

# The Blue List for 1978

*the annual accounting of the current well-being of species of special concern, as reported by observers in the field*

by Robert Arbib

ONCE AGAIN WE PRESENT the analysed and digested views of those who should know best, the field observers, on the status of the health of our bird populations. The species named to the Blue List are those which in the opinion of our respondents have recently or are currently giving evidence of population declines, either regionally or continent-wide.

As we have written previously "Blue List birds are not to be confused with the very rare or officially endangered species, although some of them may be rare or local, while others may be rapidly approaching endangered status. . . . When a species is Blue-listed, that is a signal to observers everywhere to be aware that observations (*or lack of them*) are especially wanted and valuable. Observers should make special efforts to report these birds to their Regional Editors, to be incorporated into seasonal reports. The Blue List is essentially an 'early warning system.' By focusing attention of thousands of observers on the problem species, it cannot help but improve our understanding of their changing status, and alert the scientific community, governmental agencies, and the general public to situations that need attention."

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the Blue List is functioning in this role. We find it frequently quoted in official documents, environmental impact statements, and it is even cited in a recent textbook. But, as we have often repeated, there is much room for im-

provement. We simply are not getting as much knowledgeable input as we need to make our recommendations totally reliable; there are too many instances of what seems to be complete variance as to observer opinions even within regions. At other times we receive what seem to be well-documented, impressively convincing reports from single respondents: have they observed facts that have escaped others in their regions, or are they themselves mistaken? That is why we publish, for your careful consideration, not only the official Blue List but the list of species recommended by one or more observers.

FROM ARIZONA, Janet Witzeman writes "The Blue List would be more accurate, more meaningful and more useful if the definition were changed to read 1. those species that may or may not be declining now, but may be in jeopardy in the foreseeable future; 2. those species that occur in such small numbers that their status should be monitored; and 3. those species for which there is no scientific data to substantiate whether or not they are declining, but there is definite concern for the species. For example, in the Southwest the Gray Hawk could be listed under category 1. It is not declining, but if the proposed Charleston Dam is built, a large percentage of the breeding pairs in Arizona would be lost due to destruction of their habitat. If this could be pointed out in the Blue List, then writers of impact statements plus builders of the project would take this in-

to consideration. . . In fact I feel that most people are actually listing birds for the above reasons and not following the stated definition of the Blue List." [We agree to some extent, as some of the species treatments below suggest. There is much more of interest in this long letter; its ideas (and those of other correspondents) will be considered in a redefinition of the Blue List in advance of next year's solicitation—R.A.].

**S**ELECTING (OR DELETING) SPECIES for or from the list is difficult. Many nominations are undoubtedly valid for the observer's immediate area, but are misleading or erroneous if applied to the continent at large. Frequently our more vocal respondents wax apoplectic when contemplating the nomination of a species abundant in their region, unaware or unbelieving that such a common bird could be declining anywhere! There are a few such stroke-inducers in the pages that follow.

Our respected expert, Frances Williams, is not, of course, one to wax apoplectic, but the following excerpt is a fair sample:

"I do think you need more input on the list—too many people assume that just because they don't see a particular species it is on its way out. A good example of this is the Grasshopper Sparrow. This species is spreading rapidly in west Texas with many new nesting areas being found each year. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it on the Blue List." For other viewpoints, see page 1094.

**L**AST YEAR 80 SPECIES not then Blue-listed were nominated. We do not believe that the number is excessive. Actually, if we knew the *truth* about what is happening to the populations of our secretive marsh birds, our raptors, our meadowland and prairie birds, and our forest-interior insectivores, the list might well be twice this number. (See Whitcomb *et al.*, *AB* 31: 3-23). But since we do not have reliable statistics, but must depend in most cases on impressions, we maintain a conservative approach.

That it is sanguine to act in this manner is perhaps indicated by the fact that of the 80 species nominated last year, including some nominated by *three* regions, no less than 35 were not mentioned once this year. Whether this means that these reported declines were ephemeral or imaginary we cannot tell. But

they prove that we should not hastily add or subtract.

## THE BLUE LIST

1. **Red-necked Grebe.** The returns are somewhat difficult to interpret. Although the Northeast had the most impressive invasion in recent memory during the late winter of 1977, most observers in that area and all other eastern and Midwestern regions favor retention. The picture farther west is quite different, with all coastal regions opposing retention, supported by a minority of Midwestern observers. Not easy to explain is the unanimity among Northern Rocky Mountain observers in favor of retention. Overall in favor of retention: 64%.
2. **Western Grebe.** Sentiment seems to be increasing in favor of delisting this species, although opinions, even within regions, are often greatly at variance. A 9-6 vote for retention comes from the Mountain West, while just to the north deletion is favored by Northern Rocky Mountain observers by a 7-4 ratio. Prairie and Great Lakes observers are evenly split, as is Pacific Coast. The overall ratio slightly favors deletion.
3. **White Pelican.** There is fairly strong support for continuance of the pelican on the list from almost every region where it is found. The only opposing sentiments were from Oklahoma, East Texas, Alabama, Florida ("still wintering") and the Southwest, and from minority opinions in other regions. Robert Reid, reports from Alabama "a flock of 1500 was reported from the Mobile Causeway in mid-November of last year."
4. **Double-crested Cormorant.** The only race of this species that seems to warrant continued Blue-listing is the nominate race *auritus*, and this only for mid-continent breeding populations. Differences in observer opinions are markedly geographic in orientation: the eastern seaboard and the West Coast being unanimous in favor of deletion, the mid-continent vote virtually solid for retention. To quote the previous list, "It seems evident that inland pesticide water pollution has taken its toll, whereas marine breeding cor-

morants are still thriving.” One inland observer, however, notes a slight improvement.

5. **Reddish Egret.** To quote Richard Paul, whose research species this is “The Reddish Egret remains a rare bird, relatively speaking, but all three populations appear to be healthy. To be sure, the Texas population is down about 50% from peak estimates of the 1930s. But it has recovered from the crash in the early 60s that saw estimates fall to about 550 pairs. . . . Whether or not [it] is kept on the Blue List depends on the purposes of the list. In my opinion it is not now undergoing a long-term, non-cyclical decline. If that is the sole criterion, then the species does not qualify. If, however, relatively rare species that deserve continued surveillance are to be included despite evidence of currently healthy populations, then by all means [I] recommend continued inclusion. . . .”
6. **Black-crowned Night Heron.** No apparent major change from last year, with a slight increase in the proportion of “keep” opinions. Once again, coastal observers would delete, and mid-continent observers (including Central Southern Region) would retain. “Continued increase, could be deleted in near future”—R.A. Forster. “Population steady here, no decline”—Harry LeGrand. “Take it off!”—Douglas Kibbe. Except for the Northern Great Plains, where opinions are divided, mid-America is strong for continued listing.
7. **American Bittern.** Not surprisingly, this year’s returns do not differ substantially from last year’s, when the two coasts discerned no problems, and the mid-continent strongly favored Blue-listing. Those regions most concerned with the declining status of this species are the Western Great Lakes, Middlewestern Prairie, Central Southern, Northern Great Plains, Mountain West and Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Regions. Surprisingly, the East Coast, where wetland destruction has been continuous, seems untroubled.

Least Bittern. Nominated by three observers in three regions—Central Southern, Middle Pacific Coast and Southern Pacific Coast.

Should be affected by reduction of wetlands  
To watch.

8. **Wood Stork.** Florida observers are unanimously in favor of retention. “Should be on the Federal threatened list.”—H. Kale, “Declining.”—J.C. Ogden. See this issue, p 1128. All Central Southern reporters agree. One dissenting vote—from Van Remsen, for the Southern Pacific Coast, and one from Arizona.
9. **White-faced Ibis.** Opinion is strongly in favor of retention on the list: the proportion of “keep” to “delete” opinions is 27-10. Negative votes were mainly minority opinions in their regions, except for the Southwest, which voted deletion 4-1. “Status in state [Alabama] unclear. Recently discovered area of sympatry with Glossy (Cat I., in Mississippi Sound) further clouds the issue.”—H.W. Einspahr.

White Ibis. Removed from the Blue List on the basis of strong opinions by reporters in most of the southern areas where it occurs. Several dissenting opinions were registered from Texas and the West Coast. “Large colonies are present on the Alabama coast and the percentage of ibises in them is increasing.”—R. Reid, Jr. “It is doing as well as the Cattle Egret here [Southern Atlantic Coast Region].”—H. LeGrand, Jr.

10. **Fulvous Whistling Duck.** Having reported a decline in Florida in 1975 and 1976, Florida observers now note increasing populations there. Central Southern observers maintain their “delete” opinions, and elsewhere (Texas and West Coast regions), the species is still reported to be declining.
11. **Canvasback.** Support for retaining the “managed” Canvasback of the Blue List is slowly waning; one must run down the entire East Coast to Florida before finding “keep” sentiment. Mid-continent views weigh, however, heavily in favor of retention, especially in the Middlewestern Prairie Region, and the Mountain West states. Opinions are decidedly mixed (or confused) in the Northern Great Plains, the Western Great Lakes, and the Northern Rocky Mountain

regions, with an almost even split among reporters. With large flocks reported from some wintering grounds, this species is being carried on the list essentially to encourage continued monitoring.

12. **Sharp-shinned Hawk.** With 1977 producing some of the highest totals on record for this species at eastern hawk watches, the temptation is strong to celebrate a comeback for the Sharp-shinned Hawk and delete it from the list. But there is strong, continent-wide support in favor of retention, with several reporters repeating the theme that as a breeding species, the bird is an increasing rarity, at least south of the U.S.-Canadian border.
13. **Cooper's Hawk.** Retained on the list with an even larger percentage of supporting opinion than last year: 87% of all those polled. In only one region, the Southwest, did "delete" voices outweigh those calling for retention.
14. **Red-shouldered Hawk.** Support for retention of the species on the list is dropping, from 80% in 1976, to 76% in 1977, to 60% this year. But this support is widespread, with dissent mainly found in Québec, Florida, (for *B. l. alleni*) the Central Southern, Southern Great Plains, and Middle Pacific regions. "Perhaps increasing."—W.R. Peterson (NEM), "Continued increase in breeders..."—R.A. Forster (NEM), "A long-term gradual decline in the region, mainly in the Piedmont. The Red-tailed Hawk seems to have displaced it in much of the region...a definite Blue List here."—H. LeGrand, Jr. (SAC). "Drastically reduced as a breeding bird."—D. Kibbe (N-C). Retained, at least for *B. l. lineatus*.
15. **Swainson's Hawk.** Opinion is overwhelming in favor of retention, with scattered dissenting votes from Minnesota, the Plains states, and the Northern Rockies. "The breeding population in southeastern Arizona has declined substantially."—D. Stotz.
16. **Ferruginous Hawk.** Retention approved by 90% of those reporting. Almost unanimous for continuance in all seven regions reporting: only 8 dissenting opinions. "Overgrazing

and agriculture responsible."—E. Serr (NGP).

17. **Harris' Hawk.** Retained on the basis of near unanimity among reporters in the few areas where it is still found. Two dissenting votes from Arizona.
18. **Marsh Hawk.** Retained on the basis of widespread and fairly convincing support, although it is somewhat less strong than in the last two years. Pacific Coast reporters all vote to delete, which contrasts vividly with sentiments expressed by R.A. Forster (NEM), who says "Very little suitable habitat left for breeding. Limited almost solely to offshore islands." D. Kibbe (N-C) says "Declining even faster than wetlands. Listing favored by a vast majority." The two regions with, apparently, the most favorable outlooks, are the Northern Great Plains and the Northern Rocky Mountains, whose combined vote to delete was 19-7.
19. **Osprey.** We quote verbatim from last year's report: "In spite of encouraging news of successful breeding in the Northeast [and Northwest], Osprey is the second most heavily supported species for retention on the list. With the continuance of the ban on DDT and other harmful pesticides, and with useful protection, research, and close monitoring continued, the day may not be far off that this species is happily retired from the list, but not this year." "...increased breeding productivity but no increase in breeding population (about 20 pairs)..."—R.A. Forster, Mass. "...increasing somewhat, but retain until further gains are evident."—P. Mattocks, Wash.
20. **Caracara.** Retained on the list, with observers in the regions where it occurs almost unanimous. "Should be on the Federal threatened species list."—H. Kale, Fla. Two dissenting votes from Arizona, where the small population shows no sign of decline.
21. **Prairie Falcon.** The views of our correspondents are virtually unchanged on this species. More than 74% (of a fairly restricted group) favor retention. There were no quotable comments. Only in the Southwest

was there a majority in favor of deletion.

22. **Merlin.** Although coastal (Atlantic) flights seemed stronger than in recent years, there is still an overwhelming continent-wide sentiment for retaining the Merlin on the Blue List. Only Québec, which apparently has few problems with any Blue List species (one reporter voted to delete the entire list!), expressed unanimous opinion for deletion. Otherwise, only scattered dissents were heard—one (out of 10) in the Northern Great Plains, and one (out of 14) in the Northern Rockies. In the Middlewestern Prairie Region, all 13 observers agreed on retention.
23. **American Kestrel.** Retained on the Blue List for the southern breeding race *Falco sparverius paulus* only. Reporters from Florida and the Gulf states are unanimous on this score. Contributors from other regions cite the current abundance of the species, especially in migration. However, in New Jersey and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, breeding birds are increasingly scarce. To be carefully watched.
24. **Sharp-tailed Grouse.** Strongly nominated by the Northern Rocky Mountain and the Mountain West regions. It is on the state endangered list for eastern Colorado.
25. **Sage Grouse.** No change in status. In four of the five Regions where the grouse is found, opinion was virtually unanimous in favor of retention. Two dissenting voices (of 17) in the Northern Rocky region, two (of 15) in the Mountain West, one (of 6) in the Northern Great Plains, one from California, and one from Washington.
26. **King Rail.** If the taxonomy endorsed by Ripley (*Rails of the World*, 1977) prevails, this entry should be entitled King Clapper Rail, *Rallus longirostris elegans*. But whether species or race, the King Rail has strong support for its Blue List status. Diminution of freshwater marshes is the oft-cited cause, but the species is so shy and elusive that no one has any accurate comparative data. Listing was supported by 92% of all contributors, from 13 different regions.
27. **American Oystercatcher.** The situation is unchanged, with Atlantic Coast observers urging removal from the list, and Florida and Gulf Coast observers unanimous for retention. Obviously the two populations are pursuing different courses. "Local increase in Massachusetts."—W.A. Petersen. "Should be deleted because its population appears to be continually increasing in its primary range of abundance (N. Florida through Virginia)."—C.R. Vaughn, Md. "I can foresee problems for this species in the future, as beach usage by people continues, but it is not a Blue List species here."—H. LeGrand, Jr., S.C. "Habitat problem."—J.C. Ogden, Fla. Blue-listed for Gulf Coast only.
28. **Piping Plover.** No change: 90% of our experts favor continuance on the list. Loss and disturbance of habitat continue to work against this species. "Extirpated as a breeder."—D. Kibbe, N.C.
29. **Snowy Plover.** Both races are continued on the list, with almost unanimous support from the field. Its problems are the same as those facing the oystercatcher and the Piping Plover. Four votes for deletion in the Southwest Region.
30. **Upland Sandpiper.** There is still strong support for retention of this species; a 2:1 margin approving. But there is major opposition in Ontario, the Northern and Southern Great Plains and Northwest Canada. "Largest of the few remaining breeding sites threatened by development."—R.A. Forster, Mass. "Habitat is continually threatened."—Kibbe. "Many fewer observations on migration."—Reid, Ala.
31. **Gull-billed Tern.** Florida reporters emphasize Blue List status for this tern. A minority voice from the Gulf Coast reports "Sizable breeding colony on Blakely I., near Mobile. No evidence of decline, suggestion of increase."—H.M. Einspahr, Ala. "Nests in a perilous habitat here—spoil islands—and thus could be in trouble at any time."—LeGrand, S.C. Overall, retention claims an 82% majority.

32. **Common Tern.** While still common in many parts of the continent and the world, we add this species to the list on the recommendation of observers in the Northeastern Maritime region where it is at an all-time low, Ontario, Niagara-Champlain, and Western Great Lakes regions. Colonial censuses are urgently needed.
34. **Least Tern.** The Least Tern has the same habitat problems as the Piping Plover; it is no surprise that 92% of all respondents on this species want it retained on the list. The notable exceptions were two negatives from Florida and two from Alabama. Blue-listing applies to all three races, although *antillarum* (the Eastern race) seems to be less threatened, and *athalassos* (the midwestern race) in the most trouble. Not a single reporter west of Alabama wanted to delete this species. The race *browni* is on the official Federal endangered list.
35. **Black Tern.** Recommended for the list by the Northeastern Maritime, Western Great Lakes, and Middlewestern Prairie regions. Observers are alerted to monitor this species.
36. **Common Puffin.** Although nominated by one region only, observers in Québec have been monitoring serious declines. "The largest colony on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence shrank from 59,000 (1935) to 9250 birds (1972)."—N. David.
37. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo.** In the East and in the Central South, there is growing sentiment to delete this species, on the grounds that it is elusive, and subject to cyclical population dynamics. Several reporters suggested that it is the *Black-billed Cuckoo* that should be Blue-listed. In the West, however, there is equally strong sentiment in favor of retention. We therefore remove the eastern race *americanus* from the list, and restrict listing to the western race *occidentalis*, although no immediate problem is noted in the Southwest.
38. **Barn Owl.** In the light of encouraging reports of high banding totals in the East, we were prepared to de-list this species. But the returns tell us a different story: 67% of all correspondents are in favor of continuance on the list. The Northeast, Southwest and the Far West favored deletion; the mid-continent areas retention. By regions, it was 11 to 7 for retention. This sentiment was unanimous in the Niagara-Champlain, Western Great Lakes, Middlewestern Prairie, and Northern Great Plains regions.
39. **Burrowing Owl.** Of ten regions reporting, eight (including Florida this year) favored retention and one, Southern Great Plains, was evenly divided. "Fairly common but must be kept on because ranchers are fighting so hard against prairie dogs."—E. Serr "The decline has been long and steady. Principal cause: nesting habitat is being lost to intensive agriculture."—S. Hoffman, Utah Overall, the sentiment in favor of continuance is a strong 75%.
40. **Short-eared Owl.** Maintained on the list on the basis of a 71% (last year 71%) majority favoring retention. Of 19 regions reporting, all but three agreed: Québec, Middle Atlantic Coast, and Ontario. "Confined now to offshore islands."—R. Forster, Mass.
- Common Nighthawk. Tentatively deleted from the list, on the basis of a 76-24% ratio of opinion in favor of removal, a considerable shift from last year's 55-45 ratio. Only one region remained in the "keep" column: Northern Pacific Coast. Florida was evenly divided, with H.M. Stevensen favoring listing of *C. m. chapmani*. Other areas where this race occurs called it "still abundant." Kibbe pointed to our lack of comparative population data.
41. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird.** In spite of several angry, outraged warnings to omit this hummingbird, it was cited convincingly by three regions: Hudson-Delaware, Central Southern, and Middlewestern Prairie. A difficult species to assess; tentatively Blue-listed
42. **Red-headed Woodpecker.** Support for inclusion of this species is widespread, with most (and strong) dissent coming mainly from the Western Great Lakes and Middlewestern Prairie Regions. In 1975 four regions supported listing, in 1976 ten, this year eight,

with three regions split. However, several observers favoring retention described the bird as slightly increased, but still below former populations." A long-term, decisive decline in the Piedmont, though it seems in good shape on the coastal plain."—H. LeGrand, Jr., S.C.

**43. Lewis' Woodpecker.** Perhaps we should delete this species until observers in its range are more certain of their views. This year, every region except the Middle Pacific Coast and the Southwest favors retention; Mountain West has swung back into the retention forces; the Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Region is for retention 7-5. A letter from A.G. Rempel, of Walla Walla, Wash., speaks of a "drastically declining status" in that region, and attributes it to nest-hole usurpation by the Starling.

**44. Hairy Woodpecker.** The continent-wide sentiment in favor of deletion has risen to 73%. Only three regions muster a definite majority in favor of retention—Florida, the Southern Great Plains and South Texas. We therefore delete all races except *D.v. audubonii*, recognizing that in some areas (such as Central Southern) this race (which has always been uncommon) shows no drastic decline.

Cliff Swallow. Deleted from list. Only two regions, Northeastern Maritime and Hudson-Delaware, supported this species; every other region recommended deletion. Support for retention in the Middle Atlantic and Central Southern Regions seems to have disappeared, although there is still a strong retention voice in the Middlewestern Prairie Region. "Doing well as a breeder in this region, thanks to its habit of nesting under bridges and on dams."—H. LeGrand. "Expanding its breeding range in Alabama."—R. Reid.

**45. Purple Martin.** The percentage in favor of deletion rises this year from 63% to 75%, and except for the Hudson-Delaware and Florida regions, nowhere east of the Rockies sees Blue-listing credentials for the martin, Kibbe (N-C) exclaiming that this is the cyclical species personified. But in the Northern Rocky Mountain and all three Pacific coast regions, the opposite sentiments

are manifest, by a 67-33% margin. No reasons are advanced for this pronounced regional phenomenon.

**46. Bewick's Wren.** Verbatim from last year's report. "Almost all respondents from east of the Rocky Mountains favor continuance, those on or west of the mountains see no evidence of a decline." Texas and Oklahoma depart from this summary, favoring deletion. Blue-listing should probably be restricted to the three eastern races: *T.b. bewickii*, *altus*, and *cryptus*. "F. & W.S. Breeding Bird Survey reports a 'highly significant' decline at the continental level."—Reid.

**47. Florida Scrub Jay.** Four Florida experts favor retention on the list. "Should be watched because of habitat destruction in Florida, although the bird remains plentiful locally."—J.C. Ogden.

**48. Eastern Bluebird.** We submit to the chorus of respondents demanding listing for this bluebird, in spite of an almost equally strident opposition. This year the species is nominated in four regions: Florida, Niagara-Champlain, Western Great Lakes, and Middlewestern Prairie, more than enough for acceptance. We acknowledge the fact that in some parts of its range the bluebird seems to be recovering from recent losses.

**49. Western Bluebird.** Convincingly recommended by observers in the Northern Rocky Mountains, Mountain West and Northern Pacific Coast regions. Tentatively listed.

Mountain Bluebird. Deleted from the list. Support declined this year to 36% for retention, but more importantly only the Mountain West Region enlisted a majority for "keep". The next strongest support came in the Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Region, where opinions were exactly split.

**50. Loggerhead Shrike.** Kibbe (N-C) calls this "perhaps our most critically declining species," and almost all respondents east of the Mississippi agree. "This is the classic passerine Blue List species. It has declined slowly and steadily for many years, dropping from common to uncommon over much of

the region (SAC)...”—H. LeGrand, Jr. “Now absent!” (Michigan). “The Breeding Bird Surveys report the shrike is declining at an alarming rate of 4% per year.”—Reid. In the West and in the Southern Great Plains however, no declines are noted. Blue-listing should probably be limited to *L. l. migrans*, and *L. l. ludovicianus*.

51. **Bell's Vireo.** The Western Great Lakes and Middlewestern Prairie Region observers are exactly split on the status of this species, indicating considerable uncertainty. But elsewhere within the vireo's range the opinions in favor of retention are on a 20:1 ratio, with the Southwest an exception. Unfortunately no comments were offered to elucidate the declining status of the species.
52. **Warbling Vireo.** Nominated by three regions: Appalachian, Middlewestern Prairie, and Southern Great Plains, and supported by Breeding Bird Survey results that show a 3% average annual decline, 1968-1976. Added to the list.
53. **Yellow Warbler.** This is indeed a problem species. Better than 72% of all respondents urge deletion, some of them as strongly as Kibbe, who writes, “I've said it all before. Take it off!” But Chandler S. Robbins, who runs the Breeding Bird Surveys, votes for retention, Robert Reid quotes these surveys as showing a significant reduction continent-wide, and the two California regions unanimously favor retention. Is *D.p. morcomi* the only true Blue List race? Or are observers everywhere, because the species is still common, overlooking a slow but steady decline?
54. **Yellow-breasted Chat.** Another questionable species. Although there are some strongly-worded dissents, support for inclusion of the chat increases this year from 31% of all respondents to 45%. Regions where declines are noted include Hudson-Delaware, Appalachian, Middlewestern Prairie, Northern and Southern Great Plains, and the Pacific Coast regions. Contrarily, Kibbe cites normal fluctuations at edge of range, LeGrand calls it one of “our most common warblers,” and Reid cites increases in Alabama Breeding Bird Survey totals. In the heart of its range, the chat is obviously in no trouble.
55. **Dickcissel.** While nominated from only two regions, the Western Great Lakes and Middlewestern Prairie, the recent evidence presented by Fretwell (*AB* 31: 923), and the fact that Breeding Bird Surveys indicate a substantial (5% annual) drop in continental populations 1968-1976, more than add up to Blue List status for this bird.
56. **Grasshopper Sparrow.** Support for inclusion remains at the same level as last year—about 72%, and comments last year are substantially valid. Respondents in Michigan, Alabama, the Northern Great Plains and elsewhere stress the loss of habitat through ploughing of prairies or meadows. The race *A.s. floridanus* seems most seriously threatened. In South Carolina, however, LeGrand sees no habitat problem, but “this species has one of the lowest breeding success rates in the region,” and he blames midsummer mowing. There is apparently no problem with *A.s. ammolegus* of the Southwest.
57. **Henslow's Sparrow.** Only five dissenting voices this year, one from northwestern Pennsylvania, two from Indiana, and two from Minnesota, prevent this meadowland sparrow from a unanimous Blue-listing. Our conclusions on the status of this species are probably somewhat deductive, but with 89% of respondents agreeing, there is no doubt about Blue-listing.
58. **Vesper Sparrow.** There is a wide divergence geographically of views on the status of this species. Seven regions, six of them in the East, and the Middle Pacific Region, see definite and real evidence of declining populations. In the rest of the continent, the vote is either mixed (Minnesota delete, Michigan keep “greatly reduced in 1977”), or evenly divided (Middlewestern Prairie, Southern Great Plains, Central Southern regions). Northern Great Plains, Mountain West and Northern Rocky Mountain regions are 26-6 for deletion! Overall, the “retain” percentage is 37%.



59. **Bachman's Sparrow.** A unanimous Blue List nomination. A number of respondents cited tangible population declines in this species. It was even detected by one observer in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region!

**T**HE FOLLOWING NEOTROPICAL migrants, not receiving enough nominations by our respondents to be listed, all revealed substantial population declines for the period 1968-76, according to Breeding Bird Survey analysis. The figures following the species name is the average percentage of annual decline. Regions nominating these species are appended.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (-3%), Eastern Wood Pewee (-3%), Western Wood Pewee (-4%), Least Flycatcher (-4%) (NEM), Orchard Oriole (-5%), Lark Bunting (-9%), Western Tanager (-8%). It is remarkable, and discouraging, that the last two species, with the most serious declines listed, were not nominated by a single respondent in any region. May we have some monitoring of these species?

Following is a key to the regional initials. (See map), Q. Québec; NEM. Northeastern Maritime; H-D. Hudson-Delaware; MAC. Middle Atlantic Coast; SAC. Southern Atlantic Coast; F. Florida; ONT. Ontario; N-C. Niagara-Champlain; APP. Appalachian; WGL. Western Great Lakes; MPR. Middlewestern Prairie Region; CSR. Central Southern Region; NGP. Northern Great Plains; SGP. Southern Great Plains; ST. South Texas Region; NRM. Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain; MW. Mountain West; SW. Southwest; NPC. Northern Pacific Coast; MPC. Middle Pacific Coast; SPC. Southern Pacific Coast; NWC. Northwestern Canada.

The following two species were nominated by observers in three regions:

Whip-poor-will (H-D, N-C, APP) last year two regions; Short-billed Marsh Wren (H-D, N-C, CSR) last year two regions.

The following 16 species were nominated by observers in two regions:

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel (MPC,SPC) new; Great Blue Heron (MPR, CSR) new; Anhinga (CRS,F) last year one region; Great Egret (MPR,CSR) last year only F; Snowy Egret

(F,CSR) new; Black Vulture (SAC,F) last year only F; Turkey (SAC, F) new; Willow Flycatcher (CSR,MPC) last year one region; Rough-winged Swallow (F,APP) last year two regions; Golden-winged Warbler (NEM,MPR) new; Yellow-throated Warbler (F,APP) last year one region; Bobolink (H-D, NRM) last year WGL; Blue Grosbeak (MPC,SPC) last year MPC; Field Sparrow (APP, WGL) new.

The following 60 species were nominated by a single region (a number were deleted at the Contributing Editor level): Gannet (Q); Little Blue Heron (CSR); Yellow-crowned Night Heron (CSR); White-fronted Goose (SW); Black Duck (WGL) last year three regions; Wood Duck (MPC) last year two regions; Harlequin Duck (MPC); Ruddy Duck (CSR); Hooded Merganser (CSR); Swallow-tailed Kite (SA) last year only SCR; Gray Hawk (SW); Com. Black Hawk (SW); Spruce Grouse (N-C); Bobwhite (WGL) last year only MPR, Ring-necked Pheasant (WGL); Yellow Rail (CSR); Purple Gallinule (CSR); Wilson's Plover (MAC); Spotted Sandpiper (APP); Herring Gull! (ONT); Roseate Tern (NEM); Forster's Tern (WGL); Caspian Tern (NRM), Black-billed Cuckoo (CSR); Roadrunner (MPC); Ferruginous Owl (SW); Elf Owl (SPC); Spotted Owl (NPC); Long-eared Owl (MPC); Belted Kingfisher (MPR); Com. Flicker (WGL); N. Three-toed Woodpecker (N-C); E. Kingbird (MPR); E. Phoebe (MPR); Bank Swallow (WGL); White-breasted Nuthatch (H-D); Brown-headed Nuthatch (F); Brown Creeper (MPR); Le Conte's Thrasher (MPC); Swainson's Thrush (MPC); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, (F); Water Pipit (F); Solitary Vireo (MPC); Black-capped Vireo (CSR); Blue-winged Warbler (CSR); Swainson's Warbler (CSR); Cerulean Warbler (CSR); Prairie Warbler (F); Palm Warbler (F); Hooded Warbler (F); Am. Redstart (F); Yellow-headed Blackbird (MPR); N. Oriole (CSR); Baird's Sparrow (SW); Sharp-tailed Sparrow (F); Sage Sparrow (NRM); Chipping Sparrow (MPR); McCown's Longspur (SW).

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### Southern California Postscript

Received much too late to be incorporated into continental summaries, Blue List recommendations from six correspondents from the Southern Pacific Coast Region differed in few conclusions from those previously tabulated.

The following species were unanimously considered deserving of Blue-listing: White-faced Ibis, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Swainson's Hawk, Harris' Hawk, Osprey, Merlin, Gull-billed Tern, Least Tern, Yellow-billed

Cuckoo, Purple Martin, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat and Grasshopper Sparrow.

The following additional species were supported for retention by a majority of the six reporters: White Pelican, Prairie Falcon, Snowy Plover (one dissent), Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl and Yellow Warbler.

The following species were unanimously *disapproved* for inclusion in the list: Western Grebe, Black-crowned Night Heron, Sharpshinned Hawk, Am. Kestrel, Hairy Woodpecker, Cliff Swallow, Bewick's Wren, Mountain Bluebird and Loggerhead Shrike. Other Blue List species had indecisive tallies.

Nominations for additions to the list by two or more reporters included: White-winged Scoter, Elf Owl, Willow Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*P.m. californica*), Gray Vireo, Summer Tanager, and two races of Savannah Sparrow.

A few pertinent comments:

"Harris' Hawk — Formerly fairly common along the Colorado River, but now extirpated from the state. The primary factor that has been attributed to it has been the sport of falconry."—JD.

"Swainson's Hawk—has suffered catastrophic declines in California."—JD.

"Elf Owl—habitat destruction."—GMcC.

"Willow Flycatcher—This species has suffered catastrophic declines as a breeding bird in California in the last twenty years. It no longer breeds in southern California, and is no longer found in most of its breeding range in northern California. . . .this bird has declined more than any other species on the Blue List."—JD. "Habitat destruction"—GMcC.

"Black-tailed Gnatcatcher—has a very small range; has declined from many parts of its former range; very local, habitat threatened with development."—JD.

"Gray Vireo—cowbird predation."—GMcC, SS, SC.

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