

typical songs and a good variety of calls included. Furthermore, most of the recordings were made in Texas or very nearby, so that local dialects, such as the *arizonae* Whip-poor-will found in West Texas, and the *mccallii* Eastern Screech-Owl found in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, are well represented. The accompanying booklet provides particularly good phonetic renditions of songs and calls which aid in committing them to memory. The CD is arranged primarily with one species per track (two per track in a handful of cases), so access is reasonably easy.

My only disappointment is the apparently arbitrary selection of species. This is not a complete collection of the vocalizations of the region's birds, nor does it claim to be, but this CD is not limited to specialty birds, either. Rather, a mix of specialty birds and common, widespread species is included, with glaring gaps in each group. If specialty birds are the focus, why then are such species as Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Gray Hawk, Green Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, Blue-throated, Magnificent, and Lucifer Hummingbirds, Tropical Kingbird, Rose-throated Becard, Rufous-backed Robin, Grace's Warbler, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, and Painted Redstart not included? If space is a limiting factor, why include such familiar bird sounds as Great Horned Owl, Northern Mockingbird, and House Finch? I am equally perplexed at the inclusion of Cliff and Cave Swallows but no other swallows. Likewise, I find it strange that Eastern Meadowlark is included but Western is not; both are common in Texas, and if ever there were two species whose vocalizations are critical to identification, these are the ones.

Despite the unusual selection of species, this CD provides birders visiting this region with superb examples of many of the species they are looking for and will prove to be an excellent reference.

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Alien Species in North America and Hawaii: Impacts on Natural Ecosystems. George W. Cox, 1999. Island Press, Washington, D. C., and Covelo, California. Tables, preface, glossary, appendix, index. 344 pp. Hardcover \$60.00, paperback. \$30.00.

Perhaps more than any other subgroup of naturalists, birders are acutely aware of the difference between native species and "exotics," more properly referred to as alien species—those birds either artificially introduced to the locality or invading from other areas into which they were introduced.

A longstanding "NIB" (No Introduced Birds) movement among listers illustrates the general disdain for non-native species. However, relatively little attention has been given in the birding literature to the effects of aliens on "natural" communities and ecosystems. The subject merits more attention from birders, who are in an excellent position to monitor the impact and spread of new invaders. Ignoring such species as Eurasian Collared-Dove or Monk Parakeet, especially in the early stages of invasion, would do a great disservice to both the scientific community and to future observers. Fortunately, most birders readily document the presence of new exotics, and birds are among the best-documented examples of alien invaders covered in this new book.

The problem of introduced species involves many organisms other than birds, and, in fact, birds are among the least noxious of the invading "weeds."

On the other hand, birds have probably suffered more from the effects of introduced organisms, especially pathogenic microbes, than any other conspicuous group except perhaps forest trees. Over half of the birds on the Federal list of endangered species are there primarily because of the introduction to Hawaii in the early 19th century of malaria-causing *Plasmodium* parasites.

George Cox's review of introduced plants and animals in North America and Hawaii is, in principle, of great interest to birders. The very magnitude of the problem is often underappreciated. I was shocked to learn that over 10 percent of the current flora of the United States, and over 22 percent of that of Canada, is of alien origin. Many exotics, such as Japanese Honeysuckle in the American south and the so-called "tumbleweed" of the West, have come to characterize whole regions. In Hawaii, most residents and visitors alike will never see a native forest bird! Even the most remote regions of North America are not free of introduced species, and consequently the question of whether any truly "natural" habitats survive anywhere has to be asked.

Cox divides his review into five parts, beginning with an introduction that gives an overview of the problem and its history. The second part is the largest, and discusses alien species in 13 regions, defined by both geography and ecology: the eastern seaboard, west coast bays and estuaries, northern temperate lakes, western rivers and streams, eastern forests, Florida and the Gulf lowlands, plains and intermontane grasslands, western floodplains, the "mediterranean" areas of the Pacific states, and the Hawaiian Islands. Part III reviews alien species on the basis of biotic categories: exotic game and fish, displaced species native to other parts of North America, and human commensals and domesticated animals. Part IV discusses theoretical issues associated with introduced organisms (for example, their impact on biodiversity and ecosystems), and the ways in which

California), Winter Wren (recorded in Oregon), and Pine Grosbeak (recorded in California)—are known to have recognizably different calls from one population to another.

As I looked through the recording locations, I noticed what could be another problem. Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel and Emperor Goose were reportedly recorded in England, where they do not occur. What about Trumpeter Swan in Manitoba, and Whooper Swan in Montana? Were these vagrants, or were they actually recorded somewhere else?

With these cautions in mind, the birder traveling to Alaska will find this set an excellent and invaluable reference with shortcomings that are overshadowed by the superb quality of the recordings and the generally excellent selection of species included.

Bird Songs of the Rocky Mountain States and Provinces by Robert Righter and Geoffrey A. Keller is a marvelous collection of 259 species on three discs. It includes a number of local specialties such as the recently split Gunnison Sage-Grouse, as well as White-tailed Ptarmigan, Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens, Mountain Plover, Flammulated Owl, Gray Vireo, all four longspurs, and all three rosy-finches. It is organized with one species per track, which allows quick access to what you want to hear. Most of the recordings have excellent clarity, and the CD is loaded with gems, including some of the nicest wrens and longspurs I have ever heard. With only a couple of exceptions (notably, White-breasted Nuthatch), the majority of the recordings were made in the Rocky Mountains so most of the vocalizations presented should match up well with what birders in the Rockies will hear. The diversity of call types represented is good, but the length of the cuts varies greatly; some of the tracks, such as those of Loggerhead Shrike, "Pink-sided" Junco, and Pine Grosbeak, are longer than they needed to be, while Orange-crowned Warbler is represented by only one song example.

Surprisingly, the CD is missing a

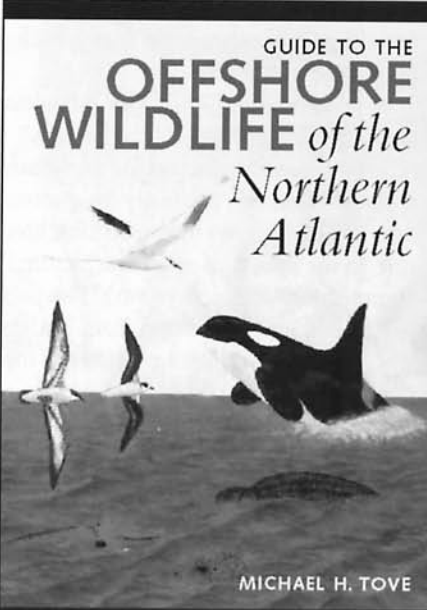
great many of the species typical of the Canadian Rockies, such as Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, ten of the "eastern" warblers, White-throated Sparrow, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. In general, any primarily eastern species with a range extending into the Canadian Rockies was not included. While all of these species may be well represented on other tapes and CDs, their absence is disappointing, especially since the title clearly implies that birds of the Canadian Rockies are included. The CD does, however, include a number of species which are barely part of the Rocky Mountain avifauna, such as Chimney Swift, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. It seems as though a little more effort could have produced a better representation of the birds of the Rocky Mountains as a whole.

This CD appears to be aimed prima-


rily at birders visiting locations in the southern and central Rockies, such as Rocky Mountain National Park and Yellowstone National Park. For those areas, the coverage is excellent, and the recordings included provide an excellent resource for visiting birders.

Bird Songs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Southwestern Texas by Geoffrey A. Keller consists of a single CD covering 119 species found in this heavily birded region, and it includes some of the finest recordings available for species such as Montezuma Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Groove-billed Ani, and many others. Tex-Mex specialties represented by excellent recordings include Hook-billed Kite, Black-capped and Yellow-green Vireos, Tamaulipas Crow, Clay-colored Robin, Colima Warbler, Tropical Parula, Golden-cheeked and Rufous-capped Warblers, and White-collared Seedeater. The diversity of call types is excellent, with

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evolution responds to the presence of alien species in a community. The book concludes with two chapters devoted to ecological, economic, and political aspects of the problem. The coverage is extensive, if not exhaustive, and Cox is to be commended for organizing a huge body of literature covering everything from micro-organisms to birds into a single source.

However, the book is not without problems. Although it could serve as a useful source of information and a directory of relevant technical literature, I found its organization annoying. The only real way to access most of the information is to consult the index, because the same information, reorganized to fit different perspectives, is often presented repeatedly in the several parts of the book. This is not exactly a case of padding, but the book could easily have been reduced to half its length with the aid of a good editor.

I assume that the author's purpose was to make each chapter self-contained, but I would have preferred a more efficient organization that would have allowed more space to be devoted to detailed discussions of the various examples. Often examples are presented as little more than lists in paragraph form, and too often a particular example is treated with only a single sentence and a reference to the relevant scientific paper. Much of this information could have been presented in tabular form, but there is only one table in each chapter which lists the common and scientific names of the organisms mentioned in that chapter. And because the same alien species appear in chapter after chapter, the same names are therefore repeated over and over in these tables. A single appendix listing all the scientific names used in the book would have been far better and taken far less space.

The entire text reads like a government in-house report or a college term paper (to be fair, the level of scholarship is higher than that). All too often, problems are well documented and appropriate questions raised, but few possible

answers are suggested. The final chapter, which deals with public policy, I found to be particularly disappointing for its lack of concrete suggestions other than the establishment of commissions or committees.

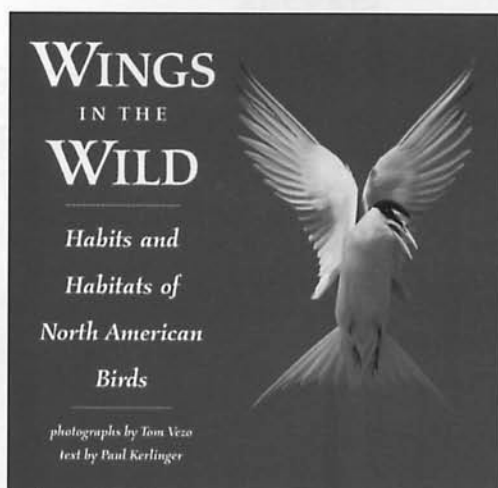
Should this book be part of the average birder's library?

Unfortunately, I would have to say no. The inherently interesting, albeit often horrifying, subject matter is treated so clinically as to be, frankly, boring. This is not entertaining reading, nor is it intended to be. If you are involved in conservation work that involves problems of invasive species, this book will

be a valuable if hard-to-use reference. Scholars will certainly find the compilation of widely scattered literature useful. The volume deserves a place in any natural history reference library, but if you are looking for engaging and entertaining nonfiction writing, look elsewhere.

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