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ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

EDITED BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

BLACKBURN'S BIRDS: THE BIRD PAINTINGS OF JEMIMA BLACKBURN. Rob Fairley, ed. Canongate Press, Edinburgh, Scotland. 1993: 112 pp., 100 color paintings, 3 black-and-white drawings, portrait photograph. $50.00 (cloth). Distributed in the United States by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, Vermont.—This large-format book ($9\frac{5}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{4}$ in.) deservedly brings to our attention the work of an all-but-forgotten Scottish artist and amateur ornithologist, Jemima Blackburn (1823–1909). She wrote and illustrated a number of books, several intended for children. Her ornithological *magnum opus* was the second edition of her "Birds from Nature" (1868). Although she was an admirer of the great folio monographs of Audubon, Gould, and others of the mid-Nineteenth Century, she realized that these were luxury items that only the very rich could afford. She therefore decided to have her illustrations reproduced in black and white, and the first edition (1862) of her book was sold for a modest ten shillings sixpence. As a perfectionist, Mrs. Blackburn was dissatisfied with the book, and in 1868 published an enlarged edition with 22 additional plates. Only six copies were colored by hand for sale to the general public, and another colored copy was produced for a friend's birthday.

The editor of the present book, Scottish artist Rob Fairley, was chatting one day around 1983 with Alan Blackburn, a friend and neighbor of some years, when Blackburn casually mentioned that his great-grandmother Jemima was a painter. Fairley paid little attention until Blackburn persuaded him to have a look at the paintings, stored in his mother's house. Struck by the beauty and accuracy of the bird paintings, Fairley became determined to revive interest in Jemima Blackburn's life and work, and this book is the result.

Most of the book's illustrations were taken directly from Mrs. Blackburn's originals rather than from published versions; in fact, many, perhaps the majority, have not been previously reproduced. Most are watercolors, with early paintings often including some ink work. A few are collages, in which she cut out a bird's outline and transfered it to a different background, much as was also done by Audubon.

Fairley mentions that some of the paintings, such as that of the Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), were done on brown paper; in that painting and the domestic pigeon (*Columba livia*) on the facing page, it is obvious that white areas were painted onto the brown background. But in the majority of the plates in this book, the backgrounds *and* the areas of the birds that should be white are a disconcerting yellowish or buffy color; this may possibly be a literal reproduction of the discoloration of originally white paper.

As evidenced both by the extracts from Mrs. Blackburn's writings (which constitute the bulk of the text of the book) and the paintings themselves, many of her subjects were painted directly from living birds, either pets, as with the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), or birds held temporarily in captivity. She was particularly successful with young birds, such as the downy chicks of the Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). A few of the adult birds, such as the Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) and Yellowhammer (*E. citrinella*), resemble the stiff paintings done from poorly mounted birds typical of much of the older school of bird art. There is an Audubonian liveliness to her painting of crossbills, which, incidentally, are the distinctively large-billed Scottish Crossbills (*Loxia scotica*) which had not been recognized as a separate species in Mrs. Blackwell's day. It would have been useful to have had dates attached to the paintings to verify what one can deduce was her increasing skill in painting lifelike birds. Some, such as the Eurasian

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) and the Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) are downright bad, but the head portraits of the Common Raven and the Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) could pass for studies by Fuertes, than which there is no greater praise.

There is one misidentification; the left-hand painting on p. 48 is identified as being that of the Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), but the reproductions are clearly two slightly different variants of a painting of Whinchats (*S. rubetra*).

Mrs. Blackburn was a keen observer of bird behavior, as amply evidenced by the excerpts from her writings included in the book. Most striking of all is her detailed account of the ejection of nestling Meadow Pipits (*Anthus pratensis*) by a blind and naked hatchling Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), accompanied by a small but dramatic drawing. This behavior had been reported by Jenner in 1788 but dismissed as impossible by Waterton in 1836. Mrs. Blackburn's account was originally published, not in a scientific journal, but in what Fairley calls "a popular but rather poor narrative for children, *The Pipits* (1871)". Darwin refers to Mrs. Blackburn's observations in the sixth edition of "The Origin of Species."

Rob Fairley has done the history of ornithology in general, and of bird painting in particular, a fine service by bringing to our attention the life and work of Jemima Blackburn, who had a distinct influence on her younger but much better known contemporary, Beatrix Potter.—KENNETH C. PARKES.

ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WOOD DUCK. By Frank C. Bellrose and Daniel J. Holm. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. 1994:588 pp., numerous black-and-white sketches and black-and-white photographs, 8 color-coded maps, glossaries of biological and statistical terms, 226 tables, 131 figures, 11 appendices, 28-pages of references, index. $59.95.—This, the most comprehensive treatment of the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) to date, begins with an introduction that treats the role of Wood Ducks in prehistoric cultures, their appearance on U.S. Postage stamps and on federal and state duck stamps, and the accounts and art of early North American explorers and naturalists. The 19 chapters that follow focus on everything from distribution and habitats to behavior, physiology, parasites, diseases, and management. Tables, figures, and appendices contain an incredible wealth of both new and previously published data about virtually all aspects of Wood Duck biology. These data are generally woven together with a text that is a good review of the literature, fleshed out with original data and analyses. Most aspects of behavior and ecology are illustrated with exceptionally good black-and-white photographs. In short, the authors have done everything but squeeze the "*Aix*!" out of Wood Ducks.

To this endorsement, I must add that it is sometimes difficult to interpret the data for lack of sample sizes and explanation of how data were collected. One could go to the original source for data from previous publications, but that isn't an option in the case of data presented for the first time. For example, tables 78, 79, and 80 present apparently new data on percentage of time spent at various activities by Wood Ducks in Illinois. *P*-values are presented, indicating results of paired *t*-tests, but neither total amount of time spent observing the birds nor the number of birds observed, let alone such factors as habitat or weather conditions, are given. The authors also present interesting data on variation in European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) use of nest boxes supplied with a sawdust nest substrate of different colors (p. 284). Again *P*-values suggest significant differences (Starlings seemed to prefer lighter substrate), but no sample sizes or other details are presented. I hope the details of these studies are yet to come in journal articles.

There are some inconsistencies in presentation. For example, text descriptions of winter distribution of Wood Ducks describe numbers and patterns based in part on Audubon Christmas Bird Counts for the years 1983-87 (why these years and not more?). Map 3, however, shows relative winter densities based on the Audubon Christmas Bird Count for 1979–1980.

The authors clearly demonstrate that this is a very intensively studied species, but for many aspects of the Wood Duck's biology they have been able to provide little synthesis or summary. Tables and figures tend to be study specific, with few data that are compared across studies or regions. Some tables that do summarize data for broad regions are inadequate because of a weak data set. For example, Table 131, which occupies one and one-half pages, presents a tabulation of some vertebrate species that have used Wood Duck nest boxes on national wildlife refuges. Only selected refuges are included, with no mention of why these were selected and others weren't. The "various animals" included in the table are often generic, such as "squirrels," "woodpecker," and "wren." Data are presented for varying numbers of years/refuge (only 1979 for many), there is no indication of the numbers of Wood Duck boxes provided per refuge, the intensity of box checks, who collected the data, or the relative frequency with which species were found using boxes. Having checked a few Wood Duck boxes over the years, I cannot imagine, for example, that Hillside National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Mississippi would have had use of boxes by only European Starlings and Northern Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*) and that Eufaula NWR, Alabama, would have use only by Starlings. I question the use of Wood Duck boxes by Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) at Catahoula NWR, Louisiana, since they have rarely nested in the lower mid-South.

The black-and-white photographs add considerable to the book but would have been easier to refer to if they had been numbered. The color-coded maps are useful, but not as useful as they might have been. Map 1, for example, includes four separate maps indicating levels of density as well as the current breeding range for Wood Ducks. Density levels given are "sparse," "low," "medium," and "high," but no source for the information on the maps is given nor are the meanings of the density levels presented. It is difficult to visualize the total range from these—a composite is really needed. The five and one-half page index is useful, but inadequate for a 588-page book. Don't depend on it! For example, under Mississippi, there are three page numbers given, yet I found Mississippi mentioned with important data presented in tables and appendices on dozens of other pages.

Errors in the book tend to be in materials somewhat peripheral to Wood Ducks. For example, the authors refer to the brown rat snake (p. 295), which is not a recognized common name for any North American snake, when they apparently meant to refer to the gray rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta spiloides*). Also, I question that "Flickers also may make tiny holes in Wood Duck eggshells, apparently in an attempt to cause nest abandonment" (p. 294). A tiny hole is all that is needed for a woodpecker to insert its tongue to feed on the contents.

This is the sort of book that tends to be viewed as a "comprehensive review" up until the year of publication. Is it? A scan of the references suggests that serious review of the literature ended with 1990, and that the most recent citation is from 1992. The authors do not refer to their list of literature as a "Literature Cited" section—it is called "References." A perusal of the references suggests that there is reason for this. While I found no reference cited in the text that was missing from the list of references, I quickly found references in the list that are apparently not cited in the text (for example, Jackson (1974) and Rudolph et al. (1990)). This list of references is of great value: included within it are more than 60 M.S. or M.A. theses and more than 20 Ph.D. dissertations, as well as an abundance of citations to unpublished government reports.

For those interested in duck biology, wetland ecosystems, and Wood Ducks in particular,

this is a "must" publication. The list of references alone should be required reading for any graduate student contemplating study of Wood Ducks. No doubt there is much yet to learn about the Wood Duck—it is a living barometer of wetlands health and as a cavity nester is easily subject to experiment and study. Finally, I urge those contemplating such study to learn from those who have gone before, build on their strengths, correct their weaknesses, but provide future biologists with data sets that allow direct comparison with those that exist.—JEROME A. JACKSON.

CALIFORNIA BIRDS: THEIR STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION. By Arnold Small, illus. by Arnold Small and Brian E. Small. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, California. 1994: 342 pp., 56 color plates with caption figs. $55.00 (cloth).—California is an immense state covering almost 10° in latitude with a coastline over 800 miles long and an abundance of diverse habitats ranging from moist conifer forests to arid deserts. It is hardly surprising that a state so richly endowed ecologically should harbor a high diversity of bird species, in this case 586 species recorded since 1900, of which 325 have bred at some time and 278 breed regularly. Arnold Small, one of California's best known field ornithologists, has taken it upon himself to author a book describing the often complex distribution patterns of each member of California's avifauna. This book is larger, much more detailed, and far more useful than Small's earlier volume (1974, *The Birds of California,* Winchester Press, New York). Anyone seriously interested in California birds will want to own a copy and make frequent use of it.

This is a large format (8.5 in. × 11 in.) "coffee table" sized book that can fit comfortably in one's home library or automobile but not in a day pack. However, it should really not be necessary to lug it into the field. It is an attractively produced volume with numerous insets of color plates, each plate containing six photographs (for a total of 336) in color. Most of the photographs are full frame shots of birds, although some are meant to illustrate the kinds of habitats in which the bird species on the plate are found (i.e., open ocean, tidal saltwater marshes and mudflats, brushland, the Great Basin, montane forests). The quality of the photographs is sharp, although some are rather dark, due mostly to background. However attractive, the inclusion of such a rich array of color adds little if anything to the utility of the book and undoubtedly contributes to its rather steep price.

The book is well designed to facilitate its use. California is a complex state with 58 counties, many unique natural areas (e.g., six national parks, seven national monuments, 21 national forests, dozens of state parks and beaches, etc.), and several major ecological landforms. On the front endpaper, each county is clearly located on a large map along with a list of counties and county abbreviations (used throughout the text). Putting these on the endpaper makes it very easy to refer to them from the text. The rear endpaper is a list and an excellent map of key California birding localities, also highly useful both for its thoroughness and for ease of access. The frontispiece is yet another map, this one showing major landforms. The reader will need to become familiar with each of these maps in order to understand the species distribution accounts.

The first 31 pages provide an overview of the physical environment and bird life of California. Each of California's major ecological regions is briefly discussed, followed by an account of the general nature and origins of California's birds. This account is largely focussed on discussing the phenomenon of vagrancy, with separate lists of vagrants that have appeared from the east, Mexico and/or Arizona, Asia, Alaska and/or Canada, and the Atlantic Ocean. Possible causes of vagrancy are discussed in some detail, along with migrant traps, habitat islands, and other unique habitats of special interest to birders, perhaps more

so than ornithologists. The long account of vagrancy is followed by a brief discussion of patterns of bird migration in California. Absent from Small's overview is any significant discussion of large scale changes in bird populations that have occurred during the present century, although he lists former nesters, very rare, irregular nesters, and recent nesters. Small hypothesizes that the most abundant bird species currently occurring in California may be one of the following: Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) [tens of millions occur offshore but within state boundaries during part of the year], European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*), Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

The species accounts are the most important component of the volume. Each species is discussed as to its seasonal status, habitat, and range in California. There is a code next to the name that informs with regard to degree of abundance or rarity as well as breeding status. In these accounts, Small briefly discusses any significant changes in status (e.g., for Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*), "formerly fairly common, but reduced to a rare or very uncommon summer visitor in the Imperial Valley near the south end of the Salton Sea"). In general, the species accounts are most detailed with regard to range in California. Where appropriate, Small lists estimated populations (e.g., "50,000–60,000 Tundra Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) winter in the Central Valley"), and he provides adequate detail with regard to regional differences in occurrence within the state. This book is not meant as a bird finding guide, but the serious reader will, in fact, obtain reasonable knowledge of where to look for species of interest. For example Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*) is given 33 lines of text detailing the various locations of colonies throughout the state. Having, within the past three years, birded during all seasons throughout much of California, I checked the species accounts against my own notes and found very close agreement. I also asked several highly experienced California birders to examine the species accounts. Each had quibbles, but each expressed the view that the accounts were in general quite accurate and useful. Some bird species such as Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*), Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) Solitary Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), and Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), have complex distributions within California, and Small has done a creditable job of describing the ranges of these challenging species as well as those whose distributions are less problematical.

There are supplemental species accounts that record those species that have been reported in California but are "of questionable origin, viable status, or questionable identification." There are also species accounts of exotics that are considered to be non-established releases and escapees. To round out the utility of the book, there are, following the species accounts, appendices on sources of records of California birds, the California Bird Records Committee (which determines the official state list), standard abbreviations used in the text, and a checklist of California birds. There is both a bibliography and literature cited section and an adequate index.

There is currently no other up-to-date volume that encompasses all of California's birds. Small's book is very helpful and deserves wide usage.—JOHN C. KRICHER.

BIRDING IN OHIO. 2nd ed. By Tom Thomson. Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana. 1994: 268 pp. $29.95 (cloth), $13.95 (paper).—This book is a guide to more than 300 Ohio birding localities. The nature of each site is described and specialty birds are listed. Sites are arranged according to region. Maps are provided which show routes and locations but not much other detail. A few black-and-white sketches are included, apparently mostly for decoration.

This book is a useful addition to regional bird-finding guides, although I much prefer the format and detail provided by Lane/ABA guides. The treatment of individual sites varies greatly but none seem to have the kind of useful bird-finding tips commonly available in books for other sites or regions. The sketches range from very beautiful to a few that are so dark as to obscure identification of the bird. Some of the maps appear to have been copied from other road maps and, in a few cases, suffered from the copy process.

The "Bibliography" is dated, not entirely in correct alphabetical order, and cites "Wilson Bull. et al., The" 1925–1980, as if the journal somehow mysteriously stopped 15 years ago! Jerry Jackson is listed as the contact person (editor?) for *The Wilson Bulletin* even though he has not been editor or an officer of the society for many years. Also, there are notations in boxes "Special regional insert," followed by "End of regional insert," also in boxes. Why these are provided is not clear.

The final section, a list of the birds of Ohio, could be more useful with detail about where and when to expect each species—especially the rarities. Other bird-finding guides have used seasonally and/or regionally arranged bar diagrams to provide much of this information. I urge the author to consider some of these revisions in a subsequent edition.—C. R. BLEM.

THE BIRDS OF MICHIGAN. By Gail A. McPeek (ed.) Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington, Indiana. 1994:358 pp., numerous color plates. $59.95.—This book may be a disappointment to those who have seen "The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Michigan" (R. Brewer, G. A. McPeek, and R. J. Adams, Jr.; 1991. The breeding atlas was awash in information, data, and detail. The present volume is mainly a coffee table book. Individual species accounts apportioned among about 10 authors range from about one page in length to very brief paragraphs (for extreme rarities). Individual coverage varies, ranging from accounts that consider (in a general way) breeding, vocalizations, abundance, and habitat preference. However, the sort of detail that many ornithologists can actually use and often prefer (e.g., real clutch size data, not estimates; migration dates, data on geographic variation) was omitted, perhaps as a sacrifice to the space taken by the color plates.

The color plates were done by five artists and vary widely in composition and quality. Some paintings seemingly were not cropped properly; parts of birds are chopped off at the edge of the page, or the bird overwhelms the page because of size format. A few plates are not of the quality one would expect of a book of this type. Some birds looked more like mounted specimens than living organisms. Particularly attractive plates were done by John Felsing (in a form reminiscent of Sutton) and David Mohrhardt. The binding and printing are very attractive and nicely done. There were no obvious typographic or editorial errors. A reasonable bibliography is provided.

I use this last paragraph to encourage editors and printers of state and regional bird texts to use their opportunity to produce works less given to color plates and more to real data. I know that the "pretty" book is likely to sell more copies, but please try to strike a balance in which the real meat of the science is not lost in an attempt to be popular. We get few chances to produce definitive state books and to educate the public about ornithology. I urge those writing texts to keep this in mind and to resist the pressure to write "general" books with little new, precise information. The process of educating the public without being too general ("dumbing down" some have called it) is difficult but worth the effort in behalf of the science of ornithology.—C. R. BLEM.

THE BIRDLIFE OF FLORIDA. By Henry M. Stevenson and Bruce H. Anderson. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. 1994:892 pp. $120.00.—This volume represents the life work of the senior author who checked all museum specimens and compiled records for more than 40 years. The book is a rich source of information on Florida birds. It includes maps of their distribution and provides detailed descriptions of status, relative abundance, migration, breeding, adverse factors, habits and habitat, and problems of identification. An exhaustive reference section is included. The binding and format are excellent, and the book is attractive, but the scholarly approach used in this book may not be attractive to the casual birder. For example, the lack of drawings or color plates may hinder sales, but to my way of thinking, this is the way state books should be done. I have spent a good deal of time birding in Florida, but I learned something in the discussion of every species in this book. The book is, unfortunately, fairly expensive for reasons not obvious to me.—C. R. BLEM.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

The Wilson Bulletin publishes significant research and review articles in the field of ornithology. Mss are accepted for review with the understanding that the same or similar work has not been and will not be published nor is presently submitted elsewhere, that all persons listed as authors have given their approval for submission of the ms, and that any person cited as a personal communication has approved such citation. All mss should be submitted directly to the Editor.

Text.—Manuscripts should be prepared carefully in the format of this issue of *The Wilson Bulletin.* **Mss will be returned without review if they are not properly prepared.** They should be neatly typed, double-spaced throughout (including tables, figure legends, and "Literature cited"), with at least 3 cm margins all around, and on one side of good quality 8.5″ × 11″ paper. Do not use erasable bond. **Mss typed on low-quality dot-matrix printers are not acceptable.** The ms should include a cover sheet (unnumbered) with the following: (1) Title, (2) Authors, their institutions, and addresses, (3) Name, address, and phone number of author to receive proof, (4) A brief title for use as a running head. All pages of the text through the "Literature cited" should be numbered, and the name of the author should appear in the upper right-hand corner of each. The text should begin in the middle of the first numbered page. Three copies should be submitted. Xerographic copies are acceptable if they are clearly readable and on good quality paper.

Tables.—Tables are expensive to print and should be prepared only if they are necessary. Do not repeat material in the text in tables. Tables should be narrow and deep rather than wide and shallow. Double space all entries in tables, including titles. Do not use vertical rules. Use tables in a recent issue of the *Bulletin* as examples of style and format. Tables should be typed on separate unnumbered pages and placed at the end of the ms.

Figures.—**Illustrations must be readable (particularly lettering) when reduced in size.** Final size will usually be 11.4 cm wide. Illustrations larger than 22 × 28 cm will not be accepted, and should be reduced photographically before submission. Legends for all figures should be typed on a separate page. Photographs should be clear, of good contrast, and on glossy paper. Drawings should be in India ink on good drawing board, drafting paper, or blue-lined graph paper. Figures produced by high-quality laser printers may be acceptable. All lettering should be done with a lettering instrument or printer. Do not use typewriter lettering and do not submit figures having adhesive transfer letters affixed to them. Designate the top of each illustration and label (on the back in soft pencil) with author's name, ms title, and figure number. Submit two duplicates or readable xerographic copies of each figure as well as the original or high-contrast glossy photo of the original.

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