
BIRDERS' BOOKSHELF



America's Bald Eagle by Hope Ryden. Photo/Hope Ryden.

America's Bald Eagle

By Hope Ryden. G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York. 1985. 63 pp, 54 black and white photographs by Hope Ryden. Hardbound \$11.95. Grade 5 and up (Ages 10 and up).

Where the Bald Eagles Gather

By Dorothy Hinshaw Patent. Clarion Books: A Houghton Mifflin Company, New York. 1984. 56 pp, 43 black and white photographs, mostly by William Muñoz. 1 map. Hardbound \$12.95. Grades 3 to 6. (Ages 8-12).

THESE TWO BOOKS FOR ELEMENTARY school children recount the life history of Bald Eagles, but *America's Bald Eagle* is an absorbing story while *Where the Bald Eagles Gather* tends to overwhelm the reader with a dry recital of detail after detail.

Ryden's account of the perseverance and patience needed by the parent eagles to raise their young, and of the many hazards faced by eagles in their lifetimes, should make it evident to young readers that raptors are not menaces to be eradicated, but birds to be admired. She takes her audience to the treetops with the eagles and we see their courtship displays, hunting and fishing

activities and their care of the young. Her dramatic story makes the birds come alive.

Patent's purpose seems to be to describe the annual autumn gathering of Bald Eagles in Glacier National Park, but she includes so many other facts about eagles that the child who dips into it may say, "That's more than I want to know about eagles." The opening page describes a Bald Eagle diving on and capturing a jackrabbit. This is a misleading introduction to a bird that feeds largely on fishes and scavenges extensively, although both these points are brought out later. A photograph of a merganser with a fish bears the caption, "Ducks as well as the eagles feed on the dying salmon." This might cause youngsters to believe all ducks eat fish. Patent includes a description of how eagles are captured and fitted with wing tags or radio transmitters and the reasons for this procedure.

Both books point out the human activities that threaten eagles. Both are well illustrated with black and white photographs. *America's Bald Eagle* is highly recommended, and that portion of *Where the Bald Eagles Gather* that describes the spectacular fall assembly is also worthwhile.—F.W.

Birds of the Great Basin, A Natural History

Fred A. Ryser, Jr. University of Nevada Press, 1985. Drawings by Jennifer Dewey. 604 pp. Hardbound \$27.50.

IN THIS NATURAL HISTORY, FRED Ryser describes how the birds common to the Great Basin in Nevada deal with the desert environment. The species accounts sparkle with descriptions of adaptations to the extreme rigors of a "cold desert" climate. Nevada's Great Basin desert stretches from the Great Salt Lake in Utah west to Eagle Lake in northeastern California, and from Malheur Refuge, Oregon, to southern Nevada, north of Las Vegas.

After describing the geography and environment in the first chapter, Ryser deals with the rigors of heat and cold, and of maintaining water balance in two detailed chapters. I found heavy sledging through these two chapters, but they lay the groundwork for the species accounts which compose the balance of the book. Ryser's species accounts depended on information from hundreds of investigators and he footnotes a prodigious 513 references. The investigators reported in august journals like the *Auk*, *Condor*, *Wilson Bulletin*, many books, and some technical publications. He synthesizes their research wittily and readably.

The section devoted to "Hibernators"—goatsuckers, swifts, and hummingbirds—offers some remarkable information. He explains both the present knowledge regarding poorwill hibernation from field observations and that gained through laboratory research with poorwill metabolism. The poorwill can adjust physiologically for survival under heat stress. It has an extremely low metabolic rate—46% of the expected rate, and with its extra-large mouth and gape, an ability to dissipate heat. As the ambient temperature rises from 35° to 47° Centigrade, it can increase evaporative water loss by a factor of eight; at 47° Centigrade, an active poorwill can dissipate metabolic heat at five times the rate of a resting bird. He also points out that the torpid poorwill found in 1879 and the hibernating bird found in 1946 proved to the scientific community what the native Indians probably already knew: the Hopi name for poorwill was *Holchko*, "the sleeping one."

Swifts and hummingbirds become torpid in cold weather—14° Centigrade for the Black-chinned Hummingbird. The Calliope Hummingbird builds a well-insulated nest close under an overhead branch, that shields her back from cold night weather. Ryser explains how hummingbirds fly up, down, forward, and backward, and how flowers adapt to pollination by hummingbirds. He informs those of us who have watched Rufous Hummingbirds dominate a feeder that those aggressive males devote more of their time during the day to defending feeding territories (6.7%) than to actual feeding (5.5%).

The ordinary-looking Black-throated Sparrow also has some not-so-ordinary adaptations to desert life. Its kidneys function to reduce water loss—during

water stress periods, the average water content of the excrement decreases, from a normal of 81% to 57%.

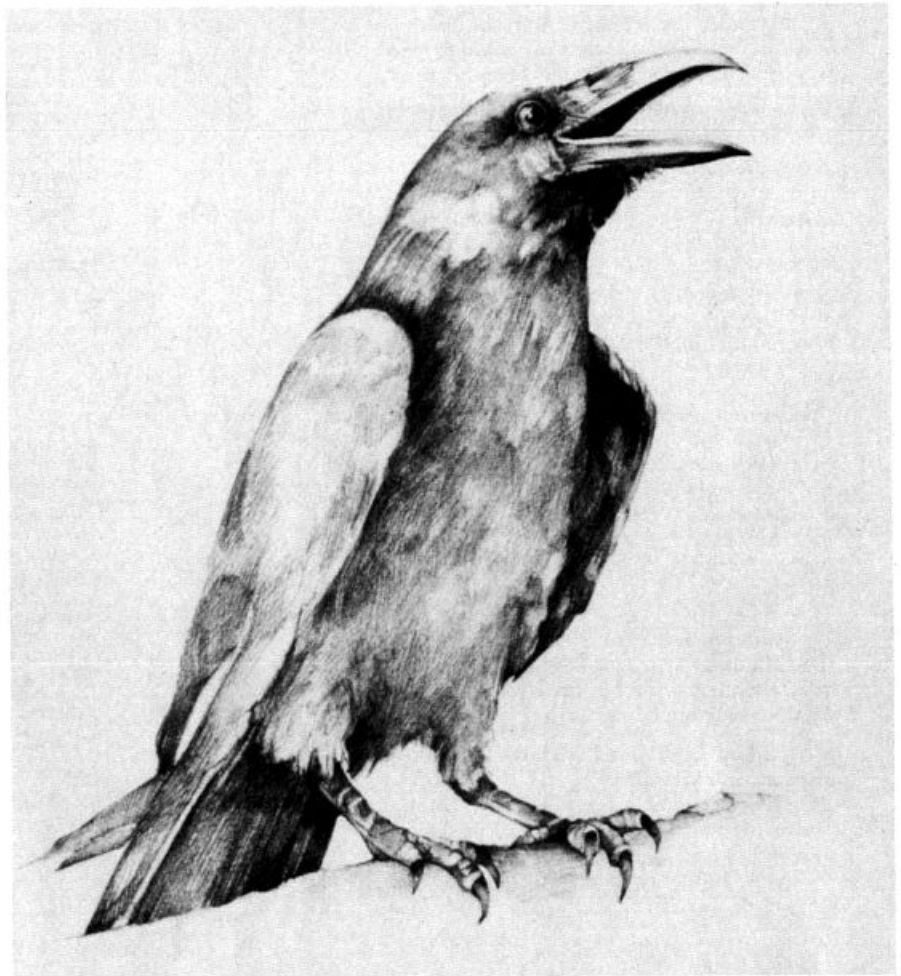
He describes communal roosting of Pygmy Nuthatches, how the song of the Bewick's Wren so much resembles that of the Song Sparrow that male sparrows defend their territories against the wrens, and the defense call of young Burrowing Owls—which sounds like a rattlesnake lying inside the burrow. He quotes Zebulon Pike (of Pikes Peak fame) on magpies, early researcher Ridgway on a myriad of species, and Fuertes on Prairie Falcons at Pyramid Lake, Nevada.

He notes that Great Basin populations of several species have changed over the years—Bewick's Wrens have increased, Swainson's Hawks have declined. He describes the hunting technique of the Swainson's Hawks in Argentina, where they winter. They formerly foraged in large flocks in search of "clouds of migratory locusts which plagued the pampas. Now with more efficient pest control practices, winter

food for the hawk is not so readily available." He suggests that its decline in the United States may stem from pest control (not necessarily pesticides themselves) in, and other deterioration of, the winter range.

With a commendable sense of proportion, Ryser devotes the bulk of his species descriptions to the birds that occur commonly in the Great Basin. He summarizes the uncommon and rare species briefly, often citing *American Birds*. (A comment to researchers: the reports to the Mountain West Regional Editor since 1973 reside in the Zoology Department of the Denver Museum of Natural History. Any researcher may contact the museum's Curator of Zoology to review or to copy those reports.)

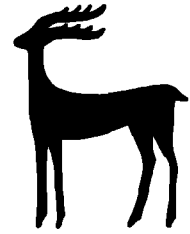
Ryser's wit frequently made me laugh out loud. He alludes to the controversy today between evolutionists and fundamentalists over the origin of species (organic evolution vs a divine creator). Then he comments, "As far as North American birds are concerned, a third force is also at work—the committee



Birds of the Great Basin, A Natural History by Fred A. Ryser, Jr. Illustration/Jennifer Dewey.



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WHAT IS COVERED IN THE 1986 VOLUME?

More than a thousand pages long and hard-bound for durable use, the *Audubon Wildlife Report 1986* features the U.S. Forest Service in a lead chapter that could stand alone as a complete book.

CONTENTS 1986

Forward by Interior Secretary Donald Hodel, The U.S. Forest Service, Wildlife Issues on the National Forest System, Federal Funding for Wildlife Conservation, Migratory Bird Protection and Management, Inland Fisheries Management, Marine Fisheries Management, The Endangered Species Program, The Federal Animal Damage Control Program, Marine Mammal Protection, Wetlands Preservation, The National Wildlife Refuge System, Wildlife and the National Park Service, Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management, International Wildlife Conservation, State Wildlife Conservation: An Overview, State Wildlife Law Enforcement, State Nongame Programs, The Whooping Crane, The Common Loon, The Atlantic Salmon, The Chinook Salmon, The Walrus, The Spotted Owl, The Sage Grouse, The Small Whorled Plover, The Polar Bear, The Peregrine Falcon, The Hooded Warbler, The Black Duck, The Lynx, The Bobcat, The Red Knot, The Osprey, Lange's Metalmark Butterfly, The Elk, Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle, The Loggerhead Shrike, Knowlton's Cactus, The Wood Duck, The Wolf.

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on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union." He goes on to describe the A.O.U. process and to praise the result of "a uniform set of names and single classification scheme."

About 20 sketches of common birds, by Jennifer Dewey, decorate the species accounts. The book also includes 60 fine color photographs taken in the Great Basin of the birds endemic to the region.

This book, like the Stokes Nature Guide series, bubbles with information that adds interest to our field observations of the birds that he describes. And with the immense list of references, we have sources from which to find out more about them.—H.E.K.

Birds of Pennsylvania, Natural History and Conservation

James S. Wakeley and Lillian D. Wakeley. Pennsylvania Game Commission, Harrisburg, PA 17120. 1983. 214 pp., line drawings by George Lavanish. Color illustrations by various artists. Hardbound \$10.00.

ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT BOOKS with the title "Birds of ____" usually fall into one of several categories. They are either annotated checklists, guides to finding birds in a particular area, species by species accounts of the natural history and status of the birds of a particular area, or listings of the "common" birds found in an area. *Birds of Pennsylvania* does not fit easily into any of these categories.

The first one-half of the book is a general introduction to birds: their life cycle, behaviors, movements, adaptations for flight, benefits and detriments of birds, attracting birds, bird conservation and observing birds. The authors pack a lot of information about the lives of birds, their natural history and relation to man into these sections. However, the examples used are not limited to Pennsylvania species or habitats.

In the section on attracting birds, the book recommends cutting openings in tracts of forest. This may certainly increase the diversity of birdlife in the

area, but it will also attract cowbirds, to the detriment of forest dwelling species. It also reduces the forest habitat for those species that require it. Whenever the habitat for one species is increased, habitat for another is decreased. This ethical dilemma is not discussed.

"At best . . . an elementary introduction to ornithology and a list of some birds common to Pennsylvania."

In the section on conservation, no mention is made of the need to conserve critical habitats in Pennsylvania, especially wetlands and fields. Instead it simply lists some of the existing government or privately-owned refuges. This one-half of the book is apparently aimed at the layman or novice. It would serve well as an introduction to ornithology for a youngster or someone with just a passing interest in birds, but it would be of little value to the experienced birder.

The other one-half of the book is divided into brief accounts of habitats found in Pennsylvania and the more common birds that can be found there. A few paragraphs on each species describes either its habitat, some part of its natural history, or its status in Pennsylvania. These accounts are not consistent, and in some cases are incorrect. For instance, Brown Creepers do breed in Pennsylvania, while Merlins do not. Only 170 species are covered in this section. A checklist at the end of this section (not in present A.O.U. order) lists only 295 of the 380+ species that have occurred in Pennsylvania. Therefore, this book does not fit the first three categories listed at the beginning of this review. At best it could be described as an elementary introduction to ornithology and a list of some birds common to Pennsylvania.

The black and white illustrations by George Lavanish are excellent and make paging through the book a more pleasant experience. The color illustrations are also very well done and consist of former "Game News" covers and "Bird Charts" sold by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

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If you are interested in which species occur in Pennsylvania, their natural history, their status, distribution or occurrence, this book is *not* for you.—F.C.H.

Birds That Came Back

John Gooders 1983. Andre Deutsch Ltd., London 180 pp, 60 illustrations (14 color). Hardbound \$24.95.

ALTHOUGH AMERICANS PROBABLY know this author best for his two "where to watch birds" guides, he has written or edited 30 volumes to date. In the present work John Gooders undertakes the task of historian in describing the return to England of several species extirpated or severely reduced in historic times. In so doing, he presents a theme which contrasts markedly from the gloomy prognostications regarding many species, especially in the tropics.

This volume is far from being a self-praising eulogy of British successes in bird preservation, although certainly most of Europe, if not the world, could learn some lessons from them. There

have been four species extirpated in historic times and the causes of their elimination and the decline of many others are pointedly detailed. Mr. Gooders hits hard at the problems (e.g. egg collecting) and isn't afraid to address unpopular solutions (e.g. gull control as a management technique). His analysis also gives considerable insight into the factors (including vagaries of fate) which tend to lead toward (or away from) extinction.

“. . . an excellent job of entwining entertaining accounts with ecological and ethnological insights.”

The author has done an admirable job of sticking to his objectives: plotting the fortunes of Britain's birds, while introducing enough European or worldwide information to allow the reader to place the commentary in a broader context. The text is an encapsulated rendition of English ornithological history loaded with intriguing insights. You'll learn, for example, of the effects world conflicts have had on avian populations, what hangs from a gamekeeper's gibbet, the gamekeeper's oath and what now extinct species had its last representative in Britain, killed as a witch. Mr. Gooders has done an excellent job of entwining entertaining accounts with ecological and ethnological insights.

American readers may find that the

reasons for British bird declines and their solutions are often markedly different than ours. We are fortunate, for instance, that egg collecting, which continued legally in England until 1954, never became a major preoccupation among American birders. And while we are unlikely to ever flood our shorelines to reduce the threat of an invasion, we can profit nonetheless from the unexpected windfall that this action gave England.

Since England is a relatively small, isolated country with a long history of ornithological awareness, one would presume Gooders had a considerable data base with which to track population fluctuations. The British set international standards with their atlas work. Sherrock's "The Atlas of British Birds" (published in 1976), presents condensed accounts of the historical status of the same species treated by Gooders. There are, surprisingly enough, some discrepancies between Sherrock's succinct summaries and Gooders' more intimate accounts. While these scarcely detract from the readability of this work, the reader should at least be aware that estimates of historical population fluctuations are subject to interpretation. Readers should be stirred to increase their participation in national survey efforts so that future generations will have reliable estimates upon which to assess population changes.

My only regret in reading this interesting anthology of bird biographies is that the author failed to include a map of Great Britain. A gazetteer and general map would have added measurably to everyone's enjoyment of this entertaining volume.—D.P.K.

Endangered Parrots

Rosemary Low. 1985 Blanford Press. Dorset, United Kingdom 160 pp. \$24.95 (\$31.95 in Canada).

HAVING HAD MORE THAN A PASSING interest in South American Psittacines in graduate school, I began reading Ms. Low's short volume with considerable enthusiasm. The text was interspersed with over 30 photos and a dozen distribution maps. A liberal amount of documentation was evident with nearly 150 references listed, most of them published since Forshaw's 1973 tome *Parrots of the World*.

“No one reading the first sixteen chapters can escape the feeling of impending doom . . .”

It is readily evident from the title, dedication and chapter headings (e.g. "Why parrots are endangered"; "Deforestation: the critical issue"; and "Southeast Brazil: an ecological disaster area") that this is a book intended to jolt us from apathy into concern. Case after case is presented of habitat destruction, population decline, and environmental apathy. No one reading the first 16 chapters can escape the feeling of impending doom, not only for parrots, but for most organisms in tropical and subtropical rainforests and on oceanic islands.

A premise underlying the author's portrayal of doom throughout the first two-thirds of the book is that captive breeding by aviculturalists followed by releases into the wild, may ultimately be the means of saving a number of species from extinction. Chapter 17, a short but perceptive discussion of the role of aviculture in conservation, should be read by anyone interested in the methods being used to maintain declining species' populations. Despite the author's repeated premise that aviculture represents the salvation of many endangered species, she presents considerable evidence that few will ever be successfully released in natural environments.

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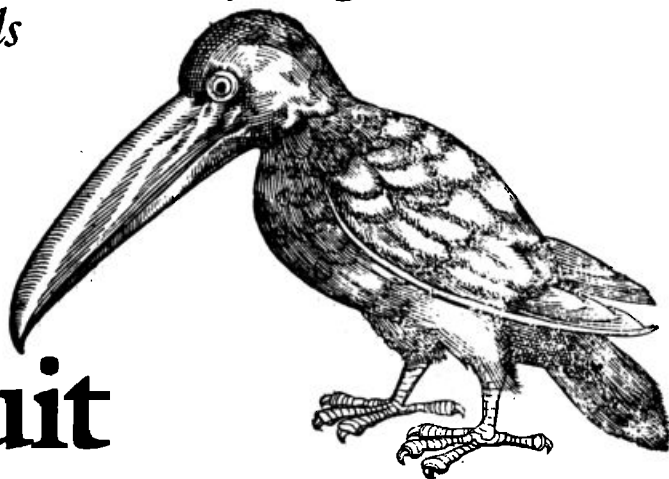
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Non-Trivia Quiz

<p>1.  The population of what Florida bird species is down to one male?</p>	<p>3.  What endangered bird in California has been the subject of an intense debate over whether or not the remaining wild individuals should be brought into zoos for "safe-keeping?"</p>		
<p>2. What raptor is increasing in numbers since DDT was banned and new protective laws took effect?</p>			
<p>4.  What bird is at the center of the old-growth forest management controversy in the Northwest?</p>	<p>5. What dramatic forest bird was considered extinct until recent confirmed sightings in Cuba?</p>	<p>6.  If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tightly restricted use of this substance by hunters, millions of ducks and geese would be saved from poisoning every year. What is this substance?</p>	<p>7. What sea-faring bird has been restored to Maine coastal islands by Audubon biologists?</p>
<p>8.  Conservationists are trying to keep the City of Los Angeles from dewatering this lake, an important breeding area for California gulls and a critical stopover for the Wilson's phalarope. What is this lake?</p>	<p>9. Conservationists are trying to keep water in Nebraska's Platte River, a critical migration stop-over for what long-legged bird? </p>	<p>11. What shorebird sports a russet breast, nests in the central Canadian arctic, and leads a perilous existence because of its strict dependence upon a few unprotected migration staging areas?</p>	<p>12.  The decline in the hooded warbler population may be due to what international phenomenon?</p>
	<p>10. What small predatory bird is on the threatened list in four states because its habitat is being converted to agricultural uses and because of pesticide contamination?</p>		

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tecting wildlife and the environment. Don't miss a single issue. Send six dollars (for six bi-monthly issues) to Audubon Activist, Dept AB, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

ANSWERS 1) Dusky seaside sparrow. 2) All raptors benefited from the removal of DDT from the market, from improved laws, and especially from the positive change in attitude toward predatory birds. Bald eagle numbers have shown significant increases. 3) California condor. 4) Spotted owl. 5) Ivory-billed woodpecker. 6) Lead shot, which can be replaced by steel. 7) Atlantic puffin. 8) Mono Lake. 9) Sandhill crane (also, whooping crane). 10) Loggerhead shrike 11) Red knot 12) Tropical deforestation

Ms Low concludes on a positive note, listing in detail measures that have afforded parrots and other fauna protection in Third World nations and suggesting measures that may conserve rainforests. The latter appear in most instances more admirable than attainable. The significance of the capture and exportation of avifauna for the pet trade is noticeably downplayed in discussions of factors causing population declines.

Endangered Parrots contains a wealth of information derived from recent studies on several of the rare parrot species. Regrettably, the accounts suffer in part from poor organization. Redundancies should have been eliminated, which would have made the author's style more direct and effective. Numerous photos of handheld young parrots appear to contribute little appeal to the book. The book will be of most value to those interested in learning more on the effects of the clearing of rainforests on Third World nations with burgeoning populations. —D.P.K.

Lorenzo the Magnificent: The Story of an Orphaned Blue Jay

By Robert Franklin Leslie. *W. W. Norton & Company, New York. 1985. 191 pp., drawings by Patti Ann Harris. Hardbound \$12.95.*

WHETHER YOU HAVE ENJOYED THE antics of those handsome blue corvids that invade your feeding station, or whether you've always thought jays were noisy, thieving rogues, you'll enjoy this book.

Robert Leslie and his wife were famous for their ability to cure the ills of injured wildlife, but when the baby blue jay (that's with a small "b"—actually it was a Scrub Jay) arrived, it was in a hopeless condition. It was club footed, its bill was twisted, it had a broken leg and wing and its head had been pecked bare. It not only survived, but thrived on the F.F.F.F. (Formula for the For-

tification of Fledgling Fowl)

The waif developed into a boisterous dandy, a master of trickery and duplicity. It reminded the Leslies of that notorious historical personage, Lorenzo de Medici, and so it was named.

The Leslies did not try to domesticate Lorenzo—he was always allowed to fly freely, and had to make his own peace with the wild jays in the neighborhood. He stayed with the Leslies until his third spring because "he liked what he had: food, shelter, amusement, protection, attention, feathered friends, love, and—an appreciative audience." He overcame his handicaps and when the time came, found a mate. They lived to raise many broods of jaychicks.

Although 191 pages may seem a bit too much about the behavior of a single bird, no matter how personable and intelligent, the lack of anthropomorphism and the charm of the telling make the story a pleasure to read. Delightful line drawings illustrate Lorenzo's adventurous life. —F.W.

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The Marsh Hen: A Natural History of the Clapper Rail of the Atlantic Coast Salt Marsh

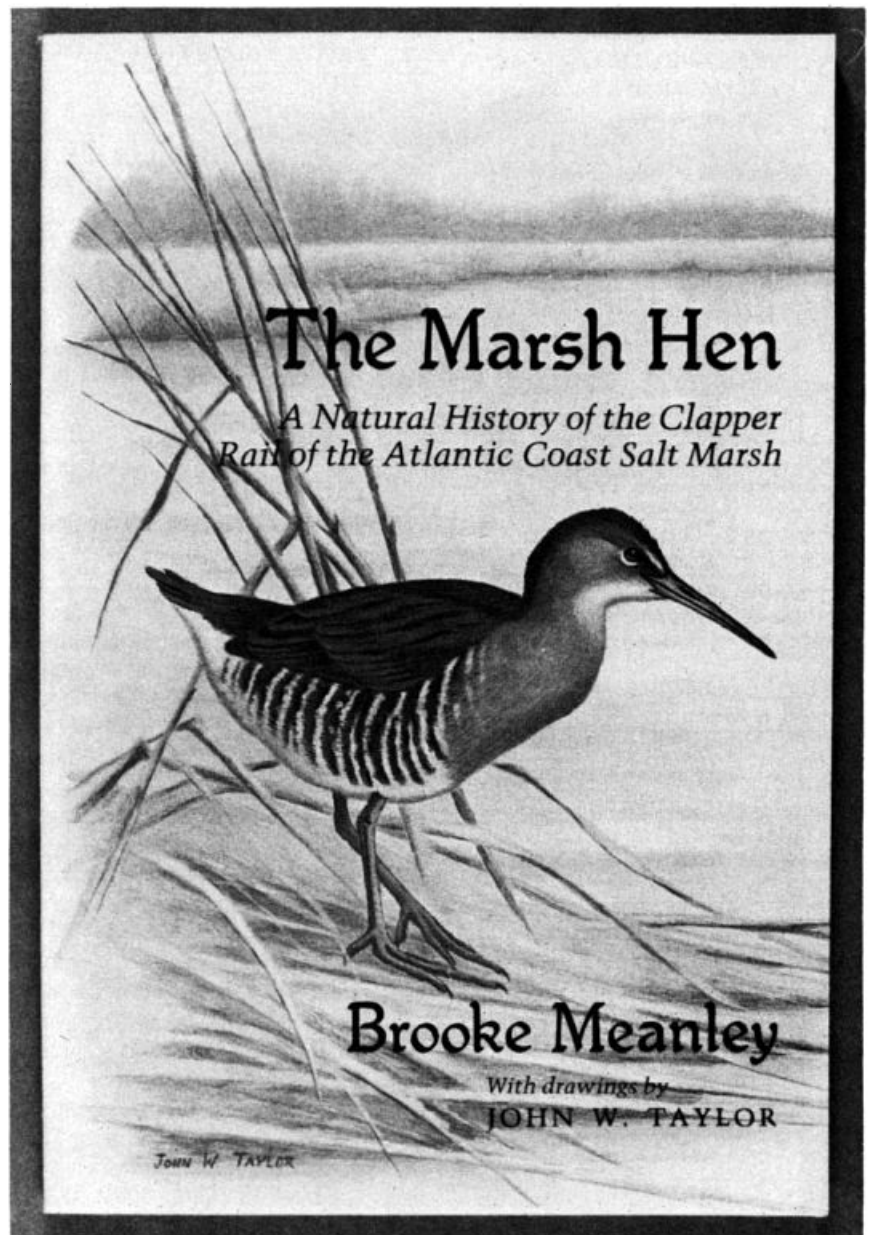
Brooke Meanley. Tidewater Publications, Centreville, MD 21617. 1985. 123 pp., drawings by John W. Taylor, many photographs. Paperbound \$8.95.

HERE IS ANOTHER FINE BOOK FROM Brooke Meanley, who has written seven previous books on subjects concerning the marshes and swamps of the east and southern United States. This is his third life history monograph; the other two are: *Life History of the King Rail* (1969. North America Fauna No. 67) and *Life History of the Swainson's Warbler* (1971. North America Fauna No. 69). The Clapper Rail is a wetlands species that is frequently heard but not always seen, except for an occasional view along some tidal creek at low tide and near dusk. Observing rails takes not just time but plenty of patience. The author has spent over one-half a century watching birds, much of that time in marshes and swamps.

His very readable style presents a fascinating view into the daily life of the Clapper Rail and its neighbors. Major topics covered include taxonomy, habitat, feeding behavior and foods, courtship and nesting, the summer season, molt, post-breeding season, migration, hunting, winter, and threats from natural catastrophe, pollution, and predation. Appendices on geographic variation, ageing and sexing, capturing, and censusing are included along with an excellent bibliography. The many fine photographs and drawings greatly enhance the book.

Everything you ever wanted to know about the Clapper Rail (at least on the Atlantic coast), but were afraid to ask, is presented. Minute details and summaries of larger sets of observations are given. One cannot begin to present in this review the many fascinating details that the author has compiled. Some examples: female fiddler crabs do not receive the same treatment by the rails as male crabs, the latter has its single large claw removed before being swallowed whole; a single hurricane may cause 15,000–20,000 rail deaths, but the population recovers within a few years.

This book is well written (and edited—I could find no typographical er-



rors), for both amateur naturalists and professional biologists. All will find it easy to read and locate information. It is very worthy of adding to a home or office library.—J.M.S.

We thank the following book reviewers for their careful reading and comments. The initials at the end of each review correspond to these names: Franklin C. Haas, Douglas P. Kibbe, Hugh E. Kingery, Jay M. Sheppard, and Frances Williams.

CORRIGENDA

In Volume 40, Number 1, we included the book "Where to find birds in Nova Scotia," in our Canadian Directory. This title is out-of-print and has been replaced with "Birding Nova Scotia" (1984). The book retails for \$5.00 and is available from The Nova Scotia Bird Society, attention: J. Shirley Cohrs, 8 Rosemont Avenue, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3N 1X8.

The book "A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada," J. C. Finlay (ed.) 1984, was also included in the Canadian Directory. It is not available in the U.S. through the Canadian publisher, Hurtig. The book can be purchased in the U.S. from the Independent Publishers Group, 1 Pleasant Avenue, Port Washington, N.Y. 11050, (516) 944-9325. It is available in both hardcover (\$27.95 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling) and paperback (\$18.95 plus \$2.00 postage and handling), though paperback stock is low.