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Birds of Mexico and Central America

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the 1980s, then declined. All months were represented in the recoveries, with winter months predominating. Recoveries were of birds banded

in 23 U.S. states and three Canadian provinces, led by New Jersey [53], Virginia, South Carolina and Michigan [30 each].) MKM

MKM = Martin K. McNicholl

Books

RAPTORS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA. By Brian K. Wheeler. 2003. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 456 pp. \$45.00.

Raptors of Eastern North America is a thorough guide for identifying hawks, eagles, and falcons. The guide includes many high quality photos that can aid in the identification of difficult-to-identify species. There is a wide selection of effective and useful photos of bird profiles and birds in flight for each species. There is also a comprehensive selection of photos showing the color variations found in the species covered, along with photos showing comparisons of juvenile and adult plumages. The book includes maps which provide sightings and illustrate ranges. These are useful in eliminating or establishing the possibility of a particular species.

This book is an excellent resource for hawk watchers and others interested in identifying hawks, including banders. The text is well written and the information is presented in a manner which is easy to understand and follow. Species accounts are comprehensive and thorough, including detailed biology of all species covered. The text includes flight and voice descriptions. The subspecies accounts are very detailed. These can also be somewhat confusing at times, especially for beginners. On the other hand, the book is dedicated to diurnal raptors and does not confuse the issue by including owls or accidental migrants, either of which could add to beginner confusion. There are some minor errors in the occurrence of species, with Cooper's Hawk listed as uncommon and Bald Eagle listed as common.

The author's primary sources include an extensive bibliography. He has drawn on a wide range of expertise in the field and has undertaken comprehensive research of available information. The book was written for advanced and beginner raptor watchers and banders. The book is more

useful for watchers than banders, but does provide additional material for raptor banding identification, especially when dealing with color morphs.

The book is structured with the first seven chapters dedicated to understanding the species accounts, including keys to maps and extensive glossaries, followed by the species accounts. The species accounts are orderly and logical, beginning with vultures and progressing through the hawks, falcons, and then eagles. The book delivers what it promises and is interesting and enjoyable to read.

In summary, I recommend this book at all levels. It should be part of every hawk-watching station in eastern North America.

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BIRDS OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA. Written and illustrated by Ber van Perlo. 2006. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ and Oxford, UK. 336 pp. \$29.95.

In a compact form, this book provides color illustrations and brief descriptions of all bird species occurring in Mexico and Central America: more than 1,500 species on 98 color plates. In a separate section at the back of the book are range maps for each species, each easily linked with the appropriate illustration through a unique numbering system. Excellent indices of scientific, English and Spanish names are provided.

This book would be of interest primarily to ornithologists or "birders" in that it is the only field guide that covers all species likely to be encountered in Mexico and Central America. I would have been delighted to have had this guide

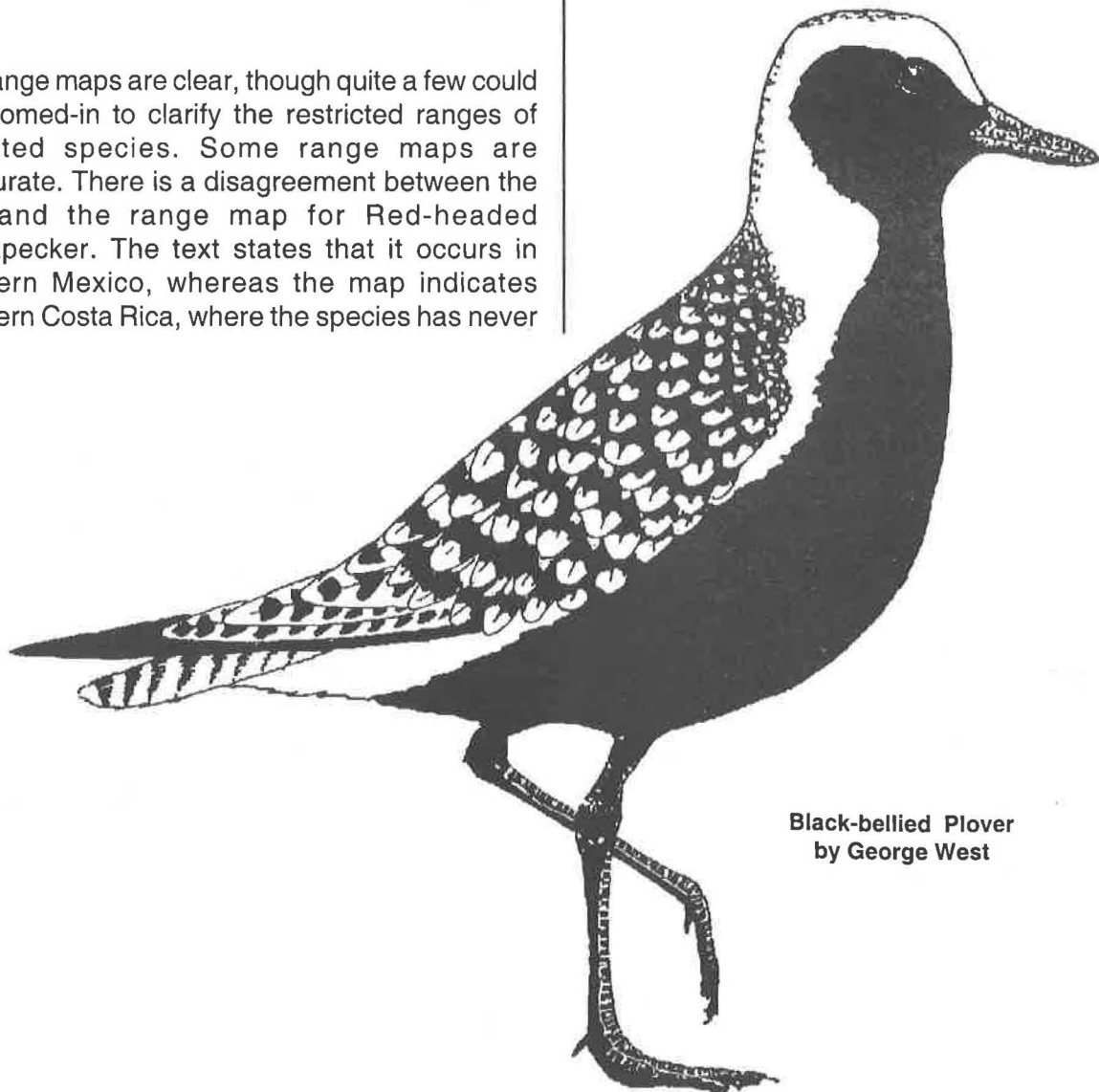
at hand when driving from Canada to Costa Rica a few years ago. North American banders working in Central America would find this book somewhat helpful in identifying and sometimes ageing and sexing unfamiliar "tropical" birds, though it lacks descriptive supportive text, such as one would find in *The Birds of Costa Rica*.

The illustrations are crisp, clear and accurate, though they present more of the "jizz" of a bird than the fine details one would find in the Sibley guide. Unfortunately, some plates are labeled incompletely. For example, on plate 5, the juvenile frigatebirds are unlabelled, though the stated convention in the book is that unlabelled birds are breeding plumage males. Although for the most part well organized, the numbering of illustrations on some plates leaves much to be desired—see plate 51.

The range maps are clear, though quite a few could be zoomed-in to clarify the restricted ranges of selected species. Some range maps are inaccurate. There is a disagreement between the text and the range map for Red-headed Woodpecker. The text states that it occurs in northern Mexico, whereas the map indicates southern Costa Rica, where the species has never

occurred. There are errors of omission. For example, the map of White-winged Dove indicates the southern limit of occurrence at Lake Nicaragua, whereas the species is common through much of Costa Rica south of Lake Nicaragua. Similar omissions are evident in the range maps of Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Canivet's Emerald and Steely-vented Hummingbird. Despite these reservations, I would recommend this book highly to anyone birding or banding in Mexico or Central America.

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Black-bellied Plover
by George West