

## MEET OUR COVER ARTIST

**JULIE ZICKEFOOSE** worked as a Nature Conservancy naturalist for six years and was in charge (1983-86) of the Connecticut Least Tern/Piping Plover Recovery Program. She lives at the Burnham Brook Preserve in East Haddam, Connecticut, where she is now a full-time professional artist but still happily carries on the bird census on that property (up to 140 species in 1986, the all-time high in 23 years of records). Her art has appeared on the covers of *Birdwatcher's Digest* and *Parrots' Wood* by E. J. Fisk, and in *American Birds* and has been exhibited at the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell, at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard, and at the Peabody Museum in Salem. Julie is currently at work on illustrations for the book by Dr. William Montevecchi, *The Birds of Insular Newfoundland*, which will include the Roger Tory Peterson plates from the 1951 volume on Newfoundland birds by H. S. Peters and T. D. Burleigh. She is also illustrating Paul Spitzer's book on Ospreys to be published by Smithsonian Press. Inquiries about commission work, works available for purchase, and future exhibits should be sent to her at Box 84, Hadlyme CT 06439.

### THE COVER ILLUSTRATION Song Sparrow

*Melospiza melodia* by its Latin name is a finch that sings a pleasant song. According to one bird-song expert, "The vocal effort of the Song Sparrow is such a simple roundelay that one wonders why it received the name." Although few listeners may know by name the ubiquitous and unobtrusive bird that produces it, this familiar vocalization is a lovely part of the Massachusetts scene. The eminent ornithologist Margaret Morse Nice studied for an entire decade the Song Sparrows of Columbus, Ohio, "as they came, courted, mated, nested, raised their young, developed their songs, departed and returned -- following them through the generations, parent to child and even to great-grandchild until sometimes her writings begin to sound like the begetting portions of the Bible (J. Kastner, *A World of Watchers*, 1986, page 145)." She learned to distinguish her male birds through their songs and discovered that each male had at least six and some as many as twenty-four in his repertoire that were recognizable as uniquely that individual's.

Song Sparrows are present year-round in our state and nest in wet meadows or similar habitat. Some remain over winter, but most of the breeding residents depart in the fall for the southern United States, returning north in early March to establish by the end of April breeding territories (each about a third of an acre), one pair producing as many as three broods in a year, accounting in part for their abundance.

Dorothy R. Arvidson