

THE BIRDS OF CANADA

W.E. GODFREY. 1986. National Museum of Natural Sciences (Canada), Ottawa, Ontario. 595 pp. 74 coloured plates, 102 black and white figures. Glossary (2 pp.) List of provincial and other bird publications (6 pp.). \$39.95

After 20 years and 60 new species, a revised edition of this bible is most welcome. It treats 578 species that have been reliably reported to December 1984 plus 37 species of hypothetical status, i.e., with inadequately documented observation. As in the first edition, regularly occurring species have a map with the range in Canada which is also detailed in the text, a general description, and sections on measurements, field marks (in many cases better than field guides), habitat, nesting (including incubation periods) and worldwide range. The two columns are now different widths, the narrow one being largely reserved for the map and text for Canadian range. The new version has 168 more pages, each of which is about 2) mm higher and 10 mm wider than the 1966 book.

The species most recently recognized by taxonomists are her also: Arctic and Pacific loons, Western and Clark's grebes, Yellow-bellied, Red-naped (not illustrated) and Red-breasted sapsuckers. However, contrary to the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union Checklist, Godfrey has put Iceland and Thayer's gulls into a single species — Iceland — on the basis of studies on Baffin Island.

The number of John Crosby's excellent plates has been increased by five and includes paintings of 498 species (431 in earlier version), most in more than one plumage, some with both flying and

swimming or standing poses. Individuals of new species and others with new plumages have been ingeniously inserted into some of the old plates while other plates have been reorganized and redone. Unfortunately, in some cases leg colour has changed between printings, e.g., immature Solitary and Stilt sandpipers. A significant improvement is the naming of each species and the referencing of the text page on the plate, plus the grouping of plates into nine sections through the book. The line drawings, by S. D. MacDonald and Crosby, have been increased by 35.

Of at least 426 species that nest, maps are presented for the Canadian breeding ranges of 384. New maps, i.e., not in the 1966 edition, include those for Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Sandhill Crane. Species still without maps include Trumpeter Swan, Whooping Crane and Rock Dove. Detectable increases in ranges are shown for more than half the species found in the Prairie Provinces and Northwest Territories. The greatest changes for the Prairies are in Great Crested Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Northern Mockingbird and European Starling, probably representing true range extensions. [In the case of the first two species, the details given under "Range" (worldwide) have not been updated to accommodate these westward extensions.] In other maps, large changes have resulted from the confirmation of suspected breeding ranges (designated by question marks in 1966), e.g., Pectoral and Buff-breasted sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope, White-breasted Nuthatch and Nashville Warbler. However, it is surprising how many still remain; for instance, Eastern Screech Owl and Horned Lark.

There are also maps with diminished ranges, e.g., Eared Grebe and Ferruginous Hawk in southeastern Manitoba, Yellow Rail from northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and Wilson's Warbler in Alberta. For many species there is an indication of a larger breeding area in the text under "Range in Canada" than is mapped. Grasshopper Sparrow, for instance, has "summer sight records north to Saskatoon" but a mapped nesting area much farther south. This section also outlines nonbreeding distribution in Canada. (Lazuli and Indigo buntings hybridize in southeastern Saskatchewan, not southwestern as stated on p. 501.)

Some maps, however, do not, as claimed, "show the distribution in Canada of each bird species as it was known through 1983 and early 1984." Two examples: Godfrey quotes no Greater Prairie Chicken records for Canada since 1976 but the map shows considerable red in the Prairies. Breeding is shown for Long-billed Curlew in the areas covered by Belcher's *Birds of Regina* (1980), Callin's *Birds of the Qu'Appelle* (1980) and Knapton's *Birds of the Gainsborough-Lyleton Region* (1979); the first two claim it as an "irregular" and "occasional" transient and the third does not even list it as occurring. There are no recent records of breeding there known to the reviewer and apparently none since the 1960s for southwestern Manitoba. Northern Mockingbird is not known to breed regularly at any of its isolated occurrences in the Prairies, let alone through the range in-

dicated for the early 1980s. There are no Saskatchewan occurrences for some species in the text because "good" sight records were omitted, e.g., Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Iceland and Ivory gulls (*Blue Jay* 1981:196)201).

The maps of Canada that form the front and back end pages are now identical, the vegetation map having been dropped, which is unfortunate. Some "Special Geographical Locations" have also been dropped, such as Waterton Lake and Cypress Hills, while others have been added.

Changes I would like to have seen: the plates all together at the center or back of the book and the map ranges in green or blue or any new colour. I find the jacket design a disappointment. In a store window, "Birds" is the word that stands out, giving the impression of just another coffee table book, and "Revised Edition" (already proclaimed by the painting of a Whooping Crane) is much more prominent than "of Canada."

This is a most worthwhile purchase. If the price scares you off, start campaigning for it as a birthday, Christmas or Valentine's Day present. Members get 10% off from the Blue Jay Bookshop. My thanks to Bob Kreba, Phil Taylor and Herb Copland for their suggestions. — Reviewed by *Bernard Gollop*, Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 0X4

HARRIER, HAWK OF THE MARSHES

FRANCES HAMMERSTROM. 1986. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC. 171 pp. b & w photos. hardcover \$24.95(US), paperback \$10.95(US).

The life of the Marsh Hawk, now called the Northern Harrier, is the story told by this book. The author has spent 25 years studying the Marsh Hawk on the prairies of central Wisconsin and presents the results of this work in this book. The book takes us through the trials and tribulations of the 25 years of work and in doing so covers the life of the Marsh Hawk from eggs to fledglings from immatures to adults.

The research began innocently as Hammerstrom watched Greater Prairie Chickens in the early morning and like all who have a life-long interest in birds of prey, was casually observing the hawks while working. One of the more prominent occurrences was the aerial courtship (sky-dancing) of the Marsh Hawk and the question arose — Do harriers mate for life? Although the initial question was answered rather early in the work, more and more arose, and so the inquisitive mind continued to seek answers. The book covers different methods used in trapping adults, methods of marking and radio tagging and the lives of these marked individuals, some of them through several years.

One of the more interesting sections, to me personally, was that covering the DDT era. Most people will be familiar with the egg shell thinning which occurred in such prominent species as the Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle. But, the Marsh Hawks did not show great amounts of egg shell thinning. Instead there were no eggs. The birds' mating systems broke down, courtships ceased, pair bonds weakened and territorial defence behavior deteriorated

and nests were not even initiated. In an area that had had about twenty nests per year prior to the critical late sixties, the thought of not seeing the spring "sky dance" seems impossible, but that is exactly what happened. The birds were still there, listless, and not mating. The pattern is not unlike what I remember from my school days. In the early sixties courting Marsh Hawks were a common scene but by the late sixties when I was actively searching for all hawk and owl nests, Marsh Hawks were not courting. In fact it was 10 years (late 70s) before I again saw the sky dance at our farm south of Raymore.

I have only one complaint with this book and that is the cost of \$25. (\$30. + CDN) for the hardcover volume. That price is exceedingly excessive. Fortunately the paperbound volume is much more reasonably priced.

The book is well produced and most importantly is very readable. All the information is there and presented in such a manner as to keep the reader's attention. It is a story book which is scientifically informative. Frances Hammerstrom must be congratulated in preparing this book. You would not even have to have an interest in hawks to enjoy this book, but beware if you were not specifically interested in Marsh Hawks, you undoubtedly will be after reading it. I highly recommend this book to both professional and amateur audiences. — Reviewed by *Wayne C. Harris*, Box 414, Raymore, Saskatchewan. S0A 3J0

BIRD BEHAVIOR

ROBERT BURTON. 1985. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York. 224 pp. \$25.95

Bookstores are full of books whose only purpose is seemingly to be decorative. When one which is handsome also turns out to be both endlessly interesting and

highly useful, it should be singled out. This book is such a one. Both the author and the Consulting Editor, Bruce Campbell, have substantial experience in various aspects of ornithology and natural history and their joint contribution to this publication is a happy blend of talents.

Burton's introduction makes clear his purpose in preparing this book: to gather and make accessible to a general audience an increasingly exciting body of scientific research into bird behavior — which is unfortunately also increasingly complex and can be almost incomprehensible to the average reader in its typical scientific-journal format. In this highly visual and eminently readable insight into the everyday actions of familiar birds, Burton stimulates the reader to go beyond casual observation, to look ever more closely — and in that closer look to find the underlying patterns and the greater satisfaction which comes from understanding the basic themes of all bird life.

The text is well-written, clear and precise. From a chapter on the individual bird and its basic daily round of activities, Burton goes on to discuss flight, the senses and intelligence, food and ways of obtaining it, communication, nesting and rearing of young, social organization and interaction and, for many one of the most mysterious aspects, migration. He organizes all this into succinct and easily findable sections describing the common themes with examples taken from a wide range of bird species, domestic and wild, exotic and familiar, from every continent. Granted, he generalizes about or only touches on some topics for which readers may well want more detail. Those who choose to focus on the fine points of a specific subject will likely not see Burton's book as their only source, but rather a fine launching point for their particular interests.

It is the almost 600 photographs, plus additional maps, sketches, diagrams and

sonagrams, which really "make" this book. The full-page list of credits for photos and artwork (most commissioned especially for this volume) is impressive, and all the photos testify to the skill of their creators in finding the sites inaccessible and the moments irreproducible. They range in size from approximately 5 x 7 cm to 24 x 29 cm, larger than a single page, with the majority about 10 x 15 cm. Some are singles; others are in series of varying length. Some are dramatic — an alligator leaping to capture an egret or a flock of ravens crowded around a snow-covered carcass; some border on the comical, such as a family of three droll young screech-owls waiting for parents' attentions. Photos such as those of Sandhill Cranes feeding at dawn or herons silhouetted against a twilight sky are worthy of inclusion in any collection of fine art photographs. All are in colour, as are a number of the sketches and diagrams.

Certainly some photos appear to be better than others, yet all have a purpose and the often lengthy captions quickly clarify for the reader the point being made. Much information is contained in these captions and the reader with only a few minutes to spend can well profit from only looking at the pictures and reading the photo descriptions, leaving the comprehensive text portions for more leisurely moments. On several levels this is a good "looking" book.

It is unquestionably a valuable addition to any birder's home reference library, where it will surely be more often in use than on the shelf. — Reviewed by *Mary D. Gilliland*, 902 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 0K1

ANNOUNCEMENT: ESKIMO CURLEW A VANISHING SPECIES?

J.B. GOLLOP, T.W. BARRY AND E.H. IVERSEN. 1986. Special Publication # 17 of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. 160 pp. 19 photos. 8 drawings. 7 maps. \$9.00.

This history of the endangered Eskimo Curlew, a New World shorebird, is based primarily on the 600+ titles listed in the bibliography. It begins with Christopher Columbus and continues through 1985 with chapters on the curlew's current status (including sightings since 1945), identification, names (local, common and scientific), nest searches in the 1860s and 1980s and life history (breeding, migration, habitat, food and feeding habits, other behaviour, voice, hunting and the species' decline). Only 39 nestings of this species have ever been reported and only one has been previously published. In this book are presented the details and an analysis of the other 38, from the handwritten notes of Roderick MacFarlane, a Hudson's Bay Company factor in the Northwest Territories in the 1860s. A major section of 70 pages is largely composed of quotations from some 300 people who wrote about the curlew in 71 countries, provinces and states, including dates and places of occurrence from Siberia to Argentina to England.

Available from the Blue Jay Bookshop
Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan.
S4P 3B4.

ESKIMO CURLEW

A vanishing species?



HANDBOOK OF CANADIAN MAMMALS 2. BATS

C.G. VAN ZYLL DE JONG 1985
National Museums of Canada. 16.5 x 24 cm, 212 pages, 4 color plates, soft cover \$19.95

Despite some misleading statements by public health and humane society officials this past summer, bats are not likely to be rabid and need not be feared. On the contrary, bats are among the most interesting creatures on earth. In foreign parts, some species face extinction owing to man's determination to destroy them for one reason or another.

No Canadian bats feed on fishes, flowers or nectar, but all depend on echolocation for capturing prey in the dark. By this means, even small insects are

located in flight and often scooped up with a wing-tip and transferred to the bat's mouth. These and many other adaptations of these flying mammals are ably described in this second book in this new series. (For a review of the first, see the *Blue Jay* 43(1):72-73).

Van Zyll de Jong has provided a useful semi-technical book. Four color plates (19 species) by Paul Geraghty and 32 pages of general information offer a good introduction to bats for the layman or naturalist. Yet there is much sound, easily understood material given under Biology for each of the 20 species covered in the book. The distribution maps, showing continental and Canadian ranges, are especially instructive and up to date.

A comprehensive glossary (9 pp.) and bibliography (17 pp.) show how well the author has covered his subject. It was pleasant to find seven citations to publications in the *Blue Jay*, but a 1959 report by Spencer Sealy on bats overwintering at Battleford (*Blue Jay* 18(3):139) is missing.

For the mammalogist (amateur or professional), zoology and wildlife student this book provides much technical information, including fine drawings by Charles Douglas of bat skulls. The book strikes a nice balance between popular and technical information. If you like bats, or better — if you don't — then buy this book. Although a soft cover book, there is a dust jacket which should be retained, if only because it includes a good photo of Stan van Zyll de Jong (no mention is made of his youthful life in a Japanese prisoner of war camp).

Recent reports of substantial cutbacks in scientific and support staff at the National Museums of Canada may mean decreased output of useful publications such as the *Handbook of Canadian Mammals*. "Only in Canada, you say? Pity!" — Reviewed by *Robert W. Nero*, 546 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3R 1B6

WILD HUNTERS

DICK DEKKER. 1985. Published by the Canadian Wolf Defenders, Box 3480, Station D, Edmonton, Alberta. T5L 4J3. 224 pp. Illus. black and white photographs, ink drawings. Paper \$12.00.

This book relates the details of the author's "adventures with wolves, foxes, eagles and falcons based on 25 years of field observations" in western Canada. In it, readers will find uncommon insights into the lives of predators and their prey as they go about securing a meal and avoiding being eaten. Uncommon because Dekker's book is based upon hundreds of painstaking, patient hours of field study in all seasons and in many haunts — from the shores of Beaverhill Lake, the banks of prairie rivers, the foothills of the Rockies to the boreal forest of the Yukon.

Wild Hunters is a pleasure to read. Written with feeling and insight, Dekker paints powerful and lasting images with his prose. Twenty-six essays are grouped by common subject into six chapters on: the wolf; the red fox; the falcons; the bald eagle, accipiters, harrier and jaegers; the golden eagle and buteos; the functions of these predators in nature and their relationship to man. Through fresh eyes we explore the private lives of predators.

The essays on wolves examine their history in North America from the time of contact with Europeans to the present. Particularly interesting are the accounts of the Jasper Park wolves. The long term consequences of wolf poisoning programs having major impacts on prey populations (elk, sheep and deer) and the subsequent changes to the wintering range of these animals are followed and interpreted. As big as Jasper Park is we realize it is not a safe wilderness island. The fortunes of the red fox in the prairie provinces are in strong contrast to those of the wolf. The

secret of how these small canids survive even flourish under the very nose of the farmer, his pet dogs and the prairie coyote is remarkable.

Dekker has observed over 800 attempts by Peregrine Falcons to capture prey! By waiting, and watching from favourite observation spots the author has adopted the techniques of his subjects and his reward is that he sees more than the average naturalist on hunting peregrines: "They come down in mile-long stoops and fall among flocks of sandpipers like a bursting shell. If they cannot strike, they regain their soaring pitch and attack elsewhere. It took a great deal of watching before I understood this relatively simple hunting strategy." We experience the terror of the hunted also. "The last bird in the straggling line seemed doomed, but a split-second before the falcon was in a position to stoop, the duck dropped like a stone. The timing of this evasive tactic was so perfect that the falcon had no chance to dive after the falling bird." From Dekker we learn the excitement of studying wildlife and gaining new understanding. Expect tips on identifying mammal tracks and raptors on the wing to help in even casual field observations. By trying some of the author's field techniques your "arena" of study will become larger. Imagine spotting peregrine Falcons while they hunt — at 1 km or more distance!

The book is beautifully designed and illustrated. Some 46 well-chosen black and white photographs are found throughout the book. In addition Dekker's ink sketches of the hunters add an even more personal touch to the book. The cover portrait of a wold, with its haunting eyes, leaves a lasting impression even after the book is put down.

Dick Dekker has published many scientific and popular articles on his studies in addition to his book *Naturalist-Painter* (1980), where his colour paintings of these same wild hunters appear. In 1976, he

was the first recipient of the Loran M. Goulden Memorial Award for his contributions to the understanding of Alberta's natural history.

This is a book of rare quality which I highly recommend to anyone interested in natural history and particularly to those who share the author's affection for *Wild Hunters*. — Reviewed by *Philip S. Taylor*, 1714 Prince of Wales Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7K 3E5

CHECK-LIST OF BIRDS OF THE CALGARY REGION

The fifth edition of the *Check-list of birds of the Calgary region* is now available. This newest edition is complete up to January 1986. The fourth edition (February 1976) listed 309 species with 182 nesting. This new edition lists 330 species with 207 nesting.

In order to cover printing costs, the check-list is being sold at \$1.00 each or five for \$4.00. There is a postage and handling fee of \$0.50 on each order. Cheques and money orders are to be made payable to Wayne Smith. Send orders to **Wayne W. Smith at 351 Alcott Crescent, S.E., Calgary, Alberta. T2J 0V3** [Telephone 403-255-0052]

1987 CALENDARS



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Can be ordered from the Blue Jay Bookstore or by sending a cheque marked "Wild Hunters" payable to the Canadian Wolf Defenders, Box 3480, Station D, Edmonton, Alberta. T5L 4J3

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