

Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges, Laura and William Riley. Anchor/Doubleday, 1979, 654 pages, \$14.95.

One of the nice things about being an editor of an international science magazine is that you get to travel a lot. Whenever I go on assignment, I check whether there is a good birding spot in the vicinity; if there is, I allow a day or two free in my itinerary. Then, to get the most out of a brief visit, I write ahead to the compiler(s) of nearby Christmas Counts and ask for information and the name of a possible guide. (Though I never offer to pay for such service, except all expenses while we're on the road, I've always found someone who "just happened to have the day off.")

But with the publication of Laura and William Riley's Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges my quest for information--and birds--will be much easier. In short, it contains descriptions of, directions to, and highlights about 380 national anchors to our natural heritage. In addition, there is solid information about weather, accommodations, and nearby points of interest.

Clearly, this is not a book for bird-watchers alone; it is for everyone who enjoys the outdoors. You can get tips regarding photography blinds, hiking trails, what fish you might catch, and hunting restrictions. (I cannot help but wonder whether Roger Tory Peterson was yanking someone's chain in his quote on the jacket blurb: "This book will surely be in every bird watcher's backpack ... " You carry it, RTP; it weighs over two pounds! In addition to providing information about what you might find at national wildlife refuges, this fat volume can also conjure up memories of the good times. Ah, yes, the White-winged Black Tern (Chincoteague, Virginia), scores of Clapper Rails and Gull-billed Terns (Brigantine, New Jersey), Mangrove Cuckoo (J. N. Darling, Florida), 39 Whooping Cranes (Aransas, Texas--where else?), Ross' Goose (Sacramento, California), Hawaiian Stilt (Kealia Pond), LeConte's Sparrow (Big Stone, Minnesota), Yellow-bellied Flycatchers (Rachel Carson, Maine). Oops! No entry--the authors missed that last one!

Wrong! By checking the index, you will find Rachel Carson N.W.R. listed under Parker River, which provides administration. Thus, you should use this book carefully to avoid overlooking some small or undeveloped refuge near you but perhaps hundreds of miles from its administrative headquarters.

For Massachusetts the table of contents lists Great Meadows, Monomoy, and Parker River. The authors truthfully write: "Great Meadows may be unique among national wildlife refuges in its urban location, just fifteen miles from the center of Boston." They also note that the golden lotus growth there is the most prolific in Massachusetts. There follows a good mammal list, a rather perfunctory bird list, a roster of nearby historical sites, and some natural history, "loosestrife was first introduced in the United States in a backyard Concord garden." (Incidentally, the writing is excellent; what could have been a dry directory reads in many places like a novel.)

If you travel, buy a copy of Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges. If you don't, borrow a copy from your library; it may change your lifestyle.

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