Waterfowl Ecology and Management

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Reviews

Edited by R. Todd Engstrom

The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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Waterfowl Ecology and Management.—Guy A. Baldassarre and Eric G. Bolen; illustrated by Tamara Sayre. 2006. Kreiger Publishing, Malabar, Florida. xii + 567 pp., 59 tables, numerous black-and-white line drawings and photos, and 1 appendix. 2nd edition. ISBN 1-57524-260-5. Cloth, $112.50.—Waterfowl are among the most studied groups of birds, in part because many species are widely hunted. In recent decades, waterfowl researchers have provided a wealth of new findings related to population ecology and management. Baldassarre and Bolen, recognizing the rapid growth of valuable new information since their book was first published in 1994 and the emergence of numerous new issues confronting waterfowl conservation, have prepared a new edition of their book.

The 2006 edition of *Waterfowl Ecology and Management* represents a major revision of the authors' original work. The handsome new front cover contains an inset of a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos)* and American Black Duck (*A. rubripes)* pair in color against a background of Greater Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens atlantica*) in flight. The book is printed on glossy paper, with a much larger page size than in the first edition (28.0 × 21.5 cm vs. 23.4 × 15.7 cm). Drawings by Tamara Sayre add to the book's appeal, and numerous black-and-white photographs help to convey important points, though some are underexposed, which reduces their effect. Stand-alone "infoboxes," another new feature of the second edition, are distributed throughout the book to highlight accomplishments of early leaders in the field, identify roles of several key institutions and organizations in the field's early development, and discuss important waterfowl issues—for example, the introduction of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) to North America and the growth of resident flocks of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*).

Several excellent books have been published on waterfowl over the past several decades, but this has not diminished the need for an up-to-date textbook for college instruction addressing waterfowl ecology and management. This volume is packed with important new information, making it a valuable reference for students and practicing professionals. Its 2,800 references, including 1,200 new citations, alone represent a valuable source of information on the current status of the field. The book's focus is primarily on North American species, habitats, and issues, but literature from other parts of the world is included where relevant. Common names of waterfowl are used throughout the book and follow Livezey (1997); in Appendix A, scientific names are provided along with English names for each of 171 species of fossil, extinct, and contemporary Anatidae.

The book is organized into 12 chapters with the same titles and order as in the first edition. Each chapter consists of a brief introduction followed by multiple sections addressing subjects pertinent to that chapter. The organization of the chapters is logical and easy to follow, and most aspects of waterfowl ecology and management are covered. Chapter 1 provides a historic overview of the field, and chapters 2 through 8 address key aspects of waterfowl biology. Chapter 9 includes a description of 67 important waterfowl areas in North America,

ranging in size from the Prairie Pothole Region to individual water bodies such as Ruby Lake in Nevada. Globally significant waterfowl sites outside of North America also are described. Chapter 10 provides a detailed overview of wetland habitats used by waterfowl, their status, and the dynamic processes that make them productive for waterfowl and other water birds. In Chapter 11, Baldassarre and Bolen provide an extensive overview of land-management policies, national environmental policies, and the roles of federal and state governments and private organizations in conserving waterfowl habitat, thereby offering guidance to readers who may seek greater involvement in waterfowl and wetland conservation and management. In Chapter 12, the authors temper the generally positive tone of the book by cautioning readers that although the recent past has seen many successes in waterfowl management in North America, major challenges lie ahead. One challenge the authors identify is a need for continuation of training programs to instruct the next generation of waterfowl biologists, a step they have made easier to achieve through preparation of this well-written textbook. For readers familiar with the first edition, major revisions occur in the chapters entitled "Waterfowl Classification"; "Reproductive Ecology"; "Nesting, Brood-rearing, and Molting"; "Harvest and Mortality"; and "Wetlands and Wetland Management." Chapter 2, on waterfowl classification, has been greatly expanded and now features Livezey's (1997) phylogenetic approach. In Chapter 5, on reproductive ecology, the section on reproductive strategies and role of nutrient reserves has been expanded, and a new section on evolution of clutch size has been added. Chapter 6, on nesting, brood-rearing, and molting, includes a wealth of new research findings on topics such as predator management, brood survival, and the beneficial effects of the Conservation Reserve Program in the Prairie Pothole Region on duck production. Chapter 8, on mortality and harvest management, includes new sections on the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program and Adaptive Harvest Management, a new section addressing strategies for reducing numbers of Arctic-nesting geese, and an expanded section identifying causes of waterfowl mortality. Chapter 10, on wetlands and wetland management, contains a new section on integrated management of wetlands for waterfowl and shorebirds and an expanded section on control of noxious and exotic vegetation.

Preparing a comprehensive synthesis of waterfowl research and management in a large, complex, and rapidly changing field represents a major undertaking. Baldassarre and Bolen have distilled a vast array of information in their new book in a timely and very useful manner. The authors' extensive and varied experience in waterfowl research, bolstered by input from numerous waterfowl researchers and managers with diverse backgrounds, have helped to make this publication state-of-the-art. I would recommend this book for the library of every waterfowl biologist, educator, and student seeking a thorough understanding of the current issues affecting waterfowl populations and their management. Avian biologists focusing on water birds and non-professionals with an avid interest in waterfowl also should find this book informative and worthwhile reading.—Gary L. Krapu, *Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, 8711 37th Street SE, Jamestown, North Dakota 58401, USA. E-mail: gary_krapu@usgs.gov*

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Birds of Mexico and Central America.—Ber van Perlo. 2006. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 336 pp., including 98 color plates. ISBN-13: 0-691-12070-6 and ISBN-10: 978-0-691-12070-6. Paperback $29.95.—Do we need another field guide to birds of Mexico and Central America, when guides already exist for subsets of the region? Yes, there is always room for improvement. This guide´s main strength is that it is more compact than most. Having all the information one needs in one very portable book is certainly handy. All species in the region are illustrated, including accidentals and hypotheticals—the only ones

missing are Tricolored Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) and some recent accidentals.

The most important features in a field guide are user-friendly design, accurate illustrations, and concise information that complements the illustrations. A bad design can spoil excellent text or illustrations. Van Perlo´s guide basically uses the facing-page format for plates and text that has proved to be the design of choice for field guides; it is quite easy to get accustomed to text sometimes spilling over to the next or previous page, and the range maps bunched together at the end of the book are well cross-referenced with the species' English name and plate number. Van Perlo generally did a good job of illustrating similar species in the same or adjacent plates (the few exceptions include scattering black raptors among plates 14–22).

The illustrations are the part of a field guide that will typically be used the most. By far, most of the illustrations in Van Perlo´s guide are accurate. But there are unfortunate errors, such as the horizontal posture of Spotted Barbtail (*Premnoplex brunnescens*); *Turdus assimilis lygrus* is unrecognizable; the legs and feet of Solitary Eagle (*Harpyhaliaetus solitarius*) are too thin; the tail is too long in Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*); and the beaks are too long in *Atthis* and *Lamprolaima*.

Illustrating birds to scale, especially within the same plate and family, is very important. Of course, illustrating condors and hummingbirds to the same scale is not practical in a field guide (in the 19th century, John James Audubon had to produce a double elephant folio to achieve just that), but an approximation within practical limits is worthwhile. Again, for the most part, van Perlo has done a good job. However, there are a few "oxymorons." For example, in plate 24, Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) seems bulkier than Sora (*Porzana carolina*) and even wood-partridges (*Dendrortyx* spp.) but is the same size as wood-quails (*Odontophorus* spp.). Rails (in plate 23) seem smaller than crakes (in plate 24). In plate 38, parrots look smaller than the parakeets in plate 37. The hummingbirds in plate 46—from coquettes (*Lophornis* spp.) to lancebill (*Doryfera ludoviciae*)—appear to be similar in size.

Van Perlo states (p. 8) that the guide uses the scientific names of the AOU Check-list. However, some more closely follow Sibley and Monroe (1990, 1993). In a very few cases, van Perlo commits the ultimate sin in a field guide: the names are switched reciprocally between Sumichrast´s and Nava´s wrens (*"Catherpes" sumichrasti* and *"C." navai*) and between Baltimore and Orchard orioles (*Icterus galbula* and *I. spurius*). Most flying falcons in plate 22 are mislabeled. Also, both species of *Caryothraustes* are given identical scientific names. The few typographical errors in the guide include *Butorides "stratus,"* "Ochraceus" Wren (*Troglodytes ochraceus*), "Guadelupe" Junco (*Junco insularis*) and "Columbia" instead of Colombia (p. 23).

The text of a field guide should be helpful and concise enough that reading it while having the bird in view does not become tedious. A detailed description of plumage is unnecessary, because that is what the illustrations are for—and as we have all heard, a picture is worth a thousand words. Lengthy descriptions of range, seasonality, and abundance are also unnecessary if they are provided in a map. In these respects, van Perlo´s guide, and "illustrated check-lists" in general, are definitely on the right track.

Are the identification tips provided in the text helpful? Usually, but for some species, brevity resulted in incomplete or misleading text. The "easy to confuse with [Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*]" under Hutton´s Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) could have been replaced by a more helpful "Thicker bill and legs than [Ruby-crowned Kinglet]" without sacrificing much space (additional details would be worth adding, especially because more space was available in this case).

Many of the following examples are attributable to the extreme brevity of the text, combined with suboptimum illustrations. It would have been nice to see both the black that partially encircles the eye-ring and the well-defined back streaks mentioned as features separating Oaxaca Sparrow (*Aimophila notosticta*) from Rufous-crowned and Rusty sparrows (*A. ruficeps* and *A. rufescens*); both features are actually depicted on the wrong species. Immature Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) will probably be misidentified as Cocoi Herons (*A. cocoi*) from a combination of the pictures (immature Great Blue not depicted) and the text ("from [Cocoi Heron] by white cap…"). Anyone relying on this guide to identify a King Rail (*Rallus elegans tenuirostris*) in central Mexico will probably not be satisfied with the information provided. It is unfortunate that the yellow or red underwings of flickers (*Colaptes* spp.) are not mentioned or illustrated;

nor are the black undertail coverts that are the main difference between male Broad-billed and Doubleday's hummingbirds (*Cynanthus latirostris* and *C. l. doubledayi*). The illustrations of Rufous Mourner (*Rhytipterna holerythra*) and Rufous Piha (*Lipaugus unirufus*) do not reflect the 20% size difference between them and, in error, their lengths are given as the same (25 cm).

Well-marked subspecies are treated in this as in most other guides to the region (but important omissions here are *Lampornis amethystinus margaritae*, *Automolus ochrolaemus cervinigularis*, *Mionectes oleagineus assimilis*, and *Salpinctes obsoletus fasciatus*); yet, as in other guides, insufficient warning is made that because subspecies featured are often only a sample, subspecific identification based on the guide remains tentative, and a taxonomist may identify a bird as belonging to a subspecies not mentioned in the guide.

The range maps in van Perlo´s guide use a clever system of symbols and hatching to concisely indicate relative abundance and seasonal status as well as distribution. Unfortunately, the hatching that indicates "frequent to uncommon resident" can often be confused with bodies of water; see, for example, the maps of Mexican Parrotlet (*Forpus cyanopigius*) and Prong-billed Barbet (*Semnornis frantzii*). The outlines of distribution are largely based on maps from www.natureserve.org (which for most of this region are based on maps in Howell and Webb 1995). They are therefore quite accurate but contain many of the same omissions. Much new data published in the past 10 years (e.g., in *North American Birds*) has expanded our understanding of species distributions. The range map of Green Parakeet (*Aratinga holochlora*) erroneously includes the range of Red-throated Parakeet (*A. rubritorquis*), though the latter is treated in the guide as a distinct species. The treatment of *Amazona ochrocephala* and *A. oratrix* is also confusing.

Overall, I recommend this guide to anyone who needs a portable book for identifying most birds in this region. The compactness that is its main strength, however, is not without its disadvantages. The font is very small; I have no trouble reading it, but I may in 10 years. Any increase in font size would be appreciated. Making the pages 1 cm wider or adding 50 or so extra pages, or both, to accomplish this—and to enhance text helpfulness, particularly with difficult cases such as *Empidonax* flycatchers—would still leave this guide conveniently compact. The flaws I have mentioned can be fixed quite easily. I very much look forward to a second edition of this guide.—Héctor Gómez de Silva, *Xola 314-E, 03100–México, D.F., Mexico. E-mail: hgomez@miranda.ecologia.unam.mx*

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Algemene en Schaarse Vogels van Nederland [Common and Scarce Birds of The Netherlands].—Rob G. Bijlsma, Fred Hustings, and Kees (C. J.) Camphuysen. 2001. Avifauna van Nederland, vol. 2. GMB Uitgeverij, Haarlem–Stichting Uitgeverij van der KNNV, The Netherlands. 496 pp., 200+ pictures, 350+ text figures. ISBN 978-90-74345-21-7. Hardcover, €49,95.—*Common and Scarce Birds of The Netherlands* provides, together with volume one, *Rare Birds of The Netherlands* (van den Bergh and Bosman 2001), the most complete overview of the Dutch avifauna. The two volumes are the long-awaited extension of the *Atlas van de Nederlandse Vogels* (SOVON 1987). Both volumes are richly illustrated with pictures (though I question the use of nest images), distribution maps, and graphics detailing seasonal distributions and trends in populations. The books are a cooperative effort of the major ornithological organizations of The Netherlands, including the Netherlands Ornithologists' Union (NOU), the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology (SOVON), the Dutch Birding Association (DBA), and the *Nederlandse*

Zeevogelgroup (NZG, Dutch Seabird Group), which guarantees the best possible quality. Both books are written in Dutch, with short English summaries, and are fully referenced. The Netherlands is important for many species, for overwintering or as a stepping-stone during migration, and all entries provide a complete overview of the literature, including the many articles published in local Dutch journals that are rarely available outside The Netherlands. Each species entry describes the origins and migrations of the species, and then details the occurrence in the breeding season and outside of it, before it finishes with a detailed discussion on the numbers and trends within the Dutch population in the 20th century. In some entries, the data are explicitly interpreted, but often the authors refrain from that or discuss the interpretations from the literature. The authors also refrain from interpreting the combined data at large, but digging through the many individual entries gives a grim view of the losses many species endured over the past decades. Overall, the books contain a wealth of information and are indispensable for anyone studying a species for which The Netherlands is important.—Kim van der Linde, *Department of Biological Science, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, USA. E-mail: kim@kimvdlinde.com*

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van den Bergh, A. B., and C. A. W. Bosman. 2001. Zeldzame Vogels van Nederland, 2nd revised edition. GMB Uitgeverij–KNNV Uitgeverij, Haalem–Utrecht, The Netherlands.

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Goudplevieren en Wilsterflappers: Eeuwenoude Fascinatie voor Trekvogels [Golden Plovers and *Wilsternetters*: A Century-old Fascination for Migratory Birds].—Joop Jukema, Theunis Piersma, Jan B. Hulscher, Erik J. Bunskoeke, Anita Koolhaas, and Arend Veenstra. 2001. Fryske Akademy, Leeuwarden–KNNV Uitgeverij, Utrecht, The Netherlands. 272 pp., 1 CD. ISBN 978-90-5011-147-8. Hardcover, €27.20.—*Golden Plovers and* Wilsternetters*: A Century-old Fascination for Migratory Birds* ("*wilster*" is a Dutch name for the Eurasian Golden Plover [*Pluvialis apricaria*]; "*flappers*" is translated as "netters") is a fascinating book that documents the century-old Dutch craft of catching Eurasian Golden Plovers and other migratory birds. Written in Dutch with a good English summary, the book is richly illustrated with pictures detailing all aspects of the birds, the craft (check out the video clip on the CD), the cultural and historical context, and modern research. In the past, the birds were caught for food and provided a small supplementary income to the *wilsterflappers*; today, their expertise is used to catch birds for scientific research on the origin, migration, and ecology of Eurasian Golden Plovers and other migratory birds.

The book illustrates very well how the knowledge of the *wilsterflappers* leads to much better understanding of the ecology, migration, and presence of these birds. For example, the Pacific Golden Plover (*P. fulva*) is now a rare winter visitor to The Netherlands (22 accepted recent records: see www.dutchbirding.nl/comm/cdna/2005.html). However, this was not always the case. In talking with the *wilsterflappers*, it became clear that they recognized two different *wilsters* and, on the basis of their accounts, museum skins, and the available literature from that time, it has become clear that overwintering Pacific Golden Plovers were quite common, to the point that the *wilsterflappers* knew exactly when to expect them. Not only did they recognize them as a separate species, they also saw the changes; the birds stopped appearing around the 1930s and 1940s. The recent records are all of individual young birds spotted in early fall, whereas the old records, from much later in the season, referred to groups of up to tens of birds. These overwintering Pacific Golden Plovers from the past were fatter and heavier-feathered than the birds of recent records and appear to represent a population adapted to overwintering in temperate regions (this species normally overwinters in the tropics). This population is gone now, and only the *wilsterflappers* noticed their disappearance. The book documents several other cases—for example, the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)—where the knowledge of the *wilsterflappers* adds to our

understanding of the presence, change, and disappearance of a species.

Overall, I highly recommend this book to anybody interested in the use of traditional crafts and practices for modern research. The book documents, in detail, "both sides of the coin" and is, as such, a unique work that documents the old craft of netting *wilsters*, its cultural and historical context, and its contribution to our understanding of the golden plovers and other overwintering birds in The Netherlands.—Kim van der Linde, *Department of Biological Science, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, USA. E-mail: kim@kimvdlinde.com*