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ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

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BIRDS OF THE TEXAS PANHANDLE. By Kenneth D. Seyffert, illustrated by Carolyn Stallwitz. Texas A&M Univ. Press, College Station, Texas. 2001: 501 pp., 10 black-and-white illustrations, 1 map, species checklist by county. \$49.95 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper).—Although at first the geographic coverage of this book might seem limited, the author extends his coverage to include the adjacent counties of New Mexico and Oklahoma. Thus, the resulting area is larger than some states, with elevations extending to almost 1,500 m. Along with the elevational variation are variations in habitat that have resulted in 442 species reported for the region and 151 confirmed breeding species. In the introduction, the author gives an overview of the region and describes the more important birding locations in some detail, indicating which species can be found in each location.

I commend the author for adopting the abundance-residence terminology used in the *Birds of North America* series. It seems that many authors want to invent their own categories rather than using one that is somewhat standardized. The species accounts contain information on status, occurrence, nesting, and specimens. The data on occurrence is the most extensive, including information on when and in which counties the species has been observed, in which of the important birding areas it occurs, and often the average numbers seen by county on Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys. The reading of the text would have been improved if the census data were summarized and the numbers put into an appendix table instead of stuck within the text descriptions.

For many species accounts the "Occurrence" and "Nesting" sections contain published and unpublished (the author's own) anecdotes of the species. Thus, the book is a blend of metrics (dates, numbers, and counties) and anecdotal snippets. This approach probably was taken to appeal to casual birders as well as those seeking details about change in chronology or abundance of a species. The result is text that is not well integrated. The length of the species accounts differ greatly. As might be expected, breeding accounts for common species tend to be larger than accounts of rare transients, but even some of the latter are lengthy. The length appears to depend upon the author's interest in or interaction with the particular species. The appendix contains a species checklist (presence only) by county. As the author points out, the lack of a record for many species for some of the counties results from the lack of observers, not necessarily the absence of the species. The counties near Amarillo and the other cities have received the greatest coverage.

Illustrations are limited to 10 attractive pencil drawings and a cover watercolor by Carolyn Stallwitz. The book will be most valuable to individuals working in the Texas-Oklahoma panhandle area. For those individuals, the book will serve as a valuable reference on the distribution and abundance of avian species. The extensive bibliography provides references to the literature examined by the author and will be a good resource for

others working in this region.—ROBERT C. BEASON.