LITERATURE

Edited by A. R. McEvev

BOOKS


For Victorians and northern Tasmanians, the shores of Bass Strait are a natural summer habitat, and people at leisure on beaches have time to contemplate and to enquire. So, it is when one is on holiday that interest and curiosity about the natural world are often aroused. Mr Simpson, in a book that covers a wider field than the title suggests, is concerned only in part to satisfy. He aims also to stimulate further the interest and curiosity awakened.

Australian ornithologists, despite the prolific writings of a few (see Marchant, Emu 72: 64-65), have traditionally been concerned with the birds of the bush rather than the coasts and seas. They have turned their backs on the crowded beaches and headed inland. Recently, however, perhaps as ornithology has become less the province of a few guardians of mystery, more people have combined the Australian's love of the beach with ornithology. Members of the Albatross Study Group in New South Wales, of the Victorian Ornithological Research Group, of ANARE (hardly beach lovers), of CSIRO, and others, have felt the fascination of albatross, dotterel, penguin, gull or shearwater and of the habitats that they share. This growth in interest was confirmed in 1972 with the formation of the Australian Seabird Group. Mr Simpson has written for these people as well as for those whose curiosity has only recently been stimulated.

The book is thus directed at two audiences, the informed and the less knowledgeable. The question must be asked: have both these audiences been successfully catered for in one volume?

The occasionally conversational style may irritate some specialists, but it illuminates for the layman what might be regarded as arid data. Again and again he is led to think and to realize that he can contribute to knowledge in this field — the ultimate excitement of ornithology. Bird watchers who never read comparative ornithological works never become more than just bird watchers. So please read — then go out with a large plastic lunch and feed it to the local seagulls. Compare, contrast, keep notes and sketches of posture and behaviour — and so on.

Species are not dealt with in systematic order, but are classified into breeding seabirds, 'freshwater seabirds', regular summer migrants, regular winter migrants, shorebirds and others. This classification has its own logic, but though it does not help the experienced reader of bird-books to find his bird, it is arguable that it assists the layman even less. Once your bird is identified as a tern, it may be found in any one of four chapters.

A writer for general readers who uses trimnions ought to assume that he will have readers interested in the justification of his trimnions, who will also be interested in his solutions to problems of nomenclature (Catharacta or Stercorarius: Sala or Morus). Decisions on these points must be made, but the reader of a work at this level deserves some explanation of the basis upon which they are made.

The problem of competition between Silver Gulls (Larus novaehollandiae) and White-faced Storm-Petrels (Pelagodroma marina) is mentioned. The author does not discuss the moral issue of whether measures should be taken to control the apparently dominant gulls or whether two competing native species should be left to work out their own fate.

Detailed descriptions are given; these can be of value even to the layman in that dead seabirds are conspicuous on beaches and identification of birds in the hand thus becomes important. But the descriptions and other technical information could be made intelligible for the layman with the addition of a glossary.

For the serious worker on seabirds, this book's greatest value lies in its vivid anecdotal material, based on the wide experience of the author and his many colleagues in the field, and its copious references.

The photographs are magnificent and well annotated; it is unfortunate that the same cannot be said of the maps. Clear and diagrammatic as they are, they omit many places mentioned in the text. More maps, even at the expense of some of the pictures, would make the second edition more useful. At the same time, some diagrams, as found in field guides, of terns' heads in various plumages and of albatrosses' underwing patterns would help in their identification. It is need for identification that so often prompts the purchase of a bird-book.

These however are small things. As a bridge to lead the increasingly curious layman to the fascinations of ornithology and as a stimulus to further curiosity by the knowledgeable reader this book has a purpose and goes a long way towards achieving it.

R.A.B.


The first volume of A Natural History of Australia, reviewed in these columns (71; 145), treated Tropical Queensland. The area covered by this volume is the country east of the Great Dividing Range, from Rockhampton in Queensland to Portland in Victoria, and all Tasmania. Like the first volume the book consists of several chapters, each devoted to a habitat. Its limitations become evident when it is seen that the charter dealing with swamp and stream does not mention fish.

In fact the book deals only with plants, vertebrates, excluding fish, and some arthropods. These are pictured, mainly by coloured and black-and-white photographs generally of high standard, though a very few rather poor ones, e.g. the inedible Calidris alba, seem to have crept in. The delicate marginal drawings by K. Breeden are outstanding and enhance the book.

Birds illustrated by excellent photographs include the Pied Oystercatcher, Hooded Dotterel, Australian Goshawk, Boobook Owl, Blue-winged Parrot, Turquoise

The fourth volume in the Gould League series of field guides continues the successful style of the first three, already reviewed (70: 39, 71: 185 and 72: 190-1). The habitat here is wetland away from coastal oceans and bays but excluding mountain-gully sections of streams, which are covered in Birds of Victoria: The Ranges. As in the earlier volumes, the ecological background of the habitat is clearly expounded, and with contributors such as Miss Aston on water plants and bird-life we know that we are being advised by experts. The scene is set for the detailed accounts of individual species.

It is satisfying to note that the hope expressed in Emu review of the third volume, that subsequent volumes would include reference to more elaborate and ambitious field guides, has been fulfilled by the provision of a most appropriately selected list. The paintings by Mrs. McIntyre are less stylized and more naturalistic than those in earlier volumes. These birds are alive and active—feeding, hunting, calling or caring for their young.

The introduction to the index and bird-list describes it as referring to 'mountain areas' rather than inland waters and transposes the second and fifth columns. These minor errors will no doubt be corrected in subsequent editions, which it is hoped will be called for.

R. A. B.


This small book of simple design is recommended as an aid to the identification of common New Zealand birds. The species are in taxonomic sequence, and most are illustrated with colour plates from paintings by J. Marshall. The brief descriptive accounts cover field characters, habitat, distribution, including Australia, and breeding. Of the forty-five species described thirty-one are found also in Australia. The plates please, both scientifically and aesthetically, but among the species found in Australia those of the Black Swan, Coot, Welcome Swallow, Black-backed and White-backed Magpies will appeal the most. In the plates some minor faults are poor printing of the background of the Little Owl Athene noctua, misleading impression of the wing and nuchal plumage of the Goldfinch Carduelis carduelis, and the Starling Sturnus vulgaris, for which only the juvenile female is shown. In New Zealand the clutch-size of the House Sparrow is 5-7, not 2-3 as recorded in the text.

H. I. S.
The Tasmanian Naturalist (33) 1973
King Penguin Aptenodytes patagonica in Tasmania (L. E. Wall) 1
Waders in Tasmania (D. G. Thomas) (continued from last issue) 4
Birds of Queen's Domain, Hobart (Anon) 7
The Australian Bird Watcher 5 (1) 1973
The Oriental Pratincole in New South Wales (J. N. Hobbs and A. R. McGeIl) 1
Brush Island revisited (A. K. Morris) 5
Crushed Grebe and Coot nesting in Tasmania (J. R. Napier) 7
Unusual behaviour of young Pallid Cuckoo (N. Chaffer) 10
Birds of the Caniambo District, Victoria (G. W. Bedggood) 12
Tasmanian Native Hen (M. Sharland) 23
Short Notes
A second Victorian record of Gould's Petrel (Mrs B. Richards) 26
Another Cattle Egret nesting colony (E. Wheeler) 27
Black-tailed Native Hen in desert country (E. Rich) 28
Reaction to predators by Black-tailed Native Hen (J. N. Hobbs) 29
Little Cuckoo-Shrikes at Werribee (R. L. Buckingham) 30
Birds caught by shellfish (R. Wheeler) 31
Courtship flight of the Grey Falcon (J. A. De Ravin) 32
Addendum to Further notes on Northern Territory and Kimberley birds (Aust. Bird Watcher 4:84-85) 44
The Scaup 4 (1) 1973
Nesting habits of White-capped Noddies (R. W. Brathwaite) 1
The Southern Emu-Wren in south-eastern Queensland (C. Corben) 5
Turquoise Parrot at Cooloolo (D. Gravat) 8
A yellow Scaly-breasted Lorikeet (P. Dawson) 9
Nests of the Red Wattlebird (M. Baldwin) 10
A survey of movements of migrant species, 1972 (Queensland Ornithological Society) 13
Birds 7 (6) 1973
Reports of field excursions to Town Point (D. Sawyer) and Kooringal Island (J. Francies). 110
The Australian Bird Rambler 11 (1) 1973
Winter area behaviour of Dromos and Forest Kingfishers (J. S. Robertson) 3
New South Wales Albatross Study Group 1972 season (I. D. Gibson) 5
Progress notes on the banding of Bar-shouldered Doves and Crested Pigeons (E. K. Pratt) 8
Dominican Gull - an early sighting (A. F. O'Dombra) 10
Giant Petrel banding near Barwon Heads, Victoria (J. R. Wheeler) 11
The Sea Bird Island series (New series) (P. Fullagar and D. Murray) 12
Seabird Islands No. 1. Bird Island, New South Wales (S. G. Lane) 14
Recovery Round-up 16
Koelwong 2 (1) 1973
Aviculture (Anon) 10
The Diamond Sparrow (B. Read) 11
Canberra Bird Notes 2 (5) 1973
Birds in the Caswell Drive area (S. Marchant) 2
Satin Flycatcher in the suburbs (Anon) 16
Mynas here to stay (ACT) (H. Elliott) 17
Letter to the Editor: Colour-banded Crested Terns (D. H. Close) 18
Short Observations; (3 species) 19
Canberra Bird Notes 2 (5-6) April 1973
Australian Bird Atlas (G. Horsy) (proposal for and request for observations) 2
The avifauna of Lake Cowal, NSW (W. Vesijens) 4
Feeding behaviour of an immature Brown Goshawk (T. Stokes) 8
Birds nesting in Canberra Botanic Gardens (C. Green and A. McWhirter) 10
Letters
Listings of the birds of the Fyshwick area (J. McNaughton) 11
Honeyeater’s migration movements (S. Wilson) 14
Status of birds of Canberra and district (cont’d) (Anon) 18
Notornis 19 (4) 1972
The dispersal movements of the Royal Albatross Diomedea epomaphora (C. J. R. Robertson and F. C. Kinsky) 289
A contribution to the natural history of the Fiji Peregrine (F. Chine) 302
Further notes on the Spotted Crake (D. Hadden) 323
Black-billed Gulls extend breeding range north (N. M. Gleeson, S. M. Fogarty, J. L. Player and H. R. McKenzie) 330
Notes on the Pink-billed Parrot-finch of Fiji (F. Chine and J. Perks) 335
Suabiding by the Fiji Goshawk (F. Chine) 336
Lizard killing by the Fiji Whistled Honeyeater (F. Chine) 337
A honey-eating Fiji Red-headed Parrot Finch (F. Chine) 338
Classified summarized notes (A. T. Edgar) 339
Short Notes:
Further observations on the Mercury Islands (P. D. G. Skeg) 365
Diving behaviour of gannets and shearwaters (D. E. Calvert) 366
A pale Short-tailed Shearwater (Photo) (S. M. Reed) 366
Letters: (selected)
Might Northern Shovellers in New Zealand be escapes? (Enquiry and reply) (E. Eisenmann, F. C. Kinsky) 370
Recordings of New Zealand birds (L. B. McPherson) 373
Biographical notes on authors of main papers 393
Corrections:
Harper, P. C. 1972 Prions 395
Notornis 20 (1) 1973
Survival rate of Yellow-eyed Penguins and chicks on Otago Peninsula (C. L. Roberts and S. L. Roberts) 1
Reactions of Blue Duck to recorded calls of their own species (A. J. Whitten) 6
The sub-specific status of the New Zealand population of the Little Owl, Athene noctua (Scopoli, 1769) (F. C. Kinsky) 9
A Manx Shearwater Puffinus puffinus in New Zealand
GUIDE TO ‘AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGY’

The journals catalogued in Emu 73 are: Tas. Nat. (30) in Pt. 1; (31) in Pt. 2; (32) in Pt. 3; (33) in Pt. 4; Austr. Bird Watcher (4) 5 and (4) 6 in Pt. 1; (4) 7 and (4) 8 in Pt. 3; (5) 1 in Pt. 4; S. A. Orn. 26 (3) in Pt. 2; 26 (4) in Pt. 3; Sunbird 3 (2) in Pt. 1; 3 (3) in Pt. 2; 3 (4) in Pt. 3; 4 (1) in Pt. 4; Birds 7 (1) and (2) in Pt. 1; 7 (3) in Pt. 2; 7 (4) and (5) in Pt. 3; 7 (6) in Pt. 4; Austr. Bird Bander 10 (2) and (3) in Pt. 1; 10 (4) in Pt. 2; 11 (1) in Pt. 4; Austr. Zool. 17 (2) in Pt. 2; Koelwong 1 (2-4 no ref.) 2 (3) in Pt. 6; CSIRO Wildl. Res. (no ref.); Canberra Bird Notes 2 (3) in Pt. 1; 2 (4) in Pt. 2; 2 (5) and (3=6) in Pt. 4; Notornis 19 (2) in Pt. 1; 19 (3) in Pt. 2; 19 (4) and 20 (1) in Pt. 4; N.G. Bird Soc. NewsL. (77) and (78) in Pt. 1; (75-82) in Pt. 2.

CONTRIBUTORS TO ‘LITERATURE’ : EMU 73