

REGIONAL CHECKLISTS

Believing as I do that collating regional field notes is the least a society can do for fellow birders and the general public, I would like to see every club in New York State publish a booklet on this subject. If your club can't afford to print it, mimeograph it — or write it in longhand if necessary.

I'm conscious, though, of the work entailed, and of how quickly your labored listing grows out of date. In fact, the two factors go together: Your hounding of members to produce their data about local avifauna is in itself a challenge to them, and to others, to go forth and make the dates obsolete. This is one of the values of the project: the stimulus to more active, more knowing field work.

Take Rockland County's list, compiled in printed booklet form early in 1949. The list at that time contained 233 species, including entries for historical records (though we omitted the Passenger Pigeon and the Roc). Since 1949, we've added three species — Swallow-tailed Kite, Gyrfalcon, Wild Turkey — as older records came to light. But, more important, we've added 15 other species directly through the heightened interest and more focused field work of our own members.

The Rockland list now comprises 251 species. Not counting permanent residents whose status hasn't changed, *Rockland Audubon Society* has changed all but 49 of the original entries, extending the dates for the migration spans, adding summer and winter dates, etc.

This was to be expected. The original list was put together when Rockland Audubon was only two years old. It drew heavily on the notes of a few sources such as the writer and the Trailside Museum at Bear Mountain. Now the work of dozen of new birders has been superimposed on the earlier base.

So I wouldn't let it stop me if only a few field notebooks were available for a regional checklist. I would go ahead and make the best possible list, broadly annotated, and let nature take its course. You couldn't ask for a healthier development than an upsurge of interest that would soon outdate your booklet.

If I had the editing to do over again, though, there are a few things I would do:

1. I would try to break the region (Rockland County and the Palisades Interstate Park, in our case) down into general habitat and topographical areas. At least, I would keep track of separate arrival and departure dates and breeding status for the lowlands and the highlands.

2. I would try, with more data available, to give a better picture of normal migration dates and a more precise indication of rarity and abundance (just how, I don't know, and I'll be watching with interest what comes out of the Federation's state bird book discussions).

3. I would seriously consider including some inkling of the field characters of certain birds — not to compete with the field guides but to help users of the book more readily to connect the bird with the listing. Then if the book were printed in pocket size, it would be more useful in the field. For example, a note about the call of each cuckoo might be helpful.

4. I would also consider including the scientific name of each species, both for the delectation of the more learned birders and to familiarize others with the Latin names.

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The following is a summary of a talk given by Stanley Oliver Grierson of Katonah, New York, full time Educational Representative for the Bedford Audubon Society, at the Convention of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, held at Bear Mountain Park, May 23, 1953.
