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BOOK REVIEWS

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Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America by Guy Baldassarre; with assistance from Susan Sheaffer. 2014. A Wildlife Management Institute Book, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 1,027 pp. in 2 vols. $69.00. ISBN 978–1421407517.

The baton has been passed again. The legendary *Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America* (*DGS*) was first published in 1942 by Dr. Francis H. Kortright, and it was popular enough to have 14 printings. Thereafter, it was the turn of Dr. Frank C. Bellrose of the Illinois Natural History Survey to revise the work and carry it forward. Bellrose published the second edition of *DGS* in 1976; responding to demands for improvement in several aspects of that edition, he published the third edition in 1980. In 2009, when it was time for someone to update the Bellrose legacy and revamp *DGS*, Dr. Guy A. Baldassarre grasped the baton. A Distinguished Teaching Professor in the State University of New York, College of Environment Science and Forestry, Baldassarre exuded passion and championed waterfowl, wetlands, and education. He had vast experience working with waterfowl, with other wetland-dependent birds, and in other topics in North America, Mexico, Venezuela, and elsewhere. Consequently, he was a prime "waterfowl disciple" to assume the role of rewriting *DGS*.

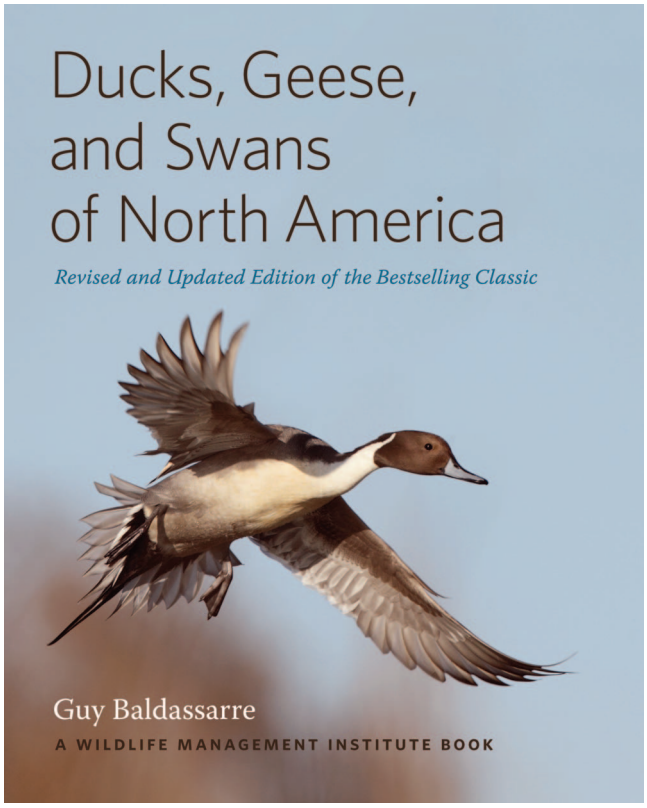
I can't recount how many times, in recent years, I yearned for *DGS* to be revised. Whether working on manuscripts, proposals, or theses, this two-volume set is often a "go-to" for reviewing some concept or quickly retrieving information about any North American waterfowl species. There is generally enough detail in the species accounts that they serve as a good first source for gleaning basic facts and bibliographic references. Although it may be less useful for seasoned waterfowl professionals with an already exceptional command of the historical and contemporary literature, *DGS* is a fantastic resource for junior scientists, undergraduate or graduate students, wetland managers, and agency biologists working on restoration or other grants that require information on waterfowl species or landscape metrics.

Organization of the Book. The two volumes of *DGS* are primarily a collection of species accounts. Working within page limits and costs of production, Baldassarre had to make difficult decisions about what to include and exclude (he explains these in a section called "Basis for the Book"). Volume 1 is nicely introduced by a few moving tributes, including the Foreword by Stephen P. Havera, the Introduction by Richard E. McCabe, and a "remembrance" by Richard M. Kaminski. The "meat" of the book is launched on page 2 with a full-page color map of North and Central America, followed by the first species account, the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*).

The two volumes of *DGS* treat 49 species or subspecies of waterfowl. The chapters are not numbered; they are instead designated by species names. Volume 1 addresses 27 species or subspecies, beginning with the two whistling-ducks (*Dendrocygna* spp.), which are covered separately in two chapters. Following the whistling ducks is separate coverage of three swan species (Mute Swan [*Cygnus olor*], Trumpeter Swan [*C. buccinator*], and Tundra Swan [*C. columbianus*]), Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), and Emperor Goose (*Chen canagica*). Next are the two subspecies of Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*), the lesser (*C. c. caerulescens*) and greater (*C. c. atlantica*), both of which are discussed extensively in the same chapter. The Ross's Goose (*C. rossii*) account comes next, followed by the two subspecies of Brant (*Branta bernicla*), the Atlantic (*B. b. hrota*) and the black or Pacific brant (*B. b. nigricans*). Next, by far the largest species accounts in the two volumes are those for Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) and Cackling Geese (*B. hutchinsii*). Given the diversity of species and subspecies of the white-cheeked geese, Baldassarre dedicates one 42-page chapter (pp. 221–262) to these species. Formerly, this group was considered one species containing a large but debatable number of subspecies or races ($n = 11$). The American Ornithologists' Union split the Canada Goose into (1) Canada Goose and (2) Cackling Goose (Banks et al. 2004). The Canada Goose group contains seven subspecies of large to medium-sized geese, and the Cackling Goose comprises four smaller subspecies. Baldassarre first broadly introduces this group of geese and then addresses each subspecies individually. Each species and race also has its own color range map, which creates nice geographic differentiation among the birds but fosters comparisons of ranges, too. The remaining chapters in volume 1 include Muscovy Duck

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(*Cairina moschata*), Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), 11 dabbling ducks, and concludes with American Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*).

Volume 2 begins with five diving or bay ducks (*Aythya* spp.). Within these, Baldassarre treats separately the Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila nearctica*) and Lesser Scaup (*A. affinis*). Following scaup are four chapters on eiders (*Polysticta* [1] and *Somateria* [3] spp.). The unique Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) is covered next, followed by three species of scoters (*Melanitta* spp.). Following the scoters is the Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), then the six members of *Mergini*, beginning with the smallest, the Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*). Within *Mergini*, the Common Goldeneye (*B. clangula*) and Barrow's Goldeneye (*B. islandica*) are covered in separate chapters, as are Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*, *Mergus merganser*, and *M. serrator*). Lastly, two members of the tribe Oxyurini (stiff-tailed ducks) are covered separately, including the Masked Duck (*Nomonyx dominicus*) and Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*).

At the end of Volume 2 are Appendix A, "Important Waterfowl Areas," which assigns numerals to important regions depicted on a grayscale map; Appendix B, "Ducklings, Goslings, and Cygnets," which contains beautiful colored drawings of the young of these North American waterfowl (except for the Masked Duck); and the Index to the two volumes. Last but not least, a sleeve on the inside back cover contains a CD-ROM with all of the Literature Cited and maps. This CD contains separate PDF maps for North America (the same or similar maps that appear in the beginning of each volume), Alaska (depicting primary cities, National Wildlife Refuges [NWRs], and other relevant features and places), and Canada (territories, provinces, and many important habitats [e.g., lakes, islands]), depicted to better identify and understand specific breeding and staging habitats of North American waterfowl; a regional map of the United States with all the states and the NWRs within each state; and a regional map of Mexico that lists many of the important waterfowl areas. The CD also includes 104 pages of literature citations. Quite simply, the CD-ROM was necessary to accommodate all of these important supplementary materials; the literature cited alone occupies 10% (104/1,027) of the total pages of the two volumes.

Species Account Information. The species accounts are mostly uniform in content, although more detail may result for some species, such as Snow and Canada geese, because of the amount of information currently available. By contrast, only seven pages are devoted to the Masked Duck, largely because much less is known about this species. Despite different chapter lengths, Baldassarre largely maintained the same subject categories for all species, elaborating at length on the life history or conservation and management for some (e.g., Canada Goose) but less for others (e.g., Masked and Muscovy ducks).

Each species account features a color drawing of the species, followed by a paragraph or so on generalities of the species, then a colored sketch of the bird's wings. The sections of the ensuing text are identified by headings and subheadings. For example, the account of the American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) begins with Identification (*At a glance*, *Adult males*, *Adult females*, *Juveniles*, *Ducklings*, *Voice*, *Similar species*, and *Weights and measurements*). Next is Distribution, and Baldassarre even describes the Chiloe Wigeon (*A. sibilatrix*) and the Eurasian Wigeon (*A. penelope*), but the American Wigeon section contains finer detail: *breeding and winter distributions* and *migration*. More primary headings follow these, including Migration Behavior, Habitat, Population Status, Harvest, Breeding Biology, Behavior (*mating system*, *sex ratio*, *site fidelity and territory*, and *courtship displays*), Nesting (*nest sites*, *clutch size and eggs*, *incubation and energetic costs*, *nesting chronology*, *nest success*, *brood parasitism*, and *renesting*), Rearing of Young, Recruitment and Survival, Food Habits and Feeding Ecology, Molts and Plumages, and Conservation and Management.

The species accounts are generally structured as in the example above, the scope of the information matching the level of knowledge available for the particular species.

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Baldassarre has improved the layout of the species accounts over that of previous editions in a couple of ways. First, each account now begins with a very basic introductory paragraph about the species, its identification, and its general distribution. Bellrose typically introduced an account with a species' Identification and Population Status, and basic descriptions of Distribution followed a bit later. Although either strategy is informative, Baldassarre's approach may offer a bit more logical flow. Second, while Bellrose typically ended each species account with a Food Habits section, Baldassarre nicely concludes each with a Conservation and Management section that brings defining closure to each account and discusses needs or conservation challenges, much as we do in scientific papers.

What This Book Provides Us. This book will be a useful addition to the libraries of ornithologists and others, for several reasons. First, it maintains an educational and otherwise worthy tradition begun in the 1940s (i.e. by Kortright). The 2014 *DGS* provides contemporary information on North American waterfowl in one accessible place (two volumes), professionally and carefully presented. The color photos of waterfowl, all gorgeous and carefully selected, should appeal to anyone, especially lay readers who may be less familiar with waterfowl identification and nuances of plumages. Second, the book provides layers of general but useful information. Frequently, we as professionals need specific information, such as a current range map of breeding individuals, average clutch size, winter habitat, or food use. This revised *DGS* serves as a great reference to begin such an information query. For an undergraduate university student in a wildlife ecology program, these volumes are a waterfowl gold mine, brimming with information. And Baldassarre was attentive enough to discuss important influences on declining or overabundant waterfowl species in North America, as well as less-studied species.

Baldassarre also succeeds in this revision by "hybridizing" the writing for a diverse readership, so that it can be understood by hunters and other conservationists and, of course, by waterfowl scientists and managers. Baldassarre succeeds in synthesizing complex subjects, such as his brief but pointed interpretation of the Lincoln–Peterson index used to estimate Snow Goose populations (p. 151). Perhaps the greatest use of the book for me will be as a source to locate that one important tidbit of information needed in a manuscript, proposal, course slides, or some other production. Many times, I've needed a literature citation, or information on trend data or some other piece of scientific evidence, and it seemingly took forever to locate it. The new *DGS* should expedite such processes. And, last but not least, a striking departure from Bellrose's editions is the larger font size of the text in this new edition.

What You Won't Find in This Book. In fairness to those who might slight the content of *DGS*, I want to briefly address the "flip side." Some may suggest that scientific rigor is lacking in *DGS*. However, remember that the revised *DGS* was not intended to be scientifically comprehensive. As in other science disciplines, vaults of diversified scientific books and journal articles are available to us (e.g., Batt et al. 1992, Rees et al. 2014). The 2014 revised *DGS* succeeds in maintaining and enhancing the legacy of this influential book.

I view *DGS* as a relay race, with no end in sight, only a steady pace through time, recharging when necessary. As we would pass the baton to a teammate on our heels, Guy Baldassarre has left us with this renewed legacy, but it arrives with much sadness, because he passed at an early age (59) from complications of chronic lymphocytic leukemia. The waterfowl community also acknowledges Guy's friend and colleague, Dr. Susan Sheaffer, for assisting him during his challenges in completing this manifesto. Perhaps some young person with a fire for waterfowl is circling the track right now, exuberantly fetching the baton from their friend. In another generation or two, we'll need to discover and encourage the next literary "baton handler."

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