

BIRDERS' BOOKSHELF

The Birds of Canada, revised edition
W. Earl Godfrey. Illustrations by John A. Crosby. National Museums of Canada, Ottawa. 1986. 595 pp., 74 color plates, 102 black-and-white figures. Hardbound \$39.95 Canadian.

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE International Congress of Ornithology in Ottawa in June 1986 was the debut of Earl Godfrey's revision of the *Birds of Canada*. A sumptuous book, it is larger than the 1966 edition, two centimeters longer and one centimeter wider, with 167 additional pages. It covers 578 species, 60 more than the 1966 edition, as well as 37 hypothetical species, 17 more than before. Of these, 426 are known to have bred in Canada. John Crosby's excellent plates depict 498 species, an increase of 67 from the earlier edition. Most species are shown in several different plumages, often in several postures, perched, flying or swimming.

The maps, 387 by my count, 10 more than the 1966 edition, provide evidence of the maturing of Canadian ornithology, and our increasing knowledge of breeding bird distribution, especially in the northern, less settled portions of the country. At least 265 of the maps have been updated, usually extending, and rarely diminishing, known breeding ranges. Some of these represent range extensions, but many merely reflect the results of intervening studies in previ-

All illustrations on this page from "The Birds of Canada," illustrations by John A. Crosby and S.D. MacDonald.

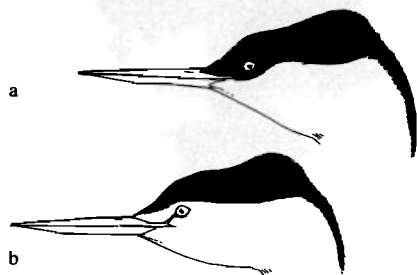


Figure 10
 a) Western Grebe
 b) Clark's Grebe

ously little-known areas, as for example in the northwestern Yukon. It is a thankless and impossible task to attempt to keep track of every obscure record; the maps give evidence of Godfrey's excellent track record in this regard. Although for at least nine species I can recognize Saskatchewan ranges that are fifty or more miles in error, in some instances this represents local birders' failures to publish range extensions not known to those outside of the province. This book will provide an incentive to all Canadians to correct such deficiencies, especially for species like

“. . . the definitive work on the distribution of birds in the northern one-half of North America.”

the Black Scoter, whose Canadian breeding range remains virtually unknown and hence unmapped.

As the senior Canadian systematist, Godfrey's thorough listing of recognized subspecies will be of value. He gives good reasons, based on (apparently) unpublished work by Brian Knudsen of his own museum, for lumping Thayer's and Kumlien's gulls as one species with the Iceland Gull, contradicting the conclusions of Neal G. Smith and A.H. Macpherson. However, he chooses not to lump the redpolls into a single species, following the equally compelling and published work in Alaska by Declan Troy.

One can quibble over minor points. The Great Gray Owl, by external feather measurements is indeed our largest owl. Yet such a statement is misleading, since the Great Horned Owl and Snowy Owl have a greater body mass. Historical changes in bird populations are not always mentioned. Additional revisions were added to the text after completion of the maps, so some extensions of breeding range mentioned in the text are not mapped.

If you already own the 1966 edition,



Figure 56
 Head of
 a) Eurasian Curlew
 b) Whimbrel

do you need the new one? The answer must be a resounding "yes" for all birders in Canada, Alaska and the northern states, and "probably" for anyone north of Mexico. This, after all, is the definitive work on the distribution of birds in the northern one-half of North America. Godfrey provides valuable infor-

“A sumptuous book . . .”

mation about field marks, habitat and nesting. Only after bird atlases become the rule, will more accurate breeding range maps be possible. Meanwhile, with an unusually attractive layout, the illustrations and maps alone are worth the price.—C.S.H.

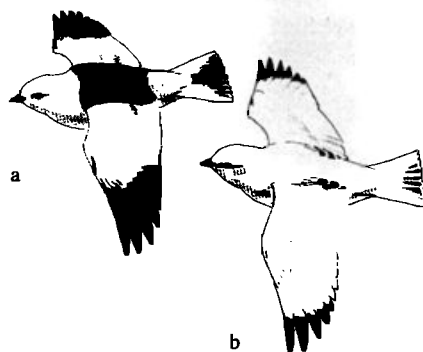


Figure 99
 a) Snow Bunting
 b) MacKay's Bunting

Species Checklist of the Birds of New Guinea

Bruce Beehler and Brian Finch. *Australian Ornithological Monographs No. 1*, December 1985. Royal Australian Ornithological Union, 127 pages.

“. . . extremely useful for anyone working in New Guinea.”

THIS CHECKLIST OF NEW GUINEA birds is extremely valuable for anyone working in New Guinea. It is most useful in giving the original names, dates of description, and author. These are all important data, but without other field guides such as “Birds of New Guinea,” this volume alone would appeal only to the serious taxonomist. Used in conjunction with the field guide, this checklist can be a useful tool to anyone interested in the birds of this part of the world.

“Used in conjunction with the field guide, this checklist can be a useful tool . . .”

A total of 708 species is listed, a significant increase from previous lists. Providing the original name applied to the species as well as the author, location, and date of the original description is also extremely valuable. The addition of more than one common name for many species is very helpful and an important part of the book. Clearly, “Species Checklist of the Birds of New Guinea” will be useful to any ornithologist working or interested in New Guinea.—D.B.



Birds of New Guinea

Bruce M. Beehler, Thane K. Pratt, and Dale A. Zimmerman. Princeton University Press. 1985. 293 pages. Hardbound \$65.; paperback \$37.50.

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN LONG AWAITED by ornithologists as well as bird-watchers. It is the first real field guide to the birds of New Guinea and an update of the *Handbook of New Guinea Birds* by Rand and Gilliard published in 1968. This new volume is more of a field guide than the *Handbook*, with less

“. . . a must for anyone interested in the birdlife of New Guinea.”

detailed information, but it is however, significantly updated. The field guide format and first rate color plates make this book a must for anyone interested in the birds of New Guinea.

The most useful field guide prior to the publication of *Birds of New Guinea*

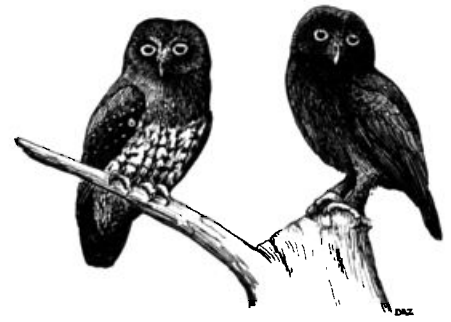


FIG. 18. Papuan Boobook (*Ninox theomacha*). Race *goldii* from the D'Entrecasteaux Is., typical race (*theomacha*)

Illustration/Dale A. Zimmerman, “Birds of New Guinea.”

was Beehler's *Guide to Upland Birds of Northwestern New Guinea*. But that volume's lack of color plates and limited geographic scope greatly reduced its usefulness. This new guide fills the void nicely.

A good supplement to *Birds of New Guinea* is the recently published first volume of a two volume set of photographs of Papua New Guinea birds by Brian Coates (Dave Publications).

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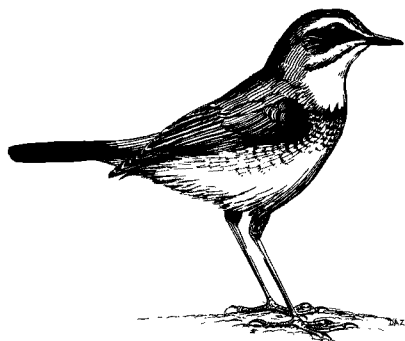
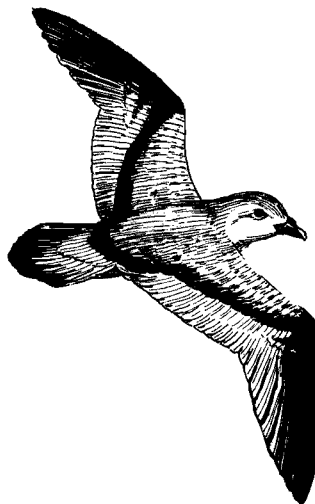


FIG. 19. Siberian Rubythroat (*Erithacus calliope*). Female

The species accounts are extremely informative, while being quite brief. They offer descriptions of the species, similar species, habits, range, and descriptions of calls. The bibliography and index are very well done and provide a great deal of assistance to any user.

Slightly oversized when compared to most other field guides, *Birds of New Guinea* follows the standard field guide format with color plates in a separate section. While it would be much nicer if the plates accompanied the species accounts, that would require hundreds

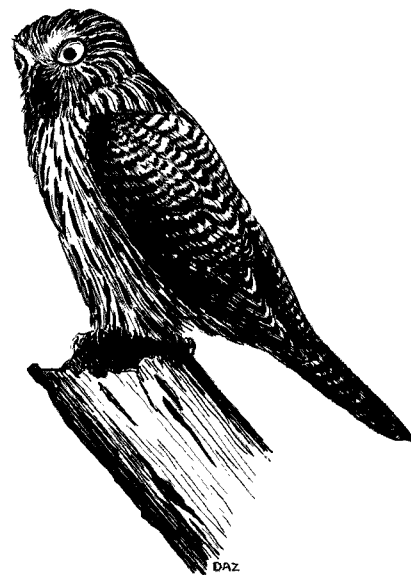
of plates instead of the fifty-five included in this volume. There is also a significant advantage to seeing most similar species of a single plate and comparison.



DAZ

FIG. 6. Fairy Prion (*Pachyptila turtur*)

All illustrations on this page by Dale A. Zimmerman from "Birds of New Guinea" by Bruce M. Beehler, Thane K. Pratt, and Dale A. Zimmerman (Princeton University Press).



DAZ

FIG. 17. Papuan Hawk-Owl (*Uroglaux dimorpha*)

Most of the plates are in color, and those in black and white are of birds which are generally black, white and grey in color.

While some of the colors in the plates are not one hundred per cent accurate, they are better than any others available. The illustration of the male *Loboparadisea sericea* attempts to show the bulbous blue wattle on top of the cere, but doesn't do the live bird justice. Still, it is a vast improvement over previous illustrations based solely on skin collections.

Birds of New Guinea has additional outstanding features, including a map of New Guinea on the inside cover. The introduction and Papuan natural history sections are very useful, as is the "In the Field" section that follows. These provide a great deal of insight into New Guinea, with the portions devoted to Health and Etiquette for visitors being particularly helpful.

Birds of New Guinea is clearly a must for anyone interested in the bird life of New Guinea, anyone who plans to tour there, or anyone who does field work in this part of the world.—D.B.



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True to Nature

Christopher Parson, foreward by David Attenborough. Patrick Stevens, Ltd., Salem House Ltd. 1984. 377 pp. Black & white and color photographs. Hardcover \$24.95.

THE NATURAL HISTORY UNIT OF THE British Broadcasting Corporation is, without a doubt, the most well-organized, well-financed, and prolific producer of wildlife programs. With a staff of over seventy people, the Natural History Unit has produced "Life on Earth," "The Living Planet," and many of the wildlife programs, like "Nature," broadcast in the United States. Christopher Parsons, who is now head of the Natural History Unit, began working for the BBC as an assistant film editor in 1955, before the Natural History Unit officially existed. "True to Nature" is his personal account of the growth of the Natural History Unit from a few small rooms filled with makeshift equipment and a tiny staff to a full-

fledged BBC department responsible for the production of over two hundred wildlife programs a year.

Parsons' first assignment as an assistant film editor is working on the series "Look," hosted by Peter Scott. Within three years he is spending a hectic, nerve-wracking day directing his first live broadcast. By 1962, Parsons is on his way to New Zealand with Gerald and Jackie Durrell to shoot a series called, "Two in the Bush." As the Unit grows and gains recognition from BBC

“. . . captures the excitement and expectancy that is felt on a film shoot in an exotic locale.”

headquarters and from the world, his projects become more numerous and ambitious. "Two in the Bush" is followed by programs like "The Major" and "A Bull Called Marius," and two series—"Catch Me a Colobus" and "The World About Us." Finally, he un-

dertakes his most ambitious project of all, "Life on Earth." Parsons provides a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at this familiar and highly respected series.

Though Parsons seems happiest in the field with a cameraman in tow, he spends a good deal of time as an administrator in what one suspects is the large bureaucracy of the BBC. The segments of the book in which he discusses fundraising, the comings and goings of personnel, the acquisition of independent films, proposal writing, and waiting for project approvals are not as interesting as his filmmaking adventures and one is tempted to skip ahead until the next project gets underway.

Parsons is undoubtedly at his best when describing his "on location" adventures with a crew and a subject. He captures the excitement and expectancy that is felt on a film shoot in an exotic locale. He writes well about all of the frustrating details—flat tires on washboard roads, bad weather, seasickness, leeches, and uncooperative wildlife subjects. When he is on location with Gerald Durrell, who is a born comedian, practical jokes abound. A few of



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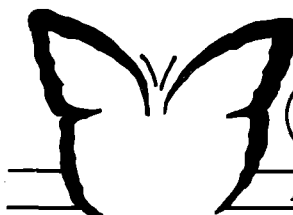
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Durrell's simple and funny cartoons are included to help illustrate their adventures.

A good many photographs illustrate the book, introducing us to the people, places, and wildlife Parsons talks about in the text. Fans of wildlife films will enjoy meeting the man who is responsible for many of our wildlife programs and learning how these programs were created.—J.F.



We thank the following book reviewers for their careful reading and comments. The initials at the end of each review correspond to these names: Betty A. Anderson, Donald Bruning, Judie Fieth, and C. Stuart Houston.



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The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds

Stephen W. Kress, *Illustrations by Anne Senechal Faust*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1985. 375 pages. Hardbound \$24.95.

ONE OF THE JOYS OF OWNING A HOME is the opportunity to provide shelter and food for wildlife, as well as for your family. In this book, Stephen Kress outlines the techniques and resources needed to attract birds and other wildlife. Six chapters and several appendices thoroughly discuss landscaping techniques, the selection of appropriate plants to provide food and shelter, supplemental feeding, and the construction of pools, ponds, and nesting structures. Using the information in this book the suburban dweller can turn a small yard into an attractive area for birds and the large landowner can benefit from suggestions for creating wetlands, green-tree reservoirs, and even "guzzlers" in more arid areas.

Two features of the book make it useful for all areas of North America, overcoming the major drawback of books geared to only one region. First, the chapter on plant selection is nicely organized to provide regional coverage of North America, not only of the more populated northeast and southeast, but the Pacific coast, prairies and plains, and mountains and desert. Abundant tables and cross-referencing vastly in-



HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY
Vaccinium corymbosum

creases the number of plants that are described and identifies those that can be used in more than one region of the country. An appendix also provides supply sources for some plants not readily available at commercial nurseries. Second, an entire chapter is devoted to a list of state and provincial publications that will help you customize your landscaping to the prevailing soils and climate. Publications from 45 of the 50 states and three Canadian provinces are listed with the publisher's address.

For those that cannot or do not desire to undertake extensive landscaping, the chapter on supplemental feeding alone is well worth the price of the book. In addition to describing both the responsibilities and rewards of feeding birds, Kress provides an excellent summary of Aelred Geis's study of the relative attractiveness of different foods at wild bird feeders. The descriptions of preferred foods will help you adjust your seed mix to attract the more desirable species and exclude some of the pests (starlings and House Sparrows). This summary will also steer you clear of the "cheaper" bird feeds that contain mostly undesirable seeds.



SHAGBARK HICKORY
Carya ovata

Clear and uncluttered line drawings by Anne Senechal Faust are found throughout the text and illustrate many of the techniques of landscape planning as well as easy to follow diagrams for constructing nest boxes, bird baths, and shelters for roosting birds. I highly recommend this book for those who wish to turn their "biologically sterile" yard into an attractive home and haven for birds.—B.A.A.

All illustrations on this page by Anne Senechal Faust from "The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds" by Stephen W. Kress (Charles Scribner's Sons).