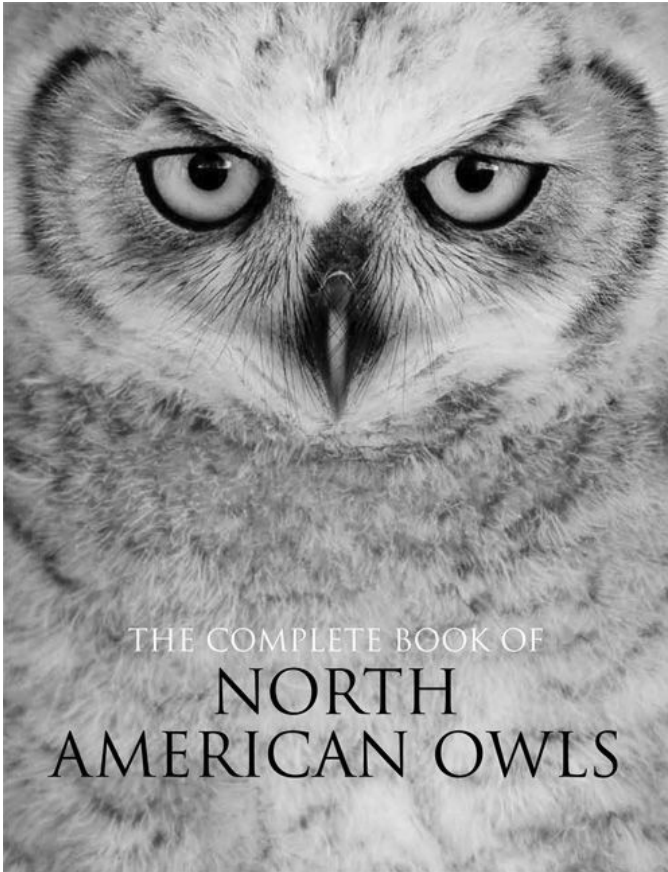


THE COMPLETE BOOK OF NORTH AMERICAN OWLS.
2013. JAMES R. DUNCAN.

Thunder Bay Press, San Diego, CA. Soft Cover. \$19.95 US.
ISBN 13: 978-1-60710-726-2. 192 pages. 19.1 cm by 24.8 cm.



The Complete Book of North American Owls begins with a short chapter titled 'What is an owl?' with a definition, very short review of owl evolution, key identifying features and behaviour, and a brief review of recent changes in owl taxonomy. The next chapter reviews special adaptations of owls, including camouflage,

hearing, silent flight, vision, olfaction and toes and talons. The final chapter of the first section reviews biology applicable to all owl species in including predation, breeding, mate choice, prey and feeding, nesting and dispersal and distribution and conservation. The first section is well written with lots of interesting

facts about owls including other bird species nesting near owl nests. Inclusion of the author's and other researchers interesting experiences with owls was a good idea as it brings the owl story to a more personal level for the reader. The section on the use of newly developed solar powered platform terminal transmitters for tracking Short-eared Owls during dispersal and migration was particularly interesting. However, one section seemed to be missing from this book, owls and people. The author had this fascinating section in his first book on owls.² Information about owl biology and behaviour is more concise in this volume than in comparable owl books by Johnsgard, Lynch or Backhouse or the author's first book on owls.^{1,2,3,4} However, this book's biology and behaviour section is definitely more than adequate for readers to become more familiar with owl biology and behaviour. The information is current, accurate, easy to read and accessible with minimal technical jargon. I liked the storytelling approach the author used. This book covers more owl species (46) than Johnsgard (41 species), Lynch (19 species) or Backhouse (23 species) due to the inclusion of Central America and the Caribbean in the coverage area and recent changes in owl taxonomy.^{1,3,4}

The next section of the book, species profiles, begins with a very brief note on text and maps. Each species has a profile with at least one photo. Length of the species profiles range from one page with a page sized photo for the least studied species, up to six pages with more photos for better studied species. Each species profile contains a text box with information about the range of physical dimensions and weight, and a small range map. I would prefer larger range maps. Unlike other owl books such as Backhouse, the text is not formally divided into sections with subheadings.¹ Instead, the well-written text flows naturally as a seamless narrative. Like the first section, the species profile information is accurate and accessible with minimal technical jargon. Each species profile text contains known information about the species identification features, distribution and preferred habitats, vocalizations, breeding and nesting biology, hunting and feeding biology, and ends with threats to species and the species global conservation status. Gaps in our knowledge about certain owl species are clearly acknowledged in the species profiles. A key strength of the book are the outstanding photographs. There is at least one photo for each owl species in the book. The

photographs do greatly enhance the strong text throughout the book.

Other recent owl books include a handy glossary (Johnsgard, Backhouse) and/or a much larger bibliography (Johnsgard, Lynch).^{1,3,4} A glossary and larger bibliography would have strengthened this book. However, the author includes a few reputable internet resources about bird conservation and owls such as *owlpages.com*. A detailed and helpful index in the back of the book does more than make up for a skimpy Table of Contents.

This book's many strengths greatly outweigh the relatively minor shortcomings. I really enjoyed the book and learned new things about owls. Therefore, I highly recommend this attractive and relatively inexpensive book to anyone who is interested in the

owls of North and Central America and the Caribbean.

1. Backhouse F (2008) *Owls of North America*. Firefly Books, Buffalo, NY.
2. Duncan JR (2003) *Owls of the World: Their Lives, Behaviour and Survival*. Key Porter Books, Toronto, ON.
3. Johnsgard PA (2002) *North American Owls: Biology and Natural History, Second Edition*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
4. Lynch W (2007) *Owls of the United States and Canada*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.

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Mule deer antler

- Lowell Strauss



Great horned owl

-Nick Saunders



Northern hawk owl

-Christian Artuso