

and mountains.

HENSLow'S SPARROW: Perhaps on the wintering grounds were two seen within 3 feet of the observers (Dick Repasky, Steve Klause) at Scotland Lake in Sandhills Game Land, N.C., on 2 April.

LE CONTE'S SPARROW: Very rare for North Carolina were migrants seen by Wayne Irvin at Dorothea Dix Farm in Raleigh on 9 and 10 April and by Douglas McNair and many Carolina Bird Club members at Cullowhee on 15 May.

SEASIDE SPARROW: At least 150 were seen flying in front of the Cedar Island fire on 30 May by Wayne Irvin and John Fussell.

BACHMAN'S SPARROW: Very rare was one seen on the Chapel Hill SBC on 1 May by Andy Towle and Tony Shrimpton.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW: A bird at Skip Prange's feeder in Harkers Island, N.C., during the winter remained until 26 April.

BOOK REVIEW

Seabirds—An Identification Guide

Peter Harrison. 1983. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 448 p. \$29.95.

This is an excellent book. It is a little large for standard field use as an identification guide, but nevertheless well worth carrying if one plans to spend any time observing birds at sea. The text covers 312 species of birds and is well illustrated. The publishers note that there are over 1600 individual color portraits. Thus, for most species, different sexes, ages, races, and other forms of plumage variation are well depicted. Additionally, 31 black-and-white plates illustrate plumage stages of single species or species easily confused. Plate 51, for example, has 11 illustrations of the dorsal and ventral plumage development in male and female Great Frigatebirds. The breeding and marine distributions of all seabirds have been mapped, and this certainly represents the best attempt to date to illustrate the known distribution of marine birds. The bibliography is up to date (the most recent citations are 1981) and relevant. Seaducks are covered only briefly in three pages at the end of the book.

The illustrations are of special interest. Harrison has personal field experience with all but 30 of the species discussed. It is unlikely that any other person has seen living examples of this many seabirds. A quick glance at nearly any of the 88 color plates should humble anyone who thinks he has mastered seabird identification. I have long wondered how people unfamiliar with the subtle differences in immature jaegers, for example, could hope to identify them with the simplistic illustrations in most field guides. The truth is that without considerable prior experience they could not. With Harrison's book in hand, one still would have difficulty in identifying all but the most typically plumaged birds, but at least one would be aware of the complexity of the problem. With the nomadic nature of many seabirds, and the limited knowledge of seasonal and geographic distributions of even North Atlantic species, the reader is quickly overwhelmed by plate after plate of cryptically plumaged birds that could conceivably occur in one area. Indeed many of the differences between plumages or races of single species are more pronounced than between some species. I have observed people on seabird excursions off the North Carolina coast happily

tallying this and that, not realizing that they probably do not have the knowledge to separate a Laughing Gull from a Franklin's Gull, yet carefully comparing all the face patterns of black-and-white shearwaters thinking that what they see is definitely diagnostic because their field guide shows it that way. Conservatively marked seabirds are a challenge, and it is common to find the sight identifications of very experienced students of offshore bird watching (me included) proven wrong time after time once the bird is collected. This applies to common everyday species, not just rarities. Harrison's artful capture of Dovekies, as a blur of wings supporting a black-and-white blob, expresses well both the spirit of seabirds and the agonies of seabird watching.

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of the book is its use of behavioral traits in field identification. Although this type of information has been used in a limited sense to recognize species of land birds (e.g. tail wagging) it has not been covered in field guides for seabirds. Because voice is normally not a useful or practical way to recognize marine birds and judging size or distance is difficult, any additional advantage the observer can obtain is welcomed. Although the field marks that separate Black-capped Petrels, Greater Shearwaters, and Cory's Shearwaters may be adequate under good light and prolonged, close-range views, the normal flight patterns are just as diagnostic and recognizable from greater distances. For some species, such as our storm-petrels, the behavioral characteristics are a more valuable identification tool than field marks.

The hunger for knowledge on seabirds must be considerable. I note, for example, one of my, to date, unpublished findings was picked up at a talk I gave on seabirds, and included and illustrated in the book. The information in question was credited to the person in the audience who passed it on. This certainly was no fault of the author, and the intermediate party was, of course, simply relaying his enthusiasm for seabirds. Similar experiences have happened to me even in journals (although the events were less innocently explained). Still, it is refreshing to participate in a field of study where our ignorance is so vast, interest so high, and almost every accurate observation a real contribution to our knowledge. Imagine what could be learned on a several day's voyage off Madagascar or the Juan Fernandez Islands. Such thoughts have apparently spawned the recent excitement in studying birds at sea. This book is timely, useful, and more carefully prepared than Tuck and Heinzel's 1978 work, *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* (see *Chat* 44:53-54), the only other similar text on the subject.

Book reviews somehow seem lacking if they do not contain a list of negative points intended to promote the prestige of the reviewer at the expense of the reviewee. As a person thoroughly immersed in seabird research, I must confess that I can find little fault with the overall intent and execution of this book as far as seabirds are concerned. The book, to me, has only two annoyances, both of which are minor when compared to its accomplishments. First, the text accompanying the plates and the species accounts is well endowed with abbreviations (NAO, AR, FHJ, DM, SS, and so forth). I question whether this saves enough space in a book of 400+ pages to be worth the effort of remembering what the abbreviations stand for, or looking them up on a rolling ship, while holding binoculars. Second is a preponderance of British names (Arctic Skua, Little Auk, Brunnich's Guillemot, Maderian Storm-Petrel, Great Northern Diver). I thought we just went through all those recent name changes and synonymized the English names on both continents!

It is a good book. If you are interested in seabirds at all and are going to limit yourself to one book, this is it.—DAVID S. LEE