

SPECIAL REVIEWS—NEW FIELD GUIDES

Birds of North America, a guide to field identification, expanded, revised edition.—Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert S. Zim. Illustrated by Arthur Singer. 1983. New York, Golden Press, Western Publishing Co., Inc., 360 pp. 170 color plates, 632 range maps. \$10.95 hardcover, \$7.95 softcover.

Field guide to the birds of North America.—National Geographic Society Book Service, Jon L. Dunn, and Eirik A. T. Bloom, Chief Consultants; George E. Watson, General Consultant; John P. O'Neill, Consultant for Songbirds. Illustrated by H. Douglass Pratt, Diane Pierce, Donald L. Malick, and 10 additional artists. 1983. Washington, D. C., National Geographic Society. 464 pp., 220 color plates, 533 range maps. Available from the National Geographic Society, Dept. 100, Washington, D. C. 20036, for \$13.95 softcover, plus \$3.00 postage & handling.

In 1934 Roger Tory Peterson's *A field guide to the birds of eastern North America* first brought birders into the modern era with concise and simple field identification techniques in an inexpensive, pocket-sized book. Peterson's field guides had virtually no competition until 1966 when *Birds of North America* by Chandler S. Robbins, et al. was first published. Now, hot on the heels of Peterson's fourth edition (1980, reviewed in *Fla. Field Nat.* 9: 43-48, 1981) we have Robbins' "expanded, revised edition" and a new entry in the race for the birders' field-guide dollars, the National Geographic Society's *Field guide to the birds of North America*. Both of these outstanding books are the subject of this special review.

The new Robbins has a stronger binding, 20 more pages, and 12 more plates than the original edition and has been completely reset in a modern roman type style. The 632 range maps have all been redrawn and revised but the plates will look very familiar with 128 retained essentially unchanged from the original edition.

Robbins includes 650 species that nest in North America north of Mexico (including Greenland), 60 regular vagrants, and about 100 accidentals, versus 645, 30, and about 25, respectively, in the first edition. The scientific names follow the new AOU Check-list of North American birds, sixth edition, but the common names are those of the 1982 American Birding Association list. Although the contents are listed in AOU order (to family and even subfamily for the passerines), this sequence is not always followed in the book. Unlike Peterson's fourth edition, Robbins includes the vagrants and accidentals in taxonomic order so one can find, for example, 4 species of godwits illustrated on one page—certainly a distinct advantage if you think you might have one of the vagrant species in view.

The major face-lift of the revised edition concerns the range maps. Although still postage-stamp size, North America is now white against a grey background which shows the familiar pink, purple, and blue ranges and migration corridors to better advantage. Also the scale of some maps has been expanded to show the distribution of restricted species in better detail (i.e. unstreaked thrashers, p. 242). This useful technique should have been used more often. Overall though, these maps are one of the best features of the book and will repay careful study, either by comparison with maps in the first edition for examples of range expansion (Brewer's Blackbird, p. 298; Brown-headed Cowbird, p. 300), or for depicting patterns of disjunct breeding ranges

(Northern Parula, p. 276; Pine Warbler, p. 286; Prairie Warbler, p. 286), or for showing migration corridors that explain relative species occurrence in Florida (compare Mourning and Connecticut warblers, p. 290).

Many of the new species illustrated in the revised edition are either Asian species that occur in western Alaska or the Aleutians, or exotics, or strays from Europe and the Neotropics. The 5 new plates include Alaskan peep (7 spp.), parrots (10 spp.), stragglers to Florida or Alaska (grassquits and finches, 7 spp.), and immature terns (2 plates, 14 spp.), and 4 plates are almost all new (robin-like thrushes, large dark- or gray-mantled gulls, and shearwaters). I judged 7 plates to be half new and 26 plates only slightly new with one bird added or deleted. Much of the introductory material has been rewritten, and includes an excellent discussion of sonograms. Robbins' new edition is by almost all measures an improved one and still is a fine little book to use in the field or to give as a gift.

At first glance the National Geographic guide looks very similar to Robbins, except being slightly larger and 75% heavier. However, the production and some of the details of the book are quite different. The staff for this book includes an editor, associate editor, 2 assistant editors, 8 writers, and 8 researchers, who evidently prepared the book in consultation with two of America's foremost birders, Dunn and Bloom, and with two leading ornithologists, Watson and O'Neill. Bloom compiled the range maps, and 13 artists painted the plates. Quite a flock!

The pages are about 20% larger and there are 104 more than those in Robbins. Fewer species are illustrated on each plate leaving more space on the facing page for each species account. However, some of the species accounts are too long for easy reference in the field. Subheadings would be a great improvement. Compare several NG species accounts with those in Robbins to gain an appreciation for the concise prose of the latter. The NG introductory matter is strong on aspects of birding especially nomenclature, plumage and molt, and birding equipment. However, the introduction and family headings scattered through the text are weak on taxonomy and natural history when compared with Robbins. Unfortunately, with the larger pages the NG range maps are not bigger than those in Robbins, because with state and provincial boundaries included on the base map the yellow, green, and blue ranges (for breeding, permanent, and winter, respectively) are not always as distinct as the colors in Robbins. Yellow alone is especially difficult to see on some maps. Unlike Robbins, the NG guide adheres to both common and scientific names of the AOU Check-list, sixth ed., but like Robbins, the NG guide departs occasionally from AOU sequence.

The list of 13 artists (p. 464) includes the plates they did, with the breakdown generally coinciding with taxonomic boundaries. Three artists did 51% of the plates; Pratt (58 plates), Pierce (34), and Malick (23). Some artists did only 1 or 2 plates. These feather-perfect pictures and the outstanding color printing make this book a showcase of bird art. The plates, as in Robbins, show birds (794 species by my count) in typical habitat with some preening, stretching, displaying, or holding food. The NG plates are busy with many individual figures, and often show different age classes or both sexes. It is a treat to see the different races depicted for so many sparrows. But on many of the plates, especially the passerines, it is difficult to find the bird because of all the foliage and because there is an overall lack of symmetry on the plates—the birds do not face the same way.

The NG guide is a fine book that will no doubt find its way into many public libraries across the country through the National Geographic distribution network. But its utility as a *field* guide is diminished because of the busy plates and large blocks of text.

For this multiple review we have assembled an outstanding team to evaluate these books from distinctive perspectives. Wayne Hoffman, whose birding experience spans the continent from the Aleutians to the Dry Tortugas, is a Ph.D. candidate in ornithology at the University of South Florida. Howard Langridge is one of Florida's most dedicated birders and envied by all for his uncanny ability to find West Indian strays in southeastern Florida. David Maehr, an outstanding wildlife artist, is a game biologist for the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission studying birds and mammals.—**Fred E. Lohrer**, Archbold Biological Station, Rt. 2, Box 180, Lake Placid, Florida 33852.

Florida Field Naturalist 12: 64-66, 1984.

Two field guides.—I will limit myself in this review to a series of questions about the use of these field guides in the field. Which guide would be more useful for birding along the Mexican border? Or in Alaska? Which guide is more useful for a beginning birder? Which guide is more useful for advanced birders? How do the two guides perform in dealing with the difficult species-groups, such as gulls, shorebirds, fall warblers, and grassland sparrows? (*Empidonax* flycatchers are left out of this list because I do not know them well enough.)

Both are intended as guides to the birds of the whole of North America north of Mexico, so naturally they include mostly the same birds. They differ substantially, however, in their coverage of introduced birds and of accidentals. Robbins includes a plate of 10 introduced parrots and parakeets; NG illustrates only 6 of these. On the other hand, NG illustrates more exotic waterfowl (Egyptian Goose, oddly, is omitted). Robbins' plate of introduced Galliformes includes Chuckar, Gray Partridge, Ring-necked Pheasant, and Black Francolin; NG shows all of these and Japanese Quail, Red-legged Partridge, Green Pheasant, and Himalayan Snowcock (!) as well. NG includes the Hill Myna and Java Sparrow, but Robbins retains the European Goldfinch.

NG includes far more accidentals but omits several illustrated by Robbins. Robbins includes one more shorebird (Marsh Sandpiper) but NG illustrates 6 additional seabirds (Short-tailed Albatross, 1 shearwater, 1 petrel, 2 storm-petrels, Red-tailed Tropicbird). NG illustrates 7 more Caribbean strays (3 doves, Bahama Woodstar, Loggerhead Kingbird, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo) but Robbins includes that reknowned Marielito, the Melodious Grassquit. Similarly, NG illustrates 10 more Mexican specialties (Jabiru, Collared Swift, Yellow Grosbeak, and Rufous-capped Warbler are highlights) and 17 more Asian strays (including among others, Steller's Sea Eagle, Siberian Accentor, 5 buntings, and 2 warblers) but you must go to Robbins for an illustration of a Brown Tree Pipit. Robbins also includes three species (Redwing, Meadow Pipit, Eurasian Blackbird) on the basis of Greenland records. Thus, in general, NG would be more useful in the Aleutians and along the Mexican border, but a serious birder would want to have both along.

I have been comparing both books in the field for a couple of months. Several opportunities arose during a winter trip to California to compare the guides against interesting birds. The illustration in Robbins of a pale-phase Rough-legged Hawk was superior because it shows clearly the contrast of pale head and breast to darker body that is so apparent in the field. In the NG illustration the head streaking is over-emphasized, obscuring the head-body contrast. Robbins also provides better illustrations of Band-tailed Pigeon and Townsend's Warbler, and the shapes of scoters are more realistic. This last point may seem trivial, but many of Florida's most prominent birders will remember arguing over the identity of a strange duck (Surf Scoter) silhouetted against the light at Merritt Island during a recent FOS meeting. The shapes of scoters are distinctive and often useful in identification. The NG illustrations were more useful in picking a female Lawrence's Goldfinch from a flock of Lesser Goldfinches, and averted confusion over chickadee identities by illustrating the dull-sided California form of Chestnut-backed Chickadee as well as the chestnut-sided ones I used to feed in Oregon. The NG treatment of immature Black-shouldered Kites seemed more accurate, although both guides are quite adequate for identification. Neither guide has adequate illustrations of the dark-phase Red-tailed Hawks so common in the West. Neither accurately portrays the head color of female goldeneyes, but NG comes a little closer. Both guides' illustrations of the Black Phoebe are suitable for identification, but Robbins' comes closer to capturing the essence of the bird. The NG illustration gives the impression of a smaller bird.

I also had opportunities to compare the guides during a brief visit to Newfoundland in February. NG captured better the gestalt of Iceland and Black-headed gulls, and also illustrated more plumages. NG also provides a more realistic illustration of the Black Guillemot's winter plumage. The illustrations of winter-plumage Ruffs in NG more closely matched the appearance of one that roosted with Rock Doves on the fourth floor window ledge of Memorial University's Science Building! In particular, the distribution of white on the rump is shown more accurately in NG. Robbins includes better illustrations of Red Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and Boreal Chickadees. The various "red finches" in NG are not well done. The Pine Grosbeaks fail to convey that bird's size, and the crossbills have exaggerated, or misshapen bills. The two guides' illustrations of Boreal Chickadees are very different. Birds I saw showed chestnut flanks and dark caps as in Robbins, and were quite unlike NG's washed-out rendition.

I will deal now with some specific groups of birds. For gulls and terns I prefer the treatment in NG. Shapes, slopes of foreheads, and proportions generally are better, and I appreciate the additional subadult and winter plumages. The new plates in Robbins of dark gulls and of immature terns appear hastily painted and are poorly reproduced. Tail shapes are distorted on several of the young terns.

I prefer the treatment in Robbins of many of the shorebirds. In NG, the plates of curlews and godwits are almost comical in their distortions of leg lengths, bill shapes, head sizes, and even overall body sizes. Robbins' Marbled Godwit comes closer to the tawny color so distinctive in these birds. The tattlers, snipe, and phalaropes in NG also seem badly proportioned. On the other hand, the shorebird flight pictures in NG are very useful.

I also prefer Robbins for coverage of most of the warblers. The NG illustrations of Pine Warblers do not convey the larger size and heavier bill so evident in the field. The Black-and-White Warblers in NG look somehow "wrong". To me, Black-and-White Warblers appear very sleek, not ruffled. The color of female and young Cerulean Warblers is not accurate in either guide. In Robbins it is too gray, and in NG far too green.

The coverage of sparrows is one of the strong points of NG. Although body shapes are less realistic than in Robbins, more plumages are shown, and for more than a third of the species two or more races are included. I compared the illustrations in both guides to sparrow specimens at USF and concluded that the NG guide should be more useful for at least 8 species, and Robbins for 3 species. For the rest, coverage was similar, or else I lack the experience (or specimens) to judge. I get a better impression of sizes from Robbins; the Harris' Sparrows and Golden-crowned Sparrows look big as they should, and in NG they do not. NG's illustrations often are more accurate in details of plumage. NG shows better the tawny lower flanks of Lincoln's Sparrows, the pallid appearance of American Tree Sparrows, and the gray back of interior Rufous-crowned Sparrows. NG's winter illustrations of Swamp and Chipping sparrows will be helpful in Florida (but what happened to the cap of the breeding plumage Chipping Sparrow?).

I would recommend the Robbins guide as preferable for beginning birders. It gives adequate coverage of the common and distinctive species, and has fewer misleading illustrations. The more detailed coverage of the NG guide will be most useful to birders who are working with the more complicated groups, such as gulls, terns, and sparrows, or who are searching particularly for accidentals.—**Wayne Hoffman**, Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.

Florida Field Naturalist 12: 66-68, 1984.

Two field guides.—The reasons for the popularity of the 1966 edition of A guide to field identification: Birds of North America by Robbins, Bruun and Zim are the splendid illustrations, the helpful innovative features like the polychromatic range maps beside the text, and the plates with heads of warblers and sparrows; and the inclusion of most of the birds of North America in one volume. Robbins' revised edition (1983) is very similar to the original edition except for the impressive addition of 64 vagrant birds. In most instances, the new illustrations of bird stragglers are inserted among the existing pictures.

Some of these vagrants inserted are the Yellow-nosed Albatross, Bean Goose, White-cheeked Pintail, Falcated Teal, Garganey, and Black Francolin. Not all the newly added vagrants were frugally inserted onto the original plates. Plates of Alaskan peeps, robin-like thrushes, Florida and Alaska stragglers, pipits, and parrots are five of the nine new or heavily revised plates. The addition of these bird vagrants is the major strength of this revision.

Overall, the text has not been changed very much, with some pages unchanged. Thus the text does not include many of the new field marks established

in the last decade, such as the difference in the central rectrices of the Golden-fronted and Red-bellied woodpeckers, the difference in color of the eyes of the Long-billed and Brown thrashers, the double bump on the head of the Yellow-billed Loon, and the difference in the gray collar and other marks between the Clay-colored and Chipping sparrows (Birding, Oct. 1977).

The brief text could have been improved by the addition of important common field marks such as the white lines above and below the speculum of the Green-winged Teal, the all white undertail coverts of the Purple Gallinule, the slow flight of the Great Egret, the diagnostic swooping up to a perch by a flying Loggerhead Shrike, and the overlap in bill length of some Western and Semipalmated sandpipers.

There were even some errors in the illustrations and text of the original edition that were not changed. Although the wings of the Snail Kite were lengthened in the revision, the wings of the White-rumped Sandpiper still do not extend beyond the tail as they should. Although the culmen of the Groove-billed Ani was flattened somewhat (but not enough), the gonys was not. The length of the Groove-billed Ani is still incorrect; this bird is shorter and smaller than the Smooth-billed Ani. The green legs of the Common Moorhen are the same yellow color as the Purple Gallinule in the paintings. The light bands in the wings of the Band-rumped, Wilson's and Leach's storm-Petrels do not stand out prominently as illustrated. Robbins surely means *gliding* instead of *soaring* in his description of the flight of the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel.

Some improvements in the text were not matched by changes in the illustrations. For instance, Robbins mentions the Horned Grebe floating with its rump low and the Eared Grebe floating with its rump high, yet the paintings have not been changed to illustrate this point. The text adds that the Cory's Shearwater may have white upper tail coverts, but the illustration has not been altered to show this. Robbins adds that the Lesser Nighthawk is browner in color than the Common Nighthawk, yet the illustrations of the perched Common Nighthawk shows the reverse.

Two points create confusion. One, the use of common names from the ABA Checklist 2nd ed., 1982, instead of from the AOU Checklist, 6th ed., 1983, can only help to prolong the confusion created by these new name changes, particularly with the use of "Louisiana" and "Green" herons. Two, instead of using the standard method of measuring birds and taking the measurements from available literature so that all guides have uniform measurements, Robbins takes the measurements from bird banders who hold the bird in a life-like pose and measure it. This creates confusion if one consults more than one guide.

The polychromatic range maps are easily read and are placed handily beside the text, but they need a tremendous amount of work. Although the range in Florida of the Greater and Manx shearwaters and the Cliff Swallow are current, I found sixty-two errors pertaining to Florida in the range maps. Although some of these errors are extra-limital in nature, they still should have been marked according to the introduction. However, many of these errors are flagrant omissions, incorrect range extensions, and incorrect range abridgements. For example, the frequent presence of the Great Cormorant in winter in Florida is not indicated. The Great Black-backed Gull is regular in

winter in Florida, but the new edition shows the southern end of its winter range near Virginia. The occurrence of Semipalmated Sandpipers and Common Terns along the Florida and Gulf coasts in winter does not agree with authoritative sources. The Snowy Plover does not occur with any frequency at all on the lower east coast of Florida. The Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary Sandpiper range maps are transposed. The Tufted Titmouse does not occur as far south in Florida as shown; whereas, the White-breasted Nuthatch occurs farther south. If the Black-throated Green and Yellow warblers are considered as wintering warblers in south Florida, so should the Worm-eating, Magnolia and Wilson's warblers. The Franklin's Gull, Brown-crested and Least flycatchers, Bell's Vireo, Clay-colored Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow are not shown as wintering in Florida. According to the range maps, the Philadelphia Vireo, Golden-winged, Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia, and other warblers are not shown as occurring in Florida, even in migration.

Despite the absence of much current information on field marks and on Florida distribution of birds, this field guide will continue to be popular for some time because of its lifelike illustrations, its concise one handy-sized volume, and its low cost.

When Peterson's (1935, 1944, 1960) and Pough's (1946, 1951, 1957) field guides for North American birds became available, an observer needed three basic volumes and occasionally a Mexican, European, Asian or West Indies guide for bird wanderers. Then Robbins, Bruun and Zim (1966) admirably compressed it into one. Now, National Geographic (NG) with the Field guide to the birds of North America (1983) continues this consolidating trend by adding illustrations and text of many vagrants and introduced species, thus eliminating the need for a variety of foreign guides when one visits Alaska, Arizona, Texas, California or Florida. Forty-three vagrants are presented that are not illustrated in other popular field guides including Robbins' revision (1983) and the Audubon Society master guide to birding (1983). Illustrations of Stejneger's Petrel, Eared Trogon, Middendorff's Grasshopper-Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Blue Bunting, and many more will churn the avaricious juices of the reader. Instead of crowding the illustrations of many vagrants on one page, NG inserts them in reasonably proper taxonomic sequence, except for the raptors. So the guided tour devotee, the bird chaser, and other eternally optimistic birders should rush without delay to purchase this book if only because of its many colored plates of sporadic visitors.

At last, field guides are now available that utilize some of the information learned about field identification during the past decade. Both the NG guide and the Master Guide completely dominate the other all purpose popular field guides in this respect. Examples of some of the new marks are the Yellow-billed Loon has a "double bump" effect on the top of its head, skuas have a "hunch-backed" look, and the Long and Short-Dowitchers in juvenile plumage have different tertial fathers. Helpful features for observers in Florida include the description of the distinctive flight of the Black-capped Petrel which is evident at a considerable distance at sea and the description of call notes of eastern *Empidonax* flycatchers.

Despite the compression of the text by NG into one volume, it still competes well with the Master Guide's three volumes and occasionally scoops the field as in the following field marks: a white U on the rump of the Ruff; the difference in length of the legs of a flying Cattle Egret, Snowy Egret, and

Little Blue Heron; the absence of a pronounced hook on the bill of the Franklin's Gull; the three-toned neck of the Arctic Loon; the short outer primary feather of a Lesser Nighthawk; the difference in the tails of the Golden-fronted and Red-bellied woodpeckers.

Although the text is excellent, some omissions occur, especially concerning Florida birding. Many alarm notes of Florida wintering passerines, especially warblers, are left out as well as the tail cocking of the Hermit Thrush. The chestnut patch on the wing of a flying Virginia Rail and the short neck of the Sharp-shinned Hawk are not mentioned. A good field mark of the Limpkin that was omitted is the flicking of the primaries during flight. This book fails to mention the slow wing beats of the Great Egret as an easy field mark for separating this species from the other smaller white egrets and herons in flight. Field guides of the future should meet the needs of the observer by devoting more space to plumage, vocalization, and behavior of birds on their wintering grounds in the South.

In addition to omissions, there are a few questionable statements. The bright yellow orange legs of the Purple Gallinule is a sound field mark so when NG states that the Common Moorhen has yellow legs (it has green), this misinformation is particularly confusing. Interestingly, the assertion that the Bay-breasted Warbler is an earlier migrant than the Blackpoll Warbler is not substantiated by our local records on the lower east coast of Florida nor by Cunningham's "A field list of south Florida birds." The description of the Least Bittern call, ". . . a series of harsh *tut* notes," does not sound like its soft *coo* at all. The ruddy Quail-Dove is very rare on the Florida Keys, not casual. The *conspicuous* eye ring of the Alder Flycatcher was surely meant to be *inconspicuous*. Despite these and a few other faults, the expertise of the consultants and of the many other sharp field observers mentioned in the acknowledgements is evident in this outstanding field guide.

What makes the NG field guide distinctive is its abundant use of illustrations as a method of instruction. For example, a number of plumage variations are presented for many species: 113 species have three different plumages, 92 have four, 34 have five, 13 have six, and 2 have eight. Other effective instructional uses of the pictures are the numerous paintings of birds in flight, including separate pages of flying ducks, gulls, female hawks, and shorebirds. The latter is especially informative as it shows the difference in flight among the Bar-tailed, Hudsonian and Black-tailed godwits and between the Whimbrel and the Eskimo Curlew; the Ruff and the Pectoral Sandpiper; the Greater and Lesser golden-plovers; and others.

The quality of most of the illustrations is accurate and uniform despite the use of thirteen artists with varying degrees of competency and style. Although some pictured birds have thick necks, short necks, thick legs and plump bodies, one might attribute this to the artist's style. Unfortunately, there are a few flaws in some of the illustrations. By using the measurements from available sources and by comparing the length of the bill in relation to the length of the body, I determined through extrapolation that the bills of the Carolina Wren and Gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes were too short. The Little Blue Heron illustration shows the two immatures to have a yellow cere (it is dark) and some yellowish color in the bill (it is bluish gray or slate with a black tip). The feet of the Connecticut Warbler are astonishingly large.

Neither the text nor the illustrations indicate that the Summer Tanager has a longer and larger bill than the Scarlet Tanager. In all plumages the primaries extend 1 to 2 cm beyond the tail of the Snail Kite, so the wings are too short in the Snail Kite painting. In the dove plate, the Key West Quail-Dove and the Ruddy Quail-Dove are too small in size on the page in relation to the Common Ground-Dove. In addition, some of the illustrations do not follow the field marks presented in the text. For example, in the plate of the Purple Gallinule the greenish yellow legs should be a bright yellow or yellow orange as the text indicates. The picture of the winter Red-throated Loon does not follow the point in the text that the pale head and neck often blend into the white on the throat although the Red-throated Loon painting used as a comparison on the previous plate shows this point well. The illustration of the Cory's Shearwater does not show the white on the upper tail to form a white crescent as mentioned in the text. However, despite a few shortcomings, most of the plates are accurate and well executed.

The polychromatic range maps appear next to the text and are relatively easy to read, but they contain several errors. The maps did not indicate that the following species winter in Florida: scoters, Western Kingbird, Brown-crested and Least flycatchers, Northern Rough-winged Swallow and Northern Oriole. The White-breasted Nuthatch's range is farther south than shown and the Bewick's Wren and Henslow's Sparrow range is too far south (Stevenson 1960, A key to Florida Birds). The Red-throated Loon and Common Merganser are very rare in south Florida, not wintering there as shown. The Limpkin's range is poorly done. The entire area between Lake Okeechobee south to Everglades National Park with its many Limpkins is marked as having none. The Snowy Plover is inaccurately marked as occurring only in Florida on the coast of the Panhandle. So obviously much more care could have been taken on the range maps in Florida.

Despite a few inaccuracies in the illustrations and text and some inaccurate range maps, I recommend this book because of the inclusion of many bird vagrants, the many illustrations of plumage variations, the plates of birds in flight, the paintings comparing species, and many of the new field marks discovered in the past decade.—Howard P. Langridge, 1421 W. Ocean Ave., Lantana, Florida 33462.

Florida Field Naturalist 12: 68-72, 1984.

Two field guides.—Bird watchers of all descriptions await the arrival of new field guides with high expectations and anticipation. Usually a new guide or revised edition comes along every 5-10 years or so, and the time interval between new arrivals is long enough to polarize the birding public into advocates and critics of extant editions. Until now, birdwatchers have never had so much to expect, so much to criticize and so many books to choose from. The new guides featured in this review are just two of three totally new or revised guides of North American birds. Both are extremely thorough in their coverage of North American residents, migrants, exotics and accidentals. Similarly, each guide *generally* follows the latest AOU taxonomic sequence (my 1980 Peterson, 4th edition, has been a virtual desk copy because I cannot feel comfortable with the haphazard ordering of bird families).

Most of the similarities end here. The Robbins guide remains a practical field companion, easily stuffed into a pocket or pocketbook. National Geographic (NG) has opted for a more spacious treatment rendering most pockets useless for field storage. This difference may be enough to determine whether or not one purchases a new field guide. But if you're more than a pocket stuffing birder, both new guides deserve a closer look. At first glance, the NG guide is nearly overwhelming. The reproduction of original artwork is superb and it is a feast for the eyes. The number of artists used has resulted in a diversity of styles and adds a dimension to the guide that no other has matched. It was the obvious intent of NG to pigeonhole their artists into taxonomic specialities (certainly not to save time). However, if a particular artist demonstrated a real verve towards one taxon, this was not sufficient to predict a similar result with another bird group. For example, Janosick's three plover plates are technically accurate and attractive, yet his juvenile stilt has legs that are too long, and the oystercatchers and avocets appear rubber-legged; the result of indistinct shading and improper proportions. Similarly, his winter Common Loon sports a bill better suited to a woodpecker. To be sure, though, these inconsistencies do little, if any, to hinder field identification, and the artist by artist comments that follow are primarily based on aesthetics.

Marc Hanson's pelagic seabirds are technically perfect and are a pleasure to look at. His Limpkin is especially lifelike. An examination of his coots and moorhens, though, reveal oversize legs and feet, and the Purple Gallinules are buoyed on rather equatorial-looking lilies.

Cynthia House complements the NG guide with accurate and consistent waterfowl renderings. These plates, however, appear less "alive" than many in the guide; a possible result of more subdued colors and depictions of birds in rather stiff postures. House's whistling-ducks, though, seem to capture the essence of these birds which in most guides appear more duck-like than behavior, morphology and taxonomy would indicate (here's a good example of a questionable departure from the AOU sequence).

Donald Malick provides, perhaps, the most spectacular artwork in the NG guide. I continue to marvel at his tension-filled, wonderfully composed accipiter plate. The subtly different positioning of head, body and tail of each bird encourages the eye to scan the page in a circular motion; it's easy to become captivated. The food habits of these birds are also quite apparent (maybe too apparent for some), and adds an additional natural history dimension to the plate. Similar high marks are due for Malick's owls and woodpeckers. And, while I'm not partial towards Piciformes, his Ivory-billed/Pileated plate is probably the most artistically attractive in the guide. My only contentions with Malick's work is that he got away with giving a Golden Eagle a miniature beak and that he didn't get away with illustrating all the raptors. Pendleton's kite/harrier plate and first buteo plate, while accurate, simply detract from a brilliant treatment of this exciting bird group. Interestingly, the Pendleton Phasianidae and hawks-in-flight plates are more than adequate and are another good example of the intra-artist inconsistencies mentioned earlier.

John O'Neill, along with Doug Pratt, makes up the LSU art-manfia which is well-represented in the guide. O'Neill's extensive field work in South America made him a natural for the parrot/trogon plates which are of the highest quality. His orioles are equally good. Unfortunately, the swallows, an elegant

and colorful group of birds, are represented quite awkwardly with stiff posturing and heads too small. O'Neill's Bobolinks, suffer a similar proportional impropriety.

O'Neill's colleague, Doug Pratt, is the best represented artist in the NG guide, which is to the guide's credit as Pratt's plates are excellent. Pratt provides little fuel for criticism, and he has very few distracting paintings. These distractions are barely significant, but why is his female Red-breasted Nuthatch so frazzled, and where did his Connecticut Warblers get their big red feet? Pratt treats the hummingbirds and the bulk of the doves and songbirds with perfection. His obvious knowledge of bird behavior and anatomy combines to create a style better suited, perhaps, for fine art prints. The result is a series of plates containing nearly three-dimensional figures. It is difficult to pinpoint any one outstanding plate by Pratt, but, his stop-action hummingbirds come as close to capturing their brilliant iridescence as any hummingbird painting I've seen.

Chuck Ripper's alcids and swifts were a pleasant surprise. Having seen many of his line drawings in various publications over the years, it was a treat to see equally outstanding and even more lifelike color portraits. Diane Pierce also fits into this pleasantly pleasing category. I once examined a display of her paintings in Columbus, Ohio, in the late 70s. It was apparent that a technical skill was there, but so were anatomical inconsistencies. Since that time her efforts have improved noticeably and her plates are generally consistent and accurate. I particularly like her renderings of sparrows and other seed eaters in typical vegetation and landscapes (I don't find the backgrounds distracting in the least). A white-eyed Rufous-sided Towhee would have been a useful addition to the towhee plate. Pierce's flamingo-jabiru-Woodstork plate is outstanding. The only exceptions to her excellence is the series of Black-crowned Night-Herons which appear unnaturally stiff and squat and her short-legged Sandhill Cranes. Also, the adult Tricolored Heron seems to be mislabeled in "breeding" plumage. A breeding Tricolored should exhibit dark, slate-blue neck coloration as well as darker and brighter cobalt bill and legs.

Thomas Shultz's skuas, gulls and terns are adequate representations of this large group. However, because of the often pale coloration in gulls and terns, many of these plates deserved a darker background to better differentiate the birds from their printed surroundings. Schultz's jaegers, appearing in four rows of alternating direction create an uncomfortable tension that may distract the user enough to interfere with identification. And, while a few other plates illustrate opposite-facing birds, only the jaegers seem disconcerting.

Fortunately for reviewers and readers alike, the Golden Guide features only one artist. Arthur Singer's birds appear consistently accurate and attractive throughout the guide. Singer's work probably represents the most comprehensive, single-volume coverage of birds that has been completed by any artist. And there is little worth criticizing. A few of his new plates (immature terns, gannet and boobies, Florida and Alaska stragglers) seem to have been done hurriedly and lack the neatness and precision of his earlier work.

The few problems associated with the Robbins guide have little to do with the artist. The range maps are generally better in the new edition, however the use of state boundaries (as in the NG guide) would have added a useful reference. The quality of printing is inconsistent throughout the revised guide. The rearranged gulls on page 143 look faded and out of focus

as if the birds were cut out and reassembled on poster board. Most of the other large gulls seem to have this problem as well. Several plates just look washed out, including the grackles and cowbirds, yellow orioles, and cross-bills. The towhees look very grainy and a little anemic, while the goldfinch yellows are day-glow bright while other colors are faded. It is unfortunate that my tea-stained, mildewed first edition contains brighter, more lifelike plates than the revised edition. Poor-quality printing also reduced the utility of the pipit tail line drawings. They are virtually indistinguishable from one another. While it is doubtful that the lower quality printing has created identification problems, it is unfortunate that Singer's high quality work has been sacrificed for an inexpensive cover price. I would have gladly paid an extra dollar or two for art reproductions equivalent to the NG guide.

One last contention with the Golden Guide is Robbins' insistence on including sonograms for many species. A compelling argument is given on the utility and value of 2-dimensional representations of bird song. But imagine trying to enjoy your favorite Beethoven or Blues Brothers tune by reading the score. It's just not the same as a recording or live performance. I doubt many music lovers would buy a recording based on a paper image, as I doubt many birders have found sonograms useful in the field.

Finally, which one should you buy? Despite all my criticisms, I like them both. In neither guide were anatomical and printing errors great enough to seriously affect accurate field identification. However, a good deal of variation in quality of plates is inherent to both guides. NG's variation is due to the large number of artists used while Robbins' variability is apparently the result of budget printing. The Golden Guide will remain my back-pocket guide, but I'll also find ways of taking the larger guide along; even if it stays on my car's front seat, or I start carrying a small backpack. I often find myself picking up the NG guide simply to enjoy the illustrations and their inherent variety. I'm not compelled to do this with the Robbins guide, although the revised edition should remain the standard field companion for all birders. But get the National Geographic guide, too. Its beautiful, spacious plates will provide enjoyable book watching while being a most practical field reference for bird watching.—David S. Maehr, Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, Wildlife Research Laboratory, 4005 South Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601.

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A guide to the birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.—Herbert A. Raffaele. 1983. Fondo Educativo Interamericano, San Juan. 256 pp., 24 color plates, 17 black and white plates, 9 maps. \$13.95 paperback.—This well-written book is the first comprehensive guide to the 273 species of birds known from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (British and United States). Winter visitors, 47% of the avifauna, are described and illustrated making a second volume for identification of North American migrants unnecessary. I particularly appreciate inclusion of the legion of introduced species (the author lists 32 species breeding in the area and 18 as yet not established), which eliminates the need for guides to the birds of Africa, Australia, South America, and Asia.