



# H-Environment

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**Introduction by Jacob Darwin Hamblin, Oregon State University**

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One of the attractive features of the annual meeting of the American Society for Environmental History is its commitment to field trips. On at least one day, historians are encouraged to get out of their hotels, change into comfortable clothes, and hop on a bus to one of several optional locations—a museum, an interesting building, a park, or perhaps a wilderness area. Usually there is a trip for birding (or as many know it, bird-watching). There are at least two species of humans who sign up for these birding field trips. Some call themselves birders: they know a lot about birds, how to differentiate them, and how to identify them. They carry scopes or binoculars, they dress appropriately, and they typically wield some kind of pre-printed list. The other group—and I confess to have belonged to it—are those who are curious about the enterprise, are happy to be outside, and count themselves lucky if they can differentiate ducks from non-ducks. At the 2012 trip to a wildlife area outside Madison, Wisconsin, I personally witnessed some ducks and several of what I termed “regular birds.” Back on the bus, I was stunned to learn that my companions had identified dozens of different species.

It is easy to envy these birders, whose hobby has imparted to them not only a discriminating eye and some cool gear, but also a working knowledge of nature, including ornithology, ecology, and natural history. They seem to be products of an informal nature education that exists outside the walls of any school or university. Their source, besides one another, is the printed field guide. The guides themselves might at first appear as technical manuals, or something like a stamp-collector’s toolkit. But don’t they also serve as a conduit of knowledge? If so, what kinds of values, what kinds of science, do they convey? How has that changed in the past century or so?

Such questions motivate **Thomas R. Dunlap** in his book *In the Field, Among the Feathered*. If there were millions of people buying them and tramping around in natural settings, birding guides should bear investigation as primary sources for environmental historians and historians of science. In Dunlap’s hands, the guides serve as a lens for those who watched, those who read, those who studied, and those who quested to fill up their lists. He starts with the first American guides written by aristocrats toting opera-glasses, and he culminates in an era that, he suggests, reflected the values of environmentalism.

I asked **Kristin Johnson** to provide commentary because of her expertise in the history of science, particularly ornithology. Like Dunlap, she has resisted studying natural history as mere stamp-collecting, and has looked to key publications to trace important transformations in the perceptions of birds. She has argued for example that the British Ornithologists’ Union’s journal *The Ibis* can be taken as evidence of the increasing infiltration of specific scientific values from evolutionary theory,

ecology, and ethology. In Johnson's study, the printed journal became a venue for reshaping scientists' identities.<sup>1</sup>

**Paul J. Baicich** offers a rather different perspective, as an author, editor, and longtime birdwatcher. Unlike the other contributors to this roundtable, he has written numerous columns about birding and has written and edited a number of bird guides, including one on nests, eggs, and nestlings. The latter was a new edition of a late-1970s field guide by Colin Harrison, and Baicich not only updated the taxonomy and added new illustrations, but offered a portrait of what remained to be learned about the habits of several species.<sup>2</sup>

**Akihisa Setoguchi** has devoted considerable scholarly attention to the place of animals in historical narratives. His interests cross between environmental history and the history of biology, including the introduction of scientific values from one culture to another, and the importation of cultural practices such as hunting. He has written, for example, about the Japanese royal family's interest in ornithology as a product of the rise of hunting after the Meiji Restoration. He shows how a Japanese sport hunting magazine, *Ryôyû*, shaped the earliest Japanese ornithologists and also encouraged women to participate in sport hunting.<sup>3</sup>

**Jeremy Vetter** is an environmental historian and historian of science, and has been particularly interested in drawing scholars' attention to the field sciences. He shares with Dunlap an interest in laypeople's involvement in science, and has argued that despite the purportedly sharp distinctions between professionals and amateurs, the lines often blurred—especially for sciences whose activities entailed fieldwork, where negotiations with local people could shape the practice of science, or perhaps create a network of knowledge production.<sup>4</sup>

Before turning to the first set of comments, I would like to pause here and thank all the roundtable participants for taking part. In addition, I would like to remind readers that as an open-access forum, *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin Johnson, "The Ibis: Transformations in a Twentieth Century British Natural History Journal," *Journal of the History of Biology* 37 (2004), 515-555.

<sup>2</sup> Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison, *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds* (San Diego: AP Natural World, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Akihisa Setoguchi, "Hunting and the Japanese Royal Family: Politics, Science and Gender on Animals in *Ryôyû* Magazine," *Thinking of Animals*, (2008) 13:39-50 [in Japanese]. Abstract in English here: <http://homepage3.nifty.com/stg/abstact.html#0812>

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Vetter, "Cowboys, Scientists, and Fossils: The Field Site and Local Collaborations in the American West," *Isis* 99:2 (2008), 273-303; Jeremy Vetter, "Lay Observers, Telegraph Lines, and Kansas Weather: The Field Network as a Mode of Knowledge Production," *Science in Context* 24:2 (2011), 259-280.

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**Comments by Kristin Johnson, University of Puget Sound**

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In 1996 I was working at a nature reserve in southwest Colombia when a woman named Phoebe Snetsinger visited to add some of Colombia's famous endemics to her life list. As the birder with the longest such list in the world, Snetsinger was at the very top of the 'competition' often referred to in Thomas Dunlap's *In the Field, Among the Feathered* (so far as I can tell, there are no prizes in this competition apart from high status and envy amongst one's fellows listers, and ridicule from those who dismiss it as a waste of time). Snetsinger's journey to ornithological meccas like Colombia had commenced when, in 1981, she was diagnosed with terminal melanoma (the prognosis: one year). Refusing to go quietly, Snetsinger insisted on keeping a date with the birds of Alaska scheduled for later that year. After she returned home to find the cancer in remission, she continued to travel in spite of the death sentence, all her energy and attention focused on seeing more species rather than her illness. By the time she visited Colombia, Snetsinger had seen more species of birds in the field than anyone else in history. What I remember about her brief visit to the nature reserve is that she and her guide came for no more than one night. I don't recall a long conversation late into the night about conservation or Colombia, the usual accompaniment of visitors to the reserve. I do remember the (rather weak-founded) cabin shaking as Snetsinger and the guide ran from one side of the upstairs balcony to the other to try and get their powerful flashlight on an owl that was new to Snetsinger's list. At first glance, her little entourage seemed a perfect example of the stereotype of birders as more interested than the list than the birds.

Dunlap's history of birders and their guides moves - mostly - beyond this stereotype and provides a sympathetic, informative, and detailed account of the diverse community of people involved in watching, listing, and enjoying birds outside of academic ornithology (professional ornithologists seem to skirt around the peripheries, but are certainly not prominent. One should add Mark Barrow's *A Passion for Birds* to Dunlap's account to get a complete portrait of devotees of the class Aves in the twentieth-century United States).

There are other stereotypes that receive less insightful analysis in Dunlap's story. Snetsinger, according to both stereotype and academic analysis, was an exception to a commonly cited rule, namely that competitive birding is a predominantly male activity.<sup>5</sup> Having myself witnessed twitches composed predominantly of men in Britain in the 1990s, and knowing that analysis of the gendered nature of activities both scientific and otherwise is of concern to many, I would be very interested to know the reasons for Dunlap's lack of any attempt to explain the gendered nature of birding. Who precisely is doing the listing, birding, etc., is mentioned in almost parenthetical asides as follows: "The men - competitive birding had become almost entirely male by the 1920s -" (p.72) Furthermore, this statement is never explicitly

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<sup>5</sup> See the studies mentioned in <http://discovermagazine.com/2006/dec/blinded-twins-birding-instinct>

placed into juxtaposition with claims like "Its origins in women's reform gave American birdwatching its focus on lists.... American birdwatching began with identification and found in competitive listing a way to encourage interest among an enthusiastic but inexperienced group of mainly women and children." (p. 87) Have I perhaps missed a chronological distinction between birdwatching and birding that might help make sense of how these statements relate? In any case, Dunlap's avoidance of any explicit analysis of gender, given the asides, is puzzling. The same applies to his analysis of the bird guides themselves, since there is evidence that the fact men write most guides has influenced what, exactly, is included.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the reader interested in class issues will find statements that Petersen guides were for 'the masses' somewhat jarring, since words like genteel, hobby, and leisure pepper the book. (Phoebe Snetsinger, by the way, was an heiress.)

A few points of criticism, from the perspective of a historian of science: The use of the term science is at points odd (in what sense, I wondered, are American Ornithologists' Union numbers and symbols for sexes indicative of science shaping field guides?). What is meant by 'science' is assumed rather than a point of analysis, which would seem relevant to an activity that, at many points, hinges on and is hinged upon by the rather self-conscious group of professional, academic ornithologists intent on establishing their status as experts throughout the period covered by Dunlap's story.

By the time of Phoebe Snetsinger's death in 1999, in a car accident in Madagascar, she had seen more than 8,398 species. As the world's top "lister," Snetsinger was no doubt often dismissed as obsessed by an activity that, if one really cared about experiencing and observing living birds, seemed misguided. But in her memoir, *Birding on Borrowed Time*, in a biography by Olivia Gentile, and in reviews, we see a more complicated Snetsinger. "By all accounts," writes a reviewer of Gentile's biography, "Phoebe was a fantastic birder. Birds were more to her than mere ticks on a list; she seemed to revel in their presence while birding. But she also wanted to truly know them. Before her trips, she studied the hoped-for bird so much that she often knew more about them than her guides did, even in places she had never been before."<sup>7</sup>

In general, Dunlap does a nice job of capturing this complexity. But in the conclusion to the 'Acknowledgements' section of his book, Dunlap writes that 'Birders, naturally, want to know if I am one of them.' His answer, that by hard-core standards, no, since 'Birds fascinate me far more than listing does... and while out birding I am happy to be distracted by snakes, turtles, frogs, regrowth in burned-off pastures, and almost any other evidence of the changing world around us' created

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<sup>6</sup> Marlene Zuk, *Sexual Selections: What We can and can't Learn about Sex from Animals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.birderslibrary.com/reviews/books/biographies/life\\_list-snetsinger.htm](http://www.birderslibrary.com/reviews/books/biographies/life_list-snetsinger.htm). Phoebe Snetsinger, *Birding on Borrowed Time* (American Birding Association, 2003); Olivia Gentile, *Life List: A Woman's Quest for the World's Most Amazing Birds* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).

some confusion in my mind. In this disclaimer, Dunlap seemed to define birders, then, as the opposite, namely those who are more interested in the list than the birds. Presumably meant to ensure readers' trust of Dunlap as objective observer of the birding community and its history, by the end of the book this disclaimer left me quite confused. For it does not seem to appropriately capture the group summarized as follows in Dunlap's conclusion: "Birding's greatest contribution to American life was to give people an activity that involved them in nature and to give them a voice in preserving it," much less the broader picture Dunlap provides of the varied interests and motivations of those who might call themselves birders. This is just one place that led me to continue to question, after reading, the precise relationship between birding and listing (must one list to be a birder, as implied above, and is anyone who lists a birder?), particularly given the constant use of the word competition. I would be interested in having Dunlap speak to the challenges he faced in capturing the complexity of aims and motivations, in providing a "*history of birders and their guides*."

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**Comments by Paul J. Baicich, Great Birding Projects**


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"[I]t is *possible* to identify every species of bird in the Eastern United States in life in any of its plumages."  
 --Ludlow Griscom (1922)<sup>8</sup>

**N**inety years ago, Ludlow Griscom, the dean of inquisitive field ornithologists, could boldly claim that it was actually possible to identify all the birds of the Eastern U.S. Today, such a statement would probably elicit a quizzical look from even a mildly skilled birder; it might even bring forth a yawn. Griscom also provided a list of exceptions to that sweeping statement, exceptions that included immature terns, female goldeneyes, the two scaup, *Accipiter* hawks, and immature Blackpoll and Bay-breasted Warblers. Today, even these exceptions might evoke a dismissive glance from experienced birders.

All this shows how much has been achieved in field identification of our birds in the interim, particularly in the last four decades. If this observation on the evolution of field knowledge from the time of Griscom to today has any relevance, it is a testament to the proliferation and effectiveness of the North American bird field guide.

Thomas R. Dunlap, in his *In the Field, Among the Feathered* has as its subtitle "A History of Birders & Their Guides." This effort has as its lodestar the assumption that field guides have become the indispensable adjunct to bird watching, certainly as crucial as quality optical equipment. The theme is bold and stated well, even while Dunlap's back-up evidence is not always equally convincing. The theory's strengths—and weaknesses—lie in the description of the sequential time-periods that Dunlap chooses. His history of the field guide is divided into three stages: the pioneer period, the mature form, and the environmental age.

For the pioneer stage, Dunlap reveals the wonder and the struggle of discovery and conviction pursued by the earliest of bird preservationists and bird educators, such as Florence (Merriam) Bailey's *Birds through an Opera Glass* and *Handbook of Birds of the Western United States*, Frank Chapman's *Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America*, and Chester Reed's three breakthrough pocket-sized volumes. Much of this isn't new, but it is pleasingly presented.<sup>9</sup>

Understanding the failure of the "dichotomous key" approach (e.g., Chapman's *Color Key to North American Birds* and E. Coues's *Key to North American Birds*) is in itself valuable. Ultimately, the failure of these keys in the field lay in the curiosity of

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<sup>8</sup> Ludow Griscom, "Problems of Field Identification," *The Auk*, Vol 39:1 (1922).

<sup>9</sup> See Frank Graham Jr., *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society* (New York: Knopf, 1990); Mark V. Barrow Jr., *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Scott Weidensaul, *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007); and Joseph Kastner, *A World of Watchers* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

"putting all the data on the same level," essentially disregarding entire categories of birds or families usually available at a mere glance - e.g., location, habitat, season. This way, a much-desired magical process of ID, where any novice might expect to put names on every bird observed, is revealed. What Dunlap does not do is take this very old failure into today's desperate "modern" field-guide method, a quick-fix app that is probably no more helpful than a very early 20th century dichotomous key in identifying many birds.

But the first period described by Dunlap is the period covered most adequately in his book. Almost from the very start (p.17) he grasps the two early constants that drew people to bird study, where people could "approach nature in their leisure hours and understand it through science." The avocation offered a combination that we Americans shared with our Anglo-European colleagues: "self-improvement, piety, status, accumulation, and high-minded recreation," while the American version also championed a view of our New World as unique, a source of "national pride and a touchstone of national identity."

For the next stage, the period of maturity, Dunlap begins with the Griscom legacy and the spark he engendered in the young crowd of the Bronx Bird Club, including Roger Tory Peterson, Allan Cruickshank, and Joseph Hickey. He gives full credit to the revolutionary contribution launched by Peterson's 1934 guide, and dwells on how Peterson got people to look at birds in different ways, how he prioritized the route to accessible identification, an approach appropriate for the masses. Peterson could describe the process as putting together "all the fragments we know about birds," such as locality, season, habitat, voice, actions, field marks, and likelihood of occurrence - to "flash across the mirrors of the mind and fall into place," finally culminating in a name on the individual bird. The brilliant simplicity of the Peterson method made birds finally and gloriously accessible.

There are, however, weaknesses in the way Dunlap approaches this second theme, and here are five:

First: He basically neglects the art form as the portal to knowledge. Indeed, the struggle to represent the bird on the page has obsessed the genre ever since Wilson and Audubon. Why Louis Agassiz Fuertes appears only twice in the book, and only in passing, is a mystery to me. Peterson's achievement was in large part one that was artistically representational. For a large part of his later life he strived to be appreciated as *an artist* as opposed to simply *an illustrator*.

Second: Dunlap consistently fails to evaluate the use of photo-sourced bird identification and photo-ID guides, especially in recent years. The postwar contributions of Alan Cruickshank and Arthur A. Allen could have prepared the reader for a discussion of the myriad photo guides today.

Third: Lured by the considerable contribution of Peterson, Dunlap consistently gives short shrift to potential contenders, such as the three guides by Richard H.



Pough (Eastern land birds, Eastern water birds, and Western birds), wonderfully illustrated by Don Eckelberry, except insofar as they could be judged as market contenders. Missed entirely is the ability of Pough and Eckelberry to perform another service altogether, namely to capture the character, the "personality" of each species, along with a thumbnail sketch of the bird's natural history, including breeding biology. It was *more* than ID, but, at best, Dunlap skims over that point.

Fourth: Even more dramatic a departure from the Peterson approach was Joseph Hickey's *A Guide to Bird Watching*, which although not a field guide, *per se*, was a power-packed guide on *how* to study birds, a virtual predecessor to the current trend in "citizen science." The book is mentioned, but not closely examined. Hickey's book presented a potential alternate soul of birding, an option that fell by the wayside and had to be reinvented many decades later. The neglect of this approach is particularly disheartening, given Dunlap's own interview with the late Joe Hickey.

Fifth: Under the spell of Peterson, Dunlap gets pulled away from the issue of studying birds and identifying birds... to chasing birds. It is the famous *Wild America* that Peterson co-authored with James Fisher that detours Dunlap so far away from the subject of the field guide at the end of the second period that his declination is altered for the rest of the book, most evident in the third section. Dunlap is not lost, but his is surely wandering.

Here we move from the emphasis of the field guide to the narrative of list-lust.

Somehow Dunlap gets distracted by the exploits of listing pursuits, starting with Peterson and Fisher's *Wild America* and buoyed by Kenn Kaufman's *Kingbird Highway*, and he neglects important historic developments of the actual field guides during the past four decades. Not only is he distracted by the revolutionary Peterson approach, he is now distracted by the pursuit of the North American list, as if this pursuit is the logical end-product of the ID guide and experience.

Even with this detour Dunlap is less than thorough. Jim Vardaman, the first birder to organize a big-year (1979) with a tight plan and a team of advisors, is merely mentioned as a "Mississippi businessman" (p. 188 and 191). If one is going to be distracted by year-long listing, later enshrined in Mark Obmascik's *The Big Year* book (and movie), Dunlap should have gotten the names and spellings right.

At least Dunlap recognized one basic contradiction, where the emphasis is turned, in his own words, *inside-out*, and he adds, "It made the road central and put nature and conservation to one side." Dunlap could have pursued something important with this thoughtful observation, focusing on the inherent conflict and developing insights into the two souls of birding, but that opportunity is lost.

It's the third section of the book that ostensibly has an environmental focus. But in this case, Dunlap is least convincing. He introduces Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*) and the rise of environmentalism, but it is still mixed up with the pursuit of North

American listing. When Dunlap asserts that “Silent Spring changed birding by turning conservation from an aesthetic interest into an urgent moral concern” (p.173) he is most mistaken and may be accused of being a wishful thinker. If anything, birding has become almost immune from environmentalism. Alas, it still seems to cling to the traditional values of “self-improvement, piety, status, accumulation, and high-minded recreation” mentioned in the very first chapter of the book. Cutting-edge birding is remarkably insulated from conservation... let alone environmentalism. This is, perhaps the real heritage provided by the bird-guide experience: identification as an end in itself. Had the Pough guides become the guiding star among field guides in the post-WWII period, or had Hickey’s work become a new field standard, things might have turned out very differently. (Such “what ifs” are the enticing counterfactuals in the world of birding.) Admittedly, the Cornell Lab’s remarkable eBird system *in part* turns bird watching into bird data collecting, a potential contribution to citizen science. And that is all very good, very admirable. But even bird data collection is not bird conservation.

But back to the field guide... The huge contribution of the breakthrough Robbins-Singer “Golden Guide” (1968) is not given enough emphasis. If anything it is measured as competition “for Peterson’s audience.” This guide’s innovations, especially in maps and sonograms, are underplayed, as is the artistic contribution. This missed opportunity is even more disappointing since Chan Robbins is still with us, lively and a veritable wealth of insight and information. There is no indication that Dunlap tapped that valuable resource.

There are three almost simultaneous developments in the bird-guide world in the early 1980s. The first is the Robbins-Singer second edition (1983). In this case, Dunlap seems unaware that the guide was picked apart, page by page, in Richard Stallcup’s self-published *Birds For Real*. For a short time, and in some circles, Stallcup’s little critique was the center of serious discussion, a commentary on what a field guide should contain.

As for a real attempt to alter the genre, Dunlap misses the importance of the *Audubon Master Guide to Birding* (1983), giving it a few sentences (p.181 and 183) only. Here was a major attempt, by editor, John Ferrand, Jr., to coordinate the compilation of a mega field-guide in three volumes with over sixty contributing experts writing species accounts and with hundreds of color photographs. It presented a potential new model, the first real challenge over the issue of art vs. photographs, a debate that continues to this very day. The *Master Guide* was a noble attempt, but, in retrospect, it had a short shelf-life. Its flame glowed for a few years, but another edition never appeared. Quite simply, according to more than one contributor in retrospect, nobody wanted to carry three books into the field.

At about the same time, the National Geographic *Guide to the Birds of North America* appeared (1983) with a team of eight major authors and thirteen artists. This guide has now stood the test of time, with six remarkable editions. What’s more, many of the original principals involved, with the notable exceptions of such major players

as Eirik Blom and Claudia Wilds, are still alive and packed with stories of how the guide was put together.

These three guides of the early 1980s are mostly treated by Dunlap as competitors to Peterson, real or imagined. With that perspective, much of their innovations are passed over, and their individual contributions in the areas of art and photos are mainly ignored. Even after the passing of Peterson (1996) other guides are viewed as attempts to respond to his standard, whether those are the works of Kenn Kaufman, David Sibley, Donald and Lillian Stokes or others. Again, the issues around illustration vs. photos and the deconstruction of different art are not pursued, as they might have been with these entries. The art in the quickly forgotten *All the Birds of North America* alone deserved a lengthy discussion. Unfortunately, the Dunlap book appeared just before the arrival of *The Crossley ID Guide*, an entirely different way to present a field guide. It would have been interesting to see how Dunlap approached this innovation, a new approach to photo presentation, let alone looking at birds.

For a book that attempts to view the pastime of birding through the creative lens of how the North American field guide has evolved and how it has impacted birding, Thomas R. Dunlap has certainly taken on an important subject. And while the first two periods covered in the book offer some insightful observations on how bird study through the field guide has changed over time, the final third of the book falls disappointingly short of the task. This is not to suggest that the author has not highlighted some fascinating insights, it is just that the results do not match the reader's expectations. Or even Dunlap's self-professed goals.

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**Comments by Akihisa Setoguchi, Osaka City University**

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**W**hen I saw *The Big Year*, a 2011 comedy film about competition among eccentric birders, I was surprised to find that American bird watching is so different from that in other countries. These birders travel everywhere, even to snow covered islands in Alaska, and spend thousands of dollars just to see as many birds as possible. This style of highly competitive bird watching is distinctively American. Thomas Dunlap's *In the Field, Among the Feathered* traces the origins and the development of bird watching in the United States. There have been several studies on the history of birding and ornithology in America, but this book is unique and new because it focuses on field guides, which are indispensable tools for birders to identify species. Through the guides, Dunlap discusses how a community of bird watchers grew up and how they interacted with other groups, such as scientists and environmentalists.

This book consists of three parts. The first two parts deal with the rise and development of field guides from Florence Merriam's *Birds through an Opera-Glass* (1889) to Roger Peterson's influential *A Field Guide to the Birds* (1934). Field guides were crucial in popularizing bird watching. They not only provided advice for novice birders, but also standardized names of bird species, which had different local names, preparing for the rise of a national community of bird watchers. With rich illustrations, including colored pages, Dunlap shows that field guides changed their styles as bird watching became a popular hobby. In the early days, field guides described birds in more of an ornithological style, such as giving scientific names and physical descriptions. However, the second generation of field guides provided comparisons of species from the same families, which made identification easier. However, it was not only science, Dunlap argues, but also American culture that shaped the hobby of bird watching. American birding had "patriotic appeals," and birders enjoyed their contact with "Nature's Nation" (87).

The final part of the book describes birding in the age of environmentalism and how it changed after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Dunlap argues that at first, environmentalism "disrupted" established conservation societies, such as the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Audubon Society (173). As a result, the American Birding Association, which put more emphasis on recreation, split out of the Audubon Society. However, Dunlap argues that in the long run, bird watching fit well with environmentalism, and it became part of mainstream culture. Field guides also changed their style as they began to put more emphasis on the habitat and ecosystems around birds. Scientists and bird watchers have become connected on the Internet and collaborate to collect data useful for conservation. At last, Dunlap concludes that bird watching introduces the public to nature and helps open their eyes to "science, art, conservation, and insight" (206).

This book is well written with rich descriptions of birding in the United States. However, I am also curious to know about comparisons to bird watching in other countries. Dunlap says that outside of the United States, only Canadians have followed the American style. In Great Britain, bird watching had its roots more in amateur natural history, so they had more interest in life histories, such as “migration, nesting, habitat, and food preferences” (58). On the other hand, American bird watching has its origin in the women’s reform movement. As a result, competitive listing became popular to “encourage interest among an enthusiastic but inexperienced group of mainly women and children” (87). Crisis among bird populations had also encouraged listing, which is in sharp contrast with Australia and New Zealand, where bird lovers had continued egg collecting (88). Each of these comparisons show that it was only in America that birding became a competitive hobby for amateurs rather than a way to simply enjoy and study birds.

However, I am not entirely convinced with this story because although it elucidates the origins of competitive birding, it does not explain why American birding continued to be competitive. Competitive birders became “almost entirely male” as early as the 1920s (72), and in the 1970s, after the American Birding Association was established, listing of North American birds became “the center of intense competition” (171). In contrast with the earlier authors in the nineteenth century, it is striking that all of the authors of field guides after the 1930s were male. I am curious why American birding became so male dominated, and continued to be highly competitive, even after the age of environmentalism.

This point leads to the second question. What kinds of people enjoy bird watching? Although Dunlap does not discuss in detail, American bird watching seems to be a hobby for all classes, which is, I suppose, particularly an American feature. For example, Roger Peterson was a son of an immigrant Swedish cabinetmaker, who did not have a high education (95). I wonder why this was possible because bird watching usually needs scientific knowledge to notice species as well as funds to access deep into nature. At least in Japan when it began in the 1930s, bird watching was a recreational activity for educated high-class urban citizens. It became a popular hobby only after the 1960s, when an environmental crisis attracted public attention. It might be the diffusion of the automobile that made the difference between American and Japanese bird watching. Dunlap suggests that in the inter-war years, “a combination of Henry Ford and the campaign for good roads” made it easier for birders to trip anywhere to increase their lists (84).

The last point I would like to know is the relationship between bird watching and other recreations, especially sport hunting. It is well known that the Audubon movement was founded by George Bird Grinnell, a sport hunter who insisted on conservation of declining birds. Grinnell’s first movement was followed by women, which popularized bird watching. Although Dunlap briefly traces this shift (31), I am curious about the relationship between hunting and birding after the early days of the Audubon Society. Did they conflict with each other, or did they work together for the protection of birds? I also wonder why there is almost no argument on hunting

in the third part of the book, *Environmental Birding*, because Wild Bird Society, the largest bird watching society in Japan, fiercely claimed that hunting was a cause for decreased wildlife in the 1970s. I believe there is rich history between bird watching and hunting in America, which will give insight to complex interactions between nature leisure activities and conservation.

This book, like Dunlap's previous books, provides a rich history of American society and environment. I believe it deserves wide readership from those who are interested in amateur nature recreation, environmentalism and science, as well as birders themselves.

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**Comments by Jeremy Vetter, University of Arizona**

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Near the end of his acknowledgments, Thomas Dunlap admits that, while he owns several bird guides and enjoys watching birds in the field, “by hard-core standards,” he is not a birder (x). I suppose, then, I should begin this review of his book by confessing that I am not a birder *by any standard*. I think I could pick out a cardinal, a blue jay, and perhaps a robin. Next to me, Dunlap surely has impressive birding credentials indeed. One implication is that my reading of the book is shaped by exactly zero awareness of how a birder would read it. Nevertheless, having been asked to review this book from the perspective of someone who works at the intersection of environmental history and the history of science, I still find myself with much to say about this interesting and worthwhile book.

Despite the equal billing of both “birders and their guides” in the subtitle, this is mainly a book about the history of published bird guides. (And I should also specify: bird guides in the *United States*. Publishers nowadays seem to have given up all pretense of insisting on geographically specific titles, particularly for U.S.-focused books.) It is the succession and development of U.S. bird guides—from Florence Merriam’s *Birds through an Opera-Glass* of 1889 onwards, through the innovative works of Ludlow Griscom, Roger Tory Peterson, and a profusion of more recent authors—that structure and animate the narrative. As Dunlap puts it, the book “tells the story of birdwatching and birdwatchers through the prism of their field guides” (7). Such an approach has its pluses and minuses. While I will be offering some friendly criticism below, it is worth emphasizing at the outset that Dunlap has provided us with an informative guided tour through the history of the U.S. bird guide genre, rich with judicious insights and enlivened with useful comparative discussion that looks backwards and forwards in time while remaining sensitive to changing historical contexts from one era to the next.

Genre studies discipline the author to anchor the narrative, which, on the positive side, can keep it from sailing off in too many directions at once. But I also found that the constant return to the descriptive account of changes in the design and organization of bird guides often seemed to prevent the book from realizing its full interpretive potential. It may be an exaggeration, but not by much, to observe that most of the book is organized around a chronological sequence of influential or representative bird guides. While this narrative convention is occasionally disrupted by a section highlighting a book that does not even belong in the genre of “bird guide” at all—most glaringly in the extended discussion of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in Chapter 6—even in such cases a particular printed book is typically the main focus for discussion. This was clearly a narrative choice by the author, and it has certain advantages, including its amenability to a compact, concise, and accessible format. Moreover, this makes it possible to see *In the Field* as a contribution to the “history of the book,” which is a venerable and deservedly well

cultivated field of scholarship (about which more below). But I was still left with the sense that the book's potential interpretive frameworks are underdeveloped.

Underdeveloped, but certainly not absent. Perhaps not surprisingly for a well-established environmental historian such as Dunlap, he is interpretively most attentive to how changes in bird guides over time reflected changing thinking about human relationships with the natural world, and whenever possible how the makers (and occasionally readers) of bird guides acted and thought environmentally. There is a discernible interpretive arc, and it ultimately leads to the emergence of what Dunlap calls "environmental birding," the subject of the final section of the book. Notably, in Dunlap's telling these impulses had been present from the beginning, in "the first generation's belief that watching birds would rally people for bird conservation" (158). Along the way, we are reminded of how each era's bird guides reflected particular environmental or conservation-oriented sensibilities. While I do wonder if such a trajectory ultimately falls apart, given what Dunlap calls the "new tension ... between conservation and recreation" in the most recent period (150)—which, if anything, he underplays in his analysis—he frankly presents key touchstones of competitive recreational birding alongside the more conservation-oriented books.<sup>10</sup> Since the intersection of bird study with conservation has already been adroitly examined by Mark Barrow from the perspective of professionalizing scientists, including their relations with amateurs, it is useful to have a book focused directly on guides for amateur birdwatchers, and to follow the story of bird study and conservation later into the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Yet within each chapter are also tantalizing clues suggesting other interpretive frameworks that might be developed more fully. I suppose one could say the same about any book, but it seems especially true of *In the Field*, and this is in part a reflection of the richness of the material Dunlap has presented. Of the many possibilities, I will comment on three such frameworks, referring here to the scholarly communities that have developed them: studies of interactions across the amateur-professional boundary line in the history and social studies of the field sciences, the history of books and publishing, and the (somewhat related) histories of leisure hobbies and ecotourism. What all these conceptual frames share in common is that they offer the potential for a somewhat messier and often also a more critical history of birding. Indeed, there are other interpretive questions one might ask that could take the critical inquiry even deeper into philosophical and psychological territory, confronting the historical roots of our industrialized society's most widely shared fascinations (manias?) about the natural world and its culturally distinctive ways of relating to what are collectively our most favored

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<sup>10</sup> For a counterpoint to Dunlap's "environmental birding" interpretation, see Spencer Schaffner, "Environmental Sporting: Birding at Superfund Sites, Landfills, and Sewage Ponds," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 33 (2009): 206-229.

<sup>11</sup> Mark V. Barrow, Jr., *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). For a longer-term study, but less narrowly bird-focused, see Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).



(fetishized?) parts of nature. I will leave those topics aside, tempting as they may be, and as essential as they may ultimately be to fully understanding the history of birding.<sup>12</sup> I will stay closer to the historical material Dunlap himself covers, which is nicely outlined near the end of his introduction: “The entire hobby rested on volumes presenting the accumulated knowledge of generations of amateur observers, organized by science, and produced for sale. While the form of the guides evolved, they held to the same mission: to pass on a body of craft knowledge within a national community of interest and give people a way to interact with nature in their everyday lives.” (9)

To probe and prod Dunlap’s argument, let me start with the amateur-professional relationship in the field sciences. My favorite parts of the book included Chapters 3 and 4. At the beginning of Chapter 3 (“Knowledge and Skills”), we are greeted with a map of the New York City Region as presented by Ludlow Griscom, showing all the railroad lines and stops. This bodes well, for we are then treated to a revealing and suggestive discussion of how Griscom, in *Birds of the New York City Region*, transformed the bird guide genre by consciously incorporating information about how to find the birds—not only where, but also what time of year—and other nuggets from direct field experience. By going “beyond early field guides ... and toward the process used by people who knew birds by long experience and close observation,” Griscom was crossing “the boundaries between professionals and amateurs” and bringing together “science and craft knowledge” (75, 78). Here, without ever really drawing attention to it, Dunlap is broaching issues that have lately interested not only historians of the field sciences but also scholars across science studies. What makes Dunlap’s analysis of Griscom’s path-breaking bird guide exciting yet incomplete is that he seems right on the cusp of drawing from and contributing to debates about the relationship between different forms of knowledge and the amateur-professional divide in science.<sup>13</sup> What seems evident in Dunlap’s discussion of Griscom is that a chasm had opened up between the cosmopolitan knowledge of science and the craft knowledge of local experience, generating conditions under which a new approach would seem desirable to Griscom and his pals.

It may be tempting to attribute this rift to professional scientists’ completely abandoning the field in favor of the laboratory, but this would not be quite right. Exacting scientific bird study and collecting in the field by professional

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<sup>12</sup> Is it possible, for example, that anyone could write a book about bird watching that parallels Yi-Fu Tuan’s provocative, classic study of pet ownership? See Tuan, *Dominance and Affection; The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> For a sampling of recent case studies, see Rebecca Ellis and Claire Waterton, “Caught between the Cartographic and the Ethnographic Imagination: The Whereabouts of Amateurs, Professionals, and Nature in Knowing Biodiversity,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23 (2005): 673-93; Jamie Lorimer, “Counting Corncrakes: The Affective Science of the UK Corncrake Census,” *Social Studies of Science* 38 (2008): 377-405; and Myriah L. Cornwell and Lisa M. Campbell, “Co-Producing Conservation and Knowledge: Citizen-Based Sea Turtle Monitoring in North Carolina, USA,” *Social Studies of Science* 42 (2012): 101-20.

ornithologists continued, and even intensified, especially in natural history museums, despite the strong shift of many academic departments towards laboratory study.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, Dunlap is, in my view, correct to emphasize the historical importance of the lab-field distinction, including its hierarchical structuring effects (5). Indeed, to understand the practice of science in this period, it is crucially important to recognize how much the rise of the laboratory changed things for everyone, even (especially?) for those who worked in the field. On the other hand, field scientists found ways to adapt, perhaps by intertwining lab and field, or by upgrading field practices to make them more exacting and rigorous.<sup>15</sup> As Dunlap shows, there were some scientific career-makers, such as Griscom, who perpetuated and even extended a robust yet resolutely field-based science, often—notably—at what Dunlap calls a “meeting place” between “scientific research and popular study” (5). Nevertheless, relations between amateurs and professionals were bound to be affected by those changes in the relative status of different forms of knowledge and the concomitant changes it produced in the practices and knowledge products of scientists in the field. We might even expect the potential for conflict to be more poignant since both groups were claiming authority over the same place. And even as rift-bridging a figure as Griscom, who was unusually solicitous of his amateur collaborators, firmly advocated for the deference of amateurs to professionals.<sup>16</sup>

In Chapter 4 (“The Field Guide Comes of Age”) the changing dynamics of amateur-professional relations and their relationship to different forms of knowledge in the field come into even sharper focus. It was also a key moment in the history of bird guide writing, for the subject is Roger Tory Peterson, the greatest bird guide author of them all. Dunlap portrays the amateur-professional interaction as largely one of mutualism and comity. “As more ornithologists took the field to study living populations,” explains Dunlap, “they needed birdwatchers’ skills, and they also enlisted the growing corps of increasingly expert amateurs.” In return, the amateurs agreed to use the scientists’ taxonomy in their guides. So far, so good: birdwatchers were valued for their craft skills and the scientists for their authoritative taxonomic knowledge. But soon we find out that things were not so simple, for “[i]n naming western birds, [Peterson] had to contend with popular names ... that now clashed with modern thought,” and he “consulted with some two dozen eastern and western ornithologists and birdwatchers to work out a nomenclature that recognized current popular practice but pushed toward the modern scientific one” (113-14). It seems clear that the widening rift between professional and amateur entailed more than simply complementarity between knowledge and skill but sometimes also a clash between different forms of knowledge and field practice—what was useful for

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<sup>14</sup> Barrow, *Passion for Birds*, 184-190. See also Robert E. Kohler, *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> As Robert E. Kohler puts it, the field sciences “were being outgrown by the aggressively expansive laboratory sciences ... but the natural history sciences were not for that reason in decline” (*All Creatures*, xi).

<sup>16</sup> Consider, for example, the five “little maxims” he advocates in Ludlow Griscom, “Problems of Field Identification,” *Auk* 39 (1922): 31-41, on p. 38.

amateur field identification might not be the same as what was deemed scientifically rigorous—and these divergences could not always so easily or smoothly be reconciled.<sup>17</sup> To be sure, many professionals embraced the help of amateurs, but they sought to control and channel that assistance, and this generated structural tension. Yet to more fully reveal how these potential conflicts over craft and scientific knowledge systems played out on the ground, it seems to me, would require more sustained attention to the rank-and-file users and readers of bird guides.

Besides its relevance for debates in the history and social studies of science, *In the Field* also has other resonances. I have already mentioned its potential contribution to the history of the book.<sup>18</sup> Valuable work is beginning to point the way for environmental historians to focus on the book as a unit of analysis.<sup>19</sup> A history of bird guides strongly suggests a material history of *books in use*, rather than simply a history of the influences of the ideas contained within them or even simply their production. As a moment's reflection on the genre reveals, and as Dunlap himself hints off and on throughout *In the Field*, bird guides were carried into the field, marked up, thumbed through, annotated, protected from the elements, soiled despite one's best efforts, and generally exposed to environmental stressors that few other genres of books were routinely subjected to. Considerations such as portability, durability, and usability in the field, as Dunlap makes clear, were pivotal to the evolution of the bird guide's design. We might well ask, then: what insights from the history of the book might enrich Dunlap's historical interpretation, and how, in turn, might a history of bird guides contribute to the history of the book? At the very least, a more forthright and expansive treatment of the reader, in addition to each book's author, seems warranted. Dunlap sometimes discusses readers or users, but rarely with anything like the same directness or sustained analytical attention that he brings to his consideration of the authors and their choices in formatting, design, and intended audience. Finally, the history of books is also about the history of publishing, a commercialized industry, and of course bird guides soon became a highly popular and lucrative genre. Dunlap's narrative supplies enough suggestive nuggets to justify a more thoroughgoing, critical interpretive treatment of books as rapidly proliferating commercial objects. Indeed, a more irreverent narrator might well have made the commodification of nature *the* central theme of the history of American bird guides.

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<sup>17</sup> For a fuller account of behind-the-scenes tensions between amateurs and professionals in twentieth-century ornithology, see Barrow, *Passion for Birds*, especially chs. 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> The recent *History of the Book in America* series (Cambridge University Press) is an especially useful entry point.

<sup>19</sup> These include Priscilla Coit Murphy, *What a Book Can Do: The Publication and Reception of Silent Spring* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005); Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007); and Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See also Thomas G. Andrews, "Toward an Environmental History of Bancroft's Works," talk delivered at Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Calif., available for viewing at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W95IQOYQePI>.

Equally enmeshed in the world of commerce have been the equipment and entertainment of birdwatchers and birders. (As a good historicist, Dunlap reserves the latter term for the most recent period, when it was more widely used.) In one of his opening anecdotes of Chapter 7 (“Environmental Birding”) he wryly notes that in addition to bird guides, “[t]he American Birding Association’s catalogs and websites, along with various leaflets and flyers, present an astounding range of goods and services, from products for the backyard feeding station to trips for the adventurous, such as a two-week birding tour in Turkey (cost exclusive of airfare \$3,895) that promises to reveal ‘the avian riches of Asia Minor’” (178). Birding *has* truly become a big business. Dunlap also points out the strongly commercial motives behind the launching of Peterson’s bird guide publishing empire. There are obvious tensions inherent in seeing birding as predominantly an environmental conscience-raising pursuit, given its contribution—particularly in the most far-flung list-checking adventures, which as Dunlap points out, were central to the post-World War II conception of birding and were foreshadowed in Griscom’s automobile-based marathons—to the growth of fossil-fuel intensive forms of recreation for the Earth’s most privileged human inhabitants. This is much the same paradox that bedevils ecotourism and global wildlife conservation ventures more broadly.<sup>20</sup> Reading *In the Field*, I was also struck by the intriguing similarities between list-mania in birding and in other similar geographically extensive hobbies, such as trying to visit as many recognized countries as possible.<sup>21</sup> More broadly, it would be productive to situate birdwatching in the context of leisure-time hobbies as a group, since Dunlap’s historical evidence seems both, on the one hand, to support scholars’ arguments emphasizing the uplifting, productive, and work-affirming qualities of modern leisure hobbies and, on the other, to amend those histories by locating the possession of nature not just in tangible material objects but in sightings and viewings—perhaps a “disguised possession” to go along with Steven Gelber’s notion of “disguised affirmation” of capitalist ideology?<sup>22</sup>

I realize that much of my critique has revolved around calling for the history of bird guides to be analyzed in broader interpretive contexts, and I suppose that is a predictable response from someone who, as I noted at the outset, is not at all a birder. And it is quite possible that if such frameworks had been deployed more forthrightly in the book, it would have turned off many potential birder-readers,

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<sup>20</sup> For examples, see Mark Dowie, “Fiasco,” in *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), 209-221; and Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> For an evocative popular account, see Ken Jennings, *Maphead: Charting the Wide, Weird World of Geography Wonks* (New York: Scribner, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). On the tendency to imbue leisure activities with the features of work, see also Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals, and Serious Leisure*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992).

who may, after all, *not much care* about all this seemingly distracting academic hubbub. It may be that this book in its present form offers just enough tantalizing clues for other historians to grasp and run with, while at the same time preserving a tighter focus on bird guides studied for their own sake, with a healthy dollop of contextualization within the history of environmental conservation—which many birder-readers will likely find congenial and perhaps even flattering. At the same time, I wonder if we might as scholars want to ponder how we can simultaneously reach wider audiences yet also challenge them more forthrightly with critical interpretations that may unsettle, trouble, and provoke. This is a dilemma we all face, but certainly one brought to the fore in this worthy study of an exceptionally popular environmental book genre. Then again, weren't many bird guide authors also motivated by a complex combination of audience-seeking and audience-shaping motives?

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**Author's Response by Thomas R. Dunlap, Texas A&M University**

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## So Many Books, So Little Time

**M**y thanks to Jake Hamblin for organizing this roundtable and to the commentators for their thoughtful pieces, for among them they highlighted main points where I decided to emphasize something or drop it or shift focus, and they suggested promising directions for further work. As Jeremy Vetter surmised, I tried to write an historical study that would interest a general audience, which required certain choices, many shaped by an interest I began exploring in graduate school, the impact of science on ideas about nature in industrial America, others by the usual suspects—time, money, and what papers I could find.

Let's start with the first topic I decided not to pursue, women in birding. Johnson quite reasonably asked why I did not offer an explanation for the gendered nature of birding. She might have been more emphatic. Why not a book fully treating women in birding? From the start of my research it was clear the hobby was made for women, often by women, and for a purpose, to get women afield in the hope that an interest in birds would lead to an interest in bird conservation. Women dominated in the early years (Ornithologists and naturalists and a gaggle of schoolchildren, mostly boys, filled out the ranks) and even now they may still be the majority. They made the Audubon movement a national phenomenon and a force for conservation, wrote some of the early guides, and by their combination of knowledge and ignorance, their humanitarian views, and their genteel outlook shaped what birders did in the field and what they expected from their recreation. I could have started with the rise of birding within women's reform in the Progressive era, gone on to the next generation's work for wildlife refuges and bird protection at places like Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, then treated the roles local Audubon groups had in raising the alarm about DDT before *Silent Spring*, and ended with an analysis of how their status and visibility in birding had changed and what that said about American society. The result would have been useful not only for environmental history but women's history, the history of science, research into reform movements and outdoor recreation, and it would have thrown light on such seemingly unrelated topics as the relations of amateurs and professionals in scientific disciplines (one of Vetter's suggestions). To do it, though, I would have had to abandon my concern with the interactions between books and birders. In short, this was a great topic but not the book I wanted to write. On the other hand, I could not ignore the issue. I took the usual route, putting in information where appropriate to my narrative line and hoping what I said would indicate the importance of the theme and lead others to pursue it.

Research, though, will require some serious digging after material that might not even be there. I had little luck with finding papers of the women who were key figures in early birding. Few had official position, enthusiastic disciples, or other

aide to getting their papers organized and archived. In other cases the usual catastrophe happened. The American Museum of Natural History, for instance, had the papers of Frank Chapman, who founded *Bird-Lore* in 1899, edited it for many years, and corresponded with almost everyone, but on his retirement they apparently cleaned out his office. I went through the ones that made it to the files and almost wept for the rest. *Bird-Lore* is a rich source, as I can testify from having gone through several decades of it, first for *Saving America's Wildlife* and then for *In the Field, Among the Feathered*, but a spotty one, and from what I know of research on small and local environmental organizations, I suspect it would be difficult to find even good collections of newsletters for women's reform groups and bird clubs. On the other hand, the topic is important and intriguing, and I did not do an exhaustive search. I would urge anyone interested to dig. If I can help in any way I will.

Setoguchi and Vetter raised a slightly different issue: who went birding? I looked at that and found it even more daunting. Some hardcore birders left papers, and for the last generation we have memoirs, accounts of big years, and the occasional biography or autobiography. For the mass of people who bought and used guides but did not identify as birders or join clubs we have much less, and almost nothing for the casual or backyard birder. Here a researcher would need an entirely different approach. Jenny Price suggested one possibility, the consumer history of nature merchandise.<sup>23</sup> It should be possible to use the appearance, sales, and advertising for guides, on all levels from master birding sets to the those plastic folding cards of common birds, to get at interest and the business history of bird houses, squirrel-proof bird feeders, and seed to trace this element. The history of park visitor programs and birding trails would add another dimension, and citizen science programs, such as the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Feeder Watch. The payoff would be a history of the social connections among birders, an important element in outdoor recreation about which we now know little. Networks existed from the start, with clubs often helping people make connections and keep in touch, and the internet provides much modern material, but what about the website's immediate predecessor, the telephone tree? How and when did it develop to pass around information on migration and rarities? Did clubs use postcards before that? We do not know. Lacking information across the spectrum of birders I tended to let the enthusiasts stand in for the larger group, a significant, but in my view inevitable, limitation on my analytical reach.

Many comments concerned not the books I left out but what I emphasized in the one I wrote. Baichch pointed out that in the last few chapters I abandoned my close focus on the guides to run off after the listers, which, he believed, led me to neglect key developments in the guides themselves. He and Johnson asked about the relation between birding and listing, while Setoguchi made a related point: where the competition came from? My narrative followed from my understanding of the

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<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Price, "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995), 186-202.

ways birders and guides shaped each other, particularly my conviction that the guides encouraged listing. A catalog implicitly presented the reader with the task of putting the right name on each of the things she found in the field; naming was the easiest way for novices to get into the hobby and lists gave a rough but satisfying measure of accomplishment and competence. Once starting down this path, competition followed, if not inevitably almost naturally. As the hobby developed, birders and the new guide further encouraged it. When Griscom and his disciples worked out ways to identify all species by sight and Peterson put them into print and picture, many more could easily become serious listers. A generation's experience, Robbins's improvements, and post-war roads and airplanes allowed, or enabled, a community of competitive listers, and that seemed to me a key development. The North American life list and record year list may not be the "logical end-product of the ID guide and experience" (Baicich) but they are an expectable one.

Baicich's argument that far from becoming environmental, "birding has become almost immune from environmentalism" requires unpacking, for it implies the hobby consisted of or at least centered around listing (plausible) but also that the "traditional values" of "self-improvement, piety, status, accumulation, and high-minded recreation" to which people "cling" do not constitute or aid environmentalism (dubious at best). Certainly "cutting-edge birding is remarkably insulated from conservation ... let alone environmentalism." At the cutting edge birding is listing—manic listing if you prefer. Note the lack of attention to conservation in such works as Kenn Kaufman's *Kingbird Highway*, in contrast to Peterson's *Wild America* from an earlier time. Still, birders were in the front of the battle against DDT in the 1960s, and the new environmentally oriented guides reflected a strong current among nature enthusiasts. They must have raised and been intended to raise environmental awareness, just as the first ones wanted to make people aware of birds. With regard to listing, birders fall on a spectrum from total commitment to casual interest; surely the same is true for environmentalism, and an interest in one does not, necessarily, exclude the other. That was true for earlier generations. Birders reported sightings to the experts as well as their friends, volunteered for the national bird-banding program that began in the 1920s, in the early 1960s protested aerial spraying of their homes and the fields around their suburbs, and they now contribute to citizen science (see the Cornell Laboratory program) and buy heavy volumes on avian life histories.

Another issue Baicich raised, what birding meant to its devotees, lay at the back of my mind from the start and in fact gave me my working title, *Guided to Nature*. For a century the most popular form of informal nature education, the guides must have affected their readers' approach to nature and their understanding of it. What kind of nature did they lead their readers to? The first ones spoke of nature as a world of beauty and a source of pleasure and enlightenment, but it proved impossible to follow that line in the guides, for they turned strictly to identification while the persisted in nature literature and movements like bioregionalism and even amateur nature study. For a recent example of the exhortation to look beyond the guide to



the experience of losing yourself in nature, see “Throwing Away the Book,” Le Anne Schreiber, in *Onearth*, Summer 2012, 66.

Once the guides turned to identification I had either to stick with them or go off into a different narrative. I stuck to the books, not as much as Baicich wanted but too much for Vetter, who believed my emphasis on them limited my interpretative reach. He offered three frameworks for further development: amateur-professional relationships in science, the history of the book, and the history of ecotourism and leisure hobbies. I agree; any could result in important works. The first is especially important, and this area ideal for its study, for ornithology and birding lay across the amateur/professional boundary and research on the communities leads to questions like the gendered nature of birding and the role of class. As I did with women, I had hints of class. Birding’s origins in the genteel strata of American society stood out so clearly I had to say something, and in the second generation the relationship between Ludlow Griscom and his protégé, Joseph Hickey threw light on the changing social landscape. Unfortunately, while I interviewed Hickey about his role in DDT for my dissertation and some years later about Aldo Leopold and Paul Errington’s ideas on predation and population for *Saving America’s Wildlife* I did not think of this project until well after his death. Birding as uplift continues. Florence Merriam taught settlement house classes in birding and now national organizations are introducing inner-city youth to birding. Undoubtedly there are other aspects of class in birding I missed, but I do not think this is as important as women in birding of the relation of amateurs and professionals and what that tells us about science in American society.

Vetter’s suggestion that I might have made a serious contribution to the history of the book seems reasonable. I never considered taking that route, though when I started I was curious to see how much could be learned from a set of books and how far they could carry the analysis. His third topic, the history of leisure hobbies and ecotourism did not seriously tempt me, but it is well worth thinking about. Here a comparative study of national birding communities would be a good place to start. I noted some differences, discussing the relative lack of interest in the American form of the sport in other English-speaking countries, but said little about the business history of birding tours, which could be very useful. Any approach, though, would yield something of use to the general topic of nature knowledge and recreation in Western societies.

With *In the Field, Among the Feathered* I tapped a rich vein but there is important work to be done in areas I minimized, passed over, or just plain missed. The commentators pointed out some, and I am sure readers will find others.

### About the Contributors

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**Paul J. Baicich** has been a birder since his early teens. He is co-author (with the late Colin Harrison) of *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds* (1997). He edited 14 bird-finding guides for the American Birding Association (ABA) between 1990 and 2003. In 2003, he received the "ABA Claudia Wilds Distinguished Service Award" for his 15+ years of service to that organization. He writes a regular column, "Quick Takes," for *Bird Watcher's Digest* and a column for *Birding* called "Traditions." He works through his own small endeavor, Great Birding Projects. Currently, he is writing a history of bird feeding in America with colleagues, Margaret Barker and Carrol Henderson.

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Fossils: The Field Site and Local Collaboration in the American West," *Isis* 99:2 (2008), 273-303, and as editor, *Knowing Global Environments: New Perspectives on the Field Sciences* (Rutgers, 2010).

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