

REVIEWS

Edited by J. M. PENHALLURICK

BOOKS

Tasmanian Bird Atlas by David Thomas, 1979. Fauna of Tasmania Handbook No. 2. Hobart: Fauna Tasm. Cttee, Univ. Tasm. Pp 171, maps 138, overlays 2. 153×214 mm. \$A3.50.

This paperback booklet presents results of the Atlas Project of the Bird Observers Association of Tasmania. The project was initiated by David Thomas, using records of Tasmanian ornithologists from 1960 to 1976 (90% of records) as well as published information from 1900 (10%); it is a combined historical and field atlas. Organized fieldwork took place only at the end of this period. The records were plotted on a 10-km grid, which was abandoned in 1977 in favour of the 10-minute grid of the RAOU Field Atlas.

As a pilot atlas this volume is of special interest in that it covers a distinct biological region, well known for its high proportion of endemic species. Most of the endemic birds remain common despite the arrival of Europeans. It is unfortunate that inclusion of early records has obscured recent changes in status, though, where such changes are known to have occurred (as with Orange-bellied Parrot and Forty-spotted Pardalote), this is stated. A distinctive symbol for old records would have helped.

Maps of distribution are shown for 138 non-pelagic species. An additional ninety-four species were recorded in fewer than ten grid-squares; these are listed with reference to R. H. Green's *Birds of Tasmania* for details. Although coverage was incomplete, some notable details of distribution emerge (for example the rarity of Crested and Fairy Terns on the western coast). The maps are clearly presented and two detachable overlays facilitate comparisons with vegetation and 'effective rainfall zones'. Some interesting interactions are evident: for example in the overlapping distributions of Brown Goshawk and Collared Sparrowhawk, with both recorded most often on the edge of cleared land, but the Sparrowhawk mainly in the eastern sub-humid zone.

The map for each species has an inset showing its Australian distribution (according to P. Slater) and a concise coded summary of its status, habitat, food and foraging behaviour. The summaries are based on systematic observations by the author (analysed further in a short introductory text) and are generally accurate (though Orange-bellied Parrots do not feed only on the ground). They make an invaluable contribution to understanding the ecology and hence the distribution of the species and are an admirable feature of this book.

One of the successes of the BOAT Atlas Project was that it inspired new observers (e.g. forestry workers) to take part in fieldwork just before the start of the national RAOU Atlas. Tasmania contains much wild and trackless country and more exploration is needed to make the maps complete. Nevertheless, the maps are a useful and detailed summary of known distributions. With the supplementary ecological information, this Atlas is a valuable record of the status of Tasmania birds.

Richard H. Loyn

The Birds of Victoria and where to find them by W. Roy Wheeler, 1979. Melbourne: Nelson. Pp 175, col. pl 50, maps 50. 200×140 mm. \$A12.95.

This is a book that gives the birdwatcher exactly what the title suggests. It makes no claim to being a field guide. The end-covers provide a map showing the location of fifty numbered areas, each of which receives two pages in the first part of the

book. One page provides a map and a description of the area, accommodation available and specially interesting birds. On the opposite page are four paintings illustrating birds that occur in the area. In the second part an alphabetic list of birds indicates their status, those areas where they occur and the location of the illustration.

Finally, there is even a tick list for those whose joy it is to make life-lists but here the author has made an error of judgement in following the CSIRO Index of Australian Bird Names. This was published in 1969 to bring some order into the chaos of bird names, pending the publication of the RAOU Checklist. But the order of the RAOU checklist of Non-Passerines and Interim List of Passerines, both published in 1975, is now most commonly used. The author may be excused for not using the Recommended English Names; perhaps, with publication in May 1978 by the RAOU, they appeared too late for the author to make changes. Though scientific names are not wholly necessary in a book of this nature, they may have helped the floundering birdwatcher to reconcile the names used here with those used in field guides. There will never be total agreement over the names of birds but we owe it to beginners in birdwatching and to overseas visitors unfamiliar with our parochial names, to strive towards uniformity.

The paintings by Jeremy Boot are excellent for field identification and dispense with the need for written descriptions. In some, the colours are too bright but this may not be the fault of the artist. Some stances look unnatural: for example, the Dollarbird usually adopts an upright stance when perched. The artist does not appear to be at ease with some of the sea-birds, specially the albatrosses, which are rarely seen in Australian waters except in flight.

Fortunately, the size of the bird is indicated with each illustration. Otherwise the juxtaposition of King Quail and Powerful Owl, Red-browed Finch (Firetail) and Laughing Kookaburra could be wildly misleading. Dimorphic plumage is shown in a few species but could have been useful with others, such as Golden and Rufous Whistlers. And why a red throat on the Lyrebird? This is an immature sign; yet the bird bears a mature tail.

Despite these criticisms, the book, fitting into a good-sized pocket, will be a boon to beginners. And the host, confronted by a visitor's demand to be shown the maximum number of birds in the minimum time, will bless Roy Wheeler for his efforts.

Pauline Reilly

Eleonora's Falcon: adaptations to prey and habitat in a social raptor by H. Walter, 1979. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press. Pp 410, b. & w. pl 36, figs 59, tables 38. 175×250 mm. £24.50, \$US43.75.

This is one of the few books devoted to a single species of raptor. It presents some new data and brings together much that is known, to form a fairly comprehensive picture of one of the world's little studied and most interesting falcons. Eleonora's Falcon is a colonial nester, breeding on rocky cliffs and islands in or near the Mediterranean. Its breeding season coincides with the autumn migration of European birds upon which it preys, sometimes hunting communally. In the nonbreeding season most of the population appears to migrate to the Madagascar area, where flying insects become the main prey.

The first two chapters are introductory. After an account of the background, aims and methods of the study, the author

moves on to field identification, geographical distribution, status and descriptions of breeding habitats, particularly of the two main study areas, Paximada on the Aegean and Mogador on the Atlantic. The third chapter, on ecology, deals with size and structure of colonies and various aspects of breeding. This and chapters on prey (including biomass of the prey, energetics of the Falcons and patterns of migration by the prey) and social behaviour are the longest chapters, with the most data. Other chapters cover hunting during the breeding season and the migration of European birds on which Eleonora's Falcon preys at this time. A chapter on the nonbreeding season, about which little is known, covers spring and autumn migration, route of migration and wintering area. After a discussion of man's impact on the species, the last two chapters bring together much of the information in the preceding chapters to discuss evolution and make comparisons with other birds of prey. These are possibly the most interesting chapters because they raise broader issues such as the reasons for reversed sexual dimorphism in raptors, selection of nest sites, territorialism, the adaptive value of morphological characteristics and the origin of Eleonora's Falcon and its closest relatives.

There are a number of interesting plates and four appendices of which the first includes tables too large for the text; the second gives detailed observations of four hours of hunting and feeding at the Paximada colony; the third lists records of Eleonora's Falcon in the Madagascar area; and the last covers the genetics of the two colour phases. These are followed by a comprehensive bibliography and thorough index.

Extracts from diaries, mostly illustrating behaviour, are scattered through the text. The book is generally easy to read and the reader is often led through the logical steps to an explanation, which is instructive. However, it often appears that the author does not have a good knowledge of other raptors: for example, Prairie Falcons often reach very high breeding densities, contrary to the generalization on page 336; and the Madagascar Kestrel eats insects (and small birds), contrary to the statement that there is no resident raptor competing for food on Madagascar (p. 294). Little reference is made to falcons in the southern hemisphere, some of which are thought to belong, with Eleonora's Falcon, to the hobby group, although some useful comparisons can be made. For example, a clutch size of 2-3 eggs, as occurs in Eleonora's Falcon, though unusual in European falcons, is not uncommon in falcons of the southern hemisphere.

We disagree with several interpretations: for example, though the increase in weight of nestlings is greatest between Day 10 and 15, the growth rate (calculated from Table 7) is greatest between the fifth and tenth days, so that it seems inaccurate to suggest that nestlings 'grow most' during the former period (p. 67). Although an inadequate food supply, leading to the loss of the last hatched young, is suggested as a limiting factor to the population at Paximada (p. 77), a re-analysis of Table 3 gives an almost identical percentage of young fledged from those hatched for both Paximada and Mogador. That the survival rate of chicks is similar in both colonies appears to have been overlooked. Also in relation to productivity, the evidence presented does not substantiate the claim that Paximada was the rule and Mogador the exception (p. 299).

The section on biocides is poor and Clark and Peakall's (1977) paper is not discussed, even though they found eggshell thinning induced by DDE in a small fraction of eggs collected near Morocco and reasonable levels of DDE in prey. As with most discussions on dimorphism in size, several species that do not conform to the theory are not mentioned. However, the subject is treated in a more integrated and less dogmatic way than by many authors.

The figures are usually of good quality; however, there are errors in figures and tables. In Table 7 (p. 69) the heading of the last column ought to be 'Average *daily* change in weight . . .'; in Figure 8 (p. 62) the vertical axis ought to be number of clutches, not days; in Figure 22F (p. 153) the silhouette of the falcon is flying in the wrong direction; in Figure 56 (p. 329),

contrary to the legend, a barred upper back is not found in the male European Kestrel (as is pictured and pointed out in the text).

In spite of these and other minor criticisms, the book is interesting because of its subject matter, the holistic approach of the study, the broader issues discussed and the questions raised. Although the price is prohibitive, the book ought to be recommended reading for those interested particularly in raptors and generally in ornithology and ecology.

Penny and Jerry Olsen

Ornithological Literature of the Papuan Subregion 1915 to 1976 by Clifford B. Frith, 1979. New York: Bull. Am. Mus. nat. Hist. 164. Pp 377-465, figs 1. 250 × 185 mm. SUS\$6.15.

A bibliography, in fact, reviews itself, leaving me little opportunity here other than to summarize the contents of C. B. Frith's opus. Briefly, it lists all titles published between 1915 and 1976 that deal with species and other taxa of specifically New Guinean birds and covers New Guinea and its satellite islands from Misool to the Louisiade Archipelago. References to the birds of the adjacent Bismarck Archipelago, northern Australia and the Moluccas are omitted unless they bear directly on species and genera occurring also in New Guinea. The cut-off point for the literature is actually June 1977.

The bibliography is absolutely exhaustive, well set out and accurately edited. An important adjunct is a succinct and accurate summary of content and coverage of each publication against its reference, which makes the compilation doubly valuable. Its significance for Australian ornithologists is, of course, its coverage of literature that deals with the best part of half the Australasian avifauna. For this service, C.B. Frith deserves our thanks for completing such an arduous and thankless task with great scholarship.

Richard Schodde

First Aid and Care of Wild Birds edited by J. E. Cooper and J. T. Eley, 1979. Vermont: David & Charles, *per* ANZ Book Co. Pp 288, figs 46, plll 23. 240 × 160 mm. \$A30.95.

This is a long overdue book on the care and treatment of casualties among wild birds, which grew out of a demand for such information from individuals and organizations like the Wild Bird Hospital Society in the UK. It is very thorough, covering most aspects of concern to the layman and many of interest to veterinarians unfamiliar with wild birds.

Various authors have contributed chapters, with the largely self-explanatory headings: Introduction to Wild Bird Care, Bird Structure and Function, Classification and Behaviour of Birds, Finding and Examining Wild Birds, Diagnosis of Disease, The Control of Disease, Feeding Birds, Wounds and Injuries, Infectious Diseases, Parasites, Poisons, Birds and Oil Pollution, Miscellaneous Diseases, Anaesthesia and Euthanasia, and Cage and Aviary Design and Construction. There are three chapters on specific groups: Birds of Prey, Crows and Waterbirds. A chapter on Captive Breeding of Birds of Prey is pleasing to see as it emphasizes the often overlooked use of unreleasable wild birds for education and research. The remaining chapter covers the legal situation regarding hospitals for wild birds in the UK and, though it draws attention to this aspect of keeping wild birds, it is probably only broadly applicable to Australia.

Some chapters can stand on their own as guides to all stages between receipt and release of casualties with a particular type of problem. There is often overlap and a few differences in opinion between authors, reflected in the methods of treatment that they recommend. This does not really detract from the book but we would recommend that, when referring to it for a particular problem, a number of sections of chapters ought to be read for a well-rounded and more complete perspective. With this point in mind, the index is not as thorough as it could

have been. There is a pleasant overtone of caring in many chapters, which goes beyond the physical considerations of bird casualties. Conservation and the philosophical and ethical issues of treating wild birds are briefly discussed in a number of places.

There are a few minor criticisms of detail: for example, Figure 37 illustrates a head position that can be quite normal, if transitory, in a relaxed curious falcon. Presumably the figure refers to the head being held in this position for long periods but this is not made clear in the text. Appendices are not numbered, although referred to by number in the text, and a glossary would be helpful. Though the book is written with the layman in mind and usually succeeds, there is some fairly technical terminology. Sometimes one is left desiring more information and this is where the inclusion of a reference section for each chapter is invaluable. Although some chapters, such as those on captive breeding of birds of prey and on taxonomy and behaviour, are poorly referenced, most are excellent. There are some gaps but these are most often due to our lack of knowledge of bird diseases and behavioural needs rather than to any omission on the part of the authors.

The figures and plates are adequate and the six appendixes useful. Two appendixes refer to the UK with addresses of organizations and manufacturers. One is a list of scientific names and the others cover equipment and medicines for bird hospitals, health hazards to humans and drugs and dosages. The latter ought to be of interest to vets in Australia because we have found that many are unsure of, and underestimate, dose rates for wild birds.

This book will be of great practical help to amateurs and professionals involved in the treatment and care of wild birds.

Penny and Jerry Olsen

The Naturalists: Pioneers of Natural History by Alan C. Jenkins, 1978. London: Hamish Hamilton. Pp 200, many col. and b. & w. ill. 222 × 250 mm. £6.95.

The author himself suggests that this book could have been better sub-titled 'Some Pioneers of Natural History'. Why not, then, 'Some Naturalists' for simplicity and accuracy? We are

given a quick exposition of the life and times of many well-known men such as Audubon, Darwin, Gould, Hudson, Linnaeus and White and of others less well known such as Douglas, Frederick II, Gosse and Waterton – from Aristotle to Zahavi, so to speak – profusely illustrated with spectacular, attractive or curious pictures, many of which seem to have little to do with the text and for one of which (page 29) the caption has gone adrift. Finally comes a salutation to conservation that seems dutiful and perfunctory rather than convincing and enthusiastic.

As a whole, I had a sense of incoherence when reading this book, probably mostly because some pictures, whose captions contain much comment and added information, seemed irrelevant; but the text itself did not help, with some chapters starting inconsequentially. I also detected archness in the style of expression. Though I am a great admirer of quotation, I thought that some had been dragged in by the scruffs of their necks and that elsewhere the author had used personal anecdotes as an indulgence and hung some text on them rather than using them judiciously to illustrate worthwhile matter. However there is the usual crop of delightfully useless information that seems to be the purpose of books like this, such as the tale of Frederick II carving up two of his henchmen in order that he could compare their states of digestion or Douglas's tragic and mysterious death.

Do I 'damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer and, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer'? Probably, and I may as well sum up my attitude to this and other books of the same sort in an anecdote, thus doing both the things that I have questioned above. From time to time (Christmas, birthdays, etc.) my mother, once she recognized that I was interested in natural history, used to give me a book of this sort. I read it, enjoyed it and profited by it and probably still have it but at the time and ever since I have regretted that the money had not been laid out to better purpose: I wanted more solid pabulum. If you buy this book, you will find it surprisingly cheap for these days but I think that you would do better by riffling through it in a library or elsewhere. It simply is not in the same class as *The Naturalist in Britain*, reviewed *antea* Vol. 76: 230-231.

S. Marchant

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