

A Project of the
**FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE
 BIRD CLUBS**

in cooperation with
 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
 Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology
 National Audubon Society
 New York State Museum

**BREEDING BIRD ATLAS
 NEWSLETTER**

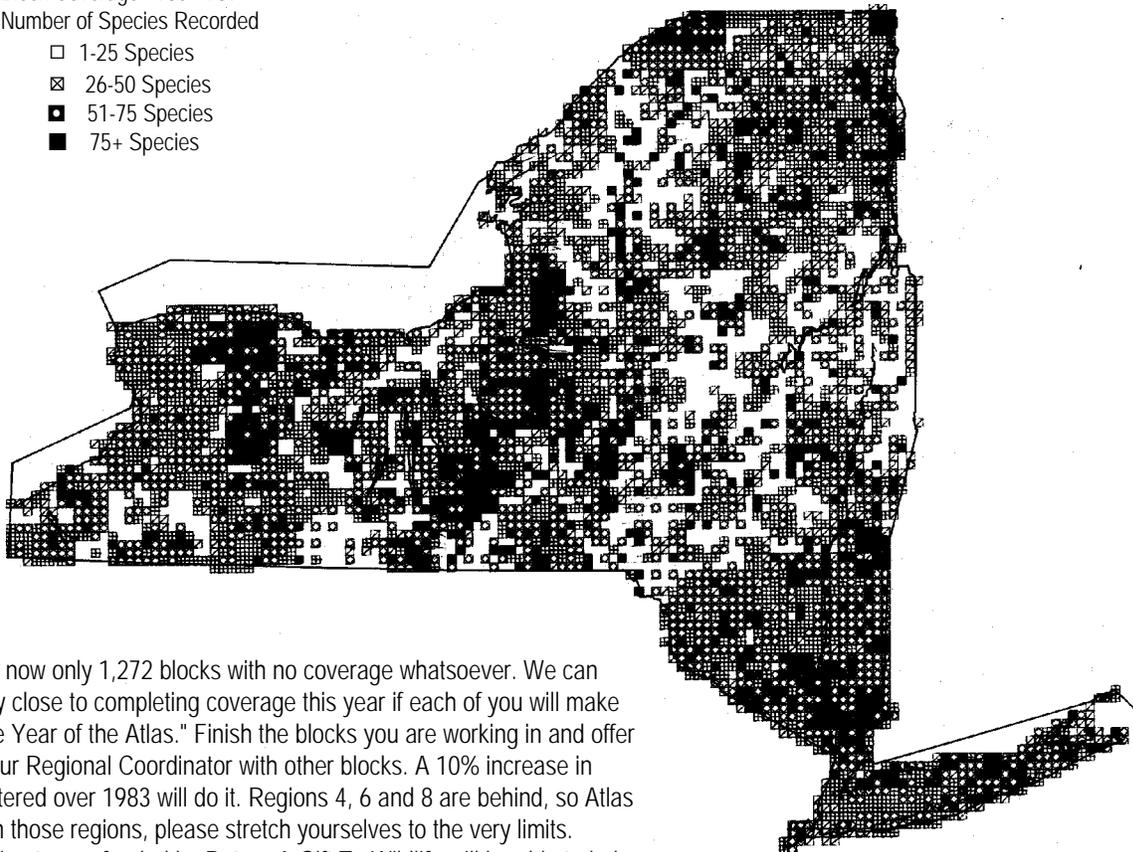
NUMBER 11

MAY 1984

1984 The Year of the Atlas

NYS Breeding Bird Atlas Project
 Block Coverage 1980-1989
 Number of Species Recorded

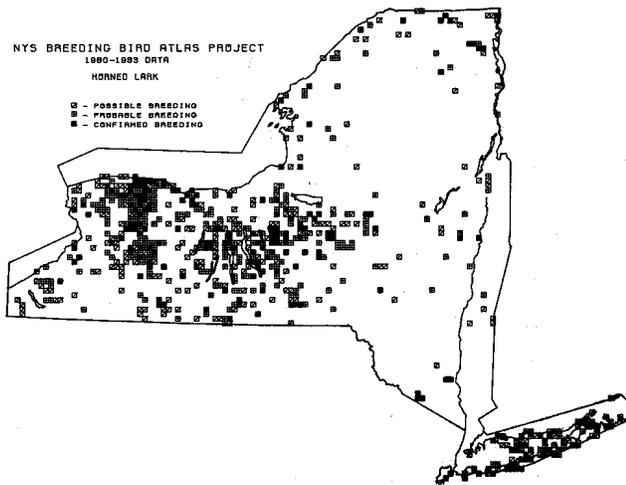
- 1-25 Species
- ⊠ 26-50 Species
- 51-75 Species
- 75+ Species



There are now only 1,272 blocks with no coverage whatsoever. We can come very close to completing coverage this year if each of you will make 1984 "The Year of the Atlas." Finish the blocks you are working in and offer to help your Regional Coordinator with other blocks. A 10% increase in blocks entered over 1983 will do it. Regions 4, 6 and 8 are behind, so Atlas workers in those regions, please stretch yourselves to the very limits. Blockbusting teams funded by Return A Gift To Wildlife will be able to help, but we need you to get those regions into shape. Some Atlas workers continue to spend time in blocks that have been adequately surveyed. This is the year to move out of those blocks into blocks still in need of work or into those that have not been entered at all. PLEASE MAKE AN EXTRA EFFORT NOW. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO ASK YOU AGAIN.

Just Keep On Looking . . .

Heading into the final season, there are still a number of species that appear to be under-recorded. Observers with appropriate habitat should be especially alert for the following: Least Bittern; all three accipiters; Red-shouldered Hawk; rails; woodcock and snipe; Upland Sandpiper; all owls, especially Shorteared, Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet; Redheaded Woodpecker; Horned Lark; Northern Roughwinged and Cliff Swallows; Marsh and Sedge Wrens (especially Sedge); Yellow-throated and Solitary Vireos; Worm-eating, Golden-winged, Nashville, Magnolia, Cerulean, Pine and Mourning Warblers; the waterthrushes; and Grasshopper, Henslow's and Vesper Sparrows. If you are working on Long Island, in addition to some of the above species, look for Broadwinged Hawk, both cuckoos, Whip-poor-will, Rubythroated Hummingbird, Willow Flycatcher and Purple Finch. Review back issues of the newsletter for "Hints on Haunts" (available from Regional Coordinators) and take note of the following information offered by Atlas workers.



Horned Lark- On Long Island it breeds in dunes at the barrier beach and in airport grasslands. Singing males are rather easily located by twittering song often given in flight, especially in early spring (like icicles falling out of the sky). Expect larks only in the most open short grass habitat. The birds are prominent singers and displayers (for the song flight is a display flight as well) in April and May. Nests are hard to find but fledglings are easy to see in the open habitat. Like shorebirds and gallinaceous birds, they walk and the young larks follow the adults around begging for food even before they can fly very well. A wet spot, such as after a rain, is a good place to look for adults with young anytime from late May to early July.

Sedge Wren-In the past two years of the Atlas project (1981, 1982) I have encountered Sedge Wrens (formerly Short-billed Marsh Wrens) at two locations along Corbeau Creek in northern Clinton County within approximately four miles of each other at elevations of 150' (1981) and 220' (1982).

-Eric Salzman

The wrens were found in the transition zone between the bordering pasture and the deeper part of the marsh along the stream. The vegetation most closely associated with the Sedge Wrens belongs to the genus *Scirpus*, or bulrush. The patches they prefer are nonflowering (no spikelets) that apparently spread vegetatively. The vegetation is dense and grasslike, 3 1/2' to 4' high. Along the edge of the stream this vegetation forms a more or less continuous thick growth. Farther away toward the drier meadow/pasture it forms smaller scattered patches in some of the wetter areas. Bordering these patches are either low pasture grass or low sedge growth. It is these smaller patches of bulrush that the wrens prefer in the intermediate or wet meadow.

The 1981 site was wetter than the 1982 site and therefore had many species of small sedges adjacent to a larger patch of bulrush. At the 1982 site, the bulrush was bordered by short pasture grass. Other than finding food for young the Sedge Wren did not wander far from this dense patch where it was concealed most of the time. The patch of bulrush at the 1982 site was perhaps 70 x 150 feet, and maybe half that size at the 1981 site.

In both locations more adjacent upland pastures were being grazed by cows. The summer of '82 was drier than normal. In mid-August, after I believe the wrens finished nesting, cows were allowed to roam over and graze the 1982 site. During September I checked the previous year's site only to find that the farmer had plowed and planted it. In 1981 he couldn't have gotten in to plow the area because it was too wet. This habitat is obviously fragile, subject to disturbance and at the mercy of the farmer's plow and livestock.

-Mark Gretch

Cerulean Warbler--In Nyack this seems to be a species that must be located by the end of May, because its singing becomes less frequent in June and ceases entirely by the end of that month. It is usually found in fairly open woods-my best bird was in a cluster of only three or four sycamores and maples-and remain very high, emerging infrequently from the interior of the tree to the more open outer branches. I am tempted to say that all sites are near streams or ponds-but one of our largest colonies in recent years was atop Long Mountain, northwest of Bear Mountain, and a good half-mile from the nearest swamp.

Two points: (1) As well as I thought I knew the song, I found I tended to overlook it in the mid-May warbler waves-listen for the distinctive measured "tee-tee-tee" opening that precedes the twittering; (2) Get this species early and monitor it until you can be sure whether it's a migrant or a possible breeder.

-Robert Deed

Continued on page 5

1983-The Best Atlas Year Ever

You have outdone yourselves and made 1983 a banner year for the Atlas. Thirty seven percent more data was submitted in 1983 representing an additional 85,634 new records. Four thousand sixty-one of the 5,333 blocks now have some coverage. Region by region the coverage is as follows:

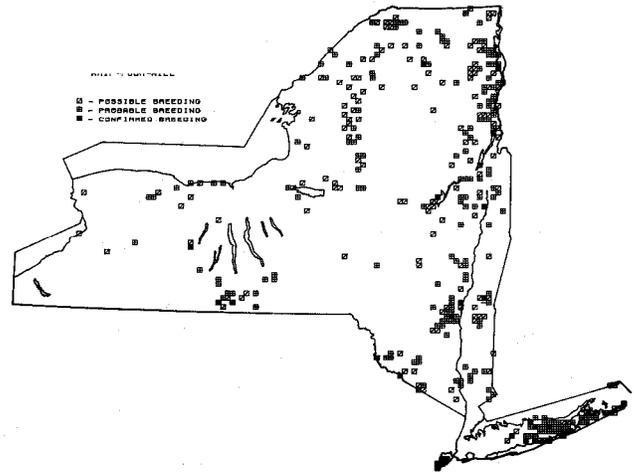
Region	Total # of Blocks	Total Surveyed	Percent Surveyed
1	635	531	83.6
2	338	279	82.5
3	448	324	72.3
4	539	334	61.9
5	552	436	79.0
6	585	349	59.6
7	690	603	87.3
8	755	428	56.6
9	509	496	97.4
10	282	281	99.6

Evidence of breeding has now been found on 243 species. Sixteen of these species are not confirmed. Bewick's Wren and Monk Parakeet are the only two species which had formerly bred in New York on which there are no reports. Six new species have been confirmed as breeding: Forster's Tern, Boat-tailed Grackle, Canvasback, Palm Warbler, Black-hooded Parakeet, and Blue Grosbeak.

The American Robin is the most frequently recorded species statewide, but in regions 1 and 10 the Song Sparrow takes the lead and in Region 7 it is the Blackcapped Chickadee. The American Robin is also the most frequently confirmed species with 82.9% of the records confirmed. The European Starling has been confirmed in 81.6% of the blocks in which it has been observed and the Mute Swan in 80.8%. Those species hardest to confirm include: American Bittern, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Common Snipe, Whippoorwill, Common Nighthawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Northern Parula, and Blackpoll Warbler.

Species diversity is still greatest in Region 7 with 202 species recorded, 179 confirmed. The other regions have lists as follows:

Region	Total # of Species	Total Confirmed
1	179	153
2	176	157
3	181	163
4	172	144
5	194	166
6	189	169
7	192	154
8	173	154
9	189	168



We estimate that Atlas workers have spent approximately 150,000 volunteer hours working on the project over the past four years. If we were to pay each of you minimum wage or \$3.75 per hour, the cost of obtaining the data would be over half a million dollars. That is some contribution and certainly noteworthy. What can we say, but "thanks."

We have no doubt that in this "Year of the Atlas" you will make your best effort yet toward the successful completion of field work.



The Top 76

This is the year to get your blocks in the best shape possible. In order to help you do this a statewide list follows showing the most frequently reported species ranked from most often to least often reported. With few exceptions, you should have all of the top forty species in your block. After that, regional variety plays a more important role. Because of this regional variation, also listed are those species that appear in the top 76 on the regional list, but not on the state lists.

Compare the species on both the state list and your region list with those you have found in your block and then Atlas for the missing species if you have appropriate habitat.

Continued on page 4

STATE

- 1. American Robin
- 2. Song Sparrow
- 3. Red-winged Blackbird
- 4. Blue Jay
- 5. Common Yellowthroat
- 6. Black-capped Chickadee
- 7. Common Grackle
- 8. American Crow
- 9. Barn Swallow
- 10. Gray Catbird
- 11. American Goldfinch
- 12. Northern Flicker
- 13. Chipping Sparrow
- 14. European Starling
- 15. Red-eyed Vireo
- 16. Eastern Kingbird
- 17. Cedar Waxwing
- 18. Wood Thrush
- 19. Yellow Warbler
- 20. Mourning Dove
- 21. Brown-headed Cowbird
- 22. Northern Oriole
- 23. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- 24. Tree Swallow
- 25. Downy Woodpecker
- 26. House Wren
- 27. House Sparrow
- 28. Eastern Wood-Pewee
- 29. Indigo Bunting
- 30. White-breasted Nuthatch
- 31. Scarlet Tanager
- 32. Eastern Phoebe
- 33. Great Crested Flycatcher
- 34. Killdeer
- 35. Northern Cardinal
- 36. Veery
- 37. American Redstart
- 38. Field Sparrow
- 39. Rufous-sided Towhee
- 40. Rock Dove
- 41. Ovenbird
- 42. Belted Kingfisher
- 43. Hairy Woodpecker
- 44. Red-tailed Hawk
- 45. Brown Thrasher
- 46. Eastern Meadowlark
- 47. American Kestrel
- 48. Least Flycatcher
- 49. Bobolink
- 50. Mallard
- 51. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- 52. Chestnut-sided Warbler
- 53. Chimney Swift
- 54. Ruffed Grouse
- 55. Purple Finch
- 56. Warbling Vireo
- 57. Great Blue Heron
- 58. Savannah Sparrow
- 59. House Finch
- 60. Green-backed Heron
- 61. Swamp Sparrow
- 62. Black-and-white Warbler
- 63. Pileated Woodpecker
- 64. Black-billed Cuckoo
- 65. Eastern Bluebird
- 66. White-throated Sparrow
- 67. Black-throated Green Warbler
- 68. Spotted Sandpiper
- 69. Dark-eyed Junco
- 70. Ring-necked Pheasant
- 71. American Woodcock
- 72. Bank Swallow
- 73. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- 74. Wood Duck
- 75. Turkey Vulture
- 76. Great Horned Owl

Region 4

- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Wild Turkey
- Hermit Thrush
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Yellow-throated Vireo

Region 5

- Willow Flycatcher
- Canada Warbler
- Brown Creeper
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Alder Flycatcher
- Yellow-throated Vireo
- Hermit Thrush

Region 6

- Nashville Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Common Snipe
- Alder Flycatcher
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- Hermit Thrush
- Northern Harrier

Region 7

- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Hermit Thrush
- Solitary Vireo
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Nashville Warbler
- Magnolia Warbler
- Winter Wren
- Swainson's Thrush
- Canada Warbler
- Brown Creeper
- Alder Flycatcher
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- American Black Duck

Region 8

- Northern Mockingbird
- Tufted Titmouse
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler

Region 9

- Tufted Titmouse
- Northern Mockingbird
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Canada Goose
- Louisiana Waterthrush
- Yellow-throated Vireo
- Prairie Warbler
- Brown Creeper

Region 10

- Northern Mockingbird
- Tufted Titmouse
- Canada Goose
- Northern Bobwhite
- Fish Crow
- American Black Duck
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- Mute Swan
- Blue-winged Warbler
- White-eyed Vireo
- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Carolina Wren
- Snowy Egret
- Horned Lark
- Least Tern
- Prairie Warbler
- Osprey
- Common Tern

- Turkey Vulture
- Great Horned Owl
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Wood Duck
- American Woodcock
- Ring-necked Pheasant

- Great Horned Owl
- Ring-necked Pheasant
- American Woodcock
- Eastern Bluebird
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Turkey Vulture
- House Finch

- Wood Duck
- American Woodcock
- Turkey Vulture
- Eastern Bluebird
- Cardinal
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Great Horned Owl
- House Finch

- House Wren
- Bank Swallow
- Brown Thrasher
- Rock Dove
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Field Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Warbling Vireo
- Green-backed Heron
- Turkey Vulture
- Wood Duck
- Black-billed Cuckoo
- Cardinal
- Great Horned Owl
- Rufous-sided Towhee
- House Finch
- Ring-necked Pheasant

- Savannah Sparrow
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Black-throated Green Warbler
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- Spotted Sandpiper
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- Great Horned Owl
- Bank Swallow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Savannah Sparrow

- Bank Swallow
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
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- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Warbling Vireo
- Purple Finch
- Eastern Bluebird
- Bobolink
- White-throated Sparrow
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Least Flycatcher
- Great Blue Heron
- Turkey Vulture
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

**Species on Region Top 76 List
But Not State**

Region 1

- Willow Flycatcher
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Mourning Warbler
- Purple Martin
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Alder Flycatcher

Region 2

- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Willow Flycatcher
- Horned Lark
- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Purple Martin
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Region 3

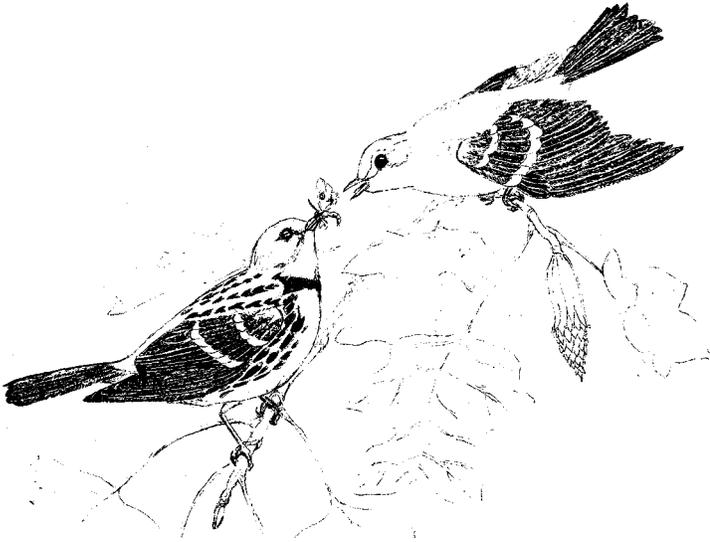
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Vesper Sparrow
- Willow Flycatcher
- Tufted Titmouse
- Horned Lark
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Wild Turkey

**Species on State Top 76 List
But Not Region**

- Pileated Woodpecker
- Bank Swallow
- American Woodcock
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
- White-throated Sparrow
- Black-and-white Warbler

- Eastern Bluebird
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Ruffed Grouse
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Black-and-white Warbler
- White-throated Sparrow

- Black-throated Green Warbler
- American Woodcock
- Bank Swallow
- Turkey Vulture
- Wood Duck
- Black-and-white Warbler
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- White-throated Sparrow



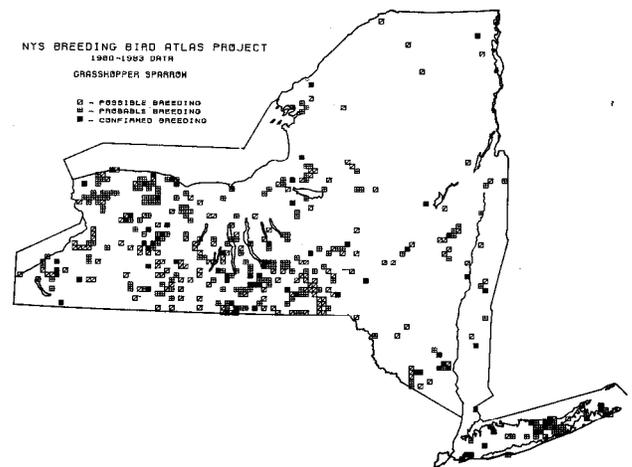
One known colony of Cerulean Warbler on L. I., the first established nesting of this species here is not adjacent to water! Habitat is a very distinctive band of scattered old locust trees separated by dense, impenetrable thickets of catbriar, blackberry and rose edging on rich, moist woods and facing open farmland. Ceruleans are nearly always located by song since they are hard to locate in their treetop habitat. Fortunately they are persistent singers right through the spring.

Males kept up regular intervallic singing right through pouring rainstorms! Females were extremely difficult to spot, nests equally so. Later in the season, after the young have hatched, females proved fairly easy to find as they searched relentlessly, sometimes at medium levels, filling their beaks with insects, making quick feeding trips to the invisible nest and then back again to the constant search. Adults can sometimes be spished down to ten or twelve feet to investigate. A fledgling was spotted in a shrub at eye level probably after having failed to negotiate an early flight attempt, and the female came down to feed it. At close range, the Cerulean female or young might be confused with some kind of vireo since it is olive on top, white underneath with a prominent eye stripe and a rather large bill but, unlike the eye-striped vireos, it has wing bars.

-Eric Salzman

Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrow nest, together with Chipping and Field Sparrows, in the more open portions of the Dwarf Pine Plains and adjacent grasslands of Westhampton Airport on Long Island. The ecological division of this habitat is striking. The misnamed Field Sparrow shares the dense shrub areas with the equally misnamed Prairie Warbler. At the other extreme, the Chipping Sparrow likes small, spaced pines with little ground cover in between as possible (grassy heath-like areas adjacent to scattered shrubs). This species also is found in old fields and in some thin moor or heath areas at Montauk. The Vesper likes it almost as bare as do Horned Lark; thin grassy or heath-like

bearberry cover areas with very thin, scattered shrubs. Grasshopper Sparrow nests are typically buried in grass. A Vesper Sparrow nest was found (in 1982) in a tiny patch of bearberry surrounded by very thin, eroded grassy or bare soils; it was tucked under a tiny blueberry shrub *Vaccinium vacillans* and actually seemed to be buried in the ground or tucked into a slight irregularity in the soil. The Grasshopper Sparrow song, when learned, is really unmistakable and, although it is a weak song, it carries surprisingly far. A second and much less familiar song, consists of a peculiar jumble and gives the impression of being something louder and farther away. The yellow shoulder is not very easy to see but the flat, striped headed look is easy to recognize-at least where there are no Henslow's around to confuse the issue. Locate by song, come back and look for striped fledglings making little begging noises as they follow the adults. It's not always so easy to see the white edge of the Vesper Sparrow tail. As usual, I find 'err by song. The Vesper Song is like the introductory part of the Song Sparrow song without the livelier second part-only longer and sweeter (lower and richer in tone); it sounds a bit like a very sweet introduction to a melody that never comes. I recognize this species because it is a big sparrow, it has a prominent eye ring (giving it a blank faced look like the Field Sparrow but with a dark beak) and, if you can get one close up, you can see the red shoulder quite well. I would look for this species in



dry, thin, eroded or disturbed grasslands.

-Eric Salzman

"Gift to Wildlife" Funds Atlas

DEC announced on April 6 that the Atlas Project has received \$25,000 for blockbusting work during the 1984 breeding season from the "Return a Gift to Wildlife" tax contribution program. The Atlas Project is one of 31 fish and wildlife projects funded during the state's 1984-85 fiscal year.

These funds will be used by DEC to hire six twoperson teams to blockbust remote and previously uncovered Atlas blocks as well as to assist the Federation in offsetting out-of-pocket expenses of regional blockbusters.

WANTED: Confirmed Breeding

Several species though observed, have not yet been confirmed. If you locate any of these species, please do your utmost to confirm them, but please don't get over zealous'

White-faced Ibis
Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead
Golden Eagle
King Rail
Black Rail
Cape May Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler

Wilson's Warbler
Brewer's Blackbird
Summer Tanager
Dickcissel
White-winged Crossbill
Clay-colored Sparrow

Atlas Anecdotes

Please send stories telling about any interesting experiences you have had while Atlasing and about things you have learned about birds and birding. A history of the New York Atlas is being compiled and your experiences are an important part. Send these to: Dr. Gordon Meade, 27 Mill Valley Road, Pittsford, NY 14534.

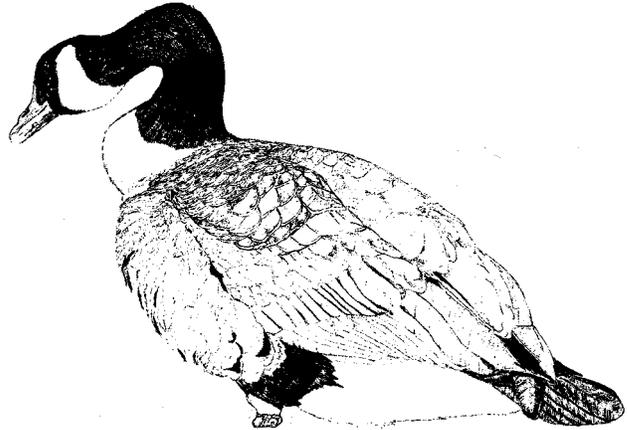
Warning

Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos cannot always be determined by song. The black-billed commonly makes a (kup) cow-cow-cow song which is very like a partial yellow-billed song. Although the quality of the song is slightly different, it takes considerable experience to tell them apart. It is far better to see the bird in question and be sure of the species.

This same thing is true of Blue-winged and Goldenwinged Warblers. Their songs are often mixed, as are the species. Some of the singers will undoubtedly turn out to be hybrids. Again it is better to see the bird.

New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Newsletter
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, New York 12233-4754

NOTICE REGION 8 ATLAS WORKERS An additional Regional Coordinator will be working in your region. He is Mark Fitzsimmons, 15 Arcadia Avenue, Albany, NY 12209 (home phone: (518) 434-6517; office phone: (518) 445-7757). For maps, supplies or information, contact Mark or Dick Guthrie.



Atlas T-Shirts Still Available

A few of the attractive Atlas T-shirts are still available. They come in two colors, light blue and goldfinch yellow, imprinted in black and red with the Atlas logo (a Kingbird at the nest superimposed on a map of New York State).

We have 8 child's Medium (size 10-12), 16 child's Large (size 14-16) and 3 adults Small (size 34-36).

They are nice to wear on field trips, at meetings, to school, at play, and just around the house.

We are offering these at a reduced price of \$5.25 plus \$.75 for packaging and mailing. Send your order with a check for \$6.00, payable to Fed. of N.Y.S. Bird Clubs, to Gordon M. Meade, 27 Mill Valley Road, Pittsford, N.Y. 14534. Indicate color preferred although, because of the small number remaining, we cannot guarantee to send the color you prefer.