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Photo by Editor

Double-crested Cormorant colony, near Baddeck, Nova Scotia, 1963.
(Common and colonial-nesting species get studied; scarce and solitary-nesting birds don't:
see Editorial and S.C.O. Column inside.)

EDITORIAL

In a feature article in this issue, Paul James shows that published research on birds in Canada covers the different groups very unevenly. Waterfowl and raptors receive more - and songbirds less - attention than their relative numbers, diversity, and vulnerability, suggest as appropriate. Waterfowl, as game birds, are supported by a small but vocal and well-funded lobby. And waterfowl and raptors are large, visible, and exciting birds of which study is often easy - and easily funded. Songbirds are even more familiar, seen in gardens and parks, and advertising themselves by loud songs and often by bright colours. Yet study of these birds has lagged, and I suggest that this is because funding agencies - and

universities - placed too much emphasis on mechanisms of study rather than focusing on needs for information.

Basic information, including breeding, foraging and other behaviour, is prerequisite to management of species and communities, and to design of further studies, and such information is lacking or inadequate for many songbirds. The focus of funding agencies and university graduate schools is on testing hypotheses statistically through use of large samples, with the result that most work is on common or colonial species whose biology is already well-known. Descriptive studies of solitary or secretive birds often involve few observations acquired over

long periods in the field, but funding for such studies is scarce and their payoff in theses is uncertain. Unless such birds have been designated as "endangered" or "threatened", classifications that should be based on an existing body of information, they are unlikely to be studied, and opportunities for remedial action before a crisis develops are lost.

How can we ensure that basic descriptive studies of little-known species receive timely attention?

The Editor

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S.C.O. COLUMN: ORNITHOLOGY IN CANADA - RECENT TRENDS IN PUBLICATIONS AND FUTURE NEEDS.

Ornithology in Canada has a long and distinguished history (Cooke 1981; Ouellet 1988), although the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO) was organized little over ten years ago. The SCO soon will be preparing a National Plan for Ornithology to help set research priorities for the future. To assist this process, we present here an analysis of Canadian ornithological publications in 1970-1991.

Methods. We searched the Canadian portion of the Zoological Record (Aves) from 1970 through 1991 for publications on Canadian birds. The worldwide number of avian publications for these years was also noted. Canadian publications were sorted among the 18 avian orders that occur in Canada (Godfrey 1986) to indicate the relative effort devoted to them. As the number of species per order varied, this was expressed as a proportion of total bird species in Canada and compared with the number of publications expressed as a proportion of the total produced. This showed whether an order had received significantly more or less research effort that expected from the

number of species in it, assuming that no order was more or less 'important' than another. Spearman rank correlations were used to test whether the number of papers per order had changed over the 22-year period. All this assumes that publication effort is a reasonable measure of research effort and expenditures per order.

Results. In 1970-1991 2.9% of the global output of ornithological literature was Canadian (Table 1). This was about equal to that of Central and South America combined (James 1987). Although in 1983 the United States produced 14.6% of the global output compared with Canada's 2.7%, Canada produced more per capita, and Canada's relative contribution increased significantly over the 22-year period (Table 1; $r=0.610$, $p,0.01$).

The breakdown by order of avian publications (Table 2) showed that Anseriformes, Charadriiformes, and Passeriformes provided 69% of Canadian publication output, and these taxa make up 71% of the Canadian avifauna. Procellariiformes, Cuculiformes, Apodiformes, Piciformes, and

