

# Ontario



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The late summer and fall is a time of transitional weather, and when one considers the huge size of the province of Ontario, just about every condition possible will likely occur. On the same day in mid-August, hot and humid conditions in southwestern Ontario contrasted sharply with the first snow of the approaching winter along the Hudson Bay coast far to the north. Summer tended to ease out slowly through most of the central and southern parts of the province, with enjoyable weather the rule. In the northwest, an unpleasant taste of winter arrived in mid-September, when a week of cold resulted in several inches of snow on the ground. Once the snow melted, a more settled but slowly cooling trend was the rule for the majority of the province. The approach and arrival of Hurricane Isabel was the most anticipated weather event of the period (see the Special Report, this

issue). Another anticipated event was the arrival of Cave Swallows in early November, again in the southern part of the province.

The fall migration was rather unspectacular, and many birders commented on how birds just seemed to slip away, with low numbers and little buildup in many cases. Of course, rare birds did turn up: Band-tailed Pigeons in Sudbury and London, a Rufous Hummingbird in Kingston, a Kentucky Warbler near Thunder Bay, and a Ross's Gull in Point Pelee National Park were seen by birders from across the province.

**Abbreviations:** C.A. (Conservation Area); G.T.A. (Greater Toronto Area); K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists); L.P.B.O. (Long Pt. Bird Observatory); O.B.R.C. (Ontario Bird Records Committee); P.E. Pt. (Prince Edward Pt.); P.P.N.P. (Pt. Pelee National Park); S.T.P. (Sewage Treatment Ponds); T.C.B.O. (Thunder Cape Bird Observatory).

### LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Red-throated Loons were noted across the s. part of the province, primarily off the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario. The largest number seen at one time was 8 off

Selkirk P.P. 19 Oct (MRo, CH), while a total of 9 was recorded 6 Oct–14 Nov at Amherst I. and P.E. Pt. (K.F.N.). Individuals were off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 31 Oct (AW), 5 Nov (AW, RLW), and 12 Nov (STP). A juv. in Algonquin P.P. 24 Oct was the 3rd record for the park (CBo, KC). Observers at Kettle Pt. noted 2 on 20 Sep, one on 3 Oct, and 2 more were found at Pinery P.P. 30 Nov (AR). In the G.T.A., an early single was at the Leslie Street Spit 31 Aug (JCa). A Pacific Loon was found 2 Nov with 392 Common Loons at P.E. Pt. (K.F.N.). Common Loons also concentrated at Rondeau, with 500 counted 18 Oct (SC). A nice count of 321 Pied-billed Grebes was made near Rondeau P.P. 12 Oct (JBU). A Horned Grebe at Long Pt. 16 Aug was early (L.P.B.O.), as were 12 at Presqu'ile P.P. 1 Sep (BMD). Peak numbers were 120 at P.E. Pt. 6 Oct and 800 there 2 Nov (K.F.N.), with 40 at the Tip of P.P.N.P. 23 Oct (AW). Red-necked Grebes were still nesting on Kelly L. at Sudbury 7 Aug, with 7 there 18 Sep (JL). The Bronte Harbour nesting site held 8 ads. and 2 imms. 24 Aug (NM). Good numbers of Red-neckeds were found on L. Ontario near Rattray Marsh: 61 on 9 Sep (GB), 106 on 6 Oct (DEP), and 53 on 31 Oct (DEP). Single Eared Grebes were found off the East Beach of P.P.N.P. 5 Nov (KAM, RLW), 8 Sep at the Townsend S.T.P. (TT), 23–25 Aug at the Alfred S.T.P. (the 4th record for e. Ontario; BMD), and 22–27 at Cobourg (MB, LW).

American White Pelicans, all singles, were at Cootes Paradise, Hamilton 28 Aug–1 Sep (RSta), over the Holiday Beach raptor banding station 25 Sep (G&DB), at Peacock Pt. 2 Sep (DG), and over the Hillman Marsh near P.P.N.P. 23 Sep (DJ, JB et al.). Great Egrets bred successfully on the Leslie Street Spit, G.T.A., with 3 fledged young noted 23 Aug (RBHS, WY). A wayward bird was found far to the n. at Eagle R., w. of Dryden 23 Sep (CE), and another was n. of Ottawa 11 Sep (MT). A record-late one was on Amherst I. 6 Nov (JHE). The period's only Snowy Egret was found on the rather late date of 6 Nov at Selkirk P.P. (JM). A Cattle Egret at Moosonee 13–16 Oct furnished the 2nd record for s. James Bay (D&DR), while at the other end of the province, one was noted near Marysville 17 Oct (VPM). Other singles were at Wheatley Harbour 3 Nov and at Sanctuary Pond, P.P.N.P. 5 Nov (KAM, RLW), at Sturgeon Cr. 31 Oct–15 Nov (SM), and another at Thunder Bay 20 Oct (AH). The only Glossy Ibis of the period was at Holiday Beach near Wheatley 17–30 Oct (DJW).

Several Black Vultures were found across the s. part of the province, with single birds at P.E. Pt. 10 Sep (DO) and in the same area at the late date of 1 Nov (K.F.N.), the 2nd

and 3rd records for the area. One was at the Tip of P.P.N.P. 9 Aug (AW), and another was at the Townsend S.T.P. 8 Sep (TT). A more n. record was a bird at North Bay 8 Aug (SO'D). Good numbers of Turkey Vultures moved over the G.T.A., with 746 counted 2 Oct and 309 counted 5 Oct from the High Park Hawkwatch (HS). An additional 333 were over Birchwood Park 2 Oct (DEP). At Wheatley 210 were counted in 3 hours at the rather late date of 8 Nov (AW).

### WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Two Greater White-fronted Geese were at Burlington 24–25 Oct (DD et al.), and 3 were at the Jack Miner Sanctuary near Kingsville 13 Nov (DJW). Another 2, apparently *flavirostris*, were found 30 Oct at Sturgeon Cr. (FD, IW, RPH). A Snow Goose at Long Pt. 4 Sep was very early (L.P.B.O.); 18 were noted over High Park, G.T.A. 1 Nov (AA); and 52 were over Kettle Pt. 3 Nov (AR). A flock of 45 over Van Wagners Beach 2 Nov was a high count for the Hamilton area (BCr). Ross's Geese put in a good appearance, with singles at Erieau 16 Nov (JB, KB et al.), at Lowbanks 23 Nov (WD'A et al.), Selkirk PP 2 Sep (JM), at West Lake Harbour 25–26 Sep (MR et al.), and at Thunder Bay 28 Sep (BM). Of particular interest was a small flock of 5 at Hillman Marsh 16 Nov (DJW, DS). Long Pt. had 2 Brant 19 Oct (L.P.B.O.), with 2 more at the Tip of P.P.N.P. 7 Nov (KAM, RLW). Farther e., 150 were at Cobourg and 117 at Presqu'île P.P. 28 Oct (CEG). The Long Pt. area held 10,000+ Tundra Swans in mid-Nov (L.P.B.O.). A single Tundra Swan first found in Algonquin P.P. 10 May remained to 21 Sep, for a first summer and only the 3rd fall record (CBo). A remarkable flock of 12,500 American Wigeons at Rondeau constituted a new area high, while 3700 was the maximum noted at Kingston 2 Nov (K.F.N.). A Common Eider at Long Pt. 9 Oct–1 Nov provided the first record for the area, and another was at P.E. Pt. 13–27 Sep (DO). A Harlequin Duck was constant at Port Credit 17–28 Nov (DEP), and 2 flying past the Tip of P.P.N.P. 21 Sep were early (STP et al.). A flock of 50 Surf Scoters at Cobourg 22 Oct represented the highest count there in a decade (MB); 50 off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 7 Oct were early (KAM). A Black Scoter off Van Wagners Beach 18 Sep was also early (WD'A). A Long-tailed Duck on Nym L. e. of Atikokan 31 Oct provided the first area record and only the 2nd for the Rainy River District (DHE). A Bufflehead in Algonquin P.P. 27 Nov provided a late park date (CB et al.). Up to 5 Barrow's Goldeneyes were scattered along the Ottawa R. 27 Oct Nov+ (BB, m. ob.), with a single present at Stoney Cr. 8–30 Nov (BC, LC). Excellent numbers of

Red-breasted Mergansers were recorded off Cobourg, with three counts exceeding 2000, peaking 28 Oct with 3176 (LW).

Bald Eagles continue to increase throughout the province, with at least 20 noted at Long Pt. 10 Sep (L.P.B.O.) and 62 at the Atikokan landfill 3 Nov (DHE). Hawkwatchers at Port Hope had some very good fall counts of Red-shouldered Hawks, among them 15 on 19 Oct and 18 on 22 Oct (RF). In addition, a locally high count of 263 Red-tailed Hawks was made 19 Oct (RF). A dark-morph *Harlan's Hawk* was well studied at the tip of P.P.N.P. 14 Nov, for the first park record (AW et al.). A nice movement of 217 Rough-legged Hawks was observed along the coast of L. Superior near Marathon 20 Oct (AW, MJ). An imm. Golden Eagle flew over the Thetford S.T.P. 9 Nov (AR), and an ad. was over Ivy Lea 16 Nov (RDW). One in Algonquin P.P. 20 Sep furnished a new early date for fall (VM). A total of 11 was noted in the P.P.N.P. area 22 Oct–30 Nov (m. ob.), and 10 were counted over the G.T.A. 2 Oct–21 Nov (m. ob.). A single Gyrfalcon was first noted in Thunder Bay 19 Nov (BR). A remarkable high count of 35 Peregrine Falcons was made during a morning watch at the Tip of P.P.N.P. 12 Oct (M&SK).

A juv. Purple Gallinule was at Holiday Beach 26–27 Sep (BP), and another at Shirleys Bay on the Ottawa R. 28 Sep (JW) provided the 3rd area record. The first fall record for Sandhill Cranes in Algonquin P.P. occurred 22 Oct, when 15 flew over Cedar L. (DS, RS). An unbanded Piping Plover was at the tip of P.P.N.P. 31 Aug–4 Sep (JC, BG et al.). Single American Avocets found their way to Long Pt. 2 Sep (L.P.B.O.), to the Chesterfield S.T.P. 18–20 Sep (2nd Ottawa area record; JW), with a different bird at the nearby Winchester S.T.P. 28–29 Sep (MG). Elsewhere, one found the Leslie Street Spit 30 Aug–1 Sep (PNP), and another was on Amherst I. 3–13 Oct (BMD). The Blenheim S.T.P. was very attractive to Hudsonian Godwits: one was there 17 Aug (KB, JB), 7 on 13 Sep (BM), and 4 on 27 Sep (BM et al.). Two were also found 11–16 Oct on Amherst I. (K.F.N.). The P.P.N.P. area had a record-late Marbled Godwit 24 Oct at Sturgeon Cr. (DJW). Single Western Sandpipers appeared 24 Aug at P.E. Pt. (RTS), 13 Sep on Amherst I. (JHE, RDW), 15 Sep at Presqu'île P.P. (BMD), and at Sturgeon Cr. 8 Oct and 27 Oct–5 Nov (KAM, AW). Presqu'île P.P. hosted a record-high 32 Baird's Sandpipers 1 Sep (BMD), and another large concentration of 31 was at the Copper Cliff tailings ponds near Sudbury 4 Sep (JL, CB). A single at Atikokan 17 Aug was rare for the area (DHE). Dunlin moved over P.E. Pt. and Amherst I. in high numbers, with 1890 grounded by poor

weather 2 Nov (K.F.N.). A juv. Stilt Sandpiper lingered at Sturgeon Cr. 24 Oct–1 Nov (AW et al.). Buff-breasted Sandpipers were found in good numbers in the onion fields near P.P.N.P. 24 Aug–10 Oct: 13 on 30 Aug was the highest count there (AW et al.), and a total of 13 was found on Amherst I. 3 Sep–12 Oct (PJG). Singles were seen at Toronto I. 7 Aug (GC) and the tip of Long Pt. 16 Aug (L.P.B.O.). A Ruff was at the Blenheim S.T.P. 16–17 Aug (PC, AR), and a Long-billed Dowitcher tarried at Sturgeon Cr. to 7 Nov (AW et al.). The Townsend S.T.P. attracted 3 Red-necked Phalaropes 7 Sep (CBu, CD'A). Four Red Phalaropes were off Van Wagners Beach 10–13 Sep (BC), and a single was found on Amherst I. 17 Nov (RDW).

### GULLS THROUGH CROWS

There was a good fall flight of jaegers, with all three species reported. Single Pomarine Jaegers were identified off P.E. Pt. 30 Aug (DO), off Van Wagners Beach 7 Sep (BK et al.) and 4 Nov (MA), and off Fort Erie 22 Sep (DB). At least 57 Parasitic Jaegers were counted from Van Wagners Beach during the period, with the first noted 31 Aug (BH et al.), a maximum of 20 counted 2 Sep (BC), and the last noted 4 Nov (RZD). At least 6 were at Fort Erie 22 Sep (DB et al.), and a light-morph bird was at Shirleys Bay 23 Sep (DM), a rarity for the area. A remarkable 5 Long-tailed Jaegers were off Kettle Pt. 3 Sep (AR), feeding from the surface and chasing nearby gulls. Singles were off Van Wagners Beach 23 Aug (RZD, BCh) and 3 Sep (BH, EH).

The only Laughing Gull reported was an ad. seen near Petticoat Cr. C.A. 14 Sep (RJ), in advance of the hurricane. A Franklin's Gull at Moosonee S.T.P. 27 Sep–8 Oct was the 2nd record for the s. James Bay area (D&DR). Elsewhere, singles were found at Kingston 1 Nov (K.F.N.) and at Hillman Marsh 26 Aug (KAM) and 27 Oct (DJW). A Black-headed Gull in late Nov at L. Fanshawe near London was quite unexpected (BL). Two Bonaparte's Gulls were in Algonquin P.P. 1 Nov, a late date for the park by five weeks (DT, RT). A juv. Thayer's Gull was at the Thunder Bay marina 18 Oct (AW, NE), and an Iceland Gull at Long Pt. 2 Sep was record early (L.P.B.O.). As usual, a California Gull was consistent at Niagara Falls Nov+ (m. ob.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in good numbers, with the earliest noted 31 Aug off Van Wagners Beach (RZD). Long Pt. had 23 on 14 Sep (L.P.B.O.), and 11 were at Shirleys Bay in mid-Sep (BMD). Ottawa birders were treated to the area's first Slaty-backed Gull, a second-winter bird discovered at the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre 12 Nov; it remained at least to 27 Nov (CM,

**SA** Once again, **Cave Swallows** appeared in s. Ontario in mid-autumn. A total of 21 birds was recorded, as compared to 110–120 in 1999 and 9 in 2002. Two distinct waves occurred. The first wave began 1 Nov with a single bird at Niagara Falls (TS), 3 farther n. at Tobermory 4 Nov (EJM), one at Cranberry Marsh 6–7 Nov (KJ, DK), 3 at the Tip of P.P.N.P. 7 Nov (KAM, RLW), and 2 the same day at the Tip of Long Pt. (L.P.B.O.). On 8 Nov, 2 were at Erieau (BM), 2 at the onion fields near P.P.N.P. (AW et al.), and a single at Sturgeon Cr. (STP). One found 8 Nov at Pt. Petre, Prince Edward was picked up dead 10 Nov; it proved to be of the expected sw. race *pelodoma* (WT). On 9 Nov, singles were noted on the L. Erie shore s. of Hillman Marsh (MBR) and at the Tip of P.P.N.P. (RPH et al.). The last of the wave was found at Cedar Springs, with one bird 10 Nov (KB).

The next wave moved into the Great Lakes area about 23 Nov on a mass of warm air and sw. winds. Most of the birds recorded were s. and e. of the lakes, with only one making it into Ontario at Cranberry Marsh 26 Nov (DK, DL). It had the misfortune to be caught by a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

14 Sep (NG), allowing close and conclusive study. A first winter Black-headed Grosbeak at a feeder 24–30 Nov in Pakenham was a first record for the Ottawa area (BJ, MJa, TB, m. ob.). Common Redpolls, scarce during the past winter everywhere in Ontario, appeared in good numbers by mid-Oct. A count of 6900 was made 20 Oct near Marathon, as flocks of redpolls moved steadily nw. along the coast of L. Superior (AW, MJ). A Eurasian Tree Sparrow was seen 24 Aug in Leamington, the 2nd record for the P.P.N.P. area.

**Cited observers** (subregional contributors in boldface): Alfred Adamo, M. Apse, William Argue, **Margaret J. C. Bain**, Stan Bajurny, G. & D. Balkwill, Jan Barnett, Dave Beadle, Tony Beck, C. Bell, Anne Blanchette, Chris Boettger, **Bob Bracken**, A. Brethour, George Bryant, Jim Burk, **Keith Burk**, Chris Burns, Alvin Cameron, John Carley, R.J. Cermak, Pet Chapman, Steve Charbanneau, B. Charlton, Barry Cheriére, Linda Cheriére, Kevin Clute, Glenn Coady, James Cole, Bill Crins, F. Dale, C. D'Aguilar, W. D'Anna, Bruce M. DiLabio, Ron Z. Dobos, Dave Don, Carrolle Eady, Gavin Edmonstone, **David H. Elder**, J.H. Ellis, **Nick Escott**, Manson Fleguel, R. Ford, Rodney Fuentes, Deny Gardiner, Mark Gawn, P. J. Good, Clive E. Goodwin, Brett Groves, Jack Hanna, Al Harris, C. Heffernan, Jim Heslop, B. Holden, E. Holden, S. Holden, Randy P. Horvath, Mike Jacques, Karl Jennewein, Mark Jennings, Bob Jourmain, Dave Jolly, R. Joos, Dan Kaczynski, A. Keaveney, Michael & Susan Kielb, Burke Korol, Rick Lauzon, J. Lemon, Bill Lindley, Doug Lockrey, N. Macdonald, V.P. Mackenzie, Sophie Macsoud, Blake Mann, D.A. Martin, Virgil Martin, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Ethan J. Meleg, Chris Michener, **John Miles**, D.J. Milsom, B. Moore, Dave Moore, Norman C. Murr, S. O'Donnell, D. Okines, John Olmsted, Oiva & Velta Paju, Jeanette B. Pepper, B. Pettit, Stephen T. Pike, B., M. & G. Prieksaitis, P.N. Prior, Brian Ratcliff, **Peter Read**, Marianne B. Reid, Ian Richards, Alf Rider, **Maureen Riggs**, Julie Rosenthal, M. Ross, Dan & Diane Ryder, D.R. Salisbury, J. Scott, Howard Shapiro, Troy Shively, Dan Simpson, **R.B.H. Smith**, R.T. Sprague, Bob Stamp, R. Stavinga, Dan Strickland, Rick Stronks, Margo Swainson, Mike Tate, Tom Thomas, Wynne Thomas, Doug Tozer, **Ron Tozer**, Paul E. Turnquest, Robert L. Waldhuber, John Walmsley, Dean J. Ware, **Ron D. Weir**, L. Wensley, C. Whiteclaw, John Woodcock, Irene Woods, **Alan Wormington**, B. Wylie, Colin Young, W. Yung. Other observers submitting observations not cited herein have our deepest thanks. 🐦

MF et al.).

Sabine's Gulls were also well reported, with a total of 4 off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 31 Aug–3 Oct (AW, IR et al.), 11 juvs. off Van Wagners Beach 2 Sep (AK, RZD), and 4 at Sarnia 2 Oct (AR). Single juv. Black-legged Kittiwakes appeared off Van Wagners Beach 31 Aug (BH, EH) and 13 Sep (DD et al.), with 2 there 9 Sep (BC). Two were also noted at Kettle Pt. 13 Nov (AR). An ad. **Ross's Gull** off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 12 Sep was a total surprise (AW, PET et al.): the bird furnished the 2nd park record and was nearly six weeks earlier than any previous record for the province, at least s. of the Arctic. A nice flock of 3000 Common Terns was at Buff Bar, Long Pt. 17 Sep (L.P.B.O.), and 900 were on the Leamington dock 17 Aug (AW). A molting Forster's Tern at Shirleys Bay 18–20 Sep was the first area record since 1991 (BMD).

A **Band-tailed Pigeon** visited feeders at Westree near Sudbury 26 Sep into mid-Oct (AB, CW), and another was found in London 17 Nov (GM, PR, m. ob.) and remained there into Jan, despite regular harassment by a Cooper's Hawk. A Eurasian Collared-Dove was noted at Bronte Harbour 3 Aug (GE). Single Black-billed Cuckoos found in P.P.N.P. (NCM, SB) and P.E. Pt. (JHE, RDW) 2 Nov were record late for both areas. Very few owls were reported, despite the apparent abundance of mice, voles, and shrews. On 11 Nov, a single Snowy Owl was on Amherst I. (JS), and a Great Gray Owl at Algonquin P.P. 10 Oct was thought to be a resident rather than one from farther north (KC, RT et al.).

In London, good numbers of Chimney Swifts were observed entering chimneys to roost in Sep and early Oct, with high counts of 460 on 23 Sep and 620 on 28 Sep (m. ob.). A Rufous Hummingbird found a feeder in Kingston 21 Nov and remained Nov+ for a 3rd area record (K.F.N.). Red-bellied Woodpeckers invaded the n. shore of L. Superior, with single birds at Marathon 14 Nov (RFu), Rosspoint 19 Oct (AW, MJ), Red Rock 7–9 Oct (O&VP),

Thunder Bay 25 Nov (NE), Kakabeka Falls 16 Nov (BR), and Atikokan 16 Dec (CY, DHE). Elsewhere, 2 were found in the Ottawa area, where the species is rare, with one 30 Oct at Carp (WA) and one 18 Nov at North Gower (AC). A Western Kingbird delighted many birders at Pembroke 30 Oct–2 Nov (CM, m. ob.), and another was found at Long Pt. 21 Sep (RFo et al.). On 19 Oct, a wandering Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was noted 30 km e. of Thunder Bay along Hwy 11/17 (JR); far to the s., an imm. was at Rondeau 5 Oct (BM). Black-billed Magpies moved into the Atikokan area in early Oct for the first winter in 20 years, with at least 3 seen at the landfill and at feeders in town (DHE).

### THRUSHES THROUGH FINCHES

A Northern Wheatear was a nice find at Moose Factory 10 Oct (AW, MJ). Quite unexpected was a Northern Mockingbird at Nipigon 20 Nov (ABI). Some 50 American Pipits at Lakeport 10 Nov was a remarkable number for that late in the fall (CEG). Bohemian Waxwings moved into nw. Ontario rather early, with large flocks present in Atikokan by 9 Oct (DHE). The waxwings and American Robins quickly consumed the abundant Mountain Ash berry crop and promptly disappeared. A Kentucky Warbler was banded at the T.C.B.O. 13 Oct, the 2nd Thunder Bay record (JWo), whereas a Hooded Warbler banded 26 Sep at Selkirk P.P. was a first fall record for the area (JM). A Lark Sparrow was at the T.C.B.O. 13–14 Sep (JWo). In Algonquin P.P., a concentrated search in suitable sedge habitat turned up at least 10 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows 3–12 Oct (RT et al.). Prior to this effort, the species had been recorded only twice in the park. A Lincoln's Sparrow was found a feeder in Atikokan in early Oct and remained into Nov+, surviving temperatures down to  $-37^{\circ}$  C. (DHE); there are very few previous winter records for the province. A Smith's Longspur was found in a convenient location on a lawn at the Thunder Bay marina