

daw should be common in North America. It is absent, except as an occasional vagrant on the east coast. It might be widespread over half of the Northern Hemisphere, but not this half.

Here is another example from the same section: "Northern parula (is) a summer visitor to northeastern USA". Ahem. It comes to Canada too. Okay, that sort of omission is nothing new. But why not mention the important fact that the species breeds where it spends the summer? It wouldn't be such a problem if "summer visitor" appeared in the glossary at the back of the book, but it doesn't. Also on that page, the European species wood warbler is called both a "summer migrant" and a "visitor" in the broadleaf woods of Britain and Europe. It's true, these species spend significant parts of their lives in different parts of the world, but to me both "summer migrant" and "visitor" imply that the species is not breeding in the location.

Speaking of wood-warblers, again on the same page the authors also refer to North American "wood-warblers". Then we read: "The robin, found widely throughout Europe ..." and then, "American robins have several call notes ..." The authors might have chosen less confusingly-named species. It seems troublesome to use robins and robins, and wood warblers and wood-warblers, as examples on the same page without explaining how distantly-related species have similar common names in different parts of the world. The "Garden birds" section on pages 56-59 is more cleverly written and avoids this sort of problem.

Do these details matter? I think they do. (The coral snake – milk snake illustration of mimicry on page 12 has me baffled.) I also find it intensely frustrating

that, for many of the species used as examples, there is no indication of from what part of the world they come. If that small detail were added I would feel much more satisfied. For instance, the "Water birds" spread on pages 144-145 includes the broad, geographic distribution for all the species used. I'm glad at least some of the authors thought that would be helpful.

Although I remain wary of the content, here is a selection of other sections that could delight and intrigue a budding naturalist: The diversity of life (although not a single micro-organism is mentioned); astronomy; a naturalist's toolkit and record keeping; what to wear and how to be safe; Forests (forest floor, logs, rot and recycling, the canopy, bark, fungi, the seasons); Tropical forests; Scrublands and heath; Grasslands; Mountains; Deserts; Caves; Cliffs; The polar regions; freshwater and marine ecosystems.

As a teenager I would have been excited to receive this book. It's sufficiently engaging to convince me to grab my naturalist's toolkit and run right out there. I'll have to leave it to the reader to decide if the captivating treatment of the book's broad concepts makes up for the content concerns. I would have loved to pass it on to the youngsters in my life, but I am reluctant to do that.

While DK is the publisher, the book also bears the National Audubon Society logo. An Audubon staff biologist is listed as a consultant and wrote the foreword. The publisher lists 26 different editors, contributors and others.

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ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS: WEB SITES

Feather Atlas <http://www.lab.fws.gov/featheratlas/index.php>

All of us have found a feather and wondered species it came from. Now you can get help from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's feather atlas website that will help feather identification. It consists of high-resolution scans of flight feathers of a selected group of birds. As this is an ongoing project the authors plan to continually add new species. So far there are samples for hawks, ducks, pigeons, nighthawks, crows, cuckoos, owls, pelicans, gulls, grouse, flamingos and woodpeckers.

The scans are of museum specimens and illustrate the dorsal surfaces of 12 wing flight feathers or remiges and six tail feathers or rectrices [from the right half of the tail]. If the species is sexually dimorphic then there are illustrations of male and female feathers as well as juveniles where appropriate. A data table of total feather lengths and vane lengths is also included. This site does not illustrate feathers the body of the bird (these are usually soft, and have soft fluff at the base).

There are three ways to search and I tried them all. They worked well and were easy to use. I thought the "Identify a Feather" search the most interesting. You can pick from 8 basic patterns and 10 colours as your search variables. This will get you a page of potential candidates for you to examine. For example, selecting "unpatterned" and "pink" will bring up a choice of Roseate Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo. Similarly "barred" and "grey" will result in a choice of 8 birds. Once you decide on the closest match you can jump to the species page.

I think this will be a very useful page for anyone who looks for wildlife. However I do have one problem, the main page states that all species of native North American migratory birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty and the possession of feathers is prohibited. So if you bring the feather home to identify it you are breaking US law!

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