Publisher's Memo

With this first issue of Volume 53, ABA is changing the title of its journal from *Field Notes* to *North American Birds*. While there is nothing wrong with *Field Notes,* and the name has served the publication well in various forms over the years, we believe that *North American Birds* better defines the scope and intent—the mission—of the new and expanded periodical we are now putting forward. We have discussed the change with the National Audubon Society, with which we are allied for a two-year period of transition from NAS jurisdiction to full ABA responsibility. NAS not only concurs with the name change, but views ABA's positioning of the journal with both pleasure and confidence in the future.

That future will draw richly from a distinguished past. A lot of people feel that the ornithologal history of the 20th century—at least the field history—resides between the covers of our venerable publication. Its origins date back to 1917, when the renowned Frank M. Chapman included an article on "The Seasons" in his pioneering magazine *Bird-Lore.* The idea prospered, took on a life of its own in 1947, and evolved until today the seasonal accounts encompass 27 regions across the length and breadth of North America; the reports are written by a corps of more than 50 expert Regional Editors, who rely on the observations of 3,000 to 4,000 highly skilled birders. Only the Christmas Bird Count brings more people together—and our regional birders keep up their dedicated work all year long. There is no other way, for the drama of bird life is seamless and never-ending, as you will see from the Editor's Notebook where Ned Brinkley introduces Fall Migration, August through November 1998.

—GUS DANIELS, *ABA PUBLISHER*

Editor's Notebook

The attraction of autumn birding in North America is singular and powerful, rivalled only by the return of warblers and other Neotropical migrants in the spring. Though the hues of some species have dulled to olive and brown by the fall, birders across the continent still eagerly anticipate the more protracted movement of shorebirds, seabirds, and passerines toward the wintering areas.

So protracted are these movements, indeed, that "autumn" when conceived as postbreeding movement becomes an unwieldy topic—not just the four months considered in the "fall migration" issue but the better part of the year. And birds' movements are scarcely limited to southbound flights, of course: eastern birds are often found in the West (and vice-versa), southern species move northward, pelagic seabirds are pushed into the continent's interior, and terrestrial species are displaced over the oceans and Gulf of Mexico.

In this whirlwind of bird activity, though, patterns of movement become discernable on scales both large and small. The Changing Seasons column attempts to capture some of the dynamism of discrete, weather-related bird records of the autumn of 1998—from the tropical cyclones of August and September in the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states, to the remarkable nontropical cyclones in October and November off Atlantic Canada and in the Midwest, to the subtle shift toward La Niña conditions in the Pacific.

Bird movements in various low-pressure systems (cyclones) are becoming more predictable, although there is a limited ornithological literature on the subject. But studies of seabirds' responses to oceanic anomalies are in their infancy. Did the shift from El Niño to La Niña have anything to do with the appearance of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater or Great-winged Petrel off California's coast this fall? Does the Southern Oscillation affect Atlantic seabirds as well (as editor Rob Norton suggests)—and, if so, then might the simultaneous records of Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel and Bulwer's Petrel off North Carolina be related to this influence?

These are unanswerable questions, naturally, at present, but as *Bird-Lore, Audubon Field Notes, American Birds,* and *Field Notes* have shown time and again in the past, these odd "accidental" records may be heralds of phenomena that our collective observations may later resolve into interpretable patterns.

—NED BRINKLEY, *Guest Editor*