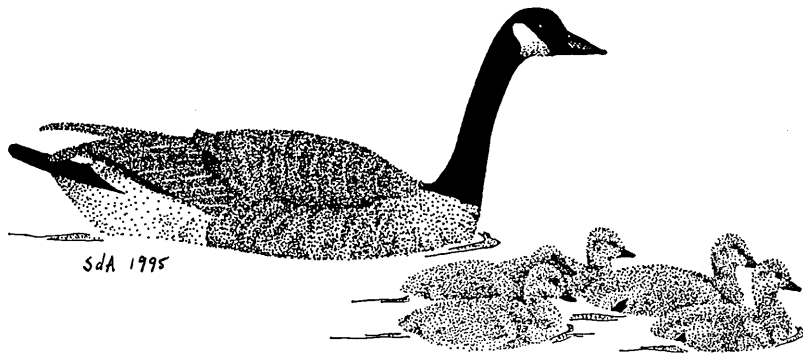




LETTER – WHAT IS BIRDING?

Robert Marcotte

4533 Dewey Ave, Rochester NY 14612-3903

Right on! Your editorial introduction (March 1996) goes right to the heart of several issues that birders must confront. Specifically, what is birding? Is it something more than listing? How can the observations of birders be more relevant and constructive? Ultimately, how can we, as

birders, work to ensure the protection of habitat so that all species might flourish?

I especially applaud the observation that "rare birds may be important to listers, but common birds may be more important to biology." I am often struck by the overwhelming and, I believe misplaced, importance that birders and their publications place on the birds that SHOULDN'T be in a given area, as opposed to those that should be. Yes, I realize that variety is the spice of life; I enjoy as much as anyone stumbling upon a rarity (Marcotte 1995). But surely we can learn more about the state of the environment, and contribute more to our understanding of it, by paying at least as much attention to our commonplace species.

To the extent that our publications overemphasize the exotic and the bizarre, they fail to give a true picture.

There is another danger. If birding is perceived to be primarily the domain of hardcore listers, in which the greatest glory goes to the longest lifelist and the rarest sighting, we risk turning off people who are interested in sharing the results of more serious attempts to monitor birds and preserve their habitat.

Please do encourage the study and documentation of even our commonplace species. Please do give at least equal coverage to these efforts, so that *The Kingbird* can indeed be a meaningful record of all New York bird life.

LITERATURE CITED:

Marcotte R. 1995. Photographs of New York State rarities. 63: Ancient Murrelet. *Kingbird* Sep;45(3):148-52.