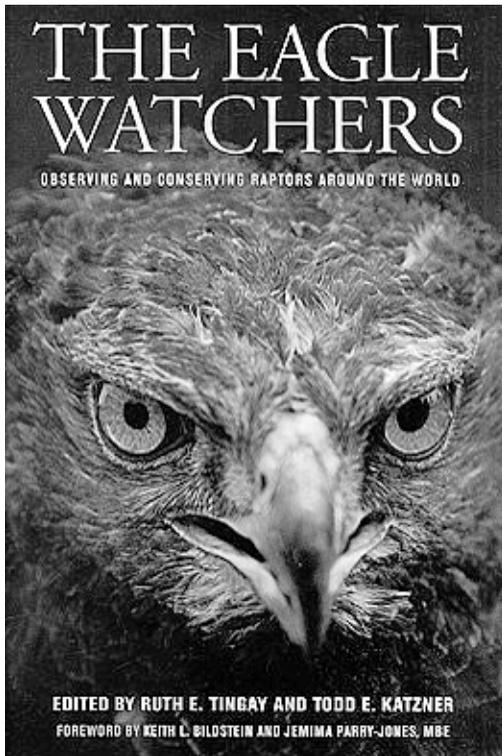


BOOK REVIEWS

The Eagle Watchers: Observing and Conserving Raptors Around the World by Ruth E. Tingay and Todd E. Katzner (editors). 2010. 234 pages. 16 x 24 cms. 14 colour images of eagles. 29 black-and-white photos of researchers. World map on end pages. Comstock Publishing Associates, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London. Hardcover with wrappers. About \$30.00 Can. *Reviewed by Chris Siddle.*



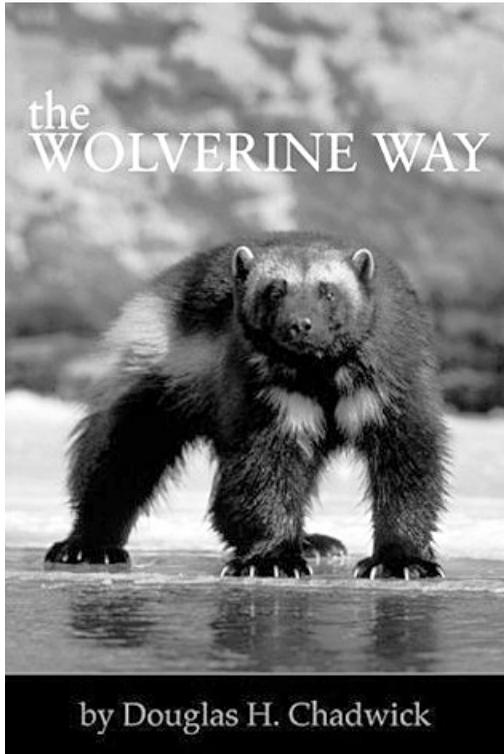
This book not only outlines the lives of 24 species of eagles (including Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle, New Guinea Harpy Eagle, Philippine Eagle, Steller's Sea Eagle, White-tailed Sea Eagle, African Crowned Eagle, Verreux's Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Harpy Eagle and 12 others), but most importantly profiles 29 contemporary eagle researchers. Following

an excellent introduction to eagle biology, ecology, reproduction, diversity, migration, winter behaviour, and threats to survival, each chapter begins with a single page species account that covers in point form the particular eagle's common and scientific names, International Union for the Conservation of Nature status, brief description, size, threats, distribution, movements, habitat, diet, and notes. This is followed by a brief biography of the researcher that serves as an introduction to a narrative of two to five pages concerning the researcher's involvement with his or her particular target species. These accounts are universally entertaining and represent the real value of this book.

The editors are to be commended for their outstanding selection of interesting narratives. For example, Teryl G. Grubb tells of his youthful hubris at rappelling down a cliff to a Bald Eagle nest. Having trained for a year with the United States Navy Seals, he couldn't imagine anything going awry, but of course, everything that could go wrong with his untested climbing equipment went wrong. He was lucky to escape physically unscathed, humbled but wiser for the experience. Other accounts are less exciting but perhaps just as meaningful to people who spend their lives in close contact with wild species. Rob Davies writes of the joy he felt living in South Africa's Karoo district, collecting the skeletal remains of the prey of Verreux's Eagles, and learning about the several pairs of eagles that made the escarpment home. My personal favourite is Ursula Valdez's straight-faced, but very funny, account of trying to find the best bait for a live trap set to catch a rare Black-and-Chestnut Eagle in the forests of Peru.

The stories of field experiences like these make *The Eagle Watchers*... a joy to read. I can imagine that some young readers will be inspired by this book to join the ranks of raptor researchers and conservationists. By the way, all royalties from the sale of *The Eagle Watchers*... are being donated for raptor conservation and training. Highly recommended for the raptor enthusiast and general reader.

The Wolverine Way by Douglas Chadwick. 2010. 276 pages. 15.5 x 23 cms. 25 colour photos, one colour map, and one chart. Numerous black-and-white photos. End paper map. Patagonia Books, 259 W. Santa Clara St., Ventura, CA 93001-2717. Softcover. \$18.28 Can. Reviewed by Chris Siddle.



This is the story of Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) of Glacier National Park, Montana, designated F2, F3, F4, F5, F7, M3, M8, M18, M19, and others. These animals were followed through the use of radio telemetry by a dedicated pack of underfunded researchers and their volunteer friends who included journalist Douglas Chadwick, author of the classic study of Mountain Goats, *A Beast the Color of Winter*, as well as hundreds of popular articles about conservation and natural history for several national magazines. This Wolverine study, one of very few ever attempted in the world, reveals that Wolverines are not the ferocious spoilers of cabins and food caches that fur trappers

would have the public believe they are. Wolverines, the world's largest member of the weasel family, are restless travelers and powerful scavengers of the wilderness, generalists that clean up animal carcasses, tear apart logs to get at grubs, or try to get the drop on small-to-medium sized critters like an injured bighorn sheep. The study also revealed an unexpectedly social side to Wolverines as well as some unusual causes of Wolverine mortality. Ultimately, the men and women who followed the animals all grew to admire the animals' bold and determined approach to life, which researchers called "the Wolverine way."

The Wolverine Way is also the story of how tough the researchers had to be to keep up with their subjects. This was no summer season study. Chadwick, biologists Rick Bates and Jeff Copeland, veterinarian "Doc" Savage, and their friends had to build small log "houses" baited with smelly meat in which to trap each animal. Once the animal was inside, the researchers had only a few hours before the animal chewed its way through the logs. The most frightening aspect of the legendary beast was its terrifying, blood chilling growls of apparent rage when the researchers peeked inside the trap. Copeland and company grew skilled at jabbing the captive with anesthetic, after which Doc Savage operated in the field to surgically implant the tiny radio transmitter into the animal. Then the crew nursed the Wolverine back to consciousness before releasing it. And they followed this procedure time after time, regardless of the season and the mountainous wilderness weather.

For naturalists who like to read about little-known creatures and who enjoy behind-the-scenes narratives, *The Wolverine Way* will prove to be an entertaining and informative book. Highly recommended.

The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds by Julie Zickefoose. 2012. 20 cm x 21 cm. Dozens of colour paintings and sketches. 3 pages of notes/bibliography. Index. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston and New York. Hard cover. \$32.95 Can. Reviewed by Chris Siddle.

Julie Zickefoose writes almost "everything in nature is so much more awe-inspiring than it first appears" (p. 235). In *The Bluebird Effect* she proves the truth of this statement several times over, whether she is foster-mothering Chimney Swift chicks,

rescuing an Eastern Bluebird from a Sharp-shinned Hawk, or watching Carolina Wrens in the yard as she does the dishes in her mid-western home.



Ms. Zickefoose is married and is raising two children with *Birdwatcher's Digest* owner/editor Bill Thompson III. Some know her from her articles in that magazine, some from national public radio broadcasts, but many more of us recognize her from her artwork and illustrations. She helped illustrate the *Birds of North America* series, for example. In his introduction to *The Bluebird Effect*, Scott Weidensaul observes “More than almost any other contemporary artist, Zick has the ability to capture the spark of a living creature – the gift for translating motion and color into line and form, while retaining the essence of the bird.” There are plenty of bird images to prove this assessment valid and accurate in this well produced book. In addition to the usual rewards readers experience when they contemplate a fine bird painting, they will also find Julie’s paintings and sketches of many nestlings at various stages of development valuable as reference for plumage and behavioural development.

Julie Zickefoose is also a talented writer. Rick Wright, chief book reviewer for the American Birding Association, writes that Ms. Zickefoose’s prose style is “neat to the point of occasional elegance.” *The*

Bluebird Effect has become so popular among not just birders, but also general readers, that it was one of Oprah Winfrey’s picks of the week in 2012.

The 25 essays of *The Bluebird Effect* are arranged by season. Spring emphasizes nesting. Summer leans strongly towards accounts of Julie’s bird rehabilitation work. Autumn is a bit of a catch-all that includes the story of a particularly “companionable” Ruffed Grouse, a restless Orchard Oriole and the hopeful essay on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Winter includes her thoughts on Sandhill Cranes and Mourning Doves as game birds and ends with a warm tribute to her long-living Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Charlie, who has been her demanding and crotchety companion since 1989.

Of the approximately 25 species written about in *The Bluebird Effect*, about half occur in British Columbia and the other half are common eastern species, with the notable exception of Ivory-billed Woodpecker (presumed extinct) and Piping Plover, which can no longer be called common. However, the author/artist is so talented that most readers will want to read this book cover to cover. Highly recommended.