

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: Harry LeGrand observed one in a flock of Field Sparrows at Buxton on 31 December (on the Cape Hatteras CBC).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW: A first record for Carteret County, N.C., was one seen by Skip Prange at his feeder on Harkers Island from 26 February to 22 March. He lives adjacent to a shrubby marsh that is a good habitat for the species. Alan Avakian noted another on 19 December on the Clemson CBC near Townville, S.C., the only place in the Carolinas (Anderson County and vicinity) where Lincoln's has been consistently recorded in winter.

SNOW BUNTING: Nine seen by Bob Lewis, Harry LeGrand, and Mike Tove on 1 January between Salvo and Avon, N.C., was the only report for the winter.

BOOK REVIEW

FINDING BIRDS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA: A SMITHSONIAN NATURE GUIDE.

Claudia Wilds. 1982. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. Illus. Appendices. Index. 215 p. Softbound, \$10.95.

Guides to bird finding range from a few sheets of paper stapled together to hardbound books, but most tend to be softbound books that sell for about \$10 or less. They may be very general (e.g. the two-volume Pettingill work) or very localized (e.g. the Lane and Tveten Texas coast guide). The latter, with its habitat photographs, bar graphs, and detailed maps, is a well-written but strictly utilitarian book that has helped to make the Texas Gulf Coast a mecca for bird watchers. Recently we have seen the publication of several statewide bird-finding guides, notably Bierly's book for Tennessee (see Chat 44:119). Their greater geographic coverage makes the bar graphs impractical, and these books tend to emphasize habitat variations rather than avian specialties. Most of these books have been a labor of love accomplished by author/publishers with a minimum of professional advice on design and layout. The result has been a series of very helpful books marred by maps with legends too small for easy reading even under the best of conditions.

Now we have a new guide to the area within easy driving distance of Washington, D.C., which includes all or parts of six states. Of the bird-finding books I have examined, this is by far the most attractive in format and, as far as I can tell without field-testing it, the best illustrated and best written. The large-scale maps, prepared by Kai Yee, and the large-size, well-spaced type can be easily read in a moving car. The spacious design by Alan Carter and drawings by Doreen Curtin are pleasing to the eye. These "little things" *do* make a difference!

CBC members who attended the meeting at Nags Head in January 1983 no doubt recall how skillfully Miss Wilds explained some very difficult problems in shorebird identification—and to mention her directions for finding the Lesser Black-backed Gull at Wanchese. She is a "good 'splainer," as one child used to say about a favorite teacher.

Although the author acknowledges her debt to Carl W. Carlson's series of articles, published in the 1960s, on bird finding in the D.C. area as well as the contributions of numerous other dedicated bird students, the book as a whole is uniquely her own. If you doubt this, just read her expression of appreciation to the typist.

The guide primarily covers the District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, and northern Virginia; however, a few places in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, southeastern Virginia, and North Carolina are mentioned briefly. An introductory section deals with geography, climate, and species to look for. The annotated species list gives relative abundance for birds found regularly within the area covered, season of occurrence, and places to look for them. Rarities and accidentals are listed separately without notations. Regional headings are mostly self-explanatory: Washington and the Suburbs; The Piedmont; Ridges, Valleys, and the Allegheny Plateau; The Western Shore (of Chesapeake Bay); The Eastern Shore; and South of Chesapeake Bay (southside Virginia and the North Carolina Outer Banks). A concluding section provides information on pelagic trips, hawk watching, and owling. Appendices list natural history and ornithological societies, useful publications (including maps), and cooperative birding activities.

The usual route directions, habitat descriptions, and lists of expected birds are enhanced by the author's common-sense advice to bring along plenty of food and drink, to avoid certain places when temperatures are too high or winds are unfavorable, and to heed "No Parking" and "No Trespassing" signs. The comments on each site are brief and straightforward, but they are presented in very readable complete sentences, often with a subtle touch of humor. The emphasis is on having a pleasant trip rather than adding a fantastic number of birds to your life list. My impression is that Miss Wilds wrote this book for a wide audience of bird watchers with the same care and enthusiasm she would use in giving directions to a very special friend.—EFP