have succeeded admirably in their aim of 'drawing together existing knowledge of the natural history and distribution of tanagers and identifying knowledge gaps'.

There is no need for plumage descriptions in the main text, as these are adequately covered by the colour plates, supplemented by ample captions on the facing page. The 32 colour plates show all the main distinct adult (and a few sub-adult) plumages of each species, including the more distinct subspecies. The birds are mostly well drawn, in more or less uniform postures; but some seem unnaturally thick-legged. The colours are good, though inevitably the full brilliance, especially of blues, cannot be reproduced with the range of tones available to conventional printing. Needless to say, this is a unique collection of illustrations, making the book a field guide as well as a scientific manual. Its handy size (a little over 9 by 6 inches) also brings it almost into the field guide size-range. It is strongly bound, and printed on good quality paper.

The price may seem high for what is, physically, quite a small book; but the thoroughness of the text, the comprehensive series of distribution maps, and the very full illustrations—in fact its overall excellence—make *The Tanagers* one of the most valuable of recent additions to the neotropical bird literature.

D.W. SNOW

JOHNSGARD, P.A. 1986. Birds of the Rocky Mountains. Pp. 504, 42 colour photographs, 15 figures, numerous range maps and an appendix. Boulder, Colorado: Colorado Associated University Press. $39·50. ISBN 0-87081-150-9.

This book provides identification characteristics, distributional status (with co-ordinate and range maps), habitat use and ecology, seasonal occurrence, anecdotal comments and suggested reading for each of about 350 birds that breed, migrate through, or winter in the Rocky Mountains from southern Canada to northern Colorado. The book includes over 90% of all breeding species recorded in either Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, or the province of Alberta, Canada. Because photographs are provided for only a representative sample of species, the book will be useful more as a reference work than as a field guide. However, because correct field identification often rests more heavily on the kind of information that this book provides than on a bird's visual appearance, the book will prove useful in the field as well.

The book begins with a very good general synopsis of the geology, climate and habitats of the Rocky Mountains. The introduction continues with a cursory list of major bird-watching areas, a list of the birds common to most of the eight Rocky Mountain parks, another list of those unique to each park, and a complete checklist of birds for each of the parks. The seasonal abundance of each species in each park is also included in an appendix. One could certainly use the park summaries to plan a bird-watching excursion in a general sense, but the information is not as detailed as the 'bird's guides' that can be purchased for some of these areas.

The information appears to be quite accurate, and the editing is excellent. The only editorial oversights I noticed were a reference to the Olive-backed Thrush (p. 10), which is an older name for Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, and a switching of the legends for the Black-backed Woodpecker *Picoides arcticus* and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*.

As with most books of this type, the information is not new. The value of this work rests with the compilation of subsets of information from other sources for a biologically meaningful geographic area. In a sense, the book can substitute for having to carry around those other sources of information (co-ordinate guides, bird identification guides, check-lists, field guides, behaviour guides, bird finder's guides, etc.). Unfortunately, a 'compilation' approach such as this seems to necessitate an extreme condensation of information. The information in Johnsgard's book must, therefore, be viewed as very general in comparison with that provided by a collection of the separate guides.

RICHARD L. HUTTO

JOHNSTON, R.F. (ed.) 1986. Current Ornithology, Volume 4. Pp. 324. New York & London: Plenum Press. £45.00. ISBN 0-306-42352-9.

Gloger's rule is one of a number of 'rules' considered by Robert Zink and J.V. Remsen in a chapter on geographic variation in birds in the fourth volume of *Current Ornithology*. This chapter took me by surprise when I discovered that 96% of North American birds studiously adhere to Gloger's rule for no apparent reason. Why should it be that populations in humid areas are more heavily pigmented than those in dry areas? I feel it is rather a shame that whilst geographic variation is well documented, experimental tests of the hypotheses that account for it are rather thin on the ground. This lack of 'reasons', albeit perhaps not the authors' fault, left this chapter rather open-ended. I felt the same about Jack Hailman's