

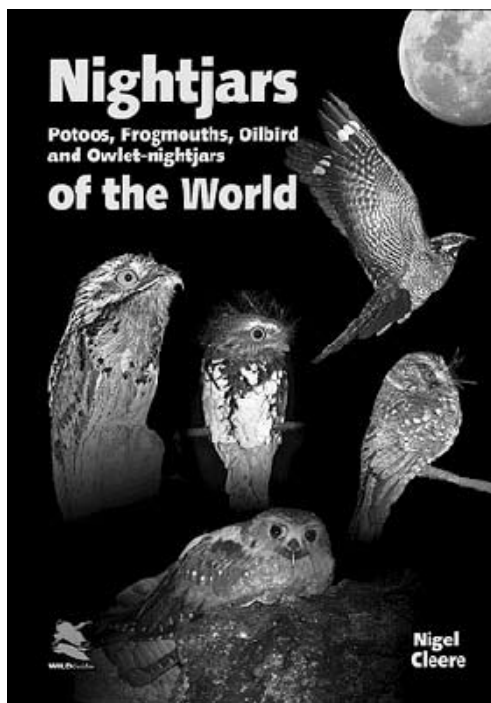
## BOOK REVIEWS

***Nightjars of the World: Potoos, Frogmouths, Oilbird and Owlet-nightjars*** by Nigel Cleere. 2010. 464 pages. 8 x 25cms. 580+ colour photos and maps. Glossary, list of photo credits, dates and locations, Appendix of alternative English names, and extinct Caprimulgiformes. List of references and index. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. \$47.50 Can. Hardcover. *Reviewed by Chris Siddle.*

You could probably comfortably fit the world's caprimulgiforme experts into a small bus. Possibly driving the bus would be Nigel Cleere, best known caprimulgid-fan and author of this book, a worthy sequel to his classic *Nightjars: A Guide to the Nightjars, Nighthawks, and Their Relatives* (Pica Press, 1998), and the authoritative "Family Caprimulgidae (Nightjars)" section of *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, Volume 5 (Lynx Editions, 1999). His new *Nightjars of the World...* is an attractive introduction to the world's nightjars, nighthawks, frogmouths, potoos and other weird and wonderful members of the order, and the first collection of caprimulgid photos commercially available.

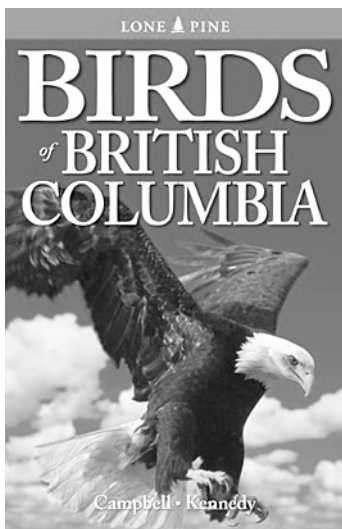
Forty-five pages written in plain, simple prose introduce the reader to nightjar biology that includes nests, eggs, feeding, form, and diversity. Cleere outlines how remarkable this group of birds is in a series of points that include facts like the Oilbird is one of very few birds known to use echolocation, the poorwill is still the only bird known to hibernate, and the Lesser Nighthawk can maintain its brain temperature below that of its body temperature.

The bulk of the book is taken up with brief species accounts in short note form covering length, identification, similar species, vocalizations, habitat, breeding, range and status, one to four photos of the species (showing sexual dimorphism if possible) and a range map. If a species has not been photographed in life, photos of museum specimens have been substituted.



You may not see many of these species in your lifetime. After all, they are cryptically plumaged, they reach their highest diversity in some of the most remote and challenging places in the world, and they are usually crepuscular, but don't let these sensible and boring reasons hold you back from acquiring this book. The images are amazing and the information fascinating. As Nigel Collar of *BirdLife International* writes in his introduction, "Everyone is a fan of nightjars for the way they give an extra twist to the end of a day's birding... there is a sense of charmed mystery in these birds... their lives lived just beyond the sharp focus of our noontday binoculars..." For a good look (albeit second hand) at nightjars and their amazing kin, get a copy of this book. Highly recommended.

***Birds of British Columbia*** by R. Wayne Campbell and Gregory Kennedy, with contributions by Krista Kagume and Genevieve Boyer. 2009. 384 pages. 14 x 21.5 cms. Colour painted bird images and range maps. Appendix of local and rare species. Glossary. Checklist. Index. List of references. Lone Pine Publishing, 10145 81 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6E 1W9. Soft cover. \$29.95 Can. *Reviewed by Chris Siddle.*



The publication of a field guide to the birds of British Columbia is always an important event. People only appreciate what they can identify. If the book is colourful, generally accurate, inexpensive, and available at many bookstores and covers most of the species the non-birding public will encounter, then such a book becomes a very important conservation tool. People only conserve what they can appreciate.

The introduction is full of sound information and good advice. It covers tips about beginning birdwatching, purchasing binoculars, a scope, and a camera, birding by habitat, a list of the 48 top birding sites in B.C., addresses for five provincial natural history groups and three provincial conservation organizations, bird feeding and nest boxes, West Nile Virus, and a short essay on the importance of British Columbia to its birds including a table listing

71 species which nest in the province but nowhere else in Canada.

Each of the 329 species covered in the main section has a page which begins with an introductory paragraph or two containing interesting information and makes browsing through the guide a pleasure. Sometimes the paragraphs explain the meaning or origin of the bird's common or Latin names, its feeding behavior, its flocking habits, its range increases or decreases, etc. Point form information about identification, similar species, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice and best sites to find the species follow each species' prose introduction. The text appears refreshingly free from factual and production errors.

The only problem that *Birds of British Columbia* has is its art work. Each species is illustrated with a colour image created by Ted Nordhagen, Ewa Pluciennik, or Gary Ross. Unfortunately these artists differ so much in style, particularly Pluciennik, that the portraits of closely related, similar appearing species can appear radically different from each other. This problem of inconsistent artistic style is nowhere better illustrated than on pages 286 and 287 where a slightly hard plastic Swainson's Thrush faces a particularly ruffled, wet looking Hermit Thrush. Based upon these images, one would not think that these two birds belonged to the same genus. Experienced birders know enough to allow for such stylistic differences, but this text is not produced for such a readership. It is a text for beginners and early-stage intermediates, exactly the groups of birders most likely to be confused by the depiction problem. Until Lone Pine finds a better way to illustrate birds, its field guides will be judged by regrettable art work, which is a shame given the book's strengths.

An innovative feature is the "Reference Guide". These twelve pages show "thumb-nail" sized reproductions of the book's bird images arranged in rows by family. Thus comparisons between species are possible as they are in field guide plates. An improvement would be to size the images proportionately. Because the images are so small, differences in artistic style are minimized.

In spite of image concerns, *Birds of British Columbia* is highly recommended.