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Review of *Ruddy Ducks & Other Stifftails: Their Behavior and Biology* by Paul A. Johnsgard and Montserrat Carbonell

John Faaborg
University of Missouri-Columbia

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ruddy Ducks & Other Stiffetails: Their Behavior and Biology. Paul A. Johnsgard and Montserrat Carbonell. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. v+291pp. Illustrations, figures, photos, glossary, references, index. \$44.95 cloth (ISBN 0-8061-2799-6).

Paul Johnsgard seems to produce books the way other academicians turn out journal articles. In contrast to his recent work, which has surveyed large groups of birds, this one focuses on only eight species. It also varies because there is a co-author, Montserrat Carbonell, who did her doctoral research on this group of birds.

The book is divided into two sections. The first is a general summary of stifftail biology, while the second contains accounts of the eight species included in this taxonomic group by the authors. The volume begins with a survey of the history of stifftail taxonomy, emphasizing which species belong to this group and where the group sits relative to other waterfowl on the evolutionary tree. The next two chapters examine general stifftail morphology, behavior, and ecology, and are followed by a chapter on social behavior, including a long discussion of the group's unusual pair-bonding behavior. Chapter 5 focuses on actual breeding behavior and populations, with information on dump-nesting behavior and how it may have led to obligate brood parasitism in the Black-headed Duck (*Heteronetta atricapilla*).

Each species account has a section for Description, Identification, Ecology, Annual Cycle, Social and Sexual Behavior, Nesting and Parental Behavior, and Reproductive Success and Status. The Ruddy Duck account covers thirty-four pages, while the others range from twelve to eighteen. Each has a line drawing of the species, a range map, and at least one sketch of display postures or other behaviors. The book ends with a ten-page glossary, a key to in-hand identification, and citations.

Unlike some of Johnsgard's previous works, this book provides a fair amount of new material in its review of the literature, most of it from the unpublished work of Carbonell. The wonderful Johnsgard artistic touch and sixteen color photos make the presentation especially attractive. I am not as enthused about the quality of the text. The general set-up, with group summaries followed by species accounts, inevitably leads to some redundancy. The summary sections themselves are often rambling and repetitive; some rigorous editing could have made this work much more readable. Finally, although the authors seem to do a reasonable job of citing the

waterfowl literature, in many cases they totally ignore important recent scientific references when discussing broader ecological or evolutionary patterns. These references would allow the authors to show how stifftails fit into the broader fabric of science and would give the reader access to important scholarly literature. Had this book appeared in 1980, I would say it was an attractively presented accumulation of the details of stifftail life and how this group fits into the overall scheme of things; toward the close of the 1990s it fails on that latter point. **John Faaborg**, *Division of Biological Sciences, University of Missouri-Columbia*.