

## MEET OUR COVER ARTIST

This publication once again expresses its appreciation to the **Stephen Greene Press** of Lexington, Massachusetts. This company, publishers of *The Bird Identification Calendar*, has generously permitted us to reprint from the calendar yet another of **John Sill's** beautiful birds, the fourth of our covers to be graced by one of this artist's watercolors reproduced in black and white. For this, we are very grateful, both to Stephen Greene Press and to the artist John Sill for his consent.

John Sill, a college major in wildlife biology, combined a knowledge of nature with his artistic gift to become an award-winning natural history artist focused primarily on the world of birds. When world-bird-tour leader Peter Alden of Massachusetts visited the Sill gallery with a tour group in tow, John's artistic reputation rapidly expanded beyond North Carolina. His work is now familiar countrywide through the bird calendar paintings and his illustrations of popular books such as *The Field Guide to the Birds Coloring Book* (Houghton Mifflin Company) and the Stokes' *Guide to Bird Behavior, Volume II* (Little, Brown and Company).

John is noted for the delicacy and precision of his transparent watercolor technique and received his training in that medium from his father, Charles Sill, a well-known artist and teacher. There is an abundance of talent in the Sill family, as evidenced by the publication in 1988 of *A Field Guide to Little-Known and Seldom-Seen Birds of North America* (Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 494 Armour Circle, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30324), a collaborative creation of three Sill family birders—Ben L., Clemson University professor of civil engineering, Cathryn P., schoolteacher, and John C., the artist. This delightful volume can be found in the nature/humor section of most bookstores and madly exploits the foibles of birders and birding. The cover is a binocular view of the "Military Warbler (*Plutonia Pentagonus*)" depicted in basic camouflage plumage, perched on a thicket of barbed wire, and sporting chevron-shaped tail-barring which "indicates some sort of social rank" (pp. 50-51). A brief sampling of the rarities portrayed in color in this unique field guide will entrance any birder and whet the appetite for more. I was enchanted by the "Long-Range Target Duck," named for the bull's-eye pattern of belly and underwing; the "Waddley Grouse (*Obesia Rotundus*)"; the "American Bunting," in patriotic plumage colors and noted to have been a "common bird in Colonial times" (pp. 42-43); and the "Greater Wandering Vagrant," with an oropendola-like nest dangling from the bill. The paintings are precise depictions of avian morphology, so realistic that a nonbirder glancing through the book could be led astray. The text, whether subtle or blatant, is uproarious.

John Sill's more sober artistic works are displayed in the family gallery in Franklin, North Carolina, where he and wife Cathy live.

Dorothy R. Arvidson