

The long, warm, dry summer continued into fall over most of the province, delaying the southbound migration of some species. There was some increased precipitation by early October, welcome after the prolonged dry conditions earlier in the year, but water levels in the Great Lakes remained very low. Winter suddenly arrived in the north of the province in the third week of October with snowstorms and record-low temperatures; Rainy River had permanent snow cover by 19 October. In Algonquin Provincial Park, small lakes froze over by early November, a month earlier than in the mild fall of 2001, though larger lakes were still open at the end of November. In the south of the province, there was a confusing succession of Arctic cold fronts alternating with warmer spells from mid-October to the end of November, with repeated lake-effect snow squalls to the lee of the Great Lakes.

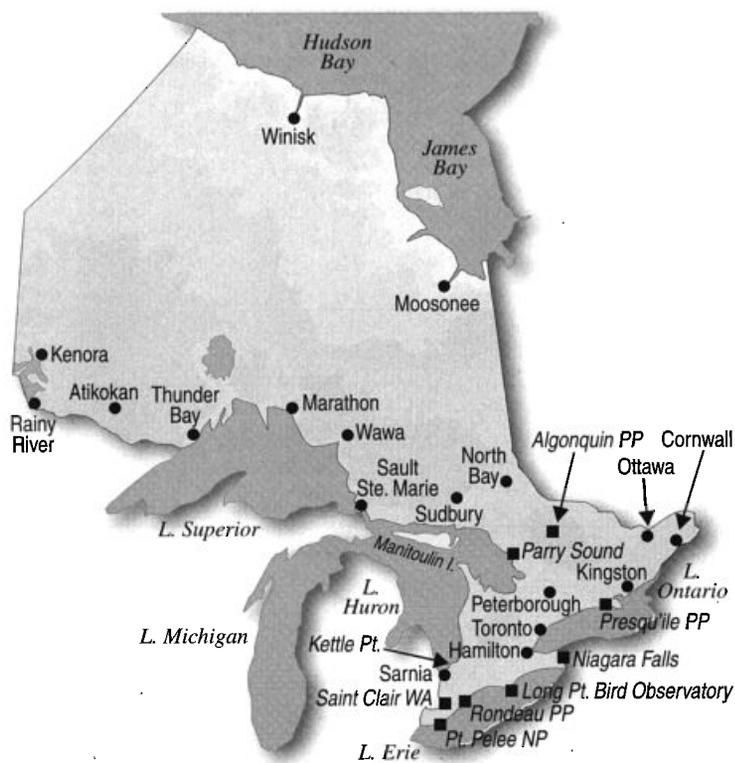
Coniferous and deciduous seed crops were abundant throughout the province, but very few winter finches were in evidence even in the north, their low density perhaps reflecting this widespread food availability. Berry crops were superb almost everywhere, weighing down the branches of many fruit-bearing trees, encouraging some migrants to linger later than usual.

The advent of the West Nile virus severely affected some bird species, especially owls and corvids. At the Owl Rehabilitation Centre in Vineland, Niagara, all the captive northern owls were wiped out, but owl species with a more southerly range appeared to be less seriously affected. This was thought to be related to the denser body plumage of the northern owls, which harbors more hippoboscids flat flies, one of the possible vectors for the virus. Some populations of American Crows were markedly reduced. This was especially noticeable in the Greater Toronto Area, where crows virtually disappeared, but the effects were less pronounced in more rural areas.

It was not a fall of outstanding rarities, though Ontario gained its first confirmed record of Tropical Kingbird, an obligingly long-staying bird enjoyed by a host of observers in the extreme southwest of the province. There was an unprecedented influx of Brown Pelicans into the Great Lakes Basin during the season, probably involving at least seven different birds often appearing and disappearing at widely scattered locations, frustrating many would-be observers. Consistent with their increasing breeding population, Ross's Geese were widely reported; Northern Gannet sightings were also unusually numerous in October and November, both on Lake Ontario and on the Ottawa River; and there was a small influx of Cave Swallows in mid-November.

Abbreviations: A.P.P. (Algonquin P.P., Nipissing); C.A. (Conservation Area); H.B.M.O.

Ontario



(Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, Essex); K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists); L.P.B.O. (Long Point Bird Observatory, Norfolk); P. E. Pt. (Prince Edward Point, Prince Edward); P.P.N.P. (Point Pelee National Park, Essex); T.C.B.O. (Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, Thunder Bay). Place names in *italics* refer to districts and regional municipalities as well as counties.

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Representing an unusually high count, 268 Red-throated Loons flew past Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton 16 Nov (NCM, SJB); 5 at Fanshawe C.A., Middlesex 17 Nov (WGL) were a large number for a small, manmade, inland reservoir. There was an ad. Pacific Loon at P. E. Pt. 3 Nov (K.F.N.). The 430 Pied-billed Grebes at Erieau, Chatham-Kent 13 Oct provided a record high count for the Rondeau area (JTB, KJB), while Red-necked Grebe numbers peaked at 340 in West Bay, Manitoulin I. 18 Oct (CBe). Single ad. Eared Grebes were at Colonel Sam Smith Park, Toronto 24 Aug (GC) and at Little Current S.T.P., Manitoulin I. 6 Sep (EA); single imm. Eared Grebes were off the Tip of P.P.N.P. 20 Oct (IR, KRK, PSB), at Erieau 25 Oct (SC), on the Cataraqui R., Kingston 2-7 Nov (RDW et al.), and at Turkey Pt., Norfolk 20 Nov (DEP,

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m. ob.). Two Western Grebes were well watched in Hamilton harbor 4-6 Oct (JO, RSt, m. ob.), and another was near Echo Bay, Algoma 12 Oct (EM).

Northern Gannet sightings, all of single juvs., began with one flying over the city of Ottawa 9 Oct (TB, MGR), followed by a sickly bird found on the Ottawa R. 26 Oct, which was rehabilitated and flown to Nova Scotia for release; one flew w. up the Ottawa R. past Shirleys Bay 11 Nov (PW), and one flew e. past the Parliament Buildings 15 Nov (GS). In the Hamilton area, a Northern Gannet appeared off Van Wagners Beach 17 (DRD), 22 (CSAM), & 23 Nov (RZD, CE), while a 2nd bird was off the Burlington Ship Canal 23 Nov (BSC, TAC), off Bronte harbor 24 Nov (GE), and in Hamilton harbor 30 Nov (KN). One was seen in Humber Bay, Toronto 23 Nov (VH et al.), and perhaps this

16 Nov, 2 single Cave Swallows flew w. at Port Burwell, Elgin just over an hour apart (DAM, LW, RCS), and the last sighting in Ontario was of one bird at Niagara Falls, *Niagara* 21 Nov (PDNM).

Three Tufted Titmice at the Tip of P.P.N. 25 Sep (DRJD et al.) were unexpected. A juv. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Britannia C.A. 15–18 Sep (m. ob.) was late and rare for the Ottawa area. T.C.B.O. had a Townsend's Solitaire 30 Oct (JRA), and another was at Marathon, *Thunder Bay* 7–24 Nov (KW). There were vigorous night flights of thrushes in late Sep, with estimates at Kingston 28/29 Sep (RDW) of 2000 Gray-cheeked Thrushes (400/hr) and 20,000 Swainson's Thrushes (4000/hr). An ad. male Varied Thrush was at Rondeau P.P. 14 Oct (BAM), the first area record since 1979, and there was a female in Hymers, *Thunder Bay* 21 Nov (HS).

American Pipits, in large flocks often consisting of 200–400 birds, passed through the Sudbury area daily 12–30 Sep (CBe), and a record 7500 American Pipits flew s. off the Tip of P.P.N. 0730–1200 EST 5 Nov (RLW, KAM). Bohemian Waxwings arrived very early in *Rainy River*, with numerous large flocks early Oct—late Nov competing with American Robins for Mountain Ash berries (DHE).

Noteworthy fall warblers included a most unexpected **Kirtland's Warbler** in a Cobourg backyard 24 Aug (MJCB), the 3rd record for *Northumberland*. L.P.B.O. had 3 **Prairie Warblers** at the Old Cut field station 2 Sep and 1200 **Blackpoll Warblers** passing the Tip 13 Sep (MH, DL). A late Northern Waterthrush was in Presqu'île P.P.

15 Nov (BG). An early migrant Connecticut Warbler was at Hillman Marsh 24 Aug (DJW), there were 4 at the Tip of Long Point 15 Sep (MH, DL), one at P.E.Pt. 16 Sep (VPM), and a record-late bird banded at T.C.B.O. 5 Oct (JRA). A male Hooded Warbler was at Presqu'île P.P. 2 Sep (BDL et al.); another at Cootes

Paradise 25 Sep was late (D&CG). A Yellow-breasted Chat found in La Salle Park, *Halton* 12 Nov (TT) lingered in thick cover to be seen by many.

A male Scarlet Tanager near Cedar Springs 17 Nov (JTB, KJB) was record late for the Rondeau area. T.C.B.O. banded a Lark Sparrow 4 Sep (JRA); an imm. Lark Bunting banded there the same day remained to 7 Sep (JRA). A Henslow's Sparrow was a good find

on Amherst I. 17 Sep (M&JJ). Southbound Le Conte's Sparrows were reported from several locations, including a total of 6 at the Two Rivers Airfield and Odenback, A.P.P. 11–20 Oct (*vide* RGT), one at Ipperwash, *Lambton* 14 Oct (CBu), and 2 at the Tip of Long Point 19 Oct (MH), with another there 1 Nov (MH et al.). *Rainy River* had an exceptional fall sparrow migration, with several species passing through in unprecedented numbers. A total of 32 Fox Sparrows at Atikokan feeders 23 Oct was at least three times the usual (DHE), Harris's Sparrows arrived early and in huge numbers with "hundreds" present late Sep—early Oct (RSI), and Snow Buntings were abundant, in flocks of several hundred along Hwy. 11 mid-Oct—early Nov (DHE, m. ob.).

An ad. female Dickcissel visited Cranberry Marsh 11 Nov (JDL, m. ob.). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was at Mac's Bay, Manitoulin I. 20 Aug (MHo), a male was with a small flock of Red-winged Blackbirds on Big I., *Prince Edward* 12 Sep (RTS), one was at the Little Current S.T.P. 17 Sep (CBe), and a late bird was in Howland Twp., Manitoulin I. 17 Nov (JJ).

Very few winter finches were reported, although some large flocks of Purple Finches were noted in A.P.P. in Oct, becoming scarce again in Nov (RGT). A pair of White-winged Crossbills was observed in Dorcas Bay, Bruce 9 Aug (BAM), and there

were several singing and displaying males in black spruce bog areas in A.P.P. in Aug, though these birds seemed to vanish in Sep (RGT).

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This juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron found by Willie D'Anna and Betsy Potter was seen by many birders as it fed actively in a small pond near Port Colborne on the shores of Lake Erie 10-11 August 2002. Photograph by Willie D'Anna.



Now rare in the province, this Piping Plover was unusually late on the rocky shore of Lake Erie at Port Colborne, found by Jean and Blayne Farnan on 10 October 2002, staying until 18 October. Photograph by Willie D'Anna.