

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Hummingbirds of North America, 2nd edition**, by Paul A. Johnsgard. 1997. Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington, D.C. 278 pages, 24 color plates, scattered black-and-white figures and range maps. Hardback \$40. ISBN 1-56098-708-1.

This is the second edition of a book first published in 1983, from which the present work differs mainly in its additional treatment of all hummingbird species found south to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in southern Mexico, thus widening the definition of North America to a biogeographic rather than political boundary. The first edition was widely reviewed and praised (e.g., *Wilson Bulletin* 96:155–156, 1984; *Auk* 101:407–408, 1984), and it pleasing to see that reviewers' comments have been addressed in the present edition. For example, despite its expanded scope, the second edition is 25 pages *shorter* than the first because of more intelligent use of page space.

The book has two sections. Part 1 (Comparative Biology of Hummingbirds) is an overview of this fascinating avian family, with brief summaries of classification, distribution, evolution, anatomy, ecology, behavior, and breeding biology. Part 2 (Natural Histories of North American Hummingbirds) comprises species accounts, with maps, for all 47 species covered. Four appendices (synoptic identification keys [bills often appear too short] for both North American and Mexican species, a glossary, and a discussion of the origins of scientific names), a useful bibliography, and index round out this recommended work. The former appendix of "hummingbird-adapted plants" is omitted from the second edition. The sixteen color plates from the original edition have been supplemented with four in similar style showing Mexican species at identified food plants, plus a reproduction (very yellow in my copy) of Sophie Webb's four hummingbird plates from *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America* (Howell and Webb 1995, Oxford Univ. Press).

Looking through the second edition, I was struck by two thoughts. First, classification is not this book's forte. While one may not necessarily agree with the American Ornithologists' Union, many generally accepted taxonomic opinions are not noted in *Hummingbirds*: e.g., AOU (1983) recognized the Long-tailed Sabrewing as a species, AOU (1991 supplement) split the Short-crested Coquette as a species, and AOU (1993 supplement) split the Mexican Woodnymph as a species. Second, the copy editor should seek work in another field: typos are rife, at least in the newly added material. For example, on page 111 see Townsend (*sic* = Howell) and Webb (1995) and Escalante-Pilego (correctly cited as Escalante-Pliego a few lines above), on page 259, "from the Green [*sic* = Greek] *kuanos*."

While some may criticize technical content, and I wouldn't rely on the field-identification sections (on the basis of the first species I checked, the Berylline Hummingbird), Johnsgard's writing style makes information accessible to lay person, field birder, and professional museum ornithologist alike. I recommend this book as a good general reference, and anyone with an interest in hummingbirds could learn something from it.

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