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## Review of *Waterfowl of North America, Europe, and Asia: An Identification Guide* by Sébastien Reeber

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**Waterfowl of North America, Europe, and Asia: An Identification Guide.** Sébastien Reeber. 2016. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. 656 pages. \$45.00 (hardcover). ISBN: 978-0-691-16266-9.

Ducks, geese and swans (Family Anatidae) are the most popular and best studied group of birds in the world. The group has been the subject of classical books by Kortright (1942), Delacour (1954-1964), Bellrose (1976), Palmer (1976), Johnsgard (1978), and, most recently, Kear (2005) and Baldassarre (2014). The latest contribution to this rich legacy is an impressively illustrated identification guide for waterfowl found in North America, Europe and Asia by author and artist, Sébastien Reeber. This is an English-language version of *Canards, Cygnes et Oies d'Europe, d'Asie et d'Amérique du Nord*, published by Delachaux and Niestlé in late 2015. The book also was published in the United Kingdom in 2015 by Bloomsbury Publishing under the title *Wildfowl of Europe, Asia, and North America*. The translation is amazingly clean.

This is a large book (656 pages with 85 distribution maps and more than 900 drawings and 650 photos), and is clearly not intended for use in the field. The author's decision to focus on 83 North American and Eurasian species is a little puzzling, because there is only limited exchange of birds between the three selected continents. Admittedly, a guide for all waterfowl (~165 species) with this level of detail would have been a daunting task and potentially doubled the size of the already bulky book; however, the division does present some problems for treatments of tropical, mobile, or widely distributed species found in both hemispheres. The book is organized into four parts: introductory sections, plates, species accounts, and literature cited. The introductory sections describe how to use the book, provide brief overviews of waterfowl taxonomy and avian topology, and present more expansive treatments of molts and plumages, aging and sexing methodology, and hybridization.

Hybridization is a subject of great fascination among waterfowl enthusiasts. Treatment of this topic in *Waterfowl of North America, Europe, and Asia* is the most thorough coverage currently available, with 107 combinations described, illustrated (24 photos and 162 drawings), and conveniently indexed at the back of the book.

Seventy-two plates are packed with 8–18 images per plate depicting birds in assorted postures, profiles, and plumages to highlight distinguishing features for species, subspecies, and some hybrids. The renditions of definitive and formative plumages were accurate for North American species with which I am familiar, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Plate images 34b and 34i: amount of white edging on the greater upper secondary coverts of adult female Blue-winged [*Anas discors*] and Cinnamon teal [*A. cyanoptera*]). Plates are cross-referenced to species accounts. A lettering convention was used to link images to detailed captions on the opposite

page that describe gender, age, plumage, and important distinguishing features.

Species accounts included sections detailing taxonomy, identifying characteristics, plumages, geographic variation, measurements and mass, voice, molt, hybridization, habitat and life cycle, range and population, captivity, and references. True to the book's purpose, emphasis in the species accounts is on plumages, identification, and hybridization with minimal treatments of life history and conservation. Taxonomy adopted by the author for individual species was based on a thorough, independent review of current literature and online resources as explained in the taxonomy section of species accounts. Characteristics of higher taxa (family/subfamily/tribe) are only briefly described in the introductory section. Colored distribution maps, which are situated opposite of the species plates, necessarily lacked detail or were incomplete for wide-ranging and trans-equatorial species. Detailed drawings of remiges for selected species supplement the general introductory treatment of aging and sexing methods. Each species account includes 4-30 captioned photos of birds in their habitat. I especially liked the photos because they showed some of the variability in their plumage aspect that was not evident in the plate images.

The description of molts and plumages is the most detailed since Palmer (1976). The author chose to describe molts and plumages using terminology advocated by Howell et al. (2003) and Pyle (2005). This will be confusing for some readers who are familiar with the terminology of Humphrey and Parkes (1959) used by all previous authors. Definitive plumage(s) are described for all species. Possible supplemental molts and plumages in species such as the Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) and Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) are addressed in the molt section; non-definitive plumages of adults are not described. Linking specific plate images to the detailed plumage descriptions in the species accounts would have further enhanced their usefulness.

The book was thoroughly referenced, but I would like to have seen further documentation of materials referenced for plate images, plumage descriptions, distribution maps, and hybrid determination. Use of numbered superscripts for literature citations may have been economical and enhanced readability, but requiring readers to refer to the back of a 650-page book for complete citations will be an annoyance for some.

Web-based applications for mobile devices (e.g., iBird - <http://ibird.com/app/iphone/ibird-ultimate-guide-to-birds/>, Larkwire Birdsong Master Birder - <http://www.larkwire.com/>) pose a serious challenge for printed guides such as this one. Although there are some obvious advantages to electronic guides (e.g., portability, image zoom capability, recent sightings, behavior, voice, etc.), there presently is no substitute for an authoritative printed identification guide with detailed illustrations and descriptions of bird appearances throughout the annual cycle. This is especially true

for birds outside of North America and Europe. *Waterfowl of North America, Europe, and Asia* complements recent works by Kear (2005) and Baldassarre (2014) with its emphasis on the appearance and identifying features of waterfowl in the Northern Hemisphere throughout their annual cycle. Recreationalists and aviculturists fascinated by this remarkable group of birds will want to have this reasonably priced book in their library. I trust that the author is working on a companion guide for waterfowl of the Southern Hemisphere. —*William L. Hohman, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Wildlife Team, Fort Worth, Texas 76115, USA.*

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