

# **INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE RARE BIRD FORM**

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN DOCUMENTING RARE BIRDS**

- 1. Your written description on the back of the Rare Bird Form is given considerable weight by authorities and is considered to be worth more than all of the information that you provide on the front of the Form. Keep in mind that listing one's birding credentials is no substitute for a good clear identifying description of a rare species. Reviewing authorities should not be put in the position of having to accept a birder's statement of their birding experience, reputation, etc., as a substitute for a clear description of the species being reported on.**
- 2. IF POSSIBLE, PHOTOGRAPH THE BIRD !!! If a good photograph is not possible, reviewing authorities need a thorough description of the rare species.**
- 3. In the field or at your feeder, keep a notebook handy to jot down ID details as you see them. By taking notes as you see birds, you're less likely to forget or miss features that may aid in identification. Glancing at your field guide may cloud your judgement or suggest features of the bird that you haven't yet seen. The bird may be there for only a minute, but you'll always have your field guide. Remember, notes first, field guide later.**
- 4. As soon as possible, write up a complete description of the bird. Written descriptions should include complete details about the bird's size, shape and posture, and color and plumage. A good procedure to follow is to begin with your first impressions of the bird. Estimate the bird's size by using other birds or objects nearby as reference points. Describe the bird's shape and posture and note how the bird's wings, legs, bill, or other body parts measure proportionately to the rest of the bird's body. Look for conspicuous feathers such as a crest, etc. Then, starting at the bird's head, note head, eye, and beak size/shape and color/color pattern, body plumage color/pattern, leg color, and look for the presence of field marks such as wing-bars, eye-rings, and patterns such as spots, and barring (marks that run from side-to-side) and streaking (marks that run length-wise) patterns in the plumage. Sketching the bird (or part of the bird) can be helpful and**

it doesn't have to be great art. **Complete your written description of the bird by telling how you eliminated similar species from consideration.**

**5. The species shown on the 2011 CBC Tally Sheet are most of the species seen on previous Matanuska Valley CBC's. All of those species on the Tally Sheet marked with an asterisk (\*) require a Rare Bird Form, as does any species you see that is not listed. The best rule of thumb to follow is that, if it's a species that we rarely see, or if it's not a regular in the Valley during the winter, then you should provide details on a Rare Bird Form.**