

BOOK REVIEW:

BEHAVIOR WATCHING

A Guide to Bird Behavior, Volume I. Donald W. Stokes. 1979. Little, Brown and Co., Boston. 336 pages. \$8.95 (paper).

The first thought that crossed my mind upon seeing this book was, "not another attempt to summarize the discipline of behavior in lay terms." My thoughts were ill-conceived. Stokes has come up with a totally new approach for introducing bird-watchers to the wonders of bird behavior. His method is simple and logical, and I believe it will lead to increased enjoyment on the part of thousands of bird-watchers. Stokes' goal is to convert bird-watchers to behavior-watchers.

The author and I share a common personal evolution — from bird lister, to bird-watcher, to behavior-watcher; perhaps this is why I am so taken with his approach. The book consists of 25 chapters, each on a species of bird that is common throughout most of North America, e.g., Canada Goose, Mallard, Black-capped Chickadee, Robin. In each chapter are sections such as: (1) a behavioral calendar, (2) display guide, and (3) behavioral descriptions. The latter constitutes the bulk of the chapter and includes subsections on territory, courtship, nest-building, breeding, plumage, and seasonal movements. For birds that frequent feeders there is an added section on feeder behavior. In the back of the book is a brief (too brief) glossary and a species-by-species bibliography. The book is pleasantly illustrated with black-and-white drawings by J. Fenwick Lansdowne.

Certainly the book is not without weaknesses. There is considerable variation among species in the depth of behavioral description. Occasionally questionable statements are made (e.g., Mallards having feeding territories), and sometimes relevant facts are omitted (e.g., presence of three adults provisioning young is frequent in Tree Swallows). But, all things considered, this book provides a marvelous aid to anyone wanting to start seeing the world of bird behavior. I recommend it highly.

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