

bination! The index is arranged in exactly the same way so is no help and is superfluous. This was not an impressive start. There is a "Quick Index" arranged in taxonomic order that is helpful if you know the scientific names and sequence of mammalian orders.

The information on the One-humped Camel (and the House Mouse, Humpbacked Whale etc.) was clear, meaningful and concise. Camels are now wild in Australia and these feral residents probably represent the most "natural" population in the world today. Certainly they seem to be extinct in their land of origin (America) and their classical home in North Africa-Arabia.

This arrangement by common name renders it difficult to make comparisons. The common kangaroos are under E, W and R (Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Western Grey Kangaroo and Red Kangaroo) You have to flip between widely separated pages to find the differences in morphology and range. There are places where you could see all three species in the same location (such as Northwestern New South Wales.) and a direct evaluation would be useful.

The range maps are a little confusing. A typical map shows the range in blue. Other maps are coloured light green. At first I thought this colour was used to show the range of the extinct species shown in the book. Later this was less clear as it was also used for subspecies and endangered species. I searched for an explanation of the range maps but did not find one. One curiosity I noted with the range maps is that only three creatures are continent-wide – the Echidna and two introduced species, the Cat and House Mouse. (Five others are al-

most continent-wide, Common Wallaroo, Gould's Wat-tled Bat, Red Kangaroo, Rabbit and Dingo) Many of the rest are quite localized.

The illustrations are odd. Eventually I realized they reminded me of children's tracings. The shape is mostly correct but gets smoothed out in places. The Red Fox is an odd looking creature. The accuracy of the colours varies. For example the Mountain Possum is grey not brown, but I think the pointed tail make the identification clear. The Greater gilder is depicted as grey-headed and white-tailed when it can be the reverse. The text somewhat clarifies this distinction. The oddest colour rendering of all is the silvery grey Antarctic Fur Seal. All those I have seen are rich brown. However, some of the illustrations are quite good. The Lead-beater's Opossum, the Agile Wallaby and the Banded Hare Wallaby all seem to be fairly accurate.

Despite my criticisms I do not think anyone will have a problem identifying a mammal though. Using the text, range map and the illustration should enable you to reach a clear conclusion on any of the 319 species covered. (This is a little short of the accepted total of 379 and I think those missing are some bats and marsupials, plus most of the cetaceans.) So, as there is sufficient diversity and differences in range you can still use this book as a field guide. The size (21 × 28.5 cm or 8.25 × 11 in.), however, means it is not truly portable.

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Birds of the Raincoast: Habitats and Habitat

By H. Thommasen and K. Hutchings, with R. W. Campbell and M. Hume. 2004. Harbour Publishing, PO Box 219, Madeira Park, British Columbia, V0N 2H0 222 pages, Can \$44.95.

This nice book describes in very delightful terms some components of the great Canadian biodiversity heritage: birds of the fascinating raincoast. It offers more than simply a nice coffee table book of a unique location and its fauna. Instead, this book consists indeed of a very sophisticated and well-written text covering all relevant aspects about birds, including species descriptions at given habitats in the stunning Canadian province of British Columbia.

The text and the brilliant photos are presented by four writers and nine photographers. The nine chapters deal with birds across seasons in the various and complex habitat types of B.C.'s raincoast (south and central coast, but not its islands).

This book is written by some of the bird and photo experts in the province. It cannot be denied that the traditional Anglophone, if not English, culture dominates in this book, as this culture also somewhat dominates the B.C. bird scene. No wonder, the first author is a country doctor, the second author makes a living in an English Department.

The bird photos are among the best I have ever seen for B.C. Some readers might find bird photos taken at the nest old-fashioned, and in some circles they deemed to be unethical even (since disturbing birds on nests and thus not publishable).

The photo layout and arrangement of the text strikes a great balance between detail and text flow; for the bird enthusiast this book is simply a joy to read and to browse through. Popular bird names are explained, and the poetry literature link is made by citing Anglophone poets from U.S., Canada and UK, such as Archibald Langman, William Blake, John Burroughs, Duncan Campbell Scott, John Clare and others. Personally, I specifically like the raptor, owl and sparrow sections, and the photos of the wood-warblers, blackbirds, owls, flowers and plants.

The wording in this book is extremely careful. However, I do not agree with the statement made by the authors that long-distance migration is a risky business for birds. Some species actually living that life-style have the longest life span known for birds; e.g., Terns and Godwits.

Allowing for a more global context, I really like that wintering grounds for B.C. birds are named as well,

which can wander off to Nicaragua and other tropical locations. However, some more spatially explicit information would be helpful for people exploring B.C. and its birds, too; e.g., a map and location names where bird species can be found in B.C. The authors clearly must know these details but so far don't share them with the reader.

Hardcore birders might be happy to learn that the book addresses how to avoid confusing Mallards from Shoveler, but no distinguishing field photos are shown really for identification headaches such as Common and Barrow goldeneyes, the species of mergansers, loons, grebes and crows. Issues of rare birds are basically ignored. So one will not learn about Eurasian stragglers from Russia that excite the B.C. birding community much and which increase birding tick lists. Avian subspecies do not get covered in depth, but some avian genetic issues are addressed.

Fascinating details on birds in B.C. get shared: The first Barred Owls were seen on the B.C. coast in 1966. The re-use of nests from owls and cavities by other birds are explained, the reader learns what "Sap Wells" are, and what makes for dabbling and diving ducks. Winter survival strategies are explained, the concept of Nest-Helpers is introduced, as well as the odd behavior that Rosy-finches cover the nest with their wings. I also like the mentioning of (sea) mammals, and how glaciation provides the reason that Myrtle and Audubon warblers, two waxwing species, and Red- and Yellow-shafted flickers can be found in this huge province, which is at least two times larger than California. The authors mention that some people in B.C. perceive birds as pests; e.g., Golden-crowned Sparrows. The Bird Checklist and the Index are nice additions making this book a well structured resource.

The authors cite John Clare: "To study birds without reference to their habitats is to examine their carcasses in glass cases". And here I find the book a little weak. Major issues for B.C., and which every bird enthusiast will notice in no time during an outdoors trip, such as habitat loss, pollution, urbanization and boating and their excessive human foot prints, etc. are not sufficiently mentioned when considering its magnitude and importance for B.C. Environmental buzz words such as clearcuts, fragmentation, oil spills or even Clayoquot Sound and Carmanah Valley do not really exist, nor is there a mention of Fraser River, or Queen Charlotte Islands and pelagic habitats. At least it gets mentioned that Glaucous-winged Gulls have increased three times in B.C. during the last 50 years (no reasons given), and that many river populations of Eucalyptus have been lost. Changes in Cormorant and Raven numbers and other related information are not mentioned.

This book might not fully satisfy readers that have a strong science hunger: Scientific names are not presented, researchers are rarely named (except for Margaret Nice and her Song Sparrow work) and this book lacks quantitative statements, other than a given home range of the Pileated Woodpecker (1000 acres) and that the

Brown-headed Cowbird population would run up to 50 million individuals. Initially, I found that the authors overemphasize a little that birds would be monogamous, but the Extra-pair Copulation (EPC) issue gets mentioned in the text later. I cannot agree with the impression somewhat portrayed in the book that feeding birds in winter would do any good to them, and that birds would not survive otherwise. Birds actually evolved fairly well without bird feeders and did well without any human intervention over the last hundred thousands of years.

If one wants to be really picky, one can have a little seabird issue with this book though. Short-tailed Albatross, Cassins Auklets and Tufted Puffins are not mentioned. The massive Old-growth Forest habitat loss relevant for Marbled Murrelets get only mentioned marginally. I am quite sure that the 8500 figure, presented by the authors as the total British Columbia breeding population for Marbled Murrelets is a drastic underestimate. The latest overall population estimate for B.C. is 60000 and some models suggest even over 150 000 birds (this includes non-nesting birds). There is no Marbled Murrelet nest photo presented; a key icon for how birds can serve as habitat indicators for the raincoast. The Bird Checklist is nice but does not fully match my experience: Marbled Murrelets for instance are not rare, but can in some fjords and during winter be among the most abundant species in coastal waters even (as for instance the case in Clayoquot and Desolation Sound). Despite all this great detail, existing expert knowledge of the authors and a wonderfully detailed text, I am not clear why the first Canadian Marbled Murrelet nest found in 1992 by Volker Bahn and others is not mentioned (but the first one found 1974 in California gets presented).

One point that puzzles me, and which might explain some issues I would summarize from above as being "uncritical" or "unaware" about environmental raincoast issues in B.C., is a phrase in the acknowledgments: "Weyerhaeuser and BC Hydro served as a source of inspiration and researching this book". Most environmentalists and bird enthusiasts actually might not relate these major companies with inspiration, nor perceive them as a great guide for research.

Despite its potentially huge value, I am also puzzled by a text feature presented in the appendix dealing with "Proactive Conservation in British Columbia: The Wildlife Data Center". In recent years, much of British Columbia's conservation has been severely affected, if not harmed, by the lack of free and shared high quality data among experts and agencies. The professional conservation climate in British Columbia is actually quite "polluted" due to this situation. Taken from its description, this data center holds much of the urgently needed information which is so crucial to sustainable and progressive land and habitat management and conservation of wildlife and birds in the province. Despite its claim to be pro-active no website is presented to the audience. I miss the word "digital" in there, too.

Here is where the cultures and generations truly clash. And how does this relate, link and compare with what the Canadian and provincial government does (see for instance Geogratis website <http://geogratis.cgdi.gc.ca/>)? Here a change and update to the new millennium is needed for British Columbia so that high quality bird and conservation data are freely shared and made available to the global public over the internet nowadays. The description of the data center mentions for instance that they hold the largest nest record data pool for Canada with 180 000 records! Let's put these massive data sets on the public table for much of the urgently needed Conservation Management in British Columbia.

The book jacket reads: "Perfect for Birdwatchers, Naturalists and Environmentalists."

The reader might decide him- or herself on the philosophical question how much birds can and should be used to address environmental concerns, and whether they contribute to conservation. I recommend this book for sure as a very nicely written description and photographic explanation of birds in British Columbia, as well as a celebration of a Canadian and world heritage component.

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The Bird Almanac: A Guide to Essential Facts and Figures of the World's Birds

By David M. Bird. 2004. Key Porter Books Ltd. 6 Adelaide Street 10th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1H6. 460 pages, Can \$24.95 Paper.

Within this book is a massive amount of bird-related information! This review could actually end right here. However, I will elaborate somewhat.

Information in this book is presented in three ways: line drawings (restricted to the anatomy chapter), tables/lists as well as glossary-style entries. These are all appropriate and lead the reader to finding information rather quickly. There is both *birding* information and *ornithological* information (and a massive amount of overlap which is shared by both). A glossary of over 20 pages contains over 1000 terms – surely the word you're looking for must be there!

There are simply too many categories of information to give more than a smattering of examples here. Both traditional and genetically-based classifications of bird families are given, followed by the massive list

of all known bird species. Significant people are listed in several tables, ornithological award recipients, world-class listers, Taverner Cup winners, bird artists and more. Bird watching clubs, ornithological societies, magazines and journals are listed from sources around the planet.

To compare this book with Leahy's *The Birdwatcher's Companion*, a recent tome of similar intent, would be to have *The Bird Almanac* come on top. The former is essentially all in dictionary format, and therefore lacks the comparative ease (or the ease of comparisons) of the thematically-organized, tabular format in *Almanac*. There are more in-depth definitions and descriptions in *Companion* (it is also a much bigger book), and the bibliography is better-organized, but I believe birders will much more enjoy flipping through *Almanac*.

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Common Birds of Ontario

By J. Duane Sept. 2004. Calypso Publishing, P.O. Box 1141, Sechelt, British Columbia, V0N 3A0. 94 pages, Can. \$12.95 Paper.

This slim volume is an entry in the "common birds to know" category. It presents some 142 species, mostly two per page, each with a small coloured photograph of the bird, together with a brief description, some information on size, nesting and habitat, followed by a paragraph or two on some topic of more general interest. A few accounts include a "Similar Species" category, and about 10% of the species receive a full-page treatment with two pictures.

There's a role for well-thought-out books of this kind. Persons who are mildly interested in birds, but who are not ready for a comprehensive guide, might skim through the pages of a book of this kind, and try to match up the bird they had just seen with one of the illustrations. But to be really useful, the author must give careful thought to the selection of species and to

utilizing the limited space to the best advantage, recognizing the user will likely be a complete novice.

Unfortunately, the present volume does not meet these objectives; in fact, I was left with the feeling that the author himself does not know Ontario birds very well. Problems abound, and there is only space here for a brief sampling. The selection of species is puzzling: avocet and Wilson's Phalarope are in but Mute Swan, Eastern Phoebe and grackle are missing. Lesser Scaup appears but Greater is not mentioned; Tennessee and Cape May warblers are shown but Magnolia and Black-and-white are not.

Some plate selections are poor: for example, the Red-tailed Hawk appears to be of the western race and could confuse a beginner; and the Least Flycatcher's wingbars are almost wholly concealed. The text is also misleading in places. We're told wigeon are "often" found wintering in large flocks on golf courses, Long-tailed Duck is a "common migrant", but "not often seen in large num-



Huettmann, Falk. 2005. "Birds of the Raincoast: Habitats and Habitat, by H. Thommasen and K. Hutchings [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 119(1), 142–144. <https://doi.org/10.22621/cfn.v119i1.196>.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22621/cfn.v119i1.196>

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