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January 1986

## Voices of the New World Jays, Crows, and Their Allies Family Cowidae

Florida Field Naturalist

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### Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1986) "Voices of the New World Jays, Crows, and Their Allies Family Cowidae," *Florida Field Naturalist*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

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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.

Florida Field Naturalist 14: 24, 1986.

**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.

Corvids prove a problem for an effort such as this. Most songbirds have a loud song, generally associated with breeding and territoriality, by which we might know them. Corvids do not have such songs but rather possess a large repertoire of calls and assorted noises which they use in a variety of contexts. As a result, often no one call exists that would best typify the species for all people. Indeed, the vocal repertoire of some jay species appears to be unlimited. Because of this fact, no species is represented by its entire range of sounds, and Hardy admits that the representation of the species is uneven. (We might have hoped for more than one predator scold from our own Florida Scrub Jay, but perhaps my personal bias is showing here.) However, for most species the calls presented are the ones most likely to be encountered, and the ones most likely, when played on a tape recorder, to "provoke nearby jays to answer and approach so that the observer can see the birds." The examples provided, the only known recordings for some species, give an interesting view of this family. One readily gained conclusion is that all of the jays, with one possible exception, sound very "jaylike". For confirmed corvid fanciers, like Dr. Hardy and myself, the opportunity to be exposed to an aspect of the biology of such a large cross section of the family is a most welcome one.—**Kevin J. McGowan**, Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.



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