

Editors' Notebook



This illustration by Miriam E. Clarke serves as frontispiece for her husband William Eagle Clarke's two-volume classic *Studies in Bird Migration* (1912). The image depicts a bird aggregation event on the foggy night of 12 October 1901 at England's Eddystone Lighthouse. The Clarkes spent many nights studying such events at lighthouses around the British Isles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their descriptions are still some of the best that exist of light-induced bird aggregation. In their day, most lighthouses were composed of one or more fixed, bright lanterns that radiated light in all directions, often causing massive bird mortality on nights with rain, fog, or low clouds. Today's lighthouses are typically lit with rotating, narrow-beamed lights that do not cause the great bird kills of the past, but one can still witness the chaos of bird aggregations in the Americas at many isolated, brightly lit locations on nights with low cloud ceiling or fog during bird migration.

Breaking new ground: "Birds about the Light"

In the first part of the first volume of the *Memoirs of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* (1886)—entitled "Bird Migration. Observations on Nocturnal Bird Flights at the Lighthouse at Point Lepreaux, Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick"—William Brewster recounts his experience of waves of nocturnal migrant birds striking the lighthouse that autumn:

The first real "rush" occurred on the night of September 1, and, for the two weeks following the feathered tide flowed swiftly and more or less steadily, marking its course through the star-lit heavens by the incessant chirping of its passing legions, in thick weather surging confusedly about the light, wrecking many a bird life against the fatal shaft, and at daybreak leaving hundreds of tired little travellers stranded in the scanty covers of the Point. With this date then begin my notes on "Birds about the Light."

Although the twelve decades since the appearance of this tome have produced plenty of similar observations of bird mortality—particularly at tall, lighted, manmade objects

such as lighthouses, TV towers, monuments, offshore oil-drilling platforms, and skyscrapers—the topic is one that has almost no experimental history, despite the clear and compelling need to understand what factors conspire to draw birds to such deaths (see <www.towerkill.com>). *North American Birds* is proud to present a fascinating paper by long-time contributor Bill Evans and colleagues, "Response of night-migrating songbirds in cloud to colored and flashing light," a study that begins to test how birds aggregate around lights, both white and colored, flashing and steady.

The consequences of this study, and those that surely will follow it, are potentially tremendous. Each year, millions of songbirds, along with many nonpasserines, are killed when they strike lighted towers and their supports, especially communication towers, which are increasing around the world at an alarming rate. With global climate change already producing changes in bird populations around the world, and very little political consensus on how to reduce carbon dioxide emissions among the world's governments, we must consider carefully those human activities that negatively affect bird populations—and hopefully study and address, quickly, those that may lie within

our power to remedy.

The innovative aspects of this study are several. Foremost is the sheer simplicity of the field equipment used—primarily a pair of \$70 halogen work lights, several \$5 colored gel filters, and a homemade \$35 microphone (see more on <www.oldbird.org>). Instead of using the expensive technologies of radar and thermal imaging, the study employed largely the methods of the past—visual observations and acoustic monitoring of nocturnal migrants (Brewster's "incessant chirping")—to determine whether birds were in fact present during various light tests. In addition, this paper combines pioneering scientific study with a welcome historical overview of the research and ideas on bird attraction to light. In particular, don't miss the fine summary of magneto-reception in birds, a topic under intensive study in Germany but nowhere so coherently digested for birders.

And finally, for *North American Birds*, the paper breaks new ground: it is a technical paper, far more technical than our usual offerings, but with a careful reading, its approach to its subject is clear and circumspectful, its methods logical, and its conclusions offer rich food for thought for those of us who try, perennially, to understand why we witness fallouts of migratory birds under certain conditions but not others. Readers will recall the recent "Changing Seasons" essay that analyzed the massive fallout of migrants at Ithaca, New York, by Andrew Farnsworth and Steve Dinsmore in autumn 2005 (*North American Birds* 60: 14-26)—the Evans et al. study was conducted just a few miles from that city, and during the same period, so that we have both a birder's perspective on the phenomenon and an ornithologist's. If you have never read an ornithological paper of this sort before, set aside an hour some time and peruse the opening and closing sections (don't feel guilty about skimming the more technical parts!). You'll find the hour was well invested. And if the spirit moves you, get involved in campaigns to keep Brewster's "feathered tide" flowing swiftly.

New regions & new editorships

In keeping with recent changes to large, multi-state regions, the Central Southern region, which in the past has included western Florida, most of Tennessee, and all of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas, will be divided into the regions of "Louisiana & Arkansas" and "Alabama & Mississippi." This change will take place beginning with the Fall Migration 2006 issue,

Volume 61, No. 1. The reason for the change is simple: to allow greater depth and nuance in the reporting of avian news from these bird-rich states, particularly in light of the ecosystem-level changes occasioned by recent hurricanes and rising sea levels. The editorial teams for these new, smaller regions will be:

ALABAMA & MISSISSIPPI

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Steven W. Cardiff (All seasons)
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Mark Cranford and Maris Apse, who did a thorough job composing the Winter Season's Ontario regional report in 2005–2006 (for which many thanks!) will turn over the reins to:

Blake A. Mann
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The Hudson-Delaware region will have a new editor for the Winter Season, beginning with Winter 2006–2007: **Frank Rohrbacher** (email: rohrbat@aol.com) of Delaware, a faithful contributor of many years and chair of the Delaware Bird Records Committee, will take over this duty from Joe Burgiel. The Fall Migration report for that region will be written by Richard R. Veit, who edits the Spring Migration for the region; our autumn editor, Brian Sullivan, has moved back to California

and now serves as the journal's Photo Editor.

In other editorial news, **Oliver Komar** officially joins H. Lee Jones as co-editor of the Central America region; **Gorgonio Ruiz-Campos** joins the team of editors for the Baja California Peninsula region, replacing **Eduardo Palacios**; **Larry Semo** joins the Colorado & Wyoming region's editors, replacing **Chris Wood**, and **Edward Pandolfino** joins the Northern California region's editors, replacing **Luke Cole**. Thanks to **Eduardo**, **Chris**, and **Luke** for their years of service—now you'll have a little more time in the field! Contact information for these new editors appears at the conclusion of those regional reports. Welcome aboard, **Steve**, **Larry**, **Blake**, **Frank**, **Oliver**, **Gorgonio**, and **Edward**—and welcome back **Greg** and **Steven**!

We are indebted to so many retiring regional editors for their many years of service. **Robert Purrington** has edited the Central Southern regional report in some fashion since Volume 23, No. 1—the Fall Migration season of 1968—and is thus, with **Robert O. Paxton** and **Guy McCaskie**, one of our longest-serving regional editors. He will continue to work with veteran regional editor **Steven Cardiff** to make sure Louisiana records get their due in the new Louisiana & Arkansas region, but we will miss direct correspondence with him tremendously. **Bill Schmoker**, one of Colorado's most active birders, will likewise continue in an active role with the journal, as will **Joe Burgiel** in New Jersey, **Bob** and **Lucy Duncan** in western Florida, and **Phillip A. Wallace** in Louisiana, though they have passed their duties on to new and returning editors. We thank them kindly for the years of hard work.

There is little left on our Editors' Wish List at the moment—although if someone knows a good resident birder in western Greenland, we would love to add that island to our coverage, even if just a report on annual high-lights!

Errata

In the article on the Social Flycatcher in Texas (*North American Birds* 60: 180-181), the date for Figure 2 should be 8 (not 7) January 2005. In the article on the Stonechat in California (*North American Birds* 60: 308-309), the figure captions were dropped during printing; these indicated that the four images (grouped as two figures) were of the individual photographed 20 October 1995 on San Clemente Island, all taken by **Robert T. Patton**. We thank **Dave Quady** and **Mark Lockwood** for these corrections. 🐦

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THE REGIONAL REPORTS

*	specimen collected
+	bird(s) seen through end of period
†	written details on file
A.F.B.	Air Force Base
acc.	accepted by records committee
A.R.C.	Avian Records Committee
b.	banded
B.B.S.	Breeding Bird Survey
B.O.	Bird Observatory
B.R.C.	Bird Records Committee
C.A.	Conservation Area
C.B.C.	Christmas Bird Count
C.P.	County Park
cm	centimeter(s)
Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
G.C.	Golf Course
G.P.	Game Preserve
Hwy.	Highway
I. (Is.)	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
Jct.	Junction
juv. (juvs.)	juvinal [plumage]; juvenile(s)
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mm	millimeter(s)
m.ob.	many (or multiple) observers
Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain (Mountains)
N.A.	Nature Area, Natural Area
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.S.	National Seashore
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
p.a.	pending acceptance
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
ph.	photographed (by + initials)
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
R.A.	Recreation(al) Area
R.B.A.	Rare Bird Alert
R.P.	Regional Park
R.S.	Regional Shoreline
Res.	Reservoir
Rte.	Route
S.B.	State Beach
S.F.	State Forest
S.G.A.	State Game Area
S.P.	State Park
S.R.A.	State Recreation Area
S.R.	State Reserve
S.W.A.	State Wildlife Area
S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant/Pond
subad. (subads.)	subadult(s)
Twp.	Township
v.r.	voice recording (by + initials)
vt.	videotape (by + initials)
W.A.	Wildlife Area
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
W.T.P.	(Waste)water Treatment Plant/Pond

Italics indicate name of county, parish, or municipality.