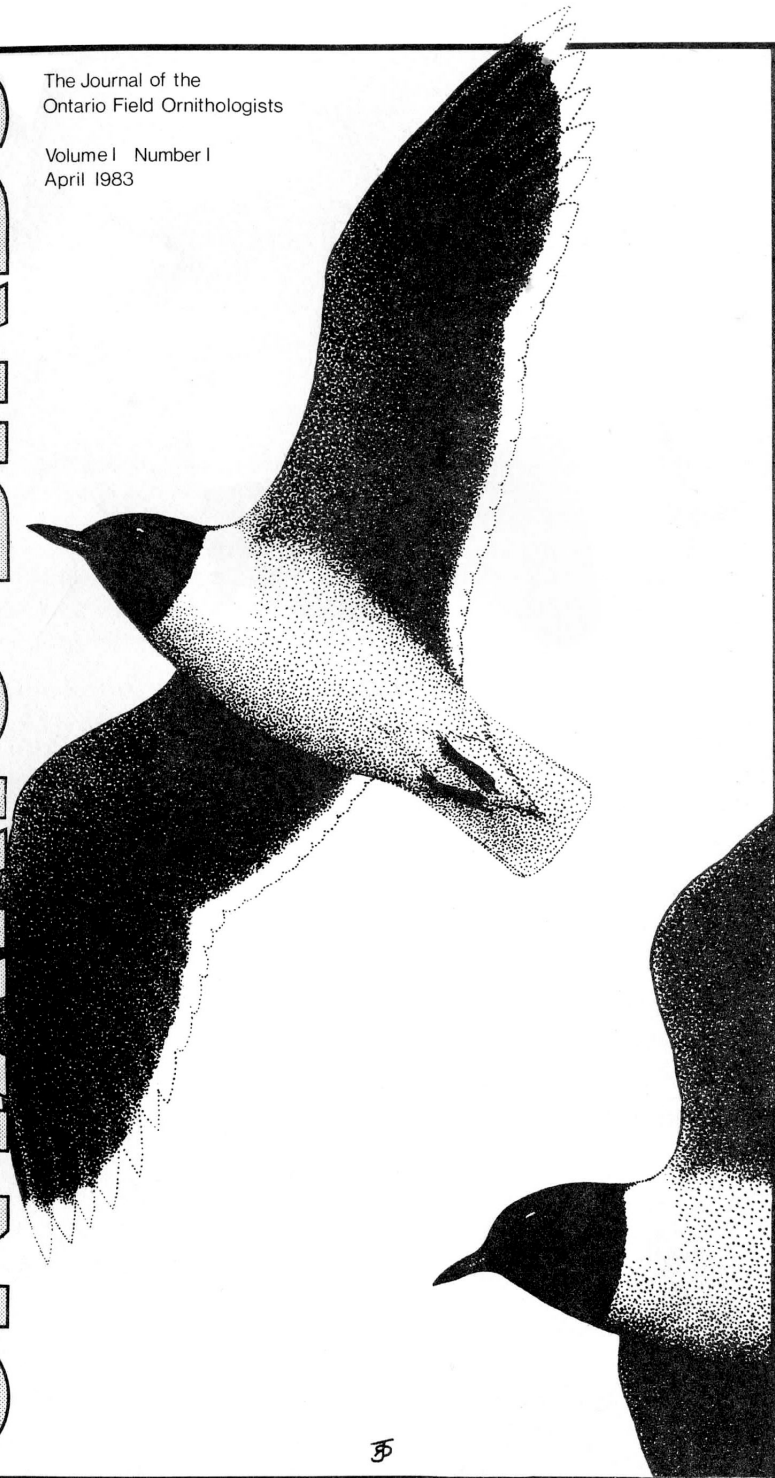


# ONTARIO BIRDS

The Journal of the  
Ontario Field Ornithologists

Volume I Number I  
April 1983



# Ontario Field Ornithologists

The Ontario Field Ornithologists is an organization dedicated to the study of birdlife in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the province and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. The Ontario Field Ornithologists officially oversees the activities of the *Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC)*, publishes a newsletter and a journal, *Ontario Birds*, hosts field trips throughout Ontario and holds an Annual General Meeting.

All persons interested in bird study, regardless of their level of expertise, are invited to become members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Membership dues are \$10.00 Annual Member or \$200.00 Life Member. All members receive *Ontario Birds*, the official publication of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Please send memberships to: Ontario Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1204, Station B, Burlington, Ontario L7P 3S9.

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We wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation for the publication of this issue of *Ontario Birds*.

# From the President ...

Slightly less than one year ago, a small group of birders from around the province sat down one night at Pt. Pelee to discuss the possibilities of an organization dedicated to the study of the birdlife of Ontario. The various pros and cons of such a group were volleyed back and forth, along with possible aims and purposes, late into the evening. Even in that early period of gestation, I was impressed with the enthusiasm everyone there expressed for the project. And to this day, with the publication of *Ontario Birds*, that enthusiasm has not wavered but has grown several times over.

From our inaugural meeting in November 1982, the Ontario Field Ornithologists has evolved into a functioning organization based upon the belief that the birders of this province were keen to share their knowledge with others of a like mind. That is really the essence of it all. A desire, that we all have, to share the excitement we experience when we are out in the field. Some might purport to be beyond this in the sense of a purist pursuing his craft but it is my belief that none of us would continue if we did not derive some

measure of pleasure from our studies.

It is a fine line that we have chosen. The pursuit of knowledge and pleasure in the proportion best suited for everyone is not an easy task but if it is done properly the rewards are that much greater. It is much like the wildlife artist who has the choice of painting popular subjects for the masses or more obscure species for himself. Ideally, he paints a popular subject in a new and challenging way, so that both he and his audience are satisfied. It is not easy but far more rewarding.

So that is the road we have chosen. We would like to serve as many needs as possible. But we can not do it without your participation. We want to solicit your viewpoint with this editorial. If you have any ideas about directions you would like the OFO to take, let us know. If there is a field trip you would like to take, make the suggestion. Every idea is open to consideration.

We have started the ball rolling and with your help we are going to maintain the momentum in the years to come. As an organization we can indeed be more than the sum of our parts.

Ron Ridout

# From the Editors ...

On behalf of the Ontario Field Ornithologists and the contributors to *Ontario Birds*, we are pleased to present the first issue of *Ontario Birds*. In compiling *Ontario Birds*, the OFO executive envisioned a journal similar in quality, style, appearance and appeal to *Blue Jay* of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society but devoted entirely to birds. We hope to avoid competition with the many natural history or scientific publications in Ontario, none of which we feel is directed solely toward the amateur field ornithologist. As Jim Richards points out in this issue, Jim Baillie himself often lamented the fact that there was no outlet for contributions by knowledgeable amateur field ornithologists (i.e. those who do not earn a living from field ornithology) in Ontario. More than anything else, we hope *Ontario Birds* will fill that void.

In compiling the first issue of *Ontario Birds*, our goal was to try to include at least one example of each type of article we thought appropriate. Appropriate both in what we, as editors, felt should be included and what you, our readers and members would expect. We have probably not done a perfect job but we are excited at the contents of this issue. Unfortunately, due to space constraints, some articles originally slated for this issue have had to be delayed. If you have suggestions for improving *Ontario Birds*, please contact us.

We encourage all OFO members to be aware of significant research, field observations or literature that would be appropriate for *Ontario Birds*. We are happy to offer suggestions to any author(s) who would like assistance in writing for *Ontario Birds*. Finally, we are now accepting submissions for the next issue of *Ontario Birds*. Deadline for receipt of material is 1 August; anticipated publication is October 1983.

Chip and Linda Weseloh

## A GUEST EDITORIAL

# “Once upon a time . . .”

by

James M. Richards

It was 22 August 1968. In the old birdroom at the ROM, checking the nest and egg collection files for needed specimens, I was conducting research for a book, *Birds of the Oshawa-Lake Scugog Region, Ontario*, (Tozer & Richards, 1974). Not unlike most days at the ROM, the birdroom paid host to several researchers and bird enthusiasts, of whom many were present this day — Dr. Savage, Don Baldwin, Dr. Peck, Ott Devitt, the Rev. Chas. Long, and naturally, Jim Baillie (a permanent fixture).

During one of my many breaks (the fumes from the collection cabinets always gave me a headache), I found myself in a familiar position — across a well-used, journal-strewn desk from Jim. He always welcomed a break and, being a keen backer of the spoken word, we commenced to discuss some of the events and happenings of the past spring and summer. Between frequent incoming telephone calls (he had a great network) and numerous interruptions by students and researchers asking questions (he always had the answers), I related to him the circumstances of

finding the nests of Brewer's Blackbirds at Oshawa that spring. As this represented a major range extension, he suggested, in what had become a familiar phrase from him, that “you should write that up”. I agreed and we talked about where it should go. This is when an idea was born, perhaps not original, but the earliest of recollection. Surely the idea of a provincial journal must have crossed the minds and lips of Taverner, Saunders and Fleming in the early 1900s and, undoubtedly, it was thought of by the likes of Snyder half a century later.

Jim seldom displayed any emotions other than those associated with joy, pleasure, happiness and concern but, at this moment, he did in fact show signs of frustration — frustration because amateurs like myself really had no local or regular outlet for publishing serious (short) papers. Soon into the conversation, he suggested we carry on over lunch and a cold beer. We were in Jim's favorite tavern, the King Cole Room, enjoying both lunch and conversation and, contrary to popular belief, it was only after we had consumed a few

cold ones that the conversation took on real meaning.

Back in the 60s, not unlike today, there were very few choices when it came to a published report. If you had a lengthy or scientific paper, you could publish in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. If it was shorter or not too technical, it could be published in the *Ontario Field Biologist*. Notes of sightings, migration dates, etc., **could** be published in the *Ontario Naturalist*. Other than these, your choices were limited. Reports of almost continental importance could be sent to the *Auk*, the *Wilson Bulletin* and other journals but they were the 'big league' and no place for a rookie like myself. Most reports and notes subsequently ended up in local naturalists' club newsletters, of no real benefit to birders or researchers outside the general club area.

It was then, on the 22 August 1968, in the King Cole Room in downtown Toronto, that Jim and I decided it was time the birding community in Ontario should have their own journal; a publication that would come out at least on a quarterly basis, a publication that would offer space to both amateur and professional, and would carry articles dealing with all aspects of ornithology, regardless of length. This publication would not take away from the existing journals, but would complement them. Most important though, it would serve not only as an outlet for a treasure of works that would normally go unpublished, but it would join together the birdwatcher and the ornithologist, the scientist and the naturalist, and all those possessing an interest in our avifauna.

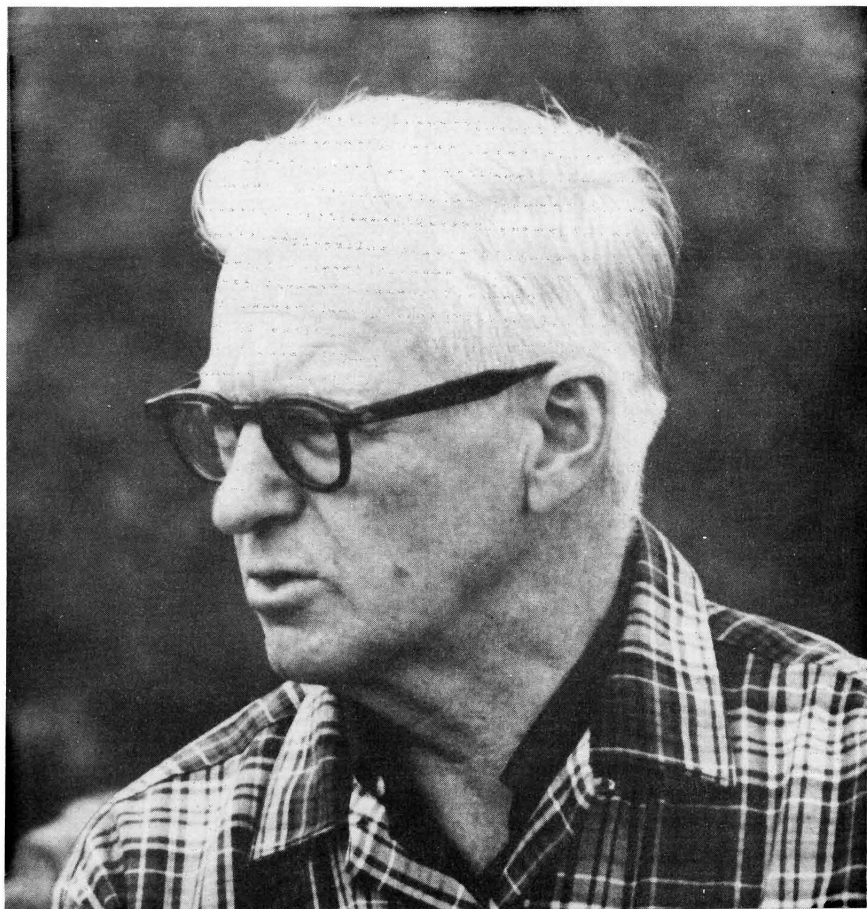
Jim suggested we should begin immediately to initiate just such a

journal (then dubbed 'Ontario Birds') and to generate an interest and to raise the necessary funds, we should create a new organization, the 'Ontario Ornithological Society'. When I left the ROM that day, my head was swimming with enthusiasm; ideas were percolating, thoughts were mixing with adrenalin; I was on a 'natural high'. Over the next few weeks, I took every opportunity to mention the idea to others. I discussed it with a young man named Barry MacKay; a Park Naturalist at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Both he and a co-worker, a young lad named Martin Parker, were enthused. I mentioned it to a naturalist at Algonquin, a chap named Russ Rutter, whom I respected very much. He too thought it was long overdue. Student naturalists at the park (youngsters at the time) like Ron Tozer, Ron Pittaway, Dan Brunton and others all seemed to be keen on the prospects. However, it was left for me to do something. Needless to say, I was caught up in many endeavors of my own — writing a book, fighting environmental issues, and trying to find time to enjoy a bit of wilderness. Ever so slowly time passed and with it, we lost some of the early backers of the scheme, people like Jim Baillie and Russ Rutter. The idea, which may have been before its time, was lost too.

Not unlike most stories which start off on the theme "once upon a time", this story too has a happy ending. In 1982 the idea was reborn, only this time to a new and energetic breed of Ontario ornithologists. A group not willing to just talk about the idea, but wanting to make it a reality, and a reality it is. Initial planning started in January '82 and

an inaugural meeting was held in November at Burlington, Ontario. An enthusiastic group of about 125 people endorsed in principle the formation of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. The group was formed. In the months that passed between then and the spring of 1983, the same few movers and shakers who initiated the formative meeting have put together the first official publication of OFO. It can only get better.

We in Ontario, who have an interest in birds and birders, have reason to be proud of this new organization, and we take pride in our own (finally!) journal. I'm sure all of you will join with me in thanking the dedicated few who have made this all possible. In retrospect, I can only lament the fact that we did not do it in 1968, but I am proud to be associated with those who did in 1982. Thank you Chip, Ron, Bill and Doug and all the others.



Jim Baillie. (Photograph taken in the 1960's)