

size of an individual bird's territory by determining how far it will range to defend its domain. Although we have ample evidence of the decline of the diurnal raptors, population information on owls is lacking. Perhaps census routes could be established. Observers might use the same technique as in the Christmas Count, recording the number of owls heard or seen year after year.

I must admit to a vague uneasiness over the use of modern hardware to exploit birds' natural instincts. In a way, it is almost as unsporting as hunting polar bears from a helicopter. Indeed, I have heard speculation that repeated exposure to taped calls, such as is endured by Louisiana Waterthrushes at Crooked Pond, may cause disruption of their nesting cycle. I hope this is not the case, for I would have to give up tape-birding. In fact, I wish to explore further this aspect of birding, which has given me so much pleasure and probably has even further potential.

MASSACHUSETTS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS  
1974-1978

This year, Massachusetts Audubon and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Game have launched a five-year program to map the breeding distribution of each bird nesting within the Commonwealth. The program is modelled on one that was successfully completed in Great Britain in 1972 and will rely on volunteer naturalists and outdoors people to gather the data. Each participant will be assigned a certain 10-square-mile "block" for coverage -- where possible, a "block" in which he lives or works. The total amount of time that each observer must commit is difficult to estimate, but 20-30 hours of observation should suffice to confirm all of the "easier" species. Although we would prefer to have the same participant(s) continue to cover a "block" for the entire five-year period, one of the advantages of this project is that one observer can take over for another without difficulty.

This project will provide the first complete set of detailed maps of breeding distribution available for any state. We are convinced that it will be extremely useful to those preparing statements on the effects of proposed land uses in the Commonwealth, and the Atlas should be an invaluable document enabling us to study more precisely those factors affecting a species' distribution.

For further information or instructions, write or call:

Deborah V. Howard  
Massachusetts Audubon Society  
Lincoln, Mass. 01773  
Tel.: 259-9500



WHAT NEST IS THIS?