



Semipalmated Sandpiper
G.W. Beyersbergen

FIELD GUIDES COMPARISON

Birdwatchers in the field need a book which is simple and concise, but also complete with all species and all significant plumages. Peterson's book was once the birdwatcher's bible, but it covers only the eastern part of the continent and thereby doesn't contain a number of species which occur in Saskatchewan. The range maps are poorly located at the back of the book, and in most cases don't show anything west of central Manitoba. The Robbins *et al* entry is the least expensive of the four. It covers the whole continent and includes a number of vagrants. The maps are coloured and easy to read, and the sonograms are an interesting feature, for those who can read them. Generally, this is an excellent book for the novice birder. The National Geographic guide is much like the Robbins book: full-continent, good maps in colour, checklist in the index. Its coverage of vagrants is considerably more complete, and the number of

illustrations of different plumages and forms a bit more extensive than Robbins. Overall it is the best field guide for a birder of any level of experience. The Audubon Society books are not really field guides — they are surely too heavy. The three-volume set gives a well-detailed account of each species which occurs regularly in North America, and accidentals are dealt with in less detail at the back of each volume. The illustrations are mainly photos; these are very good for confirming field marks, but overall visual treatment of forms and plumages is less extensive than the Geographic guide. The Audubon books are a very good alternate reference for avid birders when when considering rare bird sightings, but for the average or novice birder I would recommend the National Geographic guide or the Robbins book.

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FOUR "NEW" FIELD GUIDES FOR SASKATCHEWAN'S BIRDS

How do the new guides rate for identifying birds in Saskatchewan? All have positive points and unfortunately all have negative points. Peterson unfortunately does not cover all of the species found in Saskatchewan; that is its major drawback. The illustrations are excellent, text excellent, range maps adequate and organization good (similar species on same or nearby pages). Robbins' book has adequate illustrations, poor text, good range maps, and good organization, and it covers all of Saskatchewan's species as do the following two guides. The