

BIRDERS' BOOKSHELF

The Birds of Indiana

Russell E. Mumford and Charles E. Keller 1984. Indiana University Press. Bloomington, Indiana. xviii + 376 pp., 175 color paintings by William Zimmerman. Hardbound \$75.

EXCEPT FOR A RECENT BIRD FINDING guide (Keller *et al.*, *Indiana Birds and their Haunts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1979), which includes comments on regional status and distribution, those interested in Hoosier birds have been without a comprehensive reference for almost a century. Sorting through their vast files of mostly unpublished observations, Russell Mumford and Charles Keller have attempted to update information about Indiana's birds from 1898, when Amos Butler published the first major summary. Both authors are eminently qualified for this task, as they have travelled widely throughout the state for many years collecting specimens, making observations, and becoming well acquainted with Indiana birds and other Indiana birders. Mumford has served as curator of bird specimens at Purdue University and has maintained an extensive file of his and other's observations. Keller is an ornithologist by avocation and with the help of family members published the aforementioned bird finding guide. Having served as compilers of regional field notes for *American Birds*, both authors are adept at judging the validity of submitted records.

It is immediately obvious on first examining this book that the text is secondary to the paintings of nesting species by William Zimmerman, another native Hoosier. As a result, this is a unique state bird book, directed not only to the ornithologist and serious birder, but to anyone interested in bird illustrations and natural history art. Zimmerman's style is appealing, with particular attention paid to the background setting. Many illustrations fill most of a full 23 × 30 cm page, and a few species rate two pages. Keeping in mind that these paintings are not intended to serve as a field guide, I saw few problems with the renditions of the various species. Some birds seem too



Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). Illustration by William Zimmerman from "The Birds of Indiana." Photo/Indiana University Press.

heavy-bodied, the colors muted in others, but all species are easily identifiable, except for the plumage colors of the female tanagers. Illustrations were reserved for the approximately 170 species that are current nesters and have had two or more breeding records in the state. An exception is the Bald Eagle, which has not nested in Indiana in this century. These criteria, however, excluded the Western Meadowlark, which certainly breeds in western parts of the state but lacks definitive nesting records. The plates illustrate both sexes of adults if plumages are noticeably different, and birds are shown at the nest in appropriate habitat. Juvenile birds are not shown, although, rarely, a newly hatched chick is shown along with eggs. Two plates show predators at the nest, reminiscent of Audubon, and plants featured in the illustrations are identified. A unique and valuable aspect of the paintings is the

inclusion of nests and eggs. In the attempt to show eggs in the nest, some nests appear shallower than they actually are. Eggs not shown with adult birds are included in a separate plate near the end of the book.

Although the illustrations are attractive and ultimately may be responsible for the commercial success of this volume, it is the accompanying text that will receive the most attention from the serious students of Indiana's birds. An introductory chapter presents a history of early ornithology in the state, describes the format of the species accounts, provides definitions of terms used to describe status and occurrence, and discusses the climate, physiographic regions, and past and present land use in Indiana. The species accounts follow with approximately a page of text devoted to each breeding species. Birds not considered current nesters are discussed in smaller type with coverage

of a few sentences up to an entire page. Each species account follows a similar format. Following a list of English, scientific, and vernacular names, an introductory paragraph often recounts a personal experience with the bird, or puts the species in perspective with its habitat or various members of its family. Past status is reviewed and compared with present distribution and abundance. Habitats frequented by the species are listed. Spring and fall migration periods are discussed and peak and extreme dates and counts of birds are given. Wintering information is presented with average and extreme numbers of birds recorded on Christmas Bird Counts. Reproductive data include nesting and fledging dates, clutch sizes, nest heights, and plants and other substrates used for nesting. The final paragraph gives miscellaneous information about food items, vocalizations, and interesting behavior.

The authors have a very readable writing style, and the species accounts exude a firm, confident flavor. Subject areas where information is needed are apparent from the species accounts. The species accounts are substantial relative to many other state bird books. However, subspecies found in the state were not discussed and more quantitative information on species abundance and distribution could have been included.

A section containing occurrence charts for each species follows the plate depicting eggs. Occurrence charts have been used successfully elsewhere (e.g., Behle and Perry, *Utah Birds*, Utah Museum of Natural History, Salt Lake City, 1975), and are very useful when varying thicknesses of lines indicate relative degrees of abundance throughout the year. In the present volume, their design limits their value and in many cases tends to be misleading. Permanent residents are depicted by a continuous line with a bolder line designating peak migration periods. Relative abundance of a species between summer and winter periods cannot be discerned. Only migration periods are indicated for many summer and winter residents, so it is impossible to determine which species are summer or winter residents and which are simply migrants, without referring to the text.

An extensive list of references follows, but this is by no means a complete list of publications on Indiana's birds. The names of sponsors and donors to this monumental project comprise a section of the book. In order to produce a coffee



Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), with Northern pitcher plant in the foreground. Illustration by William Zimmerman from "The Birds of Indiana." Photo/University of Indiana Press.

table volume at a reasonable price, individuals and organizations were approached to sponsor each bird plate for \$300. This effort was very successful and the price of the original painting is especially modest considering the size and quality of the paper and reproduction. The first printing of 10,000 copies of *The Birds of Indiana* has been sold out, but at the time of writing, books were still being offered through special promotions at the original price of \$49.95, an extremely reasonable price for a book of this quality. —J.S.C.

Birds — Their Latin names explained

A. F. Gotch, Blandford Press, U.K., 1981. In U.S., Sterling Publishing, 2 Park Ave., New York. 348 pp. \$22.50.

TWO LEXICONS OF NORTH AMERICAN bird names have been published recently, those of Gruson (1972) and Choate (1973, 1985). Both were severely flawed. The latest lexicon, by Gotch, a retired British schoolteacher, is not limited in its geographic scope. Gotch chose

1850 species of birds from all over the world, mostly because they were either well known or rare/endangered, but also for a wide geographic representation. I had intended to read entirely through this book, but lost patience by the time I reached the shorebirds. The introductory chapters on nomenclature and classification are naive and vastly oversimplified. In spite of the title, the author also gives the derivation of many but not all English names. He tends to explain such adjectives as "red-footed" or "black-crowned," but tells us nothing about the origin of such nouns as grebe, gannet, shag, or whimbrel. By the time I reached page 126 and quit, I had listed nine erroneous derivations of names and 17 factual errors. Redundancy is rife; for each of the many birds whose species name is *australis*, Gotch carefully explains that this "does not necessarily mean Australia." His grasp of geography is minimal, particularly as regards bird ranges; the Galapagos Rail is attributed to "South America," but the Galapagos Hawk is "confined to Galapagos and the surrounding small islands." The Snow Goose is attributed to "southern parts of Asia" and the Rough-legged Hawk to Burma and Viet Nam. Other kinds of errors abound. Austin Rand is given as the author of *The New Dictionary of Birds*. Birds that were named for Wolf and Denham (pages 120, 124) are said to have been named by them. And so on, and so on.

Would that a modern author who is both a knowledgeable ornithologist and a classical scholar would write a *reliable* lexicon of bird names! The brilliant Elliott Coues did so for North America in 1881 (Gotch was apparently unaware of this and several other important references), but where will we find a latterday Elliott Coues?

As a footnote, I should point out that in my review of the late Ernest Choate's *Dictionary of American Bird Names* (*Bird-Banding* 45:284-287, 1974), I was severely critical of that book's multitudinous factual and printing errors. In the 1985 revision, Raymond A. Paynter, Jr. has not only brought nomenclature into accordance with the 6th (1983) edition of the A.O.U. *Checklist*, but has done a thorough job of correction. At the same time, he has left intact, quite properly in my opinion, those aspects of the book of which I was critical that represent, not outright errors, but Choate's stylistic idiosyncracies. —K.C.P.

The Technique of Bird Photography
John Warham. Focal Press, Woburn, Mass. 1983. 304 pages; illustrated throughout. Hardbound \$42.95.

ONLY A FEW BOOKS SPECIFICALLY discuss bird photography. Russ Kinne's book covers the very basics and Cornell's Home Study Course, though more extensive, lacks a true sense of continuity because of the large number of contributing authors. Early editions (1956) of Warham's *Bird Photography* promised more, but of the copies I've seen haunting bookshelves, none were dog-eared from use; in part because of the rapid advances in equipment in the two decades that followed publication and the somewhat obtuse British writing style.

Subsequent editions were not much better. However, the current edition has been completely rewritten and reillustrated and may finally become a major source book for bird photographers.

Most photo books are biased towards 35mm format, as are most photographers. Warham breaks from this tradition by equally discussing all major formats. The larger format enthusiasts and especially the cinematographer will certainly welcome this broader view.

Although these techniques can be found in most general nature photography books, the basics of photographing birds in the wild, on the wing, and at the nest using 'hides' are thoroughly described.

The true value of this edition lies in its indepth discussions of advanced techniques. For example, the flash chapter includes techniques for using telephoto flash, high and low speed flash, fill flash,

infra-red and photoelectric triggers,—methods not found in most how-to-books.

Photography has become an essential tool for field researchers and the specific techniques of recording behaviors, censusing, documenting rarities and threatened habitats must be mastered. Warham soundly advises ornithologists on these matters and also discusses how their photographs can become primary or secondary databases in themselves. The use of photographs to record and compare intra-specific soft-part colors is a project VIREO has been experimenting with. Warham includes suggestions here also.


“ . . . a definitive and highly practical overview of bird photography.”

Techniques of Bird Photography is not a beginners guide but a well-researched compendium of situational techniques serious bird photographers may need to call upon. These techniques were not just gleaned from other sources, but painstakingly honed from years of practice. Warham himself has devised a method to photograph nesting petrels in their burrows—a logistic and technical feat.

With such added bonuses as a brief history of bird photography, guidelines for critiquing photographs, and a healthy reminder of what field ethics mean, this book has achieved its potential—a definitive and highly practical overview of bird photography.—R.C.


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