

A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast, James A. Lane, distributed by L & P Photography, Box 19401, Denver, Colorado, 80219, \$3.00.

This is another of Lane's popular "where to go to find ..." books; others include such favorite areas as the Rio Grande Valley (which preceded the present volume and is also reviewed in this issue), southeastern Arizona, and southern California. Birders familiar with this series will find few changes in format. The first section details a trip from one end of the area to the other -- in this case from Beaumont to Brownsville. Next come suggested side trips, and here we note a major change in style -- the accumulated mileages have been dropped. To this reviewer, these have only led to confusion. Next comes a discussion of specialities along the Texas coast (the selection is, of course, personal), a checklist of birds, and a summary of mammals, amphibians and reptiles of the region (an excellent feature of Lane's books). The list of references is very complete and useful.

Lane has also provided some identification aids that make the book worth getting even if no trip to the Texas coast is planned. Particularly informative is his analysis of the Eskimo Curlew at Galveston and his comparison of Baird's and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, and Connecticut and MacGillivray's Warblers. There is even an entertaining discussion on the pronunciation of Jacana.

The only real objection to this work is the feeling one gets of haste in putting it together. Parenthetical references to other sections of the book fail to include page numbers; also, there are some printing errors. Some maps, while useful, are too far from their text references. For example, the Jones State Forest map is on page 49 while its text reference is on page 54. In fact, there is a map of the Houston region in between! Yet these minor problems do not significantly detract from the worth of this book. Certainly, no birding trip to the Texas coast should be attempted without it.

Charles R. Bender, San Antonio, Texas

JAEGERS ARE ROUGH CUSTOMERS

To Massachusetts birders, a Long-tailed Jaeger is rare and very special -- "was it actually a Parasitic with unutilated tail feathers that I saw?" Yet, these birds do occur off our coast during migration, so here are a few glimpses into their lifestyles, gleaned from an article by Larry W. Price, Portland (Oregon) State University, in Arctic, September, 1973.

In 1967 and 1968, while studying the geomorphology of the Ruby Range in Yukon Territory, he discovered a pair of Long-tailed Jaegers nesting approximately 600 miles south of its previously known range.

The presence of these birds profoundly affected the ecology of the locality. For example, by chasing away any predatory species (avian or mammalian) that came near their slopes, the Long-tailed Jaegers stimulated uninhibited behavior and greater populations of many "hunted" species.

Mr. Price writes, "One of the attributes of the jaeger is its marvellous eyesight. They can see for great distances and very little happens within the surrounding area without their knowing about it. For example, any eagle that came closer than 2 or 3 km. to the southeast slope was promptly chased away. Occasionally we would hear the jaegers begin their high shrill calls and look in the direction they were flying to see an eagle -- just a speck in the sky. The same treatment was allotted other predators such as wolf, fox, bear, and wolverine. The jaegers' diving and screaming was enough to drive any self-respecting animal to distraction as we had ourselves experienced on several occasions while looking for their nest. The virtual elimination of predators from the slope during the summer was somewhat counterbalanced by the jaegers themselves, however, since they harvested many small rodents on the slope, i.e., shrews, lemmings, voles, and mice of various kinds. But for the larger burrowing mammals, such as ground squirrels, pika, marmot, as well as the ptarmigan, it provided a rather trouble-free existence."

So ... the next time you see one of these runts of family skua ... think of the impact a 3/4-pound bird can have on creatures more than a thousand times its size!

L. J. R.