

## 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

Dental Surgery. In 1939 he took fall courses at Ann Arbor to learn root-canal surgery. This new skill provided the money which allowed him to travel widely. Indeed, he spent almost all his income on the purposeful acquisition of ornithological knowledge, and at his death left an unusually small estate for a professional man.

In October 1931, Larry married Clara Cartland, a minister's daughter born on a farm near Bashaw, Alberta, and later schooled at Fremont, 40 miles north of Grand Rapids. Their honeymoon was spent at the American Ornithologists' Union meeting at Detroit; this was a warning to Clara that birds played an inordinate role in Larry's life.

Meanwhile, Larry's studies of birds proceeded at a rapid pace. His first papers recorded the arrival of the European Starling, the wintering of the Turkey Vulture, and told of nests of the Black Tern, Dickcissel, Greater Prairie-chicken and Upland Sandpiper. In 1931 he studied his first nests of the Kirtland's Warbler and the Sandhill Crane. With his acute powers of observation, he quickly acquired vast amounts of data. Fortunately, he received enthusiastic support from Dr. Josselyn Van Tyne, the assistant curator of birds at Ann Arbor. Van Tyne showed infinite patience, recognizing Larry's unique talent in finding nests – among other feats, Larry recorded a prodigious 47 nests of the Virginia Rail – and his compulsion in recording the facts. Van Tyne told Larry, "You have a fine lot of biological data ... but they need a good deal of revising and polishing." For many years, preparation of a text sufficiently succinct and coherent enough for publication remained an almost insuperable difficulty for Larry, and Van Tyne's premature death in January 1957 deprived him of his most helpful critic.

Larry and Clara raised their son and daughter in a comfortable home, fortuitously situated across the street from a 100-acre abandoned farm. There, over 11 years, before and after spending the day in his dental office, he studied 613 nests of the Field Sparrow. Not surprisingly, when the final three volumes of *Bent's Life Histories* were edited by Oliver L. Austin, Walkinshaw wrote the 18-page account of the Eastern Field Sparrow, as well as that for Le Conte's Sparrow.

Larry's Kirtland's Warbler studies went into high gear when the population of singing males dropped to only 201 in 1971 and 167 in 1974. Five of eight Kirtland's Warbler nests contained cowbird eggs allowing only a single warbler fledgling to survive each parasitized clutch. The most prolific of the warbler females studied by Larry laid 38 eggs, of which 37 hatched, producing 32 nestlings over six summers. With pas-

sage of the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 1973 and use of 36 cowbird decoy traps, others exterminated 40 000 cowbirds from the main breeding area; nest parasitism fell from 65 percent to 21 percent of nests. By 2006, 1 478 Kirtland's singing males were counted and the occupied range had expanded.

Larry was one of the main searchers for the Whooping Crane nesting grounds in Canada, unknown since the early 1920s. The total count of Whooping Cranes in the wild was 17 in 1947 (they had reached a low of 15 in 1941) and they seemed doomed to inevitable extinction. Teams led by Fred Bard of Regina in 1945, by Olin Sewall Pettingill in 1945 and 1946, Robert P. Allen for the National Audubon Society in 1946-1950 and Larry Walkinshaw in Saskatchewan in 1947 and 1948 had all failed to find the nest areas, which were not discovered until 1954. Larry was a key member of the Whooper Club which morphed into the Whooping Crane Conservation Association.

Larry's field work is best represented by the data he left behind on 338 Kirtland's Warbler and 353 Sandhill Crane nests found in Michigan. In spite of difficulties and delays, Larry had three of his books printed: *The Sandhill Cranes* (Cranbrook Institute of Science 1949), *Cranes of the World* (Winchester Press, 1973), and *Kirtland's Warbler, the Natural History of an Endangered Species* (Cranbrook Institute of Science 1983, reprinted 1987). These represent one aspect of his legacy. Four others were "published" and stored only on microfilm for borrowing or purchase.

Larry, often with Clara, traveled throughout the world to study each crane species in its natural habitat as he prepared *Cranes of the World*. For the Wattle Crane, Larry determined the incubation period, their breeding cycle and their dance, causing Colonel Jack Vincent in Natal, South Africa, to say "within a few weeks you were able to receive a greater knowledge of our cranes than we have acquired in 25 years – to our shame." Larry "endured any hardship" and accepted "undue risk" during these crane studies.

At age 87, Larry contributed species accounts to *The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Michigan*. He died a month short of his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Walkinshaw name is perpetuated in the Walkinshaw Wetlands, a Sandhill Crane and Wetlands Management Area in Michigan, and by the Walkinshaw Crane Conservation Award of the North American Crane Working Group. *On the Wings of Cranes* is a worthy final tribute to a fine man and a remarkable ornithologist.

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