

RESULTS OF SUBSCRIBER SURVEY

We recently conducted an informal survey of a random sample of our subscribers. Of the nearly 350 surveys we mailed, fifty-two percent of you responded to the survey, a very gratifying response rate to the *Bird Observer* staff. The survey was designed to determine how long our subscribers had been birding (an average of 23 years), how long they had been subscribing to the publication (an average of 8 years), and the types of articles they liked the most (a "top-ten list" from articles published in the February 1991-February 1993 issues). Many responders provided additional written comments.

The survey showed that our readers like the variety of articles that *Bird Observer* offers. The February 1993 anniversary issue, featuring a historical overview of birding in Massachusetts, was a particularly popular issue, even considering that it was the most recent (and therefore easily remembered) issue before our survey was mailed. Where-to-go-birding articles remain one of our most popular features. *Bird Observer* has been making an increasing effort to publish where-to-go-birding articles from all over New England, an effort endorsed by the respondents, many of whom commented that they liked our New England coverage. Many respondents also reminded us that our best niche is the local niche and that we should not stray too often to faraway locations, such as Central or South America. Other readers, however, liked our occasional extralimital forays, exemplified by articles such as the one on Guanica State Forest, Puerto Rico, appearing in this issue.

Many responders offered suggestions for future articles. *Bird Observer* staff have reviewed each and every suggestion, many of which are being actively pursued by the staff (e.g., a where-to-go-birding article for southeastern Massachusetts, articles on local studies or censuses, where and when to look for certain species, profiles of local birders). As always, ideas are one thing, implementation, especially for an all-volunteer staff, is quite another. Elsewhere in this issue, we have called for more volunteer help in several areas. If any of you are interested in helping us generate or write new articles, we would love to hear from you!

In the meantime, we greatly appreciated your feedback, and to those who responded to our survey, our sincerest thanks. To all of you out there, we always welcome your comments and suggestions on any aspect of *Bird Observer*.

M. Steele

A WORD ABOUT WHERE-TO-GO-BIRDING ARTICLES

Readers have expressed great interest in *Bird Observer's* where-to-go-birding articles through either the subscriber survey that was recently completed (see note on survey results on the previous page) or personal contacts with *Bird Observer's* staff. Many of you naturally want to see more articles on locations near where you live, while others have welcomed the recent (and deliberate) trend toward more pieces from other parts of New England.

The survey responders who took the time to write additional narrative comments provided very insightful information, and reading the comments prompted me to provide you with more information on the history and evolution of where-to-go-birding articles. A summary of the locations that have been featured in some form of a where-to-go-birding article—and their form and substance have varied tremendously over the years—follows. In the first twenty-one volumes of *Bird Observer* (126 issues), 120 issues had a where-to-go-birding article, distributed across geographic areas as follows:

North Shore (east of Interstate 93)	19
Boston Metro (mainly inside Route 128)	20
Western suburbs (Route 128 to Route 495)	6
South Shore (east of Interstate 95)	14
Cape Cod (east of the canal) and the Islands	16
Central Massachusetts (Route 495 to Connecticut River)	11
Western Massachusetts	6
Maine	4
New Hampshire	5
Vermont	1
Rhode Island	3
Connecticut	1
Other U.S. locations	5
Foreign locations	10

Relatively speaking, except for the western suburbs, eastern Massachusetts has been fairly well saturated. As a result, we have solicited more articles from all around New England, which also makes *Bird Observer* a journal with more appeal to a regional audience. But if you have not subscribed since 1973, these numbers may not mean much, because you will not have many of the earlier articles. In addition, the temporal distribution of articles within the geographic areas has not been even. The South Shore, for example, was well represented in the earlier years, but the last contribution was in 1987! This is clearly a situation that needs to be remedied, and several feelers are out now for additional (or updated) articles. (We welcome updated articles on locations previously written up.)

The question of soliciting articles should be further explained. There was a period from 1989-1991 when we published no fewer than five foreign where-to-go-birding articles in a string of eleven issues. This aberration was not because *Bird Observer* was trying to rival *International Safari*, but simply because we had more articles for foreign locations at the same time that we did not have articles on local areas. Since that time, we have been more active in soliciting articles, not to mention doing some tactical arm-twisting, but the fact remains that *Bird Observer* depends entirely on volunteer efforts, and unsolicited articles (on any topic) for possible publication are always welcome. The current editorial board organization is structured to increase and facilitate the solicitation of articles, but many readers are potential contributors about whom we simply do not yet know. A wonderful piece on the Martin Burns Wildlife Management Area in Newbury is scheduled for publication in the spring, and it came in entirely unsolicited. Alas, this does not happen often enough.

That said, it is now your turn to decide whether you can make a contribution to *Bird Observer*. If it is a where-to-go-birding article, the information provided above on locations of past articles shows where they have been concentrated. However, if your favorite place was covered a long time ago and needs to be redescribed, or if it has never been described, please consider writing about it. We certainly need more site guides from areas south and west of Boston, not to mention the vast areas of New England heretofore unexplored in our pages. We also need articles on where to find certain species or groups of species, rather than on all the birds in a single location (e.g., places to find bitterns or fancy sparrows). This kind of where-to-go-birding article is frequently requested but seldom written, and we would like to run more of them.

So dust off your computer or typewriter, and see what you can turn out that will answer a need or gap that you have noticed. Contact me for where-to-go-birding instructions, or, for other types of articles, contact any of the other department heads, editor, or staff members listed on our masthead. We welcome your interest and your enthusiasm.

Jim Berry

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts is looking for help with the following activities:

Field Test Where-to-Go-Birding Articles: *Bird Observer* publishes a where-to-go-birding article from a New England location in nearly every issue. We would like to establish a list of birders to contact when an article on a location in their geographic area needs to be tested for its accuracy in providing directions. Field testers will be provided a checklist of items to consider while testing an article. Contact Jim Berry, 142 County Road, Ipswich, MA 01938.

Organize Educational Programs: From time to time, we offer educational programs (either at cost or for a small profit) for our subscribers and other interested birders. Past programs have included workshops on shorebird or fall warbler identification and evening lectures on avian evolution and purchasing bird books. We need a staffperson to be responsible for scheduling and organizing several programs each year. For further information, contact Martha Steele, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington, MA 02174.

Write Articles: *Bird Observer* is looking for birders interested in writing one or more articles a year on such topics as interviews with local ornithologists or bird rehabilitators, articles on little-known natural lands in New England, periodic summaries of bird-related research programs sponsored by New England organizations or institutions, results of local bird population censuses, or other topics. For further information, contact Martha Steele at the above address.

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