

## BIRDING ETHICS

Birding ethics has become a major subject of debate over the past several years. The issue became even more controversial after a Boreal Owl was found in Salisbury on December 31, 1978. Within hours of the discovery, rumors were flying that the bird had been harassed: that it had been forced to fly numerous times; that it had been picked up and banded; and, in a report published by the New York Times, that someone had actually plucked several feathers from its breast.

This issue contains an article by Leif Robinson describing what occurred during the ninety minutes he watched the owl, but we have little knowledge as to what else occurred during the approximately 6-8 hours the bird was in the area. If you have any knowledge of incidents in which the bird was picked up, harassed on its perch, or had feathers plucked, please write the editor, stating what time you had the bird under observation. You need not mention names of individuals, but we would like to assemble a thorough account of what happened on the 31st.

The ethics issue is more complex than the question of what happened to the Boreal Owl. Banders, birders, and wildlife photographers have been the targets of increasing criticism from many quarters, including each other. This is reflected in the decision of the National Audubon and New York Linnaean Societies to refrain from stating the exact locations of rare birds reported on their rare bird alert. Great Gray Owls in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and Boreal Owls in Maine have not been publicized for fear of the consequences for the birds and for the owners of the property where the birds are located.

Bird Observer plans to publish several articles on the various aspects of birding ethics in a forthcoming issue. Future issues will also contain major articles on the northern owl invasion, winter crow roosts, hawk migration, Christmas counts, and breeding bird surveys. If you are interested in contributing articles or material to Bird Observer on these or any other topics, please contact a staff member, or write the editor.



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Will Russell, Davis Finch,  
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