

Preface

This book is intended to provide basic information about each of the thousands of types of reported avian crosses, to provide access to documenting literature, and to familiarize readers with the nature of avian hybridization. I have long been interested in hybridization, especially its role in evolutionary processes. I began this book because I wanted to make a thorough survey of hybridization within the context of a well-studied class of organisms. I thought birds would be ideal. There was plenty of data available, much as yet ungathered. Available surveys were far out of date. Moreover, more information on geographic distribution is available for birds than for almost any other major group of organisms. Detailed information on spatial distribution greatly facilitates the identification of hybrid zones. My general approach to the subject has been exploratory. I therefore often include not only *prima facie* evidence, but also facts merely suggesting the occurrence of hybridization. My intention in writing this book was to learn more about the subject myself, and to help and encourage others to study it, too.

The construction of a reference on avian hybridization is an enterprise fraught with hazard. There are many pitfalls related to spelling, nomenclature, and classification, as well as an ever-present risk of factual error, often exacerbated by conflicting reports. For each cross, various details must be accurately determined, to the extent that information is available: Are the hybrids fertile? Are they viable? What do they look like? Do the birds participating in the cross come into natural contact? If so, where? Are there additional reports of the cross that have been omitted? While I have done my utmost to eliminate mistakes, any book dealing with a subject of such complexity is liable to error. In addition, the literature on avian hybridization is so vast that I am sure that I have inadvertently omitted some reported crosses. The bibliography lists more than 5,000 references, but some foreign language publications and articles in out-of-the-way breeding journals have no doubt escaped my attention. Nevertheless, I believe this book does constitute a step forward in the understanding of avian hybridization.