

2000

## Books

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**BIRDS OF ESSEX COUNTY, NEW YORK**, third edition. Geoffrey Carleton, edited by John M. C. Peterson. 1999. High Peaks Audubon Society, R.R. 1, Box 230, Elizabethtown, N. Y. 12932-9721. 56 pp. \$8.95 U.S. (\$10.50 U.S. post paid).

This small book is the latest edition of the annotated records of Essex County, New York, a large county which includes the high peaks of the Adirondack Mountains and the Champlain Valley in the northern portion of the state. The author was a meticulous record-keeper, who has compiled and documented impressive records of the 310 species of the county, using current sightings, museum specimens, and an extensive search of the historical record.

For each species, the status, early and late migration dates, maxima and historical records are given, along with the locations and initials of observers. Boreal birds, specialties of the region, are given slightly more space, and in the case of the rarest birds every sighting is recorded. For a few species, a brief habitat description is included, as in Tennessee Warbler: "All summer records have been in high deciduous growth." There is little other descriptive or explanatory material, and occasionally the reader would like to know more.

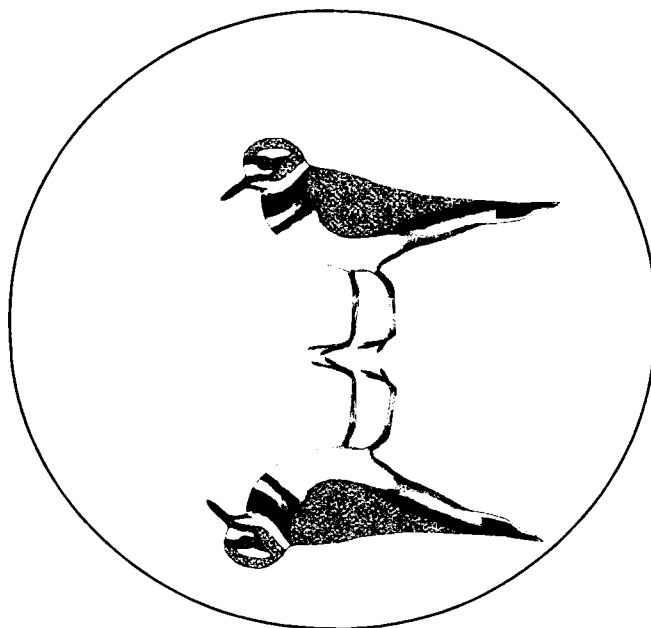
A few remarkable species have been found in Essex County, such as two species of jaeger, Sooty Tern, Black Guillemot and Prothonotary Warbler. Carleton even found two county records of Passenger Pigeons, including a nest record from 1749 and a specimen from 1891.

Black-and-white photographs of some of the rarer bird species are included, bringing us to the banding angle, because most of the photographs are birds in the hand. Carleton used all of the bird records available to him, including the records of county banders. Readers of this review will not be surprised to find a remarkable number of early or late dates, or new records, for passerine birds followed by the note "banded by JP" or another bander; we know that mist nets reveal species that may be undetected by field birders.

I recommend this book to banders for the information that it contains and as an inspiration for an important way of using our data. Unfortunately, too many county and regional books include few records from banders. We should document any rare birds we band carefully and regularly submit records of them (as well as unusual numbers of common birds) to hot lines, state rare bird committees, and those who keep records for state journals, as well as to anyone who is working on a publication such as this. Or perhaps we should be compiling such a book ourselves.

*Birds of Essex County, New York* is a wonderfully thorough documentation of the birdlife of a region. When the next edition is written, I hope that the material is expanded, more habitat descriptions are included, and that fewer abbreviations are used.

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Killdeer by George West