

begins with a foreword by novelist Jonathan Franzen, followed by a preface by George Fenwick, outlining his and the American Bird Conservancy's vision from its inception, "to capitalize on the multitudes of people who loved birds;" and concluding with his heartfelt and sincere plea "We hope . . . this book inspire[s] you to become involved." The tone of these portions, and of the Introduction, carries promise of a book that treats bird conservation issues, needs, and actions throughout the Americas. Unfortunately, the uneven organization of the work results in a guide to American Bird Conservancy activities directed principally to an audience in the United States.

The heart of the guide lies in the first two chapters. Chapter 1 nicely provides details about 212 species of birds and, for each species, there is an illustration, range map, and population and conservation summary, as well as paragraphs about their distribution, threats, conservation status, and actions deemed useful for their conservation by the authors. These watchlist birds were determined in 2007 as a part of the Partners in Flight process coordinated through Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and the American Bird Conservancy. My heart was breaking while reading the accounts of the multitude of seabirds and of Hawaiian endemics, two identifiable groups of species particularly well represented on the list. These treatments underscore the global tragedy occasioned by the exponential expansion of my species at the expense of so many others, while presenting the hope that my species has the sense to assert responsibility, as well as dominance, to the benefit of those other species. I believe the treatment remiss in not including Puerto Rican Parrots (*Amazona vittata*) and other troubled Caribbean endemic birds. These species would seem to merit inclusion more than some featured species with small but secure populations, such as Great Skuas (*Stercorarius skua*).

Chapter 2 treats a dozen groups of habitats, termed birdscaapes, in lavishly illustrated detail, summarizing the extent, location, concentration of watch-listed species, and identifying the habitats, birds, threats, conservation status, and conservation actions indicated for the birdscape. A summary of individual habitats, their general condition, the level of threat faced by each, and a flagship bird species provides an overview of the

The American Bird Conservancy Guide to Bird Conservation

D. J. Lebbin, M. J. Parr, and G. H. Fenwick. 2010. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. 456 pages, 600 color plates. ISBN 978-0-226-64727-2. \$30.00 (Hard cover).

Something about this book troubles me, and prevents me from writing the fully favorable review that I initially wanted to write. The text

conservation situation within each birdscape. One or more Important Bird Areas are listed for each habitat grouping. How these Important Bird Areas relate to the longstanding Important Bird Areas programs of the National Audubon Society and of Birdlife International is not made clear in the text, creating some ambiguity about what was represented.

A great strength of this book is the treatment of the threats to birds in Chapter 3. We should look to the American Bird Conservancy for authoritative knowledge of threats faced by birds because understanding threats is one of their signature activities. Nine anthropogenic activities are listed as causing at least 1 million bird deaths annually, presumably within the United States, and without documentation. The 27 groups of specific threats aggregate into seven broader categories: habitat loss, invasive and overabundant species (including outdoor cats, responsible for an estimated 532 million fatalities annually), collisions (collectively responsible for perhaps 1 billion casualties annually), exploitation and persecution (with hunting mortality listed at 41.5–120 million birds annually), fisheries (mortality apparently not estimable), pollution and toxics (collectively slaughtering upwards of 18 million birds each year), and climate change. For each threat, the treatments include an introduction, a summary of the extent and trend of the threat, a précis of the problems presented by the threat, a group of suggested solutions to the problems, and a list of actions that will serve to reduce the problems posed to birds. I applaud the authors for the variety of suggested actions, which run the gamut from individual and personal to collective and political activity. Readers will find the illustrations in this chapter both graphic and appropriate to the subject matter. For example, I was astonished, awed at the ingenuity of nature, and dismayed to learn on page 315 that a plant invasive to the Hawaiian islands, *Verbesina encelioides*, grows faster than albatross chicks, thereby impeding the parents from feeding their young and effecting eventual starvation of the chicks. The treatment of threats created by one bird species for others is refreshingly direct and evenhanded. I commend the authors for tackling the notion that Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), some gulls, and other species are “overabundant.” Such a treatment opens the door to our acceptance of the responsibility to identify, for birds, what

are acceptable upper as well as lower limits to populations, and admits the possibility of future discussion on a broad basis of the production, management, and control or harvest of species when their numbers exceed agreed-upon limits. This is especially true for birds such as Brown-headed Cowbirds and Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*), whose winter survival may be substantially enhanced on fallow agricultural lands in the nonbreeding range, thereby creating negative pressure on other species during the breeding period.

The fourth chapter, on international bird conservation, was doubtless the most difficult to prepare, and is the least detailed. In form, it replicates the treatment of birdscape in Chapter 2, with additional treatment of threats particularly *apropos* to areas of the Western Hemisphere outside the United States. Unfortunately, though perhaps understandably, the sketchy treatment ignores multiple conservation partners in numerous countries. Many ornithologists will be perplexed by the unnecessary characterization of “redundant collection of specimens” on page 398.

Strategies and actions for participating and effecting conservation form the thrust of Chapter 5, wherein a reader can find a skeletal listing of the opportunities available for an interested individual or organization to become engaged in bird conservation activity in a meaningful way. The authors do a creditable job of including a variety of independent sources of such opportunities, including a listing of conservation priorities by state (alas, excluding Canadian provinces and Mexican states, as well as all other nations of the Americas), and a brief Bird Conservation Directory.

The text ends with a selected bibliography and an index. Fact-checking the multitude of numbers listed throughout the document is very difficult. No footnotes and very few citations of supporting documentation are offered in the work. Not including citations increases the readability of the work substantially; omitting footnotes or endnotes supporting the various assertions creates an unfortunate air of “take our word for it, we’re the experts.” Although such a stance was doubtless not the intention of the authors, the perceived attitude is an affront to conservationists when industry “experts” do the very same thing. I frankly hoped for more careful attention to scholarship in this important work.

One additional conservation action that I want to suggest pertains to hunting and state agencies in the United States responsible for managing public lands where much public hunting and wildlife viewing takes place. In the past, wise wildlife managers developed dedicated funding sources to support actions of their agencies, notably through the sale of hunting licenses. The resulting stable income stream buffered the agencies from undue political interference with science-based management decisions relative to species, bag limits, and seasons. Over recent decades, declines in the numbers of hunters have reduced the income stream to these same agencies, which now face additional and often underfunded duties related to "nongame" management activities. Such agencies must in conscience respond to their paying clientele, the declining hunter base. The nonpaying (bird-watching) public lacks the credibility of the hunters because they do not pay in the same way for their activities. A simple approach to resolving this dilemma of standing is for those of us who use public lands for bird watching and research activities to pay for a hunting or sportsman's license in our home state and then to raise our voices as paying clients with a stake in nongame bird conservation outcomes. A waterfowl hunter colleague who read this review in manuscript form found it "amusing that bird conservationists apparently consider waterfowl hunting to be Exploitation and Persecution. Very poor word choices, in my opinion; choices apparently designed to alienate hunters rather than build common ground if discussions of improved conservation are to occur between the groups."

My misgivings about this book lie in the failure to execute its intentions to credit partnerships, to cover all the Americas, and to be attractive to less committed readers by offering documentation of its assertions. You need have no misgivings about what it does achieve, for you will find this guide useful for advising others about potential conservation actions beneficial to birds. The views and opinions expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the USDA Forest Service.

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