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### ***Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country* by Robert Righter, Rich Levad, Coen Dexter, and Kim Potter**

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country.** 2004. Robert Righter, Rich Levad, Coen Dexter, and Kim Potter. Grand Valley Audubon Society, Grand Junction, CO. \$29.95, paperback; 214 pp. + 2 maps. ISBN 0-9743453-0-X.

As the Grand Valley Audubon Society points out, only rarely have individual Audubon chapters published state or regional bird books. Regional bird books in full color with the attention to content and detail provided by this new book are virtually unheard-of. Covering the westernmost third of Colorado, *Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country* provides readable and thorough insight into the avian community of this scenic and ecologically diverse landscape.

At the heart of the book are accounts of the 373 bird species documented from the region; range maps are included for the 200 most abundant and regularly occurring species. Species accounts present more than the expected content of status, distribution, and habitat; they also identify species that have been introduced, that have recently changed in distribution, or that enjoy special conservation status. Seasonal and elevational graphs for each species pinpoint when and where birds are found, and reinforce the concept that abundance is usually an ever-changing function of elevation, habitat, and timing.

Righter, Levad, Dexter, and Potter have produced a book that is a must-have for wildlife

professionals, land managers, and those interested in birds of western Colorado. It is a useful companion to the 1992 *Colorado Birds* by Robert Andrews and Robert Righter and to the 1998 *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* edited by Hugh Kingery. It goes beyond those 2 books by summarizing the best regional birding localities and identifying where to observe target birds, assets that visiting birders will find invaluable. The illustrations by Don Rado- vich complement an already beautiful book.

This fine book could scarcely be improved upon, although a summary of proportions of native versus introduced species or of species that have changed in distribution would have been useful. Also curious in the Willow Flycatcher account is the statement that the “pure form” of the federally endangered Southwestern subspecies has not been satisfactorily documented in the southernmost portion of the region—a statement which contradicts current regulatory guidelines of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and which might prove confusing for some readers. Nevertheless, even a brief glance at this book leaves the reader with more than a tinge of desire to visit western Colorado and watch the nearly endemic Gunnison Sage-Grouse displaying at a lek.

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