

AMERICAN BIRDS

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. . . from the editor's desk

Now, in midsummer, it is time to sharpen your shorebird identification skills. The millions of cosmopolitan peeps and stints that have survived their sometimes chaotic annual breeding cycle have left the high latitudes of their circumpolar breeding distribution and are *en route* to their southern nonbreeding areas, some of which are well beyond the confines of the North American continent. These long-distance migrants can be found during this season and well into autumn continentwide and in oftentimes confounding plumages. For your field-viewing pleasure and in response to the requests of so many, we have here repeated one of our great seminal articles of 3 years ago: 'Field identification of smaller sandpipers within the genus *Calidris*' by Veit and Jonsson.

Marshall Howe's 'Wetlands and waterbird conservation,' is a noteworthy contribution to our International Council for Bird Preservation series. We exhort you to keep in mind his cogent points and some of the environmental outrages visited upon the nation's wetlands while shorebirding your favorite haunts this season. Criticizing ecological errors, commending noteworthy contributions to the protection of our natural heritage, and monitoring the progress of preservation programs is the responsibility and obligation of each of us. Conservationists heaved an enormous sigh of relief when finally, in April 1987, the United States became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention. This is the only international wildlife conservation treaty whose focus is the protection of habitat. As a contracting party, the United States has the obligation to formulate and implement land use planning for designated wetlands. In short, this means that the federal government has the moral obligation to create new wetland reserves.

What better time for birders nationwide to voice their views? The useful momentum generated by accession to the Ramsar Convention clears the way to designate more areas "wetlands of international importance."

The time is ripe for you, as a shorebird enthusiast, to sit down and write an extremely political letter. Do your share to preserve the wondrously complex ecosystems our migratory shorebirds depend upon.

Communicating with your elected representatives is no more difficult than sending a letter. Influencing the legislative process doesn't mean traveling to the nation's capital. Writing letters and making telephone calls are effective and time-honored ways of delivering your political message. Because these are *elected* officials, every message is very carefully recorded in the offices of our congressional delegates. More importantly, voiced viewpoints of voters are carefully considered when it comes right down to voting on a particular issue.

Air your point of view. Use a letter to your members of Congress as an opportunity to inform him/her about the importance of wetlands preservation. Urge your state and federal representatives to designate Bowerman Basin in Washington state, Cheyenne Bottoms, Kansas, and San Francisco Bay as complements to the four wildlife refuges already identified as "wetlands of international importance."

If you really care about all of those peeps you enjoy seeing as they migrate through your area, let your representative know how you feel. Stay tuned!!

S.R.D.

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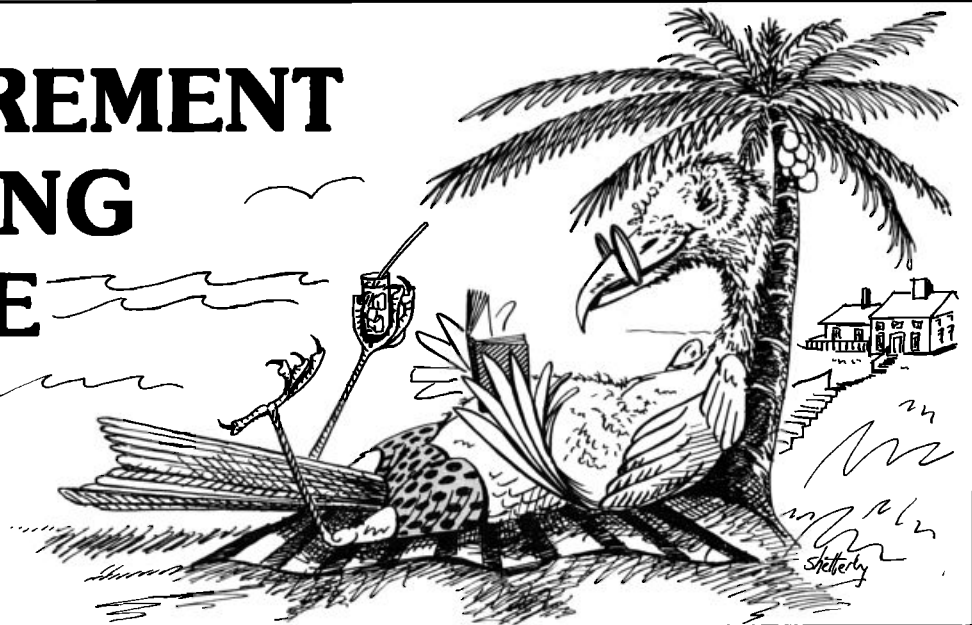
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Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) Illustration/Jim Lish

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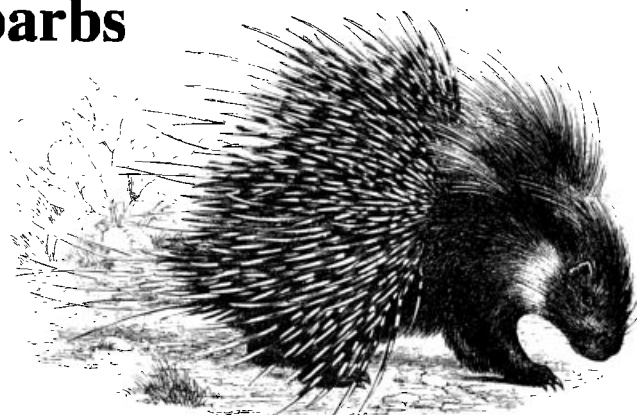
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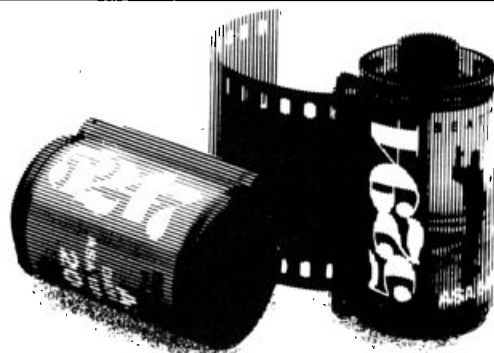
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