

used since many population estimation methods differ greatly by country and in the time-windows for which these data are presented. As for many birders from central and northern Europe, the authors elaborate on the believed to be very detrimental effects of (song) bird hunting in the southern EU (but they show less attention for these issues in Africa). A consistent theme is that landscape changes affect all stonechat species; their relations with forthcoming climate change are not elaborated on.

True preferences for nest, food and habitat, taking their availability fully into account, are still not reported and are usually not known for most of the discussed species. This presents often a shortcoming in traditional birding books (the difference between resource use and resource preference has been known for over 30 years and should really be addressed in modern book texts).

As this and other advanced birding books show, the birding, taxonomy and publishing world has just not found a convenient way to describe and summarize relevant species plumage identification features; e.g.,

### **Birds of Yorkton – Duck Mountain**

By C. S. Houston and W. Anaka. 2003. Saskatchewan Natural History Society, 206-1860 Lorne Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2L7 Canada. ii + 318 pages. Paper \$20 plus \$4 shipping.

In Saskatoon there is a powerhouse of a human called Stuart Houston. As a professor of medicine he has influenced many young lives, not the least his own children. From a tender age he had a passion for birds, and I do not mean as a birder but as a scientist. This passion has resulted in a lifetime of bird banding, research and many publications. This alone would make his achievements remarkable. He has another achievement to his credit. He has encouraged, led or cajoled an army of people to join in his passion. There are a large number of people who now band, write, research, observe and record, myself included, as we never did before. For *Birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain* he is joined by a Yorkton local, Bill Anaka.

*Birds of Yorkton-Duck Mountain* is a very thoroughly researched collection of all the available data on the birds in this corner of Saskatchewan. Anaka and Houston have combed all conceivable pockets of information from Audubon notes to unpublished data. The species account gives a very clear picture of the status of all birds recorded from Quill Lake to the Manitoba border near Shellmouth. These accounts cover common nesters to bizarre and clearly incorrect reports. They are well presented and provide a valuable resource for all those interested in birds of the region, particularly for those doing research. The Duck Mountain area is given special note, as it is sufficiently different from the rest of the area. For example, the Evening Grosbeak is variable in the parkland, but is resident at Duck Mountain.

in a table or in any other format easy to comprehend for the user. Instead, the descriptive plumage text still deals with all the “usually”, “oftens”, “manys” and other sometimes vague terminology trying to put (individual) feathers and colours into words; over decades, this has developed into a slang of its own, presenting almost an anthropological literature phenomenon. Here two such examples from the text: “The lower mandible is pale horn-brown on the basal third”, and “Underparts are also duller than in the adult female and the breast and foreflanks can show narrow brown fringes to the feathers giving a slight mottled appearance”.

Anyway, this publication makes for the stonechat bible, presented by the authors as a true labour of love and obsession; they are to be congratulated. This publication is worth reading, and should stand in your bookshelf for specifics on species information and identification.

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The book contains several maps. The first is an excellent fold-out map of the area covered. It does not show roads (so it is uncluttered), but does depict towns, etc. There are several banding recovery maps. These are not labeled, but it is an obvious guess as to what they represent. They are identified obliquely in the acknowledgments as waterfowl migratory pathways by Kathy Meeres and locations where young were banded by Kelvin Wylie.

After reading this book I commented to a friend that the data given show the disappearance of the Passenger Pigeon was followed by the subsequent expansion of the Mourning Dove into this area. It was an interesting correlation. However, I had some difficulty in finding the pages to show him because there is no index. You must know the sequence of the current AOU 49<sup>th</sup> supplement to be able to find a species account.

The book has several useful appendices. The first gives a list of all the species seen in the area. This is followed by a summary of the Breeding Bird Surveys, then a list of banded species. Finally there is a list of waterfowl banders and their banding records.

I think these regional accounts are very important contributions to the record of knowledge. While this book may have limited sales in the local area and among a group of specialists, I believe it will be an important document for many years to come. In comparison to other similar works this is a scholarly and very professional product. The authors and the Saskatchewan Natural History Society are to be commended for undertaking this project.

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