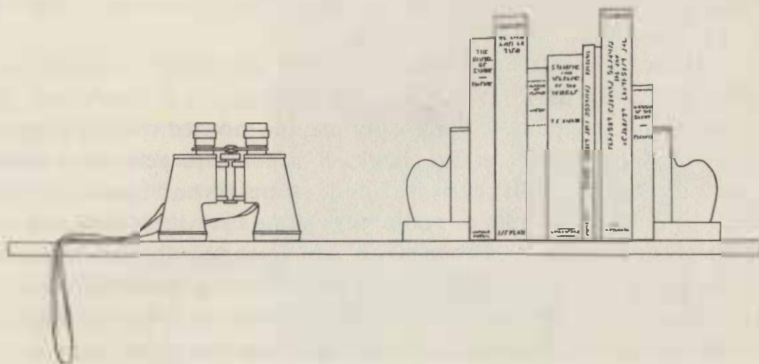


Reviews

Edited by

ELAINE COOK



The Birds of South Dakota — Members of the Check List Committee of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union. 1978. Published by the Union with the cooperation of the W.H. Over Museum. 311 pp., range maps, 52 line drawings, frontispiece. \$10.00.

Publisher's address:
South Dakota Ornithologists' Union
c/o W.H. Over Museum
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, South Dakota 57069

Subtitled *An Annotated Check List*, this volume brings together accumulated knowledge of the status of birds in South Dakota. This is no mean feat, as it meant the close cooperation of the seven members of the Check List Committee; anyone who has dealt with a multi-author work of this scope knows the difficulties inherent in accomplishing such an undertaking. The authors are Nathaniel J. Whitney, Jr., chairman of the Committee; Byron E. Harrell, editor of the completed manuscript and general factotum of seeing it into and through the printing process; Bruce K. Harris; Nelda Holden; James W. Johnson; B.J. Rose; and Paul F. Springer. Authors were assigned specific groups of birds for which to prepare species accounts, and each checked the work of the others.

The format for each species includes a status statement, a one- or two-line habitat description, separate spring and fall migration accounts (normal period of occurrence, earliest and latest dates), and, when applicable, nesting and winter occurrences and status. Food habits, general behavior, disease, predation, etc. are not within the scope of the work.

Small distribution maps are provided for every species, 377 of them; these maps also locate extralimital records by season, and are almost always on the same page as the applicable species account.

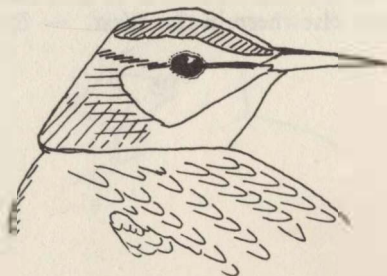
The species accounts are well done, providing a clear and concise statement of status, carefully documented by referenced records obtained through the years. One might be properly suspicious of some of the sight records authenticated by the authors, but in the main the matter of whether or not to accept records is handled judiciously. Some readers might wish that the current locations of specimens cited were stated, and the same applies to photographs cited that have not appeared in the literature. A cut-off time for records is not given, but it appears to be mid-1975 for at least some species; no records (save one) are more recent and few species accounts contain records after 1973.

An Introduction describes the physiography, climate, and plant life of South Dakota; the distribution of the avifauna in general; how human settlement has changed the environment; a brief ornithological history of the state; an interpretation of the species accounts (check list); and a tabular summary of the birds of South Dakota. A 16-page signature of photographs illustrates bird habitats; unfortunately, either some of these were poor initially, or they suffered in the printing process. Excellently prepared sections appear at the end: a list of hypotheticals, a bibliography, and indices of persons, locations (including a state map), and birds. The total of about 550 entries in the index of persons indicates the thoroughness of the entire book.

The Birds of South Dakota measures 7 x 10 inches. The cover is quite "soft," too much so to permit much use, and its illustration, a Badlands scene in color, is badly blurred. The frontispiece, showing a Lark Bunting singing on a yucca stalk and painted by Wayne Trimm, is disappointingly small.

The Birds of South Dakota is so well organized, so well researched, and so indispensable to anyone expecting to bird in South Dakota, that it is well nigh a *tour de force*. Even if you have never been in the state, nor ever expect to be, obtain a copy as an example of how to "do" a state list. But you had better hurry — as of this writing, only 200 copies remain of an initial printing of 1100. — *Gale Monson*

As co-author of the *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona* and of the classic *The Birds of Arizona*, Gale Monson is well acquainted with the factors involved in producing a multi-authored distributional work; he also has an extensive background of field experience with the birds of the Dakotas. — *Eds.*



Birds of Northern California: an Annotated Field List (Second Edition) —

Guy McCaskie, Paul De Benedictis, Richard Erickson, and Joseph Morlan. Designed and edited by Nick Story. 1979. Berkeley, California: Golden Gate Audubon Society. 84+ iv pp., map, bar graphs. \$5.00.

Available from publisher at \$5.80 (includes 80¢ postage & tax):
Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.
2718 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 206
Berkeley, CA 94705

In the twelve years since the first edition (by McCaskie and De Benedictis) of this checklist was published, a remarkable amount of new information on bird distribution in northern California has been amassed. Because the two original authors no longer live in this region, this extensively revised edition was largely undertaken by Erickson and Morlan, who are well-known as leaders in northern California's current corps of active field observers. This work thus preserves its high standards of distinguished authorship.

The area covered is approximately the northern two-thirds of the state, minus Inyo County and part of Mono County (pre-empted by the southern Californians and covered in a similar field list by Pyle and Small). To facilitate capsulizing each species' range within this rather large area, the introduction describes and maps five "distributional districts" which conform to the broad outlines of bird distribution here, and adds definitions of ten basic habitat types.

The format of the main body of the list is one which is now reasonably standard: each two-page spread begins with a bar graph treating several species and follows with a section of text giving additional comments on those species. The bar graphs convey degrees of relative abundance by month, and letter codes indicate in which distributional districts each species occurs, what are its preferred habitats, and whether it nests in northern California. Text comments are added for most species, but not all: only those for which the authors wished to add significant information not communicable in bar graphs. These comments may deal with peculiarities in distribution, details of the occurrence of outstanding rarities, or helpful pointers on identification. The latter are particularly noteworthy: rather than mere rehashes of well-known information (such as are included in some regional checklists), these supply points additional to (or in correction of) the standard field-guide treatment. This work is thus doubly useful as a supplement to one's field guides.

In summary, this well-designed, authoritative field list will be indispensable to anyone doing a substantial amount of birding in or near northern California, and a useful reference for observers elsewhere in the West. — *E.C., K.K.*

Birds of Pennsylvania — Merrill Wood. 1979. University Park, Pennsylvania: College of Agriculture, Pennsylvania State University. 133 pp., illus., map. \$2.00 paperback.

Publisher's address:
College of Agriculture
Pennsylvania State University
Box 6000
University Park, Pennsylvania 16802

This attractive and very modestly priced little book is basically a briefly-annotated list of Pennsylvania's bird species. It appears that it was primarily designed for, and will be of most use to, casual or beginning birdwatchers who want a general idea of what occurs in the state.

Each regularly occurring species receives a short paragraph outlining its geographic and seasonal occurrence in Pennsylvania, often with brief habitat notes or other comments; a second short paragraph capsulizes the total range of the species. For rarer species there is an indication of the counties and seasons in which they have occurred, and for accidentals all records are listed individually.

We found ourselves wondering about some of the latter, since the author does not state whether he personally re-evaluated any of the numerous records quoted from *Audubon Field Notes/American Birds* — some of which, invariably, inevitably, will be open to question. Another oddity is that Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* is included as a fully accepted species while Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* is relegated to the "escape list," seemingly a reversal of the actual probabilities. And some may be pained to see that the Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta* [a petrel, perhaps this species, was once photographed over Hawk Mountain] is here taken out of its proper family, the shearwater/petrel assemblage, and dumped unceremoniously among the storm-petrels.

But casual observers (who are unlikely to encounter any of these accidentals anyway) should not be disturbed by such matters; and they are likely to appreciate such points as the attractive drawings of common species in the margins, or the introduction, with its calendar of expected avian events by month. In conclusion, then, this book may have little to offer the advanced or serious student of Pennsylvania's birdlife, but it should make a fine gift for beginners. — K.K., E.C.

