

WHY KEEP BIRD RECORDS ?

It may come as a terrific shock that I am thoroughly in favor of keeping records—that is, maintaining them, but not keeping them from further light of day or fellow ornithologists.

Why do persons keep records ? I should say first of all to get acquainted with birds. Its a game with a figure of 60 to 100 species as the preliminary goal. This is highly justified and may consist of notes on localities, dates, plumage characteristics, if a strange or unfamiliar species, and the numbers.

The next step results in migrational studies, with earliest and latest dates of arrival and departure, new locality records, probably with the publication of short notes on additions to the local list or notations on abundance or scarcities in numbers.

The third phase results in behaviour studies or territorial problems, facilitated by breeding bird counts, and practical applications of these principals of bird relationships and requirements to wildlife management.

No matter in which of these catagories you are interested, the keeping of records is extremely valuable and necessary.

What can you do with these records ?

The remainder of this paper will deal with some possible uses for these records.

The earliest systematic bird work in Iowa was inaugurated by Wells W. Cooke. The work begun in 1883 with 4 observers, was expanded in 1884 utilizing 26 observers, and was completed in 1885 with 15 persons participating. This study was summarized in the 1888 publication entitled "Bird Migration in the Mississippi Valley"

THE USE OF BIRD RECORDS

Philip A. DuMont

For many years the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly in part the Biological Survey) has been accumulating information on the distribution, migration, and abundance of North American birds. By means of this information, the Service is aided in administering intelligently the bird resources of the United States, as it is obligated to do under the terms of the Migratory Bird Treaties with Canada and Mexico. The method of getting this information has been to furnish 2 x 5 inch cards to bird students in various parts of the country. On these the observer would record the migration dates, breeding and wintering status, and abundance of each species of bird occurring at his locality. These cards are distributed by species and State or Province in a file which contains also transcribed and clipped published records of distribution and migration. This file, now containing over 2,000,000 cards, besides its use in many government publications, has served as the basis of bird distribution descriptions in many State bird books, as well as in the several editions of the American Ornithologists' Union "Check-List of North American Birds." It is at present being used as a basis for the next revised edition of the A.O.U. Check-List, as well as the ranges to be included in the forthcoming volumes of Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds."

To improve the method of obtaining information, the Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting the aid of strategically located bird clubs, biological laboratories, and other agencies, interested in the study of birds. These organizations may be of great assistance by acting as the local clearing houses for data sent in by their members and correspondents, and by sending to the

Fish and Wildlife Service each season cards containing the combined information for each species for each locality. It is hoped that the cooperation of enough organizations may be enlisted so that a large part of the United States and Canada can be covered in this way.

Another step has been taken to make better use of bird distribution and migration records and to avoid duplicate efforts both in the preparation and filing of such records. Early in 1947, the National Audubon Society and the Fish and Wildlife Service entered into a cooperative arrangement whereby Dr. John Aldrich (in charge of Distribution and Migration of Birds), and others of his staff will assist in editing Audubon Field Notes—now published entirely separate from the Audubon Magazine.

Mrs. Joseph J. Hickey will assist as editor of Audubon Field Notes.

Mrs. Hickey and Dr. Aldrich are collaborating on certain improvements and additions to Audubon Field Notes. One of the first innovations will be a series of breeding distribution maps. Observers will be urged to report any localities (not shown on the map) in which the particular species is discovered to be nesting. After these records are received, the map will be republished in a later issue showing the localities added. Plans are also under way for initiating a winter census, and instructions will be announced this summer or fall.

The vast files of the Fish and Wildlife Service on bird distribution and migration are kept at the Patuxent Research Refuge, just outside of Washington, D. C., at Laurel, Maryland. All notes and records now submitted for use in Audubon Field Notes will become a part of the Patuxent files.

The present schedule of seasons will be treated in four issues of Audubon Field Notes. For the Middle-Western Region, which includes all of Iowa, eastern

Nebraska, southern Wisconsin, the north half of Illinois, and northwestern Indiana, reports will be submitted to Philip A. DuMont, 2730 Central Street, Evanston, Illinois as follows:

Winter Season	May-June issue	Notes due April 1
Spring Migration	July-Aug. issue	Notes due June 1
Breeding Season	Sept.-Oct. issue	Notes due Aug. 1
Fall Migration	Jan.-Feb. issue	Notes due Dec. 1

The Christmas Bird Count, which is published in the March-April issue, and the Breeding Bird Census, which appears in the Nov.-Dec. issue, will continue to be mailed directly to the National Audubon Society, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, New York.

These two projects, submitting distribution and migration data for the Fish and Wildlife Service files and season reports for Audubon Field Notes, offer excellent cooperative programs for bird clubs as well as individual observers. If your organization will consider the first proposal as an opportunity to take part in a national program for accumulating information, please advise Dr. John W. Aldrich, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.