

Good morning! This is Sue Mauger.

You're listening to "Reading between the Lines" brought to you by the Friends of the Homer Public Library.

Finding the right field guide can be like searching for comfortable shoes online. You can browse pretty pictures all day, but you'll never know if they'll be comfortable until you try them on. Same is true with field guides - some have rich illustrations or beautiful photography, some seduce you with flashy color-coding while others offer in-depth descriptions. But until you get out in the field and test them out, you just don't know what will work for you. So before purchasing a guide at one of our local book stores, come on in to the library and check one out for a trial run around the block.

And with the Shorebird Festival just weeks away, now is the time to think about a bird guide. The library has some classics like: *A Field Guide to Western Birds* by Roger Tory Peterson, and *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Sibley, each of which relies on illustrations to show markings and other details used to identify birds in the field. Sibley's might appeal to those with some upper body strength as it is quite a tome and might be better as your 'leave-it-in-the-car' guide rather than a 'take-it-in-the-field' guide.

*The Shorebird Guide* by Michael O'Brien uses photography to help you learn how to identify this challenging group of birds. With photos you can't always see the specific identifying marks that can be highlighted in an illustration; instead a photo provides a more holistic approach to identification. By capturing a scene of birds as you might see in Mud Bay, a photo can give you a better understanding of the relative sizes and colors of different species which are hard characteristics to discern only through text.

Of course not all birds are so accommodating as to stand still while you leaf through a guide. You might only get to hear a bird. You can brush up on your bird calls with the *Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs: Western region*. This is an audiobook with an amazing 551 bird calls recorded. Practice your favorite and enter the bird call contest at the Salty Dog during the Shorebird Festival. I've yet to win a prize but it sure cracks me up trying!

If you've already mastered bird calls and identification, you might want to find a guide that will tell you more about avian ecology, behavior and evolution. *The Birder's Handbook : A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds* by Paul Ehrlich is for those who want to know more than just the names of these charismatic creatures. In addition to information about 650 species, the handbook also includes essays on interesting topics. For example in the essay about nest sanitation, you'll learn that nests that do not deteriorate over the winter can harbor

potentially lethal numbers of parasites that may withstand the cold and await returning nesters. In fact many birds repeatedly add green leaves or cedar bark with pest-killing properties to their nests, particularly birds of prey that often reuse old nests. So those eagles that are hanging out at that big old nest at the corner of Lake Street and the Sterling Highway will probably do just that – as soon as we actually have some green leaves.

So after checking out some field guides at the library, get your own copy and make notes, earmark pages, start lists - it will become a treasure – just like a comfortable pair of shoes.

The Library hours are

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

and Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tune in next Sunday morning at this same time for “Reading between the Lines” right here on KBBI 890, Homer!