



# Toronto Ornithological Club **Newsletter**

September 2010

Number 207





# Toronto Ornithological Club

Founded 1934

<http://torontobirding.ca>

From September through June, TOC members and their guests meet on the second Monday of each month except the first Monday in May and the third Monday in October. Meetings are held at 7:30 pm at Burgundy Room A, of North York Memorial Hall.

Free Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks, led by seasoned birders, are organized by the TOC to destinations in and around Toronto.

The TOC plays a leading role in ornithological activities in the Toronto Area. Programs include the Christmas Bird Count, Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory, Spring Warbler Survey, Whimbrel Watch, and Greater Toronto Raptor Watch.

The TOC is a registered charitable organization engaged in ornithological research and education. A tax receipt is available for any donations exceeding \$10, but not including membership fees.

CRA Charity # 87246 3807 RR0001.

The TOC Newsletter is published 10 times a year, from September to June. Submissions are always welcome, and can be sent to [mark.field@rogers.com](mailto:mark.field@rogers.com) with TOC included in the subject line.

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Cover Illustration: Blackpoll Warbler (first winter female)  
Photo by Sam Barone

## Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks

### High Park

**Saturday, September 11, 2010 8:00 a.m. - 12 noon**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot inside the Bloor St. entrance to High Park at High Park Avenue. Fall migrants, raptors. Leader: Steven Favier.

### Durham Waterfront, Pickering-Oshawa Second Marsh

**Saturday, September 18, 2010 8:00 a.m. – afternoon**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Pickering GO Station - from 401 East exit at White's Road and then go south to Bayly St. (first lights), then east to the Pickering GO station (just east of Liverpool Rd.) - go a little bit east of the main parking lot to the overflow lot on the left (north) on Sandy Creek Rd. - meet in SE part of the lot. Fall migrants, shorebirds, waterfowl. Leader: Geoff Carpentier.

### Lambton Woods

**Saturday, September 25, 2010 8:00 a.m. - 12 noon**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at James Gardens parking lot (access from Edenbridge Drive east of Royal York Rd., north of Dundas St West). Fall migrants. Leader: Don Burton.

### Leslie Street Spit

**Sunday, September 26, 2010 8:00 a.m. - all day**

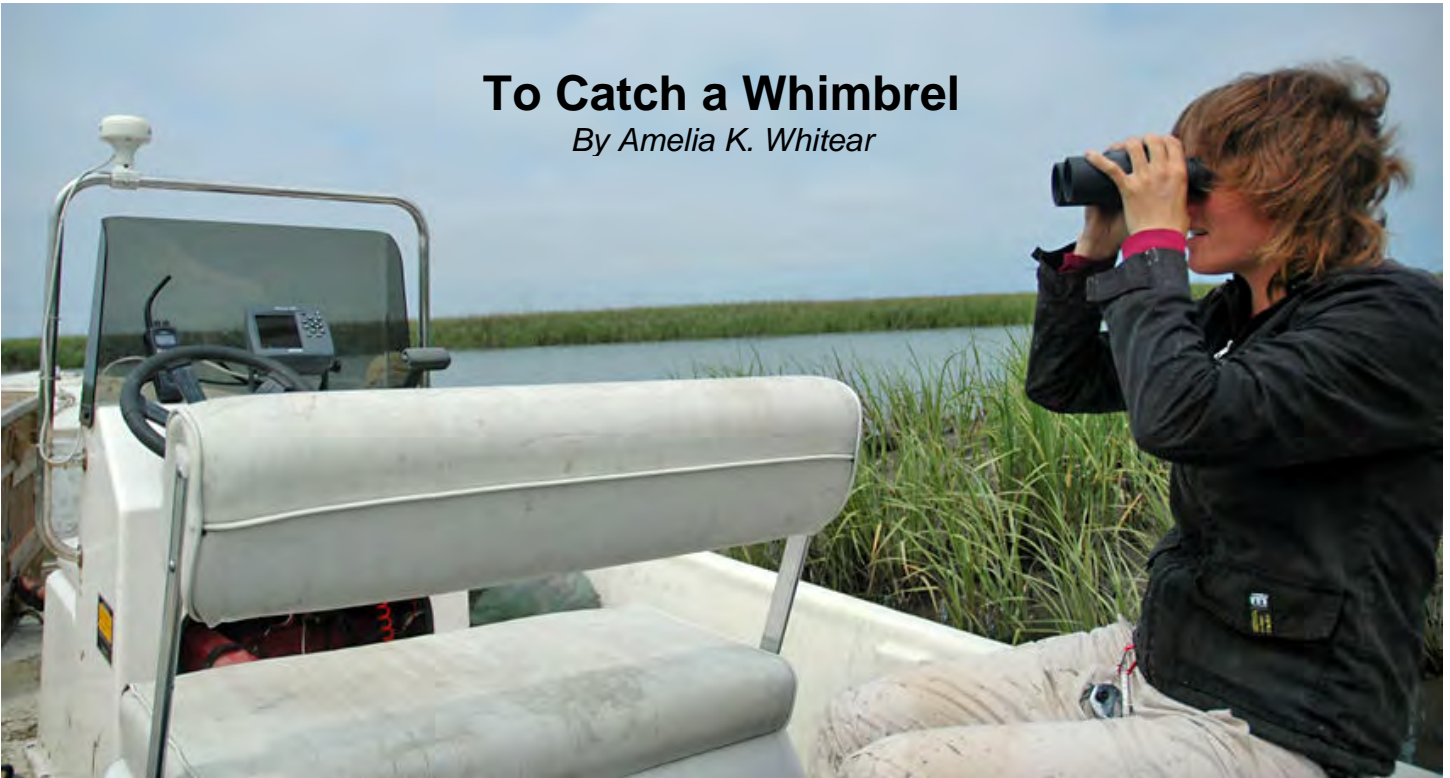
Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the foot of Leslie St. (south of Lakeshore Boulevard East). Fall migrants, raptors, shorebirds. Leader: Bob Kortright.

## September 13 TOC Meeting

Join host Mark Peck for an audience participation event, *The TOC Fall Warbler Warmup Workshop*. Share your knowledge and learn the tricks TOC members use to identify the confusing young of the year and adults as they pass through the GTA. More fun than looking for sparrows!

# To Catch a Whimbrel

By Amelia K. Whitear



Amelia Whitear monitoring Whimbrel movements on Elkins Island near Box Tree Marsh, Machipongo, VA. Photo by Tom Badger.

The Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*, is notorious for being one of the wariest of shorebirds to catch. In Machipongo, on the Eastern Shore of the Delmarva Peninsula, Virginia, The Nature Conservancy owns a marsh known as Box Tree. It is the best location for capturing, marking and releasing this beautiful bird. Box Tree Marsh consists of a monotypic salt marsh grass known as *Spartina alterniflora*. It creates a perfect habitat for the mud-burrowing Fiddler crabs that fuel Whimbrel migration.

To catch a Whimbrel is dirty work, filled with educated guesswork and a touch of luck. On the burgeoning high tide, Whimbrel are pushed from their low tide feeding habitat to one of the few remaining Fiddler crab-infused mudflats not covered by water. Here, we set up rocket nets.

Three rockets make up the core of the operation. Each is equipped with an electric match and filled with Howitzer propellant, a type of compressed black powder. They are attached to the leading edge of a net and placed on tracks bolted to a five-sided wooden box. The box is placed on a wooden table and secured in the mud. Being roughly rectangular in shape with five sides made of wood and enforced with metal edges to add stability, the open end of the box faces the exposed mudflat where we hope Whimbrel land at high tide. A net (17.4 metres long by 13.1 metres wide) is carefully folded into the box. The net's momentum is hindered in the air by 25 pound weights attached to the trailing edge. Twenty gauge, single strand blasting cable then connects each rocket in series and is strung to a blasting box harbored a safe distance away. To complete the device, *Spartina alterniflora* is placed around the box, camouflaging the conspicuous entity from the keen Whimbrel eye.

Once the Whimbrel catcher is set up, the waiting starts, and this is where the touch of luck comes in. On one phenomenal day that I was lucky to be a part of, everything fell into place. We set up three boxes at half tide and retreated to the dock where all of the catch areas were easily seen with a spotting scope. It started with a 'confidence bird', a Laughing Gull, landing in front of the box. It was always a good sign when one of these birds appeared in front of the box, as Whimbrel were sure to follow close after. As it happened we didn't have to wait long. Whimbrel flew about, and 14 landed in front of the catch area of one rocket net.

With each person assigned a job, we jumped from the dock to the boat, loaded with the Amish woven chicken boxes in which we would transport the Whimbrel. We motored slowly to the detonator site, careful not to flush our targets. "3-2-1 Fire" came fast out of Fletcher Smith's mouth. The boom of the rockets was intense, infiltrating the very core of our chests and making the beat of our hearts skip. With a rush of adrenaline coursing through our veins, Fletcher was already on route towards the catch area, moving so efficiently that our detonator, Tom Badger, didn't even have time to jump back in the boat and help with extracting our catch from the net.

I was assigned to be first off the boat as I had more shorebird extracting experience than the other technicians. Anna Fasoli was to follow closely behind me with the boxes needed to hold the captured Whimbrels. As we approached, we saw clearly three entrapped Whimbrel. Two were struggling to stay above the water. Thankfully, they were just wet, not muddy, as a little water easily dries but mud requires washing off before release, as it will impede flying ability. I moved to the front of the boat at the ready, and even before Fletcher had anchored the boat, I jumped as high as I could off the bow and into the more hardened parts of the mudflats. Placing one wrong foot in soft mud would render you immobile and powerless to help the caught birds. Apparently, this act was so comical that it is henceforth known as the “Whimbrel Leap”.



Amelia Whitear holding a Whimbrel while Fletcher Smith attaches a Porzano metal band inside the temperature-controlled van used as our banding station. Box Tree Marsh, Machipongo, VA. Photo by Tom Badger.

Once the birds were extracted and secured in their towel-laden keeping cage, we disconnected the charge wires, and loaded the boat with the rockets, net and box. It was a short boat ride back to the dock. We were filled with pride and excitement over our bountiful catch.

There were as many birds as technicians. Each of us was able to hold a bird while Fletcher processed them in the temperature-controlled William and Mary Van. Our first task was to measure culmen length. With an up close look at the bird, the origins of their genus name, *Numenius*, was apt—the curve of the new moon was mirrored in the downward curve of the Whimbrel bill. Also, we measured the natural wing chord, flattened wing chord, tail length and weight. Weight measurements can tell of extremes between individuals of the Western and Eastern breeding population in hand. The Western breeding population females are of heavier weight extremes while, the Eastern breeding population males are of comparatively lighter weight. We also procured feather samples for sexing, genetic and isotope analysis.

After taking the appropriate measurements, I held the Whimbrel's leg out as it was time to mark the birds. We started by applying the individually numbered U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service metal band to the right tarsus, or lower leg. Application of this band first is a golden rule of banding. It ensures the placement of an identifying mark that links to the record of the caught bird if something should go wrong and it is released early. Next, we affixed the individually coded lime green coloured flag to the right tibia, or upper leg, along with a yellow band. The flag is used for re-sighting; an individually engraved code may be seen from a spotting scope and stopover information can be gained from it long after a radio transmitter stops working. Please keep an eye out for colour-flagged Whimbrels while birding.



Radio transmitter affixed to synsacrum of a Whimbrel, Box Tree Marsh, Machipongo, VA. Photo by Tom Badger.

Turning it around, we prepared the bird to secure one of the radio transmitters the Toronto Ornithological Club funded. We cut the back feathers short on a spot directly over the flat part of the back, known as the synsacrum. With Super Glue we attached the transmitter, holding it in place for 30 seconds while it dried. After processing was complete, we returned the birds to a clean keeping cage.

To end the catch is a beautiful sight. Whimbrel often find safety in flocks during migration, and as such, Fletcher has found releasing the caught Whimbrels in multiples while throwing them up and into the wind to be least traumatizing. On the count of three, this time in ascending order, Tom, Anna and I threw the birds up and watched them fly with the wind to their

comrades. With the transmitter wire trailing behind our first Whimbrels of the season, I couldn't help but marvel at the great migration that lies ahead for them, and hope that a data logger placed along Lake Ontario would pick up these birds.

**Acknowledgements**

First and foremost I would like to thank Fletcher Smith for giving me the opportunity to experience a Whimbrel catching operation, and to Jean Iron, Ron Pittaway, Mark Peck, Neil Hershfield, Barbara Whitear and Mark Field for their editing efforts. I would also like to thank the Toronto Ornithological Club for funding radio transmitters and data loggers. Alex Lamereaux was also a Whimbrel Technician on this project, but was unable to make it on this particular catch day.

**TOC Whimbrel Migration Count**

*Data provided by Don Barnett*

The TOC organized a Whimbrel Migration Count at Colonel Samuel Smith Park in Toronto, which took place from May 19 to 29, 2010. This is the second year such a count has been conducted by the TOC. Don Barnett and Wayne Renaud acted as official recorders.

The total number of observer hours from May 19 to 29 was 115. Fifty-five flocks or Whimbrel sightings were made, and the median flock size was 27. Coordinates for the monitoring location are 17624795E 4833443N.

Thank you to all those who volunteered their time to make the Whimbrel Migration Count a success.



Whimbrel counters Jean Iron, Wayne Renaud and Don Barnett (L to R) at Colonel Samuel Smith Park, taken on 24 May 2010, just after sunrise. Photo by Terry Smith.

Daily counts of Whimbrel at Colonel Samuel Smith Park from May 19 to 29, 2010:

May 19	May 20	May 21	May 22	May 23	May 24	May 25	May 26	May 27	May 28	May 29	Total
0	6	0	60	624	48	0	90	9	658	206	1701

Cumulative Hourly Distribution of Whimbrel counted at Colonel Samuel Smith Park from May 19 to 29, 2010:

5-6 AM	6-7 AM	7-8 AM	8-9 AM	9-10 AM	10-11 AM	11-12 AM	12-1 PM
825	294	17	176	100	8	226	49
1-2 PM	2-3 PM	3-4 PM	4-5 PM	5-6 PM	6-7 PM	7-8 PM	8-9 PM
0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0

# Overview of Spring 2010 Whimbrel Migration Study

By Fletcher Smith



A flock of migrating Whimbrels departs the Eastern Shore of Virginia, flying north to their breeding grounds.  
Photo by Alex Lamereaux.

## Background and Objectives

For more than a decade, scientists have believed that the seaside of the lower Delmarva Peninsula in Virginia played a significant role in the life history of the Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). It is now believed that areas of coastal Georgia and South Carolina are extremely important staging areas as well. During spring migration in the mid-1990s, biologists from the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) at the College of William and Mary and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) documented the densest concentration of Whimbrels ever recorded in the western hemisphere within the barrier island lagoon system of the lower Delmarva. Subsequent aerial surveys have shown a 50% decline in Whimbrels between 1994-96 and 2008-09. It is now known that this site (along with marsh habitat in Georgia and South Carolina) represents a critical coastal staging area where birds feed on vast numbers of fiddler crabs that inhabit the tidal marsh system to build up fat and energy reserves before making their last overland flight to the breeding grounds. It was previously assumed that birds staging in Virginia were exclusively from the Hudson Bay population. Investigations into the migration routes of Whimbrels staging in Virginia have shown a previously unknown link between the eastern and western populations as they stop over in Virginia. This link has not been documented in other staging areas as of yet. Primary objectives of this study are to examine stopover and migration strategies as they relate to conservation of Whimbrels, document specific routes and key stopover sites using satellite and radio transmitters, investigate local stopover strategies in Virginia using conventional radio transmitters, and to determine the proportions of eastern and western breeding Whimbrels utilizing the Eastern Shore as a stopover site.

## Methods

Trapping was conducted on all days between 25 April and 31 May 2010 in Virginia and on multiple occasions between 15 April and 22 May in Georgia. A field readable lime green alpha-numeric flag was attached above the left metatarsal joint on all birds. A colored wrap-around Darvic band was placed above the alpha-numeric band to identify the bird to banding location (yellow in Virginia, orange in Georgia). A serially numbered Incoloy band was placed on the lower right metatarsal joint. Standard morphometric measurements, including wing, tail and culmen were recorded. Feather samples were obtained to establish sex of the individual using DNA analysis, and also to determine breeding and wintering origin using stable isotope analysis.

Digitally coded glue-on 9 gram radio transmitters purchased by Toronto Ornithological Club (TOC) and Georgia Department of Natural Resources Non-game Division (GADNR) were attached to Whimbrels in Georgia and Virginia. Feathers were trimmed to allow contact between super glue and feather tracts/skin. Aerial surveys were conducted weekly throughout the season to detect radio tagged birds. A 9.5 gram satellite transmitter was attached using a modified leg-loop. A Teflon ribbon was used in place of elastic cord. The ribbon was fastened with brass rivets and super glue was used to reduce fraying of the ribbon. Whimbrels were observed before release to confirm freedom of movement with the transmitter attached. Transmitters were placed on the synsacrum anterior to the uropygial gland.



(L) Placement of radio transmitter, photo by Fletcher Smith. (R) Placement of satellite transmitter, photo by Bart Paxton.

## Results and Future Goals

A total of 21 Whimbrels was captured between 28 April and 22 May 2010 in Virginia. A total of 8 Whimbrels was captured in Georgia between 19 May and 22 May. A total of four 9.5 gram PTT satellite transmitters was deployed during the spring migration season, two each in Virginia and Georgia. You can follow the migrations of these birds at <http://wildlifetracking.org/?species=whimbrel> and also at <http://ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/Whimbrel/maps.htm>. A total of 26 birds migrated north with radio transmitters attached this year.

Dataloggers rented by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Willow Beach Field Naturalists were placed at Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Tommy Thompson Park, and Presqu'ile Provincial Park during the spring 2010 migration. In 2009, an amazing 10 of 38 radio tagged birds were detected along the Lake Ontario shoreline at the Samuel Smith location. Unfortunately, no Whimbrels were detected migrating through the Lake Ontario region this year, possibly due to technical problems with one of the dataloggers (a radio tagged bird was clearly photographed at Tommy Thompson Park this spring, but not detected by the datalogger). The weather patterns on staging grounds in Virginia and Georgia (prevailing NE winds through most of migration) may have pushed birds to the western Great Lakes, as large flocks were seen from Ohio through Wisconsin this year.

In the spring of 2009, CCB and TNC initiated a watch program to count Whimbrels leaving our primary study area on the seaside of the Delmarva Peninsula. Birds are counted in flocks as they fly north during the last 2 weeks of May, using the same protocols as the Greater Toronto Area Whimbrel Count that is coordinated by TOC. All birds appear to leave the Eastern Shore of Virginia during the 4 hours before dusk. The objective of this effort is to understand the phenology for birds staging along the Delmarva Peninsula and to make comparisons with counts of Whimbrels moving through the Greater Toronto Area and on to breeding grounds. Over 11,000 Whimbrels have been counted leaving the Eastern Shore of Virginia the past two years, with 6,429 individuals seen this year. The high count for the 2010 season was 1,765 individuals seen on 24 May. A total of 95% of Whimbrels migrated from Virginia between 22 May and 26 May. Mean flock size was 45.6 birds/flock.

## The Travels of Hope the Whimbrel

Hope the Whimbrel remains the star pupil of our study. She has made some very remarkable travels since I last spoke to the TOC in February. She is currently foraging on the same mudflats where she was initially captured. Her updated map follows:





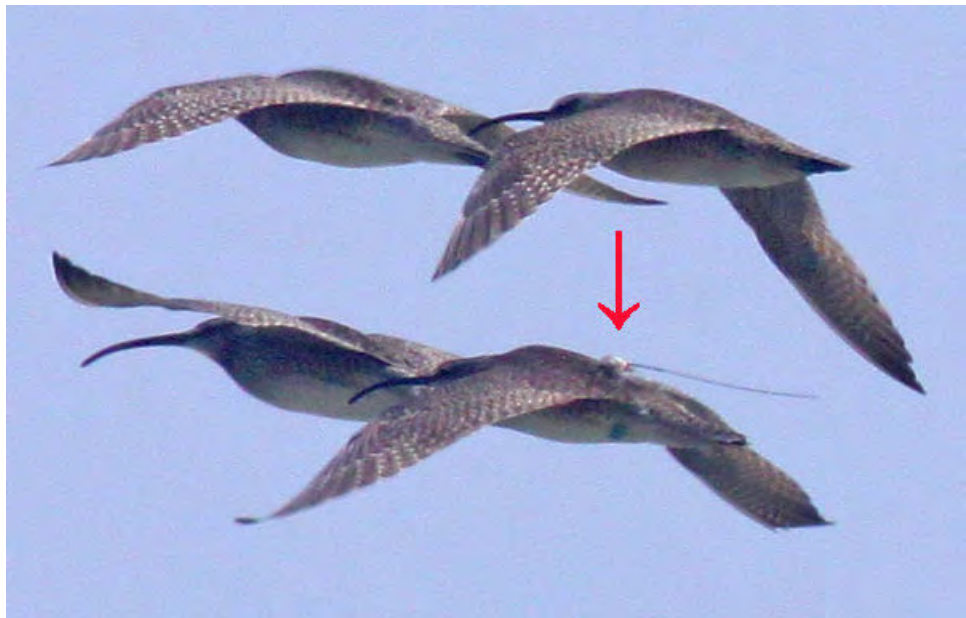
Flock of Whimbrel including one with a radio transmitter. Photo by Mike Dizonno.

On 23 May 2010, Mike Dizonno of Richmond Hill was birding Tommy Thompson Park (Leslie Street Spit). At 1:30 p.m. he spotted a flock of 30-40 Whimbrels circling in the fog. One by one they landed on an island where the Common Terns nest. Mike took several photos of Whimbrel in flight and later at home he noticed the Whimbrel in the lower centre of the above photo was carrying a radio transmitter. Could it be one of the Virginia Whimbrels that TOC paid for and Amelia Whitear and Fletcher Smith wrote about?

Fletcher Smith of Virginia who heads up the Whimbrel Migration Study identified it as one of 18 birds radio tagged in April and May on the Virginia Coast as part of a study to understand the migration of Whimbrel staging on the East Coast. TOC paid for these 18 radio transmitters. In anticipation of picking up radio signals on the north shore of Lake Ontario, two dataloggers were placed in Toronto by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), one at the lighthouse at Tommy Thompson Park (Leslie Street Spit) and the other at Colonel Samuel Smith Park in Etobicoke. A third datalogger was placed at Presqu'île Provincial Park by Willow Beach Field Naturalists Club of Cobourg/Port Hope. Each datalogger picks up radio signals within a 5 km radius. Unfortunately, this year the dataloggers did not pick up any signals.

Next year, there will be increased efforts to radio tag Georgia Whimbrels to find out if they are taking the same migratory route as the Virginia birds. Fletcher wanted to get two more satellite transmitters out this August, but on 24 August had over 80 Willets and 15 Whimbrels in front of the net in Virginia, way too many to catch at once. So the goal will be to get them out next spring.

Following the lives of Whimbrels in their migrations and knowing that the TOC is making a contribution is exciting. It made Mike Dizonno's day suddenly to be part of this international Whimbrel project. Fletcher Smith said Mike's photos made their season.



Bottom Whimbrel carries radio transmitter. Photo by Mike Dizonno.

**Acknowledgements:** I thank Fletcher Smith of The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University for information and Mike Dizonno for use of his photos. The Toronto Ornithological Club is an important partner in the Whimbrel Project.

# An Update from the Nature Conservancy of Canada

By Dana Kleniewski

At any given time, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is working on dozens of land acquisitions and stewardship projects across the country. We use the best available conservation science to guide us to the highest quality habitat in the country in urgent need of protection – this way, our supporters know that we are investing their funds in the right places, at the right time, for the right reasons. In Ontario, three of our highest priority landscapes – and most active project areas – are the Happy Valley Forest, the Southern Norfolk Sand Plain and the Carden Alvar.

The Happy Valley Forest is a hidden gem just north of Toronto near King City. It is one of the largest, intact deciduous forests remaining on the Oak Ridges Moraine. It is home to the threatened Jefferson Salamander and supports more than 110 breeding bird species. Recently the Acadian Flycatcher and Hooded Warbler have both been heard calling through the canopy of the Happy Valley Forest. To date NCC has protected 415 acres in the forest through purchases, donations and conservation easements, including the Humber Source Woods property (a partnership project with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and York Region), which was purchased in March 2010, and the Pinchgut property, which was purchased in July 2010. Several more acquisitions are currently underway.

The Southern Norfolk Sand Plain includes much of Norfolk County and the internationally significant Long Point sand spit. The area is part of the Carolinian Life Zone, which is home to 25 percent of Canada's species at risk. In partnership with The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, NCC recently announced the acquisition of 3,400 acres in this important area. The lands that are part of this initiative are outstanding examples of Norfolk County's best forests, savannahs and wetlands. Converted lands will be gradually restored to natural habitat for many species at risk including Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, American Badger, Eastern Fox Snake, Spotted Turtle, American Chestnut and Eastern Flowering Dogwood.

The Carden Alvar, meanwhile, also remains a high priority for NCC. The Little Bluestem Alvar property was purchased in September 2009, and now has a new sign at the entrance behind the Carden Rec Centre. Staff hope to work on an improved trail and fencing for the property this field season. At the same time, NCC and the Couchiching Conservancy have been offered an incredible funding opportunity by an anonymous donor. This long-time Carden supporter has agreed to match private donations to the Carden Alvar 1:1 for new acquisition projects to the end of 2012. All private donations will then be matched by government funding sources to complete the projects. Staff are currently speaking with landowners in order to explore future acquisition possibilities, and fundraising to match this generous offer is already underway.



Acadian Flycatcher. Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick

All three of these project areas are part of NCC's recently announced *Force for Nature* Campaign. This ambitious new campaign will raise \$500 million to protect 500,000 acres across the country.

Thank you to the Toronto Ornithological Club and the many members who contribute to NCC's work. We could not accomplish so much without you! If you would like further information about our project areas or fundraising opportunities, please contact [dana.kleniewski@natureconservancy.ca](mailto:dana.kleniewski@natureconservancy.ca) or call 416-932-3202 ext. 246.

# TOC's 2010 Baillie Birdathon Report

*By Andrew Keaveney*

This year's TOC Baillie Birdathon was undertaken by a group of young men including me, at Point Pelee National Park and adjacent areas during a 24-hour period between May 9 and 10. The four of us were (from elderly to youth) Andrew Keaveney, Josh Vandermeulen, Bret Fried, and Dan Riley. All of us had been birding in Pelee this spring for at least a few days and Josh and I had the opportunity to spend many days this May birding together in the park. With the help of several park interpreters and vehicle traffic controllers we were able to zip in and out of the park several times within the 24-hour period and never venturing far, with single visits to Hillman Marsh, Wheatley Harbour and the Onion Fields. While we were in no way trying to break our backs or lose excessive amounts of sleep over this whole affair I think that we carried ourselves quite well through the course of our birdathon and when all was said and done we tallied 142 species as a group (seen by at least 3 of us). I was able to see 138 species myself, no easy feat given that we sometimes split up along trails to locate some uncommon migrants, keeping in contact with cell phones.

We began birding late morning while trying to get the four of us in one place and we all decided to just bird until we saw something that we probably wouldn't see again in the 24-hour period. Well that didn't take long as our first stop at White Pines had a singing Pine Warbler (not to be seen or heard again as this is an early migrant) and minutes later a Mississippi Kite flew over the trail we had been walking to look for what we had hoped would be our first bird of the count, a Yellow-breasted Chat. As it happens I have still not seen one yet this year! While there were some other nice birds seen throughout the day – White-rumped Sandpiper, Yellow-throated Vireo, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Bay-breasted and Canada Warbler – the main highlight as always was hanging out and doing something we loved with like-minded friends. I would definitely go birding with this bunch again. All were very keen with their ears, several had never done a formal 'big day' before and everyone learned something new.

To all of the great supporters at the TOC a big thank you goes out for donating to the Baillie Birdathon, Bird Studies Canada and of course your own Toronto Ornithological Club will see a large share of the donation. **I am still looking for several members to honour their pledges, and new donations can continue to be made even into September at the first fall meeting.**

Looking forward to doing it all again next year if I'm in Ontario in May!

## Top Ten Reasons for Toronto Birders to be Optimistic

*According to George Bryant*

- 10) Numbers of eleven out of the twelve largest bird species have increased between Atlases (exception—Great Blue Heron).
- 9) Numbers of only one (American Kestrel) or possibly two (Sharp-shinned Hawk) of our 25-odd raptor species have declined between Atlases.
- 8) There is three times the amount of forest in southern Ontario now compared to the 1920s.
- 7) Population of European Starling has declined 2% annually for the past 40 years.
- 6) Additions to our avifauna, virtually all positive, drastically outnumber subtractions.
- 5) Ontbird, Ebird, other electronic messaging vastly accelerate our knowledge of bird locations.
- 4) Nature Conservancy of Canada, land trusts, stewardship agreements, conservation authorities, nature clubs all promote the acquisition and protection of natural areas.
- 3) Amount of interest in natural history and the amount of excellent literature is now way beyond dreams of only a few years ago.
- 2) Coyotes enter eastern North America, potentially acting as a check on proliferating Canada Goose and Mute Swans populations.
- 1) Ontario Species at Risk and Ecological Land Classification legislation requires much more biological analysis of all land transfers—biologists now find steady employment!

# Outings Report

By Sarah Box

## Fall Field Day

All TOC members are invited to take part in the 2010 Fall Field Day on Sunday, September 19, 2010. Activities for members that day include:

- Birding in Durham region (please see details below from Hugh Currie)
- Birding in High Park and possibly other locations along the western GTA lakeshore, led by Garth Riley. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot inside the Bloor St entrance at High Park Avenue
- Birding at Leslie St Spit, led by Bob Kortright. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to the Spit, at the corner of Leslie St and Unwin Ave
- Birding anywhere in the GTA

The day will conclude with a round-up hosted by Petra and Jim Grass from 4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., which all members are welcome to attend. Members are asked to keep note of all species and numbers of birds seen during the day, for tallying at the round-up and so that they can be submitted to the Records Committee. Members who are unable to attend the round-up are asked to call in their results between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to (416) 750-1890.

*Directions to the round-up: Petra and Jim Grass, 6 White Pine Ave, Toronto. Tel: (416) 750-1890. From Woodbine Subway Station, take the Parkview Hills 91A bus and get off at Elswick Ave which is one stop past White Pine Ave (ask the driver for White Pine Ave). White Pine runs north from Parkview Hill Crescent. The closest intersection is St. Clair Ave and O'Connor Drive for those who are coming by car (approximately a 5 minute drive from the Don Mills South exit from the DVP).*

## Birding in Durham Region

The Durham portion of the day will begin between 7:30 and 8 a.m. at Hydro Park. To get there, exit the 401 at Brock Road and go south. Turn right on Bayly Street, then left onto Sandy Beach Road, the meeting point is just past the bridge. There will be some experienced birders there who can arrange carpooling at this time. Anyone not confident of their field ID skills and/or unfamiliar with the area can choose to travel with a veteran if they wish. Keep track of your numbers as best you can and travel anywhere you wish in bird-rich Durham. Other participants can start anywhere and anytime they wish. Please feel free to contact Hugh Currie at (416) 535-1902 if you are seeking companions or require more information regarding the Durham activities.

## Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walk Trip Report

### Toronto Islands, May 24, 2010: report submitted by Garth Riley

The weather was clear and had been for at least two days prior so we knew that the spring fall out we hoped for was not to be. As it turned out for much of the day we had more birders than birds, with 51 participants joining the outing. Warblers were particularly scarce and we only managed one female Mourning Warbler in the early afternoon. Other warblers of note included seven Blackpoll, two Canada and two Wilson's. Shorebirds are hit and miss on the Islands but we did chance on to three breeding-plumage Semipalmated Sandpiper on the beach at Hanlan's Point. There was also a large number of Cliff Swallows feeding along the beach. This is a species which we usually only see at the Centre Island pier. We did well with Empidonax flycatchers, seeing Willow, Least, Alder and Yellow-bellied. Conspicuously absent were Indigo Buntings – we didn't see or hear any throughout the day.

While it was disappointing that there were so few birds, with some hard slugging we did manage to get 83 species for the day. This is well below the usual tally of approximately 100 species historically seen on this outing but the beautiful weather was some consolation.

*Many thanks to Garth for submitting the above report and for leading the outing on behalf of Luc Fazio.*



## **Toronto Ornithological Club Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks: Fall 2010 Program**

These outings are for those of all abilities who are interested in birds.  
Beginners are welcome. Free to all.

*Note: Outings will take place rain or shine. Outings may involve walking on unpaved trails that may be muddy, steep, overgrown and/or uneven. Participants should wear sturdy footwear and clothing, sunscreen, and insect repellent appropriate to the weather/season, and bring a snack or lunch and something to drink. Participants in outings take part at their own risk and the TOC assumes no responsibility for any loss or injury however sustained. Please do not bring pets.*

### **Saturday, September 11, 2010**

#### **High Park**

**8:00 a.m. - 12 noon**

**Leader: Steven Favier**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot inside the Bloor St entrance to High Park at High Park Avenue. Fall migrants, raptors.

### **Saturday, September 18, 2010**

#### **Durham Waterfront, Pickering-Oshawa Second Marsh**

**8:00 a.m. – afternoon**

**Leader: Geoff Carpentier**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Pickering GO Station - from 401 East exit at White's Road and then go south to Bayly St. (first lights), then east to the Pickering GO station (just east of Liverpool Rd.) - go a little bit east of the main parking lot to the overflow lot on the left (north) on Sandy Creek Rd. - meet in SE part of the lot. Fall migrants, shorebirds, waterfowl.

### **Saturday, September 25, 2010**

#### **Lambton Woods**

**8:00 a.m. - 12 noon**

**Leader: Don Burton**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at James Gardens parking lot (access from Edenbridge Drive east of Royal York Rd, north of Dundas St West). Fall migrants.

### **Sunday, September 26, 2010**

#### **Leslie Street Spit**

**8:00 a.m. - all day**

**Leader: Bob Kortright**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the foot of Leslie St (south of Lakeshore Boulevard East). Fall migrants, raptors, shorebirds.

### **Saturday, October 2, 2010**

#### **Toronto Islands**

**8:00 a.m. - all day**

**Leader: John Nishikawa**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Toronto Islands Ferry Docks at the foot of Bay St off Queen's Quay to catch the 8:15 a.m. ferry to Hanlan's Point (\$6.50 ferry fee for adults; students/ seniors \$4). Late migrants, raptors.

### **Saturday, December 4, 2010**

#### **West Toronto Lakeshore and Beyond**

**8:30 a.m. - all day**

**Leader: Dave Milsom**

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East (located off Park Lawn Rd south of Lakeshore Boulevard West). Waterfowl and winter birding.

# Birds Online

By Mark Field

Whenever I welcome fellow bird lovers into my home, the same scene never fails to repeat itself. Within ten minutes of arriving, my guests habitually discover and begin inspecting my collection of bird related books. I doubt this phenomenon is exclusive to me or my limited library. The twentieth century has produced a wealth of printed material on ornithological topics. While it is easy to share these printed resources with a small group of people, it would be difficult to share amongst a larger group such as the TOC. Luckily, the internet age is upon us! The number of bird related resources available on the internet is astounding. From the comfort of your home, you can now find information on a huge variety of avian topics: area sightings, migration status and prediction, how to find that lifer you're missing, where to go birdwatching on your trip overseas, detailed species accounts, photographs, software, blogs, out of print books, bird magazines, and taxonomical updates. The list could go on forever.

I'm sure each of us has a folder of bookmarks that contains our favourite online resources. I would encourage you to share some of the best online resources with your fellow TOC members by writing an introductory paragraph or two and sending it along with the URL to [newsletter@torontobirding.ca](mailto:newsletter@torontobirding.ca).

## Tools for calculating effort for eBird

When I first started using eBird, I found that the most difficult thing was providing the information required to calculate effort. I was never very confident in my estimation of the distance I had traveled, and I certainly had no idea how to estimate the area I had covered in hectares or acres. While exploring the eBird website, I made an interesting discovery – the frequently asked questions section of eBird.ca answers only 15 questions, while the same section of eBird.org answers 46! The expanded FAQ also includes links to three online tools that can help you calculate distance traveled and area using google maps. This expanded FAQ can be found here: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/faq>.

Two online tools are offered for determining distance covered, though I prefer to use the Gmaps Pedometer: <http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/>. To use this site, navigate to your starting point using the map or "Jump to" box. Select your unit of measurement, and for "Draw route" choose "manually (straight lines)". When you are ready, choose "Start

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recording”, then double click the mouse on your starting point. Single clicks will allow you to move the map, and only double clicks will result in waypoints. I will often use the satellite map to more easily see the route that I followed.

Google Planimeter (<http://www.acme.com/planimeter/>) is the suggested tool for calculating area. With this tool, a single click will drop a marker, and a double click will zoom in a level. Once you have centred the map on the area you visited, simply place points around the outside of the area where you were birding and the resulting area is shown below the map.

## ***Migration of Birds by Frederick C. Lincoln***

Frederick C. Lincoln (1892-1960) was a successful American ornithologist, writer and administrator. He became Curator of Ornithology at the Colorado Museum of Natural History at the age of 21, and eventually joined the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey in 1920. Based in Washington, D.C., he was tasked with organizing the nation’s bird banding program – an assignment that lasted 26 years. Using data from waterfowl banding and returns, he pioneered the concept of flyways and their use in the administration of migratory bird hunting regulations.

Lincoln’s introduction to the migration of birds was originally published in 1935. It has been revised three times, most recently in 1998 by John L. Zimmerman of Kansas State University. Topics covered include techniques for studying migration, the speed and rate of migration, flight altitude, segregation during migration, geographic patterns, the influence of weather and topography, and routes of migration.

The latest edition is now available free of charge in pdf or html formats.

You can download the pdf version at: <http://www.fws.gov/birds/documents/MigrationofBirdsCircular.pdf>

or the html version at: <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/migratio/>

## **Membership Nominations**

### **Angela Barbetta**

Angela was fortunate to have a father who loved birding (and fishing near Kenora) and would think nothing of suddenly stopping the car on the way to the cottage to point out a Scarlet Tanager or some other such beauty. He taught his children to respect and cherish birds of every kind. Angela grew up in Toronto but spent two years in Amsterdam where delightful European Robins and a variety of warblers would visit the garden. At the moment, she works for an engineering company that designs infrared bird cameras. She takes care of the two resident Java Rice Finches that helped in the development of the camera and loves to watch their amusing antics and daily squabbles. Her company has a bird feeder outside the building during the winter and the employees enjoy seeing the mob of chickadees, sparrows, juncos and cardinals. Although we sometimes take them for granted, they are still enchanting. Angela hopes that in joining the TOC she will be able to further share her passion for birds.

*Proposed by Jeremy Hatt*

### **Brett Tryon**

Brett grew up in Orillia, and received her Ecosystem Management Technology diploma from Sir Sandford Fleming College in Lindsay, Ontario. Brett was introduced to birding in 2003 when she volunteered as a naturalist at the Explorer’s Inn in Tambopata, Peru. Birding would have been impossible to avoid in a place that boasts 600 species! After graduating in 2004, she landed her first field job in southeastern Arizona doing point counts for a study on Band-tailed Pigeons. She then spent almost two years interning at the Big Sur Ornithology Lab in California, where she became proficient in mist netting and banding. Her next contract was at Fort Benning in Georgia, where she ran a banding station for the Institute for Bird Populations. She then volunteered in Whitehouse, Jamaica for the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre where she colour banded and mapped American Redstarts. From there she headed to the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee, nest searching for Cerulean Warblers. Her final contract was at the Queens University Biological Station, where she nest searched and territory-mapped American Redstarts.

After so much traveling, Brett was ready to settle down and find permanent work. She moved to Toronto in October 2008 and was extremely fortunate to find a job in March 2009 with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority as the Coordinator of the Tommy Thompson Bird Research Station. She now has the unique experience of doing fieldwork in an urban context, something that is very rare in the field of ornithology. Every day offers new surprises and insights, and it is incredibly rewarding to be surrounded by people who are so passionate about birds and nature.

*Proposed by Mark Field*

**TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB  
MINUTES OF THE 777th MEETING**

Date: June 14, 2010  
Place: Memorial Hall, 5110 Yonge St.  
Chair: Kevin Seymour, President  
Attendance: 71

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion (John Catto/Mark Field): To approve the minutes of the 775th meeting of the TOC held on April 12, 2010. Carried.

**WELCOME & INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

Members	Guests
George Bryant	Bill Bryant Sid Daniels David Wilson
Mark Field	Angela Barbetta Alan Hayton Ann Hayton Brett Tryon
Jim & Petra Grass	Barbara Hirst
Andrew Keaveney	Sarah Stanger Guy
Mark Peck	Karen McDonald
Andy Tanas	Richard Aaron
Cathie Towle	Svend Laengner

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Kevin welcomed Maya Ricker-Wilson and Jeff Warren to the TOC.

**REPORTS**

**Programs**

- Mark Peck outlined the fall program, which includes:
  - September – a warbler workshop
  - October – Alec Dobson on Birding Ghana
  - November – John Black and Kayo Roy on Niagara Birds
  - December – Members' night (interested participants should contact Mark)
- Mark also reminded members that suggestions for program speakers and topics are always welcome.

**Newsletter**

- Mark Field explained the delay in issuing this month's newsletter and advised it should be available by tomorrow.
- Mark also advised members that, effective September, the TOC newsletter will be published at the beginning of each month (except July & August) rather than just before the monthly membership meeting. Therefore, the deadline for submissions will change to mid-month.

**Outings**

- Sarah Box reported that since the last meeting, outings took place at Lambton Woods, Colonel Samuel Smith Park and the Toronto Islands. Reports for first two are in the newsletter.
- Upcoming: The fall outings schedule has been published in the newsletter. One outing will occur before the TOC meeting in September – that is on September 11 in High Park. Sarah also advised a new outing has been added to the fall schedule, in Durham region, led by Geoff Carpentier on September 18. She also noted that John Nishikawa will be the new leader for the fall Toronto Islands outing, scheduled for October 2. As always, Sarah thanked all of the leaders and participants for making the TOC outings a success.

- **Fall Field Day:** Sarah reminded members that the Fall Field Day will be held on Sunday, September 19. This is an annual event for members, in contrast to the regular outings, which are open to the public. Options include birding anywhere in the GTA, including the traditional Durham area. Members may also join routes led by Bob Kortright at the Leslie Street Spit or Garth Riley, starting at High Park. All members are also welcome to attend the round-up, hosted by Jim and Petra Grass – directions are in the newsletter.

### Conservation

- Margaret Kelch reported on the Carden Alvar census days. Although the second census day was cancelled due to weather conditions, those who showed up at 6 a.m. still had an opportunity to see some good birds.
- Margaret noted the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), i.e., Karen McDonald and team, has put out a raft for the red-necked grebes at Colonel Samuel Smith Park. There is at least one nesting pair and another pair building a nest. She also noted the signage and thanked the TRCA for its efforts.

### OTHER ITEMS

- Kevin reminded members to send any outstanding data regarding the Spring Warbler Survey to Bob Kortright.
- John Carley invited members to participate in the butterfly count on Saturday, July 10, 2010. (If you can count and distinguish colours, contact John – beginners will be placed with more experienced individuals.) Over the 15 years of the count in the Toronto area, 61 species have been identified.
- Richard Aaron invited interested members to contact him about participating in a survey of dragonflies – at least 5 visits are required and there are four routes, for which 3-4 individuals are needed per route.

### PRESENTATION – Nature Conservancy of Canada

Margaret Kelch introduced Chris Maher, Ontario Regional Vice-President of the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and NCC staff members Dana Kleniewski and Ria Nicholson. The TOC and its individual members were thanked for the support given to the NCC over the years, after which Dana provided an update on three NCC projects: Happy Valley Forest, Southern Norfolk Sand Plain and Carden Alvar. *(Please see the report published separately in this newsletter.)*

### PROGRAM

Hugh Currie introduced George Bryant who spoke about “Sixty Years of Birding in Toronto–The Changes We Have Seen”. A question and answer period followed the presentation, after which Darryl Braganza thanked George on behalf of the TOC.

### SIGHTINGS

Members noted recent sightings.

### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

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Celia Harte, Secretary



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