Bohemian Waxwings. Furthermore, there is no mention in either Bent (1950) or Martin *et al.* (1951) of Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) eating tree buds. Jim Mountjoy (in litt.), who has studied Cedar Waxwings extensively, was "not aware of references to waxwings eating buds other than those cited in Cramp (1988)." Cramp (1988:494-496) lists the buds of several tree species including elm eaten by Bohemian Waxwings in Europe.

It remains a mystery why three independent flocks of Bohemian Waxwings were observed eating elm buds when berries were readily available. They may have been eating buds for their protein content as a lack of protein in fruit seems to be the most important limitation of a diet which is high in fruit (Jim Mountjoy, in litt.). Bohemian Waxwings were observed in the same areas on several dates before and after 14 January 1990, but elm bud eating behaviour was never noted on any of these other occasions.

Acknowledgements

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Book Reviews

Mar. 1976 (republished 1986). By *Louise de Kiriline Lawrence.* Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc. 104 pp. CN$??, paperback.

Ernest Thompson Seton gave us histories of mammals based on composite studies of more than one individual. Louise de Kiriline Lawrence gives us the life history of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker based on her observations of one bird.

Primed to read her incomparable word-paintings, I came to an abrupt halt on page 3, where I read of sapsuckers "sucking" sap from holes they had bored in trees. Would I find more fallacies in an otherwise charming book? I did. On page 77, she again refers to the woodpeckers sucking sap; yet on the next page, she has Ruby-throated Hummingbirds "lapping" the stuff, which is also how sapsuckers imbibe it.

Other than that duplicated error, Mrs. Lawrence gives a full account of the life history of a male sapsucker as observed by her over two summers. Her story follows the bird from its arrival in spring,

through the claiming of territory, arrival of the females, courtship, mating, nesting, to activities of the birds until they depart for the south in the fall. There is no jumping about as from the events of April to those of July, thence back to May; rather, a natural progression is followed, her skilful writing inducing the feeling of the passing of the seasons.

At times, she breaks the story with theories of her own, some well conceived, some questionable. These interpolations tend to interrupt the reader's trend of thought, and may have reached a more appreciative audience had they been inserted at the end of a chapter, which usually terminates at the conclusion of a phase in the bird's life.

As I have been associated with sapsuckers about my cottage in Muskoka, and as I believe I know the species quite well, I questioned two statements. She refers, more than once, to the erectile crests worn by both sexes, an adornment that has apparently escaped my notice, notwithstanding my having observed the species in its mating season. The other statement refers to the bird's "dancing" in much the same way as flickers. I have seen the flicker so engaged dozens of times, and Downy Woodpeckers on several occasions, the latter sending me and the late Les Snyder (of the ROM) to Bent. We found no reference to the act in Bent's discussion of the Downy Woodpecker, but did find a confirmation of sorts for the Hairy Woodpecker. Searching the same "bible" on this occasion produced nothing under *Sphyrapicus varius varius* (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker), but did; "...much like a flicker"; under *S. v. nuchalis* (Red-naped Sapsucker). Evolution would demand that the act be committed by more than one species of woodpecker, so, in both cases (the display and the crests), it would seen that the author has been a privileged observer. If others have been so privileged, they have refrained from publicizing it. I also wondered how she knew Mar brooded the young at night, when all were confined to a hole in a tree.

One is never disappointed in her play on words, her description of the song of a Veery being a good example: "A thrush, a tawny veery, was engaged in a lyric performance of rare musicality, a flow of silvery dulcet notes in a descending cadence leisurely repeated over and over again." Other writers usually dismiss the song as a series of descending curves.

You will find *Mar* a highly interesting book that will introduce you to many facets in the life of a sapsucker. But it will not tell you how the male sapsucker that she knew intimately over six summers received its name.

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Birds of the Kingston Region. 1989. by *Ron D. Weir.* Quarry Press, Kingston, Ontario. 608 pp; 44 illus. CN$39.95

When one considers the relatively few regions in Ontario with book-length studies of bird distribution, it makes all the more amazing this third major publication since 1965 when Helen R. Quilliam came out with her first *History of the Birds of Kingston.* And this does not include a 40-page supplement produced in 1980 by Weir and Quilliam to describe the occurrence of those species new since her 1973 book! Owners of any or all of the other publications need not think that this most recent work is redundant, for it contains a wealth of fascinating information about our birds that few other areas have the database to even attempt to duplicate. Furthermore, it describes their status in a rich region which, for geographic and demographic reasons, few birdwatchers from elsewhere in Ontario frequent.

The format of this hefty paper-covered book follows the tried and true formula. Following an introduction by W.E. Godfrey, there are sections that outline: the purpose (if nothing else, to describe the 49 new species since Quilliam's 1973 book); basis for including records; annotated list of presumed escapes; abundance and frequency designations; the topography, vegetation and climate; descriptions of nine special interest sites with black-and-white photo illustrations; summary of ornithological work, especially since 1948 and leaving the earlier historical work as described in Quilliam's books; and, bird population trends. Inside the back cover in an envelope is a fold-out large scale map of the Kingston Region. It shows a number of Christmas Bird Count circles and the old 50km diameter Kingston Birding Area circle but, unfortunately, not the 10km squares now used.

The ornithological studies section is only about three pages long but it reveals the amazing thoroughness with which this small group of, essentially, amateurs have gone about the task of analyzing and documenting the bird-life of the 13 atlas squares (1300 km^2) which comprise the Kingston study area. Among these have been numerous special censuses (waterfowl, shorebirds, larids), banding projects, Lennox Generating Station tower kills, the Prince Edward Point Observatory, probably the most thorough atlassing for the *Breeding Bird Atlas*, and on and on it goes.

Naturally, the 343 species accounts comprise the bulk of the book. Accounts average about a page in length. Each account follows a general format which, however, is not adhered to slavishly. Often something interesting about a species such as its North

American status or habitat preference begins the account. The observers of rare species are acknowledged, which seems the correct approach in a regional account. A season-by-season summary follows a history of the bird's status in Kingston. Weir has a peculiar way of indicating dates with the year before the month and date which I find awkward, if not pedantic.

The summary statement of status includes a descriptor of relative abundance and another of frequency of occurrence. Perhaps this provides precision but I find it confusing and would prefer one series of designations. For example, to say that Red Phalarope is irregular (less than once per year) and very rare (seen once in a while) seems to me to be redundant. One set of labels running from abundant to casual would, I believe, be at least as clear. The frequency standard "accidental" used here and by many other authors I have always had difficulty with. When there are already two records of a bird (Northern Gannet and Harris' Sparrow) should it be designated as not expected to occur again? Other species labelled accidental, such as Curlew Sandpiper, Mew Gull, Ivory Gull, and Western Kingbird to name just some, given their status in Ontario, will almost certainly occur again in Kingston at some future date. Why not just state that there is just one record? In fact, the author did just this in some cases, stating the Great Cormorant has "two winter and one spring records" which surely is more clear than a label.

But these are very minor points of personal preference and can detract but minutely from the fascinating information contained in these species descriptions. One of the most interesting results of using a set of 10km squares to define the study area is that Weir has calculated the number of breeding pairs of every species in the OBBA years. Some examples follow: Red-shouldered Hawk 270; Northern Goshawk 35; Warbling Vireo 27 500; Cerulean Warbler 130; and Red-winged Blackbird with 193 500 as the most common breeding bird. The richness of this part of Ontario is indicated by the 1300 pairs of Common Moorhens and 40 of the 50 pairs of Henslow's Sparrows estimated for Ontario during the atlas years! Under the appropriate species are tower kill statistics, banding counts and returns, tables of censuses like Black-crowned Night-Herons or a table showing all the Bald Eagles counted, by season, from 1952 to 1987. From Weir himself come counts of night-migrating thrushes identified by calls. In over six hours on 14-15 Sep 1987, 720 Gray-cheeked Thrushes passed over his home and on 21-22 Sep 1983, 16 000 Swainson's Thrushes were tallied in eight hours. One wonders whether the next day was a work day!

As always in such works, there are interpretations with which one

can quibble. Weir cites three records of *L.g. kumlieni* (Kumlieni's Iceland Gull), implying that the others are the nominate race, which most authors would consider, by range, to be far less frequent in Ontario. Weir does not seem to share the almost universal concern for species like Black Tern and Common Nighthawk. In providing breeding pair counts of Saw-whet Owl, Weir assumes that males cease singing once they acquire a mate, which "explains" why few are located after early April. One only hopes that the explanation is not that these are transients which moved on after early April.

The black-and-white illustrations, which are a combination of drawings and photographs, are an attractive feature. Those drawings of Ian Jones' are especially good; I particularly like his immature male King Eider. It's a pity that more photos of rarities could not have been included in lieu of some common species.

After the species accounts fully one third of the book remains. There are eleven appendices! First is a "Field Checklist of Birds". Presumably it is a duplicate of a field card, but obviously it cannot here function in this way. Appendix B is the now-obligatory seasonal bar graphs. I find the next appendix, "Arrival and Departure Statistics", which summarizes 40 years of migration dates, to be more useful and interesting, but I suppose the visual approach has its followers. Other appendices list the 20 commonest breeding birds; the birds killed at Lennox Generating Station, and six area CBCs. There is an excellent 15-page list of references as testimony to the thoroughness of the book, as if any was needed. Finally, there is a bird species index.

Birds of the Kingston Region serves as an ideal model for anyone contemplating a book on the birds of a particular region, although the thoroughness of Weir's book may be more than a little daunting. One thing, however bothers me, which, in the context of a review for *Ontario Birds,* needs to be stated: Weir not once in giving the provincial status of rare species cites the rapidly accumulating bank of thoroughly researched information to be found in the Ontario Bird Records Committee annual reports. This intentional slight notwithstanding, *Birds of the Kingston Region* is an outstanding achievement and an excellent book which all serious students of the province's birdlife will want to have on their shelves.

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