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A BIRD-FINDING GUIDE TO ONTARIO

CLIVE E. GOODWIN. 1982. 14 x 21 cm. University of Toronto Press. Paperback. 248 pp.

The 'sport' of listing and the 'art' of bird-finding have finally come of age in Canada. Not surprisingly, Ontario, with its large population of bird watchers has been among the first provinces to devote an entire guide to bird-finding.

The author, Clive Goodwin, is no stranger to bird-watching, having edited the Ontario regional reports in *American Birds* for 17 years. His knowledge, here combined with that of the best of Ontario's birders, forms the basis for an impressive catalogue of prime birding places.

Ontario has a diverse avifauna with 417 well-documented species, of which at least 276 have nested (this compares, for example, with Saskatchewan which has acceptable records of 336 species of which 241 have bred). With ranges of latitude and longitude of over 1600 kilometers each, listers intent on shattering old records and more casual naturalists looking for a stimulating outing will welcome such a comprehensive guide.

The book is divided into four major sections. The first gives general information on the status of Ontario birds. The second, consisting of six chapters,

provides regional accounts summarizing the best birding areas in the province. The third provides information on conditions such as weather, snakes, poisonous plants, and insects. And the fourth presents a systematic list of bird species and a brief statement of their status. Cross-indexing of localities and species names allows the reader to find information quickly.

Accounts are provided for 217 localities in Ontario — actually many more localities than this are included when you consider that places like Toronto include dozens of more specific locations. The book achieves two major objectives. First it discusses those species one would normally find in an area and locates major 'hot spots' for rarities (Point Pelee, Long Point, Rondeau Provincial Park and some remote localities such as Winisk and Moosonee). Secondly Goodwin also manages to call to the attention of everyone, birder and none-birder alike, those areas that are especially important to mixed groups of birds. For example, we learn that Lake Ontario between Toronto and Hamilton provides wintering habitat for up to 50% of the wintering waterfowl in southern Ontario! This is one thing that traditional bird books often fail to do.

Being a Westerner with strong opinions on the different approaches to bird-watching exhibited by eastern and western Canadians, I found the indirect insights into 'eastern' human behaviour to be particularly illuminating! Eastern Canadian birders, for

example, seem to be much less affected by the quality of the bird-watching environment than westerners; or why else would this book contain references to so many un-savoury habitats. In fact, with detailed information on how to find 125 sewage lagoons, the book might well have been subtitled "a guide to the sewage lagoons of Ontario"!

I would like to mention two minor problems with the book. Firstly, I think the reader would benefit by the inclusion of a guide map to Ontario with relative positions of the six provincial sub-regions clearly marked (sub-region maps are provided). This would orient anyone moving from one regional map to the next. Secondly, there seems to be little value in the attempt made in the systematic list to summarize the status of birds (7 categories) in 'northern' and 'southern' Ontario. Obviously, given local changes in bird distribution, general summaries over such vast areas are of little use to the birder. This information is best sought in other books such as an *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ontario* by James, McLaren and Barlow (1976).

In summary, the book is well-conceived. Goodwin is to be commended for infusing a real sense of the birds and habitats of Ontario and somehow raising the book above the level of "just another bird book".

The value of such a publication lies more in the awareness it generates in terms of preserving habitats (even, perhaps, the sewage lagoons!), than in providing the "lister" with opportunity to check off species on next year's roster. The former serves the best interests of the birds; the latter, as illustrated by the sorrowful, trodden understory of Point Pelee, may not.

— Reviewed by *Wayne E. Renaud*, School of Landscape Architecture, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario.

WADER BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Volume 3 of our special report series contains 1364 listed references to the genera *Calidris* and *Limicola*, (price: U.S. \$7.00). Volume 4 contains 394 listed references to the genus *Phalaropus*, (price: U.S. \$4.00). Both prices include surface mail postage. For air mail postage, add U.S. \$1.00. These attractively covered blue paperbacks are available from Ottenby Bird Observatory, Pl. 1500, S-380 65 Degerhamn Sweden.

A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO CHURCHILL

JAMES A. LANE and BONNIE CHARTIER. 1983. L & P Press, Denver, 62pp. Paperback \$6.50.

"A hike across the tundra is one of the great experiences of Churchill. Each footstep, sinking softly into the deep spongy carpet of mosses, gives an exquisite feeling of walking across a plush rug ... The air is filled with the strange, delightful calls of courting shorebirds."

This quotation will bring back fond memories to anyone who has participated on one of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's annual field tours to Churchill. It partially explains why Churchill is invaded every June by a migration of birdwatchers intent on observing arctic birds at their tundra nesting grounds.

This book begins with a summary of the region's history, topography, vegetation and weather. A section titled "Progression of Summer" provides a useful summary of the arrival of birds, beluga whales and wildflowers. The section "What to Wear" is required reading for any visiting birder.

The bulk of the book describes the birds most likely to be found in any of 8 principal areas. Our field trip observations bear out the authors' account. Each region has its own map showing various lakes, creeks and landmarks. There is also a series of photographs showing the habitat and a few of the birds. Unfortunately many of these photographic reproductions are of poor quality.

An appendix lists some 40 mammals and 300 plants that have been found in the region. This list would have been more useful to the visiting naturalist if an indication of relative abundance, habitat or flowering dates had been included.

The most useful feature of the book is a series of bar-graphs showing the relative abundance of each of 166 bird species on a monthly basis. Most of these agree with observations on SNHS field tours. I would however disagree with the status of the Ross' and Little Gulls. They are listed as "How Lucky Can You Get" (ie. very rare, less than 10% chance of finding). For the last three years our tours have found these birds on a regular basis — although one does need to know where to look.

I would recommend this book to any birder, especially those who plan to join our Churchill tour this June. It is available from the Blue Jay Bookshop, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3B4 — Reviewed by *Stan Shadick*, 3F-1800 Main Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4B3

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(All profits to Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.)



*C.S. Houston at Osprey nest platform
Frank Scott*

FOOL HEN: The Spruce Grouse on the Yellow Dog Plain

WILLIAM L. ROBINSON. 1980.
University of Wisconsin Press,
Madison, Wisconsin. 221 pp.
Hardcover \$18.50 U.S.

According to the dust jacket this "is the first book devoted fully to the Spruce Grouse." The book presents information on all aspects of the biology of the Spruce Grouse and does so in exceptionally good style. The information is accurate and detailed and is presented in such a manner as to be very readable and enjoyable to the amateur and yet still be very valuable to professional



Young Spruce Grouse G.L. Holroyd

biologists for its extensive facts on Spruce Grouse.

The book contains sections on habitat, behaviour, growth, plumages, physiology, diseases, population ecology and Spruce Grouse predators, and is based on the author's work on the Yellow Dog Plain of northern Wisconsin. Robinson describes the Spruce Grouse in full and interesting detail in each of the above sections. The only fault I could find in this book was the poor quality of the photographs.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, learning much about this quiet, unobtrusive species which inhabits Saskatchewan's coniferous forests.

— Reviewed by *Wayne C. Harris*, Box 414, Raymore, Saskatchewan. S0A 3J0

AN ADDRESS BOOK FOR NATURALISTS

Quotations collected by MARGARET MORSE NICE. Wood engravings by SYLVIA HAHN. Edited and arranged by DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS. Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., P.O. Box 69, Postal Station H, Toronto. M4C 5H7. Hardcover \$9.95 plus \$1. postage.

To quote from *An Address Book for Naturalists*, Margaret Morse Nice is, "probably the most famous woman ornithologist in the world. A trained zoologist, active environmentalist and prodigious writer, she was also a loving wife and mother." She collected quotations from a wide variety of writers, planning to use one to begin each chapter of her autobiography, *Research is a Passion with Me*, which was edited for publication after Dr. Nice's death by Doris Huestis Speirs, a long-time friend and herself a noted ornithologist. Instead of using the collection of quotations in the autobiography, Speirs has chosen to put them together in a separate publication.

Speirs has selected a theme for each letter of the alphabet, and quotations precede the pages for the appropriate addresses. For example, B's theme is Beauty. Sylvia Hahn has complemented this letter, as she has all others, with a delightful wood engraving: a bee climbs up the B which introduces the pages for "B's" and the theme Beauty. There are also seven full page wood engravings.

Unfortunately, the space for addresses — which should be basic in

an address book — is restricted. For most letters of the alphabet, there are 16 sections of 4 lines each, allowing space for one change of address in our transient society, or allowing for 32 names and addresses of two lines each. Since the book is so attractive that you might wish to keep using it indefinitely, it would have been better in looseleaf form so that an occasional address page could be changed or added without disturbing the rest of the book. However, despite the space limitations, this delightful collection of unusual quotations makes looking up an address both pleasant and inspirational.

"I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things", the quotation from Ecclesiastes which introduces T's theme, Truth, is certainly a reflection of the life of Dr. Margaret Morse Nice to whom this book is a tribute.

— Reviewed by *Mary I. Houston*,
863 University Drive, Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan. S7N 0J8



Cuckoo Bumble Bee Fred W. Lahrman

THE SINKING ARK. A New Look at the Problem of Disappearing Species.

NORMAN MEYERS. Pergamon Press,
Oxford 1979. xiii plus 307 pages. \$12.50
U.S.

I read Norman Meyers' *The Sinking Ark* at the same time as the more celebrated work of Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave*. The latter will be read by many seeking to realign their life aims as Toffler's projected "third wave" rolls over us, but people other than naturalists concerned with disappearing species should read Norman Meyers' book, too.

Several statements from the end of the book form a suitable preface to this review. Meyers proposes that a small fraction of the amount spent on bringing up a child to the completion of a university course at the bachelor's level (say \$80,000) spent on global conservation "would help to ensure each child a worthwhile patch of this earth-home to spend the rest of his or her life in."

"...the challenge of conservation of species," Meyers' goes on to say, "is a microcosm of broader problems that arise from integrated living in the global village ... yet ... hardly any other problem receives as little attention as that of disappearing species."

The Sinking Ark is a thoroughly-researched modern treatment of the problem. It contains sufficient numerical data to indicate the magnitude of the problem, and it analyzes in stark economic terms the cost of not preserving sufficient habitat to maintain wild species (Chapter 4). Meyers points out the value of rare plants as sources of new genetic stock and the value of animal and plant extracts as drugs involved in cancer therapy, or their value as sources of raw material for

industrial processes, or as new foods or dietary supplements. These "bring immediate utilitarian benefit to society." In the long term, however, what is emphasized is the maintenance of ecosystems rather than isolated heroic preservation of certain species.

The Sinking Ark has twenty chapters, grouped in three parts:

1. The Problem of Disappearing Species
2. Tropical Moist Forests
3. A Comprehensive Strategy for Conservation of Species

There is a useful index and a list of selected references, mainly recent ones up to 1978. This reviewer would have preferred references given on the page as footnotes rather than by chapter at the end of the book. There are a few typographic and word choice errors. The reviewer's main criticism is the disproportionate amount of time

spent on the analysis of species disappearance through destruction of tropical rain forests, with little more than acknowledgement of the poor protection afforded to grasslands and Mediterranean type zones (Chapter 15). However, Meyers' thesis is that the tropical moist forests are at greatest risk.

Responsible naturalists and, in fact, any persons who claim to be active conservationists should read this book carefully. It is a sound and readable guide to making rational decisions as a citizen as to what is real protection for the future and the future of our children, rather than short term gain in terms of cheap plywood from tropical forests or cheap beef raised where the Amazon rain forest once was!

— Reviewed by *Jim Jowsey*, 2635-19th Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4T 1X2

UPCOMING SNHS ACTIVITIES

*Whooping Crane Tour

Plan to join this escorted tour and observe some of these majestic but endangered birds as they stop over on their fall migration. The tour departs Saskatoon on September 29 and October 6. The tour cost (\$65) covers leadership and transportation for this one day event. For reservations, write:

Saskatchewan Natural History
Society
Box 1784
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7K 3S1.

*Annual SNHS Fall Conference

This year's meeting will be hosted by the newly formed Melfort Natural History Society on the weekend of October 26-28. An exciting variety of program events is planned. Be sure to reserve this date on your calendar. More details later.

WANTED: BUG COLLECTORS

The Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History would like to hear from any individual who has collected insects in Saskatchewan. If you have an insect collection, small or large that is properly documented with date and locality of specimens collected, the museum would appreciate the opportunity to view the collection. The museum strives to gather as much information about Saskatchewan's natural history as possible and entomology is but one aspect. Your collection can contain valuable information on the life history and distribution of Saskatchewan insects. And who knows, you may have an insect that is a new record for Saskatchewan. If you have a collection, please contact: KEITH RONEY, Curator of Invertebrates, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Wascana Park, REGINA, Saskatchewan S4P 3V7.