

There have been 483 species of birds recorded in Washington state. If you are interested in a no-frills, authoritative, species-by-species account of where and when each was seen, then Birds of Washington State is for you. Its 46 authors—accomplished birders, managers, and scientists—summarize how the abundance and occurrence of each species has changed over the past several decades and provide access to the scientific literature documenting bird distribution in Washington. Their information sets a solid benchmark for future evaluations.

Birds of Washington State begins with short introductions to Washington ornithology, state conservation efforts, habitat classification, methods of trend analysis, mapping issues, and conventions used throughout the species accounts. The editors make a valiant effort to alert readers to their biases, procedures, and intentions.

The meat of the book is the species-by-species account of the birds’ habitat, occurrence, conservation and management issues, and noteworthy records. A few black-and-white drawings of birds, maps of occurrence for selected species, and bar charts of seasonal occurrence break up the detailed listing of where and when a species was observed. The focus is clearly on status and distribution with few references to behavior, life history, or basic ecology. The authors clearly state that such information can be found in other published sources. The only photograph of a bird (red crossbill [Loxia curvirostra]) is on the dust jacket.

To me, the gold in this book is the documentation of current status. The authors relate current status to what was known in the past, thereby, describing the trends in Washington’s bird populations. Their analysis of trend is crude, mainly descriptive,