

## The Blue List for 1982

*A restructured list redefines and refines the analysis of data from the field*

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WITH THIS, WE begin the second decade of the Blue List, a concept devised by Robert Arbib, and heralded in his article: Announcing—The Blue List: an “early warning system” for birds (*American Birds* 25:948-949). The fact that the list remains a valuable addition to our understanding of North American birds is a testimony to the importance of the concept. *American Birds* has been the sponsor of a full seasonal array of birder-supported bird censuses, the most important of which is the annual Christmas Bird Count. Many attempts have been made to convert these censuses of systematically obtained information to the needs of the academic and wildlife management communities.

The Blue List continues in this tradition of putting the count records to use. Last year Jim Tate summarized the ten-year history of each species that has had a place on the list. Beginning late in 1980, we solicited opinions from the birding, academic, and wildlife management communities on how to improve the nomination, data gathering, listing, and verification processes for potential Blue List species. We believe the list is better this year and will continue to improve as we incorporate the ideas we are receiving.

### THE LISTING PROCESS

BEGINNING WITH the cooperator's form, a number of changes are apparent. The *American Birds* reporting regions were requested along with the respondent's home address, to allow us to judge when they were different. The “status” categories were changed to a simple A, B, C, D, or E. The “C” category meant “holding its own since the last reporting period”, even if that was at a reduced level from historic records. In fact, some species were reported to us as “C—no population!” This did not present an analytical problem, so long

as there were comments provided to lend perspective on earlier population levels. “B” meant “down in numbers”, and “D” meant “up in numbers” since the last time they were reported. “A” and “E” meant “greatly down and greatly up in numbers”, respectively. We meant for the up side of the population estimates to be applied to only those species that had been previously listed or mentioned, in order to document recoveries as well as declines. Like the Threatened and Endangered lists, the ultimate goal of the Blue List is some day to delist every species.

The comments space was purposely left small in order to solicit succinct nominating comments. This worked well for those species for which there was adequate numerical documentation of the suggested recent decline. For those cases where the respondent had some specific data for our consideration, the small space did not prevent their inclusion. As you will see below, we have been placing increased emphasis on the concept that nominations from respondents need to be checked against systematically collected data such as Christmas Bird Counts, or Breeding Bird Surveys.

Analysis involved coding all records into a simpler form and placing them in computer storage, complete with their comments. By using a simple file sorting program, we could print out all the records for a single species. This application of modern microcomputer technology made the evaluation of a multitude of diverse reports and comments manageable for each species considered.

With the freedom from drudgery represented by a single page listing of every respondent's comments on each species, more time could be spent on the careful consideration of how each proposed and confirmed population decline should be listed, if at all. The final scheme does not differ markedly from previous listings except that the rules

and definitions for inclusion in a category have been more carefully set forth

### DEFINITIONS

THE RESULT HAS BEEN to create three groupings. The first and most important is the BLUE-LISTED GROUP of species. These are distinguished in the main list by *numbering*. Every species in this group has been brought to our attention as showing clear, recent signs of population decline in all or a major portion of its range. Further, the possible decline has been confirmed as well as possible through evaluations of systematic observations. This approach is based on the fact that only rarely has a species undergone a clear population decline that has not occurred over a sufficiently long time that one or another of our systematic means of assessment has not noted it. This means that very local or very temporary fluctuations can usually be distinguished from more widespread population declines worthy of consideration for Blue-listing. The evaluated systematic observations used included, whenever possible, the Christmas Bird Counts, the Winter Bird-Population Studies, the Breeding Bird Censuses, the Breeding Bird Surveys (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), the Nesting Season Reports, the Spring Migration Reports, and the Winter Season Reports. Most of the analyses used were provided by respondents.

The second group, SPECIES WITH SPECIAL CONCERNS, is involved in the delisting process. These are designated by inclusion in the main list, but they are *not numbered*, and therefore not formally Blue-listed. As Douglas Kibbe and others have pointed out, there is a tendency for a species to get on the Blue List and to remain on the list as observers repeat past nominations. The questionnaire for this year's list asked for an evaluation of past nomina-

tions that had actually increased in numbers since the last listing. This resulted in the removal of a number of species from the Blue List group. Since it would be unwarranted to list a species one year and then drop it totally the next, this second group contains a number of species that appear to be recovering from a past decline and are likely to be placed in the third group, should the recovery continue, or to be returned to the Blue List, should it suffer a reversal. In some instances a species has been nominated for Blue-listing by a number of respondents over a reasonably contiguous area. If systematic supporting information has not been provided or possibly does not exist, we have taken a conservative approach and placed that species in the Special Concerns group along with a request for supporting data. We believe this makes the Blue List itself more meaningful.

The third group, unlike the previous two, is not included in the main list. This separate list of LOCAL PROBLEM SPECIES comprises those nominees for which a population decline cannot be confirmed and which does not occupy a large contiguous area. Usually a number of respondents have mentioned a species from scattered parts of the continent, but have not documented their nominations. Other birders from the same Region may present conflicting opinions. Occasionally, the systematic information sources fail to confirm the apparent decline; or alternatively may indicate a decline when other respondents do not, as in the case of the Willet and Western Wood Pewee. However, we believe the opinions of active birders mean that a serious look should be given to any species nominated in good faith. When that look has not justified listing, we have documented their concern by including these species in this third group.

#### APPLICATION

THE FUNCTIONING of these three groups is such that a nominated species may be added to the highest group for which its nominating criteria make it eligible; a species suddenly and undisputedly in trouble may immediately be Blue-listed. Once Blue-listed, a species for which the degree of concern is questionable may be moved to a lower status on the main list, alerting respondents that more information is needed to justify continued Blue-



*Red-necked Grebe/Liz Hastings*

listing. Thus, a species can be gradually but systematically removed from Blue List consideration without losing track of it until its populations are stable at acceptable levels or increasing beyond these levels.

While we have dealt with both the listing and the delisting processes, there remain certain species which present special problems. For example, game species which have suffered population declines have been included in the second group. Game birds which have been nominated and confirmed by the above process, may indeed be at long-term population lows in all or part of their range, or they may be having a regional decline that would normally justify Blue-listing. In many cases this information may already be apparent to the Federal, State, or Provincial agency responsible for game species' management. If not, the nomination of a game species by a local, knowledgeable birder brings it to the attention of the responsible agency. This provides an opportunity for the agency to assess the population decline and to take appropriate action if the decline is confirmed. It is entirely possible that the population declines which alarm the birding community are at managed levels acceptable to the agency. Inclusion of a managed species in the second group becomes an independent audit of the agencies' population policies.

Some species, such as certain herons and loons, are of Special Concern because they are potentially susceptible to decline owing to some habitat vulnerability, but have not necessarily begun to decline; these have also been included

in Group 2. In the case of the Great Blue Heron, the vulnerability of the bird to loss of colony sites is often mentioned, but no well-documented area-wide declines caused by this factor have been demonstrated. The Common Loon's susceptibility to the potential loss of its prey base due to acid rain has been frequently postulated, but has not yet shown itself, so far as we can tell.

Further, several species with large, presumably healthy, non-North American populations, have North American populations which exhibit clear signs of problems. Often the North American population is in marginal habitat for the species, subject to fluctuations at the edge of its range, or simply supported by some unique feature of local habitat. One of these is the coastal race of the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila melanura californica*). The species occurs in San Diego County, California and south through Mexico to Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi and Guanajuato. The coastal race's habitat in San Diego County, "... is very fragmented and under heavy developmental pressure from avocado and real estate interests." (Weaver). Local agencies, with zoning and preservation responsibilities may choose to take action on their clearly documented local problem. For this reason, we have listed such cases in the second group (with Special Concerns) when they have been brought to our attention, especially if the local decline is documented. They have not been listed in the first group since their larger non-North American population may very well be doing fine. We cannot always be sure from the available infor-

mation, however.

In our first application of the system this year, we were fortunate to have, through the courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, statistical analyses for a number of species that had been previously Blue-listed. These analyses used Breeding Bird Survey data from 1966-1979 from the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Christmas Bird Count data from 1963-1980 as compiled by Carl Bock at the University of Colorado.

In addition, an increasing number of birders are supporting their nominations with systematically obtained information. Some birders, such as the Reids and Imhof, extracted trend data from past Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, or appropriate local counts for their nominated species. Others used simpler, but equally valuable systems such as "... I saw 1.7 birds per trip in 1981, but in the 1970s I was seeing 3.5 birds per trip", or "... previously seen on ten trips per summer in the right habitat, but never seen this summer on any of twenty-seven trips in the right habitat." This kind of input is extremely important when we attempt to take a nominated species and examine recent systematically-obtained information for confirmation of the observed decline.

The list of 69 species that were Blue-listed in 1981 has been reduced to a smaller group of 30, every one of which is deserving of our attention. We hope this will reinforce the Blue List as a meaningful commentary on the near-endangered birds of North America. The Special Concerns list is composed of 52 species. Some of these might have been listed on the Blue List if we had been aware of documentation for them. Others from the Special Concerns list seem to be on their way out of the lists. (It could be said the Special Concerns list functions as a clearing house for those entering and leaving the Blue List.) Beyond that, we intend to keep some species (*i.e.*, game birds that are at low levels) in the Special Concerns group. Twenty-three species were experiencing Local Problems in 1981. This year, 43 are so listed. We suspect there may be perfectly sound Special Concern species on this Local Problems list. We are quite confident, however, that none of the species on the Local Problems list qualifies as a Blue-listed Species by the criteria established above. If you believe we have improv-



*Ferruginous Hawk* J. David Renwald

erly listed any species, we would be pleased to consider (or in some cases reconsider) your documentation.

### SCHEDULING OF THE PROCESS

A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS have surfaced regarding the timing of our requests for Blue List nominations. We have not always gotten our request for nominations into an issue of *American Birds* as early as we would have liked. Delivery problems have often made a joke of stated deadlines. Up to the last day of writing this manuscript, a few were still coming in; the last of these will be saved for later consideration. Requesting the nominations in the September issue has caused consternation for many active birders. They have commented that with the holiday season, Christmas Bird Counts, Waterfowl Counts, and other pressures, they simply did not have the time to respond to the request for Blue List nominations.

The policy of confirming nominations with systematic information sources requires additional time to do a thorough job. For the 1980 and 1981 lists, little time has been available between the request for nominations and the publishing deadlines. The application of statistical analysis to the systematic information sources for those species that have been nominated is very time consuming as many of you who put such effort into preparation of your cooperator's forms know.

With the publication of this, the 1982 Blue List, we will go to a schedule of publishing the Blue List once every two years in an effort to alleviate this problem. Our goal is to document short-term (< 5 years) downward population

trends as an early warning system. By this means, the burden for the respondent to nominate annually is removed. The deadline for nominations to the next list can occur much earlier, rather than being concentrated in a short period between September and December. The analysis (confirmation) process also may begin shortly after the publication of a given list and continue for as much as one and three-quarters years. Time will then be available for careful consideration of all information sources that might reflect on the validity of a nomination.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE RESPONDENTS to the Blue List are dedicated to the need to keep a separate audit of those species which are in the midst of a potentially threatening population decline. The names of many of these respondents are listed with the comments that they made with the nominations. We have tried to capture the essence of the comments in the "quotes" we have used in the text. Names of other respondents are given with the supporting information they provided to insure that we would not overlook important facts. There is not room to list all of the respondents, but each may be assured their support is appreciated. A special thank you goes to Bob Croft, Bob Andrews, Frank Cole, Chandler Robbins, and Stan Anderson of the U.S.F.&W.S., Clait Braun, Douglas Kibbe, and Tom Strong, all of whom contributed useful criticisms or input into data gathering and analysis.

As in the past, comments and suggestions on any aspect of this process are welcome.

## The Blue List and the list of Species with Special Concerns

**Common Loon.** — Slightly down in numbers in the Northeast. For example, Hanisek reports for Hudson-Delaware that “fall numbers are down in 1981 at a local staging area. Only one day of 100+ birds this year, while 7-10 days of 100+ previously.” Stable or in a few cases slight increase farther south and west. Of Special Concern owing to continuing powerboat effects on nesting success and unknown potential of acid rain.

**Red-throated Loon.** — Kibbe reporting from Niagara-Champlain calls it stable and recommends it not be listed. Respondents from Hudson-Delaware, Northeastern Maritime and Middle Atlantic Coast regions felt it was down in wintering numbers on the coast.

**Red-necked Grebe.** — Considered stable in the central California area based on sequential counts. Shuford reports “Recent censuses by Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory personnel have shed light on the status in this area. See *American Birds* 35:226, 857 for baseline against which to make future comparisons.” Stable or down in numbers locally elsewhere.

**01. Western Grebe.** — Winter and migrant populations down in Mountain West Region. Mowbray reports: “The 1981 Christmas Bird Count had only 290 on Las Vegas Bay.” Appears to be stabilizing at a reduced level.

**White Pelican.** — Stable from all reporting regions. Grover from the Southwest gives an upbeat note: “As many, possibly more sightings; good this fall.” Of Special Concern due to vulnerability of nesting habitat. Better data in 1981 have shown that this vulnerability has not expressed itself as a significant regional decline.

**Double-crested Cormorant.** — Respondents report it as stable (7 reports), up in numbers (14 reports), or greatly up in numbers (3 reports). Two respondents from the Western Great Lakes Region suggested caution. Another from the same region reported: “150 nests on Lake Erie Islands; great increase” (P.A. Woodliffe). Remains of Special Concern because: we need to keep an eye on the Western Great Lakes population; we apparently don't know

any more about the population-controlling factors for this bird than we did in 1972 when it was first listed; potential effects of acid rain are often mentioned, but remain unproven.

**Great Blue Heron.** — Last year an area from southern Minnesota to Ohio was showing a possible decline. In the same area this year it appears stable or perhaps slightly up. Nesting area disturbances may well be controlling factors for this species. When it nests in known, established colonies, they can be protected more easily. But, it is known to be fickle about the colony location from year to year. Of Special Concern, but no evidence of need for Blue-listing.

**Reddish Egret.** — Richard Paul from Florida answered last year's question about what was happening to this species. “A few years ago . . . surveys in Texas, Florida and California suggested that Reddish Egrets were stable or increasing. . . . Reddish Egrets continue . . . to be rare but stable or increasing.” As a result, it has not been Blue-listed, but continues to be of Special Concern.

**Black-crowned Night Heron.** — Continued signs of recovery, but it has not yet begun returning to areas from which it was extirpated in the last ten years. Keller reports: “Former colony at Gary abandoned; no other known nest sites in Indiana.” Hanisek, reporting for Hudson-Delaware agrees: “Still nonexistent as breeder; bred locally in the 1950s.” Stable or doing well in most other areas.

**02. Least Bittern.** — Stable, but down in numbers, this year in parts of the Northeast (Niagara-Champlain Region). Still depressed population from Ontario south through the Western Great Lakes to the Middle and Southern Atlantic Coast regions. “Practically gone, except one local area where stable” (Western Great Lakes Region, Woodliffe). “Have found no nests or birds in several years” (Appalachian, Dobke).

**03. American Bittern.** — Reported severely down in the Northern Great Plains, Western Great Lakes, and Appalachian regions. Probably not so severe reductions from Ontario, Niagara-Champlain, Northeastern Maritime and down the Atlantic Coast regions. Re-

ported stable or slight increase farther south and west. Why? The Breeding Bird Survey has detected no significant trend.

**Wood Stork.** — At the northern end of its breeding range in Florida, it is drastically down in numbers. Nonbreeding and post-breeding numbers appear stable a little farther north. While we believe the United States breeding population is in trouble, we leave it as a species of Special Concern. How is it doing in the rest of its extensive range?

**Fulvous Whistling Duck.** — Reported as stable in the Central Southern Region, but greatly down in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region. Thus of Special Concern. If there is some additional information available, we should examine it.

**Trumpeter Swan.** — “For the most part, breeding habitat appears to be adequate. An improving population picture may be the reason for a 33 per cent increase in the 1980-1981 midwinter Trumpeter Swan survey in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. See also *AB* 35:789-793 for Alaska breeding census. Wintering numbers are increasing on the Pacific Coast. The chief [special] concern for the Trumpeter Swan is the evident low capacity of its existing wintering habitat, which currently is more serious for the interior birds (those wintering in the tri-state area) than for the Pacific Coast birds. So, while the species is doing well on its breeding grounds, it is backing itself into a corner as regards available wintering habitat. Nearly all of the Canadian birds winter in the tri-state area. It would take a single disease outbreak to obliterate the Canadian population” (Weaver).

**Black Duck.** — Black Ducks recognizable as such in the field are down in numbers in the Middlewestern Prairie Region. Mixed reports of stable and down in numbers from Hudson-Delaware, Niagara-Champlain, and Northeastern Maritime regions. It would be difficult for birders to obtain reasonable field data on the number of apparent Black Ducks carrying Mallard genes, so the amount of intermixing and the location of the zone of contact may be impossible to judge by this means

For these reasons, it remains of Special Concern.

**Redhead.** — Weber reports that in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region it is no longer seen on every winter trip. LeGrand reports a 30-year decline in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region. Subject to agency confirmation and appropriate action. Of Special Concern in the eastern United States.

**Canvasback.** — The migrant and winter populations of this elegant duck have been in a 30-year decline as attested to by several respondents. In some observers' records, last year's migration and wintering numbers were up. At what population do we want this species of Special Concern to stabilize?

**Turkey Vulture.** — Clearly increasing in parts of the East. Remains of Special Concern, however, in a few areas as a result of reports such as: "Summer roost at Malheur, Oregon down from 100 (1976) to 50 (1981)" (Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Region, Trost); "Average per trip afield first nine years was 5.1; average per trip afield last nine years was 4.2" (Southern Great Plains Region, Seyffert).

**Black Vulture.** — In 1981 several respondents from the Southern Atlantic Coast Region found this vulture greatly down in numbers. A response (LeGrand) from the same region this year reports: "A great decline since 1930 and a small decline in the last decade." Thus, it remains of Special Concern in this area. Elsewhere, its status is stable. In the Hudson-Delaware Region, it appears increased in (still small) numbers.

**04. Sharp-shinned Hawk.** — The consensus is: greatly down or absent as a breeder over much of eastern half of the continent. The stable or increased numbers reported from migration have been attributed by some to more hawk watchers.

**Cooper's Hawk.** — Populations remain below those of 30 years ago, but signs of being up slightly in numbers from Southwest, Mountain West, Niagara-Champlain, Hudson-Delaware, Middlewestern Prairies and Ontario regions. More individuals seen on migration and wintering in eastern half of continent. Remains of Special Concern until we can confirm these observations.

**Harris' Hawk.** — Stable in Southwest and Southern Great Plains regions. Like the Wood Stork and the Black-tailed Grackle, this bird is near the edge of its range in the United States. Of Special Concern until fuller knowledge of its



*Marsh Hawk* J. David Renwald

status across the border allows us to ignore local variations in populations.

**05. Red-shouldered Hawk.** — Nowhere has it been listed as up in numbers. The most optimistic report notes: "Now reported regularly from southwest Oregon. The recent increase in reports is only partly the result of increased field work" (Northern Pacific Coast Region, Contreras); "Common in Dismal Swamp but has practically vanished elsewhere" (Middle Atlantic Coast Region, Chandler).

**06. Swainson's Hawk.** — Most regions agree with Grover from the Southwest Region where its status is stable this year. However, in the Southern Great Plains Region, its breeding numbers are clearly down. Andrews reports a decline on the Kansas Breeding Bird Survey, but elsewhere the trends were stable or upward. In the Mountain West Region, it has declined or is absent from areas as a breeder.

**Ferruginous Hawk.** — Andrews reports: "The Christmas Bird Count indicated populations in the key Southern Great Plains wintering areas are basically stable." Seyffert reports: "Average number per trip afield between 1964 and 1972 was 0.34, while the average number per trip afield between 1973 and 1980 was 1.06." In the Southwest Region, Grover reports numbers are down greatly this winter. Gifford, reporting for the Mountain West Region mentions it as absent as a breeder since 1978. It appears to be holding steady at a reduced level overall or to be locally down. Of Special Concern, subject to confirmation.

**07. Marsh Hawk.** — Weaver noted a slight increase in the Southwest where mesquite growth has been "controlled."

Migrant and winter populations reported stable or up in numbers. Problems remain in the Northeast. Urbanization is cited as a cause. Breeding Bird Survey data show declines in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Minnesota. Additional confirmation that an area of decline extends eastward into the Upper Great Lakes Region is needed.

**Osprey.** — Many reports such as this one from the Middle Pacific Coast Region: "Perhaps the increase in actual population size is not determinable, but the number of young per occupied nest consistently increased between 1968 and 1981. In 1981, 70 percent of 117 nests reported were successful, producing 1.31 young per occupied nest; these rates are very high when compared with the literature" (Airola). It is a pleasure to see this bird respond to the changes in its environment; our initial concern, followed by the discovery of the effects of DDT (DDE and DDD), led to mitigating actions and to the current apparent recovery. Still of Special Concern. Two comments bear repeating: "Effects of acid rain on food availability bear watching" (Niagara-Champlain Region, Peterson); and, "Doing very well in Carolinas, yet Bald Eagles aren't—Why?" (Southern Atlantic Coast Region, LeGrand).

**Caracara.** — No nominations this year. Last year it was down at the northern edge (Florida and Texas) of its extensive range. Remains of Special Concern owing to its historic listing.

**American Kestrel.** — Respondents in the West have had their impressions confirmed by the Breeding Bird Survey which supports the belief that this species has no serious problems in the West. Most eastern respondents call it stable or up in numbers. No one said it was greatly down as a breeder or migrant. I suggest that those areas with a local problem should look into a nest box program. The apparent contiguous area of decline from last year was broken up this year.

**Merlin.** — Last year we had some delist recommendations from the edge of its breeding range. No additional breeding area suggestions have come from this year's respondents. Based solely on the migrant and winter reports, there is no apparent major area-wide decline.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse.** — Stable except in the Northern Great Plains Region where attendance at leks and hatching success are reported as low.

**Sage Grouse.** — Six respondents, of which four say “down in numbers”. Solid data are lacking, however. A great deal of effort is being expended to keep this species stable, albeit at a much lower level than 30 years ago. Of Special Concern to some birders.

**Bobwhite.** — Recovery from severe winter of 1979-1980 seems nearly complete. The local problems remaining may very well be related to land use patterns as has often been suggested.

**08. King Rail.** — As we requested last year, we have obtained a better picture of the status of this species. Steady decline in the Middlewestern Prairies, stable at low levels or none throughout its range, no nests for several years are the reports we have been reading. Only Ortego suggests population growth in the central South with the comment that the “population is low, but increasing in the rice fields of southwestern Louisiana.”

**09. Piping Plover.** — Breeding populations stable at very low levels, declining slowly, or absent. Most observers on the breeding grounds are greatly concerned about it. There appear to be reasonable numbers in some wintering areas along the Southern Atlantic Coast Region (LeGrand).

**10. Snowy Plover.** — Analysis of Christmas Count data by Andrews confirms last year’s statements that the Southern Pacific Coast and Middle Pacific Coast are suffering a serious decline: “The problem this species is having on the Pacific Coast is clearly substantiated by the Christmas Bird Count, with a 93 per cent decline in central California and a 68 per cent decline in southern California.” Nesting conditions inland can account for local problems.

**11. Long-billed Curlew.** — Either stable at last year’s low numbers (Southwest), or in reduced numbers in Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain and Southern Great Plains regions. Seyffert (Southern Great Plains) says, however: “Stable summer population; increased numbers in migration.” The Breeding Bird Survey reports a stable population.

**12. Upland Sandpiper.** — Slowly declining or stable at low levels or absent over much of its former eastern range: “small breeding colony in northern Lancaster County, Pa., decreasing” (Hudson-Delaware Region, Schutsky). May be related to maturation of habitats. The Breeding Bird Survey shows an in-

crease in the Northern Great Plains and a stable population in the East.

**Common Tern.** — Competition with gulls; pets, beach erosion, human intrusion and development are all problems for colonies. No regional pattern develops for the species, however. Of Special Concern.

**Roseate Tern.** — Continues to have problems in Gulf coast area. Mentioned as down in numbers in Northeastern Maritime Region. Stable or unreported elsewhere.

**13. Least Tern.** — From the Northeastern Maritime to the Central Southern regions, many recommendations for continuing on Blue List. Some other reports list it as stable at reduced levels. Too few were reported on the Breeding Bird Survey to compute a trend analysis. We feel it should be Blue-listed.

**14. Black Tern.** — While the species as a whole is stable or perhaps slightly down from most reporting regions, there is a clear problem in the Northern Great Plains Region. Harris reports it greatly down in numbers in Saskatchewan, possibly due to drought. The Breeding Bird Survey shows a continuing decline in all areas east of the Rockies.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo.** — Absent from southern California habitats where it was once common. Weaver reports from Escondido, California that it was “a former breeder, but none observed in six years; mature riparian woods in the area are highly disturbed.” Thus, of Special Concern. Elsewhere, the Breeding Bird Survey confirms that its populations are in good to excellent condition.

**Barn Owl.** — Populations appear to be low, but stable over most of range. Many opinions based on very few observations. Everyone of us who lives in its historic nesting range should consider a Barn Owl nest box program similar to those mentioned last year.

**Screech Owl.** — A good response to our request for more data because of last year’s local problems. The same scattered and localized areas of reduced populations. The Breeding Bird Survey shows populations declining in the west, stable in the east. Removed from the Blue List, but of Special Concern in some local areas.

**Burrowing Owl.** — Central California populations still low. Housing development in western states, that until recently destroyed dozens of black-tailed prairie dog towns annually, has

been slowed by high interest rates and inflation. Most populations appear stable this year.

**15. Spotted Owl.** — Of continued concern because of loss of old growth forest for the subspecies in the Northern and Central Pacific Coast regions. Airola reports: “The numbers of known pairs has increased during the last few years thanks to more intensive surveys throughout California, but old growth habitat is still declining due to logging.” Barred Owls are moving into Oregon providing competition. Apparent increases in the Mountain West Region may be owing to better coverage.

**16. Short-eared Owl.** — Populations down again at the edge of its regular breeding range in southern Ontario and the Niagara-Champlain Region. The reports of population reductions extend westward into the Middlewestern Prairie, Northern and Southern Great Plains regions.

**Whip-poor-will.** — Respondents from throughout the breeding range of this species report general declines. Some areas no longer have any Whip-poor-wills. We have long known that this species increases and decreases dramatically, but locally, over a period of years as the habitat is cut and regrows. The Breeding Bird Survey indicates that populations for the continent as a whole are stable.

**Common Nighthawk.** — Nowhere is it greatly up in numbers. Two large areas seem to be emerging where numerous observers report declines; the first is the Niagara-Champlain, Northeastern Maritime and possibly Hudson-Delaware regions, the second is the Northern and Southern Great Plains and the Mountain West regions. No reports from the Middle or Northern Pacific Coast regions.

**17. Ruby-throated Hummingbird.** — The center of the area of decline has settled in the Hudson-Delaware Region. For example, Deed reported, “No records in 1981!; few in 1980”; and Hanisek found, “It is as difficult to find in the breeding season as [it has been] in the past five years.” Despite the good populations elsewhere (Breeding Bird Survey), the problem appears to center in this area.

**Red-headed Woodpecker.** — Reported as greatly down in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region. Mixed reports from different observers indicate that the problems are very local within a region. Regions with reports of both stable and declining numbers include

Hudson-Delaware, Appalachian, and Niagara-Champlain. As before, fire-wood cutting, clearcutting for wood and agriculture are blamed. The Breeding Bird Survey shows the Southeast as the only area of widespread concern.

**Lewis' Woodpecker.** — Based on last year's reports and on the Breeding Bird Survey there appears to be a long-term decline. It was on the Blue List from 1975 to 1981. No reports on it this year. Remains of Special Concern owing to its historic listing. Confirmation requested.

**18. Hairy Woodpecker.** — Greatly up in numbers in Ontario. Is stable throughout the greatest part of its range. Reported greatly reduced or reduced in numbers from Niagara-Champlain Region down the Appalachians to the Central Southern Region, including the Middle Atlantic Coast. Also two reports indicate it is down in the Northern Pacific Coast Region and that the problem reported last year continues. The Breeding Bird Survey indicates stable populations in general.

**Eastern Phoebe.** — Local areas of increase and areas of decline in the Hudson-Delaware Region: "Summer Bird Count data show increase, 1979-1981" (Schutsky); "Still much scarcer as a late fall migrant than a decade ago and no real increase as a breeder in central New Jersey" (Gochfeld). Stable to somewhat down in the Middlewestern Prairie and Appalachian regions: "Seen less often, habitat being destroyed by tearing down of old bridges" (Middlewestern Prairies, McMullen). Somewhat down in Western Great Lakes and Southern Atlantic Coast regions: "No increase, has almost disappeared" (Western Great Lakes, Kelly). The Reids and Imhof report a 35 per cent reduction in Alabama based on the 1980 Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Count data.

**19. Willow Flycatcher.** — Stable or up in those regions reporting on this species (Hudson-Delaware, Niagara-Champlain, Southern Atlantic Coast). No respondents from the Middle Pacific Coast Region this year. No respondents from the Utah, Arizona, New Mexico areas where it was Blue-listed last year. Birders should pay special attention to this bird in the areas mentioned.

**Least Flycatcher.** — Reported down in numbers this year in Hudson-Delaware and Northeastern Maritime regions. Continues down in Western Great Lakes region. Of Special Concern until we have examined systematic information.

**Bank Swallow.** — Only Kibbe from the Niagara-Champlain Region responded this year with the request that we keep the species off the Blue List.

**Cliff Swallow.** — Reported down in the Southwest, Appalachian, Northeastern Maritime, Niagara-Champlain, and Middlewestern Prairie regions. The Breeding Bird Survey shows populations to be increasing or stable except in some of the northeastern states. Population declines noted may not warrant retention on the Blue List, but it appears to remain a species with Special Concerns in parts of the Northeast.

**Purple Martin.** — No discernible pattern of declines. Easily managed with well run nest box programs. The Special Concern for this species should tempt more of us to manage our local populations. Many guides to management exist in the popular and scientific literature.



*Purple Martin/Kevin Veara*

**20. Scrub Jay.** — Continued because the Florida population remains in trouble owing to clearing and orange grove development. Probable interaction with Blue Jay also involved.

**Short-billed Marsh Wren.** — The Northern Great Plains, Middlewestern Prairie, and Ontario regions form a discrete unit from which nominations for listing continue to come. Special Concern that a decline in the Middlewestern Prairies noted in 1981 may be spreading and becoming deeper. The Breeding Bird Survey indicates that the decline also involves the northeastern states. We need people from these areas to help us verify the extent of these declines.

**21. Bewick's Wren.** — Some local populations appear stable or increasing

slightly in the Mountain West, Southern Great Plains, Northern Pacific Coast and Southern Pacific Coast. Remains at lows, or absent, where it was once common in the Appalachian, Southern Atlantic Coast, and Central Southern regions. Mixed reports from the Middlewestern Prairie Region. The Breeding Bird Survey shows a continuing decline except in the West. Does not appear ready for delisting as was hoped in 1981. The comment by Harness in Missouri is intriguing: "The loss of small farms hurt this bird. It likes garages and sheds near woodlots."

**Carolina Wren.** — The last two lists reported general declines over much of the northern parts of its range. Now appears to be recovering in those areas. Reportedly never in trouble in the heart of its range (Ortego). Owing to its special problem of winter sensitivity, a true decline may be masked, should it occur. The Reids and Imhof for example, documented a decline in Alabama and northwest Florida.

**22. Eastern Bluebird.** — A number of people wrote to confirm the comments of 1981 that as long as nest box programs are well maintained, the bluebirds will do well. Those respondents who report long-term low numbers for their local areas are prime candidates for a well-managed nest box program. Regions with populations down, down greatly or with long-term low but stable reports for 1982 include Northeastern Maritime, Niagara-Champlain, Middlewestern Prairie, Hudson-Delaware, and Western Great Lakes regions, although some local areas in these regions are doing fine. Only in the Northeastern Maritime, Niagara-Champlain, and Middlewestern Prairie regions are the reports generally of greatest long-term reduced populations.

**Western Bluebird.** — See Eastern Bluebird. Gifford makes a good point that "... competition for nesting sites can't be managed in national parks."

**Black-tailed Gnatcatcher.** — See introduction, p. 127

**Mountain Bluebird.** — See Eastern and Western bluebirds.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet.** — Has not completed a rebound in Niagara-Champlain, Northern Great Plains, or Central Southern Regions. There may be a decline in the Mountain West Region.

**23. Loggerhead Shrike.** — A few respondents noted migrant and winter numbers up to break the pattern of very

serious breeding declines everywhere else. A *bona fide* Blue List species. One respondent (Chandler) reports seeing more Peregrines than Loggerhead Shrikes in 1981! The Breeding Bird Survey detected declines in all parts of its breeding range. Serious study of this species is warranted.



*Loggerhead Shrike*/J. David Renwald

**24. Bell's Vireo.** — A few small populations are holding on or increasing slightly in the Middlewestern Prairie and Southern Great Plains regions. The Breeding Bird Survey shows a decline on the Osage Plains of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The loss of riparian habitat which includes thick overgrown shrubbery may well be to blame in the Far West. The mesquite forest population declines are not so easily explained.

**25. Golden-winged Warbler.** — Continues to experience swamping by Blue-wingeds. Still holding on in Hudson-Delaware north of the Wisconsin Moraine and in the Pocono Mountains. Dempsey has observations that suggest that Golden-winged Warbler is also moving northward in Wisconsin and Minnesota into areas where it is free of Blue-wingeds, but the Breeding Bird Survey shows a net loss for Wisconsin. Several other observers suggest traditional habitats are outgrowing Golden-wingeds. Peake suggests that restarting plant succession at surface mine reclamation and clear cutting sites may favor the Golden-winged in Virginia.

**26. Yellow Warbler.** — Significant declines were found on the Breeding Bird Survey in Idaho and the Dakotas, but there were widespread increases in the East. We present the Fish and Wildlife Service data first because we continue to receive disparaging remarks from some birders who simply refuse to believe that such a common bird is in trouble anywhere. We received reports of declines from the Middle Pacific Coast, and Southern Pacific Coast re-

gions (and the Mountain West, Central Southern, Hudson-Delaware, and Western Great Lakes regions). The Reids and Imhof propose that the cause of the declines may be loss of tropical forest.

**27. Eastern Meadowlark.** — Last year's trend of declines in the Western Great Lakes and Hudson-Delaware continues. The Breeding Bird Survey shows widespread declines in the eastern states, attributed in part to the severe winters of 1976-77 and 1977-78 (Robbins).

**Orchard Oriole.** — While some species may be doing so well in some places that it seems obvious they should not be listed under any circumstances, Breeding Bird Surveys showed that populations decreased in a belt extending from Kansas to Alabama. Further, the Reids and Imhof have discovered a 40 per cent ten-year decline in the Central Southern Region; they blame loss of tropical habitat.

**28. Dickcissel.** — The Middlewestern Prairie, Northern Great Plains and Southern Great Plains regions reported local increases, mixed with comments on overall declines. Since last year's decline continues, it appears to be of more than just Special Concern.

**Lark Bunting.** — A newly listed species, it is of Special Concern solely because of the report of Andrews: "The Breeding Bird Survey indicated declines in the key states of North Dakota and South Dakota . . . The general decline noted by the Breeding Bird Survey is corroborated by the Christmas Bird Count. Significant declines were noted in Texas (90 per cent). The overall trend for the entire winter range from southeastern California east to Texas is a 62 per cent decline."

**Savannah Sparrow.** — Reported down in the Mountain West Region. The Breeding Bird Survey confirmed stable populations throughout its range.

**29. Grasshopper Sparrow.** — Rather than resulting in delisting as hoped last year, additional information confirms declines. We have conflicting reports of declines and increases from several areas. Declines were apparent from Breeding Bird Survey data in key breeding states from the Dakotas and Nebraska east to New York and Maryland.

**Baird's Sparrow.** — No respondents this year. Possibly last year's respondents who said it was down on the breeding range (Manitoba) and the winter range (New Mexico) will want to



*Lark Bunting*/J. David Renwald

check the census data. Remains of Special Concern owing to its historic listing.

**Henslow's Sparrow.** — Reports of continued declines of stable but low level populations from the Central Southern, Southern Atlantic Coast, Middle Atlantic Coast, Hudson-Delaware, Niagara-Champlain, Ontario and Western Great Lakes regions. Of Special Concern until confirming systematic information is available.

**30. Bachman's Sparrow.** Our request for more information last year has resulted in a nearly universal response in favor of listing. Greatly down or down in the Middlewestern Prairie, Appalachian, Central Southern and Southern Atlantic Coast regions. LeGrand reports from the Southern Atlantic Coast that ". . . Populations in the coastal plain are down. Nearly gone from the Piedmont." He suggests competition from Field Sparrow in Piedmont as a reason for the decline. The Breeding Bird Survey shows a decline in the Lower Coastal Plain.

## LOCAL PROBLEM SPECIES

THE FOLLOWING SPECIES were nominated and commented upon by two or more respondents in adjacent areas, or in some cases by one respondent who nominated a species with good documentation of a local problem.

**Horned Grebe.** — "Great decrease in wintering numbers last two years; too early for me to say if a problem exists; need comments from other regions" (Southern Atlantic Coast, LeGrand).



**Pied-billed Grebe.** — “Only known breeding locations in state in 1981 are Kearny, N.J. (16 families) and Pedricktown, N.J., (1 family)” (Hudson-Delaware, Kane).

**Green Heron.** — “I see fewer of them each year. I think the New Jersey salt marsh population is about 25 per cent lower than four years ago and the Long Island (Jones Beach) population is certainly down by 33 to 50 per cent from a decade ago” (Hudson-Delaware, Gochfeld).

**Great Egret.** — Recommended from the Central Southern (greatly down), Western Great Lakes (stable), and Middlewestern Prairie regions, where it is called a “steadily decreasing nester” (Dani).

**Snowy Egret.** — Recommended from the Central Southern (greatly down), and from the Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain regions, where Trost reports “Eggshell thinning seen; several local breeding populations crashed.”

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron.** — “Sixty-five per cent of the New Jersey population on barrier islands threatened by development” (Hudson-Delaware, Kane).

**Glossy Ibis.** — “A tremendous population crash on the coast in the last five years; common prior to 1970, now uncommon on much of coast; pressure from White Ibis and/or Cattle Egret, plus summer storms” (Southern Atlantic Coast, LeGrand).

**Bufflehead.** — “Only breeding areas in California are in the southern Cascades where perhaps only 100 pairs breed; previously known breeding areas now support none or few pairs due to clearing and natural fall of snags in and around reservoirs. . . ; a number of new pairs. Still, the population is certainly down from what it was in the 1950s and 1960s” (Middle Pacific Coast, Airola).

**White-winged Scoter.** — Same pressures as on Surf Scoter in the Western Great Lakes; also “still very low in boreal Saskatchewan where they do not seem to be recovering to the population levels of the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s” (Northern Great Plains, Haru).

**Surf Scoter.** — Population pressure caused by “development of harbors for power utilities and also heavy concentration of fishing boats with the introduction of salmon fishing” (Western Great Lakes, Inicky).

**Black Scoter.** — In the Western Great Lakes Region, the same pressures as on the two scoter species above.

**Swallow-tailed Kite.** — “Barely hanging on as a breeder” (Southern Atlantic Coast, LeGrand).

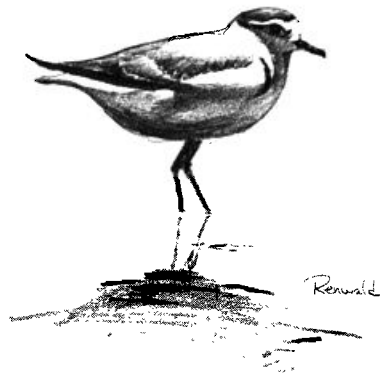
**Goshawk.** — “Although known nest groves are protected on U.S. Forest Service lands, probably a number are destroyed by logging each year; . . . it is unknown if old growth is currently limiting” (Middle Pacific Coast, Airola).

**Spruce Grouse.** — Peterson reports in the strongest terms an “island-effect” decline in upstate New York, but does not elaborate further.

**Clapper Rail.** — Stable, except Gochfeld reports from Hudson-Delaware that compared to five years ago, the population is greatly reduced.

**Wilson’s Plover.** — Jackson reports that populations of this species are down along the Mississippi coast.

**Mountain Plover.** — Grover reports that in the Southwest Region it “appears to be getting rarer.”



Mountain Plover/J. David Renwald

**Common Snipe.** — “Drastically down in numbers in normal areas; 1980 was bad, but 1981 was even worse” (Western Great Lakes, Gresser).

**Willet.** — “The Christmas Bird Count showed a 91 per cent decline in southern California.” (Andrews). New this year and of Local Concern in southern California.

**Marbled Godwit.** — “There was a 63 per cent decline noted from the Christmas Bird Count in southern California” (Andrews). New this year and of Local Concern in southern California.

**Forster’s Tern.** — “Minnesota state survey showed fewer colonies than previously thought” (Eckert).

**Chuck-will’s-widow.** — On the Southern Atlantic Coast, the “nightly chorus has changed to an occasional soloist” (Ristau); in the Southern Great Plains Region, the picture is unclear but indicates a slight decline” (Boyd).

**Poor-will.** — “Barely hanging on, owing to urbanization” (Mountain West, Brockner).

**Chimney Swift.** — In the Middlewestern Prairie Region it seems to be a decreasing nester (Dani). The Breeding Bird Survey shows stable populations throughout its range.

**(Red-shafted) Flicker.** — “Lowest in ten years, possibly due to tree cutting?” (Mountain West, Brockner). “None seen in 1980 or 1981” (Southern Great Plains, Hicks).

**Eastern Kingbird.** — “Very few on Breeding Bird Survey routes where formerly common: where 17 were seen in 1980, none were found in 1981.” (Appalachian Region, Peake). “About 50 per cent as numerous as 20 years ago” (Hudson-Delaware, Gochfeld).

**Acadian Flycatcher.** — “Declined nearly every year at Cookville, Tennessee since 1978 based on Breeding Bird Count data” (Simmers).

**Rough-winged Swallow.** — Ristau is very concerned about no nestings in four years in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region.

**Tufted Titmouse.** — Two respondents from the Middlewestern Prairie Region are very concerned. For example, McMullen comments: “Uncommon all year long; absent in town at feeders since December, 1979! Haven’t seen it in town anywhere since!”

**House Wren.** — In the Mountain West, and less so in the Middlewestern Prairie and Western Great Lakes regions, a decline has been noted. A Colorado observer (Brockner) reports it is the lowest in five years.

**Swainson’s Thrush.** — “In 1920 at least to 1936, the most abundant *Hyalocichla* on the peninsula; this year and the previous two, only a single individual was found” (Western Great Lakes, Hermann).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet.** Local problems in the Niagara-Champlain and Northern Great Plains regions. Increasing in many areas.

**White-eyed Vireo.** — “Possibly affected by similar problems as the Bell’s



Renwald

Foster's Terns/J. David Renwald

**Purple Finch** — Wiggins reports from Massachusetts that this species is "being replaced by House Finches which are still increasing. An area censused in Gloucester always had anywhere from six to 12 pairs of Purple Finches; now there is one pair or none." A drop is also mentioned in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region (Chandler).

**Lesser Goldfinch.** — Brockner recorded none in the Mountain West Region during 1981. This represents an eight year low in his records.

**Baird's Sparrow.** — This species reported static at low levels in the Southwest and the Northern Great Plains regions, yet the Breeding Bird Survey indicates a continuing decline.

**Vesper Sparrow.** — Declining in the Northeast (Hudson-Delaware, Niagara-Champlain, Northeastern Maritime, and Middle Atlantic Coast regions), as confirmed by the Breeding Bird Survey. Doing fine in the West, where Croft reports: "Among the eight states for which we examined data, no declines of any importance were found."

**Chipping Sparrow.** — Respondents in the Mountain West, Middlewestern Prairie, and Ontario regions report reductions in numbers.

—7485 Quartz Street,  
Golden, Colorado 80401

Vireo. The decline has been noticed for 5-6 years" (Southern Great Plains, Boyd).

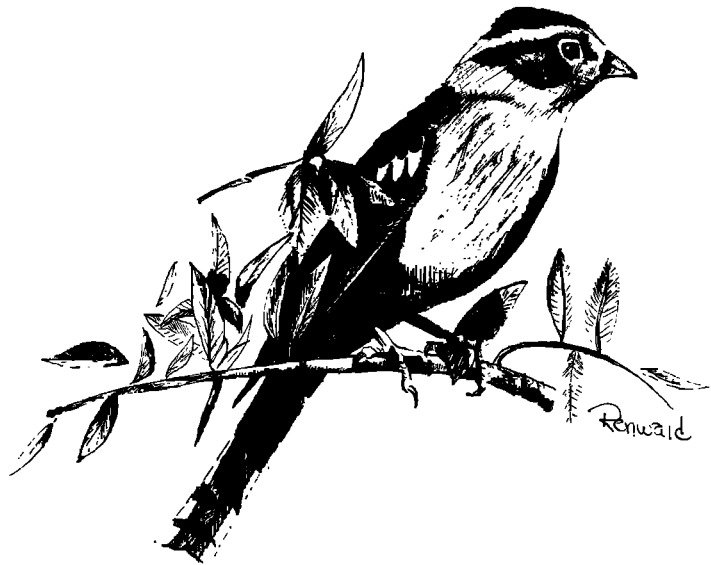
**Yellow-throated Vireo.** — "Numbers less than five in an area where 20-30 could be found" (Middlewestern Prairie, McMullen).

**Solitary Vireo.** — "Habitat alteration eliminated the only breeding population in the mid-1970s" (Southern Atlantic Coast, Carter).

**Warbling Vireo.** — Still down locally in the Mountain West, Middle Pacific Coast, and Middlewestern Prairie regions.

**Common Yellowthroat.** — Reports of declines continue from the Mountain West, Northern Great Plains and Southern Great Plains regions.

**Yellow-breasted Chat.** — Stable at reduced or low numbers in the Hudson-Delaware Region. Reported disappeared from Utah areas where formerly common (Gifford). The Reids and Imhof report that Breeding Bird Survey analysis shows a three per cent decline over its range. They propose the loss of tropical forests as the cause.



Vesper Sparrow/J. David Renwald