

on wetland ecology, this book would be on the required reading list.—SCOTT FORBES, *Department of Biology, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9, Canada.*

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A Birdfinder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley.—

Mark W. Lockwood, William B. McKinney, James N. Paton, and Barry R. Zimmer. 1999. American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado. viii + 280 pp., 43 maps, 5 drawings, 3 photographs. ISBN 1-878788-18-3. Paper, \$17.45.—In the 1950s and 1960s, Fisher and Peterson's *Wild America* and Pettingill's *Bird Watcher's America* stimulated us to dream about birding in exotic settings filled with unfamiliar species. Pettingill's *Guide to Birdfinding East of the Mississippi*, and its companion for the West, provided the information needed to undertake exploration of personal terrae incognitae, giving basic descriptions of the avifauna in each state and good birding sites around selected population centers. After Pettingill, a new era in birdfinding guides began with a series by James A. Lane that covered the nation's most popular birding destinations. The popular Lane Guides, together with refinements by Harold R. Holt (to whom the present volume is dedicated), were known for their level of detail, practicality of information, annotated lists of specialty species accompanied by advice for locating them, and occasional infusions of humor. Recently, the American Birding Association has been updating existing descendants of the Lane guides and developing new guides for additional regions. The present volume, in its third edition and relying on an entirely new cadre of authors, is a fine example of this genre.

This guide covers a larger area than might be inferred by the title, resulting in one of few criticisms I have of this otherwise well-conceived volume. Information is presented for areas along the length of the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico all the way to southern New Mexico, and also for sites as distant from the Rio Grande as the Edwards Plateau, Davis and Guadalupe mountains, and Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Many birders traveling to these areas may miss out on the resources in this book simply because they assume it to be confined to areas along the lower reaches of the Rio Grande. Given the large scope of this coverage, it would have been nice to have included a bit more information on birding opportunities in nearby portions of Mexico. Site accounts in *A Birder's Guide* are divided into three sections: Lower Rio Grande Valley (84 pp.), Trans-Pecos Texas (including Las Cruces and Carlsbad Caverns,

New Mexico; 62 pp.), and Edwards Plateau (22 pp.). The book gradually works the reader upstream. The site accounts are very informative and well written and contain an abundance of attractive maps. Details for finding particular birds at each site are well presented, and at times, finely detailed. For instance, precise directions are provided to a nest tree used by Common Black-Hawks (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) in the Davis Mountains. The authors provide interesting tangential details about other animal and plant species that might be seen, such as endemic fishes confined to individual ponds or springs, and about historical or cultural features.

In addition to the site accounts, the book contains a wealth of supplementary information. The guide begins with a collection of introductory material describing ecological regions of Texas, seasonality, accommodations, sources of information, birding organizations, and the potential for biting insects; it would have been useful to caution visitors more emphatically about the hazardous summer heat. The section summarizing nomenclatural changes in the region's bird species since 1973 is interesting to review in its own right. After the site accounts, the usual bar charts and annotated listing of specialty species have been replaced by a complete annotated list of all the region's birds (56 pp.). This, in itself, is worth the price of the book. Also included are helpful hints regarding identification of Tropical (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) and Couch's (*T. couchii*) kingbirds and Gray-crowned (*Geothlypis poliocephala*) and Common (*G. trichas*) yellowthroats; these provide details not available in standard field guides. Additional lists are provided by Jeffrey S. Pippin for butterflies of the region and by Alan H. Chaney for nonavian vertebrates (excluding fish), both with brief distributional notes. Following a list of selected references, a few pages describe the American Birding Association and its Code of Birding Ethics and provide instructions on how to submit reports of rarities to the review committees of Texas and New Mexico, with additional lists of species for which detailed information is requested. Finally, the index contains an interesting innovation by providing a 25-line Abbreviated Table of Contents on each page that should assist the reader in finding important sections without having to navigate the overall index.

In the interest of providing as well-rounded a review as possible, I feel compelled to point out the handful of deficiencies that I could identify. The text contains occasional grammatical errors. Terminology is occasionally confusing; the word *resaca*, referring to a small body of water, is used initially without introduction, and the use of the terms "Valley," "mid-Valley," and "Lower Valley" at times seems inconsistent. Sometimes species lists are redundant. Although the annotated bird list is a bonus, its depiction of seasonal variations in abundance and of arrival dates is less detailed than when presented as

a bar chart. Indeed, in the site accounts, a few seasonally restricted species are listed in a way that implies they are permanent residents, potentially misleading readers. However, these blemishes are small compared with the overall value of the book, which constitutes a fine achievement.

In summary, *A Birder's Guide* is a valuable information source, geared to the birding hobbyist. Any bird enthusiast who explores the region would be remiss to arrive without this guide in hand, whether looking for an introduction to the area's avifauna or

searching for specialty species. In addition, those not planning to visit the area but who are interested in bird distribution patterns will find the guide worth purchasing for its annotated list. Because the book will be of interest to lay birders as well as ornithologists, it would be a nice addition to both public and academic libraries. This volume undoubtedly will enrich the visit of any bird enthusiast to the Rio Grande region, one of the most popular birdwatching destinations in North America.—PETER H. YAUKEY, *Department of Geography, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148, USA.*