

Choosing a basic ornithological library

What books should be on the shelf of every serious birder or student of ornithology? What books should be considered essential to the collections of any college or public library? It was to provide answers to these questions that *American Birds*, in its issue of October 1971, asked seven leading ornithologists to provide their personal choices for a basic bird book library: a list limited arbitrarily to 25 titles. The lists were to be considered guides for the formation of a nuclear bookshelf, around which other less essential, or more specialized volumes could be added.

The seven lists submitted formed the basis for a "Master List" of 60 titles, in part derived from a consensus of one selector's choices, and in part reflecting the editor's judgment on the ultimate balance of the list, and its success in fulfilling the original charge. With the addition of a list of regional works, and notice of recent and forthcoming works, the first supplement on books came to 16 pages. Today, with our stock of reprints exhausted and five years of fecund productivity on the part of authors, editors, and publishers intervening, it is time for our second bird book supplement. Reprints will be available.

This year, five of the seven original selectors have reconsidered and updated their original lists. They are, in order of appearance, Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., author, lecturer, and until recently director of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University, Kenneth C. Parkes, Curator of Birds at the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Thomas R. Howell, Department of Zoology, University of California, Los Angeles, Dale Zimmerman, Department of Zoology, University of Western New Mexico, and Dean Amadon, recently retired Lamont Curator of Birds at the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

As before, each of the selectors compiled a list from a special, personal viewpoint, giving the reader insights into the way the listed books are viewed and used. Pettingill most closely adhered to our request for a list useful to home or library, Parkes adds valuable titles of books required for

the working taxonomist or the answer-provider to questioning public, Howell and Zimmerman reflect their interests both as teachers and researchers. Amadon, leaving the textbooks to others, reminds us of works of literary or other neglected merit.

What should a Master List provide? As one of the selectors notes, it should probably include the following: 1) a selection of field guides needed for the identification of the birds of North America, 2) the state, province, or regional works appropriate to the location of the library, 3) books that survey the birds of this continent and the world, 4) general texts on ornithology, 5) books on specialized subjects or groups of birds, 6) works of particular literary or artistic merit. In the Master List, category 2 has been omitted, except for those few regional works whose usefulness or importance makes them transcend this category; these books are listed separately in the Regional List, p. 1018.

With a few exceptions, books about birds of other continents have been omitted. Although birders are travelling to far-off corners of the globe with increasing frequency, such books do not really belong in a basic collection for North America.

The serious collector will find it no small task, or expense, merely to acquire one of the selector's list of 25; much more so for our Master List of 65. But if he is serious about birds, his bookshelf will inevitably grow: both from additions of fine books now in print, and the many important additions to the list that will surely be published in the years to come. The editor began years ago with one Reed Pocket Guide, and now has a roomful. Bird books are our storehouse of knowledge; they give lasting pleasure. And as some astute observers have noted, wisely chosen they can prove to be a remarkable investment.

In the listings that follow, books cited for the first time are cited in full; succeeding mentions are followed by an asterisk. — The Editors

OLIN SEWALL PETTINGILL, JR. submits a list that is a model of organization and the product of long experience in teaching ornithology. The 1976 Pettingill list shows a number of additions and revisions to the 1971 list, but it adheres to the selector's 1971 principle, expressed as "I have interpreted 'basic' books as meaning works containing fundamental information on bird life. I have therefore excluded all guides to identification, all regional works, and all treatises of particular avian groups."

The indispensable top five in any ornithological library

- 1 A New Dictionary of Birds, A. L. Thomson, Editor. 1964. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.
- 2 The Audubon Illustrated Handbook of American Birds, E. M. Reilly, Jr. 1968. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.
- 3 Birds of the World: A Survey of the Twenty-seven Orders and One Hundred and Fifty-five Families, O. L. Austin, Jr. 1961. Golden Press, New York.
- 4 Life Histories of North American Birds. 23 vols., A.C. Bent. 1919-1968. U.S. National Museum, Washington, D.C.
- 5 Check-list of North American Birds, Fifth edition. 1957. American Ornithologists' Union.

Texts

- 6 The Life of Birds, Joel Carl Welty. Second edition. 1975. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia. (Broad coverage of biological facts and concepts with in-depth discussions based on studies of birds over the world.)
- 7 An Introduction to Ornithology, George J. Wallace and Harold D. Mahan. Third edition. 1975. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York. (College level with brief treatment of the more significant biological facts and concepts derived largely from studies of North American birds.)
- 8 Fundamentals of Ornithology, Josselyn Van Tyne and Andrew J. Berger. Second edition. 1976. John Wiley & Sons, New York. (Wide coverage of biological facts and principles with extensive treatment of functional anatomy. Essentially for students already with some knowledge of ornithology. Its 169-page synopsis of bird families — one page to a family — makes the book indispensable for reference.)

Migration, Navigation (Orientation)

- 9 The Migrations of Birds, Jean Dorst. 1962. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. (Concerned primarily with migratory movements in different parts of the world.)
- 10 Bird Navigation, G. V. T. Matthews. Second edition. 1968. University Press, Cambridge. (Though quite technical and sometimes hard reading, it is the most thorough coverage of the subject in one book.)
- 11 Travels and Traditions of Waterfowl, H. Albert Hochbaum. 1955. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Paperback edition, 1967. (Even though it deals with one group of birds, it is a near-classic treatise on migratory problems.)

Flight

12. The Flight of Birds Analyzed through Slowmotion Photography, John H. Storer. 1948. Cranbrook Institute of Science Bulletin No. 28, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. (The best illustrated and most understandable presentation of the aerodynamics of bird flight.)
13. How Birds Fly: Under the Water and through the Air, (Previously published in 1968 as: Flashing Wings: The Drama of Bird Flight), John K. Terres 1976. Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York. (Treats all aspects of bird flight. Highly informative and non-technical with many of the author's personal anecdotes.)

Behavior

14. The Herring Gull's World: A Study of the Social Behaviour of Birds, Niko Tinbergen. 1953. Collins, London. (This book, practically a classic, is still the best introduction to the study of bird behavior.)

Reproductive cycle

15. The Life of the Robin, David Lack. Fourth edition 1965. H. F. and G. Witherby, London.
16. The Canvasback on a Prairie Marsh, H. Albert Hochbaum. Second edition. 1959. Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
17. Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow. Parts 1 and 2, Margaret M. Nice. 1937 and 1943. Transactions of the Linnaean Society of New York. Dover reprint available. (The first two books above give a well-rounded, readable account of the life history of a passerine and non-passerine species, respectively. The last book has a wealth of information basic to the understanding of a bird's life cycle.)
18. Parent Birds and Their Young, Alexander F. Skutch 1976. University of Texas Press, Austin. (The reproductive cycle from pair-formation and nest-building to fledging of young. Worldwide in scope with a generous recognition of significant literature.)

Bird song

19. A Study of Bird Song, Edward A. Armstrong. 1963 Oxford University Press, London. (A good review of the whole subject including the literature.)
20. Bird Vocalizations: Their Relation to Current Problems in Biology and Psychology, R. A. Hinde, Editor 1969. University Press, Cambridge. (Sixteen essays by specialists in various aspects of the subject. Instructive reading for anyone interested in the serious study of bird song.)

Distribution

21. Birds around the World: A Geographical Look at Evolution and Birds, Dean Amadon. 1966. Natural History Press, Garden City, New York. (Unfortunately rather brief, it is nonetheless a very readable treatment of the main principles of both geographical and ecological distribution.)

Miscellaneous

- 22 *The Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson and the Editors of *Life*. 1963. Time Incorporated, New York.
(Though listed in scope, it is chock full of meaty information, with superb illustrations, of the topics covered.)
- 23 *The World of Birds*, James Fisher and Roger Tory Peterson. 1964. Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York.
(Available in no other book is the series of world maps, each showing the distribution of one to three families of birds. The bibliography of regional treatises on birds is outstanding.)
- 24 *Handbook of North American Birds*. Volume 1 (Loons through Flamingos), 1962; Volumes 2 (Waterfowl, Part 1) and 3 (Waterfowl, Part 2, concluded), 1976. Ralph S. Palmer, Editor.
(The most comprehensive and up-to-date summary of existing information on the seven lower orders of birds north of Mexico. Volumes on all other North American orders are projected.)
- 25 *Avian Biology*. Volumes 1-5. Donald S. Farner and James R. King, Editors. 1971-1975. Academic Press, New York.
(A must for advanced amateur and professional ornithologists. Practically all fields of investigation are surveyed in chapters by international authorities.)

KENNETH C. PARKES once again lists the books that he has found essential to his work as taxonomist and museum curator. He notes that he has made relatively few changes in his 1971 list, and that almost all of his book buying for the museum and his personal library has consisted of regional works such as field guides and state books, or books on groups of birds. "Many other books have appeared during this period, but a large number of these are 'coffee-table books' that I would not recommend for anyone's 'basic library'." His selections are not listed in any order of preference.

- 1 *Stalking Birds with Color Camera*, Arthur A. Allen. 1951. National Geographic Society, Washington, D C.
(A good source for color photographs-as opposed to paintings-of many North American species.)
- 2 *The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds*, 5th Ed *
- 3 *Life Histories of North American Birds*, A. C. Bent.*
(Absolutely indispensable.)
- 4 *Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum*, Various authors. 27 vols. 1874-1898. British Museum (Natural History), London.
(The only place one can key out any bird in the world, assuming it had been described prior to the pertinent volume. No museum can do without it.)
- 5 *Catalogue of the Birds of the Americas*, C. B. Cory, C E. Hellmayr, and B. Conover. 1918-1949. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.
(Usually referred to as 'Hellmayr'. Still the basic reference on taxonomy, distribution, and nomenclature of New World birds. Older volumes were more perfunctory and are very out of date, but once

- Hellmayr took over in 1924, the coverage was much more detailed.)
- 6 *Avian Biology*, Donald S. Farner and James R. King, Editors.*
(A major reference work, highly desirable but forbid- dingly high-priced. Multiplicity of authorship creates some unevenness. Additional volumes may be pub- lished.)
- 7 *Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States*, E. H. Forbush. 3 vols., 1925-1929. Mass Dept. Agri.
(The Fuertes plates in this set make it transcend the status of state bird book; they probably constitute the best set of paintings of North American birds in any single work.)
- 8 *Living Birds of the World*, E. Thomas Gilliard. 1958 Doubleday & Co., New York.
(Stylistically inferior to the Austin work, but a more scholarly and carefully done reference work.)
- 9 *Birds of the World*, O. L. Austin, Jr.*
(I don't use this as often as I do the Gilliard book, but they complement each other nicely, both in text and illustrations. Beware the many errors in the original edition.)
- 10 *Red Data Book, Vol. 2 — Aves*. 1966, with later sup- plements. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Morges, Switzerland
(The basic sourcebook for information on rare and endangered species, from which most or all of the popular books on this subject have taken their data)
- 11 *A Dictionary of Birds*, Alfred Newton and Hans Gadow. 1896. London.
(A fascinating storehouse of information, most outstanding on the origins of the names applied to birds. Coverage of anatomy is also excellent.)
- 12 *Handbook of North American Birds*, Ralph S Palmer, Ed.*
(Indispensable for those groups of birds covered — loons through flamingos and waterfowl. Coverage vastly superior to that in other recent works on water- fowl.)
- 13 *Check-list of Birds of the World*, 15 vols., vols. 8 and 11 not yet published, J. L. Peters and others. 1931 — Harvard University Press. Cambridge.
(Although the earliest volumes are rather out of date and multiple authorship makes the quality of recent volumes uneven, this work is basic for all museum work.)
- 14 *Field Guides*, various. R. T. Peterson, etc. See Master List.
(What need be said?)
- 15 *The Birds*, R. T. Peterson.*
(I always recommend this to the interested layman as the best single inexpensive introduction to ornithol- ogy beyond mere identification.)
- 16 *Birds of North and Middle America*, 11 vols., Robert Ridgway, (last 3 by Herbert Friedmann) 1901-1951 U.S. National Museum, Washington.
(Never completed, but the most important and thorough single work on taxonomy, nomenclature, descriptions and measurements, etc., for the area covered. Absolutely basic, and all too little known by younger workers.)
- 17 *Birds of North America*, Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun and Herbert S Zim See Master List

(In general I prefer Peterson, but both books are so inexpensive and handily-sized that I recommend 'get both.' Unfortunately, having both eastern and western birds in one book can be confusing and is a great temptation to wishful thinkers . . .)

- 18 A Coded List of Birds of the World, Ernest P. Edwards. 1974. Published by the author, Sweet Briar, Virginia.
(Listed *faute de mieux*. Out of print, but a revised edition will be published. At present the "least worst" source for scientific and English names of all species — except those inadvertently omitted!)
- 19 A New Dictionary of Birds. A. L. Thomson, Ed.*
(By far the most useful single reference work to have within arm's length, especially when the telephone rings.)
- 20 Fundamentals of Ornithology, J. Van Tyne and A. J. Berger.*
(Although expanded and brought up to date, this edition unfortunately lacks the fine glossary of the 1959 original. The Dover paperback of the first edition is still a bargain.)
- 21 The Handbook of British Birds, 5 vols., H. F. Witherby, F. R. C. Jourdain, N. F. Ticehurst, and B. W. Tucker, 1938-1941. (later editions have some revisions.) Witherby Ltd., London.
(Far more than a regional work; probably the best and most complete bird book ever written as of its date. Information on many North American [i.e. Holarctic] species is more complete than that found in the American literature.)
- 22 Catalogue of the Edward E. Ayer Ornithological Library, 2 vols., John T. Zimmer. 1926. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.
(A tremendously useful guide to the earlier ornithological literature, with important bibliographic information, especially in collation of rare books.)
- 23 The Zoological Record — Aves. Latest vol. is 109, 1976, incl. literature for 1972. Zoological Society of London.
(Indispensable for literature searching; coverage and accuracy have improved greatly in recent years.)
- 24 The Ornithologists' Guide, ed. by H. P. W. Hutson. 1956. British Ornithologists' Union.
(Little known in the U.S. and partly out of date but well worth having. Basically a guide to how to study birds, originally directed to British overseas residents. Subject coverage amazingly thorough; chapters by such international stars as Lack, Moreau, Scott, Skutch, Thorpe, and Tinbergen. A modernized edition with an American slant would be a tremendous contribution.)

THOMAS R. HOWELL writes "If limited to only 25 works, I find I must choose among many of equal merit on grounds of purely personal interest in certain subjects. I hope I may be allowed, instead, to offer a list of alternatives from which a total of 25 may be chosen. In each category, I give a minimum number in parentheses. Multi-volume works are counted as one; otherwise, we could end up with only two titles. Obviously, the needs of a school or public library may be different from

those of the individual, especially if he or she is a traveller. My assumption is that our library or person is North American and that the language should be English."

1. *Field Guides*: (3)

A Field Guide to the Birds; A Field Guide to Western Birds, R. T. Peterson, and Birds of North America, C. Robbins *et al.* Both have their special merits. Beyond these, the choice depends on the areas of interest I prefer Peterson and Chalif's Mexican guide over the other three alternatives. New field guides seem to appear almost monthly for previously uncovered areas, so far with little or no overlap — which simplifies the choice.

2. *The Local State Book*: (1)

Some are better than others, but virtually all provide basic information on distribution and natural history within the chosen region.

3. *General Coverage*: (3)

The Birds, R. T. Peterson.* An excellent introduction to the subject.
Birds of the World, O. L. Austin, Jr.* or Living Birds of the World, E. T. Gilliard.* Both provide a mine of information on the natural history of all the orders and families of birds. I prefer the first, partly because of Arthur Singer's paintings rather than the photographs in Gilliard.

The World of Birds, J. Fisher and R. T. Peterson* This covers the subject in a totally different fashion from the above, and is also splendidly illustrated

4. *Textbooks, or nearly so*: (1)

The Life of Birds, 2nd ed. J. C. Welty.* Not without faults, but still the best overall coverage.

Alternatives are:

Fundamentals of Ornithology, J. van Tyne and A. J. Berger.* Much bigger than the first edition, but the new material often seems tacked on rather than integrated. The synopsis of families and the glossary of technical terms are still valuable.

The Life of Birds. (2 vols.), J. Dorst. 1974. Columbia University Press, New York. Translated from the French. Less "texty" than the above, with good broad coverage and a world-wide perspective; more for the serious layman than the student.

5. *One-volume Encyclopedia*: (1)

A New Dictionary of Birds. A. Landsborough Thomson.* The subjects are arranged alphabetically, but it is an encyclopedia rather than a dictionary in the usual sense. Excellent contributions by many authorities, including the author-editor. This one has no competitors, and is for the serious student as well as the more casual one.

6. *Advanced Technical Reference*: (1)

Avian Biology. (5 vols.), D. S. Farner and J. R. King* An indispensable scientific reference work at an advanced level, superseding the earlier 2 vol. Biology and Comparative Physiology of Birds ed. by A. J. Marshall. The recent coverage (1971-1975) of such fast-changing fields as song analysis, flight, rhythmicity, migration, and navigation puts other books on these subjects out of date. You'd better be serious to buy this set as the prices are atrocious

7 *Handbooks and Life Histories:* (3)

The Handbook of North American Birds. (3 vols.), R. S. Palmer.* Just about everything you wanted to know and probably much more about each species and subspecies treated so far — a highly detailed, authoritative, mostly technical reference, and a much-needed one.

The Handbook of British Birds. (5 vols.), H. F. Witherby *et al.**

A mine of information about all the birds of Britain, which includes most European and many North American species. There is no handbook of European birds in English, so this one is particularly valuable. There are now handbooks on Africa and India-Pakistan for those with a special interest in those regions.

Life Histories of North American Birds, A. C. Bent, *et al.** I was and am critical of this set as a whole, but some of the life history information is not otherwise available in a single source.

Life Histories of Central American Birds. (4 vols. to date), A. F. Skutch. 1954, 1960, 1969, . Pacific Coast Avifauna 31, 34, 35, . Cooper Ornithological Society, Berkeley. I must confess that some of Skutch's prose is too rhapsodic for me, but many others are inspired by it. In any case, his life history data on these species are unmatched and essential for the student of neotropical ornithology.

8 *Regional Works* — "*Birds of...*": (At least 1)

Again, choose your area of interest. The range of choice gets bigger by the year, but tropical South America is still largely a dark continent (temperate Chile is well-covered). Meyer de Schauensee's Guide to the Birds of South America, 1971. Livingston. Now from Harrowood Books, Valley Forge, Pa., is essentially a distributional check-list with brief descriptions and a few plates, but extremely useful if you want a one-volume descriptive list of all South American species.

9 *Books on Particular Groups of Birds:* (At least 1)

There has been a rash of these lately, so beware of coffee-table books by non-ornithologists and in all cases cling tightly to your wallet or you may be headed for debtor's prison. Among the best books are

Hummingbirds, C. H. Greenewalt. 1960. Doubleday & Co., New York. Superb color photos, informative text Unfortunately out of print.

Eagles, Hawks, and Falcons of the World. (2 vols.), L. Brown and D. Amadon. 1968. McGraw-Hill, New York. Highly authoritative, many superb illustrations covering all species; lots of information on general biology of raptors, not just species accounts.

For sheer visual splendor, like that of an earlier era, try Parrots of the World, J. Forshaw. 1973. Doubleday & Co., New York. A big book with brief, straightforward species accounts and full-page color plates by W. T. Cooper of every species of parrot. That's a lot of color! But don't go for the 19th century hand-colored monographs unless you're Howard Hughes' true heir.

10 *History:*

Ornithology from Aristotle to the Present, E. Stresemann. 1975. Harvard University Press, Cambridge Translated from the German, and surpris-

ingly lively. If you've been curious about people such as Bonaparte, Forster, Swainson, Sharpe, etc., you'll find them all put in appropriate historical context.

11. *Some special classics:* (3)

Key to North American Birds, E. Coues. 1st ed. 1872, 5th ed. 1903. Estes & Co., Boston. Much more than a "key" — it's really a handbook. The species accounts are dated, but every scientific name is explained. The first sections include detailed anatomy and other technical material, and also fascinating essays on how to study birds, how to prepare bird skins or mounts, quotations from famous poets, etc. You will see why Coues was a towering figure in 19th century American ornithology.

Oceanic Birds of South America. (2 vols.), R. C. Murphy. 1936. American Museum of Natural History, New York. Still the best single work on sea birds, with applicability to a much greater area than South America as many of the species have wide ranges. You can also learn a lot of oceanography and marine ecology, or simply get carried along on the author's great adventures.

The Herring Gull's World, N. Tinbergen.* Far more than an account of a single species, this work exemplifies the approach to the study of animal behavior that brought he author the Nobel Prize.

12. *Taxonomic references:* (1)

For those who need authoritative or quasi-official scientific names and distributions, in some cases to the subspecies level:

Check-list of Birds of the World. Vols. 1-7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15. J. L. Peters *et al.** Still not complete, but covers most orders and families.

Catalogue of the Birds of the Americas. (15 vols), C.E. Hellmayr *et al.** Complete; a detailed distributional check-list including subspecies of all the birds of North, Central and South America and adjacent islands.

The Birds of North and Middle America. (11 vols), R. Ridgway, H. Friedmann.* Still not complete, but it started with the Passeriformes and so covers all of them and up through Falconiformes. Not just a check-list, but includes detailed descriptions of all plumages and standard measurements (very useful to banders, aviculturists, and ecologists, among others) Earlier volumes are, of course, dated.

The Birds of the Palaearctic Fauna. (2 vols.), C. Vaurie. 1959 and 1965. Witherby, London. An outstanding modern check-list of this avifauna (mostly Eurasia).

The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, 5th ed.* The quasi-official distributional list. In the process of revision, with supplements appearing in the Auk.

The Species of Birds of South America. R. Meyer de Schauensee. For the first time (1968), a complete distributional list of all the species of birds of South America in one handy volume. Subspecies are wisely avoided except for special cases.

There is a minimum total of 20 titles with at least one in each category. The other five will depend on your special needs or interests, and I hope I have provided some clues

DALE ZIMMERMAN says of his selections "As in 1971, I am gearing my selection to a small college or town library which endeavors to provide a representative cross-section of books covering the various aspects of birding and ornithology for beginners and serious students alike. *Most* of my selections, too, have the serious birder's personal library in mind. One difference this year is the elimination of regional or state books with certain exceptions "of such universal value that they demand inclusion."

Selecting the 10 or 15 most important books is simple, but problems multiply rapidly thereafter. Should the list include something on attracting birds? (I decided not, though I'd include one in a list of 35 or 40 titles). It was difficult for me to exclude classics like Mrs. Nice's Song Sparrow works; there were other difficult decisions. In my 25, the important historical element is neglected; I'd like very much to add Coues' "Key" for example. Too many younger (and middle-aged) birders know so little of Coues they don't even pronounce his name properly. The works of early ornithologists deserve far wider audiences among modern students. Books on specialized subjects or on specific avian groups naturally prompt the compiler to play favorites, but certain volumes' utility far transcends the scope suggested by their titles. Thus I don't necessarily prefer hawks or hummers to cracids or cranes. I feel remiss in excluding any treatise on ecology, and Darlington's "Zoogeography," but I am confining myself to *bird* books.

My selections, below, are not listed in any order of preference.

Textbooks

- 1 The Life of Birds, Joel Carl Welty.*
Despite some unfavorable comments by reviewers this is beyond question the best text around, genuinely enjoyable to read and a sound, scholarly work which offers any reader a great deal.
- 2 Fundamentals of Ornithology, J. Van Tyne and A. J. Berger.*
- 3 Ornithology in Laboratory and Field, 4th ed. O. S. Pettingill, Jr. 1970. Burgess Publishing Co., Minneapolis.
Perhaps debatable as a library book but the extensive bibliographies alone warrant its inclusion for they serve to lead the reader to any ornithological direction.

General References

- 4 A New Dictionary of Birds, A. L. Thomson, Ed.*
One of the top four or five; essential in every bird student's library.
- 5 Life Histories of North American Birds, A. C. Bent.*
The more recent volumes of this celebrated but somewhat overrated series do contain considerable

information and often provide the best starting point when seeking information on a given North American species.

6. The Birds, Roger T. Peterson and the Editors of *Life*.*
Highly informative for the layman and beginning student.
7. The World of Birds, James Fisher and R. T. Peterson.*
This book has several virtues; the earlier edition with its distribution maps is the only one to get — if you can find a copy.
8. Birds of the World, O. L. Austin, Jr., illustrations by Arthur Singer.*
The rather numerous errors are overshadowed by the scope and general utility of the work; indispensable if one's interest extends beyond the A.O.U. area.
9. Handbook of North American Birds, R. S. Palmer, Ed.*
Indispensable for the groups covered, and far better to have than the early Bent volumes.
10. Avian Biology. Donald S. Farner and J. R. King, Eds.*
Detailed and current information on many aspects of ornithology. With completion of these unfortunately expensive volumes, several other titles for a basic list have become more or less obsolete. Heavy for the beginner but no real library can afford to overlook them.
11. The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds *
Increasingly out of date, but with its supplements still an "authority" on taxonomic status and distribution of the species in our fauna.
12. The Birds of North and Middle America, Robert Ridgway (and H. Friedmann).*
Incomparable in its detailed treatment of plumages, measurements, etc., and often the only source of such information for banders and working ornithologists. Invaluable, too, in matters of nomenclature. Possibly the number one reference work for those working regularly with bird collections.
13. The Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States, Edward Howe Forbush.*
Title notwithstanding, scarcely a regional work. It has wide application east of the Great Plains, and to a lesser extent beyond. Of incalculable value to me for a quarter-century of bird study in Michigan, and I still refer to it frequently out here in the Southwest. The great Fuertes and Brooks plates still are the best illustrations of numerous species and plumages. The lengthy descriptions, colors of soft parts, etc., are of benefit to observers and banders.

Bird-Watching

14. A Guide to Bird-Watching, Joseph J. Hickey. 1975. Dover Press, New York (reprint).
Of value to beginners and to experienced birders who may tire of mere listing and wish to apply their abilities to more meaningful pursuits.

Special Topics and Bird Groups

15. The Life of the Robin, David Lack.*
16. The Herring Gull's World: A Study of the Social Behaviour of Birds, Niko Tinbergen.*
17. A Study of Bird Song, Edward A. Armstrong *

- 18 Hummingbirds, Crawford Greenwalt.*
Treats one family only, but so beautifully that I can't resist including it as one of the most pleasing of available picture-books. This one also is of more universal interest to American readers than those treating wholly exotic families.
- 19 Oceanic Birds of South America, Robert C. Murphy.*
To me, one of the "all time greats" since long before I visited South American waters; its usefulness extends around the world.
- 20 Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World, Leslie Brown and Dean Amadon.*
Treats a widespread, important, and interesting group of birds — on which even students interested only in identification rarely have enough literature. It is of use at home as well as on other continents.

The other five books listed by Dr. Zimmerman are field guides, all of which appear in the Master List

DEAN AMADON demurred at listing the 25 basic books for beginning an ornithological library, holding that at least half of them should probably be non-ornithological, for example, a good text on genetics, on biostatistics, etc. But he did come up with a unique selection that is based more on "literary and cultural considerations (with some exceptions); books that I re-read in part or in whole from time to time." Since his emphasis is on *authors*, our previous order is reversed.

- 1-3 Field Guides. R. T. Peterson,* R. H. Pough, Robins, Bruun & Zim.* See Master List.
(Pack them all but don't play favorites!)
- 4 Handbooks: Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America, 2nd Ed. Frank M. Chapman. 1940. Dover Press, New York (reprint).
(Still worth having as a reference, and not merely as a pioneering classic.)
- 5 A. C. Bent, Life histories.*
(Still a source of useful information. Especially in the earlier volumes one finds some very nice descriptions of a less-spoiled America. The late H. H. Collins brought out a two-volume Bent sampler, which was roundly criticized. True, there is not enough there to make it a reference on particular species, but for anyone interested in casual reading, they are worth taking along on a summer vacation.)
- 6 J. C. Welty. The Life of Birds. 2nd ed.
(Still the best general coverage of ornithology. A refreshing example of the fact that a comparative unknown can sometimes outperform the professionals.)
- 7 J. Fisher. The Shell Bird-book. 1966. Ebury Press & Michael Joseph, London.
(Not a shell game but a by-product of the Shell Oil Company. A fine example of the late author's scholarship and interest in history. Why doesn't someone write a similar volume for America?)
8. R. C. Murphy. Oceanic Birds of South America *
(A somewhat esoteric subject. Still, we should all know something of the Wandering Albatross and penguin! A beautifully organized and written work, with some of the best work of the late Lee Jaques as illustration.)
9. John James Audubon — Yes, by all means in one form or another, preferably one that includes the charming "Delineations" which he scattered among his bird biographies.
10. Alexander Wilson — Although I have read a fair amount about Wilson, and once by chance saw the public statue of him, bird in one hand, sketch book in the other, in Paisley, Scotland, I have never, I confess, read much *by* him. Of course, we all recall the poor Ivory-billed Woodpecker that nearly ripped its cap-tor's domicile to pieces in its efforts to escape. I vow to read more. Wilson's plates recently reprinted by Dover Press, New York.
11. Elliott Coues — Coues wrote brilliantly, even when only compiling a bibliography. His "Birds of the Northwest" and "Birds of the Colorado Valley" were evidently printed in good supply by the government, and can usually be picked up from second hand dealers.
12. Ernest Thompson Seton — My feelings about Seton are reflected in the fact that I still resent the pedestrian treatment he received in a short obituary in *the Auk*, although that must have been 25 years ago! Well, brilliance is sometimes resented. But one hardly knows what to recommend: "Two Little Savages" is for boys and only incidentally about birds, "Birds of Manitoba" was reprinted in 1975, by Premium Ventures Limited, Winnipeg.
13. William Beebe — Like Seton, a virtuoso whose style could be a bit florid at times but never dull. "Pheasants of the World" is a rather specialized subject, almost any of his other books will contain some material on birds.
14. John Burroughs — Burroughs' first book "Wake-Robin" is more ornithological than most of his later volumes, even if the "robin" in the title is a flower. Just published is "The Birds of John Burroughs," Hawthorn Books, New York, a selection.
15. Bradford Torrey — "Spring Notes from Tennessee" (1896). A leisurely account of a birding and botanizing vacation in Tennessee, at a time when Civil War veterans still strolled about at Chickamuga and Lookout Mountain discussing old times. Torrey wrote a prose as pure as the song of the Field Sparrow, he was an expert at field identification long before Ludlow Griscom was heard from. A second hand dealer secured all of Torrey's ten or so books for me over the course of a year, but the above remains my favorite.
16. William Henry Hudson — Hudson collected birds as a young man and with Sclater's help wrote "Birds of La Plata." Perhaps we could say that he is the only ornithologist who later became a recognized literary figure. "Green Mansions" and "The Purple Land" will scarcely qualify for present purposes but all of the books Hudson wrote in England in later years contain considerable information about birds.