
editors' notebook

As Nancy and I edit reports of the previous breeding season, we occasionally take time to peer out at the activity around the feeders just beyond our upstate New York window. None of the birds that use this feeding station are out-of-range nor particularly scarce, however, some would have caused a stir just forty years ago. These include Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, and House Finch. Through the 1960s, the first two were considered southerners by northeastern North American bird observers. As recently as the 1930s, cardinals were often regarded as escaped cagebirds here. The House Finch was a feral novelty living in the immediate surrounds of the Big Apple. How things have changed.

Field Notes and its alter ego *American Birds* have provided a superb forum for illustrating the ongoing changes in North America's birdlife such as those just alluded to. In a very real sense we now stand on the shoulders of our birding forbears. The distributional information we are gaining from field guides, bird-finding guides, and even the *AOU Check-List*, owes much to the efforts of steadfast editors, a parade of talented regional editors, and the countless enthusiastic birders who have worked together since "The Season" was first published in *Bird-Lore* by our ornithological godfather Frank M. Chapman in 1917. The scale of this effort is unmatched: it spans the continent. No other publication attempts to present the detail and coverage of this one.

It is unfortunate that some birders who subscribe to *Field Notes* find the breeding season issue the "dullest" one in a year's crop of the journal. The breeding season itself is often overlooked by birders. Witness the introductory comments by Robert O. Paxton et al., George A. Hall, and Daryl D. Tessen about observer effort and enthusiasm in their respective regional reports. Speaking for ourselves, June and July were always our opportunity to really get to know the migratory birds to which we had only brief introductions during the spring. Birds are easily at their most approachable and watchable when absorbed in the business of nesting. It is also underappreciated how many empty spots still exist in the avian map of our continent, especially in the wide open spaces of the West where latilong firsts are still being rapidly compiled. There are even a few unexplored sites within those fortunate states with completed breeding-bird atlas projects. If you have time and the inclination, you owe it

to yourself to consider doing a Breeding Bird Survey route or participating in a breeding-bird census or atlas if one is going on in your area. Perhaps you could organize your local bird club to do a June bird census in your CBC circle. Whatever you do, don't, in Daryl Tessen's phrase, "retire [your] binoculars until the fall migration."

On a more prosaic note, the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature released the long-anticipated seventh edition of its *Check-List of North American Birds* last summer. One of the actions taken in this edition was the rearranging of some familiar groups of birds to reflect new data on the evolutionary relationships among birds. As many of you probably know by this time, the New World vultures are now considered close relatives of storks rather than diurnal birds of prey, and vireos and shrikes are thought to cleave closely to the crows, among a number of other less obvious changes. The policy at *Field Notes* regarding these alterations allows editors to choose the order in which to present their report. The majority of our regional editors still use sixth-edition order, however, eleven editors have used the new seventh-edition sequence in this issue. These include New England, Southern Atlantic Coast, Appalachian, Central Southern, Southern Great Plains, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, British Columbia–Yukon, Middle Pacific Coast, and Southern Pacific Coast Regions. Complete conversion to seventh-edition order will not come to pass until action by the ABA Checklist committee.

Although we are gaining subscriptions and continue to hope that we will become self-supporting, we are also seeking funding to assist *Field Notes* during the continuing transition from Audubon to American Birding Association publication. The editors of *Field Notes* most gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the Nuttall Ornithological Club of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for its grant of two-thousand dollars to aid in publishing these issues.

—WALTER G. ELLISON AND NANCY L. MARTIN
Guest Editors

We need the opinion of an expert—YOU! Please fill out the ABA *Field Notes* Subscriber Survey inserted within this issue and return it to us. Your comments will help us determine *Field Notes'* future format.