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BOOK REVIEW . . .

Parasites and Diseases of Wild Birds in Florida, by D. J. Forrester and M. G. Spalding. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. 2003. 1132 p. Cloth cover, ISBN: 0-8130-2560-5.

At first glance, a book with the above title might not seem to be of great general interest. However, Florida has a highly diverse bird fauna, the state is a major migration site, and the authors have worked with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for decades, assessing the effect of parasites and disease on both birds and mammals. As a result, this book is one of the most comprehensive, easily used, and data-rich resources available to parasitologists. It will be especially relevant, indeed virtually a required reference volume, for those in any area of conservation biology or wildlife management, and it will be very useful to teachers and researchers who are working with natural host-parasite systems involving birds.

Parasites and Diseases of Wild Birds in Florida is organized more or less along classical taxonomic lines, with chapters on bird families beginning with loons and grebes and ending with passerines. "Parasite" and "disease" are both interpreted broadly, thus information is provided not only on viruses, bacterial infections, fungi, protozoa, helminths, and arthropods but also on chemical residues, e.g., lead poisoning and organophosphates, and trauma, e.g., injury resulting from contact with structures. The book is heavily referenced (even the Preface has a literature cited section!) and as a result is a virtual window revealing a vast body of literature, not typically accessible to the average academic or government employee. For example, the 22-page chapter on kites has nearly 4 pages of references, with citations ranging from those in major journals to ones in relatively obscure commission reports. Each chapter also is generously supplied with tables, including data sources,

an excellent example being a 4-page table on ticks reported from passerines, with collection sites, dates, tick stages represented, and prevalence. There are 23 tables listing similar data for helminth parasites of wild turkeys. The tabular data and Literature Cited alone make this single volume an exceptionally valuable resource, potentially saving enormous amounts of time for anyone who has any reason whatsoever to recover information on bird diseases or parasites.

This book is also unusual in that it mentions both negative data and gaps in our knowledge, although the information applies mainly to Florida. For example, in the chapter on Anserinae (whistling ducks, swans, and geese), we are told there is no information on neoplasia, viruses, bacteria, fungi, or blood protozoa in these (wild) birds, but we are also told of reports on some of those parasites in captive flocks or in nearby states. Ecological data are included when available and relevant, a good example being seasonal dynamics of nematodes in bobwhites. The book provides a reasonable number of photographs of pathological conditions, some of which are quite dramatic, thus useful in teaching. Techniques are also illustrated, and although some readers might question why these photographs are included, it is not always obvious to biologists in general, especially in a molecular age, how data on wild animals are acquired. A good example of this material is the series of photographs on how to make and use a lard-can bait trap to get information on avian malaria vectors.

The text is well written. The David Maehr pen and ink bird drawings are a nice touch for a scientific book, and the originals of these drawings are probably collectibles because of their subtle quality.

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