

The Last Word

It is with great regret that we announce the retirement from active service one of our senior Regional Editors, Fred R. Scott, who has been producing one flawless report after another, for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region almost forever. Actually, his first effort was for *Audubon Field Notes*, Volume 12, Number 1, dated February 1958, and since he has produced these reports without a break for 22 years, we are all indebted to him for an incredible 88 reports. We herewith express our sincere gratitude to him and wish him a rarity — blessed "retirement."

Ready to step into Fred's shoes, and rarin' to go, is Henry T. (Harry) Armistead, of Philadelphia, an accomplished and respected birder, who comes to us with the highest recommendations. Although Harry does not live within his

new region, he has devoted much of his birding life to the two-state area it encompasses, and knows its birdlife "like a native." A more detailed biography will be forthcoming. Meanwhile, all reports for the Autumn, 1979 season that have not already been forwarded to Fred Scott should be addressed (without delay), to Henry T. Armistead, 28 E. Springfield Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118.

Another of our favorite Regional Editors is leaving us and going on to bigger things, and we will miss him. John C. Ogden has contributed seasonal reports, usually of the Nesting Seasons for the Florida Region for at least ten years. As our readers know his reports have always been highly informed, professional, and models of the art of compressing much knowledge into a little space. John, a member of the National Audubon Society staff, has already moved from Florida to

California, where he will be our Senior Program Director for the projected Condor Recovery Program. We bid him *ave atque vale*. As new Florida Region editors we are pleased to welcome Lyn and Brooks H. Atherton, well known to our readers for years of field notes and some fine photographs, the latest being the color portrait of the Key West Quail-Dove in September (*Am. Birds* 33 731, 1979). The Athertons, whose address is 4619 Woodmere Road, Tampa 33609, are not only keen birders and photographers; Lyn specializes in gull studies and has recently added California Gull to the state list. The Athertons are replacing John Edscorn for the Autumn Migration season, and Edscorn will replace Ogden for the next Nesting Season.

New subscribers, of which we have more than 3000, will find our next (January, 1980) issue somewhat of a surprise, because, like our special July issue that is devoted to the Christmas Bird Count, the

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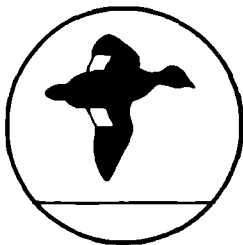
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January issue is "special" — devoted exclusively to the two types of habitat studies *American Birds* has sponsored for many years. These are the Winter Bird-Population Studies, and the Breeding Bird Censuses, which are careful, repetitive, intensive studies of small tracts of habitat, whose purpose is to determine the ecological associations of bird populations in winter and in the breeding season. New subscribers may be startled when first perusing an issue so different from our four "seasonal" issues, but the scientific world believes that this issue is the most important one we publish.

Speaking of new subscribers, we now have in our storeroom many thousands of handsome subscription brochures, which we will gladly send, gratis, to any organization or individual who might wish to distribute them: we have in mind bird clubs, Audubon chapters, nature centers, wildlife refuges, and biology libraries. We remind brochure distributors that our special "subscription extender" offer still stands: we add one extra issue to your own subscription for every new subscriber you send us, up to six — or a year's issues free. We can fill orders up to 2500.

Subscribers, especially new subscribers, often write, complaining about the lateness of publishing of the various issues of *American Birds*. This is a situation we have struggled with for almost ten years, without success. Basically, the major problem is that *American Birds* is a journal written and edited largely by people whose major efforts are otherwise occupied. Each of the seasonal issues, for example, publishes the records of about

3500 observers. These records must filter down from observer to Contributing Editor, to Regional Editor, be assessed, analysed, and incorporated into their written reports. Only when these are all written (and we allow the reporting process and the Regional Editors minimal time), and copies have been mailed to the Changing Seasons Editor, can his or her report be written because it is a distillation of the most important trends and facts in more than 400 pages of manuscript. One recent C.S. editor told us his (unpaid) work on this report came to 19 full days. Often C.S. editors will schedule a "window" in their own busy schedules in which to write the C.S., only to have several regional reports come in late, wrecking their timetables.

Understand that we do not blame the Regional Editors, or even the local observers, for these delays. Many R.E.s get their reports to us on or nearly on time. Tardy ones usually have valid reasons for delay. The schedule that we have set ourselves may well be impossible. But we would rather try to meet an impossible schedule and miss, than not try at all. We could, of course, *rename* each present issue two months later (January for November, etc., and come out "on time." But it wouldn't mean that you would get your Nesting Season report any sooner. And probably, human nature being what it is, if we loosened up the schedule we'd get even less prompt response.

There are, of course, other factors. We patronize smaller suppliers (typesetters, color processors, printers), primarily to cut costs, and our own staff is minimal. A *Time* or *Newsweek* can publish weekly, because literally thousands of people are working around the clock, and the mechanical and mailing facilities are enormous. It takes our printer about 15 working days to print, bind, and mail

each issue, we could get it all done in two days but you couldn't afford it

One more relevant factor. We estimate that we edit and set in type between one million and 1,250,000 words each year, and almost half as many bits of information. The sentence "The only Snowy Owl was at Ladd Marsh Preserve s.e. of La Grande, Ore., Nov. 9 (WCD)." is 17 words long, and has 14 bits of information. Which is what is known as "difficult copy," both for editors, typesetters, and proofreaders. All of which takes time.

Abbreviations frequently used

ad.: adult, Am.: American, C: Celsius, CBC: Christmas Bird Count, Cr.: Creek, Com.: Common (bird name), Co.: County, Cos.: Counties, *et al.*: and others, E. Eastern (bird name), Eur.: European, Eurasian (bird names), F: Fahrenheit, *vide*: reported by, F.&W.S.: Fish & Wildlife Service, Ft.: Fort, imm.: immature, I., Island, Is.: Islands, Isles, Jct. Junction, L.: Lake, m.ob.: many observers, Mt.: Mountain, Mts.: Mountains, N.F.: National Forest, N.M.: National Monument, N.P.: National Park, N.W.R. Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, N.: Northern (bird name), Par.: Parish, Pen.: Peninsula, P.P.: Provincial Park, Pt.: Point, not Port, Ref.: Refuge, Res.: Reservoir, not Reservation, R.: River, S.P.: State Park, sp.: species, spp.: species plural, ssp.: subspecies, Twp.: Township, W. Western (bird name), W.M.A.: Wildlife Management Area, v.o.: various observers, N,S,W,E.: direction of motion, n., s., w., e.: direction of location, ♂: male, ♀: female, Ø: imm. or female, *: specimen, ph.: photographed, †: documented, ft, feet, mi: miles, m: meters, km: kilometers, date with a + (e.g., Feb. 28+) recorded beyond end of period. Authors may also abbreviate often-cited locations.

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