (AW), a Cliff Swallow at Pelee 24 Mar (AW), and a Barn Swallow near Jarvis, *Haldimand* 16 Mar (SMi). Exceptionally late for a spring migrant, a Brown Creeper was at Pelee 25 May (SS). A surprise shipmate was a Mountain Bluebird, which landed on a fishing boat near St. Ignace I. in L. Superior 23 May (PP). The male Varied Thrush at Prinyer's Cove, *Prince Edward* remained until 15 Apr (TS). Another Varied Thrush was in Scarborough, *Toronto* 11–14 Apr but may have been there for up to three weeks previously (CH, m. ob.). Locally rare, a Northern Mockingbird visited a feeder in Whitney, *Nipissing* during early Mar (JBo, KB).

A male **Virginia's Warbler** was seen at Port Lambton, *Lambton* 14 May (BAM) but could not be relocated. A male **Townsend's Warbler** was at Nolalu, *Thunder Bay* 21 May (FN, EK), and a young female **Hermit Warbler** was at Pelee 7 May (KK et al.) for the area's 3rd record; interestingly, a second-year female Hermit Warbler was banded at the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory at Cabot Head 13 May (EM). A Kirtland's Warbler was at Breakwater 15 May (HR, MB) for Long Pt.'s 2nd record; another was at Pelee 17 May (ER, MR et al.). Away from sw. Ontario, single Worm-eating Warblers were near Glencoe, *Middlesex* 22 Apr (DAM, LW) and at P. E. Pt. 20 May (KE). The first Kentucky Warbler for n.

Ontario was one banded at T.C.B.O. 29 May (T.C.B.O.). Record early were a Mourning Warbler at Pelee 5 May (JDL) and a Hooded Warbler there 9 Apr (AW). Up to 18 Summer Tanagers were seen 30 Apr–23 May, with most occurring at Pelee, but with several at each of Long Pt. and Pelee I. (m. ob.).



Continuing its decade-long expansion, White-faced Ibis was reported well out of range in many places this spring. This bird was found 4 May 2003 but first identified as a White-faced at Sturgeon Creek, Ontario 5 May. Photograph by Alan Wormington.

The Spotted Towhee in North Dumfries, *Waterloo* survived the winter and lingered into Apr (WW). An apparent hybrid Chipping Sparrow x Clay-colored Sparrow was at Rondeau P.P. 3–5 May (AW et al.). A male **Brewer's Sparrow** was captured, banded, and photographed at T.C.B.O. 27 May (JW), which is likely the first confirmed record for Ontario. Single Lark Sparrows were reported from six locations in s. Ontario, e. to P. E. Pt. and n. to Manitoulin I. (m. ob.). Three Henslow's Sparrows were at Pelee between 16 Apr and 20 May (m. ob.), one was on Pelee I. 9 May (PJ, JVD), and another was well to the n. at Nonquon s. l., *Durham* 17 May (MJCB). Pelee had a Le Conte's Sparrow 1 May (MEC), and one was at Fish Point, Pelee I. 4 May (JMc). A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at Pelee 15 May (m. ob.). The freezing conditions and ice-covered fields in *Prince Edward* during early Apr brought many birds to the grit-covered road shoulders. At Pt. Petre, hundreds of sparrows were flocking at the road edge 7 Apr, including 31 Fox Sparrows along one 500-m stretch (MLH); similarly high concentrations were reported from the Lambton/Huron shores area, providing the area with its biggest and most distinct movement of these birds in 35 years (*vide* AHR). Record early, a Fox Sparrow was at the Algonquin P.P. Visitor Center 1 Apr (LPa), while a very late Fox Sparrow was on the Leslie Street Spit, *Toronto* 25 May (m. ob.). A Harris's

Sparrow appeared at a feeder in Nipigon, *Thunder Bay* 19 May (SF), and a male Golden-crowned Sparrow was heard singing at Hurckett, *Thunder Bay* on the same day (GW, m. ob.). Rondeau P.P. hosted a female Blue Grosbeak 12–19 May (EP, m. ob.), while Pelee I. had single males 12 & 19 May (JWo; RTy). E. Ontario's first **Painted Bunting** was a male videotaped as it visited a feeder near Ashton, *Lanark* 12–13 May (JA, PA); an imm. male was at Breakwater, Long Pt. 18 May (HR, KBu). Single Dickcissels were at the Tip of Long Pt. 1 May (LPBO), at Pelee 15 May (D&DL), and at Cobourg, *Northumberland* 20 May (CEG). Single Western Meadowlarks were seen at the Blenheim s. l., *Chatham-Kent* 4 May (SC) and in Carnarvon Township, Manitoulin I. 26 May (CW).

Cited observers (subregional editors in bold-face): G. Ackert, J. Akers, P. Akers, E. Allin, M. Apse, B. Andrie, D. Bailey, L. Bailey, M.J.C. Bain, S. Bajurny, J. Ball (JBa), R. Bedford, C. Bell, M.A. Biro, C. Boettger (CBo), J. Borrowman (JBo), K. Borrowman, B. Bracken, M. Bradstreet, E. Brown, J. Burk, K.J. Burk, K. Burrell (KBu), R. Campbell (RCa), I. Cannell, J.R. Carley, M.E. Carlson, S. Charbonneau, B. Cheriére, K. Clute, G. Coady, P.D. Cole, S. Cowan (SCo), W.J. Crins, R. Curry, J. Dickey, B.M. DiLabio, S. Dobbyn, R.Z. Dobos, D.R. Don, D. Duckworth, C. Edgcombe, G. Edmonstone, K. Edwards, D.H. Elder, J.H. Ellis, N.G. Escott, L. Evans, B.M. Ewald, J. Fairchild, S. Foulds, C. Friis, A. Gancz, M. Gawn, W. Gilmour, C.E. Goodwin, C.H. Grether, S. Hadlington, T.A. Hanrahan, F. Harrison, F. Helleiner (FHe), J. Heslop, G.T. Hince, T. Hoar, M.L. Holder, R. Holland, C. Horner, T.P. Hurst, J. Iron, F. Jazvac, B. Jones, P. Jones, R. Joos, R. Kingswood, E. Knudsen, B. Korol, P. Kornaker, D.&D. Lauper, E. Leblanc, J. Lemon, C. Lewis, J.D. Lockrey, S. Long, Long Point Bird Observatory, W. Luft, B. Mackenzie, S. Mackenzie (SMa), V.P. Mackenzie, R. Mackintosh, S. Mackintosh, B.A. Mann, D.A. Martin, W.A. Martin, J. McAllister (JMc), J. McCormick, T. McGowan, K. McIlwrick, K.A. McLaughlin, E. Meleg, G. Meyers, J. Miles, S. Miles (SMi), D.J. Milsom, P. Mirsky, B. Moore (BMo), B.L. Morin, F. Morley, N. Murr, K. Newcombe, Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch, F. Nigro, P. Paquette, L. Paul, L. Pauze (LPa), S.T. Pike, F. Pinilla, A. Pinteric, R. Poulin, P.D. Pratt, E. Pye, E. Rauckis, M. Rauckis, P. Read, A.H. Rider, R. Ridout, M. Riggs (MRi), B. Ripley, H. Robert, M.W.P. Runtz, S.E. Rupert, B. Scott, J. Shaffer, G. Slessor, R.B.H. Smith, T. Sprague, B. Steinberg, R. Stronks, S. Suebert, E. Ticknor, D. Tozer, H. Tremblay, M. Turner, R. Tozer, R. Tymstra (RTy), F.J. Urie, R. Valentine, J. Van Dieen, D.J. Ware, R.D. Weir, C. Whitelaw, S. Wilcox, G. Williams, W. Wilson, L. Wladarski, J. Woodcock, J. Woodford (JWo), T. Woodrow, A. Wormington. 🐦