

REVIEWS

Edited by G. W. JOHNSTONE

BOOKS

The Sea and the Ice: A Naturalist in Antarctica by L. J. Halle, 1974. London: Michael Joseph. Pp xv + 286, b. & w. pll 27, figs 5, maps 2 + end-covers. 222 x 150 mm. \$A11.25.

L. J. Halle, political philosopher and now Professor of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, seems to have had his share of good fortune in his (amateur) pursuit of seabirds. His previous book, *The Storm Petrel and the Owl of Athena* (1970), recounted ornithological aspects of a fortnight spent in Shetland one July, as well as various sorties into the bird life of the Lake of Geneva. In *The Sea and the Ice* he tells of his voyage from New Zealand via Campbell Island and Hallett to McMurdo, with flights to Byrd and Amundsen — Scott (at the South Pole). In an appendix he recounts a brief visit to the Royal Albatrosses of Tairaroa Head.

The writing is reflective, perceptive and stimulating; above all, observations and facts are presented lucidly. Birds feature prominently, especially in the account of the voyage; there are also chapters on seals and whales. In addition, the author has managed to weave in with the account of his own doings a potted history of Antarctic exploration up to Amundsen's and Scott's expeditions to the South Pole. Black-and-white photographs nicely complement the text, but never dominate it.

There are a few points I would quibble about. It is surely erroneous to group the prions with *Macronectes*, *Fulmarus*, *Daption*, *Pagodroma* and *Thalassoica* as fulmarine petrels (p. 60). The tail of a great albatross is certainly short, but this does not mean that the feet necessarily extend beyond it (p. 65); like the smaller mollymawks, a great albatross can hide its feet among the under tail-coverts. And the Yellow-nosed Albatross certainly ranges beyond the stated confines of the Southern Atlantic and Indian Oceans (p. 67): sightings off eastern Australia show that it enters the Pacific.

These are, however, minor flaws. For someone who is interested in birds and who wants an introduction to the Antarctic, this is the ideal book. The author deserves praise for a good job well done and thanks for communicating his experiences and his thoughts so readably.

G. W. J.

The Dictionary of Birds in Colour by Bruce Campbell, 1974. London: Michael Joseph. Pp 352, col. pll 1008, map 1, line drawings 9. 312 x 243 mm. \$A15.95 (£6.00).

This book is divided into three major sections: Introduction, Plates and Dictionary. The far too brief but otherwise admirable Introduction contains sections on: The Faunal Regions, a geography of the six major zoogeographic regions with their more significant avifauna; Origins and Species, dealing with avian evolution and speciation; The Bird's Anatomy, a concise treatment; and Classification, a short history and description of taxonomy leading into a review of each of the 154 families.

The plates, one to eight per page, vary in quality because of size, but the quality of the original photographs was clearly variable too. Almost every page has examples of basic photographic errors. In one extreme example a silhouette of a bird sitting on a nest can be found only after careful searching. Although there are also some very good plates and the quality of reproduction is excellent throughout, the standard of

photography is poor for a book whose illustrations constitute the bulk of its content and are obviously a major selling point.

Each of the 1,200 entries in the Dictionary covers the name, distribution, identification, habits, food and nesting details of a species, sufficient for a brief introduction. Cross-referencing to the plates and between scientific and vernacular names is good, but annotation of the reviews of families indicating plates that illustrate relevant species would have been useful. It is disappointing that several families and many species mentioned in the Introduction are not featured in either the Plates or the Dictionary.

Other books better justify their place on the ornithologist's bookshelf; I could recommend this one only for those requiring a picture-book large enough to adorn a coffee-table.

D. E. P.

Animals and their Colours by Michael and Patricia Fogden, 1974. Peter Lowe. Pp 172, col. pll 188. 280 x 212 mm. \$A8.75.

Friedrich in his book *The Art of Hunting with Birds*, written sometime between 1244 and 1250, commented that brownish birds sometimes depended on their protective coloration and lay still, hoping to avoid the notice of enemies. It is the extension of this type of observation that the authors of this book amplify with a wide-ranging text and well-chosen illustrations. The book is aimed at the lay natural historian; it gives a good summary of current knowledge and could well be used as a general introduction for the more advanced reader.

The section on the nature of animal colours is easy to follow and particularly useful to the student of birds, as is also the chapter on the need for patterns of behaviour to be adapted to patterns of camouflage. Later in the book when discussing birds nesting on the ground, the point is made that normally either the clutch or one of the parents is coloured cryptically. If the former, as soon as danger is sighted the bird leaves the eggs, which blend into their background, and if the latter, the bird remains on the nest as long as possible.

The authors point out that not all colouring is camouflage: it can be used as a means of communication, usually for animals that are active by day and have good colour vision. Of interest is that some birds rely on the gaping of the nestling to determine that it is alive: they feed the nestling if it gapes and throw it out if it does not. Difficulty in breeding Bearded Tits in captivity was traced to an over-abundance of food: the young stopped gaping when satiated and the parents then behaved as if their chicks were dead and ejected them from the nest. This problem apparently does not arise in the wild because the parents have to go some distance to obtain food and a nestling that is not gaping is dead indeed.

Unfortunately, in the general text there are no cross-references to illustrations. The choice is to read the chapter and look at the illustrations or look at the illustrations and then read the chapter; the third option, reading and searching for an illustration, I found most disconcerting. Headings of chapters are often lost in the double-page photographic spread introducing each chapter, leaving the opening paragraphs looking rather naked; but some may consider this lay-out effective. Despite these criticisms, the text is interesting and clear, the illustrations are excellent and the text attached to them is pertinent.

F. R. B. D.

Bird Life by Ian Rowley, 1974. Sydney: Collins. Pp 284, col. and b. & w. pll 28, figs 26. 150 x 223 mm. \$A9.50.

This book is one of three that have been released recently by Collins to initiate their Australian Naturalist Library series. If subsequent titles achieve the standard of Ian Rowley's book then the series will be assured of success.

Rowley's basic aim is to illustrate the main ecological and behavioural adaptations of Australian birds. He is well qualified for the task. He came to Australia in 1949 and since that time has been studying birds in the field both as a hobby and as a profession. Consequently, he has a valuable perspective on our bird life. He knows what features our birds share with overseas species, yet he can highlight their unique adaptations as well.

The book is divided into three sections. Part One has five chapters in which the reader is introduced to ornithology and the Australian environment. Australian birds are first put in an evolutionary and zoogeographical perspective and then the physiography, climate and main habitats of the continent are concisely described. A chapter on the general aspects of bird behaviour follows in which the basic methods of locomotion, foraging, drinking, grooming and communication are introduced. This leads to a general consideration of breeding in birds and the ecological factors that initiate and control it. The section concludes with a chapter on the way the habitat is shared out among competing individuals in time and space. Concepts such as competitive exclusion, territorialism and population regulation are painlessly introduced. Lastly, birds are classified into three basic life-styles depending on the distances they travel between breeding seasons: residents, migrants and nomads.

The remainder of the book is devoted to accounts of the ways in which particular Australian birds have adapted to their habitats. Despite the limited amount of published information available Rowley has made a discerning selection of species. They illustrate all the main variations within the three basic life-styles and illustrate with great clarity the concepts and principles established in Part One. In Part Two Rowley provides detailed insights into the ecology and social relation of the Superb Blue Wren, Australian Raven, Australian Magpies, White-winged Chough, Laughing Kookaburra, Noisy and Bell Miners, Tasmanian Native-hen, Malleefowl, Eastern Rosella, Galah, Satin Bowerbird and Superb Lyrebird. This is the best part of the book.

Most of the investigations were carried out by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research and Rowley himself was responsible for the work on the Wren, Raven, Chough and Galah and also contributed to the stories on the miners and Magpies. With the Magpie we are given a tantalizing glance at the results of a long-term study, most of which have not yet been published. We are told that the basis of the social organization in the Magpie is the despotism of one male who defends and maintains the territory together with the female who will only breed in the correct 'psychological' environment. Accounts of other species provide equally intriguing stories.

Part Three on the migrants and nomads is more superficial than Part Two. After an introductory chapter on migration we are told the story of the Tasmanian Muttonbird. After a brief description of some inland nomads we are introduced to the strategies used by our waterfowl to find and exploit suitable aquatic habitats. The last accounts describe the nomadic habits of the Silver Gull, Little Penguin, giant-petrels and Wandering Albatross.

The last chapter on conflict and conservation is a plea for informed management of bird populations and their habitats. This chapter could have been expanded.

Bird Life fills an important gap in the literature on Australian birds. It is not only a reference book that provides an up-to-date account of the development of Australian ornithology but it also serves as a handbook and guide for future ornithological research. Throughout the text the point is made repeatedly that an enormous amount of behavioural and ecological information

can be collected using binoculars and notebook but the key to any such study is bird-banding. As Rowley says 'Bird-banding transforms an anonymous individual into a unique member of a species'. Colour-marking allows individuals to be identified without recourse to recaptures. All the accounts of resident species were based on colour-banding programmes and they exemplify the wealth of information that can be gained by such techniques. In Appendix I Rowley details his methods of study; he explains how to mark, capture and observe birds. In Appendix II he outlines how to come to grips with the literature and the societies one can join to study birds.

The writing is simple and concise, yet personal and interesting. The text, supported by well-chosen plates and figures, provides detailed and colourful descriptions. The chapters proceed in a logical and coherent fashion with helpful introductions and summaries. The plates, figures and text are of adequate quality and I could find only three mistakes: one spelling error and two incorrect references, one to a figure and one to a plate.

Bird Life should be read by everyone in Australia interested in ornithology as a hobby or a profession. It will also benefit the visitor to Australia and give him a perspective and a feel for Australian birds. Teachers and lecturers will now be able to provide Australian examples of concepts and ideas in behaviour and ecology but the greatest use of this book will be as a handbook for future ornithological investigations, because it not only provides model studies one can follow but it details the materials and methods to use as well.

R. Z.

Birds of the Harold Hall Australian Expeditions 1962-70 edited by B. P. Hall, 1974. London: Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History). Pp xi + 396, b. & w. pll 10, map 1. 245 x 183mm. £12.50.

This heavy paperbacked volume brings together the results of five expeditions to Australia that were launched by the British Museum (Natural History) through the generosity of the Australian philanthropist, Major Harold Hall. The expeditions took place between 1962 and 1968, usually during the Australian winter, and visited all mainland States and the Northern Territory. Special attention was paid to remote areas including south-western Queensland, the Kimberleys and Arnhem Land. Cape York was not visited, despite plans to do so, because of reports of impassable roads. Brief notes are included of two expeditions by the South Australian Museum (1963 and 1964) and one other expedition (1970) that were partly financed from the same fund.

The chief object was to make representative collections of Australian birds for study in the British Museum; this aroused some opposition from Australians, from the standpoints of conservation and nationalism. However, the expeditions worked closely with Australian ornithologists and the present publication is to be welcomed as an attempt to make the results generally available.

Some of the findings have already been published and the book includes a full set of references. It is well known that one new species was discovered — Hall's Babbler *Pomatostomus halli* in southern Queensland on the first expedition. Several taxonomic revisions were suggested and for two species new sub-species were distinguished: *Petrophassa albigennis boothi* for the Rock-pigeon in the north-west of the Northern Territory and *Colluricincla harmonica serventyi* for the Grey Shrike-thrush in middle latitudes of the western half of Australia. Work on the specimens is continuing and further conclusions about speciation and evolution are expected.

The book begins with narratives of each expedition, giving details of personnel, routes followed and some of the interesting birds and other observations. Unfortunately only thirty pages are devoted to this section, so that the narratives are too short to make enjoyable reading but too long for easy reference; this is a pity because one can sense the desire of the authors to indulge in

more descriptive writing, which would have enhanced the work. Localities in the text are identified by numbers that refer to the map at the end of the book. This map can be folded out and consulted alongside the text; even so, it is helpful to memorize the pattern of numbering first.

The main part of the book is devoted to a systematic list. Each species encountered is treated in detail: a list of specimens collected (giving localities and usually weights for every specimen), distribution and abundance, habitat and behaviour — all based on field observations — food, annual cycle (e.g. moult and breeding condition), impermanent colours, parasites and geographical variation — based primarily on examination of specimens. The editor states at the beginning of the list that far more information is included than is standard practice and that many of the facts will be well known. She believes that this is justified by the absence of any authoritative handbook on Australian birds and I agree with her. On the other hand, I feel that some of the data ought to have been reduced; for example, a table of average weights of each species (with standard errors and notes on any apparent sexual or regional variations) would have been far more useful than the separate listing for every specimen.

One ought to recognize that the expeditions were not designed primarily to obtain data on distribution or behaviour of the birds. Had they been, they would have benefited from inclusion of extra observers to make more systematic field observations and a botanist to provide reliable descriptions of habitat. Nevertheless, many of the field observations are of interest and it is good to see these brought together in a single volume, with comments on absence of species from areas as well as presence. In this respect the book can be seen as a challenge to field ornithologists to improve our knowledge of the distribution of Australian birds and to provide a systematic framework for regular recording of information in the future.

The book's main value is as a catalogue of information not readily obtainable by field ornithologists. Data on stomach contents, fine variations of plumage, breeding seasons, etc., are probably more comprehensive than in any other published work. It is unfortunate that little work was done in summer so that information on annual cycles is incomplete. As stated in the foreword, the book does not aim to do more than present the expeditions' findings as comprehensively as possible. Australian ornithologists will find it a valuable source of reference.

R. H. L.

All Heaven in a Rage by T. P. Inskipp, 1975. Sandy, England: R. Soc. Prot. Brds. Pp 41, b. & w. pl 10, tables 30, figs 6. 210 x 300 mm. £ 0.85.

To compensate for its title (quoted from William Blake, 'Robin redbreast in a cage/Puts all Heaven in a rage.') which is uninformative for the less literate among us, this serious booklet is subtitled 'A study into the importation of birds into the United Kingdom.' It reports the results of two years' work by Inskipp who was commissioned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to investigate the scale of imports of birds into the United Kingdom.

Many data on such imports were either non-existent or unavailable to the author who had to rely on cogent statistical inference to appreciate the enormous extent of the trade in cage-birds. The report presents the statistical data in simple figures and tables and the underlying assumptions and subsequent arguments are clearly presented and easily followed. Inskipp's method was to analyse the data published throughout the world on the international bird trade from 1970 to 1974 and to relate these to his own survey of birds that came into the RSPCA Hostel at London's Heathrow Airport from 1972 to 1974.

The picture that emerges is most disturbing. At a conservative estimate five and a half million birds are imported annually into countries throughout the world. Given a fifty per cent mortality before export these five and a half million are the sur-

vivors of at least ten million birds that must have been taken from the wild. After import there is a further 19-25% mortality during acclimatization; consequently, the slaughter of wild birds for the cage-bird industry is immense. The author predicts that 600,000 birds are imported annually into the UK with a total retail value of £1,670,000.

The United Kingdom is not the largest importer of wild birds. Japan, USA, France, W. Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands each import similar or greater numbers. The birds come mostly from Asia (40%), Africa (40%) and South America (3.4%). It is gratifying to see that references to imports of birds from Australia are almost non-existent. This, apparently, is because strict wildlife regulations apply here. Predictably, those Australian birds that are mentioned are parrots and waxbills. Less than one per cent of the parrots that entered the RSPCA Heathrow Hostel were of Australian origin and only 0.5% (4,400) of the waxbills were Australian ones and these were apparently captive-bred from Western Europe. Less reassuring is the fact that almost one and a half million waxbills were unidentified and their origin unknown. The price of Australian birds smuggled out of the country again speaks for the success of our regulations: £4,500 for a pair of Golden-shouldered Parrots and £150 a pair for fairy wrens. Further justification for our export policy is that overseas aviculturalists have been forced to engage in intensive programmes of breeding Australian species because wild birds can no longer be obtained cheaply.

Most of the recommendations in the report aim at legislating for greater control of bird imports into the UK and the institution of similar studies in other main importing countries to gain a more detailed appreciation of the world trade. It also recommends research into the effects on wild populations in the exporting countries. Finally, it suggests that aviculturalists in the importing countries should establish scientific programmes for breeding as many species as possible and concentrate on importing only species, such as cockatoos, which occur in such numbers in their country of origin as to be regarded there as harmful.

The report has already had some impact. In September 1975 the British Government announced regulations that will restrict imports of birds into the UK.

R. Z.

Feeding and the feeding apparatus in waders: a study of anatomy and adaptations in the Charadrii by Phillip J. K. Burton, 1974. London: Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History). Pp 150, numerous line drawings. 243 x 190 mm. £ 3.50.

Based upon the author's Ph.D. thesis, this book provides first a detailed study of the structure of the feeding apparatus of the charadriine waders with special emphasis upon five species: the Golden Plover, Redshank, Curlew, Dunlin and Common Snipe.

An analysis of the feeding habits of these forms discusses their varying characteristics for comparison with the summarized habits of other species and an analysis of the stomach contents of the five species is included.

Following general discussion on the forces acting upon the skull and jaws, the process of kinesis (the movement of the upper jaw relative to the brain case) is outlined in its various forms. Detailed descriptions of the musculature of the jaw, the hyoid skeleton and other associated features then follow and form the major portion of the book.

The structural modifications found in the Charadrii are reviewed and the adaptive features found in the representative species are studied.

As an advance on work carried out by earlier workers the muscles of the jaw are shown to have some taxonomic usefulness. The book, of which this notice gives merely an outline, is a detailed, valuable and well-illustrated study. Its potential usefulness and interest extend far beyond the group to which its attention is confined.

A. R. McE.

Birds of the Tropics by J. A. Burton, 1973. World of Nature Series, London: Orbis. Pp 128, many col. pll 230 x 300 mm. \$A5.95.

Birds of the Tropics by M. D. England, 1974. London: Hamlyn. Pp 96, many col. pll by the author. 215 x 290 mm. \$A6.95.

Tropical Birds by Clive Roots, 1971. London: Hamlyn. Pp 159, numerous col. ills. 110 x 180 mm. (Paperback) \$A\$1.25.

These three books reflect the still-dominant role of northern Europeans in ornithology. The avifaunas of North America and Europe are 'normal' — those of the tropics 'special'. But an attempt to write a book specifically on the birds of the tropics is an attempt at writing one on the birds of the world (or three quarters of them) and others have failed in that task before. The first two books are not really such an attempt but are picture-books with letterpress appended to the illustrations.

Burton's book has little to commend it other than attractive presentation. It is merely an account written round available photographs of gaudily coloured birds. There is little attempt at balance, with the section on Asia showing twelve Galliformes out of seventeen species illustrated. Even less care has been taken in selecting tropical species with the Superb Lyrebird, Mandarin Duck and Grey-headed Albatross being the farthest astray. The letterpress, surely unaffected by the need to match photographs, discusses such un-tropical species as Green Rosellas and Black-backed Wrens. The tone of the book is set with the opening illustration of a 'primary rain forest in New Guinea,' which appears to be very secondary.

The book by England is similar, but with the difference that all photographs are by the author who, incidentally, takes ethical pains to indicate which illustrations are of captive birds. The photographs reflect credit on the author but unfortunately reproduction is only fair. The book is set out in broad taxonomic groups but unhappily the illustrations of each group are transposed, e.g. the parrots appear in the section on cranes and gallinules. At the end is a chapter on photography, useful in that it includes recent technical developments that may not be in the standard works on the subject. Both this and the preceding book give a reading-list that has notable omissions of important references for south-eastern Asia such as Glenister's *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Penang* (1951).

Clive Roots's book, at \$1.25, would be a useful acquisition to someone starting to develop an interest in ornithology. It ambitiously tries to cover the field by habitats, including those in towns and cultivated areas. The author states that his intention is 'to give an insight into the tropical environment' and achieves some success. Unfortunately, errors of fact creep in, such as the Ground Parrot virtually losing its flying capacity, Goura Pigeons that run away rather than fly and the Golden Bowerbird *Prionodura* being found in New Guinea. The section on tropical mountains mentions only Andean forms and the section on tropical islands rather unwisely treats Borneo and New Guinea. In the same context as the Galapagos and West Indies. As in the other books, non-tropical species are figured, e.g. the Turquoise Parrot. Like the other Hamlyn All-colour Paperbacks, the book is well illustrated with neat coloured drawings but, in some, accuracy has strayed: the Emu look distinctly like Rhea-Emu hybrids and the Chestnut Rail is of startling hue.

To sum up, none of these books is of use to the serious student or necessary for the novice. All are suitable as gifts for some friend with leanings towards natural history, *Tropical Birds* being the best value for money.

H. L. B.

Victorian Ornithology: A Chronology Showing Characteristics of the Periods by A. R. McEvey (assisted by L. Reid 1973-74), 1975. Melbourne: Natn. Mus. Vict. Chart (704 x 914 mm) and Bibliography (pp 8, 152 x 241 mm). \$A1.50 (available from Natn. Mus. Vict.).

Mr McEvey has done a tremendous amount of research into tabulating this chart. It starts on 18 April 1770 when Captain James Cook sighted Victoria at Cape Everard (now Point Hicks) and reported the first birds — the Port Egmont Hen (Southern Skua) and the Pintado Bird (Cape Petrel).

The period from 1797 to 1838 includes early exploration of the colony by sea and land and mentions such men as Bass, Flinders, Murray, Brown, Baudin, Grimes, Tuckey, Collins, Hume and Hovell, Quoy and Gaimard, Sturt, Batman, Mitchell, Backhouse and Winter, with brief reference to the birds they recorded. Next comes the Gould Period (1838-1850) with Stokes, Hobson, Bruce, McMillan, Strzelecki, Bunce, Howitt, Hawdon, Haydon, Cotton, Westgarth and Clutterbuck and, again, the species they reported. The period from 1850 to 1880 concerns the National Museum of Victoria and the Royal Society of Victoria and mentions Blandowski, Krefft, Batchelor, McCoy, Broadbent, the writings of Wheelwright ('An Old Bushman'), collectors and game-shooters, and egg-collectors headed by A. J. Campbell. It also gives details of the early days of the Melbourne Zoological Society and the introductions of 'innocuous animals' by the Acclimatisation Society.

The first publications came between 1880 and 1900 with such journals as *The Southern Science Record*, *The Victorian Naturalist*, *The Wombat*, *The Geelong Naturalist*, *The Australasian* and *The Leader*, all of which published ornithological material regularly or occasionally. The influence of A. J. Campbell, D. Le Souëf, Keartland, Forbes-Leith, Belcher, Gabriel, Brittlebank, Shepherd, Kendall, French Snr and Jnr and other representative names of the period formed a foundation for the events to follow.

The period from 1900 to 1970 is referred to as the 'old' RAOU Period, in which the (Royal) Australasian Ornithologists Union with *The Emu* played a major role; Victorians during this period played a major part in its publication. Among those mentioned are Le Souëf, Brittlebank, Mattingley, Kershaw, Shepherd, Belcher, Campbell, Ryan, Gabriel, Hall and Keartland in the early years. In the middle years Gray, Dickson, Bryant and Chisholm played their parts. This was the period in which photography played a big part and Mattingley, Kinane, Lawrence, Littlejohns, Chandler, Bryant, Land and Monro are mentioned. Noted writers included Leach, Belcher, Barrett, Macdonald, Crosbie Morrison and Chisholm among many others. The Bird Observers' Club, the Gould League, the Victorian Ornithological Research Group and The Australian Bird Banding Scheme all came into being in this period.

In all Mr McEvey has given a very faithful coverage of the history of Victorian Ornithology; he and his assistant, Ms L. Reid, are to be congratulated. This fine chronology is definitely an encouragement to other States to take up the challenge.

W. R. W.

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGY

Contents of other periodicals selected by M. G. BROOKER

Australian Bird Bander 13 (3) 1975

Report of wintering Flame Robins in the Cobram District, Victoria (I. M. Bateman) 47

Black-winged Petrel on Mutton Bird Island, New South Wales (N. G. Holmes) 53

Further notes on the seabirds of the Solitary Islands, New South Wales (S. G. Lane) 56

Seabird Islands No. 12. North-west Solitary Island, New South

Wales (A. K. Morris) 58

The White-winged Widowbird near Windsor, NSW (S. G. Lane) 61

Australian Bird Watcher 6 (3) 1975

The birds of the mangroves in Papua New Guinea (M. Heron) 69

The Bush-hen in south-eastern Queensland (G. R. Beruldsen) 75

Exotic pine forest as a bird habitat (J. H. Stevens) 77

- Some notes from Mud Island (J. Klapste) 79
 The avifauna of Wilson's Promontory (Part 6) (R. P. Cooper) 87
 Observations at a Magpie's nest (T. and P. Gardner) 82
 Nocturnal hunting by raptors (M. Batemen) 84
 Transfer of eggs by Lotusbird (A. Blackburn) 85
 The European Starling in northern Queensland (J. M. Forshaw and K. A. Muller) 86
 Mobbing behaviour of Dusky Woodswallows (A. Fleming) 86
- Australian Birds** 10 (1) 1975
 The Common Sandpiper in NSW (R. Noske) 1
 The Wanaaring Black Tern (J. N. Hobbs) 10
 Domestic cats that kill wildlife (A. B. Rose) 12
 Ramsay, Wilcox, Barnard— notable names in Australian Ornithology (A. Chisholm) 14
 Notes on the Australian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus australis* (Gould) 1838 (L. M. C. Haines) 15
 Gang-gang Cockatoos in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (A. B. Rose) 17
- Bird Observer** (525) 1975
 Bird conservation in Western Australia (E. H. Sedgwick) 57
- Bird Observer** (527) 1975
 White-faced Heron and Rainbowbird surveys — an assessment (H. M. Arnold) 74
- Canberra Bird Notes** 3 (3) 1975
 Bird report 1.7.74 to 30.6.75 (G. Clark) 2
 Status of the Galah in the ACT (S. Wilson) 11
 Status of birds (35 species) of Canberra and district (Anon) 13
- Canberra Bird Notes** 3 (4) 1975
 A report on birds observed at Dairy Flat Road 1974-75 (G. Baker and J. McNaughton) 2
 The Musk Duck boom (A. D. Ross) 10
 Predator avoidance behaviour by Dusky Woodswallow (J. Miles and R. Elvish) 12
 Field observations of the Jabiru (S. J. Wilson) 13
 Range extension of the Green Catbird and the White-headed Pigeon (I. McRae) 19
- Canberra Bird Notes** 3 (5) 1976
 Further details of the Port Lincoln Parrot in the ACT (I. Grant) 6
 Observations at Campbell, ACT, 1974-75 (M. Basten) 7
 Christmas Island and its birds (G. Goodrick) 10
 Food preferences of the Eastern Rosella (M. Baldwin) 12
 Grey Falcon sighting in the central tablelands (I. McRae) 13
 The diet of the Barn Owl at Booligal, NSW (N. L. Hermes and A. Stokes) 14
 A Black Kite sighting near Braidwood (P. Woollard and J. Olsen) 17
- Geelong Naturalist** 12 (2) 1975
 Some bird observations near Winchelsea (G. Matheson) 29
- New Guinea Bird Society Newsletter** (113) 1975
Sula dactylatra off Port Moresby (M. Carins) 12
 Expanding feathers on Black Bittern (I. L. Weston) 12
 Speciation in birds-of-paradise (G. G. George) 13
- Display of Magnificent Riflebird (G. Opat) 15
 Breeding record of Large-tailed Nightjar (G. Opat) 16
- New Guinea Bird Society Newsletter** (114) 1975
 Some field notes on Melanesian Psittaciformes (A. Green-smith) 7
 Black-and-white Wren-warbler *Malurus alboscapulatus* (L. W. Filewood) 10
- Notornis** 22 (2) 1975
 Counting birds in New Zealand forests (D. G. Dawson and P. C. Bull) 101
 Some ideas on speciation in New Zealand parakeets (R. H. Taylor) 110
 A bushman's seventeen years of noting birds. Introduction and Part A (Bellbird and Tui) (R. A. St Paul) 122
 Some observations on the development of feeding in captive Kea *Nestor notabilis* (H. P. Zeigler) 131
 Food of Skylarks and Pipits, finches and feral pigeons near Christchurch (A. Moed) 135
 Observations of altitudes reached by some birds in central and northwest Otago (P. Child) 143
 Sea birds found dead in New Zealand in 1965 and 1966 (P. E. Roberts) 151
 First sightings of Nankeen Kestrel in Hawkes Bay (W. J. Powell) 175
 Streaked Shearwaters *Calonectris leucomelas* in the Coral Sea (J. D. Gibson) 176
 Buller's Mollymawks ashore in Otago (A. Wright) 177
 Nest of Marsh Crake (M. Barlow and R. R. Sutton) 178
 Unusual nest-sites of House Sparrow and Paradise Duck (P. Child) 121
 Spotted Shag regurgitating shells and stones (A. Wright) 130
 Taxonomy and nomenclature of the New Zealand Spur-winged Plover (D. H. Brathwaite and G. F. Van Tets) 180
- South Australian Ornithologist** 27 (1) 1975
 Quails in mid-northern South Australia (L. P. Pedler) 3
 Southern record of the Painted Finch (L. Joseph) 5
 The Western Warbler on Eyre Peninsula (N. Reid) 6
 Eyre highway magpies (A. B. Black) 8
 First record of Grey Petrel for SA (A. F. Lees) 10
 Western Warbler sighted in Mt Lofty Ranges (E. and M. S. McNamara) 11
 Fuscous Honeyeater near Laura (M. T. Templeton) 11
 Birds seen in forest reserves in SA (B. C. Gepp and A. J. Fife) 12
 Range of Bourke's Parrot (J. Eckert) 18
- Victorian Naturalist** 92 (8) 1975
 VORG Westernport Report No. 1, Part 5. (W. A. Davis and A. J. Reid) 163
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 VORG Westernport Report No. 1, Conclusion (W. A. Davis and A. J. Reid) 194
 Bird species list, Wombat State Forest, Central Victoria (S. E. Townsend) 197
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 Birds of the Prince Regent River Reserve, north-western Kimberley, Western Australia (G. M. Storr *et al.*) 75