

One of my passions is owl books; I collect them. Fortunately for me, most of the books on owls ever written in the English language have been published in the last twenty years, so a reasonably complete collection is not too difficult to obtain. It is a good year when one really worthwhile owl book makes it into print. We are twice blessed in 1989 with the publication of two outstanding titles. In this account I have discussed these recent books in more detail and then have offered brief notes on twenty-nine owl books for adults and juveniles. These books are presented alphabetically, with details about them given in tabular form.

NORTH AMERICAN OWLS, BIOLOGY AND NATURAL HISTORY by Paul A. Johnsgard. 1989. Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. 295 pages; color illustrations and photos, line drawings; \$45.

Modeled along the lines of Mikkola's *Owls of Europe*, this is an outstanding contribution to North American ornithology and is our (that is, America's) best book on owls by far. Species accounts, as well as chapters on evolution, ecology, physiology, behavior, reproduction, and mythology, are expertly written and reference the literature as recent as 1987. Three appendices cover a key to North American owls, a key to their typical calls, and an outline of the origins of the scientific and vernacular names of owls. The fifteen-page glossary is a great boon to the nonprofessional, and the bibliography is extensive. Ten color plates by Louis Agassiz Fuertes add to the book's attractiveness. Highly recommended.

OWLS OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE by Karel H. Voous. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press. 320 pages; color and black-and-white illustrations by Ad Cameron; \$55.

An exhilarating combination of fine scholarship and remarkable artwork, *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere* is without a doubt the most satisfying owl book yet published. The author, asked to take over the task of writing the text upon the death of Leslie Brown, presents a series of species accounts, some long, others much shorter, of forty-seven owls occurring north of the tropics. Voous, who prefers to "deal with species rather than with models, schemes or generalities...", forgoes introductory chapters on biology and ecology and, after a one-page preface, plunges right into the species accounts. From the preface comes his approach to the book: "The text of each species is divided into the following sections: introductory remarks; general; geography; structure, hearing, and vision; behavioral characteristics; ecological hierarchy; breeding habitat and breeding; food and feeding habits; movements and population dynamics; geographic limits; life in man's world; concluding remarks." There are distributional maps and an extensive bibliography.

Interestingly, this work was commissioned to provide text to go along with Ad Cameron's paintings (usually it is the other way around). The large format of the book permits Cameron's paintings and drawings the space they deserve, for they are all very special. It will be a long time before another book of this caliber comes along.

THE BARN OWL by D. S. Dunn, A. B. Warburton, and R. D. S. Wilson. 1982.

This is a very well written monograph. Curiously, all of the authors have only initials for given names.

BIRDS OF THE NIGHT by Eric Hosking and Cyril Newberry. 1945. One of Hosking's early efforts, this contains a lot of good material on European owls.

BIRDS THAT FLY IN THE NIGHT by E. Bosiger and P. Faucher. 1973. Adapted from the 1958 French book, *Les Oiseaux de la Nuit*, this title has no outstanding qualities to recommend it.

THE BOOK OF OWLS by Lewis Wayne Walker. 1974. Walker's owl book, the first in my collection, still holds a place of honor as one of the best books on North American owls.

CENTURIES OF OWLS by Faith Medlin. 1967. Quite a number of owl books, including scholarly works, devote a few pages to owl folklore; this book concentrates on it and does a fair job.

A DELIGHT OF OWLS by Peter Steyn. 1984. Owls of southern Africa are discussed and illustrated with a fine series of photographs by one of the region's most prominent ornithologists.

GHOST OF THE FOREST: THE GREAT GRAY OWL by Michael S. Quinton. 1988. Wonderful color photography highlights this very personal work on one of the northern hemisphere's most spectacular birds.

THE GREAT GRAY OWL: PHANTOM OF THE NORTHERN FOREST by Robert W. Nero. 1980. You get the idea from the titles of these last two books that the Great Gray Owl is some sort of a spook! Anyway, here is a fascinating account of the bird's life history, along with some memorable shots of the techniques used to capture Great Grays during the winter.

GUIDE TO OWL WATCHING IN NORTH AMERICA by Donald S. Heintzelman. 1984. There is little of substance here.

THE MAGIC OF OWLS by Jozefa Stuart. 1977. I collect owl books, but for every person like me, there are thousands who collect owl figurines in wood, glass, porcelain, ivory, and just about any other medium you can imagine. This book is chockablock with owl collectibles.

A NATURAL HISTORY OF OWLS by Michael Everett. 1977. As an introduction to owls and their lives, this is the best book available. Text and illustrations are both first-rate.

- THE NIGHTWATCHERS* by Angus Cameron and Peter Parnall. 1971. Peter Parnall burst upon the scene with his wonderfully executed drawings in this book. One of my favorite books, it contains short chapters relating the author's personal experiences with American owls.
- NIGHTWATCHMEN OF BUSH AND PLAIN* by David Fleay. 1968. Fleay, the reigning expert on Australian owls, has had decades of experience with these birds. This is the only book I know of on Australian owls, and it is a good one.
- ONE MAN'S OWL* by Bernd Heinrich. 1987. A scientist's account of his three-year study of a Great Horned Owl that he had rescued. This is good writing.
- AN OWL CAME TO STAY* by Claire Rome. 1980. Do not hound your local bookseller for a copy of this, the story of a Tawny Owl.
- THE OWL PAPERS* by Jonathan Maslow. 1983. Maslow writes about his encounters with owls in New York, at Cape May, and in various other American locales and does a good job conveying some of the feel of owl watching. After being out of print for several years, it is available again, this time in paperback.
- OWLS* by Tony Angell. 1974. This book serves as a vehicle for the author's woodcut illustrations, which are better than average but not inspiring.
- OWLS, AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE AMATEUR NATURALIST* by Gordon Alcorn. 1986. Worthless.
- OWLS IN FOLKLORE AND NATURAL HISTORY* by Virginia C. Holmgren. 1988. About half of this volume is devoted to owl folklore, mostly American Indian folklore. The subject is fascinating, but the writing is overly sentimental.
- OWLS OF BRITAIN AND EUROPE* by A. A. Wardhaugh. 1883. When I first saw this little book, I suspected it couldn't be much of anything (a bookseller judging a book by its cover). I was wrong. There is a lot of worthwhile reading in its 128 pages.
- OWLS OF EUROPE* by Heimo Mikkola. 1983. Mikkola's study of European owls is a well-illustrated, superbly written account.
- THE OWLS OF NORTH AMERICA, NORTH OF MEXICO* by Karl E. Karalus and Allan W. Eckert. 1974. First published in various editions fifteen years ago, this title has recently been reprinted. The gallery of owl portraits, covering all North American subspecies, is uniformly uninspiring, and the text is much too brief.
- OWLS OF THE WORLD, THEIR EVOLUTION, STRUCTURE, AND ECOLOGY* edited by John A. Burton. 1973. This book is worth acquiring for the pictures alone. The text is also commendable.

TITLE	TOTAL PAGES	ILLUSTRATIONS COLOR	ILLUSTRATIONS B&W	PHOTOGRAPHS COLOR	PHOTOGRAPHS B&W	MAPS	BIBLOG. REFS.	FOLKLORE PAGES
<i>The Barn Owl</i>	264	0	12	1	31	5	218	14
<i>Birds of the Night</i>	128	0	2	0	86	0	0	0
<i>Birds that Fly in the Night</i>	95	0	1	0	71	0	0	1
<i>The Book of Owls</i>	255	0	0	0	89	1	0	0
<i>Centuries of Owls</i>	93	0	35	0	46	1	275	55
<i>A Delight of Owls</i>	159	0	1	57	80	0	57	0
<i>Ghost of the Forest: Great Gray Owl</i>	99	8	0	63	0	1	8	0
<i>The Great Gray Owl: Phantom of the N. Forest</i>	167	0	0	29	48	2	120	0
<i>Guide to Owl Watching in North America</i>	193	0	2	0	65	0	17	0
<i>The Magic of Owls</i>	71	6	21	37	37	0	0	0
<i>A Natural History of Owls</i>	156	1	0	38	133	0	10	4
<i>The Nightwatchers</i>	111	0	54	0	0	0	0	7
<i>Nightwatchmen of Bush and Plain</i>	163	1	0	16	103	1	0	0
<i>North American Owls</i>	295	11	47	22	0	20	478	8
<i>One Man's Owl</i>	224	0	21	0	35	0	180	0
<i>An Owl Came to Stay</i>	144	0	36	0	8	0	0	4
<i>The Owl Papers</i>	184	0	16	0	0	0	0	12
<i>Owls</i>	80	0	60	0	0	0	8	0
<i>Owls, An Introduction for the Amateur Naturalist</i>	176	0	60	0	15	0	59	4
<i>Owls in Folklore and Natural History</i>	175	0	69	0	2	19	69	82
<i>Owls of Britain and Europe</i>	128	0	10	16	21	0	80	2
<i>Owls of Europe</i>	397	8	62	0	75	39	800	0
<i>The Owls of North America</i>	278	60	53	0	0	59	286	0
<i>Owls of the Northern Hemisphere</i>	320	50	53	0	0	24	904	0
<i>Owls of the World</i>	216	48	1	103	0	113	14	9
<i>Owls: Their Natural/Unnatural History</i>	206	0	49	1	16	0	76	13
<i>Pygmy Owl</i>	38	2	0	9	4	4	0	0
<i>The World of the Great Horned Owl</i>	158	0	0	0	87	0	34	2

OWLS: THEIR NATURAL AND UNNATURAL HISTORY by John Sparks and Tony Soper. 1970. One of a handful of decent general outlines of owls and their ecology, it is recommended.

PYGMY OWL by John Bull. 1976. Here is a tiny little book that may have been published as a giveaway. It contains tidbits of data on several species of pygmy-owl and even has a couple of Guy Tudor color plates.

THE WORLD OF THE GREAT HORNED OWL by G. Ronald Austing and John B. Holt, Jr. 1966. Lippincott published a wonderful series of nature books under the heading "The World of the...." This is one of the few on birds, and it is a model for an author hoping to write a serious bird book for the general public.

There have been, and continue to be, a great number of books for kids with owls as the central theme. Many of these are fiction; a growing number are well illustrated natural history. Here are three that are among the best I have seen.

OWL MOON by Jane Yolen and illustrated by John Schoenherr. 1987. I suspect that most copies of this Caldecott Medal-winning book never make it to the children they are bought for; adults read the marvelous story and keep the book for themselves.

OWLS by Bobbie Kalman and Glen Loates. 1987. Glen Loates is one of Canada's finest artists, and his renderings add a great deal to this lively introduction to owls.

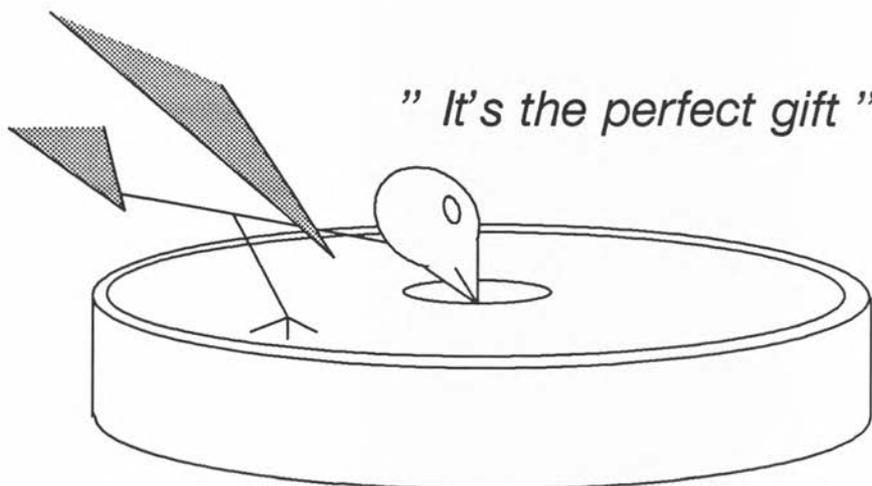
OWLS by Helen Hoke and Valerie Pitt. 1975. General natural history, folklore, and a short survey of owls around the world combine to make a fine book for young readers.

BRIAN E. CASSIE, whose natural history book and tour business is now located at 28 Cocasset Street, Foxborough, MA 02035, will present on the evening of November 15, 1989, a workshop/seminar for *Bird Observer* on the subject of "Building Your Natural History Library." Call 508-543-3512 to register or for further information.

≡ SOLAR SIPPER™ ≡

PATENT PENDING

Cold Weather Bird Watering Device



The bird-tested SOLAR SIPPER uses the power of the winter sun to extend the time that water remains liquid in freezing temperatures during daylight hours.

For information or to order, write to:

Happy Bird Corporation
479 South Street
Foxborough, MA 02035

\$ 15.99 + \$3.00 postage & handling