

Here is where the cultures and generations truly clash. And how does this relate, link and compare with what the Canadian and provincial government does (see for instance Geogratis website <http://geogratis.cgdi.gc.ca/>)? Here a change and update to the new millennium is needed for British Columbia so that high quality bird and conservation data are freely shared and made available to the global public over the internet nowadays. The description of the data center mentions for instance that they hold the largest nest record data pool for Canada with 180 000 records! Let's put these massive data sets on the public table for much of the urgently needed Conservation Management in British Columbia.

The book jacket reads: "Perfect for Birdwatchers, Naturalists and Environmentalists."

The reader might decide him- or herself on the philosophical question how much birds can and should be used to address environmental concerns, and whether they contribute to conservation. I recommend this book for sure as a very nicely written description and photographic explanation of birds in British Columbia, as well as a celebration of a Canadian and world heritage component.

FALK HUETTMANN

Institute of Arctic Biology, Biology and Wildlife Department,  
University of Alaska-Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775  
USA

### The Bird Almanac: A Guide to Essential Facts and Figures of the World's Birds

By David M. Bird. 2004. Key Porter Books Ltd. 6 Adelaide Street 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1H6. 460 pages, Can \$24.95 Paper.

Within this book is a massive amount of bird-related information! This review could actually end right here. However, I will elaborate somewhat.

Information in this book is presented in three ways: line drawings (restricted to the anatomy chapter), tables/lists as well as glossary-style entries. These are all appropriate and lead the reader to finding information rather quickly. There is both *birding* information and *ornithological* information (and a massive amount of overlap which is shared by both). A glossary of over 20 pages contains over 1000 terms – surely the word you're looking for must be there!

There are simply too many categories of information to give more than a smattering of examples here. Both traditional and genetically-based classifications of bird families are given, followed by the massive list

of all known bird species. Significant people are listed in several tables, ornithological award recipients, world-class listers, Taverner Cup winners, bird artists and more. Bird watching clubs, ornithological societies, magazines and journals are listed from sources around the planet.

To compare this book with Leahy's *The Birdwatcher's Companion*, a recent tome of similar intent, would be to have *The Bird Almanac* come on top. The former is essentially all in dictionary format, and therefore lacks the comparative ease (or the ease of comparisons) of the thematically-organized, tabular format in *Almanac*. There are more in-depth definitions and descriptions in *Companion* (it is also a much bigger book), and the bibliography is better-organized, but I believe birders will much more *enjoy* flipping through *Almanac*.

RANDY LAUFF

Biology Department, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish,  
Nova Scotia B2G 2W5 Canada

### Common Birds of Ontario

By J. Duane Sept. 2004. Calypso Publishing, P.O. Box 1141, Sechelt, British Columbia, V0N 3A0. 94 pages, Can. \$12.95 Paper.

This slim volume is an entry in the "common birds to know" category. It presents some 142 species, mostly two per page, each with a small coloured photograph of the bird, together with a brief description, some information on size, nesting and habitat, followed by a paragraph or two on some topic of more general interest. A few accounts include a "Similar Species" category, and about 10% of the species receive a full-page treatment with two pictures.

There's a role for well-thought-out books of this kind. Persons who are mildly interested in birds, but who are not ready for a comprehensive guide, might skim through the pages of a book of this kind, and try to match up the bird they had just seen with one of the illustrations. But to be really useful, the author must give careful thought to the selection of species and to

utilizing the limited space to the best advantage, recognizing the user will likely be a complete novice.

Unfortunately, the present volume does not meet these objectives; in fact, I was left with the feeling that the author himself does not know Ontario birds very well. Problems abound, and there is only space here for a brief sampling. The selection of species is puzzling: avocet and Wilson's Phalarope are in but Mute Swan, Eastern Phoebe and grackle are missing. Lesser Scaup appears but Greater is not mentioned; Tennessee and Cape May warblers are shown but Magnolia and Black-and-white are not.

Some plate selections are poor: for example, the Red-tailed Hawk appears to be of the western race and could confuse a beginner; and the Least Flycatcher's wingbars are almost wholly concealed. The text is also misleading in places. We're told wigeon are "often" found wintering in large flocks on golf courses, Long-tailed Duck is a "common migrant", but "not often seen in large num-