

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

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Tanagers, Cardinals, and Finches of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide by David Beadle and J.D. Rising (Figure 1). 2006. 196 pages. 14.2 x 21.5 cm. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford. \$31.75 CDN (soft cover). *Reviewed by Chris Siddle.*

This is an identification guide with (usually) single paragraphs about each finch's measurements, habitat, behaviour, voice, similar species, geographical variation, distribution (divided into breeding, wintering, migrating and casual ranges), conservation status, moult, description, and major references. All of the regularly occurring species are included as well as species vagrant to Canada and the United States excluding Hawaii.

The regular species are shown by two to seven colour photographs that usually illustrate adult breeding, non-breeding, juvenal, and immature plumages. Red Crossbill appears to be the winner with 11 photos, while Common Redpoll has five and Hoary Redpoll has seven. American Goldfinch has six while Lawrence's Goldfinch has four photos. The photographic range for regularly occurring species spans gender and age differences but also may address well-marked subspecies. For example, a male eastern Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus purpureus*) is shown as well as a Pacific coast form (*Carpodacus p. californicus*). The forms *Exilipes* and *hornemanni* Hoary Redpolls are also shown, though the latter is shown in only one photo (taken in the United Kingdom). The captions are written in detail discussing fine points of comparative identification and moult for example, as well as giving the general time and place the photo was taken. These captions are part of the special value of photographic guides. It's too bad that publishers usually print fewer photo per species than the micro-birder wants.

Besides the 200 colour photographs there are 30 range maps, a page of sonograms of Red Crossbill song types, a 30-page glossary of terms, and six

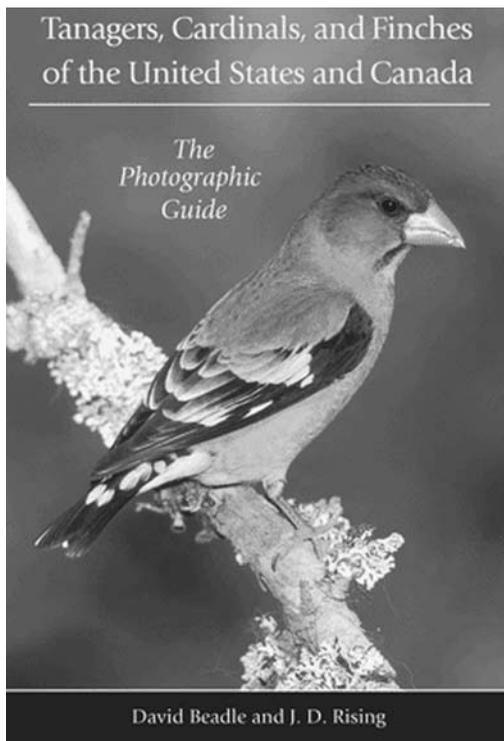


Figure 1. *Tanagers, Cardinals, and Finches of the United States and Canada* provides a range of photographs that combine to form an attractive identification handbook.

pages of useful references.

My only criticism of the captions, and of the book in general, is the authors' use of Humphrey and Parkes's plumage and moult terminology which beginning birders will likely find cumbersome and confusing. However, this is not a book for true beginners.

Vagrant species are given adequate accounts but a few seem under-represented by photos. For example the Red-legged Honeycreeper, a highly sexually dimorphic species, is represented by only one photo, that of an adult male.

All in all *Tanagers, Cardinals, and Finches of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide* is an attractive identification handbook available at a reasonable price. Recommended.

Blue Grouse: Their Biology and Natural History by Fred C. Zwickel and James F. Bendell (Figure 2). 2004. 284 pages. 21.6 x 28 cm. National Research Council (NRC) Press, Ottawa, ON. \$69.95 CDN (soft cover). *Reviewed by R. Wayne Campbell.*

In 1944, C.D. Fowle completed his M.Sc. thesis, "The Sooty Grouse *Dendragapus fuliginosus fuliginosus* (Ridgway) on its Summer Range" at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Little did he realize at the time that professors Fred Zwickel and Jim Bendell, and their students, would follow up his pioneering study with five decades of research to unravel the biology and natural history of this large grouse throughout its range in western North America. That effort was rewarded when The Wildlife Society announced that their Wildlife Publications Award for Outstanding Monograph for 2005 was going to be presented to the British Columbia researchers.

The book brings together hundreds of published works, but more importantly, much unpublished information that is usually "filed" for later reference and usually never made available to wildlife managers, biologists, and serious naturalists interested in Blue Grouse and their future. For me, the most important component of the book is its emphasis on the bird's natural history that is complemented by rigorous scientifically based research.

The volume is divided into five major parts with 20 chapters varying in length from one to 31 pages. Each chapter is logically organized, well written, lavishly illustrated with figures, tables, and photographs, and, of course, thoroughly researched. The topics include taxonomy, evolution, seasonal habitat requirements, morphology, reproduction, growth, food, energetics, genetics, behaviour, and the relationships between populations, predators, and diseases. Over 600 references are listed. The book ends with two Appendices on statistical tests and an annotated list of physical anomalies used in each chapter, along with a useful glossary and index.

A nice feature at the end of each chapter is a "Synthesis" section that summarizes significant information as a thumbnail sketch and "Endnotes" that provides additional and more detailed information to better explain, or help clarify, statements made

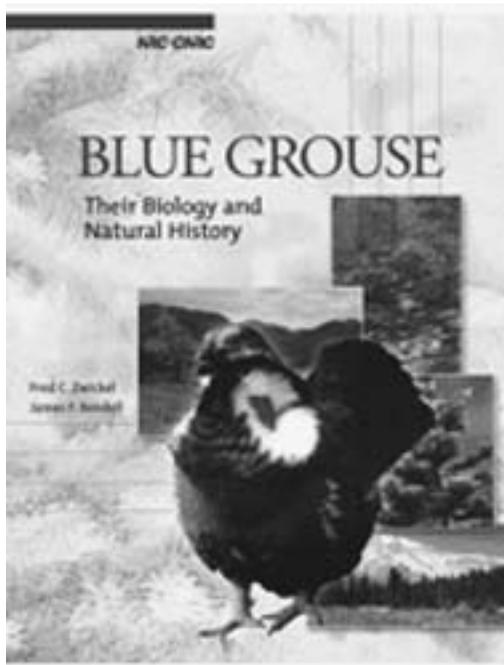


Figure 2. A strength of *Blue Grouse* is that it synthesizes a broad array of literature and features much previously unpublished material that will prove valuable to managers, biologists, and naturalists.

earlier. For example, readers might assume that the Blue Grouse is a resident species with little migratory behaviour. In the “Synthesis” section the authors summarize this nicely by saying “*Movements tend to have a strong vertical component, with birds in most populations moving up in winter and down to breed, opposite to that of most species in montane areas.*”

There are many practical applications that biologists and naturalists can extract from the book to enhance the quality of information they gather in the field. Sixteen photographs on plumage and development (see page 112), from one-day old to adult size, is a very useful reference when trying to age chicks. Every statement in the book has been written, and questioned, with thought and supporting evidence. Long-term banding, and being able to identify individual birds, helps make this research a classic in ornithology.

Every biologist, student, and amateur ornithologist

will want to have this reference book in their library to remind them what commitment and good science can accomplish. Highly recommended.

The Shorebird Guide by Michael O’Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson (Figure 3). 2006. 474 pages. 15 x 23 cm (6 x 9 in). Houghton Mifflin Company. New York, NY. \$33.95 CDN (soft cover). *Reviewed by Chris Charlesworth.*

Shorebird enthusiasts have been blessed with a number of excellent publications in recent years; however *The Shorebird Guide* takes a more holistic approach to identification using overall structure, impressions, and colours simplifying what can be a challenging group of birds. The beauty of this book lies within the 870+ stunning colour photos of over 90 species of shorebirds. Even accidental species are covered in detail with multiple photographs.

The introduction is simple and extremely educational. You will find paragraphs describing the details of each family of shorebirds as well as information on migration and threats to populations. Also included in the extensive introduction is a large section on “How to Identify” shorebirds using size, colour, structure, and behaviour. A very handy two-page spread using 15 photos attempts to describe how to age shorebirds. Not only will you find helpful identification photos, but you will also find artistic photos complementing the photographs. Included in the ‘photo plates’ for each species are helpful tidbits such as the size and wingspread in metric and imperial units, as well as weight in grams and basic information on structure, behaviour and status. The range maps are easy to decipher. The species accounts, rather than covering minute details of plumage, concentrate more on each species’ status, migration, taxonomy, moult, and vocalizations.

This is a great book, simple, easy to read, superb photography, and an essential if you love shorebirds. Highly recommended.

The Penguins of the World by Wayne Lynch.

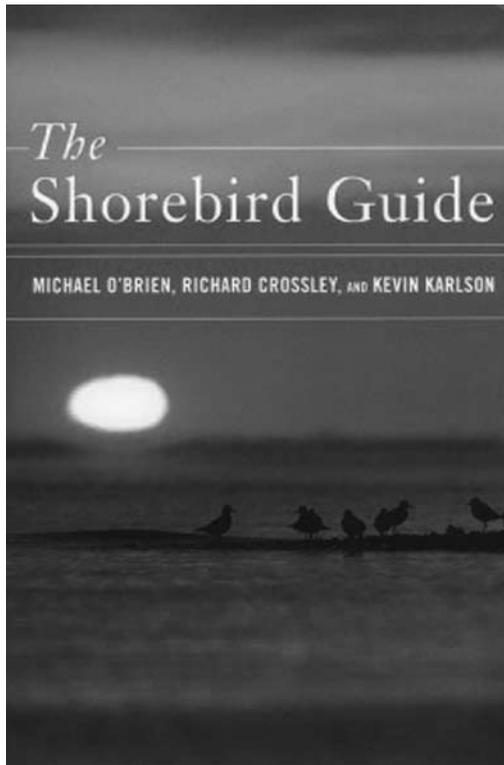


Figure 3. The Shorebird Guide is loaded with vivid photographs and provides readers with a holistic approach to the identification of this diverse group of birds.

2007. Firefly Books. 175 pages. 28 x 21.2 cms. 143 colour photos, one colour map, and two appendices. Index. Reference list. Firefly Books, 66 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ont. L4B 1H1. \$24.95. (Softcover). *Reviewed by Chris Siddle.*

Like Wayne Lynch my introduction to penguins came one evening on Philip Island near Melbourne, Australia, where my wife and I, and about 800 other tourists, sat upon cold concrete seats set into a sandy hillside above a beach at the edge of the Great Southern Ocean. After sunset groups of stubby, upright figures suddenly emerged from the surf and stood timidly on the wet sand looking around as if wondering what to do next. Spotlights revealed the

little arrivals to be Little Penguins. It's impossible to resist these utterly charming birds. Groups of 2 to 20 birds left the surf line to waddle across the beach, their flippers extended like toddlers' arms, slowing only when they reached the cover of the dunes into which they disappeared headed for their burrows. Unfortunately except for one or two less memorable encounters, that night also marked the end (temporarily I hope) of my experiences with wild penguins. For Wayne Lynch, his evening at Philip Island's "penguin parade" marked the beginning of epic voyages. Over the next 18 years he would travel 504,000 kms to photograph and study the other 16 species. He has captured penguins' appeal in the 143 colour photos. Nine species are shown in 6-27 photos each, with King (27), Gentoo (18) and Adelie penguins (11) particularly well portrayed. The remaining 8 species are presented in only 1-2 photos each. Among them is my acquaintance, the Little Penguin.

Although the photos are clearly the work of a professional, it's the text that captured my attention. In six chapters Lynch explains in clear, simple and yet compelling prose the general biology of the world's penguins. Chapter 1 briefly touches upon penguin fossils, anatomy, movements, and species' groupings. Chapter 2 concerns habitats, adaptations to hot and cold climates and convergent evolution between penguins of the Southern Hemisphere and auks of the Northern. The remaining 4 chapters cover basic penguin life history from courtship through to the independence of the chick. These chapters are supplemented by an appendix giving the ranges and breeding populations of each species and a second appendix describing humanity's appalling history of butchering penguins in various ways. All in all, *The Penguins of the World* is a fascinating introduction written in a style which holds the reader's interest. It is an attractive large format softcover sold at a very modest price. Highly recommended.