

REVIEW

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Spring Migration at the Dry Tortugas, The Birds of Sanibel, and Rare Birds of Sanibel.—Karis and Don Herriott, 1992. D. R. Herriott, Inc., 1237 Isabel Dr., Sanibel, Florida 33957. Current prices for the three videotapes are \$34.95, \$39.95, and \$39.95, respectively, plus \$2.00 shipping and handling.—These are the first locally-produced birding videos on the market, and will surely be followed by many more. The most interesting, and certainly the best of these three is *Spring Migration at the Dry Tortugas*, a 57-minute tour to undoubtedly the most spectacular part of Florida. The video begins on the Florida mainland, showing 10 “target” species birders might look for on their way to the Keys. Starting with an American Swallow-tailed Kite soaring over the treetops, we are treated to beautiful views of, among others, a Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Purple Gallinule, Mangrove Cuckoo, and 200 Roseate Spoonbills flying in to their evening roost on Sanibel Island. Then we board a boat at Key West for a three-day trip to the Tortugas.

Among the 71 species shown on the islands are excellent views of a Black Noddy, courting Magnificent Frigatebirds, nesting Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies, stray Short-eared and Burrowing owls, a Cattle Egret swallowing what appears to be a Barn Swallow, a singing White-winged Dove, and beautiful footage of many warblers (including a female Connecticut), buntings, grosbeaks, and orioles. Also featured are “cameo” appearances by many FOS members, probably unaware they are in this video!

A seaplane flight to the Tortugas is also shown, as are scenic views of Fort Jefferson, and the various islands in the Tortugas chain. The final few minutes of the tape are composed of other birds seen after the group returned to Key West, and headed back toward the mainland. At Cutler Ridge, the nesting Cave Swallows are shown, along with superb views of the Bahama Swallow that later became a traffic casualty. In Matheson Hammock, we are treated to views of a pair of Hill Mynas trying to evict an Eastern Screech-Owl from a cavity. Other species shown are Monk, Red-masked, and *chiriri* Canary-winged Parakeets, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, and a Spot-breasted Oriole. The tape concludes with a male Snail Kite.

The two tapes dealing with birds on Sanibel Island, each approximately two hours in length, are less enjoyable to watch, but they still contain many beautiful views of birds. *The Birds of Sanibel* was originally created to train volunteers at the J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in bird identification, and features 84 of the most frequently seen birds on the island. *Rare Birds of Sanibel* presents an additional 131 species. Highlights of the Sanibel videos include excellent views of both bitterns, Least and American, close-ups of Tricolored Heron nestlings, a beautiful Florida Red-shouldered Hawk, stunning views of a White-rumped Sandpiper, diving Northern Gannets, and a male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

A few birds are misidentified in the videos. A Common Nighthawk on Loggerhead Key is called a Chuck-will’s-widow, and a Louisiana Waterthrush is twice misidentified in *Rare Birds of Sanibel*, once as a Northern Waterthrush, and once as a Spotted Sandpiper! Other birds, such as Lesser and Antillean Nighthawks on Garden Key, and a Green Parakeet on Sanibel, are not identifiable to the species claimed, due to distance, poor lighting, or a lack of vocalizations.

A larger problem with the videos is substituting footage from a location other than the Tortugas or Sanibel Island. In the Tortugas video for instance, the Eastern Kingbird (with an American Crow calling in the background), and the singing Summer Tanager (with a Yellow-throated Warbler singing in the background) were surely videotaped elsewhere. Other footage is clearly stated to be from locations outside the state, such as scenes of the Merlin, Roseate Tern, and Kentucky Warbler. One can understand the Herriotts’ desire

to use the best footage possible for each species (they are frequent participants in birding tours around the country), but the flow of the videos is interrupted when one sees breeding-plumaged Common Loons or a Spotted Sandpiper fledgling in a "Florida" videotape.

Another problem with the videos, particularly the two Sanibel tapes, is narration that is geared to the beginning bird-watcher, with many minutes of *The Birds of Sanibel* devoted to distinguishing the various heron species. Additionally, the narration contains numerous questionable or incorrect statements. Although many of these statements are rather trivial, some are more serious. For example, Horned Grebes do not have a "speculum"; Masked Boobies *did* breed after 1984 (and continue to breed) on the Tortugas; the Peregrine Falcon was *not* extinct; Mourning Doves are *not* brood parasites; Barn Swallows and Orchard Orioles *do* breed in Florida; and it is brood parasitism, not "predation," by Brown-headed Cowbirds that may be causing the Red-eyed Vireo to decline in numbers.

A problem in the Tortugas videotape is frequent audio "muffling" caused by high winds hitting the microphone. All three videos retain the original audio (usually unnecessarily) and many viewers may find it preferable to watch these videos with the volume lowered.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of these videos is their cost, which amounts to over \$100 if all three tapes are purchased. Nonetheless, most viewers should enjoy these tapes, especially *Spring Migration at the Dry Tortugas*. These videos are available directly from the Herriotts or may be purchased through the American Birding Association.—Bill Pranty, Archbold Biological Station, P.O. Box 2057, Lake Placid, Florida 33852.

FLORIDA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Species Index to Florida Bird Records in Audubon Field Notes and American Birds Volumes 1-30 1947-1976, by Margaret C. Bowman. 1978. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 1. Price \$4.00.

The Carolina Parakeet in Florida, by Daniel McKinley. 1985. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 2. Price \$6.00.

Status and Distribution of the Florida Scrub Jay, by Jeffrey A. Cox. 1987. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 3. Price \$8.00.

Florida Bird Records in American Birds and Audubon Field Notes 1947-1989, by Robert W. Loftin, Glen E. Woolfenden, and Janet A. Woolfenden. 1991. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 4. Price \$8.00.

West Indian Bird Records in American Birds and Audubon Field Notes (1947-1990): Species Index by Islands, by Robert W. Loftin. 1992. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 5. Price \$8.00.

Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List, by William B. Robertson, Jr. and Glen E. Woolfenden. 1992. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 6. Price for FOS members \$14.95 (soft cover), \$19.95 (hard cover); nonmembers \$17.95 (soft cover), \$22.95 (hard cover).

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