

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

2018 Member of the Year:

Gregory Zbitnew

The OFNC's Member of the Year award recognizes the member judged to have contributed the most to the club in the previous year.



In 1977, two local birders, Paul Matthews and Richard Poulin, wrote a series of articles for *Trail & Landscape*, on how to find 200 species a year in the Ottawa area. Fast forward to 2017 when a suggestion was made to update those articles for *Trail & Landscape*. Gregory was asked if he was willing to do this and fortunately for us, he agreed. The result is a comprehensive survey entitled: "How to find 250 bird species in OFNC study area in a single year".

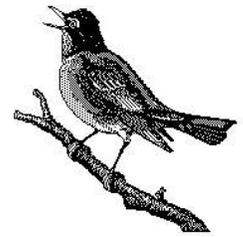
It is no surprise that a dominant interest for OFNC members is birding. These articles have proven exceptionally valuable for all who are keen on birds whether serious birders or casual observers. Even those whose interests may lie elsewhere will find much to enjoy in this excellent series. A nod should also be given to the outstanding photos by Jacques Bouvier accompanying the articles.

The articles were published in 2018, Volume 52, one per issue starting with Number 1, and culminating with issue Number 4. Along the way, Gregory gave us informative, well-researched, valuable and eloquent advice and suggestions on how, when, and where to look for birds.

A preamble in the first article talks about "Laying the Foundation" and covers how to find news of recent observations, (for example, by checking eBird), and what comprises the OFNC study area. It includes definitions of "common", "uncommon", "rare", and other useful and important points.

Every article focuses on the birds that can be reasonably found in the four seasons covered by each of the different issues. The best locations are highlighted, but not ignored are many other

less-visited, excellent spots in which to search for birds. Suggestions as to where some of the seasonal specialities might be found prove especially useful. For example, in issue Number 1, a section called “Chasing Winter Birds” provides tips on where one might see winter finches, Bohemian Waxwings, some of the winter raptors, and other groups of birds more likely to be seen in winter.



Each article also gives a list of “Important Target Birds” to look for during the particular season. These lists include the uncommon to rare species that may be difficult to find but should be found with some effort. As Gregory notes, it “excludes the very rare species” that cannot reliably be predicted.

In the last issue, Number 4, Gregory provides two excellent summaries in the form of tables. In his own words, Table 1 shows the “appropriate activities/places for birding each week” through the year. Table 2 is a list of all the target species”with their usual habitat and the usual time that you can expect to see them.” Therefore, at a glance, it is easy to find a bounty of relevant information to help plan birding activities.

The sheer amount of work that Gregory put into these four lengthy articles is staggering. It is clearly a labour of love, and reveals a solid and deep knowledge of the world of birds. A wealth of information is contained within this significant work. These articles will become an essential tool for anyone interested in birding, for many years to come. Indeed, they are already proving very popular.

In addition to preparing the above articles, Gregory also maintains and distributes the OFNC weekly online birding report. And as if all that is not enough, he also leads birding trips for the OFNC throughout the Ottawa area.

For all these reasons we are more than proud to present Gregory Zbitnew with the OFNC Member of the Year award for 2018.

