

BOOK REVIEWS

Dunlins and Western Sandpipers do, as described by Stan Senner. The immense, remote Copper River Delta just southeast of the Prince William Sound in Alaska, is arguably one of the most important stopover sites for migratory waterbirds in the world, and the author does a captivating job in describing its importance to the successful migrations of Dunlins and Western Sandpipers. Almost the entire world's population of Western Sandpipers appears to stop at the Copper River Delta during spring, and most of the west coast population of the Dunlin (*Calidris alpina pacifica*) does the same.

The last chapter focusing on specific species deals with our smallest birds, the hummingbirds. William Calder has long studied the migration of hummingbirds, especially the Rufous and Broad-tailed, through the Rocky Mountains. He presents an amazing picture of how these tiny creatures gather enough fuel in the form of body fat, in a very unpredictable environment, to complete migrations of thousands of kilometers successfully.

Able ends the book with a succinct plea for why we should be concerned about conserving migratory birds and what problems these creatures face. In a pessimistic but politically brave note, he points out that unless industrialized and nonindustrialized countries do something about curbing their insatiable expansions, especially through population growth and use of resources, life's diversity, including migratory birds, faces a diminished future.

Gathering of Angels is generally well edited. There are few and minor typos such as "Great plains" on p. 105 and labeling the figure on p. 18 as map 2.1. The maps and figures are clear and informative, with the exception of map 7.1 (p. 107), which in my copy is blurry and hard to read. Photographs are well selected.

Who should buy *Gathering of Angels*? Even before I was asked to review this book, I had purchased it as a perfect book to read while traveling. For those looking for the latest review on bird migration, tied in to the latest theories, with a complete list of references, this book is not for you (nor was it intended to fill such a role). Instead, it offers a fascinating, very readable, and personal look at bird migration in North America from the long-term perspectives of the distinguished contributing authors. *Gathering of Angels* should be an automatic buy for all private, public, and academic libraries with bird sections, especially given its relatively modest cost.

Nils Warnock

Swifts: A Guide to the Swifts and Treeswifts of the World, second edition, by Phil Chantler, illustrated by Gerald Driessens. 2000. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT. 240 pp., 24 color plates. Hardback \$40.00. ISBN 0-300-07936-2.

The first edition of *Swifts* was published in 1995 and received mixed reviews (e.g., see *Cotinga* 6:42-43, 1996). Hence, perhaps, the fairly quick appearance of a second edition. The jacket cover notes that particular attention has been paid to neotropical swifts and that several plates have been revised. I reviewed *Swifts* in terms of New World species and changes over the first edition to answer two questions: if you own the first edition is it worth buying the second? If you own neither, should you make the financial leap?

Numerous specific criticisms of the first edition have been addressed, and in particular I commend the author (and publisher) for more frequent inclusion of direct literature citations. Although citations seem to have been included at random, and remain rather thin on the ground, the author has summarized a wealth of literature concerning swifts. Inevitably some references were overlooked. Not surprisingly perhaps, given the publication date, records from Sonora of the White-naped Swift and Chestnut-collared Swift (Russell and Monson 1998, *The Birds of Sonora*, Univ. Arizona Press) were missed, but White-collared Swifts have been known from central-

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west Mexico for some time (e.g., Howell 1994, *Euphonia* 3:45-46) and are not mentioned.

The plates are printed much more clearly and on glossier paper than in the first edition but besides this, and some different background colors, I detected no substantive changes in illustrations of any New World species. Unstandardized postures still do not facilitate comparison among similar species and shapes of most species suggest the artist did not visit the New World, e.g., the disconcertingly fat-bodied and stubby-winged *Aeronautes* which, in life, are so streamlined.

Revisions to the text have met with mixed success. Some accounts have been greatly expanded, e.g., for the enigmatic White-fronted Swift, although a statement in the introduction (p. 21) that "a recent sight record appears to support its [= White-fronted Swift's] validity as a species" is unfathomable. Conservation, status, and habitat data from Stotz et al. (*Neotropical Birds: Ecology and Conservation*, Univ. Chicago Press, 1996) are valuable additions to each account. Some maps have been changed, e.g., for the Black Swift, but this species' range in Mexico (wrongly claimed to be part of Central America) was more accurately portrayed in the first edition (and remains accurate in the text). The introductory taxonomy section notes specifically that Marin's recent revision of some *Chaetura* swifts (*Ornithol. Monogr.* 48:431-443, 1997) has not been followed, but I found no mention of the possible merger of the Chestnut-collared Swift into *Streptoprocne* (suggested in 1992) and followed by the AOU (1998, *Checklist of North American Birds*, 7th ed.).

Many needed changes did not happen, probably because, like so many books in this genre, *Swifts* suffers from its author's lack of adequate New World field experience and peer review. For example, the sections on movements of the Black Swift and White-throated Swift comprise partially organized facts rather than syntheses of information. Coastal nesting of Black Swifts in central California is not mentioned, and an unreferenced statement under the White-throated as "in Mexico believed to be rare" is truly bizarre (noted as "fairly common to common" by Howell and Webb 1995, *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*, Oxford Univ. Press). Other accounts remain inexplicably inaccurate (e.g., for range and elevation limits), and voice in general is treated poorly for all New World species.

In conclusion, the second edition of *Swifts* is disappointing and overpriced, and I see no reason to own it (or the first). The treatments for Old World species may be better, but I regret to say there is still great need for a good book on New World swifts.

Steve N. G. Howell