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Birds of the Rocky Mountains—Frontmatter

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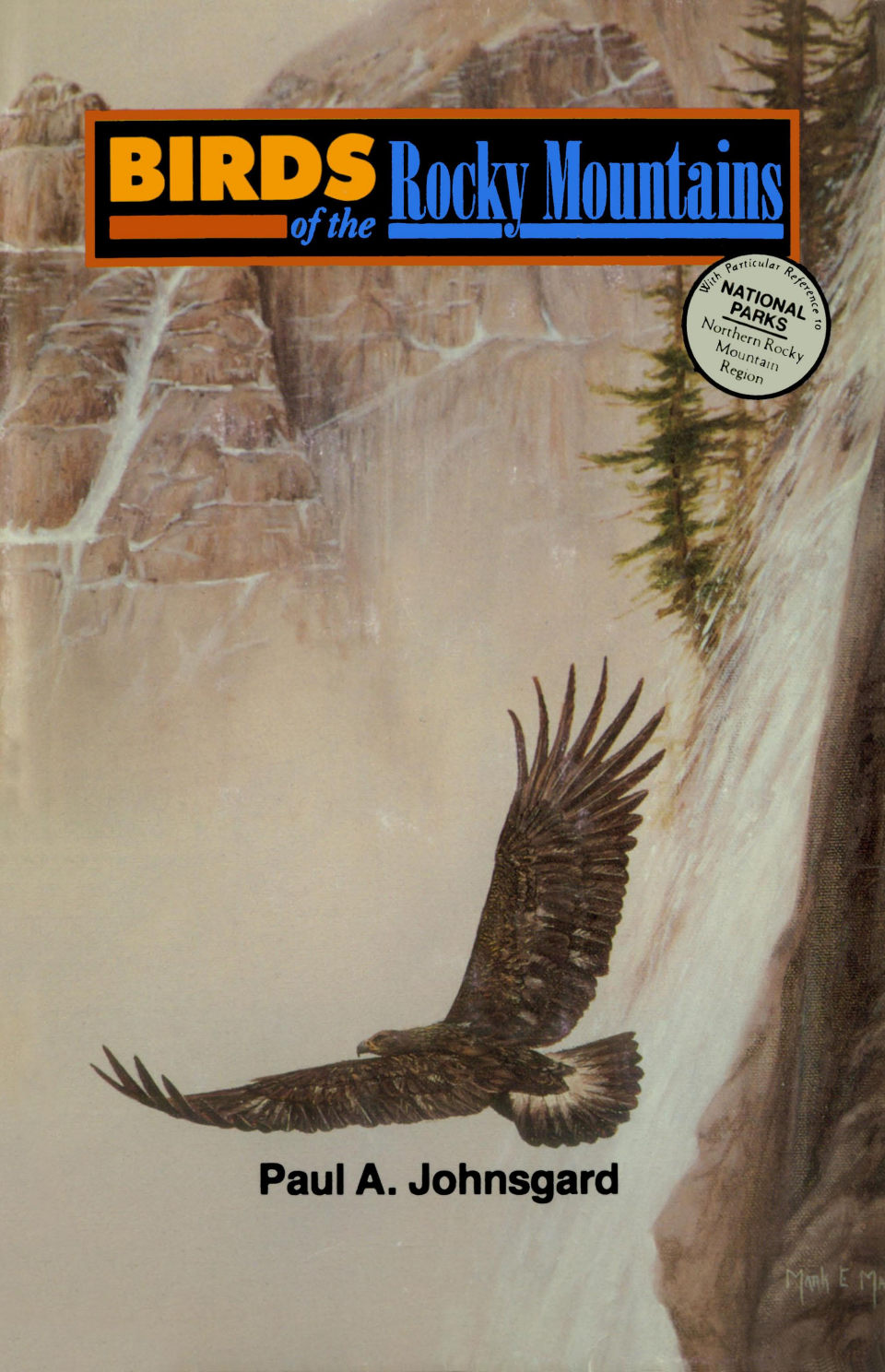
BIRDS of the Rocky Mountains

With Particular Reference to NATIONAL PARKS Northern Rocky Mountain Region



Paul A. Johnsgard

BIRDS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

With Particular Reference to National Parks in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region

Notwithstanding the great latitudinal spread and the equally wide altitudinal variations that occur in the region, the Rocky Mountains contain surprisingly uniform bird life. A bird-watcher in Banff or Jasper national parks in Alberta will encounter the vast majority of the same breeding species in the coniferous zones of those areas as one who is observing nearly a thousand miles to the south in Rocky Mountain National Park, although particular bird species would occur at considerably different altitudes.

This comprehensive reference work describes in detail 354 species found in a 353,000-square-mile area—from the 40th parallel in Colorado north to the 52nd parallel in Canada; from the western border of Idaho to the eastern boundaries of Montana and Wyoming. Although not an identification guide per se, the species descriptions will aid in field identification for persons already somewhat familiar with bird groups. Of more importance, however, are the range maps and status charts that accompany each of the species listings. Here a visitor to any one of the major national parks in the Rocky Mountain region can have quick access to the abundance and seasonality of a given species. In addition, a comprehensive introduction describes the predominant life zones of the region, and over a dozen maps illustrate such significant features as precipitation patterns, vegetation community types, and major physiographic provinces.

Illustrated with 42 color plates, hundreds of line drawings, and individual park maps, *Birds of the Rocky Mountains* will prove to be indispensable to amateur and seasoned birders alike.

PAUL A. JOHNSGARD. author of many popular books and scientific monographs on avifauna, is professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska. A Fellow of the American Ornithological Union, his book *Grouse and Quails of North America* received the Wildlife Society's annual award for the outstanding book in terrestrial biology and ecology in 1974.

BIRDS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

BIRDS *of the* ROCKY MOUNTAINS

with particular reference to National Parks in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region

by
Paul A. Johnsgard
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

With a new Supplement by the author

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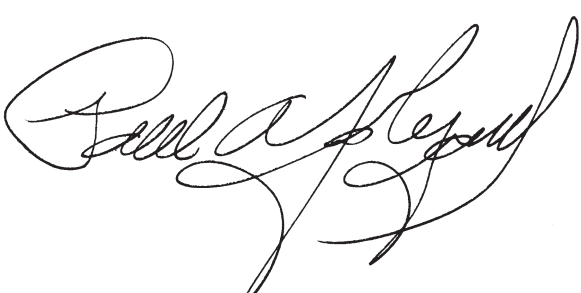

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The Rocky Mountain region has fascinated me ever since I first travelled to Glacier and Yellowstone national parks as a teenager, and saw for the first time such wonderful birds as ospreys, dippers, and Lewis's woodpeckers. At various times in my adult life I have also felt compelled to return to the mountains again and again. Because of my Nebraska home, these more recent trips have most often been to Rocky Mountain National Park and Grand Teton National Park, both of which are only about a day's drive away. Grand Teton National Park has been my special favorite, and was the subject for an earlier book on the region's natural history. Shortly after writing that book its publisher, Colorado Associated University Press, asked me if I would be interested in writing a book on the birds of Rocky Mountain National Park. I rejected that idea immediately, inasmuch as I had no interest in doing a book on such a restricted area, but countered with the proposal of a book covering the entire region of the northern Rockies, and encompassing all the U.S. parks north to the Canadian border. This idea was accepted and I began work on the book in 1982. It soon became apparent that I could add most of the Alberta and British Columbia parks without much additional effort, and thus I moved the boundaries of map coverage north to the 52d parallel, or the boundary of Banff and Jasper national parks. Since the avifauna of Jasper is almost identical to that of Banff I decided to deal with them collectively, pointing out any significant differences in the text. The western boundary of Idaho became my western limits, the eastern boundaries of Montana and Wyoming my eastern limits, and the 40th parallel in Colorado my southern limits. The resulting total area of coverage in this book is some 353,000 square miles, or about 70% of the area covered in my earlier (1979) book on the breeding birds of the Great Plains. A total of 354 species are included in this book, compared with 325 in the earlier one (which was restricted to breeding species only).

These two books are somewhat complementary both in their geographic coverage and utility, for the earlier book has sections on breeding biology and characteristics of nests, eggs, incubation periods, etc.,

which for reasons of space have not been included here. At the suggestion of the publisher, this book includes short "identification" sections that should help facilitate field identification for persons already somewhat familiar with bird groups, but is not nor cannot be considered a substitute for a good color-illustrated field guide. This book should be especially useful to residents of or visitors to Montana and Wyoming, since both of these states lack "state bird books," and to a lesser degree persons in Idaho and Colorado, for which states bird books have been written but are now out of print. I hope that my book will be of supplementary value to *The Birds of Alberta* by Salt and Salt (1976), which provides similar distribution maps covering all of that province as well as the other two prairie provinces. Because of the high levels of visitation to the national parks of the Rocky Mountain region, particular attention has been paid to the status of each species in these parks, based on published or unpublished park records and additional information accumulated by me in the course of my research. Rather surprisingly, considerable information "gaps" still exist for nearly all these parks, in spite of the great attention they have received, and I would appreciate receiving information that updates or modifies the materials presented here.

An important component of the book was the inclusion of latilong data from montane portions of Montana, Wyoming, and northern Colorado. For permission to use Montana data I am indebted to the late P. D. Skaar, and for similar data from Wyoming and Colorado I appreciate permission from the editors of the *Wyoming Avian Atlas* and the *Colorado Bird Distribution Latilong Study*. However, I made some modifications of these sources, in part based on personal information and in part demanded by standardization of coding symbols, and thus the data are not invariably identical to these sources. It might be further noted that the reader may occasionally find apparent discrepancies in the text among the status symbols indicated for a particular park, that park's latilong data, and the general range map. In part these result from the fact that the boundaries of parks and latilongs never coincide. Furthermore, the range maps are usually more "generous" in estimating a species' range than is indicated by available data from a latilong or particular park. Such a situation reflects my belief that, based on its general distributional and habitat characteristics, the species may eventually be found there. More rarely, the mapped breeding range of a species may not include a park for which one or more historic breeding records exist; this is sometimes the case for species whose ranges have retracted or otherwise changed in recent years. Finally, the diffi-

culties inherent in drawing range maps covering some of the topographically most complex areas in North America need hardly be mentioned.

Many biologists assisted me in various ways, including the Chief Naturalists of several parks, specifically Glenn Kaye, Clyde Lockwood, George Robinson, and Patrick Smith. Other biologists provided unpublished data, including Greg Beaumont, Charles Chase III, David Costello, Kenneth Diem, Richard Follet, Richard Hutto, B. Riley McClelland, Suzanne Murray, Ronald Ryder, David Shea, and Paul Wright. Dr. Diem also provided a critical reading of the entire manuscript. Photographs were offered or provided me by Hans Aschenbrenner, Kenneth Fink, Alan Nelson, Mardy Murie, and Ed Schulenberg.

I also wish to thank the U.S. National Park Service and the University of Wyoming for providing me with research space at the Jackson Hole Biological Station in 1983, and for similar accommodations in 1975 and 1976 at the station's earlier location.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I were not to thank my various field companions, especially Tom Mangelsen and my son Scott, for sharing many wonderful days in the mountains with me, surrounded by some of the most glorious landscapes on earth.