

National Audubon Society

Spring 1995 Vol. 49 No. 1

FieldNotes



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From the Editor

Every decade brings new and different threats to the integrity of our environment. The variety of responses to those threats continues to widen. Driven by the prospects of an awesome diminishment of the world's biological resources, we stand at the confluence of menacing forces that now beset the earth. Each peril individually would be a major challenge. Together they may be calamitous. Think of the magnitude of the challenge. We now stand at the brink of a spasm of extinction the likes of which has not been experienced for 65 million years, possibly a good deal longer.

In spite of the apparently bleak prognosis, however, making a personal difference will always be possible in this country as long as elected officials are not impervious to the votes of their constituents. If all of the committed birders and casual bird enthusiasts in the country were to galvanize on a single bird conservation issue or several issues, the assembled political muscle would be formidable indeed. Citizen action campaigns utilizing muscle of this magnitude could have an astonishing impact on environmental policy. The talents gathered within the birding community represent a considerable force for the good. Our expertise matches compelling conservation needs. We have a powerful mix, ripe for great environmental activism.

Migratory birds are our announcers of spring and our heralds of autumn. Conservation biology of migratory birds, particularly neotropical forest-dwelling species, is a birder's issue, if there ever were one. Evidence now emerging points to major long-term declines in their numbers. We should, each and everyone of us, be leading the field in efforts to document, interpret, and reverse these declines. Linking the information gatherers with the information users should be of the highest priority.

As members of the birding community, we have an immense responsibility to

ensure that conservation derives maximum benefit from our work and our presence. The fact is that we care about birds and their habitats. And because of this fact not only do we need to do birds, we must do them with a vengeance and with unmatched excellence.

Most of us make sure that we have current information on the environmental issues that concern us. But taking the next step to act on the information with which we are armed always seems more difficult. Do something simple. Take the next couple of steps today. First, read the opening item in our World Briefs column. Next, exercise the potent power of the pen, telephone, fax, or e-mail and notify your House member and two Senators that you want them to vote to keep the National Biological Service intact and fully funded.

Light up the congressional switchboard, load up the mail bags, or make your computer network work for migratory birds.

In addition to your own elected officials, the following Members (with their telephone numbers) are key to protecting National Biological Service appropriations.



Rep. Bob Livingston (Appropriations Committee Chair) 202-225-2771

Sen. Ted Stevens (Republican, Alaska) 202-224-3004

Sen. Patty Murray (Democrat, Washington) 202-224-2621

Sen. Bob Bennett (Republican, Utah) 202-224-5444

Sen. Slade Gorton (Republican, Washington) 202-224-3441

Sen. Connie Mack (Republican, Florida) 202-224-5274

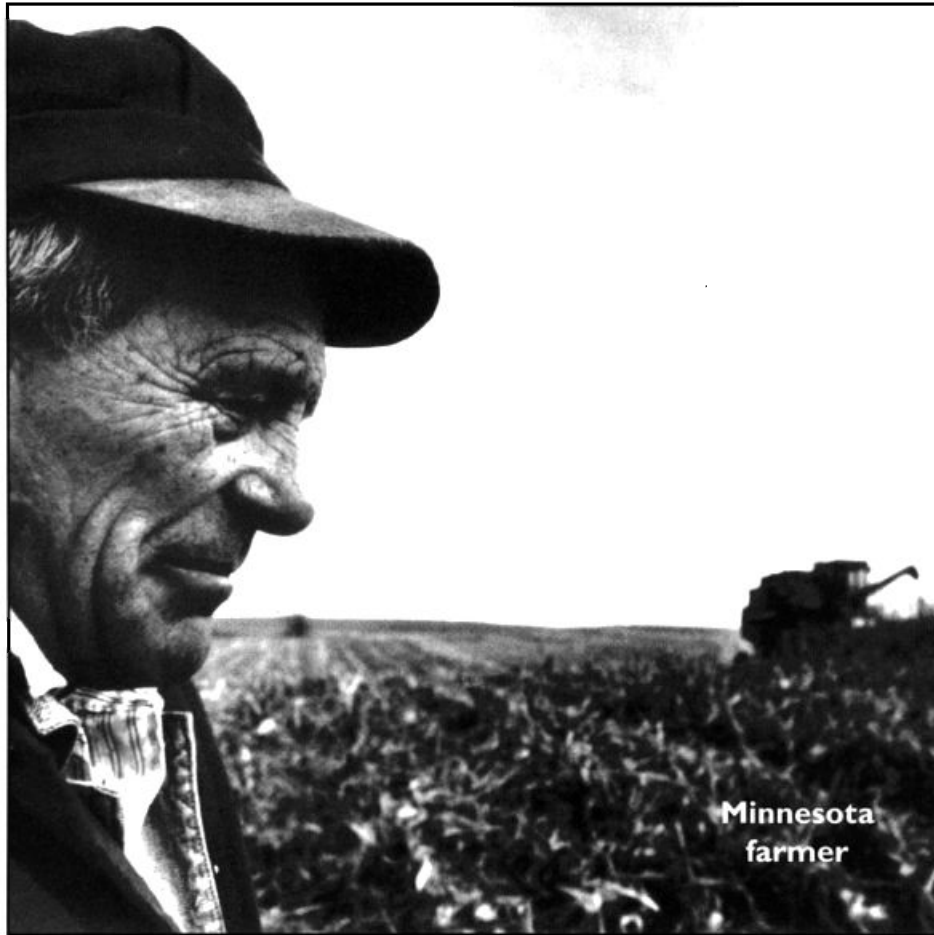
Sen. Thad Cochran (Republican, Mississippi) 202-224-5054

Sen. Pete Domenici (Republican, New Mexico) 202-224-6621

Sen. Mark Hatfield (Republican, Oregon) 202-224-3753

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For more information about how you can help protect the plants, animals, and ecosystems essential for our future, contact: National Audubon Society, Box ESA, 700 Broadway, New York, New York 10003.

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ON THE COVER: Territorial male
Grasshopper Sparrow in full song.
Photography by Tom Ulrich

How to Read the Regional Reports

Birds have no respect for range maps. Bird distribution in North America is constantly changing, as birds expand their ranges into new areas, disappear from former strongholds, or alter their patterns of migration.

Our knowledge of bird distribution is also changing constantly, as discoveries continue to come in. Keeping up with all these developments is a challenge for ornithologists, conservationists, and birders.

The Regional Reports, published four times a year, contain a wealth of information about our dynamic birdlife. To those seeing the reports for the first time, they might appear difficult or technical, but they are not; anyone with any birding experience will find the reports easy to understand. We invite you to read the report from your area of the continent; we predict that the information there will alternately surprise you and confirm your ideas about birdlife in your region. To help you get started, here are answers to some questions that may occur to first-time readers.

What kind of information is included, and do the Regional Editors report everything that's reported to them?

Regional Editors do not report every sighting of every bird. Such a list would be huge, unwieldy, and not very useful. Instead, they solicit reports from as many observers as possible, screen the records for accuracy, choose those that are most significant, look for trends and patterns of occurrence, connect scattered bits of information, and ultimately come up with a concise, readable summary of the real bird news—the important avian events and trends of the season throughout their region.

Why are there abbreviations in the text?

We abbreviate some frequently used words and phrases to save space. Most are easy to understand and remember. (See the following list of abbreviations.) In addition, some Regional Editors use shortened versions of the names of birding hot spots; they list these local abbreviations in a separate paragraph, just after the introductory comments and just before their main species accounts.

What do the initials in parentheses mean?

Most records published in each report will be followed by initials, to indicate the source, the person(s) who found or reported the bird(s) mentioned. The initials may be followed by *et al.* (short for *et alia*, meaning “and others”), or preceded by *fide* (literally, “by the faith of”—meaning that this is a second-hand report, and the person cited is the one who passed it to the Regional Editor).

There are good reasons for giving credit to the observers involved. Readers may be reassured about the accuracy of surprising sightings if they know who the observers were; researchers who want to know more about a certain record may be able to contact the observers directly.

Who sends in their sightings?

All observers are invited to send in notes to their Regional Editors: details on rare sightings, species that were scarcer or more numerous than usual during the season, unusual concentrations on migration, and so on. Reading the reports for your region for a few seasons is the best way to find out what kinds of information are desired. Although the Regional Editors cannot cite every record that they receive, every contributor helps them to produce a more thorough and accurate summary.

Why are some bird names in heavier type?

We use boldface type to draw attention to outstanding records of rare birds. General categories of birds that the Regional Editors would place in boldface would include: any species that has been recorded fewer than 10 times previously in a given state or province; any new breeding record for a state or province; or any bird totally outside established patterns of seasonal occurrence. (For the most part, records are not boldfaced unless they are backed up with solid details or photographs.) Birders who like to know about rare birds (and most of us do) can get a complete rundown of the season's outstanding rarities by scanning all the Regional Reports for those boldfaced birds.

What are the sections marked “S.A.”?

“S.A.” stands for “Special Attention” (and, by coincidence, is pronounced “essay”). The purpose of the essays is to draw attention to noteworthy phenomena or trends.

Likely topics include new population trends or new patterns of bird distribution, unusual invasions or migration events, field research projects that have yielded new data, specific conservation problems that have an impact on birdlife, or detailed discussion of some outstanding (or perplexing) rare bird record. Experienced readers make it a point to flip through all the reports and read all the S.A.s, even in regions where they do not read the rest of the text.

Standard Abbreviations used in the Regional Reports

Abbreviations used in place names:

In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Other abbreviations:

Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
Hwy	Highway
I.	Island or Isle
Is.	Islands or Isles
Jct.	Junction
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mi	mile(s)
Mt.	Mountain or Mount
Mts.	Mountains
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
Ref.	Refuge
Res.	Reservoir (not Reservation)
S.P.	State Park
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area

Abbreviations used in the names of birds:

Am.	American
Com.	Common
E.	Eastern
Eur.	European or Eurasian
Mt.	Mountain
N.	Northern
S.	Southern
W.	Western

Other abbreviations and symbols referring to birds:

ad.	adult
imm.	immature
juv.	juvenile or juvenile
sp.	species
†	means that written details were submitted for a sighting
*	means that a specimen was collected
♂	male
♀	female
CBC	Christmas Bird Count

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