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CREATOR OF A SYMBOL: FREDERICK GEORGE BARD

JEROME J. PRATT. 1997. Whooping Crane Conservation Association, 3000 Meadowlark Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635. \$1.75 U.S.

Fred Bard, an employee of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History from 1925 to 1946 and its director from 1947 until his retirement in 1970, died on 23 September 1989.

This *Blue Jay*-size, 24-page booklet, is Jerry Pratt's memorial to Fred Bard. Jerry reminds us how Bard spearheaded the drive to save the Whooping Crane from extinction, and reproduces two Whooping Crane posters distributed from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. He gives the text of the 1970 newspaper report when Bard received an honorary LL.D. degree from the University of Regina. He reproduces, without mention of its

source nor of permission granted, the memorial to Bard, written by Ruby Apperley and Fred Lahrman, and published in *Blue Jay* 48:168-170, 1990. He also reproduces Bard's reminiscences, given at the annual meeting of the Whooping Crane Conservation Association meeting in Regina on 4 October 1980.

This little booklet, sold at cost, is a bargain. Anyone with an interest in Whooping Cranes or in Fred Bard, or both, will treasure it.

Reviewed by C. Stuart Houston, 86 University Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J



White-tailed Jack Rabbit

Wayne Lynch

BIRDFEEDING 101 A TONGUE-IN-BEAK GUIDE TO SUET, SEED AND SQUIRRELLY NEIGHBOURS

(Teacher Resource) by Richard E. Mallery, Main Street books, Doubleday, Toronto, 1997; illustrated by Linda Decker; ISBN 0-385-48700-2; 194 pages, \$16.95.

Most of us naturalists are avid birders who enjoy injecting each day with some humour. Birdfeeding 101 provides a "course of instruction" that will answer some questions asked by even the most experienced birder.

The chapters are set up like a series of mini-courses with a twist. First, there is basic information, then a Recap and Reinforce section, followed by letters to Dick E. Bird (Ann Landers style), Tongue-in-Beak Titbits, questions and discussion topics, and Bird-Brainedivia. The author sets up the pages in a reader-friendly style, with quotes usually from Dick E. Bird, the book's mascot), puns and poems, clever cartoons and illustrations, and other notes. For example,

The heart fills as the birdfeeder empties. (p. 48)

Although this book is largely non-fiction, it does have a villain, Hairy Houdini, the notorious squirrel. The author includes a wanted poster for this outlaw and affectionately discusses its interference with bird feeding throughout the book.

Ground squirrels will hang out around the base of the birdfeeder like teenagers at the mall. They look like they are loitering, but they're actually there for a purpose..... (p. 72)

Some of us are in the process of signing our gardens to achieve

maximum wildlife habitat. This book provides useful information on planning such a garden. It is also good at explaining why we do what we do:

It is important to provide water in both summer and winter. Birds constantly tend to their feathers, which must be kept clean and healthy to ensure proper insulation and mobility, especially in winter months. Various water heaters are available to keep water from freezing in colder climates. (p. 47)

Seed trays with drainage holes will quickly clog with wet seed, droppings, and hulls. Screening works much more efficiently. (p. 53)

Many points are made with the author's insatiable sense of humour. He admits that feeding birds regularly is expensive but nevertheless has therapeutic value:

Feeding birds lets you turn off your lights for awhile, park your brain, and idle your engine. Some people never get the opportunity to feed birds. Some are never exposed to the joy associated with watching colourful birds pick their pockets. (p. 146)

On a more serious note, the chapter entitled "Seeds for Thought," describes the importance of interconnectedness and of habitat protection.

The dictionary defines a bird's

“habitat” as “all the elements and conditions that satisfy the living requirements of a bird, so that it can successfully produce offspring in sufficient numbers to perpetuate its kind.” (p. 96)

The book provides useful information for students’ wildlife reports or for your article writing and interpretive repertoire. There are many facts to use in science lessons on the vertebrates, namely birds:

Nuthatches work a tree differently from other birds. They search tree bark from the top down, giving them

a different angle on bugs hiding in the bark that other birds miss. (p. 96)

At the end of the book is a list of sources of bird-feeding supplies, a glossary and an index for easy reference. The mood throughout is optimism. This book is a joy for all birders and would make a fine gift. I will end this review with a quote from page 144:

In a mad world nature is sanity’s only hope.

Reviewed by *Judith Benson*, Saskatoon SK.



Sandstone outcrops near Climax, Saskatchewan

Fred Lahrmo

VULTURE: NATURE'S GHASTLY GOURMET

WAYNE GRADY. 1997. Greystone Books (Douglas & McIntyre), Vancouver, BC
xi + 110 pp., illus., index. Hardcover, \$24.95

Wayne Grady states in his preface that his goal in this book is to “encourage us to reexamine our attitude towards vultures and condors in particular, as we must reexamine our attitude towards nature in general, and help us to make room in our hearts for all creatures, no matter how they make their living.”

It is by no means clear, however, that people who have not already made room in their hearts for vultures will even want to open this book. Consider the pocket photo. Readers accustomed to bird books whose covers feature such soothingly familiar images as the imperious glare of the Bald Eagle or the brilliant colours of the Painted Bunting will be startled by the darkly brutish animal shown here. It's a Lappet-faced vulture, an African species of outlandish and unwholesome aspect: bare ear flaps, a massive hooked bill, a naked head covered in folded and wrinkled skin, long, lanceolated breast feathers, and an oddly luxurious ruff that creeps over the back of its neck and stands erect behind its long skull. Grady's hunched and sinister poster bird is visually striking but unlikely to inspire a reexamination of attitudes on the part of readers who have already formed the notion that vultures are repulsive. Even less likely to spark reconsideration is the book's title.

But setting these mixed messages aside for a moment, what of the text itself? First, there's not much of it. So numerous are the photos and graphics that only 51 pages (excluding

preliminaries and end matter) are predominantly text. Second, the three chapters are so discrete that each could have been an article in a popular magazine. Indeed, *Vulture* reads more like a collection of articles than a unified work.

The first chapter, *The Value of Vultures*, notes that these “bottom feeders of the bird world,” though vilified in some cultures, are revered in others. The chapter moves into an interesting discussion of the evolutionary convergence between the Old World vultures, which belong to the order Falconiformes, and the New World vultures, which were recently moved from Falconiformes into Ciconiiformes, the order that includes storks and herons.¹

The chapter concludes with Grady's answer to the question, “Why should we care about the preservation of vultures?” It's the sort of question that arises frequently during any discussion of creatures that fail to meet common human standards of agreeableness in appearance and habit. Grady eschews the easy utilitarian response—that vultures “help keep us from becoming knee-deep in squirrel carcasses”—and opts for the more enlightened one. We should care about vultures because they exist.

The second chapter introduces individually the five New World species (the two condors appear in the final chapter) and relates some of the

characteristics of the group's nesting, roosting, and feeding behaviour. Like Turkey Vultures, the Greater Yellow-headed Vultures of South America forage by smell and are, according to Grady, "arguably better at finding food even than turkey vultures, which can sniff out a dead field mouse under a pile of manure from a great height."

In his third and final chapter, titled *El Condor Pasa*, Grady gives a concise account of the conservation efforts that have been made on behalf of the California Condor and the Andean Condor. "Perhaps because the Andean condor is still a mythological bird in South American society and folklore, its situation is somewhat less precarious than that of its California counterpart," Grady notes.

A brief list of further readings (nine books, six articles) and an index conclude the book.

Vulture is enthusiastically designed. Over half of the book's space is given over to photos, illustrations, and brief extracts from the text that are given special typographical treatment. The sidebars, the type, the use of colours and screens, the illustrations (many of which are of historical interest), and the photos combine to produce a book that is visually lively—even distracting, some might say. The photos are uniformly excellent.

Many of the captions are less satisfactory, however. One (page 37)

labels a turkey vulture a black vulture. Another (page 19) claims that a vulture's feet are designed for ripping. Several neglect to identify the species shown. The bird in the astonishing jacket photo is unidentified. Another omission—curious because both author and publisher are Canadian—is a discussion of the reasons for the northward expansion of the range of the Turkey Vulture. Nor is there mention of the number of vulture species worldwide. A list of these 22 birds, with notes on size, range, and population status for each, would have been a welcome addition. The species name of the Lappet-faced Vulture is consistently misspelled.

In sum, then, *Vulture* aims at a wide audience. It mixes graphics and text to provide a quick introduction to aspects not only of the natural history of these birds but of the way they have been perceived by various human cultures. Finally, the book will be of as much interest to those interested in book design as to those interested in vultures.

1. Some may find it difficult to imagine that the Turkey Vulture has more in common with the Greater Flamingo than it does the Golden Eagle, but the 41st Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds, published in July 1991, would suggest that you prepare yourself for field guides in which vulture and flamingo share a page.

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Wolf Lichen contains a toxin, vulpinic acid, used in the past to poison wolves.