Reviews

EDITED BY CARL D. MARTI

The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors.—Brian K. Wheeler and William S. Clark. 1995. Academic Press, San Diego, California. xviii + 198 pp., 377 color photographs. ISBN 0-12-745530-2. Cloth, $29.95.—Field guides of every imaginable format, philosophy, and avian subject seem to appear weekly, but particularly welcome are those that treat groups of birds traditionally considered to be difficult to identify. For many reasons, the diurnal birds of prey represent an ideal group for detailed treatment. Clark and Wheeler addressed these birds previously in a Peterson guide (*A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*, 1987) and now augment that work with this guide based on photographs, the majority of which were taken by the authors. The earlier *Hawks* employed only limited black-and-white photographs and rather stiff color plates.

Why is a photographic raptor guide particularly welcome? First, because hawks and falcons seldom allow close and leisurely study of feather detail, field identification is most often based on shape, flight mannerisms, and general patterns; good photographs, properly selected, often capture this essence better than paintings in a field guide. Second, plumages and even shapes of many raptors are frustratingly variable, with such variation based on age, geography, sex, feather wear, and genetic polymorphism; good photographs portray real variation, not just the idealized averages typically shown in field-guide paintings. Finally, the active collection of specimens to document identification and serve as vouchers for research generally is (although perhaps not necessarily justifiably) out of the question, so raptor biologists and birders are keen to have an arsenal of identification tools at the ready.

The stated goal of this book was to "show, using color photographs, every recognizably different plumage of each species of regularly occurring diurnal raptor [north of the Mexican border], as well as representative plumages of vagrant and extralimital raptor species." The book is clearly intended to complement the *Hawks* guide, and many omissions are, in fact, intentional. The text is brief, and biological information is virtually lacking. In essence, this is a collection of photographs of diurnal raptors assembled to show identification criteria, with appropriate text amplification.

The guide treats 3 cathartids, 30 accipitrids, and 10 falconids; 9 of these 43 species are classified as "vagrants" and receive only cursory treatment. The number of photographs per "regular" species averages 10.4 and ranges from 3 (California Condor, *Gymnogyps californianus*) to an astonishing 46 (Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*). Among the more thoroughly illustrated species are Swainson's (*B. swainsoni*) and Rough-legged (*B. lagopus*) hawk, Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and Merlin (*Falco columbarius*). It is clear that the authors approach, if not meet, their goal of showing every recognizable plumage. For nearly all species there is a nice mix of perched and flying birds. Flight photos are lacking for Crane Hawk (*Geranospiza caerulescens*), Red-backed Hawk (*Buteo polyosoma*), Hawaiian Hawk (*B. solitarius*), and Collared Forest-Falcon (*Micrastur semitorquatus*); no perched Short-tailed Hawk (*B. brachyurus*) is shown.

The only introductory text consists of notes on photographic techniques, photo credits, and a glossary of topographic terms (many of which are illustrated on five representative photos). Text accounts run from 0.5 to 2 pages per species and emphasize general appearance, ageing and sexing criteria, geographical variation, "best field marks," and distinctions from similar species. Distributional information is brief; because a knowledge of seasonal status and distribution is an important basis for accurate field identification, readers will need to consult more thorough distributional treatments. Measurements (length, wingspan, and mass) are given as means and ranges, with no sample sizes. Photo captions emphasize characters useful for species, age, and sex identification.

The photographs range from good to stunning, and the provenance (state and month) of each is provided. A very useful section on raptor identification problems uses 14 groups of photographs (repeated from the species accounts) to provide quick comparisons of

similar species. These sections include "Sharp-shinned vs. Cooper's hawks," "Pale primary panels on backlighted underwings of flying buteos," "Perched juveniles with streaked underparts, pale superciliaries, and dark malar stripes," and "Perched dark morph buteos." Here it might have been useful to "flip" some of the photos so that birds being compared faced the same direction.

The primary weaknesses of this guide are those of omission. As stated above, these omissions are intentional, because this is a guide to be used in conjunction with other literature. However, identification rests on more than appearance: vocalizations, social behavior, habitat and distribution are all components of the identification puzzle. At the very least, these "nonvisual" characters should have been mentioned in cases where they have an important bearing on field identification (e.g. calls of Red-shouldered Hawks [*Buteo lineatus*], social behavior of Bald Eagles vs. "asocial" Golden Eagles [*Aquila chrysaetos*], arboreal habits of Hook-billed Kite [*Chondrohierax uncinatus*], etc.). A more "self-contained" guide would have required only a little extra effort on the part of the authors.

Some of the nomenclature departures from that of the AOU. For example, *Falco peregrinus* is simply called "Peregrine" rather than Peregrine Falcon, and *F. tinnunculus* is called "Common" (rather than Eurasian) Kestrel. *Buteo polyosoma* is called Red-backed "Buzzard," whereas all other buteos are called "hawks." *Buteo albonotatus* is consistently misspelled as *B. albonotus*.

Unfortunately, trinomials are not given for such polytypic species as Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and Red-tailed Hawk (but are provided for Red-shouldered Hawk). Those not familiar with geographical variation in North American birds are left to wonder just what a "Taiga" Merlin or a "Florida" or "Fuertes" Red-tailed Hawk might be. Perhaps understandably in a field identification guide, minor geographic variation (e.g. in Turkey Vulture [*Cathartes aura*] and Sharp-shinned Hawk [*Accipiter striatus*]) is not mentioned. Color morphs receive considerable and welcome discussion; because *morphs* are defined in the glossary as "recognizably different forms of a species, usually color related," I was confused by the statement that "two [species of buteonine hawks] occur only in the dark morph."

Although attractively packaged and well edited, this guide suffers from a few lapses. Attu Island is said to be in the "eastern Aleutians" (should be "western"), Colombia is misspelled, and HA (rather than HI) is used as the standard abbreviation for Hawaii.

As an identification tool, this guide's remarkable compilation of photographs and wealth of field marks makes it an invaluable complement to existing field guides, including the authors' previous guide. Given the many sources of biological information about North American raptors, e.g. Brown and Amadon (*Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*, 1968), Snyder and Snyder (*Birds of Prey: Natural History and Conservation of North American Raptors*, 1991), and Palmer (*Handbook of North American Birds*, 1988), Wheeler and Clark wisely chose to limit the goals of their guide and to emphasize their strengths as photographers and field identification experts. These goals are served admirably by the photographs, but a little more biological information relevant to identification would have furthered the usefulness of the guide. I cannot imagine a birder or raptor biologist who would not benefit greatly from this fine and relatively inexpensive collection of photographs and discussion of identification criteria. Buy this guide, but do not let it be the only raptor book in your library.—KIMBALL L. GARRETT, *Section of Vertebrates, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, California 90007, USA.*

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Nearctic Passerine Migrants in South America.—Raymond A. Paynter, Jr. 1995. Publications of the Nuttall Ornithological Club No. 25. ix + 126 pp., 3 tables, 71 text figures. Cloth, $13.50.—Elsewhere, I noted that the movements of birds in Middle America is probably the most poorly understood aspect of the biogeography of North American vertebrates (*in* M. Wilson and S. Sader, *Conservation of Neotropical Migratory Birds in Mexico*, 1995). The movements of North American migratory birds in South America during the boreal nonbreeding season might have been included in this observation. The appearance of Paynter's book goes a long way toward pushing back the veil of ignorance in this area. Paynter treats South American representatives of a group of taxa that often is given the popular misnomer of "Neotropical migrant." The work is a synthetic effort, pulling together a widely scattered knowledge base and summarizing it succinctly and thoroughly. Paynter extracted about 4,400 reports of 68 passerine taxa from more than 500 publications treating avian distributions in South America.

The book consists of a brief introduction, 89 pages of species accounts, and 16 pages of summary and discussion. Each species account provides a map of the points in South America where the taxon has been reported. These maps furnish a genuine summary of our knowledge of distribution, and thus provide a much better understanding of distribution than do maps that merely shade in a species' entire range. The maps that Paynter provides are rare because of the tremendous amount of work required to assemble them. Nevertheless, it is this type of map that best serves the stu-

dent of distribution. The only improvement that might have been made to these maps would have been to use different symbols for different portions of the nonbreeding season. This would have made it relatively easy to distinguish at a glance core winter records from those obtained during autumn and spring migration. For the species considered, it is probably not possible to determine cutoff dates for migration with much specificity, but multiple symbols would have given a degree of temporal dimension to the maps (perhaps with a fourth symbol to denote dates within the gray zone between migration and midwinter). However, such a treatment assumes ubiquity of the typical pattern observed in Nearctic-Neotropic migrants of a single sedentary midwinter period. Given that such a pattern does not describe all Palearctic-Paleotropic migrants, perhaps the author was unwilling to make such an assumption in the New World. Until instability during winter months is observed, however, it seems useful to consider migratory periods separately from wintering ones. Some temporal separation is made in the generally excellent text that accompanies each map.

Twenty-two of the 68 taxa treated "are so poorly represented that they apparently have an insignificant place in the avifauna of the continent" (p. 99). Only 10 Nearctic-Neotropic migrant passerines winter mostly or exclusively in South America. Thus, despite the importance of South American wintering grounds to many species of Nearctic-Neotropic migrants, it quickly becomes apparent that Middle America is the region of most importance to this class of birds during the nonbreeding season. Within South America, wintering records are concentrated in the Andes, in the northwestern part of the continent. Of the 13 South American countries (all of which have records of wintering migrants), Colombia hosts the most species and thus might be considered the most important South American country for wintering Nearctic migrants (Mexico holds this status in Middle America). Paynter's analysis finds that Brazil is "a comparatively infrequent destination for Nearctic migrants" (p. 101) and shows that this is not an artifact of observer distribution.

One of the most fascinating parts of the work is the final section, entitled "Summer Residents," in which Paynter assembles and discusses records of about 29 species for which there are boreal summer records in South America. This phenomenon is relatively common among shorebirds, but "It is now evident that the phenomenon is also widespread on the continent among North American passerine migrants" (p. 109). Taxonomically, these occurrences seem capricious, but the phenomenon has strong potential evolutionary importance. Although it seems probable that most Nearctic-Neotropic migrants arose from Neotropical ancestors, we have yet to determine who gave rise to whom in closely related species or subspecies groups in which both Neotropical sedentary and Nearctic-Neotropic migratory lineages are represented. The establishment of South American breeding populations of *Hirundo rustica* makes it clear that North American migrants can generate Neotropical lineages.

One thing to note: The absence of a species from a region cannot be taken at face value. It may be that collections have not been made in that region, that collectors or other observers have not obtained records of a particular species, or that collections that have been made either have not been reported upon or the resulting specimens have not been examined by Paynter. A great deal of work remains to be done on the distributions of nonbreeding migrants (e.g. see accounts of *Oporornis agilis* and *Piranga olivacea*).

Paynter's work is an important development in the study of New World migration. I look forward to a similar work on nonpasserines, and ask "who will provide an equivalent work for Middle America?" Moreover, I hope that this summary will encourage Neotropical workers to undertake the exploration needed to fill in the blank areas on the maps.—KEVIN WINKER, *Conservation and Research Center, National Zoological Park, Smithsonian Institution, Front Royal, Virginia 22630, USA.*

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Antbirds and Ovenbirds: Their Lives and Homes. —Alexander F. Skutch. 1996. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas. xix + 268 pp., 71 black-and-white drawings and photographs, 6 tables. ISBN 0-292-77705-1. Paper, $19.95.—Alexander Skutch, dean of observers of bird behavior, has assembled a stock of information on many aspects, especially feeding and nesting, of the lives of various species within two large Neotropical families whose ranges do not extend north of Mexico. Each family occupies roughly half the book. Each half includes an introductory chapter, several chapters on aspects of behavior, and an extensive life history for one species (i.e. Black-faced Antthrush [*Formicarius analis*] and the Rufous-fronted Thornbird [*Phacellodomus rufifrons*]). Ornithologists unfamiliar with the Neotropics may find the book a helpful introduction, with well-indexed, authoritative data on two important groups representative of the area. Laymen who want a good natural history read will enjoy the author's expressive descriptions as well as his thought-provoking and unique philosophical approach. They should be prepared, however, to share with Skutch the occasional tedium of prolonged nest observations from a hide.

The book is less likely to be important to those al-

ready familiar with antbirds and ovenbirds. Most, if not all, of the material has already been published. Much of it is from Skutch's own writings, in particular his *Life Histories of Central American Birds, III* (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 35, 1969). The chapter on the Black-faced Antthrush, for instance, is a shortened version of the life history published there, and several other items I traced had appeared previously in ornithological journals, with many passages taken verbatim or with slight modification. Only about a third of the approximately 460 species in these families are mentioned, and the bibliography contains only three references more recent than 1988. As a survey of antbirds and ovenbirds, it is neither complete nor current.

Nonetheless, the book is a handy, compact compendium of information that could be useful to students of these families, Skutch fans who might not have access to his now out-of-print life histories, and anyone who enjoys superior writing. His accounts of Jimmy, the Bicolored Antbird, and of the activities of army ants, for instance, are fascinating and beautifully written. Fifteen photos of nests and habitat are not as sharply reproduced as would have been desirable, but the black-and-white illustrations by Dana Gardner are excellent.—WILLIAM BELTON, *HCR 62 Box 162B, Great Cacapon, West Virginia 25422, USA.*

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A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada.—James D. Rising. 1996. Academic Press, San Diego, California. xii + 365 pp., 27 color plates, numerous text figures and distribution maps. ISBN 0-12-588970-4. Cloth, $39.95; Paper, $19.95.—James Rising has provided a guide to a particularly tricky group of birds, the North American sparrows. In the future, I doubt that I will head into the field without it. This work is intended to allow identification of the 62 species of New World sparrows found north of Mexico, including vagrant Latin American grassquits and Asiatic buntings.

Rising has anticipated taxonomic revisions by the AOU's Check-list Committee, dividing the Sage Sparrow into Bell's (*Amphispiza belli*) and Sage (*A. nevadensis*) sparrows, and the Fox Sparrow into Red (*Passerella iliaca*), Sooty (*P. unalaschcensis*), and Slate-colored (*P. schistacea*) fox-sparrows. For other species with considerable geographic variation, "types" are discussed separately. With about 12 subspecies in the U.S. and Canada, the Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) has separate comments for "typical," "large-billed," "Belding's," and "Ipswich" types.

An eight-page account on the general biology of sparrows is followed by species accounts. Emphasis is on identification, and the descriptions of plumages, voice, and habits are more than adequate for this purpose. Providing descriptions of nests and eggs in the hope that "these facts will help to identify nests" is perhaps overly optimistic. A delightful description is provided of the original collection, description, and naming of most species. Readers in need of more than a cursory review of habitat requirements, breeding biology, or conservation status will have to refer to the Birds of North America life-history accounts.

A map depicting summer and winter distributions is provided for each species, supplemented for most by Breeding Bird Survey data of relative abundance. It is unfortunate that this latter information is not yet available for Alaska and northern Canada. The list of references is limited, but the list of provincial and state bird guides is an unexpected bonus.

The color plates by David Beadle provide as many as 13 images of each species, showing sexual, seasonal, geographic, and age-related differences in plumage. In many cases, sympatric and easily confused species are presented together to aid in identification. These plates are beautiful, and they complement the text descriptions. Beadle's ink drawings of sparrow topography, and of heads and tails of similar species and subspecies, will be endlessly useful in the field. The same cannot be said for the illustrations that accompany the description of each species. At best, they are redundant to the color plates, and some, including the Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), and Bachman's (*Aimophila aestivalis*), Botteri's (*A. botterii*), Brewer's (*Spizella breweri*), and Swamp (*Melospiza georgiana*) sparrows, are simply poor. Ink illustrations cannot be expected to convey subtle plumage characteristics of birds that are essentially brown, tan, gray, and black.

A great deal of effort has gone into this work. Yet, it appears to have been completed in haste. A number of unfortunate errors of fact and editing slipped through. The Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) is called the Chestnut-sided Longspur on p. 247. Golden-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) do not breed in Washington state, nor in Banff National Park, and American Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) do not breed in central Alberta. Distribution maps on pp. 226 and 242 show a large zone of intergradation between Dark-eyed (*Junco hyemalis*) and Yellow-eyed (*J. phaenotus*) juncos through central and northern British Columbia, far beyond the northern limits of the latter species. The writing style falters in places. For instance, we are told that Canyon Towhees " . . . like to feed under things. Females breed closely." Chilton et al. (1995) appears in the References section, but is not mentioned in the text.

This book offers North American birders all that they need, and a little more. Those who wish to go beyond "another damned sparrow" will find a bargain ($19.95) in the paperback version of *The Sparrows*. It

should be noted, however, that the more serious student will find more detail for 110 species at the same hardback price in Byers et al. (*Sparrows and Buntings: A Guide to the Sparrows and Buntings of North America and the World*, Houghton Mifflin, 1995). When I reach toward the shelf in my office, I will pull down the hardcover version of Byers et al.—GLEN CHILTON, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada.*

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Sparrows and Buntings: A Guide to the Sparrows and Buntings of North America and the World.—Clive Byers, Jon Curson, and Urban Olsson. 1995. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 334 pp., 39 color plates, numerous maps and sketches. ISBN 0-395-73873-3. Cloth, $40.00.—This is an example of an increasingly common genre among bird books, the specialized guide, designed primarily to identify a difficult group of birds. The book covers all of the sparrows and buntings of the Northern Hemisphere, with a few southern congeners added to complete the genera that are treated. The attractive illustrations cover many distinctive races of geographically variable species and hybrids between species. Each species account includes identification pointers and a list of geographical races with their distinguishing features. Short sections on sexing, molt and ageing, measurements, voice, status and habitat, and distribution and movements, and a detailed range map, accompany each species. Sketches of distinctive feather patterns help to explain ageing and sexing rules. The bibliography includes over 350 references.

The book is in "standard hardcover" format and is thus more useful for the library or the banding station than for field use. I found the written information to be detailed and accurate for the species that I know well, and the text identified gaps in current knowledge. I liked the layout and sketches, although more distinctive shading tones would have been useful on the maps. The geographic scope (about three-quarters of the Earth!) means that only highly itinerant sparrow-seekers will get to see most species in the book.

I was slightly troubled by the accuracy of some of Byers' illustrations. Despite their vibrant colors and attractive layout, they do not capture the "authentic look" of some species and races. The problem seems to be more than just printer's mistakes. For example, three of the six Fox Sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*) in Plate 30 do not illustrate the bi-colored bill characteristic of the species, and my local Song Sparrow (the distinctive *Melospiza melodia morphna*) lacks the appropriate brown hues to capture its plumage color convincingly. Other species and races seem to be depicted more accurately, but perhaps I do not know their nuances well enough to spot subtle errors.

In summary, "comprehensive" specialist guides of this type fill a rather narrow niche. Although they are nice additions to the libraries of serious birders or museums, they are too bulky to be convenient for field identification. To be most useful, they should be accurate, informative, and easy to use. On these grounds this book succeeds quite well, despite some minor reservations about the paintings and maps.—JAMES N. M. SMITH *Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, 6270 University Boulevard, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1Z4, Canada.*

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Birds in Europe: Their Conservation Status.—G. M. Tucker and M. F. Heath. 1994. Birdlife Conservation Series No. 3. BirdLife International, Cambridge, United Kingdom. 600 pp. ISBN 1-56098-527-5. Paper, $45.87.—Bird conservation is no longer served by fencing off breeding habitat or by introducing legislation to stop the shooting of particular species. It is a complex process involving the interplay of diverse subjects including law, commerce, land tenure, taxonomy, ecology, agriculture, and international conventions. Above all, an active conservation policy requires detailed information on the status of species, including changes in direction (up, down, or static) of populations. This book provides the latter for the birds of Europe. It is a compendium of information gleaned from contributors in 49 territories ("geopolitical units" to use the book's jargon) and summarizes the observations of "several thousands of ornithologists throughout Europe over the last few decades." It is a remarkable achievement.

In order to assimilate the information, a reader has to come to terms with a variety of acronyms, of which "SPEC" is the most fundamental. A SPEC is a Species of European Conservation Concern and is classified into one of four categories depending on whether it occurs in Europe and is of global conservation concern (SPEC1), has its global population concentrated in Europe where it has an unfavorable conservation status (SPEC2), has its global population not concentrated in Europe but does have an unfavorable conservation status there (SPEC3), or has its global population concentrated in Europe but has a favorable conservation status there (SPEC4). Species are said to be concentrated in Europe if more than half of their global breeding or wintering population occurs there.

The bulk of the book comprises accounts of species thought to have an unfavorable outlook, i.e. SPECs 1–3, followed by shorter summaries about the SPEC4s. To appreciate the meaning of the species accounts, it is essential to keep flicking back to the introductory 11 pages (which explain Data Collection, Assessment of Conservation Status, and Data Presentation) until familiar with conventions, such as parentheses around the "vulnerable" mean that this status attribute is provisional, or that the difference between a large or a moderate decline requires a look-up table involving both the status and the "European population size/trend." Similar complications surround definitions of codes for trends and data quality, verification codes, the threat status itself, including the unsurprising item that a "Data Deficient" SPEC is one "for which there is inadequate information to make a direct or indirect assessment of its risk of global extinction."

Fortunately, a lot of information is available on many species, and it is this information that makes this a very important source book for conservationists and planners of all sorts. But it is a bit like tackling a huge club sandwich. You know there are very tasty bits in the middle, but the thought of taking the first bite is daunting, as is the decision on where to begin. The tasty bits here are the individual species accounts, written by specialists on each bird, which include sections on distribution and population trends, ecology, threats, conservation measures, and maps with breeding population trends (up, down, stable or unknown) and estimates of numbers of pairs in each country.

Appendix 1 summarizes the conservation status of all European species, not just the SPECs, followed by all the SPECs listed according to country in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 tabulates species with particularly poorly monitored breeding populations in Europe, of which all SPEC1s (see above for definition, you haven't forgotten already have you?) are listed in bold. Surprisingly, there are only two: Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) and Scottish Crossbill (*Loxia scotica*). Appendix 4 is another table, with half a page of explanation to it, on the status of SPECs within the European Union's Wild Birds Directive, the Bern Convention, and the Bonn Convention. This is followed by Appendix 5, which reproduces the questionnaire used to glean data for the book, a glossary, codes for references according to species and country, a country-by-country list of citations, the bibliography for the text itself, and an index.

Despite all the wealth of data provided and the careful categorization of everything from vulnerability to data deficiency, I still felt puzzled by some decisions. For instance, the abundant Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*), is a SPEC4, i.e. it has a favorable conservation status but more than half its population is concentrated in Europe. Six percent of its breeding population is said to have declined by more than 20%, mostly in the Czech Republic, but also in Lichtenstein. Contrast the predicament of the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*). Sixteen percent of the breeding population in Europe has declined by more than 20% and 2% by more than 50%, but is not highlighted at all. Was this because less than half of its population is European and it doesn't quite qualify as a SPEC3? Should conservation decisions be so reliant on the biological species concept at the expense of local populations?

Tucker, Heath and the multitude of contributors to this volume must be congratulated on assembling a prodigious work that will be essential reference material. It should be part of the arsenal of information on the shelves of all those involved with conservation, not only in Europe and in those countries to which "European" birds migrate, but everywhere birds are threatened.—ROBERT A. CHEKE, *Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, Central Avenue, Chatham Maritime, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TB, United Kingdom.*

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Towards an Ornithology of the Himalayas: Systematics, Ecology and Vocalizations of Nepal Birds.—Jochen Martens and Siegfried Eck. 1995. Bonner Zoologische Monographien No. 38, Zoologisches Forschungsinstitut und Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, Germany. 445 pp., 3 color plates, 124 text figures. ISBN 3-925382-41-0. Paper, no price given.—Between 1969 and 1995 Jochen Martens undertook seven expeditions to Nepal, totaling approximately two years. He trekked mostly in the mountains and concentrated on recording vocalizations of as many species as possible. He made copious field notes and in the early expeditions collected some specimens. This monograph summarizes his findings. A short introduction describes the main habitats and zoogeographical regions of Nepal, but the bulk of the book is a list of species encountered. It includes localities and dates of all observations, measurements of collected specimens, anecdotal reports on habitat and breeding, discussions of taxonomy and geographic variation, and detailed descriptions of vocalizations. Sonagrams of 128 species are presented, mostly territorial songs, but also calls. Attention is paid to geographic variation in songs, when the material is available. Many references to a relatively poorly known German literature are a useful feature for English speakers. The book is not intended as a guide to the birds of Nepal, and species not encountered by Martens are not discussed. Some taxa are described in much more detail than others. Examples of genera dealt with in depth include *Parus* and *Phylloscopus*, which have been the subject of previous publications by Martens.

The monograph is most useful as a reference for re-

searchers who are actively studying the Himalayan avifauna. It will be quite difficult to use for less serious ornithologists. Common names are mentioned in passing, or not at all for many species. References are cited only where the authors' findings complement or differ from previous reports. The many localities mentioned are difficult to find on the few maps, and only three figures in the book actually place observations of birds directly onto a map (one at a local level compares the distributions of two *Cettia* species; another at a regional level compares three *Passer* species; and the third at the country level compares *Aegithalos* species). The lengthy verbal descriptions of songs perhaps could have been shortened by reference to sonagrams. Occasionally the monograph strays far from Nepal. For example, some museum measurements of the Canary Islands Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus canariensis*) are included.

The importance of this monograph resides in the additional information it provides on the birds of Nepal, and it will be most useful when considered in conjunction with previous work. The only field guide dedicated to Nepal's birds is by Fleming et al. (*Birds of Nepal*, 1984), although Ali and Ripley's classic *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (compact edition, 1983) covers all of Nepal. Unfortunately, both books are out of print. Inskipp and Inskipp (*A Guide to the Birds of Nepal*, 1991) give maps and a review of previous distributional records. Many of their records (and Ali and Ripley's) are queried by Martens and Eck, but without an updated synthesis.

Martens and Eck do use their observations in an attempt to delineate elevational ranges for a number of species. However, they note in the introduction that elevational ranges can vary considerably across the Himalayas, and no quantification of distributions using systematic censusing methods is provided. Their observations therefore can be considered a start, but in the absence of more rigorous studies they will be difficult to use in research. I detected only a few obvious errors in the book (e.g. on the distribution of birch [*Betula utilis*] forest). This may be partly because many of the facts are technical and beyond my expertise, but perhaps also because much of their work is qualitative. For example, they note that the distribution of *Phylloscopus pulcher* is largely coincident with fir (*Abies*) forest. Although this is likely, our own studies from Nepal and elsewhere in the Himalayas suggest that the critical factor affecting the distribution of *P. pulcher* is the presence of *Rhododendron*, not *Abies*.

These criticisms are not meant to detract from the book's value. Martens' work has concentrated on vocalizations and taxonomy, and he has made many important contributions, including the raising of two subspecies of *Parus* to species status, and the demotion of two species of *Parus* to subspecies. Observations on breeding and habitat were clearly secondary to the main goal of song description, and Martens and Eck are to be commended for having made their observations fully available to the serious student of Himalayan ornithology. Nepal has been remarkably neglected. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when there was a tremendous amount of ornithological research elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent (e.g. Ali and Ripley), Nepal was virtually inaccessible. It was not until the late 1940s that the first ornithological expeditions outside of the Kathmandu Valley were conducted, and by then essentially all of the forest was gone between 1,000 and 2,000 m. Only in the last 25 years has most of the country been opened to visitors. As noted by Martens and Eck, little forest remains from 2,500 m right down to the plains, and the last natural habitat around Kathmandu is threatened. Martens and Eck euphemistically note "A mostly negative influence of man on the flora and fauna is detectable in all Himalayan forest habitats."

Many of Martens and Eck's documentations of breeding are one of a handful for the species in Nepal. *Phylloscopus proregulus* must rank among the top 50 commonest birds in Nepal, yet breeding had never been proven until this study! The current political climate in Nepal is reasonably encouraging for research. I hope that this book will stimulate more ornithological study in the region, even if it does so only by demonstrating the huge gaps in our knowledge. Martens and Eck, and others before them, have pointed to the many fascinating zoogeographical questions raised by distributions of Himalayan birds. The time to move from observation to more rigorous study is long overdue.—TREVOR PRICE, *Department of Biology 0116, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, California 92093, USA.*

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Eagle's Plume: Preserving the Life and Habitat of America's Bald Eagle.—Bruce E. Beans. 1996. Charles Scribner, New York. 318 pp., 8 black-and-white plates. ISBN 0-684-80696-7. Cloth, $25.00.—This book is one of the first to discuss the near recovery of Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) as witnessed by the recent reclassification of the species from Endangered to Threatened in the United States. The book is written for the lay person and is organized into 15 independent chapters, each describing events occurring within selected regions of the United States.

Chapters 1 to 3 detail some of the challenges facing the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program. Beans describes classic struggles that pit developers and industry against conservationists, battles played out frequently in other regions of the country. The message here is that the future may be bleak for

Bald Eagles given increasing human population pressures, but that individuals can make a difference and assist species recovery if they possess patience and endurance. These chapters also introduce several subjects that are expanded upon later: habitat loss, environmental contaminants, eagle persecution, government distrust, and reclassification.

Chapter 4 retraces the historical circumstances that led to the selection of the Bald Eagle as the United States' national emblem. Much of this section summarizes how a reverence of eagles, in most cases Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), is common to cultures throughout the world. Although these digressions add a humanist perspective to eagle recovery, the best and most important writing follows in later chapters.

The fifth chapter illustrates the insidious nature of chlorinated hydrocarbons and presents a brief, entertaining biography of Charles Broley. Broley first documented the negative effect of chlorinated hydrocarbons on ecosystems and surmised that DDT was the root cause for declines in eagle productivity. The negative effects of environmental contaminants in general, particularly DDT, are given serious treatment in Chapter 6, where Beans recounts how these "miracle" compounds, which promised to cure many of the ills plaguing human kind, instead wreaked havoc on delicate food webs.

Chapters 7 to 9 describe conflicts between developers and conservationists in Florida and Virginia. Within these chapters, Beans correctly identifies one of the fundamental issues hampering recovery of endangered species: cost. Some developers disrupt Bald Eagle nesting activities in the hopes of causing site abandonment. This ensures that building proceeds on schedule because if halted for even a few days, financial losses are incurred as interest accrues on large loans. A quotation from the Fifth Amendment of the United States' Constitution ". . . nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation . . ." exposes the rift between the rights of individuals and the desires of society and justifies the legal actions taken by property owners to offset the economic burdens of endangered species conservation.

If conflicts between developers and conservationists fail to disturb the reader, the black market trade of Bald Eagles and the wanton killing of eagles under the guise of predator control described in Chapters 10 to 12 certainly will. Although illegal activities occur with regularity from coast to coast and from border to border, Beans focuses on undercover operations conducted in the Midwest and Rocky Mountains. The reader follows efforts of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents and learns how difficult it is to catch and bring violators to justice. Moreover, after painstaking detective work and a myriad of frustrations, the final insult occurs when convicted eagle killers are repeatedly assessed light fines and routinely avoid jail time.

Chapter 13 highlights the Great Lakes region where environmental contaminants, PCBs in particular, continue to threaten the recovery of some eagle populations. This example is important because it emphasizes that not all Bald Eagles have enjoyed recovery across the country. In stark contrast, the next chapter concerns the impressive concentration of Bald Eagles along the Chilkat River in Alaska. Here again, Beans recounts the fierce battle that occurred between preservationists and resource extractors prior to the agreement that created the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve.

Beans returns the reader to New Jersey in the final chapter, most of which describes the daunting challenges faced by the Endangered Species Act. Management of species on private lands and the economic impact of conservation are addressed in detail. The author then briefly catalogues some possible solutions; e.g. tax credits to landowners, conservation subsidies, and greater financial involvement by the public.

In general, the book is well done and timely. Beans reports in an informative and readable manner how the increase in Bald Eagle populations was due to relevant research, sound management, hard work, and some luck. However, the book is not without some weaknesses, the most significant being its parochial viewpoint. Admittedly, the book's subtitle emphasizes "America's" Bald Eagle. Nonetheless, it is remiss to ignore the contributions of Canadians to Bald Eagle research and conservation. Moreover, the uninformed reader might come away with the impression that eagles were actually nearing extinction in the 1950s, when in fact large numbers still existed north of the border. The author also biases his reporting toward conditions along the east coast of the United States. Scant reference is made to Bald Eagle recovery in the West, such as in the Intermountain Region where the number of nesting eagles has exploded during the last decade. Finally, the endnotes are of limited use because they are not identified within chapter text. This leaves the reader guessing which facts to verify. The information contained within the book and its affordable price, however, outweigh these minor weaknesses. This book should be included in larger community libraries, and it might prove useful as a case study in environmental sciences courses that focus on endangered species.—MARCO RESTANI, *Department of Biology, Utah State University, Logan, Utah 84322, USA.*

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