

# AMERICAN BIRDS

Fall 1987



Fall 1987  
Vol. 41, No. 3

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AMERICAN BIRDS is published five times a year. Editorial and business offices are located at 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022 (212) 546-9191. Subscriptions, all in U.S. \$: One year \$27.50, Two years \$50., Canada and Foreign \$32.50, Libraries and Institutions \$35. Single copies: Christmas (Bird Count) Issue \$15., Spring Issue (Autumn Migration), Summer Issue (Winter Season), Fall Issue (Spring Migration), Winter Issue (Nesting Season) all \$5.00 each. Checks and money orders in U.S. \$ only should be made payable to AMERICAN BIRDS. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and additional Post Offices. Copyright © 1987 by The National Audubon Society.

Postmaster: Send address changes to AMERICAN BIRDS, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. ISSN 0004-7686.

## . . . from the editor's desk

Our warmest congratulations to Chandler S. Robbins, who, at the 52nd Departmental Honor Award Convocation of the United States Department of the Interior, September 30, 1987, in Washington, D.C., was a recipient of a coveted Honor Award, presented by the Secretary of the Interior, for his years of invaluable and productive service with the U.S. Government. Our sincerest congratulations, Chan. No one deserves it more than you.

The fact that humanity can have a deleterious impact on the Earth is, in itself, nothing new. The ancient Greeks, in response to expanded populations, progressively destroyed their forests to satisfy needs for lumber, firewood, and charcoal; the Romans, like the Christians who followed them, with their possessive view of the Earth, deforested the hills of Galilee under the Roman agricultural system; Europeans of the Middle Ages paid no attention to the erosion of soils, and they pushed their own resources toward exhaustion.

In America, we have an exploitative "there's always a new frontier" attitude, typical of Western societies. Destruction of our own old-growth forests follows in the tradition of very little concern for the diverse aspects and needs of the environment. Modern environmentalists have designated the Spotted Owl as an "indicator species" of the well-being of its environs. That is to say, its population growth or decline is used to assess the health of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. The northern Spotted Owl is a secretive, nocturnal bird that lives deep in the forest of western Washington and Oregon. The old-growth forests are ecologically rich, diverse stands in which the trees, mostly Douglas-firs, are more than 250 years old, and a good many feet in diameter. This owl lives almost exclusively in such forests.

We hope that all AMERICAN BIRDS readers will read this issue's International Council for Bird Preservation column, written by David Wilcove, and once suitably versed in the preservationists' view of the old-growth forest issue, will write letters supportive of the National Audubon Society position on the Spotted Owl question to: Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, 319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208. Be sure to send copies of your letters to your senators and congressmen and other elected officials who are already hearing from opponents of old-growth protection.

In resource-dependent states like Oregon and Washington, land management has become a political football, and old-growth is a hot issue. Industry has represented the resource issue as one of birds vs jobs, and has mounted massive media campaigns on this theme. The issue is not simple, and the threat posed by logging to old-growth forests is less black-and-white than conservationists might wish. The ethics of industry and the preservationist press from opposite directions, yet the fundamentally wrong public land management position demonstrates entirely too little commitment to the benefits of wilderness. Old-growth advocates must show a firm commitment to the natural heritage of these indescribably beautiful forests. The sale of a few board feet of timber cannot possibly justify the harvest of these old-growth stands. At the current harvesting rates, no old-growth forests will remain in fifty years, and with the disappearance of those comes the inevitable extinction of the Spotted Owl. It is true that the debate is bitter; the magnitude of the uproar is a measure of the positive value of wilderness in America. One thing is clear: it is impossible to have one's old-growth forest, and timber it too. Birders cannot afford to stand aside and watch the fray from an objective distance. Get into it! Express yourself! Speak up for the 100-plus species that will be disastrously affected if our old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest are eliminated.

Both the front and back covers of our Spring 1987 issue (Volume 41, Number 1) featured photographs of the Diademed Sandpiper-Plover (*Phegornis mitchellii*) and, in my editorial, I stated that these were the first color photographs of the bird to appear in print. Shortly after publication, first Davis W. Finch, then Bret Whitney, and then H. Nuijen brought to my attention the fact that, fifteen years ago, color photographs of a lesser quality than Ridgely's did appear in the 1972 publication *Supplement to the Birds of Chile and adjacent Regions of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru* by A. W. Johnson. We apologize for this error, and refer our readers to the corrigendum published in this issue. We thank Finch, Whitney, and Nuijen for notifying us of this error.

The Christmas season is quickly approaching, and we ask all of our readers intending to participate in Christmas Bird Counts this year to read page 509.

The 1988 AMERICAN BIRDS Birdathon will be held on April 6, 1988, in South Florida. We want all readers to have sufficient advance notice of this event, which we will be formally announcing in our Winter issue, so that they will be rounding up sponsors for AMERICAN BIRDS, thereby increasing their chances to win a free birding trip to the Falkland Islands in 1988, and to increase their chances to win any one of many prizes we will be offering this year.

Stay tuned!!

— S R D

# 1987-1988 Christmas Bird Count Information

The dates for the 1987-1988 Christmas Bird Count are December 17, 1987, through January 3, 1988, inclusive. This year, we invite all of those interested in participating in one or more Christmas Bird Counts to do so irrespective of the degree of birding expertise they might have. If prospective participants are unsure of the Christmas Bird Count circles located closest to their homes, please call or write the AMERICAN BIRDS offices, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022, ATTN: CBC Editor; phone: (212) 546-9193. We will do our best to supply you with information before the Christmas Bird Count period begins.

This year, as in other years, every field observer who participates in a Christmas Bird Count will be obligated to pay a fee. This fee is used to help defray the expenses incurred in administrating and publishing the Christmas Bird Count issue. The participant fee schedule for the 1987-1988 Christmas Bird Count is:

- \$4.00 per participant for the first count in which one is a field observer,
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- \$3.00 each additional count in which one serves as a field observer.

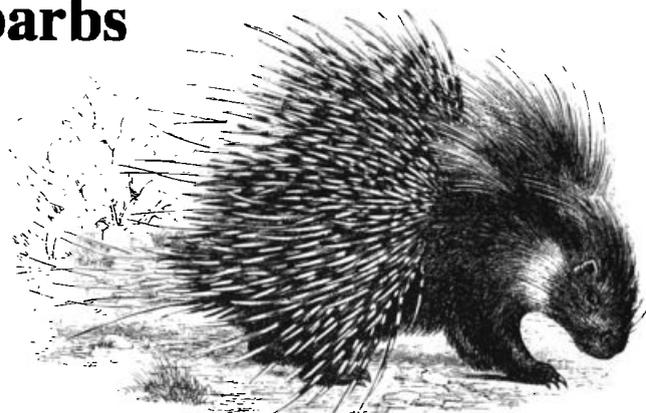
This means, for example, if you participate on only one count, you will pay \$4.00 to the compiler of that count. If you participate in two counts, your total participation fees will amount to \$7.50, four dollars of which is paid to the compiler of the first count, and \$3.50 of which is paid to the compiler of the second count. If, however, you take part in, for instance, four counts, your total participation fee will be \$13.50, \$4.00 of which will be paid to the compiler of the first count, \$3.50 to the compiler of the second count, and \$3.00 each to the compilers of the third and fourth counts.

Every field observer on every count is obligated to pay this participation fee. Every compiler of every count is obligated to collect these fees.

We thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

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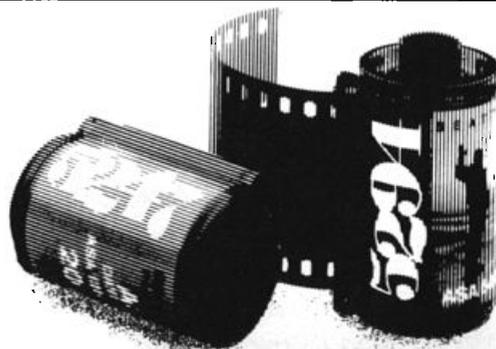
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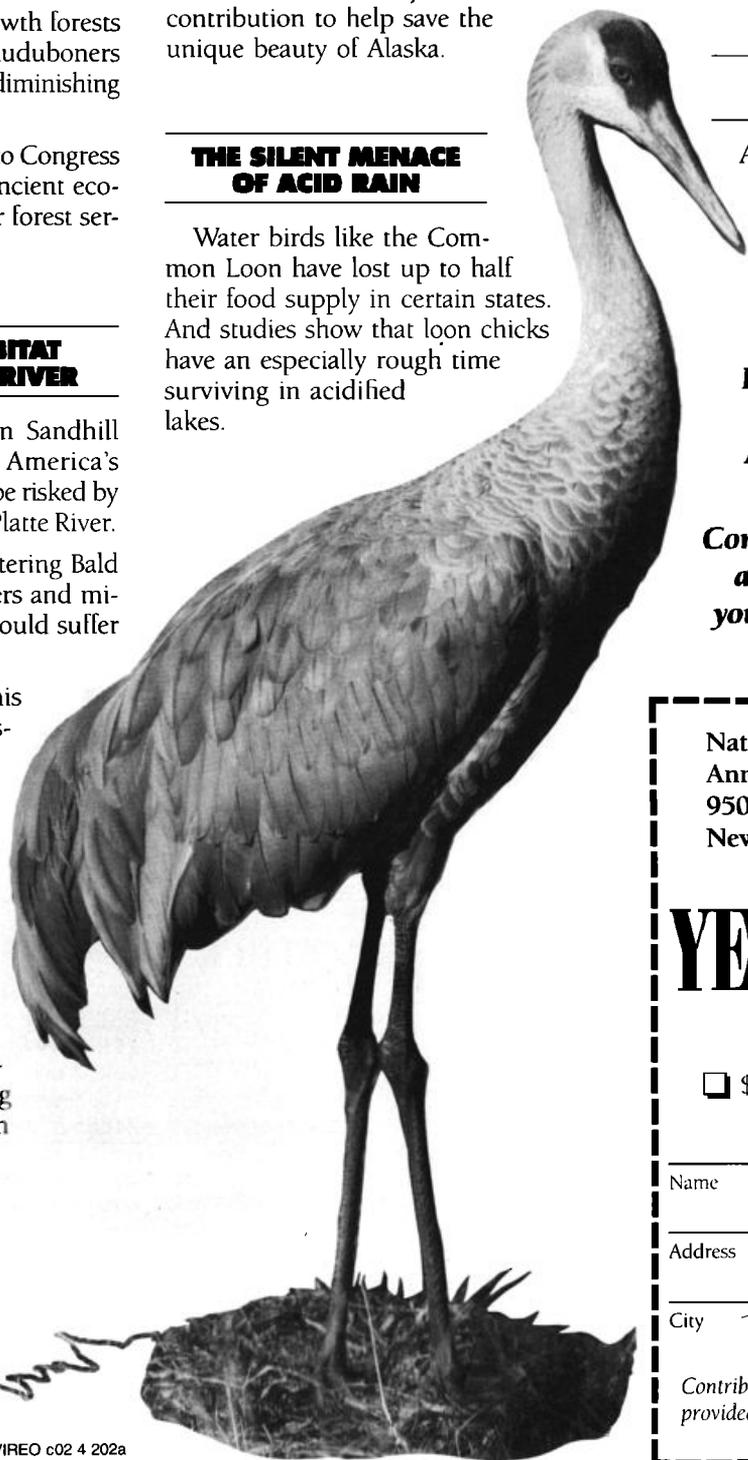


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**Front cover photograph:** Red-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa brevirostris*), St. George Island, Alaska, July 12, 1987. Photo/J.P. Myers (VIREO m01/22/001).

**Back cover photograph:** School. Red-legged Kittiwake with Thick-billed Murres (*Uria lomvia*), St. Paul Island, Alaska, July 10, 1987. Photo/J.P. Myers (VIREO m01/22/002).

**Camera:** Canon A-1, 400mm lens. **Film:** Kodachrome 64.

