

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

President Robert Waters has kindly relenquished this page to the Editor for this issue. As an editor, of course, we could go on for some time on most any subject, but there is one subject, THE SUMMER BIRD COUNT, that should be discussed.

About 2 years ago, Tom Atkeson suggested that The Society embark on an annual summer bird count to be conducted along the same lines as the Christmas Bird Count, except that it would be done during the breeding season of most resident breeding birds. The Council agreed that this was a worthy activity for the Society, and The Summer Bird Counts were begun in 1964, and continued in 1965. These counts were reported in ALABAMA BIRDLIFE for those two years.

These counts are interesting and, if continued over a period of years, would prove useful in noting changes in breeding populations that might occur in the future. This type of bird count, however, has some shortcomings when it comes to interpreting the results. Each local count covers an area of 15 miles diameter, centered at a selected point. It is, therefore, not a sample of any particular type of habitat or of any particular type of region. Also, the counters are naturally going to do their birding in places they know to be good birding, and largely ignore less desirable habitat. At least this is apt to be the case when the party doing the count is small and pressed for time. The usual bird count resolves itself into sort of a contest to see who can turn up the largest number of species and individuals. So, while Christmas and Summer Bird Counts are fun and useful, they fall short when the serious student of bird populations tries to apply statistical methods to the results. Such methods are essential if we try to describe population changes to non-birders.

Recently, we received a copy of MARYLAND BIRDLIFE which contained an article on a breeding bird survey that was done in Maryland during the past summer (1965). It seems that the Maryland birders have been thinking along the same lines as we have as to the need for a summer count, but they have embarked on a more detailed and painstaking survey. This article is reprinted in this issue of ALABAMA BIRDLIFE for your study and consideration.

You will note that this Maryland survey has some features different from the usual count. First, the census areas are routes that are driven in cars with regular stops. Second, the routes are randomly selected to sample the entire State, and third, considerable dependence is placed on identifying and counting birds by ear. Obviously, a count of this kind offers some challenges to birders.

Mr. Chandler Robbins, writer of this article, hopes that eventually a systematic breeding bird survey may be used throughout the country. This was also our hope when we started the Alabama Summer Count. Although we might not be able to sample all of the State the first time using Robbins' methods, with all the good birders we have in Alabama, we could certainly give it a try.

Maurice F. Baker