



The Sibley Guide to Birds

By David Allen Sibley

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David Allen Sibley, America's most gifted contemporary painter of birds, is the author and illustrator of this comprehensive guide. His beautifully detailed illustrations—more than 6,600 in all—and descriptions of 810 species and 350 regional populations will enrich every birder's experience.

The Sibley Guide's innovative design makes it entirely user friendly. The illustrations are arranged to facilitate comparison, yet still capture the unique character of each species.

The Sibley Guide to Birds provides a wealth of new information:

- Captioned illustrations show many previously unpublished field marks and revisions of known marks
- Nearly every species is shown in flight
- Measurements include length, wingspan, and weight for every species
- Subspecies and geographic variants are covered thoroughly
- Complete voice descriptions are included for every species
- Maps show the complete distribution of every species: summer and winter ranges, migration routes, and rare occurrences

Both novice and experienced birders will appreciate these and other innovative features:

- An introductory page for each family or group of related families makes comparisons simple
- Clear and concise labels with pointers identify field marks directly
- Birds are illustrated in similar poses to make comparisons between species quick and easy
- Illustrations emphasize the way birds look in the field

With **The Sibley Guide to Birds**, the National Audubon Society makes the art and expertise of David Sibley available to the world in a comprehensive, handsome, easy-to-use volume that will be the indispensable identification guide every birder must own.

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The Sibley Guide to Birds By David Allen Sibley Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

More than 10 years in the making, David Sibley's *Guide to Birds* is a monumental achievement. The beautiful watercolor illustrations (6,600, covering 810 species in North America) and clear, descriptive text place Sibley and his work squarely in the tradition of John James Audubon and Roger Tory Peterson; more than a birdwatcher and evangelizer, he is one of the foremost bird painters and authorities in the U.S. Still, his field guide will no doubt spark debate. Unlike Kenn Kaufman's *Focus Guide*, Sibley's is unapologetically aimed at the converted. Beginning birders may want to keep a copy of Sibley at home as a reference, but the wealth of information will have the same effect on novices as trying to pick out a single sandpiper in a wheeling flock of thousands. The familiar yellow warbler, for instance, gets no less than nine individual illustrations documenting its geographic, seasonal, and sex variations--plus another eight smaller illustrations showing it in flight. Of course, more experienced birders will appreciate this sort of detail, along with Sibley's improvements on both Peterson and the National Geographic guide:

- As in Peterson, Sibley employs a pointer system for key field markings--but additional text blurbs are included alongside the illustrations to facilitate identification.
- Descriptive passages on identification are more detailed than those in most other field guides. For example, Sibley includes extensive information on the famously hard-to-distinguish hawks in the genus *Accipiter* (sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and northern goshawk), noting differences in leg thickness and wing beat that will be of use to more advanced birders. A section on the identification of "peeps" (small sandpipers) includes tips about seasonal molting and bill length. Confusing fall warblers, *Empidonax* flycatchers, and Alcids receive similar treatment.
- As previously mentioned, ample space is given to illustrations that show plumage variations by age, sex, and geography within a single species. Thus, an entire page is devoted to the red-shouldered hawk and its differing appearances in the eastern U.S., Florida, and California; similarly, gulls are distinguished by age and warblers by sex.
- Range maps are detailed and accurate, with breeding, wintering, and migration routes clearly depicted; rare but regular geographic occurrences are denoted by green dots.
- The binding and paper stock are of exceptional quality. Despite its 544 pages, a reinforced paperback cover and sewn-in binding allow the book to be spread out flat without fear of breaking the binding.

Some birders will be put off by the book's size. Slightly larger than the National Geographic guide, it's less portable than most field guides and will likely spend more time in cars and desks than on a birder's person while in the field. For some it will be a strictly stay-at-home companion guide to consult after a field trip; others may want to have it handy in a fannypack or backpack. But regardless of how it is used, Sibley's *Guide to Birds* is a significant addition to any birding library. "Birds are beautiful," the author writes in the preface, "their colors, shapes, actions, and sounds are among the most aesthetically pleasing in nature." Pleasing, too, is this comprehensive guide to their identification. --*Langdon Cook*

Amazon Exclusive Essay: Author David Allen Sibley on Spring Birding in the United States



photo credit: Erinn Hartman

Birders are an optimistic lot--always looking forward to the next day, the next season--and no season is as keenly anticipated as spring. Everyone loves spring, of course, but to a birder that feeling is multiplied as spring is the season of discovery. Migrating birds make their way north from wintering grounds in the south to breeding grounds in the north, and no matter where you are you can see this migration in action. Every day brings new arrivals and new sightings, and the flood of birds can be overwhelming at times.

If you're lucky enough to be able to travel to a place like Gray's Harbor in Washington state, Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas, or Delaware Bay in the east, you can see hundreds of thousands of migrating shorebirds as they stop for a few weeks to refuel on their way to the arctic. Along the Gulf Coast beaches you can see birds that have just flown from the Yucatan or from South America and are dropping into the nearest patch of cover to rest. Even in urban areas--places like Central Park in New York City, Rock Creek Park in Washington DC, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, and countless other parks in cities and towns across North America--you will find outstanding birding. During spring migration these natural oases can be filled with brightly-colored songbirds, and seeing an exotic bird like a Blackburnian Warbler or a Western Tanager, where there were none the day before, is a thrill unique to birding. You don't even have to travel. Whether you're a seasoned birder or a neophyte, just grab some binoculars and a bird guide, and head out to your backyard, or to your local park or beach to see what's happening. Those warm spring days when all you want to do is take a long lunch break and sprawl out on the lawn are the same days that the birds will be migrating north, and all you have to do is look up.

--David Allen Sibley

From Publishers Weekly

The bird-watching world knows Sibley best as an immensely talented painter. His thick, attractive and data-packed color guide offers nearly 7,000 images, along with range maps and detailed descriptions of songs, calls and voices, for all the birds North Americans might see. It's a more informative volume than Kenn Kaufman's forthcoming *Birds of North America* (Forecasts, Sept. 11) but less portable and harder for beginners to use. An introduction describes the key parts of major classes of birds--the tomia and culmen of a gull's bill, the scapulars and coverts of passerines (songbirds). Sibley then moves on to hundreds of pages of birds in 42 categories, from Loons and Grebes to Silky Flycatchers and Bulbuls. A typical page has two columns, with one species in each: that species gets a color-coded range map, a description of its voice, and four to eight illustrative paintings. These multiple images of single species are the guide's most attractive feature; they let Sibley show some birds in several poses, as well as important seasonal and regional, juvenile and mature, breeding and nonbreeding, or male and female versions of the same bird. (Gulls, terns, and many other seabirds, in particular, change their patterns completely when breeding.) Sibley assists viewers by giving, on the same page, images of species that might be mistaken for one another. Done column shows 13

kinds of thrushes. He also describes calls for every bird (not just the more common ones), and makes many more comparisons. If Kaufman's guide belongs in birders' coat pockets, Sibley's big, detailed book belongs on their desks; it's easy to imagine birders rushing to Sibley's guide to check details of plumage or to confirm an ID the smaller guide has helped them make.

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From Scientific American

For birders who cut their teeth on Roger Tory Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds, that book seemed definitive, like the King James Bible or Bogart and Bergman in Casablanca. But it's a new millennium, and David Allen Sibley and the National Audubon Society have produced an impressive new Guide to Birds.

How does it differ from earlier guides? When Sibley himself was asked, he replied: "My book relies much more on illustrations.... I believe the average field guide user spends the vast majority of time looking at the pictures, and when I was developing this layout I based it on the premise that most of the text in current field guides is redundant.... I wanted a book that would condense a huge amount of information into a portable size, and at the same time make the information 'patterned,' logical, and accessible to any reader."

He delivers. Full-color paintings--6,600 of them--show us 810 North American species in an array of shapes, stages, colors, markings and poses (at rest, in flight, perched, swimming and so on). Raptors are shown from below. All significant plumages are depicted: the Laughing Gull, for example, is shown in six different stages. Voice descriptions (songs, flight calls, juvenile begging cries, threats, displays) appear on every page. Full-color range maps show complete distributions, migration routes, and summer, winter and breeding locations. Measurements are there, too: wingspan, length and weight. To facilitate comparison, information and illustrations are arranged in the same way for each species, and birds are shown in similar poses. Happily, the text accompanies the drawings as captions, so you don't have to flip back and forth. Pointers guide your eye to the relevant feature.

The book's introductory material is a primer on how to look at and identify birds, beginning with the parts of a passerine, or songbird. The introduction also includes Sibley's "rules," the first of which is: "Look at the bird. Don't fumble with a book, because by the time you find the right picture the bird will most likely be gone. Start by looking at the bird's bill and facial markings. Watch what the bird does, watch it fly away, and only then try to find it in your book."

Even the endpapers overflow, in an organized way, with useful tools: metric conversions, rulers, a map of the area the guide covers. A sturdy, flexible cover, sewn-in binding, and heavy, nonreflective paper add to the pleasure of using this book. True, it's a little hefty for the field, but this is a quibble. Better to have all this information than to be able to tuck the book in your pocket. Besides, it fits easily in a backpack.

Born to Bird

The son of Yale ornithologist Fred Sibley, David Sibley taught himself to draw at age six by tracing Arthur Singer's illustrations in *Birds of the World*. After two semesters at Cornell, he dropped out to work at the Cape May Bird Observatory. Several years later he left Cape May and crisscrossed the U.S. in his pickup truck to study birds, storing his sketching equipment in the cab and sleeping in the back. By his late 20s he was an acknowledged expert, leading tours for WINGS. Now 39, he is married to Joan Walsh, an ornithologist he met at Manomet Bird Observatory, and the father of two young children. Sibley starts his drawings in pencil, working from photographs and field sketches. He then puts the illustrations on an opaque projector and adjusts for size so they are exactly proportional to the others on that page of the guide. After correcting for size and shape, he traces the projection and paints the final version in gouache, working in transparent layers until he reaches the desired color and texture.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Williams:

Hey guys, do you wishes to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the headline The Sibley Guide to Birds suitable to you? Typically the book was written by renowned writer in this era. The particular book untitled The Sibley Guide to Birds is a single of several books that everyone read now. That book was inspired a lot of people in the world. When you read this guide you will enter the new dimension that you ever know ahead of. The author explained their thought in the simple way, and so all of people can easily to be aware of the core of this book. This book will give you a great deal of information about this world now. In order to see the represented of the world on this book.

Rodolfo Odum:

Are you kind of active person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your day time to upgrading your mind talent or thinking skill also analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book than can satisfy your short period of time to read it because all this time you only find reserve that need more time to be learn. The Sibley Guide to Birds can be your answer since it can be read by an individual who have those short free time problems.

Jerry Melgar:

Is it you who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day through watching television programs or just lying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This The Sibley Guide to Birds can be the reply, oh how comes? A book you know. You are so out of date, spending your spare time by reading in this brand new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these guides have than the others?

Doris Stone:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that question when you got students? We believe that that issue was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Everybody has different hobby. And also you know that little person just like reading or as reading through become their hobby. You must know that reading is very important and also book as to be the factor. Book is important thing to increase you knowledge, except your own personal teacher or lecturer. You will find good news or update in relation to something by book. Many kinds of books that can you go onto be your object. One of them is this The Sibley Guide to Birds.

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