

pears to be the song. Cross-referencing between species accounts is quite thorough, but the list of 19 known local cowbird host species (page 290) omits Hermit Thrush (page 235) and Common Yellowthroat records (page 259). Also, a record of House Sparrows nesting in Bank Swallow holes is mentioned in the swallow account, but not in that of the sparrow and a case of hybridization between Eastern and Mountain bluebirds is mentioned only in the Eastern species account. Odd omissions from the glossary are the terms "albinism" and "leucism," especially since the less common "melanism" is included. An odd feature, though not an error, is the use of U.S. spelling for behaviour, centered, colour, favoured, harbour, moulting, neighbourhood and variants of these. The difference in slope of the bill between Tundra and Trumpeter swans, a feature much easier to see than the visual differences noted, would have been a useful addition to the identification tips in the swan accounts (pages 89 and 90). The header for Wilson's Snipe indicates that two nesting records have been documented in the area, whereas three are mentioned in the text. The record of a robin feeding a young cowbird (page 237), while interesting, is not definitive evidence of successful parasitism by cowbirds on robins, as non-parental birds sometimes feed offspring of birds of other species (for example, Salt 1997). Most references cited are included in the reference list, but one by Allen (1952) is cited as both Allan [incorrectly] and Allen on page 138, one by Dunn et al. (2000) cited on page 189 is not listed unless 2002 is intended, the title is missing from a paper by Greenberg and Droege, the pages of the 1996 owl paper by C. S. Houston should be 125-133 [not 25-132] and the second author of the book by Robbins et al. should be B. Bruun, not B. Brown.

Although such regional works serve primarily to document occurrence, dynamics and changes in local

bird populations, they also serve to document various life history observations that the author(s) may otherwise never find time to write up. Examples of such tid-bits in this book include fondness of Snow Geese for peas, television tower casualties of Green-winged Teal, albino and/or "partial albino" Ruddy Duck, magpies, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Yellow-headed Blackbird, a pair of Red-necked Grebes incubating golf balls, predation by American Crows on Eared Grebe eggs, cormorants perching on power lines, a dry land nest of an American Bittern, Willet courtship flight, magpies chasing and catching bats and eating berries, a Bank Swallow colony in a hole in a wheat field, House Sparrows nesting in Bank Swallow holes, robins nesting on antlers and large numbers of starlings flycatching.

Another measure of success in such regional works is the degree to which they stimulate publication to fill in gaps and document changes. Judging by the number of notes and papers on bird observations and research in the Saskatoon area that have appeared in ornithological and natural history journals since "Birds of the Saskatoon Area" appeared in print, this volume has succeeded in that respect as well. It is an important contribution towards a forthcoming two-volume account of the birds of Saskatchewan.

#### Literature Cited

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- Salt, J. R. 1997. MacGillivray's and Black-throated Gray warblers compete to feed fledgling cowbird. *British Columbia Birds* 7: 15.

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**Book Review Editor's note:** In a brainstorming session between the Editor, Francis Cook and myself, on future directions, we agreed I would investigate suitable websites and, if appropriate, include their reviews. I proposed we use Brian Coad's site as a test case, hence the following review. If others know of similar suitable sites [Cornell University, USDA and USGS come to mind] please e-mail me [r.john@rogers.com] with your suggestions.

#### Brian Coad's Ichthyology Site

<http://www.briancoad.com/main.asp?page=fishdictionary.htm>  
By Brian Coad. 2008.

Unlike books, websites are not static. This is the case with Coad's site, which is defined as a work in progress. What it currently contains is sections on Projects, Fishes of Canada: Annotated Checklist, Dictionary of Ichthyology, Freshwater Fishes of Iran, Fishes of Canada's National Capital Region and Freshwater Fishes of Iran.

The first section lists the author's eight current projects with a few sentences of explanation. The checklist of Canadian Fish is a straightforward list of scientific and common names in both languages, plus occasion-

ally a few comments. The dictionary, co-authored by the late Don E. McAllister, defines terms specifically used in the study of fish and includes some generally used common words.

The Freshwater Fishes of Iran has individual species accounts arranged by genera. These start with an introduction to the genus. Each detailed account has sections on the Common name in English and Farsi with the phonetic pronunciation, Systematics, Key characters, Morphology, Sexual dimorphism, Colour Size, Distribution, Zoogeography, Habitat, Age and growth, Food, Reproduction, Parasites and predators, Economic importance, Conservation, Further work and Sources.

These accounts are illustrated [black-and-white line drawings] and give the reader a very exhaustive understanding of the individual species.

Fishes of Canada's National Capital Region [NCR] has similar coverage to the above. Also included are photographs of out-of-water fish where these are available and range maps within the National Capital Region. I decided to try out the site to identify small fish I saw in Mud Lake in Ottawa. After comparing descriptions and other information I decided it might be a Central Mudminnow. To be certain I would need the fish in hand. I might raise eyebrows, or worse, if I started netting fish in a public park.

The Freshwater Fishes of Iraq contains only a checklist and bibliography at this date.

Some of the advantage that this web site [and all others] have is that material [such as photos] can be included as required, poor quality photos can be replaced if better become available, multiple photo can show all features (not the case in a book where cost and space are limitations), text and other errors can be corrected, feedback from readers is easily incorporated, new information can be added as science progresses, in some cases differing view points can be presented at length, saving on costs of paper and distribution

over the book format. The site can be accessed from anywhere in the world [with Internet access] without needing to carry around hard copy, it is copied by students, researchers and naturalist for their own projects.

This site is a wonderful source of information in a subject area that is often difficult to access. It is very easy to navigate and loads quickly [but it is not as user-friendly as a book]. I am not one to load up my favourites folder unless it is a site I will use frequently. I suggest this is one of those sites, especially if you live in the Ottawa-Gatineau area (National Capital Region). I also need to trust the information supplied. The generic question remains in that sites like this have not been reviewed as a book would be. Readers on the internet will need to verify the quality of a website before trusting the data. As Brian Coad is a respected research scientist (at the Canadian Museum of Nature) with extensive field experience in the Ottawa District and Iran, this is not an issue, despite its being a personal, rather than an institutional site. At least you should take a look at it as I am sure you will learn as I did.

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## BOTANY

### Exploitation and Utilization of Chinese Spice Plant Resources

By Zhang Weiming and Xiao Zhengchun et al. 2007. Southeast University Press. 722 pages. Price 186.00 CNY.

Spice plants are in a special category in the plant kingdom, and have been popularly used for various purposes in different countries or regions of the world. The history of the use of spice has even exceeded recorded history of human beings. Early humans might have used spice plants to preserve meat, fish or other food, reduce the annoying odors of various foods, or increase a special flavor when cooking. Gradually, these began to expand the range of use of spice plants.

Spice plants are closely related to the daily lives of human beings. Systematic research and summary of them is necessary, however, as this has not been well done before, at least in China. Now, this situation has been changed by the publication of the book *Exploitation and Utilization of Chinese Spice Plant Resources* by Zhang Weiming and Xiao Zhengchun et al. The authors have been engaged in research work on spice plant resources for a long time. They have conducted several research projects relating to Chinese spice plants in the last few decades, and obtained valuable and abundant data in this field. Meanwhile, they also collected other abundant information on spice plant resources at home and abroad. Based on these data and information, they produced this massive book.

There are a number of climate zones in China. Different environmental conditions allow for the growth of an abundance of plant species, including spice plants. Except for a few tropical species, most of the spice plants grow in China. China was one of the earliest countries to use spices. There are some records on the aromatic and spicy plants in the Book of Songs, the Book of Mountains and Seas, and other book that are more than 2000 years old. Over a long time, due to the various usage of different types of spice plants in cooking, the people living in various areas of China formed a variety of eating habits, reflected in the so-called eight genres of cuisine of Chinese dishes. Hence, we might say that one of the most important reasons that Chinese food (or any other regional food) enjoys a world-wide reputation is its unique use of spices in cooking.

The indigenous spice plants in China are abundant. Furthermore, over the years, China introduced many foreign-origin species. The book not only is a systematic and comprehensive monograph on the spice plant resources of China, but also has its value as a reference for other related countries. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is a general introduction to spice plants, including the history of spice plants, the general situation of Chinese spice plant resources, the main ingredients and the application of spice plants,