

Redwoods to the Sea Wildlife Corridor: A Work in Progress (May 1999)

Over the past four years, RRAS Breeding Bird Atlasers have had the opportunity to visit a select assortment of beautiful and off-the-beaten-path locales, thanks to the generosity of many Humboldt County residents. Just last year, a remote and important landscape was brought to our attention by some folks who responded to one of the hundreds of access request letters we sent out. Read on and see what we discovered!

Sandwiched between Humboldt Redwoods State Park and the King Range National Conservation Area lies a 3,045 foot promontory named Gilham Butte, home to Spotted Owls, Coho Salmon and many other wild denizens. Clinging to the slope of this tableland is a cluster of residents who are working quietly and resolutely to recreate a wildlife "bridge" between the State Park and the Kings Range preserves. Toward this end, they are on a quest to purchase timberland from Eel River Sawmills for old-growth reserves and/or conservation easements. A number of organizations such as Save the Redwoods League are helping them.

Land or easements secured in this "wildlife corridor" would serve not only as valuable stream and wildlife protections in their own right, but would also enhance the value of BLM Late Successional Reserves that are already in place in the area. In effect, the Gilham Butte residents and BLM would be working together to restore natural corridors and connections between Humboldt Redwoods State Park and King Range National Conservation Area, thereby enabling the movement of plant and animal populations between these two reserves and helping to safeguard the integrity of the upper Mattole River watershed. This really is a lovely area, blessed with a wide variety of breeding birds from booming Blue Grouse to elegant Mountain Quail to Western Kingbird pairs carrying food across wide, grassy fields.

If you want more information about this effort to recreate historical wildlife corridors, contact Gabrielle Roach at POB 14, Redcrest 95569, or Linda Derksen at POB 604, Miranda 95553. Or, you can write to State Senator Wes Chesbro and State Assemblywoman Virginia Strom-Martin urging them to seek funds from the Wildlife Conservation Board for the creation of the "Redwoods to the Sea Wildlife Corridor". Thanks for your help in making Humboldt County a welcoming home for breeding birds and species of all kinds.

Twixt For It And 'Tween Agin It (January 1999)

by David Fix

Last week our chapter president, Hal Genger, asked me to write a short piece for the Sandpiper.

I agreed to do so, committing to no particular topic. Over the past couple of days I considered only idly what to write about, luxuriating in the knowledge that writer's block knows no medicine as heady as the deadline. This afternoon, scenes from my twenties and early thirties play across my mind's eye, their initial haziness giving way to repeated keen focus as tunes from an old Pat Metheny album provide pastel-and-poignant accompaniment. I remember, especially, the era of my life--in all, eight years--in which I lived in the mountains of southern Oregon, working for the Forest Service.

Gauzed mountainscape

A general image of a complexly furrowed and haze- returns. Against this, I recall promptly the feel of the work--that tickle and trickle-run of sweat; the dust-muted glint off ranks of mint-green trucks; the giving *krump* of roadside gravel beneath my boots. Well below the road, rust-flecked steel tapes are slapped around rebarbed trees that require a chain-and-a-half of sidehill pacing to shoot a height on. The bounds of the broad corridors of hemlock-mellowed light are constantly defined by the wavering flight of the flies and wasps, members of their separate nations darting past in silverzip and then invisibly beyond, as if through a series of brightly illuminated rooms connected by unseen halls of shadow.

I like these memories a lot, and I find myself exploring them for long moments. As they remind me of who it is I once was, so are they freighted with meaning, and plenty of it. To have labored and played hard in the Cascades old-growth during the lengthy matriculation from adolescence demanded of so many happy-go-lucky Seventies Children was to have been inculcated in the big business of industrial forestry, a long blue sky with a clouded lining.

Long-time seasonal employee

As a long-time seasonal employee with the Forest Service, I ultimately gained experience with practically every conceivable job that might be done in the woods. Through the merry and hectic go-around from firefighting to timber-cruising, from reforestation inspections to owl surveys, from database reinstallation to crew supervision, one thread (aside from my paycheck) offered a sense of connectivity to my widely disparate tasks. It was a feeling of pride, a sense of contribution, mixed vexingly with the perception that what I did was wrong. This confused reaction to my hard work first visited my reflections early in the game. Unwelcome to give voice to righteous indignation, times of frank doubt caused emotional spillover sessions with various bosses. In the face of even the most articulate rationalizations by guiding superiors—kindly and pragmatic persons, often far more educated in technical forestry than I—this ill feeling was not assuaged. Instead, it became iron-forged as I was given greater responsibility and perceived more accurately the aim of forestry.

Those in the departments for which I worked relied, to whatever degree, upon my acquired skills in developing a basis for land-use decisions. Often the numbers generated in the course of field work dictated that a timber stand 'required' treatment. Constrained by the sideboards of applied forestry theory, bound by allegiance to the agency, I wrote finis to the lives of abundant Others who could neither speak nor vote. In so doing I became a willing collaborator in the erasure of singular and inexpressible charm, and in the rending of the earthly fabric in which I was gladly entwined.

Programs run on my own data

Using results from programs run on my own data, I wrote a stand diagnosis which advocated serial clearcuts on each side of an exquisite stepped meadow--a seldom-trodden headwater glade in which, a few days earlier, I had offered nectar from a bitten orange slice to a confiding tortoiseshell fluttering inches from my nose. I lost sleep wondering how it was that a forty acre ridgetop unit whose trees averaged a tad more than fifty-four inches tall was no longer to be considered a 'visual opening' by the corps of cheerful Landscape Architects with whom I played softball, and whose kids I sometimes babysat.

One hushed September afternoon in my thirty-first summer, I found myself overcome with emotion at the uncommon loveliness of a subalpine stand ... and jarred by regret at having lately advised that it be stacked downtown with sprinklers on top. I found myself very much alone at the end of a long trail. Map, compass, and aerial photo handy in my vest sleeve, I was as lost as I had ever been. A thrush *chuk*'d close by, then flitted into view. Without speech at hand I apologized to the simple and unknowing Other, racked by profound anguish, brimming with a caustic shame. I glanced upward to staunch the swelling slob of glimmer in my vision and caught sight of the constant, generic vault of my youth limned against the glare--striving, insentient, the product of ages. And damned. I found a sitting spot on a down log, and, alone in the forest, I allowed the sobs their free course. I felt in that sickened instant that my passion for what I felt was true and right and beautiful must serve as an engine of flight, driving my final removal from that place, and from that pain.

I was gone

Within months I was gone, having left off my participation in the Punishment Of The Innocent.

I recall that moment each time I glance at the retired field vest in the corner of my closet. The sight and the scent of it brings back with a heady tang these memories of my youth, the trials of contradicted labors, and the potential for self-transformation to be availed under the haunt and spell of wonder.

A Whale of a Day And some birds too! (November 1998)

by Ron LeValley

On October 10, fifteen hardy seafarers and myself prepared for a day on the bounding main aboard the Moku out of King Salmon. Ocean conditions were forecast to be very good, and good they were, as when the tide changed from outgoing (and against the incoming waves) to incoming, the seas became almost unbelievably calm. Combined with the unusual warm days that we are trying not to get used to, our day was a delight.

Our only disappointment of the day was the lack of numbers of birds, but what we lacked in numbers and rarities we made up for with quality views. There was a moment when we all had long, simultaneous and educational views of flying Buller's, Sooty and Pink-footed shearwaters. There is no better way to learn the subtleties of identification than direct comparisons. The calm conditions allowed great looks at close-flying Black-footed Albatrosses as well.

It was not long after we had departed Humboldt Bay when we saw our first whales: a mother and calf humpback that surfaced less than 50 yards in front of the boat allowing superb views of their diagnostic arching backs. The blue whale we saw at a distance was less satisfying but still exciting.

From my perspective the highlight of the day were two groups of Northern Right Whale Dolphins that visited the Moku, riding the bow wave and providing all of us with incredible views of this uncommon mammal. I had been wanting to see this species for over 20 years, and was not disappointed with our views. When I first started learning about marine mammals, I was told that the fastest dolphins were the Dall's porpoise (which we also saw) and the right whale dolphins. These two species could not be more different at first glance. The right whale dolphin is a long, sleek, skinny porpoise with no dorsal fin. The Dall's porpoise is short and muscular with a well-developed dorsal fin. Apparently the Dall's porpoise uses its muscle mass and relatively broad tail fins to force itself through the seas, while the long "lever" of the right whale dolphin's tail stock speeds small tail fins up and down. Both were remarkably fast when we saw them.

Redwood Region Audubon Society hosted two pelagic trips this fall on board the Moku; the first, held in September came home with stories of Laysan Albatross. We'll be scheduling more during the next year watch for the announcements!

On the touch of dappled light nearest home (February 1998)

by David Fix

Throughout my life as a naturalist, the experiences and moments of epiphany I have beheld have each been made richer--and indeed have been given much of their very definition--by native vegetation and the lands they clothe. Although my greatest interest has long been birds, the essential images I can recall of the places I've lived and worked all are of the vegetal cover. I have been fortunate to have lived in the midst of great forestlands as well as out on the sagebrush steppe. The periods of my life are defined by images long since branded into my mind's eye as if with an iron: the sprawling old-growth stands of the western Cascades; the ash swales and and shrubby streambanks of the southern Willamette Valley; oak-and-pastureland mosaic of interior Humboldt County; subalpine meadows in northwestern Montana; the greasewood flats of the northern Great Basin playas.

To be sure, I have enjoyed birds in many places--I well remember my first Townsend's Solitaire nest, and each of the Gyrfalcons I've watched--yet I find that the deepest ties I have to my patch of ground knot me fast to the Earth in swirls and swatches of leafy greenery, half a million miles with but scant surcease, shadowed and breeze-nodding under my forty years of sun passages. These images conjure up memories of kid afternoons learning warbler songs; the high-sun mid-days of my twenties, cruising virgin timber tucked deep in fern-dense canyons, and the evenings of my thirties, standing on a ridge-nose in the dark, vocally Fishing For Rare Owls In The West.

Altogether I have but to close my eyes and envision a thicket of vine maple or lodgepole pine, and the rightness of my work, my pastime, and the faces of colleagues and companions--some of whom to which I might no longer place a name--come flooding back in the instant. The feelings of rightness and strength these images engender within my heart have played a great role in my perception of who it is I am, and who I may become. I have paid attention to the trees, the shrubs, and the bracken, and I have come away a better person for it. This, for me, is the greatest blessing bestowed upon my psyche by those voiceless and insentient sister beings who cannot speak, and who cannot vote.

As I grow older, I feel an apprehension creep more frequently into mind. It is the uneasy sense that those of us living in the United States are a citizenry becoming more and more removed from ties which bind us mindfully into a relationship with Earth. This feeling passes through my consciousness each day, although I attempt to explain it away, to quell and quash it, and to manufacture a flawed peace.

It comes to mind in bitter manifest when I flip through the business section of the newspaper and glance at the monochrome photos of flinty-eyed executives with vertical lines brutally creasing their foreheads, stating that the outlook for the third fiscal quarter is outstanding. I know the feeling whenever I overhear cliques of the Conceptually Challenged extolling the great new fall lineup on the Fox television network. I see it in the eyes of pudgy children in stylish duds who pout in distraction and disinterest at scenic vistas in the hinterlands, while Dad or Mom fumbles with the camcorder. And I know my feeling has validity when I read the in the editorial pages that the Pacific Lumber Company has been picked on enough already. It is apparent to me that the realm through which we pick our wending way has, in the minds of many, been increasingly reduced to swabbed pastels and a wasted search of happiness down karmic box canyons of material pursuit. We are, I fear, a society overcome by compulsory Disneyfication, and by an estrangement of our spiritual base.

To sit alone at the side of a road and gaze thoughtless across forty miles of hazy ridges brushed unkempt with the gesturings of great and ancient firs is to know ease. To hug a declining white pine sad-burnished with the guilt of introduced blister rust is to sympathize with one who cannot offer thanks. To appreciate the stubborn tilt and skew of wind-trained junipers in a lost draw on the slopes of an unpeopled mount is to recognize the quickness of the lifetime of a person. To hop the fence at Big Tree and span a twentieth of its squat circumference with outstretched

arms is to dare to have the courage to feel small. To kneel before the season's first calypso orchid and feel the dew-slick flutter of its sensuous pink petals pass delicately among one's fingers is to allow the recognition that flowering plants have endured the passage of epochal time with no hang-ups at all about sex! And to feel regret at the sight of a three-log load headed downtown on a Peterbilt Habitat Hearse is to allow the frank tragedy of industrial forestry to color one's thoughts with a candid slant on sanity.

Not all of us enjoy abundant opportunity to take the time to listen to the lessons given by the plants which preceded our tenure by ages. We are a people driven inexorably by monetary and material need. We will forever find our stifled cloister in cities, and, as is said in the Nation of Humboldt, We Will Always Cut. Yet there is, I feel, a vital spiritual assuagement to be found in even the most modest representation and honoring of native vegetation and the Earth-tie murmurings it bespeaks. A feeling of belonging may be found by noting the silent life of a cluster of redwood shoots growing tall from an old stump in the backyard, or a rootbound fir in a pot on a porch, even a patch of salal in a forgotten corner.

In the course of landscaping our yard, my partner and I have elected to forego the seemingly mandatory Monterey pines, hedge-trimmed ornamental junipers, and pampas grass which causes so many properties to resemble botanical chaos. Although we have made a few concessions to the qualities of favorable exotics, Jude and I are planting and nurturing a broad selection of native trees and shrubs. Rather than line our small pond with a trendy threesome of European birches, we have transplanted cuttings of willows from places in the Humboldt coastal dunes where we have enjoyed good birding. The shady microsite afforded by the north-facing bank of the pond now supports madienhair ferns. Among the conifers which will rise in time to replace the Douglas-firs presently above the property are hemlock and grand fir. Salal struggles a bit in the summer sun along the western fenceline, yet it will persist, reminding us at every glance of glad times hiking in the forest. Jasmine trails over the front gate, but it is complemented by sword ferns and lilies.

In pausing to consider the humble plants around us, one may find humble calm. As members of a species whose very success foretells an uncertain future, we would do well to give a nod to the natives whose resilience offers lessons well worth attending.

Wolf Gone Shadow (May 1997)

by Larry Karsteadt

She is lingering there still
among the hillside and shadow,
just beyond the edges
of my dream,
restless,
anxious,
alone.

Always searching
for the way back home,
to when she could
smell the wind,
track the wild quail,
raise her cubs
and freely roam.

I can feel her now
deep in my bones,
hear her in my heartbeat,
sense her in my song.

I can smell the residue left behind
when grandmother-grizzly and father-elk
were her elders,
all gone with time.

I can taste the memory of the blood

from her last kill,

when she worried deer trails

but kept them strong.

Before cattle grasses grew

and taxes weakened competition

with poison bait

laid along the

ground.

I can hear her midnight

howl fill the sky,

echoing across the quiet land,

behind the moonscape

a longing song,

teaching,

warning,

almost gone.

And I see her standing proud,

a mother, a hunter, a queen;

eyes piercing my being,

reaching inside,

whispering in my mind

that we too

will pass

with

time.

2/15/1997

Western Field Ornithologists Convention (October 1997)

by David Fix

We went, we participated, we did a little birding... August 21-24 saw a healthy turnout at the (air-conditioned) Imperial Valley Inn at Imperial, California, for the 22nd annual meeting of Western Field Ornithologists. Among those in attendance were five members of your Humboldt County Breeding Bird Atlas steering committee: David Fix, Rob Hewitt, John Hunter, Tom Leskiw, and Jude Power.

Social Hour

Thursday night saw a social hour and general get-together of active birders and ornithologists from all over California as well as from a few places elsewhere in the West. Accommodations were entirely pleasing, and cool motel rooms were a blessing to retire to in the evening. We met for presentations at the ceiling-fan-cooled Imperial Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. Discussions followed all of the intriguing presentations, which included concerns over the highly fragmented Willow Flycatcher population in the Southwest; effects of increasing toxification and salinization of the nearby Salton Sea; recent colonization by breeding Brown Pelicans at the Sea, status of birds in the Sea of Cortez, and an unprecedented open public meeting of the California Bird Records Committee, whose members comprise many among the corps of excellent birders in California.

The Imperial Valley and the Salton Sea offer birding phenomena quite unlike that of any other region in the United States. During early-morning field trips preceding presentation of papers on Saturday and Sunday, participants enjoyed opportunities to become acquainted as local hotspots were toured in air-conditioned minivans. And we do mean hotspots: the shade temperature approached 120 degrees in mid-afternoon. Tours ended well before the onset of the furnace-like heat which visiting birders must contend with here in summer.

Crowded Roost

At Ramer Lake we saw a crowded roost of more than ten thousand Cattle Egrets. Fig Lagoon provided our first incongruous glimpse of Brown Pelicans in the Imperial Valley. Later one tour group had to brake for two pelicans standing on the highway! The Salton Sea proper was alive with hundreds more pelicans, Yellow-legged Gulls, plenty of Black Terns, and a few Black Skimmers. A Heermann's Gull was a local rarity, while a "Large-billed" Savannah Sparrow was another of the regional specialties to be looked for in this far southeast corner of the state. A large flock of White-faced Ibis overflowed the VFW hall before sunset Saturday evening.

A discussion of statewide Breeding Bird Atlas efforts, both published and underway, took place Saturday afternoon. It was an excellent chance for members of the Humboldt BBA steering committee to both learn from the results of other projects and recommend our own methods. We came away from the meeting feeling fresh determination that our five-year project, now completing its third season, will be a great success. On that note, all of us thank every one of the dedicated birders who have chosen to enhance their experiences and expertise in local birding by contributing hours and miles to the Breeding Bird Atlas.

ALPENMUSE (May 1997)

by David Fix

LAST AFTERNOON AUGUST, moist heat

Toward the crest of the range, incipient thunderheads rise
powered by a distant furnace, driven upward and out, they pause,

Inviscerate, pile up further, mound, tower, heap

expand mightily

Leaving earthly moments miles beneath.

..it is up this track to Deer Leap Rock

That the mild fingers of maple-shattered light

find me now. Here to feel..

..giving crumpncrunch of gravel underfoot

..tickle and trickle-run of sweat

And to search half-alertly for the hints of September today.

Past Budweiser crick, seeing spring's hellroar is history;

what jammed this culvert with debris is so far reduced,

The vernal torrent-force drawn thin, low, silvery in August

Slender waterweeds laze gently among glimmering ruddy rocks

and a spare handful troutfry nose all together north,

Easily keeping pace this current's push.

..gaining elevation, I

Stride higher, feeling cooling upslope breeze

Rush across wrist, elbow, shoulder

whir welcome into ears, eyes

It bears suggestions of deep-valley scents

born of business and manbustle.

Up ahead, roadside fireweed gives up grudging gifts

Its clots of airy, shining white seed-fluffs

Torn.. ..clear, free, gone down the longdrawn sky

Spilling ever far with the lay of the winds,

Child wanderers all.

Forging almost straight uphill,

slide-alders slap my squint-of-eye

And the deerfly legions wage bloodlust anew.

Coming chill evenings will decimate their ranks, kill them entire

but today the season's unkind spawn know only

To fly is to feed deep.

..leaving the forest traverse below, I greet once more the sun

Tramp the ridgetop bald

Looking at my path, watching, taking care not to step amiss

and finish off the last nodding lilies

nestled in dried thatch-grass:

Their quenching snowpatch gone, they bloom their last

Soon to send the gypsy fritillaries hungry on their way.

..and here, dropping packstone beside me

Atop this forgotten skymount

I trace thoughtfully the lines of distant ridges,

peaks, and clouds

Knowing that their repeated benign and fearsome images
have given my spirit ease, a calm acceptance beyond measure

And somewhere within my youthful yearning vessel

..a mind of age.

1985

Of year-birds, robins and attention to what matters (April 1997)

by David Fix

As a birder, and as the most interested chronicler of my own life, I tend to remember what has happened. Long ago, I fell into the habit of remembering what took place on seemingly inconsequential dates long in the past. Friends sometimes ask me how in the world it is that I am able to recall what happened on a given day. It might be, say, April 14th, and I may mention off-handedly that, on this date in 1978, I saw my first Black-throated Gray Warbler of the year. It was in a Red Alder in a woodlot now long razed and planted in overpriced townhouses, and it was in the upper portion of the crown (no, I don't remember in which direction it was facing when I spotted it!). Why have I remembered this trivial event? It made an impression on me because there had been an influx of migrants that morning, and I felt strongly that there would be a fancy new outrider among the northbound swarms of "Audubon's" Warblers. I worked with past knowledge, having found that Black-throated Grays typically arrived in that area around the third week in April, and that a few 'pioneers' usually showed up before the main portion of the population moved through. The experience was an affirmation of a growing ability to roughly predict when certain birds might show up.

While such a recollection of dates and circumstances may seem remarkable, the flip side is that I cannot remember most of the birds I've seen. The figuring works this way: I consider that, without question, I have taken notice of at least ten million seen-or-heard birds since I began birding intensely, when I was fifteen. Yet only a vanishingly tiny fraction of these have, for whatever reason, been memorable in themselves, so that the great majority have been seen or heard, appraised, and quickly disregarded... then forgotten. I can estimate with assurance that the percentage of birds I have seen or heard and cannot remember so closely approaches 100% that---and here's the amazing point--- I might claim that nearly the totality of my birding experience has been utterly lost to memory. Given this, why, then, have I been able to learn anything at all about birds?

The key to learning anything at all substantive or revealing about anything is, first, to take in the greater picture. Because we assimilate knowledge a bit at a time, the next step in considering anything is to fine-focus with a feeling for what details to pay attention to, pondering and retaining the niceties that help define the essential characteristics of the experience. Conversely, what is deemed "not to matter" can be forgotten, or avoided. Barry Lopez ends one of his earlier short stories about the inherent sparseness of the human perceptual experience with the comment that the protagonist, a material minimalist with a penchant for easy efficiency, knows how to avoid what is unnecessary. Faced with a thousand and one options and the unceasing urgency of chore prioritization, this is true in much of daily life.

And, in the midst of a galaxy of feathered beings, it is surely crucial in learning about birds. Many persons with an interest in birds see much, yet fail to pick up on details which define the set of circumstances they're experiencing. They glimpse a complex and ever-shifting milieu of birds in their backyard, yet turn from the window without having had that one crystal moment of awareness which may take their understanding of, say, songbird migration just a tad bit farther. Rather than continuing to paint with broad brush here, I'll draw a more precise illustration of my point.

On a morning in February just past, I saw a couple of American Robins running about on the front lawn. Although I see robins probably every day around Arcata, I hadn't seen a robin actually feeding on the lawn in some time. Each bird was a bright, bold male and both of them looked plump and well-fed. Possibly recently-arrived? They were just robins, they're too common to pay attention to...

However, I remembered this forgettable moment the following morning when forty robins suddenly appeared in the yard. Along with a majority of obvious black-headed males, there were drabber, more softly-patterned females among them. And now they concentrated efforts in a cotoneaster loaded with berries...fruit that the local wintering birds had disdained. The robins attacked the cotoneaster berries so heavily over the next week or so that, as I glance out the window this afternoon, hardly a berry can be seen remaining where there were thousands (hey, this cotoneaster is very nearly a tree!). For several days, there were hundreds of robins in my neighborhood. Driving around town, I saw that there were throngs of robins altogether around Arcata. As they peaked in numbers, the sex ratio appeared to level out at about 1:1. Yet today these swarms are gone. What was the story here?

What I had been able to figure out, beginning with notice of just two everyday robins, was that our yard had become one of innumerable local focal points for large numbers of robins which were clearly on the move. And although I can't say I saw a single one of them flying north in migratory flight, I know full well from experience that this is what occurred. Surely, the robins we saw here near the end of last month might well now be in Astoria, or in Victoria. A classical harbinger of spring in colder climes, robins appear in large numbers in mid-continent in late winter and early spring. Having spent a few days lately in a terribly bleak Illinois winter landscape, I can imagine the impact of a swarm of robins such as the one I experienced here in Humboldt. What we do not often recognize is that robins migrate through our area as well. Their movements are sometimes difficult to notice because large numbers remain both in summer and winter. But the initial preponderance of males--such a constant fact in the northward migration of abundant species--helped tip me off. Taking a moment to ponder what I had seen, it all made sense. When a full-scale northward push of robins occurs, it's tough to miss... if you pay attention.

Savvy birders acknowledge that daily birding has almost nothing to do with rarities. Greater than 99% of birding involves experiencing common and abundant birds. By the same token, the greatest part of bird-learning takes place as one ponders common birds. A smart birder maximizes opportunities to become more skilled by keeping this in mind. By paying attention to what birds you see, and thinking about them, you define what is 'normal' for a given period of the birding year; by remembering what you feel is 'normal' for that period, you increase your ability to detect the anticipated reaffirmations of seasonality from year to year. A personal calendar of birding events need not exist on paper. Carry it in your brain, and add to it or revise it whenever you encounter migratory influxes--including your 'firsts' for a given year.

This April and May as the legions of southern-wintering insectivorous birds return to your Atlas block, make note of the changes you perceive. You'll discover the open hillsides enlivened with the songs of Lazuli Buntings on some morning, while at the same time the first Warbling Vireos may be singing in the oaks... but which morning? Can you reasonably expect their return to occur about the same time the following year? Take note of the date-- birds are quite strongly tied to traditional timetables. Birthdays and anniversaries aside, each day of the year can begin to assume a memorable significance all its own if you take a moment to ponder the events which continually dot the unwritten avian calendar.