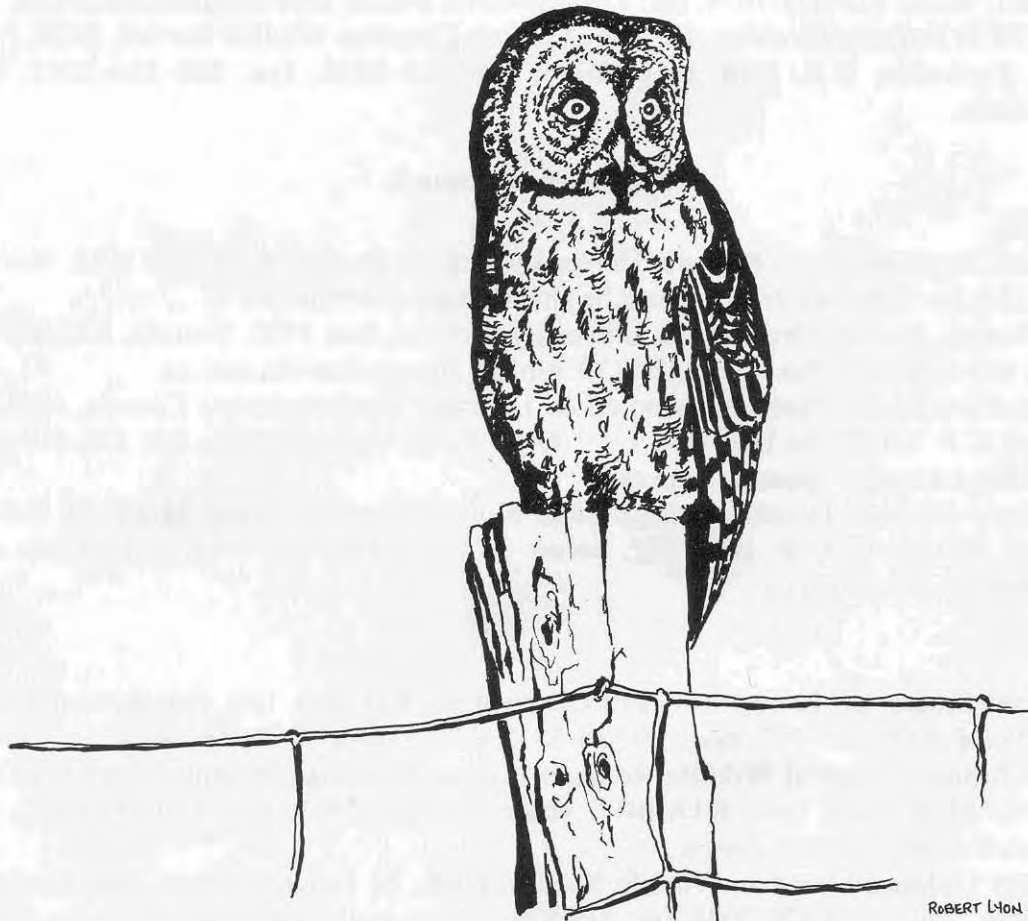

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ROBERT LYON 1996

Great Gray Owl, first confirmed in New Brunswick February 1996.
Drawing by Robert Lyon.

See also owl conference (under Announcements), in Winnipeg, centre for research on this species.

Society of Canadian Ornithologists Société des Ornithologistes du Canada

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A Word From The President

NEW PATHWAYS, NEW HORIZONS

To say the response to our Questionnaire inserted in the last issue of *Picoides* (November 1995), on the proposed Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO) Annual Meeting, was large and varied is an understatement. It displayed a vibrant and interested membership, overflowing with ideas and suggestions for change or new directions. Although reactions varied from the identification of "problems of distance and travel costs to attend a regular annual meeting" to the "need for a journal more than a meeting" and everything in between including the desire to receive more for their money, two things stood out. First, there emerged a unanimous desire to communicate via a stand-alone or joint gathering dealing with Canadian bird issues both as avian biologists and from a strong conservation biology perspective. And second, a strong expression for the establishment of a mechanism to disperse the findings of scientific research and conservation needs of birds in Canada through a communication outlet such as a journal. The responses also varied in form. Some questionnaire sheets arrived with check-marks alone, many had additional marginal comments, often carried over to the backside of the sheet, and some were supplemented with attached letters outlining views in detail. Collectively, they presented an overwhelming endorsement identifying new pathways for the Society to follow and new horizons to aim towards. Spring is well on its way, a useful reminder of a new beginning and opportunities for tackling the stimulating and exciting challenges ahead. The SCO membership is not short on ideas!

Canada is vast, with a narrow ribbon of people extending from the Atlantic to the

Pacific, mostly along its southern border. This dispersed distribution pattern prompted suggestions of where to hold annual meetings. Views on this important issue separated clearly into two positions: (1) select a site centrally-located as to people distribution (i.e., Ontario or Quebec) which most members can reach with relative ease and at low cost (except for the extremities: British Columbia and Newfoundland), or (2) rotate the meeting location across the country (eastern, central, or western regions) allowing all members to attend an annual meeting at least once every three years. Both views have considerable merit, and further deliberations and inputs are required by SCO members, councillors and officers. Other possibilities also come to mind: for example, meetings might alternate between centre vs. eastern or western regions, resulting in east or west meetings every 4th year and central ones every other year? Also, nothing prevents us from seeking invitations from parties anywhere in Canada interested in hosting a SCO annual meeting. Whatever the final outcome, we are on our way to more direct communication and a forum for the transfer and exchange of information important to birds and their habitats in Canada.

The call for platforms to disseminate information on birds in Canada is fundamental to SCO's existence. The challenge is clear: organize annual meetings around "special themes" deemed significant to Canadian birds by the membership as a whole, including academics, university and government scientists, other professional and serious amateur ornithologists, students, and land-use managers and decision-makers. This will allow important avian subjects and

