

## CORNELL LABORATORY OF ORNITHOLOGY'S BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA, CD-ROM VERSION 3.

Peter W. Thayer and J. David Diehl. 2001. Thayer Birding Software, Naples, FL. CD-ROM. \$90 CDN NET. ISBN 1887148167. Available from the Nature Saskatchewan Bookshop.

Thayer's Birds of North America CD-ROM Version 2.5 was reviewed in the June 2001 issue of *Blue Jay*<sup>1</sup>. In this review, I describe some of the differences in the recently released (December 2001) Version 3 of the Birds of North America CD-ROM. For this version, Thayer Birding Software has teamed-up with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology to revamp Thayer's instructional and listing birding software products in order to keep up with continuing improvements in computer technology.

Version 3 has numerous improvements in the main instructional section, which is called "eField Guide View": better photos, improved arrangement of species account information, enhanced similar species views, family plates, use of field marks in the ID Wizard, an improved bird sighting recording system and improved online help.

The only major disappointments I found in Version 3 were the exclusion of certain Version 2.5 features such as the sound options from the ID Wizard and the Avian Jukebox. The other section that has been eliminated is the World sampler. The Joy of Birding section has been replaced by direct Internet links to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Project Feeder Watch and Thayer Birding Software sites. The Birder's Handbook section has basically stayed the same, but Bird Quizzes is much improved with the addition of 200 additional quizzes, including

ones on Christmas Bird Counts in Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Churchill.

### **Improvements to the Instructional Section**

*Photos.* Although there are fewer photos in the main instructional program in version 3 (2,675 as compared to over 3,000 in Version 2), photograph clarity has been improved by replacing 2,000 photos and having photos displayed with the newer SVGA monitor display standard.

*Species account information.* eField Guide View has improved the arrangement of species account information by using a field guide format with scientific and common names (in English, French, Spanish and German), order, family, identification tips (in point form), habitat and behaviour (short paragraph), photos, range and abundance maps, and sound mnemonic placed together on a single electronic page. A zoom-in feature is available for photos and abundance maps. There are quick jump links to alternate photos, sound recordings and sonograms, abundance maps, the Birder's Handbook and an Internet online guide.

*Species view and family plate.* The Version 3 species view shows six birds rather than two, and includes a new feature, the family plate, which allows you to view up to 12 members of a taxonomic family at a time. In the family plate, you can link to

similar or identical family description information in the Internet online guide.

*ID wizard.* The identification wizard has been improved by the addition of field marks such as crest/tufts, eye rings, white outer tail feathers and wing bars with a line drawing illustrating where these field marks occur on a bird. In Version 3, useful lists and quizzes can be generated from the ID wizard in addition to the photo gallery, which displays photos of all species in the final list along with the selected identification characteristics. From the photo gallery, one can play sound recordings, zoom in on the displayed photo or jump to specific species accounts in the eField Guide View.

*Sighting recording system.* A 'lite' version of Thayer's listing program, Birder's Diary, is included in Version 3 to replace the simple observation dialogue box found in Version 2.5. This simple listing feature contains pull down dialogue boxes for species name, location (state/province), date, and observer and a comment field (no longer limited to 255 characters). With this program, you can save your sighting data electronically and sort them by combinations of location, date, species name (taxonomic or common) and comments for generating date ascending life lists (first-time sightings of species) and sighting reports by taxonomic group and dates. This listing program accepts one observer name and does not allow one to export lists or sightings to other programs. In order to have full listing program capabilities, you will need to purchase the compatible North America or World editions of Birder's Diary Version 3.

*Online help.* Although there is no guided tour of Version 3 that can be printed out for easy reference, the Thayer Birding Software website provides excellent sections on common questions about software, including Version 3. After you register your copy, technical support is available by e-mail or through their toll-free number.

## System requirements

The minimum system requirements for running Version 3 are Pentium 233 processor or equivalent; Windows 98, ME, 2000 Pro or XP; 64 MB RAM; 16x CD-ROM drive, 30 MB on hard drive, or 600 MB if you want all the media copied to your hard drive; and all hardware and software required to support multimedia applications. Links to websites from the CD-ROM require an Internet connection. These minimum system requirements describe a computer purchased within the past 3–4 years. They have not tested the CD-ROMs on Windows 95 or Windows 3.x, and cannot offer support to you if you are running these other operating systems. Thayer Birding Software cannot guarantee Mac users that the CD-ROM will work with Windows emulation software such as Virtual PC or Softwindows, although there are reports that some Mac users are successfully running this CD-ROM on their Macs with Windows emulation software.

This software requires that you register with Thayer Birding Software. This is important because unregistered copies stop working after 30 days. Registration protects Thayer Birding Software from software piracy but the 30-day grace period also means that you can now legally lend your CD-ROM to anyone and they can try it out for free for 30 days.

1. Thayer, P.W. and J.D. Diehl. 1998. Birds of North America CD-ROM 2.5. Thayer Birding Software. Naples, FL. Reviewed by Robert Warnock. *Blue Jay* 59: 109-112.

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