

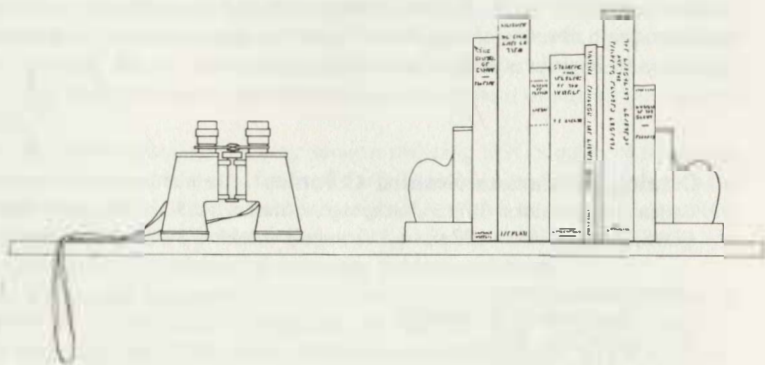
number of large and small errors scattered throughout the plates, text, and maps; the presence of these errors reflects a major flaw in the production process, i.e. the lack of a thorough review & revision by experts in the field. If further editions of this or other guides in the series are contemplated, hopefully either good sense or his publishers will prevail upon Peterson to seek the aid of more knowledgeable observers. R.T.P. should not feel self-conscious about doing so: after all, paradoxically, his field guides have been instrumental in creating a generation of experts who have moved "beyond the field guide stage of birding."

For the time being, the North American observer is still without a reliable bird guide. The recommended solution, if you want a book to carry afield, is to take both the appropriate regional Peterson Field Guide and the Golden Guide, *Birds of North America* . . . and take both with a large grain of salt. Use a liberal hand in writing additions and corrections into the margins; take every opportunity to learn new points from other birders, from your own experience, and from articles in *Continental Birdlife* and elsewhere. Keep your fingers crossed in hopes that an "advanced field guide" may yet be forthcoming from some source. And if you should meet Roger Tory Peterson, do not criticize his latest Field Guide; just ask him to autograph your copy, and thank him for having done so much to promote bird study all over the world.

Reviews

Edited by

ELAINE COOK



A Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds — Donald W. Stokes. 1979. Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown & Co. 346 pp., illus. by J. Fenwick Lansdowne, bibliog., index. \$9.95.

Publisher's address:
Little, Brown & Co.
34 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02107

ALTHOUGH we are routinely called "birdwatchers," it seems most birders spend regrettably little time *watching* to see what birds are actually doing. This *Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds*, with its focus on a few easily-observed species, could bring about a healthy change in this aspect of birder behavior.

Twenty-five common species are discussed in detail. Although all of the included birds are of wide distribution (and all areas of North America will harbor some of them)

their orientation is clearly eastern, and no exclusively western species is covered. Each species account runs ten to fourteen pages, with a behavior calendar, a display guide, and behavior descriptions. The monthly behavior calendar gives a rough approximation of the timing of certain behavior patterns described in the text, such as territorial defense, courtship, nest-building, breeding, seasonal movement, and social behavior. The display guide describes the postures and vocalizations which the birds use in courtship, aggressive interactions, and so on; these displays include such items as head-pumping in Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, flutter-flight by Tree Swallows *Iridoprocne bicolor*, song-flight-call by Common Yellowthroats *Geothlypis trichas*, and wing-droop in American Robins *Turdus migratorius*. The last and longest section in each species account describes life history aspects such as territories (both breeding and non-breeding), nest-building (with hints on how to locate nests of the species), all phases of nesting and fledgling behavior, molt, migrations if any, and social behavior.

Accepting this book's invitation to look at bird behavior can prove very rewarding, regardless of the level at which it is practiced. Many observers will probably find that bird watching is simply a good antidote to boredom when the *birding* is slow. However, some may want to pursue the subject further. This book provides lists of selected references which will lead the interested individual to more comprehensive treatments of each of the included species. The author also points out that much basic behavioral research remains to be done on even common species, so that the birder may be able to parlay his interest into a serious contribution to science.

The author, Donald Stokes, does not claim to be an expert on bird behavior, but he wisely chose to have the manuscript reviewed by two leading ornithologists, John T. Emlen and Millicent S. Ficken. Their input was probably responsible in part for the commendable absence of errors. All in all this is an excellent book, and well worth the attention of beginners and expert birders alike. — E. C., K. K.

Catalog of Alaskan Seabird Colonies — Arthur L. Sowls, Scott A. Hatch, and Calvin J. Lensink. 1978. Anchorage, Alaska: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (FWS/OBS-78/78) vi + 32 pp. + 152 maps and tables, 3 appendices, illus. Free.

request a copy from:
U.S. Department of the Interior,
Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Alaska has more coastline than the rest of the continental United States combined, and Alaska supports the largest seabird colonies in the northern hemisphere. Because of this, the long-overdue *Catalog of Alaskan Seabird Colonies* was a necessity as a data baseline to coincide with the exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the coastal basins. As fossil fuel exploitation increases in coastal Alaska, seabirds will be the paramount environmental indicators for monitoring ecological change due to human interference.

Ten years prior to the release of this catalog, knowledge of Alaskan seabird colonies was practically nonexistent. Thus the purpose of the catalog, to delineate the colonies of coastal Alaska and estimate their species content and populations. The undertaking was rather gigantic; the results are modestly successful, yet still most valuable. With publication, key areas for formulating marine resource management policies have been identified. For more casual ornithologists as well as natural history tourists the catalog is a source for the spectacle that is a seabird colony, and for locating the endemic

"Beringian" birds, e.g. the *Aethia* auklets and Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.

This Fish & Wildlife Service publication is organized to present information both for individual sites and for the species present. This is effectively addressed with species accounts, maps for every colony and numbered tables. The text is in two parts commencing with a brief account for each species. Included here are pertinent statements on life history, nesting and feeding ecology, some identification characters, range delineation and, less often, comments on the species' sensitivity to disturbance. A coupled section reviews the status of each species' statewide population highlighting abundance centers, pioneering areas and largest individual colony; the latter are noted with specific numbers which relate to the second section of the catalog. There is also a diagrammatic drawing of the discussed species. A state map, depicting colony sites with dots and numerical tables, accompanies the drawings.

It appears that the authors divided the writing of the species accounts because the text is not consistent or uniform, although this rarely reaches the point of distraction. The line drawings were also done by several artists and some as expected are of more value than others. The maps with dotted colony locations are to such a small scale that detail is lost. They do serve to visually expose the general range in Alaska and, more importantly, the center of abundance for each species. When correlated with oceanographic patterns the maps could facilitate furthering one's knowledge of seabird ecology.

Throughout the text, beginning in the excellent introduction, the authors reveal and explain the problems inherent in censusing seabirds. (Witness the photograph of massed murren in the introduction!) These problematic parameters are incorporated into the survey estimates. The reader thus clearly understands the presented numbers and that future techniques and estimates must be standardized. Nearly every colony estimate is described as incomplete. It is pointed out that whole colonies are still to be discovered and present estimates revised. The writers interject their own statewide estimates beyond the actual survey results; these extraneous projections do not augment or add to the value of the known totals.

The second half of the catalog is a map section utilizing USGS maps of the entire coast. Each colony is represented with circles of various sized increments, placement of which is most accurate. Included are accompanying tables with a corresponding colony number designating system. Here is where the most significant value of the catalog lies. Interspersed in this section are photos of colonies, habitat and birds.

The catalog is a current summary of population data for all known sites, obtained mostly since 1970. It is bound in a loose-leaf format so map revisions and new information can be added easily. The publication is free and should not be passed up by the ecologist or one interested in seabird distribution. Visiting birders should also find the site maps and species summations most helpful in planning trips and locating the more accessible colonies. A similar catalog (Drent and Guiguet 1961) has been prepared for British Columbia, so the entire Pacific Coast north of 49° N now has preliminary coverage with population estimates and colony locations. — *Theodore G. Tobish*