

So this great contribution to ornithological literature steam rollers on slowly transforming itself into the bible of birdwatching. It is hard to believe that I will be in my seventies before the last volume is produced and the creators will then have to consider revising Volume 1.

References

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²The Birds of Canada, Bulletin 203 (Biological Series 73), W. Earl Godfrey, 1966. National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. Revised Edition 1986.

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The Marbled Murrelets of the Caren Range and Middlepoint Bight

By P.H. Jones. 2001. A Western Canada Wilderness Committee Research Report. ISBN 1-895123-13-5. 150 pp. \$34.95.

"British Columbia is endowed with one of the most diverse and probably the richest natural heritage in Canada and yet so little is known of this vast resource". This book is not strictly a scientific one, but surprisingly, the first of its kind. It provides the reader with an alternative and widely shared view on the Marbled Murrelet issue in southern British Columbia. It is about the classical conservation battle for a habitat and a species of world importance: the Marbled Murrelet (MaMu), *Brachyramphus marmoratus*, and its nesting habitat, the coastal Old-Growth Forest.

The author states "I was alarmed at what was happening on the Caren and elsewhere in the province. My respect for the profession of forestry had clearly suffered a huge shock". The book is for MaMu-holics written by a Murrelet-phil. But it is also suggested reading for any naturalist and wildlife ecologist in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Readers learn from a first-hand account on "how to find a Marbled Murrelet nest", as well as about many aspects of the fascinating biology of this bird, including all the politics around it.

Certainly, the finding of the first active Marbled Murrelet nest in Canada on 12 August 1993 makes for a central theme of this book. The discovery presented a major effort over many years, based on a tremendous amount of amateur field-work and vision; eventually it turned into a success. However, the events that led to this historical finding deserve some attention. For instance, it is not clear why the people who first located the nest were not authors in the forthcoming publication. The overall motivation and funding situation for "The Caren" remains somewhat unclear as well.

Many fascinating details about this bird, its habitat (including the sea) and its inhabitants can be learned from this publication, too. For instance, the Caren Range claims the oldest tree in Canada with a confirmed age of over 1700 years; the discovery of this

finding is worth a read in itself. Well-rounded, the text even presents "MaMu-history" and native aspects. And certainly, a fair bit of lifestyle in coastal British Columbia is described. The Marbled Murrelet is not only a species difficult to study, but also to draw. The author includes tasteful and nice black-and-white illustrations of this bird.

The statement of the author that Marbled Murrelets are unlikely migratory can be confirmed (wintering birds are found consistently along the British Columbia coast). Although not well liked by Canadian governments, this fact has major conservation implications because according to the Bird Migratory Act 1917 the federal government can only support migratory species; this bird not being migratory would drive the responsibility in the hands of the provincial government. The author states on this subject "...Provincial authorities in British Columbia have done virtually nothing to protect marbled murrelets and to set them on a path of recovery". It is worthwhile to mention that besides facilitation, the federal government has also not provided much guidance in the last years on this matter.

Several interesting biological features about Marbled Murrelets are reported in this book: locations and timing of moult. Other jewels in this book might be the raw data on nest visits, and pair-bonding described for October. The described mating observations, the murrelet foraging process, and transformations of summer and winter plumages in September are also precious. The claim that Marbled Murrelets could be identified individually, and that males could be distinguished from females in the field, deserves more proof; at least this has never been reported anywhere else in the world. Another concern is that Mew Gulls don't depend on the Old-Growth Forest, and re-use of Marbled Murrelet nests is seen as a rather rare event, so far. I would doubt, too, that this bird is colonial, as hinted in the text. Unfortunately, the statements about the Simon Fraser University are disagreeable and need correction (e.g., a cliffnest was indeed found by this group, and over 150 nests were located in the last four years

with radio-telemetry from helicopter). For these subjects, the reader is suggested to contact the researchers from the Centre for Wildlife Ecology directly, or check their website (URL: <http://www.sfu.ca/biology/wildberg/species/mamu.html>). Besides the claim of the author and the obvious loss of Old-Growth Forests, there are still no statistical indications that the populations in British Columbia overall have in fact declined — a topic of major controversy. A less disputed point is made in this book that the traditional hype about the nesting habitat is not really reflecting the overall life-needs of the Marbled Murrelet; the marine aspects of this bird are even less studied, nor do any (!) Marine Protected Areas exist along the unique coastline of western Canada (Middlepoint Bight as a feeding area might present one candidate).

The issue of the effect corporate funding would have on science, and on Marbled Murrelet research in particular, is still open for discussion, but is heavily argued, here. Since controversial topics are reported on, names like Randy Stoltman, Mike Harcourt, and Glen Clarke are not missing in this book. The footprints left by prominent Marbled Murrelet researchers in British Columbia like Spencer Sealy, Harry Carter, Jean-Pierre Savard, Gary Kaiser, and others are found throughout.

"We made our point, too, with the Forest Service that it was they who were forcing the companies to get out there and log the Caren, even when there was a government process in place to protect areas like the Caren!". Obviously, the management of the forests in British Columbia gets much debated in this book, as elsewhere. "We cannot have a Ministry of Environment which is subservient to a Ministry of Forestry as has been the case in the past". The term "overcutting" is mentioned many times by the author. It is not clear how this can occur in a country that claims to do "sustainable forestry"; apparently without any relevant and consistent ground-based inventory of Old-Growth Forests! Jobs matter in British Columbia, but due to odd and failed management, the international forest industry — to name Japan, USA, and even Norway — has become the main drivers of the agenda of forests in coastal B.C.

The author refers often to the "Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team", which is supposed to do something good for the Murrelets. The Protected Areas Strategy (PSA) and the BC Forest Practices Act might be one approach. However, other solutions exist, and as this book clearly indicates, nests are not found in low elevation but rather at higher elevations (>400 m) and with steeper slopes. The least one could say about all this is that Marbled Murrelets are very robust in their nesting habitat, which covers apparently a wide range of landscape and tree characteristics. This puts doubt on the Marbled Murrelet as an indicator species, since it "indicates" so many habitat features (way beyond the low elevation forests, a traditionally claimed prime nesting habitat for this bird). Biases in Marbled Murrelet research and conservation are introduced by investigation approaches with a poor research design, by the management term "forest stand" (basically impossible to define objectively in the field and from maps), by using the term Old-Growth Forest (over 12 definitions exist), and by the current counting scheme for Murrelets in the forest (titled "Occupied Detection" surveys). As the author confirms, the Canadian counting protocols used for Occupied Detections and at-sea surveys differ markedly from the ones used in the United States.

The author is certainly not an "ecoterrorist"; instead, he is a devoted naturalist and deeply concerned about his "backyard", the Caren Range and Middlepoint Bight. His book provides an emotional and passionate narrative. It presents a textbook-example to concerned citizens and naturalists about his battle with local experts, the local District Forester, and governments to convince and to achieve his case; these are experiences one makes when interacting in "territories" of the established and so-called local experts. This recommended book shows how he succeeded.

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Hummingbirds of North America: The Photographic Guide

By Steve N. G. Howell. 2002. AP Natural World. Academic Press, San Diego. 222 pp., illus. U.S. \$24.95.

Photographic bird guides have a rather chequered history. They seem like a good idea, but in practice they have all too often proved to be less than ideal, with poor poses, ambiguous colours, and a lack of uniformity all combining to reduce their utility. So I approached such a guide to hummingbirds with con-

siderable skepticism — after all, hummingbird colours can be difficult to determine at the best of times, and their behaviour doesn't help much.

But Steve Howell has surmounted all the usual problems. This is the ideal photographic guide, with a multitude of carefully selected poses, detailed information in the captions, and meticulous attention to the appearance of each image.



Huettmann, Falk. 2002. "The Marbled Murrelets of the Caren Range and Middlepoint Bight, by P. H. Jones [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 116(4), 660–661. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.363528>.

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