

# BIRDERS' BOOKSHELF

## Great Birding Trips of the West

Joan Easton Lentz. 1989. Capra Press, Santa Barbara, California. 281 pp. paperback \$10.95.

**B**IRDERS FROM BEGINNER TO ADVANCED will welcome Joan Easton Lentz's handy new guidebook *Great Birding Trips of the West*, but it's probably best for intermediate level watchers. *Great Birding Trips* is essentially a compact series of "Lanetype" guides that gives the reader eight birding tours for the price of one. As such, it cannot provide the kind of detail found in the Lane guides, nor can it cover every "great" birding area in the West, a fact that will no doubt leave local partisans squawking. But what it does, it does well: provide good, solid information on what birds to see and where, when, and how to see them.

The book's eight chapters/tours are well chosen to represent a variety of habitat types and a broad diversity of

birds. They are, in order: Southeastern Arizona; Colorado's Alpine Tundra (roughly from Rocky Mountain National Park south to Mount Evans); Colorado's Short-Grass Prairie (in and around the Pawnee National Grasslands); Washington's Island World (the San Juan and Whidbey islands and the coast around the Strait of Juan de Fuca); California's Mojave Desert; from Yosemite to the East Slope (the Sierra Nevada); Santa Barbara, California; and from Morro Bay to Monterey (California).

Each chapter begins with a lively overview of the area and its primary attractions, including a brief description of its natural and (sometimes) human history—a nice touch. The next section breaks down the area into major habitat types. For example, the heading "Climate and Habitats of Southeastern Arizona" includes a brief thumbnail sketch of the prevailing weather patterns and then the subsections "Desert Scrub," "Desert

Grassland," "Deciduous Riparian Woodland," "Oak Woodland," "Ponderosa Pine Forest," and "Spruce-Fir Forest." This creative format takes some getting used to but proves to be a quick and useful way to get a mental picture of an area's birdlife. Each subsection concludes with a list of birding sites that represent the particular habitat type.

Next come two or three short essays on aspects of birding or perhaps on a notable species of the region, followed by a section called "Notes from a Birder's Diary,"—presumably the author's. Uneven in quality, the essays nonetheless contain much useful or interesting information.

But then it's back to the good stuff, a section of "Traveller's Tips" and the birding sites themselves, complete with clear directions for finding them.

The accompanying maps are usable but could have been a lot better. I found myself constantly returning to the first map in the book, the only one that offers a key for sorting out the baffling array of dotted and dashed, thick and thin lines. The chapter ends with a list (not complete; "common" birds only) of the area's birds, again by habitat.


Throw out the book's relatively minor shortcomings and you have a fine book. Ms. Lentz makes an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide I wish I'd had her book along when I recently visited Washington state's coastline. I would have gotten a lot more good birding out of it.

—Fredrick Baumgarten

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## Birds of Ohio

Bruce G. Peterjohn. 1989. Indiana University Press. 237 pp., cloth, \$49.95.

**I**T HAS BEEN 86 YEARS SINCE A comprehensive book on Ohio's birds has been written. With the publication of *Birds of Ohio* by Bruce G. Peterjohn, we now have an up-to-date volume on the status of Ohio's birds. *Birds of Ohio* is a well written, painstakingly documented book detailing the occurrence of the 390 species

of birds known to occur in Ohio. It is also beautifully illustrated with 49 color plates by William Zimmerman.

Peterjohn begins the introduction with a brief description of Ohio's climate and a few paragraphs about the state's geological history. He then details the state's physiographic regions including information on habitat changes brought about during settlement of the Ohio country. The introduction concludes with a summary of the major contributors to Ohio ornithology from the 1800s to present. A brief sketch of references follows.

The remainder of the text is devoted to species accounts of the 390 species known to occur in Ohio. Peterjohn prefaces this section with an explanation of terms used throughout the book and discusses relative abundance, seasonal status, and regional status of species.

The extent of each species account varies with its status within the state. Accidental species' accounts include a summary of all sightings and are necessarily brief. Accounts for more common species include discussions of seasonal and distributional abundance, expected dates of arrival and departure during migration, breeding status within the state, historical background, and unusual dates and/or places of occurrence. They are very readable and contain a wealth of information valuable to Ohio birders.

The bibliography is exhaustive, including no fewer than 526 sources. This reflects the enormous research Peterjohn did in preparing *Birds of Ohio*.

The text is accompanied by 49 color plates of paintings by William Zimmerman depicting at least 87 of Ohio's birds. The paintings are marvelous. The birds are exquisitely painted and seem ready to fly right off the pages. The detail in each painting is remarkable. The birds are augmented by beautiful surrounding vegetation and/or other animals. Each plate is accompanied by a brief description of the pictured species. The paintings alone are well worth the price of the book.

There were two things that I would like to have seen in a state bird book that were not included. A section on the most productive birding areas in Ohio would have been interesting and extremely valuable. This may have been outside the scope of *Birds of*

*Ohio*. The second, and more realistic feature, would have been an inclusion of breeding range maps for those species known to nest in the state. In my opinion, small maps showing all counties with dots indicating breeding would have added a great deal to the book. Perhaps it was considered duplication of the forthcoming Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas volume.

Unfortunately, there are some inconsistencies in the way first state records are treated. For roughly 70% of the first state records, full credit is given the observer. In fact, in some second and third and even eighth (see Lark bunting) state records, credit is given to the observers. Inexplicably, no observer credit is given for the remainder of first state sightings. Full credit should be given to *all* observers of first time records if that information is available.

As well-written and informative as the species accounts are, they do contain some incorrect or incomplete information and apparent errors of omission. Peterjohn states in the preface the "questionable records will be put to rest." I must confess that I am not quite sure what he means by this statement as he frequently lists records that he himself considers questionable. He also says that some published records were omitted. I agree that certain undocumented or unverified published records should be omitted. Unfortunately, this leaves the reader not knowing which records were rejected and which may have been overlooked by Peterjohn.

A thorough review of the species accounts indicated numerical mistakes, incorrect dates, and/or omissions of records for at least 44 species. I suspect that more than a few of these records were among those intentionally omitted by Peterjohn. But at the same time, I also think it is important to make readers aware of the real and potential errors present in *Birds of Ohio*.


*Birds of Ohio* does contain mistakes. However, they detract very little from the overall value of the book. It is a beautiful book and a very informative reference for anyone seriously interested in Ohio's birds. Another real contribution by one of *American Birds'* excellent Regional Editors.


—Tom Kemp




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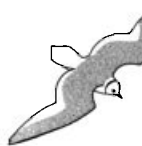




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