

REVIEWS

Edited by B. GILLIES

A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan by the Wild Bird Society of Japan (Koichiro Sonobe, Editor in Chief), 1982. Tokyo: Wild Bird Society of Japan, Aoyama Flower Bldg, 1-1-4 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan. Pp 336, col. p11 144, b. & w. photos 12, main maps 2, many line drawings. 125 × 190 mm. Y2900.

The Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) was founded in 1934 and has long been active in the promotion of bird watching and the protection of birds and their habitats throughout Japan. This guide admirably fulfills its objective of providing the first English language field guide of Japanese birds for promoting international cooperation for bird protection, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. The book has borrowed from field guide innovations elsewhere but has also improved on the design, as one might expect in Japanese products. It is solidly bound in plastic-coated hard covers. The layout of plates opposite text, with colour-coded distribution maps for most species, is the particular influence of *Birds of North America* by Robbins *et al.* (1966, now revised, 1983, *Condor* 86:26), which is also followed for status definitions. As in the latter book, the basic portrait of the bird is given, with females and juveniles provided where required, plus flight views, occasional chicks, and vignettes offering additional identification details. Immature gulls and underwing views of birds of prey rate double page spreads of their own. The superb colour plates are by Shinji Takano and the reproduction is crisp and clean. For completeness, all recently extinct species are included. The Okinawa Rail *Rallus okinawae*, only described in 1981 (*cf* Yamashina & Mano, *J. Yamashina Inst. Orn.* 13: 1-6, p11 1-3), was just in time for inclusion. An added bonus at the back are two plates of aviary escapees (finches and parrots). I note that a record I published of the Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* on Okinawa (1975, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 95:156) did not make the list; and others may belong in this category.

After a foreword by Sir Peter Scott, the introduction includes a checklist and a useful, illustrated feature called 'Identifying Birds with this Book' (a feature to be recommended in other field guides). With appropriate drawings of birds one is asked questions such as 'is the tail long or short?', 'how does the bird sit or perch?', 'is the rump light or dark?'. At the back of the book is a useful regional bibliography and an eleven page bird watching guide to some of the better known spots (some shown by b. & w. photos). This covers twenty-eight places, from Hokkaido in the north, to the southernmost Ryū Kyū Islands, very close to Taiwan. Some notes on each place, with bird highlights, are provided (another useful feature in a field guide). For bird song, many are available on records, and details are given for those that would like to obtain them. The front endpapers provide a quick family reference, showing a characteristic member, and there is a map on the back. Japan's concern for its environment has recently been expressed in the publication of an Environmental Atlas (Environment Agency of Japan, 1982). This is very useful for assessing the distribution of bird habitats. It also reminds us that in Japan about 70% of its original forest and associated habitats remain.

The coverage in the guide is 538 species, including thirteen introductions. The text and maps provide a summary of their occurrence in Japan. Full details of distributional records can be found in the Check-list of Japanese Birds (1974, *Orn. Soc. Japan*, 5th ed., reviewed in *Emu* 75:160), and supplements published in *Tori*. The checklist covered 490 species. The addi-

tion of forty-eight species in eight years supports the increasing activities of ornithologists and bird watchers, and I know of additions since the guide was published, e.g. Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (1982, *Strix* 1:123, the first issue of the WBSJ journal intended to fill the niche of providing reports on various WBSJ and other ornithological activities). The differences with English names for species also found in Australia were discussed in the checklist review and still apply as the guide has followed these. This particularly affects some waders and seabirds, and for these groups and other migrants in particular the Japan guide is very valuable for bird watchers in Australia. Other familiar species reach Japan, e.g. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* (Ryū Kyū Is.), and there are isolated vagrant records of the Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* (once 1904) and the White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* (once 1973). The honeyeaters have even managed a toehold in the Japanese islands, with the Bonin Islands Honeyeater *Apalopteron familiare*, which is very much like a white-eye *Zosterops* spp in general appearance and behaviour. It is a tenuous hold, however, as there is some doubt about its affinities with honeyeaters (see Morioka & Sakane, *Mem. Nat. Sci. Mus. Tokyo* 11: 169-188, 1978).

It only remains to say that if you must limit yourself with buying bird books, this first class example of the field guide art must remain high on your list. It can be easily carried with Australian guides and may prove indispensable with identifying some migratory species.

M.D. Bruce

The Birds and Birdlore of Samoa by Corey & Shirley Muse, 1982 [= 1983]. Walla Walla, Wash.: Pioneer Press (Available from University of Washington Press, Seattle WA 98105, USA). Pp x + 156, col. photos 76, maps 4. 218 × 151 mm. US\$15.00.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats of American Samoa. I. Environment and Ecology, II. Accounts of Flora and Fauna by A.B. Emerson, Jr, W.A. Whistler & T.D. Schwaner (Ed. by R.C. Banks), 1982. Washington, DC: US Fish & Wildlife Service (Available from USFWS, Region I, 500 N.E. Multnomah St, Suite 1692, Portland OR 97232, USA). Pp I: ii + 119, II: ii + 151, many b. & w. photos & maps. 215 × 275 mm. No charge.

The Pacific islands comprising Western and American Samoa, east of Fiji, are becoming well endowed with bird books. In a recent *Emu* (83: 206), I briefly reviewed Watling's large format *Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa*. It is a valuable guide/handbook, but of an entirely different style from the Muses' book. For a start, this little book on Samoa is much easier to pop into your baggage if visiting Samoa, but of greater importance it provides an ornithology of Samoan Islands for the Samoan people. It was very much with the Samoan people in mind that this book was conceived and written. The authors have gathered together many legends from Samoan culture which focus on the bird life.

The mostly one-page accounts of the birds include a photograph or painting for identification, representing a mixed source of pictures to those accustomed to field guide plates.

Two new records for the region are listed, the Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (the first gull ever recorded, see also the Muses' paper in *American Birds* 34: 848-9, 1980) and the Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. More economical use of the text could have been made in providing details on habits rather than description when the bird, in most cases, is already illustrated. A need for seeing such information indicated is not helped by finding several blank pages through the book, as well as the wide margins around the text on many pages. The one page also includes the legend(s) applying to the species, with longer tales interspersed through the text, and also some colour views of the islands. The several pages of introductory material briefly cover the ornithological history of Samoa, legends and proverbs, Samoan geography and the scope of the book. At the back are some tips for the visiting birder/ornithologists, notes on the Samoan language, a checklist and a bibliography.

This book was recently reviewed by Diamond (1983, *Auk* 100: 1013-4), who discussed the book in some detail. Diamond also felt that the book could have made better use of the basic information needed by every bird watcher, particularly when it is an introduction to the birds for local people. However, the entertaining accounts of Samoan birdlore are certainly well presented, and these alone make it a valuable contribution. In attempting to fulfill the dual aims of providing an up to date guide which could even be used by untrained individuals, and a record of the relationships of birds with Samoan culture, I must say that they have been most successful with the second aim. For such a small bird fauna (74 species, but only 37 land-birds) so much more could have been put into the book. Want of space was certainly not a problem, without any need to increase the number of pages. However, as Watling's book emerged while this book was in press, some of the criticism is alleviated. It remains an entertaining book and would be a welcome addition to any library. I certainly hope its objectives in awakening local interest in Samoan birds are successful.

The volumes of Amerson *et al.* are the results of a survey of the status of the terrestrial vertebrates and their habitats in American Samoa conducted from June 1975 to December 1976. American Samoa consists of the smaller islands, from Tutuila to Ta'u, and also Rose Atoll further east. This intensive survey was based on forty-two study plots in sixteen habitat types on seven islands and ninety-eight linear survey routes between plots. In effect, it provides a great deal of background data useful in understanding the biology and ecology of remote, tropical islands. The original report of over 1200 pages, from which this was condensed by Banks, was cited in the Muses' book, but with little indication that its content was used. One may now hope to see a comparable report produced for Western Samoa (in Fiji, a start was made for birds by Gorman, 1975, *Ibis* 117: 152-161). An indication of the amount of information in this report can be seen from its use of 104 tables. The detailed summary of bird records (II: 54-73) is valuable. A total of fifty-three species is covered, including two introductions, with four more considered hypothetical. Notable among these findings is the discovery of a population of the Friendly Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba stairi* (indicated in Muse, p. 94); also that the local population of the Mao *Gymnomyza samoensis*, a giant honeyeater, has been extirpated. Among the other vertebrates recorded, it is unfortunate to see that the Cane Toad *Bufo marinus* was introduced to Tutuila in 1953, with the survey estimating a population of 2.3 million. It is a serious pest on Tutuila and the report urges that it must not reach other islands.

M.D. Bruce

University Press. Pp 203, col pl 22 (by Woodcock), many drgs, maps 30. 280 × 220 mm. £30.

For those interested in the ecology and behaviour of tropical birds the works of David and Barbara Snow should be compulsory reading. They have worked for many years in the Neotropics, particularly the Caribbean region, studying a variety of frugivorous birds but especially the Cotingas. This is a diverse and fascinating group of sub-oscines which parallel in many ways the birds-of-paradise. They exhibit a wide range of social and sexual behaviour and some species are brilliantly plumaged.

This book is the first monograph of this important family and David Snow's intimate knowledge of many of the species is obvious. Barbara Snow and other ornithologists have written those sections for birds with which they are more familiar.

There are four introductory chapters and then the sixty-five species recognised by Snow, are treated genus by genus. The introductory chapters, although short, set the flavour for the book. Ecology, behaviour and the evolutionary context in which they are set are stressed as even a cursory glance will show. The first chapter is on origins, classification and distributional history, and Snow describes the speciation of the group in relation to Haffer's rainforest refuge concepts. It is very good. The second chapter on "evolutionary radiation and sociobiology" discusses the variety of niches occupied by cotingas and presents a coherent introduction to the evolution of social behaviour in the group. A short third chapter is about ornamentation and display structure. The fourth chapter is "Breeding and the Annual Cycle". It is neat and succinct and finishes with a useful intergeneric comparison of the timing of moult.

The systematic section deals with the twenty-five genera at length (seventeen of these are "effectively monotypic" i.e. consist of a single species or superspecies). The account of each genus does not follow the pattern normally associated with monographs. The genus is first introduced and its distinguishing anatomical characters, behaviour, etc presented. This is followed by distribution, habitat and food (or ecology), behaviour, breeding and annual cycle, plumages and moults and physical characteristics. Thus the boring bits — measurements and plumage descriptions come at the end and thus a more interesting tone is set to the book. David Snow has gone one further in his heresy by not describing adult plumages, standard texts do this, and by relegating taxonomic summaries of subspecies etc to an Appendix. It's all there (look up Peter's for synonymy) but nicely out of the way. Species in polytypic genera are discussed and compared throughout the generic account, eliminating the need for repetition of information.

The distribution maps are superb. Often full page size, they show the locations of individual specimens and reliable sight records, and the amount of South America each map depicts is varied to suit the size of the genus' distribution. Every species is well illustrated (in colour) by Martin Woodcock, many for the first time, and, where appropriate, line drawings are used to illustrate specialised behaviour. The Cotingas I have had the pleasure to gaze at certainly look like the pictures if that is any criterion.

As might be expected, the coverage of each genus is not uniform. We still know very little about some species and those solitary species that do not show specialised behaviour are obviously not going to receive as much treatment as the lek-forming species or those with spectacular displays such as Cocks-of-the-Rock and Umbrella-birds.

I am not going to discuss David's Snow's treatment of

The Cotingas: bellbirds, umbrella-birds and their allies in tropical America by David Snow, 1982: London: British Museum Oxford

Cotinga biology. There is no point since what I know is in large part what he and Barbara have written. I have surely tracked down a Screaming Piha screaming, watched an Umbrella-bird and counted fruits eaten by Purple-tufts, but I don't *know* the birds. David Snow does and it shows in this book. Buy it for the information, buy it for the pictures or just buy it because it's a pleasure to read about such fascinating birds.

F. Crome

Funktionell-Morphologische Untersuchungen zur Radiation der Ernährungs- und Trinkmethoden der Papageien (Psittaci) by Dominik G. Homberger, 1980. Bonn. Zool. Monogr. 13: 1-92. No price given.

This interesting paper is a contribution to the systematic relationships of parrots, and is of particular interest as many Australia-New Guinea genera were studied. A comparative analysis of feeding and drinking methods in relation to the associated morphology of the bill, tongue, mouth cavity, salivary glands, and the tissues underlying the bill's rhamphothecae was undertaken in ninety-two species of Psittacidae. Homberger describes four drinking methods, typical of distinct parrot subgroups. Cockatoos scoop with the lower bill, lorikeets lap with their brush-tipped tongue, and most typical parrots use the tip of the tongue to ladle water, which is then pressed against the palate to move the water to a position for swallowing. The fourth method, where the tongue is pressed against the palate and drunk with a suction-pump action, was only found in hanging parrots *Loriculus* spp. and the Vulturine Parrot *Psitttrichas fulgidus* of New Guinea. The latter also differed from all other parrots studied in its mechanism of seed-husking. Among other findings, Homberger concluded that the Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* belongs with cockatoos, and the Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor* is close to the rosellas *Platycercus* spp.

A new classification of parrots is proposed, recognising five subfamilies in the single family Psittacidae. *Psitttrichas* and *Loriculus* each represent two subfamilies. The findings are also compared with the often followed classification of Smith (1975, *Ibis* 117: 18-67). For the benefit of English speaking ornithologists, Homberger provided a shorter summary paper elsewhere (1981, in R. Pasquier, Ed., *Conservation of New World Parrots*, ICBP Tech. Publ. 1: 471-485). As she has pointed out, some important parrot genera were not covered by this study, e.g. *Nestor*, *Micropsitta*, *Opopsitta*, *Strigops*. Until

all distinctive types of parrots have been examined, her new findings may not receive as wide a following as they deserve. It would certainly provide a fruitful field of research in the land of parrots.

M.D. Bruce

Birds, Birders and Birding in the Saginaw Bay Area by E.E. Kenaga, 1983 [= 1984]. Published by Chippawa Nature Center, Inc., 400 South Badour Road, Route 9, Midland MI 48732, USA, and Dr E.E. Kenaga, 1281 North Wagner Road, Essexville MI 48732, USA. Pp vi + 134, many b. & w. drawings and maps. 216 × 278 mm. No price given.

What interest in Australia is there for a guide to the Saginaw Bay area of Michigan? Perhaps very little, but what makes this book of interest is the superb way it brings together everything you need to know about a particular area. It covers area descriptions, an annotated checklist, monthly checklist, results of counts and banding data, factors affecting bird populations, details of all organisations supporting bird activities, and many maps. If anyone is planning a local region bird guide, this book offers many good ideas.

M.D. Bruce

Sharing a Dream by Glen Threlfo, no date [= 1983]. Published by the author, c/o O'Reilly's Guest House, Canungra QLD 4275. Pp 80, col. photos on every page. 172 × 245 mm. \$14.95.

If you have visited Lamington National Park, you may already have met Glen, who, often armed with his tape recorder, does indeed share his enthusiasm for birds. He is also a skilled photographer, as readers of *Wildlife Australia* would know. In producing this little book, he shares his love for birds by showing a marvellous collection of photographs. The highlight of the book is a sequel on 'The story of the Lotus Bird' (*Irediparra gallinacea*) (p 3-21), covering the first few hours of life of one family and how the parent bird carries her young under her wing. The other photos cover a range of subtropical rainforest species, including four pages on the nesting of the Albert's Lyrebird *Menura alberti*. A welcome addition to those books on birds that are enjoyed for their pictures.

M.D. Bruce

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