

Book reviews

Edited by P. DANN

A Field Guide to the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific, by H. Douglas Pratt, Phillip L. Bruner & Delwyn G. Berrett, 1987. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA. Pp xx + 409, col. pll 45, map as endpapers. US\$50.00 (hard) and US\$19.95 (soft).

When Ernst Mayr published his *Birds of the Southwest Pacific* in 1945 (reprinted 1968, 1978), largely based on the results of the Whitney South Sea Expedition (1920-37), it was a major stimulus to the study and observation of birdlife in the vast island region of the tropical Pacific. Some of the fruits of this activity are found in recent works on specific sections of this region, e.g. see my reviews in *Emu* 83, 206, 282; 85, 136, 275; 86, 125. But it was time for a new book, tying together later work in the tropical Pacific and this book does that, as well as giving the region the field guide treatment increasingly available elsewhere. The difference in coverage between the two books is that Mayr's included the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia and excluded the Hawaiian Islands. Pratt *et al.* is the opposite, also including all of Micronesia and Polynesia (except Easter Island).

The new guide has also successfully overcome the problems inherent in dealing with numerous islands vs. a continental land mass. Hence birds on plates are grouped regionally. While the text is in a taxonomic sequence, the appendices provide six regional checklists covering 29 pages (plus 13 pages of regional maps) to help the user narrow down the choices when birding. There is also an overview of the nature of oceanic islands and their habitat diversity (with five photos illustrating examples) and, an increasing necessity in guides today, a section on conservation. This review changes from the culture of indigenous, traditional societies to the general list of problems of today, such as logging and the effects of introduced species. Two tables list the 23 species accepted as extinct, three for the first time (and another can be removed from their hypothetical list and added here, the no longer Mysterious Starling *Aplonis mavornata* now shown to have formerly occurred in the Cook Islands, cf. Olson, 1986, *Notornis* 33, 197-208), and 80 endangered and threatened forms (the latter including some probably already extinct). Other features are familiar to all field guides.

During my own research in the mid-1970s on various aspects of the birdlife of the Pacific Islands, I had the opportunity to meet all three authors on different occasions and discuss the proposed field guide. I also became familiar with Pratt's superb artistic style and technical skill and had been looking forward to seeing this field guide for a decade. I have not been disappointed. Pratt's excellent (and well printed) plates provide not only a brilliant panorama of the birdlife (many never adequately portrayed before) but clearly demonstrate their value in the basic business of field identification (certainly for the many with which I have had field experience). For completeness (and perhaps a little optimism) most of the extinct species are given their proper places in the plates. Also to be found here are the all too numerous exotics established on many islands, most notably in Hawaii.

The species accounts in the text are brief but economically worded. Diagnostic characters of each bird are highlighted, along with notes on habits, voice, similar species (if any), distribution/occurrence and alternative names (if any). Also to be found, where necessary, are annotations covering changes introduced by the authors, e.g. see Sacred Kingfisher, and references on particular species are cited in full. In the distribution section the authors

demonstrate a concerted effort to be as up to date as possible on endemic, resident species and subspecies, which is also invaluable in not only highlighting the plight of many birds, but revealing one's chances of finding them on the relevant island(s).

The coverage of the literature appears to be up to date, allowing for the publication lag, and especially for Hawaii. This region is the main feature of the book and obviously its best market, which is also apparent because the book was sponsored by the Hawaii Audubon Society. The only significant omission of recent literature I can find is the 1984 monograph of the birds of southeast Polynesia by B.T. Holyoak & J.C. Thibault (see *Emu* 86, 125). Although published in France and presumably becoming accessible after the completion of the book, it is the more surprising because my contacts with Holyoak and Thibault, and their earlier publications, made it clear that this work, in various stages, was available over a number of years before its final publication, and also because this was an area of specialisation of Bruner for at least the preceding decade. This is less a criticism, as it can be hard to ensure that every possible source is covered in such a work, but a reminder that both works need to be consulted for information on many areas of Polynesia. As indicated in my review of the latter, it adds another species to the extinct list (*Phalopus mercieri*) and at least one more to the list of exotics (*Bubo virginianus*).

These minor comments, however, do not detract from the valuable summary of tropical Pacific birdlife presented in this book and its excellence as a field guide. I give it my highest recommendation as a field guide and a reference on regions around Australia that should be added to the libraries of all birders and students of Australasian birds.

Murray D. Bruce

Birds of the Blue Mountains, by Margaret Baker & Robin Corringham, 1988. Three Sisters Productions, Box 104, Winmalee 2777. Pp 64, including 56 colour photos, 140 x 210 mm. \$9.95.

This is a small, well illustrated guide to the 56 most commonly observed birds in the Blue Mountains area, west of Sydney, New South Wales. Each is given a single page treatment with a photo plus brief notes on appearance, voice, breeding, behaviour, food and distribution. The introduction gives a brief overview of the area and indicates that the defined area of coverage is the City of the Blue Mountains and the surrounding Blue Mountains National Park.

The total list of 187 species recorded is summarised on four pages at the back, but only the name of each is given. No indication of status in the Blue Mountains is indicated, so that one can conclude they are less common than those illustrated. But assuming many users of this list have access to field guides, it can be treated as an index to a field guide for relevant details and serve to highlight what has been recorded so far.

This is the second booklet focusing on this area. In 1968 Reta Vellenga, with the support of the Gould League, wrote *Some birds of the City of the Blue Mountains*. It didn't cover the national park and was especially intended for use in schools. It was not illustrated but did provide a large number of documented records

from the area, including useful notices of the arrival and spread of introduced species (see McAllan & Bruce (1989), *The Birds of New South Wales. A Working List*). The booklet of Baker & Corringham serves a different purpose in covering the better known birds with text and photos and as it can reach a broader local market it should stimulate more interest in the birdlife of this beautiful region. I recommend it as a delightful production and a useful contribution to the all too few local bird guides covering parts of New South Wales.

Murray D. Bruce

Ecology and Management of Gamebirds, edited by Peter J. Hudson and Michael R.W. Rands, 1988 Oxford: BSP Professional Books. Pp 263, many tables, graphs, 13 b & w photos. 230 x 155 mm. \$49.95

This volume is an integrated review consisting of nine chapters contributed by various authors under the editorship of Peter Hudson and Michael Rands. Both editors have had considerable experience of the subject in their respective roles as Head of Upland Research at the Game Conservancy in Scotland and Director of the International Council for Bird Preservation's conservation program. The book refers to a wide range of species but emphasis is placed on the Order Galliformes in the British Isles, particularly the Families Tetraonidae (grouse) and Phasianidae (pheasants, quail and partridge).

The first chapter introduces the subject of management in an ecological context with a description of the habitats of British gamebirds and some of the changes taking place in these habitats. The stated objective of the book is to describe and examine the principles of ecology and the application of such principles to the management and conservation of wildlife. In this case, gamebirds have been chosen to exemplify the approach since the group has been both managed and studied in detail.

The following two chapters are concerned with population changes in gamebirds; one through the analysis of long-term trends provided by bag records and the other with fecundity, survival and dispersal. The main theme of the book, the relationship between ecological processes and management, is taken up in chapters 4, 5 and 6, which deal with predators (their ecology

and impact on gamebird populations), parasites (their ecology and control) and habitat quality respectively. Some of the interesting issues raised in these three chapters include: the role of parasites in population regulation, the dynamics of predator-prey interactions and the effects of habitat quality on gamebird numbers.

The remaining chapters are less directly associated with the main theme of the book but provide worthwhile insights into their respective relations with gamebird management. The first of these three chapters reviews the mating systems of gamebirds and provides a brief commentary on the management implications of mating systems. The penultimate chapter deals with harvesting and its effects on gamebird populations including an interesting treatment of whether shooting mortality is additive or compensatory. The final contribution is a lucid consideration of the role of models in the management of gamebird populations.

One of the strengths of this work lies in the remarkable number of experimental studies drawn on by the authors. It is unlikely that there is another group of birds for which there is so much experimental work available. Game-keepers have been managing gamebird populations with predator control and habitat manipulation for centuries. Lovat discovered over 85 years ago that the burning of heather in strips on a rotational basis was beneficial to grouse stocks and, since that time, many experiments have been carried out in which the supplies of food and shelter have been manipulated and the effects on gamebird numbers, densities or reproduction have been monitored.

This book will be useful to anyone who is involved with the management of animal populations. Techniques for managing gamebirds can also be applied to other groups, endangered populations or species. While the processes are usually designed to maximise reproductive success or survival, these treatments can be applied also for the purposes of achieving a sustainable yield for harvesting or reversed to reduce populations of pest species.

The Ecology and Management of Gamebirds is an interesting well-written and attractively presented work with many graphs, diagrams and photographs. It is an uncommon blend of high-quality scientific endeavour and easily digestible text which I would recommend to anyone with an interest in the management of populations.

Peter Dann

Software review

Edited by P. DANN

World BirdBase. Santa Barbara Software Products, 1400 Dover Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93103, U.S.A. US\$99.00, plus US \$10.00 postage.

World BirdBase (WBB) is a menu-based computer program for the keeping and presentation of lists of species of birds. It runs under MS-DOS on an IBM compatible computer with 640 kilobytes of memory, a hard disk drive and an A drive the same size as the floppy disks supplied with the package. When ordering specify if the A drive is 9 or 13.5 cm as a copy protection scheme will only allow the program to start if an original disk is present.

The species taxonomy and nomenclature is taken from *Birds of*

the World: A Checklist by James Clements. The common and scientific names are often at variance with the *Recommended English Names for Australian Birds*. Provision is made for altering names, lumping, splitting and adding new species.

The program allows for the recording of observations in two ways: (1) by flagging the presence of a species on nine list categories: home, locale, regional, country (hierarchically) or life list as well as from four special lists; and (2) by entering detailed sightings from a place and date.

The package comes with a 76-page manual and two or three floppy disks containing the computer program and bird name data

files. The indexed manual has a tutorial for each program option. Other sections cover the conundrum of lumping and splitting; codes for countries; and technical notes covering installation onto the computer, backing up and problem solving.

Installation Most computer packages need to be installed onto the machine, this need only be done once. In this case the process requires the user to alter the system configuration, create and change to a directory, copy program files, copy and join data files and configure the program for day-month-year or month-day-year date format. While the steps are outlined in the manual, the task requires some careful typing and the process could have been improved by the provision of an automated installation batch file.

In order to store all the species names the program requires almost all of 640 kilobytes of computer memory. If a machine has memory resident utility programs loaded at system startup then WBB may not run and special config.sys and autoexec.bat files may be required.

Running the program The program is started by changing to the appropriate directory then typing *wbb*, with the original program disk ensconced in drive A. After memory and screen checks, the program loads the common and scientific names and taxonomic sequence of over 9,000 species of birds. This takes 50 seconds on an 12 mhz AT-compatible. A menu with the following main options is presented:

Initialise and correct lists This option allows for the quick flagging of species. The world list shows as a great number of screens of common names arranged in taxonomic order and delimited by family. Cursor keys allow the movement to and the selection of a particular species. A box on the screen shows the scientific name of the current species. A find option allows searching by common or scientific name. It allows partial sub-string search, and is not case or punctuation sensitive e.g. typing *zebraf* or *poe gut* will find Zebra Finch *Poephila guttata*. Once a species is selected the user indicates its presence on the various list categories by typing Y or N.

Present species on any list This option allows the production of the species recorded in one or other of the list categories. The list may be written on the screen, printer or to a computer file were it may be edited with a word processor. The list is presented taxonomically, delimited by family with a taxonomic sequence number.

Enter sightings from a trip This option allows the entry of a set of sightings from a locality and date. A header screen is presented which allows the user to enter a locality/comment, country/area using international codes e.g. AU for Australia; date and whether the sightings pertain to one or more of the list categories. The entry of a full date is mandatory, no provision is made for monthly and yearly periods of observation and the earliest date that may be entered is 1 January 1950. Species are selected from the screens of birds names and a 40 character comment may be ascribed to each selected species. The entry of a large bird list can take some time and might be hastened by the provision of a four figure code for each species. Sightings are placed into a master file with the header information attached. Once sightings are entered they cannot be edited, but they may be displayed or deleted and, if need be, re-entered. A maximum of 32,500 sightings may be stored in a directory, requiring about 12 megabytes of disk space.

Display or remove sightings Sightings may be selected by country, faunal zone, list category, species, first sighting and by time interval. Selected sightings are displayed taxonomically with trip and comment information, to the screen, printer or computer file. The selection of first sightings shows the first entered rather than the one with the earliest date. Not shown are species marked on the various list categories and not entered as sightings. For the most satisfactory results all species should be entered as sightings and in date order. Other options allow the display of a summary of trips and the species observed on those trips and for the deletion of individual sightings.

Split species — add species Within the primary world checklist scientific and common names can be readily changed and species may be added, lumped or split. Individual entries in the sightings file may have to be deleted and re-entered.

World BirdBase is an easy to use computer software package well suited to the many ornithologists who are overt or closeted keepers of lists and who are not prepared to grapple with general database packages. It provides for the flagging of up to nine categories of lists and, importantly, allows for the entry of detailed trip sightings. Reports may be generated in a number of ways and as these may be written to computer files then specially written computer programs could provide other analyses.

Simon Bennett