

The herons handbook.—James Hancock and James Kushlan. 1984. Harper & Row, New York. ISBN 0-06-015331-8. 288 pp., 64 color plates by Robert Gilmor and Peter Hayman, numerous line drawings. \$24.95.—A *handbook* is a “small book or treatise such as may be held in the hand” (Oxford University Dictionary 1964, 3rd ed. rev. Oxford: Clarendon Press). A scholarly milestone of the ornithological literature defines a *handbook of birds* as “arranged in such a systematic and uniform way that it can be consulted on any point about species with ease” (Witherby *et al.* 1952. *Handbook of British Birds*, vol. 1:iii London: H. F. Witherby). The “*Herons Handbook*” exemplifies both definitions.

In the introduction, the authors offer expectation that the handbook will enable readers to “understand herons more deeply” and “in a global context.” It will now be a simple matter to compare all of the species within this family. For travellers we have a book that will slip conveniently into valises or even large pockets.

Chapters on classification, courtship, feeding and the identification of herons and egrets provide meaningful background for 244 pages of species treatments. These vary, depending upon the accumulated knowledge about each, from two to six pages of text. For each of the 60 species there is an easily-interpreted range map and a color plate both of which accompany the text for that species.

The double-columned format and the clearly titled categories of information facilitate easy reading and searching of text. Information is organized under these titles: Distribution and Population; Migration; Habitat; Behavior (sub-categorized to Feeding and Breeding); Nest, Eggs and Young; and Taxonomy.

Readers will recognize that “*The Herons Handbook*” is, in part, adapted from the folio-sized “*Herons of the World*” (Hancock and Elliott 1978. New York: Harper & Row). The text of that lavish volume has been up-dated, reorganized and supplemented. With the exception of four new color plates, which are devoted to comparisons of the world’s white-plumaged herons and egrets, the artistry of the handbook is direct inheritance from the “*Herons of the World*.”

What handbook has illustrations such as these! Have the herons ever been so portrayed before? The figures are not the tiny, highly stylized ones characteristic of field guides and many handbooks. These plates’ large figures stand forth impressively. The Black-headed Heron and the Snowy Egret, for example, are approximately 8” and 5 1/2” tall on pages 9 1/4” in height. The plates’ striking backgrounds at once accentuate the birds, suggest habitats and lead to delightful contemplation. Such plates make for flipping and re-flipping through the handbook’s pages. The world’s herons step out successively before one.

The rate of accumulation of information about herons indicates that a revised edition of this handbook should be forthcoming in a few years. Of more than ordinary interest in that edition will be the revision of the present chapter on classification (pp. 10-14) which is a provocative one well handled by the authors. In the chapter, ill-defined species limits and puzzling questions of relationships are discussed. For a revised edition, I urge that proof readers carefully check text-cited references against the Bibliography. A very casual check of references in the text shows that the following are not cited in the Bibliography: Hindwood *et al.* 1969 (p. 26), King and Cruber 1972 (p. 51), and Poifer 1979 (p. 54); while Hancock 1984 (p. 26) and Kushlan 1976 (p. 88) have “a” and “b” categories in the Bibliography but not in the text. Sheerly mechanical shortcomings are easily avoided by precise editing.

“Designed to appeal to a large readership” R. T. Peterson wrote in his Forward to the Handbook. This reviewer can’t imagine a field biologist who shouldn’t want this book. Floridians, in whose state a fifth of the world’s heron species are found, should not be without it. Anyone contemplating a handbook of whatever vertebrates should inspect it carefully for this is a model of what a handbook can be. “*The Herons Handbook*” is also a model of what ornithologists and artists, all outstanding in their fields, can create from

enthusiasm and obvious empathy for their subjects.—**Oscar T. Owre**, Department of Biology, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida 33124.

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Summary of the 1987 fall meeting.—The fall meeting of the Florida Ornithological Society was held from 2-4 October at the Ramada Inn Countryside in Clearwater, Florida. Dave Goodwin was the host for the meeting.

Larry Hopkins presented a slide show of the birds of Pinellas County during the initial flocking. Dave Goodwin prepared a bird identification quiz of illustrations, both old and new. Bill Pranty took first place and won a set of the Peterson tapes of eastern bird calls. Lyn Atherton and Bruce Neville tied for second. Lyn received a print of Audubon's Great Egret painting; Bruce received a copy of Skutch's "A Bird Watcher's Adventures in Tropical America."

Field trips were held on Saturday and Sunday mornings to Honeymoon Island State Recreation Area, Brooker Creek County Park, and Dunedin Hammock Park. There were 132 species of birds, including 24 species of warblers, observed on the field trips. Long-billed Curlews and Snowy Plovers were a big hit at Honeymoon.

There was a panel discussion on Saturday afternoon concerning management of the Least Tern in Florida. Moderator for the session was Rich Paul, Warden-Biologist of National Audubon's Tampa Bay Sanctuaries. Reports were presented by Ted Below of the National Audubon Society sanctuary at Rookery Bay; Dr. Doug Runde of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's Nongame Wildlife Program; Belinda Perry with Sarasota County's Coastal Zone Management Program; Charles DuToit, District IV Biologist with Florida Department of Natural Resources; and Dr. Craig Huegel, Urban Wildlife Biologist with the University of Florida. Each gave a brief synopsis of his or her agency's programs of research or protection efforts regarding the Least Tern. A question and answer session followed the presentations. Wes Biggs and Herb Kale presented a brief workshop on the Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Rich Paul also was the banquet speaker. He gave a slide presentation of a trip he made down the west coast of Florida, retracing the route taken by W. E. D. Scott in 1886 and read from Scott's account of the trip. Both explorers were surveying heron rookeries along the coast. Scott's expedition was at the height of the plume hunting era, and Rich had some good news for us regarding the recovery of these species.—**Bruce Neville**, 8221 SW 72 Ave., Apt. 273, Miami, Florida 33143.

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