

National Audubon Society

Summer 1994 Volume 48 No. 2

# FieldNotes





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# From the Editor

Welcome to the new *National Audubon Society Field Notes*. Last year for financial reasons, the Society decided to scale back *American Birds* but to continue publishing the quarterly regional reports and Christmas Bird Counts. This publication is the first of the scaled-back magazines and follows in the proud tradition of its predecessors. *Audubon Field Notes* was published by the National Audubon Society from 1947 through 1970. *American Birds*, born in early 1971, incorporated *Audubon Field Notes*. The success of this and each of those other publications was due, in part, to a host of talented regional and Christmas Bird Count editors. It would be impossible to overemphasize the value of their contributions.

The boom in birding, which appears to still be in its infancy, has resulted in so many people birding, seeing noteworthy birds, and sending reports of them to our Regional Editors that some of our best and brightest are swamped. Our editors have masses of material to read, consider, digest, and analyze. The stresses and tensions of the evaluation process are not insignificant. They continue but with mounting pressures of increased time and effort and with the nagging regrets for the records left out. Regional Editors are an heroic breed. I consider it the greatest privilege and pleasure to work with them.

After 40 years of devoted service, Tom Rogers, our regional editor of longest standing, has decided to retire in order to get more time to work on his book on the natural history and ecology of the inland northwest. He began writing for us in 1954, when his present Idaho-Western Montana Region was the Palouse-Northern Rocky Mountain Region. However can we thank you, Tom, for all of those years and all that work? You are a role model to us all. Dan Svingen, who has been submitting sightings to us for at least 15 years, has been writing the last few

columns with Tom and we welcome you, Dan, to the fold.

Harry LeGrand—industrious, knowledgeable, and extraordinary author of the Southern Atlantic Coast Region since 1976—retired in 1993, and Ricky Davis, perhaps the most active birder in North Carolina over the past decade, and member of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee, celebrates his fourth column in this issue. We owe you an enormous vote of gratitude, Harry, and belatedly but sincerely we welcome you, Ricky.

Harry Armistead singlehandedly wrote the Middle Atlantic Coast regional report for nearly 15 years. He managed a huge reporting network, wrote well-crafted and accurate accounts, and somehow managed to still spend a good deal of time in the field. Since his retirement last year, his

shoes have been filled by Eirik Blom, coordinator of the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas, Michael O'Brien, artist, photographer and one of Maryland's very active fieldman, Eugene Scarpulla, organizer of pelagic trips out of Ocean City, and Brian Patteson, leader of pelagic trips and one of Virginia's keen birders.

Your efforts have been deeply appreciated, Harry. To the new quartet, we extend a warm welcome.

A very belated but nonetheless sincere welcome to Ron Martin, who joined the Northern Great Plains team last year.

After 10 years and 42 seasonal reports, Ron Weir, Ontario regional editor, passed the reins to Ron Ridout in late 1992. Ridout's reports have appeared in print since early 1993 and we are delighted to have him on our team. We take this opportunity to publicly thank Ron Weir and hope he is succeeding as editor of the *Journal of Chemical Thermodynamics*.

To each of our recently retired editors, we send loud applause and best wishes in all of your endeavors. To each of our new editors, we send you cheers for picking up the torch.

Stay tuned!!



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ON THE COVER: Whimbrel in California.  
Photography by A&E Morris/VIREO.

# How to Read the Regional Reports

Birds have no respect for range maps. Bird distribution in North America is constantly changing, as birds expand their ranges into new areas, disappear from former strongholds, or alter their patterns of migration.

Our knowledge of bird distribution is also changing constantly, as discoveries continue to come in. Keeping up with all these developments is a challenge for ornithologists, conservationists, and birders.

The Regional Reports, published four times a year, contain a wealth of information about our dynamic birdlife. To those seeing the reports for the first time, they might appear difficult or technical, but they are not; anyone with any birding experience will find the reports easy to understand. We invite you to read the report from your area of the continent; we predict that the information there will alternately surprise you and confirm your ideas about birdlife in your region. To help you get started, here are answers to some questions that may occur to first-time readers.

## What kind of information is included, and do the Regional Editors report everything that's reported to them?

Regional Editors do not report every sighting of every bird. Such a list would be huge, unwieldy, and not very useful. Instead, they solicit reports from as many observers as possible, screen the records for accuracy, choose those that are most significant, look for trends and patterns of occurrence, connect scattered bits of information, and ultimately come up with a concise, readable summary of the real bird news—the important avian events and trends of the season throughout their region.

## Why are there abbreviations in the text?

We abbreviate some frequently used words and phrases to save space. Most are easy to understand and remember. (See the following list of abbreviations.) In addition, some Regional Editors use shortened versions of the names of birding hot spots; they list these local abbreviations in a separate paragraph, just after the introductory comments and just before their main species accounts.

## What do the initials in parentheses mean?

Most records published in each report will be followed by initials, to indicate the source, the person(s) who found or reported the bird(s) mentioned. The initials may be followed by *et al.* (short for *et alia*, meaning “and others”), or preceded by *fide* (literally, “by the faith of”—meaning that this is a second-hand report, and the person cited is the one who passed it to the Regional Editor).

There are good reasons for giving credit to the observers involved. Readers may be reassured about the accuracy of surprising sightings if they know who the observers were; researchers who want to know more about a certain record may be able to contact the observers directly.

## Who sends in their sightings?

All observers are invited to send in notes to their Regional Editors: details on rare sightings, species that were scarcer or more numerous than usual during the season, unusual concentrations on migration, and so on. Reading the reports for your region for a few seasons is the best way to find out what kinds of information are desired. Although the Regional Editors cannot cite every record that they receive, every contributor helps them to produce a more thorough and accurate summary.

## Why are some bird names in heavier type?

We use boldface type to draw attention to outstanding records of rare birds. General categories of birds that the Regional Editors would place in boldface would include: any species that has been recorded fewer than 10 times previously in a given state or province; any new breeding record for a state or province; or any bird totally outside established patterns of seasonal occurrence. (For the most part, records are not boldfaced unless they are backed up with solid details or photographs.) Birders who like to know about rare birds (and most of us do) can get a complete rundown of the season's outstanding rarities by scanning all the Regional Reports for those boldfaced birds.

## What are the sections marked “S.A.”?

“S.A.” stands for “Special Attention” (and, by coincidence, is pronounced “essay”). The purpose of the essays is to draw attention to noteworthy phenomena or trends.

Likely topics include new population trends or new patterns of bird distribution, unusual invasions or migration events, field research projects that have yielded new data, specific conservation problems that have an impact on birdlife, or detailed discussion of some outstanding (or perplexing) rare bird record. Experienced readers make it a point to flip through all the reports and read all the S.A.s, even in regions where they do not read the rest of the text.

## Standard Abbreviations used in the Regional Reports

Abbreviations used in place names:  
In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Other abbreviations:

Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
Hwy	Highway
I.	Island or Isle
Is.	Islands or Isles
Jct.	Junction
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mi	mile(s)
Mt.	Mountain or Mount
Mts.	Mountains
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
Ref.	Refuge
Res.	Reservoir (not Reservation)
S.P.	State Park
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area

Abbreviations used in the names of birds:

Am.	American
Com.	Common
E.	Eastern
Eur.	European or Eurasian
Mt.	Mountain
N.	Northern
S.	Southern
W.	Western

Other abbreviations and symbols referring to birds:

ad.	adult
imm.	immature
juv.	juv. or juvenile
sp.	species
†	means that written details were submitted for a sighting
*	means that a specimen was collected
♂	male
♀	female
CBC	Christmas Bird Count



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# I returned home only to discover my sketch pad was blank.



*Amy Cunningham recalls  
one of Mississippi's  
state parks.*

**C**ameras with long lenses may be the most expedient way to capture waterfowl, but I've always derived more satisfaction putting simple pencil to paper, then trusting my memory when I'm at the easel. Besides, I paint strictly for pleasure, not for the purists.

That's probably a good thing, too, considering I came home blissfully empty-handed from my long weekend in Mississippi. I couldn't help it. When I looked up and saw the Great Blue Heron wading in the shallows, I froze. He was almost touchably close and I knew if I moved, he'd take flight.

In my mind's eye, I hurriedly sketched page after page in exquisite detail. I filled the pages front and back. By the time he'd flown away, I knew every feather and the glint of his obsidian eye.

I don't know how long we looked at each other in our total stillness. It was long enough for the light to change, of that I'm sure. And it was long enough for my heart to change as well, because in the eye of a heron, deep in the heart of Mississippi, I knew I'd found a state of grace.

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