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The Last Word

OUR REGIONAL REPORTS are heading into trouble. But it is a welcome kind of trouble, the kind that stems from growing success, rather than failure. The trouble is that there are now too many people birding, seeing noteworthy birds, and sending reports of them in to our Regional Editors. The boom in birding, which would appear to be still in its infancy, is resulting in the swamping of some Contributing Editors and through them the Regional Editors, with such masses of material to read, consider, digest, and analyze, that some editors have thrown up their hands and resigned rather than face the pressures and tensions of the evaluation process. Others are suffering, quietly or otherwise, with more fortitude, but the time and effort consumed still mounts, and with them go the nagging regrets for "the ones left out." They are a heroic breed, these Regional Editors.

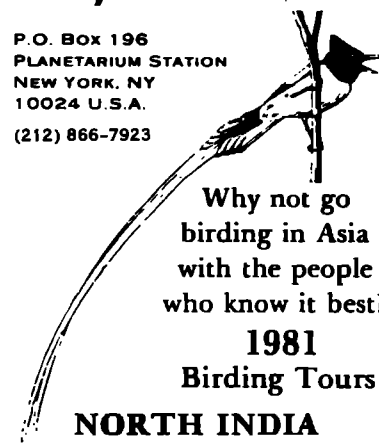
This issue of *American Birds* incorporates 57+ pages of Regional reports, less space for maps and photographs. It is, perhaps, somewhat shorter than the reports dealing with the spring and autumn migrations. This editor has rather ruthlessly deleted a number of records that will appear in Christmas Bird Counts, in our next issue (but has left hundreds of others). And yet, the number of cited observers, both within the text and in the observer lists, runs to more than 2500. In addition, individuals whose records were reported by clubs, or were disguised as "m.ob.," or "et al.," probably represent several hundred more. For the observer lists alone, the space occupied in this issue runs to 107 column inches, or 3.75 pages, not counting spaces for initials in the text. It is a sizable, costly, and probably necessary item. We often wonder whether there is any periodical anywhere in the world that is literally put together by the cooperative efforts of so many persons. For it is a fact that everyone who submits a record, or shares in an observation, is a part of our operation.

AT PRESENT, we can cope with the long lists of names, although we approve of the way Kim Eckert, at the end of his long list of names, added "and

171 additional unnamed contributors." Hugh Kingery actually lists 259 unnamed contributors. But the time may well be near at hand, when something rather drastic will be required. Should we list observers for very important records only? Should we use only initials, and once a year publish one consolidated observer list for each region? Should we reduce the type-size from the present 8-point (legible) to 7-point (eye-strain) for observer lists? Should we eliminate observer names completely as does *British Birds*, allowing the original documents to remain the official records? If we stop publishing most or all observer names, will observers stop sending in records? We recognize that there are certain justified elements of pride and prestige involved in having records attributed in these reports. How important are they? We would like to have the view of some of our readers, and will publish the most

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interesting and/or outrageous ones.

It should be stated here, of course, that there are still many excellent observers whose records do not get published because they are never submitted, and that we want them. There are entire regions and areas of the continent that seem either to neglect to submit their records, or (less likely) are not well birded. The South Texas Region, for example, must surely be more thoroughly birded than Fred Webster's reports reflect. The state of Nebraska has never seemed adequately represented in our pages, along with Georgia, Utah, Kentucky and some others. These are mere impressions, and may be incorrect.

ON THE OTHER HAND, some of our report regions seem to be ever-growing in coverage. Aside from the booming East and West Coasts, the upper Middlewest, and Ontario, where birders are legion, we see encouraging increases in observer lists from Appalachia, from Québec, and the Prairie Provinces. Even the small group of hardy souls in the Northwestern Canada area seems to be growing.

The growth that is our problem is gratifying, and it strengthens our claim that no continent on earth can compare

to North America for the coverage of its changing bird life that is provided by *American Birds*. That was how we started, and it is still our major service to ornithology today, even though we have added and expanded our interests in recent years, and will continue to do so.

* * * * *

In the September issue we will, on a trial basis, introduce a twenty-sixth region, devoted to the West Indies. This is an idea that we have been nursing for several years, and we hope that the many birders who live in this fascinating area, as well as those who visit, will contribute their notes. The region will encompass the entire West Indies including the Bahamas, Greater and Lesser Antilles, Trinidad and Tobago. Editor will be Robert L. Norton, Bureau of Fish and Wildlife, No. 86 Estate Frydenhoj, St. Thomas, USVI 00801.

* * * * *

THE RECENT INCREASE in interest in field ornithology is reflected as well in the circulation of *American Birds*, which in recent months has reached a goal we set for it several years ago—of

15,000 copies. Recently, however, demand has exceeded even this lofty total, and we are in the embarrassing position of being out-of-print, in spite of record print orders, for both the September 1979, and the November 1979 issues. Print orders are among the trickiest chores this office is faced with; for each issue we must not only count how many ongoing subscribers we have, but how many will expire with the last issue, estimate what percentage of those will renew, guess how many new subscriptions will arrive between last and next issue, how many more may be added during this volume year (who may want the entire volume), how many non-subscriber copies we need; when these items are totaled, we then add 500 more copies for future inventory. For September 1979, and November 1979, our estimates were obviously too low; we now have no inventory of these, and one or two other older back issues.

The way we have solved this problem in the past is to advertise for the scarce issues. Although we cannot pay for them, we do write donors a letter certifying a tax deductible gift of value, and our gratitude.

—The Editor

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