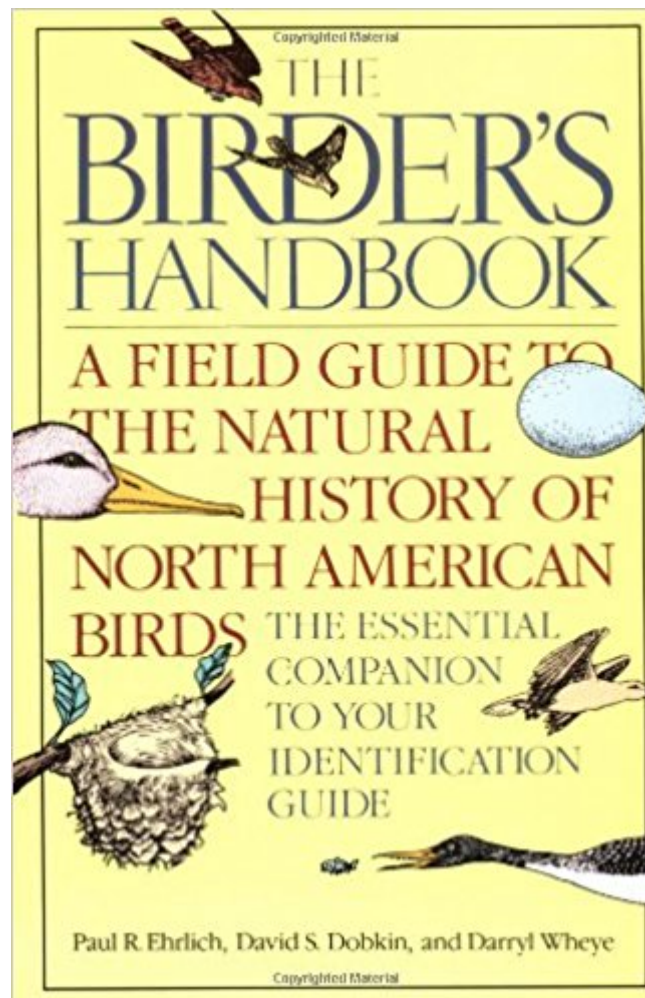




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# **The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide To The Natural History Of North American Birds**



## Synopsis

This is the most complete and authoritative reference book about the birds of North America -- up to date and in field-guide format. The Birder's Handbook is the first of its kind: a portable library of fascinating information not included in your identification guide. For each of the 646 species of birds that breed in North America, The Birder's Handbook will tell you at a glance: \* Where the bird nests, and which sex(es) build(s) the nest; \* How many eggs the bird lays, what they look like, which parent incubates and for how long, and how the young are cared for; \* Food preferences and foraging habits. You will also find information about displays and mating, wintering, conservation status, and much more. In addition, The Birder's Handbook contains some 250 short essays covering all aspects of avian natural history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Compact and yet filled with information, this portable encyclopedia of North American bird behavior is a complement to field guides. Learn more about the species you see in the field, and--when in doubt--use this handy reference as another tool for identification.

Susan Roney Drennan Editor, *American Birds* A dizzyingly competent, extraordinarily readable, impeccably comprehensive and marvelously educational feat! Certainly mandatory reading for everyone even remotely curious about the birds they watch. Mercedes S. Foster Research Zoologist and Curator of Birds, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service The Birder's Handbook is a gold mine...that will

greatly enhance the joys of watching birds. David S. Wilcove Ecologist, The Wilderness Society Field guides will help you to recognize birds. This book will help you to understand them.... This book should be required reading for all birders, naturalists, and conservationists. Thomas E. Lovejoy Smithsonian Institution Anyone who owns a field guide to the identification of North American birds will want The Birder's Handbook as a companion volume.

This book is very unique in the birding book world on several counts.~ First off, as has been stated in other reviews, this is not a conventional guidebook. It has no pictures or drawings and is clearly designed to be used with other guidebooks, in fact references to page numbers in the major "picture" guidebooks are given for each bird. I would go so far as to say that it has no place "in the field" but rather should be consulted when back home.~ Second, I really feel that this book is truly for advanced birders - or trivia freaks like me (more on that later).~ Thirdly, the layout takes a bit of getting used to but once you "get it", it is ingenious. On the left side of each page layout (even numbered pages) are all the write-ups about all U.S./Canadian birds. The writeups include lots of info not always included in a guidebook including nest shape, food, incubation period and mating system (monogamous vs polyandrous vs polygynous etc) using a simple legend system. It also includes a prose of each bird including unique facts often not found in other guides. The right hand side (odd numbers) is where it gets really unique. The right side may or may not have anything to do with the birds facing it. These pages consist of essays that range from Courtship Feeding to Sleeping Sentries to Bird Biologist - Joel Asaph Allen! Roughly half of the book (actually more) is made up of these essays and informative blurbs. The neat thing is that, if they apply to any particular bird, they are referenced within that bird's description. So, for example, under Wood Duck one will find references to Site Tenacity, Plume Trade and Parasitized Ducks along with the essay's page number. These same essays may be referenced from many other birds and thus are not necessarily near any specific bird. For advanced birders or trivia nuts (like me) it is a fabulous resource. For me, it is kind of like those times when you get lost on the internet and follow link to link to link and wonder how you got to where you are! Only these links contain factoids and useful info re: birds! I guess somehow, that sounds more meaningful and fulfilling than surfing the net for hours. My only hesitation might be that the book may be a bit dated. It was published in 1988 which to some may make it ancient. For birding, other than the taxonomic orders that are constantly changing, I believe the info is all still very timely and accurate. Another interesting thing about the book is that one of the authors is Paul Erlich who was renowned back in the 60's for his population studies and publications ("The Population Bomb"). Not sure what part he played in the writing and

layout but it is certainly a fascinating connection between birds as an indicator species for the health of the planet and his having a hand in the book. Hope this helps some folks out! Steve

Definitely not for the casual reader... This book is really two books. One is a book on details of specific birds, the other a collection of essays on a wide ranging set of subjects. Both are very interesting and usable, but the book is structured such that the bird details are always on the left page, the essay on the right. Sometimes the essays are a fit with the bird details, sometimes not. Sometimes the essay continues on for several pages... Purchase of this book should really be combined with either the old three volume Audubon Master Guide, or older editions of Peterson (west and east), or a couple of other older field guides. You may have to hunt used books for a match. As indicated in the reviews below, the detail pages are loaded with cryptic little symbols that reference specific plates and pages in these other older guides. There is quite a lot of detail here, it is not a thin book, so don't plan on carrying it in the field much past the interior of your car. The size raises another issue. Updating this thing is not going to be an easy task. I suspect this 1988 edition is going to be what you get for a looong time.

Great resource if you want to know more about the birds than just their markings and ID. Only way to improve it would be to have a cheat-sheet of the symbols so I don't have to hunt for them each time.

Very in-depth, a LOT of information here. Goes far beyond photo bird guides. Not for ID'ing birds, for knowing the small details about them and their habits. I'm surprised it doesn't list their favorite color and musician. Lots of details here. A fairly thick book.

A friend gave me one of these and I have gotten them for two other people. Most bird-watchers have a field guide, but this sizeable book has supplemental information such as incubation times of the eggs, time to fledging, etc. This does not replace a good field guide as there are no photos, but it is fabulous for information beyond what a simple field guide offers.

This book is a real treasure. Besides containing interesting and useful information on North American species which it rarely contained in other guides, it also contains great "essays" with fascinating bird-related subjects, research and people. Left-hand pages contain the species information, right-hand pages contain the essays. While it is not intended for field use due to its

weight, if traveling by car or kayak, I bring it along on any multi-day trips just for pleasure reading when the opportunity presents. It is that good! I highly recommend it to all my friends.

A beautifully written compendium of facts and information about birds. It's a valuable reference source and a wonderful place to browse and learn for anyone interested in birds. Paul Ehrlich and his colleagues have created a masterpiece that blends meticulous research and science with consummate writing.

This is a useful supplement to a standard bird identification guide, giving details about how birds go about their lives and providing wonderful little articles, like "How owls hunt in the dark" and "Helping to conserve birds."

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