TORONTO BIRDS

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TORONTO BIRDS – The journal of record of the birds of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

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COVER PHOTO

Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*)

Photo © James M. Richards

The current winter is exceptionally good for numbers of Pine Siskins; birds are being commonly seen at bird feeders throughout southern Ontario

The Pine Siskin in this photograph was perching on a sumac branch after feasting at a nearby niger seed feeder in Orono, *Durham*, Ontario, 13 January 2009.

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Toronto Birds publishes monthly bird records from the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario. It may also include articles and notes about birds, bird records, counts, surveys and birding in general, with the emphasis on the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario birds. *Toronto Birds* is distributed monthly to the active members of the Toronto Ornithological Club.

We welcome submissions of notes or articles related to birds in the GTA. We also request potential cover photos, artwork and current photos for use in illustrating the bird report. Please send all contributions, or photos in jpeg format including date, location, subject, and caption if any, to our email address below. Bird observation records should be sent to Roy Smith rsmith@mrs.com. All submissions are subject to review and editing.

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GREATER TORONTO AREA BIRD REPORT – DECEMBER 2008

The following are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records. County/Region codes used in the *database* are: MT = City of Toronto; HL = Halton R.M.; PL = Peel R.M.; YO = York R.M.; DU = Durham R.M.; LO = Lake Ontario Pelagic, but full names are provided in the Report, except for locations within City of Toronto. Frequently cited place names in Toronto are abbreviated as follows: CSSP = Colonel Sam Smith Park; HP = High Park; HBP = Humber Bay Park (E or W); LSS = Leslie Street Spit; TI = Toronto Islands. Other abbreviations: HRF, DRF, YRF = Halton, Durham and York Regional Forests, respectively. TBO = Toronto Bird Observatory; TTPBRS = Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station.

Species names in **bold, underlined BLOCK CAPITALS** are OBRC rarities. These reports require acceptance by OBRC before they can be considered as part of the local records. They are qualified by [Documentation received] or [No documentation received], as applicable.
Species names in **bold** (but not underlined) are local rarities within the GTA. These reports require documentation and acceptance by the Toronto Bird Rarities Committee (TBRC) before they can be considered as valid records. They are qualified by [Documentation received] or [No documentation received], as applicable.
Individual species **marked * or specific reports marked *** indicate unusual local observations for which documentation is requested by TBRC and/or TOC Records Committee by virtue of rarity, difficulty of ID, extreme dates (early, late, unseasonal) or high counts.
Species names in [square brackets] indicate reports believed to relate to escaped or released birds, or to introduced birds which have not yet become established.
Names in *ITALICS* indicate subspecies, hybrids, morphs or other 'recognizable forms', which may be identifiable in the field. This does not necessarily imply that the compilers agree with such designations, or accept their validity.

CACKLING (RICHARDSON'S) GOOSE – 3 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 5th (AA) and 1 at Mouth of Duffin's Creek, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa).

CANADA GOOSE - 1500 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 6th, 3000 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 20th & 500 off Bond Head Park, Newcastle, *Durham* on 20th (all NMu,ICa).

SNOW GOOSE – One (white) at Franklin Beach, *York* on 11th (KDu) [Brydon 2009] and 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 31st (JI fide DRBA).

MUTE SWAN - 61 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 17 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 30th (SCH).

TRUMPETER SWAN - 9 at Corner Marsh, *Durham* on 4th (ETB fide DRBA) & 11 there on 6th (NMu,ICa). 1 at South Platform, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa), 1 at Amos Waites Park on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 4 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL). 6 at Toronto CBC Sector 2 (Lower Humber) on 14th (TXC,GC,MKP,&), 2 at HBP [E] on 23rd (John Crawford fide ONTBIRDS) & 5 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 23rd (CSAM fide DRBA). 96 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 30th (SCH), 4 with unreadable tags, 1 with no tag & the rest with readable tags, of which 67 were read!.

TUNDRA SWAN - 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 21st (JKa fide DRBA) & on 23rd (CSAM fide DRBA).

GADWALL - 38 at Thickson's Point, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & 37 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL).

AMERICAN WIGEON - 43 at Thickson's Point, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & 7 at HBP [E] on 7th (OFO,DJM, fide ONTBIRDS).

MALLARD - 250 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL).

NORTHERN SHOVELER - 15 at HP on 6th (SMF). 78 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL); with Grenadier Pond frozen, numbers must include those birds.

NORTHERN PINTAIL – 1 at Corner Marsh, *Durham* on 5th (AA) and 1 M there on 6th (NMu,ICa); 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 23rd (CSAM fide DRBA).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL - 2 at HBP [E] on 6th (JBMW,DJM) & 1 M there on 7th (OFO,DJM, fide ONTBIRDS).

REDHEAD - 150 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 300+ at HBP [W] on 11th (FP fide ONTBIRDS).

Raft of **Long-tailed Ducks** at Amos Waite Park, *Toronto*, 25 December 2008. *© Winnie Poon.*

RING-NECKED DUCK - 1 at HBP [E] on 6th (JBMW,DJM).

GREATER SCAUP - 300 at Thickson's Bay*, Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & 1000 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL).

LESSER SCAUP - 8 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL). 2 at LSS on 14th (TXC,JRC, &) & 21 at TI on 14th (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE,RLau).

KING EIDER - 1 F first reported at Thickson's Point*, Durham* @ 13:30hrs on 3rd (Dan Kaczynski,&, fide JDL). It was seen again there on 4th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS;THo fide DRBA), on 5th (AA), & on 6th (NMu,ICa). [No doc. seen for any of these reports].

HARLEQUIN DUCK - 1 M at HBP [E] on 7th (anon fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS), 4 (1 M, 3 F) at Amos Waites Park @ 15:15hrs on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS), 1 M at SE Tip, LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL) & 2 F at Ben Machree Park*, Peel* on 14th (anon fide SPXC, fide MCr).

BLACK SCOTER – 1 at Thickson's Point*, Durham* on 5th (AA).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - 1 at Amos Waites Park on 25th (RBHS,WP).

COMMON GOLDENEYE - 35 at Thickson's Bay*, Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa), 75 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 350 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL).

HOODED MERGANSER - 1 M at HP on 6th (SMF), 13 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 2 at Whitby Harbour*, Durham* on 13th (R. Stephenson fide DRBA). 12 at LSS (TXC,JRC,&) & 24 at TI (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE,RLau) on 14th. 2 (1M, 1F) at Superior Avenue on 25th (RBHS,WP) & 1 M at Cell #3, LSS on 26th (NMu,MVL).

COMMON MERGANSER - 23 at HBP & 22 at Sunnyside on 11th (NMu,MVL). 250 at LSS on 14th (TXC,JRC,&) & 35 at LSS on 26th (NMu,MVL).

RUDDY DUCK - 1 at Thickson's Point, *Durham* on 5th (AA) & at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 13th (R. Stephenson fide DRBA) & 2 (M & F) at HBP [E] on 23rd (John Crawford fide ONTBIRDS).

RUFFED GROUSE - 1 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 21st (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS).

WILD TURKEY - 4 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 12th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS), 9 at Con 11 & 17th SR, King, *York* on 22nd (DJM fide ONTBIRDS) and 11 at Keily Cres, Caledon, *Peel* on 24th (GCam) [Brydon 2009].

RED-THROATED LOON - 1 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL).

COMMON LOON - 1 at SE Tip, LSS on 26th (NMu,MVL) & 1 at Oshawa Harbour, *Durham* on 30th (THo fide DRBA).

PIED-BILLED GREBE - 1 at Grenadier Pond, HP on 7th (anon fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS).

HORNED GREBE – 2 at Jackson's Point, *York* on 3rd (KDu) [Brydon 2009], 1 at HBP [E] on 23rd (John Crawford fide ONTBIRDS) & again there on 31st (Adam Penson fide HC).

RED-NECKED GREBE - 2 at Bronte Harbour, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at CSSP on 7th (OFO fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS).

GREAT BLUE HERON - 6 at Corner Marsh, *Durham* on 4th (ETB fide DRBA), 8 there on 5th (AA) and 6 again on 11th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). 3 at Pringle Creek, Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 5th (AA), 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 5th (AA) and 6th (NMu,ICa) & 6 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (GCarp fide DRBA). 1 at Mimico Creek Mouth, HBP on 6th (JBMW,DJM), on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS) & on 11th (NMu,MVL). 1 was also at Mimico Creek N of Lakeshore on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS). Singles at Leslie St N of Steeles, *York* on 14th (TXC,RBHS,WP), Kortright C. A., *York* on 21st (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 23rd (CSAM fide DRBA) & at Lawrence Ave & Manse Rd, Scarb on 28th (RLau).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - 1 IMM at Mimico Creek N of Lakeshore on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS).

BALD EAGLE - 1 IMM at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 7th (ETB fide DRBA), 2 (1 AD, 1 IMM) at Marie Curtis Park on 7th (OFO fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Oshawa Harbour, *Durham* on 8th (A. Johnson fide DRBA). 1 AD at Amos Waites Park on 11th (FP fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 flying over at Dunlap Observatory, *York* on 20th (MAB,AK,RHXC).

NORTHERN HARRIER - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa), 3 on 13th (RPye fide DRBA) & 1 M there on 23rd (JDL fide DRBA). 1 at Newtonville Rd & Lakeshore, *Durham* on 6th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS). 1 M at The Meadow, Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 13th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at Thickson's Rd, *Durham* on 13th (RPye fide DRBA) & 1 there on 30th (Bernie Monette fide ONTBIRDS). 3 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL) & 2 there on 14th (TXC,JRC, &). 1 F at Jeffreys Street, Whitby, *Durham* on 28th (Glen Steplock fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 M at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 29th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK – 5 reports of single birds from different locations from 12th to 21st.

COOPER'S HAWK – 13 reports at 12 different locations of single birds from 1st to 23rd. 2 at 7 Fairway Dr., Scarb. on 26th (RLau), an AD made an agressive pass at perched immature bird, which took off in a hurry and was displaced by the AD, AD vocalized a few times before flying off.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st (JFa,CSAM, fide DRBA), 12th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS),13th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS) & on 20th (NMu,ICa). 1 at Nature Reserve, TI on 14th (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE,RLau) . I at Albion Trail, *Peel* on 20th (GCam), and 1 at 198 Altamira Dr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 20th (RTi) [both Brydon 2009]. 1 1Y at Peninsula B, LSS on 26th (NMu,MVL) was 'trading vocal insults/warnings? with a Great Horned Owl within 30' of it!'.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK - 1 at Thickson's Rd, *Durham* on 13th (RPye fide DRBA), 1 at Distillery District, Toronto on 21st (Max Perren fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 (dark) at Con 11 & 17th SR, King, *York* on 22nd (DJM fide ONTBIRDS).

* GOLDEN EAGLE - 1 1Y at Con 11 & 17th SR, King, *York* on 22nd [No doc. seen] (DJM fide ONTBIRDS), 'At one point, it dove down into a gully and flushed up 9 Wild Turkeys'.

MERLIN - 1 at 350 Midwest Rd, Scarb. from 1st to 19th (RLau),"Unusual for one to stay this long, behaving as if resident?" 2 (prob. pair) at Vanderhoof Ave, Leaside @ 12:30hrs on 16th (ETB fide GC). One (the F) was perched behind #98 Vanderhoof, and still there at 14:30h, having stirred up a flock of House Sparrows; the

other flew NE towards Eglinton. 1 at Keele Valley Landfill, *York* on 20th (Tom Waechter,RHXC) & 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 26th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS).

PEREGRINE FALCON - 1 at Distillery District, Toronto on 21st (Max Perren fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 AD at Michael Starr building, Oshawa, *Durham* on 23rd & 24th (DRuch fide DRBA). 1 at Bloor & Bay on 26th was seen taking a Rock Pigeon (REH fide GC). 1 at Etienne Brule Park on 28th (SCH).

GYRFALCON – 1 at Claireville Reservoir, *Peel* on 14th (Sarah Hendershott, John Klymko, WHXC) [Noble 2009] [No doc. seen].

AMERICAN COOT - 5 at HBP [E] on 7th (OFO,DJM, fide ONTBIRDS) & 3 at HBP [W] on 11th (FP fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Amos Waites Park on 25th (RBHS,WP) & 1 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 30th SCH).

SANDHILL CRANE - 20 flying over at Bronte Creek Prov. Park, *Halton* @ 12:00hrs & 35 flying over Appleby Line N of Upper Middle Rd, *Halton* @ 13:00hrs on 4th (Michael Veltri fide ONTBIRDS).

KILLDEER - 1 at Mimico Creek Mouth, HBP from 1st to 20th (GC,&), at a warm water outflow on E bank, 10m S of Lakeshore Rd. On the 14th it was seen on the Toronto CBC and documented for CBC purposes (TXC,GC,&). It had been present at this site since 27 Nov, and stayed to 20 Dec 2008 (GC).

AMERICAN AVOCET - The long-staying individual from November, which had been identified as a F, reappeared at the Mouth of Duffin's Creek, *Durham* on 2nd (JFa,JCS, fide JDL), and was seen there on 3rd (FP fide ONTBIRDS; MJL fide ONTBIRDS), on 4th at 14:00h (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS), and on 5th (GDe, &).That might have been the end of the story, but what was most likely the same bird then turned up at the S end of Grand Island (Beaver Is. State Park) in *Erie Co, New York,* where it was first reported on 6th (Debbie Sharon fide Jim Pawlicki, fide ONTBIRDS). Jim Pawlicki concluded it was probably the same bird based on dates, study of photos, a plumage feature, and behavior (its fish-catching ability). It was seen there on 8th (anon fide Bill Watson, fide ONTBIRDS) and remained until 14th (anon fide DFS, fide ONTBIRDS). It made a last appearance back in Canada at 11:00hrs on 16th, when it was relocated across the Niagara R. at Fort Erie, *Niagara* on the shore at Bowen Road (Ron Goodrich, fide Marcie Jacklin, fide ONTBIRDS).

BONAPARTE'S GULL - 4 at the Causeway, LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL – Singles at Oshawa Harbour, *Durham* on 21st (THo fide DRBA) & at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 23rd (CSAM fide DRBA).

GLAUCOUS GULL – 1 at Ashbridges Bay Park on 26th (AA).

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL - 1 at HP on 2nd, 13th & 29th (SMF). 2 at Humber Marsh #7 & 1 at South Humber Park on 14th (GC). 1 at Downsview Dells Park on 14th (TXC,DBo,&).

GREAT HORNED OWL - 5 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL) & 2 there on 26th (NMu,MVL). 2 at Humber Marsh #4 on 14th (GC), 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 18th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 21st (THo fide DRBA).

"SNYDER'S" GREAT HORNED OWL - 2 at Peninsula D, LSS on 14th were photographed and pictures appear on Jean Iron's website (TXC,JI,&). 3 reported at LSS on 26th [No doc. seen] (NMu,MVL).

"LABRADOR" GREAT HORNED OWL - 1 Peninsula D, at LSS on 14th (TXC,JI,&), photographed by Jean Iron.

SNOWY OWL - 2 at W end Ravenshoe Rd, *York* on 3rd (KDu) [Brydon 2009]. 1 at Bronte Harbour, *Halton* from 6th to 12th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 IMM-F at CSSP on 6th (JBMW,DJM). 1 at Hwy 401, E of Thickson's Rd., *Durham* on 12th (RPye fide DRBA), on 18th (FP fide DRBA) & on 22nd (Mark Cresswell fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Winners, Lebovic Ave. on 12th (George Talusan fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Interchange Way, S of Hwy 7, *York* on 13th (Peeter Musta fide ONTBIRDS) was perched on a lamp standard! 2 at Island Airport, TI on 14th (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE,RLau), 1 1W at LSS on 26th (NMu,MVL) & 1 at Victoria St W of Thickson's Rd (nr. Rona), Whitby, *Durham* on 27th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS). 3 at Pearson Int'l Airport, *Peel* on 28th were interacting with eachother (MDB fide ONTBIRDS); seen from a plane while waiting to take off! 1 at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 29th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS).

LONG-EARED OWL - 1 at Bronte Creek Prov. Park, *Halton* on 8th (Michael Veltri fide OFO-W) & on 14th (Dave Don fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 11th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL) & 1 there on 14th (TXC,JRC,&).

SHORT-EARED OWL - 2 at Bloor St & Oshawa Townline, *Durham* on 11th (GCarp fide DRBA), 1 at Thickson's Rd, *Durham* on 13th (RPye fide DRBA) & 2 at Downsview Park on 14th (TXC,DBo,&).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL – Singles at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & at LSS on 14th (TXC,JRC,&).

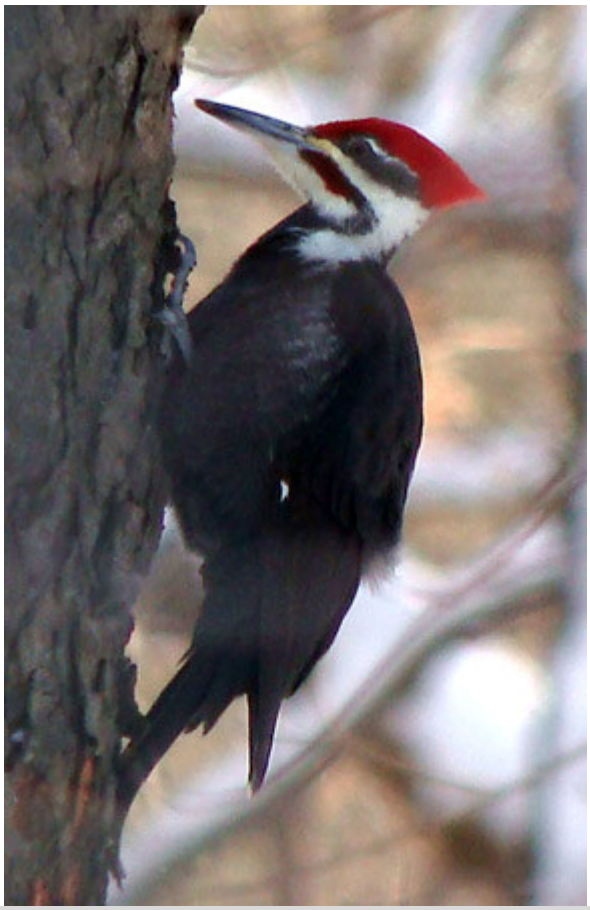
BELTED KINGFISHER – Singles at Uplands Golf Course, Thornhill, *York* on 8th (GDe), Donalda Golf Course on 13th (JCa,MCa), Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 13th (R. Stephenson fide DRBA) & at Cedarbrook Park on 21st (RLau).

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER - 1 F at HP on 2nd & 25th (SMF). 1 at Bronte Creek P.P. (East) on 14th (AA); 1 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 20th & 30th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Werry Rd, Solina, *Durham* on 21st (N. Miller fide DRBA).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER - 1 at Jefferson Forest, *York* on 20th (GDe,&,RHXC), at dead end of Forest Ridge Rd.

NORTHERN FLICKER - Singles at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 1st (GCarp fide DRBA), at W end Whitby (in backyard), *Durham* on 11th (G. Ernest fide DRBA), at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 14th (JDL fide DRBA) & NE of Leslie & Sheppard on 14th (TXC,AK,&).

PILEATED WOODPECKER - 1 M at South Humber Park on 13th (GC,GJB), in SW corner; first time GC has ever seen one there. 1 at Claremont Cons. Area, *Durham* on 20th (NMu,ICa), 1 at YRF - Robinson Tract, *York* on 20th (Marianne Yake,RHXC) & 1 M at Sheppard's Bush C.A., Aurora, *York* on 20th (WP,RBHS,RHXC).



Male **Pileated Woodpecker,** Sheppard's Bush C.A., Aurora, *York*, 20 December 2009. *© Winnie Poon.*

NORTHERN SHRIKE – 20 reports from 6th to 28th included 15 sightings of single birds, 2 at G. Ross Lord Park on 14th (TXC,CPG,SE), 3 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 21st (THo fide DRBA) & 2 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 21st (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS). Also, 2 at Palgrave C.A., *Peel* on 4th (PG, Gordon Morton) and 2 at Dixie & Boston Mills, *Peel* on 23rd (GCam) [both Brydon 2009].

BLUE JAY - 12 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 6th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS).

AMERICAN CROW - 5 near 31 Glenroy Ave on 21st (SCH) were eating peanuts and sumac flowers. These represent the first pair (plus 3 yng) to successfully nest in this neigbourhood since West Nile virus struck.

COMMON RAVEN - 1 flying over at Conc 8 & Brock Rd, Claremont, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & 1 at Beaverton River Wetlands, *Durham* on 17th (RDJ). 1 at Tim Hortons, Uxbridge, *Durham* on 22nd (RDJ), 'Having a donut at Tims (the raven that is, not me). It was saying nothing (mouth full I guess)'.

HORNED LARK - 52 at Newtonville Road, *Durham* on 6th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at SE Tip, LSS on 14th (CH,Ralph Tononger, TXC), flushed from E shore of embayment. [Documented for CBC purposes].

BROWN CREEPER – 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 1st (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS) & on 14th (RPye fide DRBA). 1 at Corner Marsh, *Durham* on 4th (ETB fide DRBA), 2 at Marie Curtis Park on 7th (OFO fide DJM, fide NTBIRDS) & 1 at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 11th (Josh Vandermeulen fide ONTBIRDS).

CAROLINA WREN - 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 1st (JFa fide DRBA), 1 there on 14th (RPye fide DRBA), & 1 on 18th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Resources Road Ravine on 14th (TXC,MK) & 2 at Hanlan's Point, TI on 14th (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE,RLau).

* HOUSE WREN - 1 (late) at Bronte Creek P. P., *Halton* on 13th [No doc. seen] (Rod Murray fide ONTBIRDS).

WINTER WREN - 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 1st (JFa fide DRBA), 2 there (Corbett Creek Marsh) on 14th (AA) & 1 on 18th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Mimico Creek N of Lakeshore on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET - 2 at Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Marie Curtis Park on 7th (OFO fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS) & 12 at Peninsula C, LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD – A small flock at Bronte Creek Prov. Park, *Halton* on 13th (Rod Murray fide ONTBIRDS) & 4 there on 14th (AA). 6 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 14th (WHXC fide BNo, fide ONTBIRDS) was the 1st record for this CBC. * 8 (6 M, 2 F) at Don Valley Brickworks Park @ 08:15hrs on 14th [Documented for CBC] (TXC,JNi,LMS).

HERMIT THRUSH – 1 at Thickson's Woods, *Durham* on 5th (AA); 1 at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 6th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Rosedale Valley on 13th (DP) was reported as CW for Toronto CBC. 1 at Sheldrake Blvd. on 17th, eating the last Mountain Ash berries (GF). 1 at Doris McCarthy Trail, (Kingston & Bellamy), Scarborough on 21st (Robert Ferguson fide ONTBIRDS).

AMERICAN ROBIN - 14 at HBP [W] on 11th (FP fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Peninsula C, LSS on 13th, where uncommon in winter (NMu,ICa,MVL). 15 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 14th (RPye fide DRBA), 363 at Willowdale on 14th (TXC) & 52 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 21st (THo fide DRBA).

VARIED THRUSH - 1 M at Highland Creek area, Scarborough on 10th [No doc. seen] (Karin Fawthrop,JFa,JCS), came to feeders in backyard, but only for one day.

GRAY CATBIRD - 1 at Deer Run & Winston Churchill, *Halton* on 14th (anon,SPXC, fide MCr), in the Joshua Creek valley (fide CEE,ONTBIRDS). 1 at backyard in Etobicoke on 21st (BPB fide OUTON).

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD – A good number of reports this month, with 36 from Toronto, 16 from York, 5 from Durham, 3 from Peel and 3 from Halton. Excluding duplications, this accounts for about 56 individual birds for the winter period so far. Results from the Peel-Halton, Kleinburg, Pickering and Oshawa counts have not yet been fully incorporated into the totals. Thanks to all the regular contributors and please continue to send in these reports.

AMERICAN PIPIT – 1 at Pringle Creek, Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 5th (AA).

* NORTHERN PARULA -1 M first reported at Beaver Pond, Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 13th [No doc. seen] (Dan Kaczynski,&, fide JDL). It was seen again there on 15th (anon fide GCarp, fide ONTBIRDS). *If documented, this would be the first ever December report of this species in the GTA.*

* YELLOW WARBLER - 1 AD-M at The Arsenal Lands, *Peel* @ 14:00hrs on 6th [No doc. seen] (AK fide ONTBIRDS). Reported as 'far W of Marie Curtis Park, along a small creek'; watched for 15mins at close range (within 5m).

* BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER - A truly unprecedented situation this month, with 3 different birds staying into December. First, a female, which had been found at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd Nov, was seen again on 24th and 28th Nov, then on 11th Dec (Josh Vandermeulen fide ONTBIRDS), and photographed there on 12th Dec (Michael Veltri, fide OFO Website). It was seen along the boardwalk, keeping low and feeding on buckthorn berries (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS). It was apparently difficult to find, but was reported still there on 1st Jan 2009 (Cecilia Verkley fide ONTBIRDS). Meanwhile a male, which first showed up in the second week of November at a feeder on Grandview Ave, Toronto (W of Withrow Park), also stayed into December and first became known to birders when information was posted on 3rd Dec (Don Baxter fide OUTON). It was photographed on 12th, coming to a tube seed feeder (Don Baxter fide HC). The third one, also a male (probably 1W by plumage), was first reported on 1st at a feeder on Belsize Drive, Toronto (N of Mount Pleasant Cemetery) (Steve Rowe fide ONTBIRDS), and photographed on 6th (Steven Rowe fide MSch; pers.comm.). Both the Toronto birds were seen on the Christmas Count (first ever on this count!) and were documented, the Grandview one by MSch and the Belsize one by Kevin Seymour). Both persisted until 19th. There was a heavy snowstorm around that date and –16C temperature overnight, and neither was seen on 20th, nor subsequently. See NOTE elsewhere in this issue.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER - 1 at HBP [W] on 6th (JBMW,DJM) & 2 at HBP [E] on 7th (OFO,DJM, fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at HBP on 14th (TXC,GC,&) & 1 at St Lawrence Park, Port Credit, *Peel* on 14th (anon fide SPXC, fide MCr).

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT - 1 at HBP [E] on 7th (GC fide ONTBIRDS), in the large stand of Phragmites on E bank of Mimico Creek below the white footbridge - responded to pishing. 1 at 'Magic Marsh', East Don Parkland (S of Bayview Woods Strip Mall on Finch) on 14th [Documented] (TXC,REH,Declan Troy).

EASTERN TOWHEE - 1 AD-M at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 1st (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS), on 12th (C. Adey fide DRBA) & on 21st (JKa fide DRBA). 1 at Oshawa Creek N of Rossland Rd., *Durham* from 1st to 5th & from 8th to 12th (THo fide DRBA).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW - 16 at South Trail/Platform, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa). 75 at LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL) & 36 there 26th (NMu,MVL). 40 at 8th Line N of Britannia, *Halton* on 27th (DEP fide ONTBIRDS).

* CHIPPING SPARROW - 1 at 104 Hadrian Dr, Etobicoke from 1st to 22nd (Documented) (MK), coming to feeder irregularly since 9 Nov 2008. 1 at S of Shell Park, Oakville, *Halton* on 5th [No doc. seen] (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Rosedale Valley on 16th, also seen twice prior to this date [No doc. seen] (DP) & 1 at Conc 3 W of Zion (just W of McCullogh Rd.), *Durham* on 20th [No doc. seen] (NMu,ICa).

* VESPER SPARROW - 1 at CSSP on 6th [No doc. seen] (JBMW,DJM). 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 18th [No doc. seen] (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). *Doc. required from 1 Dec onwards.*

* SAVANNAH SPARROW - 2 at CSSP on 6th [No doc. seen] (JBMW,DJM) & 1 at 8th Line N of Britannia, *Halton* on 27th [No doc. seen] (DEP fide ONTBIRDS). *Doc. required from 1 Dec onwards.*

FOX SPARROW - 1 at Thickson's Woods, *Durham*, at one of the cottage feeders on 6th (NMu,ICa). 1 at feeder at 127 Pugsley Ave, Richmond Hill, *York* on 20th (GDe,&,RHXC).

SONG SPARROW - 1 at HBP [E] on 6th (JBMW,DJM), 1 at Marie Curtis Park on 7th (OFO fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS), 6 at Peninsula B, LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL), 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 13th (RPye fide DRBA) & 16 at LSS on 14th (TXC,JRC,&).

SWAMP SPARROW – 2 at Corbett Creek Marsh, Thickson's Woods, *Durham* on 5th (AA); 1 at Peninsula B, LSS on 13th (NMu,ICa,MVL), 4 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 14th (RPye fide DRBA), 1 at Science Centre Pond, Ernest T. Seton Park on 14th (TXC,ETB,MM), 1 at Richmond Hill Mill Pond, *York* on 20th (GEL,RHXC) & 3 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 21st (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW - 3 at HP on 2nd, 2 on 6th, 1 on 13th & 4 on 25th (SMF). 4 at South Trail/Platform, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (NMu,ICa) & 3 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 13th (RPye fide DRBA). 2 at @ feeder in Whitby, *Durham* on 7th (G. Ernest fide DRBA). 3 at Island School (New), TI on 14th (TXC,Gavin Platt,HE, RLau) & 2 at Canada Life, University Ave. on 18th & 24th (RBHS). 3 at Idleswift Dr, Thornhill, *York* from 8-15th (GDe) and 1 there on 26th (GDe) [both Brydon 2009]. 8 other reports from 11th to 23rd of single birds.

HARRIS'S SPARROW - 1 at Cadmus, *Durham* on 9th (Stan Garason fide MCar, fide RPye). Reported to Margaret Carney because of her nature column, 'It feeds entirely on the ground in amongst the cedars, but perches up in my maple tree and looks at me through the window'. On the 14th his son, Matt Garason, got a photo of the bird which confirmed the ID. 'It comes infrequently, but I am trying to attract it more often with seeds thrown under the cedar line. I'll see if this has any positive effects'. (Stan Garason fide MCar, fide RPye). It was reported again there on 18th (MJCB,Richard Pope, fide RPye).

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - 4 at HBP [E] on 6th (JBMW,DJM), 1 at #13900 E Qtr Line, Cartwright, *Durham* on 18th (MJCB,Richard Pope, fide RPye) & 1 at Holy Cross Cemetery, *York* on 20th (MAB,AK,RHXC).

DARK-EYED JUNCO - 45 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 23rd (MAB).

NORTHERN CARDINAL - 15 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 23rd (MAB).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD - 1 M at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 5th (AA) and 6th (NMu,ICa).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – 1 at South Platform, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 5th (AA) and 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 14th (JDL fide DRBA).

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD - * 450 at Shoalpoint & Bayly St., *Durham* on 4th [No doc. seen] (HC). *New seasonal high count, for 10 Oct-31 Dec period, if documented (previous was 73).* 5 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 20th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at backyard in Whitby, *Durham* on 21st (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS). One at Idleswift Dr, Thornhill, *York* on 26th (GDe) [Brydon 2009].

PINE GROSBEAK – 6 at Palgrave, *Peel* on 26th (Elizabeth & Gordon Morton) and 2 at Albion Hills C.A., *Peel* on 27th (PG, Gordon Morton) [both Brydon 2009].

RED CROSSBILL - 3 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 12th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Cold Creek C. A., *York* on 14th (WHXC fide BNo, fide ONTBIRDS, was the 2nd record for this CBC.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL - 8 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st (JFa,CSAM, fide DRBA), 45+ on 12th (CSAM fide ONTBIRDS), 65 on 13th (JDL,RPye, fide ONTBIRDS), 25 on 14th (JDL fide DRBA), 10 on 23rd (JDL fide DRBA), 300 on 30th (Bernie Monette fide ONTBIRDS) & 1000 there on 31st (JI fide DRBA). Some were seen & photographed at Bronte Creek P.P. (W side), *Halton* on 4th (Michael Veltri fide ONTBIRDS) & 5 M were there on 20th (John Millman fide OFO-W). 20 at Utica (in backyard), *Durham* on 8th (JKa fide DRBA) & 60 at Uxbridge (in town), *Durham* on 11th (D. Connolley fide DRBA). 70 at Claireville C. A., *Peel* (TH,&,WHXC) & a total of 1024 were recorded on 14th on the Kleinburg CBC (WHXC fide BNo, fide ONTBIRDS); which was a new record for this count, but expected in view of the irruption. On the 14th there were 6 at Sunnybrook Park (EO'C,BEM, fide OUTON) seen on Toronto CBC along with 30 at Willowdale (TXC,Declan Troy). 35-40 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 18th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). On the 20th on the RHXC there were 27 at Huntington Park, *York* (MAB,AK,RHXC), 22 at Yonge & Royal Orchard, *York* (MAB,AK,RHXC) & 1 M at YRF - Robinson Tract, *York* (RBHS,RHXC). 30 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 21st (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), 10 at Humbercrest Lane on 29th (AA), 168 at Darlington P. P., *Durham* on 30th (THo fide DRBA) & 15 at backyard in Whitby, *Durham* on 31st (B. McWalters fide DRBA). Other reports from *Peel* included 12 at Palgrave on 4th (Gordon Morton) and 14 at Palgrave C.A. (PG, Gordon Morton) on same date; 15 at Graydon Property, Humber Grove on 7th, and 5 at Hall's Lake & Mt Wolfe Rd on 25th (GCam) [all Brydon 2009]. Other reports from *York* included 7 at Newmarket on 13th (MvdT), 6 at Seneca College (King) on 20th (BB, RHXC) and 40 at Bathurst N of Morning SR on 30th (BB) [all Brydon 2009]. *Reports have been listed in detail in view of the interest in the current irruption.*

COMMON REDPOLL - 7 at Darlington P. P., *Durham* on 30th (THo fide DRBA).

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH - 28 at HBP on 11th (NMu,MVL) & 260 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 23rd (MAB).

CITED OBSERVERS: & et al.; OFO-W OFO website; OFO Ontario Field Ornithologists; BPB Brian P. Bailey; MJCB Margaret Bain; ETB Eleanor Beagan; GJB Gerard Binsfeld; MAB Michael Biro; DBo Dan Bone; MDB Mike Boyd; BB Bruce Brydon; DEB Donald E. Burton; GCam Gordon Cameron; ICa Ian Cannell; JRC John Carley; MCar Margaret Carney; GCarp Geoff Carpentier; JCa John Catto; MCa Margaret Catto; GC Glenn Coady; MCr Mark Cranford; HC Hugh Currie; WD'A Willie D'Anna; GDe Gene Denzel; SE Sandra Eadie; CEE Cheryl Edgecombe; HE Herb Elliot; JFa Jim Fairchild; GF George Fairfield; SMF Steven Favier; PG Phyllis Graydon; CPG Chester Gryski; REH Ross Harris; SCH Sandra Hawkins; CH Carl Hills; THo Tyler Hoar; TH Theo Hofmann; JI Jean Iron; RDJ Ross D. James; JKa James Kamstra; AK Andrew Keaveney; MK Mark Kubisz; RLau Rick Lauzon; GEL Graham Leonard; MJL Marcus J. Lise; MVL Margaret Liubavicius; JDL J. Doug Lockrey; JMacK Jess MacKenzie; BEM Bruce Massey; CSAM Craig S.A. McLauchlan; JBMW Jim Baillie Memorial Walk; DJM Dave J. Milsom; MM Marilynn Murphy; NMu Norman Murr; JNi John Nishikawa; BNo Bob Noble; EO'C Ed O'Connor; anon Unknown Observer; ONTBIRDS OFO Email Hotline; OUTON OutdoorOntario.net; MKP Mark K. Peck; DEP Don E. Perks; DP Don Peuramaki; FP Frank Pinilla; RJP Ron Pittaway; WP Winnie Poon; RPye Rayfield Pye; DRBA Durham Rare Bird Alert; JDR Jim Rising; DRuch Dave Ruch; LMS Lucy M. Sayurama; LS Leon Schlichter; MSch Mary Schuster; RBHS Roy B. H. Smith; JCS John C. Stirrat; DFS David F. Suggs; RTi Russ Tilt; MDW Mike Williamson; RHXC Richmond Hill Xmas Count; SPXC South Peel Xmas Count; TXC Toronto Xmas Count; WHXC West Humber Xmas Count.

REFERENCES:

Brydon, Bruce 2009. November-December 2008 Sightings. WHNC Newsletter January 2009: 8-9.

Noble, Bob. 2009. Christmas Bird Count [2008]. WHNC Newsletter, January 2009: 3-6.

ERRATA: November 2008 Report

A reference to White-crowned Sparrow at Devald St., Holland Marsh on 22 November 2008, should be removed as it pertains to Simcoe not York, hence outside the GTA.

Compiled by Dave Worthington for the TOC Records Committee.

Photo editing by Winnie Poon.

Data entry by Roy Smith. 1032 reports were added to the database for December 2008 (some CBC data outstanding).

Please send reports to: Roy Smith 20 Harding Blvd. W, Suite 1002, Richmond Hill, ON L4C9S4. Tel: 905-508-4045 Fax: 905-508-4730 email: rsmith@mrs.com by 8th of the following month, please. Send photos for possible use in the bird report to: torontobirds@sympatico.ca, following guidelines on 2nd page of this journal.

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THE 84TH TORONTO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER 2008

Glenn Coady (Compiler)

The eighty-fourth Toronto Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 14, 2008. A record 118 participants took part in this year's count. A total of 89 species was found on count day (slightly above the ten year average of 86; tied for fourth highest all-time), including a total of 52,690 individual birds (just above the ten year rolling average of 52,552; ninth highest all-time). One additional species (Hermit Thrush) was found within the Count Week period.

In contrast to the nearly constant deluge of rain experienced on last year's count, this year presented much more pleasant conditions for counters. Temperatures varied from -1°C at dawn to a high of 4°C in the afternoon. It was overcast for most of the day, with some sunny periods and short instances of light drizzle. The winds were generally light, peaking at 20 km/hr from the southwest.

The highlight of the count was the two male Black-throated Blue Warblers found on route 12 (Central East), representing a new all-time species in the history of the count (for more details, see the accompanying note by Roy Smith in this issue). These birds rightfully garnered the 2008 "Hole Truth" Award for the best bird of the count, for the team of Mary Schuster, Kevin Seymour, John Nishikawa, Greg Stuart, Lucy Saruyama, Howard Shapiro, Theresa Dobko and Don Peuramaki (Figure 1).

Other unusual species found on the count included eight Eastern Bluebirds at the Don Valley Brick Works (sixth record for the count), an American Pipit on the Leslie St. Spit (eighth record for the count), a Common Yellowthroat in a marsh in the East Don Parkland south of Finch Avenue (ninth record for the count) and a Killdeer seen at the mouth of Mimico Creek (fourteenth record for the count).

Special commendation this year goes to those counters that promptly provided documentation for the Toronto Bird Rarities Committee for every one of the seven species for which it was required (Killdeer, Horned Lark, Eastern Bluebird, American Pipit, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Chipping Sparrow).

The top ten species counts were: European Starling 16,883; Rock Pigeon 4,683; Ring-billed Gull 4,290; Long-tailed Duck 4,280; Mallard 2,837; House Sparrow 2,403; Canada Goose 2,008; Greater Scaup 1,979; Redhead 1,857; and American Robin 1,224.

Besides the Black-throated Blue Warblers, additional record high counts were also tallied for the following 13 species: Trumpeter Swan 6 (ties 6 in 2007); Common Merganser 988 (previously 480 in 1953); Red-breasted Merganser 712 (previously 309 in 2006); Northern Harrier 6 (previously 5 in 1960); Sharp-shinned Hawk 18 (ties 18 in 2001); Cooper's Hawk 21 (previously 16 in 2006); Red-tailed Hawk 101 (previously 89 in 2005); Merlin 3 (ties 3 in 2005 and 2007); Rock Pigeon 4,683 (previously 4,136 in 2007); Downy Woodpecker 245 (previously 234 in 2006); Eastern Bluebird 8 (previously 5 in 2005); Dark-eyed Junco 962 (previously 821 in 1989); and Northern Cardinal 517 (previously 478 in 2006).

Additional species with notably high counts were: Northern Shoveler 63 (second highest ever); Northern Shrike 10 (highest since 15 in 1954); and Brown Creeper 30 (fifth highest all-time).

Unusually low counts were made for the following species: American Black Duck 88 (fifth-lowest since the 1940s); Bufflehead 447 (lowest since 1995): Great Black-backed Gull 29 (third lowest since 1985); and American Crow 99 (the seventh consecutive year under 100 individuals since the appearance of West Nile virus in our area in 2002 - whereas 1,294 had been found on the count in 2001).

For the fourth time in the last ten counts, six species of owls were recorded (Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl).

For only the second time in our count's history, three species of warblers were found on count day (Black-throated Blue Warbler 2; Yellow-rumped Warbler 2; and Common Yellowthroat 1). This had previously occurred in 2006 (Orange-crowned Warbler 1; Yellow-rumped Warbler 4; and Ovenbird 1).

Despite the fact that the winter of 2008-2009 is shaping up to be remembered as one of the best in a generation for northern finches in our area, results on count day were truly paltry indeed. Only 36 White-winged Crossbills, two Common Redpolls and a lone Pine Siskin were found by counters. Pine Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Hoary Redpoll and Evening Grosbeak were not found at all.

Species that were missed altogether on count day (among those which have been found on more than 20 of the 84 count days) included Wood Duck, Northern Pintail, Harlequin Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Snow Bunting, Rusty Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch and Evening Grosbeak.

Thank you to all of our volunteers for your efforts in making the count such a success. I would especially like to thank Sarah Box for organizing the route leaders and new volunteers for the count. Her enthusiastic efforts, in her first year in assuming this role, provided much of the impetus for our record turnout.

Many thanks are due again to Mary Ellen Hebb and Robin Fraser, who hosted a wonderful round-up celebration party for over 60 of our count volunteers.

Lastly, thanks to Winnie Poon for re-formatting the count spreadsheet for use in this publication.

Figure 1. Mary Schuster (right), on behalf of Sector 12 of the Toronto Christmas Count, accepting the **Hole Truth Award** from John Carley, 5 January 2009 at the TOC meeting, *Toronto*, for the Best Bird in the Count : two Black-throated Blue Warblers. © *Glenn Coady*.

THE 84TH TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – 14 DECEMBER 2008

PART 1		SECTOR												
SPECIES	Totals	1	2	3	4A	4B	5A	5B	6A	6B	22	30	23	9
Canada Goose	**2008**	116	362	156	105	149	11		16		10	3		
Mute Swan	**138**	20	32											
Trumpeter Swan	**6**		6											
Gadwall	**389**	10	18		1									
American Wigeon	**38**	9	2											
American Black Duck	**88**	3	22	12	1	1				1	1		2	
Mallard	**2837**	128	436	365	77	66	3		15	12	7	133	38	6
Black x Mallard hybrid	**14**	4	4											
Northern Shoveler	**63**		53											
Green-winged Teal	**1**		1											
Canvasback	**2**													
Redhead	**1857**	37	461											
Greater Scaup	**1979**		769											
Lesser Scaup	**32**		6											
scaup sp.	**13**	12												
White-winged Scoter	**11**	4												
Long-tailed Duck	**4280**	57	548											
Bufflehead	**447**	25	33	19										
Common Goldeneye	**620**	17	62	15	1									
Hooded Merganser	**91**	12	16											
Common Merganser	**988**	2	17	10		11								
Red-breasted Merganser	**712**	15	65											
Red-necked Grebe	**1**													
Double-crested Cormorant	**1**													
Great Blue Heron	**10**		4	1								1		
Black-crowned Night-Heron	**16**		1											
Northern Harrier	**6**													
Sharp-shinned Hawk	**18**	1				2				2			6	
Cooper's Hawk	**21**	1	1	1		2	1		1	1			4	2
Northern Goshawk	**2**													
Red-tailed Hawk	**101**	5	2	8	6	4	5		4	4	4	3	5	6
American Kestrel	**18**	1							4	2		2		
Merlin	**3**			1										
Peregrine Falcon	**3**			1									1	
American Coot	**4**		2											
Killdeer	**1**		1											
Ring-billed Gull	**4290**	810	1184	298	153	272	1			22	50	94	3	10
Herring Gull	**618**	48	68	7	29	43			2				6	
Iceland Gull	**3**		1										1	
Glaucous Gull	**1**													
Great Black-backed Gull	**29**	2	4											
gull sp.	**144**						78		37				2	
Rock Pigeon	**4683**	32	146	628	155	96	1013		92	84	201	154	29	8
Mourning Dove	**495**	8	15	21	11	64	12		30	46		17	7	59
Eastern Screech-Owl	**6**	1	3						1					
Great Horned Owl	**9**	1	2										1	
Snowy Owl	**2**													
Long-eared Owl	**2**					1								
Short-eared Owl	**2**								2					
Northern Saw-whet Owl	**1**													
Belted Kingfisher	**8**						1			1	1		2	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	**1**			1										

PART 1- continued		SECTOR												
SPECIES	Totals	1	2	3	4A	4B	5A	5B	6A	6B	22	30	23	9
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1						1							
Downy Woodpecker	245	23	17	18	8	18	9		6	15	1	4	12	5
Hairy Woodpecker	80	6	1	10		6	3		2	1			8	4
Northern Flicker	6			1									2	
Pileated Woodpecker	6									2				1
Northern Shrike	10					1			1		3	1	1	
Blue Jay	98	5	1	21	5	3	5			5	5	6	2	1
American Crow	99	9	7	4	1	6			3	4	1	7	15	
Horned Lark	2													
Black-capped Chickadee	1031	68	29	61	29	39	37		7	26	29	10	154	46
Red-breasted Nuthatch	37	4	2	3	2		1				1	1		3
White-breasted Nuthatch	121	18	9	12	4	7	10		1	1		1	6	7
Brown Creeper	30	9	6	4	1	1	1						1	
Carolina Wren	5	1			1									
Winter Wren	13	5	1	1									3	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	43	16	11											
Eastern Bluebird	8													
Hermit Thrush	cw													
American Robin	1224	16	43	98	25	106	39		2	48	75		363	34
Northern Mockingbird	30		2		2	9	1		1		2	7	1	
European Starling	16883	334	231	111	635	237	392		186	78	610	340	551	48
American Pipit	1													
Cedar Waxwing	196													
Black-throated BlueWarbler	2													
Yellow-rumped Warbler	2		1											
Common Yellowthroat	1												1	
American Tree Sparrow	255	7	55	25	6	14	1			3		4	2	3
Chipping Sparrow	1					1								
Song Sparrow	42	5	1	2	1				1					1
Swamp Sparrow	4												1	1
White-throated Sparrow	47	15		7	5	5	2		1					
Dark-eyed Junco	962	47	51	87	48	108	63		11	35	7	39	62	24
Northern Cardinal	517	25	17	21	30	60	32		11	29	36	25	30	19
Red-winged Blackbird	1						1							
Common Grackle	1									1				
House Finch	306	10	2	16	27	53	18		5	8	2	12	9	
White-winged Crossbill	36												30	
Common Redpoll	2													
Pine Siskin	1												1	
American Goldfinch	825	31	19	48	48	50	11			22	16	7	109	30
House Sparrow	2403	80	121	72	253	62	430		137	36	56	193	63	18
# Species (not incl. CW)	89	46	53	36	29	31	27	0	25	26	21	23	36	22
# Count Week species	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# Individuals	52690	2115	4974	2166	1670	1497	2182	0	579	489	1118	1064	1534	336
Party hours on foot	179.75	12.5	10.0	7.0	6.5	5.0	7.0		3.0	3.5	7.0	0	12.0	7.0
Party hours in car	57.08	0.33	2.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5		4.0	2.0	1.0	7.0	5.0	2.0
Party km on foot	241.0	12.0	15.0	6.0	14.0	7.0	10.0		4.0	12.0	12.0	0	12.0	10.0
Party km in car	714.5	4.0	20.0	6.0	30.0	46.0	57.0		52.0	10.0	40.0	73.0	50.0	15.0
# Participants	118	8	11	7	3	6	9		4	5	2	2	5	2
# Feeder watchers	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
# Parties	42	3	2	1	2	2	2		1	1	1	1	3	1
Hours owling	9	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		1.5	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0

PART 2	SECTOR													
SPECIES	17A	17b	10A	10B	11A	11B	12	13	14A	14B	16A	16B	15	18
Canada Goose	3	1						533	156	150	62	120	51	4
Mute Swan								12	6	44	21	3		
Trumpeter Swan														
Gadwall								35	9	1	69	227	19	
American Wigeon								6			9	12		
American Black Duck								7		1	23	9	4	1
Mallard	7	5			9	7	192	268	72	110	139	578	156	8
Black x Mallard hybrid		1									1	1	3	
Northern Shoveler											9	1		
Green-winged Teal														
Canvasback										1	1			
Redhead								136	1	232	540	450		
Greater Scaup								13		840	147	200	10	
Lesser Scaup									21		2	3		
scaup sp.												1		
White-winged Scoter										1	2	4		
Long-tailed Duck								1189	175	750	484	800	277	
Bufflehead								32	55	130	38	71	44	
Common Goldeneye								22	30	86	190	143	54	
Hooded Merganser								24	24		12	2	1	
Common Merganser								2	7	640	250	20	29	
Red-breasted Merganser								24	74	219	53	237	25	
Red-necked Grebe												1		
Double-crested Cormorant												1		
Great Blue Heron	1				1		1			1				
Black-crowned Night-Heron							15							
Northern Harrier										2	2	1	1	
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2			1	1	1							2
Cooper's Hawk	1	2					3						1	
Northern Goshawk									1	1				
Red-tailed Hawk	3	1	3		1	9	14	1			2	5	3	3
American Kestrel					1	1	3					1	2	1
Merlin	1													1
Peregrine Falcon							1							
American Coot								1				1		
Killdeer														
Ring-billed Gull	52	36	3		6	40	58	459	7	65		388	272	7
Herring Gull							8	60	7	90	121	117	10	2
Iceland Gull													1	
Glaucous Gull												1		
Great Black-backed Gull								5	2	2	11	3		
gull sp.						10								17
Rock Pigeon	317	9	5		1	180	1029	111		14		10	252	117
Mourning Dove	46	47	9		3	33	44		2	1		3	6	11
Eastern Screech-Owl														1
Great Horned Owl											4			1
Snowy Owl									2					
Long-eared Owl											1			
Short-eared Owl														
Northern Saw-whet Owl											1			
Belted Kingfisher	1	1					1							
Red-bellied Woodpecker														

PART 2 - continued	SECTOR													
SPECIES	**17A**	**17B**	**10A**	**10B**	**11A**	**11B**	**12**	**13**	**14A**	**14B**	**16A**	**16B**	**15**	**18**
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker														
Downy Woodpecker	3	10	12		4	4	20		6	3	1	1	28	17
Hairy Woodpecker	4	5	2		4	3	8			2			7	4
Northern Flicker		1					1							1
Pileated Woodpecker			1											2
Northern Shrike											1	2		
Blue Jay	4	1				6	13					1	13	1
American Crow	13		9		4		6						5	5
Horned Lark											2			
Black-capped Chickadee	10	53	52		56	10	84	2	44	36	8	7	59	75
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	3	7		2		3							3
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	3	5		4	3	15		1				4	7
Brown Creeper									2	3				2
Carolina Wren									2	1				
Winter Wren														3
Golden-crowned Kinglet					1		3		2	2			6	2
Eastern Bluebird							8							
Hermit Thrush							cw							
American Robin	7	112	6		7	7	172					1	5	58
Northern Mockingbird	1	2				1						1		
European Starling	368	251	33		160	150	2199	8270	7	8	60	1042	402	180
American Pipit											1			
Cedar Waxwing					195			1						
Black-throated BlueWarbler							2							
Yellow-rumped Warbler								1						
Common Yellowthroat														
American Tree Sparrow	2						21		12	7	60	31	1	1
Chipping Sparrow														
Song Sparrow							7		2		16	2		4
Swamp Sparrow		1				1								
White-throated Sparrow	1	1					1		4					5
Dark-eyed Junco	31	50	26		5	6	121		9	22	2	1	36	71
Northern Cardinal	26	18	5		6	18	33		13	6		2	27	28
Red-winged Blackbird														
Common Grackle														
House Finch	29	61	7			10	5					1	10	21
White-winged Crossbill					6									
Common Redpoll											2			
Pine Siskin														
American Goldfinch	59	91	11			4	166		3	18	20		30	32
House Sparrow	55	30	124		1	225	242	23		30		80	26	46
# Species (not incl. CW)	**27**	**26**	**18**	**0**	**22**	**21**	**34**	**25**	**31**	**34**	**36**	**42**	**35**	**35**
# Count Week species	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
# Individuals	**1050**	**798**	**320**	**0**	**478**	**729**	**4500**	**11237**	**758**	**3519**	**2367**	**4586**	**1880**	**744**
Party hours on foot	11.0	8.0	4.5		7.5	2.0	17.0	1.5	5.0	6.5	5.0	15.0	7.0	9.25
Party hours in car	3.0	0.25	1.0		0.50	3.0	7.5	2.25	0	0	2.0	6.0	1.5	1.25
Party km on foot	16.0	8.0	4.5		10.0	10.0	22.5	1.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	14.0	18.0
Party km in car	78.0	8.0	2.0		10.0	22.0	85.5	18.0	0	0	12.0	12.0	14.0	50.0
# Participants	7	4	5		2	2	8	4	3	2	6	5	6	2
# Feeder watchers	0	0	2		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# Parties	4	1	1		1	1	5	1	1	1	1	3	2	1
Hours owling	0	0	0		0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0

Note: Unfortunately, the data for Sectors 5A and 5B were not segregated, and the same applies to 10A and 10B.

List of Sectors and Participants

Revised Sectors 2004; 7.5 mile radius circle, centered on Avenue Road and Roselawn Avenue.

Sector 1	(High Park):	**Bob Yukich**, Patrick Stepien-Scanlon, Steven Favier, Brian Bailey, Peter Ewins, Alex Still, Allison Still, Dave Beadle.
Sector 2	(Lower Humber):	**Glenn Coady**, Mark Peck, George Peck, Alison Paul, Audrey Nowicki, Teresa Santos, Jan Doherty, Gerry Binsfeld, Cameron Peck, John Crawford, Geoffrey Legault.
Sector 3	(Upper Humber):	**Garth Riley**, Nancy McPherson, David Langford, Enver Domingo, Peter Aukenthaler, Karin Aukenthaler, Michael Agueci.
Sector 4A	(Weston South):	**Hugh Currie**, Alistair McGiven, Mark Kubisz.
Sector 4B	(Weston North):	**Gene Denzel**, Bob Cumming, Denise Potter, Rod Potter, Mark Kubisz.
Sector 5A	(Downtown):	**Jess Mackenzie**, Josh Shook, John Grant McLoughlin, Eric Davies, Bronwyn Rayfield, Ihor Prociuk, Eleanor Dowson, Zoe Lebrun-Southcott, Andy Tanas.
Sector 5B	(Central West):	**Jess Mackenzie**, Josh Shook, John Grant McLoughlin, Eric Davies, Bronwyn Rayfield, Ihor Prociuk, Eleanor Dowson, Zoe Lebrun-Southcott, Andy Tanas.
Sector 6A	(Downsview West):	**Dan Bone**, Susan Blayney, Brenda Carr, Michael Bates.
Sector 6B	(Downsview East):	**Don Barnett**, Robert Carswell, Margaret Kelch, Leslie Kinrys, Anne Marie Leger.
Sector 22	(York University):	**Chester Gryski**, Sandra Eadie.
Sector 30	(Thornhill):	**Roy Smith**, Winnie Poon.
Sector 23	(Willowdale):	**Ross Harris**, Don Burton, Dan Kozlovic, Declan Troy, Jim Fellowes.
Sector 9	(Bayview):	**Naish McHugh**, Andrew Jano.
Sector 17A	(East Don Central):	**Margaret Catto**, John Catto, Ron Pittaway, Bob Ross, Michael Austin, Neil Meehan, Allan Sangster.
Sector 17B	(East Don North):	**Andrew Keaveney**, Sarah Jane Stanger- Guy, Dave Hallett, Holly Dodds.
Sector 10A	(Sherwood):	**Joan Winearls**, Barbara Kalthoff, Bob Falconer, George Fairfield, Jean Fairfield.
Sector 10B	(Sunnybrook):	**Joan Winearls**, Barbara Kalthoff, Bob Falconer, George Fairfield, Jean Fairfield.
Sector 11A	(Wilket Creek):	**Bruce Massey**, Ed O'Connor.
Sector 11B	(Leaside):	**Eleanor Beagan**, Marilynn Murphy.
Sector 12	(Central East):	**Mary Schuster**, Kevin Seymour, John Nishikawa, Greg Stuart, Lucy Saruyama, Howard Shapiro, Theresa Dobko, Don Peuramaki.
Sector 13	(City Shore):	**Ray Geras**, Tom Flinn, Dennis Duckworth, Anne Pinteric.
Sector 14A	(Toronto Islands West):	**Gavin Platt**, Herb Elliott, Rick Lauzon.
Sector 14B	(Toronto Islands East):	**Bruce Ferry**, Mick Panesar.
Sector 16A	(Leslie Spit):	**John Carley**, Jean Iron, Carl Hills, Ralph Toninger, Leon Schlicter, Sarah Box.
Sector 16B	(Portlands):	**Richard Joos**, Howard Davidson, Mohammed Zwink, Ian Stanley, Margaret Heslin.
Sector 15	(East Toronto):	**Bob Kortright**, Ann Powell, Rachel Gottesman, John Foster, Julie Graham, Jennifer Janzen-Ball.
Sector 18	(East Don South):	**Karl Konze**, John van Nostrand.

Note: Sector leaders' names are in bold.

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NOTE

Snyder's and Labrador Great Horned Owls in Toronto

Jean Iron

The following photographs illustrate two described subspecies of the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus scalariventris* and *Bubo virginianus heterocnemis*) that are different from the resident, nominate form, *Bubo virginianus virginianus*. These photos were taken at the Leslie Street Spit, Toronto, on 14 December 2008 during the Toronto Christmas Bird Count.

Snyder's Great Horned Owl 1 on 14 December 2008. This is a pale northern subspecies of the Great Horned Owl, whose range is almost entirely in northern Ontario, except in winter when some come south. Its facial discs are pale grey and its plumage is much paler than the typical Great Horned Owl of southern Ontario. This subspecies was described in 1961 by L.L. Snyder of the Royal Ontario Museum who named the breeding population in northern Ontario as *Bubo virginianus scalariventris.* Ron Pittaway and I examined Great Horned Owl skins in the Royal Ontario Museum and Canadian Museum of Nature. We looked closely at the large and uniform series of *scalariventris* from across 800 km of northern Ontario in

the ROM described by Snyder (1961). It is “more coldly grey with bolder bars” than *subarcticus* from farther west. The latter also is more extensively whitish “with more vague and sparse dark markings below”. *Scalariventris* further differs from *subarcticus* by its greyish instead of more whitish facial disks.

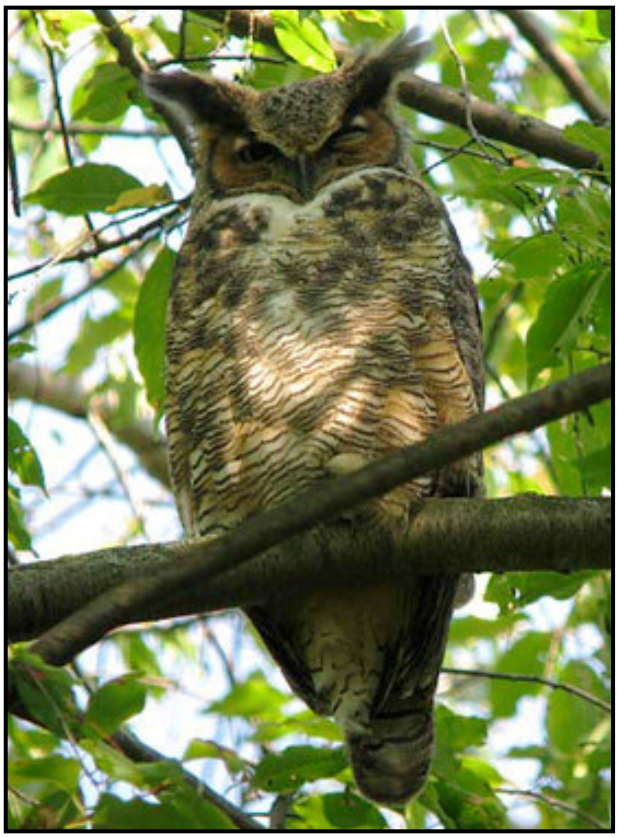
Left : Snyder’s Great Horned Owl 1.
Same as above showing the vermiculated pattern of the scapulars, coverts, tertials and tail.

Right: A second Snyder’s Great Horned Owl on 14 December showing pattern of the scapulars, coverts, primaries and tail.

The following are useful references pertaining to “Snyder’s” Great Horned Owl:

Pittaway, Ron. 1993. Recognizable Forms: subspecies of the Great Horned Owl, Ontario Birds 11(2):64-69.
Pittaway, Ron. 1997. Recognizable bird forms of Canada, Birders Journal 6(2):67-89.
Snyder.L.L. 1961. On an Unnamed Population of the Great Horned Owl. Contribution No. 54. 1961. The Royal Ontario Museum.
Smith, Roy. 2000. Feedback – “Snyder’s” Great Horned Owl, TOC Newsletter 104:13-14 (April 2000).

Labrador Great Horned Owl. A dark subspecies of Great Horned Owl ***Bubo virginianus heterocnemis***. Breeds in northern Quebec, Labrador, and Newfoundland and wanders occasionally in winter into Ontario. Its facial discs are dark and its plumage is darker than the typical Great Horned Owl of southern Ontario.



Resident Great Horned Owl ***Bubo virginianus virginianus*** has orange facial discs. It is overall more brownish with distinct rufous tinges to body feathers. Thickson's Woods, *Durham*, 22 September 2008. *© Jean Iron*.

Skins of Great Horned Owl

Comparison of skins of three subspecies of Great Horned Owl: ventral view (top) and dorsal view (below). Left: ***Bubo virginianus heterocnemis*** – ROM #33333, collector J.A. Whillans, 15 December 1939, Palgrave, *Peel*. Centre: ***Bubo virginianus virginianus*** – ROM #32.3.29.10, collector J. Miner, 28 March 1932, Kingsville, *Essex*. Right: ***Bubo virginianus scalariventris*** – ROM 75245, collector D.G. Waldriff, 26 February 1948, Elsas, *Algoma District*. This is the type specimen used by Snyder (1961) to describe the subspecies ***scalariventris***.

Note that the example of *heterocnemis* used in these photos is not as dark as more typical birds, which are much darker (sootier and less rufous) than *virginianus*, with heavier barring below, and with dark brownish-grey instead of rusty facial disks (Ron Pittaway, pers. comm.).

Photographs by Mark Peck, Ornithology/Department of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum.

Ventral View

Dorsal View

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NOTE

Black-throated Blue Warblers in late fall and winter in the Greater Toronto Area

Roy Smith

The Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* is not normally thought of as occurring in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in winter. In fact, there are only two previous December records, so the appearance of three individuals in December 2008 warrants further discussion.

GTA Winter Records in 2008

The first to be reported was a female found at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23 November (anon fide Cheryl Edgecombe fide ONTBIRDS). It was seen again, briefly, on 24 November, but then not reported until 5 December (anon fide Cheryl Edgecombe fide ONTBIRDS). On 11 December it was seen along the board-walk at 13:00hrs, keeping low and feeding on buckthorn berries (Josh Vandermuelen fide ONTBIRDS). A good photo (Figure 1) was obtained on 12 December (Michael Veltri, OFO Website). Unfortunately, this bird could not be found on the Hamilton CBC on 26 December, and it was last reported still present on 1 January 2009 (Cecilia Verkley fide ONTBIRDS).

Figure 1. Black-throated Blue Warbler, LaSalle Park, *Halton*, 12 December 2008. © *Michael Veltri.*

The second bird was a male (Figure 2), actually first noted during the second week of November at a backyard feeder at 21 Grandview Avenue (west of Withrow Park), *Toronto* by Don Baxter (pers. comm.). However, it did not become known to the birding community until posted On Outdoor Ontario.net on 3 December. On 12 December it was photographed on a tube seed feeder;the resulting image somewhat dark because it was taken at 07:30hrs! It was noted that *"We were feeding him mealworms mixed up in shelled sunflower seeds, which seemed to be his food of choice. We saw him on a daily basis"* (Don Baxter, pers. comm.). This bird was duly recorded for Sector 12 of the Toronto CBC on 14 December, by Mary Schuster, Howard Shapiro, John Nishikawa and Lucy M. Saruyama, and documented by Mary Schuster. It remained until the 19th, when it presumably succumbed to low temperatures and a heavy snowfall. *"The Saturday after the bird count, December 19th we had our first serious snow storm. The bird was eating and remaining in a sheltered location near the house along with many juncos. However, he did not appear the following day, December 20th and we have not seen him since. He was becoming quite tame and seemed to realize that when we appeared with his food dish, it really was for him. We are sorry he is no longer around."* (Don Baxter, pers. comm.).

The third individual was also a male (Figure 3), found on 1 December in a backyard at 44 Belsize Drive, *Toronto*, by Steven Rowe. This location is east of Yonge Street, a few blocks north of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. It was posted on ONTBIRDS on 3 December, seen daily, and good photos obtained by Steven Rowe on 6th. It was also recorded on the Toronto CBC (coincidentally also in Sector 12!) on 14 December, when seen by Greg Stuart and Mary Schuster, and documented by Kevin Seymour. Based on the slight greenish colour of the back, it was probably a first winter bird. As with the Grandview Avenue bird, it was last recorded on 19th. Notes from that time indicate that *"the heavy snowfall and -15C temperature that night seem to have been too much for it, and it didn't appear on 20th"*. During its stay it fed on suet cake and peanuts. It spent time both at the feeders and on the ground beneath the feeders (Steven Rowe, pers. comm.).

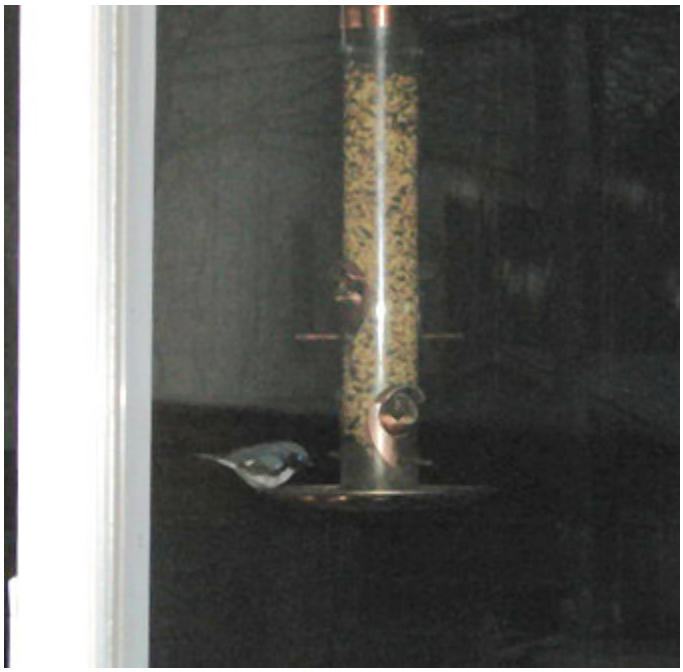

Figure 2. Black-throated Blue Warbler at feeder on Grandview Avenue, *Toronto,* 12 December 2009, 7:30 a.m. © Don Baxter.

According to the database, there are just two previous winter records of this species in the GTA. Back in 1989, a female was found at or adjacent to Mount Pleasant Cemetery, *Toronto,* between 14 January (Harry Kerr) and 19 February 1989 (Don Peuramaki).Other observers on intervening dates included Tim Sabo and Hugh Currie. Several of the sightings may have occurred at a feeder at 167 Welland Avenue, just south of the cemetery, where it was specifically noted on 16 January

Figure 3. Black-throated Blue Warbler at 44 Belsize Drive, *Toronto,* 6 December 2008. *© Steven Rowe.*

1989 (Bill Edmunds). Then in 1993, another female was seen at the north end of Grenadier Pond, High Park, *Toronto,* between 5-8 December (Patrick Stepien-Scanlon, Harry Kerr, Hugh Currie, Bob Yukich). It may have been the same bird as one reported there on 6 November 1993 (Bob Yukich), although there were no intervening reports.

Earlier authors such as Fleming (1907), Saunders (1947), Tozer and Richards (1974), and Speirs (1976) did not know of any winter records. Their data also indicate that the earliest dates of spring arrivals have generally advanced since the 1970s, while the last lingering fall migrants have also stayed considerably longer into October and November than was formerly the case. In part, these date spreads may be simply the result of more observers and/or better reporting, but it is tempting to think that perhaps climatic amelioration has something to do with it? The occurrence of more late fall records is also supported by Curry (2006), who listed three November records, whereas none of the earlier authors cited above listed a single November record. Speirs (1985) did mention one occurrence for 15 November (prior to 1938), which was apparently noted in his MA Thesis written in 1938, but details concerning this record have not been traced.

Table 1. Black-throated Blue Warblers in late fall and winter in the GTA and Hamilton: 1900-2008.

# Bird	Date	Location	County	Observer(s)	Source
1	15 Nov [prior to 1938]	Unknown	(?)	anon	Speirs(1985), quoting Speirs(1938) = MA Thesis
1	4 Nov 1954	Humber Summit, Toronto	MT	Arne Dawe	TOC Record Book #2
1	11 Nov 1961	Lorne Park Rd at Hwy 2	PL	Don E. Perks	TOC Database; Curry(2006)
1 F	14 Jan – 19 Feb 1989	Mount Pleasant Cemetery	MT	Harry Kerr; m.obs.	TOC Database
1 F	6 Nov 1993; also 5-8 Dec 1993	High Park, N end Grenadier Pond	MT	Bob Yukich Bob Yukich et al.	TOC Database
1 M	22 Nov 1995	Garden in Dundas	HM	Jerry & Nina Chapple	Curry(2006)
1 F	9 Nov 1997	Hyde Tract, Flamborough	HM	Barb Charlton, Rob Dobos	Curry(2006)
1	6 Nov 2005	New St. and Walker's Line, Burlington	HL	anon, fide Hamilton Fall Bird Count, fide ONTBIRDS	TOC Database
1 AD-F	12 Nov 2005	Wendigo Way Ravine, High Park	MT	Celia Harte	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)
1 M	3 Nov 2006	Allotment Gardens, High Park	MT	Steven M. Favier	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)
1	5 Nov 2006	Lynde Shores C. A.	DU	James Kamstra fide DRBA	TOC Database
1	14 Nov 2006	176 Hillsview Dr., Richmond Hill	YO	Deborah Chute fide Theo Hofmann	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)
1 F	23 Nov 2008 – 1 Jan 2009	LaSalle Park	HL	anon fide Cheryl Edgecombe fide ONTBIRDS	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)
1 M	2nd week Nov 2008 – 19 Dec 2008	21 Grandview Ave, Toronto	MT	Don Baxter et al.	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)
1 M (1W?)	1 Dec -19 Dec 2008	44 Belsize Dr., Toronto	MT	Steven Rowe et al.	TOC Database [Documented] (Note 1)

Key to regions: DU = Durham R.M.; YO = York R.M.; MT = City of Toronto; PL = Peel R.M.; HL = Halton R.M.; HM = Hamilton.
Abbreviations: DRBA = Durham Rare Bird Alert; ONTBIRDS = Listserv of Ontario Field Ornithologists.
Note 1: Awaiting review by Toronto Bird Rarities Committee (TBRC).

Fall Status

Table 1 lists all the known November records from the GTA, plus two more from Hamilton. For late fall dates in *Toronto*, Saunders (1947) gave 29 September as the average departure date, with 17 October as his latest date, based on 11 years with records. The latest dates known to Tozer and Richards (1974) were

one at Thickson's Point, *Durham* on 11 October 1970 (Edgerton Pegg) and one at Oshawa, *Durham* on 29 October 1956 (Ronald G. Tozer). Speirs (1976) provided latest dates of 15 October 1967 at his property (Altona Forest, Pickering), *Durham* (J.M. Speirs) and 16 October 1955 at Oshawa, *Durham* (G. A. Scott).

The first November report for the GTA came in 1954. It was followed by another in 1961, but then a gap of thirty-two years ensued until the next one in 1993 (Table 1). In total, the database now holds twelve November reports, including the two from 2008. Three cases involved birds which probably or certainly stayed into December. It does seem that there has been a sudden increase in reports in the last three years.

By the 1990s, it had already been noted that there were 'numerous' November records from the eastern USA, as well as a marked tendency in this species for vagrancy to the west coast (Dunn and Garrett 1997). These authors reported 634 records from California, with most of them in October and early November. Probably a lot more have been added subsequently. This pattern, attributed by some to mirror-image mis-orientation, is also shown by the Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* (355 California records as of 1995, with 90% in fall), by the Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* (209 records for California with two-thirds in fall) and several other eastern warbler species. There are also 'over a dozen' winter records for California, and a few more from other west coast states (Dunn and Garrett 1997). So it seems that most of these mis-oriented vagrants do not just stay and winter where they end up, or many more of them would get reported. Instead, we can only assume that they either continue on their misdirected track to a certain death out in the Pacific, or that they somehow manage to re-orient themselves, and head back towards their primary wintering areas in the Caribbean.

Winter range

It is well known that virtually all Black-throated Blue Warblers winter in the Caribbean, more specifically on the large islands comprising the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico and their offshore islands), as well as the Bahamas. They are rare on the Lesser Antilles and virtually absent from central America although a few have been recorded along the Caribbean coast (Dunn and Garrett 1997), and there is apparently one banding recovery from Panama (map in Holmes and Sherry 1992). Very small numbers winter in extreme southern Florida. The Black-throated Blue Warbler is one of three eastern warblers (the others being Cape May and Prairie) that winter almost entirely in the Greater Antilles and Bahamas.

Within the wintering areas the distribution of the birds is not uniform. In the case of Black-throated Blue Warbler it has been found that there is habitat partitioning between the sexes, with the females tending to forage in lower vegetation e.g. understory while the males occur more frequently in the canopy layers of taller forest (Wunderle 1992). Hence there is some related altitudinal separation, with males at lower elevations and females at higher elevations, even going up into the pine forest zone, to 2500m at least, in the Cordillera Central of the Dominican Republic (personal observations). However, the birds are evidently not restricted to moist montane forest on some of the other islands. Also, it has been found that older males are more likely to hold and occupy a 'winter territory', while first winter males may not be able to acquire a winter territory and are more likely to end up as 'floaters' with the mixed feeding flocks. As with other warbler species there is relatively high winter site fidelity, with up to 46% of marked birds in Jamaica returning in the next year (Holmes and Sherry 1992).

Winter records around the Great Lakes

Looking to neighbouring jurisdictions, we find that New York State has had six winter records as of 1998, five of which were males, and all but one occurred at feeders (DeConstanzo in Levine 1998). Five records were from coastal *Suffolk Co.,* but one involved a male wintering inland from mid-November 1985 to 14 February 1986, at a feeder in Endwell, *Broome Co.* It disappeared after a snowstorm on that date.

Recently, Fazio (2008 online) has summarized the three documented winter records from Ohio, as follows: one at Garfield Heights, *Cuyahoga Co.* 29 November - 5 December 1993 which survived at a peanut butter feeder; one in *Cuyahoga Co.* 25 November - 10 December 2000, found by Ted Gilliland; and a male at Duck Creek Road, Patnos, *Mahoning Co.* 5-22 December 2008 (found by Gayle Thomas, photographed by Shari Jackson and Ronnie Macko). This bird turned up at a chopped sunflower seed feeder and was still present on 22 December 2008. Fazio also listed a report for Highbanks Metropark, Delaware on 2 November 2008, and a male at Veteran's Park, *Lake Co.* 29-30 November 2006 (found by Jerry Talkington and Jim McCarty).

Other interesting winter records quoted by Fazio include one on 24 December 1984 in *Wyoming Co.*, Pennsylvania, and one which survived at a feeder in *Boone Co.*, Indiana 16 December 1979 to 20 January 1980. The only other mid-continent state with a December record was Arkansas.

Breeding range in eastern Canada

The second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (2001-2005) suggested that the Black-throated Blue Warbler may be reclaiming former range in southern Ontario, south of the Shield. In the species account, Joos (2007) noted that the probability of observation for the province as a whole increased by 63%, compared to the first atlas (1981-1985). The most significant increases were in the northern shield region (21.1% v. 10.9%), in the southern shield region (85% v. 71.25%), and in Lake Simcoe – Rideau Region (22.6% v 8.9%). Surprisingly, perhaps, there was also an increase at the northern edge of the range. This seems counter-intuitive because one thinks of the Black-throated Blue Warbler as a bird of cool, damp, primarily deciduous forests, which may have a substantial coniferous component (e.g. Eastern Hemlock or White Cedar), but not specifically 'boreal forest'. Light gaps, whether of natural occurrence or caused by selective logging, are an important component of the habitat, since there should be some dense sapling regeneration to provide preferred nesting conditions (Peck and James 1987). Atlas work indicated that there had been a *significant* 100km shift in the southern edge of the species' range in southern Ontario, along with a *significant* 24km southward shift of the core breeding range. Expansion south of the Shield may represent re-colonization of former breeding range, lost over 150 years ago when much of southern Ontario's original forests were cleared for agriculture. In recent decades, as more marginal farmland has reverted to forest, we may be seeing more potential breeding habitat developing in these areas. This seems to be the case in Norfolk County, where an outlying concentration of about ten adjacent 10-km squares with breeding season records (only one confirmed however) can be correlated with both remnant deciduous forests such as Backus Woods and maturing pine plantations near St. Williams (Atlas data). The Atlas also recorded that Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicated a near-significant annual increase of 4.3% in Ontario since 1968.

It is interesting that the Maritime Atlas Project (2008 was its third year) has also found a 12% increase in probability of observation over their first atlas, which also correlates with observed BBS increases for Black-throated Blue Warbler in the Atlantic Region of 3.4% per year for 1968-2007, or 8.3% per year from 1997-2007 (Stewart 2008).

Discussion

The remarkable occurrence of three different Black-throated Blue Warblers in the GTA in December 2008, as well as another in Ohio, might be viewed as possibly part of an emerging pattern of late fall and winter occurrences in the Great Lakes region. On the other hand, the numbers involved are miniscule, and may be just the result of random events. Also, there is no evidence so far that even one of these birds has successfully overwintered, so we are not looking at enhanced individual survival.

It is possible that the role of feeders may be significant, since the vast majority of winter records north of the 'normal' wintering areas have occurred at feeders. Observations indicate that "Late fall and winter birds

in the East often feed on suet and peanut butter at feeding stations" (Dunn and Garrett 1997). Of course, it could also be the case that any birds which do turn up tend to be more readily seen at feeders, and the operators may then put out special foods to entice or encourage them?

In the wider context, one needs to look at the situation in the breeding and wintering areas to develop a comprehensive view of changes at the population level. For a long time, ornithologists have speculated about the impact of habitat change on the wintering grounds, especially considering the small size of the winter range compared with the breeding range in eastern North America. However, even if habitat change in these areas is having some impact on the population, it seems unlikely that it would have anything to do with late fall and winter records in Ontario? On the other hand, increasing populations in Ontario and the Maritimes could possibly contribute to more extreme dates being recorded. At this point it seems too early to try and guess at what is going on.

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