



#### EDITOR'S PAGE

Reports from two large distributors of bird seeds indicate that thistle seed may be in short supply and costly this winter. Also only 25% of the millett fields were planted this year in Colorado. Better order your winter supply now.

The staff of BIRD OBSERVER thanks Arlene Bandes for her creative ads for Newburyport Aviary and Ranger III. Our advertisers are delighted; we hope you will say you saw their ads.

NOTE: Davis Finch's address (BIRD OBSERVER, Vol. 1, No. 3) is now 240 West 98th St., Apt. 11C, New York, New York 10025.

Calling all photographers! Send us your favorite photos of backyard or rare birds.

Swap or Sell - Do you have something someone needs? For subscribers only - FREE AD. Limit 25 words, as space permits.

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#### FRANCES TORREY ELKINS

"GOLDEN EAGLE FEB. 25 CAMBRIDGE 1 (MT. AUBURN CEMETERY) K. AND F. ELKINS" So reads the first entry specifically attributed to Frances Elkins in the first volume of Records of New England Birds, 1945. This laconic statement is symbolic of her special devotion to the plight of the birds of prey, characteristic of her ability to detect the unusual and unexpected, typical of her desire to share her expertise with others, and prophetic of the sad day when Mrs. Frances Torrey Elkins was to be laid to rest at Mt. Auburn, one of her favorite birding spots, in July 1973.

In the late 1930's, when Hervey and Frances Elkins first moved to Belmont, I had the good fortune to be living just a mile from their home and to share in many of their birding experiences. This included dozens of local hikes as well as trips to Essex County and the Sudbury Valley. Frances was widely known for her exceptionally keen ear and good memory for songs and call notes.

Of all the birding trips of my youth, those I recall with greatest nostalgia are the memorable excursions to Mt. Tom with Frances and Hervey Elkins to watch the nesting Duck Hawks and to witness the spring and fall hawk migrations. Yes, I still manage to see a few Peregrines (as we now call them) nearly every year as they fly silently by between their Arctic breeding grounds and their winter haunts in the South. But travels through all fifty states and much of Canada have failed to bring me to an occupied eyrie where I could hear as of old the wild cry of the tiercel high over his nesting cliff.

By keeping daily counts of raptors observed over three decades in Massachusetts, Frances and Hervey Elkins were among the first to document the complete disappearance of nesting Duck Hawks, as well as the catastrophic decline of the Red-shouldered, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks and decreases in most of the other hawks as well.

Frances, we miss your cheerful voice, your nuggets of wisdom, your constant store of bird-finding news and your beloved raptor populations. We are grateful for your having shared so much with us. May we likewise share with others--not just the friendly spirit and the bird-finding thrills, but the deep concern for the future of the environment on which we are so dependent, and of which the birds of prey are such a sensitive barometer.

CHANDLER S. ROBBINS