

MICE IN THE FREEZER, OWLS ON THE PORCH: THE LIVES OF NATURALISTS FREDERICK AND FRANCES HAMERSTROM

Helen McGavran Corneli. 2002. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI. 308 pp plus 30 pp of notes, 41 b/w photos. Hard cover, \$29.95 U.S. ISBN 0-299-18090-5. Also available in soft cover.

Frederick (known as Hammy) and Frances (known as Fran, pronounced *Frahn*) Hamerstrom were extraordinary wildlife biologists. They lived during an era of a new way of thinking about the environment and the interactional forces within it, which grew into the discipline now commonly referred to as ecology. Professionally, their main focus was the Greater Prairie-Chicken, and they became international experts on this species. They also studied other birds and Fran became well known for her knowledge about Golden Eagles and other raptors.

The Hamerstroms were also extraordinary people. Helen Corneli, a neighbour of theirs and professor emeritus of English, introduces the reader to their growing-up years and describes them as privileged aristocrats in the American East; Fran was a debutante, Hammy went to Harvard. Fran was an independent thinker at an early age, smitten with animals, while Hammy was more conservative. They fell in love during their college years and found their way west to study first with Paul Errington at the University of Iowa and then to the marshes of Wisconsin to work with Aldo Leopold. It is during their time in the west until their deaths in the 1990s, that Corneli covers in greatest detail. They lived near Plainfield, Wisconsin for over fifty years, studying the prairie-chicken, teaching, and mentoring numerous students (who were referred to as “gaboons”), and their home became the “salon” of wildlife biology and falconry

intelligentsia for the last four decades of the 20th century.

Drawing extensively on Fran and Hammy’s written records and discussions with them both, as well as on interviews with key individuals who knew and worked with them, Corneli chronicles the Hamerstroms’ professional lives thoroughly and exhaustively, documenting relationships with other professional partners in their work and revealing the tensions between the pursuit of scientific knowledge, bureaucratic employers, and the public. Knowing that the final responsibility of maintaining healthy ecosystems lies with the public, Fran wrote numerous books, both fiction and non-fiction, about our natural world, and did many public speaking engagements to further educate and enlist the support of the public in preserving wildlife habitat.

Although Corneli does an admirable job documenting their professional lives, I feel she focuses more on Hammy than on Fran, thereby implying that professional credibility was his, more so than hers, certainly an arguable point. He, after all, earned the doctorate degree, whereas hers was an honorary PhD. One tends to think of Hammy as the producer of research and scientific publications, and Fran as the producer of popular literature about eagles, hawks and other wildlife. It would be a mistake to judge one as more important or valuable than the other.

Corneli interjects many of the interesting and remarkable facts that punctuated their personal lives, but I do not believe she captures the personal spirit of Fran and Hammy, and, in fairness to Corneli, perhaps it isn't possible to do so. I say this as someone who had the extreme good fortune to have spent time with the Hamerstoms in the early 1970's. To say they were extraordinary does not even begin to capture the essence of this couple. They were, in fact, magical, in a very out-of-this-world way: kind, generous, marvelously eccentric, passionate, knowledgeable, worldly (e.g., they exchanged kids with Konrad Lorenz in the mid-1950's), loyal, and downright wacky at times. Those of us from around the world who were touched by them—wildlife biologists, falconers, academics (and that includes Joe and Sheila Schmutz here in Saskatchewan, who are quoted in the book), students of all ages, wayward souls, and the general public—belong to a special group; mention their name and the response is usually, "Ah yes, the Hamerstoms,"

accompanied by a twinkle in the eye, memories of outrageous occurrences, awesome experiences, warmth, gratitude, and finally, great loss. Hammy died in 1990 and Fran in 1998.

This book is a wonderful addition to any naturalist's library. It covers a longer span than either of Fran's autobiographies (*Strictly for the Chickens* and *My Double Life*), and goes into much greater depth about their professional lives than Fran's other books. Because of this, this book is a thorough and accurate history of the growth of certain segments of ecology as a perspective and a science, as well as an inspiration to aspiring (or arrived) professional biologists, people who are interested in wildlife and/or ecology, falconers, and to every person who marches to the beat of their own drum, be it professionally or personally.

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OWLS OF THE WORLD

JAMES R. DUNCAN 2003. Key Porter Books Ltd. Toronto, ON. 319 pp., 281 colour illustrations, 21 cm by 27.5 cm. ISBN: 1-55263-214-8. Hard cover \$60.00 Cdn

This beautiful and well-written book contains a great deal of meticulously researched information about owls. The purpose of this book is two-fold: to educate readers about owls and to provide reference information in an attractive large-format book. The intended audience is anyone interested in owls, from the layperson to the professional biologist. This is not the first book on owls of the world—*Owls of the World* and *Owls: A Guide to the Owls of the World* also provide global coverage—but it is the most up-to-date book on the subject and is unique in having a chapter on owls in mythology and personal stories from noted owl biologists.^{1,3}

Excellent colour photographs and figures accompany the text and many of the species accounts. Other figures illustrate owls in natural habitats, owl activities such as hunting, courtship and threat displays, human interaction with owls, owl habitats and owls in culture and mythology. There are maps, graphs, and tables to illustrate facts in owl biology.

The first five chapters cover general topics. Chapter one, *The Nature of Owls*, discusses the anatomy, biology, behaviour, evolution and genetics in terms of special adaptations of owls. The second chapter, *Owls in Mythology and Culture*, is a

fascinating global survey about owls in mythology and various human cultures including Mayan, Native North American, Chinese, and Medieval European. Chapter 3, The Study of Owls, is a sampling of contemporary owl studies by Jim Duncan and other researchers as given from a first-person perspective. Threats to Owls, chapter 4, deals with many issues including pesticides, shooting and trapping, predation and competition, habitat loss, invasive alien species, captivity, post modern conservation strategies without modern science, disease and ecto-parasites. The fifth chapter, A World for Owls, contains stories about several studies (Great Horned Owls in Saskatchewan, Ural Owls in Japan, Boreal Owls in western US and Barn Owls in Ontario) and activities such as owl photography, film-making and captive breeding.

The final chapter is Owls of the World, Their Global Conservation Status and General Distribution (mistakenly referred to as Appendix 1 in Chapter 1). This chapter consists of concise, accurate and well-written species accounts for all 205 owl species in the world. Each species account consists of an English common name, scientific name, a field-guide-type description for identification purposes, habitat information, global range (occurrence) map, natural history information and International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) conservation status. The species account information here is briefer but more up to date than in comparable global or regional owl books, such as *North American Owls: Biology and Natural History*, *Owls of Europe* and *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere*.^{2,4,5} Colour photos are included for 122 species accounts. It is unfortunate it was not possible to include

more photos, especially of the rare and poorly studied owl species. And, a glossary of technical terms would have further enhanced this book.

For many owl species, knowledge is minimal, and thus most information and examples in this book, and similar global works, are from the better-studied owl species in North America and Europe. One of the strengths of this book are the invited articles from noted owl biologists from Canada, USA, Russia, Mexico, Japan, Australia and Finland. Some of the 'local' contributors include Stuart Houston, Geoff Holroyd, Bob Nero, Ted Leighton and Terry Galloway. The personal stories about owls and their research by Jim Duncan and other contributors help make the information 'come alive' for the reader.

I applaud Jim Duncan for this excellent achievement. The book is a pleasure to read and I highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in owls.

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1. HUME, R. and T. BOYER. 1998. *Owls of the World*. Runnig Press, Philadelphia, PA.
2. JOHNSTADT, P.A. 2002. *North American Owls: Biology and Natural History*, Second Edition. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
3. KÄENIG, C. F. WEICK, and J.H. BECKING. 1999. *Owls: A Guide to the Owls of the World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
4. MIKKOLA, H. 1983. *Owls of Europe*. Buteo Books, Vermillion, SD.
5. VOOUS, K.H. 1988. *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

BIRDS OF YORKTON-DUCK MOUNTAIN

HOUSTON, C. Stuart and William ANAKA, 2003. No.6, Manley Callin Series, Special Publication No. 24, Saskatchewan Natural History Society. 318 pp. 6 colour photos, 2 b/w photos, 15 b/w sketches, 1 map sheet. ISBN 0-921104-20-0. \$20.00 Can. Available from Nature Saskatchewan

Birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain (YDM) is number six in the Callin series of regional bird guides in Saskatchewan. It fills the geographic gap between Callin's *Birds of the Qu'Appelle, 1857-1979* and Donald Hooper's *Birds of East-central Saskatchewan* published in 1992.

We are introduced to the Yorkton-Duck Mountain area with a beautiful fold-out map and a discussion of how vegetation and weather conditions have changed over the years. This is the ecological backdrop against which you can expect to see certain birds and animals. Unfortunately, the colour photos - vignettes of the YDM area - are poorly printed. On the other hand, the typeset makes the book easy to read.

Page four cautions the reader that "this is a compendium of information, more for reference and for browsing than for reading." This poses the problem of maintaining a flowing narrative, which has been overcome by interspersing the species accounts with short passages about personal experiences that the authors had while studying the birds in question

The main focus of the book is the species accounts which outline historical sightings, the frequency of the birds (their status from common to endangered), dates for earliest arrival and latest fall departure, breeding records, banding records and band recoveries. For relevant species, the accounts include information from the Prairie Nest Record Scheme, Breeding Bird Surveys, and the Jowsey and Cymbalisty egg collections.

An example of the depth and breadth of research for some species is seen in the

American Bittern write-up, which traces the rise and fall of this reclusive bird of marshland. Few were seen in the dirty thirties, many more as the rains returned in the forties and fifties, but once again they declined in numbers in the 1970s and 80s. Today, it is assumed that they continue to decline in number in the YDM area.

Not to be overlooked are the appendices: Appendix 1 presents the reader with a clear and concise printout of the level of occurrence of all birds that have ever appeared in the study area. Appendix 2 is a summary of the 53 breeding bird surveys that have taken place. Appendices 3 and 4 summarize banding activities in YDM. And Appendix 5 lists the 10-minute blocks, an area described on page 40 as covering roughly 21 by 17 miles.

Unfortunately, the maps that appear with the species accounts are unlabeled. I assume these pinpoint banded bird recoveries in the Americas. Below each map is a diagram, also unlabelled, which I assume to be ten minute blocks of longitude and latitude pinpointing recoveries within the YDM area.

Birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain has a sense of history and gives credit to all who have played their part in increasing our knowledge of the birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain area. The cover photograph sets the tone: Isabel Priestley—mentor of many and guiding light to the founding of the natural history societies in Saskatchewan—ecstatic, smiling, holding firmly but gently a not too happy American Bittern. The book also includes short biographies of all those who have contributed to the understanding the birds of YDM. This gives us a sense of those

who have come before and those who are now taking up the torch. While birding is often a solitary activity, it gets its strength from community.

Without question the vigour of *Birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain* is the scholarship in teasing out the history of YDM coupled with the observations of contemporary observers. The hope is that this work

becomes a benchmark for future observations in the area. In my case, I would be overjoyed to hear that Baird's Sparrows once again thrive in the area with the other grassland or prairie species that have been declining in the Yorkton-Duck Mountain area.

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BUTTERFLIES OF NORTH DAKOTA: AN ATLAS AND GUIDE

RONALD ALAN ROYER. 2003. Minot State University Science Monograph Number 2. Minot State University. Minot, N.D. 192 pp. 15cm x 23 cm. ISBN 0-9619635-1-4. Hard cover \$40.00 US. Available from the Minot University Bookstore at 500 University Avenue West, Minot, North Dakota 58707 (1-800-777-0750)

This book is an update of Dr. Royer's earlier *Butterflies of North Dakota* published in 1988 and covers all 147 species (although the jacket says 148) known to occur in the state.

The author will be familiar to many Saskatchewan butterfly enthusiasts for his role as Great Plains regional editor of *The Lepidopterists' Society* annual reports and for providing his expertise over the years to verify the identification of many specimens sent to him by Saskatchewan butterfly collectors.

I was not instantly taken with the book when it arrived in its plain brown protective jacket. Nor, as a birder who grew up with the Peterson guides, was I pleased to see that the illustration format was one species per page. And when I turned quickly to a few typically confusing species to see if there were any new tips offered for identification, I found none. It was only on taking the time to sit down and read the book from cover to cover that I came to appreciate what a remarkable contribution this book makes to our knowledge of prairie butterflies.

The main annotated list covers 147 species of which 117 are found in Saskatchewan, with a good potential for 9 others to occur here. The common names used generally follow Miller's *The Common Names of North American Butterflies* (1992) and will be familiar to most readers. I noted 14 variations from the North American Butterfly Association's listing of common names but all were reasonably easy to "translate".

The high resolution digital photography used to provide life-size illustrations of each species is outstanding, as is the effort to display both dorsal and ventral views of both sexes whenever this is of value. The only exception is with some of the swallowtails where the book's medium-sized format may have precluded additional life-size images. Male dorsal views are shown for 145 species, male ventral for 144, female dorsal for 126 and female ventral for 123. In addition, there are 52 supplementary images of 35 species that illustrate colour variations, different forms or, for many of the Hairstreaks and Blues, an additional enlarged view. Another 55 good quality colour photographs of butterflies in

the wild are scattered throughout the book.

The text for each species covers identification, habitat, larval food, flight periods, distribution in the state and sources for additional reference on the species. The larval food and flight period information is particularly thorough and valuable since all species are consistently covered which is often not the case in other guides.

Another innovative feature of the book is the distribution maps. Distribution is indicated on a county basis in the state map at the bottom of each species account. The format is such that anyone using the book can easily fill in new county records, and room has been provided adjacent to the map to record details of new distributional data.

The introductory section is short but does provide an overview of the North Dakota environment as well as a useful section on terminology including two figures illustrating

terms related to the butterfly wing. I would have liked to have seen a state map showing the more frequently mentioned locations but one was not included.

Appendices include a listing of 12 species which might potentially occur within the state (9 of these have been found in Saskatchewan) and of six species that have been erroneously reported in the past. A one-page bibliography and a glossary of terms are also provided.

This is a very complete and well thought out book, better organized than the previous edition and with vastly improved plates. The size and format make it practical to carry in the field as well as to display on the coffee table. I would highly recommend this book to the general naturalist and the more serious lepidopterist alike.

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CHECKLIST of the VASCULAR PLANTS OF SASKATCHEWAN and the PROVINCIAL AND NATIONALLY RARE NATIVE PLANTS IN SASKATCHEWAN

VERNON L. HARMS. 2003. University Extension Press, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. 328 pp. ISBN 0-88880-471-7. Soft cover, \$39.95 Cdn.. Available from University Extension Press (email: uep.books@usask.ca)

This book, as you may gather from the title, is not a flashy wildflower book; it is instead a scientific publication packed with useful information. It contains the names and synonyms of all of the vascular plants of Saskatchewan, and gives the rarity status of all of the rare plants in the province. This is the only current list of vascular plants for the province and, in the absence of a

provincial flora, is a necessary addition to the bookshelf of anyone studying, or working with, Saskatchewan plants.

The first part of the book, the checklist, was compiled as an initial step toward producing a Flora of Saskatchewan. It is a list of the native and naturalized vascular plants that occur in Saskatchewan given in

alphabetical order by scientific name. Each entry gives the most recent scientific name plus scientific name synonyms, English common name (or names in some cases) and a series of symbols indicating how common the plant is in Saskatchewan and whether or not the plant is native or introduced.

The second part of the book lists the provincially and nationally rare plants that occur in Saskatchewan. As in the checklist, the plants are listed in alphabetical order by scientific name and are organized by families. Rarity status, shown in symbols, is given for each plant. There are several ranking systems for rarity status and this book gives the ranks (and their definitions) assigned on the basis of several of these: the Canadian Priority Rating, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) candidate list and reports, Nature Conservancy Element Ranks, the Harms ranking, and the Saskatchewan Species at Risk Committee ranking. These ranks play an important role in discovering threatened habitats and in making conservation decisions.

There are two indexes, one to scientific

names and one to common English names, and three appendices. Appendix 1 lists plants previously reported or listed for the province but now excluded. Appendix 2 lists plants classified as extirpated, endangered, threatened or vulnerable according to the author's ranking system and Appendix 3 gives the plants currently excluded from the rarity list. All three are concise lists that give plants by scientific name in alphabetical order.

The scientific basis of this book goes well beyond its value as a reference to current names and rarity status. The current checklist is based on the author's taxonomic review of our provincial flora. All of the species in the checklist have also been reviewed with respect to the current taxonomy. In particular, the numerous revisions made by the *Flora of North America* and John Kartesz's Biota of North America Project have been taken into account. For this reason, the checklist is a vital resource to anyone seriously studying our flora.

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Baby porcupine, south of Saskatoon, on April 20, 2003

Doug Thorpe