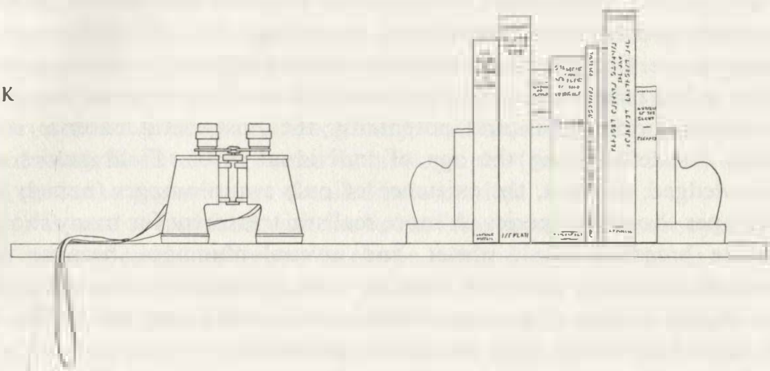
display a clear-cut "half-hooded" effect, with very dark ear-coverts and rear part of crown. However, some Laughings can show a suggestion of this pattern; and we might question to what extent the apparent dark areas on the head in the photograph are caused by shadows. But there can be no question about the *tail-pattern* in the photo, and this is the best mark of all. Laughing Gulls in juvenal and first-year plumages display a rather broad black subterminal band crossing all of the rectrices, as illustrated in various field guides. The tail-pattern of juvenile and first-winter Franklin's Gulls, which has rarely been depicted correctly, is quite different: the black subterminal band is slightly narrower than that of the Laughing, and it tapers in width from the center toward the outer edge, so that the *outermost rectrix* on each side is almost always *entirely white.* This may be seen clearly in the photograph.

The juvenile **Franklin's Gull** featured here was photographed by Scott Terrill on the California-Arizona border at the upper end of Lake Havasu on 25 August 1978.

Reviews

Edited by

ELAINE COOK



Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders — Anthony J. Prater, John H. Marchant, and Juhani Vuorinen. 1977. Tring, Hertfordshire: British Trust for Ornithology. *their* Field Guide 17. 168 pp., illus., 17 plates (1 color). £2.50.

Publisher's address:
British Trust for Ornithology
Beech Grove
Tring, Herts. HP23 5NR
England

One North American source:
Audubon House Bookstore
Los Angeles Audubon Society
7377 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90046
price $8.95 plus $1.00 shipping.

Of the literally hundreds of bird books published annually in the English language, most have no substantial effect upon field ornithology in North America. This slim volume seems destined to be an exception. Ten years from now, no doubt, a more sophisticated generation of shorebird-watchers will look back upon the publication of *Holarctic Waders* as the turning point.

The previous "field guides" by the British Trust for Ornithology, while excellent, have had little application on this side of the Atlantic. But the shorebirds (plovers, sandpipers and their allies, or "waders" in the British parlance) present a special case.

Many of the migratory shorebirds of the northern hemisphere have the proven capacity for long-distance vagrancy, so a guide covering only the known British or European species would have left room for uneasy thoughts of extralimital strays; the authors chose to forestall such doubts by providing thorough treatment of *all* the species breeding in the Holarctic faunal regon. Thus the book covers all shorebird species occurring in our area of interest (or likely to occur in the future) with the southern exceptions of Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa,* Double-striped Thick-knee *Burhinus bistriatus,* and Collared Plover *Charadrius collaris.*

Designed with banders foremost in mind, *Holarctic Waders* treats each species in telegraphic style, presenting only key "in-the-hand" details rather than the whole picture. Nothing is said about characteristics of silhouette, behavior, or voice; illustrations are few. The beginning birder who is still struggling to separate Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* from the dowitchers *Limnodromus* will find this book much more confusing than helpful. But the moderately experienced observer who is willing to spend time looking closely at individual birds will find *Holarctic Waders* a gold mine.

In the page or so allotted to each species, little space is devoted to specific characters, except for members of difficult groups; the focus is on identification below the species level. Distinctions between sexes are given when known, although in most shorebird species these are slight, consisting only of differences in average measurements. Geographic variation is discussed for species with described subspecies and for a few others which vary regionally in measurements or color.

The major emphasis (and, potentially, the most useful material) seems to be on criteria for determining the age of individual birds. Field guides to date have acknowledged, at most, the existence of only two plumages (namely breeding and winter) per shorebird species. A more realistic treatment for many shorebirds would illustrate breeding, adult winter, and juvenal plumages, because the latter are sometimes markedly different; even in more subtle cases, the aging criteria (often involving the pattern of coverts, tertials, and/or scapulars) will be discernable in the field for a surprisingly high percentage of species.

Birders who are unaccustomed to determining the exact pattern of individual coverts, etc., will be able to practice at home by studying the 32 black-and-white photographs in the book by J.B. and S. Bottomley. These photos — remarkable for their technical perfection, their razor-sharp detail — do not depict all species, or even a majority of species; they are useful mainly as examples of the *kinds* of criteria used in aging and identification.

Some practical applications of the material in *Holarctic Waders* will be immediately obvious. An observer's ability to age shorebirds in the field, far from being a mere 'parlor trick,' could be the key to significant discoveries. We know, for example, that the peak southward migration of juveniles does not coincide with that of adults in many shorebird species; but the exact details of timing remain to be clarified for most species in most areas. Here is a situation in which the local observer, by identifying birds to age group and keeping detailed notes, can add to our basic knowledge of migration. — *K.K.*

The Herons of the World — James Hancock and Hugh Elliott. 1978. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers. 304 pp., illus., maps. $65.00.

Publisher's address:
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
10 East 53rd Street
New York, New York 10022

The Herons of the World is a superb accounting of the world's sixty-one species of bitterns, egrets, and herons. Each species is illustrated in a full-page color painting and receives three or four pages of text.

The paintings, by Robert Gillmor and Peter Hayman, range from good to excellent. Some of Gillmor's work is truly spectacular, reaffirming his status as one of the world's leading bird portraitists.

The text for each species touches on distribution, migration or dispersal, habitat, general appearance, identification (albeit rather superficially), and behavior (mainly feeding and breeding). For many species, taxomonic notes are included. Evidently the authors are particularly interested in taxonomy and nomenclature: there are numerous lucid discussions of species relationships and of the tangled history of Latin names applied to some herons.

Obviously, some species of herons are much better-known than others. For poorly known species — e.g., Zigzag Heron *Zebrilus undulatus* — the text presents virtually all that is known of the bird. When dealing with well-known species, such as Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias,* Hancock and Elliott have admirably summarized a vast amount of available data. The extensive bibliography (circa 1000 titles) will help the interested reader to pursue more detailed information.

Although it is hard to find fault with the book, I was occasionally annoyed by the globe-trotting authors' casual references to exotic localities with no hint as to which continent these occupied; fortunately this practice does not extend to the range descriptions, which are clear and informative. Range maps are provided for only twenty-four of the sixty-one species, and the captions for some of these (which provide only the Latin specific names, not generic or English names) could cause some temporary confusion. Despite these minor shortcomings, this is an admirable addition to the growing library of semi-popular bird family monographs. — *E.C.*

Birds of Southeastern Michigan and Southwestern Ontario — Alice H. Kelley. 1978. Bloomfield Hills, Michigan: Cranbrook Institute of Science. *their* Bulletin 57. 99 pp., map. $2.50.

Publisher's address:
Cranbrook Institute of Science
500 Lone Pine Road
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013

This handy little book should prove valuable to birders visiting or living in the area of the title. Since the area happens to include the phenomenal migration stage of Point Pelee, Ontario, the book will be of interest to birders in other areas as well.

Each of the 338 species included receives one or two paragraphs of telescoped summaries of the bird's status in the area, habitats in which it occurs, migration dates and abundance in migration, and breeding records. There are no extensive directions to birdwatching areas.

There are a few minor problems with the book. First, it covers only the years 1945 to 1974; the only post-1974 records I found were the 1975 Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Virginia's Warbler *Vermivora virginiae.* With publication in 1978, one wishes that the cut-off date for records could have been set somewhat later. Second, there has evidently been no strenuous effort to evaluate all of the records included in the book. For example, the record of a Sprague's Pipit *Anthus spragueii* associating with a flock of Water Pipits *A. spinoletta* was undoubtedly incorrect. And thirdly, some species which are separable in the field are not separated in the book. While not splitting "Traill's Flycatcher" *Empidonax traillii and E. alnorum* is disappointing but not surprising, lumping the data for Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* and Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus* under "Dowitcher (sp.)" is less than illuminating.

All in all, *Birds of Southeastern Michigan and Southwestern Ontario* is competently assembled and should see quite a bit of use.

The Sulidae — J. Bryan Nelson. 1978. Oxford University Press for the University of Aberdeen. Aberdeen University Studies Series; number 154. 1012 pp., 539 tables and figures, 32 plates. $98.00.

Publisher's U.S. address:
Oxford University Press, Inc.
200 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10016

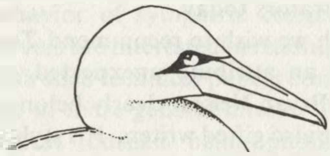
Within the last decade we have witnessed the appearance of a number of monographs of the sort devoted to one family (or two or three closely related families) of birds. Although these have varied somewhat in their quality and scope, one could characterise the genre by pointing out that these monographs usually are illustrated lavishly with color paintings of each species, and they usually cover families that contain a substantial number of species (e.g., 300+ parrots; 60+ herons; 120+ rails). Our first impressions of such a volume tend to be influenced by the quality of the color illustrations; our final judgment usually rests on the quality of the text; the most we can ask of the latter, when dealing with a large family, is that it must indicate concisely what is known and provide us with a good working bibliography so that we may pursue any further details desired.

The volume under review here stands as an exception to all of these generalizations. *The Sulidae* contains no color paintings, although it is abundantly illustrated with photographs (both color and black-and-white) and drawings. It covers a family which contains only nine species. It covers these nine species in such detail that it would not be an exaggeration to say that everything of importance known about gannets and boobies is included between these covers. And it does more than to simply compile and present what was already known — because a great deal of the included material is based upon the author's own exhaustive and scholarly research.

The book is divided into ten major sections: one for each species of sulid (the three gannets, North Atlantic *Sula* [*bassana*] *bassana,* African or Cape *S.* [*b.*] *capensis,* and Australasian *S.* [*b.*] *serrator,* here treated as comprising a superspecies; and the six boobies, "White" or Masked or Blue-faced *S. dactylatra,* Brown *S. leucogaster,* Blue-footed *S. nebouxii,* Peruvian *S. variegata,* Red-footed *S. sula,* and Abbott's *S.*

abbotti), plus a lengthy final section drawing comparisons among the species. Each species account is organized on a standard format under four subheadings: (1) nomenclature — external features — morphology — molt — and voice; (2) breeding distribution — numbers and other aspects of populations, (3) breeding ecology; and (4) breeding behavior. The longest species account (over 200 pages) is that for the North Atlantic Gannet, doubtless the most thoroughly studied sulid; the two shortest accounts are those covering the African and Australasian gannets, largely because their ecology and behavior are quite similar to those of the North Atlantic form and can be described in terms of simple comparisons.

The second most notable feature of *The Sulidae* (after its thoroughness) is its clarity. Facts are stated precisely and in logical sequence. Any unproven theories are clearly labelled as such. Tables and graphs and maps are well-designed and easy to read. Photographs are clearly captioned, and are usually positioned near the points in the text which they are intended to illustrate. The standardized format and the cross-referencing within the text make it possible to locate any desired fact rather quickly (although the index, seemingly overwhelmed by the immensity of the text to which it is appended, occasionally fails in this regard).



At this point, some of our readers may well respond: okay; here's a thousand-page bird book, the bulk of which is devoted to play-by-play descriptions of courtship activities and other minutiae — which will be of little interest to the average birder, who is unable to casually spend a hundred dollars on a new bird book anyway. What does this book have to offer to the audience to whom *Continental Birdlife* ostensibly is addressed?

A fair question. We realize that most of our readers will be unable or uninclined to invest in *The Sulidae*. Our recommendation is that the serious field observer should at least try to maneuver into the position of having access to a copy of this book; if you don't live near a university library, and if your public library won't purchase it, perhaps members of your local bird club could pool funds to obtain a communal copy. There are several aspects of the book's contents which would be of value to field birders or armchair naturalists:

The material relating to field identification is excellent; much of it is not duplicated in print anywhere else. Nelson discusses everything from the overall impressions created by silhouette, flight action, etc., down to the finest of details. Did you know that male and female Blue-footed Boobies can be distinguished by the apparent size of the pupil of the eye? Can you accurately judge the ages of the subadult Gannets that you see on pelagic trips? Were you aware of the odd geographic pattern of occurrence of the many different color morphs of the Red-footed Booby? Esoterica such as these may not be of universal interest, but most birders will appreciate the points offered to help separate the species: as witnessed by some of the arguments we have heard in Florida and at the Salton Sea, some members of the family pose real identification problems. A long session with this volume will do wonders for one's self-confidence on a trip to the Dry Tortugas (or any other tropical islands).

The observer interested in ornithogeography will be impressed by this book's treatment of the distribution of each species. Breeding distribution is given especially close attention; for each species, the site of *every* breeding colony — past or present, known or suspected — is mentioned and mapped (and many are illustrated in photographs). The total population at each is given in terms as specific as possible, and anything known of the history of the colony is discussed. Understandably, nonbreeding distribution cannot be treated in such exact terms; but the author has supplied tentative maps for each species, coded to indicate degrees of relative abundance over different expanses of ocean. The rather generalized nature of these maps, and the numerous blank spaces and question marks contained thereon, should spur observers to record all pelagic sightings of sulid species.

Special mention should be made of the excellent drawings by John Busby scattered through the text, which are provided both for decoration and to illustrate various display postures and other points not shown in available photographs. Artists in particular may want to study these closely: we daresay that Busby has the first really *original* approach to bird illustration that we have seen in some time. His style has in it just a touch of caricature, and with it he captures the 'personality' of gannets and boobies perfectly, succeeding far better than would the feather-by-feather approach employed by most bird illustrators today.

The final point on which we wish to recommend *The Sulidae* is that it is a very enjoyable book to *read* — an attribute unexpected, perhaps, in thousand-page ornithological tomes. Dr. J. Bryan Nelson clearly belongs among that distinguished company of scientists who are also gifted writers. His style is precise but informal, easy to read. Nelson's own keen interest in his subjects is continually coming to the surface: one can sense his excitement as he describes the crowded and busy scene at a gannetry, or his feeling of awe as he traces a species' complex adaptations to its environment.

Few persons will want to read this book cover-to-cover (although E.C. did so), but there are certain portions which we can mention as being of exceptional interest. We were fascinated by the entire account of Abbott's Booby, that strange sulid of the Indian Ocean. The unraveling of its past distribution reads like a good ornithological mystery story — although one is left with a final unresolved mystery, since Nelson chooses this section in which to quote Paul Slud's description of an unidentified (but somewhat Abbott's-like?) booby seen on Cocos Island in the Pacific, thousands of miles from any point where the occurrence of Abbott's has even been suspected. Another noteworthy section concerns the Peruvian Booby, its associated species of cormorants, pelicans and other seabirds, and their major food resource: the vast numbers of anchovies that exist in the cold waters off the west coast of South America. At intervals (roughly once every seven years) a countercurrent of warm water invades this area, with disastrous results for the populations of anchovies and of fish-eating birds. In the past, the populations of both always "bounced back" after these setbacks, but now the increasing pressure from commercial fisheries may complicate the picture. Nelson's account of the situation should be required reading for introductory courses in ecology. These, however, are merely two examples; shorter sections of equal fascination will be found throughout the book. Indeed, anyone with an interest in birds may open the book at random and find some intriguing point on practically any page.

Weighed against the overall value of the book, any minor faults that we might find in *The Sulidae* pale to insignificance. This work should stand for decades as a classic of ornithological literature. — *K.K., E.C.*