

## BOOK REVIEW

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Review of *Baby bird identification: a North American guide*, by Linda Tuttle-Adams (2022). Cornell University. 401 pp. ISBN 978-1-50176-285-7. US \$39.95.

*Baby Bird Identification: A North American Guide* by Linda Tuttle-Adams is much more than a typical bird identification book. Although the illustrations and photos are indeed integral to her work (and necessary for appropriate identification), she also offers the “why” and “how” behind each facet of identification and provides a proven process to identify the bird in hand.

The book begins by explaining the importance of proper identification, starting with the determination of whether the baby bird needs to be “rescued” in the first place. Proper identification will indicate the appropriate housing, diet and enrichment if the bird is in rehabilitation care; improper identification can harm the growing baby developmentally. Knowing the species will allow a rehabilitator to accurately place the baby among conspecifics or determine whether or not the youngling may be reunited with a parent or fostered to a wild pair with young. Ms Tuttle-Adams addresses the possible stress to nestmates as well as the species that do not accept young other than their own. She also explains the difference between imprinting and habituation, possible reversibility, and the factors involved in each.

The next section of the book describes basic bird anatomy and then focuses on the aspects that are helpful in accurate identification. Ms Tuttle-Adams discusses beak shape and size, inner mouth colour, gape flange colour, and the location, size, and shape of the nares, and provides a table detailing which species possess specific attributes. The scales on the legs of birds can place them within a particular family of birds. The size, length, and positioning of toes, as well as the presence of webbing,

nails, claws or talons, can provide clues as to the species in hand. Ms Tuttle-Adams explains the type and function of each type of feather and how natal down can be utilized as a factor in identification. For each identifying factor, she provides tables that list species possessing those characteristics.

The final natural history section of the book covers growth, development and age estimation. Ms Tuttle-Adams explains the difference between altricial and precocial and defines hatchling, nestling and fledgling. An accompanying table outlines each stage in small and medium passerines. She discusses using feather eruption patterns, size and weight as clues to age estimation, as well as circumstances that can alter these factors. She ends the section by highlighting the differences between ageing precocial and altricial birds.

The last section of the text-only portion of the manual is Ms Tuttle-Adams’ process (she refers to it as the “process of elimination by making comparisons”) for identifying baby birds. She includes a worksheet of the process step by step and thoroughly explains exactly what to look for in each step. This section also includes questions to ask finders to determine if a baby bird needs help, a list of nest locations and substrates, and a comparison of swifts and swallows.

The remainder of the book is an incredible collection of colour illustrations, photographs and descriptions of each of the major species seen in North America. There is a photo gallery of many species in each stage of development. The appendices include a colour chart and terminology as well as growth and development tables for many different species.

*Baby Bird Identification: A North American Guide* is a must-have for any rehabilitator who works with baby birds. It is an invaluable tool for our profession and is highly recommended.

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