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Review of *The TOS Hand hook of Texas Birds* By Mark W. Lockwood and Brush Freeman

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The TOS Handbook of Texas Birds. By Mark W. Lockwood and Brush Freeman. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004. xxviii + 261 pp. Photographs, maps, appendices, references, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Several authoritative checklists of Texas birds have been published since the first one in 1912. As is typical of most checklists, all appeared in the conventional narrative format—a tradition for checklists that seems impossible to give up, even though range maps have long been used effectively in bird books. Now, with the publication of Lockwood and Freeman's Texas Ornithological Society volume, we have at last a Texas checklist that allows us the convenience of referring to shaded distribution maps.

Maybe narratives are more “scientific” than maps. But are they really? Listing the counties that border the range of a species tells us no more about true distribution than a shaded map based on these geographical units. Furthermore, most of us construct a mental map from the narrative anyway. Be that as it may, Lockwood and Brush's excellent checklist accommodates both camps, providing maps *and* narrative range descriptions. On only two points could there be any disagreement: the name of the book and the inclusion of photographs.

To call this a “handbook” is both pretentious and misleading, even though any small reference book is literally a “handbook,” including a pocket dictionary. But, rightly or wrongly, we have a century-long convention of reserving this term for zoology reference books like the *Handbook of North American Birds* and a host of other European and North American hefty treatises. This is not quibbling over words; it's an appeal to authors to title their books to conform to readers' expectations, which necessarily are based on titles of previous books. There seems to be no compelling reason to broaden the usage of this word.

The 140 photographs—perhaps the part of the book most appealing to readers in the Great Plains—include some stunning images of Mexican and

less-well-known Texas species, accompanied by interesting and informative explanatory notes. Including color photographs, however, makes this, the definitive checklist of Texas birds, considerably more expensive than it otherwise would be, at a time when an inexpensive, authoritative checklist of Texas birds is no longer available. On the other hand, the photographs and distributions complement each other beautifully; and by including both, the authors have provided a unique and elegant publication that is truly an important contribution to Texas ornithology. **Kent Rylander**, *Department of Biological Sciences, Texas Tech University-Junction*.