



## BOOK REVIEWS

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**A Guide to the Birding Hot-Spots of Israel.**—Hadoram Shirihai, James P. Smith, Guy M. Kirwan, and Dan Alon. 2000. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, The Israel Ornithological Society, Tel Aviv, Israel. Vol. 1 (Northern Israel). 115 pp., 63 color photographs, 15 maps, species checklist; Vol. 2 (Southern Israel). 165 pp., 84 color photographs, 19 maps, species checklist. ISBN-none (British Library Cataloguing). \$30 (paper).

Given the amount of attention that has been paid to this tiny country over the years (and not just for the birds), it is amazing that it has taken this long to publish such a practical guide for birders. Better late than never! Israel boasts over 500 species of birds, including many western Palearctic rarities that can be seen throughout the year, such as Black Francolin (*Francoelinus francolinus*), White-breasted (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) and Pied (*Ceryle rudis*) Kingfishers, Clamorous Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*), and Yellow-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xanthopygos*). And then there is the world-renowned migration where you can see, as the authors put it, “what 100 000 honey buzzards really look like.”

The authors have done an excellent job in putting together a user-friendly, comprehensive guide to finding those birding hotspots previously known only by local experts and the hardcore. Each volume contains a helpful introduction giving a concise overview of locations, habitats, climates, migration, and even particulars about birding tours and accommodations. A very useful section called *Timing Your Visit* gives a month-by-month breakdown of general birding highlights. Maps and color photographs of many of the notable birds in the area accompany the text throughout.

A systematic checklist of all the birds recorded in Israel is included at the end of each volume. Taxonomy and nomenclature follow the *Birds of the Western Palearctic, Concise Edition* (Snow and Perrins 1997). Species status is based on Hadoram Shirihai's *Birds of Israel* (1996) with updated information added by the authors through April 2000. An undefined measure of abundance is noted by case; seasonal occurrence status codes in capital letters signify common species and those in lowercase uncommon species. The species checklist does not show subspecies (except for the disputed Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus [cachinnans] michahellis*, and *L. [cachinnans] cachinnans*), although some subspecies identifiable in the field are mentioned within the text.

The main body of each volume is constructed according to numbered sites that are also labeled on a map of the entire region found at the front of the book,

making it easy to initially locate sites. Each of the 23 numbered sites is described in detail with additional maps and information about how to get there and what to expect. Two subheadings are listed under each chapter title: *Sub-Sites* and *Key Species*. These quick references are helpful, although at times the *Key Species* is somewhat inconsistent. In general, this subheading includes species that are unique for a particular site; however, occasionally some species are noted along with their status, and a few lists include mammals. The text is well written and concise for easy review in the field. Descriptions include a longer, detailed list of key species, the names of which are highlighted in bold. Latin names throughout the text take up a lot of space and are unnecessary given the complete species list found at the back of each volume. A bit confusing at times is the listing of common species alongside uncommon ones such as Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) and Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha bimaculata*) for the Hula Valley. The text is filled with sightings of vagrant and irregularly occurring species, which can also be misleading to novice birders but definitely adds an adrenaline rush for the more avid birder (dare I say “ticker”).

A map accompanies each location description with sub-sites labeled by number. I field-tested several areas in the north and found the maps adequate but very simplified, i.e., only major roads and structures are shown (and I am familiar with the areas). The maps appear to be hand drawn, which is a refreshing change from the ubiquitous computer-generated graphics of other birding guides; however, on some of the maps it is difficult to distinguish between the stippling pattern of *Town/Village/Built up Area* versus *Open Water/Fish pond/Reservoir*. In my opinion, more maps with more detail such as topographical lines would be beneficial and could be added in place of photographs, thereby maintaining the field-friendly size.

The guide attempts to cover all of Israel, which is not too difficult a task considering Israel is about the size of a large county in California. However, coverage varies substantially, from extremely thorough to absent. Understandably, the authors had to select the sites they felt are the best and most representative in an effort to keep the guide concise and useful. Yet, it is hard to understand why they decided to leave out the center of the country. It is true that much of this area comprises Tel Aviv and Jerusalem urban sprawl; however, some areas are great for birding and are a welcome addition to the many tourist attractions. For instance, located in the center of Jerusalem, at Knesset Park, is the Jerusalem Bird Observatory, one of four bird-banding stations in Israel. Jerusalem is one of the

best sites to find Olive-tree (*Hippolais olivetorum*) and Barred (*Sylvia nisoria*) Warblers in May, and breeding Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*). Along the coastal plain, several reservoirs such as Hulda and Revadim have produced many good birds.

One last point that I felt was lacking, and one unfortunately absent from most bird-finding guides, is a discussion of birding behavior and species protection. A short mention is given in the *Some Final Tips* section (Volume 2 only) regarding desert birds, advising the birder not to pursue birds. The only other mention I found for cautioning birders about disturbance is at the end of the description for sub-site KM 33 (Southern Arava, Volume 2). Israel is a rapidly growing, industrialized country with diminishing biological resources. Although the main problems are habitat loss and degradation, direct human disturbance can significantly impact rare and sensitive breeding species. In the spring, some birding hotspots such as KM 33 are inundated daily by hordes of birders, and although most are responsible, it only takes one trek off the path to cause site abandonment, crushed eggs, etc.

Altogether this two-volume set is an indispensable addition for anyone interested in birds, including Israelis and those visiting Israel for the first or twenty-first time. The two volumes are compact and portable, even in the field (in fact, they could easily have been combined into a single volume). So if you have not planned your next vacation, this guide will certainly whet your appetite.—ZEV LABINGER, Bio Logic Consulting, 18a Narkisim Street, Kiryat Tivon 36073, Israel, e-mail: labinger@netvision.net.il

**Diseases of Wild Waterfowl, 2nd Edition.**—Gary A. Wobeser. 1997. Plenum Press, New York. xii + 324 pp., 24 plates and illustrations. ISBN 0-306-45590-0. \$79.50 (cloth).

For many of us working in the field of ornithology, the impact of disease on avian populations is often recognized, but rarely surfaces among the myriad factors that we identify as influences on population regulation. But for groups of birds that congregate in high densities during some period of the annual cycle, such as waterfowl, disease can become an important factor influencing population dynamics. *Diseases of Wild Waterfowl* is a practical reference text that provides ornithologists working with waterfowl species a complete up-to-date guide on diseases that could occur within their study populations. Material contained in this book would also prove essential to waterfowl management biologists (particularly those on National Wildlife Refuges), aviculturists (especially game-farm waterfowl producers), wildlife disease investigators, and those interested in having the most up-to-date reference on waterfowl diseases.

The Introduction outlines basic concepts of waterfowl diseases, then relates that to the rapidly changing environments in which we live, a subject dear to the hearts of many waterfowl biologists. The book covers all known diseases (over 70), divided into eight sections: (1) viral infections, (2) bacterial infections, (3) fungal infections, (4) parasitic infections, (5) toxicoses, (6) miscellaneous conditions, (7) investigative techniques, and (8) references. This subdivision allows the

reader to easily separate and find disease issues. Each disease discussion is subdivided into sections on etiology, epizootiology, clinical signs and pathology of sick birds, diagnosis, and, for a few of the diseases, present knowledge about control mechanisms.

Section I focuses on viruses, highlighting duck plague (a subject of several detailed investigations by the book's author), avian influenza, and Newcastle disease. Highlighted is the importance of transmission from domestic to wild bird populations, as exemplified by duck plague. The remainder of this section provides concise summaries of hepatitis, parvovirus, reovirus, adenovirus, and poxvirus infections, the reticuloendotheliosis group of viruses, eastern encephalitis, and bursa of Fabricius infections.

Section II is devoted to bacterial infections, of which avian cholera is undoubtedly the most important to ornithologists studying waterfowl populations. This disease is usually thought of as a disease of wintering waterfowl in the western U.S., but Wobeser points out that die-offs have occurred in all flyways and during northern and southern migration through Canada. Avian cholera can devastate wild populations, with >60 000 birds dying in Texas during an epizootic in 1956–1957, about 70 000 succumbing in northern California in 1965–1966, an estimated 80 000 in Nebraska in 1980, and even larger outbreaks at Chesapeake Bay in 1970 and 1978. The remainder of Section II presents substantial information on tuberculosis, salmonellosis, staphylococcosis, and seven other types of bacterial infections reported from waterfowl.

Fungal infections (Section III) are covered in seven pages of text, with the only extensive information provided on aspergillosis. Section IV is more extensive (39 pages), and, with subdivisions for protozoan and metazoan parasites, deals with the broad field of parasitic infections. In the protozoan portion, Wobeser covers blood protozoan parasites, *Cryptosporidium* and *Sarcosystis* infections, coccidia (intestinal and renal), and three other potential parasites of questionable significance in wild waterfowl populations. The metazoan portion of this chapter includes excellent discussions on ectoparasite, leech, trematode, cestode, nematode and acanthocephala infections. Many of the book's illustrations are contained in this section and should prove useful to ornithologists in referencing potential parasitic infections in their waterfowl study populations.

Section V on toxicoses is divided into chapters on botulism, lead and other metals, pesticides (including PCBs and related chemicals), and other toxic substances. The two diseases presently of most importance to waterfowl populations, botulism and lead poisoning, are covered in greatest detail. However, as we become more aware of the insidious impacts of toxicoses on bird populations (particularly the impacts of pesticides and heavy metal accumulations in the food chain), this chapter will prove even more valuable as a reference guide to waterfowl biologists. All that we have to do is reflect on the DDT story of the 1950s to understand that as anthropogenic materials accumulate in the environment, and as waterfowl are crowded into decreasing areas of habitat, the impact of toxicoses will be further amplified.