

Book reviews

Edited by B. GILLIES

Penguins of the World: A Bibliography Compiled by A.J. Williams, J. Cooper, I.P. Newton, C.M. Phillips and B.P. Watkins on behalf of the BIOMASS Working Party on Bird Ecology, 1985. Cambridge: British Antarctic Survey, Natural Environment Research Council. University Press. Pp X1+255. 177 × 254 mm. £11.50.

BIOMASS is the acronym for Biological Investigations of Marine Antarctic Systems and Stocks, a co-ordinated 10 year international research program involving 14 countries investigating the Antarctic ecosystem. The BIOMASS Working Party on Bird Ecology is responsible for co-ordinating research activities on Antarctic and Subantarctic seabirds and in that role has produced various data compilations to assist seabird researchers.

This bibliography of over 1900 citations to journal articles, books and theses is intended to be a comprehensive guide to the literature on the Spheniscidae to the end of 1984. Excluded from the bibliography are citations in the following categories: anecdotal, early taxonomic, other bibliographies and book reviews.

Prior to the bibliography are two lists, one for species codes and the other for subjects. Sixteen species of penguin are recognised; the Royal Penguin is included with the Macaroni Penguin and the White-flipped Penguin with the Little Penguin. This treatment does not follow the classification presented in Condon (1975, *Checklist of the Birds of Australia. Part 1. Non-Passerines. R.A.O.U., Melbourne*). The species list itself is in alphabetical order (rather than taxonomic) for the genera but not for the species in each genus. There are 17 subject codes, including distribution, diet and feeding, ecology, behaviour, disease and biochemistry.

Then follows the main body of the bibliography with each citation referencing both the species code list and the subject code list. For many citations there are multiple entries from each list. The entries in the bibliography are arranged alphabetically by author.

Following the bibliography are two indexes. The first index lists all citations for each species under all subject headings; the second lists all citations for each subject by species. Both indexes are easy to use and produce the same citation list for any species and subject combination.

The compilers intend to update the bibliography through the occasional publication of supplementary lists. Users of the bibliography who become aware of omissions or who produce new publications are requested to inform the Secretary of the BIOMASS WPBE.

Although the bibliography refers only to the Spheniscidae, its use is not confined to researchers in this family. The 17 subjects are broad enough to allow workers in other seabird groups or marine-related fields to make use of this bibliography. The publication of supplementary lists of citations will enable this reference work to be kept up to date.

Eric Woehler

A Guide to the Birds of Nepal by Carol and Tim Inskipp, 1985. London: Croom Helm. Pp 392, col. pl 8, many line drawings and maps. 195 × 250 mm. \$63.00.

Increasing interest in the avifauna of the Himalayas and an increase in the number of bird-watchers visiting Nepal have resulted in the production of this somewhat unusual guide. The authors' primary aim to produce a book that provides an accurate record of the distribution and abundance of birds in Nepal has been admirably achieved. The collecting and collating of the raw data must have proved a mammoth task. The information was obtained from many sources: published literature, museum specimens and unpublished sight records received from numerous ornithologists, comprising a total of over 600 references, all of them numbered and referred to throughout the book. These references represent a comprehensive bibliography of Nepalese ornithology.

Not content with this quite remarkable achievement, the authors have taken a giant step forward by including a detailed and fully illustrated identification guide, covering the more difficult-to-identify groups of birds found in Nepal.

The book begins with a detailed map of Nepal, followed by maps indicating annual rainfall and climate. Then follows a brief introduction to the topography, climate and vegetation. There is a small section containing information on bird distribution, recent changes in the avifauna, and migration. This is followed by a brief history of ornithology in Nepal, and a section giving details on some of the better bird-watching areas in the country, with mention of some of the species one could expect to see there. Next are the black and white line drawings of the more difficult-to-identify birds in Nepal, which include: raptors, waders, gulls, owls, wagtails, pipits, tits and buntings. Opposite each page of illustrations are detailed notes on how to separate the various species.

Then follows the main part of the book, the systematic lists of the 835 species of birds that have been recorded in Nepal. For each species both the scientific and common names are provided, and for some species several of the commonly used common names are given. This is a great help to the reader, enabling him to work out exactly which species is being referred to. For each species, there is a note on when the bird was first recorded and by whom, and the bird's present status is given, nominating areas where the bird is most abundant. The notes conclude with the bird's distribution within the Indian sub-continent. All but the rarer vagrants have a distribution map that is divided up into half degree squares, and symbols within the squares indicate whether there have been specimens collected, sight records, possible breeding records or positive breeding records within the area of that square. Also included are period-of-occurrence bars, which indicate the time of year the bird has been recorded in Nepal. There are also altitude bars, which indicate the range in altitude of the bird; this is particularly useful information for a country that is largely mountainous. Approximately 20 per cent of the birds listed are accompanied by a small black and white line drawing. Located half-way through the systematic list are the coloured plates showing the notoriously difficult warblers and rosefinches. A

comprehensive reference section and index of scientific and common names is included at the end of the guide.

The book has one major drawback; the typeface used throughout is apparently produced by a word processor, making the text unattractive to look at, difficult to read and a strain on the eyes. This is a great pity for the content of the book is excellent. The large size of the book (approximately twice the size of Slater's new field-guide) and its weight of over 1 kg are also drawbacks for a book that is designed for use in the field. In fairness, it must be stated that the book covers some 835 species, which is approximately 10 per cent of the world's birds, and it is difficult to see how the authors could have achieved the aim of the book using a reduced format. The book has a hard cover, is well bound and will stand up to use in the field.

Having tried and tested this book on several field-trips to Nepal, I strongly recommend it to any bird-watcher intending to visit the Himalayas. Used in conjunction with a *Pictorial Guide to the Birds of the Indian Sub-Continent* by S. Ali & S.D. Ripley, which illustrates all species found in the Indian sub-continent, the two works combine to form a sound basis for identifying birds in one of the most picturesque and avian rich countries in the world, which is fast becoming a 'mecca' for bird-watchers.

C.J. Doughty

Handbuch der Vögel der Sowjetunion edited by V.D. Il'icev & V.E. Flint, translated from the Russian by B. Stephan, 1985. Wittenberg Lutherstadt: A. Ziemsen Verlag, Vol. 1, pp. 1-350, col. pl. 8, b. & w. figs & maps 76. 175 × 245 mm, approx DM 75.00.

This is the first volume of a major new handbook series on Soviet birds translated from the Russian and to be completed in 10 volumes. Volume one features a comprehensive 191 page introduction and history of Soviet ornithology followed by the first part of the species accounts (loons, grebes, albatrosses and petrels). In *Emu* 86, 59-60 I reviewed the first English language Soviet bird guide and briefly mentioned this work with other Soviet bird books. This book marks the beginnings of yet another multi-volume handbook series on offer. As it is published in German, the English field guide may satisfy most with an interest in Soviet birds and the more serious amongst us may feel that buying the fat volumes of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* is enough. Thus the main appeal is its provision of updated summaries of information on Soviet birds (especially those not occurring in Europe) that is primarily based on the not generally accessible Soviet literature. The species accounts vary from one to eight pages in length with information discussed under 15 headings, from common names in four languages to a note on their economic importance; also included are two-colour maps and text figures of diagnostic features and/or behaviour. Of the Procellariiformes, 18 species are covered in 50 pages (av. 2.8 pages per species). The colour plates are well printed and cover field guide type illustrations (most of the seabirds, except some storm-petrels, are shown in flight), nestlings and eggs. This handbook has the advantage of a compact size and format and I think the valuable historical coverage alone of volume 1 is worth the (reasonable) price of the book. I certainly recommend it for this information, but would also add that as subsequent volumes are published it will certainly prove to be an important reference source and should be in all larger ornithological libraries.

Murray D. Bruce

Birds of the Pilbara Region, Western Australia by G.M. Storr, 1984. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 16, 1-63. 173 × 214 mm. \$5.00.
Revised List of Queensland Birds by G.M. Storr, 1984. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 19, 1-189. 173 × 223 mm. \$5.00.

Birds of the Gascoyne Region, Western Australia by G.M. Storr, 1985. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 21, 1-66. 173 × 223 mm. \$5.00.

Birds of the Mid-eastern Interior of Western Australia by G.M. Storr, 1985. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 22, Pp. 1-45. 173 × 223 mm. \$5.00.

Birds of the Houtman Arbroolhos, Western Australia by G.M. Storr, R.E. Johnstone and P. Griffin, 1986. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 24, Pp. 1-42. 173 × 223 mm. \$5.00.

Birds of the South-eastern Interior of Western Australia by G.M. Storr, 1986. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* 26, Pp. 1-60. 173 × 223 mm. \$5.00.

In 1967 Glen Storr published his first annotated list on the birds of the Northern Territory; this was revised in 1977 (see *Emu* 78, 102). His pioneer effort in 1973 for Queensland (see *Emu* 75, 92-93) has now also been revised. Since 1980 Storr has been covering Western Australia through a series of regional lists, starting with the Kimberley Division and working southward. With the three under review, Storr has produced eight annotated bird lists covering all of northern and a large segment of central Australia. A remarkable feat in nearly two decades by one who does not devote all his energies to studying birds.

The two aspects of Storr's lists that have been touched on by past reviewers are his taxonomic approach and the distributional and related data provided. I will consider these separately:

Taxonomy

Storr has used his earlier lists as vehicles for offering taxonomic variations, some without an explanation or even a reference, and hence by no means the most satisfactory way of introducing them into the literature. I refer to the above cited reviews for samples and to Ingram's comments in *Sunbird* 8, 94-97 (1977) for a more general viewpoint (which also applies to the often sensitive matter of common names). It is suffice to say that while these variations may be something of a nuisance to the non-taxonomist in particular, Storr at least ensures that his taxonomic opinions reach a broader readership. But to journal editors yearning for consistency with bird names from all contributors and to societies seeking to offer standardised bird lists for members, there may be little to commend Storr's methods. On the whole, however, the effect on using his lists is virtually negligible, especially in the latest ones (a combination of one becoming accustomed to Storr's taxonomy and fewer new changes).

Distributional and related data

The invaluable component of each list. There has been relatively little change in the presentation of distributional summaries but the number and detail of annotations have improved and in the latest lists there is greater detail on breeding (including clutch sizes, even if it is admitted that some data may prove to be imprecise).

To ornithologists familiar with Storr's lists the latest ones need no introduction and sell themselves; to those unfamiliar with the lists I strongly recommend adding them to any working library of Australian bird reference books.

Murray D. Bruce

La Collezione Ornitologica del Museo di Zoologia dell'Università di Torino by O. Elter, 1986. Turin: Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali, Cataloghi Vol. 8, pp. 1-513, col. pll 6, 172 × 240 mm, n.p.g.

This is the ornithological volume of the Museum's catalogue of a collection of great historical significance. The collection contains about 21 000 specimens dating back to 1804 and its major period of growth was under the care of Tommaso Salvadori from 1864 until his death in 1923. The collection remained as Salvadori had left it until it was hastily packed and stored away during World War II. When I visited the collection in 1978 a large amount of the collection was still packed in the same containers, but fortunately very little had been lost. Dr Elter has performed a valuable service with her catalogue but, as she is not an ornithologist, she

has alphabetically summarised the material using names from Salvadori's period with all available data provided by using a series of number codes. There is an introduction in Italian and English. For Australian ornithologists there is much of interest, including specimens from Cook's Voyages and a valuable collection donated by Gould with labels written in his own hand or that of Gilbert. Extinct birds include a juvenile King Island Emu *Dromaius ater*. The 'Magenta' voyage material contained in Turin features the type of the recently rediscovered *Pterodroma magentae* and the Catalogue reproduces the five colour plates of this and the other new petrels originally published by Salvin in Rowley's *Orn. Misc.* (1876).

Murray D. Bruce