

OSU Press 'Birds of Oregon' available now

Oregon State University (OSU) Press has published the "mother of all Oregon bird books" -- a comprehensive, 768-page reference guide to the 486 bird species known to inhabit the state.

The new book, "Birds of Oregon: A General Reference," was co-edited by David B. Marshall, Matthew G. Hunter, and Alan L. Contreras.

It offers information on each species of bird, and their habitats and life histories.

More than 100 contributing authors volunteered their work and expertise for "Birds of Oregon," which includes line drawings by wildlife artist Elva Hamerstrom Paulson and data from the Oregon Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

The editors say they hope the factual nature of the book transcends political polarization to provide Oregonians with important facts on the diversity of birds in the state.

In the preface, Marshall wrote, "One of my hopes is that the book will dampen some of the rhetoric and misunderstanding that have emerged from resource extractors on one side, and environmentalists on the other, regarding the needs of controversial species."

"And by describing habitat requirements," he said, "we also show that habitat destruction for one group of species invariably creates habitat for another

group; yet maintaining habitat diversity is necessary to sustain all of the state's birds."

This is the first comprehensive reference to Oregon's birds published since Ira N. Gabrielson and Stanley G. Jewett's landmark book of the same name, "Birds of Oregon," published in 1940, also by OSU, according to Tom Booth, marketing manager for OSU Press.

"It really is an incredible resource," Booth said. "Bird watching and identification, or 'birding,' is one of the fastest-growing activities around, and it certainly has become popular in Oregon in recent years.

This new book should prove to be an invaluable reference guide for birders of all levels, as well as biologists, students and wildlife enthusiasts in general."

Since Gabrielson and Jewett's work, another 150 species have been added to the official list of state birds, maintained by the Oregon Birds Records Committee.

Most of those species comprises "vagrants" found at various times by the increasing number of birders, the editors point out, but other species have expanded their territory into Oregon either as migrants, breeders or a combination of both.

One of the most spectacular examples of new species is the cattle egret, which came to the Americas from Africa, landing first on the East Coast,

eventually migrating to Oregon.

Also moving westward into Oregon were the barred owl and grasshopper sparrow.

From the northeast came the Franklin's gull, least flycatcher and northern waterthrush.

And from California came the white-tailed kite, red-shouldered hawk, Anna's hummingbird, black Phoebe and blue-gray gnatcatcher.

Some of the biggest changes since 1940 have been in the number of birds.

Oregon has been "inundated" by the European starling, the editors say, and the northwestern part of the state has become a haven for the western scrub jay and the house finch.

The world's largest Caspian tern colony now lives on manmade islands near the mouth of the Columbia River, where none historically had nested.

Another dramatic change has been the appearance of hundreds of thousands of Canada geese that now winter in Oregon, primarily in Willamette Valley, but also in the Columbia Basin east of the Cascades.

"Much to the consternation of farmers, the geese are attracted to the Willamette Valley by the grass seed industry that developed after World War II," Marshall said.

Success stories in Ore-

gon include population increases of bald eagles and ospreys, and the re-establishment of peregrine falcons after their population had been decimated, primarily because of the widespread use of the insecticide DDT.

Oregon also has had some losses, the book reveals. Two formerly common breeding species -- the yellow-billed cuckoo and the sharp-tailed grouse -- have disappeared, though attempts are being made to reintroduce the grouse.

The state's upland sandpiper population, once among the largest in the West, is all but gone.

And several other species -- including the canvasback, snowy plover, blue grouse, mountain quail, yellow warbler, horned lark, and others -- are in serious decline for a variety of reasons.

Habitat loss or change, hunting pressure, predation, disease, and loss of food sources can all result in the decline of species.

Contributors to "Birds of Oregon" ranged in age from 17 to 77, and are from all over Oregon.

More than two-dozen individuals or organizations helped sponsor "Birds of Oregon," including federal agencies, timber companies, environmental groups, scientists, and utilities.

"Birds of Oregon" is available at bookstores or phone 1 (800) 426-3797.

The Savvy Senior by Carol Martin

United Seniors Association Chairman and Chief Executive Charles W. Jarvis urged Democrats and Republicans to join together to pass responsible Prescription Drug legislation for seniors, like that passed by the House in 2002. The United Seniors' Health Care Freedom ad campaign features Art Linkletter, recipient of the 2003 Emmy Award for Lifetime Achievement.

"Our friends at the AARP have had Members of Congress sign a pledge on a prescription drug benefit, but seniors can't take paper pledges to the pharmacy. United Seniors Association is interested in creating tangible results for seniors NOW," said Mr. Jarvis.

"The critics of the House-passed plan must be asked a simple question: 'Why are you willing to allow millions of seniors to suffer for two, three, or four years before receiving benefits when they could have them this year?'" questioned Jarvis.

"Prescription drugs are a major concern for seniors. President Bush has been extraordinarily focused on helping seniors in the area of prescription drugs," continued Jarvis. "The House of Representatives has answered the call for help twice in the past three years by passing legislation establishing a prescription drug benefit with choices under Medicare. That kind of dedication to creating results, not just rhetoric, is supported by the vast majority of senior Americans."

The USA Health Care Freedom Project is a positive multi-year effort focused on educating, motivating, and activating seniors and their families in support of policies that make sense economically and provide effective and efficient health options. USA's television and radio ad campaign on prescription drug legislation is a part of that effort to encourage policies that are economically wise and deliver tangible health results to millions of seniors quickly.

"Seniors strongly supported the 2002 House-passed legislation because it produced tangible results in the areas of greatest concern for seniors: affordability, accessibility, choices, less red tape, fiscal responsibility, and respect for the doctor-patient relationship," said Mr. Jarvis. "Seniors want personal health care choices now, not more layers of bureaucracy and rhetoric."

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