

REVIEWS

Keith County Journal. John Janovy, Jr. 1978. New York, St. Martin's Press. Pp. xi + 210, illus. \$8.95.

The charm of Janovy's book lies in his evident love and ability to write about the sandhills country of Nebraska (wherein lies Keith County). For those uninitiated to the vast landscapes of the western sandhills, this book will be a treat. Janovy has included watercolors (reproduced in black-and-white) of his favorite sandhill subjects, 13 are birds. His cover painting of flying curlews captures the delicate nature of the sandhills and his passion for research there. His writing covers the ecology of his study subjects (snails, fish, birds, and their parasites), an essay on George Sutton, and commentary on the philosophy of science and the inherent politics. It is in the latter discourses where the book sometimes drags - to the point of stopping. Overall, the charm of the illustrations and the wit of the author make the book easy reading.--Ren Lohofener, Terrestrial Ecology Division, MSU Research Center, NSTL Station, Ms. 39529.

The Role of Insectivorous Birds in Forest Ecosystems. Edited by James G. Dickson, Richard N. Connor, Robert R. Fleet, Jerome A. Jackson, and James C. Kroll. 1979. New York, Academic Press. \$24.00.

As is usually the case in the published proceedings of a symposium, the collected papers do not adequately reflect the breadth of the title. However, the brighter side of collected symposium papers is also represented. The papers are more detailed with more comprehensive literature reviews than would be the case in papers honed down for journal publication. Lucky is the researcher who has the symposium proceedings to draw from.

As would be expected with 18 papers and 24 authors, the style, readability, and content varies. Major sections are: censusing birds (2 papers), predator foraging strategies (6 papers), ecology (8 papers). Some papers are very topic and species specific, others more general. Overall, the papers lumped in the ecology section are too specific to represent the section heading. Unless the prospective reader has a specific research interest in bird-prey-forest ecology, the price versus contents conflict will keep it from the personal library shelves.--Ren Lohofener, Terrestrial Ecology Division, MSU Research Center, NSTL Station, Ms. 39529.

Owls. By Tony Angell, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1979: 80 pp., 63 drawings by the author. \$8.95, paperback.

This book is a reprint of a hardbound edition published in 1974. If you are a "hoot-o-phile" you'll love the artwork of Tony Angell. The accompanying text is also a piece of art, carefully weaving factual information into a pleasing "mood-setting" essay about each species. The amount of factual material to be learned about the eighteen species presented varies considerably - but this is not a textbook on owls - it is a book to be enjoyed.--J.A.J.

Research is a Passion with Me. By Margaret Morse Nice, Consolidated Amethyst Communications Inc., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1979: 324 pp. \$9.95, paper, black-and-white photographs and line drawings by the author.

This is the autobiography of a woman with a passion for birds and a thirst for knowledge. Margaret Morse Nice grew up in the late 1800's in a small town academic setting. Her father was a history professor at Amherst College. The natural world was important in her early life and birds were foremost in her interests. Margaret graduated from Mount Holyoke College and did graduate work at Clark University, though she did not complete work for a graduate degree. Instead she married and moved with her husband to Oklahoma. Along with her marriage and raising four daughters Margaret developed a professional career that led Ernst Mayr of Harvard to say that "she almost single-handedly initiated a new era in American ornithology." Margaret was a prolific writer, publishing in professional journals in ornithology and educational psychology as well as authoring several books. Without a doubt, however, she is best known for her detailed studies of the Song Sparrow. By using bird banding techniques she developed histories of many individuals in a local population and studied the dynamics of that population for a period of years. Her book "The Watcher at the Nest" is a classic that every student of animal behavior and every amateur interested in seriously studying birds should read. This autobiography is fascinating reading. Through it one can gain insight into the gentle genius of the "Song Sparrow Lady." The book is filled with choice biological anecdotes - it is barren of many details of other aspects of her life. Three brief sentences mention the death of her daughter Eleanor at the age of nine. For the student of ornithology, behavior, or ecology, for the amateur bird bander, for anyone interested in a success story par excellence, I could not recommend a more inspiring, more enjoyable book than "Research is a Passion with me." --J.A.J.

The Complete Outfitting & Source Book for Bird Watching. By Michael Scofield, The Great Outdoors Trading Company, Marshall, California, 1978: 192 pp. \$6.95, paperback, numerous drawings and black-and-white photographs.

In somewhat of a catalog style this volume describes the array of binoculars, spotting scopes, telephoto lenses, tape recorders, and other birding paraphernalia on the market at the time of publication. Certainly as new equipment becomes available this volume will quickly be out-of-date. Descriptive information seems to be that of the manufacturer and no ratings or prices of equipment are provided. Some preliminary discussion of binoculars, scopes, etc. is helpful. The listing of state organizations notably leaves out the Mississippi Ornithological Society. A listing of bird-watching sites is essentially limited to National Wildlife Refuges, Audubon Sanctuaries, and National Parks. A checklist of North American birds provided as an appendix has birds arranged alphabetically and contains numerous errors, (e.g., both Dipper and Ouzel are listed; Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are not listed; AOU names are not consistently used and some names are misspelled - "Sissor-tailed Flycatcher"). Some entries are ridiculous: 11 species of storks are listed as occurring in the United States and Canada and a whole series of what appear to be first-names of warblers are listed as terns.

This volume will be useful to the "buying" birder - but not for long. I hope new editions will come out frequently and that deficiencies will be taken care of. I suggest checking publication date before you buy this book - and I would not buy the 1978 edition.--J.A.J.

The California Condor. By Carl B. Koford, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1966: 154 pp., many black-and-white photographs. \$3.00, paperback.

For those of you who have read of the death of a Condor chick this year and have heard of the controversy surrounding plans to save this rapidly declining and perilously endangered species, I highly recommend this reprint of Koford's classic study. It was first published in 1953 as a special report of the National Audubon Society, but remains today as a major source of our knowledge of these magnificent birds.--J.A.J.

A Garland of Nightingales. By Hockley Clarke. Gordon Cremonesi Publishers, distributed by Antheneum Publishers; New York, 1980: 120 pp., 15 monochromatic drawings and photographs. \$15.95.

This is a harmless little book about nightingales. Were it not for the price tag, it might be welcomed for its elegant treatment of a sentimental favorite among birds. The jacket is gold embossed, and the pages are of fine quality paper. The print is large and easy to read, attractive in a maroon against beige background. The text on each page is framed in finely etched blossoms, leaves and curlicues. The line drawings and photographs are well reproduced in maroon against beige. From an aesthetic standpoint, this book is worth the money. Even the text, while introducing absolutely nothing new about nightingales, is classy, offering personal glimpses of nightingales by the author, and excerpts of prose and poetry of that most esteemed bird, by the likes of John Keats, William Wordsworth, John Milton, and others.

As is often the case of a bird book aimed at a popular audience, A Garland of Nightingales is of no use to the ornithologist, student, or even the ardent amateur birder, whose bird-book allowances must be spent selectively.

The one-half hour it takes to read this book, and enjoy it, hardly justifies its ultimate fate, which is abandonment in a dusty corner of the bookshelf. Given the unlikely happenstance of coming into a vast inheritance, I would still hesitate to buy this book; it would be frivolous and extravagant.

If, however, I were looking for the perfect gift for that someone who has everything, I would consider the \$15.95 well spent, although I believe that he who has everything will be just as likely as I to consign it to the unused upper shelves.--Judith A. Toups.

Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona. 2nd ed. By Gale Monson and Allan R. Phillips. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1981: 240 pp. 3 maps. \$5.95 (Paperback).

Here is a most unusual book. To be sure, it will be of use to the itinerant birder. But this is not a book of the same genre as other annotated checklists that have come out in recent years. It does not give you precise directions to the best birding localities, nor does it dwell at any length on ecological associations of species. This

checklist does give specific geographic distribution patterns of birds in Arizona and for these the book is well worth the price to the average birder. But birders will have some difficulty with the organization of the book. Species are not arranged in field guide order nor in current AOU order - rather they are arranged in what the authors feel should be the proper systematic arrangement. Many of the innovations will no doubt be followed by the AOU; others will not. In addition, species are listed with scientific name given first in boldface type, followed by common name in normal type. And if you have just become accustomed to recent AOU changes in scientific names, be prepared for a few additional changes made by Monson and Phillips. For example the authors drop Picoides as the genus name for our pied woodpeckers and revert to Dendrocopos. The book ends with a strange note: the description of two new subspecies of the Red Crossbill! It's a shame such a taxonomic effort wasn't put into the technical literature where it would receive the attention it deserves. In spite of the strong taxonomic slant and departures from current styles for this sort of publication, I strongly recommend the book as a companion to Phillips, Marshall, and Monson's "The Birds of Arizona" and to your favorite field guide if you are lucky enough to be heading west on a birding trip.--J.A.J.

Beyond the Bird Feeder. By John V. Dennis. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1981: 201 pp. Numerous black-and-white drawings by Matthew Kalmenoff. \$13.95 (Hardcover).

This book is intended as a companion guide to Dennis' "A Complete Guide to Bird Feeding," and the author's intent was to discuss the "habits and behavior of feeding station birds when they are not at your feeder." Included are chapters on migration, food, water, various maintenance behaviors, eluding enemies, the various perils that birds face, and bird houses. The illustrations by Kalmenoff are generally well done and contribute to the quality of the book. Dennis' style of writing is "easy flowing" and I'm sure the book would be enjoyed by anyone who has enough interest to identify the birds that come to his or her feeder. However, the author's intent of discussing the birds that visit our feeders is often stretched to include species that do not normally visit feeders (e.g., Eastern Phoebes), and in spite of token references to a few western species, the book is written primarily for an eastern audience. The migration map (p. 7) will leave the novice with the mistaken idea that all northeastern migrants follow the Atlantic flyway. In general this book succeeds in fulfilling the author's goals and it would make a nice addition to any birdwatcher's library.--J.A.J.