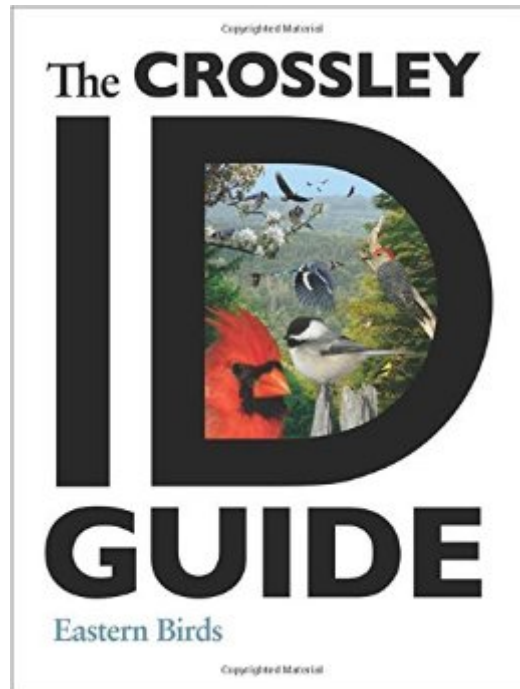


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The Crossley ID Guide: Eastern Birds (The Crossley ID Guides)



Synopsis

This stunningly illustrated book from acclaimed birder and photographer Richard Crossley revolutionizes field guide design by providing the first real-life approach to identification. Whether you are a beginner, expert, or anywhere in between, The Crossley ID Guide will vastly improve your ability to identify birds. Unlike other guides, which provide isolated individual photographs or illustrations, this is the first book to feature large, lifelike scenes for each species. These scenes--640 in all--are composed from more than 10,000 of the author's images showing birds in a wide range of views--near and far, from different angles, in various plumages and behaviors, including flight, and in the habitat in which they live. These beautiful compositions show how a bird's appearance changes with distance, and give equal emphasis to characteristics experts use to identify birds: size, structure and shape, behavior, probability, and color. This is the first book to convey all of these features visually--in a single image--and to reinforce them with accurate, concise text. Each scene provides a wealth of detailed visual information that invites and rewards careful study, but the most important identification features can be grasped instantly by anyone. By making identification easier, more accurate, and more fun than ever before, The Crossley ID Guide will completely redefine how its users look at birds. Essential for all birders, it also promises to make new birders of many people who have despaired of using traditional guides. Revolutionary. This book changes field guide design to make you a better birder. A picture says a thousand words. The most comprehensive guide: 640 stunning scenes created from 10,000 of the author's photographs. Reality birding. Lifelike in-focus scenes show birds in their habitats, from near and far, and in all plumages and behaviors. Teaching and reference. The first book to accurately portray all the key identification characteristics: size, shape, behavior, probability, and color. Practice makes perfect. An interactive learning experience to sharpen and test field identification skills. Bird like the experts. The first book to simplify birding and help you understand how to bird like the best. An interactive website--www.crossleybirds.com--includes expanded captions for the plates and species updates.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

BASICS: flexcover, 2011, 529pp; large photo identification guide to the 660+ species in eastern US/Canada; excellent color photos show multiple plumages and poses of the bird digitally inserted over natural backgrounds; brief text gives concise descriptions of the bird and its vocalizations; additional notes provide key pointers on identification; map for each of the non-rare species shows summer, winter, and resident ranges

This is an intriguing book that differs notably from the familiar guides out today, which will probably cause both positive and negative comments from the various groups of birders. First, this is an awesome collection of photos that deserves high compliments and respect for the mere creation of this work. Second, this book is an identification guide but definitely not a field guide. Why not a field guide? The three reasons are: (1) It's a large and heavy book on par with some college textbooks (10 x 7.5 x 1.75 inches and 2 pounds); (2) the layout of the species and of photos does not allow for quick comparisons between birds; and, (3) the lack of notes or arrows on the plates plus the text crammed at the bottom of the page demands more time to be spent looking away from the bird.

The most outstanding feature of this book is the wide selection of excellent color photos of the 660+ eastern birds of USA/Canada, including rarities. The 10,000 photos used to compile this book show vibrant colors and nearly all the plumage variations (gender, age, season, race) one would expect to see in the field. For the American Redstart, you see the male/female, the adult/immature, perched/in-flight. With the shorebirds and gulls, you can enjoy inspecting the various plumages, all crammed onto one page. Yes, crammed in many cases. Some pages are nearly overwhelming, causing your eye to dance all over the page trying to look at each plumage. As an extreme, over 50 different Snow Buntings and over 20 Herring Gull are shown on the page. A consequential distraction with this format is having to inspect each individual to see if it is another plumage variation or, if it's just another photo of the same. This would be a severe distraction when trying to use this book in the field while trying to keep your eye on an unknown bird. However, as an identification and not as a field guide, this busy format provides a wonderful

reference of detail to be inspected when at home with the book. You can stare at the perched or in-flight bird to practice for upcoming excursions or, when recalling your sighting; or, when examining your own photo. A few nice touches I like about this book involves the ducks. Instead of the readily identifiable male, it is the female that is typically put up front in the selection of photos. This may come in handy for anyone with doubts about the female mergansers, scaup, scoters, or teal. Another is the inclusion of many eastern rarities (e.g., Garganey, Fieldfare, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo). Also included are many western species that routinely stray to the east. However, some of these birds seem a bit too rare for inclusion (e.g., White-eared Hummingbird, Greater Pewee). In addition to a very busy page, a few other small critiques can be made. Some of the birds seem a bit too dark, such as the Empidonax flycatchers, the Gray-cheeked & Bicknell's Thrush, and some of the warblers. Perhaps this may mimic realistic field conditions but, it does not always translate into an easier way of learning the bird. The inclusion of a photographed habitat in the background makes for an attractive photo while also giving a sample of the bird's typical habitat choice. It also adds to the busy look to the page, forcing you to search around for birds that may get lost in the collage - especially the little birds in the background. See if you can find all the Brown Creepers. As a couple of quirks, the order of the birds in the book follows familiar taxonomy for the most part; however, the jays/crows are sandwiched between the woodpeckers and hummingbirds while the swallows precede the flycatchers. This is no big deal, but may cause some birders to search a little more to find a particular family group. One other interesting tidbit is the plate showing the Song Sparrow. How did that American Robin slip into the background? Accompanying the photos is the seemingly smaller amount of text. As noted in the introduction, the author prefers pictures and may find text to be boring. The material offered focuses mostly on description and on identification. After reading through many species, the smaller amount is actually strengthened by the conciseness and potency of the information given. This will prove to be very useful for beginning to intermediate birders. The text, backed up by the photo, points out the long undertail coverts of the Connecticut Warbler, the contrasting white undertail coverts of the Tennessee Warbler, and the dark eye of a first year White-eyed Vireo in the fall/winter. Additional notes that are useful are key comments on the bird's behavior and habitat. Which of the beginning, intermediate, and experienced birders will appreciate this book the most? Probably the intermediate, who is looking to learn from those additional tips and views which are abundant in this book. The experienced birder will immensely enjoy the thousands of photos but probably won't read or see anything new. In contrast, the beginning birder will certainly like the great photos but the sheer volume of birds and the crowded, busy pages may be daunting. The author said in the introduction "a picture says 1000

words", promoting the quick mental snapshot of an image versus reading and memorizing information. However, quickly interpreting a picture or a view of a bird in the field comes with experience - and frustration. The newer birder often does not know what in the photo may demand extra attention; what things must be compared; how to read relative sizes and shapes; etc. The beginner won't have the experiential knowledge needed to free him from the text and to rely on only the photos. Having just said that, any birder will still greatly enjoy this book so long as he knows what is and is not in this book. - (written by Jack at Avian Review with sample pages, February 2011) I've listed several related books below...1) Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America by Kaufman 2) Birds of Eastern North America: A Photographic Guide by Sterry 3) National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America 4) The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America by Sibley 5) Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America by Peterson 6) Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region by Stokes 7) The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America by Stokes 8) National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Birds of North America by Brinkley 9) Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America by Floyd

At first, the new Crossley book seems like a great idea that was long in coming - publish a book for bird identification that presents photos of birds in natural settings, and in poses and positions that people will actually see in the wild instead of the Peterson style of consistent poses where most species on a page are in the same position. Peterson's book was great for many reasons but birds rarely showed themselves in his poses and this sometimes led to problems in identification. What Crossley has done is take photos of a species from various times of the year and merge them onto a single photo plate, arranging the plate so that the birds look to actually be where they are presented. Most times these plates will show natural habitat and the birds are shown in places where you'd actually expect to see them; shorebirds are on beaches or mud flats, rails are in marshes, warblers in trees, etc. Many plates have images of birds in flight, including small passerines, in a manner and angle that is true to what we actually see in the wild. Where the book goes wrong for me is in the execution of this concept. Many of the images are extremely small on the page, making their usefulness less effective. Some have argued to me that this is like natural birding - birds are often distant and seeing all the details of a close-up photo is impossible. Although I agree with this observation, I also think that it is ineffective to not provide all the detail that can be learned about a plumage or molt that can't be seen in these fingernail sized images. I remember when I first started banding how confusing it could be to have a bird that I had seen hundreds of

times in the tops of trees in the hand, where every minute detail could be seen, and how the overload of field marks caused me to hesitate in some of my identifications. Details in bird observations are an example of where more is always better and Crossley fails to do that. The static images of print material limits what is a concept that would have been much more effective in the digital world of a software book or a website. The same 'plates' presented on a computer screen could allow the same presentation of species in various positions and poses on the page, but a click on an image could then zoom in to allow the individual birds to zoom to a more natural size for the viewer. In this way, all of the small details could be seen and learned, while at the same time allowing the birds to return to the smaller size with another click of the mouse that might be more realistic in the observer's binoculars in the field. The same digital concept could also incorporate motion and sound through links on the page to audio recordings and video of a species. Profits could be retained by selling log-ins to a site or through DVD sales for the digital version of this concept. On the whole, the book is too large to take into the field but it's not a bad reference book that could be kept in the car or on a nearby shelf to retrieve on return home. I think most people that buy this book will enjoy the novel approach that this book presents for the first time, and the "Where's Waldo" novelty of trying to fully scan each plate for all the hidden images that are throughout the book. Eventually though I think the book will be relegated to a place on the shelf that gets forgotten or only pulled out on rare occasions, instead of the must used guide that Richard Crossley had envisioned when he started to take this concept from idea to publication.

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