

BOOK REVIEWS

The View from Hawk Mountain, Michael Harwood, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 191 pages, \$6.95.

Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, is the only place in the Northeast where for 40 years the fall hawk migration has been observed daily. This book, written by a devotee of the mountain, a freelance writer, and a birder, is a rambling, anecdotal history of the world's first sanctuary for the birds of prey. Background information on the slaughter of hawks in the early 20th century, the trials of creating a sanctuary, the movement to pass legislation protecting birds of prey, and the ecological problems threatening hawks today is interspersed with stories about the people involved.

The dedication of Maurice Broun, who spend 32 years on the mountain as the first curator, and the daily routine of Alex Nagy, who is currently in that position, are described along with the activities of the Pennsylvania Dutchmen who hate to quit shooting hawks and the birders who come from all over the world.

The flavor of hawk watching at Hawk Mountain comes through. One becomes familiar with the terrain and canny about the weather. Though the chapters are larded with tips about hawks, with references to writings by naturalists and ornithologists, there is much for those with a general interest in the conservation movement.

For the birdwatcher looking for something specifically about hawk migration, there is a new publication by Mr. Nagy and James Brett, Feathers in the Wind: The Mountain and the Migration. In it you will find photographs and maps showing why so many hawks fly past Hawk Mountain, and what weather conditions encourage good flights. You will also find charts that tell when, and in what numbers, the different species migrate. There are pages on each bird of prey to be observed, with photographs, silhouettes, and tips on identification. All this for \$2.00! Order from Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, Route 2, Kempton, Pa. 19529.

Johanna Alderfer Harris, Belmont

Birds of Big Bend National Park and Vicinity, Roland H. Wauer, University of Texas Press, P. O. Box 7819, Austin, Texas 78712, 223 pages, \$4.95.

Having been a resident of Texas for several years and having fallen in love with the vast expanse of the Big Bend country, I eagerly anticipated the publication of Roland Wauer's new book. Mr. Wauer, a fine birder and a keen student of natural history, must have really enjoyed his opportunity to become the bird historian of the Big Bend from August, 1966, to October, 1971. As Chief Park Naturalist during that period, he spend some 3,500 hours in field research and was able to put together for the first time the complete picture of the region's avian possibilities -- from the peaks and flows of the Rio Grande-Intermountain migration flyway, to the wanderings of rare birds from the Sierras of Mexico into this borderland.

As I read through his book, I again thrilled at the memories of unspoiled desert gardens, the awesome shaded canyons, hikes through linely pine-oak woodlands high in the mountains that overlook the impenetrable thickets bordering the mighty Rio Grande river, and the brilliantly colored slopes of the Sierra del Carmen range in Mexico showing bright red in the last rays of sunset. Because of its great distance from airports and major highways, this region remains one of the least explored but most rewarding bird bonanzas in this country.

Mr. Wauer gives a brief ornithological history of the area, bringing up to to date with observations into the 1970's, including documentation of birds new to Texas (Rufous-backed Robin) or the United States (Black-vented Oriole). The text covers 385 species, 359 of which are documented by confirmation, specimen, or photograph; the remaining 26 are unconfirmed, thus hypothetical. This total makes Big Bend the birdiest National Park in the country and proves once again that nothing seems impossible for birders in Texas. As we read of recent sightings of White-tailed and Swallow-tailed Kites, Groove-billed Ani, Rose-throated Becard, Great Kiskadee, White-eared Hummingbird, Coppery-tailed Trogon, and others, it doesn't seem so incredible that Robert P. Fox of Hingham, Massachusetts, once found a Crimson-collared Grosbeak in this park.

A valuable section of this book is a discussion, (illustrated by color photographs of various habitats) of the Big Bend ecology that thoroughly traces the interrelation of the land,

vegetation, and wildlife. This is supplemented with color paintings of birds by Howard Rollin and Anne Pulich, grouped according to habitat requirements.

Of interest to life listers will be the detailed account of the rare Colima Warbler and where to find it. I can personally agree that the bird is "locally common" in several areas of the park and can be readily found from late April through June. However, I was surprised to learn that as many as 166 individuals were recently censused in one year.

The specific areas within the park that are mentioned may be found by using the book's detail map of the Big Bend area. Wauer also lightly touches on related nearby areas in southwest Texas, such as the Davis Mountains and the migratory mecca of Balmorhea Lake. In fact, this volume will be very useful to the visitor to Big Bend whether he be a birder or simply a lover of the outdoors.

The terminology used is a transition between the old and the new A. O. U. check-lists, as illustrated by the rather newly adopted "Great-tailed Grackle" and the inclusion of the now-lumped "Baltimore Oriole" and "Bullock's Oriole," as well as "Myrtle Warbler" and "Audubon's Warbler." A nice discussion based on personal experience shows the necessity of lumping Black-eared and Common Bushits.

David T. Brown, Quincy

A Birder's Guide to Denver and Eastern Colorado, James A. Lane and Harold R. Holt, distributed by L & P Photography, Box 19401, Denver, Colorado, 80219, 136 pages, \$3.00.

Jim Lane has done it again! Birders of the 70's are certainly fortunate to have access to such "what to look for where" guides such as this book on eastern Colorado. Since this state has vast mountains and plains, the basic format of the book wisely provides many loop trips within reasonable driving time of Denver or other areas of suitable accommodation. Each loop is concisely presented and thoroughly prepared, giving the reader an accurate prediction of practically all species possible in all habitats.

While comparing my own notes of past birding trips to Colorado, I was delighted to find agreement on where to see such species as White-tailed Ptarmigan, Brown-capped Rosy Finches, Mountain Plovers, and McCown's Longspurs. However, I wish this guide had been available to lead me to Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sage Grouse, and the booming grounds of the Greater and Lesser Prairie Chickens. Also included is a list of birds with their best locations, of interest particularly to visiting listers. For birders or migration students, the chart of occurrence for the 392 species found within 50 miles of Denver will be valuable. This is followed by a listing of the frequency and habitat of mammals, amphibians, and reptiles encountered in the field.

I also find interesting some of the tips for birders, such as playing a tape recorder at low volume in order to be more attractive to birds. This book is highly recommended for library or traveler.

David T. Brown, Quincy

Autumn of the Eagle, George Laycock, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973, 239 pages, \$6.95.

Because George Laycock's book treats such a tragic happening as the decline of the Bald Eagle, I wish that the exposition were more telling. Since the dust jacket describes Autumn of the Eagle as being "organized chronologically," it is disappointing that a solid, comprehensive picture of the eagle's plight does not emerge. The material on mass shooting and poisoning, DDT, and other persecutions is informative. Yet these chapters are admixed with others that are partly anecdotal and partly descriptive, the latter being written in a strangely old-fashioned and heavy style. For example, in describing the collapse of a tree bearing an overweight nest, the author writes, "The weight of sticks and moist decaying humus becomes a malignancy ... The old tree groans and bends ... The forest giant, shuddering and trembling, has leaned with the winds before, and stood. But on this night it dies."

Such prose distracts from the impact of Mr. Laycock's more factual account of man's appalling acts against the eagle. Moreover, this disconcerting mix affects the readability of the book for knowledgeable persons who hope that persuasive arguments for the protection of eagles will reach a larger public.

AVIS HEAD, Belmont