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Book Reviews

Charles Broley, an Extraordinary Naturalist. By *Jon Gerrard.* 1983. White Horse Plains Publishers, Headingley, Manitoba. iv + 60 pp. illus. \$4.00 Paper.

Jon Gerrard produced this little biography for "Bald Eagle Days," held at Winnipeg on 19-21 August 1983. No one could be better suited for the task, since Jon has been the key figure in maintaining a Bald Eagle research study area on Besnard Lake, Saskatchewan, since 1968.

As Jon's forward begins, "To take the full measure of Charles Broley, and to understand how a 58-year-old banker could suddenly start climbing trees and banding eagles with the energy and grace of an 18-year-old, it was necessary for me to search out his origins." Search he did. The book begins in 1793 and 1802 with Abel

Stevens and Roswell Matthews, when they moved their families from Vermont to Canada.

Broley, a descendant of Matthews, became manager of the bank at Delta, Ontario in 1905 and that summer noted his first Bald Eagle nest on nearby Lower Beverly Lake, where Broley later built a summer cottage. Broley's first wife, Ruby Stevens, a great granddaughter of Abel's, died of tuberculosis in 1921. Meanwhile, the Broleys had moved to Winnipeg in 1918.

In 1923, Broley began regular contributions to A.G. Lawrence's "Chickadee Notes" in the *Winnipeg*

Free Press, and that year married Myrtle McCarthy, who was to be his companion on many birding expeditions. In 1926, Broley became chairman of the ornithological section of the Manitoba Natural History Society and attended the first Canadian meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in Ottawa. In 1928, Broley gave a job in his bank to Terry Shortt, who shared Broley's interest in birds. Shortt later said that his "instruction was maybe two-thirds banking and one-third ornithology." Broley bought a cottage at Delta, on the south shore of Lake Manitoba about 1934 (he had an affinity for Deltas in two provinces), and then in 1938 he retired.

Broley was en route to winter in Florida when, at the A.O.U. meeting in Washington, D.C., Richard Pough of the National Audubon Society asked him to check on the Bald Eagles there. Broley that winter taught himself to climb tall trees and banded 44 eaglets. Thus began the continent's foremost eagle banding program, with over 1200 nestling eaglets banded. The Broleys returned each summer to Beverly Lake, Ontario where, beginning in 1940,

Charles banded a few eagles still nesting there.

It is fortunate that Broley was monitoring Bald Eagles so carefully. He was the first to note their declining production of nestlings after 1946. His wife, Myrtle, documented this decline in her excellent book, *Eagle Man: Charles L. Broley's Field Adventures with American Eagles*, in 1952. After another six years of observation, Broley published, in *Audubon* magazine, his conviction that 80 percent of the Florida Bald Eagles were sterile, and that DDT was the probable cause. This set the stage for Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published four years later in 1962.

Broley died in May 1959, while fighting a fire near his cabin at Beverley Lake. He is buried on a hill just outside Delta, Ontario. Gerrard concludes his book with three pages of Myrtle Broley's verse, a bibliography of Broley's writings, and a selected list of a few of Myrtle's extensive writings. Gerrard's is not yet the definitive biography, but it provides much interesting information about an amateur ornithologist from Ontario whose influence is still being felt today.

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The Joy of Birding. A Guide to Better Birdwatching. 1984. by Chuck Bernstein. Capra Press, Santa Barbara, California. 201 pp., \$12.95 (paper).

The Joy of Birding is a book by a birder for birders. Chuck Bernstein is an enthusiastic and unabashed birder, and this book is an earnest attempt to convey his enthusiasm for birdwatching to the reader. The book contains a series of essays describing the author's birding trips, interspersed with chapters intended to encourage birdwatchers to delve into their hobby beyond

listing, involving areas of study such as behaviour, identification and distribution.

The chapters that describe specific birding trips are followed by a listing of bird names (common and scientific), including all birds seen by the author, in chronological order for each date or location described in the text. No attempt is made to compile the list

systematically, such as in A.O.U. taxonomic sequence. These lists, while personally valuable to the recorder, are of little or no value to the reader, and add 17 pages of text to the book.

The book has an obvious western bias, concentrating on the author's experiences in California and elsewhere in the western U.S. Some eastern trips are highlighted but the area descriptions and information on birding hotspots will be of most value to western birders or those planning a trip to the western U.S. The western influence must be considered when reading the text; for example, warbler migrations are mentioned as being primarily March phenomena—not the typical Ontario situation. The author also has a particular complaint, perhaps justified, about most existing field guides. The fact that they are published in the east, and rely on eastern subspecies and eastern plumage characteristics, can apparently lead to confusion and even species misidentification in the west.

The book contains a number of dispersed birding hints, but it is generally geared towards the experienced birdwatcher rather than the novice. The fine points of identifying particular species, subspecies and immatures are addressed, often in excessive detail. This coverage tends to be sporadic, concentrating on those species which the author finds particularly interesting, difficult to distinguish, or encountered on a particular trip. These tips are not organized along any lines, but are described as encountered in the text. If the reader is not familiar with the bird(s) under discussion (which in my case occurred frequently because of my lack of birding experience in the west), he must either consult a field guide or ignore the reference. The

excessive details in some areas may intimidate or deter the novice birder. As an example, discussions on Song Sparrow and thrush subspecies, detailing colouration, size and range, take up approximately one and a half pages of text each. Similarly, a chapter on bird songs and their recognition correctly emphasizes that one must properly learn bird songs by experience, but then lapses into excessive discussions of verbal interpretations of bird songs that are of little value but perhaps of some humour. Did you realize that the Rufous-sided Towhee's familiar "drink-your-tea" song may sound like "scratch-a-flea" to a pet shop owner?

This book's greatest entertainment value lies in its emphasis on the fun of birding and bird study; one is caught up in the author's obvious enthusiasm for everything related to birds and birding. He shares the joys of observing a new species, the camaraderie of birding with like-minded souls in all kinds of situations, the disappointment of missing that once-in-a-lifetime chance for sought-after species, the fun of rediscovering the same, possibly common, species, in a new location or a new area. Birders are also encouraged to contribute to the scientific accumulation of knowledge, such as through participation in the Christmas Bird Count. Several chapters stimulate birders to extend birding beyond mere listing, to ask and attempt to answer basic biological questions such as the complexities of species distribution, song, subspecies identification, migration patterns, and so on, thereby expanding their horizons.

The book, however, lacks an overall organization and purpose—it is not a field guide but it delves into details of field marks and species

identification; it is not an introduction to birdwatching but it does provide hints for novice birders; it is not an ornithology text but it does discuss some detailed biological concepts. The book would appeal most to the select group of serious birders who

wish to expand their hobby from mere observation to more investigative birdwatching, and who are looking for some direction or avenues to pursue. Again, the book is also more appropriate to birders with interests or experience in western birdwatching.

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A Guide to the Birds of Colombia. 1986. By Steven L. Hilty and William L. Brown. Illustrated by Guy Tudor and others. Princeton University Press, 836 pp.

Frustration, for a birdwatcher (at least for this one) is to be in a patch of tropical forest, surrounded by beautiful and varied birds, and not to be able to identify them because no book exists for the area. Ironically, until recently, it was South America, far and away the richest continent faunistically, and the one most accessible to North Americans, which was the least well-served by workable field guides. Little by little, this lack is being remedied, and a major gap has now been plugged by the publication of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*.

Since a multi-volume field guide is, by definition, a contradiction in terms, the authors (and illustrators) faced a severe challenge in dealing with the 1700-odd Colombian species adequately in the space available. In my judgement they have succeeded in meeting this challenge very well indeed. Not that this guide could in any way be described as a "slim volume"; it has over 800 pages, including an index of more than 40, as well as 56 colour and 13 half-tone plates, and weighs three pounds.

The book starts with short but useful articles on items such as the Topography, Climate, Vegetation and National Parks of Colombia, and there is a ten-page appendix (which might usefully be expanded) entitled "Find-

ing Birds in Colombia". However, the bulk of the book is given over to species accounts and to the plates.

The species accounts consist of sections on Identification, Similar Species (especially useful in a field guide), Voice, Behaviour, Status and Habitat, Range and, where relevant, Notes. The format is, of necessity, condensed and laconic, but there is an enormous amount of information compressed into the available space. Given the fact that the authors are both consummate field ornithologists, the species accounts emphasize points that are important to field identification—a welcome contrast with some of the previously published books for this region.

A field guide will, however, be judged mainly on the quality of its illustrations. Here, given the constraints of space and time, two hard but I think sensible decisions were made. Firstly, North American migrant species are largely omitted; secondly, since there is so much overlap with Venezuela, it clearly was not sensible to repaint a large number of species. Instead, many plates are almost identical to the corresponding plates contained in deSchauensee and Phelps' *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*, with appropriate substitutions of species or races. However, because of

the richer fauna of Colombia, a number of entirely new plates have been added (to a total of 69 versus 53 in the Venezuelan guide). This does, on occasion, result in similar species being distributed among different plates—the tapaculos for example—but this is a relatively minor inconvenience. The majority of the plates—as in the Venezuelan guide—are by Guy Tudor, arguably the best field guide illustrator in the world today. As examples of especially superb draughtsmanship, I personally would pick out plates 36 (small flycatchers) and 50 (mountain tanagers).

The quality of plates in the Venezuelan guide was somewhat variable, with some artists of much lesser talent than Tudor. Some of the more inferior plates of that book have been repainted for the Colombian guide, but it is still

a major disappointment with the present work that there remain a number of, if not poor, certainly not good, plates. It is instructive to compare Tudor's *Atlapetes* finches (plate 54) with other members of the same genus on plate 55, by another artist. Other problems with the illustrations lie in the absence of many female plumages, and in the fact that a significant number of species are not illustrated at all.

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, it has to be said that *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia* is an excellent book which represents a major leap forward in the coverage of this richest of continents. It will be essential to any visitor, not merely to Colombia, but also to Ecuador, Peru and much of Brazil. The price (over \$60 Canadian after exchange) is steep, but the book is worth it.

David Brewer, R.R. #1, Puslinch, Ontario

OFO Announcements

Field Trips

1 November 1987, Sunday: SARNIA JAEGERS. Leader: Dennis Rupert (519) 371-2919. Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot behind the Waterworks at Point Edward. Exit Hwy. 402 in Sarnia at Front St., the last exit before the bridge. Turn left (west) on Michigan Ave. and proceed to the last street before the river, turn north across Victoria St. to Fort St., which ends at the Waterworks. If it is a good day (*i.e.*, bad weather) the group will stay there most of the day. If it is a bad day (*i.e.*, good weather) the trip will move on to Kettle Point and Ipperwash about 10:00 AM.

21 November 1987, Saturday: NIAGARA RIVER GULL OUTING. Leader: Glenn Coady (416) 596-8109. Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot at the mouth of the river, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

6 February 1988, Saturday: EAGLES AT PETROGLYPHS PARK. Leader: Geoff Carpentier (705) 743-8594. Meet at the Park gate at 9:30 AM. From Peterborough take Hwy. 28 north 50 km to Woodview. Turn right on Northey's Bay Rd. and go 11 km to Park gate. For additional details see site guide in *Ontario Birds* 3(1):29-32.

For the latest details regarding any of these events contact Margaret Bain, OFO Field Events Coordinator (416) 668-6452.