

Wood, D. M. 1955. Nesting of Brewer's Blackbird at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Ontario Field Biologist 9: 23.

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Book Review

Birds of Presqu'ile Provincial Park. 1993. By Steve M. LaForest. The Friends of Presqu'ile Park and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Brighton. (softcover) XII + 436 pp. illustrated. \$21.95 + \$3.00 Postage and handling from The Friends of Presqu'ile Park, P.O. Box 1442, Brighton, Ontario K0K 1H0.

Presqu'ile Park is one of Ontario's premier birding areas. Like all major promontories along the Great Lakes, it is a migrant trap, bottling up landbird migrants both spring and fall on the hook-shaped peninsula. Offshore ducks congregate, while the long beaches provide shorebirds with some of their best foraging along the lower Great Lakes. In the breeding season the marshes, deciduous and evergreen woodlands and old fields attract a rich array of nesting birds, and in winter Snowy Owls sit on the ice ridges and winter finches chatter in the conifers. In all 312 species have been recorded here, and 126 have nested.

This book is the account of this rich birdlife. The first published list of the birds of the park was by Ron Scovell in 1960, and in 1982 Doug McRae's *Birds of Presqu'ile* appeared. That booklet was 74 pages long; the present book has 436 pages, an indication of both the amount of field work summarized here, and the completeness of the treatment.

For those accustomed to regional bird listings, the format of this present book will be familiar. The

account for each species covered starts with a brief one-to-three line statement of overall status. Subsequent treatment then varies. For those birds that are regular in the park, the author traces their seasonal status from spring through winter, giving the first and last dates, high counts and any other information of interest, including egg dates when available. In the case of Ring-billed Gull, a three page account gives details of the history of the huge colony, with banding data and population counts.

Rare species are accorded similarly thorough coverage. For the rarest full details of the record are given, with mouth-watering verbatim quotes from the (often dazed) observer! More regular vagrants have all their occurrences listed, while the simply unusual have their outside dates and high counts given. In all cases any changes in status are discussed, and there are references to occurrences in adjacent areas (such as Brighton) where relevant. Seven species are listed separately, in a category of "Unacceptable Records, Extinct Species and Escapes".

February 28, 1991 was the cut off date for observations used in the text, but an addendum lists some more noteworthy sightings as late as March 1992.

There's more to the book than the systematic list of birds. After an evocative foreword by Barry Kent MacKay, there is a profile of the area, setting the regional context and outlining the history both of Presqu'île itself and of birding there. Then there is a useful 14-page guide to the park and its environs, which gives someone unfamiliar with the area an excellent overview of where to go and when.

The book concludes with lists of scientific names of plants, of literature cited, and selected references relating to ornithological research done at Presqu'île. At the end is a short list of park facilities, visitor information and a map of the park.

Book reviews are supposed to nit-pick, but there's little to complain about here. I found the book's layout rather cluttered, and the poor reproduction of the illustrations does little to enhance either them or the book itself. Misprints are agreeably few, and the information presented seems accurate. In sampling the index one or two entries were listed for the page facing the actual page of entry. The index, incidentally, lists both scientific and English names for the species, and is unusual in that Brown Thrasher, for example, can be found under both Brown and Thrasher - probably a good feature in a book that may be used by persons unfamiliar with bird names and indices.

There is also a long section on acknowledgements, with an alphabetical list of all the observers who have contributed observations over the years. It's tempting to skim this, but in a very real way this is the story of the book - years of observations by a multitude of observers, all adding up to yield a comprehensive picture of the birdlife of one small but significant area. Some contributions stand out - the 17 years of observations by the Thomsons for example - but it is the sheer volume that yields the picture.

A book of this sort is a fine example of what can be done with input from visiting birders, contributing their individual sightings over a long period. It's a real stimulus and encouragement to observers to participate in the record gathering, and to fill in the gaps; or to resurrect forgotten observations that might improve the picture. This reviewer rather guiltily noticed some species where he had apparently forgotten to turn in sightings! By the same token it also enables the significance of a sighting to be addressed quickly - I'm unlikely to overlook future records with this compendium readily available!

But while the effort is a cooperative one, someone has to put it all together, and compiling a book of this kind is far more than a mechanical exercise. The author is to be congratulated on producing a well organized and comprehensive account of Presqu'île birds. It is a valuable addition to the growing literature on Ontario birdlife, and if you bird in the park at all, you need this book.

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