



**Ontario Field Ornithologists**  
**Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2024**

**AGM Materials**



# 2024 AGM Materials

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## President's Message

### October 2023 – September 2024

Welcome back to the Convention. It's great to be back in Leamington again this year to sample the birds of deep southwestern Ontario. Next year we are planning to meet in Sarnia for the first time to explore some of their legendary autumn birding locations. The northern contingent of our Convention is happening for the third time and this year is meeting in Hilliardton. Thanks to Angie Williams for making this possible. Have fun if you chose to go there to explore and see some of the great birding opportunities in that area.

This has been another vibrant year for OFO with 100 field trips, several online programs and a few new things such as the Young Birders Optics Program. This program aims to distribute used optical equipment to young birders who need them. Our Discord server now has over 1,400 members (up 40% from last year). 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. We also now offer a WhatsApp community for sharing bird information, providing yet another way for people to engage in conversations about birds. Popular Discord servers and WhatsApp groups for birders owe their success to the moderators and administrators who generously volunteer their time.

Our young birder offerings continued to be strong with events in Toronto and Algonquin. The OFO summer camp had 14 participants join the five volunteer leaders this year. The camp has become popular enough that we unfortunately had to turn away several people this year. We did so based on age as the youngest will have more chances to join. It would be great to involve everyone, but resources and volunteer time are finite. We had three groups sponsor the camp this year: Hamilton Naturalists 'Club, Toronto Ornithological Club and Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society. Thanks to them the camp did not lose money and is vibrant.

We have two outgoing board members this year that I want to thank them here. We owe a great deal of thanks to Lynne Freeman and Susan Nagy for their work on the Board. Susan has led fundraising and volunteer coordination for three years and has helped to steer the financial committee through the many changes implemented this year. Lynne has been a fundamental part of the board for 15 years(!), 7 and a half of those years as president. She has worked on most committees and knows all the ins and outs of the society. Lynne has kindly stayed on some committees and will continue to attend board meetings as a non-voting member for the foreseeable future. She is a big part of the glue that holds us together. We thank both Susan and Lynne and look forward to welcoming new members and ideas to the Board at the OFO Convention this year.

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. 2025 will be the final year of what 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!
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** The EDI Committee continued to be very active and is providing excellent suggestions to make all our programs more accessible and balanced. This year in July, Disability Pride Month, we had two outings that were geared primarily toward

people with disabilities. We held virtual meetings for birders who identify as New Canadians, Immigrants, and Migrants as well as Women, Trans People, and Feminine Presenting People. And for the third year in a row, the OFO EDI committee continued its Pride Month programming. This included a walk held in conjunction with the Essex Field Naturalists, the third annual Toronto Pride Month birding walk and the second Birding with Pride event at the Point Pelee Festival of Birds.

- **OFO Ambassador Program:** This program has continued to grow and helps coordinate birder activities around rare birds to minimize negative impacts to both the community and the birds involved. This year saw initiatives related to the Western Tanager in Ottawa, Fieldfare in Sturgeon Falls, Harris's Sparrow in Reidsville, Eurasian Tree Sparrow in Bourget, Bullock's Oriole in Toronto and Gray-crowned Rosy Finch near St. Thomas. Thanks to all who were involved including homeowners, site hosts and ambassadors.
- **OFO News:** Thanks to our departing editor Bruce Kirkland for his work at continuing to raise the bar on this fantastic publication and thanks to Paul Nicholson for acting as the bridge to make the transition to our new editors (Emily Burton, Ted Down, and Edward Millar) seamless.
- **Ontario Birds:** Thanks to our two departing editors, Brandon Edwards and Jackson Kusack and welcome to our new editors Edward Millar and David Welch. Ontario Birds continues to be a strong publication with 35 authors contributing articles and notes for our last three issues. Thanks also to Barry Kent MacKay for continuing to provide amazing cover art for the journal and to Judie Shore for her work on and for the layout and design of both this publication and OFO News.
- **Publication costs:** In a continuing effort to encourage members to read OFO publications online, starting in 2025, members will be charged \$10/year if they opt to receive OFO News in paper format, and \$10/year for Ontario Birds. This move was prompted by rising printing and paper costs, recognition that publication costs are OFO's largest expense, and the loss of revenue from Birdathons.
- **Webinars:** On-line members meetings continue to be popular and people are taking advantage of our YouTube channel, which continues to allow access to recordings for people who can't attend member meetings. We had over 34,000 views on this platform this year! Our Facebook and Instagram accounts also continue to grow. Thanks to Sarah Rupert, Dave Milson, Monika Croydon and Colleen Reilly for all their volunteer efforts on these fronts.

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.

Good birding!

**Jeff Skevington (he/him)**  
**OFO President**



**Ontario Field Ornithologists  
Treasurer's Report  
Financial Statements for the period  
ended December 31, 2023**

The 2023 Financial Statements are attached for your review. If you have any questions, please direct them to me through the OFO email address: [treasurer@ofo.ca](mailto:treasurer@ofo.ca).

This past year we finished up with a nice net income of \$10,373 vs \$11,540 in 2022. Membership dues were up a modest \$2,390. Donations were up significantly over the prior years and we thank all of those that have donated to help move forward the causes and programs of OFO.

We took a substantial financial loss for the 2023 Annual Convention held in Peterborough in September of 2023. The reason for this is the significant increase in food costs, along with costs incurred that we wouldn't normally have incurred at a typical convention centre. The pandemic has not done the hospitality business sector any favours and we will continue to feel these increases well into 2024 and beyond.

Our regular publications saw a modest increase from 2022 to 2023, however there is an anticipated cost increase for 2024 that will significantly impact these costs. We would encourage those that are computer savvy to please change your preferences to online rather than printed versions.

We ended 2023 with a healthy cash balance of \$78,291 vs. \$68,213 at the end of 2022.

We also set up a Finance Committee to review our finances on a regular basis. The Committee consists of a number of Board members, including the Treasurer, and one non-Board member. The Committee reports to the full Board and meets about 9 times a year. The Treasurer regularly prepares financial statements and the Committee discusses OFO's financial affairs and banking with the Treasurer. The Committee also assists the Treasurer in the preparation of the annual budget.

I would like to thank the Board and especially the Finance Committee – Susan Nagy, Jack Alvo, Jeff Skevington, Gis Segler and Bob Cumming for their support during my first year as Treasurer. I have learned and will continue to learn more about this great organization in support of our natural world.

Sue Suess,  
Treasurer  
March 31, 2024

**ONTARIO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (UNAUDITED)  
COMPARATIVE BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2023**

<u>ASSETS</u>			<u>LIABILITIES &amp; MEMBERS' EQUITY</u>		
	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>		<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Cash in bank	\$ 78,291	\$ 60,213	Prepaid Membership Dues	\$ 33,027	\$ 35,595
Convention Deposit	1,000	1,000	Accounts Payable	8,737	-
Accounts Receivable	900	2,300	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 41,764</b>	<b>\$ 35,595</b>
HST Receivable	7,663	6,186	<b>MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>		
Inventory	-	3,553	Balance beginning of Year	\$ 38,958	\$ 27,418
Investments	3,241	1,180	Net Income for Year	10,373	11,540
Equipment	-	577	Balance end of Year	<b>\$ 49,331</b>	<b>\$ 38,958</b>
Accumulated Depreciation	-	(456)	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 91,095</b>	<b>\$ 74,553</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>\$ 91,095</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 74,553</u></b>			

**COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF INCOME and EXPENSES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

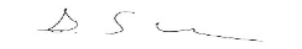
<u>INCOME</u>			<u>EXPENSES</u>		
	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>		<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Membership Dues	\$ 54,025	\$ 51,635	<b>Printing and Mailing</b>		
Donations	9,076	5,372	Journal, Ontario Birds	\$ 20,570	\$ 20,334
Baillie Birdathon	7,120	8,780	Newsletter, OFO News	15,540	16,676
Advertising	3,240	3,550	<b>Administration</b>		
Sale of Merchandise	1,513	196	Advertising	1,627	85
Young Birders (Net)	2,539	(1,371)	Affinipay Fees - Membership	3,101	2,104
Annual Convention (Net)	(8,322)	(2,367)	Audit	250	250
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b><u>\$ 69,191</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 65,795</u></b>	Awards	500	232
			Bank Charges	155	179
			Board & Communication	559	496
			Depreciation	121	30
			Donations	1,500	3,417
			Fees	69	-
			Field trips	2,273	1,603
			Inventory Adjustment	3,553	(966)
			Liability Insurance	2,188	2,124
			Membership Expense	55	55
			Wild Apricot	5,379	5,250
			OBRC	357	-
			OFO Website & Ontbirds	330	266
			Postage & Handling	120	-
			Postal Box Rental	296	841
			Purchase of Merchandise	-	1,132
			Treasurer's Expenses	275	147
			<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 58,818</b>	<b>\$ 54,255</b>
			<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 69,191</b>	<b>\$ 65,795</b>
			<b>NET ANNUAL INCOME</b>	<b><u>\$ 10,373</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 11,540</u></b>



Sue Suess, Treasurer



Jeff Skevington, President



Gis Segler, Finance Committee

PREPARED WITHOUT AUDIT FOR MANAGEMENT



## Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting September 23, 2023 – Peterborough

The 2023 Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) was held in Peterborough on Saturday, September 23, 2023, 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 2022 AGM held Sept. 24, 2022. 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, committees, and editorial teams for our publications; and priorities for the coming year.

The following motions were 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.**

Regarding OFO’s Board, Jeff noted the one major change during the past year, which is that Brian Gibbon retired as Treasurer after more than 12 years (thank you Brian!) and that Sue Suess has taken over as Treasurer in addition to organizing OFO’s Annual Convention (thank you Sue!).

Jeff also noted that Susan Nagy does not intend to run for re-election when her term ends in 2024, so we will be looking for a replacement. In particular, the Board would also like to fill the Vice-President’s position, which has been vacant for over a year.

We then moved to the election of Board members. The 3-year term of one director, Mike Burrell, ended this year so there was a call for nominations to fill that seat. There were no nominations, however, Mike indicated that he would like to sit for another 3-year term.

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

Jeff then listed the priorities for the coming year. Please refer to his power point presentation (**President’s Message**). In closing, Jeff thanked all of the volunteers who have worked to make OFO strong and invited all members to consider volunteering if they can.

Finally, Jeff moved, and it was seconded by Martin Parker, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10.

**Jack Alvo (he/him),  
OFO Director & Secretary**

## The 2024-2025 Board of Directors

### Existing By-laws

The existing 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.

The foregoing will be unchanged under proposed new By-law.

### Changes to the Board

There have been no changes to the Board since the 2023 AGM.

### The Current Board

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Present Role</b>	<b>Director Since</b>	<b>Term ends</b>
Colleen Reilly	Director-at-large and Trips	2022	2025
Jack Alvo	Secretary	2019	2025
Marcie Jacklin	Conservation	2022 (her 2 <sup>nd</sup> tenure)	2025
Sue Suess	Treasurer	2023	2026
Dave Milsom	Trips and Events	1999	2025
Sarah Rupert	Publicity & Communication	2016	2025
Mike Burrell	Director at Large	2020	2026

The terms of six directors come to an end this year. Two of the six are not planning to stay on the Board, while the other four are standing for re-election.

Departing from the Board are Lynne Freeman, who has served on the Board for 15 years including 7-1/2 years as President; and Susan Nagy, who has served on the Board for 3 years. We thank them both for their exceptional service and dedication.



## **Standing for re-election**

The following directors are standing for re-election to another 3-year term:

**Jeff Skevington, President:** Jeff has completed his first term with the OFO board and is seeking re-election. He is a keen supporter of young birders and has been helping to run the OFO young birders' camp since its inception. Jeff is involved with several naturalist clubs, is an eBird reviewer for several Ontario counties, is an editor for iNaturalist and is a member of the Communications and Volunteer Management Committee for the Third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. Jeff recently retired from his job as a scientist where he worked on fly taxonomy and evolution. He continues to finish off research projects but now has much more time to devote to birding and travel. He now works part time as a guide in Antarctica, South America and the Great Lakes so that he can focus more on his passion for sharing his love for nature with others. Jeff's recent book on flower flies (*Field Guide to the Flower Flies (Hover Flies) of Northeastern North America*) may be of interest to some of the membership looking to expand their natural history knowledge. Jeff has birded in over fifty countries and in all 50 counties in Ontario where he just passed the milestone of 7000 total county ticks.

**Kiah Jasper, Director-at-large:** Kiah has served on the OFO board since 2020, working mainly on Young Birder initiatives, the Rare Bird Ambassador Program and the OFO Bird of the Year. He is also a regional coordinator for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, and an eBird reviewer for several counties. In 2022 he broke the big year record for most birds seen in a calendar year in Ontario, recording 359 species. In 2024 he co-founded a birding tour company along with his partner Alessandra Kite, leading trips across Ontario.

**Gis Segler, Director-at-large:** Gis has just completed his first 3-year term and is seeking re-election. Gis brings previous Board experience to OFO, most recently as Treasurer of another organization. He has been active on OFO's Finance Committee. He worked in the financial services industry in Toronto but recently retired to a quieter time on the farm. Gis loves to share his enthusiasm about birds and wildlife with all, but especially young birders at the OFO camp each summer. He can often be seen out with his son who is also a keen birder.

**Angie Williams, Membership Director:** Angie is a retired teacher and a former co-editor of OFO News. A resident of Northern Ontario, Angie is passionate about promoting birding in the north, through encouraging birding in her community, bringing northern content to OFO News and organising the Northern Edition of OFO's Annual Convention. When she is not volunteering for OFO, she keeps busy with multiple hobbies including pickle-ball, gardening, performing music, and (of course!) birding.

## **Nominations to the Board**

Two nominations have been received for director positions on the Board. The following two candidates have both been nominated by the Board:

**Andrea Kingsley:** Andrea has over 35 years of experience in biology, natural history interpretation and guiding. She has worked and lived across Ontario, Alberta and the Maritimes at various environmental consultant jobs, teaching, research projects, a MSc in biology, and volunteer positions. She is a passionate long time birder and general naturalist.

Andrea is also an artist who expresses her love of nature through various art forms, feeling it is important that people of all ages are exposed to nature. Her artwork, both photographs and illustrations, hope to inspire people to get outside and appreciate what is around them. Her illustrations are featured in several publications, including the *Field Guide to The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Algonquin Provincial Park and the Surrounding Area*.

Andrea currently is a biologist in Brighton, is a regional coordinator for the Ontario breeding bird atlas, Northumberland region, and is also the Presqu'ile CBC compiler.

**Mark Peck:** Mark is the Collections Specialist in Ornithology at the Royal Ontario Museum, soon to be retired (November 2024). Mark began his career with the ROM in 1983. He has spent much of his career involved in ornithological research, fieldwork and collections management but has also been involved with museum programming, exhibitions and gallery development.

In addition, he has been an author and/or photographer to numerous websites, popular articles, scientific papers and books including: *Niagara Birds*, *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario 2001-2005*, *The Extraordinary Beauty of Birds: Design Pattern and Details*, *The Birds of Nunavut* and his most recent publication, *Bird Eggs - A Young Naturalist Guide*.

Mark has also been the Program Councillor for the Toronto Ornithological Club and ROM Liaison for the Ontario Bird Records Committee, and has been involved with all three of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlases. In addition he is an enthusiastic contributor to several citizen/community science programs as well as the proud father of two wonderful daughters.

**Jack Alvo** (he/him)

*OFO Director & Secretary*

## **New By-law**

On August 21, 2024, we sent to Members the proposed new By-law for OFO. Members will be asked to vote on this new By-law at the Annual Meeting on September 28, 2024 and OFO's Board of Directors recommends that Members vote in favour. Here is a link to the proposed new By-law: [http://ofoc.ca/ofoc-docs/OFO\\_REVISED\\_BY-LAWS\\_2024--FINAL.pdf](http://ofoc.ca/ofoc-docs/OFO_REVISED_BY-LAWS_2024--FINAL.pdf).

By way of background, and as previously advised, new legislation has come into effect for certain Ontario corporations, namely the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, or "ONCA". This act requires OFO to file new Articles of Incorporation and a new By-law by October 18, 2024. The By-law regulates certain aspects of how we operate (e.g. number of directors, holding of an Annual Meeting for members, etc.).

Importantly, there are no significant changes in how OFO will operate. For example, we will still have a December 31 year-end and an Annual Meeting at the September Convention. Also, the number of directors continues to be a minimum of 8 and maximum of 13; however, the requirement for quorum is now a majority of directors rather than a fixed number (previously 7).

Once approved, the new By-law will replace the existing By-law, which can be found [here](#).

**Jack Alvo** (he/him)

*OFO Director & Secretary*

# OFO Committee and Director Reports for 2023-24

## **Bird reporting community tools from OFO**

OFO's bird reporting community tools continue to grow and this year we expanded to include a new "WhatsApp Community". This helps expand the ways that OFO members and Ontario birders in general can interact with each other and share bird sightings in a fun and engaging community network. Each tool covered here serves a slightly different but often overlapping group of users and the OFO Board is excited to provide this varied "landscape" so that people can interact, share sightings and discuss Ontario birds in whichever format they feel most comfortable.

### **OFO WhatsApp Community**

The OFO WhatsApp Community was launched in April of 2024. WhatsApp communities are a way to "combine" groups. Each group functions on its own, but any member of the community can see a list of all the groups and request to join any they like.

The OFO WhatsApp Community is for anything related to birds in Ontario. Most groups focus on regional bird reports (e.g. regional Rare Bird Alerts or "**RBAs**" for short) but there's room for other more casual or topic-based groups to be added. If the number of groups becomes too large OFO will prioritize groups that share birding information.

There are currently 530 members within the OFO WhatsApp Community, which includes eight groups. Groups are run and managed by individuals and are not directly affiliated with OFO – the Community is just a way to connect people and groups together, making it easy for people to find each other. OFO reserves the right to remove individuals or groups from the Community. The OFO Code of Conduct is a central piece of this.

If you already have a WhatsApp group that you would like to add to the Community or would like to create a new one, please contact one of the Community Admins or email [WhatsApp@ofoc.ca](mailto:WhatsApp@ofoc.ca). Any individual can invite another individual to the Community.

Want to join the Community? Use this link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/K7wYn5U6ZkkHoFQA6SgfEK>

### **OFO Discord Server**

The OFO Discord Server continued to grow over the past year. There are now 1,435 members of the server (up about 40% from last year) 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 have a lot of potential.

We still would like 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.ofoc.ca/content/discord>

## [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 (along with the archives) at [ontbirds.ca](http://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 membership stayed about steady at nearly 4,000 subscribers (down slightly from 3,930 last year to 3,886). Being restricted to the rarest birds in Ontario, email traffic is low on this listserv, with just 31 messages since last year’s AGM (up from 19 a year ago). 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. We are looking for a volunteer (or volunteers) to share news to Ontbirds of any rare birds that don’t make it here “on their own” – if you’re someone that’s plugged into the various sources of rare bird news in Ontario and you’d like to help ensure as many people in the province hear about these birds as possible, please contact [ontbirds@ofo.ca](mailto:ontbirds@ofo.ca).

Birdnews membership is down slightly with 3,108 subscribers (from 3,225 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, 470 messages (down from 501 a year ago) came in since last year’s AGM.

If you’re interested in being a volunteer content moderator (approving messages before they go out to everyone) for either or both listserves, please contact [ontbirds@ofo.ca](mailto:ontbirds@ofo.ca).

**Mike Burrell (he/him)**

*OFO Director*

## **Conservation**

This year OFO has attempted to leverage its limited funds toward projects that are likely to struggle to find traditional funding. OFO has started developing a plan to increase birder access to waste water treatment plants (sewage lagoons) and hopefully influence their drawdown times to coincide with peak shorebird migration times. OFO also helped fund the third Ontario Bird Atlas which we know is a project many OFO members have helped support with numerous hours of volunteer time.

OFO started its program to 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](mailto: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:**

The free first-year membership program continues to be a popular offering from the Ontario Field Ornithologists. This has helped to reduce the economic barriers experienced by many birders while participating in the Ontario birding community, particularly those who are new to the hobby.

For the second year in a row, OFO offered two outings in July, Disability Pride Month, that were geared primarily toward people with disabilities. These outings are joint initiatives of OFO, Toronto Ornithological Club and Accessibirdies. Later this year, these same parties are teaming up with Downsview Park to offer a similar outing there.

Alessandra Wilcox has developed a number of new events during her time as an EDI Committee Member. These include virtual meetings for birders who identify as New Canadians, Immigrants, and Migrants as well as Women, Trans People, and Feminine Presenting People.

For the third year in a row, the OFO EDI committee has continued its Pride Month programming. This included a walk lead by Jeremy Hatt in collaboration with the Essex Field Naturalists, as well as the third annual Toronto Pride Month birding walk lead by John Nishikawa and Maxwell Matchim. This year saw the second Birding with Pride event at the Point Pelee Festival of Birds. This event has become an annual highlight of the Festival of Birds for many participants. Multiple walks were led throughout the day by a number of experienced birders.

OFO News continues to publish articles that represent the experiences of marginalized communities, including Queer and Trans birders and those with disabilities

The EDI Committee is currently in conversation with the OFO Board to develop new and innovative approaches to increase the diversity of our organization's members and to dismantle barriers that prevent people from participating.

In closing, we always welcome your feedback and ideas. You can contact us at [diversity@ofoc.ca](mailto:diversity@ofoc.ca). In the meantime, good birding!

**Maxwell Matchim (they/she), Co-chair, EDI Committee, &  
Jack Alvo (he/him), OFO Director & Co-chair, EDI Committee**

## **Field Trips**

We have been fortunate this year to be able to provide 100 fieldtrips, webinars and workshops for our members and guests. We are continuing to offer our members free fieldtrips to birding locations throughout this huge province, from southern Ontario's top locations to Rainy River and Thunder Bay in the west, to Cochrane and Moosonee in the north, and to Ottawa and Kingston in the east.

Many of the field trips in 2024 have again been fully subscribed and upcoming ones are mainly full already, 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.

We are extremely lucky as an organization that we can count on so many experienced and willing leaders to lead our fieldtrips. These individuals freely volunteer their time to often guide large groups of birders with differing experiences and needs. 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 are always looking for new birding sites and will offer some very exciting new destinations in 2025. Keep an eye on our website : [www.ofoc.ca](http://www.ofoc.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. We try to post reports from fieldtrips where available as well trip photos on Facebook and Instagram. We are currently offering Bird ID Cheat Sheets. Mike Burrell has also developed an Ontario Hotspots site which gives valuable birding information to birders throughout Ontario.

Events upcoming in 2025 include the OFO annual Convention in Sarnia in Fall, plus a northern Ontario Convention held at the same time, and several webinars and workshops throughout the year. We have established an OFO Lagoon Committee to work with municipalities; and our Ambassador Program will continue its great work begun two years ago in monitoring and organizing rare bird viewing at specific locations when rarities occur. We also are continuing to promote Birding Buddies and other birding initiatives.

**Dave Milsom  
OFO Director, Trips**

## **Fundraising**

Thank you to Pelee Wings for sponsoring the 2024 OFO Convention once again and also thank you to Vortex Canada for their continuing support of OFO News and Ontario Birds.

In 2024, due to policy changes and CRA regulations, Birds Canada changed the way it allocates funds received through their major fundraiser Birdathon. While OFO continues to participate in, and support, the Birdathon, we will no longer receive any of the funds raised from this event.

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: Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Toronto Ornithological Club and Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society.

**Susan Nagy** (she/her)  
**OFO Director - Fundraising**

## **Membership and Outreach**

As of September 3, 2024 there were 1,798 active memberships, which is about the same as at this time last year.

OFO continues to offer free membership to those who cannot afford to pay. Those members who can pay a lesser amount are encouraged to offer it as a donation to OFO.

Online Members Meetings were held monthly from September through April of 2024. Our 2024/25 series began September 4 with a presentation about Point Pelee in the Fall, by Sarah Rupert. Members Meetings are an initiative seeking to increase access to OFO activities by those who are unable to physically attend events, including those who live in more remote areas.

We encourage members to 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 December 31 and members can renew as early as October 1st .

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. 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**

## **Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC)**

The 2023 OBRC reviewed 133 reports of rare species on the province's three regional review lists, of which 106 (80%) were accepted. This year's AGM for the OBRC was held on the 16th of April in Toronto at the Royal Ontario Museum. Three species were added to the Ontario species list – Limpkin, Western Flycatcher and Short-billed Gull following the recent split of Mew Gull - bringing the total number of species recorded in the province to 511.

Slaty-backed Gull and House Sparrow were added to the Lowlands Review List, bringing the total number of species for this zone to 334. Mississippi Kite was added to the Central Review List, for a new total of 388 species in this zone. With the addition of Limpkin, Short-billed Gull and Western Flycatcher to the South Review List, the total number of species recorded in this review zone now stands at 502. The committee voted this year's record of White Wagtail as the bird of the year. The full Annual Report is available in the August edition of Ontario Birds.

The members of the 2023 OBRC were Nicole Richardson (chair), Anthony Kaduck (non-voting secretary), Mike V.A. Burrell (non-voting archivist) Alvan Buckley, Dan MacNeal, Michelle Martin, Amanda Guercio, Dave Szmyr and Kiah Jasper. Mark Peck acted as the ROM liaison. At the conclusion of this year's annual meeting, the 3-year terms for Alvan Buckley, Dan MacNeal and Nicole Richardson have ended, and the committee has elected Cameron Chevalier, Jon Ruddy and Gerard Phillips to begin 3-year terms starting in 2024. Mark Peck has retired, and confirmation of the continuing ROM liaison is pending. Mike Burrell will continue as non-voting archivist. Anthony Kaduck was voted to continue as secretary.

As Nicole Richardson's voting term has ended, the committee was tasked with electing a new Chair. Typically, this is a continuing voting member, but as all four continuing voting members were unable to continue in this role, for the first time, the committee voted to elect a new incoming voting member to the role of Chair. Gerard Phillips was elected to the role of Chair.

**Nicole Richardson (she/her)**  
**OBRC Chair**

## **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. The co-editors work to achieve a balance between all three areas, and the editorial team is particularly enthusiastic to publish pieces where these themes intersect.



We also welcome unsolicited ideas for articles and we are especially happy to receive full drafts of articles written by OFO members. We may not always be able to publish every article that we receive, but we always appreciate the effort that goes into preparing an article for our consideration, and we are happy to work with authors to develop new ideas and drafts. If you have an idea for an OFO News article, please do not hesitate to contact us.

A continuing focus of the *OFO News* editorial team is the recruitment of contributors that reflect the diversity of OFO's membership. Over the course of the past year, we have made efforts to publish content that is reflective of that diversity, which we believe helps us to highlight new approaches and perspectives on birds, birders, and birding.

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. We thank our departing editor Bruce Kirkland for his valued contributions to the newsletter. Our new co-editors are Emily Burton, Ted Down, and Edward Millar. On an interim basis, Paul Nicholson has also been assisting. These editors bring a range of backgrounds and experiences which continue to enrich the content of *OFO News*.

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

**Anita Aviad, Emily Burton, Ted Down, Mark Field, Ankur Khurana, Michelle Martin, Evan Millar, Paul Nicholson**  
*Co-editors, OFO News*

## **Ontario Birds**

*Ontario Birds* is the provincial scientific journal for ornithology of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Its objective is to serve as the platform for the publication of original research and observations dealing with the birds of Ontario. Material submitted to *Ontario Birds* is reviewed by the editor(s) and outside reviewers (if necessary) and considered for publication provided it meets the guidelines for content and geographical boundaries of *Ontario Birds*.

The last year of *Ontario Birds* comprised three issues: December 2023, April 2024 and August 2024. These issues contained 172 pages in 12 articles and notes. That is 24 pages and three articles/notes more than for the previous three issues; it is good to see this uptick in the size of *Ontario Birds*. Thanks to our members for their extra efforts in supporting our journal!

The 12 articles/notes of the last three issues of *Ontario Birds* encompassed four species groups of Ontario birds: passerines, colonial waterbirds, shorebirds and raptors. The passerines included the Northern Waterthrush, three species of grassland birds (Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and Savannah Sparrow) and Tree Swallow. The colonial waterbirds included Common Tern, American White Pelican and Bonaparte's Gull. Shorebirds and raptors were represented by Piping Plover and a possible Cooper's Hawk x American Goshawk hybrid. The last four articles included the write-up for Bruce Di

Labio's Distinguished Ornithologist Award, the memorial for Ron Pittaway, a review of The Travel Journals and Correspondence of Charles Fothergill and the 2023 Report of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC).

Finally, we would like to thank the 35 individual 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 layout and 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 like to make a special acknowledgement to two departing co-editors: Brandon Edwards and Jackson Kusack. These two PhD students have successfully graduated and/or moved on to new challenges in their early careers. We wish them the best of luck and thank them for their service to *Ontario Birds*. Two new co-editors, Drs. Edward Millar and David Welch, will be formally introduced in the December issue of *Ontario Birds*.

- We look forward to receiving your inquiries and drafts of future articles and notes for *Ontario Birds*. You can reach us at [ontariobirds@ofo.ca](mailto:ontariobirds@ofo.ca).

**Chip Weseloh, Pamela Martin, Edward Millar and David Welch,**  
*Co-Editors, Ontario Birds*

## Publicity & Communications

Our social media presence continues to grow on Facebook and Instagram with the very popular field trip report posts. A big thank you to Dave Milson, Monika Croydon and Colleen Reilly who have all assisted with posts over the last year, especially while I was away in hospital. We remain inactive on Twitter/X, given the continuing negative atmosphere on the platform, though we have maintained our account.

Members have participated in several media interviews over the past year, including youth in birding and an interview about our accessible birding hikes. Thank you to those who were willing to speak on the organization's behalf.

On-line members meetings continue to be popular and people are taking advantage of our YouTube channel, which continues to allow access to recordings for people who can't attend member meetings. We expanded our offer to include information about enabled birding, working in partnership with Birds Canada. Subscribers grew to 526 over the past year and over 34 000 views (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq50dMTiQtDYcREl7iZ8yBQ/featured>)

Three different promotional materials were reprinted this year due to their popularity:

- OFO Calling card – a business card with OFO contact information in an easy format for trip leaders and members to carry and share in the field
- 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 National Park) and we will consider producing another run for next year, as they were all distributed by June

- OFO Pride pins – lapel pins were produced to distribute at Pride events and for members to wear as a welcome to the LBGQTQ2+ 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, OFO Director &  
Publicity & Communications Coordinator**

## **Young Birders**

2024 was a strong year for the OFO Young Birders program, with several successful initiatives happening across the province.

The OFO Young Birders Optics Program launched this spring and has been receiving donations from across Ontario. We currently have 3 in-person drop off sites (High Park Nature Centre – Toronto; Birds Canada HQ - Long Point; and Point Pelee Visitor Centre - Essex) and are hoping to expand to more in the upcoming year. The goal of this program is to re-home used optics to young birders who face financial barriers, in hopes of making birding more accessible.

The annual Alan Wormington Memorial Young Birders Camp in Algonquin Provincial Park went very well this summer, with 14 young birders attending. During the camp the participants explored the Highway 60 area in search of birds and mammals; travelled to the east side of the park for a 3 night canoe trip; learned about natural history from the researchers at the Algonquin Wildlife Research Station and the Ontario Parks staff; and did a field sketching workshop, to only name a few things!

OFO is looking forward to the continuing future of the Young Birders Program.

**Kiah Jasper (he/him)  
OFO Director – Young Birders**

# OFO Awards for 2023-24

## 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 2023-2024 awards are:

- **Deryl Nethercott, *nominated by Mike Burrell*** - For his efforts in almost single-handedly sharing photos and information for all of Lambton County for the BirdingHotspots.org initiative.
- **George Naylor, *nominated by Bruce Mackenzie*** – For his efforts in protecting the Cliff Swallow colony on the Hwy 6 Bridge in Caledonia, ON.
- **Marion and Norm Maier, *nominated by Brett Fried*** – For graciously hosting birders to view the Harris's Sparrow that appeared at their home in Reidsville, ON on January 19, 2024.
- **Eric Baldo, *nominated by Jack Alvo*** – For his work as lead counter at Toronto's Whimbrel Watch at Colonel Sam Smith Park in Toronto, ON.
- **Scarborough Environmental Association, *nominated by Lauren Pragg*** – For their work arranging several naturalist led bird walks throughout Scarborough to encourage new birders to take up the hobby.
- **Igor Kabic, *nominated by Aaron Hywarren*** – For his efforts with the OFO Ambassador Program supporting the Western Tanager that visited Ottawa, ON from January - March 2024.
- **Michele Carnerie, *nominated by Susan Nagy*** – For hosting birders to view the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at her home in Aylmer, ON on November 12, 2023.
- **Karen McDonald, Andrea Chreston and Liam Graham, *nominated by Chip Weseloh*** - For designing, seeking expert opinion and implementing a science-based plan to protect the first pair of nesting Bald Eagles in the City of Toronto amid the demand and desire for control of co-nesting Double-crested Cormorants.

- **Brian Gibbon, *nominated by Jack Alvo*** – For 12 years of excellent service as an OFO Board member and Treasurer.
- **Mike McCabe, *nominated by Paul F.J. Eagles*** – As Engineering Manager of Rogers Media Inc., he agreed to delay the grassland harvest at the Rogers Radio Tower Field adjacent to the Grass Lake/Paris Cranberry Bog Reserve in North Dumfries Township in the Region of Waterloo, ON until after July 14, 2024 to enable successful nesting.

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** (he/him)  
*OFO Volunteer, Certificates of Appreciation*

## **Awards of Special Merit**

**OFO Awards of Special Merit for Essex Region Conservation Authority, Pelee Wings Nature Store, and Point Pelee National Park - *Nominated by Jean Iron and Dave Milson***

These three parties are being recognized for their ongoing support of OFO Shorebird Nights and shorebird education at Hillman Marsh each spring. These organizations have contributed funds, promotions and opportunities for birders to join OFO volunteers and learn about shorebird migration.

The Essex Region Conservation Authority (**ERCA**) is recognized for creating and maintaining habitat specifically for shorebirds. Point Pelee National Park has championed shorebird observation opportunities through its programming during the Festival of Birds and managing the 3-day Birding Pass program, in partnership with ERCA, allowing entry to the Park and Hillman Marsh. Pelee Wings is recognized for its contributions to education through its support of the creation of the shorebird blind at Hillman, and providing optics and guides during the shorebird viewing opportunities.

**Dan Chronowic** (he/him)  
*OFO Volunteer, Certificates of Appreciation*

## **Distinguished Ornithologist Award**

The Board of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) is pleased to announce that Mark Peck is the 2024 recipient of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award (DOA). Mark is known throughout Ontario and beyond for his significant contributions to the study and conservation of birds. He is an outstanding birder and exceptional researcher who is generous with his knowledge and time.

Mark has been a birder from a very early age. His participation in the Ontario Nest Records Scheme began when he was a young birder. Mark pursued his passion for birds with a career at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) where he is recognized for his professional collegiality, research, outreach and community-based bird protection projects. Mark is a long-time member of OFO. He is a tremendous resource to OFO and the Ontario birding community by hosting visits to the ROM, leading field trips, giving presentations, supporting the Ontario Bird Records Committee and more. Mark's Canadian and international research have resulted in the publication of new ornithological knowledge.

A full account of Mark's contributions to the study of birds in Ontario and the presentation of the Distinguished Ornithologist Award will take place at the OFO Annual Convention in Leamington on 28 September 2024 and will appear in the December issue of Ontario Birds.

**Nominated by:**

**Jean Iron, John Carley and Gerard Binsfield**