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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**The life and letters of Alexander Wilson.**—Edited by Clark Hunter. 1983. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. 456 p. \$50.00. Alexander Wilson was born in Scotland in 1766 and spent his early adult years there as a weaver, peddler, reformer, and poet. He came to the United States in 1794 and turned to school teaching, which led to his acquaintance and friendship with the botanist, William Bartram. This association aroused his interest in birds, ultimately his aim to publish the most complete illustrated account of the birds of America that had yet been attempted. The enterprise lasted but ten years, until his death in 1813, but it sufficed to establish Wilson's reputation as the "Father of American Ornithology." The present book offers first a good, relatively brief biography of the man and then 150 of his letters, many of them newly published or published complete for the first time. They contain a wealth of fascinating observations about his travels and the progress of his *Ornithology*. Several additional documents are given in the appendices. The volume itself has been beautifully designed and printed, a rare treat in an era of computerized photo-typesetting. It is illustrated with photographs, maps, wood engravings by Thomas Bewick, and selected reproductions of Wilson's plates—together with Audubon's plates of the same birds. The book adds important new details to our picture of this pioneer ornithologist.

**Johann Friedrich von Brandt. *Icones Avium Rossico—Americarum Tabulae VII, Ineditae*** with comments on birds, expeditions and people involved.—Bernt Løppenthin. 1984. Scandinavian fine editions, Copenhagen. 70 p. 385 Danish kroner (\$34.75). Source: Scandinavian fine editions, P.O. Box 1019, DK-1007, Copenhagen K, Denmark. Brandt (1802-1879) was a German physician who made his career as director of the zoological museum at the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Based on specimens collected by others, he published many papers, including a description of the cormorant species which bears his name. He worked on, but never completed, a large work on the birds of the Russian North Pacific possessions, including the Russian territories in America (now Alaska). Apparently made for that opus were seven unique, hand-colored lithographic plates, drawn about 1835 by W. Pape. They are here published for the first time, reproduced from a set in the University Library, Copenhagen. Løppenthin provides valuable background on Russian American settlements and expeditions before 1835, of importance to ornithological studies. He then discusses, for each of the 44 species of birds, the history of its taxonomy and of the specimen depicted. The plates themselves appear to be accurate facsimiles in size, color, and detail. This scholarly, well-produced volume makes a signal contribution to the ornithological history of the North Pacific and Bering Sea. List of references, index, map.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**International registry of poultry genetic stocks/A directory of specialized lines and strains, mutations, breeds and varieties of chickens, Japanese quail and turkeys.**—Ralph G. Somes, Jr. [1985] Bulletin 469, Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, The University of Connecticut, Storrs. 96 p. Paper cover. \$3.00. Source: Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, Storrs, CT. This is the fifth edition of a reference for poultry fanciers and researchers who use poultry in their work. It is organized like its predecessor (noted in *Condor* 84:202), but has again been enlarged so as to include stocks from more suppliers. Incidentally, the registry demonstrates the major roles played by domesticated birds in studies of avian genetics.

**Bobwhite thesaurus.**—Thomas G. Scott. 1985. International Quail Foundation. 306 p. \$29.95. Source: I.Q.F., P.O. Box 550, 206 Buncombe St., Edgefield, SC 29824. This is an indexed bibliography of *Colinus virginianus*, including more than 3,000 publications that were issued before 1983. The index is unusually thorough for works of this kind, as it comprises over 100 principal subject-categories and up to three levels of subordinate categories. Even the page references for each specific piece of information are given. The book is nicely made and has a color frontispiece by wildlife painter Bob Carey. It will be a useful tool for quail biologists and managers.

**The Puffin.**—M. P. Harris. 1984. T&AD Poyser, Carlton, England. 224 p. \$32.50. Thirty years after Lockley's *Puffins*, here is a new book about *Fratercula arctica*, one of the most generally familiar and widely appealing of seabirds. It offers comprehensive treatment of the species' distribution, behavior, breeding and feeding biology, natural and man-caused threats to survival, and population dynamics. Material has been drawn from the author's own studies and those of other ornithologists at several island

colonies in the north Atlantic and western Arctic waters. Commendably, the book manages to report a great deal of accurate and detailed information, yet in a readable, non-technical style. Various additional data are given in 20 tables at the back. The volume is well illustrated with maps, diagrams, monochrome photographs, and drawings by Keith Brockie. List of references, index. Harris is correct in saying that his book complements rather than supersedes Lockley's. Read the new book for up-to-date facts and analysis, and the old one for a vivid, admittedly personal, account of life in a puffin colony.

**Ecogeographical variation in size and proportions of Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*).**—John W. Aldrich. 1984. Ornithological Monographs No. 35, American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. 134 p. Paper cover. \$10.50 (\$8.50 to AOU members). Source: Frank R. Moore, Department of Biology, University of Southern Mississippi, Southern Station Box 5018, Hattiesburg, MS 39406; all orders must be prepaid and include a \$0.50 handling charge. In this monograph, Aldrich examines patterns of morphological variation in a species with a wide breeding range in order to learn their probable adaptive significance. Measurements and proportions of the wing, bill, tarsus, tail, and middle toe are correlated with certain ecological categories (Life Areas and Ecoregions) of North America. Multitudes of data are reported and analyzed. The patterns are, for the most part, clear and irrefutable, but the adaptive reasons behind them, while plausible, remain to be established. Aldrich concludes that "the ecological forces selecting adaptive genetic differences have a greater effect on morphological change or microevolution than do geographical separation or isolation." His rich findings should stimulate further research into the ways by which environmental factors influence the evolution of avian taxa. Maps, graphs, list of references, appendices.

for discussing various aspects of this project. We also thank J. Verner, W. J. Smith, and two anonymous reviewers for making helpful suggestions on previous drafts of this manuscript. The Portage Country Club kindly allowed us to use their property for our research, and the facilities of the University of Manitoba Field Station were made available by J. Shay. Financial support was provided by operating grants from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) to Barclay and J. Picman, an NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship to Leonard, and an NSERC Undergraduate Summer Research Assistantship to Friesen. This is Publication No. 130 of the University of Manitoba Field Station, Delta Marsh.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**The dictionary of American bird names, revised edition.**—Ernest A. Choate, revised by Raymond A. Paynter, Jr. 1985. Harvard Common Press, Harvard and Boston, Massachusetts. 226 p. \$17.95 hard cover, \$9.95 paper cover. Bird names, like other words, commonly attract no notice except when one wants to be sure that they are correct and unmistakable as to their subject. They embody, however, a rich history of popular and scientific observations, beliefs, and associations, couched in many languages. This book draws together linguistics and ornithology in exploring the origins and meanings in the past of the names of North American birds. Owing to the large number of names, especially those in local vernacular use, the list is

selective. Common names and scientific names are treated in separate chapters. The entries delve into languages, history, mythology, superstition, and nonsense, as well as the appearance and habits of birds. In revising the work (from the 1973 edition), Paynter has brought it into conformity with the sixth edition of the AOU *Check-list* and corrected errors in the derivations and origins of names that had come to light. An appendix gives thumbnail biographical sketches of 100 people who are commemorated in bird names. Bibliography and list of scientific name equivalents for common names. If you are intrigued by names such as *Oceanites* and "Big Cranky," here is the reference for deciphering them.

tings). If none of the water acquired by dunking blows off in transit to the nest, each dunked grasshopper fed to a nestling would contain an average of 0.225 g water, of which 28% would originate from the dunking behavior itself.

Dunking behavior may have been an important way of providing free water for nestlings in this colony of Brewer's Blackbirds. Other species that nest in seasonally dry environments with some source of free water relatively near their nests may also dunk their prey. (Wind and evaporation would largely deplete water accumulated through dunking if the water source were too far from the nest, as discussed for sandgrouse by Cade and Maclean [1967].) That such behavior has gone previously unreported is not surprising, given the ease with which it might be missed by researchers who focus on adults while the birds are feeding young rather than while they are foraging.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Birds of Nebraska.**—Coordinated by Jon Farrar. 1985. NEBRASKAland Magazine, Vol. 63, No. 1. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Lincoln. 146 p. Paper cover. \$6.00. Source: NEBRASKAland, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503. This is a special issue of the NEBRASKAland Magazine, devoted to a popular account of the State's birdlife. Its 21 chapters, by a variety of authors, present the birds according to major habitats or taxonomic groups. Easily readable, they concentrate on natural history and wisely eschew descriptions for field identification. The closing chapters look at Nebraska's endangered species and the character of its avifauna. Lavishly illustrated with high-quality color photographs. No references or index. Aimed for general readers, this attractive magazine can be effective for raising their appreciation of birds in the north-central states. As a companion publication, an annotated checklist of Nebraska birds is available (\$0.50) from the above address.

**Birds of the northern Rockies.**—Tom J. Ulrich. 1984. Mountain Press Publishing Co., Missoula. 158 p. Paper cover. \$7.95. Source: Mountain Press Publishing Co., P.O. Box 2399, Missoula, MT 59806. This is intended as a field guide to 170 species of birds that can be found from the Canadian Rockies south along the Rocky Mountain chain to the Tetons of Wyoming. It is illustrated with more than 220 color photographs, most of them by the author. The one-paragraph species accounts give general information about field marks and habits, but no specific details about occurrence in the region. The text suffers from poor writing, banalities, and anthropomorphisms. Ulrich is to be commended for his efforts in taking the photographs, yet his book does not seem to offer any advantages over existing field guides. Index.