

Despite the relatively mild winter in much of Ontario, March and April remained cooler than normal overall and fairly quiet from the perspective of rarities. Spring migration appeared delayed at many locales, with pushes of returning migrants occurring later than usual. However, as is often the case, there were many exceptions that set local record-early dates, if only by a few days. Cold and wet conditions in March and April changed to warmer and more seasonal conditions in May, although that had the consequence for birders in allowing migrants to over-fly many traditional birding spots. Fallouts were noted at the end of April, but few were noted afterwards. Highlights included White-faced Ibis, Rock Wren, Bell's Vireo, and two colorful buntings, a Lazuli Bunting and a Painted Bunting, which enthused those who were able to see them.

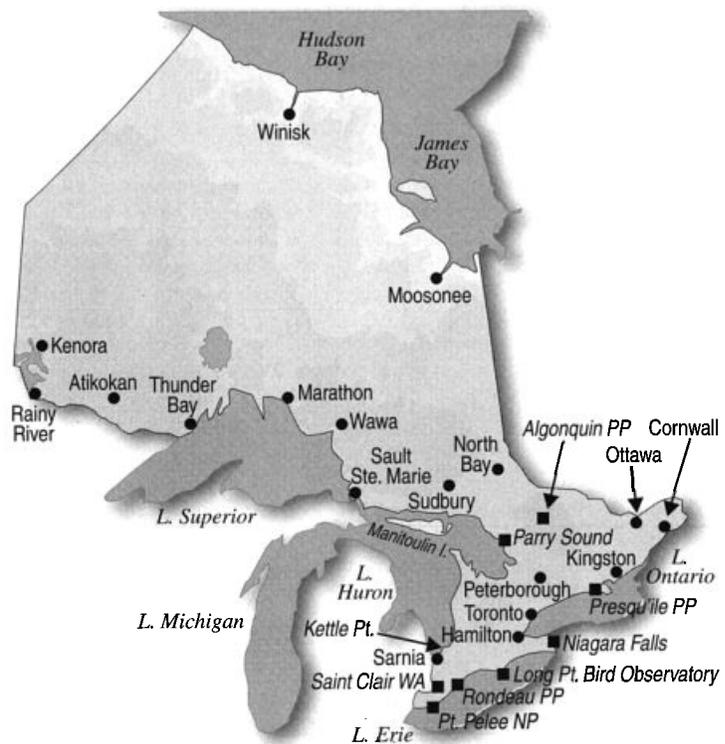
Abbreviations: N.P.H. (Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch); Pelee (Point Pelee N.P., Essex); P. E. Pt. (Prince Edward Pt., Prince Edward); T.C.B.O. (Thunder Cape B.O.). Place names in *italics* refer to districts and regional municipalities as well as to counties.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

As is usual, numbers of Red-throated Loons appeared on the Great Lakes through the spring, with the highest count being 86 individuals at one spot along the L. Huron shoreline, near Kincardine, *Bruce* 6 Apr (MLH). A Pacific Loon was at Cabot Head, *Bruce* 17 May (VM, GS). On 6 Apr, Brights Grove, *Lambton*, had 2 Horned Grebes (JMi), and at least 2000 Red-necked Grebes were at Ben Machree Park, *Peel* (BF, RS). Humber Bay Park in Toronto had an Eared Grebe 29 Mar (BY), another was at the Tip of Pelee 12 Apr (HTO), one was reported from Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* 22 Apr (*fide* TH), and another was at Exeter S.T.P., *Middlesex* 30 May (RT). Rock Pt., *Haldimand* had an American White Pelican 23 May (PY, BH), and a Great Cormorant was observed at P.E. Pt. 20 May (DO). Thirty active Double-crested Cormorant nests were counted 30 May on Gull I. in Algonquin P.P. (RSt), more than double the number of nests seen there last year. The peak of Double-crested Cormorants at Kingston reached 10,000 on 21–22 May (KFN).

Single Snowy Egrets were at Pelee 15 May (RGT, LA et al.), Amherst I., *Lennox and Addington* 24 May (KH, BR), and Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* 29 May (DAS). A Little Blue Heron stayed at Brantford 11–13 May (JP), a Tricolored Heron was reported from Rock Pt. 22 May (BW), and an ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at Sturgeon Creek, *Essex* 25–26 Apr (MG, NG et al.). The province's 4th White-faced Ibis, and the 2nd for Pelee, was at Holiday Harbour 9 May (JMG, JNF et al.). Single Black Vultures were in *Haldimand*, e. of Marburg 18 Apr (MGa) and near Dufferin 14 May (MF). Other singles were at London, *Middlesex* 29 Mar (ARA), at Beamer C.A.,

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Niagara 5 Apr (TT et al.), at Pt. Petre, *Prince Edward* 19 Apr (*fide* RTS), at Pelee 15 May (MJ, JK et al.), at Tobermory, *Bruce* 19 May (JH), and at P.E. Pt. 29 May (EM).

Greater White-fronted Geese were at Peterborough 10 Mar (AA), at Sandbanks P.P., *Prince Edward* 13–17 Mar (JB et al.), at Carlsbad Springs, *Ottawa-Carleton* 28 Mar (YL), in Thunder Bay from 9 Apr into May (TA), and in Ottawa 13 Apr (BD). Away from the typically large numbers in e. Ontario, a flock of approximately 100 Snow Geese was significant at Binbrook, Hamilton 7 Mar (BK, RKi), surpassed by a flock of 150 near Port Dover, *Norfolk* on the same day (GB). A Ross's Goose was at Amherstburg, *Essex* 6 Mar (*fide* AW), one was at Aylmer W.M.A., *Elgin* 24–26 Apr (KS et al.), and up to 2 were in the Hamilton area, with one near Vinemount 28 Mar (BHo, EH) and one at Mountsberg Res. 6 Apr (AMi); remarkably, one was found at Lavigne on L. Nipissing 30 Mar (AMa, GM). Only the 4th ever spring record for Pelee, 7 Brant were at the Tip 5 May (BM, LK). The peak number of Tundra Swans in the Pinery area, *Lambton* was tallied 17 Mar, with approximately 16,000 noted (AR). Presqu'ile P.P., *Northumberland* had a Eurasian Wigeon 4 Apr (BD), and potentially the same bird, accompanied by an unidentified female wigeon, was observed there 1 May (DM, BG, RA); other single males were at Townsend S.T.P. 10 Mar (DSa, RS,

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LM, Exeter S.T.P., *Middlesex* 22 Apr (RT), and the Provincial mill, *Thunder Bay* 9 May (SB). A pair of Cinnamon Teal at nw. Hillman Marsh, *Essex* furnished Pelee's 3rd record (MH, RF et al.).

Algonquin P.P., *Nipissing*, had a pair of record-early Ring-necked Ducks 29 Mar (RGT). At P.E. Pt., a King Eider was observed 10 Mar (JHE, PJG, VPM), and another was at Gull Pt., Presqu'ile P.P., *Northumberland* 8–15 Apr (DM, MR). An ad. female Common Eider at the Tip of Pelee (KAM et al.) was probably the same bird present in the area in 2003 and may also be the same individual observed elsewhere in L. Erie during the past two years. A single male Harlequin Duck was at Humber Bay, Toronto 18 Mar–30 Apr (BY, m.ob.), but a pair was at Ben Machree Park, *Peel* 21 Mar–11 Apr (GC). Numbers of White-winged Scoters at P.E. Pt. peaked at 1295 on 20 Apr (RTS), while the peak number of Long-tailed

Ducks, totaling approximately 50,000 birds, occurred 10 Mar (KFN). Single Barrow's Goldeneyes were observed on Hamilton Harbour 2–21 Mar (RC, GSI; m.ob.) and Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 3 Apr (BD).

RAPTORS THROUGH RAILS

Single Mississippi Kites were at Pelee 13 (JS et al.) & 15 May (HMS et al.). Bald Eagles were nesting near Kettle Pt., *Lambton* as early as 19 Mar, despite the late spring (AR). New high one-day counts of Rough-legged Hawk at Beamer C.A., *Niagara* were 46 on 29 Mar and 37 on 16 Apr (N.P.H.); a late Rough-legged was at Pelee 16 May (BHo, EH, SH) and Pelee I. 17 May (GG, DW), and another was at Cabot Head, *Bruce* 27 May (SM). Golden Eagles in the Kingston region included single birds at Howe I. Apr 7 (*vide* RDW), at P.E. Pt. 26 Apr (DO), and at Chaffey's Lock 1 May (JS). Technology combined with nesting habits of Peregrine Falcons can make bird at-lasing easy: webcam images of a Peregrine nest with eggs in Toronto provided confirmed breeding evidence 20 Mar (SHa). Spring Peregrines are a rare sight in *Lambton*, so the individuals seen at Kettle Pt. 26 Apr (AR) and at Grand Bend S.T.P. 22 May (AR) were noteworthy. The Peregrine seen at Arowhron Rd. 25 Apr was Algonquin P.P.'s earliest ever (BD). Algonquin P.P.'s 4th ever Wild Turkey was at Basin Depot 29 Apr (JY, DSm); the park's first record came only two years ago.

A Yellow Rail was early at the Sedge Wren Marsh in Carden Twp., *Kawartha Lakes* 27 Apr (AA, BP, TB), and one was at the Marsh Boardwalk, Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 29 Apr–May, with 2 reported 7 May (JB, m.ob.); another was heard calling in the marsh at the mouth of the Wolf R. in Dorion, *Thunder Bay* in May. The King Rail banded at Rock Pt., *Haldimand* 14 May was a very rare treat for bird banders (JL, JS).

PLOVERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A female Wilson's Plover at Tollgate Ponds, Hamilton Harbour 15–19 May (KW; m.ob.) was an excellent find, only the 3rd for Hamilton. A Piping Plover with color-bands on the legs at Burlington Beachstrip, *Halton* 7 May (IR) was determined to have been banded as a hatchling in Michigan in 2003, different from an unmarked bird seen 8 May at nw. Hillman Marsh, *Essex* (JL et al.). Interestingly, one of the 2 Piping Plovers seen on Pelee I. in late May was banded and was also determined to have come from Michigan (PAW); it has been suggested that the observations of Piping Plover at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* 11–17 May and 22–23 May pertain to 2 birds, one banded and one not banded (DK, JD).

Pelee I.'s first Black-necked Stilt was at Pelee I. Bird Observatory 18 May (*vide* DW). On the same day, a pair of stilts was found at Jarvis S.T.P., *Haldimand* (BJ). These birds were seen copulating at Townsend S.T.P. 19 May

(MK, CK), and a nest with three eggs was found near the Jarvis S.T.P. 28 May for the first confirmed nesting of Black-necked Stilt in Ontario (MP et al.). Unfortunately, the nest was later abandoned, with only pieces of eggshell remaining, presumably a result of predation.

A collection of American Avocets was seen at nw. Hillman Marsh, *Essex* in late Apr: 3 birds were there 22 Apr (TAY, CA), surpassed by 14 on 27 Apr (GDB et al.). This spring saw a remarkable number of Willets at Pelee, with a total of 258 birds seen. The 130 Willets at nw. Hillman Marsh 5 May represented a high count for the province (KAM). Elsewhere, a Willet was at the Chippewa S.T.P., *Thunder Bay* 21 May (BMo), and another was at Tollgate Ponds, Hamilton Harbour 22 May (MC). Three Hudsonian Godwits were near Pelee 25 May (GJ), which earlier had 4 Marbled Godwits 27 Apr (DW, GDB et al.), one lingering to 5 May. A Marbled Godwit was also at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* 29–30 Apr (TH). The Sanderling at the Tip of Pelee 24 Apr was a very early arrival (STP). Three Semipalmated Sandpipers at Canoe L. 16 May were Algonquin P.P.'s earliest ever (JR), and a Western Sandpiper was at Blenheim, *Chatham-Kent* 7 May (RC, GSI). Up to 2 Stilt Sandpipers were at nw. Hillman Marsh, *Essex* in mid-May (KAM, RLW et al.), and single Ruffs were at Embrun S.T.P. 2–3 May (Reeve; *vide* CL) and at Blenheim S.T.P., *Chatham-Kent* 5 May (black Ruff; SC). The 395 Short-billed Dowitchers at Pelee 10 May was a record-high tally for the area (AW, BSC, LC et al.).

Three Pomarine Jaegers were an exciting find at the Tip of Pelee 17 May, representing the first spring record for Pelee (DS, PRA, LMD, CT). A total of 3–4 Laughing Gulls came from Pelee, with singles 9 (DW), 17–19 (EPL, RJC et al.), 22–23 (DW et al.), & 24 May (BG, VLM). A first-summer Franklin's Gull was at sw. Hillman Marsh 22 May (ICP, GP, PAR, RR). Single ad. Black-headed Gulls were at Coterie Park, *Essex* 27 Mar–2 Apr (AW et al.), Queenston, *Niagara* 28 Mar (GB), and Port Elgin, *Bruce* 15 Apr (MP et al.), with an imm. at Blenheim S.T.P., *Chatham-Kent* 6 May (ARo, LJ). A very late Thayer's Gull was at Wheatley Harbour 22 May (KAM), and an ad. Black-legged Kittiwake was at the Tip of Pelee 19 May, representing the 4th spring record for the area (LW, BJo, EZ et al.). A Forster's Tern was e. to Ottawa 24 May (CL, BB).

The Band-tailed Pigeon that successfully overwintered in London, *Middlesex* remained until 10 Apr (m.ob.). Pelee's first White-winged Dove was seen 15 May (MB, RKO et al.), one was at Tobermory 8–9 May (DWI, MW), and another was in the n., in a backyard in s. Thunder Bay 22 May (JC). Great Gray Owls were relatively numerous in *Thunder Bay* this spring, with at least seven reports coming from the district in late Apr and May;

2 were banded at Thunder Cape (NGE). It is unknown whether these birds were breeding locally or lingering on their way to other breeding grounds. The Short-eared Owl at Jake L. tower 21–22 Apr provided one of Algonquin P.P.'s few records of this species, which is very rare in the park (JLo). A Lewis's Woodpecker was reported n. of Stratton, near Kenora (*vide* NGE). The declining Red-headed Woodpecker had a good showing in Ontario this spring, with more significant reports including 2 reaching Thunder Bay in May, Algonquin P.P.'s first since 1990 at Lake of Two Rivers Picnic Area 26–28 May (CB et al.), and 32 birds flying s. off the Tip of Pelee 30 Apr (RGT, PT, AW). Very rare in n. Ontario, a Red-bellied Woodpecker was banded at Thunder Cape 19 May (T.C.B.O.), the district's 2nd of the spring. A male Black-backed Woodpecker was s. to Serena Grundy Park, Toronto 1–2 Apr (AJ).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Western Kingbird was on the Sibley Pen., *Thunder Bay* 24 May (AE). The Loggerhead Shrike at Hastings 20 Apr was the first spring record in the area since 1999 (CEG et al.). The first Pelee record since 1992, a Bell's Vireo was at nw. Hillman Marsh 16 May (GTH et al.). The Warbling Vireo at Pelee 22 Apr was record early for the area (MBR, JHa). Leucistic and albino birds are not so rare as to be noteworthy in all cases, but an all-white Gray Jay visiting a feeder in Kaministiquia, *Thunder Bay* in Mar was unusual (*vide* BRa). Common Ravens appear to be extending their range southward, with records becoming more regular s. of the Precambrian Shield. One was at Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 27 Mar (DM, BG, MR), another was at P.E. Pt. 20 Apr (DM, BD), and a 3rd was s. to the Beverly Swamp, Hamilton 27 Apr (AMS). Kingston had a Tufted Titmouse 29–30 Mar (BR, FA, RSa et al.), Howe I. hosted one 4–5 Apr (SD), and Lynde Shores C.A., *Durham* had one 24 Apr (JG, WR). Remarkably, Elk L., *Timiskaming*, hosted a Rock Wren 4–7 May (SVP et al.; ph.). A Varied Thrush lingered at Beverly Swamp 27 Mar–16 Apr (PDS, AMS), and a Sage Thrasher was banded at Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* in late May (T.C.B.O.).

Very rare in n. Ontario, 4 Golden-winged Warblers were also banded at Thunder Cape this spring (JW, ph.). A Lawrence's Warbler was reported from Lighthouse Pt., Pelee I. 13 May (*vide* DW). Algonquin P.P. had record-early Magnolia and Yellow-rumped Warblers 1 May (DT; CB, KC), while on the same date, Kettle Pt., *Lambton* hosted a fallout of Yellow-rumped Warblers, with 1000 birds observed moving in from before dawn to about 10 a.m., moving ne. along the L. Huron shoreline (AR). Single Yellow-throated Warblers were at P.E. Pt. 19–22 Apr (EBa, VPM), at Cabot Head, *Bruce* 7 May (RG, AD, SM), and at Pelee 24 Apr (FJU, RPH et al.) and 1–8 (LA et al.),

16 (GSh), & 20 May (possibly 2 birds; BF, FJU et al.). Pelee I. also hosted one on 14 May (m.ob.). Kirtland's Warblers at Pelee included an ad. male 11 May (RO, JO) and an imm. male 17–19 May (AAd, DL). Prairie Warblers were picked up in good numbers across the province, with 17 reported from Pelee alone (m.ob.). Rare for the area, a Yellow Palm Warbler was at Pelee 24 Apr (STP), and the Blackpoll Warbler at Pelee 30 Apr was very early (HTO). Away from sw. Ontario, a male Prothonotary Warbler at Hendrie Valley, Burlington 26 Apr (MA) was an early migrant, and a Worm-eating Warbler was n. to High Park, Toronto 4–5 May (JP). Other Worm-eatings were at Cabot Head, *Bruce* 30 Apr and 12 May (SM et al.) and P.E. Pt. 17 May (EBa, VPM). A Swainson's Warbler was at Pelee 11 May, the 3rd record for the area (JWB, ST). The Ovenbird at Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 29 Apr was apparently the earliest record for the park (BG). Away from traditional breeding areas, a Louisiana Waterthrush was at Moore Park Ravine, Toronto 8 May (HK), and a singing male was near Ahmic Harbour 20–22 May, the first record for *Parry Sound* (AM). Kentucky Warblers were at Rondeau P.P., *Chatham-Kent* 3 May (DB et al.), and another was at Thickson's Woods, *Durham* 14–15 May (MBa). Pelee furnished what may be a record-early Mourning Warbler, seen 3 May at Post Woods (CP). A Hooded Warbler in an Oakville backyard, *Halton* 18–20 Apr (A&JE; m.ob.) was very early.

Exceptional numbers of Summer Tanagers were observed in late Apr and May. Pelee had a total of 25, and individuals were seen daily on Pelee I. (m.ob.). Away from Essex, an imm. male was found at Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland* 29 Apr (BG, RA, DSh, IS), another imm. male lingered in *Thunder Bay* 1–2 May (WF), one was at Port Hope, *Northumberland* 2 May (RFR), one was at Thickson's Woods, *Durham* 2–4 May (m.ob.), a male was at Kincardine, *Bruce* 14–17 May (RKn), single birds were at P.E. Pt. 16 (Kingston Field Naturalists) & 31 May (MWPR), and a male was at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* 22 May (WR). Clay-colored Sparrows are seldom found in large numbers on spring passage at Pelee, so the 19 seen at Pelee this spring was an excellent total, including 8 on 10 May (AW, WGL, KAM et al.). In with the thousand Yellow-rumped Warblers mentioned above, approximately the same number of Savannah Sparrows was estimated at Kettle Pt. 1 May, followed by a fallout of approximately 5000 White-throated, White-crowned, Chipping, and Field Sparrows the next day (AR). Always a rare sight due to their genuine rarity and secretive habits, single Henslow's Sparrows at Pelee 29 Apr (JHa, MBR) and 11–12 May (RLW, BNC, DBo) tantalized observers; another was at Windsor, Essex 5 May (DMc). Pelee hosted single Le Conte's Sparrows 2–3 (MS, PAR, SR et al.),

9–10 (MWJ, DEO et al.), 11 (LM, CM), & 14 May (m.ob.). Elsewhere, singles were discovered at Thickson's Woods, *Durham* 27 Apr (m.ob.), Pelee I. 15 May (OG, AK), and at the old airfield in Algonquin P.P., *Nipissing* 19 May (CB). Algonquin P.P.'s earliest-ever Fox Sparrows arrived at the Algonquin Visitor Centre 30 Mar (CB, KC). A number of sparrows successfully overwintered in nw. Ontario, the most interesting being a Lincoln's Sparrow that survived in Atikokan, *Rainy River* (DHE). In s. Ontario, single Harris's Sparrows were at Wheatley P.P. 8–10 May (m.ob.), Long Pt., *Norfolk* 9 May (BHo, EH), and Pelee 10 May (SE, LH, DY et al.). An ad. male Oregon Junco was at Pelee 27 Mar (ACP). The spring flight of Lapland Longspurs along the L. Erie shoreline was noteworthy this year. The peak day at Selkirk P.P., *Haldimand* was 23 Apr, when 249 were counted during an 80-minute census around the banding area, and at least 400 were estimated to have flown over that day (*vide* JM). Similar numbers were observed at Rock Pt., where 221 were counted flying over the banding site 27 Apr (JLe, JS), and up to 400 were estimated in a field near Stromness, *Haldimand* 28 Apr (JLe, JS).

In *Thunder Bay*, where rare, Northern Cardinals appeared in Pardee Twp. and Silver Islet in May (m.ob.). A Black-headed Grosbeak was reported from Harrington, *Middlesex* 12 May (SHt). Blue Grosbeaks were mostly restricted to Pelee and Pelee I., with 3 at the former locale, on 3 (EKA), 13 (BHg, KHg), & 16 May (MBM), and one on Pelee I. 15 May (OG, AK); a male was reported from Port Elgin, *Bruce* 14 May (CC). A **Lazuli Bunting** graced the feeders of a home in Ottawa 29–31 May (DH), and a male **Painted Bunting** was photographed at Cherry Valley, *Prince Edward* 12 May only (*vide* RTS). Individual Dickcissels were at Wheatley P.P. 10 May and at Pelee 12 (AW, CHG et al.) & 14 May (JA et al.). The 75 Bobolinks at the Toronto Bird Observatory 10 May provided a noteworthy daily tally at the banding station (DD et al.). A singing male Western Meadowlark was found at Cabot Head, *Bruce* 26 May (SM). An apparent male Bullock's Oriole x Baltimore Oriole hybrid was reported from Pearl, *Thunder Bay* on the last few days of May (ER). A pair of White-winged Crossbills lingered at Pelee 27 May, suggesting the possibility of nesting in the area (KAC). With the recent increase in observations of European finches in the Great Lakes region, it is tempting to speculate that they pertain to wild birds as opposed to escaped cagebirds. Regardless, the European Goldfinch in *Thunder Bay* was stunning, first seen on Sibley Pen. 24 May (AE, PH), then later appearing at the tip at Thunder Cape, where it was netted, banded, and photographed (JW). Two were in a flock of American Goldfinches at P.E. Pt. 19 May (*vide* RTS).

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