

Reviews

A Guide to North American Bird Clubs. By Jon E. Rickert. Avian Publications, Inc., Elizabethtown, KY, 1978: 565+ pp., maps. \$15.00

You finally have enough time to go on an extended birding trip to southeastern Arizona, but you have a problem. Where do you find pertinent information on the best dates to be there, who to contact concerning probable birds, and who to report out-of-the-ordinary birds to? How many times many of us have faced this kind of problem and have had to either go there and hope for the best or make expensive long distance phone calls to individuals who might not even be up on local bird distribution data. Those days are no more. Jon Rickert now gives us that much needed information under the cover of a single book.

The author has taken upon himself the monumental task of not only listing every bird club known to exist in North America, but also listing contact individuals, club addresses, meeting dates and places, field trip preferences, and a host of other important facts. From all indications he has done a superior job.

The book is well organized and divided into chapters on National organizations in the U.S. and Canada, state and local clubs in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Canada, and organizations in other North American nations. Each organization is listed along with an address and the publication of that organization. Local clubs are listed along with an address and addresses and phone numbers of several people in the local area who can be contacted concerning birding information.

The advantages of such a book are many. In addition to the list above, club publications are listed which will facilitate much-needed interclub exchange. In many cases, professional ornithologists are listed which will encourage contact between amateur and professional on a level never before witnessed. Local areas will undoubtedly see some economic gain from increased birding in their areas. It remains to be seen just how many advantages will be reaped as the result of this book.

There are drawbacks to the book, some of which the author recognizes. Three pages are devoted to the plan of the book and how to use it. Reminders on birding etiquette and courtesy are suggested. But, the major drawback is an instantaneous one - the book was out-of-date the minute it came off the press! With so many individuals cited, one could not expect addresses and phone numbers to remain the same. I know personally of one club, with five individuals cited, three of which no longer reside in the area. Fortunately, the author has foreseen this deficiency and will apparently rectify it in the form of a new periodical publication to be circulated in the near future.

To be sure, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. The author has performed all that could be expected of him and should be recognized for that. In my opinion, this book warrants a place on the bookshelf right next to my field guides and maps.--C. Dwight Cooley, P.O. Drawer 6Y, Mississippi State, MS 39762

The Birds of John Burroughs. Keeping a Sharp Lookout. Edited and with an introduction by Jack Kligerman, foreword by Dean Amadon, Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York, 1976: 240 pp., photograph of John Burroughs and several black-and-white reproductions of bird drawings by Fuertes. \$3.95, paperback.

This delightful book is a collection of essays that have been reprinted from The Writings of John Burroughs. Burroughs is well-known to an earlier generation as the "Sage of Slabsides." He wrote intimately and philosophically about birds and other life around him. This is a great "fireside" book that contains a wealth of natural history lore.-- J.A.J.

A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela. By Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr., Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978: 424 pp., 53 color and black-and-white plates. \$50.00.

Venezuela is perhaps the South American country most visited by North Americans. It is also blessed with nearly 1300 species of birds. The authors have included all of these in this guide - and each species is illustrated. While the book is slightly larger than a conventional field guide, the authors have done a remarkable job of including basic descriptions, distributions, and habitat preferences of so many birds in a book that can easily be carried and used in the field. The plates by Guy Tudor, H. Wayne Trimm, John Gwynne, and Kathleen D. Phelps, and line drawings by Michel Kleinbaum are generally well done and contribute immeasurably to the usefulness of the guide. The high price of the book is undoubtedly due to the inclusion of the 40 color plates. If you have the opportunity to visit Venezuela, you'll want to take this book along.--J.A.J.

Birds of the South. By Charlotte Hilton Green, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1933 (Dover edition published in 1975): 277 pp., several black-and-white illustrations. \$3.50, paperback.

This book is not a "guide" to southern birds and it is not always accurate in describing the habits and habitats of some of our birds. Nevertheless, it is well-written and worthy of a place on your bird book shelf. Birds of the South is of historical interest because it reflects a bit of the southern culture of the 1930's. Short verses and numerous personal anecdotes add to the book's charm.--J.A.J.

Ravens, Crows, Magpies and Jays. By Tony Angell with a forward by J.F. Lansdowne. University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1978: 112 pp., 84 illustrations. \$14.95

It is not often in this day and time that a book comes along which captures the essence of a group of birds as legendary and mythical as the corvids. Tony Angell has done just that. He has personified these beautiful birds with striking line drawings and at the same time conveyed the intricacies of corvid behavior and social organization with his rhetoric as witnessed by the following passage:

Before the coastal mountains around Los Angeles were flattened for homes and punctured by roadways, there were still places that youngsters could hike to and wrap up in the solitude and adventure there. Pairs of Scrub Jays came to scold us as we set up our camps. I remember awakening those mornings to the faint feeling of being watched and, upon looking up, I usually found a jay, head cocked over, staring me full in the face. I came home with such memories along with the usual good dose of poison oak.

The book is very well organized in such a manner that one can acquire a wealth of scientific information concerning food habits, behavior, and measurements while reading about such topics as myth and culture, social strategies, and tool using by corvids. All 19 species known to occur within the U.S. are described and the final chapter contains an extensive bibliography on the Corvidae, for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of corvid biology.

The author has distinguished himself as a superior artist by many of his earlier works and this book is no exception. Well over 80 black-and-white drawings lavishly illustrate many poses of the corvids, revealing many behavioral patterns. One would certainly hope that some of these same poses will come out in the near future in the form of prints.

Finally someone has covered a scientific subject as diverse as corvid biology and made it truly engrossing and interesting. I would wholeheartedly recommend the book to anyone.--C. Dwight Cooley, P.O. Drawer 6Y, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

Pigeons and Doves of the World. By Derek Goodwin, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1970 (first published by Cornell University Press, 1977): 446 pp., numerous small maps and line drawings, three color plates. \$27.50.

Pigeons and doves are found throughout the world and are of interest because of their diversity of form and habits, their frequent association with man, their use for sport, and their frequent symbolic roles in our culture (dove of peace, etc.). In this book Derek Goodwin presents a brief discussion of the adaptive variation of pigeons and doves and a brief technical account of each known living or recently extinct form. The species accounts are illustrated by Robert Gillmor. While the book is not written in a "popular" style, it has received good reviews as an important summary of our knowledge of these birds. The book would be of particular value to zoos, libraries, or anyone interested in raising exotic birds.--J.A.J.

A Guide to Bird Watching. By Joseph J. Hickey, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1975: 252 pp., some line drawings. \$3.00.

Here is a bargain book that every bird-watcher should have. Dr. Hickey first published this guide in 1943 and its popularity has not waned. A Guide to Bird Watching includes chapters dealing with many of the activities that amateur birders become involved in: watching migration, studying bird distribution, bird banding, and others. My particular enthusiasm for the book comes as a result of the extremely useful Appendix C: "Outline for a Life-History Study." This "Outline" is a detailed series of questions, each of which points the reader in the direction of an interesting project with birds. If you are more than a casual birder you will find this book very useful. If you are only a casual birder, after reading this book you will want to become more active.--J.A.J.