

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

With the announcement of the selection of John L. Bull of Far Rock-away as permanent editor-author of the Birds of New York State, our state book project takes another important step forward. In John Bull the Federation has an eminently qualified author, an ornithologist of national repute who is the leading authority on the birds of the downstate area, one who has a solid grounding in taxonomy, distribution, and other pertinent areas, one who is familiar with the state as a life-long resident, and one who is an expert in the field identification of birds. Only one further preliminary step remains, albeit an all-important one, the raising of funds to provide the author with a two or three year fellowship while the work is in progress. The book committee is engaged in this effort at this time.

The appointment of an author does, however, signal the beginning of a fundamental and crucial task on the part of each of the member clubs of the Federation. For if the book is to be truly complete and authoritative, the author must have access to all the data available everywhere in the state, and it is to our member clubs that he must turn primarily for help. This is only logical, since our Federation was formed when organizations around the state banded together for the express purpose of gathering and exchanging information on the birds of our state, with the state book as one of our major objectives.

At this time, then, your President asks each club to begin (in many clubs it is well in hand) to implement ways in which information gathered locally may be made available to the author. In some areas this will be relatively simple: for the New York City area John Bull himself has just completed a comprehensive 600-page book incorporating all but the most recent information. In Buffalo, Harold D. Mitchell has nearly completed an up-to-date survey of the birds of the Niagara Frontier. Dr. Gordon M. Meade is in the latter stages of a study of the birds of the Adirondacks. These and other detailed area studies will be of enormous value in preparing our state book. But many other areas are presently lacking in such studies, and it is the local clubs on which the author must depend. Your President asks each club to review the following questions and suggests highest priority club action where the answers are negative.

1. Is there an up-to-date annotated list for the county or region covered by your club in its field work? Does it include maximum numbers, dates, observers, locations, and other vital data?
2. Has this list recently been published? Is it available to the author?
3. Is there a committee or member of your club responsible for maintaining such a list? Keeping it up to date? Publishing it?
4. Does your club have a Records Committee responsible for the verification and validation of all field reports submitted in your area?
5. Is there a State Book Committee appointed and active in your club to act as liaison state book with the author, to supply him with information as requested, data, lists, maps, censuses, etc. (See Arbib "The Common Loon in New York State" *Kingbird*, XIII, 3:134-140, (July 1963) for the types of data wanted for each species.)

6. Is your club at present engaged in that most wanted item of New York State bird knowledge, the breeding bird census of tracts of uniform habitat in your area?

In the many areas of the state not currently being covered by organized clubs, but in some cases by informal groups or by individuals, some of whom are individual members of the Federation, efforts should be made to initiate similar lists and surveys, so that every part of the state will contribute information to the final compilation.

In other words, we have a project, we have an author, we all have a job to do, and the time has come to get things rolling.

Robert S. Arbib, Jr.

WHAT CONSTITUTES BREEDING?

JOHN L. BULL

One of the most important aspects of the future New York State Bird book is the proper evaluation of data for breeding species. Although it may appear to be elementary to discuss criteria for breeding at this time, there has been an alarming trend to treat certain peripheral species as probable, or as definite breeders, even though an element of doubt exists in such cases. For example, there are a number of species which are expanding their ranges into "new" territory as breeding birds from the south, north, and west. Other species, common enough as breeders within their long-established range, are reported to breed in some instances well outside this range. Still others definitely established as breeders *once* in a given locality, are automatically assumed to be breeding on subsequent occasions when, in fact, actual proof is lacking. Most unfortunately these alleged breeding "records" are published as gospel truth, thus misleading the reader, the compiler, and the investigator. In many instances breeding is implied but not proved.

It is not identification of the species that is in question, but rather the evidence for breeding. Certain criteria must be adhered to, if we are to document breeding records properly. The following are criteria acceptable and unacceptable for breeding purposes.

ACCEPTABLE—(breeding proved, whether successful or not is immaterial)

1. Nest under construction or newly completed
2. Nest with eggs
3. Nest with young (altricial species)
4. Downy young out of nest (precocial species)
5. Newly fledged young being fed by parents

UNACCEPTABLE—(breeding not proved)

1. Singing male on "territory" (unmated bird)
2. Adult with enlarged gonads
3. Summering nonbreeders

The unacceptable category most frequently used as "breeding evidence" is number 3 — summering nonbreeders. In southeastern New York (Kingbird regions 9 and 10), the area most familiar to the writer, many species of water birds and not a few land birds remain through the summer, or spend a portion of it, without actually breeding. This category is too often