

Book Review

The Visitor's Guide to the Birds of the Eastern National Parks: United States and Canada (1992; \$15.95 U.S., \$20.95 Canada) and **The Visitor's Guide to the Birds of the Rocky Mountain National Parks: United States and Canada** (1993; \$15.95 U.S., \$19.95 Canada), by Roland H. Wauer. John Muir Publications, Santa Fe, NM.

Those who know Ro Wauer will not be surprised to learn that he hasn't slowed down since retiring from the Park Service. Among other projects—such as serving on the National Academy of Sciences committee that produced the report, *Science in the National Parks*—Ro is writing a series of four books on birds in the national parks. Two of these have been published and the third—on the parks of central North America—is in press. This year he is researching and visiting parks along the west coast up to Alaska.

The series is the idea of Robert Cahn, noted conservation writer with a special interest in national parks. With his "trailer

slave" (wife Betty), Ro has visited all the parks he writes about, adding this up-to-date acquaintance to knowledge gained and notes taken over his 32-year career with NPS. (Betty, not an avid birder, has enjoyed these trips more since taking up videography.)

The books are introductions to both birding and national parks. For each park, they describe the most common and obvious birds, their behavior, and plant community associations; park environments; and park facilities, services and publications. They also summarize the bird life as presented on the park checklist. With this format, readers can compare parks easily. Ro apparently assumed that readers would turn to selected park accounts and therefore wrote each account to stand alone. This results in descriptions of many species being repeated several times throughout the book. Ro's birding skills and close, precise observation habits are everywhere evident.

Because the books are written for beginning birders, advanced birders will be disappointed by the lack of discussion of the less common species. However, every reader will benefit from the advice on good birding areas and will find many bits of intriguing bird behavior. I was surprised to learn, for instance, that red-tailed hawks sometimes stalk their prey on the ground. Conservation messages, especially on neotropical migrants, are sprinkled throughout. The illustrations include maps of park locations and excellent bird drawings and color photos of park environments. A single summary checklist of all birds in the parks described, a list of plant names, and a bibliography end each book.

The books will be sold in many parks and will be useful additions to park libraries, for both staff and visitors. The central North America book should be out in 1994 and the west coast book in 1995.

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