
NATURE LIBRARY

A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO CHURCHILL

Bonnie Chartier. 1994. American Birding Association, Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80934-6599, USA. 132 pp.

Churchill, Manitoba is considered by many to be one of Canada's hot-spots for birders. Located at the mouth of the Churchill River, on the coast of Hudson Bay, a rich variety of habitat awaits the annual return of birds and birders. Birds of the Arctic nest along the coastal strip of tundra, boreal forest birds nest in the taiga and seabirds are found on the tidal shores.

Bonnie Chartier has presented the visiting birder with a comprehensive guide to the area. The first part of the book contains an introduction to the region covering human history, vegetation, weather, local tourist attractions, accommodation and transportation options. A particularly useful section describes the "Progression of Summer," which summarizes changes in birding activity from mid-May through the peak month of June and on to July and August. A code of ethics for the visiting birder is a must read, as is the "Polar Bear Warning."

The second part of the book covers a guide to all birding areas accessible from the 105 km of local roads. It contains detailed maps along with a discussion of the birds likely to be found in June or July along each kilometre of the road network.

The third part of the book begins with an annotated list of those birds of particular interest to the visiting

birder. Bar graphs then reflect the monthly status of 167 species with designations of: Hard to Miss, Should See, May See, Lucky to Find, and How Lucky Can You Get. Species names are given in English, French and Latin.

The book is lavishly illustrated with sketches and photographs of birds and landscapes. The end of the book includes lists of accidental bird species, amphibians, mammals, butterflies, moths, and plants, as well as a listing of useful local telephone numbers and addresses.

I was extremely impressed with the format and accuracy of this book. All members of the 1994 Nature Saskatchewan Tour to Churchill found it to be excellent. I would strongly recommend it to anyone visiting Churchill or to writers of other bird-finding guides.

- Reviewed by *Stan Shadick*, 304 - 1008 Temperance St., Saskatoon, SK. S7N 0N6

PERFECT MORNING ALONG THE SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN

Peter Jonker. 1994. Compact disk. Recorded and produced by Peter Jonker. 213 - 4040A 8th St. E., Saskatoon, SK. S7H 5L4

This is an unedited recording of wildlife sounds as heard between 0400 and 0600 hours on 30 April at one spot along the South Saskatchewan River, approximately 45 km south of Saskatoon. It is an excellent snippet of the chorus produced by some 30 species of birds, mammals and frogs. And, while it happens every spring morning in our own

“backyard,” it is not until someone with expertise goes to the effort of digitally taping the chorus and making it available for armchair listening that most of us get to appreciate it — at any season of the year. Neither human voice nor any other sound pollution is heard. The author is a member of the Saskatoon Natural History Society and Nature Saskatchewan. This is the first of a planned series.

It seems as though there is never a second's silence — sometimes two or three species vocalizing simultaneously. That does not make it overwhelming to listen to, but it is tough on anyone trying to list the species contributing. Because it was recorded as it happened, there are near and not-so-near species. Setting the volume for comfortable listening to the background sounds gives the impression that the foreground ones are at your elbow — not an unpleasant experience.

The very close species are Canada Goose, Rufous-sided Towhee (more than 100 songs and some call notes), a Sandhill Crane on a sandbar (single calls for ten minutes) and, briefly, a female Mallard, a Black-capped Chickadee and gulls. A Song Sparrow or two sing through the entire first cut — more than 150 songs. One or more chickadees, “chickadeeing” and whistling, replace them on the second half. Ducks and geese are almost constantly commenting through both parts and a flock of Snow Geese converse as they fly over. Mourning Doves, American Crows, Black-billed Magpies and an American Robin are also prominent.

If none of that turns you on how about Ruffed Grouse? A male drums more than a dozen times on each cut. And Great Horned Owls! They

also make themselves heard over everything else on both halves.

Then there is the percussion group — the Beaver splashing its tail, Snowshoe Hares thumping around, deer bounding away, and other sounds that I could not identify, one of which was apparently a porcupine “complaining.” Thirty seconds into the first cut a wood frog calls in the background.

The front panel includes a reproduction of stained glass that Peter made. The back panel describes what happens on each cut. However, the Marbled Godwit referred to in the first part is a Willet; there is a godwit in the second. The Western Meadowlark mentioned is so far away that it might be missed. None of which detracts from the fact that this CD is a great buy, worth enjoying again and again — especially in winter. Available from gift shops, record and department stores.

- Reviewed by *Bernie Gollop*, 2202 York Avenue, Saskatoon, SK. S7J 1J1

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

John Bull and John Farrand. Revised by John Farrand. 1994. Knopf, New York. 797 pp.

The dust jacket proclaims this edition to be “Completely Revised — All New Photography” and that appears to be about 95% true. The number of species has purportedly gone from 456 breeding species to 508 species (whatever that means). Photos-per-page are the same (2.3), suggesting there may be fewer illustrations per species.

The photos are new, generally sharper and brighter, and there are 62 more of them, made up in part by adding shots of species considered rarities, such as Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe and Baird's Sparrow. For at least one species (Lincoln's Sparrow) the photo is new only in that it has been reversed between issues. California and Mew Gulls, both prairie province breeders, were omitted in 1977 and still are. The same is true for Varied Thrush and Rosy Finch.

However, there is a bigger gaff. Between editions, the west boundary of the eastern region moved to the mountains: in 1977 the Cypress Hills were excluded while in 1994 they are included. But the reviser forgot to add in the species acquired by the expansion. If you are heading for the Cypress Hills, leave this book at home. You won't find Trumpeter Swan, Sage Grouse, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Dusky Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, MacGillivray's Warbler or Brewer's Sparrow — in text or pictures.

More than half the species have a single image. Only Oldsquaw and Northern Oriole have as many as three. Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawk have one photo each. Of Saskatchewan warblers in the Audubon Guide, two-thirds show only the male in breeding plumage. For immatures of six species of our white-headed gulls, Audubon has three illustrations, the Western Peterson has 24 and the National Geographic has 19.

The "exciting dimension" that photos are supposed to add is marred by too many photos having the same problem as in the previous version — uneven rendition: too washed out, too dark, too yellow, too red, too

blue, etc. In the copy I have, Clay-coloured, Grasshopper and Le Conte's Sparrow, Veery, and Palm Warbler look like new species between editions. Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrush, water-thrushes and young night-herons were brown in 1977 but are now gray. Particularly disturbing (or enlightening) is the shading on the head and neck of Common and Red-throated Loons — it is reversed between editions.

This book repeats other problems with photos: no facing text and too few species visible for comparison on an open page and the problem of scale (e.g., a big Boreal Owl facing a smaller Great Horned Owl).

Species accounts — with more space than other major guides — vary from largely the same to largely rewritten. However they are finally organized in a logical and conventional way — AOU or checklist order. In the 1977 edition habitat was the criterion, with the result that species we would find on a single slough, Northern and Wilson's Phalarope, Mallard, Black-bellied Plover and Willet, were located under groups called open ocean, freshwater marshes, lakes, ponds and rivers, sea-shore and salt marshes respectively. Another improvement is the addition of marginal distribution maps.

No doubt about it, this is a pretty picture book. However as an identification guide, see if you can get someone to give it to you as a gift. Incidentally, in 1977 it cost \$9 while it is now \$26.

- Reviewed by *Bernie Gollop*, 2202 York Avenue, Saskatoon, SK. S7J 1J1

Saskatchewan Natural History Society
Statement of financial activities and fund balance for the seven months ending March 31,
1995, with comparative figures for 1994 (12 months)

Income	Operating Fund (\$)	Trust Fund (\$)	Managed Fund (\$)	Total 1995 (\$)	Operating Fund 1994 (\$)
Sask Lotteries	60,000	—	—	60,000	106,400
Conservation program	2,241	—	—	2,241	27,483
Education	10	—	—	10	3,377
Endangered species/spaces	691	—	—	691	18,052
Specified programs (schedule 1)	11,406	—	—	11,406	19,980
Self-generated (schedule 2)	35,939	—	—	35,939	50,067
Other revenue (schedule 3)	21,848	—	—	21,848	42,771
Trust fund - net (schedule 4)	—	(6,483)	—	(6,483)	3,696
Managed fund (schedule 5)	—	—	67,048	67,048	90,379
Total	132,135	(6,483)	67,048	192,700	362,205
Expenses					
Administration (schedule 6)	62,842	—	—	62,842	104,168
Travel & meetings (schedule 7)	5,410	—	—	5,410	11,848
Communications (schedule 8)	25,618	—	—	25,618	33,927
Programs (schedule 9)	36,696	—	—	36,696	81,101
Other expenses (schedule 10)	4,583	—	—	4,583	40,790
Managed funds	—	—	67,048	67,048	90,379
Total	135,149	—	67,048	202,197	362,213
Net income (loss)	(3,014)	(6,483)	—	(9,497)	(8)
Fund balance, beginning of year	25,835	299,388	—	325,223	325,231
Fund balance, end of year (retained earnings)	22,821	292,905	—	315,726	325,223

Saskatchewan Natural History Society
Balance sheet for seven months ending March 31, 1995

Assets (\$)	Operating Fund (\$)	Trust Fund (\$)	Managed Fund (\$)	Total 1995 (\$)	Total 1995 (\$)
Cash & short-term deposits	79,440	43,087	—	122,527	178,425
Accounts receivable	15,751	—	—	15,751	34,532
Inventory - Bookshop	13,956	—	—	13,956	13,080
Prepaid expenses	—	—	—	—	3,222
Marketable securities (quoted market value \$257,079; 1994 - \$249,451)	—	249,817	—	249,817	249,310
Capital (note 4)	50,536	—	—	50,536	50,536
Interfund receivable (payable)	(32,427)	—	32,427	—	—
Total	127,256	292,904	32,427	452,587	529,105
Liabilities and Fund Balances					
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	10,505	—	—	10,505	5,049
Deferred amounts funding (note 5)	11,577	—	—	11,577	69,581
Restricted					
Open (schedule 1a)	23,943	—	—	23,943	28,609
Closed (schedule 1b)	7,874	—	—	7,874	7,874
Managed (schedule 5)	—	—	32,427	32,427	42,233
Total	53,899	—	32,427	86,326	153,346
Fund balances (schedule 4 - trust fund)	22,821	292,904	—	315,725	325,223
Equity in capital assets	50,536	—	—	50,536	50,536
Total	127,256	292,904	32,427	452,587	529,105