

WE MUST ECONOMIZE

New Policies for Bird Counts

Some state ornithological journals do not have a sufficient amount of publishable material, and others have ceased or at least sharply curtailed publication for lack of funds. We do not want to find *Chat* in either position. At present we have an abundance of excellent manuscripts, and Carolina Bird Club had no serious deficit in 1976. Recent sharp rises in printing costs, however, made it necessary for the editors to review our publication policies. This was done in consultation with CBC President Barbara Lee.

Approximately one-third of the pages in *Chat* are devoted to the Christmas and Spring Bird Counts. Thanks to many years of successful bird counts, winter and spring distribution are the two best known aspects of bird life in the Carolinas. The amount of new information obtained each year is no longer sufficient to justify the \$45-per-page cost of publication in the present format. The count tables have become prohibitively expensive. Yet both counts build club spirit and provide good fellowship for bird watchers. Some of the birds seen are truly significant. We certainly do not advocate discontinuance of the bird counts.

Because the Christmas Count is almost entirely a duplication of material that appears in *American Birds*, *Chat* will no longer publish this count, not even in summary format. Local compilers who are not presently submitting reports to both journals are advised to obtain instructions immediately from Christmas Bird Count, American Birds, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. *American Birds* charges a fee of \$1 per participant. Subscriptions to this excellent magazine are available from the above address at the rate of \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years. In addition to the regional reports and the Christmas Bird Count issue, the journal has many color pictures and features of general interest to bird students.

The Spring Bird Count is strictly a Carolina Bird Club project. We will continue to send out the count forms and to compile the table, which will be placed in the files of the CBC Records Committee. In the future only a summary of the Spring Bird Count will appear in *Chat*.

By saying that the distribution of birds during the winter and spring seasons is well known for the Carolinas, we do not mean to imply that we know everything that needs to be known about the bird life of the region. We strongly urge individual observers to send full details on any rare species found on a Christmas Bird Count to the editors of *Chat*, being sure to mention that it was seen on the count day or during the count period. As a rule, all first, second, or third records for the state should go to the General Field Notes Editor (with full details) while subsequent sightings may go to him or to the Briefs for the Files Editor, depending upon the significance of the occurrence.

Economizing on the publication of the bird counts should enable CBC to continue publishing scientific papers and notes without charge to authors. Many professional biologists can obtain funds for page costs through the institutions financing their research. When such funds are available, we should greatly appreciate their being paid voluntarily at the rate stated on the masthead of the current issue of *Chat*. Headquarters Secretary Betty Paterson will furnish a bill upon request.

The editors of *Chat* hope to maintain high standards for the journal without making it necessary for CBC to raise dues; but with the continuing inflation, a future increase seems inevitable unless the club experiences a remarkable growth in membership. The chief expense in publishing *Chat* is setting the type. We could print twice as many copies and mail them to twice as many members at only a modest increase in the overall annual budget.

CBC should be growing. The population of the Carolinas has increased greatly during the past 25 years, but CBC membership has remained about the same. Public awareness of the need for wildlife protection and conservation of natural resources is

better than ever before, but CBC does not seem to benefit from it. There must be hundreds of potential members who simply do not know that the club exists. If you really care about the future of CBC, now is the time to do whatever you can to publicize the club and enroll new members. Please remember that our best publicity is your own personal enthusiasm for bird study when shared with friends, neighbors, and the young people of your community.—EFP

A REAL NEED

Breeding Bird Studies

At the spring CBC meeting in Winston-Salem, Chan Robbins of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explained the Breeding Bird Survey, a series of nationwide roadside censuses made annually and mostly by volunteers. Across the country as well as right here in the Carolinas, the least well known aspects of bird life are the distribution, both ecological and geographical, and the relative abundance of species during the nesting season.

A project to census the birds nesting in certain State Parks is underway in South Carolina, and a report on the 1977 season has been offered for publication in *Chat*. This study provides a useful sampling of breeding birds from all sections of the state.

It would be helpful if museums and natural history clubs would sponsor annual breeding bird forays to census a different place each June. When announced in advance through the CBC Newsletter, these forays should attract capable bird students from a wide area.

Local clubs also could sponsor the compiling of breeding records for the county. Even for many common species we need information such as early and late egg dates, clutch size, nest construction, habitat preference, number of broods, care of young, and frequency of cowbird parasitism.

Much useful data can be gathered by one dedicated bird watcher. We urge individuals to list all birds seen within a given area from 1 to 25 June, dates that should exclude most late migrants and early post-breeding wanderers. This could be a long-range project for one county, state or national park, or state or national forest. On the other hand, it could be a one-shot list from a vacation spot. A bare list of species and dates seen from a county that has almost no published ornithological records might contain some real surprises.

Please send lists of breeding birds to Eloise F. Potter, Route 3, Box 114 AA, Zebulon, N.C. 27597. (Reports should be submitted on or before 1 December. While unsupported lists of birds must be limited to the 1-25 June period, adequately documented nesting records obtained before or after these dates can and should be included.) BBS route data can be used, but please make a separate list for each county along the route. (Birds do not respect political boundaries, but editors do.)

This is an experiment. In time CBC may have organized breeding bird surveys with forms to simplify the recording of data, but at present we shall have to rely upon the ingenuity and sound judgment of individual bird students and group leaders. The format for publication and the number of years the project will continue must be determined by the extent of coverage. Several friends have predicted that the response will be very poor. "People just don't go birding after the first of June," they tell me. "The heat, ticks, and poison ivy are too much for 'em." That may be so, but I'm betting that CBC members are not that easily discouraged. Anyone who sends *Chat* a breeding bird list can be sure it will be sincerely appreciated by one who knows from experience the hazards of June field work.—EFP