

BOOK REVIEW

A.B.A. Checklist: Birds of Continental United States and Canada, prepared by the Checklist Committee of the American Birding Association, distributed by the American Birding Association, Inc., Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78765, 64 pages, \$3.50.

With the ever-increasing interest in North American birdlife, it is appropriate that birders have access to a current and taxonomically accurate checklist for the 49 continental United States and Canada. The recent A.B.A. Checklist provides not only an up-to-date listing of 794 species which are native breeding species, regular visitors, naturally occurring accidentals (without the aid of man) and well established introductions, but it also pulls together the most recent "lumps", "splits" and name changes in North American bird taxonomy. The geographic area covered by the present checklist differs from that of the A.O.U. Checklist in that Greenland, Bermuda and Baja California are excluded. For each species listed, one of six symbols indicates the status within the area covered.

The taxonomy essentially follows that of the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds (5th edition) and its 32nd Supplement published in April 1973 (Auk 90, 411-419). Nonetheless, readers will find two areas of change. The first is that the order of the shorebirds follows that proposed by Jehl in 1968 (Relationships in the Charadrii, San Diego Society of Natural History, Memoir 3). The other changes concern some modifications in English nomenclature. Most of these changes involve the use of modifiers for the sake of international clarification (e.g. American Black Duck). Other related changes are those likely to be adopted in future supplements of the A.O.U. Checklist (e.g. Sedge Wren for Short-billed Marsh Wren).

Of particular interest is a section summarizing accidental species records during the 20th century. This list includes forms recorded fewer than ten times in the A.B.A. area and provides sources of documentation for each. This list, along with new taxonomic changes, promises to be periodically revised by the A.B.A. Checklist Committee.

The present work should appeal to many birders in that it is available at a price more reasonable than that of the A.O.U. Checklist. Perhaps its only drawback lies in the fact that little space is provided for the lister to record the date, place or details of sighting for species recorded in North America. It does, however, provide ample space at the end of the booklet for notes and supplemental additions in future years. This writer will conclude by highly recommending the A.B.A. Checklist to anyone with a serious interest in North American birdlife and its species taxa.

Wayne R. Petersen, Abington

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS!

This past spring for a couple of weeks a pair of Common Flickers had been excavating a new nesting cavity at Linwood Cemetery, Weston. By May 5th its depth was such that a flicker could easily disappear inside. While checking the hole on the 9th, I closed in too abruptly, for one of the birds flushed. Immediately, it was followed out of the hole by a Starling! Both birds flew to nearby branches from which they scolded me.

Was this an incident of competition for the nesting cavity? Probably not, for four reasons. First, it is difficult to imagine a Starling challenging the much larger flicker. Second, the flicker's mate was nearby but did not aid in defending the territory. Third, there was no squabbling as I approached the tree. Fourth, there is an abundance of unoccupied nesting sites in the immediate vicinity.

Yet, what is the answer? In his Life Histories Bent notes that flicker eggs have been found in the nests of several other species of birds. But my experience was different--the Starling was in the flicker's nest, not vice versa. I presume a freak happenstance.

Leif J. Robinson, Wellesley