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## Books-Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson

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southwestern England. Two adults color-banded in Gloucester, England, were on Guernsey throughout summer 2009.) MKM

**Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* successfully rearing a young Sandwich Tern *S. sandwichensis*.** B. Cadiou and Y. Jacob. 2010. *Seabird* 23:139-142. Bretagne Vivante –SEPNB, 186 rue Anatole, France, BP 63121 (The first “Roseate” chick of the year banded at a colony in northern Brittany was so heavy that the researchers suspected that their scale was faulty until other Roseate chicks were found to have normal weights. As the chick grew, its identity was discovered to be a Sandwich Tern.) MKM

**Leach’s Storm-Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* nesting at a new site in Shetland.** W.T.S. Miles, R.M. Tallack, B.H. Thomason and J.D. Okill. 2010. *Seabird* 23:145-150. 29 Highfield Ave., Cambridge CB4 2AJ, Scotland (The capture of 18 Leach’s Storm-Petrels in mist-nets and observation of at least 15 more on some of the islands in Shetland and in Aug 2010 led to searches for nests on nearby islands and islets, leading to the discovery of some nesting pairs, whose nesting burrows were too deep to verify the presence of

eggs or young. Additional searches for nest-sites are proposed.) MKM

**Photographic identification of bands confirms age of breeding Carnaby’s Black Cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus latirostris*.** D.A. Saunders, R. Dawson and P. Mawson. 2011. *Corella* 32:52-54. CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, GPO Box 284. Canberra, ACT 2614, Australia. (Reading of color bands on legs of three females of these endangered parrots in Western Australia showed that one was at least 25 years old, the oldest known breeding female, one was at least 19 years old and the third was 19 years old. Types of bands, their durability and their ability to retain initial colors are documented.) MKM

**Note:** Thanks to John Fraser for forwarding a copy of the press release on the albatross longevity record and to David F. DeSante and James F. Saracco for copies of five papers abstracted in this issue.

MKM= *Martin K. McNicholl*

**Correction For Reviewer’s last name:**  
*NABB* 36:120, WDS should be “WDL = W.D.  
“Bill” Loughman” not Laughman

## Books

**BIRDWATCHER [:] THE LIFE OF ROGER TORY PETERSON.** By Elizabeth J. Rosenthal. 2008. The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut. vi + 437 pp. \$29.95.

Although *North American Bird Bander (NABB)* was not sent a review copy of this book, banding, like all other aspects of ornithology in North America and the world generally owes so much to Roger Tory Peterson’s contributions to bird identification techniques, that a review in *NABB* is appropriate. A recent hospital stay gave me an unplanned stretch of time to catch up on some delayed reading, including this gift book from my sister, Sigrid L. Zueff.

Although this is not the first biography of “R.T.P.,” it is the most comprehensive that I have seen. Unlike an earlier biography by John C. Devlin and Grace Naismith (1977), it was written after

Peterson’s death and, although full of praise for his contributions, generosity, influence, and talent, Rosenthal does not shy away from his flaws, aspects of his behavior and personality that delighted some and irritated others, and his perceived obsession with birds over all other interests, sometimes including family and friends.

The book is written in six “parts,” with from two to five chapters in each part. These are followed by four pages of acknowledgments, 20 pages of “chapter notes,” three pages of “further reading,” and a 15-page index. Although based partly on Peterson’s extensive writings and previous biographies and biographical notes about him, much of the information came from interviewing numerous admirers, colleagues, friends, neighbors and relatives.

The first part, "Fledgling," covers Peterson's birth through early stages of his career in three chapters, the first of which outlines his unhappy childhood, graduation from school in spite of frequent truancy, the influence of one of his teachers, a flicker, and the writings of Herbert K. Job and Ernest Thompson Seton on his fondness for and interest in nature. This interest led him to attend a meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union as early as 1925 at the age of 17, already exhibiting paintings and meeting some of the ornithological giants of the era. He also became involved in ornithological and naturalist organizations at an early age, becoming the only non-Bronx County resident member of the Bronx County Bird Club and getting to know his mentor, Ludlow Griscom, through membership in the Linnaean Society of New York. During these early years, Peterson's use of his famous little arrows to highlight significant features on some field sketches that he brought to a field outing caused William Vogt to urge him to create a field guide. The second chapter covers Peterson's years as head of the National Association of Audubon Society's education department, starting in 1934. One of his early tasks there was to modernize the cover of *Bird-Lore* when the Audubon societies took it over from Frank M. Chapman. Their screen tours and camps programs were also influenced for many years by his innovations. The third chapter covers the beginnings of photographic aspects of his career, the transition between his first two marriages, searches for the rapidly declining Ivory-billed Woodpecker, ongoing work with the National Audubon Society, and stamps that he illustrated for the National Wildlife Federation.

The second "part" of the biography, "Intercontinental migration," consists of one chapter on Peterson's influence on birdwatching in Europe and another on his birdwatching tour of North America with British naturalist James Fisher, followed by accounts of three follow-up tours by other birdwatchers, and a brief summary of other collaborations between Peterson and Fisher. While birdwatching on Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain, Peterson had a chance encounter with Britain's Guy Mountfort, who was using Peterson's eastern guide to identify local birds. Mountfort was so impressed with its helpfulness that he invited Peterson to

collaborate with him and Phillip Hollom in developing a European equivalent. This guide was so successful that it led to substantial increases in membership in Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Spanish edition was credited with stimulating interest in conserving nature there. The anecdote of Peterson's keeping Fisher puzzled for some time before revealing that the authors of mystery "bird" calls were Red Squirrels and chipmunks (p. 110) brought me amusing memories of similar incidents with good observers who were not previously familiar with these often vocal mammals.

Three more chapters are grouped in the third part, "Paradoxical *Homo sapiens*:" the first covering family life with his second wife of 33 years, Barbara, and their two sons in their Old Lyme, Connecticut home, ending with their divorce and the beginning of his third marriage to "Ginny," much less popular and respected among his colleagues and friends. Chapter 7 compares and contrasts the views of some of Peterson's neighbors and colleagues who experienced him as a boring "monomaniac," with virtually no interests other than birds, to others who experienced him as a well-rounded naturalist with considerable interest in plants, butterflies, other natural features, and history. The eighth chapter, "Hidden Roger" covers his attitude towards hunting, social interactions in public vs. those at home and his apprehensions about aging and mortality.

The fourth part consists of four chapters focused on conservation. Chapter 9, "embryonic conservatism," outlines early influences on his outlook, including the writings of Herbert K. Job and the anti-hawk hunting campaigns of Rosalie Edge, and covers Peterson's early efforts at public education on the effects of oil pollution on birds and early realization that the growing use of DDT to eradicate insects during World War II had profound negative effects on many animals, especially birds. Chapter 10, "Adventuresome flights of conservation," starts with Peterson's involvement in both scientific and conservation organizations at both national and international levels and continues with accounts of his involvement with eminent conservationists and scientists in conservation efforts in Spain, Kenya,

Bolivian Andes, Midway Atoll, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, the Galapagos and Antarctica. Chapter 11 focuses on the DDT-attributed decline of Ospreys, notably in the Old Lyme, Connecticut, area, where Peterson lived, and the studies of Peter Ames and later others into why numbers were decreasing there. This chapter includes brief accounts of declines of several other bird species and the suspected role of DDT and other pesticides in their declining reproductive success, including Western Grebes, Bald Eagles, and Peregrine Falcons. Part four ends with the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, on Peterson's participation in Lars Linblad's ecotours for wealthy travelers to such destinations as Africa, Aldabra, and other Seychelles islands, the Amazon, and the Galapagos islands.

Part five consists of five chapters on "inspiring flights," with Chapter 13 covering some of Peterson's colleagues and protégés, with brief biographical sketches of "local hatchlings" William Burt, Robert Hernandez, Thomas Lovejoy, Fleur Ng'weno, son Lee Allen Peterson [author of an edible plants guide], Noble Proctor and Paul Spitzer, "hatchlings far and wide" Peter Alden, Pete Dunne, George H. Harrison, Kenn Kaufman, David Allen Sibley, and Edward O. Wilson, and "Swedish hatchlings" Lars Jonsson and Kent Ullberg. The 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, "Offerings," covers Peterson's attitude towards charitable donations, his apprehension over competing field guides, his generosity in contributing artwork and time to conservation, naturalist and ornithological causes and organizations and in writing forewords, introductions, and prefaces to books by other authors, resentment of Peterson by a few colleagues for his fame and success, and his continuing stamina at age 62 when he climbed with greater ease than a considerably younger companion to add Brown-capped Rosy-Finch to his life list. Chapter 15, "Maturing with National Audubon," covers his contributions to the National Audubon Society as an "insider" board member, columnist, free-lance artist, photographer, screen tour lecturer and writer, and secretary long after his employment there. The chapter ends with a nearly fatal car accident near Ithaca, New York. Chapter 16, "Shooting Birds," covers Peterson's prowess at bird photography, coupled

with his use of photographs in his articles and lectures. The 17<sup>th</sup> chapter, "Painterly birds," covers Peterson's artwork, emphasizing his desire to devote more time to painting in various behavioral and scenic contexts, rather than illustrations for identification purposes and his relationships with various other artists and publishers. Art exhibitions and awards are included in this chapter.

The sixth and final "part" consists of two chapters on "Bird man of bird men." Chapter 18, "Territory under challenge," begins with the untimely death of Peterson's close friend and British collaborator, James Fisher. The chapter continues with the deaths, often prematurely, of several other colleagues and friends, and tensions between his third wife, Ginny and some of his family and friends. Some of his many awards and honorary doctorates are then summarized, followed by an account of the growing number of field guides competing with Peterson's, some of the other art and writing projects competing for his time, and the offence he felt towards reviews criticizing some of his guides. The 19<sup>th</sup> and final chapter, "still all over the range map," covers more of his donations of time to fund-raising and awards he received and for which he was nominated, changes in the programs and projects of the National Audubon Society, as well as apprehensions over health problems and the inevitability of death, establishment of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute and finally his death.

Peterson's most significant contribution to banding is by far his distillation of field identification into the field guide concept and his authorship and co-authorship of numerous field guides and bird identification articles. His very busy schedule for much of his life precluded extensive banding himself, but he did occasionally participate in some banding and wrote on the contributions of specific banding projects to our understandings of specific biological facts, such as Charles Broley's banding of Bald Eagles in Florida (pp. 78 and 228) and a night of banding with Guy Mounfort, Keith Shackleton and Shackleton's wife at a lighthouse in the English Channel, the subject of the first instalment of Peterson's column in *Audubon*. Barbara Peterson's contributions to Peter Ames'

Osprey banding are also highlighted, including her record-keeping and help with logistics (pp. 233-234). From an historical viewpoint, banders may be interested to learn that an early challenge to the widely used Humphrey-Parkes molt classification was introduced to the American Ornithologists' Union in a session chaired by Peterson, who called on Humphrey or Parkes to respond. Prominent banders, such as C. Stuart Houston and Chandler S. Robbins, were among Rosenthal's sources on several topics, notably halting the U.S. Navy's planned destruction of the Midway Atoll albatross colony, where one of Chan's banded birds became the oldest documented bird mother in the World (Puckett *et al.* 2011).

Although Rosenthal often refers to birds, organizations, and serials by the names by which they were known at the time of an incident under discussion, she is usually careful to note their current names at the same time (e.g., Upland Plover = Upland Sandpiper, National Association of Audubon Societies = National Audubon Society, International Council for Bird Preservation = Birdlife International, *Bird-Lore* = *Audubon*). Occasionally, she expands on such changes in a footnote, such as one (p. 74) on Traill's Flycatcher being split subsequently into Alder and Willow in part on the basis of studies by John Aldrich stimulated by Peterson's comments on their singing different songs in different locations. Occasional errors are very minor. For example, the Canadian Audubon Society [not Audubon Society of Canada] is not now Nature Canada (p. 212), but it and its affiliates joined together to form the Canadian Nature Federation [since renamed Nature Canada]. I noticed only one very minor word omission and two spelling flaws—as a scientific name *Homo sapiens* (p. 328) should have been in italics or underlined to indicate Latin and *Homo* capitalized, as the genus and Swallow-tailed Kite is spelled Swallow-Tailed on p. 409.

Rosenthal obviously has researched thoroughly the literature on Peterson, his publications and the issues that were important to him. The many interviews and private papers of correspondence on which Rosenthal's book is based add considerably

to its authenticity, with a four and one-half page section on general acknowledgments, followed by another four-page list of interviewees ["sources"], 21 pages of "chapter notes," and three more pages of "further reading." Citing collections of private papers identifies the source of many of events and opinions expressed, but citing such collections as the source of published notes may imply to some that such notes are only in such collections. For example, C. Stuart Houston's private library is cited as the source of Peterson's (1960) account of his observation with James Fisher of a Greater Prairie-Chicken at Old Wives Lake, Saskatchewan, whereas several libraries have all but the earliest issues of *Blue Jay*, making the note more widely available. Several notes and papers from even more wide-spread journals, such as *British Birds* and various North American serials are cited similarly from private collections. In short, this is a thorough, well-researched and balanced account of the life of a man whose efforts and talents will continue to influence banders and other birdwatchers and ornithologists for many more years.

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