

BOOK REVIEWS:

CANOE COUNTRY BIRDS

Birds of the Superior National Forest. Janet C. Green, Gerald J. Niemi, and Karl P. Siderits (compiler). 1978. U.S. Forest Service. 82 pages. No charge (paper).

This interesting paperback will be an important source of information on northern Minnesota bird life for many years to come. The stated intent of this book is "to provide basic information about birds, especially during the summer nesting season, that will be of interest to both the amateur and professional."

From this beginning the book is divided into six chapters: Introduction, Birds in the Forest, Distinctive Species, Bird Communities, Bird Finding, and Annotated List. The real worth of this book can be found in chapters 2 and 4, dealing with birds and their habitats. These chapters describe the distribution of birds in the forest and their use of 13 habitat types, plus a "Miscellaneous" habitat category.

I object to the "Miscellaneous" section because the authors tried, and failed, to make this a catch-all. For instance, under "species that have needs beyond vegetative structure," mention is made of the Pileated Woodpecker, which occurs "where there are very large trees and an available food supply." From past experience, I would place this woodpecker in the Mature Deciduous Community or Mixed Deciduous-Coniferous Community. Several other species are included that could fit into one of the 13 major habitat categories and thus completely eliminate the necessity for the Miscellaneous section.

Important in the habitat categories is a listing of species that are considered characteristic of a particular habitat type. I disagree with the habitats associated with several species, e.g., Northern Waterthrush in the White Cedar Community, when past experience leans toward the Alder-Willow Community, and the Red-tailed Hawk in the Open Disturbed Community.

The Annotated List could have been enhanced considerably by including the data in Table 2, "Forest-Dwelling Ubiquitous Breeding Species." This table provides the reader with data on habitat use, foraging guild, foods, and nesting preference for most breeding species. As it now stands, the reader must turn from page 55 to page 70 when investigating the biology of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. In addition, Table 2 is not arranged in phylogenetic or any other usual order.

Nomenclature is quite standard, though the "Northern" Green Heron pops up again. Also, on pages 69 and 70, the Common Flicker is referred to as Yellow-shafted, while on page 54 it is called Common. Misspellings of both common names (Varied Thrush) and scientific names (Ring-necked Duck, Rough-winged Swallow, House Sparrow) detract considerably from the text.

The chapter on Bird Finding is a real benefit to birders visiting this vast forest. Directions are concise and to the point, and will direct you to such northern Minnesota specialties as Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Gray Jay, and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, as well as several good locations for the numerous breeding warblers.

The value of this book for understanding habitat relationships among breeding birds, and locations for finding birds, far outweighs its few shortcomings.

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