

AFTERWORD

And so this work is completed at last. This distillation of half a century of observations, bird bandings (88,000), television tower monitoring for 50 years, doing breeding bird counts, compiling 174 Audubon Christmas Censuses (CBCs), is done. The tedious work of putting it all together in one place, rechecking all the details, checking records, proof reading, editing, reediting has taken almost two years. “The birds are quiet now,” the poet said. I too am quiet.

It’s an exhilarated feeling—being finished. But in the shadow of that emotion there is another sentiment. It is a concern, an anxiety. How will the public receive this? The professional ornithologists, the scientific researchers, the university elite professors—will they look on this with disdain. Modern scientific treatises do not express emotion, much less poetry. And the lay person who has either no particular or only marginal interest in birds, how will he or she react? Have I hopefully planted a seed of interest in the fascinating world of birds? The study of changing bird populations in a small area of Wisconsin over the last half century may only spark a “Who cares?”

And the interested birder. Have I offended anyone by omitting his significant report of a rarity or some unusual record? I apologize for any such omission.

There also comes with the anxieties another realization. Google on the internet tells me that a search for ‘Books about Birds’ turned up no less than 42,900,000 references. ‘Birds of the United States’ produced 12,500,000 entries. ‘Birds of Wisconsin’ whittled the number down to only 3,200,000. And now there will be 3,200,001.

Thus this book is like a tiny meteorite whistling through space unnoticed in the vast cosmos. And its inevitable destiny is to be swallowed up forever by some black hole.

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