

REVIEW OF "BIRDS OF NEW YORK STATE"

1974. Doubleday/Natural History Press
655 pp. \$29.95

John Bull's *Birds of New York State* is the latest in a recent nationwide rash of state bird books. New Yorkers may take pride in this, the first statewide treatment of New York birds since Eaton's 1910 and 1914 works. The format of the volume closely follows that of Bull's previous book, *Birds of the New York [City] Area*. The reader is provided with an introduction covering past ornithological history, outstanding birding areas, a very brief discussion of conservation problems, a breakdown of the avifauna into its regional components, and a defense of the author's unorthodox treatment of taxonomy, followed by the major portion of the text, devoted to discussions of species that are known to have occurred in New York.

The greatest value of a regional bird book is in the stimulation and direction it gives to future field researchers. It is in this area that *Birds of New York State* excels. Not only are many gaps in our knowledge of the state's avifauna specifically delineated but the format of the species discussions should induce many readers either to make additional records public or to conduct appropriate research. Species accounts include remarks on range, status, occurrence (including coastal and inland maxima and extreme dates), breeding records, banding returns, and remarks (sometimes not entirely lucid) on the species' taxonomy. [Why does Mourning Warbler precede Connecticut Warbler in the text?] Of particular interest are a number of maps detailing breeding locations of species with limited breeding ranges in New York. These breeding localities appear to be historical rather than current (*e.g.*, Common Terns no longer breed near Ithaca) although this point is frequently not clear in the text. Considerably more work on breeding distributions is needed and encouraged by the author (and this reviewer). A considerable amount of space and cost could have been saved and detail enhanced if the breeding maps encompassed only those portions of the state where a particular species occurs (*e.g.*, Roseate Terns, Willets, etc. nest only on Long Island). Another series of maps show banding locations and points of recovery for a few species, mostly waterfowl.

As would be expected in any work of this size, a few typographical errors were found but this reviewer found the volume generally extremely readable. Idiosyncrasies of the author that may be irksome to some readers include his coining of new common names (*e.g.*,

Common Turkey?) while many of us are still struggling with the AOU's new appellations, and his inconsistent reference citation format. The book's bibliography appears to consist primarily of cited literature rather than being an inclusive, up-to-date listing of state literature.

Photographs in the book appear to have been carefully selected but in some cases are not particularly functional. Eight color plates by New York artists depicting typical avifauna at some of the outstanding birding areas in New York are very good. However, I doubt that the portrait of a Thayer's Gull in Plate VIII is adequate to resolve currently existing identification problems centering around this "new" species. A ninth plate of Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers and their hybrids seems out of place and is somewhat misleading in that it states that parental types show little variation, hardly the case in most areas in central New York where "pure" specimens are rare.

In summary, *Birds of New York State* is interesting and provocative reading and promises to be an essential, though expensive, addition to all active Northeastern ornithologist's libraries. My compliments to the author on a job well done and well worth the wait.

—Douglas Kibbe