



TORONTO BIRDS

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by Winnie Poon



COVER PHOTO

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

Photo © Rick Lauzon

This Bohemian Waxwing was photographed by Rick Lauzon on 3 November 2007 at Cobden, *Renfrew*. It was part of a flock of 20, with 10 Cedar Waxwings, a Merlin and 3 Pine Grosbeaks feeding in the next tree.

Produced and edited 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 potential cover photos, or photos for use in illustrating the bird report. Please send photos to Winnie Poon winniepoon@sympatico.ca including date, location, subject, and your preferred caption if any. Please do not email files exceeding 3MB without prior consultation. Please submit notes or articles to Dave Worthington worth@pathcom.com with a copy to Roy Smith rsmith@mrs.com. Bird observation records should be sent to Roy Smith.

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GREATER TORONTO AREA BIRD REPORT – MARCH 2008

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

Species names in **bold, underlined BLOCK CAPITALS** are OBRC rarities. These reports require acceptance by OBRC before they can be considered as part of the local records. They are qualified by [Documentation received] or [No documentation received], as applicable.

Species names in **bold** (but not underlined) are local rarities within the GTA. These reports require 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.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - 5 at Newcastle Marina, *Durham* on 2nd (Art MacLeod fide DRBA).

MUTE SWAN - 63 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR) & 47 there on 22nd (RBHS,WP).

TRUMPETER SWAN - 3 at HBP [E] on 1st (JBMW,GVR), 2 on 4th (Jacques Gravel,TFN) & 4 (2 AD, 2 juvs) on 9th (SCH) & 4 (2 AD tagged #21 and #22, plus 2 juv) on 14th (Eve Ticknor fide ONTBIRDS). 6 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR) & 2 (tags #137 & 126) AD there on 22nd (RBHS,WP). 5 at Glenville Ponds, *York* on 10th (KDu fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & 3 there on 17th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS). 1 (tag #917) AD at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 21st (RBHS,WP), 2 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 27th (SLaF fide ONTBIRDS), 1 (untagged) AD at Bay D, LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL), 2 (w/ wing tags) at W. Holland River, *York* on 29th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 (tag #951) at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 30th (Jerry Scheenaard fide OUTON).

TUNDRA SWAN – 6 flying over 39 Lincoln Ave on 17th (BY) and 8 flying W at Snake Island, TI on 27th (NMu).

WOOD DUCK - 1 (still there) F at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 1st (GC,GJB), 5 at Newcastle Marina, *Durham* on 16th (RPye fide DRBA), 1 at LaSalle Marina, LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 31st (John Stirratt fide DRBA).

GADWALL - 26 at LSS on 15th NMu,MVL) & 28 at Moore Point, *Durham* on 21st (RBHS,WP).

AMERICAN WIGEON - 2 M at HBP [E] on 14th (Eve Ticknor fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 15th (Jerry Ball fide DRBA).

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK - 24 at Bethesda SR W of McCowan, *York* on 11th (Al Johnston fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

MALLARD - 228 at TI on 27th (NMu) & 200 at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL - 1 at Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 31st (John Stirrat fide DRBA).

NORTHERN SHOVELER - 2 M at HBP [E] on 4th (Chris Evans fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN PINTAIL - 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 9th (RPye fide DRBA), 2 at Watson St E, Whitby, *Durham* on 21st (Gerry Ball fide DRBA), 10 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 27th (SLaF fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at W. Holland River, *York* on 29th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL - 2 at Watson St E, Whitby, *Durham* on 21st (Gerry Ball fide DRBA), 7 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 26th (J. McKnight fide DRBA) & 31 at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL).

CANVASBACK - 1 at HBP [E] on 2nd (Jacques Giraud fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at HBP on 13th (Bruce Wilson fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 14th (DW fide DRBA) & on 30th (RPye fide DRBA). 12 at Trout Pond, TI on 27th (NMu).

REDHEAD - 35 at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), 48 at TI on 27th (NMu) & 8 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 30th (RPye fide DRBA).

RING-NECKED DUCK - 2 at HBP on 15th (WER, Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 M at HBP [E] on 25th (Mark Field fide ONTBIRDS), 16 at Trout Pond, TI on 27th (NMu) & 14 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 28th (DW fide DRBA).

GREATER SCAUP - 320 at HBP [E] & 860 at Travelodge Hotel, *Halton* on 1st (JBMW, GVR). 153 at Moore Point, *Durham* on 21st (RBHS, WP) & 300 at LSS on 29th (NMu, MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

LESSER SCAUP - 2 at HBP [E] & 1 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW, GVR). 1 at Cell #3, LSS on 15th (NMu, MVL), 1 M at CSSP on 22nd (RBHS, WP) & 1 M at Bronte Marsh, *Halton* on 29th (RBHS, WP).

HARLEQUIN DUCK – 10 reports from the 1st to 16th of 2 (M & F) at HBP [E] (m. obs). 1 M at Kew Beach on 25th (Doug Paton, TFN, fide OUTON).

SURF SCOTER - 3 at Travelodge Hotel, *Halton* on 1st (JBMW, GVR).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - 18 at HBP [E], 46 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* & 60 at Travelodge Hotel, *Halton* on 1st (JBMW, GVR). 65 at Tip, LSS on 2nd (NMu, ICa) & 47 there on 15th (NMu, MVL). 2 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 4th (JDL fide DRBA), 13th (J. McKnight fide DRBA) & on 15th (SLaF, RPye, fide DRBA). 4 at CSSP on 4th (Jacques Gravel, TFN) & 9 there on 16th (BPB fide OUTON). 30 at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at HBP on 15th (WER, Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* on 22nd (RBHS, WP) & 22 at TI on 27th (NMu). 4 at Bronte Marsh (in Bronte Creek), *Halton* on 29th (RBHS, WP) & 2 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 30th (RPye fide DRBA).

BUFFLEHEAD - 2 at Wallace St, Woodbridge, *York* on 5th (Tessa Shelvey) (anon 2008), 128 at TI on 27th (NMu) & 86 at LSS on 29th (NMu, MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

COMMON GOLDENEYE - 38 at LSS on 2nd (NMu, ICa), 33 at TI on 27th (NMu) & 300 at LSS on 29th (NMu, MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

HOODED MERGANSER - 13 at HBP [E] on 1st (JBMW, GVR) & 5 there on 9th (SCH). 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 4th (JDL fide DRBA), 2 at Newcastle Marina, *Durham* on 16th (RPye fide DRBA), 9 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 28th (DW fide DRBA) & 6 at Lynde Shores C. A., *Durham* on 28th (Jerry Scheenaard fide OUTON). 2 at LSS on 15th (NMu, MVL), 2 at George Richardson Park, Newmarket, *York* on 16th (Ruth & Ron Bonner fide ONTBIRDS) & 10 at Bronte Marsh, *Halton* on 29th (RBHS, WP).

COMMON MERGANSER - 31 at LSS on 2nd (NMu, ICa) & 72 on 29th (NMu, MVL, fide ONTBIRDS). 38 at TI on 27th (NMu).

RUDDY DUCK - 3 at HBP [E] on 1st (JBMW, GVR), 5 on 4th (Jacques Gravel, TFN), 5-7 on 4th (Chris Evans fide ONTBIRDS) & 10 there on 16th (DW). 2 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 28th (DW fide DRBA).

WILD TURKEY - 3 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 6th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS), 14 on 8th (H. Parke fide DRBA) & on 13th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS), 3 M on 21st (RBHS, WP), 12 on 28th (DW fide DRBA) & 13 seen there on 30th (RPye fide DRBA). A lek (# not reported) at Conc 2 1km S of Holborn Rd., *York* on 29th (RJF, MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at Humber Station Rd. Heronry, *Peel* on 30th (RBHS, WP).

RED-THROATED LOON - 1 AD at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS).

PIED-BILLED GREBE - 2 at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 22nd (WER fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 at LaSalle Marina, LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu, ICa, fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 28th (DW fide DRBA) & 1 there on 30th (RPye fide DRBA).

HORNED GREBE – 7 reports from HBP [E] beginning with a high of 5 on 1st (JBMW, GVR) & last report of 4 on 16th (DW). 2 at CSSP on 4th (Jacques Gravel, TFN), 5 on 22nd (WER fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 there on 26th (SCH). 5 at LSS on 15th (NMu, MVL), 7 at LaSalle Marina, LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu, ICa, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at TI on 27th (NMu), 1 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 28th (DW fide DRBA) & 1 there on 30th (RPye fide DRBA).

RED-NECKED GREBE - 13 at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), 26 at LSS on 15th & 2 there on 29th (NMu,MVL). 6 at CSSP on 16th (BPB fide OUTON), 30 on 22nd (WER fide ONTBIRDS) & 8 there on 26th (SCH). 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 26th (J. McKnight fide DRBA).

EARED GREBE - 1 at SE Tip, LSS on 2nd [No doc. seen] (NMu,ICa) & 1 at LaSalle Marina, LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd [No doc. seen] (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT - 4 flying over at TI on 27th (NMu), 39 flying over at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL) & 1 at PetroCanada Pier, *Halton* on 29th (RBHS).

GREAT BLUE HERON – Singles at Pringle Creek, Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 2nd (ETB), at Aurora, *York* on 13th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS), Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 14th (DW fide DRBA) & at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 20th (Steve Walsh fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS). 23 standing on nests at Holland R. Mouth Heronry, *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS) & 7 (about 24 nests visible) at Lower Baseline Heronry, *Halton* on 29th (RBHS,WP).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - 1 AD at Bronte Marsh, *Halton* @ 19:00hrs on 29th (RBHS,WP).

TURKEY VULTURE – 6 reports of singles from 9th to 22nd, 2 at Hwy 27 & Hwy 9, Schomberg, *York* on 9th (JLo fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & 15 at Townline Rd & Hwy 2, Oshawa, *Durham* on 28th (SLaF fide DRBA).

BALD EAGLE - 1 at Travelodge Hotel, *Halton* on 1st (JBMW,GVR), 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA) & 1 AD there on 14th (DW fide DRBA). 1 IMM flying over at Leaside Industrial area on 7th (ETB), 1 AD at Thicksons Rd & Victoria St., Whitby, *Durham* on 15th (K. Jennewein fide DRBA) & 1 IMM at Conc 2 N of Holborn Rd., *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN HARRIER – Singles at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA), at Moore Court, Oshawa, *Durham* on 21st (RBHS,WP), at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* & at N End Bathurst Street, *York* on 22nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) & at Cawthra-Mulock FON Reserve, *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK – 5 reports of single birds from different location from 2nd to 29th.

COOPER'S HAWK – 9 reports of singles from 3rd to 31st from different locations & 2 (pair) at 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 14th (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN GOSHAWK - 1 AD at Jane St 1 km S of Hwy 9, *York* on 1st (AA fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 13th (GCarp fide DRBA), 1 at Darlington Prov. Park, *Durham* on 16th (J. McKnight fide DRBA) & 1 at Balsam Rd, Uxbridge, *Durham* on 23rd (FP fide DRBA).

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK – Singles at Arsenal Lands, *Peel* on 2nd (JWi,BKa), Ritson Rd & Winchester, Oshawa, *Durham* on 21st (D. Dalke fide DRBA), Hochreiter Rd., N End Bathurst Street, *York* on 22nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), Vivian Rd 1km W of Kenedy, *York* on 23rd (CHvR fide TH), Simcoe & Adelaide, Oshawa, *Durham* on 26th (DRuch fide DRBA) & at Miller SR, W of Bathurst, *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS).

RED-TAILED HAWK - 1 at Midland & Kingston Rd, Scarb. @ 15:30hrs on 9th (Frank Butson fide JI), showing characters of a dark-morph 'western' Red-tail. 'Wings similar to a dark morph Roughleg, but the tail was very noticeably rusty coloured'.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK - 2 (light morph) at Buttonville Airport, *York* on 9th (Jack & Connie Walker fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

MERLIN – Singles at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 4th (J. McKnight fide DRBA), Trayborn Dr, Richmond Hill, *York* on 10th (NMu), HBP [E] on 11th (Andrew Don fide ONTBIRDS), W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 12th (KDu fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 22nd (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS) & at LaSalle Marina, LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS).

PEREGRINE FALCON - 2 at Lift Bridge, Burlington Beach Canal, *Halton* on 1st (JBMW,GVR) & 1 there on 15th (LM fide ONTBIRDS). 2 (pair) at Clarica Centre, Islington on 6th were seen flying circles around the nesting tower when a swing stage was lowered past the nest ledge (to install a new camera). The pair was seen again there on 22nd. On the 28th there were at least 2 eggs in the nest (SCH). 1 JUV-F at SE Tip, LSS on 15th (NMu,MVL), silver leg band visible on L leg. 1 at Hwy 401 & Markham Rd on 23rd (Don Bailey fide ONTBIRDS).

AMERICAN COOT – 5 reports of 2 at HBP [E] from 1st to 16th. 1 at Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 20th (G. Ernest fide DRBA).

SANDHILL CRANE - 1 at Guelph Line & New St., Burlington, *Halton* on 28th (CEdge fide ONTBIRDS).

KILLDEER – First report was of 1 at HBP [E] on 3rd (JI), 1 or 2 reported up until the 16th, then 7 at North Toronto Sewage Plant on 21st (ETB) & 18 at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

* LESSER YELLOWLEGS - 1 at Baselands, LSS on 29th [No doc. seen] (NMu,MVL). Very early date.

WILSON'S SNIPE - 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 29th (WER fide ONTBIRDS).

AMERICAN WOODCOCK - 1 (at dusk) at Newmarket, *York* on 12th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS) & 4 (displaying) in the wet field S of Whitby Truck Inspection (401E), *Durham* @ 20:00hrs on 26th (SLaF fide ONTBIRDS). 'This site has been reliable for the last 8 seasons'. 1 at The Meadow, Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 28th (K. Jennewein fide DRBA) & 1 calling @ dusk at CSSP on 29th (BPB fide ONTBIRDS).

RING-BILLED GULL - 20-25,000 at LSS on 2nd (NMu,ICa), very quiet, in contrast to later in the season when they have settled on the breeding areas.

ICELAND GULL - 1 at Frenchman's Bay, *Durham* on 2nd (DW fide DRBA), 1 on 15th (SLaF fide DRBA) & 2 there on 21st (RPye fide DRBA).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA).

GLAUCOUS GULL – 6 reports thro' the month from Frenchman's Bay, *Durham*, mainly 1-3 birds & 8 there on 21st (RPye fide DRBA). 1 AD at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Whitby Harbour, *Durham* on 14th (DW fide DRBA) & 1 AD at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL, fide ONTBIRDS).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL - 7 at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR).

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL - A *brown morph* on 1st at Rosetta McClain Gardens (JI), 1 at 7 Fairway Dr., *Scarb.* on 15th (RLau), 2 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 24th (DEP fide ONTBIRDS) & 2 there @ 19:40hrs on 29th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), one perched on a Wood Duck nestbox.

GREAT HORNED OWL - 1 at LSS on 2nd (NMu,ICa) & 1 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (Michael Biro fide Michael's Bull. #358).

SNOWY OWL - 1 at Holland Marsh, E of Jane St., *York* on 2nd (Chris Dunn fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), very white, prob. an AD-M. 1 (F or imm) at N End Old Yonge Street, *York* on 2nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), about 2km S of Ravenshoe Rd. 1 M at Lakefront Promenade Park, *Peel* on 7th (WER fide ONTBIRDS), on docks of Port Credit Yacht Club. 1 at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 10th, 16th (KDu fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & last reported there on 19th (anon fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).



Brown morph Eastern Screech-Owl at Rosetta McClain Gardens, Toronto, 1 March 2008. A very informative article by Ron Pittaway on morphs of the Eastern Screech-Owl can be found in *Ontario Birds* 13(2): 66-71, August 1995. Photo © Jean Iron.

BARRED OWL - 1 at LSS on 2nd (NMu,ICa) & on 15th (NMu,MVL). 1 at Victoria St, Bolton, *Peel* on 8th (anon fide PG) (anon 2008), 1 roosting at Hague Park, Scarb. on 23rd (RLau), 1 at Faulkner Avenue Woods, *York* on 23rd (CHvR fide TH) & 1 at Wayne Dr, Newmarket, *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS).

* GREAT GRAY OWL - 1 at Centreville Creek Rd., *Peel* on 1st & 2nd (anon fide PG) (anon 2008).

LONG-EARED OWL - 1 at Peninsula D, LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL - 1 at LSS on 2nd (NMu,ICa), 15th & on 29th (NMu,MVL). 2 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 24th (DEP fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Clearmeadow Blvd. Newmarket, *York* during week ending 21 Mar (Nancy Colefield fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

BELTED KINGFISHER - 1 at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 16th (DW).

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER - 2 at Edge Pegg Property, *Durham* on 13th (JDL,Betty Pegg, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Orono, *Durham* on 15th (JMR fide DRBA), 1 at N End Bathurst Street, *York* on 17th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 on Dufferin a few km N of Hwy 9, *York* on 22nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS).

DOWNY WOODPECKER - 6 at Glendon Ravine on 6th (Jacques Gravel) & 9 at TI on 27th (NMu).

NORTHERN FLICKER - 1 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA) & on 9th (JDL fide DRBA). 1 at LSS on 2nd (NMu,ICa) & on 29th (NMu,MVL). 1 at backyard in Whitby, *Durham* on 20th (G. Ernest fide DRBA).

PILEATED WOODPECKER – Singles at Queensville SR nr. Kennedy, *York* on 1st (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS), Adelaide & Townline, Oshawa, *Durham* on 9th (Otto Peter fide DRBA), Joshua Valley Park, *Halton* on 10th (Matt Ryan fide ONTBIRDS), Seneca College (King), *York* on 23rd (FP fide ONTBIRDS) & at Cawthra-Mulock FON Reserve, *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Wallace St, Woodbridge, *York* on 8th (Tessa Shelvey) (anon 2008) & 2 at Dixie Rd, N of Finch, Pickering, *Durham* on 30th (Tom & Sue Wakes fide DRBA).

EASTERN PHOEBE - 1 at Hanlan's Point, TI on 27th (NMu) & 2 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 29th (WER fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN SHRIKE – 14 reports of single birds from 12 different locations throughout the month.



A strong breeze from behind accounted for the unusual posture of a **Northern Shrike** at Colonel Sam Smith Park, *Toronto*, 23 March 2008; it had been around since January. Photo © Winnie Poon.

GRAY JAY - 1 at S of Vivian Rd, W of McCowan, *York* on 23rd [No doc. seen] (CHvR fide TH). 'She has seen the Gray Jay at least 4 times over a period of two weeks. First seen at the stable where she has her horse, also seen elsewhere in the area'.

AMERICAN CROW - 55 (migrants) flying NE at Cardico Drive, Gormley, *York* @ 14:05hrs on 15th (RBHS,WP).

COMMON RAVEN - 1 at LaSalle Park, *Halton* on 2nd (anon fide BRH, fide ONTBIRDS), 2 at YRF - North Tract, *York* on 2nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Durham RF - Main Tract, *Durham* on 23rd (RPye fide DRBA).

HORNED LARK - 2 at Beaverton Valley, Sunderland, *Durham* on 3rd (RDJ), 30 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 6th, 8 on 9th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS) & 14 there on 15th (SLaF fide DRBA). 70+ at #150 King Rd, W of Dufferin, *York* on 12th (anon fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 20 at N End Bathurst Street, *York* on 13th (anon fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & 19 flying over at LSS on 15th (NMu,MVL).

TREE SWALLOW - 1 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 27th (SLaF fide ONTBIRDS).

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE - 22 at TI on 27th (NMu).

TUFTED TITMOUSE - 1 at Shoreacres Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 (singing) there 18:15hrs on 29th (RBHS,WP). 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 29th (WER fide ONTBIRDS).

BROWN CREEPER – Singles at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA), 9th (JDL fide DRBA) & on 15th (Gerry Ball fide DRBA). 1 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 15th (S. Wysotski fide DRBA) & on 20th (SLaF fide DRBA).

CAROLINA WREN - 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR) & 4 (2 singing) there on 28th & 29th (WER fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 13th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Temperance St, Bowmanville, *Durham* on 13th (S. Laing fide DRBA), 1 at Shoreacres Park, *Halton* on 23rd (NMu,ICa, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 (singing) at Snug Harbour, TI on 27th (NMu).

WINTER WREN - 1 at HP on 23rd (SMF).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET - 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR) & 4 at YRF - North Tract, *York* on 2nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD - 4 at 14th Ave E of Reesor Rd., *York* on 2nd (ETB), 2 M at Conc. St E @ Providence Rd, Bowmanville, *Durham* on 3rd (Andrea Geboers fide ONTBIRDS) & 6 at Glendon Ravine on 6th (Jacques Gravel).

AMERICAN ROBIN - 8 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPye fide DRBA), 50+ at St. George Lake, *York* on 12th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), 40 at Bethesda SR W of Leslie, *York* on 15th (MvdT,RJF, fide ONTBIRDS) & on 16th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS). 86 at TI on 27th (NMu), in open patches amid the snow. 'Not much open water in the lagoons and only half the Trout Pond is open. Snow hard to walk through, most I have ever seen down there'.



A newly arrived American Robin at Corner Marsh, *Durham*, 22 March 2008.
Photo © Winnie Poon.

* GRAY CATBIRD - 1 at Castlederg, *Peel* on 2nd (Christine Leslie fide PG) & on 5th (anon fide PG) (anon 2008).

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD - 33 reports this month, with 15 from *Toronto*, 6 from *York*, 9 from *Durham*, 3 from *Peel* and none from *Halton*. Singing was first noted on 16th, at a site in *Durham* (RPye). Very little fieldwork was done by WP and RBHS this month, so the low numbers reported probably do not reflect reality. Thanks to this month's 22 contributors (ETB, BB, RJF fide ONTBIRDS; Petra Grass, Jacques Gravel, SCH, DTH, TH, Karl Jennewein fide RPye; GEL, JBMW, Doug Patton, WP, RPye, GVR, Bob Ross fide ONTBIRDS; Tessa Shelvey fide BB, MSch, RBHS, John Stirrat fide DRBA; PW fide ONTBIRDS).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING - In view of the exceptional nature of this winter's irruption, the reports are listed in detail.

Reports early in the month may have involved birds 'wintering' in our area, but by the third week it became clear that the GTA was experiencing a substantial 'return flight'. In most previous irruptions the birds have been concentrated in *Durham*, *York* and *Halton* regions, and never before (at least according to the records available to us) have such large numbers been reported within the City of Toronto. In many cases, the birds were in mixed flocks, with Cedar Waxwings, though the proportions of each species varied greatly. We received only one March report from *Peel*, but suspect this was an artifact of reporting – there must have been some there? If anyone has additional reports, we request they be submitted promptly, so that the database reflects the full picture of this unprecedented event. It should be noted that good numbers continued into April, and will be reported next month, although some are mentioned in the review elsewhere in this issue.

In *Durham*, there were 82 at Lynde Shores C. A. N of Bayly St on 1st (GC,GJB) but then a gap in reports until 19th when 25 were seen at Oshawa Second Marsh (J. McKnight fide DRBA). These were followed by 360 at Bessborough Dr, Oshawa on 20th (they flew off to SE after 30mins) (THo fide ONTBIRDS); 60 at Ritson Rd & Rossland, Oshawa on 21st (RPye fide DRBA); and 75 at 155 Ravenscroft Rd, Ajax @ 11:18hrs on 21st (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS). 175 were seen at the same location on 27th (GCarp fide DRBA); as well as 10 at Anderson & Rossland, Whitby on 28th (D. Wysotski fide DRBA); 450 at Salem Rd, N of Hwy 401 on 29th (RPye fide DRBA), 3 at South Blair St, Whitby on 29th (RPye fide DRBA), 55 at Halls Rd. on 30th (RPye fide DRBA), and 10 at Minto Court, Oshawa on 31st (B. Bell fide DRBA).

In *York*, there were also birds present early in the month, with 40 at Queensway S of Deer Park Rd, Keswick on 1st (KDu fide ONTBIRDS, anon 2008), 35-40 at Queensville SR nr. Kennedy Rd @ 14:30hrs on same date (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS), and 30 at Hwy 48, 4 km E of Sutton on 2nd (Walter Hyde fide ONTBIRDS). 25 were noted at Woodchopper's Lane & Keele on 10th (but not seen there on 11th) (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) and some were drinking water from ruts in Bethesda SR nr. St. George Lake on 12th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS). Five were still in that area (Bethesda SR 1km W of Leslie) on 16th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), noted feeding on Highbush Cranberry, and 50+ were at Park Rd, 3km E of Sutton on 17th (Don & Barb Cavin fide ONTBIRDS). 100+ were near the lake at Seneca College (King), *York* on 23rd (FP fide ONTBIRDS), while a very vocal flock of ~100 at Mary Lake on 30th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) could possibly have involved the same birds.

For *Peel* we have just a single report: one with a few Cedar Waxwings in the Valleywoods area, N of Brampton on 27th (ARa). Any more?

For *Toronto* itself, which had no reports during the early winter stage of the irruption, there were 50 flying over at Brimley & McNicholl, Scarborough @ 16:00hrs on 21st, plus another 4 perched (Mark Smith fide ONTBIRDS), and 200 at Murison & Coltman Cres, Scarborough (SE of Sheppard & Neilson) @ 12:00hrs on 22nd (GLKJ fide ONTBIRDS). These flew off to W. On the following day, 21 were seen at 76 North Hills Terrace, Don Mills @ 14:30hrs (KK fide ONTBIRDS). Also around this time, 2 were at Warland & O'Connor, E. York on 22nd, with 3 there the following day, photographed feeding on Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) 'berries' (Kevin Seymour), and 51+ there on 30th (Kevin Seymour *et al.*) About 50 flew over 39 Lincoln Ave on 24th (BY). On 27th a good count of 66 was made on the TI, involving flocks of 42 on Centre Is. nr new School and 24 on Gibraltar Point near the old school. However, they did not hang around for long, and soon flew off to W (NMu). To round out the Toronto picture, Bob Ross found one (with 10 Cedar Waxwings) in the Duncairn Park area (100m N of the Tallwood Ave access point to the old rail trail), N of Lawrence at 15:00h on 27th. They were being harassed by a Northern Mockingbird, undoubtedly trying to defend its food supply! This Bohemian was also seen later that day (BF), and was relocated the following day, further S on the same rail trail, at the Edwardian condo on Lawrence E of Leslie (ETB fide ONTBIRDS). It was feeding with Cedar Waxwings on crabapples, and over the following few days numbers built up at that spot, with 7 there at 09:30h on 29th, along with 50 Cedar Waxwings (HC fide ONTBIRDS), but only 3 there @ 08:40h on 30th (Lynne Terris fide ONTBIRDS). However, by 11:00h there were 30 (ETB), and shortly after Lynne Freeman had ~60 there (in 3 flocks), still feeding on the crabapples. A few were still present at 14:30h on 31st (Don Davis fide ONTBIRDS) and many birders and photographers got to see the birds at this readily accessible location.

In *Halton*, the end of the month also produced good photo-ops at Walkers Line & Millcroft Park, Burlington where 150-200 were seen sporadically from 27-28th at the Tansley United Church (anon fide CEdge, fide ONTBIRDS). They were still there on 29th, but in smaller numbers of up to 90 or so, along with 20 Cedar Waxwings, and many photographers (RBHS,WP). Once again, the birds were feeding on crabapples, and one was seen to eat some snow from one of the remaining patches on the lawn. Meanwhile, the 50 seen at Upper Middle Rd E of Headon Rd (on Tuck Creek, W of Walkers Line) during the week ending 28 Mar (anon fide CEdge, fide ONTBIRDS) may have involved some of the same birds as at Walkers Line & Millcroft, since the locations are less than 1km apart. Another group of 50 was seen briefly at Oakville Harbour @ 14:20hrs on 30th, before the flock took off and flew W (Barbara & Eric Harrison fide ONTBIRDS).

CEDAR WAXWING - 40 at Woodchopper's Lane & Keele, *York* on 11th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), same spot where Bohemians were yesterday, but not one among them! 25 at Leslie St S of 19th SR, *York* on 14th (Siegmar Bodach fide ONTBIRDS) & 50+ there on 17th (GEL) (anon 2008). 30 at Bethesda SR 1km W of Leslie, *York* on 16th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), 40 at Oshawa Second Marsh, *Durham* on 27th (SLaF fide ONTBIRDS), 90 at

Addison Rd, Richmond Hill, *York* on 27th (WP) & 90 at Anderson & Rossland, Whitby, *Durham* on 28th (D. Wysotski fide DRBA). 33 at South Blair St, Whitby, *Durham* on 29th (RPy e fide DRBA), 50 at The Edwardian (Lawrence E) on 29th (HC fide ONTBIRDS) & 30-35 there on 31st (Don Davies fide ONTBIRDS). 20 at Walkers Line & Millcroft, *Halton* on 29th (RBHS,WP), feeding on crabapples with Bohemian Waxwings.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER - 1 at Port Credit Harbour (S of Snug Harbour Restaurant), *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR).

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW - 15 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 1st (JBMW,GVR).

SONG SPARROW - 2 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPy e fide DRBA) & 4 there on 9th (JDL fide DRBA). 2 at South Trail, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 6th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS), 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 15th (WER,Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS) & 14 at LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL).

SWAMP SPARROW - 1 at South Trail, Cranberry Marsh, *Durham* on 1st (GC,GJB) & on 6th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS). 2 at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 2nd (RPy e fide DRBA) & on 9th (JDL fide DRBA). 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 15th (WER,Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW – Singles at Adelaide & Townline, Oshawa, *Durham* on 9th (Otto Peter fide DRBA), University Ave & Queen on 11th (RBHS), High Park on 14th (SMF) & at Idleswift Dr, Thornhill, *York* on 18th (GDe) (anon 2008).

DARK-EYED JUNCO - 40 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (Michael Biro fide Michael's Bull. #358).

SNOW BUNTING - 150-200 at King Rd, W of Dufferin, *York* on 1st (AA fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 10+ at Halls Rd., *Durham* on 6th (JDL fide ONTBIRDS) & 12 at N End Bathurst Street, *York* on 13th (anon fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS). 3 at Flats, LSS on 15th (NMu,MVL) & 1 at W. End Ravenshoe Rd., *York* on 29th (RJF,MvdT, fide ONTBIRDS).

NORTHERN CARDINAL - 19 at Palace Court, Doncrest, *York* on 4th (Michael Biro fide Michael's Bull. #358).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD - 20 at Watson St E, Whitby, *Durham* on 9th (RPy e fide DRBA) & on 14th (DW fide DRBA). 11 at LSS on 15th & 48 there on 29th (NMu,MVL). 60 at Whitby, *Durham* on 20th (G. Ernest fide DRBA) & 89 at TI on 27th (NMu).

EASTERN MEADOWLARK - 1 at Ward's Island, TI on 27th (NMu).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - 2 at Whitby, *Durham* on 20th (G. Ernest fide DRBA).

COMMON GRACKLE - 1 at Watson St E, Whitby, *Durham* on 14th (DW fide DRBA), 1 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 15th (WER,Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS), 4 at LSS on 15th (NMu,MVL) & 1 at Idleswift Dr, Thornhill, *York* on 18th (GDe) (anon 2008).

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD - 1 at Watson St E, Whitby, *Durham* on 14th (DW fide DRBA), 35 at Rattray Marsh, *Peel* on 15th (WER,Dave Hallett, fide ONTBIRDS) & 1 at Idleswift Dr, Thornhill, *York* on 15th (GDe) (anon 2008). 30 at Whitby, *Durham* on 20th (G. Ernest fide DRBA), 1 at HP on 23rd (SMF) & 7 at TI on 27th (NMu).

PINE GROSBEAK – A small flock at Bolton Ave, Newmarket, *York* on 1st (Frank Butson fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS), 15 at 2km N of Ashburn, *Durham* on 2nd (JKa fide DRBA) & 5 at Ravenscroft Rd & Westney Rd, Ajax, *Durham* on 5th (GCarp fide DRBA). 8 at YRF - North Tract, *York* on 9th (RJF fide ONTBIRDS), 1 M at Edge Pegg Property, *Durham* on 13th (JDL,Betty Pegg, fide ONTBIRDS), 1 M at Park Rd, 3km E of Sutton, *York* on 17th (Don & Barb Cavin fide ONTBIRDS) & 8 at Durham RF - Main Tract, *Durham* on 23rd (RPy e fide DRBA).

HOUSE FINCH - 28 at Thicksons Woods, *Durham* on 1st (GC,GJB).

COMMON REDPOLL - 6 at Ashbridge's Bay Park on 1st (GC,GJB), 6 at Mill St., Bond Head, *Durham* on 13th (MJL fide ONTBIRDS), 6 at Dufferin a few km N of Hwy 9, *York* on 22nd (RJF fide ONTBIRDS) & 12 at Peninsula D, LSS on 29th (NMu,MVL). 50 at 60 Miles Hill Cr, Richmond Hill, *York* during week ending 13 Mar (FP fide RJF, fide ONTBIRDS).

EVENING GROSBEAK - 9 (in am) at #4529 Balsam Rd, Uxbridge Twp., *Durham* (JFa fide DRBA) & 5 at Balsam Rd N of Cty Rd 23, *Durham* (GCarp fide ONTBIRDS) on 22nd.

Cited Observers: & et al.; TFN Toronto Field Naturalists; AA Alfred Adamo; BPB Brian P. Bailey; ETB Eleanor Beagan; GJB Gerard Binsfeld; BB Bruce Brydon; ICa Ian Cannell; GCarp Geoff Carpentier; GC Glenn Coady; HC Hugh Currie; GDe Gene Denzel; KDu Keith Dunn; CEdge Cheryl Edgecombe; BF Bruce Falls; JFa Jim Fairchild; SMF Steven Favier; RJF Ron Fleming; PG Phyllis Graydon; SCH Sandra Hawkins; THo Tyler Hoar; DTH Doris Hofmann; TH Theo Hofmann; BRH Brandon R. Holden; JI Jean Iron; RDJ Ross D. James; GLKJ Gabriel Lau Kin Jock; BKa Barbara Kalthoff; JKa James Kamstra; KK Karl Konze; SLaF Steve LaForest; RLau Rick Lauzon; GEL Graham Leonard; MJL Marcus J. Lise; MVL Margaret Liubavicius; JDL J. Doug Lockrey; JLo Joan Love; LM Lou Marsh; JBMW Jim Baillie Memorial Walk; NMu Norman Murr; anon Unknown Observer; ONTBIRDS OFO Email Hotline; OUTON OutdoorOntario.net; DEP Don E. Perks; FP Frank Pinilla; WP Winnie Poon; RPye Rayfield Pye; ARa Alfred Raab; DRBA Durham Rare Bird Alert; WER Wayne E. Renaud; JMR Jim M. Richards; GVR Garth Riley; DRuch Dave Ruch; MSch Mary Schuster; RBHS Roy B. H. Smith; MvdT Mike Van Den Tillaart; CHvR Christel von Richter; JWi Joan Winearls; DW David Worthington; PW Peter Wukasch; Bob Yukich.

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anon [=Bruce Brydon] 2008. February- March 2008 Sightings. WHNC Newsletter :10-11, Mar 2008

Compiled by Dave Worthington for the TOC Records Committee.

Photo editing by Winnie Poon.

Data entry by Roy Smith. 552 reports were added to the database for March 2008.

Please send reports to: Roy Smith 20 Harding Blvd. W, Suite 1002, Richmond Hill, ON L4C9S4. Tel: 905-508-4045
Fax: 905-508-4730 email: rsmith@mrs.com by 8th of the following month, please. Send photos for possible use in the bird report to: winniepoon@sympatico.ca, following guidelines in TOC Newsletter #175 (March 2007).

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A greedy male **Red-breasted Merganser** swallowing the big fish before the female could catch up. Humber Bay Park East, Toronto, 9 March 2008. Photo © Sandra Hawkins.



The Bohemian Waxwing Irruption 2007 – 2008

Winnie Poon

Introduction

The Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*) is a holarctic species found in boreal habitats of both the Old and New World. In North America, the stronghold of subspecies *B.g. pallidiceps* was traditionally considered to be the northwestern part of the continent, with the wintering range extending southwest deep into the U.S. But small numbers irregularly wander to the northeast, particularly during irruptions, when they might reach the Midwest, the Northeast coastal states, and eastern Canada from southern Ontario and Quebec to the Maritimes and Newfoundland (Witmer 2002). In Ontario, it is an uncommon breeder in the northern boreal forest, where it gives way to the Hudson Bay Lowland (Peck and Coady 2007). During the winter the species wanders widely in search of berries and fruits, occasionally irrupting to the south and east when food supplies fail. This winter, the failure of the mountain-ash crop, an important food for the waxwings in much of northern Ontario, induced another irruption, exactly as forecasted by Ron Pittaway in his *Winter Finch Forecast 2007-2008* (<http://www.ofo.ca/reportsandarticles/winterfinches.php>).



Bohemian Waxwings, Halton, 29 March 2008. Photo © Winnie Poon.

The 2007 – 2008 Irruption: Southern Ontario

Based on reports provided on ONTBIRDS up to 24 April 2008, the first indication of arrivals in areas south of about Sudbury was of one at Prince Edward Point on 17 October, followed by a notable 129 birds on 20 October on the Ottawa Fall Bird Count; widespread sightings quickly increased with reports from: Willow Beach, York, 4 November (25 birds); Bracebridge, Muskoka (15 birds) and Guelph Aboretum, Wellington, 5 November (1 bird); Valley Inn, Halton, 10 November (100 birds); Pinery Provincial Park, Lambton, 11 November (32 birds). One notable large flock of about 700 birds was in the backyard of Iain Wilkes at Kanata, Ottawa on 13 November. On 17 November three flocks up to 200 birds were seen in the Carden Alvar area feeding on junipers, some also on bittersweet berries and buds of deciduous trees. Another 3 flocks totalling 600+ on 1 December, in Orillia, Simcoe, became quite an attraction among the 'twitchers' – some of whom reportedly had come from Ohio and New York. These birds together with the Pine Grosbeaks managed to devour all the fruits from the crabapple trees there in just one week, and had moved on by 6 December. However, numbers at the Guelph Aboretum continued to build up through December, reaching 190 by month-end (Early 2008). Up to 300 at Middletown Rd & Concession 5 from 12 January – 20 February provided a new record high count for the Hamilton Study Area (Dobos 2008). On 19 December, Quinte also recorded its highest number of Bohemian Waxwings ever seen, 500 birds north of Belleville, Hastings. Yet the most impressive flock was the over 1300 birds reported by Jeff Skevington on 19 January at Merrickville, Lanark. Overall, for areas south of Lake Simcoe and Lake Huron, the waxwings reached the counties of (east to west): Hastings, Lanark, Lennox, Frontenac, Prince Edward, Northumberland, Peterborough, Durham, York,

Toronto, Peel, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara, Brant, Wellington, Dufferin, Perth, Waterloo, Oxford, Middlesex, Norfolk, Elgin, Huron, Lambton, and Essex.

The number of reports dropped off markedly in January and February, perhaps because many of the birds had moved on further south or east, or possibly due to reduced birding activity when severe winter weather set in. However, some remained throughout the period. Then, in March and early April, southern Ontario experienced an even larger return movement, with many of the reports concentrated in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Undoubtedly, when all the records are in, this will turn out to be the greatest irruption ever recorded in the GTA and adjacent southern Ontario.

The 2007- 2008 Irruption: Greater Toronto Area

Based on records in the TOC Database (still a work in progress), the Bohemian Waxwing was a rare and irregular winter visitor in the GTA until the 1980's when it started to be reported more frequently. A similar situation has been recorded in the Hamilton Study Area (Curry 2006). Since then, numbers ranging from singles up to 100 birds have been observed in most winters, usually in the northern parts of *York* and *Durham*, with none in 1981-1982, 1982-1983 and 1984-1985. Record large flocks previously noted were 500 on 9 December 1989 at Claremont Conservation Area, *Durham* (Jim Fairchild, TOC Database); and 520 on 13 April 1996 at Brooklin, *Durham*, seen by Brian Henshaw (Bain and Holder 1996). Other irruption years on record, with the largest single GTA flock reported in brackets, were: 1895 (several small flocks) (Fleming 1907), 1993-1994 (300), 1997-1998 (500), 1999-2000 (238), 2001-2002 (100), and 2003-2004 (300). The overall pattern of records shows that there have been more reports in the last three decades than earlier in the 1900s. This may be partly an artifact of better reporting, but perhaps also related to an eastward extension of the breeding range, as suggested by Peck and Coady (2007).

York Region

This winter (2007-2008), commencing with a report on 4 November, smaller groups appeared in northern parts of *York*: Willow Beach, Mossington Point, Keswick, and Newmarket. Richmond Hill had Bohemian Waxwings on the CBC (for the 5th time ever) and others were reported in January at the David Dunlap Observatory, and in the Oak Ridges area, well into March. Birds were also reported from the Humber Valley Trail in January. In *York*, the maximum was 200 birds at Bruce Street off Ravenshoe Road on 3 February. On 23 March, Ron Fleming commented (fide ONTBIRDS) that "Over the past two weeks they have been reported (often in big numbers) in Keswick, Sutton, Newmarket, Aurora, Holland Landing, King City, Thornhill, and nearby Bradford (Simcoe County)". In April, *York* produced a nice *finalé* by getting four more different flocks in southern Markham, one of over 120 birds, plus 5 more in Woodbridge on the 13th.

Halton Region

In *Halton*, there were 100 birds at the Hendrie Valley on 10 November, after which there were only 2 other small flocks in December. It was not until 27 March that a photogenic flock of about 150 birds at Walker's Line and Millcroft Road in Burlington created quite a bonanza for many eager photographers. An additional flock of 50 was seen at Oakville Harbour on 30 March. But these numbers were completely overshadowed on 5 April, when Don Perks found a flock of 500+ at 6th Line, south of Concession 10, feeding on rotting apples in an old orchard. It was the highest count for the GTA this winter, almost matching the previous record in 1996. The last flock reported was a small one on 11 April at Oakville.

Durham Region

For some reason, *Durham* has historically produced more records than the rest of the GTA, probably due to its available agricultural habitat with many orchards and crabapples, plus its easterly geographical location. For this irruption, there were a total of 37 reports (32 occurrences), 13 of which involved over 100 birds. Of these, 22 occurrences came from the 'return flight' period in March and April. Significant flocks of 300 birds were seen on 14 December in Uxbridge by Eleanor Beagan; and 360 birds on 20 March in Oshawa by Tyler Hoar, but both were outnumbered by a count of 450 at Salem Road on 29 March by Rayfield Pye, the largest flock recorded in *Durham* for the period.

Peel Region

In *Peel*, there were only three early reports: 10 birds at Albion Trail, Caledon on 21 December; 16 at Bolton on 29 December; and 3 that appeared at Rattray Marsh on 24 February. However, during the return flight, six more sightings were logged, of which four were in Brampton. The latest sighting involved 7 birds on 13 April at the Meadowvale GO Station. It is very likely that there were more sightings in *Peel*, which thus far have not been reported.



A photographic session with Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings feeding on crabapples at Walkers Line and Millcroft Road, *Halton*, 29 March 2008. Photo © Winnie Poon.

Toronto Region

During the early winter period none were reported from within *Toronto*. In the past, Bohemian Waxwings have rarely wandered into the city, and the database held a total of only 22 *Toronto* reports prior to the present irruption (clearly, the data is incomplete for some former years). The earliest records we have date back to the 1890's, when Fleming (1907) recorded a small irruption during the period 3 February to 6 March 1895. Subsequently, there were only records of singles in the winters of 1941, 1983, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, and 1999. Larger numbers seen were 3 at Guildwood Park, 15 January 1992; 26 at Toronto Islands, 10 January 1994; 11 at Lambton Woods, 3 December 1995; 4 at Humber Arboretum, 21 December 1995; 3 (migrants) at Hawk Hill, 18 November 1997; and 30 at Humber Arboretum, 6 February 2000. For the present irruption, the first report did not come until 21 March (50 birds), then 22 March had an unprecedented 200 birds; both in Scarborough. In the days that followed, reports indicated ten additional groups moving through, one of which stayed until 5 April in the Don Mills area (Leslie and Lawrence). On 6 April there were 71 in High Park. On 8 April *Toronto* Islands registered an all-time *Toronto* record count of 300 birds by Norm Murr. On the same day, 52 birds at the Leslie Street Spit provided Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station their 1st record. In total, there were 35 reports (21 occurrences) from *Toronto* for this irruption, all from the 'return flight' period, and closely matching *Durham* in this respect. The latest date received to date was 24 April – 9 birds at Snug Harbour, *Toronto* Islands, seen by Norm Murr.

Discussion

The extent of the irruption might be best appreciated from a report by Bruce DiLabio who tallied 2000+ birds on 20 March along the Ottawa River from Shirley's Bay to Remic Rapids, *Ottawa* – an indication of the wave of returning birds which passed through southern Ontario in late March and early April. The irruption period lasted from approximately mid-October 2007 to the third week of April 2008; and was evidently extensive in terms of bird numbers, area covered and duration. Quite possibly, many more birds were

involved, but went undetected by birders, or have not been reported. Many localities reported setting new high counts or first observational records, and some were able to record the species on CBCs, such as the 2nd record ever for the Woodstock CBC.

Within the GTA, it became the largest irruption ever, surpassing the previous record of 1999–2000, and even the influx of 1958–1959, which Gunn (1959) described as “the largest of the century”. But even then, according to Gunn’s report, in southern Ontario most of the birds were found in an east-west belt extending from Collingwood to Ottawa; and only ‘...a few had reached the outskirts of Toronto’. The maximum number of birds recorded that winter was 457 on the Fort William CBC, *Thunder Bay*; and the last observation was of 2 at Kingston, *Frontenac* on 27 February 1959.

The notable features regarding this irruption were the large number of occurrences in *Durham*, and the unusually numerous sightings in the City of Toronto itself. Moreover, the number of *April* records in the database reached a total of 48, when historically only eight previous years had *April* records, and then only 1–3 each. Of course, allowance should be made for improved reporting and the greatly enhanced flow of information via the Internet. According to the database, the latest April date for the GTA was 24 April 1965 at Ajax Shopping Plaza, *Durham*, but Speirs (1985) gave the latest Toronto date as 11 May.

To get a full picture of the irruption, it would be necessary to also look into the U.S. data, when information is published in the North American Birds seasonal reports. For the period mid-December 2007 to early January 2008, it was reported that birds had arrived across Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode Island, some in flocks of hundreds (Retter and Block 2008a). Also, from mid-February 2008 to 10 March 2008, “there was a small flock wintering in *Porter*, Indiana”, while “the species was quite widespread in neighboring Michigan, being reported from at least ten counties” (Retter and Block 2008b).

Many birders gained great enjoyment watching the Bohemian Waxwings gorging on fruits and berries, often at point-blank distances. Birds were mostly reported stripping off crabapples, but were also seen feeding on grapes, junipers, bittersweet, buckthorn, Highbush Cranberry, multiflora rose, rotting apples and even sipping sap oozing from a birch tree – a rare encounter for any Toronto birder indeed. During spring, waxwings may feed on sap drips from maple and birch trees (Bent 1950).

Another less frequently seen behavior involved a sizable flock (about 40) observed by the author on 5 April in Markham, *York*. They were plucking off the stamens from a flowering maple tree (photos 4 and 5). It is generally accepted that Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings share the same food habits. Studies in the U.S. found that during spring when fruits are scarce, ‘flowers – petals and stamens’ may comprise a large portion of the diet of Cedar Waxwing, as much as 44% in the May diet, but only 4% in the annual diet (Witmer 1996). Cedar Waxwing has been recorded eating flowers of elm and pecan, and picking off and devouring only the *petals* of apple blossoms (Bent 1950). Petals may provide sugars while stamens, specifically pollen, may provide protein. The bird seems to be particularly fond of the stamens of fruit trees like apple, pear, cherry; and trees like oak, maple and ash; it ‘doubtless eats stamens of many other varieties’ (Barrows 1912). In spring, Cedar Waxwing also often feed intermittently on the male catkins of eastern cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*), when eating highly acidic fruits such as highbush cranberry (*Viburnum opulus*), to maintain their acid/base homeostasis (Witmer 2001).

In Ontario, Bohemian Waxwing are known to feed on *tree* buds, with elm and ash mentioned by Pittaway (1990) and maple by Elder (2002), but there seem to be no previous reports of birds eating stamens from a maple tree. On 5 April, using the scope at close distance, the author observed that the birds were only dipping their bills into the centre of the flowers on a maple tree, without plucking off the entire flowers. On examination it was found that the anthers contained much yellow pollen, and that the waxwings were actually eating the *stamens* only. This was further confirmed by two series of digiscoped continuous *burst mode* photos, which proved that the birds were only eating the stamens (filaments and anthers), while the outer parts of the flowers remained untouched from the first frame to the last. This may be the first photographic confirmation of Bohemian Waxwings eating flower stamens from a maple tree, at least here in Ontario.

Age and Sex: Bohemian Waxwing molts only once a year from about August to November, a partial 1st pre-basic for the juveniles and complete pre-basic thereafter for adults. Molting begins on the breeding grounds but is often suspended during migration, to be completed on the winter grounds. There are no pre-alternate molts. In an irruption year we would see the birds in complete fresh plumage in spring. With co-operation from the birds or help from photos, it is possible to age and sex them. Second year birds are identified by the lack of white tips to the inner webs of the primaries (photo 2), as opposed to the 'hook' pattern on adults (photo 3). In adults the white outer primary tips also become yellowish with age (photo 3). Adults have relatively more and longer waxy tips plus a broader yellow tail tip; these two features are also *relatively* distinctive between males and females, with males at the high end of the scale. Females have a less distinct lower border on the throat patch (photo 1) (Pyle 1997). (All photos taken in *Halton*, 29 March 2008; © Winnie Poon)



Photo 1: Note the single displaced long rufous undertail covert feather, and diffuse lower border of the black throat patch.



Photo 2: A 2nd year bird identified by the straight white bar on the outer edge of the primaries.



Photo 3: An adult bird with 'hook-patterned' edges on the primary tips and with the upper three primary bars in pale yellow, plus a broader yellow tail band.

Bohemian Waxwing eating maple flowers: The maple tree was an ornamental *Acer sp.* in an industrial area. The flock, however, did not feed on another maple that had flowers already wilting and without any stamens, just around the corner. Each flower had at least 14 or 15 stamens with extremely long filaments (photo 5). The anthers were large and reddish-yellow in color when fresh. In photo 4 note that the bird has two anthers in its bill and that most of the stamens have been nipped off the flowers directly in front of it. (All photos taken in Markham, York, 5 April 2008; © Winnie Poon)



Photo 4: Bohemian Waxwing feeding on the maple tree.



Photo 5: Clusters of blooming maple male flowers with long stamens.



Nine Bohemian Waxwings drinking from meltwater on manhole cover at Markham, York, 5 April 2008. Photo © Winnie Poon.

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