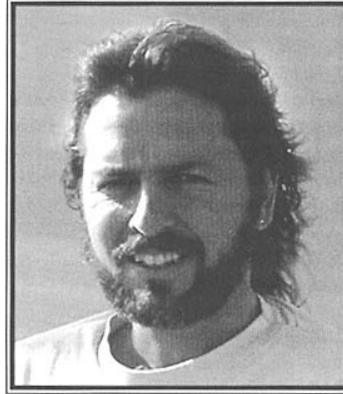


# P Birder Profile

**Bruce Di Labio's** face should be familiar to regular readers of Ontario Birding News because he has been bringing you our regional reports for Eastern Ontario for the past three years. Bruce is a highly skilled observer who has gained a reputation as a first-rate field trip leader. He has led numerous trips for clubs that include the Ottawa Field-Naturalists, The Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Ontario Field Ornithologists. He has also been involved in leading eco-tours in both Canada and the United States.

For 11 years, Bruce, along with three other members of the infamous "Canadian Team", have consistently shown the mainly US based competitors in the annual World Series of Birding in New Jersey that they are a force to be reckoned with. They have scored top honours in four separate categories, more than any other team and have walked away with the grand prize three times. Other participants are looking forward to the day when this group retires.

This competitive spirit goes back to his youth when he began to develop a serious interest in birds with several neighbourhood friends.



They became known in local birding circles as Ottawa's "Bicycle Gang". Too young for cars, they toured across the region on two wheels, which proved to be an excellent way to observe birds. Not only did they get to see more this way, they were more attuned to the sounds around them. Bruce now does a large part of his birding by ear.

His interest in birds deepened after joining the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club and by 1975 he was leading bird hikes and taking part in Christmas bird counts, enabling him to share his knowledge with others.

For someone with his extensive experience, the number of interesting bird stories is legion but a few stand out. One involved a trip he was leading to Moosonee in 1996, on which a participant got stuck in the mud along the shore of Shippensands Island. In attempting to pull her out, he became mired in his hip waders. Eventually both escaped the mud but he had to grab onto logs to do it. Talk about a sinking feeling!

Surprisingly, Bruce's favourite birding spot has become the area around the power dam in Cornwall. After discovering a number of years ago that this locale is frequented by interesting waterbirds, including the occasional vagrant from the Atlantic Ocean, he has been making regular trips there. His efforts have turned up Northern Fulmars, Gannets, an Atlantic Puffin, Black-headed Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes and a Long-billed Murrelet from Siberia.

In spite of the lure of the rarities, one of his favourite birds remains the Chickadee. This amiable species always seems to be in good spirits. "They are friendly and always around. It could be the harshest day of winter yet they are always cheerful."

## TAVERNER CUP COMPETITION

It's not everyone's cup of tea but for those who enjoy the "sport" of birding, there's nothing like a little friendly competition to see who will count the most species in one day.

In this its second year, the all-Canadian Taverner Cup competition, held on May 30, was won by team members Mike Runtz, Peter Burke, Doug McRae, Colin Jones and a designated driver. They saw 171 species in the day.

There were 13 teams covering areas from Algonquin Park, south to Presqu'ile and the eastern part of the

province as well as west Quebec. As interest grows, the competition will receive more press coverage.

In addition to the competitive aspect of the day, the 55 observers had a number of good sightings. There were Spruce Grouse, Pine Siskins, Lincoln's Sparrow and a Blue-winged Warbler in Algonquin Park. Presqu'ile offered up Red Knot and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher while up the Rideau at Chaffeys Locks there were many Cerulean and Golden-winged Warblers, a Louisiana Waterthrush and a Red-headed

Woodpecker.

They had Yellow Rail in the Richmond Fen near Ottawa, a Red-necked Phalarope at Embrun and St. Isidore sewage lagoons and a pair of Eurasian Wigeon at the Alfred lagoon.

Despite the fact that they had Sandhill Cranes "lined up" in advance near Alfred Bog and in Eganville, none showed. They also reported that diving ducks were notably absent and that there were few migrant thrushes and warblers. This reflected what happened across the province this spring.