

## BOOK VIEWS

by Brian E. Cassie, Millis

### THUMBS UP!

*TALES OF A LOW-RENT BIRDER* by Peter Dunne. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick. 1986. 157 pages; drawings by David Sibley. \$15.95.

This is a wonderfully written book. Rarely does one find an author who both knows his birds and writes with style. Pete Dunne is such a gifted writer, and this book reflects his ability to transmit the scientific, humorous, or evocative aspects of birdlife at Cape May, New Jersey, into praiseworthy prose. Get this one!

*A GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING IN NEW JERSEY* by William J. Boyle. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick. 1986. xvii+512 pages, illustrations by David Sibley, maps; flexible binding. \$19.95.

Here is another good bird book by Rutgers University Press. In fact, Boyle's book has everything a regional bird finding guide should have: the writing is clear and informative; the maps are excellent, as are the directions; the book is well indexed for birds and localities; and the appendices include an annotated checklist and good information on pelagics and on hawkwatching. The drawings by David Sibley are classy. I recommend this volume highly. (Maybe we'll have one like this for Massachusetts some day.)

*THE BIRDS OF CANADA*, revised edition, by W. Earl Godfrey. National Museums of Canada, Ottawa. 1986. 595 pages; 74 color plates, maps. \$39.95.

If you liked the old Godfrey, you will like the new Godfrey better. The text has not changed dramatically, although there are obviously a lot of distributional and extralimital records from the last twenty years worked in, and the author now discusses 578 species (versus 519 in the first edition). Of the seventy-four plates, thirty are unchanged from the first edition, thirty-one have been reworked with additional species illustrated, and thirteen are entirely new. (For the millions of birders who cannot seem to get enough of seabirds and shorebirds, nine of the new plates cover these.) Although the dimensions of the book are greater in this revised edition, the distributional maps are forty percent smaller; and that, dear readers, is my only criticism.

*THE BIRDS AROUND US*, A. E. Mace, editor. 1986. Ortho Books, San Francisco. 352 pages; hundreds of color illustrations. \$25.

Mace and a battery of twelve writers, including Kenneth Able, Jerome Jackson, and a number of other well-known ornithologists,

have put together an attractive and worthwhile introduction to bird life. There are chapters on evolution, behavior, flight, migration, ecology, attracting birds, and photographing birds, as well as a substantial "Gallery of Birds," with short species accounts and color photographs of 125 common North American birds. Considering the publisher, I trust this book will be available in every nursery and lawn and garden shop in the U. S., as well as in bookstores. I hope that a lot of the backyard birdwatcher/gardeners will pick it up.

#### THUMBS DOWN!

*BIRDS FOR REAL* by Rich Stallcup. 1985. Privately printed. 100 pages; illustrations; paperback. \$6.00.

Rich Stallcup is one of the premier bird identification experts in America, and his knowledge of subtle field marks is tremendous. In this little book, Stallcup has taken up the challenge of detailing all of the errors (as he perceives them) in the revised edition of Robbins' *A Guide to Field Identification of Birds of North America*. What a waste! Stallcup's remarks are directed at serious birdwatchers, and birdwatchers at this level do not, in my experience, use the Robbins guide; so all of his advice essentially falls on deaf ears. Besides, one hundred pages of nitpicking is boring. Do something positive with all of that ability, Rich.

*OWLS: AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE AMATEUR NATURALIST* by Gordon Dee Alcorn. 1986. Prentice Hall, New York. xiv + 176 pages; illustrations; paperback. \$9.95.

Owls are a favorite subject of nature writers; every year I add one or two volumes to my owl book collection. I have a feeling that this owl book will have a hard time finding a spot on my shelf. Mr. Alcorn writes anecdotally and uninterestingly, and he does not always have his facts straight. And that is enough to make this a poor "introduction for the amateur naturalist." To make matters worse, the author uses his own dreadful renditions to illustrate the book. How did this one get by the editors?

BRIAN E. CASSIE, birdwatcher, bird tour leader, lepidopterist, book dealer, father of three, and director of the Millis Christmas Bird Count, has gained (with the support of a host of devoted bird-feeding friends and neighbors) for the quiet town in which he resides a national reputation as the nation's number one stronghold and winter playground of the Black-capped Chickadee.