

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: We are continuing to use the current currency codes. Thus Canadian dollars are CAD, U.S. dollars are USD, Euros are EUR, China Yuan Remimbi are CNY, Australian dollars a AUD and so on. You will find these are the codes now used by financial institutions and internet currency converters. I will include an updated note for the next few issues as a reminder.

ZOOLOGY

Birds of the Kingston Region [Second Edition]

By Ron Weir. 2009. Kingston Field Naturalists, P.O. Box 831, Kingston, Ontario K7L 4X6 Canada. 611 pages. 30 CAD, Paper.

The History of the Birds of Kingston was privately printed in 1965. It was written by Helen Quilliam and ran 216 pages. This was revised in 1973 and ran 209 pages. Ron Weir's original version, called *The Birds of the Kingston Region*, was published in 1989. Weir's 2008 second edition is a full revision and is considerably expanded. There are three elements in this expansion. The first is the 28 species added to the list, bringing the total to 371. Most of these are new sightings, although a few are the result of splits like Cackling Goose and Canada Goose. The second factor in the expansion is the additional data collected in the last 18 years, amounting to over 500 000 new records. Finally, and perhaps most useful, is a series of appendices, including a Checklist of the Birds, arrival and departure dates, Christmas counts and midwinter waterfowl survey results, the last prepared by Chip Weseloh and giving a summary of the current status of the colonial water birds.

The book has an introductory section that explains how the book is organized and gives an overview of the key birding areas of the region. There is a pull-out map showing the area covered by the book and the Christmas Bird Count areas within the Kingston region.

The species text is arranged in the old Wetmore order, a great relief as this has been the sequence for many years and the one we have grown comfortable with. Each entry discusses the records since 1948, emphasizing the last 20 years. While the focus is on Kingston, there is a lot of information on each species in Ontario [and Canada], particularly for the less common birds. For example, we can read the status of the Yellow-breasted Chat in British Columbia, Alberta and southern Ontario, followed by a synopsis of its rare, but regular occurrence in Kingston.

These species accounts handle a lot of "dry" data in a constructive manner that allows for easy reading and absorption of the salient facts. The "Summary" that ends most species accounts is useful for anyone planning a birding trip to the Kingston area. For a

species like Ring-billed Gull, the categorization of "very abundant" may not be of much interest to visitors from most of North America, whereas White-eyed Vireo on the other hand is a very hard bird to find anywhere in Canada away from the Lake Erie shore. The Summary lists it as a "fairly regular rare spring visitor" suggesting this is a bird to look for in May. However, when you skip through the summary sections, the information is inconsistent for the rarer birds. The introduction list "Accidental" as "Not expected again" [this sounded severe]. So Yellow-billed Loon with one sighting is Accidental [never to be recorded again?], yet Brown Pelican with two sightings is "Casual." This seems a significant upgrade, but the designation for abundance lists "Casual" as once or twice over many years. There is also a designation for "Frequency" that includes the term "Casual" [less than once in 20 years], but the pelican occurred twice in 8 years. Purple Gallinule with two records in 15 years only ranked as accidental, yet the Black Guillemot [2 in 50 years] made "Casual." Unfortunately this confusion existed for a number of birds. Some like Fork-tailed Flycatcher are known wanderers [Accidental with 2 records] and are likely to be found again. In this case the summary is incorrect as it states only one record.

For the rare, but regular, birds like Prairie Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Acadian Flycatcher and even some "common" birds, like Screech Owl, that we are more likely to see near Kingston than Ottawa, we can use Appendix B [Arrival and Departure Statistics]. This well-organized and detailed table is excellent.

Overall, this is an excellent book and a worthwhile purchase for any serious birder in Ontario, northern New York and western Quebec. It is one of the most informative local guides available and is pleasant and easy to use. Not only will it travel with us this spring, but will probably encourage us to visit the Kingston hot spots more frequently.

ROY JOHN
[with input from JOHN CARTWRIGHT]

2193 Emard Crescent, Beacon Hill North, Ottawa, Ontario
K1J 6K5 Canada