

Book Review: *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Tennessee*

C. P. Nicholson. 1997. University of Tennessee Press. 426 pp. \$45.00 U.S. (hard cover).

This book is the latest in a series of first class state breeding bird atlas publications that have come off the presses in recent years. It is similar in format and quality to products from Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, New York, and Vermont.

Species accounts and maps showing confirmed, probable, and possible nesting distributions, based on field work from 1986-1991, are presented for each of the 170 confirmed breeding species in Tennessee. Like most states, Tennessee used 1/6 of a 7.5 minute topographic map for the survey block.

The accounts give detailed reviews of nesting distribution, status, and population trends within the state, as well as a summary of breeding biology. One criticism of Atlas projects has been the absence of abundance information, a parameter just as important as distribution. Tennessee anticipated this by conducting "miniroutes," an abbreviated version of the U.S. Breeding Bird Survey, in each Atlas survey block, and producing contour abundance maps for those species with sufficient data.

This book contains much more than abundance and distribution data. It gives detailed information on the history of Tennessee ornithology, the landscapes and habitats of the state, including historical changes, a review of historic changes in Tennessee birds, and conservation efforts on their behalf. An appendix summarizes all that is known about breeding chronology (nest with eggs, nests with young, and fledgling periods) of Tennessee birds, and the literature cited section has 26 pages of more than 650 references.

I had only a couple of small criticisms. Layouts for most Atlas books usually feature a one page species account with the distribution map on the opposite page. The species accounts and maps for the Tennessee Atlas ran continuously without page breaks. It was a little disconcerting to me, for example, that maps for the Cerulean Warbler were on the same page as the introduction to the Black-and-White Warbler account. Also the quality of the line drawings was inconsistent and ranged from poor to good.

The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Tennessee will become *the* reference for at least a generation for all serious amateur and professional ornithologists interested in Tennessee breeding bird biology. It will also be a standard for the rest of us in the Southeast with Atlas projects to strive for.

John Cely, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

John Cely was the state coordinator for the South Carolina Breeding Bird Atlas Project (1988-1995) and promises to have all atlas maps for the state finished by the end of this year. Ed.

