

Canada Jay name change proposal

An effort to reinstate an historic name

By Ron Pittaway



Canada Jay in Algonquin Park
Photo by Jean Iron

When the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) changed the name of Canada Jay to Gray Jay in 1957, many Canadian ornithologists and birders were saddened and disappointed, but did not protest. Recent investigations by Dan Strickland (retired Chief Park Naturalist of Algonquin Provincial Park) revealed that the 1957 name change was arbitrary and unnecessary. The topic of a name change has come to the forefront because Canada does not have an official national bird. In 2016, the Gray Jay was selected by the Royal Canadian Geographic Society (RCGS) as its candidate for Canada's national bird, after the RCGS carefully considered thousands of public and expert comments. However, the Government of Canada is not actively considering proposals to adopt any bird as a national symbol.

Despite this, Dan Strickland and American ornithologist Carla Cicero (University

of California, Berkeley) have made a joint proposal to the American Ornithological Society (AOS) to "restore Canada Jay as the English name of *Perisoreus canadensis*." It is one of the few birds whose scientific name is derived from Canada. The proposal is supported by five Canadian ornithologists, including the president of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists. The Canada Jay is the logo bird of its journal *Avian Conservation & Ecology*. The decision on the name change proposal will be announced this July 2018 in the 59th supplement to the Check-list of North

Canada Jay UPDATE

OFO News learned recently that the proposal to restore Canada Jay as the official name of the species was accepted by the American Ornithological Society. This decision will be published in the 59th supplement to the Check-list of North American Birds in the July issue of *The Auk*.

American Birds published in the journal *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*. I'm confident that Dan Strickland and Carla Cicero's proposal to restore the official name Canada Jay will be approved.

The federal government may be more likely to consider the Canada Jay as our national bird if an official name change is made. The Canada Jay is the perfect candidate for a national bird because it is non-migratory and found in all 10 provinces and three territories. In addition, it has not been chosen as the official bird of any province or territory, making it fully eligible as a national bird with no political conflicts. In our 151st year as a country, it is time that the Canada Jay be our national bird. An Act of Parliament will be needed to make the Canada Jay/Mésangeai du Canada our official bird emblem.

Ron is a past editor of OFO News and Ontario Birds, and received OFO's Distinguished Ornithologist Award in 2005.

President's message

Many birders think of summer as the doldrums of the birding year, but it's not true.

While birds are not as easy to find in the summer months, the challenge is worth it. Most passerines are breeding in June and into July, and it is fascinating to observe their behaviour during this crucial time. See if you can find the birds in your patch, and challenge yourself to observe where they nest, how they avoid predators, and how different species interact. Remember to bird responsibly — observe nests from a distance.

Colonial water birds such as Double-crested Cormorants are easily observed, and ducks and other waterfowl will be leading their young on lakes and rivers. In late June, the southward shorebird migration begins as adult shorebirds vacate the breeding grounds.

There is really no pause in the birding year — just different and wonderful experiences and facets of bird life to observe and enjoy.

Good birding,
Lynne Freeman,
OFO President