

Bird Calls

Newsletter of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club

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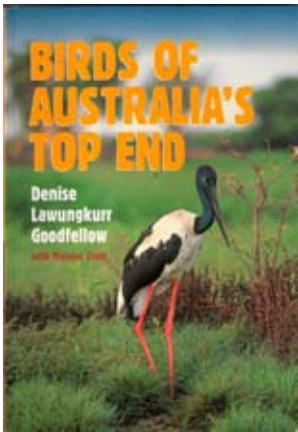


Northern Shrike by Nancy Halliday

BOOK NOTES By Eleonora di Liscia

QUIET SNAKE DREAMING AND BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA'S TOP END BY DENISE LAWUNGKURR GOODFELLOW

Recently Australian birder, Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow, reached out to ENSBC members to participate in her Ph.D. survey about how American couples bird. (See *accompanying article*.) So when she asked me to review her two books, how could I refuse?



When the books arrived, I was stunned. The Top End bird guide is absolutely beautiful with Denise's stunning watercolor images of Top End birds. The text contains descriptions of plumages as well as behavior, flight patterns and hints on bird finding.

The Guide also contains Denise's endearing notes. Some refer to aboriginal legends: "According to Kunwinjku people Brown Falcon... was once a man who cooked well." (P. 53.) Others to natural history:

"Crane fossils have been found that are 60-40 myo (million years old)." (P. 55). And still others reflect the author's own experiences:

"Once I rescued an injured pelican from a sewage pond where it was at risk of being eaten by the resident crocodile... Kruger (as the bird was named) had his wing set by Drs. Rogan Draper and Gerry Goodhand, the obstetrician and anesthetist who had delivered my son only a few weeks before, thus demonstrating the versatility of medical practitioners at this end of Australia!" (p. 35)

Denise's guide is a must-have for anyone thinking of visiting Australia's Top End, which includes Kakadu National Park. Denise also authored the companion book: *Fauna of Kakadu & the Top End*.

Already impressed with Denise from her bird guide, my admiration swelled as I read *Quiet Snake Dreaming*, her memoir about her life reaching across cultural barriers to Aboriginal women.

Beginning with a troubled childhood, (Denise's parents divorced and once she had to fight off a sexual predator babysitter), Denise received stability and kindness from a neighboring Aboriginal couple. Mrs. Knight, herself only a teenager, took Denise on walks through the bush, teaching her about the local animals.

AN AUSTRALIAN GUIDE STUDIES BIRDING COUPLES By Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow

In 1983 I began guiding in the Top End of the Northern Territory, Australia. Most of my clients were American birders, and they travelled as couples. Largely seniors, they tended to be well-educated and well-travelled. But mostly these people were not just interested in birds, but in other fauna and flora as well. Many were also interested in learning about Australia's Indigenous people. They got information on where to travel by word of mouth, or through trusted organizations.

Until the early 2000s, the NT Government and the tourism industry were only interested in sightseeing tourism, and consequently birders were often directed to guides and operators who knew little or nothing about wildlife.

The tourism industry would not refer such people to me. I had been "blacklisted" after running a national campaign against tour operators who were ramming crocodiles with their boats, something I witnessed while



Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow
Courtesy of The Kluge-Ruhe
Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia

guiding a group from the Academy of Sciences, Philadelphia. We were all horrified. The Mirrar people, the traditional owners of part of Kakadu National Park, were so angry that they said it was "better the tourists go and

BOOK CORNER

Want to write a book review?

Submit no more than 400 words to Bird Calls editor at diliscialaw@comcast.net or call 847-679-1936. Also, if you have had your own book published, please let us know about it.

BIRDING COUPLES CONTINUED FROM COVER

the crocodiles stay". My official protests were ignored, and hence the campaign. When the tourism authorities finally became interested in birding, they took two conflicting approaches. Guides with no background in birding were expected to become good birding guides in a matter of weeks, and yet at the same time publicity was aimed at attracting "twitchers," ie serious listers.

Research on birders and birding has largely focused on twitchers. However, their numbers appear to be rather small, compared to the generalists.

In some key ways, the couples I guide behave somewhat differently from individual birders. Whereas one of a couple might be a serious birder, his or her partner might be interested

in all wildlife or in art or in Indigenous people. Some travel to a country together and then go their separate ways. Others do a whole trip together, attempting to fit in with each other. For instance a wife might go out birding early while her spouse stays in bed (or vice versa), and then they'll both go to a museum or gallery together.

Are my clients typical of birding couples? There was no research that I could find. Professor David Scott, of A & M University, Texas confirmed the lack of research when we met last year.

I would like couples in which one or both are birders to fill out my questionnaire. The URL is http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=h3NCqTwur3H_2bPIbFtk_2bSpw_3d_3d

BOOK NOTES CONTINUED FROM COVER

After leaving an abusive relationship, moving to Darwin and bearing her spunky daughter Amber, Denise stood for city council in 1981. An Aboriginal reserve, Bagot, was situated in her ward, and so she set out to represent the residents, many of whom hated "balandas" or whites.

Denise seized one opportunity to reach out when a young Aboriginal girl shyly admired the make up of Mary, a health worker. Denise and Mary realized the girl would be too shy to visit the chemist on her own, so inspired, Denise decided to hold make up classes. She had an ally in Julie, a nurse turned beautician. At first, the Aboriginal girls tested the waters by sending a toddler boy in for a makeover. But as Julie polished the little boy's nails, the older girls crowded inside for their own makeup lessons.

Still, Denise struggled to win the trust of the elders. Then one day, Gunyok, a senior Aboriginal woman, challenged Denise to catch a snake. Denise was no coward. She had stood up to wife-beating bullies and silenced sex-

ist Aussie males with her prowess as a buffalo hunter. Although frightened, Denise persevered, spending four hours in crocodile-infested waters, before catching her python. But the story did not end there. Threatened with prosecution for catching the snake, Denise decided not to pay a fine fearing that if she did so the women would think she was ashamed of what she had done. And finding their own food was how the Aboriginal women recreated their bonds with wildlife and the country.

But she had finally found someone ready to stand up for her. To save her, the senior woman tearfully offered to adopt Denise into her Aboriginal family so that she could hunt legally. And that woman became Denise's Gunyok or sister-in-law. Quiet Snake Dreaming tells the story about Denise and Gunyok's intercultural family bonds.

To order Denise's books (or to contact her as a birding guide), email goodfellow@bigpond.com.au or write to **Scrubfowl Press, POB 3460, Palmerston, NT 0832 Australia.**

CONSERVATION CORNER

BIRDS & BP, A TERRIBLE MIX

By Lloyd Davidson

The devastating effect of BP's catastrophic oil well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico on birds is an incredible nightmare and the number of birds killed by it will increase by many orders of magnitude over the next decade along the Mississippi flyway and in the waters of the Gulf. Unfortunately for us and for the affected animals, there is virtually nothing that can be done to alleviate the dire effects caused by this immense flood of oil on the birds and other creatures (including humans!) of that region. All we can hope for at this moment is that BP can plug the well and stop the oil release. Cleaning the oil from individual birds or other animals does little more than extend the lives of a tiny minority of the oiled birds by only a few days. Tagging experiments demonstrate that about 90% of affected birds die soon after release, many from kidney failure. BTW, the 4 white pelicans sent from the Gulf to Brookfield Zoo had broken wings only; they were not affected by the oil spill.

While BP's well failure and their valuing cost over safety is certainly the proximate cause of this disaster, the true cause lies with all of us - yes, you and me - as pointed out in recent stories in both the Financial and NY Times. The US contains only about 5% of the world's population yet consumes over 25% of the world's oil (though China will overtake us in oil use within 4 years). This level of use is unsustainable without projects like deep drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. Brazil will soon be drilling wells in four-mile deep water in the Atlantic. As Pogo once famously said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Short of changing our gluttonous lifestyles drastically and being willing to pay the real cost for energy sources like gasoline (think \$10 per gallon, minimum), the best we can do to protect the birds in the Gulf is to donate to groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Nature Conservancy, Green Peace, <Xerces.org>, Environment Illinois and other such organizations that are doing the day-to-day hard work necessary to preserve and restore the Gulf wetlands as well as other ecologically sound environments across the nation. Personally, we make recurring, automatically renewed, monthly donations to a number of such groups. Volunteering to work with such groups locally can be very important to preserving Chicago area environments. We work with the North Branch Restoration Project <www.northbranchrestoration.org>

Cleaning oiled birds in the Gulf simply has no significant longterm beneficial effect. Ultimately, the best thing we can do is to support with all possible diligence any and all efforts to replace our reliance on oil with alternative, renewable energy resources that don't produce CO2 (and hence increase global warming) and to decrease markedly our overall energy consumption, e.g. by buying smaller, more efficient cars and driving less.

FAREWELLS TO TWO ENSBC MEMBERS

WALTER KRAWIEC

By David Brenner

I was fortunate to have met Walter Krawiec, along with some other experienced birders, about forty years ago when I began birding. This led to several lifelong friendships. Birding with Walter was always enjoyable. He was a true gentleman but did not hesitate to express his thoughts on many subjects, which included politics, art, music, history, the environment, and religion.

I discovered one of the most important things about him on my fiftieth birthday when Walter gave me a beautiful watercolor of a golden-crowned kinglet painted by his uncle Stanley. I then learned that Walter himself was a fine artist, as were his mother, father and uncle. His house was filled with lovely paintings, mostly by family members, which he would proudly identify if you asked. So Walter looked at wildlife as an artist. This certainly contributed to his love of birds and his skill at identification.

Walter had unbelievable patience when birding. He could stand perfectly still watching a clump of grass for many minutes. I once found him in LaBaugh Woods waiting for a winter wren to reveal itself. I walked away for at least fifteen minutes. When I returned he had not moved. Then the bird appeared and it was a rock wren. Walter wasn't looking for a rarity: he just had to see what was hiding in the grass.

Over the years Walter birded many hours, traveled about the U.S. and into Latin America when he could, and managed to see a good many species. However he never expressed an interest in numbers or lists. He seemed to remember everything he saw and when and where he had seen it, but if he made lists he couldn't find them and didn't seem to care.

In addition to birds Walter desired to see all of the world's steam locomotives. He could identify them and often did paint-



Walter Krawiec courtesy of Mark Krawiec

ings of them. His interest in railroads was of value to him as a lawyer. When he represented the County Treasurer he was an expert on the taxation of railroads.

His legal work led to a story he enjoyed telling about arriving late for an afternoon court session wearing wet rubber boots. It seems that the shorebird migration had caused him to drive from the downtown County Building to Lake Calumet on his lunch hour. When he suspected that time was running short he quickly drove back to court wearing his boots, leaving his shoes on the top of the

car when he pulled away. He said the judge forgave him.

As his age increased he continued doing bird counts but let others take the responsibility of leading them. However, he did not let age deter him from birding the area he loved most and knew best. That was in his own neighborhood on the far north side of Chicago. He spent many hours in LaBaugh Woods, two cemeteries on North Pulaski Road and all the nearby residential areas. He seemed to know every inch of those woods, fields and cemeteries as well as which homes had bird feeders. When the railroad that ran through the area abandoned its right-of-way, and when two cemeteries had extra land, Walter tried to convince the county to acquire the land as forest preserve. He failed—as he expected, and the land became homes and a shopping center. But much remained and Walter birded it as long as he could.

HERB TRACE

I was quite saddened by the news of Herb Trace's death. I have not talked or spoken with him for a long time but he was quite active in the bird club during the 1980s. He was newsletter editor for a while and his distinctive humor made each issue a surprising pleasure. He also led the first bird club sponsored trip to a far away

place. He took a group to Churchill, Manitoba on Hudson's Bay. The club has taken many trips now to such as destinations as Mexico and Belize so his legacy endures.

— Joel Greenberg

Herb Trace and his wife Cecile were long time supporters of the Bird Club. Herb also led a trip in the 80's for our bird club to Churchill, Manitoba. I remember his cadillac got stalled somewhere in the

middle of Canada and had to be towed back to the US. Herb was a friend of my father-in-law Dr. Samuel Pollack; I believe they went to medical school together.

— David B. Johnson

Our condolences go out to Herb's wife, Cecile, also a life member of the bird club. She has recently moved to Roodhouse, IL.

— ENSBC Board

PROGRAM NIGHTS

Club programs are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Evanston Ecology Center, 2024 McCormick Blvd., Evanston.

Sept. 28 – MEMBER’S NIGHT

This night is for members to share their birding memories with the rest of the group. If you’d like to show your pictures/videos from your latest birding trip, please contact Brian Herriott at wrybill@sbcglobal.net. Each presentation is limited to 10 minutes.

Oct. 26 – Donnie Dann

“Birding Conservation Issues Facing us Today”

Fellow ENSBC member Donnie Dann will cover the current threats to birds including habitat loss, feral cats and wind turbines but will also update us on the latest success stories in local bird conservation.

FIELD TRIPS

September 12, 2010 – Sunday

Waukegan and Illinois Beach State Park. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at McDonald’s at Rt. 132 and Sheridan Rd. in Waukegan to see a variety of land and lake migrants. Leaders: Ari Rice and Joel Greenberg

September 25 and October 2, 2010 – Saturdays

Northwestern Lakefill and Sailing Beach. This area has long been a stopover for migrants of all kinds headed south. Park on the lakeside of the upper deck of the south parking lot off of Sheridan Rd. and Clark St., north of Clark St. beach, at 8:30 a.m. Leaders: Sue Robert, Ray Pershing, Libby Hill and/or Wayne Svoboda.

October 23, 2010 – Saturday

The Grove, Glenview. Expect later warblers and other passerines. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at The Grove: east side of Milwaukee Ave., just south of Lake Ave., in the second parking lot that leads to the Interpretive Center. Leader: Ari Rice.

WE ALL SPEAK BIRD

By Eleonora di Liscia

I recently visited Isonzo Delta, a nature preserve in Italy, that is a birding hotspot. I was there with family, none of whom bird. But I was fortunate enough to encounter two Italian birders in the observation blind. The gentleman knew all the English names and generously pointed out lifers for me in the large wetland. The lady birder tried to help as well. “My English is not so good,” she said. “Ma, tutto parliamo uccelli. (But we all speak bird),” I replied. They laughed. After the gentleman left, the lady was able to communicate the location of a Spoonbill, that I had overlooked between all the Great and Little Egrets.



“I Speak Bird!”

European Blackbird photo by Eleonora di Liscia

And now Bird Calls would like to print your experiences with the international language of birding. Send items of no more than 400 words to **Eleonora di Liscia, 5333 Madison, Skokie, IL 60077, diliscialaw@comcast.net.**

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME: FINAL REMINDER!

Welcome to a new ENSBC year. For those of you who have not yet sent in your dues for the year, we are sending Bird Calls with a reminder to please renew your membership. You will be receiving Bird Calls up through the December edition.

When we receive your renewal, we will be happy to mail your Directory. Enclosed is a renewal notice and envelope for your convenience. We look forward to hearing from you.

Libby Hill

Membership Chair

1940’S ARCHIVE CHALLENGE WINNER:

Jeff Sanders won his choice of home-baked oatmeal raisin cookies by naming all the birding spots mentioned in last issue’s “From the Archives.”

Here they are:

Coast guard and west park – *Gilson Park and harbor*

Memorial Park – *The cemetery in Skokie on Old Orchard and Skokie Boulevard.*

Gravel pit north of central – *Doetch’s pit, now Lovelace Park, on Gross Point Rd.*

Church Street woods – *Part of Harms Woods.*

Bobolink field – *Most likely the open field on the west side of Skokie Lagoons*

Warbler Lane – *Runs along the east side of the former Bobolink Field along the creek. (As a teenager, Jeff called it Warbler Alley.)*

Deer Grove Park – *Deer Grove east and west forest preserves*

Dundee Road – *The bridge at the south end of the Botanic Garden, formerly a great shorebird spot.*

Eustus estate – *Now the Crabtree Nature Center.*