

Breeding Birds of Ontario: Nidology and Distribution

Volume 1: Nonpasserines

(First Revision - Part C: Jaegers to Woodpeckers)

by
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Parasitic Jaeger, *Stercorarius parasiticus*

4 nests representing 1 provincial region. During the past decade 2 more nests have been found, both near the Hudson Bay coast in Kenora District. One nest containing 2 eggs was found 23 June 1991 near the mouth of the Brant River, and the other contained 1 egg when it was located on 16 June 1992, just west of Winisk. Both nests were in grass/sedge meadows and 1 was on a mound 46 cm (18 inches) high and 91 cm (36 inches) in diameter.

Little Gull, *Larus minutus*

23 records (9 colonies, 3 isolated nestings, 28 nests) representing 5 provincial regions. The 9 colonies ranged from 2 to 5 nests and averaged more than 2 but less than 3 nests. In addition to the 1984 nesting and breeding records from Kenora District outlined in Appendix A, Volume 2 (Peck and James 1987), the Little Gull continued to nest on North Limestone Island, Georgian Bay, Parry Sound District, with 2 nests in 1981, 1 in 1983, 2 in 1984 and 2 nests in 1989.

EGGS 23 nests with 1 to 3 eggs; **1E** (2N), **2E** (2N), **3E** (19N).

Average clutch range 3 eggs (19 nests).

EGG DATES 23 nests, 27 May to 21 July (39 dates); 12 nests, 12 June to 19 June.

Bonaparte's Gull, *Larus philadelphia*

11 records (40 nests) representing 4 provincial regions. A usually solitary nester, pairs of this gull may sometimes nest in loose proximity to each other, thus approximating coloniality. New nest records have been received from near the mouth of the Shagamu River in Kenora (1990), and the Ogoki Reservoir in Thunder Bay (1976).

A high nest in a black spruce was 15 m (49 ft) above ground. This same nest had an outside diameter of 22 cm (8.7 inches); inside diameter of 12 cm (4.7 inches); outside depth of 10 cm (3.9 inches); and inside depth of 6 cm (2.4 inches).

EGGS 8 nests with 2 to 3 eggs; **2E** (3N), **3E** (5N).

Average clutch range 3 eggs (5 nests).

Ring-billed Gull, *Larus delawarensis*

476 records (196 colonies, 15 single nestings, ca 829,549 nests) representing 32 provincial regions. The Ontario population of this larid has increased dramatically and more and larger colonies are being reported. The average size of 148 colonies totalling 730,224 nests, was 4,934 nests. New nesting regions are Halton (1990), Hamilton-Wentworth (1986), Lambton (1987), Lennox and Addington (1985), Peel (1989), Prescott (1983), Sudbury (1988), and Timiskaming (1985). A mixed colony at Lake of the Woods, Kenora, also contained American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Common Tern.

Unusual colony sites were on the flat roof of a building at Owen Sound in Grey in 1985-7 (Blokpoel and Smith 1988), and in a fenced zoo enclosure at Toronto in 1989. In one island colony some nests were in the branches of dead and fallen trees.

Outside diameters of 6 nests ranged from 25 to 32 cm (9.8 to 12.6 inches); inside diameters from 12.5 to 20 cm (4.9 to 7.9 inches); outside depths from 2 to 7.5 cm (0.8 to 3 inches).

EGG DATES 9 April (Niagara) to 30 July.

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*

1024 records representing 37 provincial regions. Nest records have been obtained from near the Little Shagamu River in Kenora (1990), Lennox and Addington (1964), Middlesex (1983), Peel (1989), and Stormont (1976).

Colony nesting on the flat roofs of buildings was reported in Bruce and Grey in 1985-7 (Blokpoel and Smith 1988).



Figure 1: Nest and two eggs of Great Black-backed Gull, 17 May 1989, Little Haystack Island, Bruce County. Photo by G.K. Peck.

Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*

32 records (6 colonies, 24 single nestings, 43 nests) representing 9 provincial regions. In the past decade this species has continued to nest in Ontario along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, with new nest sites at Bruce (1988-9), Durham (1981), Haldimand-Norfolk (1991), Manitoulin (1991), Prince Edward (1986), and Stormont (1988). The 6 colonies ranged from 2 to 5 nests with an average just over 3.

EGGS 31 nests with 1 to 3 eggs; 1E (6N), 2E (12N), 3E (13N).

Average clutch range 2 to 3 eggs (25 nests).

EGG DATES 23 nests, 28 April to 29 June; 11 nests, 14 May to 24 May. The 19 July egg date given in Volume 1 (Peck and James 1983), was an error.

Caspian Tern, *Sterna caspia*

108 records (68 colonies, 11 single nestings, ca 11,093 nests) representing 12 provincial regions. The breeding population of the Caspian Tern in Ontario has continued to increase in the past decade. The average size of 62 colonies totalling 10,677 nests, was 172 nests. A total of 21 provincial nesting sites has been reported, about half of which are in current use.

The first 4-egg clutches (a total of 7) were reported from two colonies in 1991.

EGG DATES 53 colonies, 6 May to 12 August, (66 dates); 27 colonies, 6 June to 24 June.

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*

665 records representing 32 provincial regions. Nest records have been obtained from Glengarry (1976), Grenville (1981), Grey (1936), and Hamilton-Wentworth (1985).

Outside diameter of 1 nest was 23 cm (9 inches); inside diameter was 10 cm (3.9 inches); outside depth was 4 cm (1.6 inches).

Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*

18 records (10 colonies, 1 single nesting, ca 89 nests) representing 1 provincial region and an island in each of Hudson and James Bays (NWT). Essentially a colonial species, about 8 nests were noted spread out over a 4 km strip of Hudson Bay coast in 1990. The average size of 8 colonies totalling 82 nests was 10 nests.

One nest had 20 cm (7.9 inches) twigs in the exterior; and twig pieces, grass stalks and rootlets in the lining. The diameter of this nest was 13 cm (5 inches); inner depth was 2 cm (0.8 inches).

EGGS 19 nests, with 1 to 3 eggs; 1E (4N), 2E (14N), 3E (1N).

Average clutch range 2 eggs (14 nests).

EGG DATES 14 records, 16 June to 21 July, (19 dates); 7 records, 26 June to 5 July.

Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*

49 records (16 colonies, ca 771 nests) representing 3 provincial regions. The average size of 13 colonies totalling 767 nests, was 59 nests. Colonies were loosely-knit and often consisted of well-separated single nests and groups of nests.

EGG DATES 14 colonies, 19 May to 6 July, (17 dates); 7 colonies, 29 May to 11 June.

Rock Dove, *Columba livia*

210 records (212 nests) representing 31 provincial regions. We now have a nest record from Evansville, Manitoulin (1982).

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*

2000 records (2213 nests) representing 40 provincial regions. An old nest record has been received from Thunder Bay (1958), and more recent ones from Haliburton (1991), and Parry Sound (1991).

A nest was found in a balcony flower planter in Grey (1991).

EGG DATES 12 March (Elgin) to 28 September.

Black-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

443 nests representing 41 provincial regions. A photograph of a Manitoulin nest in 1991 furnished documentation.

Five more 5E nests and one 6E nest have been reported.

EGG DATES 16 May (Middlesex) to 8 September. The number of late dates suggests re-nesting.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus americanus*

113 nests representing 25 provincial regions. Early nest records have been obtained from Elgin (1885), and Frontenac (1951).

We now have three 5E clutches on file.

EGG DATES 13 May (Simcoe) to 7 August. An Essex nest contained 2 small young on 30 August, indicating a later egg date than 7 August. The number of August egg dates suggests at least occasional re-nesting.

Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*

39 nests representing 8 provincial regions. A 1985 nest record was obtained from Haldimand-Norfolk (McCracken 1987), and an old breeding record from Carleton (1937).

INCUBATION PERIOD K. McKeever (pers. comm.) found the period in wild-obtained captives to be ca 26 days.

EGG DATES An active 1989 Niagara nest with 5 eggs was observed on 16 September, and established our latest actual egg date.

Eastern Screech-Owl, *Otus asio*

106 nests representing 25 provincial regions. Old nest records from Simcoe (1918) and Waterloo (1928) were missed in Volume 1. New nest records have come in from Dundas (1987), Grey (1986), and Perth (1987).

Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*

643 nests representing 44 provincial regions. Recent new nest records were reported from Lennox and Addington (1988) and Sudbury (1989).

Northern Hawk Owl, *Surnia ulula*

5 nests representing 3 provincial regions. The account of the third Ontario nest in Kenora in 1981 appears in Appendix A.

A fourth nest, apparently recently-vacated and with agitated parents nearby, was found near the Little Shagamu River in Kenora on 23 June 1990. The nest was in the hollowed top of a black spruce stump at a height of 2 m (6.6 ft). An occupied nest cavity of a Northern Flicker was situated in the stump 20.3 cm (8 inches) below the owl's nest.

The fifth nest was found NNE of Red Lake, Kenora in 1993, and was in an old Pileated Woodpecker cavity in a dead poplar at a height of 10 m (33 ft); it contained 3 young.

INCUBATION PERIOD In wild-obtained captives the period was 28 days (K. McKeever, pers. comm.).

Barred Owl, *Strix varia*

17 nests representing 8 provincial regions. Of the 3 regions listed in Appendix A, Muskoka (1981) was a breeding record, and Bruce (1984) and York (1983) were nest records. Another new nest record has come in from Waterloo (1983).

Great Gray Owl, *Strix nebulosa*

9 nests representing 3 provincial regions. A probable breeding record involving the observation of flying young with an adult, was made in 1989 near Round Island Lake, Algonquin Park, Nipissing (Forbes *et al.* 1992). Five nests were reported in 1993 from the Red Lake area of Kenora, suggesting that the Ontario breeding population is much greater than our few nests indicate.

Four of the 1993 nests were in poplars (3 in broken-off stubs, 1 in a crotch), and the fifth was in the crotch of a jack pine. Nest heights were 5.6, 6, 10+, 20, and 18 m (18, 20, 33, 65, and 60 ft).

INCUBATION PERIOD In wild-obtained captives the period was 31 to 32 days (K. McKeever pers. comm.).

Long-eared Owl, *Asio otus*

123 nests representing 27 provincial regions. First nest records have been received from Haldimand-Norfolk (1985), Manitoulin (1993), Peterborough (1962), and a breeding record from Bruce (1988).

EGGS 82 nests with 2 to 6 eggs; **2E** (9N), **3E** (13N), **4E** (26N), **5E** (28N), **6E** (6N).

Average clutch range 4 to 5 eggs (54 nests).

EGG DATES 19 March to 2 June.

Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*

28 nests representing 14 provincial regions. A historic nest record from Haldimand (1885-90) and old nest records from Kent (1944) and Middlesex (1946) have been obtained. Recent nests have been reported from Grey (1993), Lennox and Addington (1988), Victoria (1993), and, as well, breeding records from Bruce (1988) and Ottawa-Carleton (1987).

Outside diameters of 3 nests ranged from 22 to 29 cm (8.7 to 11.4 inches); inside diameters from 12.7 to 16 cm (5 to 6.3 inches); and inside depths from 3 to 5 cm (1.2 to 2 inches). One of these nests was a substantial mound of dried grasses with an outside depth of 7.6 cm (3 inches).



Figure 2: Short-eared Owl brooding young on nest in Grey County, 15 June 1993.
Photo by G.K. Peck.

EGGS 23 nests with 1 to 9 eggs; 1E (1N), 3E (1N), 4E (3N), 5E (4N), 6E (4N), 7E (7N), 8E (1N), 9E (2N).

Average clutch range 5 to 7 eggs (15 nests).

EGG DATES 20 nests, 14 April to 1 August (26 dates); 10 nests, 7 May to 24 May.

Boreal Owl, *Aegolius funereus*

2 nests representing 2 provincial regions. The second Ontario nest (see Appendix A) was found near Atikokan, Rainy River in 1984. It contained 1 or more young and was in the old nest cavity of a Pileated Woodpecker in a quaking aspen at a height of 10.7 m (35 ft).

Northern Saw-whet Owl, *Aegolius acadicus*

22 nests representing 12 provincial regions. An old breeding record from Norfolk (1927) involving the collection of a juvenile not long out of the nest (Snyder, 1931), has been added.

Common Nighthawk, *Chordeiles minor*

288 nests representing 36 provincial regions.

A 1E clutch was incubated and a young hatched in a recently reported nest.

Whip-poor-will, *Caprimulgus vociferus*

76 nests representing 24 provincial regions. Old nest records have been obtained from Haliburton (1936), Muskoka (1936), Parry Sound (1904), and Prince Edward (1911). Other new nest records were from Lambton (1974), Niagara (1992), and Victoria (1986).

EGGS 63 nests with 1 to 2 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (61N).

Average clutch range 2 eggs (61 nests).

INCUBATION PERIOD 4 nests; 1 less than 19 days, 1 of 19 days, 1 of at least 20 days, and 1 of 21 days.

EGG DATES 48 nests, 21 May to 21 July (67 dates); 24 nests, 5 June to 20 June. Re-nestings and second broods were both reported in Leeds in 1984.

Chimney Swift, *Chaetura pelagica*

132 records (150 nests) representing 32 provincial regions. An old nest record from Northumberland (1902) and a recent one from Lambton (1985) have been added.



Figure 3: Chimney Swift at nest containing four young in tobacco shed, 24 June 1982, in Durham R.M. Photo by G.K. Peck.

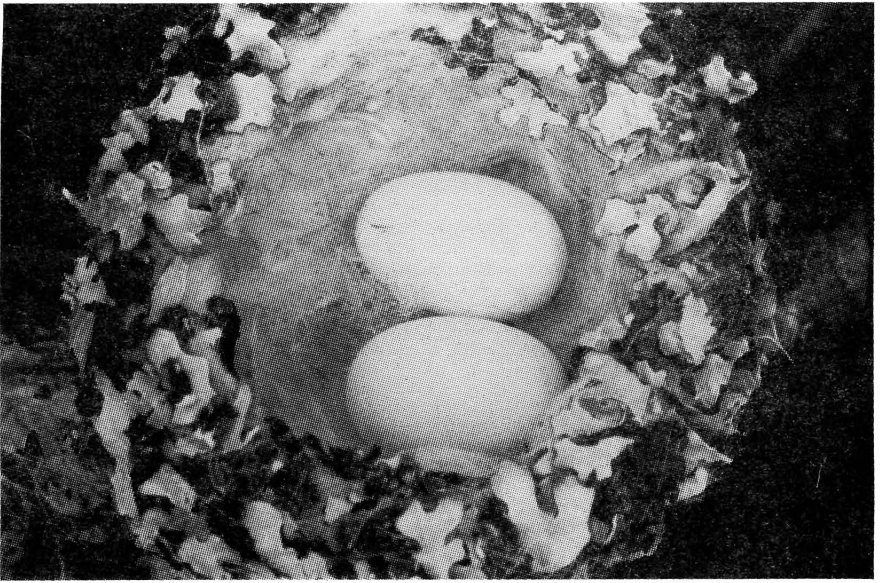


Figure 4: Nest and two eggs of Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 21 July 1992, Artemesia Twp., Grey County. Photo by G.K. Peck.

One chimney site contained 15 nests (at least several were active), and 2 nests (each with 4 eggs) were noted on the wall of a silo.

EGG DATES 24 May to 7 August.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird, *Archilochus colubris*

178 nests representing 41 provincial regions. Two old nest records (1935-36) from Norfolk County have been obtained.

In the second paragraph of the species account in Volume 1, the nest branch diameter should read "1 to 6.5 cm" (not metres).

One nest in a sugar maple was 7 m (23 ft) away from the tree trunk.

Outside diameters of 5 nests ranged from 3.5 to 5 cm (1.4 to 2 inches); inside diameters of 4 nests from 2 to 2.5 cm (0.75 to 1 inches); outside depths of 3 nests from 2 to 4 cm (0.8 to 1.6 inches); inside depths of 3 nests from 1.8 to 2.3 cm (0.7 to 0.9 inches).

A 1993 nest in Elgin contained 3 eggs and was the second ONRS record of this extremely rare clutch size - the probable result of laying by 2 females (Tyrrell 1984).

Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon*

395 records (396 nests) representing 43 provincial regions. New nest records are from Essex (1986), Haliburton (1991), and Huron (1983).

Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

250 nests representing 36 provincial regions. We now have old nest records from Elgin (1949), Muskoka (1962), and Russell (1966).

EGGS 41 nests with 1 to 7 eggs; 1E (2N), 2E (2N), 3E (4N), 4E (16N), 5E (12N), 6E (2N), 7E (3N). *Average clutch range* 4 to 5 eggs (28 nests).

EGG DATES 37 nests, 14 May to 21 July (38 dates); 18 nests, 31 May to 15 June. A second instance of 2 broods from a nest was reported from Elgin in 1993.

Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*

24 records (25 nests) representing 9 provincial regions. A report of a 1989 nesting in Oxford (Weir 1989) was noted, but details of an actual nest have not yet been received.

Nest cavities were in dead or partially dead, deciduous trees. Selected trees were elm (2 nests), beech (2 nests), maple spp. (2 nests), and 1 nest each in basswood, oak sp., white ash, and hickory sp.

EGGS 5 nests with 2 to 7 eggs; 2E (2N), 4E (1N), 5E (1N), 7E (1N).

EGG DATES 5 nests, 1 May to 29 May.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*

497 nests representing 37 provincial regions. A 1972 nest record symbol for Dundas was omitted from the map in Volume 1. Early nest records for Long Portage (1926), Mattice (1926), and Moosonee (1934), all in Cochrane District, have been added. A recent nest record came in from Haldimand-Norfolk (1988).

The use of a bird house as a nest in Ottawa-Carleton (1979) should have been included in Volume 1.

Downy Woodpecker, *Picoides pubescens*

290 nests representing 37 provincial regions.

Hairy Woodpecker, *Picoides villosus*

319 nests representing 43 provincial regions. Nest records have been received from Durham (1981), Grey (1984), and Huron (1983). In Volume 1, a minimum nest hole diameter of 2.5 cm (1 inch) was undoubtedly an error on a nest card, since reported diameters are larger (Bent 1939; Terres 1980). Diameters of 24 holes ranged from 3.8 to 6.4 cm (1.5 to 2.5 inches), with 12 averaging 4.4 to 5.1 cm (1.8 to 2 inches).

Three-toed Woodpecker, *Picoides tridactylus*

18 nests representing 6 provincial regions. A nest record has been obtained from Algonquin Provincial Park, Nipissing (1964).

Nest trees were more often dead (11 nests) but occasionally living (3 nests). Black spruce (8 nests) were preferred to jack pine (3 nests), tamarack (1 nest), birch (1 nest), and poplar (1 nest). Heights of 16 nests ranged from 1.2 to 8 m (4 to 26 ft), with 8 averaging 3 to 6 m (10 to 20 ft).

Hole diameters of 5 nests ranged from 3.8 to 7.5 cm (1.5 to 3 inches). Diameter of 1 nest cavity was 9.5 cm (3.7 inches).

Black-backed Woodpecker, *Picoides arcticus*

108 records (109 nests) representing 13 provincial regions. We now have an old nest record from Swastika, Timiskaming (1955).

EGGS 21 nests with 2 to 6 eggs; 2E (2N), 3E (11N), 4E (6N), 5E (1N), 6E (1N).

Average clutch range 3 to 4 eggs (17 nests).

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*

1039 nests representing 50 provincial regions. An early nest record has been obtained for Hastings (1912).

A 1990 Kenora nest was in the same tree as the nest of a Northern Hawk Owl.

Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*

142 nests representing 30 provincial regions. New nest records were from Elgin (1992), and Kearns in Timiskaming (1985). The most northerly nest record for the province was reported at Moosonee, Cochrane (1991).

Acknowledgements

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K. McKeever, Owl Rehabilitation Research Foundation in Vineland, Ontario, for the incubation periods of some wild-obtained captive owl species.

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In Memoriam

William Charles Mansell (1908-1993)

Author and naturalist, William Charles Mansell (known as "the birdman of Mississauga"), has passed away at the age of 85. He was born in Toronto on 26 December 1908, and died on 30 December 1993, at Peterborough Civic Hospital.

Bill Mansell was a lifelong student of nature, with a particular interest in ornithology. He was past editor of "The Chickadee" (a children's nature magazine then published by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists), a member of several natural history organizations, and author of various articles and books (e.g., "North American Marsh Birds", and "North American Birds of Prey").

He had a deep personal attachment to the family property on Rebecca Lake in Muskoka, which was a base for his long years of observation and study of the District's natural history. Mansell authored two books on this beloved area ("Birds of Cottage Country", and "Muskoka Daze"), and wrote a newspaper column on birds and other wildlife in the Huntsville Forester for 35 years.