

Reviews

My World of Birds: Memoirs of an Ornithologist. By George J. Wallace. Dorrance & Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1979: 345 pp., several black-and-white photographs. \$10.00.

George Wallace, as with many ornithologists, developed an early interest in birds and later pursued his childhood avocation as a professional. After receiving an A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Wallace settled into what was to become a 30-year teaching career at Michigan State University. The first three chapters of this autobiography detail the author's years as a student and young researcher. One chapter is devoted to Wallace's tenure as warden of the Pleasant Valley Sanctuary in Massachusetts, another to a sabbatical year spent in Colombia. Instead of devoting space to such things as the trials associated with writing his ornithology textbook or the results of his research efforts, most of the book is a travelogue of a bird-lister. Chapter after chapter Wallace leads the reader through excursions around the world in search of new birds for his life list. While the author does provide some insight and interpretation of bird associations and conservation problems in various parts of the world, the two major emphases of the book are the lists of birds he saw and the problems he had in seeing them. The latter were not the hair-raising escapades of an adventurer in a hostile environment, but more often than not the plebian worries of bad weather, lost luggage, and cancelled flights.

I have not had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Wallace, but from this book I sense that he is a person who struggled for support of his discipline unsuccessfully at Michigan State. Wallace's bitterness as a result of this failure is evident throughout the book.

While the book "flows" well, I was continually distracted by poor editing. After a while I found myself more interested in grammatical errors and redundancies (e.g., p. 306, "five concurrent sessions going on simultaneously") than I was in the author's travels. In spite of the editorial flaws and a frequent air of pessimism, Wallace has "told it like it was." If you're a "lister" with hopes of someday going abroad to search for birds or if you are a budding ornithologist with a desire to foresee some of the problems of being an ornithologist in academia, you'll likely find some enjoyable reading in "My World of Birds." --J.A.J.

Birds of the Great Plains: Breeding Species and Their Distribution. By Paul A. Johnsgard, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979: xiv + 539 pp. \$25.00

In writing "Birds of the Great Plains," Johnsgard aimed at a general audience. The detailed map for each species and the modest literature review will also make this book a handy reference for the shelf of any mid-continent naturalist. Following an introduction to the physiography and ecology of the Great Plains, is an approximately one-page summary of the breeding status and needs of each bird species known to nest in the states of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, or Oklahoma, or in eastern Colorado, northeastern New Mexico, northern Texas, western Minnesota, or western Iowa. The book has little information that isn't in bird books of these states, but the value of this volume is that Johnsgard has put the "meat" of all of these books into one volume. Faults include a weakness in the review of recent literature and a failure to follow American Ornithologists' Union names for all species. The eight pages of color photographs of selected species are of excellent to poor quality and probably are not worth the price they added to the book. Nevertheless, this will be a useful book and should be in any high school or college library in the region and in any university library.

Bird Finding in Tennessee. By Michael Lee Bierly. Published by Michael Lee Bierly, 3825 Bedford Ave., Nashville, Tennessee 37215. 255 pp., numerous maps, some black-and-white photographs. \$8.00 (paper).

Here is a labor of love -- and one from which Tennessee birders will reap continuing benefits. Bierly has identified 112 prime birding areas across the state of Tennessee and has given precise information on how to find them and what to expect to see when you arrive. Each area is clearly identified on an associated map. Brief descriptions of the areas identify the bird "specialties" to look for as well as when and how they might be found. Some special sections at the back of the book add immeasurably to its usefulness. The first is the "Tennessee 300", an annotated list of the birds of Tennessee. Following this is a directory of birders around the state - including addresses and phone numbers so that one might get some local help on a short visit to an area. Next there is a brief description of the Tennessee Ornithological Society and its several chapters. This list also includes meeting times and places and additional local contacts. Because of the nature of much of this information, the book may become dated in a few years - I hope that TOS will lend its support to encourage timely revisions. Mississippi birders venturing north will surely want to take this book along!

Endangered Birds: Management Techniques for Preserving Threatened Species. Stanley A. Temple (ed). The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin. 1977: 466 pp., 31 black-and-white photographs, 73 tables, graphs, charts, maps.

This book contains the proceedings of a 1977 international symposium on endangered species. Papers by more than 50 scientists report on current works, and together these papers form a broad overview of the current state of the art and science of preserving endangered birds. Here, in one volume, the reader may find the latest, but certainly not the last, word in the relatively new science of saving endangered birds ... for such a science is a new frontier, and its biologists are the pioneers in a struggle for threatened wildlife which goes beyond the traditional holding patterns of legal protection, habitat preservation, and education.

The intent of this book is to provide ornithologists, wildlife biologists, game managers, conservationists, and ecologists with a current and accurate evaluation of the pioneering results of this new field. That it does with admirable completeness. As a reference work, there is nothing in publication with which it can be compared, but it stands on its own merits of good, overall coverage of a complex subject.

Either by coincidence or design, this book is also provocative, exciting, dramatic, and with the exception of a few chapters, is a highly readable introduction for those not actively involved in the field. I cite chapters (papers) 8, Artificial Nest Ledges for Bald Ibises; 11, Brood Parasitism: Reducing Interactions between Kirtland's Warblers and Brown-headed Cowbirds; 12, Excluding Competitors from Bermuda Petrel Nesting Burrows; 24, Sibling Aggression and Cross-fostering of Eagles, among many others, as chapters in point.

The book is presented in ten parts, ranging from Endangered Bird Problems and the Concept of Managing Threatened Species, through Alleviating Problems of Competition, Predation, Parasitism and Disease, Manipulating Aspects of Nesting Biology, Captive Breeding of Endangered Birds, to Integrated Approaches to Management of Endangered Birds.

Throughout, one sees the mix of old and new methods, and the promise of success in modifying bird behavior to fit a changed environment. One cheers for the gutsy manipulation and intervention into the life histories and ecology of endangered species at the precise stage where each has been adversely affected by environmental conditions, and learns the merit of such last resort methods as captive breeding. The premises put forth in each chapter come from the practitioners of the art. From preface to summary, there is optimism, however guarded, from those who struggle with and for the endangered birds of the world. And lest we become too complacent, there are reminders that the old threats

still exist and are sometimes only the tip of the iceberg amidst the more subtle, limiting factors of a society which channels its funds and energies into the exploitation of its dwindling resources.

This book is highly recommended, both as a reference work and as an introduction to a subject which should demand more attention. Although the print is small, it is sharp and easy to read. One might hope that this is only the first volume, and that the proceedings of the next symposium on Management Techniques for Preserving Threatened Species will again be made generally available in book form.--Judith Touns, 4 Hartford Place, Gulfport, MS.

Birds of the South. By Charlotte Hilton Green. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1975: 277 pp., numerous black-and-white line drawings. \$3.50 (paper).

This is a reprint of a book first published in 1933. Charlotte Green wrote this book for the southern layman interested in birds. She freely cites contributions of the important ornithologists of her day, but technical information is skillfully woven into the text with her personal observations. Each chapter deals with one to a few species and each is introduced by a few lines of poetry about these birds. This is light reading and relatively accurate. A few bird names have been changed (Purple Grackle = Common Grackle, etc.), but the average birder will recognize these. Some species have since expanded their ranges (e.g., Eastern Phoebe). A few inaccuracies are simply reflections of the state of our knowledge in 1933. For example, Green portrays the sapsucker as a "bad" bird and suggests that several pairs of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers live together. Today we know that sapsuckers feed primarily on the sap of already diseased trees and that the groups in which Red-cockaded Woodpeckers often occur usually include only a single breeding pair and some of their male offspring from previous years. In general, there is much to be learned from this book and the style of writing makes the book suitable for school libraries as well as the interested adult. At the price, this is a real bargain.