

far inland. I would be surprised if this pack-ice loving beast would go up fresh water rivers.

Notwithstanding my comments, this is a much-needed guide and it will be indispensable for naturalists and mammalogists for years to come.

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## Birds of the Saskatoon Area

Edited by Anna L. Leighton, Jim Hay, C. Stuart Houston, J. Frank Roy, and Stan Shadick. 2002. Nature Saskatchewan Special Publication Number 23, Regina and Saskatoon Nature Society, Saskatoon. 345 pages. 40.00 CAD [30.00 CAD to Saskatoon Nature Society members] Paper.

During my second encounter with the late J. Bernard Gollop in Regina some time between 1968 and 1970, the late Margaret Belcher and her sister, Mary Houston, mentioned that his planned book on the birds of the Saskatoon area would probably be the next of the esteemed Saskatchewan Natural History Society special publications to appear. Unfortunately, Bernie did not live to see it in print, but 77 authors and six editors finally brought his 1965-1988 efforts to fruition. The long gestation period produced an outstanding addition to Saskatchewan's ornithological literature.

This largest book in the series to date is also the first to be co-published [by the Saskatoon Nature Society] and is the fifth in the Manley Callin series on birds of specific areas of the province. It is jammed with information, with even the covers and fold-outs from the covers containing information [an area map, a Landsat image of the study area and a few tables]. Introductory material covers the first 68 pages of text, including publication blurbs, tables of contents, drawings, maps and photographs, a dedication to Bernie Gollop, a preface, a foreword by Farley Mowat, a poem, acknowledgments, chapters on birding aids, histories of birding in the area and of the project, a detailed chapter on habitats and other ecological influences on the local avifauna, a detailed chapter on "hot spots" [essentially a bird-finding guide], a list of "unpublished" sources [including published seasonal compilations] consulted, a list of abbreviations, a topography and a glossary. These are well illustrated with figures, maps and drawings. The bulk of the text consists of 340 species accounts in taxonomic order except for one [Prairie Warbler] that was added while the book was in late stages of production. Eight appendices, a list of references cited and indices to English and French bird names close the book.

The species accounts are preceded by a two-page introduction, explaining their contents and definitions used for seasonal occurrence, status in the area, abundance, tables of arrival and departure dates and other general information. Species accounts range in length from two paragraphs to two and a quarter pages, depending on regularity of occurrence in the area, amount of knowledge of the species' life history features in the

area, numbers banded in the area, and other factors, such as change in status, locally, provincially, and/or generally. If migratory, earliest and median spring arrival and latest and median fall departure dates are included. If banded, numbers of the species banded in the area are listed, as are numbers (if any) recovered inside and/or outside the Saskatoon bird area. If known to nest, data are included on whatever details of nesting biology, chronology, habitat and/or success are available. Remarks on population changes and their believed causes are also included if appropriate. Drawings accompany several species accounts. Current English, French and scientific names and one or more four-letter species code(s) are indicated for each species. Former English names are also indicated for several. Nineteen nesting species are listed as hosts of Brown-headed Cowbird documented in the Saskatoon area in both the cowbird and the host species accounts. Several miscellaneous observations of biological, historical or population trend interest are also mentioned, often in a "side bar" or box.

The book ends with a series of eight appendices (on annual Christmas, May Day and fall counts, local Breeding Bird Surveys, numbers of each of 79 species banded in the area, numbers of birds banded by each bander who has banded in the area, nest-box dimensions and requirements for 12 species and a list of 12 theses based on birds studied within the area), a list of references cited and indices in English and French to the first page of each species account.

This volume continues the trend of improving on the already high quality of earlier contributions in this series, using as many sources of published and unpublished sources as possible. Although some variability in style is inevitable in a book with so many authors and editors, the quality of writing and accuracy of information are high throughout. I noted a few minor grammatical deviations, but few errors or omissions of substance. The statement (page 284) that Dickcissels "continue to breed" in southern Manitoba implies regular occurrence there. While they occasionally nest there, rarely in fairly large numbers, their occurrence is irregular, often with several years between sightings (Davis et al. 2003). Minor errors include the omission of the hyphen from screech-owl (page 68), reference to Townsend's Solitaires as "thrush-sized" (page 232), implying that they are not thrushes and a few instances of species names in lower case. The vocalization of Baltimore Oriole referred as a "call" (page 291) ap-

pears to be the song. Cross-referencing between species accounts is quite thorough, but the list of 19 known local cowbird host species (page 290) omits Hermit Thrush (page 235) and Common Yellowthroat records (page 259). Also, a record of House Sparrows nesting in Bank Swallow holes is mentioned in the swallow account, but not in that of the sparrow and a case of hybridization between Eastern and Mountain bluebirds is mentioned only in the Eastern species account. Odd omissions from the glossary are the terms "albinism" and "leucism," especially since the less common "melanism" is included. An odd feature, though not an error, is the use of U.S. spelling for behaviour, centered, colour, favoured, harbour, moulting, neighbourhood and variants of these. The difference in slope of the bill between Tundra and Trumpeter swans, a feature much easier to see than the visual differences noted, would have been a useful addition to the identification tips in the swan accounts (pages 89 and 90). The header for Wilson's Snipe indicates that two nesting records have been documented in the area, whereas three are mentioned in the text. The record of a robin feeding a young cowbird (page 237), while interesting, is not definitive evidence of successful parasitism by cowbirds on robins, as non-parental birds sometimes feed offspring of birds of other species (for example, Salt 1997). Most references cited are included in the reference list, but one by Allen (1952) is cited as both Allan [incorrectly] and Allen on page 138, one by Dunn et al. (2000) cited on page 189 is not listed unless 2002 is intended, the title is missing from a paper by Greenberg and Droege, the pages of the 1996 owl paper by C. S. Houston should be 125-133 [not 25-132] and the second author of the book by Robbins et al. should be B. Bruun, not B. Brown.

Although such regional works serve primarily to document occurrence, dynamics and changes in local

bird populations, they also serve to document various life history observations that the author(s) may otherwise never find time to write up. Examples of such tid-bits in this book include fondness of Snow Geese for peas, television tower casualties of Green-winged Teal, albino and/or "partial albino" Ruddy Duck, magpies, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Yellow-headed Blackbird, a pair of Red-necked Grebes incubating golf balls, predation by American Crows on Eared Grebe eggs, cormorants perching on power lines, a dry land nest of an American Bittern, Willet courtship flight, magpies chasing and catching bats and eating berries, a Bank Swallow colony in a hole in a wheat field, House Sparrows nesting in Bank Swallow holes, robins nesting on antlers and large numbers of starlings flycatching.

Another measure of success in such regional works is the degree to which they stimulate publication to fill in gaps and document changes. Judging by the number of notes and papers on bird observations and research in the Saskatoon area that have appeared in ornithological and natural history journals since "Birds of the Saskatoon Area" appeared in print, this volume has succeeded in that respect as well. It is an important contribution towards a forthcoming two-volume account of the birds of Saskatchewan.

#### Literature Cited

- Davis, S. K., G. Walz, and P. Taylor. 2003. Dickcissel *Spiza americana* (Gmelin). Pages 372-373 in *The birds of Manitoba*. Edited by P. Taylor. Manitoba Naturalists Society, Winnipeg.
- Salt, J. R. 1997. MacGillivray's and Black-throated Gray warblers compete to feed fledgling cowbird. *British Columbia Birds* 7: 15.

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**Book Review Editor's note:** In a brainstorming session between the Editor, Francis Cook and myself, on future directions, we agreed I would investigate suitable websites and, if appropriate, include their reviews. I proposed we use Brian Coad's site as a test case, hence the following review. If others know of similar suitable sites [Cornell University, USDA and USGS come to mind] please e-mail me [r.john@rogers.com] with your suggestions.

#### Brian Coad's Ichthyology Site

<http://www.briancoad.com/main.asp?page=fishdictionary.htm>  
By Brian Coad. 2008.

Unlike books, websites are not static. This is the case with Coad's site, which is defined as a work in progress. What it currently contains is sections on Projects, Fishes of Canada: Annotated Checklist, Dictionary of Ichthyology, Freshwater Fishes of Iran, Fishes of Canada's National Capital Region and Freshwater Fishes of Iran.

The first section lists the author's eight current projects, with a few sentences of explanation. The checklist of Canadian Fish is a straightforward list of scientific and common names in both languages, plus occasion-

ally a few comments. The dictionary, co-authored by the late Don E. McAllister, defines terms specifically used in the study of fish and includes some generally used common words.

The Freshwater Fishes of Iran has individual species accounts arranged by genera. These start with an introduction to the genus. Each detailed account has sections on the Common name in English and Farsi with the phonetic pronunciation, Systematics, Key characters, Morphology, Sexual dimorphism, Colour Size, Distribution, Zoogeography, Habitat, Age and growth, Food, Reproduction, Parasites and predators, Economic importance, Conservation, Further work and Sources.