

Editors' Notebook

There is scarcely space enough in the journal to thank and acknowledge the outgoing team of editors, Michael Patten and Kevin Karlson, much less to enumerate all of their good offices since 1999. Michael, together with Virginia Maynard, has streamlined the process of submission of articles, photographs, and regional reports, and devised a rapid method for returning review pages to authors and editors. Michael and Virginia also produced a polished Style Manual for regional editors, which has resulted in a consistency of form and style well received by readers. Michael convinced editors from Belize to Baja California to join the *North American Birds* family, and their regional reports from Central America and Mexico's westernmost states have been of the highest calibre. Most importantly, Michael instituted and has maintained the highest standards for peer review of articles submitted, and this has borne fruit in some of the best articles, one daresay, the journal has ever published. Happily, Virginia Maynard will stay on to assist with maps and graphs and Bill Pranty will stay on as Technical Reviewer, joined by Steven G. Mlodinow, regional editor from the Oregon-Washington Region, and Marshall J. Iloff, regional editor from the Middle Atlantic Region, in this invaluable service.

Everyone at the ABA has welcomed the new editing team warmly in the past several weeks, and all have expressed a strong commitment to the success of *North American Birds* as a journal. Doing yeoman's duty as Photo Editor will be Matthew F. Sharp, who is also a staff member at VIREO (Visual Resources in Ornithology) at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Coming on board as Associate Editors will be Stephen J. Dinsmore, Alvaro Jaramillo, and Paul E. Lehman. Steve, Alvaro, and Paul will be well known to most readers; their coverage of a range of fields within both birding and field ornithology—on both coasts and in the continent's center—will bring both depth and breadth to the journal's editing resources. We are delighted to announce, too, that our coverage in Mexico will begin soon, with Héctor Gómez de Silva as Regional Editor for all of Mexico except the Baja California peninsula. Subregional editors for various regions and states are still being sought but should be in place shortly. Contact Héctor, whose reports will begin with the Spring Migration 2001 season, by email at hgomez@miranda.ecologia.unam.mx—or by regular mail at Instituto De Ecología, UNAM; Xola 314-E; 03100 - Mexico, D.F.; MEXICO. At last, a place to send your significant sightings in Mexico!

There are hundreds of good ideas circulating among regional editors and contributors, among ABA staff people and Board members, for improvement and strengthening of the journal, but I would like to make a plea to readers of this column to send in your own thoughts and ideas (to ensifera@aol.com). We, the Associate Editors, Photo Editor, and Editor, will weigh and respond to every piece of mail we receive. We welcome, as always, the submission of articles of all stripes: *North American Birds* generally publishes articles on changes in bird distribution; on bird migration; on records of vagrants; on particular species or groups of birds and their patterns of breeding and movement; and on birds' relations to oceanographic and atmospheric phenomena. Together with the editing teams at *Birding* magazine and *Winging It* newsletter, we will be happy to suggest the most productive venue for publication of any bird-related material,



A popular male Cape May Warbler frequented Stinson Beach, Marin County, California from New Year's Day into March. Photograph by Rich Stallcup.

even if one of the ABA publications is not able to publish the material.

North American Birds in all its incarnations has always been a challenging undertaking: even five and six decades ago, there were calls to the subscribership to help boost the distribution of *Bird-Lore* and *Audubon Field Notes*. The number of people contributing to the base of data on North America's birds has grown steadily over the twentieth century, and continues to grow in the twenty-first, but the percentage of the birding population that feels the need to know more about their own areas, and particularly in a continental context, has never been enormous.

The challenge of producing *North American Birds* continues, as more and more modern birders turn to the Internet as the source for current information on bird distribution and vagrants. No journal, of course, can compete in timeliness with the near-instantaneous dissemination of material in electronic form. But *North American Birds* by no means pales in comparison to that medium: the journal offers a synopsis, region by region, of an entire season, compiled and composed by veteran observers and editors who have worked hard to separate the wheat from the chaff and give narrative form to the truly significant finds and trends of the season. These regional reports offer analyses found nowhere on the Internet, and they have for many decades comprised a sort of "gold standard" in the evaluation of birders' and ornithologists' discoveries in the field. In turn, birders and ornithologists who read the regional reports come to comprehend more clearly the relative weight of their own discoveries.

Most of the nearly 5000 people who subscribe to *North American Birds* at present can be considered birding's vanguard in North America (and abroad); most of us have kept up our subscriptions, through thick and thin, because we consider the regional reports to be an indispensable part of our lives as birders and ornithologists. We have grown, intellectually, with and through *North American Birds*, and in many cases, we've grown up with it. In living our lives through birds, we rely on the journal and look forward to its appearance in the mailbox. It is a repository for our own records and findings and a means of enjoying and learning from the discoveries of others who are like-minded. It is a means and source of communication, of amazement and aesthetic appreciation, even of comfort, an ornithological journal that has never lost its contact with the enormous cadre of amateurs from which the study sprang.

Please let us know your thoughts on this journal for this and future issues.

—Edward S. (Ned) Brinkley, Editor