
Society of Canadian
Bulletin of The Ornithologists

PICOIDES

Bulletin de la
du Canada
Société des Ornithologistes

ISSN 0836-060X

Picoides, April 1998
Volume 11, Number 1



Photo by Dorothy McFarlane.
S.C.O. President (Tony Diamond) in action – real bird work (no computer, no board room).

Society of Canadian Ornithologists Société des Ornithologistes du Canada

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is an exciting time in Canadian ornithology. In January 1998, Long Point Bird Observatory, long the leader among North American bird observatories, transformed itself into Bird Studies Canada. As a national organization for the promotion and implementation of national studies of bird populations, B.S.C. will be an important player on Canada's ornithological stage, and we in S.C.O. look forward to a productive relationship.

S.C.O. members played important parts in the metamorphosis of L.P.B.O. into B.S.C.. Past-President David Nettleship and several Council members, including myself, served as members of B.S.C.'s Advisory Board that worked with the L.P.B.O. Board for over two years to bring about its transformation, and former President Bruce Falls chaired the Advisory Board. So we as an organization can take pride in our role in bringing a new and very significant ornithological body into being. Throughout this process, we debated the roles of B.S.C. vis-a-vis S.C.O., and I would like to share with you some of my own thoughts on this.

Ornithological organizations in most countries have several separate roles. One important role is as a scientific body that has credibility in presenting general scientific knowledge of birds, and that promotes professional or semi-professional scientific research. The number of professionals and other serious researchers will always be smaller than the number of skilled and enthusiastic amateurs who participate in national or regional surveys that are designed, coordinated and analysed by a core professional staff. This is the role that B.S.C. has emerged to fill. Both S.C.O. and B.S.C. share a strong motivation to put their science to serve the conservation needs of birds; this was not always so in earlier history of ornithological organizations, but has now become a dominant theme in most countries. However, neither B.S.C. nor S.C.O. is in

the business of carrying out conservation projects; this is the role of others, including Canadian Nature Federation and World Wildlife Fund, which rely on scientific data and advice provided by organizations such as S.C.O. and B.S.C. to decide their conservation priorities. S.C.O.'s interest in conservation has taken a leap forward with recent establishment of a conservation committee. This is chaired by Keith Hobson, whose description of the Committee's mandate appears elsewhere in this issue of *Picoides*.

In the next few months your Council also will establish a Meetings Committee to reflect the increasing importance of our annual meetings in S.C.O.'s affairs and to help each year's organizers - rather than allowing overworked individuals to bear the additional work as was the case to date. Please look for Kathy Martin's update on what promises to be a very exciting meeting in Vancouver this year. Plans are afoot also for a joint Millennial Meeting with the British and American Ornithologists' Unions in St. John's in the year 2000; look for more on this in the next *Picoides*.

Editing the Proceedings of the Fredericton Conference has taken longer than I had hoped - I should not be surprised by this! - but I still plan to have it available at the August meeting in Vancouver.

In the last two years we have significantly increased S.C.O. activities. Our continued effectiveness as an organization will depend on enlarging our membership to reflect these changes. My final note is to challenge each of you to recruit two new members this year; this is not a difficult task for any individual, but collectively could triple the size and resources of the Society, and allow us to continue the vigorous expansion of activities begun so effectively under David Nettleship's leadership, which I resolve to continue during my two years at the Society's helm.

