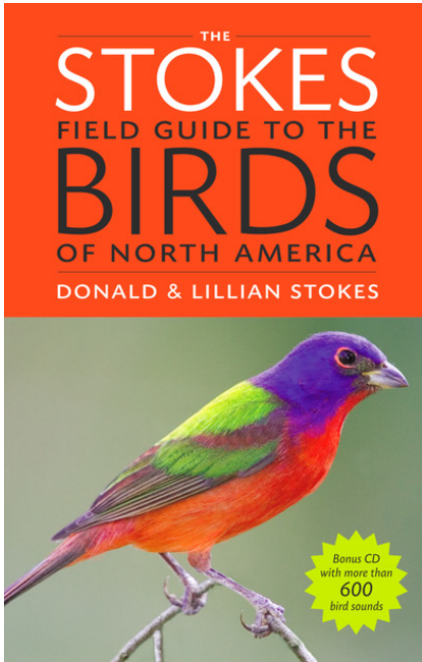

NATURE LIBRARY

THE STOKES GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA.

Donald and Lillian Stokes. 2010. Little Brown and Company, New York, NY. \$27.99 CDN. Soft Cover. ISBN: 978-0-316-01050-4. 792 pp. 13.8 cm by 21.5 cm.



The Stokes Guide to the Birds of North America is a traditional bird guide with standard bird photos illustrating birds perching, swimming, walking or flying. The 854 species accounts are arranged in typical phylogenetic order determined by the AOU Checklist Committee. Scattered amongst the species accounts, there are large text boxes containing useful identification tips for most major groups of birds in North America. Species accounts range from a quarter page to a full page. Species accounts and identification tip text boxes contain brief, concise well written-text with heavy use of abbreviations. Range maps are clear and sharp and look the same or similar to range maps found in other recent bird field guides. Each species account is

attractively arranged in a simple format with photos at the top of the page and text and range maps below. I did not detect any errors in the species accounts.

The 3,400 plus photos are clear and sharp and contain captions that indicate age, sex, season, morph and subspecies when appropriate. This is the first field guide to indicate in captions in which jurisdiction and month for almost every photo was taken. However, almost all photos were taken in the US. Each species account contains one to four photos. I noticed that for the Burrowing Owl, 2 of 3 photos showed the less common and more range restricted floridana subspecies. It might have been better to show more photos of the more commonly encountered hypugea subspecies.

The Stokes Guide does not use a photo composite approach like the Crossley ID Guide but has smaller book dimensions and provides more text information than the Crossley ID Guide (3). Also, the Stokes Guide focuses on quantitative shape as bird identification tool. In addition, other bird guides are even more compact (Kaufmann); contain more habitat information (Dorling Kindersley, Lone Pine); include information on best birding sites (Lone Pine); describe bird behaviour, ecology and evolution (Dorling Kindersley); and other useful features that aid bird identification such as labeled field marks (Dorling Kindersley) 1,4,5.

A key strength of the book is a section entitled "How to use this Guide" where the authors clearly explain each section

of species accounts so readers can get the most out of this book. It is particularly strong on bird shape and plumages, which are key to successful bird identification. This section also includes area and species covered, photos and captions, species name, American Bird Association (ABA) birding codes, length, flight, voice, habitat, subspecies, hybrids and range maps. I find sections on flight and habitat too brief and I do not think the use of ABA birding codes for relative abundance is very effective. The key to the parts of a bird section is excellent with clear, sharp well-labeled photos. Handy summaries of how to use this guide and key to the parts of a bird are found in the front and back inside covers respectively.

There is something new with the Stokes Guide that is not included with most other bird field guides: a bonus CD of selected bird songs and calls. The bonus CD includes over 600 songs and calls of 150 common North American birds. The individual species soundtracks can be easily found on the CD when it is loaded in a computer CD drive and by the soundtracks index at the end of the guide. The CD also includes a downloadable and printable PDF guide to these calls and songs. The sound quality on this CD is equal to Thayer's Birds of North America DVD version 5 and Peterson's Field Guides Eastern/Central Bird Songs 2,6. However Thayer and Peterson cover songs and calls of many more species than the Stokes CD.

The book concludes with acknowledgements, photo credits, a simple and effective three-page glossary, a detailed species index and a key to location abbreviations. However, it lacks a reference list for readers to find additional information.

Although the well put together Stokes Guide doesn't have all the features found

in other field guides, I still recommend it to birders looking to further their identification skills with a traditional but up to date photo bird guide.

1. Bird, DM (2010) Birds of Canada. Dorling Kindersley, New York, NY.
2. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. (1990) Peterson Field Guides: Eastern/Central Bird Songs. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY.
3. Crossley R (2011) The Crossley ID: Eastern Birds. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
4. Hoar TL, De Smet K, Campbell RW, Kennedy G (2010) Birds of Canada. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, AB.
5. Kaufmann K (2000) Birds of North America. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY.
6. Thayer PW (2009) Thayer's Birds of North America DVD version 5 - Gold Edition. Thayer Birding Software Inc. Naples, FL.

*Reviewed by Rob Warnock,
E-mail: <warnockr@accesscomm.ca>*



"Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction."

-E. O. Wilson