

The Common Flicker is well known for nesting in unusual places, for example, in buildings, in the hub of a wagon wheel, and in kingfisher or swallow burrows in vertical banks (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 174, 1939). A. F. Ganier (Wilson Bull. 38:116, 1926) once observed a persistent flicker remove over a bushel of sawdust in excavating a cavity in an insulating box around a water pipe. Unlike the persistence of our ground-nesting flickers, the "sawdust" flickers were eventually successful in raising young. Pearson (Birds of America, Part II, Garden City Publ. Co., Inc., p. 165, 1936) published a photograph of a clutch of flicker eggs in a shallow depression on bare ground, and Brown (Iowa Bird Life 42:98-101, 1972) photographed a flicker incubating eggs in a similar situation. Hamilton and Hart (Oriole 34:56-57, 1969) also found flickers attempting to nest on the ground in Georgia. Finally, Hamilton (Oriole 34:56-57, 1969) and Dorsey (Oriole 34:55-56, 1969) both found flicker nests excavated into the ground in the manner that ours was. Hamilton's nest was against a utility pole and was unsuccessful due to rain. Dorsey's nest in a lawn contained young which survived at least one rainstorm.

#### Reviews

Portraits of Mexican Birds. By George M. Sutton. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1975: 106 pp., 50 full color 12 X 15 inch reproductions of Sutton's paintings of Mexican birds. \$35.

George Sutton began drawing birds about 75 years ago and he is still an active artist. But Doc Sutton is more than an artist; he is a well respected scientist and author as well. As a field biologist Doc has the eye to pick up the nuances of behavior and ecology of a bird that a non-biologist would overlook. As an artist he has developed a sense of perspective and composition that makes his writing, as well as his drawing and painting, a joy to dwell on. Doc Sutton always gives due credit to his mentor, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and indeed, he dedicates this volume of bird portraits to Fuertes. Though the influence of Fuertes on Sutton is clear, Sutton need not stand in the shadow of his master. Sutton is clearly the dean of contemporary American bird artists. This volume could be used as a standard of excellence by which to measure attempts to combine wildlife art and writing. The paintings and observations in this book were made over a period of 35 years and, as a result, one is able to study and appreciate the maturation of Sutton, the artist and ornithologist.

The format of "Portraits of Mexican Birds" is simple. There is a Foreword by Enrique Beltran, Director of the Institute for Mexican Renewable Natural Resources, University of Mexico. This gives the reader an appreciation for the significance of Sutton's work as it is recognized in Mexico. Next is a brief Preface by Sutton that lets the reader know where, when, and under what general conditions his paintings were made. Then follow the fifty paintings, each preceded by a page of text describing the subject of the painting and the circumstances under which the painting was made. On these pages is a wealth of information presented in a manner that is not only informative, but exciting, clever,

and full of understanding of the bird and the people with whom Sutton was working. There are few pages that won't elicit at least an internal chuckle, for Sutton has a way of capturing the amusement of any situation. Following the paintings is a brief commentary by Sutton that details more of the conditions under which he worked. This commentary is illustrated by two photographs of the artist at work in the field and three photographs of the areas where he worked. Included as a bonus with the book is an extra print of one of the paintings for framing.

My recommendation concerning this book is unequivocal: if you think it sounds like a great book to give to a friend, you're right - but don't buy just one copy - if you do, you won't give it away.  
-J. A. Jackson

Parent Birds and Their Young. By Alexander F. Skutch. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1976: 503 pp., 116 black and white photographs, 18 tables, 19 figures. \$27.50.

Alexander Skutch is a naturalist who is well known for both his popular and scientific writing. He is a botanist, ornithologist, and philosopher who has resided in Costa Rica for the past 40 years. As an ornithologist Skutch is best known for his very detailed life history studies of tropical birds. In "Parent Birds and Their Young" Skutch draws on his intimate knowledge of tropical birds as well as on the major bird literature of the world to put together a well-written review of our knowledge of the reproductive activities of birds. The book contains 34 chapters, beginning with pair formation and progressing through such topics as territoriality, nesting seasons, nest-building, incubation, care of young, and ending with a discussion of those factors thought to regulate the rate of reproduction in birds. While this book is a useful scientific contribution, it is written and illustrated in a manner such that it can be enjoyed by anyone interested in birds. While most of the photographs are good, a few are out of focus and a few are of poor quality - but then, the subjects were often difficult ones to photograph. I found few typographical or factual errors in the book, but one which did bother me is Skutch's repetition (p. 222) of Heinz Seilmann's suggestion that woodpeckers elicit a begging response from their nestlings by pecking at the enlarged corners of their beaks. Nestling woodpeckers, kingfishers, and some other hole-nesting birds beg primarily in response to a change in light intensity which is caused by the parents blocking the light as they enter the nest cavity.

In general I recommend this book to anyone interested in the breeding biology of birds. It is an interesting and provocative review throughout which Skutch has added his own careful observations and interpretations.-J. A. Jackson.

## THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

Wildlife Begins at Home. By Tony Soper. David & Charles, North Pomfret, Vermont, 1975: 128 pp., numerous photographs, numerous line drawings by Robert Gillmor. \$7.95.

This book is written around the idea that one needs only to step out the back door to observe wildlife. In spite of being written about a backyard in Britain and about British wildlife, Soper's book will cause the American reader to look around the yard with a new perspective and an eagerness to discover the secret lives that are being lived in the weeds that have escaped the mower and in the myriad of hiding places that our buildings and accumulated belongings provide. Soper has a disdain for well-kept gardens and a seeming love for weeds, but as he skillfully illustrates, carefully weeded gardens not only require continual work, but they are incapable of supporting the worms that aerate the soil and the other animals that might help him to control pests. Much of the book deals with birds, and most have American counterparts whose names could easily be substituted for the British ones with little loss in the accuracy of the statements. For example, for black-bird substitute robin, for green woodpecker insert flicker, for Blue Tit read chickadee. The Starling, House Sparrow, Rock Dove, Herring Gull, Barn Owl, (Barn) Swallow, and (Winter) Wren are, of course, the same species that we have. Tales of hedgehogs, foxes, and badgers in the backyard may seem foreign to Mississippians, but they make interesting reading. My only fault with the book is that at times it seems a bit too factual and lacking in personal anecdotes that would make one identify with the author. Nevertheless, this is the sort of book that anyone over the age of 10 with an interest in nature might enjoy and learn from.-- J. A. Jackson.

North American Game Birds of Upland and Shoreline. Paul A. Johnsgard. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1975: 183 pp., 22 color photographs, 29 black and white photographs, 29 maps, 2 diagrams, \$6.95, paperback.

This book includes basic general information on the distribution, identification, and ecology of 20 species of grouse, quails, partridges, and pheasants; 3 of pigeons and doves; 2 of shorebirds; and 8 of cranes, coots, gallinules, and rails. The color photographs are generally of very good quality and are well reproduced, though a few of them are obviously of caged birds. Reproduction of the black and white photographs is not as good as that of the color ones, perhaps a result of making black and white prints of color photographs. Additionally, in some cases there are two or more photographs of the same species that are so similar that they add little to the book except pages and cost. It is difficult to refer to specific photographs because these, as well as the pages on which they occur, are not numbered. In addition to the accounts of various species, there are tables of weights of game birds, estimates of annual harvests by hunters (35,000,000 Bobwhite, 9,826,000 Mourning Doves!), and a key to the major groups of North American game

birds. While I realize some hunters shoot things that they can't identify, it hardly seems necessary to provide a key to separate the ducks from quail, etc. At the end of the book is a useful list of additional references to the various groups and species of game birds. In general I feel that the average sportsman as well as many bird-watchers would find this book interesting and useful as a reference.-- J. A. Jackson.

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Owls of the World: Their Evolution, Structure and Ecology. Edited by John A. Burton. A & W Visual Library, 95 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016, 1973: 215 pp., 99 color photographs, paintings by John Rignall, numerous maps. \$9.95, paperback.

This well-illustrated guide to the owls of the world includes chapters by 15 authors dealing with such subjects as: "Owls and Men", "The Origins of Owls", "What Makes an Owl", "Conservation", "Owl Pellets", and "Owl Voices", as well as with the various species of owls. The chapter on owls and men discusses the influences and significances of owls to different cultures and illustrates owls as portrayed in various art forms. Chapter 2 summarizes our knowledge of the fossil record of owls. Chapter 3 discusses the adaptations of owls for the various niches they fill. The figures in Chapter 3 illustrating the binocular vision, asymmetrical ears, eye structure, feather structure, and skeletal system of owls are very informative. The photographs, paintings, and range maps of the various species of owls are well-done and well-reproduced. The chapter on owl voices gives a phonetic interpretation and description of the calls of many species of owls. For my own use, I would like to have seen a more complete bibliography of works dealing with owls, but this deficiency detracts little from the book. I recommend the book as a handsome, useful reference to anyone with an interest in owls.--J.A. Jackson.

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Traveler's List and Check List for Birds of North America. By James A. Tucker. American Birding Association, Inc., P.O. Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78765, 1975: 28 pp. \$1, paperback.

This is simply a checklist of all of the birds known to occur in North America. It is about the same size as the Mississippi checklist, but there is only one column of bird names per page and the remaining space on each page is ruled for checking the birds off when they are observed in different places. The birds are arranged in the AOU checklist order (as they are on the Mississippi checklist), but an alphabetical index at the end will be helpful to those not familiar with checklist order.--J.A. Jackson.