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## A Birdsong Tutor for Visually Handicapped Individuals: a Narrative Introduction to the Sounds Made by Common Birds, Frogs, Insects, and Mammals of Eastern United States and Canada

Florida Field Naturalist

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## REVIEWS

Florida Field Naturalist 17(4): 84, 1989.

**Bears of the World.**—Terry Domico and Mark Newman. 1988. Facts on File, New York, NY. ISBN 0-8169-1536-8. Hardcover, 168 color photographs, 8 maps. \$29.95.—Despite their large size, global distribution and often close association with people, bears suffer from tremendous world-wide ignorance. Even in Florida, home of one of the most numerous southeastern black bear populations, many visitors and residents of the sunshine state react with surprise upon reference to bears in our state. And, often, the question that follows is “what kind are they?” Maybe this situation should be expected when one considers that much of the popular literature on bears is sensational, fictional, and most of us are urbanites with less affinity to the out-of-doors than earlier generations.

Terry Domico and Mark Newman have tried to help bridge this information gap with a pictorial and written update of international bear study. Each of the world's eight bear species is represented with a survey of basic natural history and conservation status. Without exception, the authors have made it clear that despite the varying status of the world's bears, they all have suffered from man's intrusions. Interesting and practical sections are included on man vs. bear and personal protection in bear country. These chapters emphasize the problems we have caused these intelligent beasts and the respect they deserve as the dominant forces in their changing landscapes.

Whereas the current knowledge of each species is thoroughly discussed, it often is difficult to attribute the work to a bona fide bear researcher or to the interpretation of the author. Including a complete bibliography, instead of a list of suggested reading of other popular literature, would have solved this minor confusion and also would have provided a practical source for someone in need of primary literature. Another missing item was a large comparative table summarizing and comparing each bear species' natural history and conservation highlights. Columns with common names, distribution, weight, population estimate, hibernation tendency, population status, harvest status, dominant food, threats to survival, etc. with brief explanatory statements or numbers could have been an insightful source for readily comparing these interesting species.

The photographs are quite spectacular especially the North American bears and giant panda. As often is the case with obscure animals, the sun, sloth and spectacled bears are represented primarily with shots of captive specimens. Nonetheless, these pictures generally are excellent as well.

This is a wonderful text for anyone wanting an introduction to bears of the world. If more regional specific information is desired, the primary literature needs to be consulted. “Bears of the World” is an easily read, factual and well illustrated book that should help fill the information gap noted by the authors.—David S. Maehr, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 566 Commercial Blvd., Naples, Florida 33942.

Florida Field Naturalist 17(4): 84-85, 1989.

**A Birdsong Tutor for Visually Handicapped Individuals: A Narrative Introduction to the Sounds Made by Common Birds, Frogs, Insects, and Mammals of Eastern United States and Canada.**—Lang Elliott. 1989. Ithaca, Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. Two cassettes, \$14.95.—This program was sponsored by and produced in cooperation with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS),

The Library of Congress, and the Canadian Institute for the Blind. Lang Elliott, owner-operator of NatureSound Studios, developed the concept of a bird song tutor after being motivated by the Library of Congress' "Birding: An Introduction to Ornithological Delights for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals" series. Whereas, it is obvious that sounds are important for visually handicapped persons in studying nature, Elliott was surprised to discover that narrated, auditory tutorials emphasizing sounds were unavailable to this audience.

In large part because of their calls and songs, birds provide much enjoyment while we are engaged in various outdoor activities. By sound alone, most species of birds can be identified without seeing them, often at considerable distances away. Think about hearing the calls of a Barred Owl at night, a Red-tailed Hawk on a distant ridge, or a Common Loon on the other side of a lake during an early foggy morning. Birders frequently sharpen their avian natural history skills by listening to similar tapes and the USFWS sponsored Breeding Bird Survey program is extremely dependent upon bird identification by sounds. As visually dependent creatures, we often forget how important are sound for species identification and communication. As stated in the advertisement booklet, these cassettes provide "A narrated introduction to the sounds made by common birds, frogs, insects, and mammals of the eastern United States and Canada" for visually handicapped individuals. The two cassette tapes (four sides, 120 minutes total) contain the sounds of about 70 species. However, the program is dominated by birds; by my count there are 56 identified species of birds. Further, many avian species are represented by mechanical sounds (e.g., woodpecker drumming), calls, and songs.

The tapes are divided into several sections that explore animal sounds. In the introduction to the diversity of natural sounds, the pitch, quality, and timing are discussed. Another section explores the function of sounds, such as, alarm calls, begging calls of young, and breeding calls. But most of the tape time is devoted to identifying the various species by habitat association or settings. For example, types of habitat or setting include the city; suburbia; farm and field; stream, swamp, and lake; deep forest; and ocean coastline. The farm setting is further divided into sounds typical of the morning and evening hours.

The tutor is available for no-cost loan to patrons of the NLS. Sighted listeners may also find this tutorial as a useful introduction to the world of natural sounds.—**James A. Rodgers Jr.**, Wildlife Research Laboratory, 4005 South Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601.

## EDITORIAL

**Acknowledgments.**—This concludes my third volume as editor of the *Florida Field Naturalist*. I wish to thank the officers and members of the Florida Ornithological Society for support of the journal. Special thanks go to the Associate Editors for their assistance with producing the journal. I sincerely appreciate the conversations with many FOS members, especially L. Atherton, for making suggestions to improve the quality of the journal. My editorship was made easier with the support of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. The following individuals accepted the arduous, thankless, and blithe task of reviewing manuscripts during this volume: T. Below, W. Biggs, D. Buden, J. Cox, J. Diemer, R. Duncan, T. Hardisky, W. Hoffman, S. Humphrey, J. Jackson, F. Johnson, H. Kale, H. Langridge, J. Layne, F. Lohrer, B. Millsap, R. Norton, O. Owre, R. Paul, W. Robertson, L. Short, H. Smith, S. Sprunt, H. Stevenson, N. Synder, J. Wooding, and G. Woolfenden.