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CANADA'S THREATENED SPECIES AND HABITATS

THEODORE MOSQUIN and CECILE SUCHAL, Editors. 1977. Canadian Nature Federation, Ottawa. 185 pp. \$8.00

In 1608 Champlain ascended the St. Lawrence and found the land rich in timber and wildlife, the water clean and the natives living in harmony with nature. The twentieth century explorer is more likely to encounter waterways polluted with garbage and oil, a paucity of wildlife and people who think "they can eat their environment and have it too."

Everyone speaks of habitat destruction and the demise of the ecosystem. What has this to do with the narwhal, the kit fox or the Eskimo curlew? A habitat is where a species can live successfully and reproduce. With no walrus habitat, no walrus. If we are to salvage endangered species we must consider what factors in their environment are discouraging their survival.

R. Yorke Edwards, a wildlife biologist, compares the species-habitat relationship to a bucket of water. You may damage a bucket so that it looks the same but will hold no water. Similarly, if you destroy just one of the habitat conditions that a wolf must have, no wolves will live there. Canada, the world's second largest country, has only 23 million inhabitants and yet we have managed to alter or destroy most of the original habitats that existed in Champlain's time, and with them, the flora and fauna they supported. Why has this been allowed to happen? R. Yorke Edwards believes that "most of

Canada is out of sight, so we do not even glimpse most changes. We forget what landscape looked like and accept today's manhandled version as the norm. Even when we really see the world around us we think of it as a static painting. . ."

The British North American Act states that the administration of wildlife is a provincial responsibility and yet only Ontario and New Brunswick have Endangered Species Acts and these include only animals, not plants. The situation concerning habitat protection is no better, with only three provinces (British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick) having Ecological Reserves Acts. Michael Singleton, an Ontario biologist, describes Canadian legislation as "piecemeal, jumbled and cosmetic." The Canadian Wildlife Federation lists 41 animals as endangered. Plants are also threatened. Of the estimated 4,000 species of flora found in Canada, some 1,300 have been classified as rare. Clearly a collective effort is necessary if we hope to halt this destruction of our environment.

In May 1976 the Canadian Nature Federation and the World Wildlife Fund co-sponsored a symposium to discuss this very problem. Their intention was not to demonstrate the obvious, that there are endangered species in Canada, but to examine management programs, review government policies and make recommendations. The papers presented were later compiled into a soft covered book. Unfortunately there is a bias in the coverage of endangered species favoring those which are presently being studied or which have received the attention of governments. A notable omission was

the absence of any mention of Canada's endangered flora. Each paper deals with the present status, habitat requirements, threatening factors and management plans of the species in question. Little time is spent in discussing animal life histories, which I found refreshing, and which can be found in any standard reference text. A healthy bibliography accompanies each article. Photographs are in black and white but regrettably are inconsistent in quality and interest. I found it particularly unimaginative that a whooping crane photograph was selected for the cover.

Threatened species and habitats should be a concern of every Canadian and this publication offers an inexpensive opportunity for everyone to increase their knowledge. I heartily recommend it. — *Wayne Lynch*, No. 102, 4040 Gordon Road, Regina, Saskatchewan. S6S 6W2

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS. EASTERN REGION.

JOHN BULL and JOHN FARRAND, Jr.
1977. Knopf, New York. 775 pp. \$8.95.

This may be the most beautiful, most adequate field guide ever published. It covers Canada from the Alberta foothills to the Atlantic coast, excluding the Cypress Hills of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is beautiful because it contains 584 coloured photographs of birds with one to three species per page. It has more than twice as many pages as Robbins' or Peterson's western guides.^{1 2} However, its size, 7.5" x 4" x 1", with soft cover, permits it to fit more easily into more pockets than the other guides. There is almost a page of text per species divided into description, voice, habitat, range, nesting and additional comments. That about sums up the beauty of the book. Its inadequacies require more space. (The companion volume, *Western Region*, was not seen until after this review was written.

Reference to it is made only in the following paragraph.³)

How complete is this new eastern Audubon guide for the Prairie Provinces and Northwest Territories? It does not illustrate from 4% to 11% of the birds in each province and territory (Table 1). Its western counterparts omits 14% to 18%, whereas Peterson has 2% to 6% missing and Robbins' is practically complete. While most of the omissions are stragglers, there are some relatively common and widespread species in Saskatchewan not treated. Excluding those restricted to the Cypress Hills area, the eastern volume makes no mention of Western Grebe, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, California Gull or Say's Phoebe.

How good are the illustrations? The authors claim that photographs are better than paintings because "Every artist's rendering of a bird is his interpretation, whereas a good photograph captures the natural color and stance of birds as you will usually see them". However, while most photos in this guide are feather-sharp, some are blurred, e.g., Red Knot, Eastern Kingbird, Palm Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow. In most the colour rendition is good but some are too dark, e.g., Pine Grosbeak and Philadelphia Vireo, or too pale, e.g., female Rufous-sided Towhee, or too yellow, e.g., Clay-colored and Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

Also, one photo usually shows only a single stance of a single individual and in this book this is most frequently an adult male in breeding plumage. Non-breeding plumages are given for 30 of our species; Peterson has them for 92 species. Female and immature plumages are given for 63 species; Peterson for 125. (Robbins' contains more in both cases.) Colour phases are shown only for Snow Goose and Screech Owl. A Peterson or Robbins is needed for dark phases of Prairie Buteos.

The use of coloured photos has also severely restricted the number of birds shown in flight. For 28 species of ducks, Bull has 47 marginal drawings

Table 1. COMPARISON OF OMISSIONS IN FOUR FIELD GUIDES

	# Species Occurring	SPECIES NOT DESCRIBED							
		1977 Audubon Guides				Peterson's		Robbins'	
		Eastern Region		Western Region		Western Guide		N. Am. Guide	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Alberta	324	37	11	42	13	5	2	1	—
Saskatchewan	336	29	9	53	16	9	3	0	—
Manitoba	315	14	4	58	18	13	4	1	—
N.W.T.	252	21	8	36	14	14	6	1	—
TOTAL	392	53	14	76	19	29	7	3	1

of birds in flight (underside only); Robbins has 115 coloured individuals (upper and lower views).

How are the coloured photos arranged? They are grouped according to "obvious similarities in appearance" or "visible similarity in behaviour or habitat". This hybrid system has its problems. Loons, grebes and pelicans are "Duck-like Birds" but cormorants are "Upright-perching Water Birds" and gulls are "Gull-like Birds". The snipe is put among the "Upland Ground Birds" which includes our upland game birds and has a Ruffed Grouse as its thumbnail symbol at the outer edge of the page. However, the snipe is standing in water and in the text is found under "Freshwater Marshes".

Perching birds are further broken down by colour. Again, there are problems. Catbird and Mockingbird are colour-coded red; the female Black-throated Blue Warbler (a brown bird) is in the blue section; the male Yellow-headed Blackbird and magpie are gray-coded, and there are 12 consecutive brown, gray and yellow photos (No. 461-472) that should be green or olive, according to the authors. The bird labelled as a female Western Tanager is apparently a male in non-breeding plumage (based on the amount of red around the bill).

Another problem with this new approach is that no more than six, often only four, species are visible for

comparison at once. Peterson regularly shows at least 12 and in Robbins' guide up to 50 birds (warblers' heads) can be studied on facing pages. To compare our four Buteos in flight, one must look from pages 502 to 639.

How is the text laid out? The text has species grouped by primary habitats giving the reader "an additional check" on identification. The authors suggest that readers look through the appropriate habitat section prior to trip to find out what species they can expect to see. "Primary habitat" is not defined but the assignment of species to a single habitat is questionable for identification since it is partial to a number of habitats depending on area and season. How many people in the Prairie Province would expect the following species in the habitats assigned, rather than one of the others or somewhere else? *Open Ocean:* Northern Phalarope; *Seashore:* Red-breasted Merganser, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Eared and Horned Grebes, Golden Plover; *Salt Marshes:* Whooping Cranes, Snow Goose, Willet, and yellowlegs and godwits, Long-billed Curlew; *Freshwater Marshes:* Sandhill Crane, White-fronted Goose, White Pelican, Avocet, Short-eared Owl; *Lakes, Ponds, Rivers:* Tree Swallow; *Grasslands:* Common Nighthawk, Prairie Warbler; *City Parks and Suburban Areas:* Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern Phoebe, Common

Crow; *Thickets and Second Growth*: both redpolls; *Texas Thickets and Second Growth*: Rock Wren; *Deciduous Forests*: Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Black-capped Chickadee; *Coniferous Forests*: Great Horned Owl, Evening Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing and Black-billed Magpie.

As for the additional identification check, the Northern Shrike is shown at a nest in spruce but in the text is a grassland bird. The sequence of species within each habitat is by photograph number.

Because neither pictures nor text is arranged in a conventional manner, the fastest way to find a species is to use the index. But, to ensure that this book is frustrating to the last page, the index has been made as difficult to use as possible — no entries are indented. The reader cannot scan from Grebe to Grosbeak to Grouse without finding Eared, Horned, Black-headed, Ruffed, etc., starting in the same column with capital letters.

Interestingly enough, the name "Audubon Society" appears *only* on the title page and cover. The book is neither published by or for, nor endorsed by the Audubon Society — with good reason.

In conclusion, this is probably a nice book to receive or give but not to buy for yourself. The old identification guides are still the best. Robbins' is the more complete of the two for the Prairie Provinces and Northwest Territories and has more illustrations per species, but colour rendition is sometimes poor. Peterson's western guide has the advantage of arrows to point out differences quickly. Opinion differs as to whether Robbins' monogram or Peterson's text is better for describing songs. Robbins' small maps, lacking political boundaries, may not be as useful as Peterson's text. Peterson has more on habitat and nest description. — J. B. Collop, 2202 York Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7J 1J1.

PETERSON, R. T. 1969. A field guide to western birds. Houghton Mifflin,

Boston, 366 pp.

²ROBBINS, C. S., B. BRUNN and H. S. ZIM. 1966. A guide to field identification — birds of North America. Golden, New York. 340 pp.

³UDVARDY, M. D. F. 1977. The Audubon Society field guide to North American birds: western region. Knopf, New York.

RAILS OF THE WORLD

S. DILLON RIPLEY, with paintings by J. FENWICK LANSDOWNE. 1977. M. H. Feheley Publishers Ltd., Toronto. 406 pp. \$75.00

This is a sumptuous book, bringing us practically everything known about the still poorly known family *Rallidae*, the rails, crakes, coots and gallinules of the world.

Throughout the book the 41 glowing plates, each depicting a number of species (generally three), are so spaced as to be fairly near the descriptions in the species accounts. The paintings are beautifully executed and artfully posed — there is the illusion of arrested motion in each of the 128 forms plus eight downy young shown. The paintings illuminate, rather than illustrate this monumental work.

The heart of the book is, of course, the species accounts (Chapter 4) but before reaching them Dr. Ripley discusses characteristics, distribution, evolution and speciation. After the species accounts there is a section of black and white photographs of rallids, then a chapter entitled "A Synopsis of the Fossil *Rallidae*" by Storrs L. Olson, Curator of Birds at The Smithsonian.

In going through the book I found that ignorance is the recurring theme in an astonishing number of forms. In the chapter "The Characteristics of Rails" the author remarks that the voices of many tropical and insular species are unrecorded, and that little is known of territorialism in rails.

Mystery Song. In common, I suppose with those SNHS members familiar with Manley Callin's article "Vocalization of the Virginia Rail: A Mystery Solved" (*Blue Jay*, June, 1968), I believed the persistent ornithological

mystery he discussed had been laid to rest. Not so.

In the species account of the Black Rail Dr. Ripley noted that William Brewster in 1901 thought this species gave the mysterious "kicker" song. In 1902 J. H. Ames reported that a Yellow Rail he had in captivity gave the "kicker" song. Manley Callin describes the work done in Saskatchewan between 1961 and 1964 leading to the discovery that the Virginia Rail was the mystery songster. Ripley, in the species account of the Virginia Rail states "Only recently (Reynard and Harty, 1966-67) has this song been traced to the Virginia Rail."

George B. Reynard and Stephen F. Harty are credited with the discovery when they published "Ornithological 'Mystery' Song Given by Male Virginia Rail" in *Cassinia* 50:3 (1966-67 issue published November 1968). I have not consulted it so I do not know when the field work was done, whether before or after the Saskatchewan work, but certainly Manley Callin's account predated the Reynard and Harty account. While immersed in this review the mail brought the September, 1977 issue of *American Birds* which included an account by Stephen F. Bailey "Ornithological 'Mystery Story' Revisited — The Plot Thickens". Bailey concluded that the California Clapper Rail also gave the "kicker" song.

Bailey refers to an earlier suggestion by Richard C. Bollinger and Emmerson Bowes (1973, "Another Chapter in the 'Ornithological Mystery Story'", *American Birds*, Vol. 27, pp. 741-742) that more than one species of rail utters the mystery song. In view of the evidence which has accumulated it certainly seems reasonable that very similar calls are given by a number of rail species although why the callers should be heard giving the "kicker" call so rarely in relation to their abundance has not yet been satisfactorily answered.

Endangered Environment and Endangered Species. Dr. Ripley is properly concerned, as we all should be, with the fact that many of his

rallids live in environments that are disappearing. There is a trend in developed countries to alter or destroy water systems, and developing countries all too often see wetlands, when dried out, as potential agricultural land. Conservationists the world over battle to show that undisturbed water systems are vital to mankind, let alone the marsh dwellers! Since even the most remote regions are becoming more and more accessible, and greater amounts of leisure time are here or ahead of many of us, Dr. Ripley has given all of us a wealth of goals for filling in some of the gaps in our knowledge of the *Rallidae*. Many of the species are rare so life-listers had better get cracking on the task of adding them to their lists while, at the same time, adding something to our knowledge of them.

The book is unreservedly recommended. Even at \$75.00 a copy it could be considered as a prudent investment. — Frank H. Brazier, 2657 Cameron Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4T 2W5

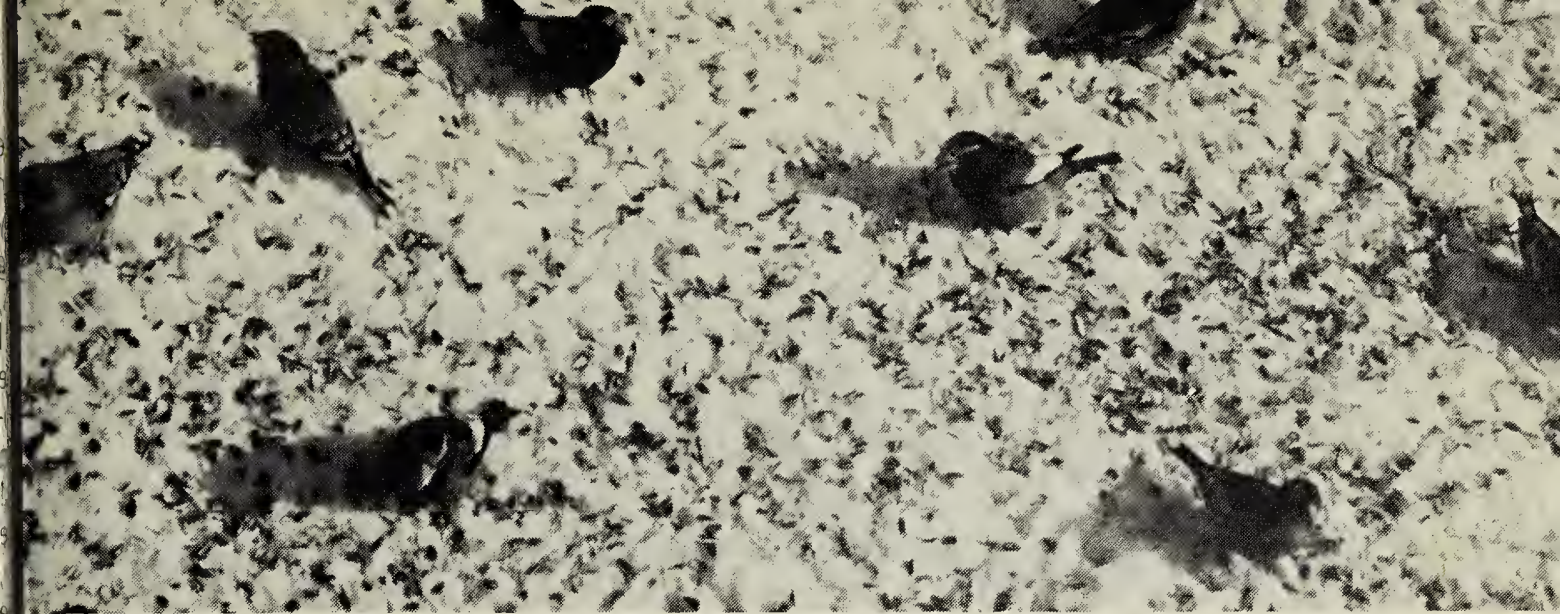
MY RECIPES ARE FOR THE BIRDS

IRENE COSGROVE, illustrated by Ed Cosgrove. 1977. Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York. 30 pp. \$2.95 U.S.

Does the mere mention of a recipe for Bluebird Betty sound enticing tickle your taste buds? And how about Chickadee Crunch, Dove Delight, Finch Fries, Grosbeak Goolash? Ah and here's another, Jay Jambalaya And Sparrow Stew!

Whether they whet your appetite and start you getting out the mixing bowl, I must tell you that these are some of the recipe titles in a neat little ringed cook book now on the market written by Irene Cosgrove, with line drawings by Ed Cosgrove.

In her introduction the author states that "The following recipes have something special for everyone. They will attract and delight the guests at your feeders, and provide the warmth



and energy that is needed during the cold winter months."

Many people today are concerned about the comfort and needs of our feathered friends during the winter season. The birds that remain with us, to share the snow, ice and low temperatures are among our most colorful and interesting residents and visitors.

So long as there are evergreens with abundant cones, seeds and fruit remaining on deciduous trees and weed seeds upon the ground or above the snow, the birds will be able to find food and, consequently, body warmth. Severe icing storms and very low temperatures may mean discomfort and possible death. It is then the feeding station is a lifesaver to bird populations.

The Author offers advice on when to set out feeders, well in advance of arrival of the birds, what types to use, both elevated and ground, to attract patrons of different needs and tastes. Drawings suggest styles.

As birds are creatures of habit she reminds readers of most important point, that once begun the feeding must be continued through the winter.

Among the ingredients for her recipes, that include raw suet, kitchen scraps, seeds, etc. available at feed shops, she gives her own Granola Treat: One cup each of the following: peanut hearts, white millet, wheat germ, crushed dog biscuits, raisins and sunflower seeds. Heat separately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup corn oil. Mix well and bake at 375 degrees for ten

minutes. Refrigerate. Granola can be fed as is or combined with suet.

Among other recipes with intriguing titles are Cardinal Casserole, Junco Jubilee, Kinglet Kugel, and so on. Mockingbird Muffins uses 1 cup cornmeal, 1 cup flour, 1 cup bread crumbs, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. soda, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup currants, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bacon drippings, 1 tsp. sand, 1 cup water. Bake in muffin tins at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Serve on feeder tray or impaled on branches.

Checking recipes like Wren Wrolls and so on, with their coconut, raisins, nuts, and other ingredients. I, soberly, consider the consumer prices of these items. With spiralling prices and inflation, knowing the length of winter and the speed with which outdoor food disappears, I wonder how practical those of us, not of unlimited means, would practise use of such extravagant fare, no matter how great is our desire to be kind to our 'little sisters of the wild.'

The little volume follows through with suggestions for help during migration, spring, nesting time and summer.

As we may, in our home cooking endeavors, use substitutes at head of equal food value, we may benefit from suggestions in this bright little book. For the author has produced a delightfully packaged work, with the original illustrations adding greatly to its visual value. — Elizabeth Cruickshank, 2329 Athol Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4T 3G4.