
Books

Hummingbirds of the Caribbean. Esther Q. Tyrrell and Robert A. Tyrrell. 1990. Crown Publishers, New York, N.Y. 238 pp. \$40.00.

This is beyond a doubt the second best book on hummingbirds in print today, the first being by the same authors in 1985 (*Hummingbirds, Their Life and Behavior*).

It is indeed another great book from the camera genius of Robert Tyrrell and the gifted pen of his wife, Esther Quesada Tyrrell. Only once in a lifetime does someone come along with such a love and understanding of his subject that his photographs leave one spellbound. Such is the case with this latest book from these two authors.

The authors' account of the trials and tribulations of living in and moving through the jungle with a myriad of photographic equipment is well worth the price of the book alone. The price is such that it lets us enjoy our purchase, instead of feeling guilty about it.

The photograph of the smallest hummingbird in the world, the Bee Hummingbird, (a male) taken in Cuba, sitting on the eraser of a pencil shown life size on the first page of the book is stunning! Tyrrell's "Overview of the Caribbean" (chapter 1) takes readers from the location in the region, with a two-page color map, on through its history and ending with the flora and fauna of this paradise. The second chapter is "Overview of Hummingbirds." It starts with Range, goes to Habitat, Classification, Size, Names, Physical Characteristics and Longevity, and ends with Predators. Chapter 3 is "A Portfolio of Caribbean Hummingbirds." From here on the rest is phenomenal. Esther Tyrrell's life histories of these hummingbirds are extraordinary; I have never seen a more complete and well laid out history in any other author's book on this subject. It is a comprehensive survey of virtually all the data ever printed about the Caribbean species.

This book is the result of a two-year trip to some of the most dangerous jungles in the Caribbean. It is

a credit the world's foremost photographer of hummingbirds; he has used his expertise in high speed photography to create a collection of exquisitely reproduced color plates that allow the full beauty of these "gems of the bird world" to dazzle the eye.

Autographed copies are available from the author: Robert A. Tyrrell, P.O. Box 15926, El Monte, CA 91734-1926. \$40.00 plus \$2.50 postage.

Dorothy J. (Mrs. Roger W.) Foy

Bird Trapping and Bird Banding: A handbook for trapping methods all over the world. Hans Bub. English translation from German by Frances Hamerstrom and Karin Wuertz-Schaefer. 1991. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. 328 pp. \$69.50.

Advanced word of this publication came to me from several quarters. They described this clothbound assemblage of bird capturing techniques with awe-inspiring adjectives like "monumental." I must confess to first not speaking any German; secondly, not having been to Europe; and finally, having never before heard of this renowned volume. Many times I have followed up an interesting ornithological title only to find the book devoted to some aspect of the natural history of the birds of Europe. Usually, I am less interested when realizing this fact. However, an encyclopedia of bird trapping, netting, snaring, noosing, and other catching methods is another thing indeed.

Bird Trapping and Bird Banding may well be the most comprehensive collection of bird catching methods in print. This statement is echoed in forewords by former Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory, George Jonkel, and his counterpart, Chris Mead of the British Trust for Ornithology.

Hans Bub's introduction begins by tracing the evolution of trapping birds first for food, then for falconry, obtaining pets or collection specimens, and finally, for the purpose of banding and the knowledge only banding can bring. This is an

excellent essay on the many important contributions banding has made to the present wealth of ornithological awareness.

The first two chapters are somewhat of a disappointment given that the title refers to banding as well as trapping. "Basics of bird catching and banding" and "Holding birds after capture until banding and release" cover some 27 pages, much of which is devoted to the use of live lure birds (an unlawful practice in the U.S.) and decoys. Although interesting reading, this is the sum total of Bub's contribution to discussion of the banding process. Additional topics omitted, perhaps filling volumes themselves, might include additional field equipment, record keeping, auxiliary marking, or even radio telemetry.

The importance of this work to banders comes in its extensive, detailed descriptions of various traps and nets and their use. Bub has amassed an exhaustive list of approximately 200 capture techniques from around the world. Their origins, often dating back hundreds of years, are explained along with more recent modifications usually aimed at bird safety. While many of these are antiquated capture methods having seemingly little use today, they are quite thought-provoking. Banders, being an innovative lot, can borrow many ideas from these methods to benefit their own unique banding needs. One amazing example Bub relates is that of the Danish bander who utilizes the oldest capture method known: capture by hand. In less than a year, this man captured and banded over 3600 gulls at a landfill while lying partially buried in trash and wearing a garbage bag over his head.

While the practical use of some of these older capture methods may be small, most described have been and are being used frequently in modern banding programs worldwide. From the most basic funnel trap to the Helgoland, from hand nets to mist nets, and from bow traps to bal-chatris, all are described and most reproduced in drawings and photographs. Not only are dimensions and materials given, but also locations or strategies for use to produce maximum effectiveness are suggested.

There are additional chapters devoted to raptor

trapping, cannon netting, and even a brief mention of capturing bats. The sport of falconry has for centuries fueled a need to develop methods of obtaining raptors. Bub compiles these and describes the operations of a raptor banding station at Cape May, New Jersey. Cannon netting has improved and its use expanded to many species since Bub provided this dated but otherwise complete chapter.

Rounding out this book are lists of other books, manuals, and periodicals for bird banding as well as a most interesting source of titles relating to bird trapping in world literature.

This English version is a translation of the 1978 edition. As a result, the bibliography exposes this work as somewhat dated, citing few references beyond the 1970s. Surely a great deal of more recent literature exists on this subject.

Finally, one cannot help but compare Bub's work to a similar, perhaps more familiar book, BIRD BANDING, by Elliott McClure (1984). Bird Banding is more current and contains more conventional information. Secondly, there is perhaps more emphasis on North American trapping methods and literature. Lastly, McClure devotes almost equal effort to discussions of banding as he does to capturing birds. While there is a degree of overlap between Bub and McClure, each is a valuable source of information and each deserves a place in every bander's reference library.

Dan Kramer

