

RETORTS, REFLECTIONS, AND THOUGHTFUL REFUTATIONS

I commend J.P. Myers for eloquently articulating the pressing need for meaningful long-term biomonitoring programs on birds, and especially for pointing out the inadequacy of current programs to provide information as to the causes of the alarming trends that are being documented. In particular, current biomonitoring efforts, including the Breeding Bird Survey, Breeding Bird Censuses and Winter Bird-Population Studies, and Christmas Bird Counts, all suffer from the same shortcoming: they fail to separate the effects of productivity (birth rate effects) for the effects of survivorship (death rate effects). Without these critical data, it is difficult, if not impossible, to test hypotheses regarding mechanisms to account for the observed population changes.

I would like to point out a newly-established program designed to help overcome these current limitations: the Monitoring Avian Productivity (MAP) project being coordinated by the Institute for Bird Populations. This continent wide project utilizes constant effort mist netting during the breeding season to provide data on landbird productivity (young to adult ratios), survivorship (age-specific return rates of adults), and population trends (capture rates of adults). The effort will serve to link amateur banders and professional researchers in a cooperative endeavor, and to provide an opportunity for banders to make an important contribution to the understanding and conservation of bird populations. About 23 stations have been established across the continent for the 1989 pilot study, including the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest, the Point Reyes, Beaverhill, and Driftwood bird observatories, the Coyote Creek Riparian Station, and several National Wildlife Refuges and private banding operations. Moreover, the approach is not new. A Constant Effort mist netting program has been operated by the British Trust for Ornithology since 1981, and other constant effort banding projects are cur-

rently being established in Finland, France, the Netherlands and Denmark, and are being considered for New Zealand, Spain, and Israel.

Let me also suggest that J.P.'s diatribe might not really have been strong enough. Many of the threats currently facing North American and planet-wide bird populations are truly global in scope: global warming, loss of stratospheric ozone, toxic pollution, low-level radiation, and the rampant destruction and degradation of natural habitats of all kinds. The human species has embarked upon a global ecological experiment, the ramifications

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of which may challenge the greatest extinction rates and fastest rates of range change ever recorded in the fossil record. And the global scientific community has not yet even put into place the means for recording the data from this experiment. We not only need better nationwide biomonitoring efforts, but truly well-coordinated globalwide efforts as well.

The Institute for Bird Populations is dedicated to fostering a global approach to studies of the changes in the abundance, distribution, and ecology of bird populations. For more information and to find out how you can help, write the Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 554, Inverness, CA 94937.

**David F. DeSante,
Institute for Bird Populations,
Inverness, CA.**

Pete Myers is always stimulating, and his comments on species limits in birds in the Winter 1988 *American Birds* (Vol. 42, No. 5) contain a notion that is of great significance: the increased divergence between the ornithological and birding communities. Far from being a future projection, I have seen this happen since I took up birding in 1950 and subsequently became a professional ornithologist but never lost my enthusiasm for birding.

Bird studies have contributed seminal material in almost all fields of biology. Our knowledge of birds is far greater than their mere numerical representation in the animal kingdom would suggest. This is, of course, because they are diverse, diurnal, and delightful, but, as Myers pointed out, it is also because of the great contribution made by amateurs to the field of ornithology.

For a long time, birders and ornithologists were the same people, many of them carrying both binoculars and collecting guns into the field. Amateurs contributed much the same sort of information gleaned from nature by professionals. Only in this century has there been a divergence in the two groups, with the explosive and gratifying increase of people who watched birds purely for enjoyment. Without formal ornithological training, these birders have still contributed a vast amount of information to ornithology. In this comfortable dichotomy, professionals and amateurs have benefited from each other.

In the past few decades, "sport birding" has turned birding from passive to active recreation, emphasizing an approach at a greater distance from its ornithological roots. The 2000 birders who recently converged on a Golden-winged Warbler in a Kent suburb exemplified an activity as far from mid-twentieth-century birding as a crowd at a soccer meet is from an afternoon of croquet! Nevertheless, the almost incredible level of knowledge of dis-

continued on page 373