

THE BIRDS AND BIRDERS OF BEAVERHILLS LAKE

ROBERT LISTER, 1979. Edmonton Bird Club, Box 4441, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 4T5. \$9.50. Proceeds to Canadian Nature Federation.

A few years ago, when I was a director of the Edmonton Bird Club, the executive was advised of an unusual problem — a surplus of money. "Operation Spendthrift" was inaugurated, with the club's Honourary President, Robert Lister, being asked to write a book on Beaverhills Lake, a favourite haunt of Edmonton birders. The book has been well worth waiting for!

Much of the text is based on the notes of the late William Rowan, for whom Bob Lister was an assistant for many years. As such, the book is not only a valuable record of the birds at Beaverhills Lake, but also almost a biography of Rowan. In addition, tales are told of many prominent naturalists resident in Alberta or visiting from elsewhere. The last chapter covers some early history of the lake; otherwise the book spans the time from when Bob first saw the lake in 1920, until 1977, when most of the manuscript was complete. About two-thirds of the text is based primarily on experiences with Rowan and his colleagues; the rest on those of members of the Edmonton Bird Club and other recent naturalists, too numerous to name in a brief review. Many of the stories will be remembered by readers fortunate to have spent a few post-Bird Club beer

sessions at Listers! I was very pleased to see these written down both for the enjoyment of others and for the sake of the historical record.

The cover by Dick Dekker, photographs over the years, and drawings by Harry Horton all add to the book. I found few typing errors, and only one which leads to confusion. The date of arrival of Peter Erasmus given as 1885 on p. 250 must be incorrect, as his subsequent activities are described as taking place between 1855 and 1858. Names of birds are sometimes obsolete in the text, but apart from *Acanthis* and *Spinus* appear to be up to date in the checklist at the end of the book. The Ruddy Turnstone is given the incorrect scientific name of *Arenaria virgata* in this list, which omits McCown's Longspur.

The errors listed above are minor and do not detract from the high quality of the book. This publication serves as a wealth of information on birds (and other nature) at Beaverhills Lake over a long period of time, and particularly of changes occurring over the years. Many interesting tid-bits of behaviour and ecology are scattered throughout. My only regret is that there is no species index or people index to help retrieval of the many biological and biographical details recorded.

As a sourcebook of data, the book is valuable, but one need not be interested in technical facts to enjoy reading it. Bob writes with the same humorous style in which he narrates stories, both in relating Rowan's eccentric antics and in telling a joke on himself. I recommend this book

highly to all interested in birds at prairie lakes, to all interested in history of naturalists, and to all who like to be entertained by a good nature book. In his foreword, the Hon. Dr. J. W. Grant MacEwan labels Lister

as "Alberta's undisputed Dean of Bird-watchers." Bob's book does this title due credit. — *Reviewed by* Martin K. McNicholl, 128 Silvergrove Hill N.W., Calgary, Alberta T3B 4Z5.



Common Catail.

Gary W. Seib