

White-winged Dove: New to Essex County

Stuart A. Mackenzie

June 30, 2002, was quite the day — 35° C. in the shade! It was also humid, muggy, and I had been in chest-waders for the majority of the day, trudging through the swamps around Holiday Beach in Essex County. It was about 3:45 p.m., when yet again I was amazed at how quickly a little discomfort and fatigue can disappear “just like that” in the presence of an exciting bird.

I spent the morning and the better part of the afternoon thus far searching for Prothonotary Warblers, as part of the project to monitor the species in southern Ontario. There was just one more area that I wanted to check, before I could enjoy the air-conditioned drive back to Rondeau Provincial Park (where I happened to be staying). Here I got out of the van at the end of a private drive that was part of a community called Erie View; the area is just east of Holiday Beach Conservation Area. In a Silver Maple woods, approximately ten metres into it, was a slight clearing where cottage owners had been dumping yard clippings and leaves. As I approached the clearing two birds flushed up from the ground. At first I just wrote them off as woodcocks, as I had flushed many earlier that day; however, I quickly realized that I was mistaken.

The larger and more stocky of the two birds grabbed my attention as it flew away with its large white flashes in the wings. I quickly took a look back at the second bird which flew in the opposite direction, to realize that it was just a Mourning Dove. I grabbed my binoculars almost in a flowing motion as I turned to try and get a look at the “special” bird. I was lucky enough to find it quickly and watched it for about 100-150 metres as it flew away from me.

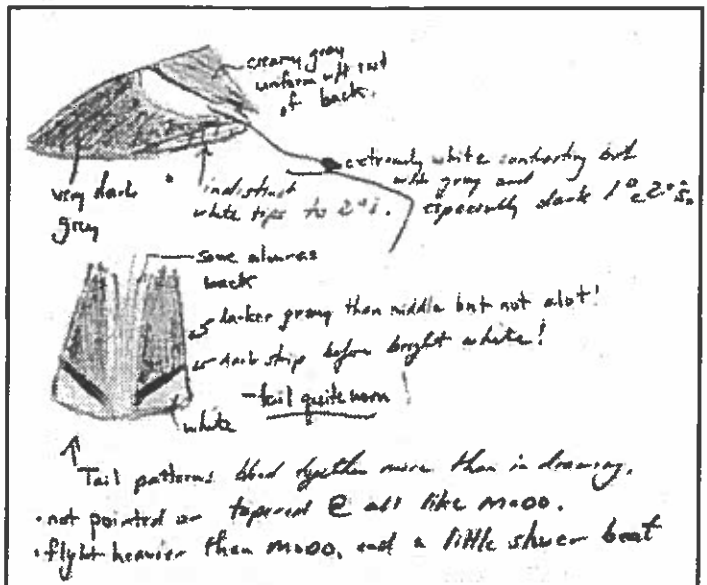
Before I had my “bins” on the bird, I had the hunch that it was a White-winged Dove. The most distinguishing feature being the distinct wing pattern that appeared foreign with bright white patches extending down the centre of the wings; this was made up of the greater coverts and contrasting with the dark slate-grayish coloration of the primaries and secondaries. The distal ends of the secondaries were tipped with white, but indistinct compared to the contrast of the white patches with the rest of the wing.

After viewing the wings, I tried to notice as much detail as possible about other aspects of the bird. The back was uniform creamy-gray, lighter than the Mourning Dove, with much less brown in the colour. This creamy-gray extended from the back of the head onto the scapulars and tertials of the wings, and down the centre of the tail. The outer rectrices were a darker gray than the back, and became darker toward the end of the tail where there was a very dark gray bar before bright white tipping; this stood out particularly when the bird was flushed and had its tail fanned out a bit (which became closed as the bird became more comfortable in flight). I was unable to pick up any facial, belly or breast features due to the nature of the view. Also no views of featherless areas could be made.

I lost sight of the bird as it flew toward the beach. Another couple of hours were spent in the community further to the east, and bopping around the poison-ivy infested woodlot, but I failed to relocate the bird.

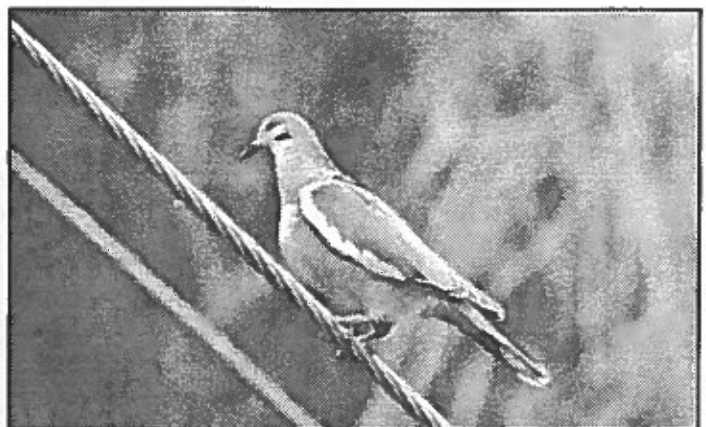
This bird was consequently one of four reported occurrences in southern Ontario during 2002, spanning just the period of June 11 to July 14 inclusive (see Table 1). Obviously a minor incursion had occurred, which is quite exceptional considering that prior to 2002 only nine records in total existed for Ontario.

When I finally arrived back at the van I wasted no time in turning on the air-conditioning, while thinking to myself “... geez, how often can you see Prothonotary Warblers and a White-winged Dove on the same day in Ontario, let alone anywhere north of the Gulf of Mexico.” Certainly not a bad day despite the oppressive heat.



Part of the original field notes documenting the White-winged Dove at Erie View, Essex, on June 30, 2002.

— Drawing by Stuart A. Mackenzie —



White-winged Dove at St. Clair Nat. Wildlife Area, Chatham-Kent, on July 9, 2002, third of four birds found in Ontario during 2002.

— Photo by Alan Worrington —

Ontario Records of White-winged Dove

- April 26-27, 1986: one, Thunder Bay, *Thunder Bay* (Isabella Kendall, J. Roderick Kendall). *Reference*: Wormington (1987).
- May 15-17, 2003: one, Presqu'île Provincial Park, *Northumberland* (William D. Gilmour *et al.*).
- June 11, 2002: one, Tobermory, *Bruce* (T. Adams *et al.*).
- June 14-19, 2003: one, Kakabeka Falls, *Thunder Bay* (Brian Rusnick, Cec Rusnick *et al.*).
- June 17, 1942: one *mearnsi* male, Fort Albany, *Cochrane* (discoverer not known) - specimen (skin) in ROM: #67776. *References*: Shortt & Hope (1943); Baillie (1957); Wormington (1987).
- June 27-July 1, 2001: one, Lappe, *Thunder Bay* (David Christianson, Ann Christianson *et al.*) - photos on file. *Reference*: Roy (2002).
- June 30, 2002: one, Erie View, *Essex* (Stuart A. Mackenzie). *Reference*: Crins (2003).
- July 7-14, 2002: one, St. Clair Nat. Wildlife Area, *Chatham-Kent* (Donald E. Perks *et al.*) - photos on file. *Reference*: Crins (2003).
- July 8, 2002: one, Bostwick Island, *Leeds and Grenville* (David C. Bostock). *Reference*: Crins (2003).
- August 16, 1995: one immature, Thunder Cape, *Thunder Bay* (Jul K. Wojnowski, David Okines, Marek Klich, Kathy Palko) - photos on file. *Reference*: Dobos (1996).
- August 29, 2000: one, Scarborough, *Toronto* (Glenn Coady, Robert Coady). *Reference*: Roy (2002).
- September 18, 1993: one, Long Point Tip, *Norfolk* (Paul N. Prior, Jul K. Wojnowski, Pat Sliwowski, Nancy Moore). *Reference*: Bain (1994).
- October 19-20, 1997: one, Lively, *Sudbury* (Donald G. Ferguson *et al.*) - photos on file. *Reference*: Dobos (1998).
- October 19, 2001: one immature, Long Point Tip, *Norfolk* (Matt Hindle, Vicki Brown, Henri Robert, Rhonda Donley). *Reference*: Crins (2003).
- December 14-19, 1975: one, Belleville, *Hastings* (R.S. Morphy *et al.*) - photos on file. *References*: Goodwin (1977); James (1984).

Key: • = occurrences accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC).

◦ = occurrences considered valid but apparently are not documented, or documented but not yet reviewed by the OBRC.

Table 1. Information is derived from "The Rare Birds of Ontario: A Catalogue of Distributional Records" by Wormington (2003).

LITERATURE CITED:

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- Roy, K.J. 2002. Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 2001. *Ontario Birds* 20: 54-74.
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In the Field

Pileated Woodpecker: Second Record for Point Pelee

On May 4, 2003 (at about 8:30 a.m.), a number of birding groups were shocked to encounter a Pileated Woodpecker at the Tip. The bird was seen in flight by Sarah E. Rupert and William A. Martin; at about the same time (or a bit earlier) it was heard but not seen by Michael W.P. Runtz. For the next couple of hours this out-of-place bird was encountered by many groups, and several observers commented that it seemed to be calling incessantly. The bird was last reported in Tilden's Woods at about 11:00 a.m., and could not be relocated afterwards despite extensive searching.

It is unknown how the bird exited the park, but it is curious that a Pileated Woodpecker was subsequently seen at Holiday Beach Conservation Area on May 15 by Ian Cannell and Michael A. Biro; perhaps it was the same individual.

Details are a bit sketchy, but the only other modern record of Pileated Woodpecker at Point Pelee was on September 17, 1963. On that date a bird was apparently seen in flight at the Tip, observed by John O.L. Roberts and possibly others. The historical status of Pileated Woodpecker at Point Pelee is uncertain; it may have been of regular occurrence prior to the 1880s.