

REVIEWS

Edited by B. GILLIES

How Birds Work: A Guide to Bird Biology by Ron Freethy, 1982 Poole: Blandford. Pp 232, b. & w. pll 68, col. pll 12, figs 41. 160 × 240 mm. \$17.95

I write this review sitting opposite a shelf containing 26 books, all but five emanating from the northern hemisphere, each intended to introduce the reader to one or more of bird biology, bird study and bird watching. Others are available: and here is yet another. I am not sure why.

Ron Freethy's contribution is well up to the standard of the genre, with more emphasis on technical biology than one often finds. The drawings of internal systems, in particular, are clear and informative: it is unfortunate that some of them seem to have bled during the printing process.

It appears that the author has no experience outside England and the usefulness of the book for the rest of the world is reduced accordingly. The caption to a photograph of a Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* begins "Australia is a good area to observe colourful avian species". So, no doubt, is the London Zoo. It would have been better to accept the limitation and not to make superficial attempts to suggest an international coverage.

As a work of reference, this is generally a competent and helpful book: although most of the libraries likely to purchase it would already have several other publications covering the same ground. Its chief advantage over those other publications is its frequent use of recent research. The complete absence of a subject index, however, will substantially limit its usefulness.

Rosemary Balmford

Enjoying Ornithology: A Celebration of Fifty Years of the British Trust for Ornithology 1933-1983 edited by Ronald Hickling, for the British Trust for Ornithology, 1983. Calton, Staffordshire: T. & A.D. Poyser. Pp 296, b. & w. drawings 30, figs 37. 160 × 240 mm. £13.00.

One can only regret that the British Trust for Ornithology has taken the title of David Lack's memorable collection of essays, published only twenty years ago, which must have assisted very many people to make the transition from watching birds to studying birds. The introduction of the present work explains that "As the earlier book has been long out of print it seemed permissible to use the title again, and [David Lack's widow] readily gave her consent". Some might have preferred to see Lack reprinted for the benefit of a new generation, and a new and distinctive title found for a later and very different book. However, *Enjoying Ornithology* is a good title, and makes a good point.

The Atlas of Australian Birds is only the latest (and by far the largest) co-operative ornithological project to have been carried out in this country. Australians who, through the RAOU, the Bird Observers' Club, the Victorian Ornithological Research Group and other organisations, have participated in the work of (for example) the Nest Record Scheme, the Swift Survey, or the Penguin Study Group, know well how to enjoy ornithology, and have a warm sympathy for the co-operative ornithological research work of the British Trust for Or-

nithology, which celebrates its first fifty years with the publication of this volume.

Visiting the BTO in 1972 as Secretary of the RAOU, I was only envious of a country where the population of people interested in bird study was large enough to support a professional staff to co-ordinate the activities of thousands of spare-time research workers. However, the RAOU itself has now reached that point and it may be that other organisations are not far behind.

Those who have been involved with the establishment, reconstruction and continuation of bird organisations in Australasia in recent years will find in the chapters which tell the story of the BTO and its sister bodies (the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Scottish Ornithologists Club, and several others) many parallels with their own experience. The behaviour of human beings, whether singly or in flocks, is for some of us, even more interesting than the behaviour of birds.

The remainder of the book describes various aspects of the work of the BTO, including *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, the Nest Record Scheme, bird observatories, and other activities of a kind as yet not embarked upon in this country, such as the Common Birds Census and the Register of Ornithological Sites.

Anyone interested in the organisation of ornithological research in Australasia will find interest and stimulation here. There are lessons to be learnt: examples to follow and examples to avoid. Co-operative research in a small thickly populated group of islands is very different from co-operative research in the large empty continent of Australia or in other parts of Australasia. However, in all those places the words of Lack, quoted in this book with approval from the collection cited above, remain true and worth repeating:

"Research is merely a term for finding out something, or to put it more accurately, something previously unknown. It may be something very simple ... or it may be the propounding of an elaborate theory ... In any event, it is a delightful pastime, one of the most delightful of all pastimes. Further, this pleasure is within reach of all ornithologists, being easier technically, though harder morally, than most people think. Do not suppose that it is something which should nowadays be left to the professional, for in this field the amateur has as many advantages as the professional, though they are different advantages".

Finally, it may be that a reader of this history will be inspired to produce a similar account of the older Australian ornithological organisations in the light of the changes in people, in birds and in the study since the founding of the South Australian Ornithological Association, the oldest of them all, in 1899. There is room for it.

Rosemary Balmford

Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas by Sálím Ali, 1977 (reprint 1979) Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp xvi + 265, col. p11 37, map as endpapers. 135 × 192 mm. Approx. \$25.

Birds of Nepal, with reference to Kashmir and Sikkim by R.L. Fleming, Sr, R.L. Fleming, Jr, & Lain Singh Bangdel, 1979. Kathmandu: Avalok Publishers, Box 1465, Kathmandu, 2nd edition. Pp 358, col. pl1 150. maps as front endpaper. 125 × 190 mm.

Although published several years ago, these two books represent the first comprehensive field guides produced for the Indian subcontinent. The first edition of the Nepal book was published in 1976 (see *Ibis* 120:78, 1978) and its popularity has seen a revised edition in only three years. Ali's guide was done as an alternative to another of his excellent regional books (see *Ibis* 121:235, 1979). While the books overlap slightly in coverage, and deal with many areas accessible only to the very adventurous, the wealth of the authors' experiences compressed into such handy volumes makes them useful references. This is especially the case for those who may not want to invest in the 10 volume Indian Handbook (see *Emu* 78:166) or the revised 'Synopsis' (see *Emu* 84:127). Of course, the Himalayan region is only part of the latter's coverage, but the great extremes of climate and topography have given it a great diversity of bird life.

M.D. Bruce

Proceedings of the Symposium on Birds of the Sea and Shore. Edited by J. Cooper, 1981. Cape Town, S. Africa: African Seabird Group. Pp vi + 473, 26 articles, 11 abstracts, 165 × 235 mm. S.A. Rand 25.00.

Available from Treasurer, African Seabird Group, c/o Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Capetown Rondebosch 7700. South Africa.

This publication is worth a look by those interested in seabirds and waders. Contributions are grouped under four main headings: 1. Feeding ecology, 2. Patterns of distribution and distribution studies, 3. Conservation of species and species habitats and 4. Physiology and breeding biology. The feeding ecology section provides description of the diets and feeding strategies of storm petrels, prions, African Black Oystercatchers and Arctic Skuas. It also includes two articles on the relationships between seabird populations and commercial fisheries both of which should possibly have been placed in the section concerned with the conservation of seabirds and habitats, as both look at the effects of over-fishing of commercial stocks and bird populations.

The distribution section gives the results of a census taken at Marion Island (especially albatrosses and penguins) and two shipboard censuses, one taken between Marion Island and South Africa and the other along the east coast of South Africa. This section includes an instructive article by Griffiths on the biases in censuses of pelagic seabirds and two articles on the distribution and biology of Giant Petrels along the western coast of South Africa and Gough Island. Waltner and Sinclair present a thirty page article on the Terek Sandpiper in South Africa which consists of ten pages on distribution and twenty pages on biometrics and moult.

The section on conservation and species habitats should prove useful to environmental managers. Except for an article on the rehabilitation of oiled Jackass Penguins, all contributions concentrate on the conservation problems associated with shorebirds (terns and waders).

The final section on physiology and breeding biology looks at moult in waders, variation in the developmental stages of seabird chicks and an article on the thermal physiology of

Anhingas and Double-crested Cormorants. Occasionally articles lacked sufficient data, but they do provide stimulating reading.

Tom Montague

Save these birds. The Red Book of Endangered Japanese Birds by Yoshimaro Yamashina (Editor), 1975. Tokyo: Kasumikaikan. Pp 285, col. p11 92, many col. photos. 190 × 265 mm. n.p.g.

Birds in Japan. A Field Guide by Yoshimaro Yamashina, 1982. New [= 3rd] edition. Tokyo: Shubun International. Pp x + 266, many col. paintings and b. & w. drawings and photos. 160 × 220 mm. n.p.g.

The name of Dr Yoshimaro Yamashina is indelibly associated with the ornithology of Japan, not only from his work over several decades, but as the founder (in 1942) of the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, an important research centre (both books are obtainable from there: 49 Nampaidai-machi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo). His long interest in conservation culminated in the publication of *Save these birds*. In Japanese, all extinct and endangered species and subspecies are described in detail. While Japanese limits its use as a general reference outside Japan, it is of equal value for the excellent colour plates and many other illustrations. It is nevertheless a very valuable regional work on endangered birds, which highlights the importance given to conservation in Japan.

Dr Yamashina's interest in conservation can also be appreciated when, in 1961, he published the first important reference in English on identifying Japanese birds. The third edition, published in the same year as the field guide produced by the Wild Bird Society of Japan (see *Emu* 85:136), inevitably draws comparisons between the two books. Firstly, the Yamashina guide only illustrates 280 of the 538 species covered by the WBSJ guide, and has retained the format of the previous two editions. There is only a small number of field guide style plates; the bulk of the species section is presented with one species per page (colour painting and text). This allows more information per species to be included. There is also more general information on bird habitats, distribution and migration, with a complete list of Japan's birds covered at the back of the book. The bird watching guide is also more comprehensive.

As an introduction to Japanese birds and bird watching, I recommend Dr Yamashina's guide.

M.D. Bruce

Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Compact Edition by Salim Ali & S. Dillon Ripley, 1983. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp xlv + 740, col. p11 113, 1 col. map, numerous b. & w. drawings. 220 × 325 mm. Rs 600.

Pictorial Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent by Salim Ali & S. Dillon Ripley, 1983. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp ii + 177, col. p11 73, b. & w. p11 33, col. map as endpaper. 195 × 255 mm. \$36.

A History of the Birds of Ceylon by W.V. Legge, 1983. Colombo: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd, 135 Dutugemunu St, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka. 4 vols. Pp cclv + 1624, col. p11 37, b. & w. drawings. 195 × 255 mm. £88.00.

From 1968 to 1975, the eminent ornithologists Sálím Ali and Dillon Ripley published a 10 volume handbook of the birds of the Indian subcontinent (*Emu* 78:166 and earlier citations there). This monumental work has since become the standard reference for this vast region. Revised (second) editions of these volumes are now emerging, as most are now out of print. The revised vols 1-3 have already been published and vol 4 will soon follow. To ease the problem of those seeking a set of these volumes, and also to facilitate basic research on Indian birds, the authors have published a 'compact' edition. It is a large 'coffee table' book in overall size, but this is to enable the reprinting of the 10 vols (with the revised 1-3) with four pages of the *Handbook* reduced to one in this edition (each page is 140 × 80 mm). Every page is an exact reproduction in this reduced size, and indexed to the separate volumes. Fortunately, the colour plates have been enlarged to the new book's size and collated at the back. The reproduction quality is generally good.

For those not wanting such detailed information, Drs Ali and Ripley have also published the *Pictorial Guide*. This is the first time all species (about 1225) have been illustrated in a single volume. The advantage over the *Handbook* is that all 106 plates are by one artist, John Henry Dick. Dick has portrayed the birds in a basic field guide plate style, which may not have the detail one likes, but quite adequate for working in the field, or just taking a bird watching trip. The text, on the other hand, is reduced to provide only a few basic details in the captions opposite each plate. It only gives the birds' status (coded), overall size (by comparison to a familiar bird and in cm) and a brief description of ecological and geographical distribution. The introduction, however, includes a family by family summary with lists of species recorded. As with the trend in many guides there is a number of black and white plates, mostly covering waders, raptors in flight and waterfowl, but in some cases, e.g. hornbill heads (pl. 59), colour would have been worth it. One problem is that the binding may not withstand intensive (or extensive) use. After only minor handling, my copy is already becoming unglued and fragile along the spine.

The classic work of Col W.V. Legge (1841-1918), a name familiar to early Australian ornithologists (and first President of the RAOU), was first published in three parts between 1878 and 1880. It has long been known as one of the great regional bird studies. Tisara Press has reissued it in a limited edition of 600 sets as part of its project of reprinting early works on Sri Lanka. To increase the value of this unabridged reprint, there is a lengthy introduction (pp vii-cxcix) covering ornithological developments up to 1983 and comparing the current Sri Lanka bird list (411 species) with Legge's coverage (371), and demonstrating that the wealth of information he compiled remains invaluable today. The reproduction of Keuleman's

original plates is generally good. To further demonstrate the value of this work, the publishers have already announced plans to produce a Sinhalese edition. Although Legge's coverage is cross-indexed to a current bird list, some readers may find it difficult to use. However, I recommend it to anyone interested in the birds of Sri Lanka.

M.D. Bruce

Birds of the Mascarenes and Saint Brandon by France Staub, 1976. Port Louis, Mauritius: Organisation Normale des Entreprises Ltée. Pp 110, col. photos 29, b. & w. photos 41, maps 6. 170 × 250 mm. n.p.g.

Oiseaux de la Reunion by N. Barré & A. Barau, 1982. St.-Denis, Réunion: Imprimerie Arts Graphiques Modernes. Pp 196, col. p11 12, many b. & w. drawings. 130 × 200 mm. FF100.00.

The Mascarene Islands, in the western Indian Ocean northeast of Madagascar, are probably best known as the former home of the Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*, but many other species became extinct during the three centuries since the last Dodo died. In fact, the subject of the losses to the bird fauna and the many changes to the islands (especially Mauritius by Staub, also Rodrigues and Réunion) is a dominant feature of both books. Many birds, such as sparrows and mynahs, have been introduced, but some remnants of the endemic bird fauna still survive. Of the 18 extant endemics, eight are in the Red Data Book, and Staub recommends five more. Apart from the 28 introductions, three water birds breed, and over 70 migrants are recorded. The islands remain important for seabird colonies, with 15 species still breeding there (especially on Saint Brandon).

Staub's book (originally published in French in 1973) is more in the form of a general handbook, with only photographs to illustrate the birds, including the world's rarest bird, the Mauritius Kestrel *Falco punctatus*, with only 5-10 individuals still surviving in the wild. Barré & Barau have produced a book in the familiar field guide format, but with only a small avifauna, the text is more like that of a handbook. As four of the eight plates of bird paintings are a little fuzzy in my copy, I would have preferred to see each on a separate page.

Both books are valuable contributions to a fascinating, if somewhat depleted, bird fauna, and create a sense of urgency to see the survivors before it is too late. Fortunately, an intensive survey of the islands by a BOU Expedition was completed a few years ago and the final report will be published shortly; conservation is now very important and well organised.

M.D. Bruce

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