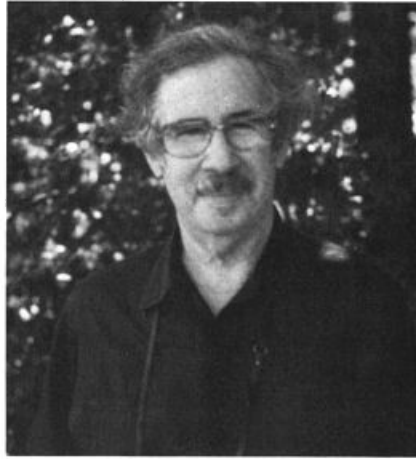


## The Last Word

REGRETFULLY, but with a deep sigh of relief, we have come to the final issue of our thirteen-year role as editor of this journal. In these years we have somehow, with much (but never enough) help, put to bed 78 issues comprising some 13,684 pages, a rather terrifying total of almost 10 million words, several thousand illustrations, hundreds of articles, 1200+ Regional Reports, and other assorted miscellany. During this time we must have answered several thousand letters (and some are still unanswered), composed 160 enthusiastic renewal letters, 82 of our private letters to Regional Editors ("The Idiosyncratic Editor"), assorted promotional brochures and ads for *American Birds* and others, a variety of columns like this one, and the occasional article.

Not to mention ironing out those problems with typesetters, printers, color separation firms, mailing houses, fulfillment firms and other suppliers and services,



including the U.S. Postal Service, that seem to plague editors at inopportune times. It's been fascinating, traumatic, fun, hypertensive, rewarding. Six times a year for thirteen years we have had the shock of actually having a new issue handed to us, after weeks of conviction that this particular issue would never see the light of day.

In these years we have made some hard-won progress towards a goal that remains to be reached. Anyone comparing current issues with those of *Audubon Field Notes* that preceded it will note certain positive differences: we introduced

feature articles, better typography, the full-sized page, color illustrations, reproductions of the Fuertes paintings, advertising, the Photo Salon, Site Guides, Trips and Tours. The Blue List, book and record reviews, bound in sound-sheet recordings and other features. The Regional Reports have been increased from 19 to 26; Christmas Bird Counts, without much help from us, have grown from 877 to 1453 in 1983.

When we took over, there was just one article manuscript in the file. Today we have an embarrassment of riches, with many good and worthy papers waiting too long for publication. The prestige of the authors and papers being offered to us continue to rise, but *American Birds* is still the place where the dedicated amateur with new insights can find a forum. We have no idea how many different individuals are involved, in one way or another, with each volume, but can there be another publication anywhere with the input of so many thousands? We thank them all.

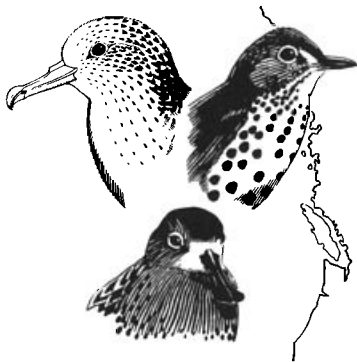
OBVIOUSLY THERE IS ROOM for further improvement. We would like to be able to afford more full color. We would like to improve the referee and manuscript-pipeline system. We would like to be able to afford the luxury of white space, so that our pages are more attractively designed. Once a year, for the Photo Salon, we play with space. At other times, the pages are crowded with words and pictures. We would like to improve the veracity of the Regional Reports and of the Christmas Bird Count. The Ideal Model idea is an attempt in that direction. We would like to provide more of a showcase for artists and photographers. We would like to improve the coverage of some Regional Reports, without adding to the pages we give to this section. We need a number of new regional

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maps. We have some pet projects that never got off the ground—especially our idea of a network of observers on off-shore oil rigs, patterned after the North Sea Bird Club of Europe. We need some sort of staff to solicit the advertising that brings in the income that prints more pages. Above all, we would like to see *American Birds* out on time.

All this, or some of it, with perhaps some entirely new concepts, will, beginning with the January-February 1984 issue, be in the hands of a new editor, John W. Farrand, Jr. John Farrand comes to *American Birds* with promising credentials. His most recent exploit was the editing and shepherding 61 contributors to the recent 3-volume *Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*, for Chanticleer Press. Prior to that task he was (and is) affiliated with the American Museum of Natural History, and was a junior author of the *Reference List of Birds of the World*, co-editor of New York's *The Kingbird*, and a former President of the Linnaean Society of New York. He will be supported by a small but highly dedicated staff and a backlog of fine material.

Coming up in the months ahead will be another soundsheet recording, an absolutely superb series of identification paintings of "peep" by Lars Jonsson, with text by Richard Viet, and perhaps, if the budget permits and the editor approves, a four-page foldout print of the Fuertes painting that hangs in our office, a Prairie Falcon that we have long dreamed of presenting to you in a 16 × 22 inch size, on special paper, as an insert later available for framing. No promises, of course. The new editor may well have surprises of his own.

**Y**ES, WE'RE GOING to miss the excitement (and the tension) of a job with so many facets and friendly contacts, the creative dynamism of New York City, the companionship of our fellow workers and our far-flung editors. But this retirement has been delayed overlong. It is truly time for new blood, new ideas, and new younger vision. Our first post-Audubon task will be to finish that book on the Christmas Bird Count that has been half done for the last five years.

Finally, we cannot leave without ac-

knowledging the priceless help of all those who contribute knowledge or services to *American Birds*: the many Changing Seasons editors, the Regional Editors and their assistants and cohorts, the CBC Regional Editors, the Van Velzens and Roger Boyd and Cal Cink, Danny Bystrak and especially Chan Robbins and Burt Monroe, two staunch and ever-willing, vital factors. Not to mention the authors, the referees, the artists and photographers and mapmakers and our support at National Audubon Society from President Peterson to Senior V.P. Les Line to our Board of Directors and our Editorial Advisors, especially over the years Charles Callison, Jonnie Fisk, Frances James, Roger Peterson, Bob Newman, the late Eugene Eisenmann, and so many others. Lastly, but crucially, our own staff: Associate Editor Susan Roney Drennan, former CBC Editor Lois Heilbrun, Assistant Editor Anne Wagner and newcomers Maria de Guard and Margaret Rubega, plus a host of volunteers. So endeth this 'Swan Song.'

Whistling—not Tundra.

Robert Arbib

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