

# From a **Regional Report Editor**

Growing up, I was always one of the youngest birders in Ontario, even into my twenties. Because almost everyone else was older and, for the most part, more knowledgeable, I played few roles in which I gave back to the local birding community. Of course, at the time I was mostly oblivious to this as I was being driven to twitches, club meetings, and famous birding sites by older birders who were all too happy to help. A wealth of birding literature appeared in my mailbox, and I didn't think much about the effort that must have gone into just one of these articles, let alone an entire magazine. I would likely never meet most of these authors, but I recognized their names immediately, as they were often frequent contributors. There's no doubt that it takes passionate people to get this work done. Even more impressive is that most of them are volunteers who do the work on evenings and weekends. But for most of us, this effort, passion, and dedication mostly go unnoticed. That is, until we become part of the process.

As a more mature birder, I now give rides to friends and younger birders, I can appreciate rare bird committees and the boards of conservation organizations, and I volunteer my time in a myriad of small ways to help spread a love of nature. For the last two years, one of these ways has been looking over and editing Regional Reports for *North American Birds*. The authors of these reports, the Regional Compilers, are local and continental experts who spend countless hours amassing bird records from hundreds of birders over numerous platforms—and all this as volunteers! What I do for Regional Reports really just amounts to a quick once-over before their hard work is churned out to you, the readers. I'm in close contact with Ontario's Regional Compilers, and I make myself available to them in whatever capacity they need. We combine our decades of birding knowledge and connections to confirm tough IDs and to seek and acquire photo permissions. In these efforts, the relationships I've formed in the community have been invaluable.

Most of my editing has involved Regional Reports from Canada, but I also jump at the opportunity to look over those from other regions that interest me, such as Hawaii and the West Indies and Bermuda. It never ceases to amaze me how much work these Regional Compilers do behind the scenes and just how intimately well they know their local avifauna. I love that I have the opportunity to see the photos and read the quarterly reports, which strengthens and broadens my foundational knowledge of Canadian birds from coast to coast to coast, while simultaneously contributing to them. I make sure the hard work of the Regional Compilers is polished and ready to be consumed by the readers, and I hope many of them are young or new to birding.

With the advent of eBird and apps such as Discord (which is currently prevalent in much of Canada), I have certainly heard people question why Regional Reports are still being produced by the ABA. Simply stated, *North American Birds* Regional Reports are different. They fill a gap. They are not gossip. They are not species-specific. They are, instead, part of a larger narrative. Where else can you find a seasonal breakdown on birds of an entire region? Yes, many of the raw data are found in eBird, but are they synthesized and accessible in a comprehensive way by a local expert? Regional Reports are here so that those of us interested in more than just rarity chasing can form a bigger picture on what our birds are doing. I find the Canadian reports excellent, and I especially commend the work of those in Ontario, Québec, the Prairie Provinces, and Atlantic Canada.

I am truly happy and proud to be a part of this legacy. I know that my contributions, like countless birders did for me growing up, are paving the way for future birders to understand and appreciate our birdlife. If, like me, you value the service that *North American Birds* Regional Reports provides to the birding community, please consider joining me by stepping up to be a report editor or a compiler for your region. For more information, email NAB Editor Michael Retter at [mretter@aba.org](mailto:mretter@aba.org).

Thank you for listening, and good birding!

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