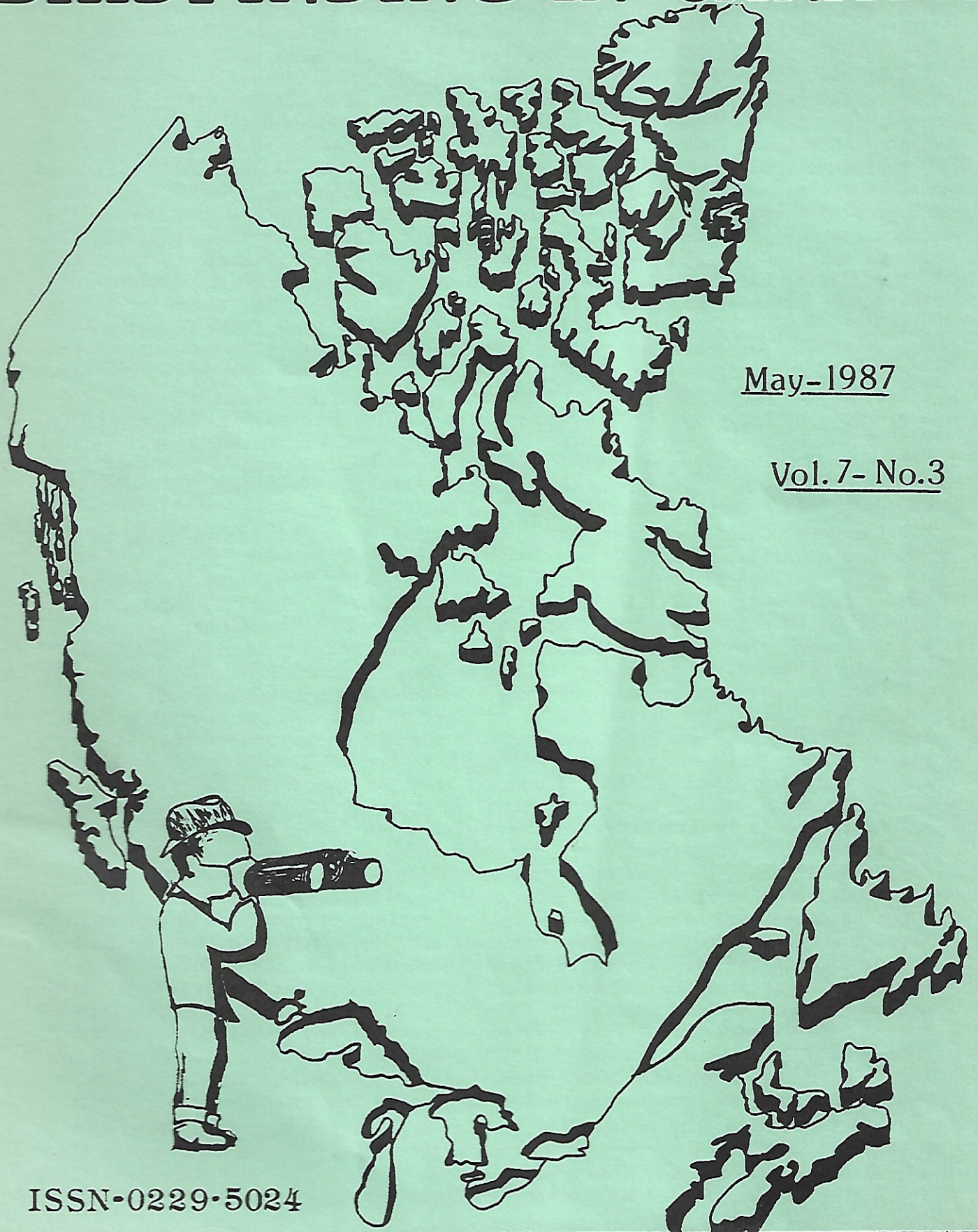


BIRDFINDING IN CANADA

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Record Keeping

Everybody's experiences produce a series of records. You cannot visit a new city, attend a social gathering or see a bird for the first time, without having the event recorded in your mind.

When the subject is of extreme personal interest, observers often translate their mental impressions into a permanent, written record - a diary or similar form of memento. Others leave them to the wind - the wind of fading memory.

It seems reasonable to assume that a person taking the extra step of keeping a record, is likely to absorb more lasting knowledge, and perhaps derive more pleasure, from the relevant pursuit than one who does not.

In observing, and learning more about birds, we suggested in "The Beginner's Page" of our March '87 issue, that it is helpful to keep records. We expressed the further thought that some kind of incentive (e.g. linking birding to some sort of easy and interesting project) which encourages the bird student to maintain a record of some kind, is advisable.

Records, analyzed and arranged, become the prime elements of statistics. And, possibly next to baseball, we can think of no pastime that lends itself more aptly to the game of statistics, than birding.

So, whether you call it posting a record, booking a statistic or keeping a list - this phase of birding is the basic link that combines the fun of birding with the incentive and medium to learn.

When publication of statistics (life lists, location and time-frame totals, etc.) first started, there was an immediate backlash action from some to whom the idea was a veritable anathema. "Listeners never learn anything about birds," was one of the common remarks that arose from this negative faction. Thankfully, this presumption (and its disciples) seems to have faded away through sheer lack of substance.

A closer look has revealed just the opposite. The motivated list aficionado (record keeper) turns out to be a dedicated student of many facets of ornithology - plumages, ranges, migration dates, songs and calls, habitats and so on. All of these are important topics, the mastery of which results in this subspecies of birder becoming highly skilled in finding and identifying birds - and often being a valuable contributor to ornithological knowledge. They lead to a myriad of specializations - banding, nest study, effects of weather on avian behavior, ad infinitum.

In each issue of BIRDFINDING IN CANADA, these few pages are reserved for publication of the statistical side of record keeping. They reveal only arithmetical by-products reflecting, in one small way, the thousands of hours birders have spent, not just looking for, and finding, birds, but in their applied study of guide books, range maps, recorded tapes, monographs and whatever additional relevant literature is available.

Figures give our subscribers the opportunity to lower their binoculars, every few months and review one of the secondary, but interesting facets of birding - theirs and their associates'. We think they form the ideal link between two extremes of birding - seriousness and fun.

One record that has been broken recently, first in 1983, and again in 1986, is the "Most Species Observed, One Year, One Province." In '83, Mike Force recorded 336 species in British Columbia, eclipsing the mark of 320, set in 1979 by David Stirling. In '86, late in the year, Mike realized he had a chance of going even higher - even though he had not started the year with this objective.

Taking stock on Nov.10th, he found his total stood at 332 and, with a few Okanagan Valley Christmas Bird Counts still ahead, it looked as though another record was within reach.

Mike's final total was 340, with a few species missed that could have easily been scheduled, had the objective been planned earlier.

Also in B.C., in 1986, Linda Van Damme had a 329 total and Gary Davidson, before hurrying off for a year's change of venue in Australia, had 325. Chris Siddle had a 323 total in B.C. in '83.

The only provinces where a yearly figure of 300 has been reached, to our knowledge, are British Columbia and Ontario.

A few birders have exceeded 300 in Ontario in a year, and Alan Wormington has done it 4 times - perhaps 5 - we don't have his '86 figure.

But, it appears this threshold could be crossed in a few other provinces - in fact, will be. Gordon Grief had 288 in Manitoba in 1984; Chris Escott, 282 in '83 in Saskatchewan and Richard Klauke ran up a 284 total in Alberta in 1986.

Some other milestones appear to be within reach which, just a few years ago, would not have been considered probable.

Of course, Norm Chesterfield's "Life List - World" has already been recognized in the Guinness Book of Records, and he keeps adding to it. But, who would have thought, say 25 years ago, that an individual life list for Canada, of 500 species, was remotely possible? Yet, as of Feb.'87, Norm sits at 495.

A similar mark is the 400 provincial life total. Will it be reached? A look at current figures indicates it certainly will with observers like Mike Force, Alan Wormington and David Stirling already in the 380's and counting.

MAKING A NOVELTY OUT OF A NOVELTY

In the past few years, birders have indulged in a harmless bit of whimsy called, "The Big Sit." The idea is to stay in one spot for a specified time (an hour, a whole day, whatever you decide) and record what birds you identify. Totals of 100+ have been reported by some of our subscribers for a one-day Sit.

Gary Davidson and Chris Siddle have had a lot of fun with one-hour Big Sits. On July 7th, 1986, they observed 36 species from 9 to 10 A.M. near Fort St. John, B.C. on what had become, for them, an annual event.

Then Gary, who was planning a move to Australia, realized that in '87, he'd miss his pet project. Or would he?

Thinking all the time, Gary has suggested a world-wide, one-hour Big Sit, asking us to publicize it. So --- here it is.

Wherever you are in the world, on the weekend of June 6/7, 1987, take one hour and send us your list of birds identified from that one spot.

Make a note in your diary - June 6th or 7th.

We'll be interested in seeing how this works out.

MORE ABOUT C.B.O.T.Y.

In our March '87 issue, we announced the intent to select a Bird of the Year for Canada, starting with 1987.

As Chairman of the Committee, Blake Maybank will coordinate the nominating and selecting process. Consideration of the "Electoral Panel" is already underway.

BIRDFINDING IN CANADA's role is that of an information medium only.

Five factors have been identified as criteria in a weighted voting process. They are: Skill: Difficulty in initial identification. (A juvenile stint would out-rate a spring-plumaged male Ruff; an Empidonax flycatcher, a Fork-tailed.)

Perseverance: How difficult was the bird to find, initially, and later? A rail would outscore a Vermilion Flycatcher.

Hysteria: What was the impact on birders? Blake estimates more people viewed Presqu'ile's Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher in 4 days than Newfoundland's Common Greenshank in 18 months.

Twitch: How rare was it? First for Canada? or a province? (Or, if not a first, would a Slaty-backed Gull rate above a Swainson's Warbler?)

Flash: Was it sensational? (Swallow-tailed Kite vs Cassin's Sparrow) Once the bird was found, was it a pleasure to see it again?

We'll have more on this in a future issue. Nominations for C.B.O.T.Y. can be made up to Jan.31,1988.

Nominations, and all correspondence, should be addressed to:Blake Maybank,Box 7, Rocky Harbour, Nfld. AOK 4N0.

N.W.T. & ATPAT

Those who have observed birds in the Northwest Territories might spend an evening or two, in the near future, preparing to split their records into two new categories.

It appears that, before very long, our N.W.T. may be divided into two territories - Denendeh and Nunavit. The resident native people have agreed on a boundary line which would create a Dene region in the western sector and an Inuit territory in the east. By the time you read this item, a ratification vote may already have been held. Newspapers have recently published articles, with maps showing the intended dividing line.

If we are correct in assuming that, once this occurs, the concept of one "Northwest Territories" will disappear, we'll have one more political, geographical entity in Canada, and thus one more addition to our "ATPAT" totals.

Speaking of ATPAT (All Territories and Provinces Added Together) here are our latest figures - as of March 1,1987.

Eric Tull, Westmount, Que.	2709	Stan Shadick, Saskatoon, Sask.	1412
Wayne Neily, Winnipeg, Man.	2544	Edge Pegg, Clarendon, Ont.	1409
Bruce Mactavish, St.John's,Nfld.	2047	Paul Mackenzie, Kingston, Ont.	1404
Roger Foxall, Halifax, N.S.	1995	Roger Taylor, Ottawa, Ont.	1359
Alex Gray, Mississauga, Ont.	1974	Bill Crins, Vancouver, B.C.	1338
Hue MacKenzie, Surrey, B.C.	1965	Gordon Grief, Dugald, Man.	1303
Jo Ann MacKenzie, Surrey, B.C.	1957	Jack Williams, Surrey, B.C.	1303
Roger Burrows, St.John's, Nfld.	1930	Chris Adam, Regina, Sask.	1253
Dave Mark, Tonawanda, N.Y.	1914	Bill Clark, Ottawa, Ont.	1240
Peter Hamel, Toronto, Ont.	1902	Richard Cannings, Vancouver, B.C.	1186
Blake Maybank, Rocky Harbour, Nfld.	1863	Peter Gilchrist, Toronto, Ont.	1144
Gerry Bennett, Woodbridge, Ont.	1742	Harv Lane, Saskatoon, Sask.	1083
Angus MacLean, Alma, N.B.	1704	Brooke Clibbon, Westmount, Que.	1071
Luke Fazio, Mississauga, Ont.	1578	Rolph Davis, King City, Ont.	1064
David Stirling, Victoria, B.C.	1537	Richard Klauke, St.Paul, Alta.	1064
Bob McDonald, Halifax, N.S.	1431	Theo Hofmann, Thornhill, Ont.	1034
Wayne Weber, Burnaby, B.C.	1421	Ken Thorpe, Montreal, Que.	1020

A new blank form for reporting personal statistics is enclosed with this issue. If you intend to file, it will be appreciated if you do so as promptly as you can.

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Business address is:"BIRDFINDING IN CANADA, P.O.Box 519, Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada. L0J 1C0."

All articles are prepared and written by G.Bennett unless stated otherwise.

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