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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

With this issue we initiate what I hope will become a regular feature of *The Auk*: a "Commentary" section. This is intended to provide a forum for brief essays or points-of-view on various matters of interest to ornithologists, or exchanges relating to papers published in recent issues of *The Auk*. In this issue Harold Mayfield addresses some aspects of the role of amateurs in ornithology, speaking from the position of an amateur who has made exceptional contributions to the field. Harold prepared this essay at the invitation of the Editorial Board, and we have invited several other individuals to prepare such personal statements on several other topics of current interest. But "Commentaries" may be contributed as well as invited. If you have strong feelings about some matter of importance in ornithology and wish to submit an essay or position statement, please do so. Alternatively, we would welcome suggestions of topics that you would like to see addressed, and the names of individuals you think the Editorial Board might consider inviting to prepare such a Commentary. The ground rules are these: (1) contributions should generally not exceed 750 words in length, and (2) all contributed material will be reviewed by the Editorial Board, which will advise the Editor of the acceptability of the material.

One other matter: In the January 1978 issue of *The Auk* I drew attention to the rather lengthy time lag between acceptance of manuscripts and their final publication in *The Auk* (17.5 months, on the average, for the papers in that issue). Reducing this time lag has been a major objective during the past year, and we have now lowered it about as far as is practical. The average time lag between acceptance and final appearance of articles in this issue (taking into account the actual date of issue of the "January" issue) is 5.6 months; the time lag for Short Communications is about a month longer.

Because of the large number of inquiries concerning the late delivery of the October *Auk* and therefore of the 1979 dues notices, we feel that we should provide some explanation for this delay. First, the transfer of the editorial offices from Oregon State University to the University of New Mexico in late summer created numerous delays, particularly involving the completion of the index for volume 95. Second, after the October issue was sent to press we experienced additional delays at Allen Press, because their publishing schedule is tight, and material for *The Auk* now had to be worked into other scheduled jobs. Third, because our turn-around time for publication has been reduced significantly, some delays were experienced when some authors did not return galley proofs as expeditiously as possible.

The print order for the 1979 dues notices was submitted to Allen Press early in the Fall and the dates for submission of dues were established to account for a possible delay in publication. Unfortunately, we did not anticipate the magnitude of the delays. We apologize for the inconvenience this has caused the membership, and we trust that in paying dues members will have used their discretion in remitting the appropriate amount.

We should also note that this issue of *The Auk* was delayed for some of the same reasons noted above, but also to allow sufficient time for members to pay their dues and thus enable the Treasurer to establish the press run for the January *Auk*. We intend to return to a regular publication schedule as quickly as possible.—JOEL CRACRAFT, *Treasurer*; JOHN WIENS, *Editor*.