

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

By David M. 1999. Bird. Key Porter Books, Toronto. Paperback, xvii + 460 pp. \$24.95.

What a catchy title! David Bird calls his book *The Bird Almanac*, a play on his surname. His professed aim is to produce a book that simultaneously caters to "ornithologists, casual to serious birdwatchers, schoolchildren ... and those offering food to birds." One would think this impossible, especially since some tables and some terms are overly technical. Nonetheless this book packs so much information that portions should be of interest to all of the above!

Almost half the book consists of a list of the common and scientific names of every species of bird in the world, largely in the sequence of Monroe and Sibley (1990). This begins with the ostrich-rhea-emu-kiwi group, then proceeds (if one ignores some intervening groups that don't occur in North America) in turn to grouse, ducks and geese, and woodpeckers, which are inserted earlier than in any other classification. It ends with blackbirds. Since there is no index, those accustomed to standard classifications will search a long time to find, for example, the scientific name for a particular bird species of interest. Indeed, most of us do not need nor desire a list of all birds of the world.

Anatomy, physiology, and reproduction together occupy 41 pages. After four pages of general information about mortality and survival there are four pages about bird disease, two of state and provincial birds, and four pages of delightful Guinness-style records for everything imaginable (e.g., most songs sung: 22,197 in 10 hours by Red-eyed Vireo; countries with most endangered bird species: Indonesia 126 and Brazil 121; relatively largest egg: Little Spotted Kiwi, 26% of body weight).

The 32 pages of "Who's Who in Bird Biology and Conservation" will be of interest to many, but they should have been checked by someone with an interest in ornithological history and biography. There are

misspellings: Alexandre for (W. B.) Alexander, Streseman for Stresemann, and ridwayi for ridgwayi. E. A. Armstrong is listed twice. C. L. Bonaparte was the Emperor's nephew, not his brother. William Bullock died in 1849 and A. S. Neboux was born in 1806. Le Conte's Sparrow and Le Conte's Long-tailed Bunting are two names for the same bird. Clark and Lewis are listed as 'captain' and 'commander,' respectively, of the expedition they led jointly. Joseph Sabine was not a member of an arctic expedition, though his brother, Edward, was. William Tolmie was not head of the Hudson's Bay Company. For the next edition Bird might consider adding, among others, Ira Gabrielson, John Macoun, Howard Mendall, E.A. Preble, and George Wallace.

There are lists of presidents and award winners of the main ornithological clubs, lists of birding record-holders (P. Snetinger has observed 8040 species world-wide, R. Johns has seen 516 in Great Britain, M. Smith 840 in North America, and the late Norman Chesterfield 540 in Canada), and of bird carving and bird stamp awardees. Codes of bird-watching conduct for both the American Birding Association and the Royal Society of Birds are presented. There are tips for choosing binoculars, bird houses, bird baths, and backyard plants. Eighty-one pages list bird organizations, tours, journals, videos, web-links, telephone hotlines, telemetry gear, and companies offering DNA sexing, among other things. The book ends with a 34-page glossary.

This is a fun book to browse in. I predict that the second edition will be even better, with a binding that doesn't become unglued in the first week. The price is right! Buy a copy now.

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Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain and North-West Europe

By Chris Kightley, Steve Madge and Dave Nurney. 1998. Yale University Press, New Haven. 300 pp., illus. U.S. \$20.

A well-written and well-illustrated guide treating the 385 species that occur regularly in Britain and North-West Europe. The birds are arranged in systematic order, that is closely related species are grouped together in genera and families. This is a widely-accepted format used in most birding guides. The 20-page introduction includes topics such as How to use this book, Bird topography, and What's in a name? The name of a bird is important. It con-

veys to others a magnitude of information. However, names can confuse those new to birding or any field of biology. A bird, in the ideal world, has two names, a scientific name and a common name. But many birds have several common names just in English and, less often, the scientific names can vary. For example, the common name warbler in North America refers to the family Parulidae, whereas in Europe their warblers are in the Sylviidae, and the orioles are Icteridae or Oriolidae, respectively. Some differing common names for the same bird in North America and Europe, respectively, are



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