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The Birds of Brevard County

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BOOK REVIEWS

The birds of Brevard County.—Allan D. Cruickshank. With added records (1974-1978) by Robert D. Barber. Helen G. Cruickshank, ed. August 1980 (hand-written publ. date). Orlando, Florida, Florida Press, Inc. XVI + 208 pp. Hard cover, $6\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$, in. \$12.00.—On a filming expedition to Florida in 1950 the author was impressed by the wealth of bird life in this east coast county and began to record his observations. His attention to the matter expanded greatly in 1953 when the Cruickshanks moved to a new home in Brevard County, on the west bank of the Indian River. By 1974 the records filled three notebooks and included not only his own but those of other trusted observers. Allan Cruickshank died on October 11, 1974, in Gainesville, Florida. This book, edited and published posthumously by his wife, is a significant addition to the literature on distribution and dynamics of bird species and populations in the state. The arrangement of the text is as follows: after a frontispiece photo of Allan there follow title and dedication pages, a list of contents, a map of the county, acknowledgements, an introduction written by Helen, a list of contributors of records, the main text, a biographical sketch of the author, and finally, four blank pages for notes.

A typical account begins with the English and scientific names followed by a general statement of status and history. For migrant species there is next a section termed "southbound occurrence," including dates and observers by initials for critical records. Then under a heading "Maxima" is given the most individuals known to have been seen on one day in the county, sometimes with the occasion (such as Christmas count) and/or locality. After that similar information is given for northbound occurrence, breeding, and egg dates. Where specimens exist for rare species, the collectors and whereabouts are indicated.

I am not an expert on Brevard County birds, nor do I feel it my duty as reviewer to check in detail the accuracy of the information set forth in this book. On that subject, I shall say only that the author and editor seem to have done a good job, providing specific dates, documentation where possible, and a summary of older records where pertinent. I note one misspelling of a bird's name (Kestrel) and only one of any other word ("occurrence").

The taxonomy is up to date, following the recent A.O.U. revisions, but there is one instance of confusion deserving comment. Both U.S. forms of the Northern Oriole, Bullock's and Baltimore, occur in Florida in migration. In their separate accounts here, the former is referred to as "Northern (Bullock's) Oriole (*Icterus galbula bullockii*)" and the latter simply as "Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)" rather than as *Icterus galbula galbula*. This gives the erroneous impression that the Baltimore form is "the species" while the Bullock's is "the subspecies," though in fact, of course, both are subspecies of the species. It is curious that much of the older general information works on North American birds actually seem to have supported this practice. Thus the Song Sparrow was *Melospiza melodia*, while all those out west were subspecies! There is nothing wrong with still referring to the eastern Yellow-rumped Warbler as the Myrtle Warbler, but if one does so then the scientific name should be given as a trinomial, *D. c. coronata*. Only the name Yellow-rumped Warbler equates with the binomial.

To me, the most important and impressive documentation this book provides is not of the rich avifauna or the simple evidence of change in population and distribution over time, but rather of the terrible destruction of the environment and the birds that has occurred in Brevard County since World War II. For dozens of species something like the following is said: "Until the early 1950's a common breeding bird and migrant. Now a rare migrant or accidental. No longer breeds in the county." Thus the suburbanization and other development of Brevard County has taken a heavy toll, a toll marked last year by the apparent extinction of an entire form, the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, and by, in the two decades before, the loss within Brevard of many species still fortunate enough to have sustaining populations elsewhere. Though it is not their fundamental purpose, books such as this one tell us of the most serious of all problems for future ornithologists and birdwatchers—the loss of the very things we enjoy studying and seeing.

This book should be used by concerned citizens as a tool to convince developers and legislators alike that something must be done to stem the tide.—
JOHN WILLIAM HARDY.

A birder's guide to Florida.—James A. Lane. 1981. L. & P. Press, P.O. Box 21604, Denver Colorado 80221. 160 pp., 57 maps. \$7.00.—Jim Lane's guide is useful to visiting birders as well as to Florida's resident birders. Many of the areas to which he carefully and accurately guides the reader are places with which Florida birders are familiar but have difficulty finding. The book is a tremendous asset to the out-of-state birder unfamiliar with our good birding areas and is especially useful for finding these locations efficiently. Lane has almost eliminated the need for a roadmap!

To write this almost flawless guide, Lane spent at least 3 years in Florida traveling throughout the state and talking with local birders. The accuracy of his book is due not only to extensive research but also to the fact that he sent the manuscript to many of the state's knowledgeable birders and had them proof-read it—a procedure that too many field guide authors fail to follow!

In addition to information about birds, Lane also includes interesting facts about the other wildlife, vegetation and the historical significance of the particular location. Though somewhat less than in his previous guides, he injects his great sense of humor throughout the book, thereby making it enjoyable to read even if not really needed as a guide. When reading the book while traveling a particular route, one has the feeling that the author is accompanying the reader on a personal tour. As his friends and many others who have actually been on a tour with him know, a trip with Jim Lane is a delightful experience!—LYN ATHERTON.