

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.

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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 10th 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*.

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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-

bers", Gray Jays are widespread and Wilson's Warblers are "common in moist areas". The foregoing are just a few examples of inaccuracies which could have been readily avoided, and which are bound to mislead the

potential reader. All in all, this is not a book I can recommend.

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Frogs of Australia: An Introduction to Their Classification, Biology and Distribution

By James R. Turner. 2004, Pensoft, Sofia-Moscow. 163 pages. Price not available.

Australia is renowned for its mammals, unique as a consequence of that continent's long separation from the other land masses. Of the amphibians, only frogs are represented; both the caecilians of other southern continents and the salamanders characteristic of northern continents, are absent.

Frogs of Australia presents 218 forms (213 species, one divided into 5 subspecies and one into 2); 110 of these named since 1960. The five families represented contain 29 genera. Three families are held in common with Canada. Hylidae occurs in the Americas, Europe, Asia and northern Africa but its 76 Australia species are often separated as the Pelodyadidae). Bufonidae is represented only by the Cane Toad, *Bufo marinus*, introduced from Hawaii in 1935 which, despite its near legendary reputation for decimating the native Australian frog and small mammal fauna, has spread only in the eastern edge of the continent, occurring in the Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales. Ranidae, of the Americas, Eurasia and Africa, occurs only marginally with a single species only in the Cape York Peninsula in the northeast. Surprisingly, the latter resembles our Canadian Wood Frog, *Rana sylvatica*, in pattern (dark mask) and call ("like the sound of a duck but lacks a musical quality"). Of the other three families, two are not represented in Canada: the Myobatrachidae 118 species (formerly included in the southern western hemisphere Leptobatrachidae) and Microhylidae 18 species (widely distributed in southern western hemisphere, Africa and Asia).

Most forms are given a vertical half page column, but six have two columns (two with consecutive half pages; four on one entire page each). A problem for the non-Australian (and perhaps even some Australians) is that the forms are sequenced in alphabetical order by English names, rather than being grouped by family or genus. Thus, in one case two subspecies with distinctive common names are separated by 100 pages.

The only other subspecies fortunately have a base common name, each form with a modifier, so all five occur consecutively.

Every form is illustrated in colour and accompanied by a range map. The text accounts are very brief: Latin name, Synonyms, Family name, Habitat, Distribution, Length, Abundance, Status, Meaning (of Latin name), Behaviour (generally breeding and call), Development (number of eggs, where laid), and Locality (political divisions it occurs in). Although all are by the author, the illustrations vary from superb to less so, with those in which a bit of substrate is included more deftly done while the others give the effect of crude cutouts. But as Dr. T. J. Hawkeswood points out in the Forward they "add a 19th century feel to the book". No variations are depicted. The maps apparently give a background of regional elevation in dark green, light green and tan though this seem not to be explained anywhere and the colours could be taken for vegetation zones. Superimposed, the purple depiction of range effectively stands out for all but the most restricted distributions. The superb layout facilitates flipping through for an overall impression of variation and ranges.

Additional text is minimal. A Quick Find Index lists families and contained species by scientific name and page number of account, and an Introduction covers topics such as How Old Are Frogs (at least 180 million years), Common and Scientific names, Species and subspecies, descriptions, distribution. A page of diagrams depicts Diagnostic Characters of Frogs, four pages list the characters of the families and genera with comments on conservation. An outline map gives the eight political divisions and a two or three letter code for each (but West and South Australia are both designated WA whereas the latter is properly SA in the text). The book concludes with a two-page Glossary (address to xeric) a 20 pages of references and a three-page index to common and scientific names.

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Experimental Approaches to Conservation Biology

By Malcolm S. Gordon and Soraya M. Bartol. 2004. University of California Press. Berkley, California. xv + 343 pages, \$75 US.

The papers collected together in this volume were originally prepared for a conference of the same name held in 2001. The editors have brought together research that emphasizes both basic and applied scien-

tific experiments related to conservation, particularly those at the organism level.

The book consists of four sections. The first section, Introduction, consists merely of a five-page introduction along with a one-page list of conservation-related websites. The list of web resources is very basic and is limited to five government sites (one Canadian and four American) along with a number of major NGOs