

## BOOK REVIEWS

why storm-petrel diversity in the eastern Pacific is so high. Spear and Ainley speculate that the age, stability, and physical diversity of the habitat have played a major role in facilitating the birds' diversity and that the clumping of nesting habitats and the clumps' wide separation by ocean has encouraged speciation.

This review omits many of the finer details of the individual species and their associations, the details of which at times can be rather daunting for those of us who have little experience with all of the species. For readers interested in these poorly known birds, however, a deeper look at this monograph is profitable. Should you wish to learn more, Spear and Ainley, with W. A. Walker, published another monograph in 2007, "Foraging Dynamics of Seabirds in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean" (*Studies in Avian Biology* no. 35). Spear and Ainley, through meticulous recording of observations at sea and subsequent thorough data analysis, have provided an unparalleled contribution to our understanding of these remarkable birds that will stand as a key reference for many years.

Jan Hodder

**John Kirk Townsend: Collector of Audubon's Western Birds and Mammals**, by Barbara and Richard Mearns. August 2007. B. & R. Mearns, Dumfries, Scotland. Hardback, 290 × 230 mm, 400 pages, approx. 350 illustrations (300 in color), 10 maps, 4 flow charts, 18 appendices, and bibliography. ISBN 978-0-9556739-0-0. Available from [www.mearnsbooks.com](http://www.mearnsbooks.com).

When the young Quaker naturalist John Kirk Townsend returned to Philadelphia from the west coast of North America, where he had lived for two years, he began writing an account of his adventures for his family and friends. Published in 1839, his *Narrative of a Journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River, and a Visit to the Sandwich Islands, Chili, &c., with a Scientific Appendix* was charming, full of encounters with native peoples and historic figures, mountain men, grizzlies, and bison, all viewed through the eyes of a greenhorn in his mid-twenties. Townsend captured the wonder of western travel, its danger, and his own barely restrained excitement at the new lands and new creatures he was discovering almost every step of the way. In 2001, the magazine *National Geographic Adventure* named it one of the 100 greatest adventure books of all time.

In 1905 the historian Reuben Gold Thwaites reprinted the *Narrative* in his series *Early Western Travels* but excised sections on Townsend's travels in the Hawaiian Islands and his sail home from the Northwest. Subsequent reprints were reprints of Thwaites's abridged edition. In 1999, Oregon State University Press produced the first unabridged reprinting of the *Narrative*, for which I provided an introduction and annotations.

Now Barbara and Richard Mearns have again reprinted the *Narrative*, marrying it with a great deal of new material of interest to historians and to natural scientists. The result is an indispensable treasure trove of Townsendsia. The *Narrative* appears in context as part of a comprehensive biography of Townsend, from his earliest years in Philadelphia, his travels west, to Washington, D.C., where he worked as a taxidermist at the National Institute, then back to Philadelphia and his early death at just 41 years of age.

Of particular interest is the Mearnses' discussion of Townsend's complicated relationship with John James Audubon, who obtained some of Townsend's western specimens to paint for *Birds of America*. Audubon was a monumental talent, and a monumental ego, in American ornithology, and did not adequately credit his great debt to Townsend; I am pleased to see the Mearnses address this lapse and take Audubon to task.

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The volume is lavishly illustrated. Photographs depict Townsend's actual type specimens of the many new species he collected during his time in the West. There are illustrations of plants, animals, and personalities Townsend encountered. The Mearnses' own photographs depict locations and habitats that Townsend experienced. Maps detail both the route his expedition followed and the locations where various species were collected or sighted. Drawings and paintings by Audubon are of the western species Townsend found.

The appendices are a valuable resource for understanding Townsend's contribution to natural science. They trace such topics as the dispersal of Townsend's natural history collection through North America and Europe, by means of flow charts, and list his new species; his catalogue of bird specimens, including those from Tahiti, Chile, and the Hawaiian Islands, where he was one of the earliest collectors. There are 18 appendices in all, as well as an extensive bibliography of both unpublished and published sources.

The *Narrative* is again abridged, for the Mearnses have edited out some of the ethnographic material, but they have added excerpts, most concerning zoology, from Townsend's journal and personal letters to his family to supplement the text. Inserted collections within the text discuss particular topics of history and zoology. The Oregon State University Press edition (1999) remains the only unabridged reprint of Townsend's 1839 original, but this new volume adds so much material of historical, biographical, and zoological interest that students of western history and the progress of natural history in the United States will find it invaluable, a book to savor, a book worthy of that remarkable young man who visited the "Oregon country" in the 1830s and returned to enchant us with his narrative.

*George A. Jobanek*

**Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country**, by Robert Righter, Rich Levad, Coen Dexter, and Kim Potter. 2004. Grand Valley Audubon Society, Grand Junction, CO. 214 + x pages; numerous color and black-and-white illustrations, range maps, charts, and graphs. Softcover, \$29.95. ISBN 0-9743453-0-X.

There are a few tools that every field ornithologist needs—a serviceable pair of binoculars, for example, and an identification guide. Beginners are inclined toward porro prisms and a Peterson guide, whereas veteran field ornithologists tend toward high-end roof prisms and the Pyle guide. But the tools are basically the same.

There is another indispensable tool, a book on avian status and distribution ("S&D"). Like that for binoculars and identification guides, the need for this tool cuts across all levels of skill and experience. Beginners and veterans alike benefit immeasurably from owning—and regularly consulting—the major S&D guide or guides for their region. And in the case of S&D guides, there is basically no such thing as a beginner version vs. a veteran version: we all benefit from using our S&D guides regularly.

In my home state of Colorado, I refer to regional S&D guides daily. I take them into the bathroom with me. I read them to my kids at bedtime. I can't get enough of them. S&D guides help me to make sense of the complex and dynamic bird communities around my home in the Front Range region, and they also help me to appreciate the amazing avifaunal diversity of Colorado as a whole.

In Colorado and elsewhere, most bird populations are emphatically not evenly distributed across a state or province. Most observers know that in the case of uncommon and/or local populations—say, Grace's Warbler and Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Colorado. But we often fail to recognize distributional differences involving common