

THE BIRDERS' BOOKSHELF

A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada

Edited by J. C. Finlay. Hurtig Publishers Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta. 1984. 387 pp., 12 maps, drawings by Terry Thormin. Paperbound \$18.95, Hardbound \$27.95.

Question: Can a book of fewer than 400 pages describe the bird-finding possibilities of the vast nation of Canada in-enough detail to be useful? Answer: Yes, it can be done; and this very attractively-produced book strikes just the right balance to pull it off.

Each major chapter begins with an overview of one province, sketching out the geography, the birding highlights, and useful local publications or birding contacts. Often there are even telephone numbers for local experts to consult. The bulk of each chapter is a series of descriptions of prime birding areas within the province. The book mostly omits lengthy directions, thereby saving space and avoiding the instant obsolescence that strikes detailed directions when the roads are altered; it seems to operate on the reasonable assumption that traveling birders are capable of obtaining and using road maps. This approach works well here. I checked out the accounts of areas I have birded in eight provinces, and I felt that the information given was indeed sufficient to guide the first-time visitor in every case.

Most sections of the text are credited to guest authors. But I suspect that editor J.C. Finlay did a massive job of soliciting the material, defining what information was needed, and editing the manuscripts. The overall approach and the level of de-

We thank the following book reviewers for their careful reading of and comments on the following books. The initials following each review correspond to these names: Robert Arbib, Fredrick Baumgarten, Kenn Kaufman, Paul Lehman, Richard E. Webster.

tail are quite uniform throughout the book, and all the writing is clear and concise.

Birders living in or making long-term visits to a particular province will eventually want more bird-finding information than this book can provide. But if you are driving across Canada, or planning a visit to some spot at high latitudes, *A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada* is the logical place to start.—K.K.

The Bird Seeker's Guide

John Gooders. Andre Deutsch Ltd.; May 1985 reissue distributed by David & Charles, North Pomfret, VT, 05053. First published 1980. 208 pp., 21 photographs. Paperbound \$6.95.

This is a British bird-finding guide with a difference: rather than concentrate on birding areas, it concentrates on the birds themselves. The bulk of the book (about 150 pages) is devoted to a species-by-species discussion of the whereabouts of each species of bird that occurs regularly in Britain and Ireland.

A typical species account (averaging close to half a page) first gives a general overview of the bird's range and seasonal

occurrence in the British Isles; then a description of its habitat; and finally a list of locations where it might be sought. The latter may range from fairly specific to extremely general. For many of the waterfowl and shorebirds, figures are given for the populations wintering on particular estuaries (these could be more interesting if we knew the sources for this information). For many songbirds, on the other hand, the directions are so general that they merely list the counties in which the bird may be expected (and for many, there is more space devoted to a listing of areas where the bird is *not* present).

Birders from North America, accustomed to the very precise bird-finding guides published in the United States and Canada, tend to be surprised at how un-specific are the birding directions in Britain and Europe. *The Bird Seeker's Guide* could be said to take the Old World trend to new levels of vagueness. The information in this book is probably too general to be of use to the North American birder visiting Britain with limited time. But if I were going to Britain with plenty of time, say several weeks, and wanted to find the birds on my own, I would be certain to consult this book heavily in planning my explorations.—K.K.

The Birds of Prince Edward County (Second Edition)

R. Terry Sprague and Ron D. Weir. Kingston Field Naturalists, Kingston, Ontario. 1984. xv + 191 pp., barographs, 1 map, 10 habitat photos, line drawings by Lynn Lougheed. Paperbound \$19.00.

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To answer your first question, Prince Edward County is in Ontario. The authors may have omitted this fact from the title in the modest belief that the book would be of purely local interest, but I believe it merits a wider audience.

Prince Edward County comprises a natural peninsula jutting into the north-east corner of Lake Ontario. This position is a strategic one for observing phenomena of bird migration (which, as is well known, can be spectacular along the edges of the Great Lakes). In the early 1970s the Kingston Field Naturalists took a special interest in the utmost tip of the peninsula, Prince Edward Point, and began systematic counts of migrants there. Their studies have resulted in recognition of Prince Edward Point as "The Point Pelee of Lake Ontario." More importantly, they have led to the establishment of the Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area, and they have produced a wealth of information on bird migration through the region. Much of that information is summarized in this book.

Although the data on migrants are likely to be the aspect of this work most relevant to observers elsewhere in eastern North America, the book also gives very

thorough treatment to the breeding and wintering species. The traditional paragraphs for seasonal status are supplemented by species accounts of up to a full page in length. These species accounts, very concisely and clearly written, are packed with information. The introductory pages and appendices also do a fine job of conveying all the essential facts in a minimum of space.

In summary, anyone who knows the fine reputation of the Kingston Field Naturalists will find this book to be just what they expected. Authors Terry Sprague and Ron Weir are to be commended on a job very well done.—K.K.

The Birds of San Diego County

Philip Unitt. 1984. Available from the San Diego Natural History Museum Store, P.O. Box 1390, San Diego, CA 92112. xxii + 276 pp., 12 color plates, 12 black and white photographs, 126 distribution maps. Paperbound: \$14; hardbound: \$20 (California residents add 6% sales tax); please add \$2.00 for postage and handling.

San Diego County, California, is about the size of one of the smaller United States, yet the 450+ species recorded from within its borders would rank it behind only three entire states: California, Texas, and Arizona. Phil Unitt's book presents a treasure of information to match the richness of the avifauna.

In the 23 introductory pages Unitt describes the varied topography, from the Pacific Ocean through the mountains to the Anza-Borrego Desert; the climatic extremes; and the correspondingly diverse flora, including marshes, chaparral, coniferous forest, and desert scrub. A dozen photographs and three maps illustrate this section. The introduction also defines important terms, details sources of information, and covers the ornithological history of the county.

At the end of the book, the reader will find the equivalent of a hypothetical list, a three page addendum covering significant sightings recorded since the completion of the main manuscript, and a list of the taxa recorded from the county, including designations of breeding status and how the occurrence of each has been documented.

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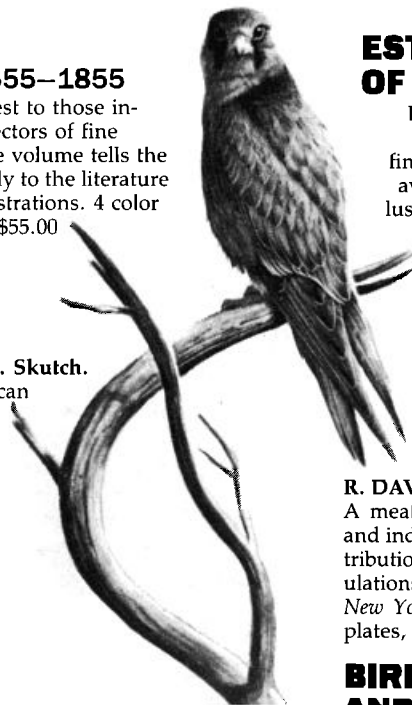
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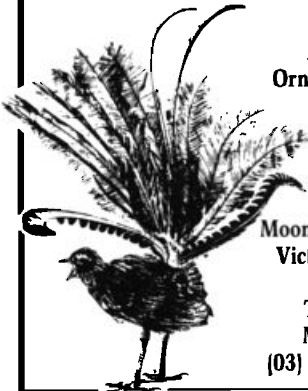
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However, most birders will not discover these introductory and concluding sections for quite a while. Most people first open a book somewhere near the middle, and once they become immersed in browsing back and forth through the species accounts, which occupy the central two hundred pages of the book, it is quite awhile before emerging at either end.

My first impression was that the author had been thorough, and impression has given way to certainty as I continue to absorb the abundance of detail in this volume. From reading the species accounts it becomes clear that the author has checked a number of egg and skin collections, probably lived in a library, used the notes of many birdwatchers, and knows which end of the binoculars to look through himself.

One example of thoroughness is the historical perspective present in many accounts. While most users will have a primary interest in the current status of a given species, Unitt has included geographic and numerical shifts in populations. Most changes can be linked to the great increases in population of a certain mammal, and most of those changes are decreases. Beach nesting birds, e.g., Snowy Plover and Least Tern, are in serious trouble; species living in coastal marshes, such as Brant and Clapper Rail, have declined as dredging and filling destroy that habitat. Breeders in the riparian are among the most threatened in the country, both from destruction of habitat and from the increase in the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird, a devoted camp follower of man. Accounts for the threatened and endangered species are among the most thorough in the book. Some of

the species that have increased include those that have adapted well to suburbia, such as Northern Mockingbird and Hooded Oriole. Other changes are less easy to explain. Why have Red-shouldered Hawks found the mountains more habitable in recent decades?

The author's diversity of interests is responsible for a balance which few publications possess. Most readers of *American Birds* have an interest in the unusual, and they will find plenty of information about a remarkable number of rarities. But the ordinary and scientifically more important birds receive even more attention, including 126 maps illustrating breeding distributions. Unitt summarizes what is known about range within the county, habitat preferences, main periods of migration, early and late dates, high counts, and egg dates.

There is always a stylistic strain between easy reading and rigorous attention to detail. Overall, I think it is excellent that Unitt has listed the necessary minimum for every individual record: full date, location, and authority (literature, museum, or individual). Records from this book can be tracked down or easily cited, and subsequent researchers will be grateful for that. Despite the detail, this bird book can be read easily. I am less pleased with the taxonomic order chosen by the author. Time will tell whether Unitt's ordering of families and species is acceptable, but in the meantime, prepare yourself for a nuisance, and yes, there is an index, but a valuable reference should be as easy to use as possible, not involve exploration of uncertain systematics.

Probably the most unusual feature of this work is the extensive treatment given to subspecies. It is also one of the most useful and interesting features. When you have your copy, take a look at Fox Sparrow. Three pages of text discuss the multitude of forms and what is known of their status in the country. Then take a look at Orange-crowned Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco. If you liked the 1957 A.O.U. Check-list and its detail on races, you will enjoy this book.

The detailed attention given to subspecies should serve to remind observers how complex and interesting the movements of populations are, and how much remains to be learned. While this book cannot serve as a field guide to the races, there are many useful comments about the more obvious variations within some species, and I suspect that this volume will encourage many to pay closer atten-

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tion to the more phenotypically variable species and to record some tentative sub-specific identifications in field notes. This volume is certainly a testimonial to the value of specimens; think kindly of your local museum when you next find a dead bird.

Any volume with this mass of material is bound to have mistakes. The few typographical errors which I have found are unimportant. Few significant records have been omitted; most of those are from 1981; a number of records from that year slipped through the cracks. It is unfortunate that a book published in 1984 was essentially completed in 1981, but that delay was largely not the author's fault, and seems to be typical of virtually every bird book published today.

What does bother me is that it is apparent from the acknowledgments and the species accounts that the text was not reviewed by any of a number of observers who could have improved it. This is an outstanding treatise, but there are matters of fact and interpretation which could have been corrected and altered. For example, there is another record of Kittlitz's Murrelet south of Alaska (Washington) and there is another specimen of Whip-poor-will from southern California (Salton Sea; *arizonae*). Arrival and departure dates of Red Knot should not be based on birds in alternate plumage because small numbers of birds in that plumage do summer in the region. A high count of 150 for Long-billed Dowitcher is somewhat low; a reviewer might have been spurred to provide a more realistic one. While essentially minor in nature, these examples typify correctable imperfections which could have been reduced.

A fundamental part of preparing this book was the review and selection of records. Unitt did an excellent job of locating useful records while eliminating questionable reports. While I do not deny that inclusion and rejection are the author's prerogative, I do think it would have been appropriate to indicate those records that have been the subject of debate. For example, those decisions by the California Bird Records Committee at variance with the author's would have been worth noting. Still, I am comfortable with the results of the author's scrutiny of so many records from so many sources.

My attitude toward the dozen color plates is influenced by the fact that the book would be a bargain without the plates, which are water colors of single

species (apparently mostly unpublished) by Allan Brooks. Brooks' fans will be particularly pleased.

A list of potential buyers would include residents of the area and adjacent regions, those who have visited the county or dream of traveling there, librarians at most North American museums and universities, students of North American bird distribution, and all connoisseurs of well-done bird books.—R.E.W.



SCREECH OWL

Birdwatching: A Guide for Beginners
Joan Easton Lentz and Judith Young.
Capra Press, P.O. Box 2068, Santa Barbara, CA 93120. 1985. 178 pp., line drawings by Karen Foster. Paperbound \$8.95.

We have become rather wary of books with titles like this, as there has not been a good general birding handbook published on this continent since Joe Hickey's, *A Guide to Bird Watching*, appeared in 1943. Most entries in this category seem to be written by non-birders who want to cash in on the sport or by scientists who want to preach; casting about for something to say, they start

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listing the National Wildlife Refuges or they tell us to begin our bird-watching by constructing ethograms of bird behavior.

With this background, it comes as a pleasant surprise that the present book is not at all bad. The authors have some experience in the field, and—being from Santa Barbara—they have felt the influence of one of the most knowledgeable birding communities in North America. Aiming this book specifically at beginners, they succeed in presenting quite a lot of useful (or at least inspiring) facts without threatening to overwhelm the newcomer to the field.

The choice of topics within the book is straightforward. There are sections on binoculars and field guides, basic preparations for field trips, learning identification, and keeping notes; a synopsis of the families of birds; and a brief but excellent bibliography. The gung-ho birder influence is manifested in a section that describes some continental "hot spots," like southeastern Arizona and northern Minnesota, thus giving the beginner (or his/her spouse) fair warning that the desire to travel is an inevitable side-effect of birding. The last appendix might be the most questionable inclusion: a check-list

of every bird species recorded in North America, including the true accidentals, which may set the beginner to thumbing vainly through the field guide in search of Hoopoe and Eurasian Wryneck.

Overall the material remains on a light and introductory level; it also remains pretty accurate, and conveys some solid information and advice. If you are a regular reader of *American Birds* you will not learn anything from this book, but you might find it the perfect gift for that friend who is just getting started in birding.—K.K.

Distributions of Oklahoma Birds

D. Scott Wood and Gary D. Schnell. 232 pp., 380 maps, index. Available from: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1005 Asp Avenue, Norman, Oklahoma 73019. Flexible binding \$14.95.

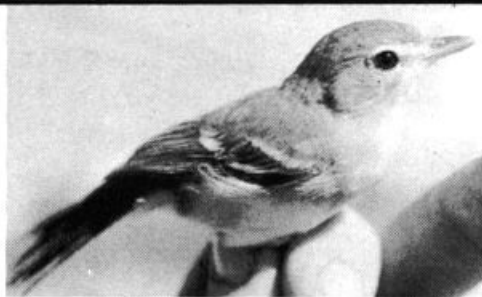
To many, Oklahoma is well-known only for its tornadoes and wintering Smith's Longspurs. However, due to the state's mid-continental location and sizable east-west length, it supports not only

a significant number of habitats but also an excellent variety of birds. The state's avifauna includes species typical of both eastern and western North America, and well over 400 species have been reported there since 1900. This can be more clearly appreciated when one realizes that in Cimarron County at the western tip of the state's panhandle, an area containing rocky mesas and significant pinyon-juniper habitat, such regular breeding or resident species as Lewis' Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, Plain Titmouse, Bushtit, Curve-billed Thrasher, Brown Towhee, and Black-throated Sparrow are found; while in the southeast's pine and deciduous forests Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Yellow-throated and Swainson's (rare) warblers, and Bachman's Sparrows (rare) occur.

Until fairly recently sufficient data on the distribution of birds in Oklahoma were available for only a number of the state's counties, most notably those in which universities and colleges are found, those in "unique" regions of the state (e.g., Cimarron County), and those supporting major parks and wildlife refuges. However, in the past 10-15 years, additional observer effort has resulted in a better understanding of some of the less-studied parts of the state. This, in combination with the data already available from the major, older published works by G. M. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, Univ. Okla. Press, Norman; 1974, *A Checklist of Oklahoma Birds*, Contr. Stovall Mus., Univ. Okla., Norman, No. 1), and J. D. Tyler (1979, *Birds of Southwestern Oklahoma*, Contr. Stovall Mus., Univ. Okla., Norman, No. 2), has resulted in a mass of data (more than 14,000 sight and specimen records through 1983) now presented in graphic form in *Distributions of Oklahoma Birds*.

This book gives the graphic range, temporal occurrence, and relative abundance of the 380 more regularly-occurring species of Oklahoma birds through the presentation of maps and bar graphs. There is no actual text in these species "accounts." In addition, an appendix cites the records of and gives information on the type of documentation available (specimen, photograph, or sight record) for an additional 53 accidental species (those recorded fewer than five times in Oklahoma between 1900 and 1983). The state maps given for each of the 380 species make up the heart of the book. These maps clearly outline and label each of the state's 77 counties, though they do not

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show any physiographic features such as major rivers. The distribution for each species in the state is given on a county by county basis, with a darkened circle in a given county signifying that a specimen documents the record there, whereas an open circle shows that a photograph or sight record exists. This type of presentation, therefore, denotes only the "presence of the species" by county regardless of time of year or relative abundance. Accompanying each species map are two codes, the first indicates the broad seasonal distribution of the species (e.g., permanent resident, summer resident, transient, etc.) in the state as a whole, the second gives the maximum abundance of the species (e.g., common, uncommon, rare, etc.) during the year. Finally, a standard bar graph is used to further define the abundance and seasonal distribution of each of these 380 species on an overall, statewide basis.

All of the outline maps and bar graphs presented in *Distributions of Oklahoma Birds* are clear and easy to read and understand. The information contained in them is invaluable to anyone interested in bird distribution in Oklahoma. However, it should be pointed out that such a presentation leaves out much valuable information. For example, the authors state that they would have preferred to represent seasonal abundance on a county-by-county basis through a series of four outline maps for each species, but owing to a lack of sufficient data for most counties, this was not done. As a result, the reader cannot tell the temporal pattern of records or differences in relative abundance on a county-wide, or even region-wide, basis, only on an overall statewide level. For example, the Prothonotary Warbler is listed as a common transient and summer resident, and circles on the outline map denote its occurrence in about one-half the state's counties, including a number of counties in the central and southwestern regions and even Cimarron County in the far west. In which of these counties does the species breed regularly? Rarely? In which does it occur only as a migrant? What are the typical or extreme arrival and departure dates for varying regions in the state? How many records are there for Cimarron County, where the species is undoubtedly only casual, and when did they occur? One cannot get the answers to these questions from this book. Date and locality information for specific records is available only for those accidental spe-

cies listed in the appendix. If a species withdraws from only one part of the state during a particular season, this cannot be deduced from the text. It is also unclear whether or not the bar graphs plot all, or just many, aseasonal records of regularly-occurring species; the authors state that the bar graphs divide the year into 36 ten-day intervals, but that "in a few cases we have represented an interval involving fewer days where a species has been recorded on one or two days outside the normal period of occurrence." Therefore, a more thorough treatment of the county-by-county or regional differences in the status and seasonal distribution of the


birds of Oklahoma can still only be found in the now somewhat out-of-date publications by Sutton and Tyler. Another important omission of this book is the lack of even short introductory sections on the state's physiography, climate, vegetation, or ornithological history, all important parts of state/provincial or regional publications, especially to those readers unfamiliar with the area being discussed.

There are a few additional minor inconsistencies. For example, the maximum abundance code does not agree with that given in the accompanying bar graph for Eared Grebe, Hooded Merganser, Burrowing Owl, or Townsend's Solitaire.



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The accuracy of the bar graphs overall seems quite good and there are only a few which appear "questionable" to this reviewer. However, are there really a number of reliable March records for Semipalmated Sandpiper, mid-/late winter sightings of Franklin's Gull, or late April records for Connecticut Warbler? Are Red-breasted Merganser and Fish Crow really rare in eastern Oklahoma? Are Western Sandpipers truly common in spring? Does the White-rumped Sandpiper occur at all regularly in fall, much less often enough to be termed "uncommon"? Are Glaucous Gulls really uncommon, or more likely rare?

Overall, this book is a valuable addition to the list of state/provincial publications and is a must for any student of bird distribution interested in Oklahoma's birds. As noted earlier, it does not convey some important information, but despite this drawback, *Distributions of Oklahoma Birds* can definitely be recommended.

I would like to thank Joseph A. Grzybowski and James Hoffman for their helpful suggestions and comments on an earlier draft.—P.L.

[An excellent companion book to *Distribution of Oklahoma Birds*, is *Oklahoma*

Ornithology, An Annotated Bibliography by Joseph A. Grzybowski and Gary D. Schnell. 1984. University of Oklahoma Press. 192 pp. Hardbound \$19.95. This book contains more than 1500 titles with up-to-date information on literature appearing in major ornithological, wildlife and regional journals, wildlife reports, and dissertations and theses from the Oklahoma State University, as well as references for popular literature of scientific and historic interest. Every reference contains the author's or editor's name, publication date, title of article or book, name of publisher, and a brief annotation describing the contents of each reference. At least half of the book's listings concern themselves with migration and distribution of Oklahoma's avian species. Highly recommended.—S.R.D.]

Enjoying Ornithology/A Celebration of Fifty Years of the British Trust for Ornithology 1933-1983.

Ronald Hickling, ed. Illus. Robert Gillmor. T & A D Poyser, 1984. 296 pp. Available from Buteo Books, PO Box 481, Vermillion SD 57069. Hardbound \$30.

This is a history of the origin, development and accomplishments of the B.T.O. in its first half century, and will be of great interest to all those who believe that amateurs can make important contributions to ornithological knowledge. All it takes, as the various authors demonstrate, is imaginative leadership, dedicated birdwatchers, adequate funding, and a unity of purpose. Accounts by project leaders are well-presented. Such investigations as the Common Birds Census, the Waterways Bird Survey, the Nest Record Scheme, the bird atlases, the Estuarian Birds enquiry, the Garden Bird Feeding Survey, and the Register of Ornithological Sites could (and in some instances have) serve as models for projects in North America. Later chapters discuss recent changes in Britain's avifauna, studies of movement and migration, the role of conservation organizations, the problems of pollution and pests, and conclude with a look into the future. Twelve pertinent tables, bibliography and index are appended. Recommended.—R.A.



GREAT HORNED OWL

The Owl Papers

Jonathan Evan Maslow. Illus. Leonard Baskin. E. P. Dutton, Inc. New York. 1983. 184 pp. Hardbound \$17.95.

This book, out-of-the-blue by a new author, is an unexpected delight. It is very simply the personal account of the author's search for and adventures with owls and it manages both poetically and amusingly to impart to the reader a solid body of information on owl habits, life histories, owl finding, owl banding, owl hearing, and owl watching. This reviewer may be slightly biased, since the opening chapters take place in Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx, an old stamping ground, but all us owl-lovers will race through *The Owl Papers* with smiles, nods of recognition, and admiration. Leonard Baskin's drawings deftly catch the personality of the birds in a book we happily inserted into our owl bookshelf. There it will shine among weightier and far less readable tomes.—R.A.

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Parrot's Wood

Erma J. Fisk. 1985. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110. 240 pp. Hardbound only \$15.95.

The Falconer of Central Park

Donald Knowler. 1984. Karz-Cohl Publishing, Inc., New York and Princeton, NJ 180 pp. Hardbound only: \$14.95.

The personal experiences of two very different birders are chronicled in these two recent volumes—one the reflections of a distinguished field observer, bander, and a trustee of various bird observatories, e.g., Manomet Bird Observatory and the Cape May Bird Observatory, Erma J. "Jonnie" Fisk; the other a foreigner's pungent observations of the life—bird and other—in New York City's Central Park. Each is satisfying in its own way, but *Parrot's Wood* tells a more significant and ultimately moving story

Ostensibly a recounting of a one-

month banding expedition in Belize, Central America, *Parrot's Wood* actually spans a lifetime, a 7-decade web of experiences interwoven with birds, people, memories and especially the shade of Mrs. Fisk's late husband Doug, a career diplomat at whose side Mrs. Fisk spent the greater part of the first half of her life, and whose death spurred her into her career in ornithological research and indeed into a larger, more urgent search for herself. *Parrot's Wood* is both a testament to her husband's death and a sometimes painfully human reassessment of her own life, the joys and frustrations of aging included.

If all this sounds a bit melancholy (and occasionally it is), it is rescued from the brink of boredom by the indomitable, joyful spirit of the woman herself, "Jonnie" Fisk. Possessed of an extraordinary resiliency that buoys her through the best and worst of times, Mrs. Fisk reveals her outlook while waiting for her plane to Belize:

"Midway through the airport, panting, backpack askew, I am advised by a bulletin board that my departing plane has been delayed. So I pause, as always, to

greet my husband where he had stood by the Pan Am desk on our last trip. After twenty years his presence still is there, in that green shirt and madras hat, his hazel eyes warm with affection, laughing at me; saying—Off again? Saying—I love you. I stand, heedless of the people that push around me. Slowly, eyes focused far away, I too push through the flow into a drugstore and concentrate on buying another whodunit, anodyne for sleepless nights. Then again I set off to meet the friends of my current life, with whom I am about to embark on this newest adventure."

Mrs. Fisk's spirited observations of the characters who people those adventures lend the book its most entertaining passages. Once, while skinning birds in southern Florida, she simultaneously resists the marriage proposal of an overly amorous stranger. Later, in a more harrowing episode on the Belize trip, she flees two men she suspects are refugee soldiers from Guatemala. Even when she is not face-to-face with her colleagues, she muses on their personalities, as in this passage when she speaks long-distance with her editor:

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"Greedy, I want to know what is at his end of the telephone. What is his office like? Are his feet on the desk, are there plants on his windowsill, family photographs, half-empty ashtrays and coffee cups?"

Is it any wonder that the author became a birder in the tropics? Her curiosity, eye for detail, and appreciation of life's diversity are remarkable, whether she is observing the family habits of Acorn Woodpeckers or describing the intricacies of the many "biffies" (outhouses) she has seen. Yet one is repeatedly attracted to the inner workings of Mrs. Fisk, as layer-by-layer the breezy, disarming narrative draws back the curtains of her feelings. One becomes aware of how the book itself represents the vehicle by which the author resolves the conflicts of her life, puts the old behind her, and masters yet another "adventure."

Parrot's Wood is packaged in a rather disappointing jacket, the cover art being a bland, literal rendering of the title. This absorbing book deserves better. Ornithologists will find its thoughtful remarks on the decline of the tropical rainforest of note; amateurs will be interested in the techniques of banding and recording, no one who reads *Parrot's Wood* will be unaffected by the vitality and charm of Jonnie Fisk. What a woman!

Birders unfamiliar with the New York "experience" may be quite surprised by the richness and diversity of birdlife in Central Park: Black-crowned Night-Herons spearing helpless Mallard ducklings, Red-headed Woodpeckers raising young in summer, Eastern Bluebirds passing through in spring, to name just a few. All told, in a year of devoted birding, Englishman Donald Knowles saw 132 species in the park's hills, paths, lakes, meadows and playgrounds.

In *The Falconer of Central Park* the birds have to share center stage with the other creatures that lend the park its distinctive flavor, and the most important of those creatures is, of course, man. Writing from a holistic point of view, Knowles frequently anthropomorphizes the birds; but then again, he "avi-izes" the people, too. In this almanac-style book covering the year 1982, he studies the tramps, drug addicts, muggers, visitors, unemployed, birdwatchers and other representatives of "*Homo sapiens Central Park*" who flock there or make it their home. Knowles cleverly avoids becoming overly sentimental, viewing the proceedings with a detached eye and a

slightly ironic tone (except when he becomes emotionally attached to a stray cat—an unnecessary piece of business). On the other hand, he does not avoid the inevitable comparisons of man to bird. Kestrels zeroing in on unsuspecting titmice become muggers moving in on their victims. The body of an oil-covered Canvasback washed up from The Reservoir symbolizes and represents the body of a murder victim found in The Ramble.

New York emerges looking rather tarnished from this account, providing in 1982 no fewer than six murders, assorted muggings, a man being mauled by a bear, controversies over the cutting of trees in the park and even the largest anti-nuclear rally ever held. All of this is faithfully captured with a journalist's eye, belying Mr Knowles training and background as a reporter, but one wishes for a greater degree of selectivity and depth in choosing and judging the potpourri of events.

Nevertheless, the author's comparisons often lend keen insight to otherwise seemingly unrelated incidents, and the writing waxes surprisingly poetic at times. And as a birder, Mr. Knowles does have an exceedingly sharp eye for picking up unusual and interesting behaviors. *The Falconer of Central Park* will make even the casual birder feel like exploring this distinctive "island" of life —F.B.

1985 Supplement to Finding Birds in Mexico

Ernest Preston Edwards. *Privately published by the author: Box AQ, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. 1985. 172 pp., several maps. Paperbound.*

It is good to see that "Buck" Edwards, one of the pioneers of modern birding in Mexico, is still actively spreading the word on places to bird in that country. Edwards' *Finding Birds in Mexico* was published in 1968, and a supplement appeared in 1976. This 1985 edition repeats most of the information from the 1976 supplement, and adds a wealth of new material: new maps for many areas, additions to the bird lists, new directions, some brand-new localities covered for the first time. For anyone birding Mexico for the first time, especially on a solo trip, these books are gold mines.

Like other gold mines, however, this supplement contains a few pitfalls. One is the fact that Edwards continues to use

his own names for many bird species. This is hard to justify, now that the A.O.U. Check-list includes Mexico and provides what could be standard names for all species there. I would be the last to claim that the A.O.U. names are *better* than those used by Edwards; I think "Laughing Creeper" is a fine title for the bird that the rest of us call "Ivory-billed Woodcreeper." But there is no field guide on the bookshop shelves today that uses the Edwards' names, so unless you are lucky enough to own a copy of Edwards' fine (but out-of-print) *Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico*, you are going to have serious problems with the bird lists in this supplement. Lacking some sort of Edwardian Decoder Ring, you will find names like "Cazique Hummingbird" (Amethyst-throated Hummingbird to the A.O.U.) or "Mexican Cotinga" (Gray-collared Becard) practically impossible to decipher.

Another pitfall is the occasional truly misleading piece of information. For example, the bird lists for Uxmal mention Couch's Kingbird but not the very similar Tropical Kingbird, which is also common there; newcomers might be led to believe that all kingbirds in Uxmal must be Couch's. But Edwards has such a thorough knowledge of Mexican birds that such slips are infrequent.

Perhaps the most curious thing about this supplement, as with earlier editions, is that Edwards often (or even usually) does not mention the "best" birds in the areas described: the highlights, the rare specialties that keen birders would want to see. These omissions could be intentional, to avoid raising the birder's hopes too high, but sometimes they seem a little extreme. For example, the list (pp. 60-61) for Lagos de Montebello National Park is very brief, and features birds like Turkey Vulture, Gray Catbird, and Wilson's Warbler. There is no mention of Highland Guan, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Azure-hooded Jay, Shining Honeycreeper, etc., all species that we actively look for and usually see on our annual visits there. I think most birders would like to know that these specialty birds are possible, even if they are far from guaranteed.

But despite these drawbacks I heartily recommend this supplement as a great source of information and inspiration for anyone fortunate enough to go birding in Mexico.—K.K.

Weather and Bird Behaviour

Norman Elkins, *illus. photographs, drawings, tables, maps. 239 pp. T & A D Poyser, 1983. Available from Buteo Books, PO Box 481, Vermillion SD 57069. Hardbound \$32.50.*

As important as the weather is to birds their feeding, nesting, migration, and very survival—until the appearance of this masterful overview, the literature has consisted largely of scattered papers concerned with random aspects narrowly reported. This is apparently the first attempt to treat the subject in a book-length review, and it makes for stimulating and informative reading. Handsomely printed in the Poyser style, with attractive drawings by Crispin Fisher and 16 pages of well-selected photographs, its chapter headings suggest the broad range of subject matter. Among them: the weather, flight, feeding, aerial feeding, breeding, migration, inception and progress, vagrancy, migration of soaring birds, extreme weather, and seabirds. A bibliography, appendices, tables and index complete the text. Since all the field reports published in the quarterly regional reports of *American Birds* and in the Changing Seasons summaries, and in fact the observations of every bird-watcher, are so deeply involved with weather, this book is a welcome and basic addition to the bird library. Highly recommended.—R.A.

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