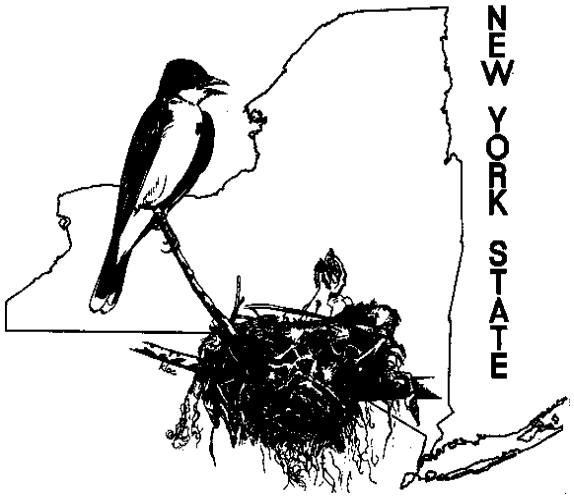


A Project o/ the

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 5 MAY 1982

The Case of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Our Atlas field work, now nearing its mid-point, will map the breeding ranges of the birds of New York State during the period 1980-84. The completed maps will provide a benchmark, accurate within 5 km., against which range changes can be measured by future Atlas efforts. Although some changes will certainly take place during our five-year search, a one-year period would be just too short to cover all blocks, while over the course of a decade the changes would be far too great for many species.

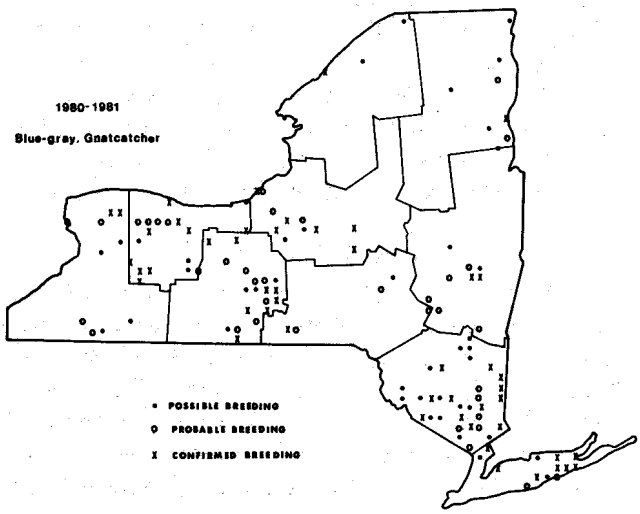
Changes occur for a variety of reasons. Disappearances may be traced to human causes such as market hunting (Passenger Pigeon), pesticides (Peregrine Falcon), or to less understood natural causes (Dickcissel). Species with expanding ranges may come from other parts of the continent under their own power (Evening Grosbeak) or with human assistance (House Finch). They may even spread from other continents on their own (Cattle Egret), or as human introductions (House Sparrow). Some changes can be traced to habitat, food, or an empty ecological niche, but others remain a mystery. Such is the case of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Back in 1914, Elon H. Eaton stated in *Birds of* New *York,* "it is evident that this species, like the Tufted Titmouse and the Carolina Wren, is of frequent occurrence in the interior of New York, but has never established itself as a breeding species." He considered the gnatcatcher an irregular and uncommon summer visitant, citing fewer than 20 records dating from 1849. Eaton noted, "There is, as far as I know, no definite record of its breeding within our limits, except that a nest evidently of this species was found in the fall of 1890 at Coldwater, Monroe county . . ."

Then in 1943 the plot began to thicken when gnatcatchers nested along Lake Erie in Chautauqua County, and the years 1947, 1954, and 1963 produced more records of occurrence and breeding. Gnatcatchers were clearly on the move. By 1974, John Bull described the species in *Birds of* New *York* State as; "Local, but greatly increased breeder at lower elevations, absent in northern New York." At that time, gnatcatchers had penetrated as far north as Saratoga County. In his 1976 Supplement, Bull reported another big flight year in 1974, with records as far north as Clinton County, and forecast, "Nesting should be expected there and elsewhere in the Lake Champlain lowlands in the near future."

Many observers in northern New York unfamiliar with the diminutive 41/2-inch bird despaired of ever finding a nest. How could one hope to find a tiny twoinch lichen-covered cup that blends perfectly with the branch, high in a leafy deciduous tree? Gordon Meade was encouraging: "It's easy. They give it away." Sure enough, they did, and an active nest with young was found in Essex County on Schuyler Island J'in Lake Champlain in 1976, followed by several nests found on Crown Point peninsula in the same northern county in subsequent years. Already our Atlas study has recorded

Continued on page 5



X CONFIRMED BREEDING

Confirming the Belted Kingfisher

The McIlroy Method

Region 3 coordinator, Dorothy McIlroy, reports no problem finding Belted Kingfisher nests; she's already confirmed four. Having seen a kingfisher along Cayuga Lake, she walked the railroad track checking the high bank for holes the right size with two conspicuous grooves at the bottom where the feet drag as the bird flies in. The grooves are quite conspicuous in an active nest, sometimes showing up darker where damp sand has been stirred up. Finding one, she sat down to wait. "After half an hour the female came with food, but would not fly into the hole with it until I hid behind a bush where I was inconspicuous, but could see the hole." The same method worked in a sandpit at Piseco Lake in Region 7. Again, "on upper Salmon Creek I saw a kingfisher fly with a fish toward a large gravel pit. There were several holes in the high bank in the pit, but only one showed grooves. I watched that one, and in about ten minutes a kingfisher flew into the hole carrying a fish."

She looks at a lot of old holes, too, in checking all gravel or sand pits near a stream with kingfishers. In August 1980, she noticed two old holes, kingfisher-size, in a huge, well packed-down, old sawdust pile southeast of Speculator in Hamilton County. In June 1981 she checked the pile and found a new hole with grooves, but had no time to wait. "In early July I went back. The kingfisher was disturbed and would not go near the hole until I sat behind a bush well away from the nest. After about fifteen minutes one and then the other adult flew into the hole with a fish."

Lunch at a Gravel Bank

Some Belted Kingfishers may be less disturbed than others. Czecher Terhune of Dutchess County had spent the morning with a friend, looking for birds and wildflowers. At noon they were having lunch beside a gravel bank near Wappingers Creek and a pond, "when suddenly we heard the rattle of the kingfishers. First one, then the other adult with food in its mouthflew to a cavity in the gravel bank. Upon coming out each carried a fecal sac. This activity we watched for 30 minutes. We decided to look at the base of the nesting area and found half a white egg shell. Our presence did not seem to disturb the birds." The cavity was quite large in diameter, and about 12 feet up the bank.

Follow the Swallows

Karl Curtis happened upon a pair of Rough-winged Swallows, another species Atlas observers have trouble confirming, nesting in a hole in a stream bank. A fairsized creek had eroded a dirt bank where the creek made a bend. He made mental notes of the features (vertical bank, excavatable soil with few rocks), and also recalled reading the Rough-winged Swallows often use old Belted Kingfisher holes.

With this in mind, Curtis searched along a stream which he knew had similar eroded banks. "I found two holes fitting the right description. One had Roughwinged Swallows busy carrying nesting material (later Confirmed-ON). The other hole, about 50 feet away, looked to be recently made, but no birds were around it. On subsequent trips the swallows were seen several times, but the kingfishers would fly by and 'rattle,' without going near the other hole as I sat about 100 feet away."

Patience arid perseverance paid off. "One day as I watched, the kingfisher flew up and landed on a dead branch some distance away and seemed to be waiting for me to leave. So, while in plain sight, I stood up and started walking away along a trail beside the creek. As soon as I went behind some tall grass, I slipped down out of sight and maneuvered into a spot where I could see the hole. Confident that I had left, the kingfisher went right to the hole. In the next few minutes the bird went in and out several times: Confirmed-ON."

Region 5 coordinator, Dorothy Crumb located a pair of Belted Kingfishers among a colony of Bank Swallows. Karl Curtis suggests being watchful for banknesting swallows, Bank and Rough-winged, since they use the same banks as kingfishers and may be easier to find.

Hot Day at the Gravel Pit

Merry Baker of Essex County says that luck, Patience with a capital "P" and perseverance are the keys to confirming. Luck provided a gravel pit with a tell-tale large hole a few feet down from the top. This called for Patience. "After surveying for other species in the area, I heard a kingfisher. Remembering the hole, I took a seat across the road from it and waited... and waited ...then waited some more. After well over an hour or more a kingfisher emerged from the hole. More long waiting to see the bird or its mate return and, at last: CO-ON." Her long wait was not a frustrating experience, since the same gravel pit was used by Great Crested and Least Flycatchers, a pair of Northern Orioles, and other birds for dust bathing on that hot day.

Perseverance and a return trip a week later allowed her to upgrade the confirmation when, "I saw one of the adult birds carrying a fish from nearby Johnson Pond." A Confirmed-FY.

TAKE NOTICE

In our last issue, we described how to locate Marsh Hawk nests. It has been brought to our attention that: 1. Marsh Hawks readily abandon their nests when disturbed; and 2. Marsh Hawks are listed as "threatened" in New York. Therefore, use other methods to confirm breeding or be content with "Probable" in the case of this species..

ATLASING IN REGION 3-The Finger Lakes

Ice ages past are a visible presence in the Finger Lakes Region. Our five large lakes-Owasco, Cayuga, Seneca, Keuka and Canandaigua-lie in valleys icedeepened southward as the elevation of the surrounding land increases from 381 feet at the north to 2400 feet in southern Steuben County. At our northern boundary, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge is a remnant of formerly extensive marshes along the Seneca River. South from there, cultivated fields are gradually replaced by vineyards along the lakes, dairy farms and deep gorges, which in turn merge into the narrow valleys and reforested state lands of the Appalachian Plateau extension of the southern third. Small marshes and shallow ponds are scattered through glacial moraine areas. The southwest section is crossed diagonally by the Cohocton and Canisteo Rivers which join at Corning to form the Chemung.

In this varied terrain, more than 100 field workers have collected data in 148 of our 448 Atlas blocks. To date, 167 species and 2 hybrids have been reported in at least one block each: 7 possible, 12 probable, 148 and 2 hybrids confirmed. Our nesting Osprey does not count, that map being assigned to Region 2. New locations have been discovered for some less common breeders such as Upland Sandpiper, Cerulean Warbler, White-throated Sparrow. In 1981 a pair of Canvasbacks, not even on the green data sheet, nested at Montezuma and the first upstate Fish Crow nestlings were observed at Ithaca. The Pine Siskin invasion of the '80-'81 winter gave us a confirmed nesting (NY) at Arnot Forest south of Ithaca. Most unexpected was the pair of Common Ravens at Arnot Forest all summer. They are still there; we hope for the first modern regional nesting record in 1982. Olive-sided Flycatcher calling through June near Elmira is a potentially new nesting species.

Frequency of species reported ranged from American Robin confirmed in 145 blocks to 19 species and one hybrid confirmed in only one block each, 10 of these at Montezuma. Alder Flycatcher was reported in 27 blocks, confirmed in only one.

Extensive historical data are available for Geneva, Cayuga Lake Basin, Watkins Glen, Keuka Park and Elmira. In the past, breeding has been confirmed for about 172 species and 2 hybrids. Of these, the species that are still unconfirmed for Atlas and should have special attention are: Common Merganser (Branchport), Marsh Hawk, King Rail, Sora, Long-eared and Saw-whet Owls, Whippoorwill, Acadian Flycatcher, Winter and Short-billed Marsh Wrens, Prothonotary (Montezuma), Wormeating (Elmira) and Hooded Warblers and Evening Grosbeak (does anyone have the record of when and where this nested?). All have been reported as either possible or probable. There is little hope for Peregrine Falcon, Gray Partridge, Short-eared Owl and Loggerhead Shrike, a better chance for Bald Eagle from the eagles hacked at Montezuma.

If Region 3 is to be covered thoroughly, we need twice as many field workers and must spread out from the club centers. Only 24 of the 148 blocks visited can be considered adequately covered; about half of the others need much more work. The major problem is too few confirmed species, hawks and owls especially. Steuben County beyond Corning and Bath is practically "terra incognita," with no clubs and only 6 field workers in that quarter of the region. The **Kingbird** receives no reports from Hornell and Keuka Park Conservation Club is inactive. Cayuga Bird Club is planning several one-day June and July block-busting field trips this year. Our two trips to Lamoka Lake area beyond Seneca Lake in 1981 produced 87 species, 36 confirmed in A block, and 65 species, 21 confirmed in B block. Unfortunately, with birders concentrated in the east, Steuben County is too far for one-day expeditions.

Many Atlas field workers have commented that they have discovered a whole new dimension to birdwatching as they observed and tried to interpret behavior. Nearly all will be continuing this year. I hope we can find the many new volunteers we need.

Dorothy McIlroy

DR. MEADE-Named 1981 Outstanding Conservationist by Wildlife Society

Breeding Bird Atlas Director, Dr. Gordon M. Meade was named 1981 Outstanding Conservationist by the New York Chapter of the Wildlife Society at its annual meeting in November.

In making the presentation, Peggy Sauer, President of the Chapter stated:

"This award is made to you in recognition of your leadership role in initiating, organizing and coordinating the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Project. The Atlas Project, now entering its third year of a five-year study, involved the cooperative efforts of more than 1,000 birders in over 5,000 Atlas "blocks" throughout the state. When completed, the Atlas Project will provide a major contribution to the present knowledge of the breeding status of more than 230 species.

"In addition, The Wildlife Society wishes to acknowledge your contribution as a founder, past President and active member of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs.

"Your efforts and dedication on behalf of the conservation of birds and other wildlife exemplify the Wildlife Society's highest ideals."

CONGRATULATIONS DR. MEADE!

Confirming the Brown Creeper

I. Amity Lake

Although I documented my first bird nests with Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in *1970,* it took eleven seasons to locate one of the Brown Creeper. The two I have found can only be attributed to pure luck ('though I pray a lot.)

On May *3, 1980,* while hiking in mature oakhemlock-beech forest at *7:50* a.m., near Amity Lake, Belmont, N. Y., I heard the beautiful warbler-like song: *see-see-see* (high and thin) and ending with a lower pitched *tidlededidlesee,* and recognized it as that of the Brown Creeper. Seen through binoculars, he was spiraling up a tree trunk, searching the bark diligently, probably for insects, and at long intervals repeating his song.

Soon a second Brown Creeper dropped to a log on the ground where it picked up fine bits of grass, or rootlets or bark fibers in its beak. With heart going like a triphammer, I sank to the ground where I was. After short flights here and there, this bird went to a dead five-inch oak snag to disappear under a piece of loose bark about five and a half feet up. Soon it reappeared to fly away but almost immediately was back with a large wad of what looked like strips of inner tree bark, some longer than itself. During the next ten minutes the bird made several trips to the nest with more material, pausing at the entrance a bit before dragging its burden inside.

Although I sat for ten minutes more, the birds just dissolved. There was no more activity and the singer quieted down. I didn't approach the nest at this time lest the birds desert it. On May 22 with utmost caution using the "T" approach to avoid leading in predators, I examined the nest with a dental mirror and flashlight. There were two tiny eggs: ah - breeding confirmed!

This last year on April 20, *1981, I* was hiking about *6:30* a.m. in another mature hemlock-oak forest near Amity Lake when I heard a Brown Creeper singing near a 1-2-inch dead elm snag I had noticed on previous visits here. This time I sat down to watch the snag which had much of the bark still clinging to it. Very shortly a Brown Creeper flew to a spot about four feet up on it and slipped under the loose bark through a crack which seemed too tiny even for the tiny bird. Once more I didn't approach the snag lest the bird desert the spot.

On June 4 there was one egg in the nest and after I left the nest to watch from a distance, the adult went on to stay. A second bird was singing nearby.

From my vast experience (ahem: two nests), we may gain a few pointers for confirming breeding for the Brown Creeper. Get out early in the day between April 20 and May 20 in mature forest. Watch for snags with loose bark. Listen for the creeper's note or song. Since it takes two to tango, when you finally find a pair, be patient and try not to lose sight of them. They may show you their nest. --Vivian Mills Pitzrick, Belmont

II.Pawling

With great luck, I came across my first pair and observed that they both repeatedly and alternately visited the same location on a dead tree with large sheets of bark peeling away. It was about *15-20* feet above the ground, a perfect nesting site. Feeding on spiders and tiny bark insects, as they do, it is nearly impossible to actually see them carry food. Judging from the birds' actions, they could not have been doing anything other than feeding young at their nest. I recorded it as CO-ON, but in this case I think that CONY would have been just as appropriate.

Sibyl M. Gibert, Pawling

III.The Adirondacks

This was a surprise, managing to confirm Brown Creeper in three of my blocks: A, B, and C. The first confirmation took place on the early date of May *16* in my B Block. I was walking along the road and heard the male singing and its mate calling. Soon I located one of the birds right near the road with its beak crammed full of food and watched it continue to hunt. The second bird was also searching tree trunks, but not having any luck. The first bird left with the food while the second kept hunting. I took it as CO-FY. (If the second bird had not been present, I would have hesitated to mark it at all, except PR-D perhaps, because of the possibility of mate feeding at that date.)

On June *7,* in my A Block in a cedar swamp surrounded by huge white pines, I heard a creeper sing. Nothing unusual, there are always creepers there. Soon I heard persistent food calls of young. (I must stress the point here that in early June inside a cedar swamp, or anywhere in the Adirondack woods, one is encased in a literal cloud of hundreds of biting skeeters!) It took about 20 minutes to locate the calling baby creepers. There were three of them, perfectly camouflaged, clinging in upright positions high up on the trunk of a monarch pine. The trio resembled a knot on the huge bole, and I would never have recognized them as birds if the parents had not come to feed them. I ignored the mosquitos, settled against a neighboring tree, and watched. They were recently out of a nest. I could only guess at its location or how these youngsters got where they were, as they were unable to fly. Their pine appeared healthy and free of loose bark, though I could not see the crown clearly. The babies were infested with parasites and jostled around in attempts to scratch themselves, especially after each feeding. Both parents fed frequently, sometimes catching an insect and returning to feed seconds after stuffing an open mouth. Fascinating experience!

Later in June I found another creeper family of parents feeding fledglings in my C Block, again in mature pine woods. After that I was running into fledgling creepers all over.

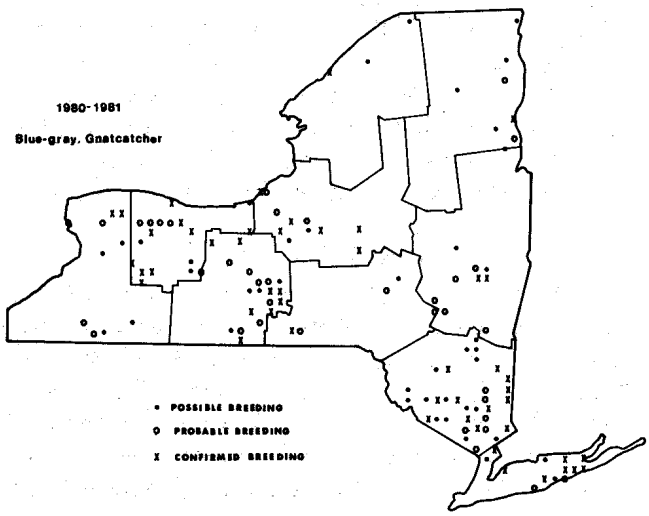
I'd say that the best way to obtain success in confirming problem species, as well as so-called easy ones, is to follow and identify every squeak, squawk, and moving branch. If it turns out to be a bird, stay with it for as long as it takes to find out if it's going to exhibit any form of breeding behavior.-Merry E. Baker, Paradox

Gnatcatcher, continued from page 1

the range of this species far north of the map of breeding distribution found in Bull, a map which is less than ten years old. How do Blue-gray Gnatcatchers "give it away?" First an observer should locate gnatcatchers, which is fairly easy if the birder can hear high notes since their calls are so distinctive. Some observers describe the call as a nasal **twee,** thinner, shorter, and fainter than a catbird's mew. It's such a curious sound that Atlas workers will want to find the source, even if they've never heard it before. Gnatcatchers are so active that they're relatively easy to locate, even for those whose hearing no longer can detect the high frequencies.

When located, the birds may be in low dense bushes darting after gnats, tail-wagging and flitting among medium-height hawthorns, or calling from tall shade trees like elms. They seem to have an affinity for water and tend to avoid conifers. Birds begin arriving in April, are nest-building by May, and incubating by late May to early June. Observers can hope for ConfirmedNYrecords between late May to early July. Territories are fairly small, and once birds are located by sound or sight they'll probably be making numerous trips carrying nest materials or catching and delivering food to young. Nests can be as low as 10-15 feet, but most are much higher. With luck, an observer can go from Possible-X to Probable-P up to Confirmed-NY within a few minutes of hearing the first thin, peevish call.

Those who are not so lucky should fall back on that greatest Atlas attribute-patience. Subsequent searches of the area where a gnatcatcher has been-seen should reveal if the bird is still on territory and can be upgraded to a higher breeding code. Wait quietly if gnatcatchers are frequenting an area, enjoy their active antics, and hope that they'll "give it away." Every record helps document the range of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in New York State in the late twentieth century, and may someday help solve the mystery of its northward expansion. John M. C. Peterson



1981 Atlas Highlights

Impressive! That's a word to describe the results Atlas workers achieved in 1981. Surveys were conducted in 1,022 blocks bringing the total blocks surveyed for the two years of the project to 1,931. This means that 36% of the total number of blocks have had some survey work done in them.

On a regional basis, coverage looks like this:

Region	% of blocks surveyed	Region	% of blocks surveyed
1	43	6	25
2	33	7	38
3	33	8	27
4	28	9	48
5	31	10	78

Taking a closer look at the quality of coverage, 46% of these blocks have over 50 species reported. This means we need to do more work in the other blocks to bring the species counts up to a higher level. If you have mixed habitat in your block, you should try to get at least 76 species reported with 50% of them confirmed. Our overall records to date show 35% confirmed.

There are twelve blocks with over 100 species that obviously have exceptional diversity, as well as dedicated observers. One hundred nineteen species is the greatest number found thus far. The observer was Daniel R. Gray III; the block 3768A in Danby, Tompkins County.

Two hundred thirty-seven breeding species were recorded statewide; 219 were confirmed. No breeding evidence has been obtained for the Peregrine Falcon, Bewick's Wren and Monk Parakeet.

The following have been reported, but not confirmed:

Possible Breeding Only

Bufflehead	Black Rail	Boat-tailed Grackle
Summer Tanager	Blue Grosbeak	

Probable Breeding Only

White-faced Ibis	Lesser Scaup	Red-breasted Merganser
Golden Eagle	Spruce Grouse	King Rail
Cape May Warbler	Bay-breasted Warbler	Wilson's Warbler
Western Meadowlark	Dickcissel	White-winged Crossbill
		Clay-colored Sparrow

The American Robin still leads the Starling with the most confirmed breeding records.

Species diversity is thus far the greatest in Region 7 with 191 species reported. The other regions have recorded species as follows:

Region		Region	
1	172	6	177
2	170	8	177
3	170	9	165
4	165	10	184
5	183		

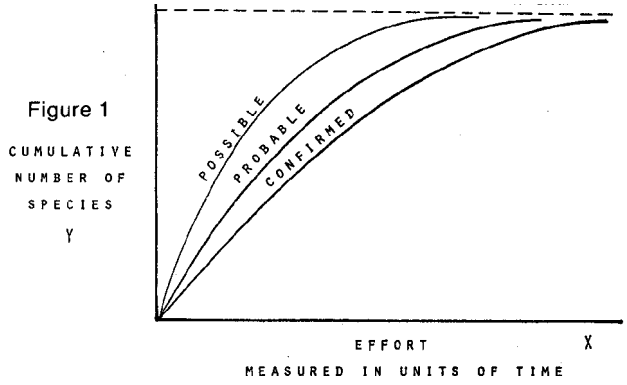
We are extremely pleased with the work done thus far. Our goals for 1982 are to improve the coverage in those blocks where habitat indicates more species are to be found and to expand coverage in each region. To all Atlas workers, we thank you for your continued support and hope you will extend yourselves even further.

What Constitutes Adequate Coverage?

At its meeting on 13 March 1982, the Atlas Steering Committee agreed to the following guidelines: The goal of the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Project is to cover **adequately** all 25 sq. km. blocks throughout the state. **Adequate coverage** is defined as a total list of at least 76 species identified from each block, with half (38) confirmed as breeders. The Committee fully realizes that there will be some blocks with more than 76 species and some with fewer.

How do you determine whether you can locate 76 species in your block? As a general rule, if you have varied habitat, such as water, woods, fields, and shrub by areas, you should have no problem. If, however, your block is in an urban or suburban area or other areas of limited habitat variability, you Will probably not find 76 species. If you feel locating 76 species in your block is unrealistic, advise your Regional Coordinator.

If you wish to determine precisely the point at which your investment of further effort in the field will not return measurable dividends of additional species, a graphic evaluation of your progress can be made. Figure 1 illustrates such a graphic approach. For materials, only graph paper and a pencil are required. For information, each observer must record at least two variables: the amount of time spent on **each** visit to the mapping unit, and the number of new species added in each breeding category **during** each visit to the block. The observer then can plot a "return-effort" curve of the type shown in Figure 1. Cumulative hours of effort are plotted on the horizontal (X) axis and cumulative numbers of species in each category (possible, probable, or confirmed) are plotted on the vertical (Y) axis, corresponding to each unit of effort. The point of diminishing returns occurs when each of the curves begins to level off, or "plateau." In practice, one may need only to graph the rate at which **confirmed** species are added, since it may be assumed that the most effort will be required to add species to the confirmed category.



Cumulative number of species (Y) is determined by adding the number of new species recorded at each subsequent visit to that number of species recorded in each category at the last visit.

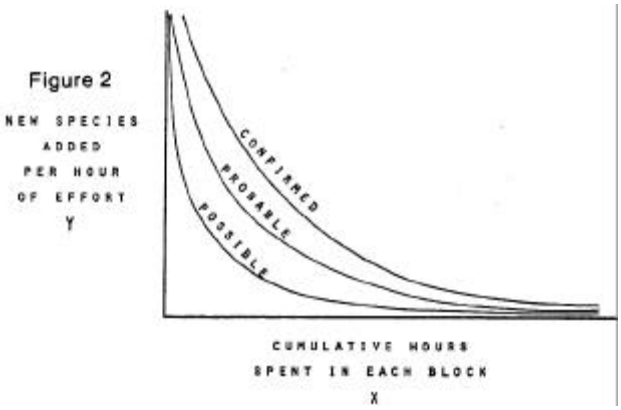


Figure 2 illustrates an alternative graphic procedure, suggested by Robert Arbib, which illustrates more clearly the concept of diminishing returns for one's efforts in the field. In Figure 2, the observer graphs the cumulative hours spent in each block on the horizontal axis against the number of new species added per hour of effort on the vertical axis. Again, in practice, it can be assumed that new species will be added at the slowest rate in the confirmed category. When one's return-effort curve begins to "plateau" as in Figure 1 or "bottom-out" as in Figure 2, the time has come to move on to another block.

If one is inclined, the evaluation procedures graphed in Figures 1 and 2 have an added advantage. Mathematical equations can be fitted to the curves of Figures 1 and 2, using the method of least-squares regression. Once that procedure is applied, one can predict the points at which the curves begin to level off and obtain a guess at how much time might have to be spent to survey an area adequately. Many pocket calculators in use today are pre-programmed for leastsquares regression and a good introductory statistics text (such as Sokal, R. R. and F.). Rohlf. 1981. Biometry) will explain the procedure in detail.

In summary, the Atlas Steering Committee has set a general guideline of 76 species recorded, with 38 confirmed as breeders, as constituting adequate coverage for each 25 sq. km. block within New York State. In practice, it is useful for each field worker individually to employ graphic evaluation procedures to determine when the point of diminishing returns is reached in surveying a block, so that one's efforts then can be applied to another block.

Charles R. Smith
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Information Needed on Barn and Short-eared Owls

Please use your blue DEC Endangered Species Business Reply Card (available from your Regional Coordinator) to report any sightings of Barn Owls and Short-eared Owls, in addition to the species already listed on the card.

The Breeding Criteria Codes
A Review

By looking at the data coming in and talking with some of our volunteers, we find some misinterpretation of the codes. First, please reread the code definitions in the handbook to keep yourself on the right track. Do not depend solely on the abbreviated versions on your field card.

Let's go now to some codes that are frequently misinterpreted.

P-Pair observed in suitable habitat in breeding season.
Pair refers obviously to a male and female together. The male and female of the species must have different plumages or have observable size differences in order for this code to apply. Two birds of the same species together does not make a pair unless they have identifiable differences.

S-Singing male present (or breeding calls heard) on more than one date in the same place. Should be heard at least a week apart.
To reiterate-these must be heard on at least two occasions a week or more apart in the same location.

N-Visiting probable nest site.
A bird flying into a bush or tree may be doing many things. This code should be used only when the bird goes in and out of a probable nest site **repeatedly.** It is a useful code for pigeons going under bridges or barn swallows going into barns.

DD-Distraction display or injury feigning.
DD is sometimes used inappropriately to record anxiety calls and agitated behavior. If you will read the code definition in your handbook you will note that anxiety calls and agitated behavior are in the "Probable" category under "D".

FL-Recently fledged young.
This code should be applied only Jo those birds restricted to their natal area by dependence on adults or limited mobility. Birds in juvenile plumage cannot be counted if they are old enough to have moved away from their nest area.

ON-Adults) entering or leaving nest site in circumstances indicating occupied nest.
ON does **NOT** stand for On Nest. Adult incubating is under the NE code. The ON does mean occupied nest and is meant to be used for hole nesting species.

FY-Adult with food for young.
In addition to adults seen carrying food, this code includes adults feeding young.

A Word of Caution About Approaching Nests When

approaching raptor and other nests which are particularly susceptible to predation, the following is suggested: ". . . walk straight past it at a distance, retrace a portion of the path and then walk along a single right-angled side trail to the nest or nest tree. If you sprinkle the side trail with moth ball crystals during the exit to destroy the human scent, you greatly decrease the chances of predation at the nest." (Fyfe, Richard W. and Richard R. Olendorff. 1976. Minimizing the dangers of nesting studies to raptors and other sensitized species.Occasional Paper No. 23, Canadian Wildlife Service)

Dorothy McIlroy
Region 3 Coordinator

Dorothy McIlroy, born and brought up in Rochester, began birdwatching during grade school. What was to develop into a major hobby began with a little Reed *Bird* Guide and the loan of her mother's gold and mother-of-pearl opera glasses. While still in high school she met Paul Kellogg, who was about to begin his undergraduate studies at Cornell, and from him learned of the summer courses in ornithology being offered at Ithaca. Subsequently, while an undergraduate at the University of Rochester, she took Dr. Allen's courses at Cornell University during the summers of 1927 and 1928. She graduated from the U. of R. with both the BA and MS in Physics, the first woman physics major. Both Mrs. McIlroy and her husband shared the hobby of watching birds, living first in Newburgh, then in Fishkill and Boston.

In 1947 they came to Ithaca, where her spouse was Professor of Electrical Engineering at Cornell. Together they frequently attended the graduate seminars in ornithology. After the death of her husband in 1956, Mrs. McIlroy operated his analogue computer for studying flows and pressure drops in water, gas, and steam distribution systems as a consultant at Cornell until her retirement in 1970.

She took her first foreign bird tour in 1962, became hooked, and has been traveling as much as possible since then, fascinated by distribution of bird species. Dorothy served as *The Kingbird* editor from 1964-69 and as substitute Region 3 editor at various times, and compiled the 1961-69 index to the journal with Mildred Comar. She was one of the coeditors of *Birding in the Cayuga Lake Basin.* Since the inception of the USF&W Breeding Bird Surveys she has taken part in several routes. Dorothy is active in the Cayuga Bird Club and does volunteer work at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Despite a loss of hearing, Dorothy McIlroy remains an active observer and an inspiration to the Atlas project. In addition to her field work and duties as Regional Coordinator in Finger Lakes Region 3, she also serves as principal observer of a square in Hamilton County, located in Adirondack-Champlain Region 7. Chester Reed and Arthur Allen would be proud.

Reporting "Winged" Warbler Breedings and Other Hybridizations

There appears to be uncertainty as to how to correctly report the breedings of mixed pairs of Bluewinged and Golden-winged Warblers and their offspring. There has been sufficient variation in this reporting to make it desirable to establish guidelines. An example of incorrect reporting was an instance in which a Blue-winged bred with a Golden-winged and the resulting hybrid (Brewster's) was reported as a breeding species. This was not correct because the hybrid was an offspring, but not by itself a breeder. Only adult birds should be recorded as breeders, not the young.

For an opinion on the proper recording we have consulted three members of the New York State Avian Records Committee: Drs. Kenneth Able, Robert Andrle, Paul DeBenedictis, as well as Dr. John Confer. Dr. Confer has made extensive studies of this complex. We have adopted their recommendations that breedings in this group be reported as follows:

1. If a Blue-winged is paired with a Goldenwinged, report both species as breeding. Make a note in the "Remarks" section on the back of the green data form that you have found an instance of this pairing. Be especially careful to observe whether they are pure Blue-winged and Golden-winged, i.e. agree with these two species as they are shown in Peterson's or Robbins' field guides. If one or both do not, then describe what the difference is.
2. Similarly, if a hybrid (Brewster's or Lawrence's) is found paired with either Blue-winged or Golden-winged report both the hybrid and the full species as breeding. In such a situation, describe the appearance of both parents in as much detail as possible. Hybrids may be reported as either Brewster's or Lawrence's if they look like the typical forms pictured in the field guides. If the hybrid differs from these, describe in what ways) and report it under the hybrid to which it is most similar.

Pairs of hybrids are known but are extremely rare, much more so than back-cross pairing between a hybrid and one of the parental types.

If these guidelines are followed, an analysis of the reports at the end of the Atlas Project should add to our knowledge of the distribution and admixture of this group in New York State.

Analogous criteria would apply to any other instance of avian hybridization encountered in the Atlas Project, e.g. Black Duck and Mallard.

Gordon M. Meade, M.D.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS T-SHIRTS
Get Them While They Last!

Available in Adult sizes Small (34-36), Medium (38-40) and Large (42-44); Children sizes Medium (10-12) and Large (14-16). The shirts are 50% cotton and 50% polyester and are available in yellow or blue (mostly blue). Send your check for $6.60 ($6.00 for shirt and $.60 for postage) for the T-shirt to Anne Clarridge, 255 East Street, Pit tsford, N. Y. 14534. Make your check payable to: Federation of NYS

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