

BOOK REVIEWS

EDITED BY JEFFREY S. MARKS

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A Fascination with Falcons: A Biologist's Adventures from Greenland to the Tropics. By Bill Burnham. 1997. Hancock House, Blaine, WA. 233 pp., 46 color photographs, numerous pen-and-ink drawings and vignettes by John Schmitt. ISBN 0-88839-415-2. Cloth, \$29.95.—For me, this was an engaging book, and I was pleased to be asked to review it. In part, because Bill took a master's degree with me working on Greenland falcon biology and, in a sense, because I watched the author go through his professional development and embark on many of the adventures he describes.

Burnham explains his plan for presenting the book's layout and subject matter on page 8, arranging the chapters geographically and topically, but not necessarily chronologically. Starting in Greenland, he travels southward to the mid-latitudes, primarily Colorado and Idaho, where his main adventures were with falconry. Then, he moves south to the tropics, with adventures mainly in Central America. There is a series of pages with photographs clustered together about a third of the way through the book. They were well-chosen to illustrate a variety of themes, from falcons on their prey, to colleagues and researchers in the field, to landscapes he visited.

In all there are seven chapters and an appendix. Chapter 1 is entitled "Events, Great and Small." It starts with an introduction to the general actions of pesticides on raptors, moves into Bill's late teenage years and his introduction to falcons and falconry, and ends with an introduction to, and rationale for, the breeding of falcons in captivity and his involvement. Chapter 2 describes "In Search of the Gyrfalcon." Much of this chapter depicts the

adventures and problems he and Steve Sherrod (another master's student of mine) had in working on Disco, a large island on the west coast of Greenland about one-third of the way up from the southern tip. I well remember Bill and Steve telling me about learning how to use a native (Inuit) Greenland's kayak, especially in mastering the ability of righting oneself when upside down in freezing water. Chapter 3, "First Time North," essentially is a description of working throughout western Greenland on falcons, from the time Bill started in 1972, and the findings of the research teams with whom he worked. Several important publications in the open literature have resulted from all the extended work in Greenland that is, by the way, still ongoing—so, in a sense, Bill's book is not yet done. Two chapters then cover falconry, sharing a plethora of stories about birds, people, and fun times, either alone or in solitude or with others.

The penultimate chapter takes us into the tropics with "Neotropical Falcons." Bill and others at the Peregrine Fund have spearheaded an extensive program in the tropics cleverly called the Maya Project—most of the studies were in the Central American home of the Mayan people. An enormous amount of what we know about Neotropical raptors resulted from this project, which is really the foundation for Bill's chapter. Finally, there is a well-thought-out chapter on "Conservation." I particularly liked his starting sentence in this chapter, when he was asked "Are you an environmentalist?" "No," he responded "but I do care about the environment as every man and woman in the world does." This chapter has several subtitles that are self-explanatory: Nature Conservation; Conserving Falcons In The Americas; You Can Make A Difference (with a set of sections that are self-evident from their titles, such as Support Conservation of Wildlife Habitat and Let Your Opinion Be Known); and lastly, Final Thoughts, in which he writes about the Endangered Species Act and our behavior in, and implied stewardship of, the natural world. A brief appendix on the "Biology and Ecology of Falcons" terminates the book.

The drawings and vignettes by Schmitt are well-executed and artfully done, but then he consistently does superb work with raptors. I counted 75 in all, some nothing more than a study of a falcon contour feather. The drawings were not necessarily original for the book, and I have seen many elsewhere. My sense is that many were overly dark, too much ink and some detail lost, but this clearly is a function of printing rather than the drawing. Some of the artwork seemed out of place and perhaps unnecessary. Although nonetheless nice, I missed the rationale for including the foot of a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) in the chapter on "Falconry," where the species are never mentioned, or the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in the chapter on "First Time North," which is a description of early experiences in Greenland, where the Red-tailed Hawk does not occur. Most of the other drawings have some relationship to the chapters in which they appear; e.g., an arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*) in the chapter on Greenland, hunting dogs in the chapter on falconry, and Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) in the chapter on Neotropical falcons.

This is a fun book, light reading, informative, well-written and edited, and at the end of the day it has the most essential of all take home messages: conservation of landscapes and human behavior toward the earth and its biodiversity. Even if you are not interested in falcons, Greenland, or the tropics, this book is worth having and sharing with others.—**Clayton M. White, Department of Zoology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 U.S.A.**

of a symposium on the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*; "Rotmilan" in German) held in Saxony in 1994. Included are 18 papers, most of which are in German but with English summaries. All aspects of the biology of this, the only diurnal raptor with a range almost restricted to Europe, are thoroughly documented. The Red Kite had been faring well, but it has decreased with the introduction of large-scale agriculture in the former East Germany. It is feared that the same may be occurring in much of Europe, although in Great Britain efforts to expand the small nucleus of a population in Wales seem to be hopeful.

This attractive and valuable little book and the symposium from which it originated were sponsored by the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls and by various German ornithological and conservation groups. It contains an insert by a power company with a striking color photograph of 11 "Rastende Rotmilan" perched on an electric transmission tower.—**Dean Amadon, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024 U.S.A.**

J. Raptor Res. 32(2):186–187

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J. Raptor Res. 32(2):186

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Rotmilan-Sonderheft. Edited by K. Richarz, B.-U. Meyburg, and M. Horsman. 1995. "Vogel und Umwelt" Vol. 8. World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls. 180 pp., photos, maps, charts. Drawings by Franz Müller. Paper, DM 17.50 (approximately \$20.00 U.S.).—This is the proceedings

A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal. By Clive Barlow and Tim Wacher. 1997. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. 400 pp., 4 maps, 48 color plates and numerous pen-and-ink drawings by Tony Disley. ISBN 0-300-07454-9. Hard cover, \$40.00.—At 11 000 km², The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in the world. This narrow (25 to 30 km-wide) country is defined by the course of the Gambia River and virtually is surrounded by Senegal. This book focuses on The Gambia because the authors reside (Barlow) or have worked there (Wacher), but Senegal is treated completely as well. A 15-page introduction includes information on geography, climate, vegetation, major habitats and protected areas. The color plates by Tony Disley are simple but elegant, and, in my opinion, they are at least as good as those in

The Collins Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa published in 1980. The plates depict 570 of the approximately 660 bird species recorded for the "Senegambian" region. Each species account includes brief information on identification (including flight characteristics), habits, voice, status and distribution, and breeding biology. The region includes an incredible diversity of raptors; the species accounts treat 58 species of falconiforms and

12 species of owls. Indeed, the falconiforms occupy 8 of the 48 color plates, 3 of which focus on flying raptors. The layout of the book is quite user-friendly. Having visited East Africa, I am now eager to expand my horizons to the western part of the continent, especially because another great field guide is now available for that region.—**Jeff Marks, Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 U.S.A.**

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