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## Notes

### Eurasian Jackdaw: New to Ontario

At 1200 h on 13 April 1985, I was driving east on Victoria Street, south of Highway 401, between Oshawa and Whitby, Durham R.M. The CN Railway tracks run just south of this road, and on top of one of the hydro poles beside the tracks I noticed as a silhouette against the sun what I assumed to be a small raptor, perched, pecking at something held in its claws. The bird looked too large for an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) and too small for an American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). Out of interest I swung south on Thickson Road, under the railway bridge, to be able to see the bird with the sun behind me. I think I actually laughed aloud at the absurdity of finding that it was a Eurasian Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), a bird with which I am very familiar from visits to southern England.

The bird was obviously a crow, but a small, grey and black one. The body plumage was glossy black, as was the crown of the

head, but the nape and cheek were silvery grey. The overall impression was of a neat, trim bird without the rather shaggy plumage of many American Crows. I watched the bird somewhat nostalgically for a few minutes until it flew off westward with a quick, almost hurried, wingbeat and a couple of familiar, high-pitched "kyow kyow"s. I attempted to follow the bird by road but traffic was too dense to keep up with it. It rested briefly on wires further down the railway line but was then lost to view.

I did not make notes on the Eurasian Jackdaw's plumage and characteristics at the time of this sighting because its identity was so obvious to me, and also because at the time I assumed that it was an escaped cage-bird. We are well trained in the Toronto area to accept, regretfully, that most records of unusual corvids (e.g., Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*)) rarely refer to wild birds. Knowing that in many countries in Europe

the jackdaw is kept as an amusing pet, I assumed it had recently been brought to Canada and then gone free. I therefore made only casual mention of the bird to others, until it became obvious from reading and conversation that its status as a wild bird should be given more serious consideration. A report was submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee which was duly accepted and represents the first record for Ontario (Wormington 1985).

Several factors contributed to this acceptance, including an acknowledged increase in numbers of Eurasian Jackdaws in Europe in the past few decades, and an apparently spontaneous range extension to North America, possibly via Iceland, since 1982 (Smith 1985). In 1984 at least six separate reports of Eurasian Jackdaws were made from the Atlantic coast of North America—from Miquelon and Nova Scotia south to Rhode Island and Nantucket, Massachusetts. Concurrently, commercial trade and quarantine regulations in North America have become much stricter, and it is unlikely that more than a very few Eurasian Jackdaws have been kept or raised in captivity in Canada or the United States for several years.

The most significant observation, however, was the influx in November 1984 of 52 jackdaws at Port-Cartier, Quebec on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Yank and Aubry 1985). These birds probably reached Labrador

by natural means and moved south in response to the onset of winter conditions. However, on the hasty premise that these birds had travelled across the Atlantic Ocean in the hold of a ship, and might pose a threat to native North American birds such as occurred with the introduction of the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), the Quebec Fish and Game Department ordered their extermination. Because Eurasian Jackdaws do not appear on any list of protected species, the Canadian Wildlife Service did not voice an objection, and by late March 1985 most of the birds had been shot or poisoned.

The Eurasian Jackdaw seen in Whitby on 13 April 1985 could well have been a survivor from this Quebec massacre. Unfortunately, in spite of intense scrutiny of hundreds of crows in the Whitby area over the next couple of weeks, the jackdaw was not seen again, nor was it reported by anyone else. It will be interesting to follow the progress of this hardy and intelligent species in its quest for new territories in the New World.

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Wild Turkey / drawing by Ron Ridout

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) is well-established in the county, but the only truly native gamebird present is the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*). In the last century the Spruce Grouse (*Dendragapus canadensis*) was probably resident in the upper Grand River valley, but was extirpated in the second half of the century (Cringan 1963); the last record was of one "taken" near Guelph on 25 November 1898 (Klugh 1906). However, it appears likely that a third species of grouse may have been resident in those days; the early settlers referred to a variety of upland game species, using various arcane and (to us) totally unhelpful names such as "birch partridge". Cringan (1963) surmised that either the Greater

Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) or the Sharp-tailed Grouse may have been present at that time. John Arkell clearly cannot have been referring to the Ring-necked Pheasant, since this species was not introduced to eastern North America until 1887, when the first birds were released in New Jersey (Bent 1960), but nevertheless would have been familiar with them from his experiences in England. Since the most characteristic feature of a "pheasant", to birdwatcher and non-birdwatcher alike, is a long pointed tail, it is highly unlikely that so acute an observer as Arkell would have referred to the Greater-Prairie Chicken by this name. It is thus very probable that Arkell's "pheasants" (which, incidentally, he noted as being "rather numerous") were in fact Sharp-tailed Grouse. This would constitute the only evidence for the occurrence of this species in Wellington County that we presently have.

#### Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Mrs. Cleo Melzer of Puslinch Township for having brought John Arkell's letter to my attention.

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## Magnolia Warbler Breeding in the Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario

On 24 June 1983, while conducting wetland inventories near Guelph Junction, approximately 1 km southwest of Campbellville (Town of Milton), S.M. Griffiths, M.J. Sharp and the author encountered a female Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), much agitated, and carrying a bill full of bright green insect larvae. Confident that a nest could be found, the observers patiently followed the movements of the female warbler to a point where she disappeared into a dense clump of cedar, from which, upon closer approach, could be heard emanating the distinctive begging calls of nestling birds. A brief search resulted in the discovery of a nest containing three young. Interestingly, at no time, either preceding or following the discovery of the nest, was a male Magnolia Warbler either heard or seen.

On 27 June, DAS returned to the site with Martin Wernaart to investigate the possibility of banding the nestling warblers. Upon our arrival at around 1115h, a male Magnolia Warbler could be heard singing intermittently from an area of dense cedar and tamarack. Although the young warblers proved too small to band,

a mist net was nevertheless erected and in due course both the male (#1580-87898) and female (#1580-87899) warblers were netted, banded, photographed, and released.

The habitat in which the nest was found at Guelph Junction may be described as a regenerating wet meadow/white cedar-tamarack swamp interface. The meadow, which as recently as 1979 was only about 50% vegetated by saplings and tall shrubs, is now almost closed by a dense regeneration of eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*), and to a lesser extent, by trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*), and willow (*Salix bebbiana*). The nest, located in a dense copse of ca. 8-10m cedars, and situated 2.25m above the ground near the end of a up-turned lower bough of a smaller cedar, was loosely constructed of dried grass stems and lined with black rootlets.

When the site was revisited by DAS on the morning of 13 July, a male Magnolia Warbler could be heard singing repeatedly. On 15 July, as there was no sign of either adults or young, the nest was collected and is now deposited in

the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

The nest reported here apparently constitutes the first such report for Magnolia Warbler in Halton Region (ONRS; Brooks 1906) and the Hamilton area generally (ONRS; McIlwraith 1860; A. Wormington, pers. comm. 1984) and one of the few recent reports for southwestern Ontario, where they are evidently very rare. In adjacent Wellington County, Brewer (1977, pers. comm. 1983) has not encountered it as a summer resident. Nor is the author aware of any recent summer records in the neighbouring counties and regions of Hamilton-Wentworth, Brant, Waterloo and York.

Recent summer records of Magnolia Warbler have, however, been reported from Middlesex County and the Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk to the west and southwest of Halton, respectively. In Middlesex, ca. 115km west of Halton, a territorial male Magnolia Warbler was discovered in June 1983, in a "middle-aged" conifer plantation bordering the Dorchester Swamp, east of London (M. Gawn, pers. comm. 1985). This record is significant in view of the belief held by earlier local authorities that this species "possibly bred", in the vicinity of London (Morden and Saunders 1882; Saunders and Dale 1933).

In Haldimand-Norfolk, ca. 95km southwest, this species has been encountered regularly in summer, at least since the 1930s, particularly, but not exclusively, in the extensive, mature conifer reforestations associated with the

Provincial Forestry Station near St. Williams and Turkey Point. There are three recent records of singing and, in at least one instance, territorial male Magnolia Warblers associated with white pine (*Pinus strobus*)—white cedar woodland on the Long Point peninsula (McCracken *et al.* 1981).

A search of both the literature and the Ontario Nest Records Scheme reveals that the Magnolia Warbler, although rare, may have been a more widespread summer resident in southwestern Ontario, occurring south to Kerwood [Middlesex Co.] (Beattie 1924); Listowel [Perth Co.] where a nest containing two eggs was collected by Wm. L. Kells, on 7 June 1882 (Kells 1882); [Wellington Co.], where it was then regarded as a "... scarce summer resident and breeder" (Klugh 1906a, 1906b); [Dufferin Co.] "common summer resident" at Orangeville (Calvert 1909), nest containing three eggs and a cowbird egg discovered in a cedar, 11 June 1927, by P. Harrington (ONRS; Diary No. 25, P. Harrington [1925-33]); and, Musselman's Lake [York R.M.] where a nest containing four eggs (ROM #7015) was collected by W.V. Crich, 5 July 1944 (ONRS).

In view of the recent discovery of a nest in Halton Regional Municipality reported here, and their presence during the breeding season in both natural and planted coniferous woodlands in Haldimand-Norfolk and Middlesex, Magnolia Warblers should be searched for and reasonably expected to occur in the larger cedar swamps and older conifer plantations in the southwestern counties of Ontario.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. R.D. James for providing access to the ONRS and other records housed in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Mark Gawn for providing details of his 1983 Middlesex County record; Brenda Axon, for allowing the use of data collected while under contract to Halton Region Conservation Authority.

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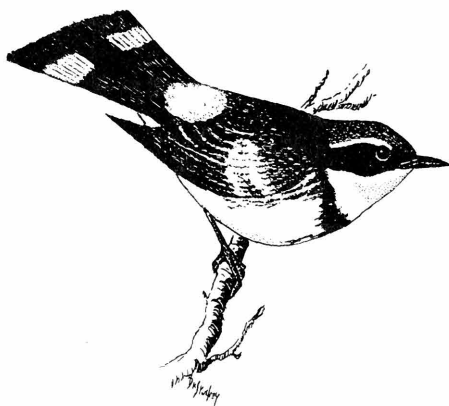
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Magnolia Warbler / drawing by Dan Stuckey

## Great Blue Heron Swallows a Branch

In late September 1984, a young male Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) was found uninjured but critically starved at a small lake near Battersea, Frontenac Co., Ontario (about 25km north of Kingston). He was barely able to stand up, totally apathetic and died almost immediately upon arrival at Verona.

A post-mortem into the strangely shaped abdomen revealed the stomach rigidly distorted by a smooth thick branch which reached from the lower neck to just past the tips of the two os pubis bones of the pelvis (Figure 1). The

piece of wood measured 300mm long by 45mm at its narrowest diameter, to 67mm at its greatest diameter, and was covered with rather thin bark that was beginning to deteriorate. The upper end of the branch had begun to erode a small area of the esophagus. The long-empty intestines, displaced behind the stomach, resembled coils of pale translucent plastic; the rest of the organs were fairly healthy. Surprisingly, a few nematodes were still found surviving in the stomach.

The heron had a 460mm wing

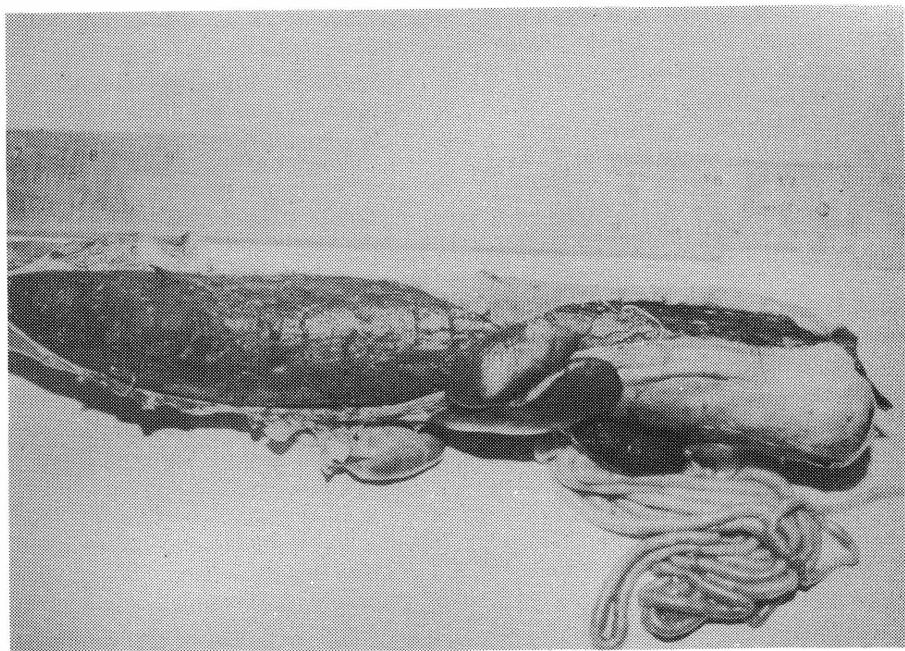


Figure 1: Branch in the stomach of Great Blue Heron.



chord, and weighed only 1565g with his burden; the branch itself was just over 415g. I have recorded other captive herons eating more than that weight at a sitting, as well as swallowing fish over 300mm long.

I suspect that the heron may have been fishing in murky water and quickly swallowed what he mistook for a large dark fish. As it probably caused no distress, he did not regurgitate it.

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## Book Reviews

**Editor's Note:** The recent publication of J. Murray Speirs' *Birds of Ontario* marked the first detailed account of the province's avifauna in 100 years. Given that this long-awaited work has generated widespread interest among Ontario birders, a decision was made to include two reviews. Although this represents a departure from the norm, it was felt to be warranted due to the sheer magnitude of the two-volume work and the somewhat differing viewpoints expressed by the two reviewers. A version of Bruce Di Labio's review originally appeared in *Trail and Landscape* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Sept.-Oct. 1986) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

***Birds of Ontario.*** 1985. By Dr. J. Murray Speirs. Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., Toronto. Vol. I, 538 pp., \$49.95; Vol. II, 986 pp., \$24.95.

When first presented with the opportunity to review *Birds of Ontario*, the challenge was met with enthusiasm. However, as I began my research, the magnitude of the endeavour was almost intimidating. The overwhelming size of the books (538 pages in Volume I and 986 pages in Volume II) presented some problems.

The concept of the books is certainly intriguing. Long overdue, this compilation of Ontario's avifaunal data should be accepted eagerly by birders and researchers.

However, Dr. Speirs might have received deserved uniform acclaim had he published the two volumes separately, for, in fact, he has produced two books so radically different that it is difficult to accept them as Volumes I and II of the same publication.

Not since McIlwraith wrote his *Birds of Ontario* in 1886 has anyone attempted to document in one publication the status and history of Ontario's birds. Fifty years, tens of thousands of notations, thousands of hours of field work and hundreds of cited observers