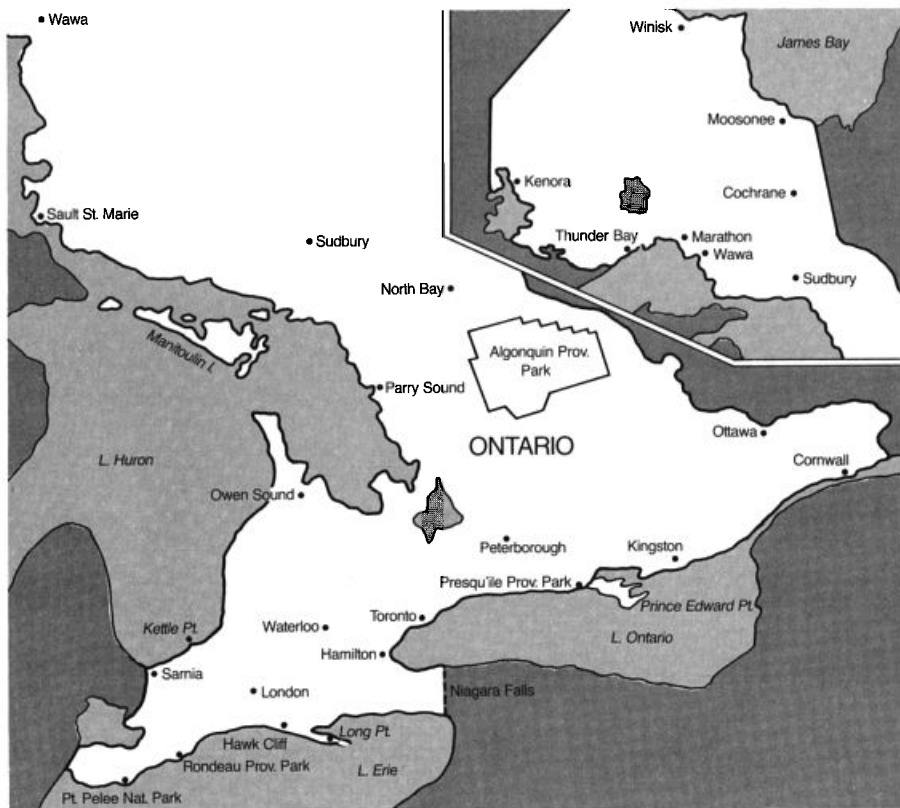


# ontario region



## RON RIDOUT

**W**eather for the season across the province was as benign as might possibly be expected. June's temperatures were slightly below normal, though not detrimentally so, while July provided what little "real" summer occurred. Precipitation in most areas was below average.

Most observers felt conditions for breeding were as good as they get, but several commented that there seemed to be fewer individuals of several species taking advantage of it. The very late spring resulted in many late northbound migrants in several areas well into June.

Recovery plans for several endangered species in the province included extensive surveys or monitoring programs for Bald Eagle, King Rail, Acadian Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, and Prothonotary Warbler. Some of the results of the surveys are summarized in the body of this report.

Outstanding rarities included Prairie Falcon, Slaty-backed Gull, and Plumbeous Vireo. All rarities mentioned in this report

are subject to approval by the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

**Abbreviations:** Pelee (*Pt. Pelee N.P. and vicinity*); L.P.B.O. (*Long Pt. Bird Observatory, Norfolk*); O.B.R.C. (*Ontario Bird Records Committee*); T.C.B.O. (*Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, Thunder Bay*); Algonquin, Presqu'ile, and Rondeau are Provincial Parks. Place names in *italics* refer to counties, districts, or regional municipalities.

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

At least one Red-throated Loon spent the summer along the L. Ontario waterfront between Ajax and Pickering (m.ob.). Summering by individuals of this species is a rare but regular occurrence on the Great Lakes. For the 2nd time this decade, a pair of Red-necked Grebes nested on w. L. Ontario. The nest at Bronte contained 4 eggs July 13 (GE). Two pairs of Eared Grebes at Emo (the site of Ontario's first nest in 1996) produced four young (DE). A pair at Thedford throughout June did not appear to breed, but their presence was intriguing (AR). An Am. White Pelican at Rondeau

June 4 (KB) was a late spring migrant, but what of the pair seen over Hamilton July 19 (JKI)? A Least Bittern at Leason, *Manitoulin*, June 29 (CB) was close to the edge of the species' range. A Great Egret at Dorion June 1 (WB) furnished a rare n. Ontario record, while a nest with four young at Long Pt. June 21 (JM) provided that region's first breeding evidence. Late wandering southern herons included Sudbury's first Snowy Egret June 17 (JN, JL) and a Tricolored Heron at Amherst I. May 29–June 3 (AS). Several ibis sightings included unidentified *Plegadis* at Pelee June 3 (PP et al.) and Oshawa June 5 (DL), single Glossies reported at Pelee June 8 (JMc) and Douro June 15 (PB), and at least two Glossies near Warton June 1 (JJ, SG et al.). These are exceptional numbers so late in the spring.

Tundra Swans in June usually involve sick or injured individuals. Such was the case with one well n. at Hay L., *Nipissing*, which eventually died July 10 (m.ob.). The Portland Trumpeter Swans nested successfully and were nurturing two young by period's end (m.ob.). A Mute Swan at Nepean June 27 (BS et al.) was e. of range, while one at Cape Henrietta Maria on Hudson's Bay, *Kenora*, June 5 (DF) was astounding and just a little worrisome. A Green-winged Teal with two downy young at Lakefield July 18 (PB) provided *Peterborough's* first breeding record. *Nipissing's* first record of King Eider involved 55 birds at Talon L. June 16 (CO et al.). Apparent summering Harlequin Ducks included single males at Toronto June 21 (AA) and Sault Ste. Marie June 30 (m.ob.). Late Surf Scoters included a single at Presqu'ile June 3 (SM) and two at Burlington June 17 (KM). A total of 370 Red-breasted Mergansers still at Pelee June 3 (AW) was a good indication of the late spring.

## VULTURES TO TERMS

An accumulation of 320 Turkey Vultures near Wildwood L., *Oxford*, July 29 (JMH) was exceptional for mid-summer. An Osprey at Dundas Marsh July 1 (*vide* MS) was likely a wandering unmated bird, while the first southbound migrant was seen at Guelph L., *Wellington*, July 31 (DB). Bald Eagle production in the southwest totaled

22 fledglings, down slightly from 1996's 23, as a result of the loss of 2 nests to high winds during the nesting season. These results are still encouraging. An imm. Bald Eagle found Dundas Marsh to its liking and lingered from June 9 on (MM, JH). Though not without precedent, summering Rough-legged Hawks at Ranger L., *Algoma* (SR), and Coniston (JN), both July 7, were exceptional for c. Ontario. A late Merlin was at Erie Beach June 3 (KB, JB), while an early southbound bird was seen nearby at Blenheim July 26 (KB, JB). A pair at Ottawa throughout the summer furnished a county first breeding record (BD). Urban Peregrines showed improved breeding success. The London pair raised one young (m.ob.), Hamilton's pair raised four young (m.ob.), while 2 pairs in Toronto raised a total of seven young (m.ob.). The Ottawa pair's only fledgling flew into a building Aug. 12 and died (m.ob.). A **Prairie Falcon** was observed at close range by an experienced raptor expert near Warsaw July 22 (TD). Details are being submitted to the O.B.R.C.

King Rails were heard at Port Rowan June 1 (JM), at Rondeau June 6 (KB, JB), and at Long Pt. on at least 2 occasions in July (DK). Five Sandhill Cranes were at Hillman Marsh, *Essex*, June 14 (JMi), while four were at Pelee July 29 (AW). Possibly the same birds spent time near West Lorne June 15–July 1 (HL). Marshes at Pelee, Rondeau, or to the north at St. Clair N.W.A. may soon be candidates for prospecting breeding pairs. At least 2—and possibly 3—pairs now nest at Long Pt. (L.P.B.O.), with lone pairs breeding in *Waterloo* and *Niagara*.

With such a narrow gap between migrations, northbound Semipalmated Plovers almost seem to be meeting themselves on their way south. One at Casselman June 19 (BD) was considered a late spring migrant, while one at Tavistock June 26 (JMH) was felt to be a record-early fall migrant. The last Willet of the spring was at Port Perry June 1 (RT et al.). Fifteen Whimbrels at Tillsonburg June 6 (JMH) were noteworthy for the late date and the inland location. Reports of godwits included two Hudsonians near Port Perry June 1 (m.ob.) and a record-late Marbled at Pelee June 8 (AW). A Red Knot at Hamilton June 28–July 6 (KM) likely never made it as far as its Arctic breeding grounds, spending the summer much farther south. A southbound Least Sandpiper at Tavistock June 26 (JMH) furnished a record-early date for *Oxford*. The first fall migrant Dunlin was at Chatham July 24 (SC). A Curlew Sandpiper at

Amherst I. July 20 (RDW, JE) provided the earliest fall date this decade. A Reeve at Blenheim July 13 (KB, JB) was the only one of the season.

Interestingly, a Com. Snipe displaying at Sturgeon Cr., *Essex*, June 3 (AW) provided only the 2nd summer record for the Pelee area. A Wilson's Phalarope was record-late at Pelee June 10 (AW). An alternate-plumaged Red Phalarope at Hamilton July 21–24 (JMe et al.) gave s. Ontario observers a rare opportunity to view this plumage.

Post-breeding Franklin's Gull numbers built to 800 at L. of the Woods by July 20 (DE), while the first juv. migrant was very early at Port Perry July 28 (JF, MBe). Record numbers of Ring-billed (40,000) and Herring gulls (9000) near Wildwood L., *Oxford*, in late July attracted some interesting rarities, including a juv. and first-summer Lesser Black-backed July 26 & 29, respectively, and remarkably, what was determined to be an ad. **Slaty-backed Gull** July 25–27 (JMH et al.). If accepted by the O.B.R.C., this would represent the province's 2nd record. Other Lesser Black-backed involved single adults at Oliphant, *Bruce*, June 26 (RA, TT, SL) and Nepean June 28 (BD). A Glaucous Gull at Erieau June 12–July 1 (KB, JB) furnished *Kent's* first summer record. A Caspian Tern at Algonquin's Grand L. June 16 (DT) was unusual for that park. Two Arctic Terns at Ottawa June 14 (CL et al.) were the only ones of the spring. A Forster's at Bath June 11 & 26 (RAL, HB) was e. of range. Numbers of Black Terns reached a noteworthy 410 at Sturgeon Cr. July 19 (AW).

#### CUCKOOS TO SHRIKES

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Whitefish L., *Sudbury*, July 1 (JN) was at the limit of the species' range. An exceptional three different Snowy Owls, lingering well into the period in the south, included one each at Barrie I., *Manitoulin*, June 3–July 31 (m.ob.), Toronto June 3 (*fide* MS), and Ingersoll July 4–31 (RSn). A N. Hawk Owl with three young at Black Sturgeon L. June 29 (NE) provided *Thunder Bay's* first breeding record in 25 years. One of the past winter's Great Gray Owls summered on Barrie I. (RC). Not one but five calling N. Saw-whet Owls at Pinery P.P. furnished *Lambton's* first summer record (AR). A *Selasphorus* hummingbird in Smith Twp., *Peterborough*, July 5 (*fide* DS) was assumed to be a Rufous, though Allen's was not ruled out.

A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers at Rainy R. June 8 (DE) was considered noteworthy in an area where once common.

The story is much the same for this species across most of its former range in the province. The opposite is true for Red-bellied as it continues to spread, particularly in the east. A pair feeding two young were reported from Lansdowne Twp., *Leeds Grenville*, July 20 (WH).

Late Olive-sided Flycatchers included one at Roblin June 8 (JE, RDW) and a record-late individual at Long Pt. June 13 (JM). A Yellow-bellied was record-late at Pelee June 23 (TH). An extensive survey of the 6 prime counties in s.w. Ontario found 34 Acadian Flycatchers in June and July (L.P.B.O.). The total number of breeding pairs in the province was estimated to be no more than 50 pairs. A Willow Flycatcher on a nest with 4 eggs at Sault Ste. Marie June 19 (EC) was at the limit of the species' range. Twenty-one southbound Leasts at Pelee July 19 (AW) was an exceptional count for the date. The first fall migrant E. Phoebe was at Pelee July 5 (AW). Individual W. Kingbirds were at T.C.B.O. June 2 & 11. One at Silver Islet June 2 (TDu) may have been the bird seen the same day at Thunder Cape.

Red-breasted Nuthatches began moving very early. Individuals were in the extreme southwest as early as July 3 at Kingsville (TH) and July 8 at Pelee (FU). A Gray-cheeked Thrush was record-late at Rondeau June 8 (JB). One was at Long Pt. the same day (L.P.B.O.). Thirty-two Swainson's Thrushes and 80 Gray Catbirds, still at Pelee June 3 (AW), were indicative of the late spring. Surveys of all of the known provincial breeding areas for Loggerhead Shrikes tallied just 18 breeding pairs, down from 31 in 1996 and 55 in 1992 (L.P.B.O.)! This species' precipitous decline in the province has led to a Recovery Plan which includes a captive breeding program. Individuals, away from known breeding sites, were at Long Pt. June 27 (MT) and Thunder Bay June 30 (BM).

#### VIREOS TO FINCHES

Ontario's first **Plumbeous Vireo** was discovered and photographed at Pelee June 3 (AW, ph. JFI, v.o.), just weeks before the official announcement of the Solitary Vireo complex split. This represents only the 9th record for e. North America. More high counts (for the date) at Pelee June 3 included seven Philadelphia and 180 Red-eyed vireos and 14 Tennessee, 45 Magnolia, 17 Blackpoll, 24 Mourning, and 19 Canada warblers (AW, FU). A "Lawrence's" Warbler held territory at Halton County Forest throughout the period (m.ob.), while a Brewster's pair was found nest-building in

the Big Otter Cr. valley, *Oxford*, June 6 (JMH). A Golden-winged at T.C.B.O. June 2 was well away from its usual range. A southbound Tennessee was very early at Amherst I. July 12 (AS).

The late spring also resulted in a rash of locally record-late warblers in the southwest. These included Nashvilles at Rondeau June 4 (JB) and Pelee June 8 (AW), a Cape May at Rondeau June 4 (JB), a Black-burnian at Pelee June 22 (FU), a Prairie at St. Williams June 17 (RR, CF), a Blackpoll at Pelee June 17 (AW), a Black-and-white at Rondeau June 26 (DM), a N. Waterthrush at Pelee June 9 (FU), and a Connecticut at Pelee June 10 (RR). Cerulean Warblers in unusual locations included a territorial male at Pelee June 10–July 6 (m.ob.) and one well n. at Whitefish Falls June 11 & 14 (JL). A newly established Recovery Plan for Prothonotary Warbler included the erection of nest boxes in known breeding sites across the southwest. Researchers felt that part of the reason for the species' abrupt decline in the province has been a lack of suitable nesting cavities. Of the 13 pairs that are known to have nested in 1997, 8 utilized the boxes provided (JM, L.P.B.O.). Surveys of suitable habitat in s.w. Ontario for Hooded Warblers found at least 88 territorial birds. Researchers estimated the Ontario breeding population at 145 to 300 pairs (L.P.B.O.).

A singing imm. male Summer Tanager at Pelee June 23–24 (RR) furnished that park's first summer record, and one of only 3 or 4 for the province. Northern N. Cardinals included a singing male at Hymers June 1 (GW) and a female banded at T.C.B.O. June 3. A Dickcissel at the tip of Pelee June 8 (SW) was a record-late spring migrant, while two singing males n. of that park July 16–18 occupied the same field as in 1996—until it was cut just after the latter date (AW). An E. Towhee at T.C.B.O. June 2 (DD) was far out-of-place, while a Grasshopper Sparrow banded there June 4 provided only the 3rd district record. A Sharp-tailed Sparrow [presumably Nelson's] at Long Pt. June 6 (GG) furnished a late and rare spring record there, as did one at Os-hawa June 10 (JK). One banded at T.C.B.O. June 8 supplied *Thunder Bay's* 2nd record. Very late White-throateds were at Rondeau June 12 (DM) and Pelee June 24 (RR).

The only Harris's Sparrow of the spring was at T.C.B.O. until June 7. The W. Meadowlark at Cedar Springs remained until early June (DW). This was the only one reported for the spring and summer across the south. A Yellow-headed Black-

bird at Nogie's Cr. June 9 (JC) was unexpected that far east. An Orchard Oriole carrying food at Hullet, *Huron*, July 5 (AR) was n.w. of the species' usual breeding range. Four Evening Grosbeaks at Westport July 16 (AM), and eight at Big I., *Prince Edward*, July 20 (TS), were the most reported in quite a few months, and may indicate the end of the dearth of this species in most of the province over the past several months.

**Subregional editors (boldface), contributors (italics), and cited observers:** R. Aaron, A. Adamo, R. Alvo (RAI), R. Andrie (RAn), **M. Bain**, W. Bascello, C. Bell, M. Bence (MBe), H. Blokpoel, *D. Bucknell*, J. Burk, **K. Burk**, *P. Burke*, R. Campbell, *G. Carpentier*, S. Charbonneau, **T. Cheskey**, J. Coulson, **W. Crins**, **E. Czerwinski**, D. Derbyshire, **B. DiLabio**, **R. Dobos**, T. Duke (TDu), T. Dyson, G. Edmonstone, **D. Elder**, J. Ellis, **N. Escott**, J. Fairchild, **D. Fidler** (DFi), D. Fillman, J. Flynn (JFl), C. Francis, S. Gilck, J. Hannah, T. Hince, **J.M. Holdsworth**, W. Houghton, *J. Johnson*, J. Kamstra, J. Klyve (JKL), D. Kozlovic, **S. LaForest** (SLa), H. Lancaster, S. Lee, **J. Lemon**, C. Lewis, D. Lockrey, **J. Macey** (JMy), D. Martin, J. McCoy (JMc), **J. McCracken**, K. McLaughlin, J. Merriman, **A. Mess**, **J. Miles** (JMi), M. Mills, B. Moore, S. Morgan, *J. Nicholson*, **J. Niskanen** (JNi), C. Osborne, P. Pratt, **P. Read**, A. Rider, R. Ridout, S. Rosa, **D. Sadler**, A. Scott, B. Scott, **R. Smith**, **M. Smout** (MSm), R. Snider (RSn), T. Sprague, M. Street, *J. & J. Thomson*, M. Timpf, T. Tiner, D. Tozer, **R. Tozer**, F. Urie, **R. D. Weir**, G. Williams, S. Wood, D. Worker, **A. Wormington**.

**Ron Ridout**, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, ON, Canada NOE 1M0.



## !ESCAPE TO COSTA RICA!

Come visit **Las Ventanas de Osa Wildlife Refuge** in unspoiled coastal rain forest on Pacific southwest coast. Over 350 bird species recorded in the area. Max.12 guests; good food and wines; freshwater swimming pool, nature trails and guides. All rooms twin beds, fan, bath and 110 vac. Book early to avoid disappointment!

### Enquiries & Reservations:

Las Ventanas de Osa Wildlife Refuge,  
PO Box 24262,  
Ft Lauderdale, FL 33307, USA.  
Tel:(305) 561-7750 or 1-800-561-7751

## Bird with More Leaders in Smaller Groups!

### Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctica

13 leaders 86 passengers,  
December 27, 1998–  
January 24, 1999, \$9300.

### Kenya

with resident Terry  
Stevenson and two birders  
from Abercrombie & Kent,  
February 28–March 21,  
1999, 12 maximum, \$4980.



### Ecuador

March 6–21, 1999, 8 only, with  
Jim Danzenbaker and resident ornitholo-  
gist, Juan Carlos Matheus, \$2730.

### Hawaii

March 9–21, 1999, with Les Chibana and  
resident guides, Jack Jeffrey on Oahu,  
Hawaii, and Maui, and David Kuhn on  
Kauai, 10 maximum, \$3175.  
Optional extension to Midway.



### Costa Rica

12 only with Maggie Wittner and  
resident birder Paco Madrigal,  
March 1–21, 1999, \$3780.

### Brazil

12 only with Andrew Whittaker,  
owner of Birding Brazil Tours, and  
Gail and Doug Cheeseman, August 13–  
September 4, 1999, \$4400.

### Non-smoking Policy

## Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

20800 Kittredge Road, Saratoga, CA 95070  
800-527-5330  
www.cheesemans.com