

- SHARP-TAILED SPARROW:** Rare inland records were an individual, believed to be of an inland race, seen at the upper end of Roanoke Rapids Lake on 3 October (Merrill Lynch), and a tower-killed bird reported by Dick Brown at Charlotte on 29 October.
- BACHMAN'S SPARROW:** J.H. Carter III noted single birds at two locations near Hoffman on 23 August, one of which was singing in a brushy old field. Breeding birds in the Sandhills, and in the remainder of the coastal plain, generally inhabit open pine-woods and not old fields, the typical habitat of the species in the piedmont.
- DARK-EYED JUNCO:** An early arrival was noted at Charlotte on 26 September by Joe Norwood.
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** An adult was seen at Fort Fisher on 7 October by Ricky Davis, and another adult, perhaps a different bird, was noted there on 21 October by Charles T. Clark.
- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:** An immature was rare at Hunting Island, S.C., on 2 October, as seen by James Clark.
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW:** Mike Tove found a dead individual at Cullowhee, N.C., on the extremely early date of 29 August. One seen by Tom Howard at Lake Surf on 15 September was the first record for that area. Other individuals were reported at Chapel Hill on 21 October (Dennis Alwon et al.), and near Townville on 22 October (Sidney Gauthreaux, Harry LeGrand).
- LAPLAND LONGSPUR:** Winter arrivals in northwestern South Carolina were noted near Townville on 19 November and near Pendleton on 25 November, both reported by Harry LeGrand.

SUGGESTIONS ON REPORTING NOTEWORTHY SIGHTINGS FOR "BRIEFS FOR THE FILES"

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

Many people who have reported their sightings to me for publication in *Chat* "Briefs for the Files" and in *American Birds* have asked whether or not their manner of reporting is the "correct" or "recommended" manner. The purpose of this note is to give contributors an idea of the "recommended" format.

WHAT TO REPORT —Naturally, you should report species that are rare in the area where found or season when seen. I am also interested in trends, such as species in unusually low or unusually high numbers in your area. This information is important in the *American Birds* seasonal report. Stated simply, report what you think is noteworthy (worthy of mention in the "Briefs" or *American Birds*).

HOW TO REPORT—Every sighting must, by necessity, contain five bits of information: the species name, the number of individuals, the date of the sighting, the location, and the observer(s). Also, the significance of the records may be stated if desired, such as "first county record" or "very late." In addition, I urge contributors to describe the field marks on the rare species, especially those difficult to identify. Species such as Baird's Sandpiper, Iceland Gull, and Warbling Vireo (each of which is rare in the Carolinas and easily confused with other species) are examples of birds that should be described in detail. A Common Loon or a Horned Grebe at an inland locality would not need a full description, but a Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, or Eared Grebe definitely should be detailed. Even though I generally do not publish the descriptions in the "Briefs" or *American Birds*, they are necessary for me to decide whether the sightings are valid or

not. If an observer intends to write a General Field Note for *Chat* on a very rare sighting, he should indicate this with the report, so that I will not duplicate it in the "Briefs".

I prefer the report to be written "Briefs" style, though complete sentences are not necessary. Place the species name at the left margin, with the remaining bits of information following the species name. The species should be in taxonomic order, though this is a convenience and certainly not a necessity. The following hypothetical sightings illustrate the preferred style:

Common Loon: 30 on Lake Smith at Washington, S.C., on Mar. 12 ["12 Mar." if you prefer; year not specified unless the record is over 1 year old] by John Doe. This is a record total for the area.

Red-throated Loon: one seen on Lake Smith at Washington on Mar. 6 by John Doe, only the second local record. The slender and upturned bill was noticed, as were the slender neck, and the light grayish back and crown. It was slightly smaller than nearby Common Loons.

Western Grebe: one studied carefully at Lake Smith near Washington on Feb. 10 by John Doe. It was seen at 100 yards through a 30X scope for 15 minutes. The long bill, very long and slender neck, and solid black and white contrast of upperparts and underparts were noted. It was approximately twice the size of nearby Horned Grebes. A field note for *Chat* will be submitted. This is the first record for the area.

Pied-billed Grebe: surprisingly scarce this winter, with only 3 seen all season in the Washington area.

If you are writing to report on just one or two rarities, the above style need not be followed. You may wish to report them in a prosaic manner, as in a personal letter. Another exception to the above style is a single-day report, such as a pelagic trip list or a list of warblers in a large wave. A single list of species, rather than a separate entry for each species, is recommended.

WHEN TO REPORT—You may, of course, contribute sightings at any time. Those who bird regularly are encouraged to gather all of their sightings at the end of each of the four seasons and then submit their reports [most already do this]. It is at these times that I write the seasonal reports for *American Birds* and the *Chat* "Briefs." The following (included in each issue of *American Birds* on the inside front cover) is a guideline as to when to report:

SEASON	REPORT BY:
Winter (December through February)	March 15
Spring (March through May)	June 15
Summer (June and July)	August 15
Fall (August through November)	December 15

I hope that the above information will help to answer any questions about reporting to "Briefs for the Files" and *American Birds*. It does not matter whether the report is typed or handwritten, although typed reports are easier to read. I just want a report from everyone who has something worth publishing!