

Letter from the Editor:

With the January-February 1975 issue, we had just completed our second year of publication, and our title read *Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts*. The front cover featured the sprightly Sanderlings that graced the issues from Volume 1 through Volume 5. On the back cover, the subscriber address was written by hand, and a 16¢ stamp was cancelled above it. A major article (typewritten) was an interview with the men who discovered the famous Ross's Gull of Newburyport.

Nearly thirty years later much has changed, but once again we are celebrating a birding phenomenon: the first New World appearance of a Red-footed Falcon on Martha's Vineyard. *Bird Observer* too has changed with the times. As creator and sponsor of the statewide birding website, Massbird.org, *Bird Observer* was actively involved in keeping the nationwide birding community informed about this bird, publishing photographs within hours after it was identified, and then updating its web page several times daily with additional links and information on the falcon.

Now it seems only natural that we take the next logical step with our involvement and publish an issue dedicated to this exciting event. Along with our extensive coverage, we're offering our first-ever color cover, a move unanimously endorsed by our directors, many of whom generously donated funds to cover the extra cost. Space considerations dictated by this focus have mandated that we omit several of our customary and popular features, including About the Cover and About Books. For this, we beg your indulgence. Be assured that they will reappear in the following issue.

We invite you to reminisce with us as you look back on *the* event of the summer. Find out how the falcon's discoverer, Vern Laux, almost let it get away. Read of Matt Pelikan's personal reflections on his experience with the bird. Do you remember the 1975 Ross's Gull? However you may answer, don't miss Wayne Petersen's and Paul Baicich's article on the striking parallels between these events. David Sibley (also our cover artist) works through the fine points of identification, while Julian Hough reviews the species' history of vagrancy and speculates on how it arrived at Katama. Bob Stymeist and Jeremiah Trimble challenge you to look for the next species new to Massachusetts, and Richard Veit discusses the provenance of vagrants.

And, finally, as a no-longer-suffering lifetime fan of the Boston baseball team, I take great pleasure in agreeing with Doug Chickering, who noted most aptly on the *massbird* listserv that he found it to be most propitious that the bird of the year — indeed the bird of the millennium — was a small gray falcon with Red Sox. Who knows what other miracles lurk in our future?

We hope you enjoy this very special issue as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Carolyn Marsh