

REVIEWS

Edited by G. W. JOHNSTONE

BOOKS

A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia by B. F. King and E. C. Dickinson, illustrated by M. C. Woodcock, 1975. London: Collins. Pp 480, col. pll 32, b. & w. pll 32, numerous line drawings, maps 2. 130 x 199 mm. £4.50.

This field guide covers all the 1,198 species known to have occurred before 31 May 1971 in Burma, West Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong. In addition three species from Hainan, which do not occur in south-eastern Asia, plus twenty-nine others that might occur are also described. Of these 1,230 species, 869 (70%) are illustrated, 408 in colour, 336 in black and white and the remainder with line drawings. The format is similar to earlier Collins field guides with brief notes on the most prominent field marks opposite the plates. Each species is numbered, corresponding to the illustration(s), field marks and to the main reference in the text, which covers identification, similar species, measurements where helpful, world range, voice, distribution in south-eastern Asia and habitat.

The authors have revised the English names completely in an attempt to clear up existing confusion. Their criteria for choosing the most appropriate name or eliminating an unsuitable one were suitability, distinctness and brevity and they give examples of each. If a species also occurs elsewhere and is known by a different English name, this is also included.

In the area covered by the book, only Thailand already has a field guide. Some of the remaining area is covered by textbooks that are still available: Smythies's *Birds of Burma* (1953), Glenister's *Birds of the Malay Peninsula* (1955) and Herklots's *Hong Kong Birds* (1967); but none of these is a field guide. Works on Indochina have long been out of print and horribly expensive. Consequently this book does attempt to fill an existing gap but whether this is possible or practicable is doubtful. There have been few reports or observers in Burma, Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam for more than twenty years (and even fewer, I would imagine, in Hainan) and there are unlikely to be more in the foreseeable future. Therefore I wonder how accurate are the statements on status and distribution in these countries. Also, how often and by whom is the book likely to be used outside Thailand and Malaya? Hence the book will inevitably be compared with Dr Boonsong's *Birds of Thailand* (reviewed in *Emu* 75: 159-160), particularly because Thailand's avifauna makes up about three-quarters of the species covered by this book.

All Boonsong's illustrations, but less than half of those in the Collins guide, are in colour. However, those in Collins are much better and, where there are slight errors, these are noted on the facing page. Nevertheless, Boonsong is the easier to use because there are fewer birds per plate (an average of 7.6 compared with 13.6 in Collins), which means that the text for the species is either on the page facing the illustration or on the next. The Collins plates are so crowded that there is room only for the species' number, not its name, next to the illustration. This means that, to find the name, the num-

ber has to be located on the facing page. Because the illustrations are not in systematic nor the numbers in numerical order this takes extra time. The Collins text is more comprehensive because the format permits more detail to be included. Some of the line drawings are quite useful but most are valueless. However, the biggest disappointment is the very large number of species that are not in colour. Many of the black-and-white illustrations, such as the egrets, pheasants, pipits, larks, some of the cuckoos, flycatchers and wagtails are virtually useless and most of the others would have been much better in colour. It was inevitable in a book covering such a vast area that some of the illustrations are of birds in remote areas, such as northern Burma or North Vietnam, and thus are very unlikely to be seen by many of the readers. This is unfortunate because it means that other illustrations of more relevance have been excluded.

The real test of a field guide is in being able to distinguish the difficult groups and here I found that the guide could be extremely helpful in the field. The green pigeons (*Treron* spp) are well illustrated but, disappointingly, several species occurring in the area are omitted. The flight sketches of hornbills are novel and are more useful than stills because hornbills are more likely to be seen in flight. The woodpeckers are good, specially the greens, the three rufous and the two confusing Goldenbacks. It is a pity that the swifts and swallows are not combined as in Slater's *A Field Guide to Australian Birds: Non-passerines* (1970). The line drawings of the swifts are not very helpful as they are drawn from above rather than below. Bulbuls are notoriously difficult, particularly some species in the genera *Pycnonotus* and *Criniger*, but the plates remove all problems except that of getting a good view in the field. Babblers are also difficult but again the illustrations and text help immensely with the *Malacopteron*, *Napothera* and *Stachyris* babblers. The *Prinias* are good, as are the leaf-warblers *Phylloscopus*. Wing formulae and keys are also included for identification in the hand. Probably the most frustrating group, because they are so brightly coloured and yet so difficult to identify, are the blue flycatchers. Had I been armed with this guide I should have been less inclined to ignore them when I saw them.

This book is a considerable advance for the area, even though it is still nowhere nearly as good as the latest European field guides. Its main disappointment is that it could have been so much better. However, it is well worth buying by anyone fortunate enough to visit the area. It is not a substitute for Boonsong's guide but is complementary. The best tactic would be to find a bird in Boonsong that resembles the one observed and then, if identification is not certain, to turn to Collins to confirm the colour and description and to check similar species.

D. G. Robertson

Bird Illustrators: Some Artists in Early Lithography by C. E. Jackson, 1975. London: H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd. Pp 133, col. pll 14, b. & w. pll 5. 250 x 195 mm. £7.00.
The Book of Birds: Five Centuries of Bird Illustration

by A. M. Lysaght, 1975. London: Phaidon. Pp 208, col. and b. & w. pl 142. 365 x 275 mm. boxed, 2,200 g. £20.00.

There have always been people interested in animals in art but recent years have brought impetus to this inclination and one of its happy accompaniments is the appearance of works that both stimulate further interest and act as sources of reference for the serious student. These two books are excellent examples and even where emphasis moves towards illustration rather than art the same general principles apply.

Mrs C. E. Jackson's work is confined to hand-coloured and chromo-lithographic work in ornithology and begins with a generally valuable chapter on the historical background to lithography as a technique on the production of coloured plates. The statement that 'not until Lear painted more individual members of the species, giving them bird-characters . . . did the artist begin to be a genuine bird-artist as opposed to a zoological draughtsman' seems to overlook Audubon among artists, though he was not a lithographer, but does not detract from the usefulness of the chapter.

Following this, are biographical accounts of fourteen illustrator-artists, who have used this medium in ornithology. These range from Swainson to Lodge including the famous Lear, Wolf and Thorburn and the lesser-known Neale and Foster. These biographies, each with an accompanying colour-plate to illustrate the artist's work, are well written, interesting, entertaining and informative. They also show evidence of research, e.g. the reference to the account of the quarrel between Audubon and Swainson in Loudon's Magazine, though they do not usually give specific sources. The account of Gould, for example, includes the usual biographical details, which one can gather from Sharpe (1893, *An analytical index to the works of the late John Gould*), *The Ibis*, Palmer's *The Life of Joseph Wolf* (1895) and others, put together with some insight, to make a substantial essay written with the understanding that arises from close study of research material. One would wish to see included, however, the sources for particular statements, e.g. 'It was usually Wolf who identified the species' and 'Elizabeth had done 600 drawings for him', in order that their blandness might be strengthened. The two-page bibliography at the end of the book provides a lead in this direction. The section on Swainson is based extensively on Swainson's autobiographical note in his *Taxidermy* (1840). Of particular value, and constituting an original contribution, is the list of published works illustrated by the artist, which is provided at the end of each artist's biography.

The author's concentration upon one kind of fine print, the lithograph, and upon a selection of its leading exponents in ornithology has allowed room for her sensitive, interesting and helpful comments upon the work of the various artists. Not least important is the inclusion of the lesser-known artists Edward Neale (fl. c. 1870-90) and William Foster (1852-1924), both of whom illustrated Hume and Marshall's *Game Birds of India, Burma and Ceylon* (1879-81).

This very welcome book is well produced and another in preparation by Mrs Jackson will cover bird-illustrators whose work was engraved either on metal or wood.

On a much broader canvas Dr Lysaght discusses and illustrates five centuries of bird-illustration and bird-painting ranging from the work of a Chinese artist of the late eleventh century to a fourteenth-century Monk's Drawing Book and through the seventeenth-century Mogul manuscript of Ustad Mansur to the nineteenth-century

Wolf and Audubon and the Japanese Haruki Nammei.

Well known for her research in historical fields of natural history, Dr Lysaght brings wide experience to the task of discovery and her Introduction is a splendid thirteen-page essay, which, necessarily drawing on various sources, reflects both sensitivity and a wide knowledge of man's association with birds from the earliest times. Its emphasis moves increasingly towards man's representation of birds in art and illustration from his pre-historic magico-religious cave-paintings to the age of lithography.

The major part of the book is taken up with 142 generally excellent reproductions, black-and-white or coloured, of selected paintings, drawings or fine prints. For each reproduction and artist a valuable summary is provided giving brief biographical details of the artist, sometimes a comment on his work and, usually, ornithological remarks. The medium that was used and the measurements of each original work are included. A comprehensive bibliography is provided at the end of the book.

This is a magnificent book of infinite appeal to those interested in birds in art and in the history of man's association with them and it is rich in its coverage and impact. High among its virtues is that it provides not only an excellent pictorial representation of the work associated with traditional names, e.g. Albin, Coeiter, Gesner, Belon, Aldrovandi, Catesby and others, but it includes the work of anonymous or little-known artists or both, e.g. the Black Vultures by an unknown Indian artist of the early nineteenth century, the Muscovy Duck by Maria Sybille Merian and the work of R. Laishley and of Major Jones (1838-1921).

Such a selection must of course leave many lines untouched and unillustrated, e.g. the unmentioned fourteenth century work of Giovannina del Grassi, whose peacocks, together with his sheep, cattle and deer in the *Visconti Hours*, represent early naturalistic work in a religious rather than in a secular book.

One wishes at times that actual artists, engravers and authors were more clearly separated; for instance, Schouman and Hiller plates represent the work by Pallas but this is not clarified in the summary. Separation of the roles in this direction is, of course, often very difficult.

Among its minor delights are items from the 'improving books and simple story tales designed for young people' and also reproduction of pages from the not minor but charming *Hokusai Sketch Books* (Michener, 1960).

It is a splendid book that will provide hours of delight and much information for the general reader and stands as an essential reference for the serious student. It is not dear as prices are now.

A. R. McEvey

XII Bulletin of the International Council for Bird Preservation, 1975. London: ICPB. Pp 324, b. & w. pl 7, 230 x 154 mm, glued cover. £4.50. (Obtainable from ICPB, c/o Br. Mus. nat. Hist., Cromwell Road, London, S.W. 7).

This is a truly international repository of information about the preservation of birds. It outlines the history of this first international organization for the conservation of wildlife up to its Golden Jubilee year in 1972.

There are reports of the X Conference of the European Continental Section in Romania in 1972 and the XVI World Conference in Australia in 1974, which followed the International Ornithological Congress. Some of the conference papers are presented in full and they make sobering reading. In a world that lays claim to a degree

of civilization and thus, presumably, to an awareness of cruelty, the section on International Trade in Live Birds is chilling. As well, the problems of toxic chemicals and pollution of the sea are examined.

More heartening are the efforts made to regenerate endangered species. As an example, the total world population of the Whooping Crane, both wild and captive, is given as seventy-three; removal of one egg from its two-egg clutch has actually improved survival of wild-raised chicks and attempts are being made to incubate the pirated egg with the intention of releasing the resultant chicks into the wild. Other species covered in this section include Steller's Albatross, Abbott's Booby, Takahe, the Chatham Island Black Robin and Saddleback. Indeed, Australasia gets the eagle's share of this Bulletin.

There are reports of World Working Groups concerned with unique conservation problems: birds of prey, bustards, cranes and others. Other sections deal with Waterfowl Conservation, The Environment and Birds, Reports of the Sixty-two National Sections and Resolutions adopted at the conferences. These Resolutions and the Introduction are in English, French and German.

After reading this Bulletin, one cannot help but have a broader understanding of conservation problems and the ways in which they may be combated.

P. N. Reilly

Proceedings of the 16th International Ornithological Congress, Canberra, Australia, 12-17 August 1974 edited by H. J. Frith and J. H. Calaby, 1976. Canberra: Aust. Acad. Sci. Pp xvii + 765, numerous b. & w. figs. 250 x 180 mm. \$A50.00.

Following the conventions of the Proceedings of the two previous International Ornithological Congresses, the papers in this volume are only those presented at the Symposia. Abstracts of papers presented at General Sessions have already been published as a Supplement to *Emu*, Volume 74.

The first short section comprises lists of Officers and Committees, and their reports. No doubt to reduce costs, this section departs from former practice in that we are denied photos of officers and exhibits. In other respects the volume follows closely the format of the Proceedings of the 1970 Congress and is produced to a similarly high standard.

In his presidential address, J. Dorst describes the unparalleled richness of the South American avifauna. The enormous extent of tropical rainforests, their great floristic diversity and their advances and contractions during Pleistocene fluctuations in climate have provided optimal conditions for adaptive radiation. Another important factor was the uplift of the Andes and the consequent fragmentation of habitats.

In all, sixty-one papers were read at symposia on: (1) Origins of Australasian Fauna, (2) Biology of Southern Hemisphere Species, (3) The Value of Various Taxonomic Characters in Avian Classification, (4) Breeding of Birds in Southern Continents, (5) Biology of Crowned Sparrows *Zonotrichia* in Two Hemispheres, (6) Structure of Feathers, (7) Physiological and Behavioural Adaptations to Arid Zones, (8) Systematics of Australian Passerine Birds, (9) Evolution of Island Land Birds, (10) Co-operative Breeding in Birds, and (11) Seabirds: Distribution, Speciation and Ecological Diversification at Sea. Brief notice can be taken here only of the papers with most immediate impact on Australasian ornithology, most of which were contained in Symposia 1, 2, 4 and 8.

In the first Symposium, J. Cracraft analyses the avi-

faunas of the southern continents and discusses their evolution in terms of continental movements and climatic changes. The suboscines and ratites and probably the pigeons, parrots and other non-passerines had their origin in the south (Gondwanaland) but the oscines seem to have originated in the north (Laurasia). In her survey of Australian fossil birds, P. V. Rich pays most attention to the flamingos and dromornithids; they have the longest history on the continent. The fossil record is less revealing on the origin of the Australian avifauna than on changing environmental conditions, especially in central Australia. C. G. Sibley examines the endemic Australo-Papuan families in the light of his protein analyses. He concludes that the ratites are monophyletic and that 'the ancestors of the emus and cassowaries were passengers on the block of the ancient continent as it drifted to its present position'. The endemic oscines are much more recent in origin and are divided by Sibley in a later symposium into two broad groups: (1) the 'corvine assemblage' with the lyrebirds, bowerbirds, birds-of-paradise, corcoracids, woodswallows and cracticids; (2) the 'Australian small passerines', which includes all the remaining oscines except such recent immigrants as the swallows, lark, pipit, etc. It seems that Australo-Papua has witnessed an adaptive radiation of oscines no less diversified than that of nine-primaries oscines in America. A. Keast looks at one of the consequences of Australia's isolation, the adaptive radiation of the Meliphagidae. In effect the honeyeaters are doing the work of four or five African families.

In Symposium 2, S. J. J. F. Davies compares the life history of the Emu with those of other ratites and the kiwis. Despite their great size the ratites attain sexual maturity with astonishing rapidity, females for example laying at less than two years of age. In another paper (in Symposium 7) Davies brings new insights into the biology of Australian arid zone birds. The prevailing notion that rainfall and breeding seasons are erratic in this zone is refuted. R. Schodde traces the evolution of both the advanced birds-of-paradise (Paradisaeinae) and the bowerbirds (Ptilonorhynchinae) from primitive birds-of-paradise (Cnemophilinae). Comparative osteology, especially of the cranium, is used by A. McEvey to confirm the relationship of the Corcoracidae to the Artamidae and Cracticidae. G. R. Williams summarizes our knowledge of the endemic New Zealand family Callaeatidae. On morphological and behavioural grounds G. F. van Tets divides the world's cormorants into two genera, *Phalacrocorax* and *Leucocarbo* (including *L. fuscescens* of southern Australia). G. T. Smith compares the life histories of the scrub-birds with those of their putative relatives, the lyrebirds, and finds them generally similar. Much has been learnt recently about the Noisy Scrub-bird, including its remarkably long incubation period of about thirty-eight days, which Smith attributes to the female's need to leave the nest in order to feed. As in lyrebirds, the male's role in reproduction is very little.

Symposium 4 includes two papers on Australian birds. L. W. Braithwaite finds that ducks of the better-watered parts of Australia tend to have regular breeding seasons, which are geared to annual events, namely photoperiodic factors in the south and the opening of the wet season in the north. The three nomadic species, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and Wood Duck, respond to irregular events like flash floods and unseasonal rains and are consequently the only species adapted for breeding in the arid interior. H. A. Nix's attempt to correlate bird movements and breeding in Australia and New Guinea with indices of plant-growth is not completely convincing. His data

on movements are too imprecise for this kind of analysis. Moreover, as Nix himself came to realize, 'the austral spring is the preferred breeding time for most species, if the environment permits', regardless of regional variation in plant growth.

In a paper in Symposium 8, A. Keast surveys the Sylviidae of the Australian Region which he divides into five subfamilies: Acanthizinae (including *Pycnoptilus*), Mohouinae (comprising *Mohoua* and *Finschia* of New Zealand), Ephthianurinae, Malurinae (tentatively including *Dasyornis*) and Sylviinae (including *Eremiornis*). After intensive research in the field and laboratory, J. Ford brings taxonomic order to the quail-thrushes (*Cinclosoma*). He recognizes five species: *ajax*, *punctatum*, *castanotum*, *alisteri* and *cinnamomeum* (including *cas-*

taneothorax and *marginatum*). In their reappraisal of the systematic position of certain Australian oscines, specially the monotypic genera, R. Schodde and J. McKean agree with Keast and disagree with Sibley in placing *Eremiornis* in the Sylviidae. They advocate the return of the fantails, monarchs, robins and whistlers to the Muscicapidae. The family Falcunculidae is considered artificial; *Falcunculus* is allied to the Australo-Papuan robins, *Oreoica* to the whistlers and *Psophodes* and *Sphenostoma* to the pomatorrhine babblers.

Dr Frith and his collaborators have earned our thanks for staging such a successful Congress and for producing such a fine Proceedings.

G. M. Storr

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