



## Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Breeding Bird Survey  
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### Memorandum to Cooperators

### SUMMER 2005

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#### CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS —

- |                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 — NEW BBS BIOLOGIST              | 5 — 2004 COVERAGE TABLE  |
| 2 — 40 <sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY   | 6 — PARTICIPANT AWARDS   |
| 3 — COORDINATOR UPDATES - ID,SD,SC | 7 — TAXONOMY CHANGES     |
| 4 — 2004 ROUTE COVERAGE            | 7 — NOTES FROM THE FIELD |
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#### NEW BBS BIOLOGIST

After four years of flying solo I am delighted to announce that Dave Ziolkowski, Jr. joined the U.S. BBS office staff this past February. Dave is a native of Maryland, and has been active in avian conservation and research since the early 1990s. He holds a B.S. in Biology from Towson University and M.S. in Biology from the University of Missouri, and came to us from the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine where he spent the last year examining avian lead levels in order to develop guidelines on potential impacts of military compounds on resident and migratory birds. In addition to his toxicological work, Dave has extensive experience in the field of avian ecology. He has participated in research on the evolution, ecology, and biogeography of Lesser Antillean birds and their haematozoan parasites, the behavioral ecology of Dark-eyed Juncos, the demography and habitat requirements of migratory nongame bird populations in New Hampshire and Maryland, and the behavioral ecology of House Wrens. Dave is no stranger to the BBS either, having conducted several routes in Maryland over the years, and he looks forward to becoming even more active in the program!

Dave's BBS responsibilities will include assuming many of the day-to-day administrative duties for the survey. So if you encounter problems before or during your survey and need to talk to someone in the BBS office for advice feel free to contact Dave at: 301-497-5753; dziolkowski@usgs.gov.

I will remain actively involved with the BBS for the foreseeable future. During this year, I will help Dave as he faces the mountain of data for the first time. I should also have more time to devote to the preparation of papers and reports summarizing various aspects of the BBS data, as well as to the development of outreach and training materials. I can be reached at: 301-497-5843; keith\_pardieck@usgs.gov.

**40TH ANNIVERSARY -- COUNTING FOR THE BIRDS SINCE 1966!**

Over four decades ago, one man had a conservation vision for non-game bird populations and dared to implement the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). That man is, of course, Chan Robbins. And he, together with the thousands of you across the country who have shared his vision, have made the BBS a resounding success and the foundation of non-game, landbird conservation in North America!

Your BBS data helped illuminate the population declines of eastern migratory forest birds in the mid-1980s and early 1990s and spurred numerous research projects to discover and reverse the causes of the declines. It also directly led to the formation of Partners In Flight, an international consortium of federal and state agencies, private organizations, and individuals dedicated to the conservation of North American birds. More recently, the plight of many grassland bird species has become a major conservation concern due to their widespread declining population trends. Without the BBS the true scale of these problems would very likely still be unknown. So as we enter into the fortieth BBS season we thank you, the participants, for your time and expertise that allows the BBS to be such a vital tool for North American avian conservation. To help mark this historic occasion we have developed a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary patch and enclosed one in each BBS packet. Thank you and let's have another 40 productive years!

### **NEW PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

Thank you for joining the flock of thousands who make the BBS a success! Through your efforts the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state conservation agencies, and many others have reliable bird population information on which to base sound conservation and management decisions. Secondly, we want your BBS experience to be as enjoyable and meaningful as possible. To help achieve these goals we have many resources available to you via the BBS web site. For example, you can download previous years' species lists for your route, see where neighboring routes are located in the state, map the location of species found in the region using the NBII mapping application, and view population trend maps. Or we can loan you a bird song CD-ROM to help you brush up on your identification skills during the winter months. Just contact me ([keith\\_pardieck@usgs.gov](mailto:keith_pardieck@usgs.gov)) to request a CD. And remember, if you ever have questions or problems regarding the BBS, always feel free to contact your state or national coordinator.

As a new participant here are a few guidelines to follow to help make your experience more productive and enjoyable.

- 1) Complete the BBS Methodology Training program and review.  
We can't use your data if you do not.
- 2) Read the BBS instructions before surveying the birds.
- 3) Scout your route before the actual survey day to avoid unexpected delays.
- 4) Submit your data electronically for faster feedback.
- 5) Return your completed forms and maps in a timely manner.
- 6) HAVE FUN -- take a friend, take pictures, or mentor a fledgling birder.

Thank you again for participating and we look forward to hearing about your adventures with the BBS.

**BBS WEB PAGE** ([www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/))

Last season the web data entry program had some glitches, as many of you discovered, causing untold frustration for users and us alike. We apologize for that and are happy to report that the problem was isolated and corrected. So the 2005 data entry process should go much smoother. Nevertheless, the data entry system is due for a major overhaul to ensure its continued operation over the next decade. Thus in 2006, we hope to have an entirely new web data entry system and stand-alone program for you to use.

The new web entry system will be similar in function to the existing program although the screen layout will change. The stand-alone program should be a self-executable program that you can download to your personal computer. With the program loaded onto your PC you can enter data for your route without being connected to the Internet. Once data entry is complete, just briefly log-on to the web to send us your data. Hopefully this will give you more control of the data entry process and relieve you of many of the frustrations associated with trying to remain online for long periods of time to enter data.

### **BETTER LATE THAN NEVER**

Do you have BBS data from previous years that were never sent in? Remember, it is never too late. Whether they are from last year or a decade ago, we can still use them. While we don't wish to promote late data submission, don't throw them out just because they are old; send them to us!

### **STATE COORDINATORS**

Richard Peterson has retired from the position of South Dakota BBS coordinator, leaving the duties to Laura Hubers. In South Carolina, Dennis Forsythe turned over coordinator duties to Steve Wagner, while in Idaho, Rita Dixon passed the coordinator position on to Rex Sallabanks. In Virginia, Sergio Harding replaces Mike Wilson who left the coordinator position last year. Also, in Connecticut, Jan Mitchell retired from the coordinator position. We send our thanks to Richard, Dennis, Rita, Mike and Jan for their combined decades of service to the BBS and wish them the best with their future endeavors. We also welcome Laura, Steve, Rex, and Sergio to our flock of coordinators for what we hope will be long and productive relationships.

**Vacancy** -- The Connecticut Coordinator position is currently vacant. Interested parties should contact Keith Pardieck ([keith\\_pardieck@usgs.gov](mailto:keith_pardieck@usgs.gov)).

<b>Idaho</b>	<b>South Dakota</b>	<b>South Carolina</b>	<b>Virginia</b>
Rex Sallabanks	Laura Hubers	Steve Wagner	Sergio Harding
Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game	Waubay Natl. Wildl. Ref.	316 E. Creswell Ave	VA Dept. Game & Inland Fisheries
600 South Walnut, PO Box 25	44401 134A St	Greenwood, SC 29646	4010 West Broad Street
Boise, ID 83707-0025	Waubay, SD 57273	864-223-0416	Richmond, VA 23230
208-334-2920	<a href="mailto:laura_hubers@fws.gov">laura_hubers@fws.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:sjwagner@scad.edu">sjwagner@scad.edu</a>	804-367-0143
208-334-2114 (fax)	605-947-4521		<a href="mailto:Sergio.Harding@dgif.virginia.gov">Sergio.Harding@dgif.virginia.gov</a>
<a href="mailto:rsallabanks@idfg.state.id.us">rsallabanks@idfg.state.id.us</a>			

Current state coordinator contact information is available on the BBS web page via the "Contact Us" link.

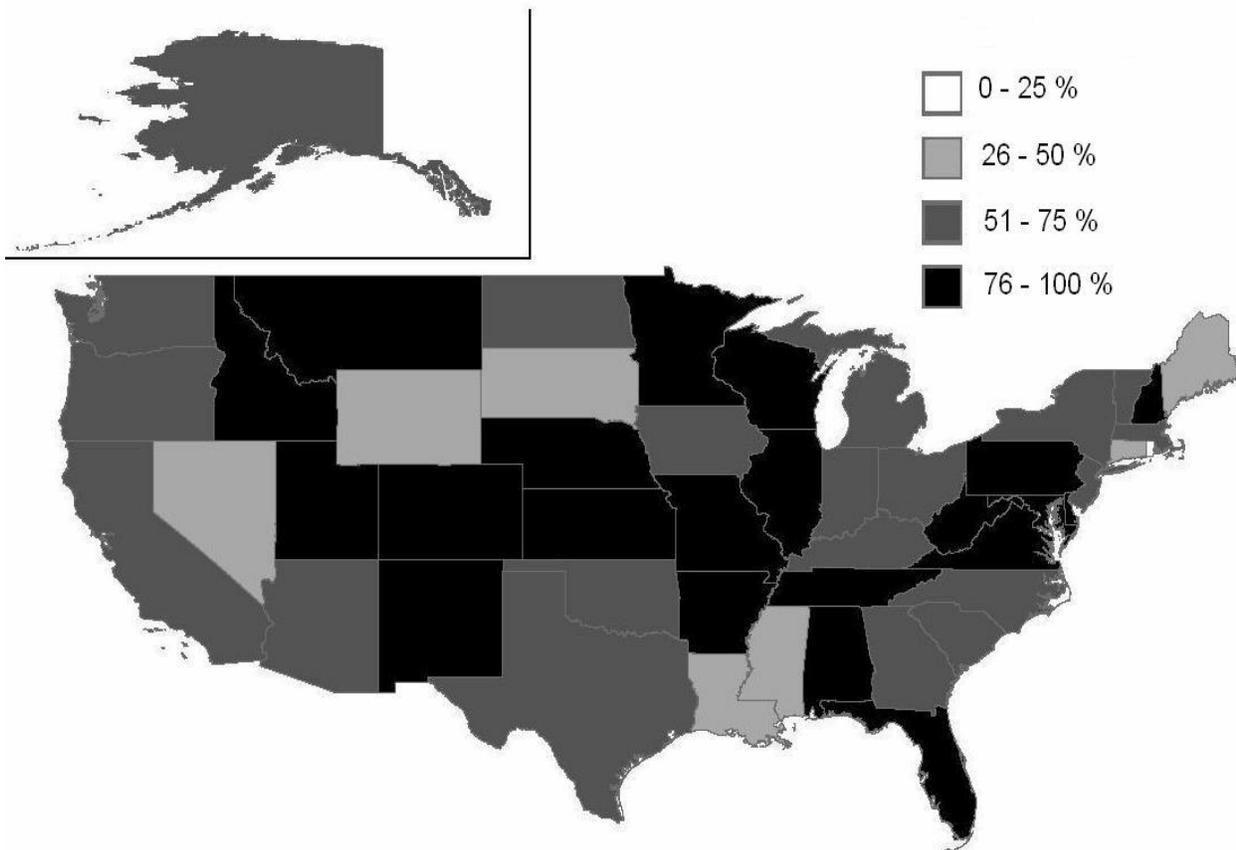
### **2004 ROUTE COVERAGE**

Our thanks to everyone who participated in the 2004 BBS season! Data for 2853 routes have been submitted so far (Table 2, page 5). Four states showed promising increases in coverage by 7 or more routes. They were Michigan, Minnesota, New York, and Virginia. Also, five states achieved coverage of more than 90% of their available routes. They were Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Utah. Our special thanks to the coordinators and participants of those states!

Seven states still lag behind in participation. Fifty percent or fewer available routes were sampled in Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Wyoming (Figure 1). We need to get more birders out of their “nests” and on BBS routes this year. If you hail from any of these states, please help your coordinator by enlisting some of your qualified birder friends into the ranks of the BBS.

To get a better idea of your state’s route coverage, you can also compare the “Available Routes” column to the “2004” column in Table 1. If the difference between the two numbers is large, we need more participants in the state. If this appears to be the case in your state, please help recruit qualified participants! Direct potential recruits to your state coordinator; their contact information is on the web. Thank you.

**Figure 1. 2004 U.S. BBS Route Coverage.** Percentage of available routes sampled in 2004 by state. Lighter coloration indicates more vacant routes and the need for more participants.



**Table 1. 2003-2004 Route Coverage Summary**

State/ Prov.	Available	# of Routes			State/ Prov.	Available	# of Routes		
		sampled in 2003	sampled in 2004	Geo-ref. Routes*			sampled in 2003	sampled in 2004	Geo-ref. Routes*
AL	91	84	69	42	NF/LB	29	14	13	7
AK	103	67	72	12	NH	23	23	21	1
AB	180	83	76	63	NJ	28	19	15	5
AZ	65	44	39	2	NM	62	59	59	15
AR	32	30	28	7	NY	112	57	65	7
BC	135	71	73	11	NU	4	0	0	0
CA	230	149	130	11	NC	95	74	71	10
CO	136	116	106	15	ND	44	37	29	1
CT	16	8	6	1	NS	29	13	20	6
DE	10	9	9	1	OH	68	58	47	4
FL	90	78	78	8	OK	65	50	48	7
GA	60	33	37	3	ON	193	80	63	14
ID	58	48	47	8	OR	122	81	75	10
IL	101	87	82	85	PA	109	93	84	29
IN	61	46	45	14	PR	44	27	13	24
IA	33	27	21	5	PEI	4	3	1	0
KS	61	58	47	7	PQ	161	51	52	1
KY	47	28	26	4	RI	5	1	1	0
LA	68	37	33	3	SK	87	31	27	68
NWT	13	4	6	6	SC	34	24	22	2
ME	70	29	33	5	SD	62	40	31	2
MB	67	43	34	32	TN	47	36	40	6
MD	59	48	54	29	TX	197	140	132	21
MA	24	16	17	10	UT	102	93	92	10
MI	83	44	59	4	VT	23	13	15	1
MN	86	63	73	4	VA	70	49	58	24
MS	37	18	17	2	WA	93	70	69	27
MO	53	43	45	14	WV	57	48	48	36
MT	65	54	55	4	WI	92	83	78	23
NE	46	41	38	3	WY	108	57	53	16
NV	42	16	16	1	YT	38	11	20	0
NB	32	17	20	10					
					Can	972	421	405	218
					U.S.	3489	2553	2448	585
					Total	4461	2974	2853	803

\* Number of routes with geo-referenced stop locations.

## **ROUTE MAPS**

Please return your route maps each year! Over 300 maps were not returned after the 2004 BBS season, causing weeks of wasted effort copying new maps and re-highlighting route paths in preparation for the 2005 season. Many think they are doing us a favor by keeping their maps since they intend to run the route again. But plans change and the route may need to be assigned to another observer, who will need the map that you kept. Moreover, we often do not know and do not have the resources to track whether someone kept the map intentionally or if it was lost. In order to prepare for the next BBS season and update our permanent map records we need you to return the maps with your data in a timely manner each year! Thank you for your cooperation.

## **BBS AWARDS**

With the completion of the 2004 BBS season 119 participants have earned the following BBS awards; the recipients names are listed below each award category in alphabetical order by last name. Congratulations to all and thank you again for your commitment to the BBS!

### **10-years (BBS lapel pin) — 72 recipients:**

Susanne Adams, Beverly Baker, James Banks, Jenny Barnett, Lois Bateman, Betsy Beneke, Steve Betchkal, Denise Bohon, Lynn Braband, Happy Chambers, Richard Connors, Karen Cortis, Steve Cox, Noreen Damude, Michael Davis, Lee Elliott, Evergreen Erb, Gail Evans, Steven Faccio, David Felley, Mike Fialkovich, Charles Fuller, Paul Gardner, Bill Griffin, Walter Hackney, Joey Herron, Lynn Hetlet, Jacqueline Heyda, Patrick Hnilicka, Henry Horvat, Harold Hultberg, Joye Johnson, David Kalbach, Robert Keiffer, Armand Lagasse, Wade Leitner, Robin Leong, Thomas Lerczak, Tony Leukering, Richard Lewis, David Lockman, Michael Manetz, John Maresh, Roy Mcwhorter, Raymond Meyer, Joe Meyers, Tom Mickel, Steven Mierzykowski, Debbie Newman, Kenny Nichols, Frank Palmer, Gerald Papachristou, Kim Potter, Peter Quincy, Bob Rasa, Larry Rizzo, Howard Sakai, Tom Salo, John Sauer, Donald Skaar, Teri Slatauski, David Smith, Scott Smith, Peggy Spiegel, Mark Stackhouse, David Suddjian, Jim Swinford, Jerry Toll, Charles Vaughn, Harold Ward, Alan Wight, Chester Winegarner, and Dave Yokel.

### **20-years (BBS key chain) — 27 recipients:**

Karen Adams, Timothy Baird, Lorraine Bartlett, Wayne Bell, Christine Bommarito, Eddie Chew, James Cox, Thomas Crabtree, Robert Culbertson, Raymond Cummins, James Dinsmore, Joyce Duncan, Carl Freeman, Wayne Mason, David Mehlman, Shirley Muse, Harold Reeve, Merle Rogers, Brian Rollfinke, David Rowell, Sharon Sarappo, Robert Scher, Colleen Sweeney, Michael Verser, Jim Waldo, Roland Wauer, and Steven Wilson.

### **30-years (BBS cap) — 7 recipients:**

Thelma Dalmas, Dave Griffiths, Wayne Harper, Harry Legrand, Jr., Theodore Mack, Hadley Roberts, and Darrel Whipple.

### **50 Routes cumulative (*Birds of North America field guide*) — 13 recipients:**

Stephen Allen, Dennis Austin, Bill Eddleman, James Evans, Helen Griffith, Gregory Grove, Lucinda Haggas, David Hawksworth, Robert Kuntz II, William Peeples, John Shackford, Dorothy Silsby, and Donald Varner.

## TAXONOMY CHANGES

As mentioned last year, the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature has made numerous revisions to the AOU Checklist of North American Birds which were not formerly reflected on the BBS data sheets. This year the BBS has incorporated the species changes as described in the 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> checklist supplements. Most notable of the changes is that ducks and gallinaceous birds will now appear before loons and grebes on your BBS forms. Please take a moment to re-familiarize yourselves with the data sheets this year so this change does not catch you off guard in the field.

The committee also added one new species -- Cackling Goose -- within the range of the BBS. Formerly a subspecies of the Canada Goose, the Cackling Goose breeds in areas of Alaska and the Yukon. So if your route is in the breeding range of the Cackling Goose, please indicate on your BBS forms which species you encounter. Also for those of you up north, the Yellow Wagtail is now known as the Eastern Yellow Wagtail and is distinct from those found outside North America.

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Kudos to Noel Cuthright and the Quad 30 Campaign! As if running 4 BBS routes per year were not enough of a challenge, Noel decided to take it up a notch in the name of bird conservation and run 30 BBS routes in 30 days during his 30th year participating in the BBS to raise \$30,000 for Important Bird Areas. Well he did it, and surpassed his goal by sampling 33 BBS routes in 33 days across four states and raising close to \$40,000 for IBAs!

Noel had this to say about his adventure, "Needless to say, my biggest accomplishment was actually completing 33 consecutive BBS routes – a feat that any BBS volunteer will readily tell you is statistically and cosmically impossible! It rained some afternoons and evenings; it rained as I drove to the starting point; and it rained immediately after several surveys. It misted on a few occasions, and I experienced a gentle shower or two during a few surveys, but only once did I need to stop during a survey for about 30 minutes to wait for a hard rain to pass. Winds were generally light enough, and I soon realized that the wind always blows in western MN, though there are no tree leaves to interfere with hearing. My uniform for all 33 counts consisted of a bird t-shirt (clean) every morning, (although on several mornings extra layers were needed as my car's thermometer registered 40 degrees in predawn northern MN and not much more 5 hours later) and the same pair of sweat pants (washed occasionally). My biggest worry was finding the starting point for each survey on strange roads (often gravel) in the dark, sometimes many miles away from where I had just spent the night, exactly 30 minutes before sunrise."

For more information on the Quad 30 Campaign and first-hand accounts of Noel's daily trials and triumphs go to: <http://quad30campaign.org/index.html>. My only regret is that he won't be doing all 33 routes again next year.

Speaking of thirties, Thelma Dalmas completed her 30<sup>th</sup> consecutive run on the Covesville, Virginia BBS route in 2004 and wrote in to ask who else had surveyed a single route for at least 30 consecutive years? There are 33 other participants who achieved that goal in 2004, with five individuals poised to reach 40 consecutive runs on a single route next year. The participants names and their number of consecutive years are listed below. Great work and congratulations -- you give us all something to aspire to!

Ralph Bell - 39, G. Marion Belyea - 34, Elizabeth Brooks - 32, Danny Bystrak - 37, Sylvia Fullerton - 36, John Fussell - 37, David Galinat - 31, Ian Halladay - 37, David Holmes - 37, Edward Hopkins - 31, Robert Janssen - 37, Vernon Kleen - 35, Frederick Loetscher - 32, Joseph Lynch - 32, Theodore Mack - 30, Maurice Mareschal - 35, Lowell McEwen - 34, Robert Moeller - 33, Robert Pantle - 38, Jack Park - 37, James Peavy - 34, Frances Pope - 33, William Reid - 38, Robert

Reid, Jr. - 39, Evelyn Rifenburg - 38, Chandler Robbins - 39, Margaret Rusk - 39, Kenneth Seyffert - 38, Daryl Tessen - 39, Claude Tremblay - 30, Jesse Ward - 31, Darrel Whipple - 30, and James Wilson - 39.

Personal safety should always be a primary concern when conducting BBS routes. In that vein, several BBS participants have written in recently to remind us of some basic safety tips we should follow. The first tip is brought to us by Randy Hill, who conducts the Odessa, Washington BBS route. Randy reminds us that it is a good idea to keep a spare set of keys for your vehicle in your pocket when running a route since it is only a matter of time before you and your keys end up on opposite sides of a locked vehicle door. Fortunately for Randy he was able to squeeze through the rear, sliding window of his pickup truck in order to get back in and finish the route. If you forget your spare keys, then at the start of the route roll one window down far enough so that you can reach in and unlock the door from the outside if the need arises.

Don Varner, who conducts the Pocola, Oklahoma route reminds us to wear orange safety vests when conducting BBS routes. They make us more visible to passing drivers and therefore safer. And they have the added benefit of discouraging the curious and concerned from stopping to ask questions because the vests apparently make us appear less suspicious and more official. Inexpensive orange plastic or mesh vests can be found at most department or sporting goods stores. The BBS office also has a few that we can mail to you if requested. Supplies are short so they will be sent out on a first come, first served basis.

The last piece of advice for this issue was also prompted by Don Varner. Don suggests running BBS routes on a Sunday mornings if you wish to have less traffic noise interfering with your count. This is the same advice we give to those who write the BBS office with complaints of traffic noise along their routes. Commuter traffic and construction noise are often much reduced on weekend mornings, especially Sundays. So if excessive traffic noise is getting you down give this a try.

Two individuals sent in notes regarding sights that would be a rare treat for most of us. Jennifer Adams observed a yellow-shafted and red-shafted flicker copulating at stop 50 along her Government Valley, Wyoming Route. While on the other side of the country J.M. Lynch observed Red-cockaded Woodpeckers feeding young in a cavity at stop 20 on the California, North Carolina BBS route. Mr. Lynch writes that although RCWO are known to reside in this area this nesting site was not previously known.

Non-avian wildlife sightings were many in 2004 and include black bears on Cathy Tighe's Hyder, AK route; J.M. Lynch's Milltail Creek, NC route; Mike Borysewicz's Sullivan Lake 2, WA route and Bill Willard's Mount Taylor, NM route where Bill turned to find a large black bear crossing the road immediately behind his parked car!

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Besides the thousands of you in the field, we would also like to thank Naoko Griffin, Heather Seebach and Alan Hedin for their outstanding help in the BBS office during the 2004 season.

*Good luck & good birding in 2005!*

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