

BOOK REVIEWS

EDITED BY JEFFREY S. MARKS

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In-hand Identification Guide to Palearctic Raptors. By William S. Clark and Reuven Yosef. 1998. International Birdwatching Centre, Technical Publication Vol. 7, No. 2, Eilat, Israel. x + 67 pp., 146 color photographs. Paper, \$25.—This relatively short booklet provides a new important tool for raptor students and banders. Starting with a brief description of raptor conservation activities in Israel, the book continues with a complete description of 37 raptor species that could be trapped in the Palearctic region. Each account begins with a short description of the species, giving the type of bird (i.e., falcon, eagle, kite, etc.) and several diagnostic characters. The proper band size is given next, with differences between the sexes indicated where necessary. The main body of the account is the section on age and sex determination. This is probably the most interesting contribution in the book.

Provided either that both the descriptions and the excellent photographs are at hand, or that there is a close observation, separation by sex and age for those species where this is possible can be performed easily. Let us not forget that this is a guidebook written particularly for raptor banders. The information for each species is completed with bibliographic references and a brief summary about conservation status. The criteria for selection of the 37 species considered in this book are not explained in the text. Nevertheless, knowing the activities of both authors in raptor trapping, particularly in migration spots, it can be deduced that the raptors most frequently captured in Israel can be identified without any problems with the help of this guidebook.

Perhaps the inclusion of a little map with the geographic range of each species would help with the identification of some of the species. It also seems advisable to include body mass, because it will be practical when the bird is captured not only for its possible usefulness to differentiate the sexes

in some cases, but also for the information it would supply on the species' size, an important piece of information when the bird is in hand. The measurements given for the species' descriptions and the possible separation between the sexes would be far more useful if they were described accurately at the beginning of the book, because for relatively inexperienced banders it would be hard to measure the birds with the same methodology used by the authors.

Among all the abundant information on raptor species provided in this book, I have been able to find just three minor errors: two in the Spanish names given by the authors for *Falco peregrinus* (Halcón Común, according to the authors, whereas Halcón Peregrino is correct) and *Falco peregrinoides* (Halcón Peregrino, which should be Halcón de Berbería), and another in the English name for *Aquila heliaca*, which in the book appears as Imperial Eagle but should be Eastern Imperial Eagle, to avoid mistaking it for the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*). In the identification of juvenile Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*; fig. 94 and text), the radical difference of the first-year plumage occurring in this species is not clear.

In short, the book by Clark and Yosef is a superb contribution to identification in hand of raptors and will be very useful for banders. The book will also be useful for persons who study any aspect of raptor biology for which an accurate knowledge of plumage differences by age and sex is required, and for those who work with museum skins. Following this book and as a future project, I encourage the authors to complete the list of Palearctic raptors. This definitely is a book that should be in the library of any amateur or professional who deals with the fascinating world of birds of prey.—Miguel Ferrer, Estación Biológica de Doñana, CSIC, Pabellón del Perú, 41013 Sevilla, Spain.

Biology and Conservation of Owls of the Northern Hemisphere: Second International Sympo-

sium. Edited by J.R. Duncan, D.H. Johnson and T.H. Nicholls. 1997. U.S. Forest Service Gen. Tech. Rep. NC-190. Available at no cost from USDA Forest Service, North Central Forest Experiment Station, 1992 Folwell Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108. xxii + 635 pp., numerous figures and tables, 31 color photographs. Paper.—This volume is 21 × 27 × 3 cm in size with a double-column format on glossy paper and contains color and black-and-white illustrations of owls. The tome weighs 1.8 kg and, because of poor binding, falls apart readily (I have been told that this problem has been remedied, so be sure to request the sturdier version). Its 657 total pages are unorganized by species or any other topic and include three biopolitical essays, a banquet address, a summary and conclusions, partial lists with some outdated names of owls from the northern and southern hemispheres, 65 symposium papers, 17 poster papers and other presentations, four workshops, and an index, all of which represent a two-fold increase in content compared with the first international symposium (edited by R.W. Nero et al. 1987). In fact, 27 species of owls are reported plus some others barely mentioned, an increase of about 80% over the 1987 symposium.

Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) lead among the presentations, because they are readily captured at banding stations and censused with tapes. Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*) are second, because they are declining in Canada, and Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis*) third, closely tagged by Great Gray Owls (*S. nebulosa*), because of biopolitics, conservation issues and research money. Elf Owls (*Micrathene whitneyi*), Northern Pygmy-Owls (*Glaucidium gnoma*), and Whiskered Screech-Owls (*Otus trichopsis*) are conspicuously absent among the United States and Canadian species, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) are represented by one abstract. Also treated are the Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*), Black-and-white Owl (*C. nigrolineata*), Crested Owl (*Lophostrix cristata*), and Vermiculated Screech-Owl from the Neotropics (*O. guatemalae*), and the Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) and Elegant Scops-Owl (*O. elegans*) from the Old World.

The mean length of study was six years, up one year from the 1987 symposium (R.J. Clark), although single-year investigations and others without explanation of effort comprise nearly half the present volume. Several papers omit comparisons with earlier major publications, and a few lack ab-

stracts and cited literature altogether. Surely, studies without comparisons, syntheses, or tests of hypotheses, and field investigations without several years of data mislead readers, given the efforts of pioneering colleagues and known environmental flux. Students must ask how their data square with previous publications on the subject and fit or not into proposed models. Of the 34 papers that I read in detail, about half were purely descriptive, some even anecdotal; only two (6%) were experimental, and only four (12%) tested hypotheses.

Representative subjects in this symposium are: (1) owls as objects of human interest, pro and con; (2) owls as biocide indicators; (3) habitat mapping and modeling, especially for *Strix*; (4) food lists for Spotted Owls (but still no rangewide syntheses); (5) long-term reproductive flux, including two decades for Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) and Barred Owls (*S. varia*); (6) juvenile dispersal, including chemically treated Western Screech-Owls (*O. kennicottii*); (7) songs, including individual voice recognition of Spotted Owls and seasonality of four Neotropical species; (8) wing loading of 15 species but no novel implications; (9) road kills in Europe; and (10) those time-honored but seldom validated tape-broadcast surveys. Some submissions (13%) are just abstracts, not indicated as such in the table of contents or in the inadequate index keyed only to authors, eight subject areas, and the species named in titles.

Among the 34 papers I read, examples and a few personal responses are (1) causes of reversed sexual size dimorphism, a review that compares two tropical species with 17 mostly temperate species but doesn't discuss sex roles in reproduction or make comparisons among coexisting tropical species; (2) roosting behavior of male Eastern Screech-Owls (*O. asio*), described previously but without present comparison or acknowledgment of the original discovery; (3) captive breeding, partly intended for release of offspring but without data on the success of the releases; (4) Flamulated Owls (*O. flammeolus*) nesting less productively in aspens than in conifers used in other studies, although with definitional questions; and (5) empirical information plus hypothesis testing to suggest, probably correctly, that Northern Saw-whet Owls in North America are nomadic like female Boreal Owls (*A. funereus*) in Europe.

Publication deadlines must have been too short for the three editors to review the horde of manuscripts, obtain peer reviews, and provide organi-

zation and uniformity. Surely, the time is past for such agglomerations of papers without focus or format. Future symposia should be organized at the outset around conceptual themes (e.g., population regulatory mechanisms, sex roles and dimorphism, juvenile behavioral development), each addressed by several invited speakers, one of whom provides the conceptual framework, others the divergent approaches, all engaging in formal discussion with each other and other conference attendees. Contributed papers might be requested as they pertain to conference themes, but profession-

al meetings and journals are better for their delivery and publication, respectively.

Despite the unwieldy welter of detail in this 1997 owl symposium proceedings, students of owls and other raptors generally, wildlife researchers, and vertebrate biologists should obtain and peruse it, because it contains important tidbits here and there and interesting insights into what to do and not to do in research and writing. For teachers, the symposium proceedings offers instructive material on subjects and methods for graduate seminars.—**Frederick R. Gehlbach, Department of Biology, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798 U.S.A.**