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The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State

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The Northern Goshawk: A Technical Assessment of Its Status, Ecology, and Management.—Michael L. Morrison, Ed. 2006. Studies in Avian Biology no. 31. Cooper Ornithological Society, Caramillo, California. 369 pp. ISBN: 0-943610-68-0. Paper, $23.—On my first day as a biologist, my supervisor told me that I would be studying the Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) of Florida Bay. He then thrust into my hands a copy of Ian Newton's *Population Ecology of Raptors* (1979) and said, "Read this." By that evening, I was a self-proclaimed raptor biologist.

Raptors bring out a uniquely intense passion in ornithologists and the public at large. People may fret over the decline of songbirds, but they will fight for the preservation of the Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis*) or Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*; hereafter "goshawk"). It is no coincidence, therefore, that many of the long-term studies that are all too rare in ornithology are conducted by scientists dedicated to understanding the ecology of birds of prey. Two of these scientists—Richard Reynolds of the Rocky Mountain Research Station and Robert Kenward of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (Dorset, United Kingdom)—are well represented in *The Northern Goshawk: A Technical Assessment of Its Status, Ecology, and Management*. The full list of authors in this volume includes most of the prominent North American experts on the species. It is safe to say that *The Northern Goshawk* represents the state of the art in goshawk research as it stood in 2006.

More than a decade earlier, many of the same authors contributed to *Studies in Avian Biology, no. 16* (1994, *The Northern Goshawk: Ecology and Management*, edited by William Block, Michael Morrison, and M. Hildegard Reiser), which was equally valuable in furthering the understanding of North American goshawk ecology. Comparing these two publications, one has a rare glimpse into the evolution of scientific knowledge. The 1994 work demonstrates predominantly basic knowledge (nest-site location, basic habitat descriptions, etc.), and the 2006 volume builds on these basics to explore the mechanisms driving goshawk populations, habitats, and resource use.

The only bothersome peculiarity of this book is the layout. Somewhat contrary to the subtitle, which lists "status, ecology, and management," the book is organized in three sections: Regional, Ecology, and Management. When discussing the goshawk, placing regional contributions in a separate section is justified because the species exhibits some plasticity in its feeding and breeding behavior. Unfortunately, this arrangement puts an onus on the reader to jump between sections to get all of the information available. For example, one finds "Habitat, food habits, and productivity of Northern Goshawks nesting in Connecticut" by Becker et al. in Section I: Regional and "Northern Goshawk food habits and goshawk prey species habitats" by Drennan in Section II: Ecology. The Ecology section also has "Diet, prey delivery rates, and prey biomass of Northern Goshawks in east-central Arizona" by Rogers et al. Should that not be in the Regional section? This quirk of organization only slightly lessens the quality of the book.

The Regional section includes two papers focused on Europe and 10 on North America; only three of the latter concern goshawks east of the Mississippi. The Ecology section includes two papers on feeding ecology and three on movement and habitat use, one of which is focused on winter activity. Reynolds et al. conclude the Ecology section with an exceptionally good review of factors limiting goshawk populations. The final section, Management, includes a design for monitoring goshawks at the bioregional scale by Christina Hargis and Brian Woodbridge—a method that has been used successfully across the United States since the publication of this paper. Also in Management are a paper on using resource-selection function models and a description of an ecosystem-based conservation strategy. The final contribution in the volume is the obligatory discussion of "where do we go from here?"

The nearly two dozen contributions to this volume are required reading for anyone interested in the ecology of the goshawk in North America. I suspect that anyone involved in goshawk work already owns a copy, but those interested in raptor ecology in general will also find the book useful. Many of the techniques and references (44 full pages) are applicable across raptor taxa. Of 20 goshawk papers published in various journals since 2006, I found references to *The Northern Goshawk* in all of them. These were not just authors citing their own work; they included work from North America, Europe, and the recent cutting-edge papers written by Shigeki Asai of the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology in Chiba, Japan. Hopefully, in 10 more years, many of these same authors or their protégés will return with the same quality of knowledge to help us deal with the challenges on the horizon.— John Curnutt, *Regional Wildlife Ecologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Eastern Region, 626 East Wisconsin Avenue, 7th floor, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203, USA. E-mail: jcurnutt@fs.fed.us*

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The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State.—Kevin J. McGowan and Kimberley Corwin, Eds. 2008. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. xxii + 688 pp., 507 maps, 243 black-and-white illustrations, 25 color illustrations. ISBN: 9780801447167. Hardcover, $59.95.—Twenty years after the publication of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* (Andrle and Carrroll 1988), New York has become the first state to publish

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a second-generation atlas; among the Canadian provinces, only Ontario has done so (Brewer 2009). This book is the result of six years of field work by more than 1,200 workers who generated well over half a million bird records. New York is blessed with a large and enthusiastic birding community, but even so, getting comprehensive coverage of all 5,335 (5 × 5 km) atlas blocks is a considerable organizational feat. Distilling such a large volume of data into a book that is informative, readable, and beautiful is a challenge, but Kevin McGowan, Kimberley Corwin, and the many other individuals who put their heart and soul into this project are to be congratulated on meeting that challenge in this landmark publication.

The six introductory chapters are essential components of this book. The introduction and methodology are laudably concise, leaving plenty of space for no less than 15 attractive and informative maps of the geopolitical, topographical, and ecological features of the state. Subsequent chapters do an excellent job of summarizing and interpreting the results, detailing habitats and changes in land use, and discussing ornithology and bird conservation in the state. It was good to see the authors provide "corrected" figures for range change, because changes in survey effort over time can hamper efforts to compare the results of two atlas periods.

Most of the book is devoted to double-page species accounts for the 244 breeding species in the state. The accounts have a familiar look, with a page of text, a black-and-white illustration, and two maps: one of current distribution and one of distribution change. Rather less formulaic are the numerous full-page color plates of New York birds and habitat, which punctuate the species accounts. Although somewhat variable in quality and sometimes rather garish in print (my only gripe with the otherwise superb production values), they add considerable value to the aesthetics of the book and are evocative of the New York landscapes—the best of them really are superb works of art.

The authors do an admirable job in the species accounts of teasing out important geographic patterns and range shifts that were the primary objectives of the atlas project. As expected, there were some stark declines but also some substantial increases, highlighting just how rapidly bird populations can change over large scales of time and space. Around half the breeding species have shown a significant (two-by-two contingency table, $P < 0.001$) change in status in just 20 years. Awarded the front cover illustration is the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), which was confirmed to breed in the state for the first time in 1992 but was found in 131 atlas blocks between 2000 and 2005. At the other extreme, several species, including Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) and Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), appear to be heading rapidly to extirpation in the state. Should a third-generation atlas be in the offing a couple of decades from now, one hopes that this publication will be viewed as having played an important role in highlighting the plight of such species and helping us to avert their loss.

It seems churlish to nit-pick such a wonderful book, but the colors used for the distribution maps deserve mention. In my opinion, the "change" maps fail to convey the important messages of range loss and gain adequately, because the gray (present in both atlases) and brown (found only in the second atlas) are too similar in tone to instantly show range expansion. This is a shame, because the change component of the maps could be considered the single most important aspect of a second-generation atlas. That aside, it really is difficult to fault this book. It is so packed with information that, in addition to being an essential reference volume, it is a browser's delight. One thing that struck me from the distribution maps is what an interesting ecological "island" the Adirondack Mountains are, as much for the absence of certain species as for the (sometimes tenuous) presence of birds typically associated with more northerly latitudes. This book left me wanting to experience those places for myself, and I am sure it will have the same effect on anyone who picks it up. As such, it should inspire further interest in the birds of New York.

I gather that data from this monumental project may eventually be made available on a website, but I join the reviewer of the second-generation *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* (Brewer 2009) in enjoying the fruits of atlas projects in book form. This book deserves to sell well—at under $60, it is a tremendous value for the money. A key target audience of this publication is the more than 1,200 New York birders whose voluntary efforts it collates, and the organizers, authors, and editors could hardly have bettered this monument to their efforts. Several other states have second-generation atlas projects at various stages of completion. *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* offers anyone currently involved in bird atlas work, including volunteer field workers, something to aspire to. They should buy it, enjoy it, and feel inspired.—Andy Wilson, *Data Analyst, 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, Powdermill Nature Reserve, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 1847 Route 381, Rector, Pennsylvania 15677, USA. E-mail: amw1328@gmail.com*

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