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A Birdwatcher's Cookbook

Florida Field Naturalist

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REVIEWS

Florida Field Naturalist 17(2): 49, 1989.

A birdwatcher's cookbook.—Erma J. Fisk. 1987. W. W. Norton & Co., New York City. ISBN 0-393-02502-0. 264 pp. Cloth, \$15.95.—“Jonnie” Fisk has written a thoroughly readable, enjoyable book: part cookbook, part journal of a birdwatcher. Anyone who wants to know what it is like to be a birdwatcher, or a cook for a group of birdwatchers, can find out in this small, well-illustrated volume. Included are more than just the standard recipes for meat, chicken, vegetable and soup dishes. By applying the lessons taught by Jonnie, one can learn to prepare such exotic foods as sparrow pie, fried rabbit, roast armadillo, goat stew, fried grasshopper and English monkey (actually a rarebit). Jonnie says, however, that she has never cooked a Canada Goose.

Ms. Fisk tells the reader how the annual Christmas Bird Count began, and how in the South, black-eyed peas bring good luck if eaten at New Year's. She includes story after story about the birders she has known and fed.

We travel with her to many places: the north-eastern United States, south Florida, Arizona, as well as to tropical islands, Ecuador, and even to the tiny kitchen behind the Francis Scott Key bookshop in Georgetown.

Herb lore is included: thyme is good for hangovers, dill for insomnia; elderberry branches over the door keep away devils and witches and parsley will cure anything.

In the first chapter the author tells us that “this cookbook . . . presupposes a woman, or man, to whom cooking is a pleasure and hobby as well as a necessity. . . .” How well this little volume illustrates that point! I heartily recommend this book to cooks, birders and anyone who wants to settle down for a “good read.”—Sue Steinberg, 5522 Riviera Drive, Coral Gables, Florida 33146.

Florida Field Naturalist 17(2): 49-51, 1989.

Extinct birds.—Errol Fuller. 1987. Facts On File Publications. ISBN 0-8160-1833-2. 256 pp., 55 color plates. \$35.00.—Birds have experienced extinction ever since they split off from their primitive reptilian ancestors about 200 million years ago. For example, about 25% of the Pleistocene avifauna became extinct due to major climatic changes (Brodkorb, P. 1960. How many species of birds have existed? Bull. Fla. State Mus. 6: 41-53). However, Errol Fuller is concerned with modern day extinctions in this book. Fuller is a writer and an artist who paints mostly modern human themes in his native England. He has authored a study of birds of paradise, and a monograph on the kiwis is to be published soon.

In the preface, Fuller details his reason for writing this book: though monographs exist on certain species (e.g., Dodo, Passenger Pigeon), no book is devoted to all the world's recently extinct birds since the out of date Rothschild's “Extinct Birds” of 1907 and Greenway's “Extinct and Vanishing Birds of the World” of 1958. Since 1600, about 75 known species of birds have been lost. Fuller vacillates in the case of some very rare birds that have not been seen for a considerable time. For example, the Cherry-throated Tanager known from only a single specimen collected in 1870, is listed as *not* extinct because of the remoteness of its native terrain and possible secretive nature.

This book has more than 135 illustrations, with 55 in color. Most of the extinct species are illustrated with color plates from archival sources (Audubon, Keulemans, Wolf, Lear), but the black and white line drawings (especially the fine lithographs of the ratites and Dodo) are equally appealing and interesting. Though lacking the fine detail of other mediums, Fuller's six oil paintings included in this book demonstrate a fine natural history skill. With the inclusion of photography, we enter the recent modern day extinctions of birds (e.g., Laysan Millerbird, Laysan Honeycreeper, Passenger Pigeon).