



BOOKS FOR BANDERS

Edited by: MABEL GILLESPIE



PORTRAITS OF TROPICAL BIRDS

by John S. Dunning

Livingston Publishing Company, Wynnewood, Pa. \$20.00.

When the author retired from business he had definite plans to photograph in natural surroundings as many neotropical birds as possible. Aided by his wife, Harriet, he achieved remarkable success in this venture.

In the foreword, Olin S. Pettingill Jr. writes: "Besides showing the colors of the fleshy parts that dead specimens almost immediately lose, the pictures provide other complementary information about head crests, facial expressions, and body contours....if the scientific records of all species could be accompanied by photographs of this quality for comparative purposes, imagine the aid such photographs would be to taxonomists in solving many of the puzzling relationships. The photographs are firsts for many of the species. One...was taken in Columbia before the species was even known to science".

"Many of the species portrayed are sharply restricted to particular - usually forested - habitats, now being depleted at an alarmingly accelerated rate. This suggests the distressing possibility that some of the species, since they are almost certainly incapable of accepting new habitats once they lose those to which they are stringently adapted, may soon disappear forever should their habitats be entirely eliminated. Horrible as the thought may be, the photographs of certain species in this book could very well be the last ever taken."

In the introduction the author writes that when he and his wife arrived in Panama they little realized how unprepared they were to make a photographic record. "I remember so well our first morning out with the bird banders. A bird was handed to us. We did the only thing we could do - my wife held the bird in her hand while I focused the camera on it. The results were awful. The bird was scared and looked it. The legs did not show. The lightning in the forest was inadequate."

This must sound familiar to many banders. Mr. Dunning solved many difficulties by using devices that will be of interest and value to the photographers in our midst. After birds were caught in mist nets they were placed in a specially designed enclosure with camera focused on a perch and an electronic flash unit was used for lighting. For each species the attempt was made to mount the proper perch and background foliage in the enclosure. When placed in the cage, the bird would soon quiet down and rest on this perch. The photography was often completed in a half hour and the bird was released in its own home area.

The text includes sketches of the construction of the enclosure, and detailed descriptions of the way it is put together. With this remarkable technique there have been obtained the most spectacular photographs of birds I have ever seen. Brilliant color leaps from the pages. Here is an opportunity for arm chair bird watching de luxe. The sight of just one of these beauties would make a season for any ornithologist. There is for instance, the Green and Gold Tanager which looks as if it had been romping in a dozen paint pots of assorted, brilliant colors. Yet its life history is unknown.

The book is neither clumsy nor heavy. The pages are the size of business stationary and of heavy, glossy paper. Some of the photographs are of full page dimensions; all of them possess incredible reality. There are seventy-two of them and they should be taken in restrained doses.

Each photograph is accompanied by a description of the bird's habits and range. In many cases such information is very limited.

Compared with the prices of many "coffee table" books on the market today, the price is very reasonable. Furthermore, the book may well be a collector's item in a few years. Why not give yourself an Easter present!

--Reviewed by Mabel Gillespie.

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In the issue of SCIENCE for December 11, 1970 (SCIENCE 170(3963): 1198-1201) there is a paper by Dr. Stephen T. Emlen, Section of Neurobiology and Behavior, Division of Biological Sciences, Cornell University, entitled CELESTIAL ROTATION: ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MIGRATORY ORIENTATION.

Dr. Emlen worked with three groups of indigo buntings, nestlings between the ages of 4 and 10 days. The birds were kept in cages and handled. When 25 days old the first group was kept in a confinement which permitted no view either of the sun or the night sky.

The second group was then exposed to the planetarium night sky which simulated the actual sky. The third group was subjected to a planetarium sky featuring Betelgeuse as the pole star.

Eventually the buntings were exposed in small groups to the planetarium setting of the current night sky. The birds of the first group failed to select the normal migration direction. The birds of the second group selected normal southerly migration direction. The birds of the third group chose the direction which would have been correct according to the arbitrary setting of the planetarium. These results seem to negate the theory that directional tendencies must be genetically determined.

--Reviewed by Mabel Gillespie.

AN EAGLE TO THE SKY

by Frances Hamerstrom

Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa. 1970. Pp. 142. \$4.95.

This is a charming, sensitive, and informative book about golden eagles written by a first-rate wildlife biologist whose contributions to ornithology hardly need repeating. In AN EAGLE TO THE SKY Mrs. Hamerstrom vividly describes the complete and total commitment which is required if one is to properly care for the welfare of captive golden eagles, or other birds of prey, while, at the same time, learning intimate details about the lives of these splendid birds.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one describes the varied, and frequently exciting, experiences of the author as she developed a nest bond with Chrys, an adult golden eagle, and tried to mate the bird in captivity. Eventually a second eagle, Grendel, is introduced to Chrys who promptly rejects him. After repeated attempts to coax the birds to mate, the author, assisted by several poultry experts, artificially inseminates Chrys. That was some task! The experiment failed, however, but the author still hopes someday to have her eagles mate and rear eaglets in captivity.

Part two of the book deals with Nancy, a tick-infested eaglet which was removed from its nest by a concerned conservationist, then placed in a cage by wildlife authorities. Eventually a permit was issued, and the young golden eagle was placed in the custody of Mrs. Hamerstrom whose "Eagle Rehabilitation Center" is ideally suited to rehabilitate these birds. Nancy recovers, is trained to hunt, and is flown almost daily by the author. Once, during one of those rare moments when a biologist is privileged to discover the true personality of a wild creature, this great golden eagle "ferociously" pounced upon the heads of flowers. Later, shortly before the bird was returned to the wild, Nancy gently untied Mrs. Hamerstrom's shoelaces. Then, in compliance with the federal regulations under which the author received the eagle, Nancy was released in the mountains of Wyoming.

The pen and ink sketches by Deann De La Ronde, and the black and white photographs by the author's well-known biologist husband Frederick, add to the charm of this delightful book. You simply must read AN EAGLE TO THE SKY. What a book! What a woman!

--Reviewed by Donald S. Heintzelman.

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We have received a little volume on loan from Dr. LeRoy C. Stegeman of Syracuse, New York. It is called "Seasonal Reflections" and contains poems of nature, written and illustrated by the author, Thelma I. Stegeman.

Dr. Stegeman feels that the verses and accompanying etchings will offer relaxation and appreciation to bird banders in off hours. As an example:

Don't miss the precious things today;
Those little things along the way.

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A spider's web bejeweled with dew,
A snowflake pattern that is new,
A falling leaf that's gay and bright
Or moonlight shadows etched on white.

The book is published by Vantage Press in hard cover and retails for \$3.95

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PICTORIAL GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA
By Leonard Lee Rue, III
Thomas Y. Crowell Co., New York, 1970. Pp. 368. \$12.50.

This is a popular reference book treating the life histories of 82 species of North American birds representative of 41 families. In his acknowledgements the author states that he selected the species treated on the basis of their abundance or rareness, their range size, and his experience with them. However, the fact that not all North American species are included, as is suggested by the book's title, is annoying. Because of the limited selection of species presented, the general value of Mr. Rue's book is lessened.

Most of the species accounts are presented in an evolutionary sequence. However, an exception, which does not follow the sequence of the Fifth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-List, is the placement of the Order Ciconiiformes (herons and allies) after the Galliform birds rather than in its proper position before the waterfowl. Each of the species accounts follows a standard format beginning with the vernacular and scientific name. A pen and ink sketch by Juan C. Barberis, and a range map, then follow. Next are presented brief sections covering field marks, size, habits, habitat, nest, eggs, food, and voice. Finally, the author then presents his general life history account based upon his experience with the species in life. Most of these are interesting and informative, although a number of statements are subject to scientific confirmation.

Included in the book is a color chart, probably of dubious value, and a long and useful appendix listing locations where one may go to see and study birds. A bibliography of ornithological reference books and an index also are included.

I have waited until last to talk about the photographic illustrations in this book since Mr. Rue is best known as a wildlife photographer. While none of the photographs (all are in black and white except the color

photograph on the dust jacket) are bad, several fail to reach the level of quality which one would expect from Mr. Rue's camera. Those which I find of marginal quality include the willow ptarmigan, the bobwhite, the rock dove, and the screech owl on page 197. On the other hand, photographs which I feel are quite attractive include the trumpeter swans, the rock ptarmigans on pages 88 and 89, and the long-tailed jaeger on page 155. Although no fault of the author, all of the photographs are poorly reproduced and lack richness and contrast. In addition, some of the photographs could have been cropped better by the editors.

Despite these limitations and faults, this book would be useful to people such as camp nature study leaders, scouts, and visitors to nature centers. Persons needing more exacting and complete information however, would not find the book too useful, and I seriously doubt if bird-banders would find this book really helpful when similar but more detailed and complete reference books already are available.

--Reviewed by Donald S. Heintzelman

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AN UNSPOILED BIT OF ATLANTIC COAST
By William E. Martin
New Jersey State Museum - Bulletin 11 - \$0.75.

This bulletin is a reprint of an article from the August 1960 issue of Natural History magazine. The history of the area is traced briefly to the opening of Island Beach State Park to the public in 1959. This is followed by a description of the zones of vegetation which lie parallel to the shoreline as one moves from the ocean to the bay shore. A few of the animal inhabitants of each zone are included in the descriptions. Finally, the natural factors which cause changes in the contour and vegetation of the area are considered. Bird banding activities are mentioned only in the captions of photographs taken in the net lanes.

The bulletin should be of particular interest to anyone who has visited or banded at Island Beach. It was written in the early days of the park, but plant life has changed little which helps to keep the article timely. However, it would have been interesting to have the story brought up to date by indicating the changes caused by the tremendous increase in visitors. The park personnel do an excellent job of patrol of the closed areas and litter picking along the road, but such things as ditching and airplane spraying for mosquito control and an increase in feral cats have caused changes even in the closed areas. Perhaps a future bulletin will continue the story.

--Reviewed by Dorothy Bordner.

WE SINCERELY REGRET.....

It is rather difficult for me to write this, but both Mabel Gillespie and I knew we would have to announce this sooner or later: The book review column on the previous pages is regrettably the final column edited by Mabel. As much as four months ago, Mabel first asked me that she felt the time had come that someone else be chosen to edit this column. At the time, I did not pay too much attention to it; when her requests to be relieved kept coming however, although I was firmly opposed to her requests, I had to finally respect her wishes.

Mabel has been editing the book reviews since 1963 more or less on a regular basis and even prior to 1963 once in a while. She's worked with three editors. She did excellent reviews in a style which was truly in keeping with the objectives of the News; a particularly readable style which few people are able to duplicate. EBBA and its members owe Mabel a lot; the number of hours lovingly given for this project are astounding! Mabel has been a great help to me too but rather than express my individual gratitude, I am positive all members share this gratitude with me. We sincerely regret losing you.

After an extensive search, Mr. Donald S. Heintzelman of 629 Green Street, Allentown, Pa. 18102 has been chosen to take over the "Books for Banders" column, starting with the next issue. Good luck, Don!

Editor

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ATLANTIC FLYWAY REVIEW
Region II. Edited by: ROBERT P. YUNICK

Mild weather and lesser numbers of birds characterized the fall migration of 1970 at various stations in inland New England, New York and Pennsylvania. Space does not allow complete inclusion of all the details of the seven stations, however, the five reports that follow give an indication of the extent of coverage at each station. Mrs. duMont's station at Wilmington, Vt., was not operated and Mrs. Downs' station at South Londonderry, Vt., was operated intermittently.

The reasons for lesser capture rates varied. In most cases, the weather was cited as the cause. However, at Friendsville, Pa. and Salisbury, N.Y., changes in agricultural practices immediately adjacent to the banding areas influenced the capture rate.

Despite the overall decrease in numbers, there were instances of speci-