

Instructions for Authors

Effective scientific prose is accurate, clear, economical, fluent, and graceful.

Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, 6th ed., Cambridge University Press, 1994. P. 101.

About *The Chat*

The Chat is the quarterly publication of the Carolina Bird Club. Its purpose is to encourage the understanding of the birds of the Carolinas. A typical issue contains one or two articles, a report from a bird count or from a Bird Records Committee, one or more "General Field Notes," and Briefs for the Files. The Executive Committee of the Carolina Bird Club serves as *The Chat's* editorial review board, with advice from the Publications Committee. The circulation of *The Chat* is currently around 1,300.

Basic Standard

Manuscripts published in *The Chat* must be related to bird study and must have a nexus with the Carolinas.

Style and Format for Articles and General Field Notes

Manuscripts submitted for publication generally fall into one of two categories: Articles and General Field Notes. Articles tend to be longer than General Field Notes and generally involve a year or more of study. Articles may also include major summaries of existing records, such as a distribution summary of a species or an accounting of birds in a particular park or region. Most articles include figures and tables. General Field Notes are shorter, usually do not contain figures or tables, and usually involve a single or limited number of observations. Documentation of a rare sighting, unusual behavior, significant nesting record, or a brief summary of several observations are typical examples of General Field Notes.

If you believe that your submission will be considered an Article, please submit three copies directly to me at the address shown on the inside front cover of this issue. If you believe that your submission is more likely to be considered a General Field Note, please send three copies to the appropriate state General Field Note Editor. Those editors are listed on the inside front cover of this issue as well. You may submit your manuscript to me simply on a diskette or as an e-mail attachment, but please include one copy in Word or WordPerfect and one copy as a text (.txt) file. Please indicate on the diskette or in the body of the e-mail message the word processing program you used. Beware that tables and figures rarely do well in electronic form and that you are better served submitting hard copies of those.

Here is how the General Field Note Editors, reviewers, and I like to receive manuscripts. This style and format is not required, especially for General Field

Notes, as we would much rather have the manuscript and format and edit it ourselves than to have a significant observation left unpublished.

The Chat for the most part follows *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*, 6th ed., Cambridge University Press, 1994. This is the style generally followed by *North American Birds*, so the styles of the two publications are quite similar.

Your manuscript should be double-spaced. Don't hyphenate, and don't use hidden formatting such as widow-orphan protection or hanging indents in the "Literature Cited" section. It is simple enough for me to do that once your diskette reaches my desk. Be sure to refer to each figure and table in your text. Use common bird names as found in the 7th edition (1998) of *American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds*. Capitalize bird names. Follow the first reference to a bird with its scientific name. Each reference cited in the text must appear in the "Literature Cited" section, and each listing in the "Literature Cited" section must be cited in the text. Don't use footnotes.

Longer manuscripts will be easier to follow if divided into sections. Common section headings are Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Suggestions for Further Study, Acknowledgments, and Literature Cited.

The General Field Note by Will Cook on his two Kirtland's Warbler observations (page 21 of this issue) provides an outstanding example of a well-written field note.

Note these defined expressions:

Record: An observation of a bird that has been accepted by the North or South Carolina Bird Records Committee. Records accepted only by other authorities should be so noted.

Report: An observation of a bird, whether accepted or not. This even includes photographs of a bird if the sighting has not yet been accepted by a Bird Records Committee.

Your title page or cover letter should include your current mailing address, telephone number (work and home), and e-mail address. If the paper has multiple authors, please designate the author to whom editors should send correspondence. Please also suggest a shortened title for the header as it will appear in *The Chat*.

Review Process for Articles and General Field Notes

The appropriate editor will determine whether the topic and treatment are potentially appropriate for *The Chat* and, if so, review the manuscript or have it reviewed by another. All papers published as Articles are sent for outside review. Whether a field note is reviewed by someone other than the General Field Notes Editor is entirely within the discretion of that editor, but generally the criteria relate to matters such as the General Field Notes Editor's expertise with respect to the specific subject matter, the significance of the subject matter, and the potential for a challenge to the submission's validity.

You should expect to receive correspondence confirming receipt of the manuscript within two or three weeks of the mailing of the manuscript, or sooner if you submit an e-mail address.

Reviewers (whether General Field Notes Editors or outside reviewers) will judge the merits of a manuscript on grounds of originality, importance for the readers of *The Chat*, substantive merit, and more.

You should expect some changes to be suggested (or required) for your manuscript. Once the review process is complete, a marked copy of the manuscript will be sent to you showing the proposed changes. Comments on Articles are also put onto a form answering some of the questions listed below. If you accept the proposed changes, please return the marked copy to the appropriate editor with a short note indicating approval. If the changes are slight and you accept the revisions with only few additional changes, return the paper with a diskette of the manuscript in PC format, or send it to the reviewing editor. If your manuscript was prepared on a Macintosh computer, please put it on a PC-formatted diskette as follows:

- ▶ Run the program "Apple File Exchange" that came with your Macintosh operating system.
- ▶ Insert a DOS-formatted diskette. (Don't use one of your Mac-formatted diskettes.)
- ▶ Use the Apple File Exchange program to copy the file from your hard drive onto the diskette.
- ▶ When you finish and quit the program, the diskette is ejected, ready for shipping off to the editor.

Papers on Mac-formatted diskettes will be accepted, but please expect a delay.

If you don't have a computer, let the editor know, and he will find a way to get your manuscript on one, but expect a delay.

Rules for Reviewers

When proposed articles are submitted for outside review, reviewers are instructed to keep the manuscript confidential and are asked to respond within three weeks and to note any conflicts of interests they might have. Most importantly they are asked to make specific comments on the paper's suitability for publication, style of presentation, interest to readers of *The Chat*, scientific soundness, originality, length, methods, data presentation, statistical design and analysis, errors, and citations. Reviewers are promised anonymity.

Briefs for the Files

"Briefs for the Files" is a listing of interesting bird observations, compiled and reviewed by Ricky Davis. See the first page of the Briefs in this issue for more information. Ricky is always glad to help you decide whether to go beyond submitting a sighting for Briefs for the Files and write it up as a General Field Note.

Other Material

The Chat will also publish book reviews of particular interest to birders in the Carolinas. Space for commentaries on published articles and on *The Chat* in general is also being considered.

Conclusion

The beginning of most papers is not typing the word “introduction.” Instead, most papers begin when someone decides to grab a pair of binoculars and go birding. The next step is almost always serendipitous: The birder notices something unusual about a bird or simply begins pondering an idea while moving to the next good birding spot. Only much later comes the research and the paper itself.

Thus, for the most part *The Chat* is written by members and friends of the Carolina Bird Club as a result of their having gone birding one day. Most would agree that the effort and expense of getting these observations, ideas, and research turned into papers and then put into print are our most significant contributions to the world of science.

Bob Wood
Editor

