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# Books

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**An Annotated Bibliography of the Literature on the Spotted Owl.** R.W. Campbell, E.D. Forsman and B. M. Van Der Raay. 1984. Province of British Columbia Ministry of Forests Land Management Rept. No. 24. 116 pp. \$7.50 Can.

Interest in this rare owl stimulated three independent bibliographic projects in British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington, but fortunately the compilers learned of each others' work in time to pool their efforts into this thorough compilation of 586 citations, a substantial expansion from a 12-page bibliography published by David M. Solis in 1980. Brief annotations describe the contents of each reference, often noting errors therein, and often (but not always) cross-referencing among the citations by citation number or author. Banders of any owls will find the several references to telemetry, sex determination and trapping useful. Errors appear to be confined to minor spelling mistakes. As Gray Jay is a proper name, it should not be Anglicized to Grey (p.79), Miller should read Alden H. (not Aldon, p.70), and R. M. de Graff appears to have lost his "de" between p. 19 and p. 20. Omissions are also minor, and covered by similar sources. For example a review of Canadian raptor populations by Fyfe from the World Raptor Conference cited in reference number 392 is missing, but a similar paper by Fyfe in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* giving the same information is included, and Colin Harrison's guide to North American nests, eggs and nestlings is listed while H.H. Harrison's similar guide to nests and eggs of western North America is not. The hours that may be saved by thumbing through this bibliography will well justify its small purchase price to any owl investigator.

Martin K. McNicholl

**The Marshland World.** Ron Wilson and Pat Lee. 1984. Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset, U. K. viii + 152 pp. \$16.95 U.S., \$22.95 Can.

This is a very readable, but authoritative introduction to marsh habitat. In keeping with its intended lay audience, the book is illustrated in abundance with black-and-white and color photographs, and the text flows smoothly. Nevertheless, the authors have not skimped on detail, and the book will also serve professional marsh ecologists well as a general reference source. The 14 chapters are grouped into three introductory chapters, followed by parts I through III on activities of humans, vegetation, and animals, respectively, and a final chapter, "the future of the marshland." The last chapter and one on drainage are the only parts of the book that stress the fragility of marsh habitats, but the dangers faced by wetlands run as an underlying theme throughout the book. A one-page list of references and an index complete this volume.

The chapter on "wildfowling" (duck hunting) contains the section of greatest interest to banders, as decoy traps, initially designed to capture ducks for the table, but later used by banders in Europe, are described in some detail (pp. 25-26). Banders will also be interested to learn that banding showed that Bearded Tits, which erupted in England in 1959, later undertook migration-like movements, returning to their original areas to nest (p. 127), behavior not generally thought to be manifest in eruptives.

There appear to be few outright errors in this book, although the separate chapter titles of "plants" and "trees" imply that trees aren't plants. The index is apparently not complete, as the Coypu is mentioned several times in the text as an environmental problem where introduced, but the only listings for this rodent in the index refer to its species account and photograph. North American readers will find heavy emphasis on British examples, with several general statements that do not apply elsewhere, and will be surprised to see *Typha latifolia* called the greater reed-mace instead of a cattail. In spite of this provincialism, the principles apply wherever marshes occur and face environmental threats, and this is a fine introduction to a habitat in urgent need of attention.

Martin K. McNicholl

**The New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand.** R. A. Falla, R. B. Sibson & E. G. Turbott. 1982. Collins, Auckland and London. 247 pp.

This volume is the latest reprinting of the venerable New Zealand field guide first published in 1966. The last major revision in 1978 contained many changed illustrations. The only later change was an addendum in 1981 that listed four species recently added to those known to occur in New Zealand, that suggested taxonomic changes for six species, and that commented on changes in the status of 33 species listed in the main text.

The main text lists 311 species. The groups of species accounts are usually preceded by short familiar accounts. Forty-eight color plates and several black and white figures show all but 13 species mentioned in the text. The black and white illustrations are by far the better renderings. Many of the color figures are awkward and show birds with oddly proportioned necks and bills. The soft-part colors portrayed for some species (e.g. Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*) bear little resemblance to those found in nature.

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As a guide to identification the book should be helpful to those unfamiliar with New Zealand birds, but it is not up to the standards, say, of the *National Geographic Guide to the Birds of North America*. Too few plumages are illustrated and some of the more difficult identifications are treated poorly or ignored. The 1980 addendum acknowledges that there are two species of Giant Petrels (*Macronectes giganteus* and *M. halli*) but the only aid for identification is a statement that "For the ocean-going bird-watcher, their separation is fraught with difficulties." Distinction of Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) from Antarctic Terns (*S. vittata*) is based largely on distinguishing immatures of the former from adults of the latter. This comparison is not helpful as no method is given to distinguish the immature Antarctic Tern, admittedly a difficult problem in identification.

One aspect of New Zealand birdlife that will strike North America readers is the predominance of waterbirds in the avifauna. The book lists 13 penguins, 41 petrels and shearwaters, 14 cormorants, 14 herons, ibis, and spoonbills, and 15 terns. However, some of this difference appears to be the result of a very liberal taxonomic policy. Nine of the cormorants treated are reduced to three species in the 1979 revision of volume I of Peter's *Check-list of Birds of the World* and the three races of the Shy Albatross, *Diomedea cauta*, are treated as full species. In contrast, passerines are relatively scarce in New Zealand. The country boasts only 46 passerine species, a number easily seen in a single day in many parts of the United States. Nearly a third (15) of this total consists of non-native species that were introduced to New Zealand and now breed there.

The strongest feature of this book is the very considerable amount of material included that treats range and habits. Unfortunately, as reviewers of earlier editions have pointed out, (e.g. Warham, *Notornis* 27:305-307, 1980) much of the text is from the 1966 edition and even more outdated now than it was then. The 1981 addendum appears to be a partial sop to rather critical reviews of the last revision.

Despite my caveats, this is still the book to own if you must restrict yourself to a single book about New Zealand birds. It presents more information in less space than any other book on the area. Its value was greater in earlier editions when it was not faced with competition from more recent, more detailed and better illustrated guides. The book badly needs a more thorough revision, one with better plates, and with the text brought up to date with current knowledge of both classification and breeding biology.

Roger B. Clapp

**How Birds Work. A Guide to Bird Biology.** Ron Freethy, 1983. Blanford Press, Poole, Dorset, England. Distributed in U.S.A. by Sterling Publ. Co., New York. 232 pages. \$19.95 hardcover, \$8.95 paperback (\$24.95 and \$11.95 respectively in Canada).

At a time when the best standard reference texts in ornithology (Van Tyne and Berger, 1976. *Fundamentals of Ornithology*; Welty, 1982. *The Life of Birds*) cost in excess of \$40.00, it is a pleasure to find one more reasonably priced, particularly the paperback edition! However, you only get what you pay for and this volume is modest in coverage as well as in price. The twelve chapters provide a good introduction to most aspects of the field of ornithology. The writing style is straightforward and very readable but perforce lacks the depth of treatment of the other larger texts. As an introduction or starting point for further reading this may not be as much of a failing as it would be in a strict reference book. A terminal bibliography provides a chapter by chapter array of up to date references which would facilitate in depth follow-up. A much less complete, and at times unimaginative, set of references is keyed to each order of birds mentioned in the chapter on "The Classification of Birds." The chapter on "Migration" includes six pages on trapping methods, but emphasizes some of the permanent banding station techniques, such as heligoland and waterfowl decoy traps. There is a heavy reliance on the European avifauna for many of the examples noted in the text; North American readers may not easily relate to a steady diet of Fieldfares, Chiffchaffs, Yellowhammers and Goosanders and prefer a book which includes more in the way of familiar species.

This book is not a definitive ornithology text and its failings would probably make it unsuitable for a college level course. However, it quite adequately serves as a readable introduction to the field for beginning banders and birders wishing to broaden their interests in the other areas of avian biology.

Charles T. Collins

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**Bird Banding.** H. Elliott McClure. 1984. Boxwood Press, Pacific Grove, California. x + 341 pp. \$15.00 (Calif. residents add 6% sales tax).

Banders have long felt the need for a comprehensive manual on banding, and few are as thoroughly qualified to write such a manual as former WBBA President, H. Elliott McClure, who has banded over 60,000 birds in Asia and North America. Unfortunately, as McClure points out in his preface, this is not the comprehensive compendium implied by its title. In fact, as pointed out below, many topics related to banding are not discussed at all, and several others receive very brief attention. What we do have here is an interesting, but rambling account of various aspects of banding from the perspective of a very experienced bander. Seasoned banders will find this a useful reference source, while beginners will find a rich source of ideas and tips. Neither can be advised to rely on this book alone.

The very short introductory chapter briefly covers some early ideas on bird movements, followed by a disappointingly sketchy history of bird banding. For North America, we are told of Audubon's early experiment with Eastern Phoebes, and the early 20th century projects of Bartsch and Miner, with brief reference to the role of government agencies in coordinating continental efforts. We learn nothing of Taverner's early efforts at distributing standard bands, the role of the American Ornithologists' Union and later the American Banding Association in encouraging cooperative studies, or various other early projects. If McClure did not wish to cover history of banding in detail, he should at least have referred the reader to such historical accounts as those of Lincoln (1921, 1933), Cole (1922), Wood (1945), Farner (1955), or Spencer (1964), none of which are even listed in his "bibliography."

In the second chapter, the author moves on to the interesting topic of the geological background of migration routes, with strong emphasis on Asia. Most banders will be interested in this topic by virtue of their interest in bird movements, but will be disappointed in finding no tie-in to banding or how it might contribute to this topic. While the role of banding in helping to define present migration routes seems obvious, the relevance of geological history to banding studies may not be so readily apparent. Reference to papers such as that of Stewart (1980) would have added substantially to this chapter.

The third chapter, entitled "the bird and the bander," covers three separate topics, the first being a series of definitions on types of migrants and of bird movements. Several topics, such as reverse migration (Lewis 1939) are not mentioned, and others are covered only partially. For example, altitudinal migrations down mountains in winter and up in

summer are discussed, but no reference of the reverse pattern in grouse appears (Bendell 1955). Banding has helped sort out several unusual patterns of migration (McNicholl 1985), and a series of examples of these would have underlined the value of banding in migration studies very strongly. The next section, "bird banding (ringing)" is a vague rationale for banding as compared with some other naturalist pursuits, and if expanded into a discussion along the lines of Spencer's (1985) treatment of the role of banding among various marking techniques in scientific study, would have made a good introduction to the book. The final section of this chapter covers methods of holding birds and of removing them from traps, snares and nets. We are told that there are two schools of thought on the best way to remove a bird from a mist net, but only one of these is described.

The fourth chapter, "the bird and its banding idiosyncrasies," consists of a systematic review of catching and banding birds of various taxa, usually organized by family, but ranging from a single species (Red-billed Dioch) to a sub-order (shorebirds). Accounts vary from a brief paragraph to over a page. McClure provides a wealth of information in this chapter, often based on his own experience and mistakes. This will be especially useful to banders contemplating studies on a group with which they have not worked previously. However, readers should be aware that major methods are omitted for several groups. Traps are discussed for catching tubenoses at their nests, but no mention is made of dipping them out of the water after attracting them close to boats, as done by Cogswell and his associates in California, and more recently in Australia (Lashmar 1984). Noosing poles, the subject of several recent articles in *NABB*, are not mentioned anywhere, not even for grouse (Zwickel and Bendell 1967) even though this is now the main method used in population studies for both ptarmigan and forest species. Cannon-netting is mentioned, but there is no reference to its use in gull colonies (Southern 1972) or on grouse leks. The use of lures on fishing lines to attract owls close to nets (Fisher 1974; Nero 1980) is another of several techniques not covered.

Chapters 5 through 7 inclusive constitute the bulk of the text, consisting of a series of traps, snares and nets respectively. These vary in complexity from simple to complex, with varying amounts of description and illustration in each. Fortunately, original sources are given for many, as the reader will often have to refer to these in order to construct a specific trap or snare. McClure includes many useful tidbits, but the reader will have to hunt for them. For example, water drips are mentioned for traps, but not for nets, and are discussed under water traps (pp. 142-143), but not indicated in either the index or the contents. Traps for specific groups and variants of particular traps are

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sometimes grouped together, but often widely separated. Although many are cross-referenced, others are not, and banders should flip back and forth through these three chapters to get the most value from them. Several published traps in addition to those indicated above are not included, and although some comparisons between variants are made, there is little reference to quantitative comparisons between trapping methods or mesh size efficiencies, such as those by Heimerdinger and Leberman (1966) and Graul (1979).

These major chapters are followed by two very brief chapters on banding nestlings and bats, the most interesting point being that one of McClure's assistants put guerilla training to good use in finding nests!

The final four chapters cover various types of equipment useful to banders (especially those with relatively permanent stations), methods of keeping records, and studies not directly related to banding to which banders can contribute (primarily parasite investigations). The latter chapter includes a section on first aid. As with the previous chapters, there is plenty of interest here, but also notable omissions. The book closes with a list of references, most of which are cited in the text (but not all), and an index.

Although typographical errors are rather too frequent, and several references cited in the text do not appear in the "bibliography," the book is relatively free of factual errors. While most *Prunellids* are found at high altitude, the Duncock or "hedge sparrow" is common near sea level in British gardens. I doubt that the banding offices will approve of the suggestion (p. 75) of cutting a digit off kinglet bands. The bibliography would have been more useful if other bibliographies, such as those of Harris (1980) and Keyes and Grue (1982) had been listed, leading the interested reader to further sources.

In short, this book falls short of the comprehensive tome suggested by its title. Nevertheless, McClure has provided a good starting place from which one can be launched, and there is plenty of interest here for all banders, from beginner to veteran.

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Martin K. McNicholl

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**Eskimo Curlew/A Vanishing Species?** J. B. Gollop, T. W. Barry and E. H. Iversen. 1986. Saskatchewan Natural History Society Special Publication No. 17, Regina. 160 pp. \$9.00 Can. (Order from SNHS, Box 1121, Regina, Sask. S4P 3B4).

This important monograph is the first of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's much acclaimed special publications to treat a single species throughout its range. As pointed out by Stuart Houston in the foreword, there has been no thorough review of the life history of this Endangered species despite several parallels between its demise and that of the more celebrated Passenger Pigeon.

The book begins with a page of quotations giving "glimpses" of the "dough bird's" life cycle, followed by two pages of acknowledgements. Brief introductory sections cover the nature of the data available on this species, its current status, identification, its many other scientific and vernacular names (in several languages), and accounts of two searches for its nest over 100 years apart in the vicinity of the Anderson River, Northwest Territories. In the area where Roderick Ross MacFarlane found the last known nest in 1866, Tom Barry and colleagues found Whimbrel plentiful in the 1980s, raising the question of whether the larger curlew is merely filling vacated habitat or was a contributory factor to the decline of the smaller.

A chapter on "life history - briefly stated" summarizes the little that we know of the breeding biology, migration, habitat, food, feeding behavior, other behavior and vocalizations of this species. The chapter closes with an overview of its slaughter and the progress of its decline. The bulk of the book then considers the curlew's "year" on a seasonal basis, summarizing all that is known of its occurrence in each season by state, province and country. The text ends with a one page account of the success of Fred Bodsworth's splendid novel on the curlew, illustrated by a drawing from a resulting movie. Appendices summarize MacFarlane's specimen notes from the Anderson River area and George Cartwright's diary records from the Labrador coast, excerpt curlew lore from an 1877 sportsman's guide and list current "common" (i.e. English) and scientific names of bird species mentioned in the text. A 32-page bibliography lists not only the many references cited in the text, but also a large number not cited directly.

As the Eskimo Curlew was brought to the brink of extinction prior to organized banding on this continent, there is little in the book of direct relevance to banders, although the detailed comparisons of Eskimo and Little Curlews and Whimbrels will be invaluable if the curlew ever regains its population to bandable numbers. In that unlikely event, we can be sure that banders will not use the method of distinguishing age that George H. Mackay described in 1892 of bending the legs to see whether or not they break.

The authors have brought together an immense amount of obscure material to provide a thorough review of what little is known of the nearly extinct Eskimo Curlew, and their printing of MacFarlane's and Cartwright's notes alone provides an important service to ornithology. Some readers may find the Bent-style abundance of long quotes

annoying and much of the text appears repetitious. Bibliographers will be irritated by the citations of reprinted works of Bent, Audubon and Stone by reprint date instead of actual publication date, but the publication date is included in the citation (and Thompson's 1891 "birds of Manitoba" is cited correctly). The placement of maps 1-4 inclusive long after they are first mentioned and after maps 5 and 6 is mildly confusing, although they are most relevant to the portion of the book in which they are placed. The proof-readers were very thorough, missing only two or three very minor typographical errors, and only one literature citation (Nice 1931 on p. 97) failed to find its way on to the terminal list. I found no errors of fact, although Paul Prevett is still (not just "formerly") with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (but in a different region), and I found the term "hypothetical" to refer to its speculative occurrence in New Mexico unfortunate. Such a status should be reserved for undocumented reports for which there is at least some form of evidence.

In short, the authors and publisher deserve a hearty round of applause for a fine monograph that could supply wildlife management agencies with their first hints in restoring this species if an opportunity is presented. In the more likely event that we shall lose this curlew, it should become required reading for all who believe that unregulated hunting plays little role in population declines. The irresponsible behavior of North Americans less than a century ago is a shocking lesson for us all.

Martin K. McNicholl

**Private Lives of Garden Birds.** Calvin Simonds. 1984. Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. xv + 175 pp.

Among the growing ranks of "birders" are many who are ready to advance from the identification of birds to an understanding of the bird's behavior. One of the earlier attempts to popularize avian ethology was *A Guide to the Behavior of Birds* by Donald and Lilian Stokes. While the Stokes try to get the reader to identify displays and vocalizations, *Private Lives of Garden Birds* uses a series of ten essays to explain the evolution, function, and the diversity of behaviors and song. Using a pen name, Calvin Simonds writes about common birds with a wide geographical distribution.

Despite some misspellings, inaccuracies, mistakes and abrupt transitions from one subject to another within an essay, the book is not without some excellent writing and analogies. The reader of this book will certainly learn something for his or her effort, but the book falls short of its claim to bring the reader to an intimate knowledge of the lifeways of ten different birds.

Many of the ideas put forth in the book are obviously the author's own interpretations. Simonds admits to rejecting the contrary opinions of experts and "stubbornly maintain(ing) some of (his) own homegrown hunches." I think the author, the book, and the reader would have benefited if the advice had been taken.

William H. Barnard