

BOOK REVIEWS

EDITED BY JEFFREY S. MARKS

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The Raptors of Arizona. Edited by Richard L. Glin-ski. 1998. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ. xv + 220 pp., 42 color plates by Richard Sloan, 42 range maps, 1 table, 1 appendix. ISBN 0-8165-1322-8. Cloth, \$75.00.—This is a handsome, well-written, and beautifully illustrated volume on the raptors of Arizona by people who obviously had their heart and soul in it. In terms of format, the book is a blend between popular and scientific literature. Twenty-seven contributors present the known information on each of 42 species of birds of prey. Each member of the 26 falconiforms, 13 strigiforms, and raptor-like 3 ciconiiforms are given two to five pages including description, distribution, habitat, life history, and status in Arizona. The authors often add their own personal observations and interesting notes on the ecology of each species.

According to the editor, Arizona is matched only by Texas in terms of raptor species diversity. This book is a superb compilation of that group. The 42 color plates by Richard Sloan are exquisite and in my mind reminiscent of the beautiful early paintings of Allan Brooks. The birds are presented in natural habitat settings in a characteristic behavior or attitude. Each painting nicely captures the essence of the species as viewed in Arizona habitats.

The introductory chapter provides a complete, yet succinct summary of what is to be expected. Included is a helpful map of the major Arizona river systems, mountain ranges, and important cities. The next chapter, entitled "Conservation of Arizona Raptors," provides the reader with an historic perspective about habitat change, raptor population changes, and how little we really know about even the recent past. The editor provides an excellent overview of the various ways that mankind has negatively affected (habitat loss, contaminants, electrocution, shooting) raptor populations, but in my opinion he could have developed

a more positive assessment for at least some of their futures. For instance, the use by many raptor species of man-made nest structures and use of urban environments could have been highlighted in this chapter. Table 1, the only table in the book, provides handy information on habitat and seasonal occurrence.

The next chapter, "Habitats of Arizona Raptors" by D.E. Brown, provides concise and informative descriptions of 19 habitats. These descriptions undoubtedly will be helpful to people not familiar with the diversity of Arizona's habitats and topography. Each habitat receives a description of vegetation, elevation, and weather conditions. The end of this chapter includes a discussion of factors influencing raptor distribution.

An informative chapter on the details of where to find raptors is presented by S.W. Hoffman. Included are all the known raptor hot spots whether they be breeding areas, migratory flyways, or wintering areas. J.W. Dawson and B.D. Taubert provide a good overview of contemporary falconry in Arizona in the following chapter, and A.M. Rea provides a short introduction to the New World Vultures.

A central goal of this book is to "enhance public awareness of these species, enticing readers to go out and discover these birds in the wild and help ensure their presence in Arizona skies." To this end the editor, artist, and authors have easily succeeded. A pleasure to read and to look at, this book will fill out your "raptors of the southwestern United States" interests. Apparently very much a collaborative effort by the editor, authors, Arizona Wildlife Foundation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and University of Arizona Press, this book could serve as the standard for what I would hope will be future efforts in other states to promote the appreciation of raptors. For those of you interested in natural history, ornithology, and birds of prey, this book is a must for your library.—**Peter H. Bloom, Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93010 U.S.A.**

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The Long-eared Owl. By Derick Scott. 1997. The Hawk and Owl Trust, London. xv + 128 pp., 29 color photographs, 2 range maps, 2 appendices, numerous black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-9503187-7-9. Cloth, £17.95 (U.K.).—Derick Scott has studied Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) in Britain for 45 years and perhaps has spent more time observing this species than anyone else on earth. His work is mentioned in Stanley Cramp's *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* and in David Glue's papers on Long-eared Owls, but little of Scott's research has appeared in the refereed literature. Here, Scott distills his observations into the first book devoted to this interesting and somewhat enigmatic species.

Focusing on Long-eared Owls in Britain, 10 chapters present general information on appearance, population status, distribution, food habits, habitat and home range, breeding biology, behavior, vocalizations, mortality and conservation. The book concludes with an appendix that catalogues diseases and parasites that have been documented in Long-eared Owls and another that lists scientific names of species mentioned in the text. The color photographs by Scott are excellent, as are Dan Powell's black-and-white illustrations.

Because the book is written for the layperson, almost no hard data are presented. Instead, the book consists of a free-flowing narrative, some of which is based on published work or personal communications from others, and some taken from Scott's own experiences. A "Selected Bibliography" lists 36 books and 98 journal references, most of which are not cited in the text. Moreover, no fewer than 19 of the articles that *are* cited in the text *are not* included in the list of references! This informal style makes for easy reading, but the lack of detail regarding methods of study and docu-

mentation of results leaves many questions unanswered. Most important, nowhere is it mentioned that Scott has ever banded a Long-eared Owl. At the very least, it would seem that most of his observations were of unbanded individuals. Scott states that males sometimes incubate eggs and brood young, behaviors that have not been documented in studies of marked owls. Similarly, he believes that mate and site fidelity are the rule in British Long-eared Owls, which is quite the opposite from the situation in North America and Europe. He also states that incubation typically does not begin until the clutch is complete. Again, this has never been seen elsewhere. Finally, Scott presents some largely unconvincing evidence that Long-eared Owls sometimes move eggs and young among nests (similar reports have been published for nightjars and later found to be untrue). Are Long-eared Owls in Britain really that different from those elsewhere? Perhaps so, but one wonders why so many of these seemingly fantastic observations have not appeared in the refereed literature. The main problem is that these behaviors can only be documented with marked individuals (aside from the issue of when incubation begins); without such evidence, the behaviors in question must be considered hypothetical.

Because of these potential problems, I am at a loss to identify a readership who will benefit from this book. The text will be of interest to nonprofessionals, who unfortunately are likely to accept at face value the undocumented statements therein. The lack of documentation of the results makes the book unsuitable for professionals. Having said this, I must admit that I enjoyed the book because I identified with many of the experiences that Scott describes. Clearly, he is a keen observer with a strong dedication to conservation. Read the book if you must, but do not hesitate to question some of its conclusions.—**Jeff Marks, Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 U.S.A.**