

North American Birds

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORD PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION



the nesting season

Volume 54: No. 4, 2000
JUNE THROUGH JULY 2000

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ON THE COVER

The Canvasback has suffered declines across North America. It is, therefore, encouraging that this species is expanding into new areas as a breeder. On the heels of breeding season records in 1999, this female Canvasback incubating nine eggs (see the Ontario report) established the first nesting record for Ontario. The nest was one of three at Triangle Pond in Tommy Thompson Park near downtown Toronto. The photograph was taken 11 June 2000. *Photograph by Mark Peck.*



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TAKING PART IN THE NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS REPORTING NETWORK

Every issue of *North American Birds* presents an overview of what the birds were doing all over North America for an entire season. These summaries are based on observations by thousands of birders. If you enjoy *North American Birds*, we urge you to consider becoming a contributor of information as well as a reader.

The columns are written by *North American Birds'* Regional Editors, all of whom are extremely knowledgeable about the birdlife in their respective regions. These hard-working individuals are all volunteers. While they are generally glad to receive more reports (to make their accounts more thorough), we need to practice some courtesies to avoid overwhelming them.

As a first step, you should know the significance of the information that you are reporting. Never just send in a list of the birds you saw, expecting the Regional Editors to sift through it. If you are new to this publication, it would be a good idea to read a few issues' worth of reports from your region to get a better idea of the kinds of bird records that are included.

If you see the expected species in normal numbers and at normal places and dates, this is reassuring and important, and well worth recording in your own field notes. But we can't publish all of that in *North American Birds*. We report the unusual. However, this doesn't mean you should ignore the "common" birds. The Regional Reports are far more than summaries of rarities. If there is a major invasion of American Robins, for example, or if Barn Swallows come back exceptionally early, such things are an important part of the story of what happened during a season.

To find out the "normal" bird situation in your locale, you need to consult other types of publications. Most states and provinces, and many smaller areas, have books or annotated checklists on bird status and distribution. Such references are essential to help you understand the significance of your own observations. Checking such sources can make your birding not only more educational, but more enjoyable.

Another good way to learn about local bird distribution is to establish contact with your nearest Audubon chapter or other bird clubs. Perhaps you are reporting to *North American Birds* for the first time because you have found a bird that is definitely unusual where or when you saw it. When reporting rarities, it is always important to include the details of the record. Points to cover include:

- Date, time, and exact location.
- Viewing conditions (lighting, weather, distance to bird).
- A detailed description of the bird: appearance, voice, behavior. Include only those things you actually observed. A description written on the spot, during the observation, is always more useful than one written later.
- Names of other observers who identified the same bird.

- Photographs, even of marginal quality, are very worthwhile for establishing records. And if video or audio tapes have been made, it's worth mentioning that they exist, although it's not necessary to send them along in most cases.

In asking for details, Regional Editors are not casting doubt on anyone's abilities. The top bird experts in North America routinely record written details to support their unusual sightings, and all birders would do well to follow their example. Reports of truly rare finds are usually kept on permanent file. Maybe everyone knows today that you're a sharp birder, but what about people 50 years from now who are researching past records? They probably won't know your reputation, and they'll want to see details.

In some regions, especially large ones with lots of birders, reports are funneled through Sub-Regional Editors, and it is best to send your reports to these individuals. Some regions list the mailing addresses for these sub-regional compilers. Others do not, but you may be able to find their addresses in the ABA Membership Directory. If you are not sure of the address, it's better to send your notes to the main Regional Editor than to not send them anywhere. It is also essential that you report significant records to your state or province records committee.

Don't be discouraged if your sightings are not specifically quoted in a particular report. Even minor observations help the Regional Editors to form a more complete picture of the season. By becoming part of our reporting network, you put your bird observations to good use, and you contribute to the permanent record of North America's birdlife.

For each season, your field reports (along with supporting details and photographs) should reach the Regional Editors as soon as possible after the season ends. The Regional Editors are working on strict deadlines, and it makes their task easier if they have time to consider and analyze your reports before writing their columns. You will find addresses for Regional Editors at the beginning of each regional report.

Winter Season, December through February

Notes should reach Regional Editors as soon as possible after March 1.

Spring Season, March through May

Notes should reach Regional Editors as soon as possible after June 1.

Summer Season, June and July

Notes should reach Regional Editors as soon as possible after August 1.

Autumn Season, August through November

Notes should reach Regional Editors as soon as possible after December 1.

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:

A.F.B.	Air Force Base
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.E.	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
Twp.	Township
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
W.T.P.	(Waste) Water Treatment Pond(s) or Plant

Other abbreviations and symbols referring to birds:

ad.	adult
imm.	immature
juv.	juvenile or juvenile
ph.	photographed
sp.	species
tape	audio tape-recorded
vt.	video-taped
†	written details were submitted for a sighting
*	a specimen was collected
@	subject to review by appro- priate records committee
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
CBC	Christmas Bird Count

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 North America's dynamic birdlife. When 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? Do the Regional Editors just 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 so many abbreviations in the text?

We abbreviate some frequently-used words and phrases to save space. Most of these are easy to understand and remember. (See the list of abbreviations at the end of this section.) In addition to these standard abbreviations, some Regional Editors use shortened versions of the names of some birding hot spots; they list these local abbreviations in a separate paragraph, just after their 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 initialed is the one who passed it along to the Regional Editor). A dagger (†) before the initials means that this person turned in written details on the sighting.

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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. In some cases, when a bird was seen by many birders, the Regional Editor may add "v.o." (for "various observers") or "m.ob." (for "many observers") after the first sets of initials.

Who are the people who send 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 or 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 or blacker 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.

Why are some of the place names in italic type?

In most of the regional reports, place names given in *italic* type refer to counties. (Italics represent parishes in Louisiana, and in parts of Ontario they may refer to districts or regional municipalities.)

What are the boxes in the text marked "SA"?

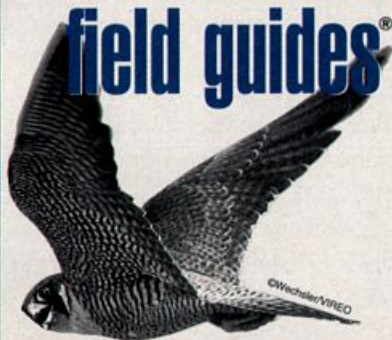
"SA" stands for "Special Attention" (and, by coincidence, is pronounced "essay"). The purpose of the boxed essays is to draw attention to particularly noteworthy phenomena or trends.

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

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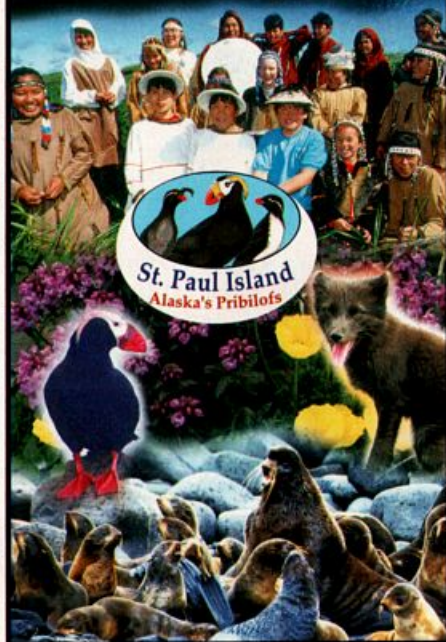
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