

dark backgrounds. Aside from this quibble, the plates do an excellent job of portraying the birds in realistic poses and settings. Similarly, the text figures do a good job of showing variation in plumage for a few confusing groups or species pairs.

In summary, this book is an excellent and detailed species-by-species account of the natural history of a very diverse and interesting group of birds. Although it is difficult to extract general behavioral trends and evolutionary patterns from this book, the information content is high, and one can easily find the details relevant to any particular species of interest. It is, as the authors intended, a very good starting point for those interested in the biology of icterids.—MICHAEL S. WEBSTER, *Department of Biological Sciences, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York 14260, USA.*

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Goose Populations of the Western Palearctic: A Review of Status and Distribution.—Edited by Jesper Madsen, Gill Cracknell, and Tony Fox. 1999. National Environmental Research Institute, Rönne, Denmark. 334 pp., 26 black-and-white plates, 29 tables, 107 figures. ISBN 87-7772-437-2. Cloth, GBP 25 (ca. \$40.00).—This volume is an impressive and handsomely presented compilation of the status and distribution of the 23 Eurasian goose populations, which represent seven species not found in North America. It contains a detailed presentation of population sizes that are spatially referenced by distinct breeding, migration, or wintering areas. Perhaps more impressive is the cooperation required to assemble information from a part of the world that is much more politically stratified than we are accustomed to in North America. This “biopolitical diversity” comprises contributions from 19 principal authors, 56 coauthors, and an additional 23 contributors.

The motivation for the book involved a need to assemble a diversity of information into a single resource. An introductory chapter provides historical and geographical perspectives for how monitoring is accomplished and discusses potential biases in esti-

mates of productivity. It also includes information on which populations have been studied using marked individuals. Of 23 recognized goose populations representing 9 species and 13 subspecies, 14 currently show increasing trends, 4 are stable, 2 are decreasing, and trajectories for 3 are unknown. Most trend data in this book are based on counts rather than on statistical estimates of population size from a sampling design. This is because geese are highly gregarious and clumped and do not lend themselves easily to spatially random sampling during migration or in winter. Nevertheless, counts underestimate population size because of incomplete detectability, and the distinction in this book between counts and estimates is sometimes clouded. Thus, readers probably should consider population numbers in this book to be biased low by an unknown amount.

After the introduction are 23 chapters that follow a uniform format for each population, as referenced by breeding area. Each chapter contains six sections starting with a general review of the population including range, delineation of flyways, population trends, breeding success, and mortality. The next three sections of each chapter address population issues from a geographical perspective: breeding grounds, staging areas, and finally staging/wintering areas in countries where both exist. For example, the first section provides details on breeding distribution and breeding ecology with information on habitat use, feeding ecology, molt migrations, and molting areas, as well as a summary of research, including banding activities and basic breeding ecology. Finally, this section ends with a discussion of protection and conservation on the breeding grounds, including hunting legislation, site protection, and conflicts with agriculture where they exist. Separate sections on staging and staging/winter areas cover distribution (range, habitat, and feeding ecology), abundance (phenology of migration, trends, and numbers), research activities, and protection and legislation. Information in these last two sections is replicated for each country in which a population is found. For example, the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser a. albifrons*) occurs in no fewer than 25 countries in the western Palearctic! Thus, considerable detail is available for those who wish to examine such stratified information.

The penultimate section for each population is a discussion of current population status, range changes, and conservation issues (including speculation about the effect of hunting on population size, agricultural conflict, future research needs, and international conservation). Finally, extensive bibliographies make this book a valuable compendium of publications for each population.

Personally, I found value in being able to compare sizes and trajectories in the Nearctic goose populations against those of the western Palearctic. Population increases on both continents reminded me of

how adaptable these voracious herbivores are, especially in their ability to exploit agricultural ecosystems. The editors were careful to state that the objective of the book was not to provide a synthesis of the effects of hunting and agriculture on goose population dynamics. Nevertheless, some chapters contain a focus on protection of geese that brought to my attention an apparent difference in philosophy regarding desirable population sizes.

In North America, population control is being advocated for mid-continent populations of Lesser Snow Geese (*Chen c. caerulescens*) that nest in the arctic and for Giant Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis maxima*) that occur in certain urban areas. The primary motivation for such advocacy is concern for arctic ecosystems and secondarily the concerns of urban residents regarding perceived health risks, unsightly droppings, and even aggressive interactions between humans and Canada Geese. The effects of geese on tundra ecosystems in the Palearctic apparently are unstudied, and there appears to be no conflict between urban humans and geese at any time of the year. In North America, management plans originate from each of the four flyways in which each goose population is found and include population goals. Such goals are absent from this book, and the focus on protection conveys the implicit message "more is better." It makes me, even as one who enjoys and studies geese, wonder "how many geese are enough?" As most Palearctic goose and human populations continue to increase, it becomes interesting to anticipate when new conflicts will develop between geese and humans in shared environments. Perhaps the editors missed an opportunity to discuss such population objectives, as well as what may be the best way to manage habitats and goose harvest internationally.

Overall, a compilation such as *Goose Populations of the Western Palearctic* has great value. Such information (e.g. spatial-temporal summaries of harvest for each species over most of the continent) exists for Nearctic goose populations, but most of it remains dispersed in various management plans, government reports, and data files. A similar document for Nearctic populations is needed, which, in itself, represents a strong endorsement.

Many similarities exist between Nearctic and Palearctic goose populations, but there are also many differences. For those unfamiliar with Palearctic geese, this volume provides an opportunity to learn not only about their status, population dynamics, and ecology, but also about processes, both biological and political, that may influence geese on other continents. The editors state that the book is written for the international community of goose researchers, nature conservationists, and waterfowl managers. However, the text is not technical and is very easy to read, so that the book will appeal to a wider audience interested in geese. In my view, this is an

important addition to the exponentially growing body of ornithological literature. At the very least, this book is recommended for goose researchers (whether civil servant or academic) on both sides of the Atlantic.—RAY T. ALISAUSKAS, *Canadian Wildlife Service, Prairie and Northern Wildlife Research Centre, 115 Perimeter Road, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X4, Canada.*

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Helpers at Birds' Nests: A Worldwide Survey of Cooperative Breeding and Related Behavior.—Alexander F. Skutch. 1999. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City. xv + 298 pp., 62 drawings by Dana Gardner, foreword by Stephen T. Emlen. ISBN 0-87745-674-7. Paper, \$24.95.—This book is a very slightly modified version of one published in 1987. It has the same number of pages in the main text and the same number of chapters as the first edition. To me it looks identical for all practical purposes. Additions are a forward by Stephen Emlen and a new preface by Skutch. Emlen points out that this book is "delightfully readable in the relaxed, engaging style for which Skutch is well known." In my review of the first addition (Brown 1988), I recommended the book to bird watchers. Rereading my earlier review, which was very favorable in this respect, I am struck by how little my opinions about the book have changed. Unfortunately, however, the book is now severely out of date, and it appears that no new references have been added to the original text. This is not a book for scientists, but perhaps it will be appreciated by those who would rather have their natural history without the complications of science and scholarship and without knowledge of the many fascinating developments in the study of avian helping that occurred after Skutch published the first edition.

Although I can appreciate Skutch's love of the rambling naturalist's approach, I am reluctant to recommend this book to anyone who loves science or wants to know about the science behind the study of helping behavior in birds. I found no reference to W. D. Hamilton, without whose theory the study of helping would still be in the doldrums in which it reposed from 1935 to 1963. Nor is there a single reference to the numerous important papers of Rabenold on *Campylorhynchus* wrens (Rabenold 1984, 1985; Wiley and Rabenold 1984; Austad and Rabenold 1985, 1986; Rabenold et al. 1990, 1991). The most recent reference to Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick was in 1978, to Koenig and Mumme in 1983, to Emlen in 1984, and to myself in 1984. The exciting recent work on sex ratios in the Seychelles Warbler (*Acrocephalus*