

BOOK REVIEWS

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Birds of Prey: Health & Disease. By John E. Cooper. 2002. 3rd edition. Blackwell, Oxford, U.K. xvii + 345 pp., 13 tables, 56 figures, 28 color plates, 11 appendices. ISBN 0-632-05115-9. Hardback, £59.50.—The study of raptors is unquestionably enhanced by the diversity of perspectives from which it derives, i.e., from biologists, falconers, medical practitioners, and others. Each of these disciplines provides data and references that address birds of prey in unique and relevant terms. In updating his earlier pioneering work, *Veterinary Aspects of Captive Birds of Prey*, now entitled *Birds of Prey: Health & Disease*, John Cooper continues his intentionally eclectic collection of information and points-of-view. The new work is organized identically to the former but for the addition of three new chapters from contributing authors. Roughly one-third of the information in the new book is repeated verbatim from the earlier one, one-third includes previous information updated by a brief summary of advancements and a list of references for further study, and the remainder is an expansion that reflects work that has appeared since the earlier volume.

Cooper has long advocated collaboration among all who deal with birds of prey, which is borne out by his approach to the new addition. Cooper is at once observer, historian, and medical practitioner in discussing the various topics. He makes no attempt to cover the subjects in depth, but rather provides context and references for the reader's use. The diverse array of topics, and the somewhat lack of in-depth coverage, may serve as a disappointment to some but will be acceptable to others as an interesting and general guide. The value of the book will certainly be defined by the expectations of those who use it.

The contributed chapters vary considerably in scope and detail. Paolo Zucca's chapter on anatomy is generalized with varying degrees of detail. Once again, subjectivity is a factor in some conclusions. Ian Newton's discussion of parasitic diseases is, by nature, broad, yet is thorough and sound in

content. The late David Peakall's contribution regarding poisonings in free-living raptors is an inclusive general overview of chemical toxicity on a worldwide scale.

This is an intensely personal work. Cooper states emphatically that he has laced the writing with opinions, personal experiences, and other subjective matter. One of the most difficult challenges in reviewing this work is to assign it to a category for the reader. The book is not a clinical manual, nor a biology text, nor a handbook for falconers. It does, however, contain elements of each along with personal reflections on the experiences and opinions of the principal author. Although resisting classification, *Birds of Prey: Health & Disease* fills a useful and interesting niche in raptor literature for all those involved in the field.—**James D. Elliott, South Carolina Center for Birds of Prey, P.O. Box 1247, Charleston, SC 29402 U.S.A.**

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© 2002 The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.

Owls. By Floyd Scholz. 2001. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA. xiii + 379 pp., more than 700 color photographs. ISBN 0-8117-1021-1. Cloth, \$80.00.—In 1993, Floyd Scholz published *Birds of Prey*, which was a collection of detailed color photographs of 17 species of North American falconiforms (see *J. Raptor Res.* 28:278–279, 1994). Teaming up once more with photographer Tad Merrick, Scholz has expanded his domain to include the strigiforms. The result is an extensive series of color photographs of 17 of the 19 species of owls (Western Screech-Owl [*Otus kennicottii*] and Whiskered Screech-Owl [*O. trichopsis*] omitted) that breed in the United States and Canada.

Floyd Scholz is an extraordinary carver and painter of birds, and the main purpose of *Owls* is to serve as a reference guide for artists. An intro-

ductory chapter, "What is an Owl?" presents information on the various morphological adaptations of owls; the treatment enhances the text and is basically the same as that found in any coffee table book or general ornithology text that deals with owls. The species accounts make up the heart of the book. Each includes a page of information on morphology and behavior of the species in question, details on the size of various body parts (including line drawings of the species from the back and side), and numerous color photographs (typically 30–40 per species). The photos are taken from nearly every conceivable angle to provide details on plumage, talons, ear tufts, facial ruffs, eyes, bills, nostrils, and napes, to name but a sample of the features depicted. These photos contain fine points that would seldom be noticed without having a bird in the hand and thus will serve as a valuable reference for people who do not have access to museum specimens. Most of the photos are of captive birds, the exceptions being a handful of very nice shots of wild Northern Hawk Owls (*Surnia ulula*), Great Gray Owls (*Strix nebulosa*), and Boreal Owls (*Aegolius funereus*) by Ron Austing and Robert Taylor.

The photo selection, and the photos themselves, are truly excellent, but two criticisms are worth

mentioning. First, the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) shown in many of the photos can be readily described by two words: pissed off. I'm not sure why an artist would need photos of an owl in this state, nor why someone would continue to bother a bird that so obviously detested whatever treatment it was receiving. In fairness to the author and photographer, this same attitude is displayed by a wild female Great Horned Owl depicted on the cover of the *Birds of North America* species account. Second, I was surprised that none of the 32 photos of the two species of pygmy-owls contained a decent view of the so-called "false eyes" on the back of the head. This is a minor quibble to be sure, but an opportunity missed nonetheless.

The last two chapters are entitled "Techniques for the Artist and Carver" and "Gallery," the latter consisting of a collection of photos of some of the owls Mr. Scholz has carved and painted. The carvings are absolutely gorgeous and point to the enormous talent of the author. This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in owls, although the price may place it out of reach of all but the confirmed "owlaholics," to borrow a phrase coined by Heimo Mikkola.—**Jeff Marks, Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 U.S.A.**