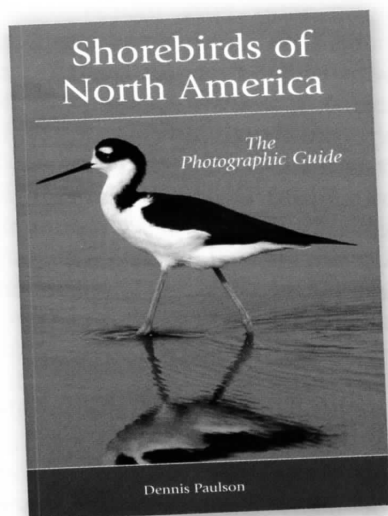


Reviews



Shorebirds of North America - The Photographic Guide. 2005. By *Dennis Paulson*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. Softcover, 608 pages, 534 colour photographs, 17 x 24.5 cm. \$41.95 Canadian. ISBN 0-691-12107-9.

Dennis Paulson firmly established himself as a shorebird specialist in 1993 with the publication of his handbook on the *Shorebirds of the Pacific Northwest*. Now Paulson has done it again with a superb photographic guide to the *Shorebirds of North America*.

Shorebirds in North America comprise the following families: thick-knees, plovers, oystercatchers, stilts and avocets, jacanas, sandpipers (includes curlews, godwits, dowitchers, phalaropes, etc.), pratincoles and

courcers. North Americans call these birds shorebirds and Europeans call them waders.

Paulson's new guide treats all 94 species of shorebirds recorded in North America, including the nearly extinct Slender-billed Curlew whose only North American occurrence is from Ontario. This is the first guide to show every North American shorebird using colour photos, making it a tremendous resource. There is a handy quick index on the folded front cover.

I recommend a thorough reading of the 19-page introduction covering the fundamentals of shorebird identification. It includes detailed shorebird anatomy using photos of standing and flying birds, plumage variation, seasonal variation, gender variation, age variation, geographic variation, individual variation, feather wear and fading, unusual plumages, photos of hybrids, molt, identification, behaviour, vocalizations, distribution, conservation, and Canadian Wildlife Service population estimates for 26 species.

The 534 colour photographs alone are worth the price of the guide. It includes photos by photographers from Ontario such as Mark Peck, Jim Richards, Tadao Shimba and Harold Stiver. Each photo has a caption loaded with information, including the month the photo was taken. The guide's text is packed with concise information and facts on each species. Of all the modern field

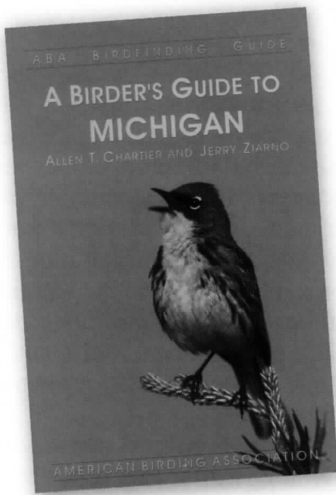
guides and handbooks, this book's strangest omission is the absence of range maps. However, breeding ranges, migration routes and wintering areas are well described.

I have only minor criticisms of this fine book. For example, it lacks a good photo of an adult Stilt Sandpiper in full breeding plumage. Also, the distinctive fresh juvenile plumage in August of the *cinnamomea* subspecies (race) of the Solitary Sandpiper is not shown. Instead, there is a photo of an older juvenile in October whose bright buff

spotting above has faded and considerably worn away.

This excellent guide has three big strengths. First, its 534 colour photos show most plumages with an average of 5-6 photos per species. Second, it was written by a world's expert on shorebirds. Third, it is compact, so easily taken into the field. I recommend Dennis Paulson's new guide to the *Shorebirds of North America*. It will make identifying shorebirds much easier for all birders from beginner to expert.

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A Birder's Guide to Michigan. 2004. By *Allen T. Chartier and Jerry Ziarno* (editors). American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Softcover, 660 pages, 253 route maps, 6 photographs, 14 drawings, 14 x 21.5 cm. \$28.95 U.S. ISBN 1-878788-13-2.

For many Ontario birders, their knowledge of Michigan may be limited to driving I-75 through the southeastern corner of the state on trips to southern birding locales, or perhaps a visit to the Kirtland's Warbler breeding grounds. However, this spectacular new birdfinding guide shows that the state has much more to offer. As noted on the book's cover, Michigan has 3,000 miles of shoreline on the four Great Lakes which surround it, 11,000 interior lakes, 36,000 miles of rivers and streams, and the largest state forest system in the U.S., all of which contribute to its rich diversity of birdlife (421 species on the official state list as of 2003). The guide describes over 200 birding sites in the state, with information on each site's birds, the best seasons to visit, and driving directions, accompanied by very clear

and detailed maps. Many local experts from throughout the state contributed material for these site descriptions, and some were authored by them.

The Introduction explains that in recognition of the ecological diversity of this large state, the book is organized into three regions (Upper Peninsula, Northern Lower Peninsula and Southern Lower Peninsula), with a further division of these into east and west sections. Other introductory material covers topography, vegetation, bird habitats, climate, a brief history of Michigan ornithology, the Michigan birding year (a summary of birds by month), hazards, and information resources for birders.

Following the site descriptions, which form the main part of the guide, there are some additional sections which will be of great interest and value to birders. For example, a chapter on "Michigan Specialties" provides status and occurrence information for a number of birds that "Michigan birders make a special effort to find", and"that out of state birders most often have as target species". These include Spruce Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Gyrfalcon, Yellow Rail, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Kirtland's Warbler. Bar graphs for 303 regularly occurring species show seasonal occurrence and abundance, with each species having three separate bars to denote the major regions of the state noted above. Following the bar

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graphs, there is an annotated list of all casual, accidental, extirpated and extinct species. Finally, there are lists of Michigan mammals, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies, damselflies and dragonflies, and orchids. Six pages of references include literature cited in the guide, plus some additional titles that "persons interested in more details of the natural history of Michigan might find useful".

I recommend this excellent birdfinding guide. I wish it had been available when I lived in Ann Arbor during my graduate school days at the University of Michigan. Its extremely detailed information and maps will be a tremendous asset to everyone birding in Michigan, both residents and visitors.



Hummingbirds of North America. 2004. The Advanced Birding Video Series with *Jon L. Dunn*. Peregrine Video Productions, 7583 Estate Circle, Niwot, Colorado 80503. VHS (\$34.95 US) and DVD (\$39.95 US); 180 minutes.

This newest offering from Peregrine Video is the third in their Advanced Birding Video Series, following two successful videos, *The Large Gulls of North America* and *The Small Gulls of North America*, and is the first to be available in DVD format. This review was done based on the DVD version (2 DVD set) of the video, which is stated to be identical in content to the VHS video tape, but has additional advantages of the DVD format. Few of us are such hopeless hummingbird fanatics that we will watch this 4-hour production in its entirety from beginning to end! The menu structure and an ability to instantly cue to any species or species group is a distinct advantage of this format.

As with the previous gull videos, there is a short introduction covering

aspects of hummingbird identification, including hummingbird topography and some specialized terms used in describing their field characters, and even covering some false ID marks, such as the presence of pollen on hummingbirds' heads. A handy insert is provided with a hummingbird topography diagram drawn by Shawneen Finnegan, who also created the artwork included throughout the video. Recognized bird identification guru Jon Dunn narrates throughout, and the script was written by hummingbird expert Sheri Williamson, author of *Hummingbirds of North America* in the Peterson Field Guide series. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001). Editors have included other well-known hummingbird authorities such as Steve Bouricius, Bob Sargent, and others. The maps, many animated and in 3D showing relief, were produced by Larry Rosche, many based on the maps in Williamson's book.

All 24 species that have been recorded in North America, north of Mexico, are covered, and one additional species, Azure-crowned Hummingbird, is briefly covered as it is a potential vagrant to North America from Mexico. The arrangement of species is not taxonomic, but rather species are grouped based on general size and appearance. Thus, we have the Rufous-Green group, the Sheartail group, the Gray-Green group, the Small Tropical Hummingbirds, and the Large Hummingbirds. The insert lists which species are included in each group for the times you may forget, and the Species Locator in

the on-screen menu is very handy. One minor complaint I have with the arrangement of the DVD is that it might have been nice to have the groupings so that the Gray-Green group was not spread across the two separate DVD disks.

It may be that my personal bias in favour of hummingbirds, and my relatively reduced enthusiasm for gulls, causes me to state that the video images in this production are superior to the gull videos, truly spectacular, and just plain fun to watch. Salient field marks are discussed throughout, with occasional freeze-frames and slow motion to allow viewers to see points that the narrator is discussing on these fast-moving birds, and well done side-by-side comparisons with similar species. All too often, however, a number of interesting characters are described and shown that seem to zoom by all too quickly. The viewers of this video will make frequent use of the rewind and pause features of their DVD or VCR just to soak it all in. Captions indicating the flower species on which the birds are feeding are a nice added touch.

Hummingbirds exhibit many interesting behaviours, which include spectacular courtship displays in many species. Animated graphics show the characteristic displays of each species. Vocalizations are often unremarkable in hummingbirds, but many calls can assist with identification. Supplementing the presentation of these call notes are animated sonograms that provide greater detail of the characteristics of these often brief and sharp notes.

In reviewing for accuracy of details, I found very little of concern, but a few minor inaccuracies did escape the editors. The introduction makes a broad statement that hummingbirds molt once a year, but that may not be true for all species, as adults of our own Ruby-throated Hummingbird molt prior to fall migration (body feathers), then once again on their wintering grounds (flight feathers). Rufous Hummingbird molt suggests a suspended molt during fall migration. Another statement that by late summer most immature male Ruby-throats will show some iridescent feathers on the throat is inconsistent with my personal experience; a small number will show this. And, buff fringing on the crown is correctly stated to be fresh feathers, but is incorrectly claimed to be characteristic of immatures since fresh adult females, and even worn females, often show buff fringing there. A couple of the range maps contain inaccuracies, which are surely carry-overs from the source field guide. For example, the map for Broad-tailed Hummingbird shows a record for central Indiana, where there is no such record, and another questionable record on the border of southern Indiana and Kentucky. The location of one of Michigan's two records of Broad-billed Hummingbird is incorrectly located, and there is a record of Black-chinned Hummingbird shown for Ontario on the north shore of Lake Superior rather than in eastern Ontario at Rideau Ferry, Lanark County, where it actually occurred. The description and graphic display of the diagnostic

“narrower inner primaries” of the genus *Archilochus*, which includes Ruby-throated and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, is a bit confusing and unclear. Dunn’s consistent mispronunciation of the genus *Amazilia* is probably of little consequence.

Technically, this video is very well done, but the DVD did exhibit a couple of glitches that probably could have been cleaned up in the editing process. The Introduction has a tendency to repeat or false start, and there are a couple of other places with abrupt, but brief jumps. The music in the background of the opening menu is a bit jerky,

and at the end of the introduction segment, there is a cut to an inexplicable 1-2 seconds of Jon Dunn simply sitting in a chair, after his narration has finished.

This video will be very useful. It has very few errors or problems, and is a feast for the eyes whether you are a hummingbird enthusiast or not. Although the number of hummingbird species to be seen in Ontario is limited, this video could help prepare you for the next rarity to show up, and I highly recommend it for anyone planning a trip to the southern and western U.S.

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Birds of Ontario: Habitat Requirements, Limiting Factors, and Status – Nonpasserines: Waterfowl Through Cranes. 2005. By *Al Sandilands*. UBC Press, Vancouver, British Columbia. Hardcover, 365 pages, 89 drawings, 86 maps, 21 x 26 cm. \$95 Canadian. ISBN 0-7748-1066-1 (v. 1).

This is the first of four volumes on the life history of Ontario's breeding birds (with shorebirds through woodpeckers, flycatchers through waxwings, and wood-warblers through Old World sparrows yet to come). The series is intended to be "an essential reference for wildlife biologists, environmental consultants, and planners preparing or reviewing environmental impact statements and environmental assessments". However, serious birders will find these books to be of great interest as well, since they present "so many interesting aspects of the ecology of Ontario birds".

The objective of these books is to summarize the life history

requirements of the regular breeding birds of Ontario, and to provide current information concerning factors that limit their populations. The material presented is derived primarily from published data. The main body of the text is devoted to species accounts. Information in each species account is organized under three biological seasons: breeding, migration, and winter. For each of these three seasons, there is a discussion of habitat requirements, limiting factors, and status in Ontario.

In the Breeding Season section, Habitat Requirements includes nesting habitat, nest description and territory size. Under Limiting Factors, information is provided on the timing of key events in the nesting period, annual reproductive effort, mating systems and diet. Additional discussion may include topics such as habitat loss and fragmentation, human disturbance, environmental contaminants, effects of water-level fluctuations, logging impacts, nest parasitism, water and air quality, and nest site availability, when such information is relevant and available. Under Status, an estimate of breeding season abundance is presented. A historical perspective of changes from the late 19th century to the present is given for some species, and the future status of species is sometimes predicted (e.g., Snow Goose, American Black Duck, Double-crested Cormorant).

The Migration section includes data on migration routes, approximate dates of migration, habitat

requirements (where relevant), habitat loss, and abundance estimates. Migration route and staging area information is most pertinent to some species of waterfowl, diurnal raptors, and shorebirds.

Winter is the final section in each account, and it is relatively brief for most species. However, some birds have particular habitat preferences and limiting factors in that season. Information is presented on these subjects when available, and Ontario winter status is defined numerically.

All the species accounts have range maps, except (inexplicably) for Pacific Loon and Common Loon. These maps show breeding range, marginal breeding range, wintering areas, marginal wintering areas, and major migration routes and staging areas (when they exist and are known) for Ontario. The maps appear to be well done, and provide detailed information on ranges and occurrence.

Each account includes a black and white drawing of the species by Ross James, often depicting the head and shoulders of the bird with typical habitat in the background. These drawings are a very attractive feature of the book.

A strength of this book is that publication citations are provided in

the text so that the reader is aware of the source for most statements in the species accounts, and can access the original material if desired. The emphasis on Ontario-based references distinguishes this book from other life history compilations. Sandilands has done a very thorough job of researching information, with 60 pages of literature cited.

At \$95, the price of this initial hardcover edition is expensive, apparently due to the limited print run that books of this type often have. However, the publisher hopes to produce a softcover version in the \$40-\$50 price range next year.

UBC Press asked me to undertake a peer review of the species accounts for this book prior to publication, and so I have had the opportunity to study them in detail. I think *Birds of Ontario* will be a very useful reference for environmental consultants and planners, but also an interesting read and a valuable information source for Ontario birders. A tremendous amount of material is summarized in the species accounts, and it is presented in a well written style. I strongly recommend this book and future volumes in the series.

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