

Fall 2012

Review of *Birds of Southwestern Nebraska: An Annotated Check-List of Species in the North and South Platte River Valleys and at Lake McConaughy*. By Mary Bomberger Brown, Stephen J. Dinsmore, and Charles R. Brown.

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Mollhoff, Wayne, "Review of *Birds of Southwestern Nebraska: An Annotated Check-List of Species in the North and South Platte River Valleys and at Lake McConaughy*. By Mary Bomberger Brown, Stephen J. Dinsmore, and Charles R. Brown." (2012). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 1257.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**of Southwestern Nebraska: An Annotated Check-List of Species in the North and South Platte River Valleys and at Lake McConaughy.** By Mary Bomberger Brown, Stephen J. Dinsmore, and Charles R. Brown. Lincoln: Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2012. ii + 152 pp. Maps, photographs, illustrations, references, appendix. \$19.95 paper.

Opening with a map of the region under study, *Birds of Southwestern Nebraska* proceeds, in its introduction, to a summary of the presettlement landscape and a description of the large-scale habitat changes occurring since then, along with avian responses to those changes. While crediting previous avian studies in southwestern Nebraska, often not readily available to the public, the authors note this area initially received little attention from ornithologists, who tended to focus on other biologically unique parts of the state, such as the Sandhills, forests, and Pine Ridge.

The body of the book consists of a list of species reported in southwestern Nebraska, in taxonomic order, with comments on seasonal occurrence (year-round resident, migrant, breeder, winter visitor, etc.), an indication of numbers reported, species status (threatened, endangered, special conservation concern, etc.), and population changes. It is illustrated with photographs of 135 of the 363 species recorded. Photographic quality ranges from adequate for purposes of identification to quite good, with occasional problems of focus or color reproduction.

The individual species accounts contain useful discussions of range changes due to continued global warming over millennia (and increasing at present) and which within the past several decades have added white-faced ibis, Mississippi kite, snowy plover, black-necked stilt, blue-gray gnatcatcher, and great-tailed grackle, all formerly of more southerly distribution, to the area's breeding avifauna. Also discussed are the hybridization zones of orioles (Baltimore and Bullock's), towhees (eastern and spotted), grosbeaks (rose-breasted and black-headed), and buntings (indigo and lazuli), all of which have been the subject of intense study nationally. In addition, comment is made on several subspecies and recognizable races currently under scrutiny by researchers and taxonomists. These discussions within the species accounts are useful to neophytes as well as advanced birders, encouraging an appreciation of the area's and its birds' significance in a continental context.

Overall, the book will be useful to both beginning bird-watchers and more advanced students who wish to learn more about a region also of great interest to historians, biologists, geologists, and the general public. It is a valuable document listing the current avifauna of a biologically significant area undergoing rapid landscape-level changes in agricultural practices, human settlement patterns, recreational use, hydrologic fluctuations, as well as reintroduction of fire into the landscape to control encroachment of woody vegetation. All of these changes seem to be accelerating during a period of rapid global warming, recurring droughts, and other weather extremes.

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