

REVIEWS

Checklist of the Birds of Texas, 2nd edition. Texas Ornithological Society. 1984. 147 pp. Order from TOS, c/o Keith Arnold, Dept. Wildl. & Fish. Sci., Texas A & M University, College Station, TX 77843. \$3.75 for members, \$4.75 for others; please add 75¢ for mailing, and 19¢ or 23¢ sales tax for Texas residents.

The basic ornithological source for Texas is the two volume set *The Bird Life of Texas* by Harry C. Oberholser, updated and edited by E.B. Kincaid, Jr., S. Winckler and J.L. Rowlett (University of Texas Press, 1974). With over 1000 pp. of detailed information and some beautiful plates by Louis Agassiz Fuertes, that work will remain a classic. But with a price tag of around \$100 for the set, those wishing to learn much about the distribution of birds in Texas will find this checklist a handy and up-to-date alternative at 1/20 the cost.

The Bird Records Committee of the Texas Ornithological Society accepts documentation for 555 species from the state. With that many species to cover, entries are somewhat limited. For each species there is a paragraph covering numerical and seasonal status for the state, giving reference to biogeographical regions or man-made zones (e.g. counties) when needed. Specimens and photographs are noted for the scarcer species. For polytypic species, a brief summary is given for each race.

If space is to be a limit, and it usually must be, some sacrifices will be made. The most obvious is the lack of information on the timing of migration. For example, in the warbler accounts there is no indication which are early or late migrants in spring. And relatively few distinctions are made between spring and fall migration; I would have thought that Blackpoll was more numerous in spring than in fall. Of course generalizations about timing are difficult in such a large state, but something more would be welcome in the next edition.

On the other side of the coin, bonus points are to be awarded for the attention paid to the distribution of different races in the state. Although the information is necessarily brief, and the criteria and authority for the separation of forms not given, there is much to be learned from the general outline presented, and it is to be hoped that this feature will be maintained and refined in the future.

The checklist is careful to present sources of documentation for the less numerous species. Although some may wish this documentation for the true accidentals, for other species the space seems unwarranted. Jaegers are not always easy to identify, but if Pomarine is "rare to uncommon," then there is no need to take up seven lines with documentation. And for the easily identified Sabine's Gull, nine lines to cover six documented records seems superfluous.

The recommendation: buy it. Those owning Oberholser will value the perspectives of these authors and will appreciate the most recent decade of discovery that has been included. Those with little about Texas birdlife on the bookshelf will find this a handy introduction and reference.

Hawaii's Birds, 3rd edition, revised. Shallenberger, Robert J., ed. 1984. Hawaii Audubon Society. 96 pp. Order from Hawaii Audubon Society, P.O. Box 22832, Honolulu, HI 96822; \$4.95 plus 72¢ (surface mail) or \$1.03 (air mail).

This attractive booklet serves as a good introduction to the birdlife of Hawaii. Those wishing more information will find the "Selected References" section of this booklet useful; particularly important is *Hawaiian Birdlife* (2nd edition) by Andrew J. Berger (The University Press of Hawaii, 1981).

All of the most regularly occurring species are given about a half page of text, divided into sections on Distribution, Description, Voice and Habits. With most sections containing five or fewer lines, there is little in the way of detailed information, but, given the limited avifauna and geographical scope, it should be sufficient for most pur-

poses. A concluding checklist of the endemic birds listed by island gives further indications of status. Scarce or accidental migrants and scarce introduced birds are also given sections in the back.

Attractive illustrations are the strong point of this work. Most species are shown in crisp, clear, well-reproduced color photographs; especially pleasing are the tropical seabirds. Other species, particularly landbirds, are illustrated with paintings, ranging from some relatively new, striking ones by H.D. Pratt to reproductions from 19th century works. Although the booklet is only 5" x 7", the illustrations are able to command attention despite their small size.

Four pages in the rear are devoted to maps of the main islands with brief suggestions for birding localities. The information in this edition is terribly brief; one hopes that a few more pages can be found in the subsequent edition to give a bit more idea of what can be found just where.

Owners of previous printings and editions of *Hawaii's Birds* will probably not wish to acquire this latest issue unless they are actually going there. For those who do not own one, 150,000 past buyers can't all be wrong.

The Joy of Birding. A Guide to Better Birdwatching. Bernstein, Chuck. 1984. Capra Press, P.O. Box 2068, Santa Barbara, CA 93120. 202 pp., soft cover. \$8.95.

The Joy of Birding is drawn from Chuck Bernstein's columns in *Bird Watcher's Digest*. The 22 chapters represent a smorgasbord of birding experiences and lore, but in displaying such a variety the author has created a strain between the main title, "The Joy of Birding," and the subtitle, "A Guide to Better Birdwatching." A stronger emphasis on either the adventure or the teaching might have led to a more unified book.

Bernstein certainly makes many points which most birdwatchers will find instructive. His chapters include discussions of such important topics as writing descriptions, keeping field notes, studying distribution, and learning about molt. But while his essays provide introductions to techniques beginning birders will wish to learn, they do little more than whet the appetite.

I was also unhappy with the content of some of the lessons. While races of some species are identifiable with fair confidence in the field, I feel the subject appears too easy in Bernstein's discussions. For instance, I would guess that the grayer Orange-crowned Warblers (p. 129) might be *orestera*, not nominate *celata*; still, noting the details is well worth the effort. The color phases of Western Grebe are not races (p. 139). A comment (p. 122) about a possibly red-phased female Summer Tanager sounds like something out of H.C. Oberholser's *The Bird Life of Texas*; such birds do, apparently, exist, but if such a subject is going to be introduced, then it needs more thorough discussion (just what percentage of females are red-phased?). And while the first chapter has some valuable comments, the heading "Leave Those Field Guides at Home: Birding British Style" makes me wince.

This volume also seems to be part of a trend: as birding becomes more sophisticated, the language becomes less so. I, for one, will utter a plea that such contractions and reductions as "immy," "juvy," "bins" and "Savvies" not become a permanent part of our lexicon.

There are, appropriately, pockets of "Joy" in this book. They can be found in the tales of birding adventure and the anecdotes about birders. Read about Pinto, the dog with the huge state list. The excitement of the account of the Eared Trogon left me with regrets that I had not chased the bird. Mark these passages and show them to your friends who don't understand birdwatching—they may gain some feeling for the pleasure we get.

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