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The Birds of the Wetlands

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REVIEWS

The birds of the wetlands.—James Hancock. 1984. New York, Facts on File Publications, 152 pp. including 112 pp. with color photographs. \$22.95.—Here is a “magic carpet” to major wetlands of the world. The first “touchdown” is to the “most important wetlands park in the world”, Florida’s Everglades. Swamps of Argentina are next reconnoitered. Now cross the South Atlantic to Kenya’s Tana River. At Bharatpur the “most spectacular heronry in Asia” awaits us. Chinese boatmen will paddle us along canals of Zhalong (in that part of this country formerly called Manchuria). Then, after visits in Japan, Indonesia and Australia, we take leave of our “carpet” at Spain’s Coto Doñana.

Field glasses aren’t needed. Linger instead over the many pages of the author’s artistic, beautifully reproduced photographs. What *painted* illustrations have paid homage to Roseate and Asiatic Spoonbills, to Campos Flickers, Saddlebacked Storks, Crowned Cranes and Mandarin Ducks as have these photographs?

A travelogue (the text) gives much about the humans in the recent history of each wetland. Maharajahs, imperial households, kings, dukes, ornithologists of the past and even cultural revolutions come alive as each plays its role in a wetland’s background. For each wetland species lists are given and there are careful instructions for travel (by conventional means) to each. Even the clothes and gear one should bring are suggested.

Each wetland has unique political and ecological problems and the topic of preservation of these areas is emphasized. One cannot escape great concern for the survival of these magnificent ecosystems. Indeed, one wonders whether or not our burgeoning civilization will be able to maintain viable room for wild species. What *would* the world be “once bereft of wet and wilderness?”

At the second edition of this delightful book, I hope that the publishers will have been convinced not to “split” elegant photographs between pages. Who can but shudder at, e.g., the White-naped Crane (pp. 70-71) and the Wood Sandpiper (pp. 102-103) with their “dislocated” necks and bills! There are a few minor errors to set aright: e.g., Daniel Board (p. 17) was really Daniel Beard and *Sterna albifrons* (p. 28) does not stay in Florida “all the year round.” It would be helpful to have a larger scale map for each wetland’s locality. And this reviewer really craved additional landscape pictures.

Thanks, James Hancock, for a fine journey. To all who enjoy the wetlands with their citizens of many taxa, I recommend your “carpet”. Most who ride it will, I’ll guess, come aboard again and again—as will I.—Oscar T. Owre, Department of Biology, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida 33124.

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Voices of the New World jays, crows, and their allies. Family Corvidae.—John William Hardy. 1983. Gainesville, ARA Records. 33 1/3 record album and 8-page insert booklet.—This is another in the series of monograph-style albums of recordings of bird families from ARA Records. Included are representative calls from 48 species of New World corvids (following the classification of Hardy, not the A.O.U.). Only one species is missing, the Azure-naped Jay (*Cyanocorax heilprini*), and apparently no recordings of this species exist. Although not technically a New World corvid, the Hawaiian Crow (*Corvus tropicus*) is included because Hawaii is part of the United States. The booklet gives localities and dates for each of the recordings, as well as comments on some species.