

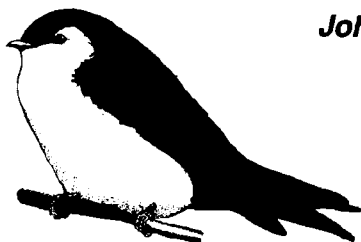
Books

Sabino Canyon: The life of a southwestern oasis. David W. Lazaroff. 1993. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ. 117 pp. \$16.95

This delightful, small book describes the history and natural settings of one of the most beautiful recreation areas near Tucson, Arizona. Sabino Canyon is a desert oasis located in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains. The lower part of the canyon has a dense forest of saguaro, palo verde and other Upper Sonoran Desert plants on the canyon walls and a rich riparian forest of cottonwoods and willows along Sabino Creek. The upper portion of the Canyon stretches to the ponderosa pines high on Mt. Lemmon. Its rugged scenic beauty makes Sabino Canyon a popular picnic and hiking destination for visitors and residents of Tucson. Sabino is probably the single best spot for visiting birders with only part of a day to devote to the area's rich bird life.

This book is lavishly illustrated with photos showing Sabino in all its changing dimensions. Lazaroff describes many of the important plants and animals found in Sabino's many habitats. This effort is especially well supported by line drawings by Marilyn Hoff Stewart. While many of the avian residents of the Canyon are mentioned, there is little in this book about Arizona birds that regional banders will not already know. Thus, this is not a primary source of information for banders, but there are plenty of Arizona bird books for that.

What this book offers is a beautiful description of seasons in the desert, and how birds and other desert organisms respond to seasonality. Southwestern banders can read this book to remind themselves of the changes of nature in their region. The rest of us can just enjoy the pictures.



John B. Dunning, Jr.

Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania. W. Brauning, Ed. 1993. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. 496 pp. \$34.95 cloth. (Distributed in Europe by The Eurospan Group.)

This atlas is the most comprehensive study of Pennsylvania birds I have ever seen. I know this state like I know the back of my hand, having spent close to forty years birding every "nook and cranny" from the Wissahickon Drive to Erie. How nice it would have been had we had this book then! It outshines all other breeding bird atlases that I have had the pleasure of reviewing, both in clarity and readability. The maps are excellent and easy to understand, and the species accounts are accurate and to the point.

Four of the eight transparent maps stored in a pocket attached to the back cover are: 1) Physiographic Provinces of Pennsylvania, 2) Major River and Drainage Basins of Pennsylvania (there are five), 3) Major Forest Communities, and 4) General Land Use Patterns. These maps give the user an insight into what could be an otherwise almost obscure area of the state.

There are 190 species maps that would make any editor proud! Over forty regional coordinators assembled 318,660 records which Daniel W. Brauning, project coordinator, carefully compiled, proofed and mapped on a central computer. After final summaries were in hand, experts wrote concise accounts of the status of each species in the Commonwealth. This book provides the resulting detailed knowledge of distribution and abundance; and, hopefully, it will make for wise stewardship of our avian populations, especially now that several species are down in numbers.

Where available, population trends from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Breeding Bird Survey routes in Pennsylvania covering 1965-1990 are in chart form on each species. These charts add immeasurably to the readability of said book. The map of Pennsylvania is reproduced for each bird and the number of blocks in which that species was recorded as "pos-

sible," "probable," and "confirmed" are listed. Physiographic Regions in which the bird was recorded gives the number recorded and the percentage of the region where the bird was found. Priority blocks are also discussed, allowing easy evaluation of the overall picture.

This atlas is not a "coffee table" book. Instead, it is a book that will be used by researchers, bird students, and, hopefully, land use planners. Because of this, I suggest that, if possible and if there is a second edition, the dates of the atlas are included on the front cover and the spine of the book. This would make for ease of use, especially when it's in a bookcase (e.g. 1983-1989).

For anyone who has birded anywhere in Pennsylvania, this book will bring back fond memories. It is a must!

Dorothy J. Foy

The Masked Bobwhite Rides Again. John Alcock. 1993. University of Arizona Press, Tucson and London. ix + 186 pp. \$35.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

In spite of the title, the Masked Bobwhite is featured in only one section of one chapter in this book. Rather, ecologist-naturalist John Alcock presents a series of essays, organized into four chapters, on the natural history, ecology and conservation of deserts, especially the Sonoran Desert of the southwestern U.S.A. and northern Mexico. Some of the essays are based primarily on historical and/or scientific literature, but most stem from Alcock's hikes in various parts of Arizona or occasionally neighboring states.

The four chapters are titled "Desert Mountains" (six essays), "Desert People" (nine essays), "Desert Cattle" (11 essays) and "Desert Hope" (five essays). Birds are featured throughout the book, but constitute the main subject of only four. One on Black-tailed Gnatcatchers considers decay and scavengers. Another on Albert's Towhees treats adaptations and lack of adaptations of various desert species to urbanization as well as the invasion of desert lands by species responding to environmental changes there. Two essays on White-winged

Doves and Masked Bobwhites discuss population trends and successful and unsuccessful management efforts for these species. Banding is not mentioned specifically, but must have featured in the studies on which the population trend essays are based. The role of cattle grazing in desert deterioration is emphasized throughout the book.

Alcock's writing flows well and highlights his enthusiasm for desert ecosystems, as well as his concern over their increasing demise. Besides a few grammatical errors, the only flaws I noticed were the use of lower case for English names of bird species, the use of "bobwhite quail" for Northern Bobwhite and the reference to the "call" of the Canyon Wren when its song was clearly intended (and used correctly two sentences later). Although this book will present few new facts to desert conservationists, all desert enthusiasts should find it a pleasant "read." More importantly, it should help non-naturalists understand the importance and fragility of desert ecosystems. May its message be heard widely and emphatically!

Martin K. McNicholl

