

Book Reviews

Ed Pierce

Field Guide to Birds of North America, 2nd Edition, The National Geographic Society, 1987.

If you already have the First Edition of this field guide, should you buy this Second Edition? The answer for the average birder is no. There is not enough revision in the four years since the first edition to justify spending \$16.95

Since the Second Edition had no explanation of its changes in its Introduction (an omission of consequence I believe), I compared the two editions page for page as each had the same number of pages. I do not feel qualified to comment on the merits of this Guide and everyone has their own preference anyway, so all I attempt to do here is describe the two editions.

Only five pages of drawings (231, 235, 237, 297, and 299) were redone: parrots, cuckoos, and anis and swallows. These new plates have the same species as previously depicted except for the addition of the Green parakeet. They apparently were redone to achieve a more life-like appearance. I would have preferred to see the warblers and shorebirds redone for that purpose.

Other drawings were altered in coloration only. The two major changes in this regard were the dowitchers (both species) which are now more accurate representations with a reduced body size (not as "porky") and reduced reddish on the belly posterior to the legs and the margins of the back feathers. Also, the spotting on the neck and breast of the juvenile Long-bill, the breeding hendersoni Short-bill and the juvenile Short-bill improve this plate. Secondly, the yellow wash on the flycatcher plate (page 293) with Yellow-bellied, Western, Buff-breasted and Northern Beardless-tyrannulet, was reduced substantially in intensity, improving this plate.

Otherwise the drawing alterations were minimal: Arctic loon (now labeled Pacific loon) was darkened in all areas of gray to brown as were all the loons on this plate (page 19); Buller's shearwater lightened on back; Stilt sandpiper now a less familiar grayer, darker bird; swifts are browner; Rose-throated becard lightened in color and orange coloration removed; Gray Jay juvenile not as dark; Pine warbler (page 348) darkened on back; Ruby-crowned kinglet (page 350) shown without eye-ring; and leaves now cover the feet of Connecticut warbler.

The Second Edition now includes the taxonomic changes of July, 1985: Pacific loon, Clark's grebe and Red-naped sapsucker. Each plate in the first edition showed these birds without labels. Now the second edition labels them. The first edition Arctic loon (page 19) is now labeled Pacific loon and the Arctic loon which is stated "often indistinguishable from Pacific loon" is not shown. The first edition light phase Western grebe (page 21) is now the Clark's grebe (although no flight picture is shown). The first edition nuchalis Yellow-bellied sapsucker (page 269) is now the Red-naped sapsucker. Little information is given about each new species.

The second edition adds the following drawings of species not in the first edition: Green parakeet, Eurasian jackdaw, Red-breasted flycatcher (Aleutians) and Golden-crowned warbler (S. Texas). Solander's petrel and White-throated needletail (Aleutians) are added in the text but not shown.

I found little change in the range maps with my cursory inspections, although I believe the breeding range for Chuck-will's-widow for Ohio ends in Adams County and doesn't cover the state as now depicted.

The textual changes are also minimal, refining distribution and abundance, adding call notes and deleting past behavioral generalizations. The only additional diagnostic information appears with the shearwaters and albatrosses and it is minimal.

For the average Ohio birder, birding in Ohio, the First Edition is fine. Replace it when it wears out (who knows, the third or fourth edition may be out then at this rate). If your library demands the newest in source material, buy it.

Gulls: A Guide to Identification, Second Edition, Grant, P.J., Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota, 1986.

This is the Second Edition of this book. The first was published in 1983 and covered 23 species of Palearctic gulls in Europe, the Middle East and eastern North America. Now the Second Edition adds eight additional species all occurring on the west coast of Canada and the USA, so that the whole of North America is now covered.

If you haven't bought this book, now's the time. Again, this is a source book that unlocks the "mystery" of the gull world. The 31 species are each treated separately in the text and black and white photos. Each species has about five pages of text including identification, aging summary, detailed description of each age, and black and white silhouette drawings of each age. Each species has about seven to 64 black and white photos; e.g. Black-headed: 24, Bonaparte's: 12, Common: 24, Ring-billed: 25, Laughing: 22, Franklin's: 33, Herring: 64, Lesser black-backed: 17, etc.

If you have the First Edition, get a Second if only for the additional eight species (including California and Thayer's gulls). I benefited from the black and white photos of the Thayer's gull (seven total) although second and third winter are not shown and only two adult photos are included. The Thayer's text cautioned me to beware of adult Herring gulls in October to December with still-growing outer three primaries: such birds show much less black on upper wing-tip, suggesting a Thayer's-like pattern, a mark useful at Niagara Falls last November.

But there is more as stated in the introduction to the Second Edition:

"Hardly a page of the original text remains unchanged, and most of the species drawings and nearly all of the distribution maps have been improved. The amendments in some cases involve small refinements or add extra minor detail to the text or illustrations, but most of them are substantial and important. Also, the General Information section has been expanded, the texts for Ring-billed Gull and Audouin's Gull in particular have been extensively rewritten, and expanded treatment and revised discussion of the geographical variation of Herring Gull is included, as well as completely new sections dealing with the subspecies of Common Gull and with the distinctive subspecies of Iceland Gull which breeds in northeast Canada (L.g. kumlieni (Kumlien's Iceland Gull))."

There are also 207 new photographs in the Second Edition (79 on the eight added species).

In short, if you want to identify gulls, you must have this book.

Cost: \$ 35.00

Abundance and Distribution of The Birds of Ohio, Peter John, B.G., Hannikman, R.L., Hoffman, J.M., Tramer, E.J., College of Biological Sciences, Ohio State University, 1987.

This is the annotated checklist (52 pages in the 8 1/2 x 11 inch size category) that in my mind precedes and updates the Trautman's work of 1968. It is our current (through December 31, 1985) State list.

It broadens the Trautman standards for list inclusion from existing specimen to include, in addition, species documented by a "diagnostic photograph." ("... a recognizable and unequivocal image, ... accompanied by appropriate data, and ... deposited in an accredited museum." All of these terms are further defined under Methods (page 2) reminiscent of the NFL replay rules.) It does not, however, give the same stature to species supported only by sight documentations but rather asterisks those which were "acceptable" to the authors labeling them hypothetical. The anomaly resulting from this unnecessary labeling (in my view) is that species such as Barrow's goldeneye or Tufted duck which were seen by at least two of the authors and many other observers and are indeed difficult to photograph remain in the mystical mirage of hypothetical (did we see it or not?). In short, for full acceptance on this list a photograph or specimen is necessary.

However, this is a book all Ohio birders should have in their library. It is written by three former and one present (Tramer) OHIO CARDINAL Records Committee members while they comprised the committee. They have packed into these relatively few pages the most current and comprehensive information on Ohio abundance and distribution of 387 species (by my count which includes 19 "hypothetical"). The book is useful statewide as the abundance and distribution are broken down into north, central, south, west, east, northwest, northeast, southcentral, and southeast, all areas within ten miles of Lake Erie, western basin of Lake Erie, and central basin of the Lake. Seasonal occurrence is also included. Eleven pages of bar graphs (one for each species except accidentals) help illustrate migration patterns and dates within a quarter of a month.

The authors employ the traditional adjectives (abundant, common, fairly common, uncommon, rare, casual and accidental) to describe the status of each species, but seem to use dual definitions for each term interchanging abundance with detectability and perhaps with frequency of occurrence within the State. "Fairly common" for example is defined as "not always found when searched for in the appropriate habitat although frequently can be found with persistent effort.", while "uncommon" is defined as "observed infrequently and found in small numbers, even in its preferred habitat." Louisiana waterthrush is described as "fairly uncommon" in southern Ohio becoming "uncommon" in northeastern counties. I have trouble conceptualizing the difference and found it tedious to sort through these definitions whose terms I constantly forgot. Perhaps through computerization we can eventually construct codes that reflect numerical abundance for the biologists and expectation of detection for the birder.

The section on excluded species is traditional also when initially reviewing records for inclusion on a state list. The Trautmans never had to face this problem (rejection of a highly respected field ornithologist's sight record) as there were no specimens for most of these birds.

A prefatory note to this section pointing out that only recently has written documentation become the accepted method of proof for inclusion on the state list would have been appropriate. Many long-time field observers never had such a thought in their mind when they saw the excluded species without a gun and therefore never wrote a contemporaneous documentation. I can only imagine the fate of the hypothetical Spotted redshank had the observers not been raised in the written documentation mode. Hopefully the information at the disposal of the authors when they made their decision to exclude has been preserved so that later committees will be able to objectively agree or disagree, but there is no note to this effect.

These views are only minor carpings about a very important and impressive compilation of the combined knowledge of four of the most competent and respected birders in the state which for me advances my knowledge of Ohio birds tenfold. It's a must.

Price: \$ 6.00, plus \$.28 tax for Ohio residents. Mail to Ohio Biological Survey, 980 Biological Sciences Building, 484 W. 12th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 42310

Report of the Records Committee, Spring 1988

The Ohio Cardinal Records Committee received 29 documentations for 28 separate birds. The OCRC accepted 21 of these 29 sightings. Those accepted are reported elsewhere in this issue. In the eight other cases, the committee was not able to verify the sighting reported from the written description provided. These are listed below.

Golden eagle - ONWR, 4/23. Not enough details to separate from Turkey vulture.

Merlin - Magee Marsh, 4/24. A quick fly-by observation. More details were needed in this description.

Merlin - Mosquito Creek, 2/3. Re-submitted from winter. Observations on wing length and shape not provided. "Helmet effect" described would fit an adult Accipiter.

Peregrine falcon - Caesar's Creek, 3/20. Inadequate plumage description provided.

Peregrine falcon - Scioto County, 5/5. More details on plumage required. Bird seen in silhouette only.

Spotted sandpiper - Sandusky River, 12/18. No description of the bird is provided.

Red phalarope - ONWR, 3/6. OCRC felt that more detailed observation was necessary to identify this bird.

Blue grosbeak - Lima, 5/17. A quick fly-by observation with no binoculars.

CORRIGENDUM: The Lincoln's sparrow [Vol. 11 (2):19] is ACCEPTED by the committee. Please add to the seasonal report.