

## BOOK REVIEWS

have reacted to introductions of the fox and subsequent eradication programs (see the Common Eider and Cackling Goose accounts, for example) and notes on taxonomy (see Green-winged Teal). Missing from the Cackling Goose account is information on how many separate island populations are now extinct. Throughout I noticed the frequent use of the past tense, which takes some adjustment but makes sense, considering that this is a description of an avifauna during a very limited interval in history. It works to give a sense of potential change and seems to encourage the idea of continuing studies to measure the birds and their habitats.

This book clearly accomplishes what it sets out to do, and, on the basis of its content, sets a very high standard for future publications in this series. Birders and ornithologists from western North America know the Aleutian Islands as a unique bridge between the Old World and the New, giving this book global relevance.

*Richard C. Hoyer*

**Birding Colorado: Over 180 Premier Birding Sites at 93 Locations**, by Hugh Kingery. 2007. Globe Pequot Press, Guilford, CT. 336 pages. Paperback, \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-7627-3960-8

I have purchased and used in the field at least two birding guides in the Falcon series (*Birding Minnesota* and *Birding Texas*) and found them the glitzier cousins of the ABA/Lane guides, geared towards more casual or less experienced birders. The latest title in the series, Hugh Kingery's *Birding Colorado*, fits the mold perfectly. Novice and intermediate birders should be thrilled by it; more serious target-oriented birders will find it an excellent basic reference but not a superlative addition to the canon.

Perhaps the biggest asset of this book is its author. Hugh Kingery—editor of the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas and one of the founding fathers of Colorado birding—not only knows the state inside out, he writes beautifully and has a knack for pointing out the more colorful aspects of the sites he describes. Asides like the one on page 107, which describes how the original surveyors of Barr Lake piled buffalo chips to outline their vision of the future reservoir, add a welcome depth and wry humor to the prose that many such guides are lacking.

The site descriptions are extremely accurate and up to date. Although it introduces a couple of birding sites that were new to me (such as Red Sandstone Road in Vail) and invents a couple (such as “Raven Lane” in Kiowa County, a novel rural route for nesting Chihuahuan Ravens), the book remains pretty squarely on the beaten track as defined by birders. Faced with the difficult task of prioritizing Colorado's many birding sites, Kingery has done a nearly flawless job of picking the very best.

In terms of getting you there, the guide is pretty good but not outstanding. The regional maps at the beginning of each section suffice quite well as overviews, and in a few cases will navigate you around larger sites when such detail can be seen. When you *really* need a supplemental map, the book almost always provides one. Particularly useful are the close-up maps of urban sites in Fort Collins, Loveland, Boulder, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. The Denver metro regional map, however, is too complex and busy to be very helpful, and the need for supplemental clarification there goes unfulfilled. DeLorme atlas grid coordinates are a nice addition to this guide that enhance its usability considerably, but more maps would greatly help it stand alone as a reference.

The guide's greatest weakness is in its treatment of target species. For the most part it will get you to the best-known sites for Colorado's most sought-after birds, but not all of them: try finding a Chukar with this book. The “Specialty Species” headers at the top of site descriptions are frustrating; they frequently fail to highlight principal target species at prime locations, such as the Dusky Grouse at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Black Rail at John Martin Reservoir, and Burrowing Owl at

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Pawnee National Grasslands—even though the text discusses all these species quite adequately at these sites. The header for Tamarack State Wildlife Area lists the Carolina Wren as a resident, a mistake not made in the text. Such hiccups suggest that the headers were put together by someone with far less savvy than Kingery.

Outside the headers, the treatment of species is better but still uneven. The book correctly crowns Pagosa Springs as the Lewis's Woodpecker capital of the state but makes no mention of that species at Cottonwood Canyon; the book rightly highlights Grace's Warbler in the Durango area but completely ignores it in Pagosa Springs. Although some species lists in text are detailed and quite useful—such as the one for Blue Lake/Adobe Creek Reservoir—others suffer from the perennial pitfalls of such guides, failing to adequately differentiate birds by abundance and season—as when the book lists the Eastern Bluebird (a breeder), Willow Flycatcher (a migrant), and Inca Dove (a single-record vagrant) in the same list as birds “possible” at Flagler State Wildlife Area.

The book's back matter, the key reference area for listers, reflects this same uneven quality. The listing of expected species in each habitat is useful and very well done; the referencing of sites for specialty species is also quite good and more extensive than in many ABA/Lane guides. A complete Colorado checklist is a real plus, but unfortunately it is divided into three separate lists: List A, with birds “apt to be seen”; List B, with birds you have a “slight chance” of finding; and List C, with birds recorded 10 or fewer times in the state. Serious listers, accustomed to seasonal bar graphs of abundance, may find the trichotomy a bit clunky.

On the whole, regardless of your birding style, if you are planning to spend any significant time birding in Colorado soon, I recommend this work. It is far more up-to-date than the now 10-year-old Lane Guide, and, in conjunction with a DeLorme atlas, existing online references, and recent tips from local birders, it will serve you very well in the field—and likely entertain you along the way.

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