

editor's notebook

Across the continent, the winter of 1998–1999 was warm, making this issue of the journal sound at times as though it represents the breeding season—so many were the Neotropical migrants that lingered into winter and got themselves mentioned in the reports that follow. But don't worry. If you like reading about North America's winter birdlife, there's plenty about that, too. So, when you immerse yourself in any of the regional reports that collectively relate the goings-on about the continental avifauna, it will be like reliving two seasons all at once.

Two reports are missing from the total of 27 that normally provide coverage of the continental bird scene. The Southern Great Plains report was delayed when the editor, Joseph Grzybowski, suffered serious injuries in an automobile accident. Joe is recovering rapidly, and his report will appear in a later issue of the journal, as will the report from Ontario, also delayed.

Almost without exception, birders spend at least part of their time afield each season seeking rare birds, which, when found, have a way of uplifting the spirit. With not many exceptions, birders also regularly participate in one or more of many continental bird-monitoring projects, which, when accomplished, have a way of making one feel useful. The feature articles that begin and end this issue of the journal cater to each of these aspects of the birding enterprise. Indeed, those aspects may be said to form the twin foundation stones on which every birding career metaphorically rests.

Steven G. Mlodinow's lead article about redshanks and greenshanks takes us on a wonderful voyage into the very citadel of rarity-land, showing us how much can be gleaned from a careful analysis of a heaping handful of records involving two vagrant shorebirds in North America. Besides contributing this article, Steve also co-authored the regional report from the Oregon–Washington Region, so he is doubly represented in this issue.

Geoffrey S. LeBaron brings us up to date on the most venerable of all bird monitoring projects, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), now almost exactly a century old but showing no signs of age. Like Steve Mlodinow, Geoff focuses our attention on two species—a dove and a winter finch—and one of them is also a rarity across much of the continent, at least for the time being. He demonstrates how CBC data provide insight into the complex lives of wintering birds, and he informs us that millions

of CBC data points are now readily available on-line literally at the touch of a finger.

Several reviewers assisted my efforts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of various manuscripts submitted for publication in the journal during my tenure as guest editor. I thank the following folk for their timely and judicious reviewing efforts: Lyn Atherton, Paul A. Buckley, Steven W. Cardiff, Jon Dunn, Ian A. McLaren, Don Roberson, P. William Smith, and Peter Yaukey. I also thank David P. Muth for agreeing to write the Changing Seasons report on rather short notice and for providing readers with both stimulating style and substance in his summary of the season.

Editing an issue of *North American Birds*, as *Field Notes* is now known, has often been a challenging experience. It turned out that all the material for the issue had to be worked on most intensely during late May and early June 1999, the precise period of time when I had also agreed to conduct 16 Breeding Bird Surveys for various agencies that frown on those who are unable to conduct their surveys at the right time of day (5 AM!) and during the right part of the breeding season (late May and early June, of course). How I managed all the editing and all the bird surveying is a tale that will need another place to tell, especially for those interested in the consequences of serious sleep deprivation, but, believe me, it was not easy.

But, it sure was worth it. I made the acquaintance of a number of extremely talented people who represent the best that birds and birding have to offer. I was able to put to practical use editing skills that I normally exercise primarily when teaching. Finally, I was able to “stand on the shoulders” of one of my early role models, Robert Arbib, whose consummate editing of previous versions of this journal provides the benchmark by which all editors who follow will be judged.

—STEVE STEDMAN, *Guest Editor*

