



Pine Grosbeak, Clarence Creek, February 25, 2013.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.

How to Find **250**
Bird Species

in the
OFNC Study Area

in a
Single Year

Part 1: January to March

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In 1977, a series of articles in *Trail & Landscape* described a strategy to see 200 bird species within the OFNC study area in a single year. This is an update/rewrite of that series. Although some things described in those articles remain the same, much has changed. The resources available now have revolutionized birding. Also, some once-favoured areas no longer exist or are now rarely visited. Other new areas have become important hot spots. Some species have declined, and others are now more common.



The title of the series as published in all five issues of T&L in 1977.

WHY NOT DO A YEAR LIST?

Have you ever tried to see as many bird species as possible in a single year in a specific area? This is quite a popular sport among birders. Although sometimes it can be a bit of work, it is actually quite a fun project. Aside from motivating you to get outside on a regular basis, it can be quite educational as you make efforts to identify more challenging species and learn about different areas to visit. If you can find a friend or group of friends to go out with, you can turn it into a friendly “competition” and a pleasant social event as well, and it is well known that you try harder if you have to keep up with someone else.

I need to make it clear that I have changed “200” to “250” only to emphasize what is possible for an experienced birder with a lot of time available. The articles are really intended to describe a strategy to MAXIMIZE the number of species you can observe in a year in the most efficient way. The exact total is not as important as is knowing how to do better than you might have thought, without spending more time. This strategy puts you where the birds are and at the right time.

From the time that bird sightings in the OFNC study area were first recorded, about 340 species in total have been found, and the current record for a single observer in a single calendar year is 267 species. This is quite exceptional, but many experienced birders have seen 250 in a single calendar year. This is possible because the OFNC study area is quite a good place to bird. While we are not located on one of the major bird flyways, we are very lucky to have the Ottawa River, which is an important bird corridor. The tributaries of the Ottawa River are also important in their own right. The river systems approximately divide the OFNC study area between the Canadian Shield and the St. Lawrence Lowlands, so there is a huge variety of habitat, and a good variety of birds. And, if you can forgive me



White-crowned Sparrow, Orleans, Jan. 5, 2012. Photo by J. Bouvier

for boasting, the area has a very active birding community with a lot of keen, skilled birders who are quite good at finding and identifying birds. The Ottawa-Gatineau area has, in my opinion, birding skill comparable to any other place in Ontario.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Do not think that your bird identification skills, by sight and by sound, need to be exceptional in order to see a lot of birds. Of course you need some, but there are ways to largely compensate for a lack of knowledge, such as using the services of a number of local birding guides, or joining some of the trips sponsored by the OFNC or the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Le Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais (COO) also sponsors field trips. You also will find that the vast majority of birders you encounter in the field are glad to share their knowledge or give you a look through their telescope. If you see a flock of birders with telescopes or binoculars, be sure to stop by and ask what they have; you might just have a new bird for your list. If you need some bird identification help, you can ask those same birders or write to the email address on the OFNC website. Many birders take pictures of the birds they see, so by all means use this as an identification tool. All this is in addition to the vast amount of on-line reference material available.

The 1977 articles made frequent reference to checking the newspaper birding columns to see the latest news of rarities or other interesting sightings. These columns no longer exist. However, the OFNC does have a weekly report on its website, usually published every Thursday, which summarizes the previous week's highlights. An up-to-the week report of actual sightings is very useful, and this report should be read every week.

However, the very best tool available is an on-line database of bird sightings called eBird (www.ebird.org), and in fact most of the OFNC's weekly report is based on information from eBird. The extensive database can be viewed by anyone without cost or registration.

Let me digress and tell you a bit more about eBird and how it relates to the OFNC study area. The OFNC, from its foundation, has chosen as its primary focus the area within a circle of a 50-kilometre radius centred on the Peace Tower (called the 50K). Until the advent of eBird, the particular political region of the sighting was of no great importance to the birding community. However, eBird currently organizes its database by county, province and country, and there is currently no public tool to give information restricted to the OFNC study area. Ottawa and Gatineau are entirely within the OFNC study area.

Other counties partly within are:

1. Les Collines de l'Outaouais
2. Papineau
3. La Vallée de la Gatineau
4. Pontiac (a very small part)
5. Lanark
6. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
7. Prescott and Russell
8. Renfrew (a very small part)
9. Leeds and Grenville (a very small part)

It is interesting to note that the way that the data can be organized and presented has actually affected how people bird, and as a result of eBird, many people now choose to focus a lot on individual counties in addition to or instead of the 50K. There is no right or wrong way to choose an area for birding, but if you want to use eBird for birding within the 50K, you sometimes may need to search by county.

eBird allows you to:

1. See illustrated checklists (by each week of the year).
2. See individual checklists of birds recorded by eBird users. If you are not so confident in your skills, you can use this feature to see what more experienced birders have been seeing in a given area.
3. See a map with all the occurrences of any species for any month or group of consecutive months.
4. See a list of the first and latest occurrences of any species, and, very importantly, to
5. **Receive an email alert for any rare bird sightings for all of the regions you have chosen, but only if you have signed up for a free account.**



*Black-backed Woodpecker, Stony Swamp,
Ottawa, March 8, 2013.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.*

This alert is also organized by county, province and country as well. The alert sends email notices for all species considered rare *for the specific day the information was posted*. So it would include out-of-season birds that are common at other times of the year. “Rare” for eBird is roughly the same as birds classified as “rare to accidental” in the OFNC publication “A Birder’s Checklist of Ottawa” of May 1993, a PDF of which is available from the OFNC website, under “Historical Checklists” in the birding section. A simplified version of this (with a listing by season, not by week) is also available from the OFNC website. If you also use eBird to enter your own data, you can be alerted to *new* birds for your area, not just rare ones. If you have your phone set up to see your email, as so many do, you can be alerted to the presence of a rare bird within an hour of its posting. Ontbirds is another system open to anyone (upon request) to receive and send information on rare birds in Ontario, but 95% of these postings pertain to sightings outside the OFNC

study area. In my opinion it is not nearly as useful as eBird, but it does have the advantage of nearly instant news of sightings. The OFNC no longer sponsors a local rare bird alert, but there are now social networks within the birding community that supplement eBird and Ontbirds. Anyone who is active and interested in chasing birds will eventually come within their orbit. It might seem to be “cheating” or “riding on the coat-tails of the experts” to rely too much on the sightings of others, but birding, while it can be competitive in the fun sense, is also a cooperative community effort as well. As long as you alert others to your interesting sightings, you are doing your part. Unlike hunting for buried treasure where there is only one winner, in most cases there is no real limit as to how many people can see a rare bird. The “winners” take no special prize, beyond the fun of the chase.

The reader might wonder when we are going to talk about the birds. Please have patience! This is a long preamble to the most important single piece of advice, which is as true today as it was in 1977.

You should chase a rarity as soon as possible. The rarity MIGHT stay for weeks, but it is more likely to be gone the next day, or even the next hour.

The birding community has many sad stories of birds being missed by minutes.

These statistics may interest you:

In 2017, to the end of October, there were about 28 rarities seen in the OFNC study area. Of these:

1. 11 stayed for several days to more than a week.
2. 5 stayed until the next day after they were found.
3. 5 stayed to the end of the day they were found.
4. 4 stayed an hour or less (essentially only seen by the person or party that found it).
5. 4 were in private locations or the news did not get out in time for others to chase it.

So in the search for 250 (or whatever number is your target), 10 or more species may be missed if you don’t move right away. That is a lot when you are pushing for high numbers.





*Bohemian Waxwing, Ottawa,
March 30, 2016.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.*

Now before we get into the birds in detail, let's get an overview. It should surprise no one that some birds are very common while others are very rare. So the focus of any "big year" is to devote your efforts to pursuing the less common to rare ones. The common ones will be found just in the course of your many field trips or, in the case of the most common, they will be hard to avoid.

It is useful to classify the species by how common they are, roughly corresponding to the abundance status in the OFNC publication "A Birder's Checklist of Ottawa" of May 1993, which gives, on a weekly basis, the abundance status of birds found within the 50K. While this checklist has not been updated and the status of many birds has changed somewhat, you are strongly recommended to refer to it regularly; a PDF version is available from the OFNC website, under "Historical Checklists" in the birding section. It is important to know what is rare and what is common, in order to more effectively target your efforts. The "Ottawa District Bird Checklist", published by the OFNC in 2015, gives a list of all the birds ever seen in Ottawa, and identifies all birds considered rare but does not give the seasonal status. See the "Publications" section of the OFNC website to order a copy of this document. I classify the species as follows:

1. Birds that you are virtually certain to see in the year because they are either extremely common for a considerable period of time, or they are found in so many areas that you are bound to run into them. About 100 belong in this category.
2. Less common birds or birds with a more restricted habitat, a shorter migration window, or normally found only at night. You could miss some of them if you rarely visit some habitats or can only devote limited effort. About 80 belong in this category.
3. Like #2 but even less common or even more restricted habitat, or their migration period is rather short. You can easily miss some of these unless you make some special effort. About 20-30 belong in this category.
4. Like # 3, but even more so. They include birds seen most but not every year, and those that are seen every year or are residents in extremely small numbers. There will be at most only a few opportunities per year to see these birds. About 20-30 belong in this category. You will miss some of these birds no matter how hard you try.
5. Real rarities, birds seen quite a bit less than every year. Sixty or more species that are real rarities have been recorded in the OFNC study area (the 50K) since the recording of bird sightings began. While the odds are obviously low for any given bird, it is certain that every year a few rarities will be seen. Eight such rarities have been seen in 2017 to date.
6. New species never seen here before. These are the ones that really bring the crowds out. The number of *potential* NEW birds for the area is quite high, but in the last few years, on average, only about one new species per year has been seen.

This article will only be mentioning birds I placed in categories 2, 3 and 4.

There are just a few more general points that need to be made. Some of them may be obvious. Clearly, the more you go out, the more you see, and some people do go out almost every day. More realistic for the average person is once per week, with a few extra trips for chasing things. You cannot expect to observe 250 species in a year by going out once per week, but a very high number is possible. With limited time available, it is even more important that on the trips you do go on, you cover all the major habitats at the right time of the year, or you will surely miss even some common birds. Even among the common birds, some are more common than others. It would be difficult to spend an hour outdoors without seeing an AMERICAN CROW or a BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE. However, you could spend the entire year in a typical suburban backyard and never seen a COMMON GOLDENYE. While all three birds are common in the area, COMMON GOLDENYE is restricted to water from fall to spring. Even common birds are not always seen every single time in the right habitat at the right time, so multiple visits will often be necessary.

This is the first of 4 articles. The following is a tentative outline of the planned contents of the articles and the T&L issue in which they are intended to appear:

1. *(January-March 2018)* Birding from January to March
 - a. The final freeze up: chasing the lingerers
 - b. Chasing feeder birds
 - c. Chasing winter birds
 - d. Frozen fields
 - e. The winter doldrums
 - f. Owls do not always give a hoot but we should
 - g. Spring returns and the east floods
2. *(April-June 2018)* Birding from April to June
 - a. The rivers open
 - b. The early passerines
 - c. How green was my valley, or the spring flood of birds
 - d. The shorebird bubble
 - e. The river is alive with the sound of insects
 - f. Late migrants
 - g. The end of migration
3. *(July-September 2018)* Birding from July to September
 - a. Summer doldrums
 - b. Migration begins
 - c. Longing for the shorebirds
 - d. Farewell to the summer songbirds
 - e. The ducks are back
4. *(October-December 2018)* Birding from October to December
 - a. Welcome to the fall songbirds
 - b. The waterfowl peak
 - c. Looking for gulls
 - d. Fall rarities
 - e. Return of winter and the winter birds
 - f. The Christmas Bird Count

As this is a series of articles, the author welcomes feedback; it may be possible to make alterations/additions to the subsequent three articles. Please write the author at sightings@ofnc.ca, as soon as possible before the editor's deadline for the next articles: February 1 for the April-June article, May 1 for the July-September article, and August 1 for the October-December article. The author is also interested in hearing of anybody's experiences trying to pursue a "big year" in the 50K.



*Pileated Woodpecker,
Hilda Road in Ottawa,
March 24, 2013.*

Photo by Jacques Bouvier.

BIRDING FROM JANUARY TO MARCH

So now, on to the birds. This part nominally covers the January-March period, but it would be more accurate to say that it covers up to the time the snow disappears and the flooding in the east has subsided, but before the rivers and inland ponds open up completely. That could happen anytime between about March 20 to April 15. If you are unfamiliar with any of the places referred to in this article, please go to the OFNC website where the locations are described.

Another important piece of advice is to cover all the major habitats/areas at the prime time, if this is all you can do.

These are the key activities during this period:

1. Visit, as early as possible, the unfrozen parts of the rivers to see the rarer over-wintering ducks.
2. Visit local or OFNC-sponsored feeders, but especially areas or feeders that have had rarities/scarcer birds reported.
3. Visit the Gatineau escarpment and the larger tracts of forest in the north: Gatineau Park and Lac La Blanche.
4. Visit other large tracts of forest: Larose Forest (east), near Pakenham (west) and the Marlborough Forest (south). Closer to town, visiting any of the Greenbelt areas is the best substitute. From east to west, try Green's Creek, Mer Bleue, Pine Grove, Stony Swamp, Jack Pine and Shirley's Bay.
5. Visit the agricultural areas outside of the city, particularly after a fresh manuring.
6. Visit the Greenland Road Hawk Watch in early March to early April.
7. Visit the flooded areas in the east.

These are the important birds to target in this period:

1. GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE
2. ROSS'S GOOSE
3. CACKLING GOOSE
4. EURASIAN WIGEON
5. HARLEQUIN DUCK
6. BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
7. TUNDRA SWAN
8. TRUMPETER SWAN
9. NORTHERN GOSHAWK
10. GOLDEN EAGLE
11. RED-SHOULDERED HAWK
12. ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK
13. OWLS (10 species possible)
14. GRAY PARTRIDGE
15. RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER
16. BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER
17. AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER
18. BOHEMIAN WAXWING
19. NORTHERN SHRIKE
20. NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD
21. CAROLINA WREN
22. TUFTED TITMOUSE
23. LAPLAND LONGSPUR
24. HOARY REDPOLL
25. COMMON REDPOLL
26. RED CROSSBILL
27. WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL
28. PINE GROSBEAK
29. EVENING GROSBEAK
30. PINE SISKIN



*Northern Shrike near Parc national de Plaisance, February 1, 2017.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.*

Remember that for all of the birds on this list, there is no place that you can go and be guaranteed to see them, at least in most years. All require *some* work, but many require a *great deal* of work in combination with determination, persistence, imperviousness to cold, and luck.

THE FINAL FREEZE UP: CHASING THE LINGERERS

January 1st gets the listers (including me) out in droves, since all their lists have now reset to zero. There is a good and practical reason to do so, though. While most of the birds you see are always common, or will be in a few months, there may be a few rare lingering ones. In some winters, extreme cold and snow cover have not yet arrived by January 1, but will do so very soon. So you have to head out in the short period of time before things get

worse. For example, in the winter of 2015-16, two rarities (BULLOCK'S ORIOLE and SUMMER TANAGER) lingered into the new year, the first until early January and the second until early February. Also, from December 15 to January 5, many are out doing one of the five or so local Christmas Bird Counts or doing the scouting for them. If any rarities are about, there is an excellent chance they will be found during this period, so stay tuned. Of the "regular" rarities, CAROLINA WREN and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER are almost certain to have shown up at some feeder in the area, but never the same one. TUFTED TITMOUSE is another rarity that seems to show up most years at some feeder, and usually it seems that the feeder is far from the city. In several recent years, one has been at a feeder in the Luskville/Quyon area. This is also the time to "pad" your year list with some birds that have, perhaps unwisely, decided to spend the winter here. Finding these birds is good for entertainment and relieving the winter doldrums, but has no effect on your overall year list.

For several of the past few winters, HARLEQUIN DUCK has often settled into the swift water on the Rideau River near Hurdman, or on the Ottawa River at Deschênes Rapids or Bate Island. Head there as soon as possible, even though last winter, one was seen from December to early May. Those are also the spots to see BARROW'S GOLDENYEYE, but this species is less critical as there are normally a few every winter.

CHASING FEEDER BIRDS

If a rarity shows up, the chances are high that it is coming to a feeder, and the chances are also high that the feeder is on private property. Aside from visiting the spot as soon as possible, do remember the code of ethics and respect the homeowner's privacy in these situations. This has been a sensitive subject in the past, and overly enthusiastic photographers and birders are a reason some homeowners do not want to publicize their sightings. Feeders often also attract the smaller birds of prey.

CHASING WINTER BIRDS

Some birds are rather rare or absent except in the winter. Winter is the best time to find BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, which may be scarce or be present in the hundreds. Over-wintering fruit is the big attraction for these birds. The Experimental Farm Arboretum is one excellent place to look for them, but any of the suburbs where there are lots of crab apples will suit them quite well too. NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD is actually a rare resident, but is mentioned here as it favours similar food to WAXWINGS but is harder to see as it likes to spend its time in thickets.

GYRFALCON is a rare possibility in any extensive stretch of open fields during the winter, and often follows the GEESE flocks in the spring. GOLDEN EAGLES overwinter in small numbers on the Eardley Escarpment (Chemin Steele and the vicinity). A trip there is pretty much essential at some point in the winter. If you don't see them early, GOLDEN EAGLES are also regular in migration. The best spot for observing migration is Greenland Road, just north of Thomas Dolan Parkway, from sometime in March until early April. For the past few years, informal trips have been arranged here on favourable days. This spot is also a good one for NORTHERN GOSHAWK and RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, but

every bird of prey can be seen here. NORTHERN GOSHAWK can be seen any time of the year in any very large tract of forest but is usually scarce and elusive. RED-SHOULDERED HAWK can be seen from spring to fall, also in any large tract of forest.

Two species of WOODPECKERS are almost only found in the winter. They are birds of northern forests, do not normally use feeders and are rather inconspicuous and quiet but not that shy. AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER is rather rare now and BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER is almost annual but not easy to find. There is no dependable spot for either, so the best strategy is to keep looking for reports of them. BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER has been seen regularly in Stony Swamp/Jack Pine, but that may be only because that area is so heavily used. Any large forested area, particularly in the north, is suitable habitat.

NORTHERN SHRIKE is possible in any open area with low shrubs/small trees.

“WINTER FINCHES” are certain species of FINCH that, aside from being primarily or exclusively seen in the winter, are highly nomadic and are nearly absent most years, but some years are present in huge numbers. The number depends on the supply of their required food crops both locally and elsewhere. If their food supply is poor somewhere they will move, but if the food supply in our region is also poor, they will not stay. These species are HOARY and COMMON REDPOLL, RED and WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL, PINE GROSBEAK, EVENING GROSBEAK and PINE SISKIN.

PURPLE FINCH is sometimes included in this category, but as it is also a fairly common nester in our area, it is not a bird that must be found in the winter.

As of the time of writing, experts are predicting that this winter will be a good one locally for all but PINE GROSBEAK. Northern forested areas like Gatineau Park and Lac la Blanche are always better, but in heavy irruption years these species will be found all over the city. CROSSBILLS rarely go to feeders, but the other ones often do. Always look for these species early rather than later, as the population could diminish as the winter progresses, and they will not likely be as numerous next winter. EVENING GROSBEAK actually nests in small numbers, but the best place in the region to observe them is now Larose Forest, particularly at some feeders in the west end of the forest. Other than that, northern forests in the winter are your best bet.

FROZEN FIELDS

Agricultural areas can be quite attractive for some species of birds. The hardest one of the regular ones to find is LAPLAND LONGSPUR, best located by scanning flocks of HORNED LARKS and SNOW BUNTINGS, which are attracted to bare/newly manured fields. The often elusive GRAY PARTRIDGE is the other species that frequents these areas; it is best located in the winter in small flocks. Corn stubble in the fields around Eagleson/Rushmore has been a good area in the last few years, as have some areas near Antrim and, in the east end, the area around Giroux Road. One new area in Goulbourn that was fairly dependable last winter is now, unfortunately, the site of a large housing development.



*Male Southern Common Redpoll,
Ottawa, March 24, 2013.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.*

THE WINTER DOLDRUMS

Sometime in late January, birders will have seen most of the birds species present, and the deepening snow and cold result in diminished motivation. There is no denying that most of the forested areas are sorely lacking in birds. At that time of year, about the only thing to do is to keep monitoring the sightings for rarities, force yourself to get out, and count down the days to March. One cardinal rule is never to hope for spring before March, and keep the hope faint until the third week of March. Actually, sometimes at the end of February there is a mild spell, and there can be a noticeable push of early migrants. That was very noticeable in 2017. Although you would not see anything then that you would not see later, it is a big boost to the spirits and can create the illusion of real progress. Unfortunately in these situations, it is usually followed by a return to normal winter conditions, which also happened in 2017.

OWLS DON'T ALWAYS GIVE A HOOT, BUT WE SHOULD

Although the OFNC no longer reports owl sightings on the internet, we can give some general advice. Winter is an excellent time to find owls. However, there is no spot where

they are guaranteed. An OWL (or any other bird for that matter) could be here today, not here tomorrow, but here the day after. In most years, it is possible for SNOWY OWLS to be found in some of the extensive open agricultural areas outside of the city and, because they are less nocturnal, can be seen very early or very late in the day. BARRED OWLS are now more common than GREAT HORNED OWLS, and outside of the nesting season they often are seen in surprisingly urban areas, usually well hidden, but are often only located when they are being mobbed by crows. All OWLS are greatly despised by other birds. The two small OWLS most likely to be detected this way are EASTERN SCREECH OWL and NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL. These small OWLS are mobbed by small songbirds, so any racket by birds should be investigated for the presence of an often incredibly well-hidden OWL. By late March, most OWLS have returned to their nesting grounds and are best located by their calls. Five other species of OWLS are much tougher to find, or are usually rather rare, and either you stumble on them in migration or rely on word-of-mouth reports from others. These are SHORT-EARED OWL, LONG-EARED OWL, BOREAL OWL, HAWK OWL, and GREAT GRAY OWL. Just to illustrate the point, in March 2017 a BOREAL OWL was on a light fixture in the front of a house in Sandy Hill all day. As always, if you do spot owls, respect the birders' code of conduct. Do not stay long and keep your distance.

*Adult Great Gray Owl, Parc national de Plaisance, February 1, 2016.
Photo by Jacques Bouvier.*



SPRING RETURNS AND THE EAST FLOODS

Eventually, after a seemingly endless winter, the snow melts, and the key event is the annual flooding in the east, which coincides with the return of the WATERFOWL, most particularly the GEESE. This event is facilitated by local topography: some very flat farmland on a wide flood plain turns some creeks into temporary lakes for a few days to a few weeks. The principal areas are Bearbrook Creek between Frank Kenny Road and Milton Road south of Orleans, the South Nation River near Riceville, and Cobb's Lake Creek near Bourget, an even larger area. Timing is rather critical, so you need to stay tuned once the snow starts to melt in earnest. The movement of GEESE has to coincide with the maximum extent of floodwater. In most years the peak is between the fourth week of March and the first week of April. In the spring of 2016, an estimated 200,000 SNOW GEESE were seen in one flock. However, in 2017, the maximum flock seen was only about 10-20,000. The sight of so many GEESE is alone worth the visit, as it is eastern Ontario's greatest wildlife spectacle. Aside from that, the draw is the opportunity to find some rare GEESE and DUCKS. Small numbers of GREATER WHITE-FRONTED and ROSS'S GEESE are mixed in with the large flocks of CANADA and SNOW GEESE. This is also the time to find the uncommon CACKLING GOOSE. Among the DUCKS, EURASIAN WIGEON is the rarest of the regular DUCKS. TUNDRA SWAN also comes through in small numbers. Birds of prey are often attracted to either the GEESE flocks or the rodents that are displaced by the flooding. The hardest one to find is GYRFALCON, and SHORT-EARED OWL is a possibility, too. If you don't yet have ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK on your list, this is the place to find it. While you are in the Frank Kenny/Milton Road area, you may as well look for the SANDHILL CRANES, which are often seen from Smith Road starting in late March. There are usually quite a few more here in the fall, though.

One exception to the eastern flooding rule is that the best place to find TRUMPETER SWANS is Carleton Place on the Mississippi River when it is just opening up.

SOME CLOSING REMARKS

We have outlined the hot spots and times for these birds, but this does not mean that there are no other good places, or no other good times. It is just that these are the best areas and times and, if your time is limited, you should go there first. However, don't neglect inspecting any suitable habitat that is near your home or near where you often go. Rarities and just ordinary good birds are sometimes not at the hotspots.

One final note: remember that access to Shirley's Bay, a premier spot in the Ottawa area, is vital starting about mid-April, and requires that your OFNC membership be up-to-date and that you specifically request that your name be placed on the access list for this area.

Look for "Part 2: April to June" in the next issue of T&L! 

*The editor wishes to thank Jacques Bouvier for providing these beautiful bird pictures to complement the article. You can follow Jacques's work (*Oiseaux EEO Birds*) on his sites: <http://jacques-miroiseur.smugmug.com/> and <http://jacquesbouvier.blogspot.ca/>.*