

National Audubon Society

Spring 1997 Vol.51 No.1

Field Notes





EXPLORING ANTARCTICA & THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

JANUARY 26 — FEBRUARY 10, 1998



OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS TO EASTER ISLAND OR THE LAKE DISTRICT AND PATAGONIA

Far to the south lies a land of dazzling snowfields, crystalline glaciers and dramatically carved ice mountains soaring above an untamed frozen wilderness. There are no human sounds in this land of primeval beauty, only the wild cries of birds, seals, and whales echoing across a vast expanse of land and sea.



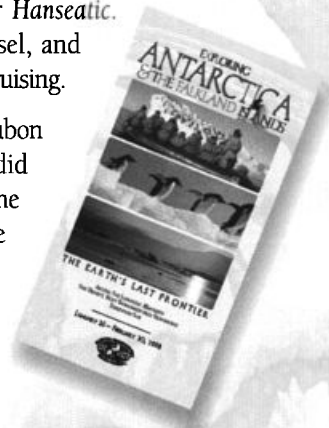
Next winter, the National Audubon Society invites you to experience the wonders and grandeur of a land where few have ever set foot as we discover the world's last frontier—the great White Continent. Ornithologist Geoffrey S. LeBaron, editor and coordinator of the annual Christmas Bird Count for the past ten years, will accompany Audubon participants on this incredible voyage.



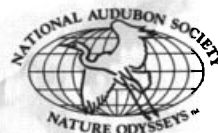
Our voyage takes place during the austral summer, when the weather is best and temperatures are moderate and days long. Penguin chicks are hatching and it is common to see elephant seals along the beaches. Zodiac landing craft—swift and sturdy motorized rubber boats developed by Jacques Cousteau—carry us from the ship to virtually anywhere along the coast. We will sail aboard the five-star 170-passenger *Hanseatic*. The *Hanseatic* is a sturdy ice-class vessel, and represents state-of-the-art in expedition cruising.



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From the Editor

National Audubon Society is proud to announce a newly established alliance with the American Birding Association, the leading national association of expert birders.

Our two organizations propose to promote together the collection, by active field birders, of data crucial to understanding the population dynamics and conservation needs of North American birds. The new alliance between Audubon and ABA concerns *Field Notes* within the larger context of a project called BirdSource. Led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, North America's field birders will track the changes in the continent's bird populations.

The American Birding Association will contribute initially by assuming responsibility for *Field Notes*, and hopes soon thereafter to organize a project to identify migratory landbird stopover sites that will be part of BirdSource. The content and distribution of *Field Notes* will be strengthened and we will facilitate a more smooth and thorough flow of information within the bird community as a cooperative project during a two-year transition period, beginning with the Autumn 1997 issue, and with ownership transferring to ABA thereafter.

National Audubon Society will continue to manage the Christmas Bird Count as a separate programmatic, financial, and editorial entity from *Field Notes*.

National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology are building BirdSource. BirdSource will

build the informational resources required to set the bird conservation agenda for Audubon as well as the rest of the country. Much of the work will be done on the Internet, with instantaneous data entry, mapping of bird ranges, graphing of population trends, and a wide variety of other information on bird population dynamics and conservation priorities.

The American Birding Association, as a participating member of BirdSource, plans to assist scientists in assembling a master database that distributes, in "real time," the best information available on bird migration and seasonal dynamics across the diverse habitats of North America. Audubon and Cornell are already experimenting with BirdSource using data from Project FeederWatch. Audubon's Christmas Bird Count will soon be added to the growing database.

This alliance promises to be exciting and fruitful for all of the participants, including you, our readers. More information will soon follow from Audubon and the ABA.



Stay tuned!!

During 1995, our nation will observe the 50th anniversary of Franklin Roosevelt's death. You are invited to plant a tree grown from seeds hand-picked from the trees that grow at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home. In your own yard, you can plant a white oak from Hyde Park, New York, or a red-bud or southern magnolia from Warn Springs, Georgia. The small trees are the direct offspring of FDR's own trees and are guaranteed to grow. Each small tree comes in a complete planting kit with a special certificate issued in observance of the 50th anniversary of FDR's death.

As Governor of New York during the Great Depression, Franklin

Roosevelt arranged for thousands of unemployed people to work on reforestation projects and as president he made the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) a centerpiece of his strategy for putting people back to work. Thus the tree symbolizes FDR's effort to rebuild the country and his faith in the future.

To mark the 50th anniversary of his death, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and AMERICAN FORESTS are sponsoring this commemorative tree-planting program and you are encouraged to join us. Place a toll-free call to 800-320-TREE and receive information at no cost.

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Franklin Roosevelt



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ON THE COVER:
Hooded Warbler, Jones Beach, New York.
Photograph by John Heidecker

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
v.t.	video taped
†	means that written details were submitted for a sighting
*	means that a specimen was collected
♂	male
♀	female
CBC	Christmas Bird Count

Northern Great Plains

The following report was inadvertently left out of the Fall 1996 issue of *National Audubon Society Field Notes*:

RON MARTIN

Something of a repeat of last spring, temperatures were well below average. Lake Audubon in central North Dakota sported ice until May 8. Precipitation was actually below average in some areas, but a good snow pack and the cool, cloudy weather, plus the remains of last years high water levels brought this springs water levels even higher, with lots of road flooding in North Dakota. Ponds and reservoirs in eastern Montana were filled this spring, and Medicine Lake was at full management level for the first time since the early 80's.

Prairie vegetation was set back significantly by the cool weather, and leaves did not appear on trees in much of North Dakota until the end of May. In South Dakota, despite the cool weather and leafless trees, migration was fairly normal with a fair number of early dates. In North Dakota and Montana almost every observer noted that most species arrived and peaked one to two weeks late. The first real influx of passerines was May 17-19, and migration was still in full swing at the end of May. Many wintering species lingered into May.

The highlight of the season occurred in Montana with the first record for Lesser Goldfinch.

Loons to Ducks

The 18 Com. Loons in *McLean* and *Mercer*, ND, Apr. 28 doubled the previous spring high for that state (REM, GBB), and the species peaked at 50 in the Fort Peck, MT area Apr. 17 (CC). Double-crested Cormorants peaked at 1300 in Grand Forks, ND, May 2 (EEF), and >300 nests were in newly flooded trees at Devil's L., ND May 19 (REM). A Least Bittern May 3 in Burleigh, provided the earliest ever record for North Dakota (HCT).

Waders again appeared in big numbers, with the high water levels in the e. Dakotas. Early arrivals in South Dakota included Great Blue Heron Mar. 1 in Brookings (BKH), Great Egret in *Davison* Apr. 5 (JDM), Snowy Egret in *Bon Homme* Apr. 6 (RM), and Cattle Egret Apr. 12 in *Brown* (JCS). In North Dakota no less than 12 reports of Great Egret were received, including the belated details of the long-awaited first state nesting record last summer at Tewaukan N.W.R. (KA). Birds returned to Tewaukan this spring,

and two nests were found at Devil's L., May 19 (REM). A 3rd nesting area was found in late May when Great Egrets were noted carrying nesting material at Dewald Slough in Kidder, ND (KR). In Montana a Great Egret was at Bowdoin May 17-21 (SJD). North Dakota had three Snowy Egrets, and 8 Cattle Egret reports included peaks of 45 at Devil's L., May 19, and 80 at DeWald Slough June 1. Also at Dewald Slough, a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron made an appearance in late May (KR).

A large goose movement occurred in North Dakota Apr. 8 & 9. Nesting duck numbers in North Dakota were estimated at 4 million, 155% above the long-term average, the highest on record since 1948 (U.S.F.W.S.). A Greater Scaup was noted at Bowdoin May 17 (SJD), and five were at Fr. Peck May 10 (CC). The species peaked with a new North Dakota high count of 260 in Grand Forks Apr. 23 (EEF). An Oldsquaw was very late at Bowdoin May 27 (SJD).

Eagles to Hummingbirds

Bald Eagles were again nesting in *Brown*, SD (DAT), and a new nest with one young was discovered in Meade May 13 (*vide* DB). A N. Goshawk displayed courtship behavior in Pembina, ND May 25 (NDBS). There is no confirmed nesting for that state. A large Red-tailed Hawk movement was noted in North Dakota April 5-9, with the peak in Grand Forks Apr. 7 when 450 were counted in 2 hours (DOL). Of the 400 migrant Red-tails noted Apr. 5 & 6 in n. c. North Dakota, approximately 10% were dark-morph individuals, and \geq two rufous-morph birds were noted (REM, GBB). An incredible 80 Rough-legged Hawks were tallied in Grand Forks, ND Mar. 21 (EEF). Merlins made a good spring showing with 26 reports.

Yellow and Virginia rails were again present in good numbers in North Dakota, and a Virginia was early in South Dakota Apr. 26 at Brookings (DN). North Dakota's 6th record of **Common Moorhen** was furnished by a bird in Stutzman May 26 (LB). Shorebird numbers were very low in North Dakota, but made a fair showing in South Dakota. Early in South Dakota were Am. Avocet Apr. 6 in Brown (DAT), and Long-billed Curlew Mar. 16 in Meade (NBH). Four W. Sandpipers were in Burleigh, ND May 8 (HCT, CDE). Rare in Montana, the White-rumped Sandpipers peaked at five May 23 at Bowdoin (SJD).

A Thayer's Gull at Fargo Apr. 9 (CMN, CAS) and three there Apr. 13 & 28 (GEN) were documented. There are only 4 previous spring records in North Dakota. Only 10 Burrowing Owl reports were received. The species appears to be declining rapidly

HYBRID DUCKS

A contribution towards an inventory

Eric & Barry Gillham

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in North Dakota. An unusual number of Long-eared Owl nests were noted, with four in South Dakota and three in North Dakota. Two nests at Salyer N.W.R., ND May 19 were only 150 yards apart (GBB, MN). The wintering N. Hawk-Owl in Grand Forks, ND remained to March 14 (EEF). Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were again present in unusual numbers in w. North Dakota and one individual made it to Medicine L., May 26 (LK), for about the 8th Montana record.

Woodpeckers to Warblers

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was far west in *Custer*, SD May 18 (VDF). Two W. Woodpeewees were early in Lawrence, SD May 9 (VDF), and an Alder Flycatcher was documented at Bowdoin May 23 (SJD). The status of Alder Flycatcher in Montana is still uncertain. A Purple Martin at Ft. Peck, May 17 provided about the 20th Montana record (CC, SJD). Tree Swallows were early Mar. 26 in Bennett, SD (LCS), and the species peaked with a new state high of 2300 in Grand Forks, ND May 22 (EEF).

A Carolina Wren was noted in Brown, SD May 24 (JCS), and a Rock Wren was e. in Ramsey, ND May 19 (REM). Sedge Wrens were numerous throughout the e. two-thirds of North Dakota. A Varied Thrush was in *Custer*, SD Mar. 6 (NRW), and a very late individual was along the Marias R., MT, the last weekend of May (D and KS). Northern Shrikes remained to late April or early May in all 3 states. An Am. Pipit was unusually early Mar. 16 in *Clay*, SD (DS), and for the 2nd consecutive year the center of Sprague's Pipit distribution seems to have shifted to the w. third of North Dakota.

The vireo peak in Grand Forks, ND, occurred in early June (EEF). A Blue-winged Warbler provided a first w. river record in *Custer*, SD May 18-19 (KD, JSP), and a Golden-winged at Minot, ND May 29 furnished the 2nd record for *Ward* (REM). An incredible 700 Yellow Warblers

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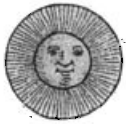
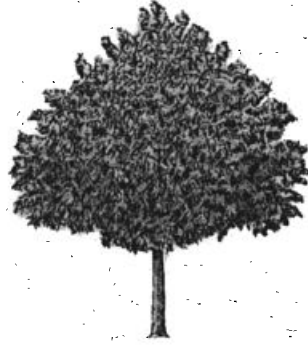
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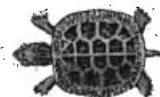
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