

snowy winters. For the past decade the numbers of Carolina Wrens recorded on Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) have increased consistently each year. Selected CBC totals seem to bear this out. In 1979 there were 81 recorded; 132 were found in 1984, 231 in 1987, and a surprising 315 in 1988. The record-breaking cold of December 1989 seemed to have little impact on the population.

Each year in late summer and fall, individual Carolina Wrens appear well north of their normal range. Some of these come to feeding stations, where a preferred food item is peanut hearts. It seems that some of these stragglers survive the winter and on occasion attract a mate and successfully breed. The increased incidence of these wayward stragglers is reflective of the increased population of the species in its normal range. Perhaps the recent progeny of Carolina Wrens that nest in Massachusetts are better able to cope with the vagaries of our New England weather.

Richard A. Forster

### MEET OUR COVER ARTIST

Barry W. Van Dusen has generously given *Bird Observer* several covers—*Cox's Sandpiper* (December 1987), *Young Least Sandpipers* (August 1989), *Little Egret* (October 1989), *Field Studies of Bobolinks* (June 1990)—in addition to many notable sketches and drawings such as *Snow Bunting* in December 1987, *Spotted Redshank with Greater Yellowlegs* and *Terek Sandpiper* in October 1990. He has also provided us with insight into the creative process by words that he has written for this column from time to time, giving the artist's point of view. Barry regularly exhibits his work; his most recent show was at the Worcester Center of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Barry is a full-time wildlife artist who lives at 13 Radford Road in the wilds of Princeton, Massachusetts, with wife Lisa, a nutritionist, a recently adopted Papillon puppy appropriately named Skipper, and a sociable, freely flying pet budgerigar named Jerry, who listens to the radio, sings to gain attention, and dive-bombs visitors in little ellipses of flight. Barry's working studio is in his home. When special birds are attracted to the artist's grounds (which are landscaped with wild flora designed to attract them), the artist birds with binoculars and sketchbook. A recent visitor (a resident?) to Barry's brush pile was a Carolina Wren, which was still present in early December, and we are delighted to print some of the resulting field sketches on these pages.

The drawing of the Carolina Wren on this month's cover also appeared in R. K. Walton's *Bird Finding in New England* (1988), published by David R. Godine of Boston.

Dorothy R. Arvidson