



# Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

## 300 Club?

The 600 Club lists well over 100 observers who have recorded 600 species north of the Rio Grande River. Edwin Stearns of South Carolina with 629 species seems to be the only member in our territory. You can receive regular reports on the 600 Club from Terry Moore, 2699 Twigg Circle, Marietta, Georgia 30067, for \$5 a year per person or \$7 for husband and wife.

Since keeping a life list is fun, it has been suggested that we inaugurate a 300 Club for the Carolinas. Anyone who has identified 300 species of birds in North Carolina, in South Carolina, or in the two states combined qualifies as a member. Send your totals to this department editor. Rumor has it that when the figures are posted Paul Sykes and Harry LeGrand will be tied for the top spot, but it would not be surprising to see some less well known bird watchers in close contention.

We use the word "fun" because so many purists think life lists and state lists are a waste of time—and maybe even harmful, in that people stretch for new records. If we start a 300 Club, it will be purely for entertainment, although it never hurts to see what birds you have missed in your own State. (Have you heard Eloise Potter moan about the life-list Olive-sided Flycatcher that got away from her at the Fontana CBC meeting?)

So, send in your name, your address, and the number of species you have identified in the field in each of the Carolinas as well as in the entire CBC region. Be sure to mention a species that has eluded you. Count birds found close enough to shore so the observation point can be reached by a small boat leaving a Carolina port and returning the same day.

All is on the honor system, of course. There is no prize, so no point in exaggerating. To "identify" a bird means that you saw it alive in the wild and checked its field marks so that you are able to recognize it again. I found a Saw-whet Owl killed by a car one day; it's not on my life list. High above Denver, a friend pointed to a flash of blue and yelled "Mountain Bluebird"; it's not on my life list. On the other hand, I was alone in the rain high in the Sierras one day and saw a busy woodpecker with a startling white head. Even I know a White-headed Woodpecker when I see one.

So be honest with yourself in counting species observed. You're the only one who has to be satisfied.

## Scarlet Sage Attracts House Finches

Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Alford of Wendell, N.C., report that scarlet sage, long known to be favored by nectar-sipping hummingbirds, has seeds that attract House Finches. Has anyone else noticed House Finches feeding on a particular plant?

## More Fawn-colored House Sparrows

I have more than once seen House Sparrow mutants as described in the Crutchfield note (Chat 42:35). Back in the early 1950s one appeared at my feeder, and the color spread through the local population in the next few years. That population was wiped out by a disease that struck the sparrows about then. I enjoyed reading Crutchfield's musings on

the literature. As to the selective value of the fawn trait, Crutchfield did not mention the negative selective value of a trait that makes an individual stand out in a flock. Several articles lately have dealt with the problems faced by an unusual individual that a predator may "fix" on and pursue relentlessly.

Another factor that works against a mutant gene in a large population is mathematical. The new gene, however great the advantage it gives the few individuals expressing it, is likely to be overwhelmed by the far more numerous bearers of the old gene. In small colonies of birds that settle in a new area where interbreeding with the main population is impossible, mutant strains have a much better chance of persisting. Although Ernst Mayr's *Animal Species and Evolution* (Harvard University Press 1963) has been around for 15 years, a long time considering the pace of science, and although some of Mayr's basic tenets recently have been questioned, his book remains an excellent reference on the mechanics of natural selection.—JAY SHULER, P.O. Box 288, McClellanville, S.C. 29458.

### **Bird Club Guide**

*A Guide to North American Bird Clubs* by Jon E. Rickert (Avian Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 310, Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42701) is now available from the publisher for \$10.00 per copy plus 75¢ for postage and handling on the first copy and 25¢ on each additional copy. This hardcover book contains over 575 pages of information important to the traveling bird watcher. It includes listings for over 835 clubs from Alaska to Panama, favorite birding areas for each club, names and phone numbers of local bird students who are willing to help visitors and newcomers, rare bird alert numbers, lists of local publications about birds, and other helpful facts such as club meeting times and places. Traveling bird watchers will want to pack this book right along with the field guides and binoculars.

### **Homes for Bluebirds**

Two Bailey men spend nearly all of their spare time putting up bluebird boxes around golf courses from North Carolina to Florida and returning to check on the nesting success of the occupants. The men are Jack Finch and Ronald Bisette, president and vice president respectively of Homes for Bluebirds, Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to providing properly constructed nest boxes for Eastern Bluebirds and to informing the public about the need for protecting bluebirds. The work is supported by purchases of nest boxes and brochures as well as by tax deductible contributions.

Some of the golf courses where you may find evidence of the work done by Jack Finch and Ronald Bisette include ones at Nashville, Willow Springs, Scotland Neck, Swansboro, Pinetops, Roanoke Rapids, and Gastonia in North Carolina and at Rock Hill, York, and Clover in South Carolina. Finch and Bisette are experimenting with nest boxes made from two specially treated fiberboard flower pots. Data from the Star Hill Golf Course near Swansboro indicate that the double-pot boxes work very well.

Conventional wooden bluebird boxes are sold at a current price of \$7 each ppd. For further information write Homes for Bluebirds, Inc., c/o Finch's Blueberry Nursery, Route 1, Bailey, N.C. 27807.

### **Autumn Hawk Migration**

When bird watchers talk about autumn hawk migration, they usually mention Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania or a similar vantage point. According to a paper presented by Barbara and David Lee at the 1978 meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists, many hawks migrate southward along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. "Observations of the Autumn Hawk Migrations Along North Carolina's Outer Banks" was summarized in *The ASB Bulletin* (25:53, April 1978).

The authors observed the fall migrations of diurnal raptors in the autumns of 1975, 1976, and 1977 and found that large numbers of these birds follow the Outer Banks. Occasionally as many as 500 hawks were tallied during a period of several hours. By monitoring from key points along the islands, it was possible to ascertain that most of the hawks remained directly over the islands as they moved south. Migration intensity and species

composition varied with the date, the time of day, and the weather. During September and October Accipiters (87%) and Falcons (10%) were the most abundant forms; Harriers and Ospreys were common, Buteos and Vultures rare. Sharp-shinned Hawks were by far the most abundant single species (85%). The open terrain provided an excellent opportunity to compare foraging techniques, which were documented for the seven most common species.

### **Birdwalk Tips**

Jerry W. Via has prepared a very useful booklet called "How to Lead a Birdwalk." He not only offers a pre-trip checklist and suggestions for directing groups of bird watchers but also describes types of walks suitable for different seasons, different times of day and night, different age groups, and different purposes (e.g. photography, nest finding). Copies may be obtained for 50¢ each by writing Virginia Society of Ornithology, c/o Mrs. Myriam P. Moore, 101 Columbia Avenue, Lynchburg, Virginia 24503.

### **Dr. J. Fred Denton Jr.**

It has been my good fortune to tag along on birdwalks with the great ones: Alan and Helen Cruickshank, Edward Chalif, Roger Peterson—and Fred Denton. Like all the great ones, Fred had an enthusiasm for birds which he wanted to share with less knowledgeable beginners.

At our first meeting in 1943, I asked Fred if he could show me a Pileated Woodpecker, a bird hard to find in those days. It took us half a day in the swamps beside the Savannah River, but he knew exactly where to look—and we found the bird. When a war-time Christmas Count was considered that year, Fred and I were the only ones available, and we split the territory: he below the Fall Line, I above it. (Fred had serious doubts about my Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, but was too kind to say so.) When one of his distinguished birding friends came to Augusta, or when he found something like the Royal Tern, Fred called me to share the experience.

The Georgia Ornithological Society planned a meeting in 1943. Fred and I pooled our gasoline ration coupons and drove to Athens to meet with Dr. Eugene Odum. I think G.O.S. attendance that day was six or seven!

The war ended and I got out of uniform, but friendship continued, to my everlasting benefit. Much later, Fred handed me the manuscript of the first Georgia Check-list, which he and others had prepared. We gambled the entire assets of G.O.S. (about \$900) and I had the book printed in Atlanta. The gamble wound up with a substantial profit for the Society.

On many a field trip in 1943-46, Fred told me of his dreams for an Augusta Bird Club; he wanted to share his love for and his knowledge of birds. In a sense, the Club is a memorial to this kind and patient man. I miss him.—LCF