

BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA/STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Kimball Garrett and John Dunn. 1981. Los Angeles Audubon Society, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046. Line drawings by Lee Jones. Index. 408 p. Hardcover, \$18.95 plus \$1.25 for postage and handling.

This is an attractive and informative book—a *must* for any bird student who lives in southern California, visits or plans to visit there, or simply wants to be well informed about the bird life of the West Coast. Do not be misled by Herbert Clarke's gorgeous jacket photo of a Western Bluebird or by Lee Jones's generally excellent line drawings scattered through the text: *Birds of Southern California* was written for people who take their bird-watching seriously. (Yes, that's our Lee Jones, formerly of Charlotte and North Carolina State University.)

A careful reading of the front matter is essential to proper interpretation of the bar graphs, species accounts, and range maps for breeding birds. The introduction includes a long list of abbreviations used in the text and a helpful discussion of the geographical scope of the work. A section on taxonomy and nomenclature explains the authors' choice of common names and species order. (Basically, Garrett and Dunn rejected the out-of-date 1957 A.O.U. *Check-list* and anticipated, as best they could, the forthcoming edition, which probably will not be available before 1983.) Other sections treat seasonal bird movements, population trends, and districts and habitats. The four districts (desert, coastal, Colorado River, and Salton Sea) are illustrated on endpaper maps of southern California as well as on aerial photographs of the region. Bar graphs offer a quick impression of relative abundance of each species throughout the year in the various districts and habitats. In some cases (e.g. American White Pelican) each district has a separate bar.

Species accounts number more than 500 and vary in length from a few lines to a page or more. The boldface opening paragraph is a brief, telegraphic statement of seasonal status and distribution. Subsequent paragraphs, written in complete sentences, give full details including specific dates and places for rare occurrences. The basic species list is followed by introduced and exotic species, a supplemental list (species that do not yet meet the criteria for acceptance on the main list), and additional species recorded from northern California.

The breeding range maps at the back of the book are very helpful, but I wish the illustrator had put the hatching lines farther apart. Even with reading glasses, I have difficulty determining the directions of slope on maps treating two races or two species. (For easy reference, I have colored one set of lines in each dual-purpose map.)

Birds of Southern California offers authoritative treatment of local seasonal distribution, migration dates, nesting ranges, habitat relationships, and population trends. With this book in hand, the Carolinian who visits southern California should return home not only with many new species on his life list but also with an understanding of habitats quite different from those of the Eastern United States.

Los Angeles Audubon Society is to be congratulated for publishing an outstanding book that defies the conventional wisdom of trade and university presses, which is that state and regional bird books will not sell unless they have lots of color pictures and instructions for identifying birds. In this day of excellent and inexpensive bird guides, authors of state and regional works should be able to omit sections on field identification without significant loss of sales. Absence of color plates is another matter. Although this will certainly discourage some prospective buyers, the strong text and wide interest in the bird life of southern California should make the small first printing of the Garrett and Dunn book sell out quickly.—EFP