



Ontario Field Ornithologists
Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2023

AGM Materials



2023 AGM Materials

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President's Message

October 2022 – September 2023

Welcome back to the AGM and convention. It is great to be able to meet in Peterborough and to have our hosts show us some of the great birding locations in the region. Next year we will be back in Leamington and then in 2025 we are hoping to meet in Sarnia for the first time to explore some of their legendary autumn birding locations. If you are looking for something different, why not head to northern Ontario and join in on the Convention from there? Angie Williams is coordinating a northern wing of the Convention for the second year in 2023 and plans to continue the tradition in 2024. Their best birding is in August, but vagrants start to appear in September most years.

This has been another vibrant year for OFO with nearly 100 hikes offered, several online programs and a few new initiatives such as the Bird of the Year. Our Discord server now has over 1050 members where people are enjoying another way to engage in conversations about birds. The eBird alerts on that server also offer a great way to quickly learn about some of the rare birds turning up across the province.

Our young birder offerings continued to be strong with events in Toronto and Algonquin. The OFO summer camp had 14 participants join the 5 volunteer leaders in July. The camp has become popular enough that we had to turn away several people this year. We did so based on age as the youngest will have more chances to attend in future. We are grateful to the four groups which sponsored the camp this year: the Hamilton Naturalists Club, Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Toronto Ornithological Club, and the Eastern Bluebird Society. Thanks to them, young birders who would not otherwise have been able to, came to the camp. The camp is a vibrant experience for campers and counsellors alike.

Here are a few more of this year's highlights:

- **Atlas-3:** OFO continues to be active as one of the five organizations planning and running the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. This is arguably the most important citizen science project running in the province at the moment and will provide a strong picture of changes in our breeding avifauna over the last 20 years. Thanks to everyone who gives back to birds and conservation through this and similar projects!
- **Webinars:** We have continued our webinars started during the Covid pandemic, and started a YouTube library of video presentations. Sarah Rupert was instrumental in making this happen.
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** The EDI Committee continues to be very active and is providing excellent suggestions to make all of our programs more accessible and balanced. This is an ongoing process and we are making excellent progress. We are working on a long overdue update to our Code of Ethics. A key change in order to promote respectful, enjoyable, and thoughtful birding, is to encourage people to follow principles in the Code of Conduct at all times and not solely during OFO-related activities.

- **Affiliations and Partnerships:** OFO is teaming up with other great organizations that promote birding. In the past year, OFO contributed to: FREED (a camp in Algonquin for university students who self-identify as Indigenous, Black, and/or Racialized), and Hilliardton Marsh Research & Education Centre. As well, in 2021-22 we contributed to the Couchiching Conservancy to help fund a land purchase in the Carden Alvar.

Susan Nagy and other board members have worked hard to create more redundancy in our volunteer ranks. Thanks very much to the many volunteers that keep us going and allow us to expand and try new things. Let us know if you want to volunteer or if you have any suggestions of new things for us to consider. We are always looking for people who are interested in taking leadership roles in the organization. We need a Vice President and are always on the lookout for potential board members. Please let anyone on the board know if you want to learn more about these roles.

Good birding!

Jeff Skevington

OFO President and Director

Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements

The 2022 Financial Statements have been circulated for your review if you have any questions please direct them to me through the OFO e-mail address.

This year we started moving back into pre-pandemic operations. Membership dues were down slightly by \$2,025.00. Donations are down year over year by \$3,039.00. A special *Thank You* to all of our generous members without whose generosity the finances would look a lot different. The Board continues its efforts to control expenses. We are finally seeing results of the hard work to obtain sponsorships for some of our key events as businesses recover from the past several years and reach back out into the community. We have started to see the financial results of the membership switching to receiving electronic publications as opposed to printed copies; however the 2022 printing costs have been hit by the inflation spiral that has been impacting us all which has resulted in an increase in costs year over year.

I would again like to close by thanking the Board, Chairs, and the members of various committees, as well as the Finance Committee and especially the editors for working so diligently to keep our costs in line. Their efforts have helped make my job a success. I would also like to thank the membership for their great support over the years that I have been Treasurer; this is my last report to you it has been an enjoyable experience and I know I am leaving it in very capable hands.

Brian W. Gibbon RPA
OFO Treasurer (retired)

**ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2022**

ASSETS

| | <u>2022</u> | <u>2021</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cash in Bank | \$ 60,213 | \$ 51,853 |
| Convention Deposit | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Accounts Receivable | 2,300 | 1,650 |
| HST Receivable | 6,186 | 3,397 |
| Inventory | 3,553 | 2,587 |
| Investments | 1,180 | 1,180 |
| Equipment | 577 | 577 |
| Accumulated depreciation | (456) | (426) |
| TOTAL | <u>\$ 74,553</u> | <u>\$ 81,818</u> |

LIABILITIES & MEMBERS' EQUITY

| | <u>2022</u> | <u>2021</u> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Prepaid Membership Dues | \$ 35,595 | \$ 34,400 |
| Accounts payable | - | - |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | <u>\$ 35,595</u> | <u>\$ 34,400</u> |
| <u>MEMBERS EQUITY</u> | | |
| Balance beginning of Year | \$ 27,418 | \$ 8,608 |
| Net Income for Year | 11,540 | 18,810 |
| Less Prior year adjustment | - | - |
| Balance end of Year | <u>\$ 38,958</u> | <u>\$ 27,418</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>\$ 74,553</u> | <u>\$ 61,818</u> |


**COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF INCOME and EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022**

INCOME

| | <u>2022</u> | <u>2021</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Membership Dues | \$ 51,635 | \$ 53,660 |
| US \$ Exchange | - | 25 |
| Donations | 5,372 | 8,411 |
| Baillie Birdathon | 8,780 | 8,445 |
| Advertising | 3,550 | 1,850 |
| Sale of Merchandise | 196 | 403 |
| Field Trips | - | - |
| Young Birders' (Net) | (1,371) | - |
| Annual Convention (Net) | (2,367) | 45 |
| | <u>\$ 65,795</u> | <u>\$ 72,639</u> |
| Inventory adjustment | 966 | 33 |
| TOTAL INCOME | <u>\$ 66,761</u> | <u>\$ 72,672</u> |

EXPENSES

| | <u>2022</u> | <u>2021</u> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Printing and Mailing</u> | | |
| - Journal, Ontario Birds | \$ 20,334 | \$ 18,256 |
| - Newsletter, OFO News | 16,676 | 15,498 |
| <u>Administration</u> | | |
| Advertising | 85 | 1,978 |
| AffiniPay fees - Membership | 2,104 | 1,708 |
| Audit | 250 | 250 |
| Awards | 232 | 212 |
| Bank charges | 179 | 207 |
| Board & Communication | 496 | 621 |
| Depreciation | 30 | 36 |
| Donation | 3,417 | 7,133 |
| Fees | - | 355 |
| Field Trips | 1,603 | 276 |
| Liability Insurance | 2,124 | 2,063 |
| Membership expenses | 55 | - |
| Wild Apricot | 5,250 | 4,205 |
| OFO Website and Ontbirds | 266 | 516 |
| Postal box rental | 841 | 251 |
| Purchase of Merchandise | 1,132 | 113 |
| Treasurer's expense | 147 | 182 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | <u>\$ 55,221</u> | <u>\$ 53,862</u> |
| TOTAL INCOME | <u>66,761</u> | <u>72,672</u> |
| NET ANNUAL INCOME | <u>\$ 11,540</u> | <u>\$ 18,810</u> |


Phyllis Wilson, RPA
Chair, Audit Committee


Brian W. Gibbon, Treasurer


Jeff Skevington, President

PREPARED WITHOUT AUDIT FOR MANAGEMENT



Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting September 24, 2022 – Leamington

For the first time since 2019, the 2022 Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) was held in person as part of the Annual Convention.

President Jeff Skevington called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. The first item of business:

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Gis Segler, to accept the Minutes from the 2021 AGM held Sept. 29, 2021. No discussion. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

Next, Jeff gave his President’s address, which included: a review of the year; changes to the Board and committees; and priorities for the coming year. Jeff gave tribute to:

- Lynne Freeman, who stepped down as President in April, 2022 after 7-1/2 years of service, but who remains on the Board;
- Bob Cermak, who served on the Board for 8 years in a variety of roles; and
- Brian Gibbon, who is stepping down as soon as a replacement can be found for him. Brian served as Treasurer for 12 years.

Jeff also presented the Certificates of Appreciation, as the volunteer who administers the awards (Dan Chronowic) could not attend. Jeff’s presentation, including the Certificates of Appreciation, are summarized in his [power point presentation](#).

The following motions were then voted on:

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Jack Alvo, to accept the Treasurer’s Report. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Gis Segler, to accept the Board and Committee Reports. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Susan Nagy, to approve the re-election of Jack Alvo to the Board. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Jack Alvo, to approve the re-election of Dave Milsom to the Board. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

Moved by Jeff, seconded by Susan Nagy, to approve the re-election of Sarah Rupert the Board. All in favour, no abstentions. Motion carried.

The only question from the floor came before the re-election of three Board members as noted above. The person asked whether there were in fact any openings on the Board, and Jeff replied that the only openings are the three for which Jack Alvo, Dave Milsom and Sarah Rupert are standing for re-election. The Board would remain at full capacity (13 is the maximum number of directors under OFO's by-laws).

Jeff then listed the priorities for the coming year (see the [power point presentation](#)). He also stated that despite the contributions by all of the volunteers (directors, co-editors of our publications, the OBRC members, and others), the organization lacks redundancy. More volunteers would be helpful so that operations can continue seamlessly even if someone steps down.

The AGM was concluded approximately 8:30 p.m. based on a motion by Jeff, seconded by Brian Hobbs, and unanimously approved.

Jack Alvo (he/him)
OFO Secretary

The 2023-2024 Board of Directors

By-laws

The By-laws of the Ontario Field Ornithologists stipulate that you, the Members, are entitled to elect new Directors at each Annual General Meeting (“AGM”). The Board of Directors may also, at any time, elect a new Director should there be a vacancy on the Board.

Presently, the By-laws state that the total number of Directors is to be not more than 13, with seven Directors required for quorum.

The term of a Director is 3 years, however, Directors may choose to resign before a term is completed. OFO does not have a limit on the number of terms a Director may serve. Directors wishing to seek another term must be voted to the Board, the same as any candidate.

Changes to the Board

Since the September 2022 AGM, there has been one change to the composition of the Board of Directors.

In January 2023, Brian Gibbon retired from the Board and as Treasurer, having served in both roles since 2009. The Board is grateful to Brian for his years of excellent and dedicated service, and congratulates him on his well-deserved retirement.

Replacing Brian in both roles is Sue Sues. Sue is a self-employed accountant and bookkeeper, and has been a welcome and enthusiastic addition to the Board.

The Current Board

The following Directors are staying on the Board as none of their terms are expiring:

| Name | Present Role | Director Since | Term ends |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Jeff Skevington | President | 2021 | 2024 |
| Angie Williams | Membership | 2021 | 2024 |
| Colleen Reilly | Director-at-large and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion | 2022 | 2025 |
| Jack Alvo | Secretary and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion | 2019 | 2025 |
| Marcie Jacklin | Conservation & Advocacy | 2022 (her 2 nd tenure) | 2025 |
| Sue Sues | Treasurer | 2023 | 2026 |
| Lynne Freeman | Director-at-large | 2009 | 2024 |
| Dave Milsom | Trips and Events | 1999 | 2025 |
| Sarah Rupert | Publicity & Communication | 2016 | 2023 |
| Kiah Jasper | Director-at-large | 2021 | 2024 |
| Susan Nagy | Fund Development | 2021 | 2024 |
| Gisbert Segler | Conservation & Advocacy | 2021 | 2024 |

As set out below, the term of one of the Directors ends this year, potentially creating one vacancy. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else to serve on the Board, please submit your nomination to president@ofc.ca no later than September 22, 2023. OFC’s membership will be asked to vote on this at the Annual General Meeting on September 23, 2023.

Standing for re-election to the OFC Board of Directors

Mike Burrell: Mike’s first term on the Board ends this year and he would like to serve for another 3-year term if re-elected. Mike has been involved with OFO since he was a kid and has served on the Board since 2020. He has also served two voting terms plus six years as Secretary with the OBRC. Mike moderates OFO's two listservs, helps run the OFO Discord server, and coordinates the management of Ontario’s hotspots in connection with “birdinghotspots.org”. Mike is also the provincial coordinator for eBird and the regional editor for Christmas Bird Counts. Additionally, he has recently taken over as the coordinator of the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas.

Jack Alvo (he/him)
OFO Secretary

OFO Committee and Director Reports for 2023-24

Conservation

OFO has a long history of being involved in conservation/advocacy work. OFO formalized this involvement with the following policy:

We encourage everyone to add their voice the growing chorus of concerned citizens. OFO is attempting to add its voice by advocating for the non-partisan conservation of Ontario's birds and their habitat. This will be effected by:

- financially supporting conservation efforts when fiscally able to do so
- keeping OFO members informed of the conservation issues that affect Ontario's birds
- lending our support and advocating as a larger group to conservation efforts

2022 projects that we have helped support included such diverse projects as: the funding for additional land purchases in the Carden Alvar; advocating for the protection of the beach at Ashbridges Bay in Toronto and providing funding for the Hilliardton Marsh Research & Education Centre.

OFO will also give conservation programs a chance to introduce themselves with a short article in OFO News. If you have a non-partisan conservation project you would like to highlight or receive funding for, please contact conservation@OFO.ca.

Gis Segler (he/him)

OFO Director – Conservation

Equity Diversity and Inclusion

In fall 2020, an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (“**EDI**”) was formed. Its purpose is helping to make OFO welcoming and inviting for all Ontario birders, as well as improving the experience of existing members. Our [Mission Statement](#) states that we aim to be “an equitable and inclusive organization”.

The EDI Committee is comprised of volunteers, mostly non-Board members, who have a shared passion for making OFO more inclusive. This group comes from diverse backgrounds and brings diverse perspectives. An offshoot of this committee is Enabled Birding which, together with Birds Canada, aims to make birding more accessible for people with disabilities, the current focus being mobility challenges.

The EDI Committee is an advisory group, making recommendations to OFO's Board for its approval. The Board is fully supportive of our EDI activities and most initiatives have involved some combination of EDI Committee members and other members of OFO's leadership. The Board applies an EDI lens to all of its decisions.

Some key developments during the past year:

- OFO has decided to broaden its **free membership** offering. The original **Free First Year Membership programme**, first launched in December 2021, will remain in place. This allows people who've faced barriers to join for free for their first year. These barriers may relate to factors including (but limited to) Financial; Gender; Language; Religion; Race; Being a Newcomer to Canada; Sexual Orientation; and Disability. Over 90 people so far have joined under this offer. Starting in 2024, under the new **On-going Free Membership** programme, anyone who faces a financial barrier is entitled to free membership each additional year. We don't want financial barriers to prevent folks from joining us!
- For the second year in a row, two well attended walks were held for **Pride Month**, both of which were joint events with local clubs. Also this year, OFO introduced a **Birding with Pride** event in connection with the Point Pelee Festival of Birds. This included refreshments and several bird hikes in order for people from the **2SLGBTQ2IA+ community** to meet fellow members of the birding community and learn more about OFO. This too was very well attended and many have suggested that this become an annual event.
- A number of new **field trips** have been organized that cater to all, including those with **disabilities**. And in July, as part of **Disability Pride Month**, two trips were offered jointly with Toronto Ornithological Club that were specifically geared toward people with disabilities. While both trips were well received, we learned that the promotion of such outings will need to be more targeted in order to attract the intended audience.
- A major initiative to make birding more accessible for those with disabilities is the **Enabled Birding Map**, a joint pilot project with Birds Canada and Toronto Ornithological Club. Trails at 9 prime birding locations in various parts of Ontario were surveyed by trained volunteers. The map will help birders of all physical abilities decide where to go birding and which trails are suitable for them at those locations. Birds Canada is working at securing additional funding needed to launch the sophisticated public version. Stay tuned for updates!
- The co-editors of our publications, *OFO News* and *Ontario Birds*, are continuing efforts to source articles and photographs by or about women and other under-represented groups from the birding community.
 - There are plans for members of OFO's EDI Committee to consult the *OFO News* team in order to provide input from an EDI perspective.

- A survey was completed by quite a few of our members last year, to learn more about the diversity within our membership and to recruit volunteers to help with various duties, and to help source contributions for our publications that better represent that diversity. As a result, we now have a number of volunteers being trained to assist with a variety of OFO activities.
- The OFO Birdathon this year had a different look to it as the “celebrity birders” were four young birders.
- We are working on a long overdue update to our Code of Ethics. A key change in order to promote respectful, enjoyable, and thoughtful birding, is to encourage people to follow principles in the Code of Conduct at all times and not solely during OFO-related activities.
- The OFO EDI Committee is developing strategies to attract new members in order to better represent the diverse makeup of the birding community through greater engagement with OFO’s social media channels.
- Regular, virtual meetups for birders from the **2SLGBTQ2IA+ community** are planned to begin in the near future, with the possibility of occasional in-person events. These social events will provide a supportive space designed to create community. They will serve as a forum to discuss both birding and the barriers faced by community members.

In closing, we always welcome your feedback and ideas. You can find our contact information [here](#). In the meantime, good birding!

Colleen Reilly (she/her), **Jack Alvo** (he/him), and **Maxwell Matchim** (they/them)
Co-Chairs of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Field Trips

In 2023 we have been able to provide close to 100 fieldtrips for our members and their guests . Most of the field trips in 2023 were again fully subscribed and upcoming ones are often quickly filled, with a waitlist which will automatically enroll the top entry when a registered person cancels. Because so many members wish to participate in field trips at some of the best birding sites in Ontario, it is very important and only fair that registered applicants who decide not to attend ensure they cancel online to give others the opportunity. We ask members to do this rather than failing to show up on the day of the trip. In the past few months, we have experienced several no-shows where the registrant failed to cancel their registration so that the next person on the waitlist could take their place. Hopefully this will not continue. It is unfair not only to our members but also to our volunteer fieldtrip leaders who give of their own free time to guide birders on trips to find birds in Ontario.

We are extremely lucky as an organization that we can count on so many experienced and willing leaders to lead our fieldtrips. Please remember to thank them for their willingness to lead. Remember that they do this purely on a volunteer no-fee basis.

As part of our efforts to attract new birders including those with disabilities, we have devised some new field trips which cater to all. No-one should feel that they are not welcome on any trip. Novices and experienced birders are all welcome. We have also provided Pride-month fieldtrips and short hikes for those who prefer these. We are always looking for new birding sites and hope to offer some new destinations in 2024. Keep checking our website: www.ofo.ca.

OFO has developed a Land Acknowledgement to recognize the Indigenous peoples who have inhabited Ontario over thousands of years. We encourage trip leaders who feel comfortable with their own expression of a suitable Land Acknowledgement to pay tribute to the Indigenous groups who inhabit the area in which their particular field trip takes place.

Events upcoming in 2024 include the OFO annual Convention in Point Pelee/Leamington, a possible conference in Sault Ste Marie, and several webinars and workshops. Our EDI committee is completing an interactive birding map featuring some great Ontario birding locations that will help those with disabilities or mobility issues by providing details on site accessibility.

We have established an OFO Lagoon Committee to work with municipalities and hope to be able to access more lagoon sites as a result very soon; and our Ambassador Program will continue its great work begun in 2022 in monitoring and organizing rare bird viewing at specific locations when rarities occur. "Birding buddies" also continues to attract those who are willing to give help and friendship to visitors and individuals who may require assistance when birding an unfamiliar area.

Dave Milsom

OFO Director - Fieldtrip Coordinator

Fundraising

Thank you to Pelee Wings for sponsoring the 2023 OFO Convention once again and also thank you to Vortex Canada for their continuing support of OFO News and Ontario Birds.

The Birdathon continues to be a major fundraiser for OFO as teams participating in this Birds Canada event can choose to direct a portion of funds raised towards OFO. This year our OFO Celebrity Birders were young birders who decided to do a Big Day in Norfolk County. All funds received through the Birdathon are dedicated to the OFO Young Birders Program.

OFO continues to seek sponsorship to help offset the costs for the Alan Wormington Memorial Camp in order to keep the camp costs low and affordable for young birders. Thanks to the following organizations that provided funds to send young birders to the camp: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Toronto Ornithological Club and Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society.

Susan Nagy (she/her)
OFO Director - Fundraising

Membership and Outreach

As of August 21, 2023 there were 1,804 active memberships, which included 29 Junior and 21 “Free First Year” memberships. That is a decrease of 89 memberships, or about 5%, from last year. Some of that reduction is due to ongoing efforts to “tidy up” the database, fixing duplicate accounts and deleting old lapsed memberships.

For a second year, OFO offered a free first year as a way to reach out to potential members who faced barriers that prevented them from joining OFO. These barriers may relate to factors including but not limited to: financial, gender, language, religion, race, being a newcomer to Canada, sexual orientation, and disability. While only a small number of people who registered for a free first year in 2022 renewed as paid members in 2023, the Board voted to continue offering it as an option, and also to offer free or “Pay what you can” memberships to those who wish to continue as OFO members but cannot afford to join.

Online Members Meetings have proven very popular, with between 50 to 100 people logging in each time. The monthly meetings will continue in September through December of 2023 and January through April of 2024. The first meeting, on September 6, welcomed new members and introduced them to some of the features OFO members enjoy.

We continue to ask that members use the online renewal option when possible, as this helps us save time and paper by reducing the amount of work required by volunteers. All annual memberships expire on 31 December and members can renew as early as October 1st . We also encourage members to choose to receive digital instead of mailed paper subscriptions to our OFO News and Ontario Birds publications. The increasing costs of paper, printing, and mailing of paper subscriptions are very significant and eventually we may have to charge for paper subscriptions.

Note that OFO memberships are household memberships. The OFO online membership process allows households to register more than one person and email address per membership for the cost of only one

membership. Please identify all members of your family who are interested in birding so that we can identify them as OFO members.

An OFO membership makes a great gift! Also, please consider a donation to OFO, as membership dues do not cover all of OFO's expenses. Your donation is vital! Donations to the General Fund support OFO's field trips and workshops, publications and events, and donations to conservation efforts. A donation to the Young Birders Program supports the annual Alan Wormington Memorial Camp and other unique experiences OFO provides to young birders. All donations of \$10.00 or more qualify for a tax receipt.

Angie Williams (she/her)
OFO Director - Membership

Northern Ontario Committee

The OFO Northern Ontario Committee, which was formed in 2021, did not meet during 2022, but a number of steps have been taken by OFO to include northerners in OFO activities.

For a second year, a simultaneous Annual Convention is being held in Northern Ontario. The 2022 event took place in Smooth Rock Falls, while the 2023 event is being hosted in Timmins. We are planning to run the 2024 convention in the New Liskeard area. The OFO Convention: Northern Edition, as it is called, includes local trips during the day, with the AGM and evening programming live-streamed from the main convention in the south. Participants in 2022 reported feeling a greater connection to OFO after the event, and voted to continue live-streaming the program in 2023.

The expanded use of technology that resulted from the pandemic has had the positive impact of allowing members to interact with each other, no matter where they live; this is especially valued by birders in small communities that have no birding/nature club and often no other birders. Our monthly members meeting is one means of keeping OFO accessible to people across our vast province. OFO's Discord server, which includes channels for all regions of Ontario, also helps us stay connected.

OFO's Birding Buddies is another initiative that grew out of the Northern Ontario Committee. Through the Birding Buddies page on the OFO website, members can search a given location and find birders in that area who are willing to share information about where to bird, or even to go birding together.

OFO members in Northern Ontario are encouraged to get involved in bringing more connectivity and engagement among birders in your own region. We would love to hear your ideas!

Angie Williams (she/her)

OFO Director

Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC)

The 2022 OBRC reviewed 114 reports of rare species on the province's three regional review lists, of which 101 were accepted. This year's AGM for the OBRC was held on April 25th, in-person in Toronto at the ROM for the first time since 2019. Marsh Sandpiper and Hepatic Tanager were added to the Ontario species list, bringing the total number of species recorded in the province to 508. Neotropic Cormorant and Black-bellied Whistling Duck have been removed from the South Review Zone list due to a marked and sustained increase in reports meeting the criteria for removal, and are no longer requested from 2023 onward (reports from prior to this are still requested). There were no changes to the Central or Lowlands Review Zone lists. With the addition of Marsh Sandpiper and Hepatic Tanager, the total number of species recorded in the South Review Zone has risen to 499. The total number of species recorded in the Central and Lowlands Review Zones remain unchanged at 387 and 331, respectively. The committee unanimously voted the widely seen and enjoyed Marsh Sandpiper as the bird of the year. The full Annual Report is available in the August edition of Ontario Birds.

The members of the 2022 OBRC were Nicole Richardson (chair), Anthony Kaduck (non-voting secretary), Mike V.A. Burrell (non-voting archivist) Alvan D. Buckley, Dan J. MacNeal, Michelle Martin, Amanda Guercio, Mark D. Read and Adam Timpf. Mark Peck acted as the ROM liaison. At the conclusion of this year's annual meeting, the 3-year terms for Mark Read and Adam Timpf have ended, and the committee has elected Kiah Jasper and Dave Szymr to begin 3-year terms starting in 2023. Mark Peck will continue as the ROM liaison. Mike Burrell will continue as non-voting archivist. Anthony Kaduck was voted to continue as secretary, and Nicole Richardson was voted to continue as Chair.

Nicole Richardson

Chair – Ontario Bird Records Committee

OFO Discord Server

The OFO Discord Server continues to grow over the past year. There are now 1,050 members of the server with new people joining regularly. Some of the top features that people use are regional chats, identification questions, non-bird natural history, eBird alert service (which filters the traditional email-

based eBird alerts), and the young birders area. The young birders area is particularly active as a great place for young birders to connect. The server has an OFO members' area which includes a buy and sell channel among others that we have not promoted much to date but which has a lot of potential.

Over the next year we hope to expand the useful features and turn management of the server over to volunteers. If you're interested in helping run it, please get in touch with a board member or start a conversation on the server! If you haven't checked it out yet, head to <http://www.ofo.ca/content/discord>

Mike Burrell (he/him)

OFO Director - Moderator of OFO Discord Server

OFO News

OFO News is the newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. It is published three times a year, in February, June, and October.

OFO News articles cover three main areas: birds, birders, and birding, and the co-editors strive to achieve a balance in all three areas.

A continuing focus of the OFO News editorial team is to recruit contributors that reflect the diversity – in all its forms – of OFO's membership. Efforts in the past year have been encouraging, and we hope that this will continue.

The editorial team is always happy to receive unsolicited ideas for articles, and is happier to receive unsolicited articles and photographs. Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, we may not be able to run an unsolicited article, but we always appreciate the effort people have made to prepare something for our consideration. No one should hesitate to contact us – or to contact us again if it appears your original message to us has fallen through a crack.

In addition, we are always pleased to receive honest feedback on articles. Feedback helps us improve and we always want to do better for OFO members.

There have been some changes in the makeup of the OFO News editorial team in the past year. Angie Williams, a co-editor since 2019, has stepped down to focus on other OFO and birding pursuits. She has been a joy to work with. Her keen editorial eye and unfailingly cheerful and positive demeanour have been excellent examples for all of us. We wish her the best in everything.

New co-editors are Anita Aviad and Ankur Khurana. Both bring many talents to OFO News, and we are confident readers will be delighted with their contributions to OFO News.

As always, the co-editors can be reached at: ofonews@ofoc.ca. We look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Olsen, Bruce Kirkland, Ankur Khurana, and Anita Aviad
Co-editors, OFO News

Ontario Birds

The last year of **Ontario Birds** comprised the three issues for December 2022 and April and August 2023. These issues contained 148 pages in nine articles and notes.

Looking back over the last five years of **Ontario Birds** (2019 to 2023) at this juncture, a somewhat disturbing pattern is emerging. The number of pages per three issues has moved annually from 176 in 2019 to 160, 188, 156 and to 148 finally, in 2023. These numbers are not too concerning; we are fluctuating between 49 and 62 pages per issue. However, also in the last five years, the number of contributions (articles and notes) per year has decreased from 19 to 19 to 15 to 13 to 9, while the number of contributions per issue of **Ontario Birds** has gone from an average of six to an average of three, a 50% decline. At the same time, the average length of an article or note has gone from 9 pages in 2019 to 8 to 12 to 12 to 16 pages in 2023; the average contribution has nearly doubled in length in five years. Thus, overall, we are losing both our contributors and the shorter behavioural or short observational notes to **Ontario Birds**. We'd like to encourage all OFO members to look back through past issues of Ontario Birds ([Ontario Birds \(ofoc.ca\)](http://OntarioBirds.ofoc.ca)) and take note of the shorter behavioural observations and unique species sightings, which were more common before Covid and back a decade or so.

Like our 2022 report, the contents of the three issues of **Ontario Birds** considered here were heavily weighted towards waterbirds, with five of the nine contributions dealing primarily with that group of birds. Two of the five papers dealt with the recent addition of the Marsh Sandpiper to the Ontario list; one described finding the bird and the other detailed its rarity and occurrence in North America. In the theme of an Ontario rarity and its occurrence and range expansion, our third waterbird paper dealt with the Black-bellied Whistling Duck and, in particular, recent reports from Niagara Region. The last two waterbird papers dealt with the Double-crested Cormorant as a potential disperser of seeds of the Japanese Chaff-flower and with 30 years of observational records of Little and Bonaparte's Gulls at Oshawa Second Marsh. This latter article is one of the few that reports, in detail, on the phenology and local spring movements of Little Gulls in North America.

Two of the remaining four articles in the last year dealt with passerines. The first was a huge 197- year accounting of the records of the Canada Jay in the Great Toronto Area, dating from 1825. Both the compilation and publication of these data were in support of the movement to eventually designate this species, whose name was recently, and officially, changed from Gray Jay back to Canada Jay, as Canada's "official" bird. The other article on passerines in the last year was an accounting of the finding of a MacGillivray's Warbler in Toronto (new to Ontario) and its occurrences in eastern North America.

The final two articles in the last year were the regular features of the annual report for 2022 by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) and the feature detailing OFO's 2022 Distinguished Ornithologist Award. The OBRC report is probably the single most exciting and most anticipated article of the year in **Ontario Birds**. The final paper in the last year of **Ontario Birds** was the written account of the accomplishments and awarding of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award to Dr. Erica Nol, at last year's OFO Annual General Meeting.

New submitted material for publication in **Ontario Birds** has been a bit slow to come in during the last year. Each issue has only had three contributions and if it had not been for the Marsh Sandpiper, there may have only been the OBR report in the most recent issue.

Finally, we would like to thank the 19 different authors who contributed articles and notes for our last three issues. We are also very appreciative for the excellent cover artwork by **Barry Kent MacKay** and for the design of the journal by **Judie Shore**. We would also like to thank the many photographers who have supplied photos during the last year; their photos greatly enhanced the appearance of the journal and added to the readability of the articles.

Included in our final thanks, we would also like to make a special acknowledgement to Ms. Becky Stewart. Becky was one of our co-editors for only a little over a year; however, she provided excellent guidance in bringing the article on plumage molt in the Long-tailed Duck to fruition. Unfortunately, with her fulltime career at the Canadian Wildlife Service and raising a young family, Becky felt she could not devote the needed time as a co-editor of **Ontario Birds**. We wish her well.

In Becky's place, we are happy and excited to welcome Pamela Martin to our editorial team. Pam has recently retired from her position as a wildlife/ornithological toxicologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Burlington. Prior to that, she was an independent consulting biologist on the prairies of Alberta and Saskatchewan, having received her M.Sc. in wildlife toxicology at the University of Guelph.

We look forward to receiving your inquiries and drafts of future articles and notes for **Ontario Birds**.

Chip Weseloh, Jackson Kusack, Brandon Edwards and Pamela Martin.
Co-Editors, Ontario Birds

Ontbirds and Birdnews Listservs

Ontbirds and Birdnews continued to operate as email-based Listservs for Ontario birders. Ontbirds is reserved for provincially rare bird reports and Birdnews is for everything else. All messages are moderated by the moderator team (Mike Burrell, Carter Dorscht, Kiah Jasper, and Jeff Skevington). Ivor Williams contributes a significant amount of time “behind the scenes”.

Instructions for joining both listservs are available on the OFO website and (along with the archives) at ontbirds.ca

We continue to look into alternatives to ensure we have an effective email-based tool for Ontario birders to share information about birds and birding, to complement the many other platforms that exist on this landscape.

Ontbirds, continues to grow, now just shy of 4,000 subscribers (3,930 to be exact, up from 3,859 a year ago). Being restricted to the rarest birds in Ontario, email traffic is low on this listserv, with just 19 messages since last year’s AGM. This is in line with the goals when the two lists were split, so people have a way to just receive news on the rarest birds if they choose.

Birdnews membership is down slightly with 3,225 subscribers (from 3,406 last year). Messages are much more frequent on Birdnews, with regular weekly reports from different areas and daily hawk watch reports (spring and fall) and migration reports (spring) from some areas. As a result, 501 messages came in since last year’s AGM.

Mike Burrell (he/him)

OFO Director- Moderator of Ontbirds and Birdnews

Publicity and Communications

This past year saw our return to regular programming since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our social media presence continues to grow on Facebook and Instagram with quiz bird features and the very popular field trip report posts. A big thank you to Dave Milson, Monika Croydon and Lynne Freeman who have all assisted with posts over the last year. We have pulled back from Twitter given the current atmosphere on the platform, though we have maintained our account.

Our online live presentations shifted to focus on members meetings this year. However we will continue to explore options to present to a broader audience than our members.

Our YouTube channel continues to allow access to recordings of live presentations for people who aren't able to attend member meetings. We expanded our offer to include information about Enabled Birding, working in partnership with Birds Canada. Subscribers have stayed steady at 465 and close to 30,000 views. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq50dMTiQtDYcRE17iZ8yBQ/featured>)

Three different promotional materials were created this year:

1. OFO Calling card – a business card with OFO contact information in a format easy for trip leaders and members to carry and share in the field
2. OFO “join the conversation” bookmark – created to promote talking about birding with the OFO community. They were distributed widely during the spring birding season (especially at Point Pelee NP) and we will consider producing another run for next year as they were all distributed by June
3. OFO Pride pins – lapel pins were produced to distribute at Pride events and for members to wear as a welcome to the LBGTQ2+ community.

Follow along with our social media streams throughout the coming year. You can find us here:

[Facebook.com/OntarioFieldOrnithologists](https://www.facebook.com/OntarioFieldOrnithologists)

[Instagram.com/OFOBirds](https://www.instagram.com/OFOBirds)

Sarah Rupert

Publicity & Communications Coordinator

Young Birders

This year was a productive one for the OFO young birders program. The annual camp in Algonquin Provincial Park had another great season, with 14 keen campers enjoying a week of naturalizing around the park. The creation of several discord channels for young birders on the new OFO server has led to increased communication & connectivity. OFO is also setting up a new program which will collect donated optics from the birding community and “re-home” them to young birders. The goal of this initiative is to make birding more accessible to youth in the province.

Kiah Jasper (he/him)

OFO Director

Certificates of Appreciation

Each year, OFO recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to the birds and birding community of Ontario.

The recipients of the 2022-2023 awards are:

Aaron Hywarren, *nominated by Quinten Wiegersma* - For his dedication to the OFO Ambassador Program in regards to the Manitoulin Island Lewis's Woodpecker for the viewing date of January 17, 2023.

Phyllis and Bob Cacciotti, *nominated by Quinten Wiegersma* - For graciously hosting birders to view the Manitoulin Island Lewis's Woodpecker in January 2023.

Tony Barrett, *nominated by Dave Milsom* - For welcoming birders to his home to see the Boreal Chickadee in Peterborough, ON winter 2023.

Roxane Fillion, *nominated by Angie Williams* - For leading trips, patiently sharing her birding expertise, mentoring newer birders, being a regional coordinator for the Breeding Bird Atlas, working collaboratively to bring an OFO Convention to Northern Ontario.

Amy Brunning, Quinten Wiegersma, Angela Skevington, Emma Gignac, *nominated by Gis Segler* - For volunteering countless hours at OFO's 2022 Alan Wormington Memorial Camp.

Jeff Chambers, *nominated by Marcie Jacklin* - For providing exceptional tram service during Point Pelee National Park's Spring Birding Festival in May 2023.

Sandra Marquez, Kathy Jones, Leona Mattice, Joanne Brathwaite, Nancy Raymond and Andres Jimenez, *nominated by Jack Alvo* - For designing and creating the Enabled Birding Map to make birding more accessible for people with various disabilities.

Tyne Bonebakker, *nominated by Richard Pope* - For donating his 156 acre property to the Northumberland Land Trust in 2018, now known as the Bonebakker Nature Reserve, and for allowing access to atlas the property. Also for collaborating with fellow landowners to secure access to their properties for additional atlassing purposes.

Karalee Patel and Ebrahim Patel, *nominated by Glenn Coady* - For welcoming birders to their Oakville, ON backyard to permit optimal viewing of the female Rufous Hummingbird during the period of November 5, 2021 - January 3, 2022.

Gary Elliott, Angela Rushton and Brock Rochus, *nominated by Glenn Coady* - For the City of Toronto Parks, Forest and Recreation staffers who went out of their way to coordinate and provide all-day protection from vehicles, birders, photographers, dog walkers and the general public to benefit the survival of a migrant Yellow Rail at Ashbridge's Bay Park in Toronto, ON on May 11, 2022.

We have a list of very worthy recipients but there is always room to make this list longer. Please, whenever you are aware of an OFO member or a member of the public providing access to a rare bird or in some other way assisting birders, send in your nomination through the OFO website (<http://www.ofo.ca/site/canominate>).

Dan Chronowic

OFO Volunteer, Certificates of Appreciation

Distinguished Ornithologist Award

The Board of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) is pleased to announce that Bruce Di Labio has been selected as the recipient of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award (DOA) for 2023. Bruce is a Founding Life Member of OFO (joining in 1982) and has been an active enthusiastic Ontario birder since the age of 8. He has had both a life-long passion and a career in the field of birding. Over the decades, Bruce has been an immense resource to OFO and to the Ontario birding community, leading numerous annual field trips and teaching bird identification courses. He has also increased our knowledge of bird life and migration in Eastern Ontario with his annual visits, 1986-1999, to the Cornwall Power Dam along the St. Lawrence River. He has written both scientific and popular articles in journals such as Ontario Birds, OFO News, Birder's Journal, Birding and Canadian Field-Naturalist, and has published on no fewer than six bird species new to Ontario.

A full accounting of Bruce's activities and the presentation of the award will take place at OFO's 2023 Annual General Meeting in Peterborough on September 23 and will appear in the December issue of Ontario Birds.