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*Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution* edited by Terence R. Wahl, Bill Tweit, and Steven G. Mlodinow

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BOOK REVIEW


One of the early, classic state bird books, co-authored by William Dawson and J. Hooper Bowles, was The Birds of Washington, published in 1915. Then in 1953 came the important multi-authored Birds of Washington State by 4 authors: Stanley Jewett, Walter Taylor, William Shaw, and John Aldrich. Now the days of detailed and comprehensive state bird books authored by but a few people are a thing of the past. This new book, Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution, has 3 editors who are ornithological and regional experts and contains species accounts and informative essays from nearly 50 contributing authors. It is the definitive book on birds of Washington state.

Two major contributions of this new book are the up-to-date distributional maps and a discussion of the change in status and distribution of species over the 50 years since the Jewett et al. book. Not only are 483 bird species covered in the book (many accounts occupying a full page and containing such headings as Subspecies, Habitat, Occurrence, Remarks and Noteworthy Records), but there is a 10-page discussion on bird habitats in Washington (in which 30 distinct habitats are listed), a 7-page discussion on avian conservation, and a section on the evolution of field ornithology in Washington. Because the logistics of coordinating so many authors were difficult, this book was more than a decade in the making. The cut-off date for abundance and status change was set at the year 2000; however, records up to at least 2002 are given. A graph showing the known range of dates of occurrence in both the eastern and western portion of the state accompany many species accounts.

Over half of the species have shown a change in status over the past 50 years. Examples are (1) the anthropogenic range expansions of the Barred Owl (Strix varia), Anna’s Hummingbird (Calypte anna), European Starling (Sturnus vulgaris), and House Finch (Carpodacus mexicanus) due to favorable habitat modifications and (2) the natural range expansions, perhaps related to climatic changes, of the Black-headed Grosbeak (Pheucticus melanocephalus), Lazuli Bunting (Passerina amoena), and Tricolored Blackbird (Agelaius tricolor). In cases of observed declines in status or distribution, the causes varied, but many were associated with habitat conversion and other human activities rather than natural events.

This book is well worth having on your bookshelf, especially if you are interested in birds of the western United States and southwestern Canada. The moderate price, as such books go, makes it an attractive purchase, especially considering that comparable books such as Birds of the Yukon Territory exceed $120.

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