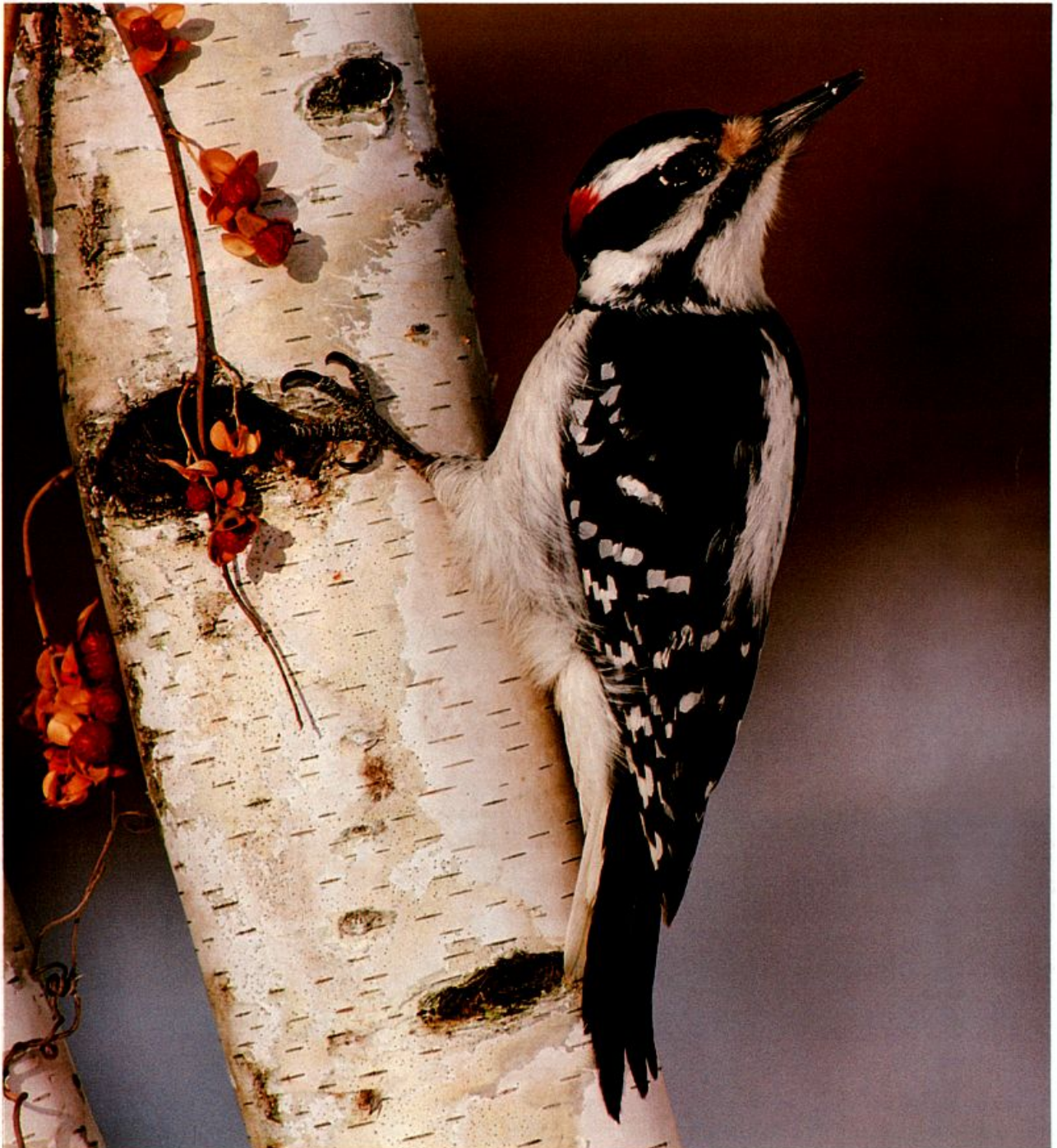


National Audubon Society

Winter 1994 Vol. 48 No. 5

Field Notes



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From the Editor

The National Biological Service (originally named National Biological Survey) and its functions are under attack in Congress. In a rush to implement the Republicans' "Contract with America," cut the budget deficit, and reduce the size of the federal government, Congress may eliminate the NBS and provide no funds for the surveys, research, and monitoring that it was set up to conduct. The first 100 days of the 104th Congress are crucial. Your help is needed to ensure that Congress does not roll back the clock and adopt a "head-in-the-sand" approach to managing our Nation's natural heritage. Please call or write your representative today, asking him or her to oppose



efforts to eliminate the NBS or its functions and to express that opposition to members of the House Committee on Appropriations. The National Audubon Society has worked hard to support the NBS and to preserve its ability to use volunteers and conduct good science. Maintaining its functions is now one of our top priorities and we need your help!

When Bruce Babbitt was named Secretary of the Interior, his immediate priority was to establish the NBS. He argued persuasively that a nationwide inventory of biological resources was needed to more carefully plan for the management and development of natural resources and to avoid last-minute, costly attempts to rescue endangered species. In 1993, Babbitt used his administrative authority to create the NBS by transferring research, monitoring, and inventory programs out of such agencies as the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management and combining them in a single agency.

In spite of the new agency's goal, it ran into immediate problems on Capitol Hill. Conservatives of both political parties charged that the NBS would use

untrained, biased volunteers who would trespass on private property and gather data on endangered species that would diminish property values. As a result, Congress never passed authorizing legislation and attempted once to disband the agency.

Rumors abound about the fate of the NBS in the new 104th Congress. Secretary Babbitt may try again to seek authorization for the NBS as he created it, and he recently issued an administrative order to clarify its procedures for use of volunteers and access to private lands. Unfortunately, such actions may not stave off meddling by Congress.

The essential goal of the NBS is to better assess the nation's biological resources, including bird populations, and to provide an early warning when a

species is in trouble. Some people think that the NBS exists only to locate endangered species on private lands. In fact, basic inventories of plants and animals on either public or private land account for only a minor percentage of the NBS's budget. Additionally, the NBS documents

climate and other environmental changes and their effects on wildlife; establishes basic life histories and habitat requirements and tests management practices that benefit wildlife; develops techniques to more effectively and efficiently monitor wildlife populations; and gathers and analyzes data to monitor population trends.

The last of these functions includes the very important Breeding Bird Survey, which monitors about 250 species of songbirds across the continent. It also includes analyses of Christmas Bird Counts and other data sets needed to understand bird population trends. These avian monitoring programs are not only a good idea, they are required by the 1988 amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

Migratory birds have been a federal responsibility since 1916, and, with your help, we won't let Congress back out of that commitment now.

Stay tuned !!



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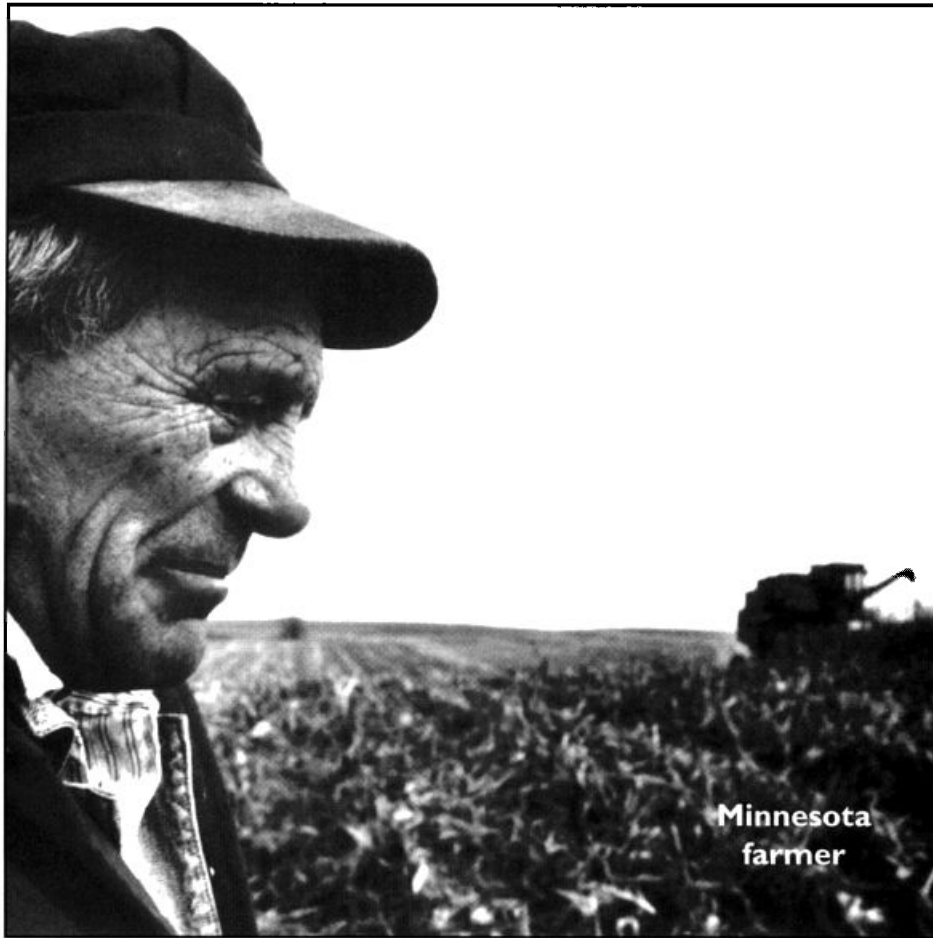
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How to Read the Regional Reports

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

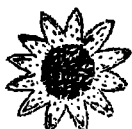
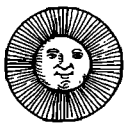
Other abbreviations and symbols referring to birds:

ad.	adult
imm.	immature
juv.	juvinal 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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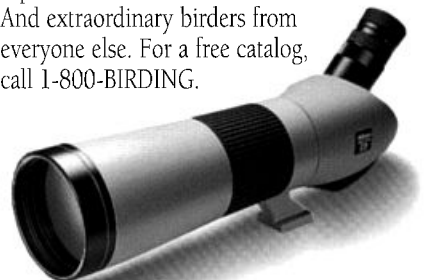
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