

Birds of the Southwest: Arizona, New Mexico, Southern California, and Southern Nevada.

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Birds of the Southwest: Arizona, New Mexico, Southern California, and Southern Nevada.—John H. Rappole. 2000. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas. xv + 329 pp., 456 color plates, 45 black-and-white photos, 458 maps. ISBN 0-89096-958-2. Paper, \$17.95.—This latest book in the W. L. Moody, Jr., Natural History Series, from Texas A&M Press, is one of a very few intermediate-level, regional identification/birdfinding guides. In the same spirit as Rappole and Blacklock's *Birds of Texas—A Field Guide* (1994), the author's goal is to help the reader "develop some sense of what a particular bird is about" within the Southwest, to help one both find and better appreciate the region's 457 avian species. The Southwest is defined for this book as southern California (north to Monterey Bay, the southern Sierra Nevada, and Death Valley), the southern tip of Nevada (including Lake Mead and the Las Vegas area), nearly all of Arizona and New Mexico, and the northern fringes of Baja California Norte, Sonora, Chihuahua, and the Trans-Pecos region of Texas. The target audience appears to be birders who are interested in seeing and learning more about southwestern birds. It is written in a nontechnical style, with relatively few references and should be easily understood by the layperson.

Short, introductory chapters cover the region's habitats and explain how to use the guide, but the bulk of the book consists of the color plates (photographs, typically of the adult, or adult male if sexes are distinctive), and the species accounts (written in a standard format) of all of the region's birds. Appendices include a list of casual and accidental species and a southwestern birding site guide, with sites arranged alphabetically within states. A list of photographers and photographs and an index (to common and scientific names, birding sites, and other items) complete the book.

In this reviewer's opinion, the book does achieve its goals of increasing the reader's understanding of southwestern birds, and it will likely help in planning birding trips, especially a first visit to the region. The reader will soon realize that most birds

and their habitats range across state and national boundaries, and this book will aid greatly in that realization. The black-and-white range maps allow one to see quickly where and when the species occurs and how common it is, whereas the text offers specific suggestions about where to look for the birds. One can then find directions to suggested sites in Appendix 2. It is gratifying to see a variety of locations throughout the regions described, even those not normally listed on prime birding itineraries. Areas such as the valleys of the lower Colorado River and the Pecos River and the Colorado Plateau (to name a few) are ecologically significant and fragile and add greatly to the avian diversity of the region.

Sections on habits, voice, and similar species are useful, although presumably nearly all readers would also have several standard field guides at their disposal as well. The author does not intend his book to supplant state birding guides, and the latter would be useful for phone numbers, hours of operation, cost, local birding hotline numbers, directions to adjacent birding areas, etc. Such detailed information would be particularly useful for birders with a specific target list and a limited amount of time.

A minor complaint is that the ecologically important southeastern corner of Arizona and southwestern corner of New Mexico were left off the map (even though covered in the text). In addition, it is somewhat difficult to browse the site listings because they are not grouped regionally within states. A map showing their locations would have been useful.

The real strength of this book lies in its description and evocation of the tremendous variety of birds and habitats in the montane forests and woodlands, grasslands, deserts, chaparral, rivers, and coastlines of the southwestern United States. This book should encourage exploration of the Southwest, and may entice nonbirders to do some birding. Birders living in or near the Southwest or planning trips there will likely want this book, and it is also recommended for public and college libraries, especially those in the region.—TIMOTHY BRUSH, *Department of Biology, University of Texas-Pan American, 1201 West University Drive, Edinburg, Texas 78539, USA. E-mail: tbrush@panam.edu.*