

The Eagle Watchers: Observing and Conserving Raptors Around the World

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The Eagle Watchers: Observing and Conserving Raptors around the World.—Ruth E. Tingay and Todd E. Katzner (editors). 2010. Comstock Publishing Associates, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. xv + 234 pp. 14 color plates. ISBN 978-0-8014-4873-7. \$29.95 (cloth).

In 2005 Todd Katzner and Ruth Tingay asked eagle researchers from all over the world if they would be willing to share anecdotes of memorable moments about their field work. The result is a delightful book about close-up and personal experiences with eagles that are both entertaining and informative. The book features short (2- to 5-page) accounts by 29 individuals, describing their adventures as they gained new insights about sibilicide, hunting behavior, migration patterns, and other aspects of eagle biology across six continents. Tingay's British roots and Katzner's American roots provide an appropriate geographic balance, and their unique format effectively conveys what it means to be an eagle and an eagle researcher.

The book begins with a 25-page introduction by the editors that addresses the diversity, ecology, and conservation of eagles. The chapter gives a broad perspective on eagle ecology and synthesizes current information on diet, habitat, and breeding behavior of well-known species. Katzner and Tingay tackle the question of what distinguishes eagles from other diurnal raptors: a wide wingspan, huge feet, a big bill, and an ability to take live prey. The authors identify five groups of eagles, on the basis of taxonomy generally derived from Lerner and Mindell (*Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 37:327–346, 2005), and a sixth catch-all group with species of undetermined or ambiguous taxonomic relationships. The common thread is that most eagles live at low densities and have large home ranges and low rates of population increase. These characteristics make them vulnerable to extinction. Accordingly, the chapter includes five pages about the threats facing eagles worldwide.

The 29 accounts about 24 eagle species are sometimes funny, sometimes inspiring, and sometimes embarrassing. Many authors admit to near calamities in the early stages of their research, and many describe the cultural, physical, and political

hurdles they faced in their work. I discovered things about long-time friends and colleagues I never knew. We learn that simply getting to where the eagles live can be one of the most challenging parts of studying them. Collectively, the accounts offer the reader a tour of some of the most interesting places in the world. The accounts are well written and skillfully edited. Readers will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for 24 eagle species as well as the people who study them and the curious characters with whom they have worked.

The Eagle Watchers also serves as a useful reference. The book includes an appendix on the conservation status of 75 eagle species according to the IUCN and a six-page section with suggestions for further reading—both books and websites. Each species account is preceded by a page with summary information (description, size, distribution, migration patterns, diet, habitat, and threats) about the species, and each author's account is preceded by a brief biography (schooling, field experience, and current professional status).

The book includes stunning color photographs of 14 of the 24 species of eagles covered in the book. It is unfortunate that images of all 24 were not included. However, the part of the book in which I was most disappointed is the poor quality of the black-and-white photographs of the authors. Most faces are in a shadow, rendering the researchers unrecognizable.

Each account ends with a paragraph describing the conservation challenges facing the species of eagle in question. An even bigger challenge illustrated in the appendix is that most of the world's 75 species of eagles still have not been studied. Perhaps this book will inspire the next generation of researchers to carry on the work. I recommend *The Eagle Watchers* not just for scientists but for conservationists, nature enthusiasts, and anyone who just enjoys these large birds of prey. Proceeds from sales of the book will be donated to the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in the United States and the National Birds of Prey Trust in the United Kingdom.—KAREN STEENHOF, 18109 Briar Creek Road, Murphy, ID 83650. E-mail: steenhof@hughes.net.