

National Audubon Society

Summer 1996 Vol. 50 No.2

Field Notes





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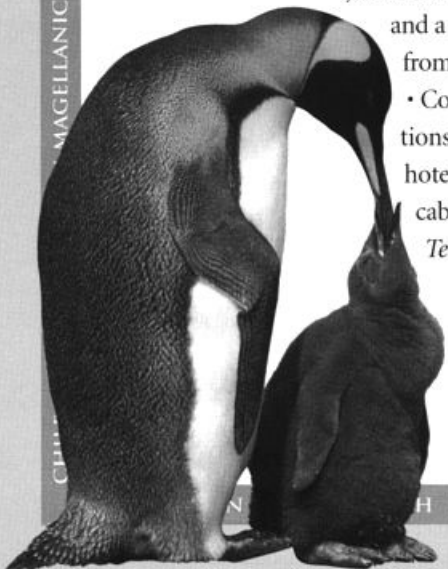
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Geoff has led two trips through the region and is eager to get back to the verdant greenery and abundant wildlife of this special area. As Christmas Bird Count Editor for *Field Notes*, Geoff coordinates, edits, and publicizes the data entry and publication of Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count, a crucial tool for the monitoring of early-winter bird populations across the western hemisphere. CBCs have even been conducted in Tierra del Fuego.



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National Audubon Society Field Notes

published by the
National Audubon Society

Volume 50, No. 2

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National Audubon Society Field Notes is published five times a year. Editorial and business offices are located at 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 (212) 979-3000. Subscription, all in U.S. \$: One year, \$25.00. Canada and foreign: \$37.00. Libraries and Institutions: \$35.00. Single copies: Spring Issue (Autumn Migration), Summer Issue (Winter Season), Fall Issue (Spring Migration), Winter Issue (Nesting Season) all \$5.00 each. Christmas Bird Count issue \$15.00. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional Post Offices. Copyright 1996 by The National Audubon Society. Postmaster: Send address changes to **National Audubon Society Field Notes**, PO Box 490, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598. ISSN 0004-7686.

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From the Editor

On Sunday night past, July 28, our old and dear friend, and America's most well-known and respected bird man, Roger Tory Peterson, passed away in his sleep at his home in Old Lyme, Connecticut. He was 87 years old and leaves behind a particularly rich heritage, of which each of us is heir.

The influence that Roger Peterson exerted in the world of natural history during the last six decades was enormous. His *Field Guide to the Birds*, first published in 1934 and revised several times since then, met the need for a simple book that would enable anyone to identify birds by sight. He painted and labeled a series of simplified, schematic plates of all of the birds of eastern

North America and developed his unique system for identifying birds by indicating each species' key field marks with lines and arrows, so that the observer could see at a glance what to look for in the field. Along with the plates was a brief text for each species, emphasizing the marks, behavior, vocalizations, or other attributes useful for identification. This pioneering field guide kept a clear vision of what a bird watcher needs to look for. This first field guide was the most influential natural history accomplishment of the century, with every generation of birder since Peterson being schooled with it.

Through this book he brought birding to the masses, thereby helping to make birding the most popular outdoor hobby in the country.

The book met instant and enduring success. Over the past 60-plus years, more than 10 million copies have been sold. Peterson subsequently wrote and illustrated bird guides to western North America, Mexico, Europe, and Africa, among others. Today his field guide series covers all aspects of the natural world—from wildflowers and butterflies to rocks and minerals. All of them use the now tried and true "Peterson System" of

pared-down, simple drawings and descriptions geared to instant impressions and quick judgments. These guides, too, have sold in the millions.

Roger Peterson revolutionized birding from the pursuit of an avid few to the pleasure of millions. In North America, more people have been introduced to the natural world by Roger Tory Peterson than by any other individual. The cumulative impact of his guides has been one of the major popularizing forces of the modern environmentalist movement. He has been credited with engendering in Americans a new concern for nature and the environment by making it accessible.

It was he who so often taught that birds are the indicators of the environment—a sort of "ecological litmus"—reflecting changes in the ecosystem. He claimed

that it was inevitable that the person who watches birds would quickly become an environmentalist. And the truth of his claim can be seen in the thousands of bird enthusiasts who have contributed immeasurably to our environmental awareness and concern.

He furthered the appreciation, and protection, of birds the world over.

He impassioned thousands of Americans, and awakened in millions a fondness for birds and wildlife.

Dr. Peterson was on the administrative staff of the National Audubon Society from 1934 to 1943. While there, he was in charge of all educational activities and programs, as well as serving as the art editor for *AUDUBON* magazine. He served, up to his death, as Special Consultant to the National Audubon Society, and each President of the organization, in turn, called upon him for advice and guidance.

His travels took him to the far corners of the earth. He exhibited paintings in all of the big cities of the world, as well as lectured in most of them. Honors have been heaped upon him, having received more than 18 honorary doctorates and innumerable medals and awards, including the Audubon Conservation Medal from the National Audubon Society and the nations' highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, from the then President of the United States, Jimmy Carter.

We will miss him.



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:

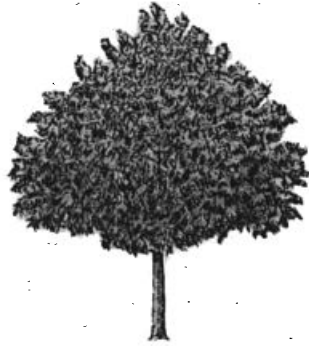
Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
Hwy	Highway
I.	Island or Isle
Is.	Islands or Isles
Jct.	Junction
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mi	mile(s)
Mt.	Mountain or Mount
Mts.	Mountains
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
Pt.	Point (not 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.	juv. or juvenile
sp.	species
v.t.	video taped
†	means that written details were submitted for a sighting
*	means that a specimen was collected
♂	male
♀	female
CBC	Christmas Bird Count

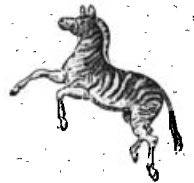


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Detail from "Piping Plover" painted by naturalist Cindy House, who uses Bausch & Lomb optics for her field observations.

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