

BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDS OF THE CAROLINAS

Eloise F. Potter, James F. Parnell, and Robert P. Teulings. 1980. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 337 color photos, 1 drawing. 408 p. Index. Hardcover \$15.

First I should state that the only reason I am reviewing this book is an obvious one. I am one of the few ornithologists in the Carolinas who was not personally involved in the book. The acknowledgment section of *Birds of the Carolinas* reads like a "who's who" of bird students and nature photographers of the region. The text and photos reflect the interest and spirit of all the amateurs and professionals who donated both excellent color photographs and time to this book. In keeping with the overall spirit behind this unique book, the authors assigned a significant percentage of the royalties to Carolina Bird Club.

The book serves some functions not immediately apparent to readers who have not had a long involvement in the study of local birds. It is up-to-date, presents a considerable amount of otherwise unavailable information, and represents an excellent, precise summary of all the field knowledge accumulated since the 1942 edition of *Birds of North Carolina* and the 1949 *South Carolina Bird Life*. Therefore, it will serve as a solid building block for future, more technical books on the ornithology of the two states.

It probably should be stated that the authors envisioned this text as a popular coffee-table book that would supplement current field guides. Their attention to accuracy and completeness makes it far more than that. The care, energy, and meticulous attention to detail that the authors put into *Birds of the Carolinas* is obvious and places it many steps above the countless commercial bird books that are appearing on the growing market.

The book, of course, speaks for itself and most readers of the *Chat* already own a copy, so a review *per se* may not seem warranted. However, I noted in this essentially error-free book a few problems the authors and publisher should keep in mind when the time comes for revisions. The bird in the adult Peregrine Falcon photo appears to be a bit on the immature side. This and several other weak pictures should be replaced. The Western Sandpiper appears to be in breeding plumage rather than nonbreeding. Absence of a Pine Warbler photo is most unfortunate. The endpaper map showing state and national parks and forests is helpful, but another map showing counties, geographic provinces, and mountain ranges would be especially useful to readers who are not well versed in the geography of the Carolinas.

Finally I should state that a major strength of this book lies in the authors' frequent admission of incomplete knowledge. Sometimes the problems are clearly defined, as in the Pine Siskin account. More often they are merely suggested by hedge words: possibly, probably, at least, is said to be, is not known to be. Particularly where breeding ranges are concerned, we have our work cut out for us.—JOHN B. FUNDERBURG, Director, North Carolina State Museum, P.O. Box 27647, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL NORTH AMERICA

Roger Tory Peterson. 1980. Fourth edition. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 384 p. 136 color plates, 390 range maps. Index. Hard cover, \$15.00; paperback, \$9.95.

This guide has been long awaited by birders, many of whom must have wondered why it took 33 long years for the fourth edition of Peterson's "bible" to hit the press. This edition represents a completely new format for the "bible," it being arranged along the lines of *Birds of North America* (Robbins et al., Golden Press, 1966). That is, the text for

each species is located opposite the corresponding illustrations of the species, with range maps included (in the back of the Peterson book). Although all of the illustrations are new, the textual material is largely the same as in the third edition, with some reduction necessary in order to print an average of four or five species accounts on a page. The accounts present several statements on field identification; a few phrases on similar species; and brief mention of the voice, range, and habitat. In general, this reduction in text is most severe in the Similar Species section, the part of the account to which one most often turns when a puzzling bird is seen. Thus, the new format necessitated a somewhat weaker text than was present in the third edition.

At first glance the 136 plates seem to be a great improvement over the 60 plates in the previous edition. All but a few plates are in color. With an average of just four or five species portrayed on a plate, Peterson has given himself more space for illustrations of females, immatures, and birds in flight. Although most of the plates are good to excellent, it is readily apparent that Peterson has somehow failed to capture the "jizz" or "gestalt" of many groups of birds, and I found the quality of each single bird portrait somewhat inferior to those in the 1947 edition. The least satisfactory illustrations are the ducks on the water; the bodies are too long and slender. The shearwaters and petrels are illustrated with wings bent back at the wrist, and they thus resemble gulls more than they do shearwaters. The flycatcher and sparrow illustrations also lack "jizz," the eye being painted in the center of the head and the crown being too rounded on many species. The Black-capped Petrel illustration is tucked near the crease of the book; yet the Cahow, found only in Bermuda, is portrayed both from above and below! Peterson has included plates on essentially all of the accidental species ever recorded in the East (except for Western species portrayed in his other field guides); however, I question the need for several of these plates, particularly the exotic species on p. 303. The highlights of the plates are the owls, even with only heads shown for most of the species, and the accidentals (especially the pelagic birds). There is no text for most of the accidental species, only a list of states where each has been recorded—a practice I dislike, as it introduces errors into the book (a Zone-tailed Hawk in North Carolina?) and becomes quickly out-of-date. I rate the overall quality of the plates equal to or slightly superior to those in Robbins (because of the inclusion of the accidentals), though the latter guide treats the entire continent and Peterson only the eastern half.

The third major feature of the book is the range maps, all grouped at the back of the book as in Conant's *A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America*. The pink, blue, and purple colors on the maps indicate the breeding range, wintering range, and range of permanent occurrence, respectively. Unlike the maps in the Robbins guide, isochronal lines and lines representing migration routes are not presented. Instead, Peterson and his wife (who prepared the maps) give capsule comments on the maps, such as "migrant mainly through plains," "declining in s. part of range," and "winters mainly south of U.S." I find these comments very informative, and they eliminate clutter from the maps that the migration lines in Robbins produce. The maps are also considerably larger and more detailed than in Robbins, and state boundaries are presented on most of them. At first glance the state lines are very helpful, but after careful scrutiny of the maps, I have come to a sad conclusion. Detailed knowledge of bird distribution in the United States and Canada has not advanced to the point it has in Europe, and there is a definite need for a distribution atlas project for North America, whereby persons interested in range maps for selected species can contact the agency in charge for these maps, rather than spending countless hours in libraries researching the maps for themselves. In other words, distributional data are still so incomplete in some sections of the continent that maps with state boundaries are not really proper. I have major complaints about the distributions shown for a number of species in the Carolinas. Several dozen species of waterbirds winter inland in the Carolinas, but the maps show many of them wintering

only coastally or only in the coastal plain (e.g. ducks, gulls, and shorebirds). Even though most of the maps are quite up-to-date (such as the *Empidonax* flycatchers and Mississippi Kite), others are 30 or 40 years out-of-date (such as Barn and Cliff swallows, Bewick's Wren, and Cerulean Warbler). I am somewhat disappointed with the maps for approximately 50 species found in the Carolinas, but only for 15 or so do I really gag—Horned Grebe, both gallinules, White Ibis, Killdeer, Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Western Kingbird, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Fish Crow, Bewick's Wren, Solitary Vireo, Cerulean Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird, "Baltimore" Oriole, Bachman's Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow.

The guide features several other changes from the third edition. I am pleased that the waterbirds are grouped together in the front half, thanks to the removal of the hawks and gallinaceous birds from between the ducks and rails (where they occur on the checklist) and the subsequent placement of them in the guide next to the owls. Peterson has changed the common names of several species (such as American Crow and Sedge Wren), and he has included a chapter entitled "How to Identify Birds," complete with black-and-white sketches.

All-in-all the new guide is well worth the money and is a visual delight. Birders who already have the Robbins guide and the old Peterson guide can live without the new Peterson, but I still recommend this book primarily because of the inclusion of accidental birds such as pelagic species and parrots. The range maps are an improvement over those in Robbins and are a great advancement over the written ranges in the third edition, but they leave me wishing for a continent-wide range-mapping project that would satisfy sticklers for accurate maps, like me!—HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A KANGAROO BIRD?

Barbara Brenner. 1980. Coward, McCann and Geohegan, Inc., New York. Two-color illustrations by Irene Brady. 48 p. Index. Hardcover, \$7.95.

Written for young readers 7 to 10 years of age, this new book reminds me of *Birds Do the Strangest Things*, which my children thoroughly enjoyed some 15 to 20 years ago. Each of the 12 chapters is titled with a question: How Does the Oilbird See in the Dark? How Crazy Is a Cuckoo? Can a Bird Use Tools? Why Are Vultures Bald? The answers to the questions tell a great deal about bird behavior. Although Ms. Brenner missed a good opportunity to point out similarities between Oilbirds and cave-dwelling bats as well as those between Oxpeckers and Cattle Egrets, the book generally does a good job of relating the birds of faraway places to those of North America. The vocabulary of this book may cause problems for some young readers, but unfamiliar words will undoubtedly arouse the curiosity of many others.—EFP

WELCOME THE BIRDS TO YOUR HOME

Jane and Will Curtis. 1980. The Stephen Greene Press, Battleboro, Vermont. Many black-and-white drawings by John Sill. 154 p. Price N.A.

The jacket blurb admits that this is "not a scientific book of ornithology." It is a "folksy" and somewhat trite story of the family who move from the city to the country with the usual problems. Their interest in birds was aroused one morning when they heard a Red-winged Blackbird. From that start, they obtained field guides, built feeders, studied migration, observed nesting, and designed plantings to attract birds. Unlike many others, they did not start with a feeder; they began by protecting and developing habitat. As they explore each facet of bird study, the authors include much information already available in print, but presented here attractively for the beginner. Each chapter is headed by a drawing of one familiar species, and there are dozens of small drawings to illustrate the authors' points. These pictures—by John Sill of Franklin, N.C.—are excellent.—LCF

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA

Graham Pizzey. 1980. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 88 plates (mostly in color) by Roy Doyle. 460 p. Indexed by scientific and English names. Hardcover, \$27.50.

If you have ever dreamed of birding in Australia, this book will make you call your travel agent. Pizzey's guide treats 726 species, many of which have two or more well-marked races that can be recognized in the field. The 1300-plus bird illustrations are printed in a section near the middle of the book, and the range maps (breeding range only) are at the back. Endpapers offer a large map of Australia. Each species account is numbered to permit easy coordination of text with maps and bird illustrations. Numbers in the indexes refer not to pages but to species and plates. The text is well organized and generally easy to follow in spite of the telegraphic style and numerous abbreviations. Many of the birds are drawn in profile with only one leg visible, and several plates are crowded with up to 25 drawings per page. Some of the illustrations are far more appealing than others, giving the impression that the artist matured greatly while the work was in progress. However, all drawings appear to be adequate for their intended purpose. Among the 25 or so familiar species Carolinians may find in Australia are the Cattle Egret, Sanderling, Glossy Ibis, Barn Owl, and Barn Swallow. But who will look for them in the land of Emus, the Australian Cassowary, kookaburras, and bowerbirds?—EFP

CBC ROUNDTABLE

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of the work is to provide a data base to aid forest managers in assessing effects of land management decisions on birds. The range maps cover Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The text provides concise information on status, primary habitats, key habitat requirements, reproduction, and food habits for each of the 234 avian species included in the work.

"Decline and disappearance of the Dusky Seaside Sparrow from Merritt Island, Florida" by PAUL W. SYKES JR. (*American Birds* 34:728-737, September 1980) features Paul's remarkable color photo of an adult male singing on territory.

With Their Ears Pricked Forward—Tales of Mules I've Known by JOSHUA A. LEE was released in October 1980 (John F. Blair, Publisher, 1406 Plaza Drive S.W., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103. 138 p. \$8.95). What will this bird-watching plant geneticist do next?

Atlas of North American Freshwater Fishes, an 850-page looseleaf publication treating 777 recognized species, was released by the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History in October 1980. Coordinator of the project was DAVID S. LEE. Each species account includes an illustration of the fish, a range map, and text giving type locality, systematics, distribution and habitat, adult size, and biology. For further information write Fish Atlas, North Carolina State Museum, P.O. Box 27647, Raleigh, N.C. 27611. Lee is also author of "The Pocket Gopher Mound Project," which appeared in the June 1980 issue of *Natural History*.

The Age of Birds by ALAN FEDUCCIA, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, traces the evolution of birds from their emergence in the Age of Reptiles to the present. A review is planned for a future issue of *Chat*.