

dead on Dec 26, apparently a victim of the Dec 24 snowstorm, specimen now at AMNH. Dickcissel: at feeder Dec 2–Jan 2 Brookhaven (DP); Dec 26 Riverdale (FH, S. Anes, et al). Evening Grosbeak: none reported. Red Crossbill: Dec 6 Montauk (RR)—only Crossbill report. LARK SPARROW: Dec 26–Jan 5 Shirley (P. Puleston, DP, GR)—photographed by D. Puleston, first Regional winter record. Oregon Junco: Dec 6–10 Montauk Pt (RR, DP). White-crowned Sparrow: adult Dec 26 Fire Is (D. Scott); two imm Dec 31 Captree Is (P. Post, J. Horowitz, TD, PB); imm Jan 2 QnCC; imm Jan 2, Jones (CW).

Corrigendum: "The White-fronted Goose reported in the *Kingbird*, 15(3):194, July 1965 apparently was *not* of the Greenland race. Several of the observers believe it was an escape." (P. W. Post).

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Please send spring reports in by Jun 7.

BOOK REVIEW

Enjoying Birds around New York City. By Robert S. Arbib, Jr., Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. and Sally Hoyt Spofford for the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. Houghton Mifflin Company 1966. 171 pp., illus., maps. Soft cover \$2.95, hard cover \$4.50.

Attractively illustrated by William Dilger and graced with a number of excellent maps by Colbert, Harrison, Noland and Samuels, "Enjoying Birds" is an attractive eye-catcher which under closer inspection proves a bit puzzling. It is really two books; or better, a book and a non-book. One the long-awaited birding baedeker for southern New York, the other a beginner's guide to bird-watching at the list-making level. The first is excellent; the second, something else again.

This latter category includes sketch accounts of "How to bird-watch", "How to attract birds", etc., all a rehash of material found in a dozen other books. Yet the information is accurate and well written, and the beginner who makes it his first book will probably benefit. At least the list of local bird clubs and comprehensive bibliography should show the way to sources of more detailed information. It just seems unfortunate the book itself could not have been more comprehensive. If space was the problem, certainly more could have been made available by eliminating the rudimentary field guide (about 80 pages). It is of value to no one.

Learning birds is an empiric process. The beginner looks at what birds are available and puts names to them; he does not search selectively for those for which he has descriptions. Pre-knowledge of what birds to expect is helpful, but this requires nothing more than a series of lists. For actual identification nothing short of a comprehensive field guide will do. Consider a beginner who, on his first field trip, sees an egret (none mentioned). He has two choices: pound away until his bird fits one of the descriptions offered (pretty difficult with an egret), or dash off and buy a Peterson's. In either case the few brief descriptions in "Enjoying Birds," though very well done, profit him not at all.

So just skip to page 53, this is the real book and offers ample justification for its existence. Besides the list of birding localities, valuable to even the most experienced local observer, it contains a combination checklist-calendar graph and other tabulations that are just the thing a beginner or visitor needs at his fingertips. One might balk at the dates for a breeding bird census (much too late) but by and large the information is first rate.

Birding localities are arranged by county, Manhattan first, followed by the remaining burroughs, Long Island and the mainland counties to Putnam and Orange. This is the natural pattern of thinking of the New York City oriented birder and is more or less geographical, but might be somewhat confusing to the outlander. A straight alphabetical order would probably be better, but no matter. When in Rome

Localities within the counties are arranged in order of interest. For the more important, brief notes on habitat and bird life are included, together with descriptions for reaching the locality by car or public transportation. Less important sites such as the city parks, likely to be of interest only to a frustrated city birder on lunch hour in May, are merely located geographically.

Though the New York City region traditionally includes all northern New Jersey and a portion of southwestern Connecticut, only four or five localities in these states are mentioned. The authors explain that they hope to squeeze out two more books and therefore are including only sites of "extraordinary" interest.

Treatment of the New Jersey localities (of Connecticut I know nothing) lacks the incisive accuracy of the New York locality descriptions. This is mostly a matter of emphasis rather than errors of fact. But there is one whopper. Be duly warned that it is a devilish long time between "larger southern terns" in Hatfield Swamp!

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Ed. Note: With regard to the "non-book" portion, illustrated by Orville Rice "Enjoying Birds" was intended for beginners, not just for advanced birders living or visiting in New York City. It clearly states that a good field guide is "absolutely essential." The species descriptions, in which color descriptions are compressed to a sentence or two, are in answer to many requests from beginners for a single inexpensive book that would tell where to go and also give more information on nests and eggs, food, and diagnostic habits for the common birds than is included in the one-volume field guides.

FIELD NOTES (Continued)

A Snowy Owl's Bath in the Chemung: One cold day in January 1967 while checking on Elmira's winter visitor, a Snowy Owl (*Nyctia scandiaca*), I saw him fly from his perch on a tall sign down to the river bed behind the business section. I located him on a narrow, stony island, once part of a large island. Hoping to see him catch a fish or duck, I focussed my 20× scope on him as he pivoted his head from front to back, ever on the alert as he scanned the river intently with his great yellow eyes.

Apparently not hungry, he flew some four or five feet to the upper end of the little island where he studied the water on every side. Then, very deliberately he waded into the river where part of the current, deflected by stones, reversed direction as it flowed around the island. The water here was only a few inches deep and the current not so swift. Two feet from shore where the water just touched his lower feathers, he flapped his great wings up and down, splashing the water over his back, and then dipped his bill in a few times. Each time after splashing he paused and looked on every side before resuming his bath.

For nearly ten minutes he bathed and preened, reaching under his slightly lifted wings and parting his breast feathers, fluffing them a bit and shaking himself. After turning around and walking back to land he continued shaking his feathers, flapping his wings and preening his back and front feathers again. When he had partially dried himself, he flew to a hummock on the larger island, where patchy snow made better camouflage, and continued his grooming.

After an hour's observation in the biting cold, I departed, thinking that I was one of few fortunate enough to spy on a Snowy Owl in his bath.

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