



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

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Photo © Sam Barone

As a winter bird on the GTA waterfront, the Northern Shoveler could be described as uncommon and localized. In recent decades, the highest winter counts have typically occurred in the first week of December, with birds concentrated in the vicinity of Grenadier Pond (High Park), Catfish Pond on Ellis Avenue and/or Humber Bay Park (all *Toronto*). In the mid 1980s, a peak count of 60 was reached in 1988, but then numbers trended lower until a new peak of 89 occurred on 4 December 1994, at Catfish Pond. This still stands as the highest winter count for *Toronto*, but 82 on 8 December 1996 came close. However, another ten years went by before these numbers were again approached, with 86 at Grenadier Pond on 1 January 2007 and 78 at Humber Bay Park on 11 December 2008. In the meantime, the Toronto numbers were completely eclipsed by 245 at Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 5 December 1998. There must have been some unusually favorable conditions at that time, because nothing similar has been reported from there subsequently.

This photograph of a male Northern Shoveler was taken near Pier 26, *Hamilton*, on 12 October 2006. *Roy Smith*

Produced by the Records Committee Toronto Ornithological Club

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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 – JANUARY 2009

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.

SNOW GOOSE - 1 (white) at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 6th (THo fide DRBA).

ACKLING (RICHARDSON'S) GOOSE - 1 at Rouge Beach Park (mouth of Rouge R) on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP).

TRUMPETER SWAN - 8 at HBP [E] on 3rd (HE) & 6 at HBP on 4th (SMF). 10 (3 with tags: A14; 917; and 875?) at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 3rd (RBHS, WP). 13 (incl. wing tags: 196, 198, 199 614, A14, H21) at Bluffer's Park on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP). 4 (2 AD, 2 IMM – no tags) at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 11th (SCH) & 115 at CCIW-Centre for Inland Waters, *Halton* on 21st (Glenn Barrett fide ONTBIRDS).

WOOD DUCK - 1 at Burlington Beach Canal, *Halton* on 2nd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS).

AMERICAN WIGEON - 1 F at Spencer Smith Park, *Halton* on 11th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN PINTAIL - 2 M at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 3rd (RBHS, WP).

REDHEAD - 56 at Bluffer's Park on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP).

GREATER SCAUP - 129 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 3rd (RBHS, WP) & 575 at East Point Park on 11th (RBHS).

LESSER SCAUP - 1 M at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP) & 2 (1 M, 1 F) at Ward's Island, TI on 11th (NMu, ICa).

KING EIDER - 3 first found at LSS on 9th (Andreas Jonsson fide OUTON) & seen again there on 11th (JI, &). 1 1W-M at CSSP was first found on 23rd Jan (anon fide RBHS); stayed into Feb. 1 F at Bowmanville Harbour Marsh, *Durham* on 27th (Larry Kirtley fide OFO-W), photo of it is on OFO website.

HARLEQUIN DUCK - 1 M at Rotary Park, Ajax, *Durham* on 3rd (JFloer, PXC, fide DRBA) & 1 M at CSSP on 3rd (BPB fide OUTON).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - 8 at LSS on 25th (IDMF fide OUTON).

HOODED MERGANSER - 2 at HBP on 4th (SMF), 1 M at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP) & 1 M at Ward's Island, TI on 11th (NMu, ICa).

COMMON MERGANSER - 22 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 3rd (RBHS, WP).

RUFFED GROUSE - 1 at Major Mackenzie & Hwy 27, *York* on 4th (JLo) [Brydon 2009].



Trumpeter Swans on ice pans at Whitby Harbour, *Durham*, 3 January 2009. © Winnie Poon.

WILD TURKEY – 52 on Oshawa Xmas Count, *Durham* on 4th (OXC fide RPy, fide ONTBIRDS) was a new record high for this CBC (former high was 27). 40 at Hunsden & Mount Hope Rd., *Peel* on 11th (anon fide PG) [Brydon 2009] & 4 at North Trail/Platform, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 17th (RPy, B. Steele, fide DRBA). 2 at 15 Montvale Dr, Scarborough on 27th (RLau), near Kingston Rd & Midland; local residents said they have been in the neighbourhood and at feeders for several weeks. Highly visible roosting in bare trees in the evening.

RED-THROATED LOON - 1 at CCIW-Centre for Inland Waters, *Halton* on 1st (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS).

COMMON LOON - 1 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS).

HORNED GREBE - Singles at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), HBP on 4th (SMF) & at Port Union Rd. on 11th (MWWI, RBHS, WP). On 31st one was found and photographed on Blakemanor Blvd, Scarb., NW of Markham & Eglinton (anon fide OUTON). It was sitting on the snow-covered road and was picked up and taken to Bluffer's Park where it was released!.

RED-NECKED GREBE - 1 at LSS on 1st (DJM, OFO), 1 at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at Tip, LSS on 25th (Mathieu Siol fide OUTON).

* **DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** - 28 flying W at Port Union Rd. on 11th (MWWI, WP) [Documented].

GREAT BLUE HERON – Singles at LSS on 1st (anon fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS), Great Lakes Dr, Oakville, *Halton* on 2nd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), Lambton Woods on 3rd (HE), Innis Lake, *Peel* on 6th (anon fide PG) [Brydon 2009], TI on 11th (NMu, ICa), Greyabbey Park, Scarborough Bluffs on 11th (RBHS) & at Watson St Bridge, Whitby, *Durham* on 24th (R. Stephenson fide DRBA).

TURKEY VULTURE - 1 at Solina Rd N of Nash, *Durham* on 1st (P. Hogenbirk fide DRBA).

BALD EAGLE - 1 JUV at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st (RPy fide DRBA), 8 at Lake Dr & Kennedy, *York* on 5th (Lorena Campbell fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 10 at Willow Beach, *York* on 6th (Lorena Campbell) [Brydon 2009], 1 AD at QEW & Credit R., *Peel* on 6th (Andy Morgan fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Bathurst & Keith Av, Newmarket, *York* on 8th (BB) [Brydon 2009]. 1 IMM at Bluffer's Park on 9th (Larry Kirtley fide OFO-W), 1 AD at CCIW-Centre for Inland Waters, *Halton* on 21st (Glenn Barrett fide ONTBIRDS), 1 AD at Sideline 26 & Taunton Rd, *Durham* on 25th (R. Stephenson fide DRBA), 1 AD flying over at HP on 31st (GC) & 1 JUV at Thickson's Rd, *Durham* on 31st (D. Kaczynski fide DRBA).

NORTHERN HARRIER - 2 (1 M, 1 F/imm) at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (RBHS,WP), 1 M at Duffin Creek WPCP, *Durham* on 25th (RBHS,WP) & 1 M at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 25th (RBHS).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK – Singles at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 2nd (FP), at Newmarket, *York* on 5th (MvdT fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), Halls Rd., *Durham* on 11th (SCH), Adelphia Dr & Eagle Rd, Etobicoke on 13th (SCH) & at Bond Park on 30th (WP).

COOPER'S HAWK – 15 seen on the Oshawa Xmas Count, *Durham* on 4th (OXC fide RPy, fide ONTBIRDS) was a new record high for this CBC (former high was 8). 10 reports of singles birds thro' the month & 2 (M & F) AD at HP on 31st (GC).

NORTHERN GOSHAWK - 1 LSS on 1st (DP) & 2 there on 11th (JL,&). 1 IMM at Palgrave C. A., *Peel* on 1st (PG,Gordon Morton) [Brydon 2009], 1 at Tim Hortons's, Lakeshore & Leslie on 3rd (DP), 1 at Warahtah Ave, Newmarket, *York* on 5th (MvdT fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 11th (RPy fide DRBA).

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK - 1 at LSS on 9th (Andreas Jonsson fide OUTON), 17th (Robert Ferguson fide ONTBIRDS) & on 25th (IDMF fide OUTON). 1 at E of Jane, N of Hwy 9, *York* on 10th (Skip Shand fide ONTBIRDS), 1 (dark) at King Rd & N Service Rd, Burlington, *Halton* on 16th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Hwy 401 E of Thickson's Rd, *Durham* on 25th (MDW fide DRBA).

MERLIN - 1 at Central Park, Burlington, *Halton* on 11th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at 200 Midwest Rd, Scarb. on 22nd & 23rd (RLau). 1 at Ravenshoe Rd & Leslie St., *York* on 23rd (NMu,ICa).

PEREGRINE FALCON - 1 at Oshawa City Hall, *Durham* on 10th (DRuch fide DRBA), 1 at Clarica Centre, Islington on 17th (SCH) & 1 at Michael Starr Building, Oshawa, *Durham* on 20th (DRuch fide DRBA). 2 at CCIW-Centre for Inland Waters, *Halton* on 21st (Glenn Barrett fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at Lift Bridge, Burlington Beach Canal, *Halton* on 30th (Harold Stiver fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Yonge & Front St on 31st (Mathieu Siol fide OUTON).

AMERICAN COOT - 2 at HBP on 6th (SMF).

ICELAND GULL - 3 at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 1st (DJM,OFO), 1 AD at HBP [E] on 4th (JRC,VC, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 6th (THo fide DRBA) & 1 1W at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 25th (RBHS,WP).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 23rd (THo fide DRBA).

GLAUCOUS GULL - 1 2W at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 1st (DJM,OFO), 1 at Rodd Ave, Pickering, *Durham* on 3rd (PXC fide JDL, fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 (1 1W, 1 UNK) at HBP [E] on 4th (JRC,VC, fide ONTBIRDS). 1 1W at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 11th (Robert Botts fide OFO-W), 1 1W at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 25th (RBHS,WP) & 1 AD at Sunnyside on 31st (GC).

MOURNING DOVE - 23 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375) & 50 at 20 Harding Blvd W., Richmond Hill, *York* on 19th (WP).



Mourning Dove at Hall's Road, Whitby, *Durham*, 11 January 2009.
© Sandra Hawkins.

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL - 1 seen at HP on 4th, 11th, 15th & 18th (SMF;MVL). 1 (brown morph) at Wright Ave & Indian Rd on 31st (GC).

GREAT HORNED OWL - 3 at LSS on 1st (DJM,OFO), 4th (Matt Pierce fide ONTBIRDS) & 3 on 25th (IDMF fide OUTON). 1 at Kortright C. A., York on 10th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at Torbram Rd., Peel on 22nd (anon fide PG) [Brydon 2009], 1 at Cawthra-Mulock FON Reserve, York on 25th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 (calling nightly) at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, York on 29th (FP fide ONTBIRDS).

"SNYDER'S" GREAT HORNED OWL - 1 at LSS on 1st [No doc. seen] (DJM,OFO) & on 11th (JI,&). 1 photographed at Dunlap Observatory, York on 4th (ETB) & seen again there on 6th (JI,ETB,WP). 1 at Darlington Prov. Park, Durham on 16th [No doc. seen] (DW fide DRBA).

Another **Snyder's Great Horned Owl** documented with photos; this winter season has been exceptionally good for owls in terms of species and numbers. Eleanor Beagan discovered this Snyder's Great Horned Owl in the Dunlap Observatory Woods, Richmond Hill, York, on 4 January 2009. The owl's location was betrayed by mobbing crows. Unlike most northern owls, this bird was quite wary of the observers. © Eleanor Beagan.



SNOWY OWL - 1 reported on many dates thro' the month at Frenchman's Bay, Durham (Karl Jennewein fide DRBA). 1 at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., York on 1st (BB) [Brydon 2009] & 2 there on 25th (KDu fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS). 8 reports from the Holland Marsh area, York thro' the month with a high count of 5 seen in this area on the 23rd (NMu,ICa). 1 at Victoria St, Whitby, Durham on 3rd (RBHS,WP) & 1 at HBP [W] on 4th (anon fide OUTON). 1 at LSS on 4th (Matt Pierce fide ONTBIRDS) & seen again there from 9th to 11th (m. obs). Singles at Bronte Harbour, Halton on 11th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), Champlain & Thornton, Oshawa, Durham on 14th (THo), Coates Rd, Myrtle Station, Durham on 21st (THo fide DRBA), Hwy 427 near Pearson Airport, Peel on 23rd (Bob Gilroy fide OUTON) & at CSSP on 24th (anon fide OUTON).

LONG-EARED OWL - 1 was photographed at entrance to the Meadow, Thicksons Woods, Durham on 3rd (m. obs, RBHS,WP).

SHORT-EARED OWL - 1 at Bayview Ave, Newmarket, York on 18th (Robin Lawson fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL - 1 at Oakville, Halton on 3rd (Frank & Sandra Horvath fide OFO-W).

BELTED KINGFISHER – Singles at LaSalle Marina, *Halton* on 3rd (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 6th (THo fide DRBA), Shoreacres Park, *Halton* on 10th (Terry Jasper fide ONTBIRDS), Pickering Village, *Durham* on 11th (J. Skene fide DRBA), at Humber R, Woodbridge, *York* on 17th (Tessa Shelvey) [Brydon 2009] & at Holland R @ Queen St, Newmarket, *York* during week ending 12 Jan (Doug Jagger fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER - 1 at 89 Constance St, Toronto on 1st (Stephanie Bryant fide GDB), 1 at Lambton Woods on 3rd (HE), 1 at Oliver's feeder, Pickering, *Durham* on 10th & 1 at Edge Pegg Property, *Durham* on 10th & 17th (JDL fide DRBA). 1 at Trulls Rd, N of Bloor, *Durham* on 14th (J. James fide DRBA), 1 M at Nashville Cemetery, *York* on 17th (RBHS,WP) & 1 F at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 21st (MJL fide ONTBIRDS). 1 F at Kortright C. A., *York* on 25th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), 1 M at 29 Mountview Ave, Toronto on 31st (GC) & 1 F at HP on 31st (GC).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER - 1 at 332 Sheldrake Blvd, Toronto from 13th to end of the month (GF), coming to suet feeder outside bedroom window, usually between 07:45-08:15hrs.

DOWNY WOODPECKER - 12 at TI on 11th (NMu,ICa).

HAIRY WOODPECKER - 2 at TI on 11th (NMu,ICa) & 4 at HP on 31st (GC).

NORTHERN FLICKER - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st & 3rd (RPye fide DRBA). 1 at LSS on 1st (DJM,OFO) & 4th (Matt Pierce fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Oliver's feeder, Pickering, *Durham* on 10th (JDL fide DRBA).

PILEATED WOODPECKER – Singles at Solina Rd N of Nash, *Durham* on 1st (P. Hogenbirk fide DRBA), Lambton Woods on 3rd (HE) & at Brookside Ave & Yonge, Richmond Hill, *York* on 25th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN SHRIKE – 14 reports thro' the month from 13 different locations of singles birds being seen.

COMMON RAVEN - 2 at Reddington Estates, *Peel* on 2nd (anon fide PG) [Brydon 2009] & 1 at Hwy 115 & Hwy 35, *Durham* on 16th (THo fide DRBA).

HORNED LARK - 15 at Conc 8 nr Sideline 6 (W of Mt Zion), *Durham* on 17th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS) & 150 at Hwy 9 & Jane St, *York* on 30th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS).

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE - 66 at TI on 11th (NMu,ICa).

BROWN CREEPER - 1 at Lambton Woods on 3rd (HE) & 6 at HP on 31st (GC).

CAROLINA WREN - 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 4th (OXC,DBar, fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 coming to suet and seed feeders at Windsor Valley Place, Courtice, *Durham* on 10th (Stu Williams fide ONTBIRDS).

WINTER WREN – Singles at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 4th (OXC,DBar, fide ONTBIRDS), TI on 11th (NMu,ICa), at Dacre Crescent on 18th (AA) & at Cedarvale Ravine on 20th (Skip Shand fide ONTBIRDS).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET - 1 at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 1st (Cecilia Verkley fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 1st (CMH,& fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at Snake Island, TI on 11th (NMu,ICa). 2 at HP on 15th (MVL) & 1 there on 18th (Mathieu Siol fide OUTON).

* BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER - 2 at Caledon Ski Club, Belfountain, *Peel* on 1st [Documented] (Glenys McCreath). They were seen several times from Soules chairlift at 2-3m range! Looked for again on 6 Jan 2009, but not seen.

HERMIT THRUSH - 1 at 159 Pinewood Ave, Toronto on 2nd (JMack), 1 at W end of Horner Ave., Etobicoke Valley Park on 2nd (Cecilia Verkley fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Boardwalk, TI on 11th (GC,&). 1 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 18th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS) was photographed on a well-stocked sunflower seed feeder. 1 at Ryerson University (Kerr Hall, Gould St W of Church St) on 21st (Gavin Platt fide ONTBIRDS) & photographed there on 24th (MKP fide WP).

AMERICAN ROBIN – High counts for the month were 100 at Dunlap Observatory, *York* on 3rd (Glenn Steplock fide ONTBIRDS), 50+ at John St W of Bayview, *York* on 10th (DW), ~100 at HP on 15th (MVL), 100 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 18th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), 105 at 20 Harding Blvd W., Richmond Hill, *York* on 19th (WP) & 288 at HP on 31st (GC).



One of 5 **Hermit Thrushes** reported in January; this bird was seen at Kortright C.A., York, 18 January 2009. © Lev Frid.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD - A total of 27 reports this month, with 19 from *Toronto*, 2 from *York* and 6 from *Durham*. Excluding 4 duplications, that means that 23 individuals were noted. Quite a reasonable number considering the cold and snowy conditions and reduced fieldwork by RBHS & WP. Thanks to the following for these reports: BB; DEB; ETB; JRC; LFr; GC; Petra Grass; THo; Pat Hodgson; RLau; JMack; DJM, OFO; WP; Kevin Seymour; Tessa Shelvey; RBHS; DW.

BROWN THRASHER - 1 reported at Riverwood Park, Erindale, *Peel* on 27th (T. Leeder fide OUTON), had apparently been present since at least 11 Jan (anon fide OUTON). It was seen again on 29th (Judi Parker fide ONTBIRDS) & photographed on 30th (T. Leeder fide OFO-W).

AMERICAN PIPIT - 2 at Spencer Smith Park, *Halton* during week ending 16 Jan (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS).

CEDAR WAXWING - 24 at HP on 31st (GC).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – 1 (still there) F at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 1st (Cecilia Verkley fide ONTBIRDS). See note in *Toronto Birds* 3(1): 23-28, Jan 2009.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER - 1 photographed at St Lawrence Park, Port Credit, *Peel* on 31st (MCR).

EASTERN TOWHEE - 1 at Solina Rd N of Nash, *Durham* on 1st (P. Hogenbirk fide DRBA), 1 at Bessbrough Dr, Oshawa, *Durham* on 18th (THo fide DRBA) & 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 24th (RPye fide DRBA). 1 at Bond & Wilson, Oshawa, *Durham* on 24th (G. Galpin fide DRBA) had been there since November 2008.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW - 22 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375), 21 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 11th (SCH), 12 at Algonquin Island, TI on 11th (NMu, ICa) & 18 at Nashville Cemetery, *York* on 17th (RBHS, WP).

* **CHIPPING SPARROW** - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 15th [No doc. seen] (THo fide DRBA). 1 at feeder in Newmarket, *York* during week ending 12 Jan [No doc. seen] (Doug Jagger fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

* **SAVANNAH SPARROW** - 1 at Hall's Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (RPye fide DRBA), was the 2nd record on this CBC, the 1st having been in 1983 (PXC fide SLaf) [No doc. seen].

SONG SPARROW – 5 reports of 1-3 at Halls Rd./Cranberry Marsh area, *Durham* from 3rd to 23rd (RPye; THo; fide DRBA). 1 at Westside Marsh, *Durham* on 23rd (THo fide DRBA).

SWAMP SPARROW - 1 at South Trail, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 23rd (THo fide DRBA).



American Tree Sparrow at Hall's Road, Whitby, *Durham*, 11 January 2009. © Sandra Hawkins.



Male White-winged Crossbill feasting on a newly opened spruce cone at Cranberry Marsh, Whitby, *Durham*, 3 January 2009. © Rick Lauzon.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW – 9 reports from the Halls Rd/Cranberry Marsh area, *Durham* of 1-3 from 1st to 24th (m.obs). 4 reports from HP during the month with a high of 5 on 15th (MVL). 7 additional reports of 1-2 from different locations thro' the month.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - 1 at LSS on 1st (anon fide DJM, fide ONTBIRDS).

DARK-EYED JUNCO - 55 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375).

LAPLAND LONGSPUR - 1 at Hwy 9 & Jane St, *York* on 30th & 2 there on 31st (Siegmard Bodach fide ONTBIRDS), with 100's of Snow Buntings and many Horned Larks.

SNOW BUNTING - 3 at LSS on 11th (JI,&), 30 at Courtice Rd & Taunton Rd, *Durham* on 16th (THo fide DRBA) & 300 at Miller SR., *York* on 17th (MvdT,RJF, fide ONTBIRDS). 1200 at Hwy 9 & Jane St (horse farm), *York* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS) & 300+ at Boyer's Rd & Warden, *York* on 25th (KDu fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN CARDINAL - 15 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD - 6 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st (RPye fide DRBA) & 27 there on 11th (SCH). 1 at Fairy Lake, Newmarket, *York* On 4th (Lynne Smith fide ONTBIRDS) &

again during week ending 12 Jan (Doug Jagger fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Westside Marsh, *Durham* on 23rd (THo fide DRBA) & 11 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 24th (RPye fide DRBA).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (RPye fide DRBA) & on 5th (G. Ernest fide DRBA). 1 at Edge Pegg Property, *Durham* on 17th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 24th (RPye fide DRBA).

COMMON GRACKLE - 1 at Solina Rd N of Nash, *Durham* on 1st (P. Hogenbirk fide DRBA).

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD - 6 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 3rd (MJL fide ONTBIRDS), 12 at backyard in Whitby, *Durham* on 10th (G. Ernest fide DRBA) & 1 M at T1 on 11th (NMu,ICa). 4 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 11th (SCH), 50 at #53 West Beach Rd, Bowmanville, *Durham* on 21st (MJL fide ONTBIRDS) & 83 at Westside Marsh, *Durham* on 23rd (THo fide DRBA).

PINE GROSBEAK - 4 at Kortright C. A., *York* on 10th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS), 9 F at Sideline 12, Pickering, *Durham* on 10th (K. Jennewein fide DRBA) & 5 there on 17th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS). 1 at Utica, *Durham* on 19th (JKa fide DRBA).

PURPLE FINCH - 3 (1 M, 2 F) at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375), 2 at Oliver's feeder, Pickering, *Durham* on 10th (JDL fide DRBA) & 1 M at Kortright C. A., *York* on 18th (Lev Frid fide ONTBIRDS).

HOUSE FINCH - 14 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL – 57 reports during the month were widespread throughout the GTA. 401 at Pickering CBC circle, *Durham* on 3rd (PXC fide SLAF) was a new high (previous high was 170 in 1971) & 570 at Oshawa Xmas Count, *Durham* on 4th (OXC fide RPye, fide ONTBIRDS) was also a new record for this CBC (former high was 17). High counts during the month included 400 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 1st & 3rd & 225 there on 11th (RPye fide DRBA), 70 flying over Bloor & Sherborne on 4th (DP), 50 at Burnham Cr. & Braemar, Brampton, *Peel* on 9th

(Brian Ford fide Don Ford, fide ONTBIRDS), 74 at Bestbrough Dr, Oshawa, *Durham* on 13th (THo), 40 at Leslie & Gorham St., *York* on 14th (KRS) [Brydon 2009], 30-50 at #4 Grenfell, Markham, *York* on 15th (CMcK fide ONTBIRDS), 40 at 232 Belair Dr, Bolton, *Peel* on 15th (DJM) [Brydon 2009] & 50-100 at Bessbrough Dr, Oshawa, *Durham* during week ending 23 Jan (THo fide DRBA).

COMMON REDPOLL – 23 reports thro' the month. High counts from different locations were 70+ at LSS on 1st (DJM,OFO), 250 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (RPye fide DRBA), 50 at Walkers Line & New St., *Halton* on 9th (anon fide CEE, fide ONTBIRDS), 26 at TI on 11th (GC,&), 50 at Humber Station Rd S of Hwy 9, *Peel* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS), 100+ at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 30th (FP fide ONTBIRDS) & 22 at HP on 31st (GC).

"GREATER" COMMON REDPOLL - 1 (rostrata) at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 29th & 30th [No doc. seen] (FP fide ONTBIRDS).

* HOARY REDPOLL - 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 1st (CMH,& fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (anon fide JDL, fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Oliver's feeder, Pickering, *Durham* on 10th (JDL fide DRBA), 1 at 181 Maple Ave, Richmond Hill, *York* on 15th (GEL) [Brydon 2009], 1 at Humber Station Rd S of Hwy 9, *Peel* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 30th (GCarp fide DRBA).

PINE SISKIN – 31 reports during the month throughout the GTA area. High counts included 100 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 3rd (RPye fide DRBA), 60 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375), 59 (@ feeders) at TI on 11th (NMu,ICa), 130 at 232 Belair Dr, Bolton, *Peel* on 15th (DJM) [Brydon 2009], 80 at @ feeder in Brooklin, *Durham* on 17th (B. Steele fide DRBA), 65 at Bessbrough Dr, Oshawa, *Durham* on 18th (THo fide DRBA), 30 at LSS on 25th (IDMF fide OUTON), 40 at 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 30th (GCarp fide DRBA) & 51 at High Park on 31st (GC). 1 **green morph** reported at Brookbanks Ravine on 29th was coming to a feeder at 9 Lichen Place, with many typical birds. 'This is one of the best winters for Pine Siskins in a decade' (RJP fide ONTBIRDS). Another **green morph** was seen at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 30th (FP fide ONTBIRDS); it seemed to have arrived along with a massive increase in numbers of Common Redpolls.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH - 260 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (MAB fide Michael's Bull. #375). 979 at Oshawa Xmas Count, *Durham* on 4th (OXC fide RPye, fide ONTBIRDS) was a new record high for this CBC (former high was 960). 50 at Humber Station Rd S of Hwy 9, *Peel* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS).

HOUSE SPARROW - 170 at Old 16th & Bayview, *York* on 10th (RBHS,WP), 153 at TI on 11th (NMu,ICa) & 100 at Glenroy Ave, Etobicoke on 19th (SCH).

CITED OBSERVERS: & et al.; OFO-W OFO website; OFO Ontario Field Ornithologists; AA Alfred Adamo; BPB Brian P. Bailey; DBar Dennis Barry; ETB Eleanor Beagan; MAB Michael A. Biro; GDB George Bryant; BB Bruce Brydon; DEB Donald E. Burton; GCam Gordon Cameron; ICa Ian Cannell; JRC John Carley; VC Victoria Carley; GCarp Geoff Carpentier; OXC Oshawa Christmas Count; GC Glenn Coady; MCr Mark Cranford; GDe Gene Denzel; KDu Keith Dunn; CEE Cheryl Edgecombe; HE Herb Elliot; GF George Fairfield; SMF Steven Favier; IDMF Iain Fleming; RJF Ron Fleming; JFlo Joachim Floegel; LFr Lynne Freeman; PG Phyllis Graydon; SCH Sandra Hawkins; THo Tyler Hoar; CMH Carol Horner; JI Jean Iron; RDJ Ross D. James; JKa James Kamstra; SLaF Steve LaForest; RLau Rick Lauzon; GEL Graham Leonard; MJL Marcus J. Lise; MVL Margaret Liubavicius; JDL J. Doug Lockrey; JLo Joan Love; JMack Jess MacKenzie; m. obs many observers; CMcK Carol McKnight; CSAM Craig S.A. McLaughlan; DJM Dave J. Milsom; NMu Norman Murr; MWMI MW Waterfowl Inventory; anon Unknown Observer; ONTBIRDS OFO Email Hotline; OUTON OutdoorOntario.net; MKP Mark K. Peck; DP Don Peuramaki; FP Frank Pinilla; RJP Ron Pittaway; WP Winnie Poon; RPye Rayfield Pye; DRBA Durham Rare Bird Alert; DRuch Dave Ruch; LS Leon Schlichter; KRS Kevin Shackleton; RBHS Roy B. H. Smith; MvdT Mike Van Den Tillaart; MDW Mike Williamson; DW David Worthington; PXC Pickering Christmas Count.

REFERENCES:

Brydon, B., 2009. January 2009 Sightings. West Humber Naturalists Club Newsletter February 2009:8-9.

Compiled by Dave Worthington for the TOC Records Committee.

Photo editing by Winnie Poon.

Data entry by Roy Smith. 670 reports were added to the database for January 2009.

Please send reports to: Roy Smith 20 Harding Blvd. W, Suite 1002, Richmond Hill, ON L4C 9S4. Tel/Fax: 905-508-4045 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 63RD LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

SUNDAY 11 JANUARY 2009

Glenn Coady (Compiler)

CONDITIONS

The weather during this year's Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory was the coldest since 1996, reaching a low of -12°C in the Greater Toronto Area. Winds varied from calm to 10-15 km/hr out of the northwest. The lake was calm, with some shoreline areas open, but most bays and inner harbours were frozen. In some areas, the lake was frozen out to distance of over a kilometre, making many ducks (both dabblers and divers) very difficult to identify beyond the ice edge.

REMARKS

This was the 63rd 'Duck Count' for the Toronto Ornithological Club and 19th year that the entire Canadian shoreline of Lake Ontario has been covered. Eighty-five participants spent 161.5 party-hours searching for waterfowl.

This year we recorded 201,447 waterfowl from 34 species (the fewest number of individual waterfowl since 1998, when 180,571 were recorded, and the lowest species total since 1996) along the entire Canadian shoreline of Lake Ontario. This is lower than the average total for the last 10 counts (283,771) but higher than the 30 year average (149,209). A record high number was reported for only one species: the 255 Trumpeter Swan surpassing the 191 in 2008. Higher than usual numbers were reported for Double-crested Cormorant, Greater Scaup and Ruddy Duck. Lower than usual numbers were reported for Tundra Swan, American Black Duck (lowest since 1985), Mallard, Gadwall (lowest since 1997), Canvasback (lowest since 1989), Redhead (lowest since 1997), Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck and Bufflehead (lowest since 1997). Missed species were: Red-throated Loon (third time in the last 10 years), Pied-billed Grebe (first time since 1998), Red-necked Grebe (first time since 1999), Greater White-fronted Goose, Brant, and Harlequin Duck (sixth time since 1980).

A total of 44 Bald Eagles was also reported (38 from Kingston [28 adult, 8 immature, 2 unknown], 1 adult from Presqu'île, 2 from Toronto [1 adult, 1 immature], and 3 from Hamilton [2 adult, 1 sub-adult]).

An interesting exotic waterfowl find was a Barnacle Goose found on the Niagara sector in Jordan Harbour. This is now the third consecutive year that a Barnacle Goose has been found on that sector.

In the Toronto area (Whitby Harbour to Bronte Harbour):

A total of 70,169 waterfowl from 28 species was reported. This is the fourth-highest total number of individual waterfowl for the 63 counts, and ties for the eighth-best species total. **Second time ever** in the 63-year history of the Toronto sector of the count were individual **Cackling Geese** found on Routes 1 and 2. Species with the highest counts were Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Canada Goose, Common Goldeneye, Mallard, Redhead, Red-breasted Merganser, Bufflehead, Gadwall and Mute Swan (listed in order of abundance).

Record high numbers were reported for: Double-crested Cormorant 28 (surpassing 3 in 2007) and Cackling Goose 2 (surpassing 1 in 2008).

Lower than usual numbers were reported for: American Black Duck (136 – **lowest ever** in the 63 years of the count), Mallard, Gadwall (362 - lowest since 348 in 1997) and Bufflehead. Missed altogether were: Red-necked Grebe, Snow Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Harlequin Duck and Surf Scoter.

Rarities included: 28 Double-crested Cormorant, 1 Horned Grebe, 1 Snow Goose, 2 Cackling Goose, 2 Northern Pintail, 2 Black Scoter and 2 Ruddy Duck.

Outside of the Toronto area:

There were many excellent sightings:

Niagara had 16 species, including 2 Double-crested Cormorant, 1 Northern Pintail and 2 American Coot.

Hamilton had 25 species, including 18 Double-crested Cormorant, 4 Green-winged Teal, 2 Canvasback (the only ones on the entire count!), and 451 Ruddy Duck.

Durham had 13 species, including 4 Trumpeter Swan and 1 White-winged Scoter.

Port Hope had 12 species, including 4 Trumpeter Swan and 1 King Eider.

Presqu'île had 11 species, including 329 Mute Swan and 1 Ring-necked Duck.

Quinte had 12 species including 2 Northern Pintail and 2 Hooded Merganser.

Kingston had 23 species including 1 Common Loon, 60 Tundra Swan, 1 Wood Duck (the only one on the count!), 1 Green-winged Teal, 6 Northern Pintail and 30 American Coot.

Thanks to all the clubs and individuals who participated. Next year's count will take place on **January 10, 2010**.



Figure 1: Participants on the Toronto Islands route of the Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory at the Toronto Island Ferry docks, 11 January 2009. Left to right: Chris Dunn, Michelle Romero, Bob Cumming, Jan Doherty, Anne Marie Leger, John Crawford and Glenn Coady. © Glenn Coady.

ROUTES AND OBSERVERS

KINGSTON:

(Ivy Lea to Prince Edward Point):

Ron Weir plus 21 members of the Kingston Field Naturalists.

QUINTE AREA:

(Weller's Bay to Point Petre):

John Blaney, Jim Taylor.

PRESQU'ILE:

(Barcovan Beach to Wicklow):

Doug McRae, Sarah Petrasek.

PORT HOPE:

(Wicklow to Wesleyville):

Roger Frost, Elizabeth Kellogg, Clive Goodwin, Margaret Bain, Ken Niles (Willow Beach Field Naturalists).

DURHAM:

(Wesleyville to Whitby):

Rayfield Pye, Dennis Barry, Margaret Carney, Brian Henshaw, Tyler Hoar (Durham Region Naturalists).

TORONTO:

(Whitby to Oakville): Toronto Ornithological Club

Route 1 Whitby to Rouge River:

Rob Nisbet, Ross Harris, Steve LaForest +1 guest.

Route 2 Rouge River to Coatsworth Cut:

Roy B.H. Smith, Winnie Poon.

Route 3 Eastern Headland to Cherry Street:

John Carley, Sarah Box, Carl Hills, Jean Iron.

Route 4 Toronto Islands:

Glenn Coady, John Crawford, Bob Cumming, Jan Doherty, Chris Dunn, Anne Marie Leger, Michelle Romero.

Route 5 Parliament Street to Humber River:

Margaret Kelch, Mark Field, Celia Harte, Jeremy Hatt, Harvey Medland, Josh Shook, Doug Woods.

Route 6 Humber River to Watersedge Park:

Don Perks, John Lamey.

Route 7 Watersedge Park to Bronte Harbour:

Mark Cranford, Donna Sheppard, Brian Sheppard.

HAMILTON:

(Bronte to 50 Point + Hamilton Bay):

George Naylor, Rob Dobos, Dave Don, Cheryl Edgecombe, Denys Gardiner, Jim Heslop, Bill Lamond, Kevin McLaughlin, Rob Waldhuber (Hamilton Naturalists Club).

NIAGARA:

(50 Point to Niagara-on-the-Lake):

John Black, Drew Campbell, Blayne Farnan, Jean Farnan, Jean Hampson, Bob Highcock, Marcia Jacklin, Carol O'Shea, Tim Seburn, John Stevens, Katherine Stoltz (Peninsula Field Naturalists).

Note: Sector/Route leaders' names are in bold.



Figure 2: Lake condition at Ashbridges' Bay Park, Toronto, was calm and open on 11 January 2009. © Winnie Poon.



Figure 3: Participants of the 63rd annual Toronto Ornithological Club Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory enjoy the post-count roundup dinner at Vesuvio's Pizzeria in Toronto on 11 January 2009. Left to right (near side of the table): Roy Smith, Mark Cranford (hidden), Ron Pittaway, Jean Iron, Carl Hills, John Lamey. Left to right (far side of the table): Winnie Poon, Michelle Romero, John Carley, Bob Cumming, Jan Doherty, Don Perks. © Glenn Coady.

63rd Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory – 11 January 2009

Page 1									
SPECIES	Kingston	Quinte	Presqu'île	Port Hope	Durham	Toronto Area (see Page 2)	Hamilton	Niagara	TOTAL
Snow Goose						1			1
Cackling Goose						2			2
Canada Goose	7540	310	24	1885	1550	11640	4540	2211	29700
Mute Swan	18	17	329	6	7	201	77	4	659
Trumpeter Swan	20			4	4	35	192		*255
Tundra Swan	60								60
swan sp.	10		50			5			65
Wood Duck	1								1
Gadwall	88					362	11		461
American Wigeon	10					11			21
American Black Duck	258	32	51	38	3	136	202	26	746
Mallard	1907	247	1	1220	160	4870	1007	766	10178
Mallard x Black Duck						6	11		17
Northern Shoveler						11	19		30
Northern Pintail	6	2				2	7	1	18
Green-winged Teal	1						4		5
Canvasback							2		2
Redhead					9	1301	71	9	1390
Ring-necked Duck	16		1			1	7		25
Greater Scaup	17261	24	301	370	4798	27673	4064	280	54771
Lesser Scaup	5					21	832		858
scaup sp.				4		4		62	70
King Eider				1		3			4
Surf Scoter							47		47
White-winged Scoter	676				1	166	1856	2314	5013
Black Scoter						2			2
Long-tailed Duck	8418	1193	3497	269	765	15357	12130	2456	44085
Bufflehead	563	51	61	111	493	1209	319	636	3443
Common Goldeneye	4983	222	905	1063	2606	5319	1189	1757	18044
Hooded Merganser	71	2	2			19	31	3	128
Common Merganser	2043	11	6	41	53	187	4490	276	7107
Red-breasted Merganser	187	11		105	1242	1241	475	480	3741
merganser sp.	2477								2477
Ruddy Duck						2	451		453
duck sp.	6525	1203	6090	2300		352		1000	17470
Common Loon	1								1
Horned Grebe						1			1
Double-crested Cormorant						28	18	2	48
American Coot	30					1	15	2	48
Total Birds	53175	3325	11318	7417	11691	70169	32067	12285	201447
Total Species	23	12	11	12	13	28	25	16	34
Participants	22	2	2	5	5	29	9	11	85
Party-hours	37	7.75	7.5	11.5	8	57.75	20	12	161.5
Bald Eagle	38		1			2	3		44

* Record high count.

Page 2	Toronto Area (Whitby Harbour to Bronte Harbour)							
SPECIES	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4	Route 5	Route 6	Route 7	Subtotal
Snow Goose	1							1
Cackling Goose	1	1						2
Canada Goose	6013	462	59		115	248	4743	11640
Mute Swan	21	7	8	16	23	61	65	201
Trumpeter Swan	13	13			4	5		35
swan sp.	5							5
Gadwall	4	6	309		16	27		362
American Wigeon			3		8			11
American Black Duck	36	11	22	24	2	16	25	**136
Mallard	593	463	784	1023	229	918	860	4870
Mallard x Black Duck			1	5				6
Northern Shoveler			11					11
Northern Pintail	2							2
Redhead	12	56	153	6	1017	57		1301
Ring-necked Duck					1			1
Greater Scaup	4419	653	103	123	576	11537	10262	27673
Lesser Scaup		1	1		11	8		21
scaup sp.		4						4
King Eider			3					3
White-winged Scoter			47	16		47	56	166
Black Scoter							2	2
Long-tailed Duck	1256	1164	829	970	932	3741	6465	15357
Bufflehead	390	112	91	22	49	191	354	1209
Common Goldeneye	1284	108	121	134	128	698	2846	5319
Hooded Merganser		1		1	11	6		19
Common Merganser	20	46	57	5	40	10	9	187
Red-breasted Merganser	288	235	145	32	37	91	413	1241
Ruddy Duck						2		2
duck sp.		350	2					352
Horned Grebe		1						1
Double-crested Cormorant		28						28
American Coot						1		1
Total Birds	14358	3722	2749	2377	3199	17664	26100	70169
Total Species	16	18	17	12	17	18	12	28
Participants	4	2	4	7	7	2	3	29
Party-hours	15.25	7	7	7	7	8	6.5	57.75
Bald Eagle			1		1			2

****** Record low count.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Winnie Poon for re-formatting the count spreadsheet for use in this publication.

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NOTE

Green Morph Pine Siskins

An increase in interest and awareness of the green morph Pine Siskin started not so long ago with the big Pine Siskin irruption that began in August 1989. In the winter of 1989-1990, massive numbers of siskins made their way southward reaching as far as Florida and the Gulf states. The birds were present almost continent-wide except for the Southwest and Pacific Coast; in many places staying late into April and May 1990, some even into the summer (Yunick 1996). Little was known about green morph Pine Siskins at that time, until McLaren *et al.* published their informative findings (McLaren *et al.* 1989). It appears that history is repeating itself with the current 2008-2009 Pine Siskin irruption, albeit probably to a lesser extent. Since late December 2008, in addition to Ontario, many eastern states including Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan have had reports of green morph Pine Siskins; there was even a report from Fort Worth, Texas. These reports were posted to BIRDWG01(2009 online), however, it is noted that some are questionable. So far, in Ontario, uncommon green morph siskins have been seen in *Niagara*, Sault St. Marie, *Algoma*, *Toronto*, *York*, and *Northumberland* (Figures 1, 2, 4). A xanthochroid or *yellow variant* bird (Figure 3) was also recorded in Bath, *Lennox*.

The majority of Pine Siskins are typical or brown morph, having normal amounts of the brown-black pigments (eumelanin) deposited in their feathers, if the quantity of these pigments is reduced, the hidden red-yellow pigments (phaeomelanin) would be exposed, giving a greenish hue (yellow and grey) to the bird. As a result, a green morph siskin shows more yellow in its plumage than normal. Green morph siskins are almost exclusively males, occurring in about 1% of the population (Yunick 1996). Although feather pigments come from diet sources, it has been suggested that genetic and environmental components may affect the amounts of pigments deposited (Roulin 2003). For a winter Pine Siskin, the pigments would have been deposited during its prebasic molt in late summer and early fall, prior to any winter irruption.



Figure 1. Green morph Pine Siskin, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*, 26 January 2009. © Mark Ansell. The bird has only a hint of pale 'green' on the back, with a white and yellow wingbar, underpart streakings are much lighter and the vent has traces of yellow.

Ron Pittaway described the green morph as "...grayish (not brown) with a slight greenish hue to the upperparts and the underparts are lightly streaked, usually there is more yellow in the wings/tail, and the undertail coverts are often yellow (not always) unlike typical brown morph birds" (Pittaway 2009 online).

Green morphs can be easily confused with female Eurasian Siskins, see ID article by Lethaby (1997) in *Birding World*.

To further confuse birders it seems that there may even be a recognizable 'grey morph' Pine Siskin.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ron Pittaway for his helpful review, and to Mark Ansell and Kurt Hennige for allowing the use of their photographs.

Winnie Poon



Figure 2 (left). Green morph Pine Siskin (front), Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*, 26 January 2009. © Mark Ansell.

Figure 3 (below). An unusually yellow male adult Pine Siskin (left), and a typical morph bird (right); Bath, *Lennox* and *Addington*, 1 February 2009. © Kurt Hennige.



Figure 4. Green morph Pine Siskin (left), Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland*, 26 January 2009. © Mark Ansell.

Note the lightly streaked underparts as opposed to the heavily streaked brown/ typical morph Pine Siskin on the right.

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