
January 1997

Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, Volume V. Birds – J.a. Rodgers Jr., H.W. Kale li, and H.T. Smith, Editors

Dirk E. Burhans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Burhans, Dirk E. (1997) "Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, Volume V. Birds – J.a. Rodgers Jr., H.W. Kale li, and H.T. Smith, Editors," *Florida Field Naturalist*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol25/iss1/4>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

REVIEW

Fla. Field Nat. 25(1):24-25, 1997.

Rare and endangered biota of Florida, Volume V. Birds.—J. A. Rodgers Jr., H. W. Kale II, and H. T. Smith, Eds., 1996. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. ISBN 08130-1449-2. 688 pages.—The fifth volume in the new Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida series focuses on birds. This current series is an update of the original, widely reprinted five-volume series organized by the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals' (FCREPA). This volume is dedicated to the memory of Herb Kale, who served as editor on both the present volume and its predecessor. FCREPA was founded in 1973 by biologists concerned with the status of Florida's flora and fauna. The first FCREPA meeting resulted in the original five-volume series evaluating those species needing conservation and/or protection. In that series, as in this current series, each species account is written by a biologist that has worked directly with a particular species or done extensive literature research on it. Like the earlier volume on birds, this book is as an authoritative and definitive reference for Florida's threatened and endangered avifauna.

This volume is organized similarly to its earlier counterpart, containing preliminary sections on definitions of status categories and descriptions of the major habitats of Florida. The introduction enumerates those species whose status categories have changed since the earlier volume and presents a good overview on listing trends and criteria. A table of the federal, state, and FCREPA status for all birds in the book greatly improves on the older version for use and readability.

The first three species accounts are brief but illuminating accounts of extinct species: the Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet and Dusky Seaside Sparrow, the latter of which was still extant when original account was written in 1978. Following the species accounts of the recently extirpated Zenaida Dove, Key West Quail Dove and Whooping Crane, the chapters proceed in order of decreasing species rarity. In a manner similar to the Birds of North America series, each accounts follows a specified format. Within each account, sections on the natural history, ecology and conservation of each species are standard, although not always consistent, for each species in the book. The present volume improves on the older one by adding sections on taxonomy, habitat requirements and habitat trend, demographic characteristics, key behaviors, and conservation measures taken, all of which add information either missing or hard to find in the earlier volume. The sections are also more extensive and informative than in the earlier version.

Like the Birds of North America series, both biologists and nature enthusiasts will appreciate the quantity and quality of natural history information contained in the species accounts. Particular standouts are the chapters on Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Sooty Tern, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Brown Noddy, which are detailed and in-depth without sacrificing readability. The other accounts are excellent or worthwhile but may contain less information, in many cases because so little is known about the species. For instance, population trends are not even known for Least Bittern, Merlin, Gull-billed Tern, and both Black and Yellow-crowned Night Heron, among others; the most recent quantitative statewide data mentioned for Florida's Osprey population dates from 1983. In addition to population data, much basic biology and behavior remains unknown for many birds, including Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Nighthawk and Black-whiskered Vireo. Hopefully this book will spur biologists to explore research opportunities on these species either directly or through graduate students, and funding agencies concerned with conservation will rise to support such work.

Attention to detail varies among chapters; more uniformity might have been achieved with greater editorial control. For instance, in the Conservation Measures

Taken section some authors note that the species is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Wildlife Code of the State of Florida, and include additional state and federal listings; other authors only note the species is “protected by federal and state laws”, or fail to mention any legal protection at all. Readers or students unfamiliar with conservation regulations may think that some birds are protected by laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and other birds are not. Many chapters give a history of state and federal listings for the species, while others do not. While the book is explicitly about Florida birds, many chapters make little mention of population size or trends outside of Florida, although complete range maps are included in the text. Nonetheless, readers may be left wondering what proportion of the species’ world-wide distribution occurs in Florida. A map at the beginning of the book labeling the Florida counties would also be helpful for comparing species distribution maps. The legibility and labeling of the included river drainage map could be improved. However, the book as a whole is handsomely designed and solidly produced, with distribution maps for each species and photographs of most.

The complexity of decision-making about listings becomes apparent throughout the course of the book. The reader may wonder if a bird was placed in the proper category, about inclusion or exclusion of extralimitals, and how aspects of rarity and vulnerability were weighed in the listing decisions. These are problems inherent with the listing process in general, especially when little is known about many of the species, and the editors acknowledge that some decisions were difficult or controversial. Overall, this book is an excellent resource on threatened and endangered birds in Florida from both conservation and basic biology perspectives. Administrators, biologists, technicians, naturalists, and students, including primary and secondary school students, will find this an invaluable resource for information about Florida’s rare and endangered birds.—**Dirk E. Burhans**, Archbold Biological Station, P.O. Box 2057, Lake Placid, Florida 33852.