

## Raptors of Eastern North America

By B. Wheeler. 2002. Princeton University Press, 41 Williams Street, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. xv + 439 pages, U.S.\$45.00 Cloth

Let me begin by saying this is a wonderful book. It gives a very detailed account of all the 26 full species of hawks, eagles and falcons occurring in eastern North America. It is profusely illustrated with extremely good, frame-filling, crisply focused photographs. These range from nine photographs for the Short-tailed Hawk to an incredible 82 of the Red-tailed Hawk. The text, despite its somewhat clipped English, is very informative. All of the known and recognizable sub-species are included, both in the text and, where valid, in the photographs. The level of detail given in the plumage descriptions is far greater than in any other book I have read. The range maps are sized as appropriate to the species they cover. For widespread birds the map depicts all of eastern North America. However, larger scale maps are used for such localized birds as Florida's Snail Kite.

This is easily the best photographic-style guide I have seen and is a real testament to the author's dedication. Thus it is the most thorough guide to this group of North American birds you can purchase. The full-color, superb photographs alone are worth the price of the book. The author has included all the plumages, races, and colour variations possible. They cover a bewildering range of plumages for species that can be annoyingly difficult to identify in the field. This makes it an almost essential book for serious bird-watchers and ornithologists and a great resource for beginners trying to grapple with the plumage variability. I do not consider this book to be a portable field guide, but a reference work. It is a little too large and

## Turtles and Tortoises

By Vincenzo Ferri. 2002. Firefly Books Ltd., 3680 Victoria Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M2H 3K1 Canada. 255 pages. \$24.95

This compact little book is a translation of the 1999 Italian publication, *Tutto Tartarughe e Testuggini*. It can best be thought of as a photographic guide to 152 species of turtles – roughly half of the species alive today.

The book opens with an introduction covering the biology, evolution, classification and conservation of turtles. The bulk of the book is occupied by species accounts. The species accounts are grouped geographically into oceans (sea turtles) and six terrestrial areas: Palearctic, Afrotropical, Oriental, Nearctic, Neotropical and Australian regions. There are 152 numbered species accounts and additional unnumbered accounts sprinkled throughout the book. It is unclear why some species accounts are not numbered, although the unnumbered accounts do not have a colour photo (they

heavy (due to the thick, high-quality paper). More important, this would be too precious a book to risk damaging in the field.

I searched through for errors and did not notice any. In fact, I was impressed by the thoroughness of the coverage. For example, the author has correctly included the spotty northern locations for Osprey in Labrador.

However, I do have one major problem with this volume. It is a companion volume to *Raptors of Western North America*, a slightly larger book covering 33 species. Thus, there are 23 species common to each book. The species accounts and photograph are almost identical, except that the range maps are different. This means there is a good deal of unnecessary repetition. I can only assume that some marketing guru felt that two versions would sell better than one. Combining into one book would increase the size from 544 to about 600 pages to allow for the text for two additional species and the eastern range maps for all species (plus a little added to the index.). This would presumably increase the price to around U.S.\$60. Each book is a worthwhile purchase on its own. If you buy the western book you will miss the accounts for Snail Kite only. If you buy the eastern guide you will lose the accounts for nine western raptors. If you buy both you will get more than 75% repetition, in essence wasting U.S.\$30, to get the coverage of one extra species plus the relevant range maps. If you can afford only one book, buy the western guide.

ROY JOHN

2193 Emard Crescent, Beacon Hill North, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 6K5 Canada

do have a colour illustration) or map. The species accounts are brief (some less than 100 words), with most ranging from half a page to a full page in length. Each account has standardized subheadings: Family, Distribution and habitat, and Characteristics. Some of the accounts also have a "Situation" subheading describing conservation issues.

Perhaps because it is a translation, this book is plagued with errors. Translation-type errors include some unusual common names. For example, the Bog Turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*; now *Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) is called Muhlenberg's Turtle. That may well be the English equivalent of the Italian common name, but that term is not used in North America. Similarly, the Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) is referred to as the Painted Tortoise. In addition, the genus is misspelled "Chrysemis." Errors in content also abound. The author asserts that *Eumotosaurus* is the earliest known ancestor of turtles, yet this theory is no longer