

Ferruginous Hawk). Herriot's Ferruginous Hawk hovering over a nest is just anatomically impossible. Most of the drawings could have been much reduced. This would have provided space to remedy the annoying separation of species account lead from the body of the text — this happens 14 times. Although only a minor distraction when the text follows on the page opposite, in 10 instances the species name sits alone at the bottom of a page, with the text appearing overleaf. This curious fault should have been caught by the layout people. Despite the usual intensive search for typos, I found only three, none of significance (one, p. 271, two, p. 306); someone worked hard! The author was able to incorporate the latest name changes, not an easy task in these days of nomenclatural shifting. I noted one small slip in this connection — in the discussion of hybrid flickers (p. 44) the names used don't jibe with the names given in the species accounts. And I take it that the omission of the title "Pigeons" for the aptly descriptive poem on p. 181 is another small slip.

This book provides information on geology, topography, ecology, history, conservation, land use, etc. — it is much more than a bird book. The 19 maps will aid anyone seeking access to the Elbow country; Roy's numerous polite reminders to respect landowner's right should benefit all concerned. With its many fine features, *Birds of the Elbow* sets a fine example, whether as a regional report, a provincial or state bird book. It fills a large gap in the ornithology of the Northern Great Plains. It's a lot of book for the money. Well done, Frank!

- Reviewed by *Robert W. Nero*, 546 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, MB. R3R 1B6

## MY LITTLE BOOK OF BURROWING OWLS

HOPE IRVIN MARSTON, illustrated by Maria Magdalena Brown. 1995. Published by NorthWood Press, Inc. \$8.00 (Available at *Blue Jay Bookshop*)

Ms. Marston's book brings the reader through the arrival of a Burrowing Owl pair settling on the prairies for the summer. The story follows the owls as they prepare their summer nest, and raise a family on the prairie grassland. The reader is taken into the lives of the owls, and is given a description of some of the dangers the young owls face as they grow up.

Bright, eye-catching illustrations by Maria Magdalena Brown accompany Ms. Marston's simple story. Despite minor inaccuracies (i.e. the Burrowing Owls are depicted with feathered legs when, in actuality, their legs are bare), the book captures the engaging mannerisms of the endangered owls. The prairie grasses and flowers in the landscape are drawn with beautiful detail. The simple story, and colourful illustrations should appeal to any child more eager to look than listen!

- Reviewed by *Neeru Verma*

## THE WHOOPING CRANE

JEROME J. PRATT. 1996. Rose Printing Co., Inc. Tallahassee, Florida, U.S.A. 171 pp. \$17.95. (Available from *Castle Rock Publishing, 1712 Pine Woods Road, Prescott, Arizona, USA 86301*)

The back cover of this soft-cover book proclaims that aviculturists, biologists, zookeepers and government officials were responsible for the success in the recovery efforts for the Whooping Crane. The

publication announcement issued by the Whooping Crane Conservation Association (WCCA) indicates the book relates work on biological investigations, captive breeding, behaviour and the policies needed to support the work. I find this to be only partly correct; the title of the book should have been "A history of Whooping Crane Conservation Efforts."

As history is often biased (depending on who writes it), so is this book written from an aviculturist's viewpoint. Mr. Pratt, a long time and highly respected executive member of aviculture since childhood, once owned and operated a commercial game farm in the USA. The executive of WCCA (the agency under whose auspices the book is published), has always been composed largely of people involved in aviculture so the emphasis is not surprising.

There are several instances in the book where avicultural credit for Whooping Crane conservation is exaggerated or misplaced. On p. 12 it is stated that the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and its U.S. counterpart (USFWS) accepted avicultural advice in removing eggs from wild whooper nests. As the person directly involved in the first egg pick-up in 1967 I know this is not correct. The 16 May 1967 letter of instruction by CWS in part was based on completely erroneous data on laying dates and contained gems of wise advice such as taking care "not to allow seismic nest-marking tape to wind around the helicopter's tail rotor." There was no avicultural advice and no "game management expertise"; what we did have was common sense and maybe a little luck.

The historic aspect of the book is

evident in its organization. Pages 21-45 are reprinted from Walkinshaw's 1973 *Cranes of the World* (Chapter 6) and this chapter already contains many quotations from yet an earlier publication, *The Whooping Crane* by R.P. Allen (1952). Furthermore, there is an eight-page contribution from C. Cottam (containing a 1958 population status report. Why?), a four-page addition by D. Hyde (1961), and five pages by E. Bizeau, a 1975 paper.

The 28-page bibliography (16% of the book) is an enigma. Of the 695 titles, some dating back to the 1700s, only 87 are referred to in the text. Conversely, over 30 papers or books mentioned in the text, are **not** listed in the bibliography. None of the titles in the bibliography are more recent than that of a single 1984 paper. Studies in Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP), along the migration route and in Texas, conducted during the past 20 years, receive only scant mention in the text and are not listed in the bibliography. Why the work is apparently ignored is not clear to me, as I know Mr. Pratt received copies of published field studies. But perhaps these papers fall in the category of, as Mr. Pratt writes, "contributing little to the survival of the Whooping Crane." However on page 67 he contradicts himself when he writes "egg collecting from wild nests has led to ... management practices which are believed to be responsible for the survival of the species." He could have specifically referred to the technique of field-testing viability of crane eggs in WBNP, which, when analyzed from 1985-1988, increased hatching success of eggs left in nests by 11.7%-15.5%.

It should be remembered that many of the studies summarized information obtained from the surveys

of cranes, their nests and eggs, their migration habits and winter range. As Mr. Pratt states, many of these papers are filed away and forgotten, but if the studies are worthy of mention (e.g. pages 17-18, 45, 84-87), they are worthy of proper reference.

There is considerable repetitious material in the book, such as descriptions of the discovery of the nesting area in WBNP (pages 23, 63), named captive birds (pages 101-103, 110-114, 127) and migration (pages 27, 125).

I found the historical description of the genesis of Whooping Crane conservation to be the most interesting part of the book (even though it contains inaccuracies), and Mr. Pratt deserves credit for pulling this aspect together, a section of the crane's history he was part of for so many years. I also enjoyed the black and white photographs of colleagues from Canada and the U.S.A. and the four group photos of WCCA members, including the entire Kuyt family in 1972, 1976 and 1983.

Some omissions should be mentioned. Even though the book contains much discussion about famous birds, such as Crip, Josephine, Rosie, kept captive in the San Antonio and New Orleans Zoo for many years, no mention is made that most of the reproductive efforts of these and many other captive birds resulted in infertile or abnormal eggs. More recently, captive breeding and rearing of captive whoopers, notably at the Patuxent Environmental Research Centre has greatly improved, hopefully reaching the point when we no longer need to take eggs from the wild. Also, no mention is made that, although captive breeding of whoopers has been in progress since 1966 and well over 400 surplus eggs

removed from WBNP and transported to the U.S.A., as of today **not a single** truly viable (i.e. self-perpetuating) Whooping Crane has been added to the wild migratory population as a result of 30 years of captive breeding!

I would like to make one suggestion. It is hoped that future writers differentiate between the various "kinds" of whoopers. When giving "box scores," we should compare today's wild migratory flock (the WBNP-Texas population) with the original wild population of previous years. Do not lump Florida birds (introduced into the wild from captive stock), birds held "captive" by the invisible membrane of their changed behaviour (which renders them non-migratory) with our normal whoopers which pass through Saskatchewan in their age-old fashion.

Finally, the book contains numerous errors of fact but also some curious statements such as "captive breeding returned the Trumpeter Swan to a stable population," "air transportation of sandhill cranes eggs ... has been ... found not feasible" and "there is no difference between a chick hatched from a wild ... egg, and one from a captive egg, at the time of hatching."

In summary, this is not a book about the interesting biological details of a fascinating endangered bird but a treatise of the history of captive management of Whooping Cranes, supplemented by previously published biological information, much of it now out-of-date.

Fortunately the book at \$17.95 Canadian is relatively cheap.

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