

editor's notebook

Among the myriad of sciences, few disciplines can truly lay claim to significant amateur contributions, let alone publication outlets for amateurs. Occasionally a backyard astronomer discovers a new comet, and journals such as *Madroño*, *News of the Lepidopterists' Society*, and *Herpetological Review* encourage publication of significant field discoveries of plants, butterflies, or amphibians and reptiles, respectively. Yet no scientific endeavor has such a long-standing, well-established contribution from amateurs as does ornithology, and *North American Birds* serves as the premier continent-wide journal publishing the plethora of field observations from active field ornithologists, amateur and professional alike. It is so well established in this role that nary a state, province, or local monograph is published that does not rely heavily upon information published in this journal. Furthermore, it is the chief organ of communication between the cadre of birders across the continent and the ornithologists studying avian distribution (such as members of the Checklist Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union).

But *North American Birds* is not a journal devoted just to the first records and surprising extralimitals. It is also a journal about range extensions, new nesting records, population increases and declines, and dispersal patterns. It is every bit as concerned with our common, regular avifauna as it is concerned with rarities and vagrants. How else could we properly track the expansion of the White-winged Dove into the Southeast, Southern Great Plains, and Midwest? Where else could we have chronologically documented the decline of the Golden-winged Warbler throughout the Northeast? Or the expansion of the Great-tailed Grackle throughout the Southwest, Southern Great Plains, and Midwest? Or the regular occurrence in North American waters of species like the Murphy's Petrel? It is only in the pages of *North American Birds*, through Regional Reports published each season and through well-researched summary papers, that we continually document the changing faces of bird status and distribution throughout the continent.

The goal for each issue is to strike a balance between these various faces, whether declines, expansions, or vagrants. This issue strikes that balance with an analysis of population trends and dispersal patterns of the Groove-billed and Smooth-billed anis, a discussion of distribution patterns and identification of different subspecies of the Whimbrel in North America, and well documented continental firsts for the Black-browed Albatross and Gray-hooded Gull. And as always the Changing Seasons takes a broad scale look at patterns and events that made spring 1999 what it was, from the incursion of Purple Gallinules into the Southeast and Midwest to the astounding numbers of migrant landbirds passing through the Southwest, from range expansions of the Mississippi Kite, Cave Swallow, and Tricolored Blackbird to the usual host of ultrararities.

North American Birds will continue to fulfill its role, but it can only do so through continued submission of papers and through contribution of sightings to Regional Reports. With help from us all this peer-reviewed journal will not only thrive in its current form, but will grow to accommodate a profusion of important papers on avian status, distribution, biogeography, and population biology in every issue, and thus will become even more invaluable. Were it not for *North American Birds*, we would all be poorer indeed.

—MICHAEL PATTEN, *Guest Editor*

SUBSPECIES, HYBRIDS, AND IDENTIFIABLE FORMS

Species level nomenclature and taxonomy used in *North American Birds* strictly follows that of the seventh edition (1998) of *American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds*. Identification of a particular bird to species is often difficult enough.

In some instances, however, a bird can be identified below the species level (i.e., to subspecies), to a discrete phenotype (e.g., a distinct morph), or is not a full taxon (i.e., it is a hybrid). Caution is needed (and urged!) whenever identifying a bird to subspecies or as a hybrid, but some subspecies, subspecies groups (a collection of similar subspecies), and hybrids have distinctive enough appearances that they actually have established common names. To facilitate communication and to encourage the reporting of these forms, *North American Birds* often uses these established common names. The more frequent ones are listed below; others can generally be found in the Check-list cited above, or at various on-line resources (e.g., the Ontario Field Ornithologists web site at <www.interlog.com/~ofo>). —MICHAEL A. PATTEN

Common Name	What It Means
Great White Heron	<i>Ardea herodias occidentalis</i>
Richardson's (Canada) Goose	<i>Branta canadensis hutchinsii</i>
Cackling (Canada) Goose	<i>Branta canadensis minimus</i>
Atlantic Brant	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>
Black Brant	<i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>
Mexican Duck	<i>Anas platyrhynchos diazi</i>
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca crecca</i> or <i>A. c. nimia</i>
Harlan's Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis harlani</i>
Krider's (Red-tailed) Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis krideri</i>
Masked Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus ridgwayi</i>
Western Willet	<i>Catoptrophus semipalmatus inornatus</i>
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus canus</i> or <i>L. c. heinei</i>
Vega Gull	<i>Larus argentatus vegae</i> or <i>L. a. birulai</i>
Yellow-shafted Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus auratus group</i>
Red-shafted Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus cafer group</i>
Brewster's Warbler	Blue-winged × Golden-winged Warbler hybrid (dominant)
Lawrence's Warbler	Blue-winged × Golden-winged Warbler hybrid (recessive)
Myrtle Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata coronata group</i>
Audubon's Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata auduboni group</i>
Yellow Palm Warbler	<i>Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea</i>
Ipswich Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis princeps</i>
Large-billed Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis rostratus</i>
Red Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca iliaca</i> or <i>P. i. zaboria</i>
Sooty Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca unalaschensis group</i>
Slate-colored Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca schistacea group</i>
Thick-billed Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca megarhyncha group</i>
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii</i>
Slate-colored Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis hyemalis group</i>
Oregon Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis oregonus group</i>
Gray-headed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis caniceps</i>
Red-backed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis dorsalis</i>
White-winged Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis aikeni</i>
Pink-sided Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis mearnsi</i>
Hepburn's Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis</i>