

Preface to the Second Edition

Since I began work on this new edition of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, I've heard the question many times, "Why do a revision? Have the birds changed?" No, they haven't. Their distribution has changed a little, even in just fifteen years, and a number of the range maps required updating. A few species, such as Pink-footed Goose and Green-breasted Mango, were once essentially unrecorded in North America and have since increased in frequency, so they needed to be added to the guide. But that's about it for changes in the birds themselves.

The plan for a revised edition was driven mostly by my own ideas about things that I wanted to change. I thought the text could be improved, to make more direct comparisons between challenging species and to include information about status and habitat. And I wanted to revise the artwork.

A few revisions were needed to correct real errors in the paintings—the flying adult male Rose-throated Becard lacked a rose throat-patch in the first edition. Also, a few images needed minor revisions to make them more typical. For example, the displaying male Ruffed Grouse was originally illustrated with a broken dark tail-band, which is shown by only a small percentage of males.

Many revisions of artwork were minor—fixing shading, adjusting colors and contrasts, and making minor changes to color patterns. About twenty percent of the total images in the guide received more substantive revisions. This included major changes in colors or patterns, changing bill shape or tail shape. All was the result of new information (at least to me). In many cases, more personal experience with a species and/or better reference material made it possible to fine tune patterns and colors that I didn't know very well the first time around. In other cases, it was simply the result of the intervening years of birding and studying, seeing the artwork with new eyes and noticing small flaws that were not apparent when I originally painted them.

The need for a revision to the guide was not a surprise to me; I've been planning it since before the first edition was printed in 2000. As I said in the preface of the first edition, I still learn new things every time I go birding. It's one of the things that makes birding so enjoyable and satisfying, but it means that even in the weeks between finishing the work for this revised edition and writing this preface, I have learned things that will not make it into this guide. I'll have to start planning the next revision.

As an author this can be frustrating, but as a birder it is invigorating. Our understanding of birds and nature is always advancing, and discoveries of global significance can be made in a city park or a backyard. There is lots of information in this book, but behind every image and every bit of text are questions to be explored, and new discoveries to be made. I hope that this book will provide an entry for you to further your own exploration of the natural world, and to share in that sense of discovery.

—David Sibley
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