

## The Riverscape and the River

By S. M. Haslam. 2008. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York. 404 pages, 65 GBP, Cloth.

*The Riverscape and the River*, by Cambridge University fresh water ecologist S. M. Haslam, is a natural and social history of watercourses and their landscapes. Based on the author's 35+ years of work on rivers and their vegetation and waters, the book is a complex and comprehensive landscape ecology that describes mutual human and ecological impacts on riverscapes and waters.

The book is divided into 15 chapters organized into four basic parts. The first part is a series of introductory chapters presenting rivers from a landscape ecology perspective, and tracing human modification and destruction of waters and associated waterscapes, plants and animals. The rest of the book discusses resources related to rivers and riverscapes, including water resources and their losses; plants, animals and minerals; and human settlements, plus other social and cultural resources connected to watercourses.

Case studies of rivers and riverscapes from around the world, with a majority from Europe, illustrate the various chapters. The case studies are complex and varied, but one recurs often: Malta, the site of much of the author's research. Over the course of several chapters, a fascinating portrait of the island emerges, as well as a distressing picture of unwise water management.

Haslam calls the Malta case study a "sad tale" of a riverscape that changed from being wet, with surplus

water for human use, to dry, with little or no perennial surface water – all within 200 years. She adds that it should serve as a warning to other countries whose streams are shrinking and drying up, and recommends that planners visit Malta to see where their regions might be heading.

The wide range of topics covered by *The Riverscape and the River* results in a dense and somewhat overwhelming book – one that makes for a rather slow and laborious read, despite the many illustrations and summary tables. The latter are indeed helpful in sorting out much of the more heavily scientific details, but they do not necessarily help untangle the considerable overlap and repetition of subject matter. Nor do they help in clarifying the organization of the content, which didn't always make sense to me, perhaps because I have scant background in landscape ecology.

That said, the book is packed full of diverse and significant information. For the naturalist with a keen interest in water, and with the time and focus required to work through the dense and complex content, *The Riverscape and the River* provides a wealth of subject matter for understanding and appreciating the nature of contemporary rivers and riverscapes. The book has potential as a university-level textbook, but would have to be used carefully and wisely.

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## MISCELLANEOUS

### On the Wings of Cranes: Larry Walkinshaw's Life Story

By Lowell M. Schake. iUniverse, Inc. 1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, Indiana 47403. 2008. Softcover. 339 pages. 34.95 USD, Cloth.

Lowell Schake has thoroughly researched the life and work of North America's greatest nest finder, Larry Walkinshaw, the man who devoted his life to saving both the Kirtland's Warbler and the Whooping Crane from extinction. Also known as "The Father of International Studies of Cranes (Gruiformes)," throughout his life Walkinshaw demonstrated remarkable powers of observation, and self-discipline in his passionate pursuit of his ornithological endeavours.

Schake, Walkinshaw's son-in-law, had access to family records and appropriate photographs that were available to no one else. As attested by the long list of acknowledgments, Schake also searched widely and profitably in major archives and traveled widely for interviews. The result is an extremely interesting 339 page biography that tells of a Michigan dentist whose lifelong passion was the study of birds: "The theme of Walkinshaw's life is birding – inspiration its message."

One of the best tributes paid to Walkinshaw was made by Harold F. Mayfield, the only person to be president of all three major ornithological societies in North America. He singled out Walkinshaw as "a genius in finding nests, tireless in the field," and thereby his "model of the life history specialist." Mayfield also wrote Walkinshaw's memorial in *The Auk*, describing him as "a man of prodigious energy and determination," who "began a day's work before most people were awake, and he ended it after most people were asleep. ... As misers collect money, he collected data."

Walkinshaw was born on 25 February 1904 in Calhoun County north of Battle Creek, Michigan, raised on a 90-acre farm near the Big Marsh, and obtained all his formal education within Michigan. The Walkinshaw children walked or drove their horse and buggy along the edge of the marsh on their way to school. After attending high school in Bellevue, he took courses at nearby Olivet College preparatory to enrolling in dentistry at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In June 1929 he was one of ten Honor Graduates in