

## EARLY NATURAL HISTORY AND ADVENTURE IN THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA

Craveri, F. 1856. Journal of a voyage: Federico Craveri and the Gulf of California in 1856 (T. Bowen [Ed.], B. D'Arpa and B. Cavatorta [Translators], 2018). *J. of the Southwest* 60(2):273-483. ISSN 0894-8410.

Good historians are amongst the most interesting and relevant of researchers. Exchanges of information and ideas between historians and biologists deepens our insights and understandings. This brand of academic “cross-fertilization” is embodied by anthropologist Thomas Bowen; and the volume reviewed here is exemplary. He and I have spent many hours travelling and studying our discrete scientific specialties on and among the islands of the Gulf of California (Gulf). I have been informed and inspired by Tom’s publications and through our endless personal chats as we travelled. Tom’s earlier book *Unknown Island* (Bowen 2000) has been of utmost importance in my understanding and appreciation of the islands and the Gulf from a historical, human-influenced perspective. Bowen has taught me much about Gulf anthropology and history, and he has assured me that I have taught him some things about seabirds and the marine environment.

In this volume, Bowen has again done something quite useful to biologists and historians alike. Bowen joined forces with translators Beatrice D’Arpa and Beppe Cavatorta to produce an annotated English translation of Federico Craveri’s field notes, describing his exploratory sailboat voyage into the Gulf. Craveri was an Italian natural historian/chemist most known for the little alcid he collected in the Gulf, *Synthliboramphus craveri* (Bowen 2013). Bowen has long recognized Craveri’s contributions as important to his own anthropological work, and also to specialists such as seabird biologists (Bowen et al. 2015).

The field notes describe Craveri’s journey from Mazatlán and back, as far north as the Colorado River Delta, January through July 1856, a century and a half ago. Craveri was commissioned to study the feasibility of the seabird colonies for guano, much as Hutchinson (1950), Vogt (1946), Osorio-Tafall (1944), and many others. Guano-oriented activities were a frequent worldwide activity of the times (Cushman 2013), in search of strategic materials for explosives, fertilizer, and other uses. Funding itself was meager, but field activities were rich in adventure. I see parallels with the recent oil-spill environmental impact funding. One wonders why *Homo sapiens* always seems to justify so many scientific activities on economic and exploitative potential, but that’s another story. This account was but a part of Craveri’s extensive wanderings, a restless and curious 40-something scientist out to learn more. He did eventually settle back to his home-town, Bra, Italy where the family has since kept a museum and most of Craveri’s intellectual contributions.

A true translation is one which “says it like it was,” giving the reader a sense very similar to what the author likely had intended. The creators of this book-length volume did just that, as evidenced by honest translations which also sadly, transmit Craveri’s European attitudes regarding racism. These translations reflect the sad reality of North America’s colonial past. These comments are interspersed among his account of collecting murrelet type specimens, which rest today in Bra (Whitworth et al. 2018). Alcid biologist Harry Carter would have appreciated this account, and in fact, I have been told, Harry visited Craveri’s museum in Bra once himself.

My own recent overall impressions of the Gulf are that, in some ways, the place remains much as Craveri saw it, a stunningly beautiful and biologically rich area, yet still a dangerous and unforgiving place. Some marine fauna and island flora today seem much the same as they were in 1856. Other aspects today are quite different from the mid-1800s. For example, I interpret from Craveri’s notes that California sea lions (*Zalophus californicus*) seemed to have been widespread, not something we see today (Zavala-González & Mellink 2000). One wonders if seabirds might have fared better because of the value of guano, which discouraged killing and disturbance. The sea lions were instead harvested heavily for their oil and skins and thus likely suffered more. Disturbance due to economic profit continues today as exemplified by activities in oil extraction, commercial fisheries, and unregulated tourism.

Craveri and his traveling companions were always struggling with anxiety over the winds, and the burning sun and heat. The ever-present and variable winds so typical of the area, are a curse today as they were then. In Craveri’s sail boat, winds were a “double-edged” curse – too much or too little. His detailed accounts of dealing with various winds indeed reminded me of how different the challenges were in comparing his sail-driven boat to our gas-powered, computer-modulated engines. Ironically, today’s marvels can also fail and leave us biologists in as much trouble as Craveri and his companions might have been in 1856. Technology changes, but the challenges of the strong wind and sun do not. Craveri suffered debilitating migraine head-aches, largely due to the constant heat, sun, and stress. But this did not deter him from his astute observations, informative natural history observations, and other extensive field and lab work.

My copy of the book is now filled with annotations, comparisons, notes, and reminiscences, especially in areas when Craveri writes of his visits to areas I know well myself, and when he talks about seabirds. One such account relates to Isla San Luis in the northern Gulf, an island often visited and explored by both Bowen and me, and which I first visited in 1971, some 115 years later. On 16-17 April 1856, Craveri described Brown Pelican nesting activity and distribution on that island, as well as features of this island’s incredible beauty. I easily recognized each and every location Craveri described. Given my experiences on the distribution and abundance of Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) (Anderson et al. 2017), when Craveri visited a place I can confirm, his descriptions fit those from my own experiences. For example at Isla San Luis, I estimated from his description at least 10-15,000 pelican-pairs, likely more, nesting on San Luis in 1856, which would have been more than the 50 years of my own studies. Given the wide distribution and abundance of Brown Pelicans that Craveri reported at many other locations (some entirely unknown to me, such as Isla Rasa, described by Bowen et al. 2015), one could speculate that Brown Pelicans were also more abundant before recent times—unless 1856 was an exceptional year for pelican nesting. A translated quote sums up 1856 conditions well: *I’ve seen no traces of guano on the islands that I explored today [even though] pelicans and sea lions cover them. Pelican nests are so abundant that there is a nest on every rock. I saw young ones. They*

are ugly. I had a big one killed to have it stuffed. Such comments also lead me to contemplate an incredible scientific opportunity, should we ever need ancient tissue samples for contaminants, elemental, or isotopic analyses, DNA, all we would have to do is make a trip to Bra, Italy and obtain permission to sample. This emphasizes the value of museums, archival collections, and historical information. Sadly, Craveri also described how some of the crew members cut the pouches from still-alive, pre-fledged pelicans, intended for tobacco pouches – another ignorant and insensitive practice from those who came before us.

Craveri also visited the island chain then known as “Salsipuedes”, now known as Islas Salsipuedes, Las Ánimas, and San Lorenzo, or San Lorenzo Archipelago, the site of, by far the largest concentration of nesting Brown Pelicans today (Anderson et al. 2017). Perhaps because the archipelago was not as promising a source of harvestable guano, the expedition spent (in my view) far too little time there. Yet, on Isla Salsipuedes, Craveri found abundant nesting pelicans, plus abundant sea lions (which we have never observed). Unfortunately, that was the end of their observations for the archipelago, so I can only guess that seabirds were also abundant on the other two islands to the south. Our recent experiences indicate that pelicans nest on Isla Salsipuedes only in years when they are exceptionally abundant on the other two. Craveri and his crew passed by the larger and more rugged Islas Ánimas and San Lorenzo to the south, apparently in the dark, with not a hint of what seabirds and other wildlife might have been there. Also around this time, late-May, Craveri’s writings suggested he and the crew were starting to get restless to get back to Mazatlan, which they finally reached on 10 July 1856 and after further short explorations to the south (which, by-the-way, turned-up huge numbers of nesting pelicans at another major island, Isla Tortuga).

I could certainly go-on discussing the pelican observations, but rather, I suggest interested persons read the entire fascinating account. Craveri’s travels can be fairly judged as one of the first great biologically-oriented expeditions into the Gulf of California, fairly added to earlier and slightly-later efforts (see Bowen’s thorough review of Gulf expeditions in *Unknown Island*). Bowen and translators D’Arpa and Cavatorta have made a tremendously important contribution here. The volume is also an interesting and truly great “adventurous read” for any seabird researcher and/or boat operator who has experienced for themselves, the joy and adventure of being in a very remote

place – vulnerable, but under-control and doing what one professionally loves most.

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*Marine Ornithology is Committed to Antiracism*

## HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

Kendi, I. X. 2019. One World, Penguin Random House LLC, New York. 320 pp. Hardcover: ISBN 9780525509288, USD\$27.00.

## THE SKIN WE’RE IN: A YEAR OF BLACK RESISTANCE AND POWER

Cole, D. 2019. Penguin Random House Canada. 320 pp. Hardcover: ISBN 9780385686341, CAD\$22.95.

The universal love and reverence for seabirds by people from all walks of life is a striking allegory for diversity and inclusion. From

Indigenous mutton-birders to the Prince of Wales, seabirds have captured the imagination of people across cultures. Moreover, as

seabirds are wide-ranging species that face threats across political boundaries, effective conservation requires an extensive network of partnership among diverse stakeholders.

How well is our community of seabird researchers and conservationists exhibiting inclusive principles that promote a just and safe environment? An increasing number of seabird projects are now led or co-developed with Indigenous people, incorporate community engagement, and focus on stakeholder participation (Lyver et al. 2016; Towns et al. 2019). However, there is also evidence that Indigenous participation can be nominal (Thompson et al. 2020), with entire knowledge systems reduced to factual environmental data (Alexander et al. 2019). Accounts are emerging from seabirders of color about micro-aggressions, among the numerous challenges faced by the broader underrepresented community of birders and bird scientists (<https://labandfield.wordpress.com/tag/lgbtq/>, Seneviratne 2019, Team eBird 2020; Lark 2020). More disturbingly, at least one Black biologist has been killed by police (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/us/aaron-dean-atatiana-jefferson.html>) and despite overcoming racial barriers, Black members of the biology community are still vulnerable to ongoing health disparities (<https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/biologist-lynika-strozier-dies-67644>). Even seabirds themselves can be victims of racist sentiment, as exemplified by the vilification of cormorants (due, in part, to their black coloration) for centuries by western cultures (King 2013).

Editors at *Marine Ornithology* have strived for an inclusive peer-review process and a page charges policy that aims to reduce economic barriers to publishing. However, the relative racial homogeneity of our editorial board has given us pause. At a ‘watershed moment’ in which many scientific institutions are grappling with the pervasive issue of racism (Schell et al. 2020), at *Marine Ornithology* we are committed to educating ourselves, reflecting inward, and applying this knowledge to better support antiracism in the seabird community. To this end, our editorial staff spent the summer reading two books – *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram Kendi and *The Skin We're In* by Desmond Cole. What follows is less of a ‘review’ of these books and more of an outline of what we learned and how we can apply this in our endeavors to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in our personal and professional lives.

In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Ibram Kendi, Boston University historian, provides a clear context and definition of racism and antiracism. As Kendi explains, one of the first steps to addressing racism is by defining it, acknowledging it, and understanding that the opposite of racism is not “not racist” – it’s “antiracist.” Kendi defines racism as “supporting a policy through actions, inaction, or by expressing a racist idea that leads to suppression of a race” and he walks through the countless US policies that foster racism and continue to promote social inequality, from the birth of slavery to the present day. He weaves together history, culture, and storytelling – including his experiences with racism, being racist, and his road to antiracism. Particularly timely is Kendi’s account of the passing of the US *Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act* in 1994; this Act increased the number of police officers and weaponry, in conjunction with the growing belief that Black neighborhoods had become “war zones” and Black inner-city youth “super-predators.” Kendi uses a story about a particularly violent childhood friend to illustrate the point that there are no dangerous racial groups, but rather only dangerous individuals.

Kendi separates racism from emotion and from the individual, and removes its use as an insult or attack, eliminating the typical reflexive defensiveness at the use of this label. This allows an opportunity for authentic reflection – where have we been racist and how can we work to grow? He emphasizes that being racist or antiracist are not permanent states. Rather, striving to be antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination, much like ‘fighting an addiction’ given how deeply engrained racism is in our culture. Kendi defines antiracist ideas as those that consider racial groups as equals in all the ways they are different. Importantly, racism and discrimination are different, where efforts to fight the latter strives for ‘race-neutrality’, which is in fact, racist. Kendi spends a chapter celebrating differences, from the cultural wonders of Ebonics (which replaced the racist term Nonstandard Negro English as late as 1973) to Hip Hop.

Kendi’s history of racism brought to light the fact that history books, as used in schools, need rewriting to highlight the truth of our racist past. Schools need to teach a history of North American society based on science and a diversity of perspectives. In this regard, Charles Mann, an anthropological contributor to *Science*, upon finding that his children were being taught the same interpretation of US history as he had been years before, wrote the book *1491* (Mann 2005). Based on published research and findings of the last few decades, it presents a pre-European view of North America, including its wildlife, differing widely from the common narrative of a sparsely populated wilderness.

Arguably the most relevant chapter for environmental conservation was that on class, where Kendi outlines the ways that racism is inherently tied to capitalism and how they must be tackled together. From wholesale clearing of land for cotton to redlining (the denial of services to areas occupied by racial minorities), racist practices are inherently linked to environmental destruction. The problems facing seabirds – climate change, plastic pollution, commercial fisheries – are all direct results of rampant, unfettered capitalism. Thus, to holistically succeed, seabird conservation must consider environmental conservation alongside equitable and antiracist conservation initiatives.

The title of *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power* was derived from that of a 2015 piece by Desmond Cole for *Toronto Life* magazine – “The Skin I’m In”, its seventh most-read article of the decade. In this book Cole chronicles a year of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racist events in Canada. As an Alberta-born, Toronto-based journalist and activist, Cole has interacted personally with many of the events he writes about; many of these involved well-publicized cases of police brutality or otherwise took place in the public eye. For example, Black Lives Matter Toronto began the movement to end participation of uniformed and armed police in Pride parades across Canada, calling out racism and racial insensitivity within Toronto’s queer movement. The story of Black teenager Dafonte Miller, savagely beaten by an off-duty police officer and his brother in 2016, is still in the Canadian national news in 2020; Dafonte was blinded in one eye during the attack, which involved a metal pipe. Only one of the two brothers was found guilty of assault, in May of this year.

Cole’s text is suffused with a simmering rage as he describes the lifetimes of micro- and macro-aggressions endured by Black people in Canada. Though focused on anti-Black racism, his book also deals with the shameful Canadian reality of anti-Indigenous racism, as it

must, given the glaring nature of this problem. For example, despite representing only about 3% of Canada's population, about one-third of incarcerated people and over 40% of incarcerated women in Canada are Indigenous (Department of Justice Canada 2017). These statistics reflect a legacy of racist government programs and policies aimed at assimilation and cultural genocide (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-schools-findings-point-to-cultural-genocide-commission-chair-says-1.3093580>). A frequently-heard sentiment in Canada is that “at least racism isn’t as bad as in the US,” a fallacy laid to rest in Cole’s book. As Cole shows, Canada shares with the US a history of racist policies, and although the degree and type of racism may be different, deep-seated racism still exists and needs to be addressed.

*The Skin We're In* opens with a painful story from Cole’s childhood about a ‘flesh’ colored crayon, which was fortunately renamed ‘peach’ in 1962. Yet, racist terminology remains in ornithology, with the flesh-footed shearwater *Ardenna carneipes* named for its pinkish-beige feet as a notable example. Following Kendi in *How to Be an Antiracist*, combatting racism in the scientific community must start with identifying its components — from the small to the big. Reading books, learning our nations’ racist history, and identifying and changing things like inappropriate color descriptors are valuable steps. However, as Tre Johnson (2020) so eloquently explains:

“Acknowledgment of black justice, humanity, freedom and happiness won’t be found in your book clubs, protest signs, chalk talks or organizational statements. It will be found in your earnest willingness to dismantle systems that stand in our way — be they at your job, in your social network, your neighborhood associations, your family or your home. It’s not just about amplifying our voices, it’s about investing in them and in our businesses, education, political representation, power, housing, and art.”

In this ongoing struggle for diversity, equity, and inclusion, it’s important to continue dialogue and be open to ideas about how racism is influencing our scientific endeavors. As with the ways we assess our environmental impacts and carbon footprints, antiracism should factor into how we evaluate our merit as scientists and individuals. Importantly, the time for antiracist action is long ago and actions to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion are needed now at all levels of ornithological science.

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## HAWAI‘I’S WHITE TERN: MANU-O-KU, AN URBAN SEABIRD

Scott, S. 2018. University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu, HI. 88 pp. Softcover: ISBN-13: 9780824878023, \$16.99.

White terns (*Gygis alba*) can be found throughout the world's tropical oceans and are one of the more visible species known for laying their egg on any available branch or ledge. While they are typically found on uninhabited atolls, curiously, in 1961, white terns started nesting in urban Honolulu, O‘ahu (and nowhere else!) in the main Hawaiian Islands. Legend had it that sailors had brought several chicks from the Marquesas Islands and raised them by hand and from that time a colony formed. However, morphological and genetic work done over forty years later indicated that the white terns in Honolulu had come from multiple sources across the Pacific (Yeung et al. 2008). The local name of the island of O‘ahu, “The Gathering Place” has proven to be true for both white terns as well as people. Since the time of their arrival, the terns have captured both the imagination of the public, and the curiosity of scientists alike.

As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii, I was enthralled to see them nesting outside the windows of our building, and the constant presence was one of the reasons I was interested in focusing on seabirds years ago. In her new book, “*Hawai‘i’s White Tern Manu-o-ku an Urban Seabird*” Susan Scott pens one of the first books dedicated solely to White Terns in an effort to raise public awareness and compile the recent wealth of information gathered on this species.

After the white tern was designated the official bird of the city and county of Honolulu in 2007, various citizen science projects began in an effort to better understand why these birds were nesting in urban areas and how we could better protect them. This book is a combination of an introduction to the natural history of the white tern and on the story of how they began nesting in urban areas.

The book is divided into eight chapters covering the names, location, description, diet, breeding, threats and conservation to this species. While the target audience of this book is the general public, there is a considerable amount of information consolidated into one place that experts in the field will appreciate. This book would serve as a good starting reference for biologists who wish to familiarize themselves with this charismatic species and the conservation issues they face. This book contains such a wealth of interesting references; however, you will frequently find yourself wanting to know the source. There is a reference section at the end, but references are not attributed throughout the text which makes it difficult to determine which statements came from each reference. The book has beautiful color photographs spaced throughout the text increasing its visual appearance and readability to non-scientists.

Overall, this is a well written and researched book on White Terns and their interaction in an urban environment that succinctly reviews the biology and ecology of these urban nesting birds.

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