



A Bird-Finding Guide to Mexico

Review Author[s]:
A. Townsend Peterson

The Quarterly Review of Biology, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Jun., 2000), 193-194.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0033-5770%28200006%2975%3A2%3C193%3AABGTM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-V>

The Quarterly Review of Biology is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact jstor-info@jstor.org.

rear-fanged colubrid introduced on to Guam and responsible for the extermination of several avian species, as well as reductions in numbers of many other vertebrates. It is also responsible for power outages, and it often invades homes, sometimes biting people.

The book is comprised of 39 chapters organized into 7 sections. The chapters and sections are divided roughly equally across the two species. The sections cover basic biology, venom and human health, behavioral and sensory biology, population biology, capture and detection, means of controlling populations, and conservation biology. It is this last section, along with Harry Greene's Foreword, that situate the often justified fears of snakes into a broader cultural and ecological context. There is much here that would be useful to ecologists, conservation biologists, natural resource managers, and especially all scientists working in any area of snake biology and behavior.

Although most of the chapters focus on only one species, several combine data on both species (e.g., comparison of venom delivery systems, pheromonal control and parasites), including the excellent internationally authored Introduction and Epilogue. The chapters, with their diverse topics and state of knowledge, vary in depth, coverage and methodological sophistication. In terms of controlling populations (for example), the design of barrier fencing is most advanced for both species, while finding effective prey or sexual attractants to lure these secretive animals to traps has been less successful. The editors have succeeded in providing a comprehensive progress report.

GORDON M BURGHARDT, *Psychology and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee*

A VENOMOUS LIFE.

By S K Sutherland. *South Melbourne (Australia): Hyland House.* \$29.95 (paper). xiii + 385 p + 20 pl; ill.; index. ISBN: 1-86447-026-7. 1998.

This is an interesting book with an interesting title: What type of venom, directed at whom? Multiple interpretations work for this autobiography, written by a foremost researcher on animal venoms and set in Australia, a continent notorious for its venomous fauna. An arachnophobe's image of spiders as deadly and aggressive is out of step with the peaceable and harmless character of most species, but leave it to Australia to evolve the arachnophobe's worse nightmare—the Sydney funnel-web spider. Sutherland is responsible for much of what we know about venoms, including that of the funnel-web spider. There is also a lot of venom of the human kind in this autobiography as well.

Why read this book? An abiding interest in re-

search on animal venoms, familiarity with Sutherland's turbulent career, or both, might motivate some potential readers, but what about the rest of us? This is an easy autobiography to read, having personality, humor, and even suspense. The book is separated into two parts, Background and Early Life and A Research Career. Both are captivating reading, but there is also an impression from the start that this book is headed somewhere in particular. Anticipation of the turbulent events that lie ahead (in the second half of Part 2) build in the opening pages, and intermittently along the way.

A rogue's gallery of dangerous wildlife lurks within these pages, including the Sydney funnel-web spider (the world's deadliest spider), western taipan (the world's deadliest snake), box jellyfish (the world's deadliest jellyfish) and more, all native to Australia and all studied by the author. Nowhere else is quite like Australia when it comes to venomous animals.

Although a fascination with venomous animals will engage readers, most are safe in the expectation that close encounters with venomous wildlife will not be their fate. The possibility of close encounters of the human kind described in this autobiography may be less easily dismissed. Some of the events covered in Part 2 were turbulent on the local scene, but likely to be unknown to the majority of readers. Because this is an autobiography, it clearly is the author's side of the story. Yet reading this account will keep your attention even if you have no prior knowledge of the protagonists. Ever called someone a worm or thrown a box of paper clips? Ever wondered what the consequences might be? Read this book.

It pays to appreciate that this is a particular kind of autobiography. It is primarily an account of the author's professional life. Wives and children get little more than passing mention—it is not that kind of autobiography.

ROBERT R JACKSON, *Zoology, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

A BIRD-FINDING GUIDE TO MEXICO.

By Steve N G Howell. *Ithaca (New York): Comstock Publishing Associates (Cornell University Press).* \$29.95 (paper). xviii + 365 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-8014-8581-9. 1999.

Mexico has been the training camp for many neotropical ornithologists. The author had done a remarkable service to the ornithological and birding communities in producing first a guide to the birds of Mexico, and he continues to contribute now with the bird-finding guide. Howell clearly has an enormous store of field experience in the country, excellent identification abilities, and effective skills at

communicating his knowledge to a wide variety of readers.

A *Bird-Finding Guide to Mexico* is an excellent compendium of sites that birders and ornithologists can visit to see Mexican birds. The combined avifaunas of these sites sum to more than 950 species, which is almost 90% of the 1060 or so species known from the country. This diversity of sites, as well as the careful descriptions that accompany each, make this book quite useful in planning outings in Mexico.

The book is generally well presented and edited. For sites with which I am familiar, the descriptions are useful and clear, and should guide users to the interesting birds. On the negative side, Howell relies overmuch on common names (see in particular the new "splits" used), which leads to ambiguity. Howell also makes some cultural bumbles. "The word *mañana* might come to mind when you think of Mexico . . . a national trait" (p 15) is odd if one knows Mexico. And his *mirando a los pájaros* ("bird-watching," p 14) has a second meaning that could cause embarrassment. Regardless, Howell has presented a very useful guide to where to see Mexican birds, more than a significant contribution.

A TOWNSEND PETERSON, *Natural History Museum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas*

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN: TOGETHER WITH THOSE OF BANGLADESH, NEPAL, SIKKIM, BHUTAN AND SRI LANKA. *Volume 9: Robins to Wagtails. Second Edition.*

By *Sálim Ali and S Dillon Ripley; with contributions by T J Roberts. Delhi (India): Oxford University Press. \$22.50. xviii + 310 p + 9 pl; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-19-563695-3. 1998.*

THE BIRDS OF THE WESTERN PALEARCTIC. *Concise Edition. Volume 1: Non-Passerines. Volume 2: Passerines.*

By *D W Snow, C M Perrins, Robert Gillmor, Brian Hillocoat, C S Roselaar, Dorothy Vincent, D I M Wallace, and M G Wilson. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. \$280.00 (two-volume set). (1) xxxii + 1051 p; ill.; bilingual indexes of scientific names. ISBN: 0-19-850187-0; 0-19-854099-X (set). (2) xvi + pp 1009-1740; ill.; bilingual indexes of scientific names. ISBN: 0-19-850188-9; 0-19-854099-X (set). [Based on *The Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.*] 1998.*

This massive pair of volumes is a direct descendant of the nine-volume set *The Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa*. The present volumes cover Iceland, all of western Europe, North Africa south to the Sahara, northern Arabia and Turkey, and European Russia from the Caspian Sea

northwards. New material is included, especially from eastern Europe, as well as new distribution and population accounts, including later changes in distributions. There are no fewer than 594 plates, 19 more than in the original multivolume work, and of these 231 are new. The color plates of the birds are vibrant, beautiful, detailed, and include sex and age forms. As appropriate (e.g., with raptors), flight patterns are also illustrated. Comprehensive color maps are provided of each species and discriminate between resident breeding and migrant breeding distributions, and winter distributions.

Species accounts are comprehensive, with field characters, habitats, distributions (total and in the different countries), seasonal movements, breeding, food, social patterns and behavior, geographic variation, voice, and some basic measurements, given. The result is a remarkably complete and definitive reference work. One envies biologists who live in the countries it covers.

ALLEN KEAST, *Biology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada*

NIGHTJARS: A GUIDE TO THE NIGHTJARS, NIGHT-HAWKS, AND THEIR RELATIVES.

By *Nigel Cleere; illustrated by Dave Nurney. New Haven (Connecticut): Yale University Press. \$45.00. 317 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-300-07457-3. 1998.*

Birds often seem to be ideal study organisms, as they (like humans) are largely diurnal and easily observed. But birds of the night put that proposition to the test. Most species of owls (Tytonidae and Strigidae) remain poorly known, although they have a hold on the popular imagination, through story and myth. The same cannot be said of the subject of this volume, the 120 species of oilbird (Steatornithidae), frogmouths (Podargidae), potoos (Nyctibiidae), owlet-nightjars (Aegothelidae), and nightjars and nighthawks (Caprimulgidae); "poorly-known," "little-known" and "rare" are adjectives liberally used throughout this book.

All species are illustrated in the 36 well-executed color plates, with the exception of *Caprimulgus solala*, a species that is known only from a single wing saved from a road casualty (which is illustrated in a line drawing in the book). For many species, birds are shown both perched and in flight (to illustrate diagnostic differences in wing and tail patterns). Sexual dichromatism and extremes of geographic variation often are shown as well. After a series of short introductory sections on general topics such as Taxonomy and Relationships, Distribution, Topography and Morphology, Structure and Mechanics, Plumages and Molt, Behaviour and Fossil Record, the book consists of a long series of accounts on each species. Headings in each species account