

Book Reviews

species, including full plumage sequences for some. The eastern form of Hermit Thrush is a good example, which should be noted by Illinois birders. This is a departure from *National Geographic*, 3rd ed. and others, which have attempted to portray and specifically name subspecies. Given the rapid changes in genetics, and the ongoing debate over what even qualifies as a species, Sibley teaches structure and de-emphasizes plumage, almost certainly understanding that he may be criticized for failing to illustrate major subspecies. His point of view is that Latin subspecies names should be avoided, since, in his words, "the names imply a kind of precision that is lacking in field observations." In this way, he makes an important contribution to understanding field identification theory.

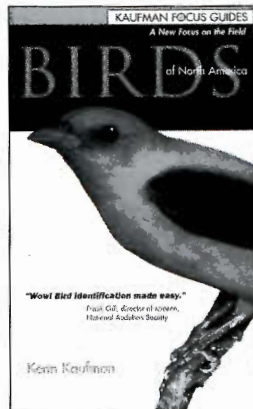
As with all guides, there are some textual errors, which I suspect will be corrected in the next printing, and he got out ahead with the nomenclature of American Magpie and Northern Caracara, which will need to be corrected, but, overall, these minor matters are easily remedied.

Physically, the guide itself is a weighty tome (2.5+ pounds) and awkward to carry. Larger and heavier than any other North American Guide, it rivals South American guides for lack of utility in the field. While you won't be able to easily carry this around without a backpack, it is an excellent research tool. As an adroit note-taker and field artist, Sibley did not concern himself with field utility. He expects good birders to take notes and make sketches, and then review the subject bird in his book later, a reasonable point of view. This book is not intended to be a handbook.

Serious Need

And now, for something completely different. For at least the past 10 years, there has been a serious need for a field guide directed at beginners. Roger Tory Peterson's 1980 revision of his Eastern guide is out-dated, but it has been the only guide to which I could direct people just discovering an interest in birds. Fortunately, we now have a very good replacement directed to beginners, but that will also prove useful to other levels of birders.

In 1980, Peterson issued his long-awaited revision to *A Field Guide to Birds East of the Rockies*, then known as RTP4. His expectations, as author, did not necessarily coincide with those of his audience. In *Continental Birdlife*, Vol. 2, Number 1 (February, 1981) a much younger Kenn Kaufman wrote what was, by his own admission, a "harsh" critique of the master. Kaufman was, and is, a devotee of Peterson, and it must have pained him to take Peterson to task for what he felt were serious flaws in the new book. Kenn expected more technical and detailed illustrations, and was seriously disappointed by what he saw. On the other hand, Peterson had a different idea regarding what his revision was all about. In a feature entitled *Bird Book Wars: The Emperor Strikes Back*, *Birding*, Vol. XIII, No.4, Peterson *retorted to his critics*, of which there were a number. With typical restraint, he wrote: Whether he likes it or not, when some-



one presumes to write a book, he invites criticism...As an illustrator, I have been caught between two pressure-groups: one wants an even simpler abstraction and the other would like infinite detail. RTP went on to explain the difficulty of meeting a broad array of expectations which did not, fairly or otherwise, understand or coincide with that of the author.

With the benefit of his experience in writing other guides, Kaufman understood the need to be clear about his purpose for this guide so as to avoid creating unrealistic expectations in the minds of his readers. He tips his hat to the master by including Peterson in the dedication. Kaufman was an ardent disciple of Peterson, and his current work honors and follows Peterson's role as a teacher.

Birds of North America is not directed to advanced birders. Rather, Kaufman takes up the baton of the mentor, and proclaims his mission is to bring new birders into the fold of birds, birding, and bird conservation. Keenly aware there is no extant guide that adequately serves the waves of new enthusiasts to birding, Kaufman has drafted a text intended to teach, and to do so with the latest technology. In the introduction, he explains he has always believed that edited photographs would be the best way to present birds in a guide, because it allowed the author to tweak the images to highlight colors in the photo, which may be too dim or overexposed, yet would retain more natural shape than often seen in artistic illustrations.

New Approach

This new approach has not necessarily met with the approval of the traditionalists who embrace painting. But what really is the difference between artistically altered paintings and digitally enhanced photographs to highlight field marks of the subject bird, if the end result is to capture, as accurately as possible, the points the author is trying to teach? Kaufman's illustrations are computer-enhanced photographs — over 2200 of them — representing thousands of hours of editorial time at the computer. The results show. The images are edited wisely, although, as with everything, you will find a few with limitations. For instance, try finding the red crown patches on the male Gila Woodpecker or Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The appearance of the photos on the page seems strange on initial review, in that they stand out somewhat starkly with the color background, but the idea works, and does not take a lot of getting used to.

Kaufman uses a modification of the Peterson arrow to highlight important field marks on most birds. The arrangement of the plates and text on each page mirrors the best of Peterson and *Birds of North America*, by Robbins, et al, and features meaty, yet crisp, text with a very useful range map on the page opposite the illustration. The range maps vary from species to species, depending on distribution, and are very helpful in describing both seasonal residence and migration. Kaufman took the maps further by using seven color schemes, lightening the seasonal and main migration route colors by one-half, creating a paler shade in areas where the species occurs rarely. The only problem with the lighter shading is that, for these old eyes at least, the pale gray is very hard to distinguish.

Chicken-like Bird

How many times have you described a bird (or heard described to you) as a chicken-like bird? Well, Kenn has just the remedy — a section on "chicken-like" birds! He also has

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