

Reviews

Prairie Birds in Color. By Doug Gilroy. Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1976: x + 111 pp., 154 color photographs. \$9.95 (softcover), \$14.95 (hardcover).

This book is basically a collection of color photographs of 92 species of prairie birds, with a brief accompanying text. The author, Doug Gilroy, farmed for 40 years near Regina, Saskatchewan, and since 1954 has written a nature column for the "Western Producer", a weekly western Canadian farmers' newspaper. "Prairie Birds in Color" is an expansion of an earlier book, "An Album of Prairie Birds", published in 1967.

I have a few minor criticisms of the book. One is the use of names (e.g. Upland Plover, Sparrow Hawk, Oregon Junco) made obsolete by the 32nd supplement to the A.O.U. Check-list. Unfortunately, many people will be unaware of these changes until new editions of the major field guides are published. The book also contains a few spelling errors in Latin names (e.g. Cicus for Circus and sparvertius for sparverius).

Most of the photographs are good, and a few are excellent. My favorites include the newly-hatched coot (p. 18), Long-eared Owl fledglings (p. 44), Pine Grosbeak (p. 89), and young Loggerhead Shrikes (p. 93). The selection of species is good; Gilroy seems especially fond of waterfowl (27 photos) and owls (13 photos), but no major group of birds is slighted except for the hard-to-photograph warblers, represented only by the Yellow Warbler. The sequence of species follows no obvious pattern, although it vaguely resembles the Wetmore sequence (starting with White Pelican and ending with Vesper Sparrow); yet, e.g., Veery is followed by Ring-billed Gull. The text accompanying the photographs is brief but generally informative, often including details on photographic techniques.

In conclusion, this is an attractive and pleasing book of bird photographs, whose deficiencies are relatively minor. The price seems a little high, but those who enjoy good bird photography will probably find it a worthwhile purchase.--W. C. Weber, Box Z, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

---

Roger Tory Peterson's Dozen Birding Hot Spots. By George H. Harrison. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1976: 288 pp., numerous black-and-white photographs, 8 pages of color photographs, several maps. \$9.95.

Roger Tory Peterson is perhaps the best known personality among American birdwatchers; his field guides have been largely responsible for the popularity of "birding" today. Without a doubt Roger has an audience all over North America (and probably the world) that is interested in where he thinks the best places to find birds are. George Harrison asked Roger to list the dozen places in North America that he favored most for birding; then George and his wife Kit spent a year visiting those places.

They tried to hit each hot spot when it was "hottest" for birding. This book is a narrative of their year's experiences. The twelve hot spots include the Everglades; three National Wildlife Refuges in southern Texas; the Platte River in Nebraska; southeastern Arizona; Point Pelee, Ontario; Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah; the coast of Maine; the Gaspé Peninsula and Bonaventure Island, Quebec; Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania; Cape May, New Jersey; Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Wisconsin; and Tule Lake, Klamath Basin, and Malheur National Wildlife Refuges in California and Oregon. After reading the book, I still feel that Dauphin Island, Alabama deserves a place among the top twelve, but, as Roger states in the introduction, these twelve are his choices. Some of the dozen were selected because of the diversity and exotic nature of the birds found there (Everglades, south Texas), others for the extreme concentrations of certain species (Platte River, Horicon National Wildlife Refuge). All are certainly places that enthusiastic birders would want to visit. Kit Harrison's "Visitor Tips" at the end of each chapter will be of great help to those who get to make these treks. These tips include such information as the best time to schedule a visit; what clothing to take along; where camping, motels, and restaurants can be found; what reservations are needed and how to make them; and where the nearest restrooms, telephones, gasoline, groceries, hospitals, and airports are to be found. This book is well-written and generally well-illustrated. I recommend it as good reading for the itinerant birder. J. A. Jackson, Box Z, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

---

Crows of the World. By Derek Goodwin. Comstock Publishing Associates, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1976: 354 pp., numerous range maps and line drawings, three color plates by Robert Gillmor. \$28.50

The family Corvidae, which includes our own crows and jays, includes about 116 species and has representatives on each continent. In this volume Goodwin attempts to summarize our knowledge of the Corvidae. The first part of the book includes generalized descriptions of "crow" behavior and ecology; the second, and largest, portion of the book is composed of "species accounts". Each account includes a brief description of the species, its distribution and habitat preferences, field characters, feeding and general habits, nest and eggs, voice, displays and social behavior, and a few references. For most species accounts there is also a line drawing of the species and a generalized range map. Three color plates which illustrate some of the diversity in the family are nice, but not spectacular. I had difficulty deciding on what audience the author was trying to reach with this book. The presentation of material certainly wouldn't make interesting reading to most amateurs, the illustrations are neither numerous enough nor of sufficient quality to make this a good "coffee table" book, and the depth of coverage makes it of little more than general use to the professional. I found the writing very "dry" and noticed a number of typographical errors - including

misspelling of the names of two of the ornithologists listed in the acknowledgments as persons to whom the author is "particularly indebted". There is no complete bibliography at the end of the book and the only indices are to species names. Literature citations at the end of chapters and species accounts are often incomplete. In short, I would recommend this book only for large libraries and persons with a special interest in the family Corvidae. In my opinion this book is simply too expensive for what it is to warrant recommendation to a wider audience. J. A. Jackson, Box Z, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

---

Wintering of Bald Eagles in the Lower 48 States. By Donald A. Spencer. National Agricultural Chemical Association, 1155 15th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, 1976: 170 pp., no price given (free?).

This small book is a compilation of distribution records and anecdotal comments concerning wintering Bald Eagles. Data are from previously published sources such as *American Birds*, from state and federal wildlife agency files, and from personal communication with refuge and park personnel. While there is only brief interpretation of data, and much of the information is anecdotal, three clear patterns emerge: (1) relatively few Bald Eagles winter east of the Mississippi; (2) reservoirs kept from freezing as a result of warm effluents are used extensively as wintering sites by Bald Eagles; (3) carrion, including large animals such as deer and sheep, is important in the diet of wintering eagles.

The important information in this book could have easily been summarized in an article suitable for publication in one of the ornithological journals and perhaps should have been. Repetition of information (e.g., all of the data in the table on page 166 are included in the table on page 52), and the extensive quoting of observers rather than trying to summarize, greatly increases the length of the book. Nevertheless, anyone with an interest in eagles will find some worthwhile reading in "Wintering of the Bald Eagle in the Lower 48 States".--J. A. Jackson, Box Z, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

---

The Bluebird. By Lawrence Zeleny. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1976: 170 pp. \$7.95.

Here is a book that belongs in every bird-lovers library. Lawrence Zeleny has summarized the scientific literature and over 50 years of personal experience with bluebirds in this most readable, most useful little book. While Zeleny's own experience has been primarily with the Eastern Bluebird, his book deals with the Western and Mountain bluebirds as well. This book provides a thorough account of the ecology of

bluebirds, discusses their relationship to man, the reasons for their decline, and how man can tip the odds in favor of the bluebird's future success. Design and construction, location, and maintenance of bluebird houses are discussed in detail. So are the enemies of bluebirds and ways with which to cope with them. A very interesting chapter deals with other species of hole-nesting birds that may use bluebird houses. The final chapter in the book is a personal account of three orphaned bluebirds which they raised and which later brought their nestlings to the Zelenys. While not so scientific in its presentation, this chapter provides a fitting summary of bluebird breeding biology and man's role in their survival. In text references and an extensive bibliography add to this book's usefulness. Four pages of color photographs are generally well-reproduced. Unfortunately what appears to be a male Eastern Bluebird in figure 2 is identified as a female, and the sexes of the Mountain Bluebirds (figures 4 and 5) are mislabeled. I heartily recommend this book to anyone with an interest in birds. As a further incentive to add this fine volume to your library, it is worth noting that all proceeds from the sale of the book will go to further the work of the Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States.--J. A. Jackson, Box Z, Mississippi State, MS 39762

-----

#### YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO HELP!

The Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Foundation, a non-profit civic improvement and lyceum corporation was organized July 18, 1974, to provide assistance to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in furtherance of its basic purpose of increasing and disseminating knowledge of the natural sciences, particularly as they pertain to Mississippi's natural resources and their conservation. The museum is a division of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission and it provides the museum's basic support funds. However, many important areas cannot be supported through these sources. The Foundation is expected to play a significant role in the future growth and development of the museum by providing some of the extras that make for greatness.

The Foundation is currently involved in a membership drive. You have an opportunity to help by joining the Foundation now. Memberships are: individual - \$5.00, contributing - \$25.00, organizational - \$50.00 and up, patron - \$100.00 through \$999.00, and life \$1,000.00. Make your contribution payable to the MMNS Foundation and mail to Box 1703, Jackson, Mississippi 39205. Your participation is encouraged.