


## Editor's Note

*I like the magazine because it deals almost exclusively with birds. Please don't extend the scope to include conservation issues, birding ethics, or other topics of 'political correctness'.*

I have been thinking about this response to our reader survey as I try to tease birding out of its larger context of environmental, ethical, and political issues. This is a journal devoted to birding: we encourage articles on the science of birding and field observations. Bird records are and have always been the core of our publication. Yet the birds we so diligently and passionately track close to home face a host of obstacles that are ours to share. On a bright, icy, and shadow-filled Groundhog Day I drove to the Worcester EcoTarium for the Mass Audubon-sponsored birders' meeting, where an enthusiastic audience of over 200 birders (more than a few of our subscribers included) learned about the latest initiatives and data on bird conservation and biodiversity in the Massachusetts.

It was an energized, informative, and rewarding forum featuring an audiovisual presentation of our biological riches by Shawn Carey, and illustrated talks on the state's Biodiversity Initiative by Environmental Affairs Secretary Bob Durand and on the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program BioMap by ecologist Henry Woolsey. You can take a look at this impressive conservation planning project on <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhsp/nhbiomap.htm>. Robert Askins, author of *Restoring North America's Birds*, focused on the birds of our region, particularly on species sensitivity to habitat fragmentation. Mass Audubon's Wayne Petersen, Andrea Jones, and Scott Hecker provided an overview and update on the progress of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, which meshes with the state's BioMap in providing critical biodiversity habitat information for state and local land use decision makers. David Sibley spoke evocatively on bird watching in the modern world, reminding us of the importance of birders to the future of birds, of birds as agents of conservation.

More recently at a Nuttall Ornithological Club meeting held at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, I poured through the museum's bird collection, which contains some 400,000 specimens of most of the world's species. I was in the presence of species I would never hear or see — Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, Carolina Parakeets, Bachman's Warblers, Passenger Pigeons, Eskimo Curlews, and one lone Spix's Macaw. I thought of Mark Lynch's comment in "About Books" (p. 123): "[Is this] the equivalent of gawking at a car wreck? Absolutely not! I believe it is vitally important to always remember what has been lost of the natural world . . . every story of extinction is an environmental lesson that needs to be learned anew." 

*Brooke Stevens*



WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.