

A vertical 1 x 6 cedar ship lap siding (individual boards) was chosen for the addition. To date,

there has been no woodpecker damage.

John R. Carley, 211 Riverdale Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M4K 1C4

Eds. Comment: The Topic of Note is a bird related subject intended to help focus members' attention in writing Notes for Ontario Birds. The April Topic is Unusual Nesting Holes, Behaviour and/or Damage Caused by Woodpeckers and that for the September issue is Interactions Between Snakes and Birds. The December Topic will be announced in the next issue. If you miss the deadline for any given Topic, submit it anyway and we will consider it for the next issue. Of course, we still welcome Notes on all other topics as well. See Ontario Birds Vol. 2: 123-124 for further details.

Book Review

Our Heritage of Birds: Peterborough County in the Kawarthas. 1983. By Doug Sadler. Orchid Press, Peterborough, 190 pp. \$7.50. Available from the author, R.R. #4, Peterborough, Ont. K9J 6X5.

In recent years a growing list of books dealing with the bird life of various counties or regions within the Province of Ontario has become available. Doug Sadler's *Our Heritage of Birds: Peterborough County in the Kawarthas* is a welcome addition to the group if for no other reason than the region it covers is a popular resortland. This book provides the visiting birder with some idea of what might be seen within the county at various times of the year.

However, this book is more than just a list of birds in the area, and I commend the author for the unique local flavour of the 33 introductory pages. These begin with a

geographical overview of the county, and continue through archaeological records, historical changes in habitats and birdlife, where to find birds in the county, bird names and recent changes including a quiz (which is quite amusing), to tips for novices. I found the tips to be very thoughtful and something that other authors of similar books should take a cue from.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the list of species, their arrival and departure dates, and the localities in which they have been seen. I enjoyed the author's easy writing style and found such anecdotes as the Barred Owl that liked to ride on curling stones and

the White-fronted Goose that walked into the Peterborough Post Office to be very amusing and a wonderful touch.

However, on a number of points, I found the book to be somewhat lacking. The system of listing the arrival and departure dates is made confusing by the combination of week numbers (e.g. 4 Apr. means the 4th week of April) and exact dates. Other authors' treatments of dates have used a mean date with earliest and latest dates in parentheses, a system which is more accurate as well as easier to understand.

Although many of the terms used in the book such as abundant, rare, casual, etc., are defined at the beginning of the species accounts, the term accidental is nowhere defined and yet is used a number of times. In the case of the term "hypothetical", popular thought by many rare bird committees and authors tends to rule out its use. Either a record is to be believed or it should be rejected. Use of the word only serves to indicate a degree of indecision on the author's behalf.

Upon examination of the species accounts themselves, I found reason to doubt some of the records. The Western Tanager record, which is listed as accidental on page 144, should be viewed with caution. This record was submitted to the Ontario Bird Records Committee and, subsequent to the publication of this book, was rejected. Perhaps the

author should not have published the record until it had been adjudicated.

I have to agree with the incredibility of the February Scarlet Tanager. However, I must add that contrary to what the author states, this record was never voted on by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. Seasonally rare records are not within the OBRC's mandate. This may seem a minor point but statements of this sort can reflect upon the credibility of the present committee.

While no work of this nature can be perfect, discrepancies of the sort I have pointed out can only serve to lower the overall credibility of the author's work. Great care must be taken to research the material thoroughly and if any records are in doubt, then it is best to leave them out.

All this is not intended to give the impression that the book has not made a worthwhile contribution to our knowledge of the region's birdlife. On the contrary, I believe it has, although I would suggest that it be read with care and any doubts about certain species accounts should be double-checked with other sources.

As I have mentioned, there are many tips for the novice birder and the overall impression I was left with is that the book was written with that level of ability in mind. At \$7.50, I recommend the book for anyone's library.

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A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada. 1984. Edited by *J.C. Finlay*. Hurtig Publishers Ltd., Edmonton. 387 pp. \$18.95.

To identify and describe where birds can best be found throughout Canada is more than a challenge. It is a project with infinite – virtually unmanageable – dimensions. Canada is far too large to be covered in total depth by one book.

The best approach to such a task is to allot a section to each province and territory, identify the most popular and productive spots in each and designate contributing authors to handle each segment.

This is how J.C. (Cam) Finlay has designed the text of *A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada*. And he has done it well.

The narrative and descriptive text is set out in 12 chapters – one for each province, one for the Yukon and one for the Northwest Territories. Each chapter has been assembled by knowledgeable observers familiar with the sector. They, in turn, have wisely entrusted descriptions of specific locations to experts who actively observe in the area. Black and white illustrations by Terry Thormin dress up the volume, punctuating the “wall-to-wall” prose that is a necessity in such a work.

Personally, I like the book. It

fills a need. It contains a fine balance of selectivity of areas versus unduly lengthy chapters. One can appreciate a fine sense of editing throughout. I have spot-checked several of the area write-ups by making personal visits and found that the directions, descriptions and distances quoted are quite accurate.

With Finlay’s publication now available, no birding vacation trip to a Canadian point should be planned without it. And, if one wishes to tour Canada from an armchair, much vicarious pleasure can be enjoyed by the careful and methodical reading of this book — one chapter to an evening!

The book contains interesting supplementary material. For example, there is one chapter with suggestions on planning trips. I especially appreciated a suffix showing the status of species in each of the twelve areas – a veritable composite cross-country checklist.

Suggested retail price is \$18.95. A recent check of several bookstores revealed that this was indeed the cost in effect, as of November 1984. The Nature Canada Bookshop’s 1984-85 catalogue lists it at \$17.05.

Gerry Bennett, Box 519, Kleinberg, Ontario L0J 1C0

New Titles

Vascular Plants and Vertebrates of Luther Marsh, Ontario. 1984. Allan P. Sandilands. Ontario Field Biologist Special Publication No. 2. 134 pp., \$6.50, available from the author, P.O. Box 147, Plattsville, Ontario N0J 1S0.

This publication provides a comprehensive inventory of the biota of this extensive and interesting wetland on the Dufferin-Wellington County line. The history of establishment of the area, physical features, habitat maps and descriptions, and annotated lists of a variety of groups of organisms, including birds, are contained within this

book. A total of 242 species of birds has been recorded in the area. This list represents the results of 14 years of personal field work, as well as historical records dating back to the establishment of the area in 1952. Some of the interesting birds known from this area include Red-necked Grebe, Wilson's Phalarope, Sedge Wren, and Grasshopper Sparrow.

W.J.C.

Date Guide to the Birds of the Hamilton Area. 1985. Denys Gardiner, Mark Jennings, and Kevin McLaughlin. Hamilton Naturalists' Club. 9 pp., \$1.00, P.O. Box 5182, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L3.

This publication was produced to serve as a guide to the dates of occurrence of all of the species of birds occurring in the Hamilton birding circle (25-mile radius centred on Dundurn Castle). Its purpose is to inform birders whether the record is unusual. It is *not* a series of bar graphs, but rather, limited dates are given for each species, within which any sighting requires documentation.

For example, the dates listed for Red-throated Loon are Jan. 15 - Apr. 25 and Jun. 15 - Sep. 30. Any sighting within these dates should be reported to the Hamilton Bird Records Committee. Sightings outside of these dates do not require documentation. Of course, any species which are listed on the Ontario Birds Records Committee review list should be reported directly to it.

W.J.C.