

**BOOK REVIEW**

# A USEFUL FIELD GUIDE FOR ARIZONA BIRDERS

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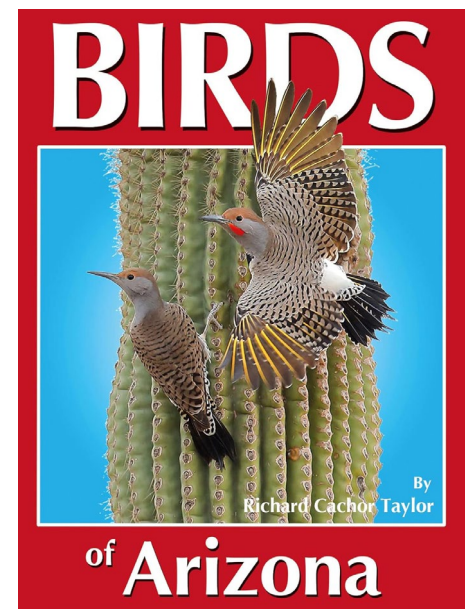
**Birds of Arizona**, by Richard Cachor Taylor. 2022. R. W. Morse Company, Olympia, Washington, 494 pages. Paperback. \$26.95. ISBN 978-0-9990736-1-2.

*Birds of Arizona* is an updated and expanded version of Richard Taylor's previous book, *Birds of Southeastern Arizona* (2010). Notable differences include coverage of the whole state, updated taxonomy, and coverage of recent rarities. Some of the rarities included in this edition have been seen only once in the state, such as the Ringed Kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*).

The layout of the book is well thought-out, starting with the cover, which features a beautiful photograph of a southwest specialty, Gilded Flicker (*Colaptes chrysoides*), atop an iconic saguaro cactus. The book is organized by family, making it easy to navigate and find information about each species. The descriptions are clear and concise, written in plain language that birders of all levels can easily understand. Each account includes a detailed description, distribution map, and high-quality photographs of the bird in various poses and plumages for straightforward identification. Descriptions also include information such as habitat preferences, behavior, elevations, vocalizations, and noteworthy facts that are essential for proper identification of birds in the field. For example, you will want to know that a Pacific Wren's (*Troglodytes pacificus*) pallid breast is much more coffee latte than the Winter Wren's (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) more cinnamon-colored breast (p. 337). Additionally, a checklist at the back of the book allows birders to keep track of the species they have seen and serves as a helpful reference for planning future trips to collect additional life birds. The overall size of the book is good for field use and fits perfectly in the back pocket of jeans or in a backpack.

Compared with *Birds of Southeastern Arizona*, the recently updated and expanded *Birds of Arizona* includes updated species accounts and distribution maps, as well as improved photographs. The layout has also been updated to include useful features such as the Short Index to Species section in the back of the book. This index is especially useful when you need to find something quickly. While other bird field guides may cover more species from a broader geographic area, *Birds of Arizona* stands out for its comprehensive coverage of the species found in the state and its high level of detail and accuracy of information for Arizona-specific birds. For example, the distribution maps included in this guide are far more accurate than those found in the popular field guides or in the Merlin app. These highly detailed maps are what set this guide apart and come in handy when you need to make an accurate ID between 2 very similar species.

One omission is that the journal *Arizona Birds* is not listed as a resource for Arizona birds under Journals in the Helpful Resources section of the book. However, this does not detract from the overall quality and usefulness of this



guide. More serious, in my opinion, is the omission of species accounts for Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*), Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*), and Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*) – all rarities with recent occurrences in the state.

In conclusion, Taylor's *Birds of Arizona* is an essential resource for exploring the avian diversity of Arizona. With its comprehensive coverage, clear descriptions, and top-notch photographs, this guide has nearly everything you need for proper identification of birds in the field at any moment, or afterward over lunch at a local restaurant. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in birding in Arizona.