

REVIEWS

Gulls: a guide to identification.—P. J. Grant. 1982. Vermillion, South Dakota, Buteo Books, 280 pp., including 128 pp. of photos. \$32.50.—Presumably Grant's intent was to enlighten European observers; however, this book certainly can be a valuable aid to North American observers. Of the twenty-three gull species discussed by the author, sixteen either breed or have occurred (most of those, regularly) in eastern North America.

Essentially, the book consists of Grant's five-part series on gull identification originally published in *British Birds* (1978-1981). The first half, approximately, of the book's 280 pages is text. The remainder consists of 376 photographs, most of excellent quality, which depict almost all of the described plumages of the 23 species.

In the "General Information" section, the author discussed the basic aspects of plumage, the understanding of which is essential for expertise in the field. Included are detailed illustrations of a gull's topography consistent with the terms used throughout the book. Beginning gull-watchers should note that the numbering system for the flight feathers is a reversal of that used by most American ornithologists.

The species discussed have been placed into five groups based primarily on similar features, especially in immature plumage, which can and often do cause misidentification in the field. Grant begins each grouping with a brief discussion of similar characteristics plus an illustration, for direct comparison, of the various gulls in their first-basic plumages. This is followed by a very thorough discussion of each species, illustrations of its various plumages and a world distribution map.

Obviously, this book is a result of years of field work and research. Overall, Grant has done an outstanding job of compiling and analyzing data. When he originally published the series in *British Birds*, he asked readers for suggestions and corrections. In thinking of a future revision, he reiterates this request in the book, and I do have a few suggestions and corrections. In the original series and again in the book, Grant placed the Mediterranean Gull between the Common and Ring-billed gulls. If grouping order is based on similar characteristics, it seems to me that the Mediterranean Gull should immediately follow the Ring-billed Gull and precede Franklin's and Laughing gulls. Also, in the original series when discussing plumage differences of Common and Ring-billed gulls, Grant failed to point out the diagnostic wear pattern of the wing coverts of birds in juvenal and first-basic plumage. He included this important distinctive feature in the book but failed to give credit to Lauro and Spencer (1980, *Amer. Birds* 34: 111-117) who first published this fact after Grant had published his original discussion of the two species.

I was surprised that Grant failed to describe the unique wear pattern of the scapulars of the Lesser Black-backed Gull in first-basic plumage. The book's lack of photographs of this plumage suggests that it is not encountered in England, i.e., hatching-year *fuscus* leave England while still in unworn first-basic plumage. Yet Grant's failure to describe this wear pattern still seems a significant omission, especially with respect to the many American observers who are faced with distinguishing this species in this plumage from others of the large-gull complex.

I was especially disappointed to find that all photographs were placed together in the back of the book rather than with the appropriate text for quick reference, as they were in the original series. I presume the change was due to cost, but I certainly hope the original format will be followed in any future revision. Unfortunately, no photographs of leucistic or albinistic gulls were included, which Grant had originally indicated would be. Also, in discussing the "white-winged" gulls, Grant is incorrect in stating that "Immature leucistic or albinistic gulls *invariably* have normal bill coloration . . ." [emphasis mine]. I certainly have photographic evidence to the contrary and, in my opinion, particularly when discussing gulls, the term "invariably" should be used with great caution or, perhaps, not at all.

The only real drawback to this book is the price, but I highly recommend it for those who can afford it. However, for those on a limited budget, I suggest going to a university library that has *British Birds* and consulting the original series. Although the book supposedly has "extensive textual improvements" and "most of the drawings have been revised," I found very little change from the original series significant to correct identification. In fact, the printing quality of the original illustrations is superior to the book's. Also, although 170 additional photographs are included in the book, the photographs in the original series show all the plumage characteristics of the various species that are useful in identification.—Lyn Atherton, P.O. Box 58124, Tierra Verde, Florida 83715.

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The molt of Scrub Jays and Blue Jays in Florida.—G. Thomas Bancroft and Glen E. Woolfenden. 1982. Washington, D.C., The American Ornithologists' Union, Ornithological Monographs No. 29. vii + 51 pp. \$8.00.—Intensive investigations of a Florida Scrub Jay population have been the chief focus of Woolfenden's collaborative research efforts since 1969, with Blue Jays coming under close scrutiny beginning about 1976. These combined efforts have resulted in a number of important publications and a wealth of data on population dynamics of individually-marked birds.

Herein, the authors analyze their molt and breeding data, chiefly with the rationale that so little information is available for any species whose details of molt and breeding are based upon birds of known sex and age. More than one half of this monograph deals with detailed molt data for the two species, all essential to a subsequent discussion of time and duration of molting and the breeding season. Not surprisingly, they found that "the pattern of molt by Scrub Jays and Blue Jays in Florida is similar to that exhibited by other passerines," although remigial molt for both species is relatively long (90-120 days). Also, their data indicate that the two species of jays in Florida are similar to most temperate-zone passerines in that breeding is followed by molt with little overlap. For example, "individual Scrub Jays finish nesting from late April to mid-June" whereas "both species molt between early June and November with peak intensity occurring between mid-July and late September."