Demography of the Northern Spotted Owl

Edited by E. D. Forsman, S. DeStefano, M. Raphael, and R. J. Gutirrez. 1996. Studies in Avian Biology Number 17. Cooper Ornithological Society, Camarillo, California. vi + 122 pp., illus. U.S. $20.00.

The Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) has been considered both a blessing and a curse, depending of course, on which faction — environmentalists or loggers — is pontificating. This book, a synthesis of eleven coordinated studies of Spotted Owl demography is a rather rigorous, highly scientific read, geared primarily to population biologists and other related specialists. The purpose of the project (conducted in Washington, Oregon and California) was to obtain and analyse empirical population data on the Spotted Owl. The specific questions to be addressed were (1) are Spotted Owl populations declining?, and (2) are there gaps in the distribution of owls resulting from human-caused factors? Ultimately, the data were to be used in the management of forests (particularly the critical old growth forests) that lay within the range of the Spotted Owl; however, recommendations for management were not made as that was the purpose of another work by J. W. Thomas, and others in 1993.

This study was very well-organized and the book reflects this. Three chapters deal with background to the study, including the general biology of the owl, a background of previous demographic studies and an in-depth chapter on both the field and analytical methods employed by the research teams. Throughout reading this book, one gets the feeling of a highly coordinated, rigorous effort.

Nine teams of researchers covered eleven study areas from periods of four to nine years. Fourteen study areas were originally set up to be surveyed. Ironically, the three that were not reported at the Fort Collins 1993 Workshop (upon which this book is based) were the three areas that were the responsibility of the timber industry to cover. Each of the nine teams that did report, did so systematically; i.e., each study is directly comparable to all of the others. Even though there is an introductory chapter dealing with the methods, there is a summary within each of the nine reports. This allows individual teams to more completely describe their particular study area as well as summarize the details of their particular study. Results are consistently well presented and discussions are to the point.

The final two chapters wrap up this project. The first is a so-called meta-analysis of the data presented by the individual teams, while the second is a critical look at the biases of the study (of both the field and analytical methods), an attempt to model the population change, and recommendations for further monitoring. A meta-analysis is a statistical tool used to interpret the data of several, similarly designed studies. It is more powerful than the set of separate analyses because it compares the individual studies for common trends. In this particular case, the outcome of the meta-analysis allowed the research team to conclude that the population of Northern Spotted Owls was in fact declining, a conclusion not unanimously reached by all the individual teams in their own study areas. However, the data were not sufficient to detect if the current decline is part of a regular fluctuation in the population, a drop to stability, or a trend towards extinction. The study only lasted nine years, which is less than one generation length of Spotted Owls. Therefore, predicting the future of these birds is untenable. The authors propose several options for further monitoring to determine the nature of the trend.

The editors have included a two-page appendix of acronyms and symbols, an area that I referred to frequently while reading the book. Unfortunately, not all acronyms were included in the appendix, which was inconvenient at times. However, all were defined within the text itself, and this oversight is negligible in an otherwise comprehensive piece of work.

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Lone Star Dinosaurs

By Louis Jacobs. 1995. Texas A & M University Press. 160 pp., illus. U.S. $27.95. Canadian distributor UBC Press, Vancouver $39.95.

One should not lament the overflowing number of books on dinosaurs. Even if some of these are ill-conceived, badly written, or published just to cash in on the dino-craze, it does illustrate one thing. There is a need to feed the desire of the populace to know more. And since there is a willing ear to hear the stories of ages past, paleontologists have a duty to tell the stories in a unique, lively way. *Lone Star Dinosaurs* is one of the latest attempts by Louis Jacobs, director of the Shuler Museum of Paleontology in Texas. "Mak[ing] science exciting" is Jacob's aim.

Geared toward the general fan of dinosaurs, *Lone Star Dinosaurs*, as the name implies, focuses on the prehistoric biota within the political boundary of Texas; who found what, where; and the history of