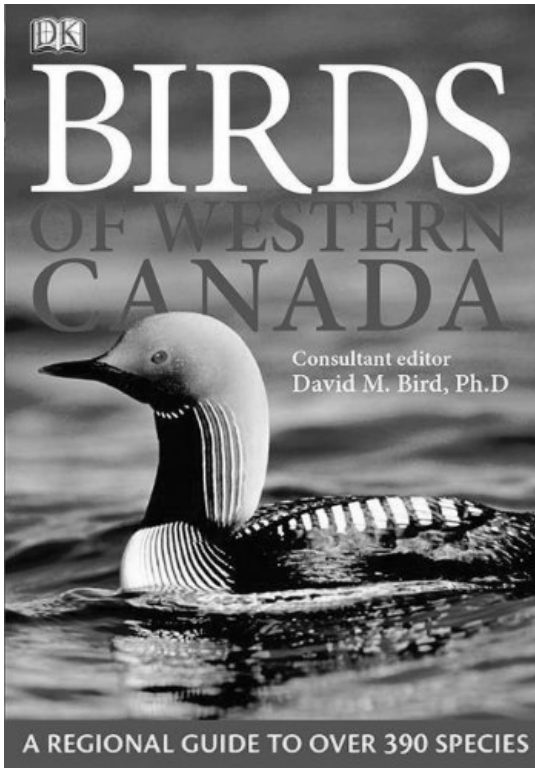

BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDS OF WESTERN CANADA. 2013. David M. Bird (Consulting Editor).

Dorling Kindersley, New York, NY. Softcover. \$22.95 CDN.
ISBN: 978-1-55363-194-1. 439 pages. 15.4 cm by 21.0 cm.



The Birds of Western Canada incorporates aspects of bird identification, life history features, and behaviour in a comprehensive and attractive bird guide. In contrast, most other bird guides either focus on identification or behaviour, but not both. Birds of Western Canada contains full-page accounts for about

390 bird species common to western Canada (west of 100°W - near Winnipeg - ideal for most Nature Saskatchewan members), and quarter-page entries for 20 rare species. The 'eastern' version of this field guide has 350 species. This book covers western Canada, as well as adjacent coastal waters. The format is

similar to Dorling Kindersley's latest edition of *Birds of North America* and *Birds of Canada*.^{1,2}

Inside the *Birds of Western Canada*, the species entries are ordered by conventional classification. Before your first use of the book, I recommend reading the section titled 'How This Book Works' in the introduction. It explains each portion of the species accounts in all sections of the book. Each bird family section begins with a useful and colourful page introducing typical species in the family and their habitats.

The accounts for common 'western Canadian' bird species are attractively arranged and full of useful and interesting natural history information. The information and photos are identical in the 390 species accounts common to both the *Birds of Canada* and the *Birds of North America*. I particularly like the large primary and smaller secondary photos and bird-in-flight illustrations, each with key identifying features clearly marked. These photos illustrate species in different views and plumage variations, including subspecies, sex, adult/juvenile, and seasonal. All photos, illustrations and range maps are clear and sharp. The natural history characteristics of each species are neatly

summarized in the text or in the bottom panel of the page. You can quickly learn the voice, nesting habits, feeding habits, range, flight patterns, occurrence, social system, wingspan, size, lifespan, mass, and conservation status for each species. These accounts also contain an additional photo that reveals typical habitat or behaviour. The natural history information presented here is accurate and appears to be up to date. Each species account has a very useful insert box containing one to three similar species, highlighting their differences. These boxes also state on what page in the book you can quickly find accounts of similar species. An interesting addition to the species accounts is a very small space at the bottom of the page for readers to record date, time and location of an observation of the bird species.

The rare species accounts contain one excellent photo each with diagnostic features pointed out, common and scientific species and family names, a brief description of the species and information about occurrence in Canada, voice, and size. Unlike *Birds of Canada* and *Birds of North America*, vagrant species are not mentioned.

The introduction to the *Birds of*

Western Canada also includes the same two–page summaries found in the Birds of the North America. They cover the following topics: avian evolution, anatomy and flight, bird migration, courtship and mating, nest and eggs and bird identification.. These summaries are supported by relevant and attractive colour photos and illustrations. The bird identification article was particularly insightful about the key identification features. An article on bird habitats would perhaps have been useful here but was not included in this volume or in the Birds of North America or the Birds of Canada.

The table of contents is very reader-friendly with the species guide portion divided by the common name of bird families. Unlike the Birds of North America and Birds of Canada, the Birds of Western Canada concludes with a two-page glossary of avian terms, a very useful detailed index, and photo credit acknowledgements. Unfortunately, no bibliography or further reading section was included in the volume, which is unfortunate for those readers who may want to learn more about the topics discussed.

The publisher pitches the Birds of Western Canada as a bird guide. It is larger than most bird

guides, still, the Birds of Western Canada can be used in the field. It has a less sturdy, but more somewhat pliable binding. Aside from a few minor deficiencies, this is a very useful and beautiful volume. I highly recommend Birds of Western Canada to anyone who is a keen birder in western Canada or wants to focus their learning on the common birds of western Canada.

1. Vuilleumier F (2009) Birds of North America. Dorling Kindersley, New York, NY.
2. Bird DM (2010) Birds of Canada. Dorling Kindersley, New York, NY.
3. Bird DM (2013) Birds of Eastern Canada. Dorling Kindersley, New York, NY.

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