

Editors' Notebook

Bienvenido Mexico!

It gives us more pleasure than we can express to welcome all of Mexico to the *North American Birds* family in this issue. After two issues with Baja California and the seven countries of the Central American region—Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, and Guatemala—in the fold, we have begun to close the gap in our coverage of Middle America through the tireless editing work of Héctor Gómez de Silva, our newest regional editor. Welcome aboard, Héctor! Our reporting regions now dovetail with the area covered by the American Ornithologists' Union's *Check-list*, although we do not currently formally cover Arctic Canada in the territories of Nunavut or Northwest Territories.

Those of you who have visited Mexico know that it's nearly impossible to suppress a smile when reflecting on the birding there. Mexico is simply an incredibly rich country for birdlife. With 105 endemic bird species, its level of endemism is *second only to that of Brazil* in the New World. But one smiles on thinking of Mexico as much for the warm hospitality of its citizens, the beautiful vistas on the coasts and in the mountains, and the great historical treasures one inevitably encounters while birding. If you have yet to visit, consider looking through the new field guides and travel guides now available to birders—and take the plunge. It's certainly one of our favorite countries to visit, and though some spots get regular birding attention, Mexico represents a real frontier for amateur field ornithology, not to mention professional ornithology, in many aspects. Within nearly all of our regions, there are still large areas that receive little coverage and little commentary, but areas south of the U. S. border are in particular need of closer study, for several reasons. Conservation concerns for all wildlife abound in Mexico, and so our readers' contributions of bird records can begin to fill in substantial gaps in knowledge of Mexican birds' distribution, both geographic and seasonal. Because North American and Middle American countries share so many bird species, both resident and migrant, sharing advances in knowledge in a common forum is imperative and long overdue in this journal. And so recent editorial decisions to include the countries of Middle America are made on the basis of a solidarity amongst people interested in bird study across political boundaries, as well as out of concern for our hemisphere's birds and their habitats. We thank Richard Erickson for his help and encouragement in this recent endeavor.

What is true of all bird records is critically important for a fledgling *North American Birds* region: make sure that the documentation that you send to Héctor is careful, thorough, and clear. If your notes include records of rare or vagrant species, these records should contain as much information as you can reasonably provide, including field notes and sketches and some discussion of how you ruled out similar species. And photographs are always welcome!

News to us

Sometimes editors can feel as though we live under rocks (or under computers)! Your cards, letters, emails, and phone calls in response to the last Editors' Notebook have been both gratifying and humbling. In the Omissions Department: it seems that in addition to White-winged and Slate-colored Juncos, *all other* forms of Dark-eyed Junco—Pink-sided, Oregon, Red-backed, and Gray-headed Juncos—were documented at feeders far from typical winter ranges, possibly another aspect of the western montane species' exodus that began in fall 2000. Editorial and Scientific Advisory Board member Ken Rosenberg commented "Why, I



Providing a first record for the Florida Keys was this Curlew Sandpiper at Boca Chica Key 25-28 April 2001; this image was taken on the final day of its stay. Few of Florida's previous records were of birds in alternate plumage, and perhaps none has been documented so beautifully. *Photograph by Gary Rosenberg.*

saw *four* Oregon Juncos in the East last winter!" Ah, but if these records never make it to our reporting network, then we who live under rocks (and under deadlines) fail to see these patterns, and it's unlikely that researchers in the future will be able to trace the pattern by combing through dozens of state and regional journals and newsletters. Ken was aware of the pattern because of his work at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, where the continent-wide citizen-science project called Project FeederWatch has been underway for 13 years. So Ken was in a good position to perceive the proliferation of "other" juncos last winter, many of which were very well documented by their hosts. A researcher looking through this journal's regional reports for winter would have noted claims of Oregon Junco from Québec, South Carolina, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky, plus three from Iowa, but it's hard to find a strong pattern here, as this race is an annual visitor to the East in small numbers. If we add in three more from New York and one more from Massachusetts, it starts to look more like a pattern. Your editorial team hopes, fervently, to establish strong reciprocal ties to census programs such as Project FeederWatch, as well as to bird observatories, birding tour companies, and other organizations whose remarkable findings might not find their way into the permanent *North American Birds* record

Splits?

We note that several species carefully scrutinized of late have been found by international organizations of ornithologists to consist of multiple species. Our own A.O.U. reportedly plans to publish a decision in 2002 to recognize Galápagos Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) as distinct from Hawaiian Petrel (*P. sandwichensis*). The two have been combined in that organization's *Check-list* as Dark-rumped Petrel (*P. phaeopygia*), but growing published evidence suggests that a number of characteristics differ between these two closely related populations. It is not clear yet

what characters might be used to distinguish the two in the field, but seabirders in Hawai'i and the Galápagos will certainly be photographing and studying both birds carefully in coming years. This journal would welcome sharp photographs of both species for a coming photographic salon.

Also of interest, on the other side of the Atlantic, the British Ornithologists' Union has joined other European organizations in recognizing that *Anas crecca crecca*, a bird this journal has called "Common Teal" or "Eurasian Green-winged Teal," is a species distinct from North America's Green-winged Teal, *Anas crecca carolinensis*. The latter split is not currently recognized by the A.O.U., but it's clear, with many records of Common Teal from across the continent last winter (and a fair number of records of hybrids with Green-winged Teal), that birders are scrutinizing these small ducks very carefully—perhaps in anticipation of a split? The A.O.U. may take this one up in the near future as well. For more information on this pair, see the 1999 article by Johnson and Sorenson (*Auk* 116: 792-805).

Eating crow

Despite the best efforts of everyone involved, errors do creep into our beloved journal, and we're overdue a few apologies and corrections from past issues (our most recent corrigenda were in *N. A. B.* 54: 3 & 349). In the Fall Migration issue (*N. A. B.* 55: 120), the photograph of the Shy (Salvin's) Albatross from Cordell Bank, California, was miscaptioned; the text should read "Unlike previous North American records, identified as pertaining to *T. [c.] cauta* (Shy Albatross) or *T. [c.] steadi* (White-capped Albatross), this bird was apparently *T. [c.] salvini* (Salvin's Albatross), the first photographic record of this taxon for the northern hemisphere. These forms are recognized as distinct species by some authors." As long as we're on the subject, the article on Virginia's Black-browed Albatross (*N. A. B.* 53: 228-231) inadvertently omitted mention of two specimen records from Greenland, both from Lille Hellefiskebanke off Manitoq/Sukkertoppen, one from August 1935, the other from July 1958 (Boertmann, D. 1994. An annotated checklist of the birds of Greenland. *Meddelelser om Grønland* 38: 1-63). Thus the Virginia record is *not* the first confirmed western North Atlantic record but is the first documented in the A.O.U. and A.B.A. areas, which exclude Greenland (an island also excluded from Palearctic avifaunal lists). A caption for the photograph of a juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger (*N. A. B.* 54: 22) erroneously stated that the bird was "exhibiting some unusual behavior" by feeding on berries. The most recent "Changing Seasons" (*N. A. B.* 55: 135) suggested the Central Southern Region had no record of Calliope Hummingbird prior to 1998. In fact, it was the region of *northwestern Florida* that lacked records of the species until 1998; the Central Southern Region's first record was back in 1982. In the same issue, the photographs of the Black-tailed Godwit (*N. A. B.* 55: 234) should have indicated that the bird "island-hopped from Maui to O'ahu." The attribution of the photograph of the Cape May Warbler (*N. A. B.* 55: 124) to Rich Stallcup was in error; the photograph was taken by W. Ed Harper. The photograph of the Hooded Warbler (*N. A. B.* 55: 119) was taken by Andy Chen. The Northern Mockingbird in Alberta (*N.A.B.* 55: 185) should be credited to Terry Korolyk, whose name was misspelled. The Wood Ducks at Ketchikan, Alaska, were miscaptioned; they were photographed by Steve Heinl. Our apologies to Mr. Harper, Mr. Chen, Mr. Korolyk, and Mr. Heinl. Thanks to Rudolf Koes, Brian Patteson, Don Roberson, and B. Mac. Myers for bringing these items to our notice.

Photographic submissions

Captions have often been the source of corrigenda, as long-time readers

will notice. After much effort in communicating the need for labeling of slides and photographs, a largely successful campaign at *American Birds*, we find ourselves in a new and bewildering era of computer-manipulated imagery. We receive a great deal of material in electronic format, some of which was taken with digital imaging techniques, while other pieces have been scanned into electronic format from conventional photographs. We often feel back at square one, with a great many unlabeled images; but still worse, we find ourselves unable to publish *most of the material we receive in electronic form*.

The format "jpeg" (file extension: .jpg) is very popular among our readers, but it is a "lossy format," meaning that the compression of pixels in this format produces a most undesirable loss of quality of the original image. We have tried to limit jpeg files that we do publish to those with a resolution of at least 350 dpi at four by six inches. But even these often reproduce rather poorly. We now request that all electronic images sent to us be either in "tiff" format, which retains more of the original quality of the image, or the PhotoShop® format ".psd," which has the added advantage of being able to include a caption/credit that does not show up on the image. For best reproduction of images, original or high-quality duplicate slides are still unbeatable. But don't forget to label them.

A modest proposal

In the recent past, *North American Birds* has been the grateful recipient of financial grants from **Sea and Sage Audubon, Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Dayton Audubon Society, the Chevron Research and Technology Company**, as well as from friends of the journal and A B A members. These partners have seen us through the tough transition years after National Audubon Society concluded its partnership with American Birding Association in publishing the journal. In expressing our gratitude, we add that although these gifts have helped us to stand on our own as the journal's sole publisher, we could certainly benefit from similar contributions from birding and conservation organizations in the future. Our coverage of our continent's birdlife continues to improve and expand, and countless regional editors would like to go into greater depth on their areas' birdlife. *We would like to bring you, our readership, more articles, more color photographs, more feature pieces—more of what you want to read.*

To do so, we need to stand on solid fiscal ground, and the best way to do that is to appeal to you, our faithful readers, to consider participating in a grass-roots subscribership campaign. If you're planning on attending a public field trip, or bird club meeting, or ornithological congress, would you consider taking a stack of this journal, and a stack of subscription forms, with you and talking the journal up to your fellow birders and ornithologists? If so, please write to us (at ensifera@aol.com) and we'll send you the materials as quickly as we can.

The situation at *North American Birds* has improved markedly with the support of generous donors and of A.B.A. Board member Jon Dunn, whose recent fundraising has been the lifeblood of the journal. But several thousand more subscriptions would make a world of difference for the journal's well-being, and it is up to our core of faithful to "beat the bushes" for those still undiscovered subscribers. Think of them as vagrants in need of some documentation...

—Edward S. (Ned) Brinkley, Editor

—Matthew F. Sharp, Photo Editor

—Alvaro Jaramillo, Associate Editor