

WILDFLOWERS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

GEORGE W. SCOTTER and HALLE FLYGARE. 2007. Whitecap Books, North Vancouver, BC. 256 pages. Soft cover. 15 x 22.5 cm. Colour photographs throughout. ISBN 1-55285-848-0. \$29.95 CAN

George Scotter and Hälle Flygare published *Wildflowers of the Canadian Rockies* in 1986. Now, in 2007, they offer us *Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains*—a charming little book that includes more species and covers a larger geographic area.

Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains includes information on over 350 species of wildflowers and flowering shrubs commonly encountered in the Rocky Mountains of Canada and United States. Trees, grasses, ferns and fern allies are excluded. The book includes an introductory section on the geology, major ecoregions and vegetation zones of the Rocky Mountains. A glossary and diagrams illustrating commonly encountered terms are provided at the end of the book.

Wildflowers are organized by flower colour and, within colour groups, by family. The layout is attractive, with two species per page. The accurate, concise text provides a description of the plant as well as information on habitat, distribution and interesting “tidbits” related to use by humans and/or wildlife, and folklore. For each species there is a photograph and small distribution map showing jurisdictions in which that species is found. The authors have attempted to use standard common names and have updated the scientific names of many of the species.

The photographs, most taken by Hälle Flygare, are, in general, superb. They represent a mixture of close-ups of flowers and plants in their habitat. The photos are the key to being able to use this book to identify one’s plant of interest, and the quality of photos provided should enable one to do just that for all but the most difficult groups.

While the distribution maps are an attempt to graphically portray where each species occurs within the Rocky Mountains, they are somewhat confusing as entire jurisdictions are shaded even though the species may occur only in a small area within it, such as the Waterton area in Alberta. The authors acknowledge this. In addition, it is unclear whether a jurisdiction is shaded if the species occurs in the jurisdiction but not necessarily in the Rocky Mountains. For example, Western Spiderwort is known from Alberta, but Alberta is not included in a description of its distribution. Is this because the species does not occur in the Rockies in Alberta?

The book is soft cover and the same dimensions as an issue of *Blue Jay*—a little large to put in a pocket but small and light enough to put in a daypack. The intended audience is visitors to the Rocky Mountains who are interested in learning about the plants that they are likely to encounter along the roadside, hiking trail or in a campground. It is not

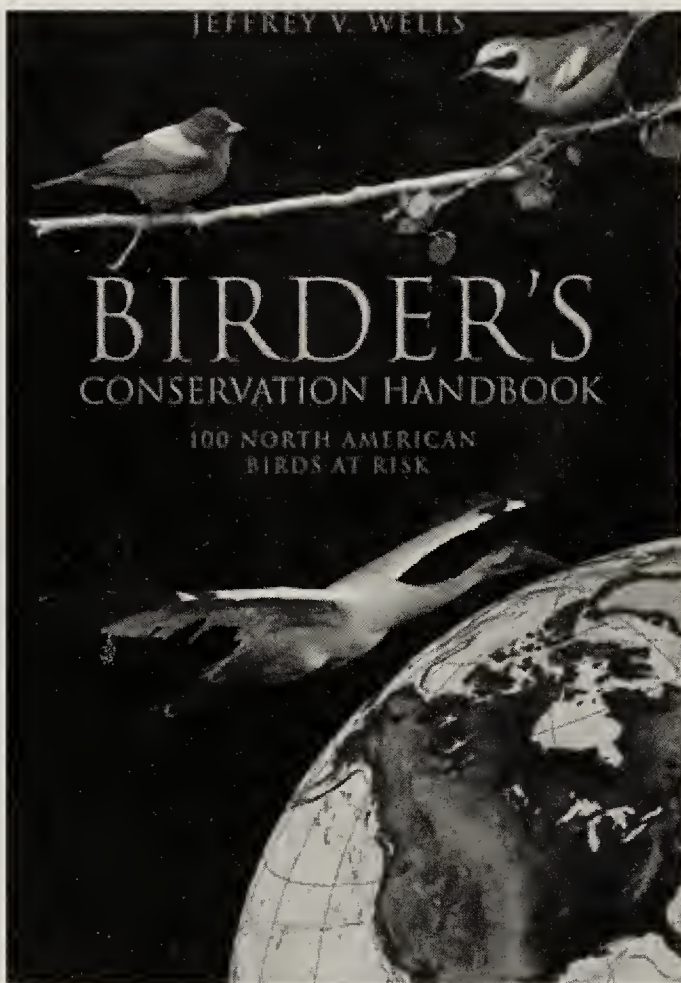
intended to be a technical treatment but rather a book that “attempts to cultivate an appreciation of the beauty and fragility of the wildflowers of the Rockies....”. The authors have done this very well and I would recommend this book to any wildflower enthusiast

with an interest in wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains.

Reviewed by Joyce Gould, Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, 9820 106 Street Edmonton, AB T5K 2J6

BIRDER'S CONSERVATION HANDBOOK: 100 NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS AT RISK

JEFFREY V. WELLS. 2007. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. xii + 452 pages. Soft cover. 17.8 cm by 25 cm. 100 black and white drawings and 100 range maps. \$35.00 US. ISBN: 978-0-691-12323-3.



This is the first attempt to summarize, in a single volume, information on the ecology, threats and opportunities for conservation of North American bird species at risk in Canada, the United States and northern Mexico. The book focuses on the 100 birds species most at risk in North America. These are species with very small and/or rapidly declining populations, and many of

these species have small and retreating ranges.

Thirty of these species breed or migrate through the Prairie Provinces. The other 70 bird species do not occur regularly or at all in the Prairie Provinces.

The first 46 pages has sections titled: Scope and Purpose, Birds as Indicators, The State of North American Bird Populations, Major Conservation Issues Affecting North America's Birds, The State of Bird Conservation in North America and Beyond, and What You Can Do. The author provides a readable although data heavy description of the status of bird populations and habitats for all major habitat types in North America. One can easily get lost in the depressing numbers. To no surprise, grasslands have the highest proportion of endangered birds of total avifauna of any terrestrial habitat.

The introductory chapter on major conservation issues affecting North American birds is one of the strengths of the book. Although brief, it provides

more than sufficient detail to be useful to the expert as a review and as an understandable introduction of these issues to the average citizen or beginner birder.

Some interesting items found in the introductory section are a list of key national and international bird monitoring programs and their contact information, a section about extinction and threats to endangered native Hawaiian birds, and a manageable list of practical suggestions to help birds and the environment in general, such as recycling, energy conservation and volunteering in bird monitoring programs.

The bulk of the book, 338 pages, consists of the 100 species accounts. Each account contains information on status and distribution, ecology, threats, conservation action and conservation needs, and references, and is accompanied by a small drawing of the species, and a current and accurate grayscale range map. (Colour is used only for the front and back book covers to minimize printing costs.) The status and distribution section describes historical and current distribution, status and population trends with available data. The sections on threats and conservation needs are a particular strength of the book.

The book has three appendices and a useful index. The first appendix summarizes the status of all North American birds on the various national species at risk lists including our Species at Risk Act (SARA) registry. The second appendix summarizes the status of native Hawaiian birds and the final appendix is the official list of Mexican birds at risk.

One of the main drawbacks of the book is its focus on the United States. For instance, conservation actions described in the species accounts pertain primarily to the United States, and the status of bird conservation in North America is primarily a review of developments, milestones and trends in bird conservation in the United States and, to a lesser extent, Mexico. The review of American and Mexican bird conservation is focused at the national level. There are short sections describing bird conservation in Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean but they are too brief to be really helpful or informative. I was left hungry for more information about bird conservation outside the United States and looking for links and references for finding more information.

Another shortcoming, in my view, is that information about Canadian conservation actions is lacking for a number of non-boreal species such as Ferruginous Hawk and Piping Plover, or is very limited, i.e. for Whooping Crane and Greater Sage Grouse. Canadian examples of conservation actions are described in more detail for boreal species such as Canada Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler, probably due to author's personal experience with boreal birds.

In spite of the inadequacy of Canadian examples and some information, I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in bird and habitat conservation.

Reviewed by Rob Warnock, 3603 White Bay, Regina, SK S4S 7C9, Email: <warnockr@accesscomm.ca>