

348 Icelandic birds is based on records from 1998 (over 12 years old); it is available online at [www.ni.is/bliki/RCform.pdf](http://www.ni.is/bliki/RCform.pdf).

Another strength of this bird guide are the provided details regarding changes that occurred in the avifauna of Iceland. Such information is otherwise hard to come by, and here bird watchers really can still provide crucial information and updates. Due to man-made global change (global warming) the Dovekie is virtually gone by now from Iceland and as a nesting bird! The Ivory Gull just gets reported as rare visitor (changes for Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl and Ptarmigan have not been reported, but must be expected to exist). The Icelandic Great Auk extinction story is already part of any good textbook in Conservation and Ornithology; but the Water Rail seems now to follow a similar fate in Iceland (due to Mink predation and wetland drainage). Tufted Ducks invaded Iceland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Short-eared Owls followed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Oystercatchers seem to widen their range. The new occurrence of the Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull on Iceland is already mentioned since the 1920's. Common Gull, Shoveler and Black-tailed Godwit followed closely (no reasons or explanations are provided by the author for any of these events; one would assume agriculture, hunting regulations and fisheries policies are the drivers). The conservation story of the almost extinct White-tailed Eagle in western Iceland makes for a fascinating detail. But the author has not dealt so well with changes in

Northern Gannets and Great Skuas though (both are expanding and/or moving north), or with reporting of fisheries effects on seabirds (perhaps that comes as no bigger surprise to insiders and who know how old-fashioned rural Iceland still is in regards to whaling, hunting of seabirds and dealing with impacts of bad fishing practices). Overall, changes in Iceland's bird world have already been rather dramatic. We are shown that since 1960, three (!) species get added to the Icelandic species list annually, showing major changes in the North Atlantic ecosystems. Ecological issues like Redpoll increases due to Icelandic forest habitat changes are reported in this book too, but urbanization issues and in relation to ravens, house sparrow and starlings are not covered, nor that Iceland is widely overgrazed by sheep and that erosion makes for a serious problem (which affects ground-nesting birds for instance).

Of course, this bird field guide cannot entirely compete with Jonsson's *Bird of Europe*, Sibley's *Guide to Birds* or some data like eBIRD and GBIF (who really can?), but this book makes Icelandic birds much more accessible to us. This field guide by Hilmarsson should be in your hands when dealing with subarctic and Iceland birds species in any capacity.

FALK HUETTMMANN

EWHALE lab—Institute of Arctic Biology, Biology & Wildlife Department, University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF), Fairbanks Alaska 99775 USA

## Birds of the West Indies

Norman Arlott. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey, USA 08540-5237 2010. 240 pages. 24.95 USD.

Despite the wide variety of digital tools available for bird identification, Bird Field Guides – in book form – have not yet gone out of style. For years Princeton University Press has been publishing field guides for the identification of birds worldwide. The initial standard field guide usually were a hefty item, not suitable for the average back pocket. Overtime the size has diminished and the quality of the illustrations have been enhanced. In evaluating this new book, I have compared it to 3 other field guides:

Book 2: Peterson's Field Guide. J. Bond. Fifth edition. 1993. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Book 3: H. Raffaele, J. Wiley, O. Garrido, A. Keith and J. Raffaele. 2003. Birds of the West Indies. Princeton University Press.

Book 4: A photographic guide to Birds of Jamaica. A. Sutton, A. Downer, R. Sutton. 2009. Princeton University Press.

Book 1 (book under review) is smaller but slightly heavier than the other Birds of the West Indies Guide (Book 3). The distribution maps are at the back of the

book. I see little advantage of book 1 over book 3 in terms of illustrations. Using the drawing of the Scaly-naped Pigeon, I would definitely prefer book 3 in that department. Book 3 has distribution maps with descriptions of the birds. This has much utility when out in the field birding. Book 3 has a list of conservation problems in the front which book 1 does not have. Between book 1 and book 3, the Raffaele et al. book is the preferred choice in terms of usefulness and utility.

When comparing book 1 and book 3 to The Peterson's Guide, they are better than book 2 in terms of illustrations. The only redeeming feature of book 2 is that it has historical value and it is the lightest. However, keep it on your shelf as a collector's item.

I am keeping book 4 – the photographic guide – as the last one for comparison. This book is a field guide to birds in Jamaica – a single country in the West Indies, rather than for all of the islands in this diverse region. Unlike the others, book 4 has colour photographs. The book is exceptionally well illustrated, has range maps on the same page, an excellent overview

in the front on habitat types, distribution, where to go and up to date species lists. It clearly sets a new standard for field guides.

It is always a good idea for the keen birder to have a series of books at one's fingertips. But if space is limiting in your travel bag, I suggest you take along book 3 for general descriptions on the West Indies

birds. Let us hope that in the future, Princeton University Press will continue to come up with books for the major islands which can match the standard of book 4.

LU CARBYN

137 Wolf Willow Crescent, Edmonton, Alberta T5T 1T1  
Canada

## Identifying and Feeding Birds

By Bill Thompson III. 2010. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. 246 pages. 14.95 USD, Paper.

Like many naturalists I have several bird feeders in my yard. These attract, on any given day, half a dozen species [e.g., Northern Cardinal] – typical for good feeders in my area. Over the seasons I get an additional 6 or 7 species regularly [e.g., Common Grackle], as the migration comes and goes. Other birds come but are less consistent [Common Redpoll]. Occasionally I see a special bird [Hoary Redpoll]. It took me many years to have such regularly active feeders.

The first step was getting dense bushes a metre or so from the feeder. When I had an open plain for a yard I paid my children to collect all the discarded Christmas trees, and these I piled around my feeder. The next step up was when a friend advised me to have at least one “squirrel-proof” feeder.

I could have saved myself all this frustration if I had owned a copy of this book. The author lays out clearly the different types of feeder, along with their key characteristics [I have four types] He explains the various varieties of food available, their attributes and which birds they attract. The author also discusses bird-friendly [food and shelter] plants in some detail. Woven into the text is advice on pests, non-feeder attractants, myths and cleanliness. He also includes some non-feeder items like bird houses and water features.

The second part of the book is a field guide of 125 selected backyard birds. It uses photographs to portray each bird in its typical plumages. These images are high quality and chosen to show the appropriate identifying points. The accompanying text covers field marks, sounds, habitat and the birds use of backyards. There is a good quality range map for each species.

Any person who follows the advice given by Bill Thompson should have as active a feeder as can be expected in their neighbourhood. The book is thorough, well organised, pleasant to read and attractively illustrated. Is it perfect? I would question some of his choices of birds in the field guide section. For example he includes Turkey Vulture. I know of only one man who staked out agricultural dead stock in his large rural property. He got lots of Ravens and Crows, plus a few buteos and Bald Eagles, but I never saw a vulture at this site. Current health regulations now prohibit this practice.

Thompson also includes birds that I see in my yard [e.g., Robin, both Waxwings], but never at the feeder. In fact many birds are stated “may” visit a feeder [although I doubt it]. Such birds as Robins come for my pond and waterfall or the berry bushes. Perhaps the book would be more accurately titled “Attracting and Identifying Backyard Birds.”

Thompson says there are no squirrel-proof feeders and I am inclined to agree. I have three “squirrel-proof” feeders: two are two-sided and one is a single. This last one my wife bought very cheaply at a garage sale this summer. I was delighted as it was in very good condition. It was similar to the two doubles I used with great success in previous years. Imagine my consternation when a vibrantly marked Red Squirrel was able to steal sunflower seeds at will. Then followed two months of squirrel war with various adjustments, modifications and branch trimming. I finally thought I had won, until I saw the local crows feeding in the middle of the road. It was a well-marked, squished squirrel. The other, paler squirrels in my yard have not yet shown the persistence of Mr. Flashy.

The author clearly has a Mid-US bias as his milo story illustrates. He said he published that milo [we call it sorghum] is ignored by birds only to get protests from south-western birders who regularly attracted quail and the like with this seed. I was not surprised then, when he missed out birds like Raven and Hoary Redpoll from his feeder selection. I have seen many Hoary Redpoll here in the Great White North and most of them have been at feeders. I had a house where Ravens were daily visitors and a friend reported a couple of weeks ago [October] getting Ravens here [Ottawa] too. I even had a house where I could induce, with fish remains, Iceland Gulls into my yard – but that is extreme. The author's southern bias also comes through when he discusses feeders. I have four hopper feeders and one is a problem in fall. When it rains during the day and freezes at night the hopper tray and the outlets become solid. For most of the year it is a good feeder, but for a month or so it is a pain. Maybe my wife will buy me a new design hopper for Christmas! The other issue is snow. Some years ago, I put a hopper feeder out in the fall on a pole at