

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOME WESTERN BIRDS

Non-game Birds of the West: An Annotated Bibliography, the Ecology and Life Histories of Seven Orders. Steve Trimble. 1975. U.S. Department of the Interior —Bureau of Land Management Technical Note T-N-269. Denver Service Center, Denver, Colorado. 320 pages (paper). No charge.

The technical note under review is a bibliography (many references are annotated) of seven orders of birds which occur in the "BLM West," a 12-state area not including North Dakota. The seven avian orders are cuckoos, goat-suckers, swifts and hummingbirds, trogons, kingfishers, woodpeckers, and perching birds.

The references, most of which emphasize ecology, life history, habitat, or behavior, are grouped primarily by biome: tundra, coniferous forest, woodland-bushland, desert, and grassland. Ecology is bent to fit bureaucracy by the inclusion of alpine tundra with coniferous forest rather than with arctic tundra, because "a BLM district containing alpine tundra likely manages montane forest as well."

The author makes some strong, but unsubstantiated statements, e.g., that frequent fires "cause recurrent problems for animals" (page 210). Smokey the Bear lives! Nonetheless, the author often is candid; one might infer that BLM management of public grasslands was suboptimal from the statement: "(D)esert scrub has since invaded many vast areas disturbed by man and his livestock" (page 210). And he, thankfully, avoids the stilted "governmentese" writing style. Discussing the recent AOU changes in common bird names, he writes of "the sadness resulting from the loss of such long-cherished and mellifluous names as the yellow-shafted flicker and the Baltimore oriole . . ." (page 5).

Two serious deficiencies mar this work. First, the author provided neither an author index nor a species index. To search for literature on the red-winged blackbird, for example, the reader would have to examine the references under five separate headings. Even more of a shortcoming is the apparent absence of references to the Canadian literature. Our northern neighbors have done valuable research on most of these biomes, too.

Appended to the report are two rough maps of the biomes occurring in the western United States and in Alaska. Their scale is 1:7,500,000, the same as used in the National Atlas.

This bibliography is useful, particularly for those references that are well annotated. The utility would be substantially enhanced by indices and cross-referencing, and by the inclusion of Canadian work.

Staff