

NORTH DAKOTA'S OWN BIRD BOOK

Breeding Birds of North Dakota. Robert E. Stewart. 1975. Tri-College Center for Environmental Studies, Fargo, North Dakota. 295 pages. \$18.50.

Now that *Breeding Birds of North Dakota* has been published we have a state bird book equalled by few and surpassed by none. The author, Robert E. Stewart, is a biologist and until his recent retirement was the staff ecologist at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Jamestown. He has published numerous papers in various scientific journals and was senior author of *Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* with Chandler S. Robbins.

Mr. Stewart is not only an extremely competent ornithologist but his meticulous attention to detail makes this book completely accurate. His work took him to every county in North Dakota and to most of our state's townships. He was keenly aware of the need to check every record before accepting it at face value.

Breeding Birds of North Dakota, 8½ by 11 inches, is a big, beautiful, comprehensive tome that covers all past and present nesting records in the state. The maps showing breeding ranges are invaluable; the photographs, both color and black and white, are stunning.

The book is of value not only to birders, but to anyone interested in ecology. It should be available in every library in the state and the first thirty-six pages should be required reading for every North Dakotan regardless of any interest or lack of interest in birds. One wonders how many are aware of the varied climate, physiography and habitats in our state. Too few of us are cognizant of the changing environment resulting from new approaches to farming, road building, and urban, suburban and rural planning. Some of these changes are so subtle that casual observers rarely notice them. Other changes are so drastic one cannot even contemplate their far-reaching effects on the environment.

Few segments of our wildlife are more quickly affected by change in habitat than birds. With few exceptions they are so dependent on a particular ecological niche that even a subtle change may disrupt populations and eventually lead to extinction of many species.

In years to come *Breeding Birds of North Dakota* will be an invaluable reference point from which to assess our management of the environment. We now have an accurate and detailed record of bird populations as of 1975. Environmental changes are inevitable but their anticipated effects should be carefully weighed before being made. A similar book in the next decade will tell us in bold face print what we have done to our environment. We can only hope we may be as proud of our management as Robert Stewart must be of his fine book.

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