

REVIEWS

Edited by J.M. PENHALLURICK and B. GILLIES

Conservation of New World Parrots: Proceedings of the ICBP Parrot Working Group Meeting, St. Lucia, 1980 edited by Roger F. Pasquier, 1981. Smithsonian Institution Press for ICBP. Pp xiii + 485, figs 15. 150 × 226 mm. \$US 14.00/£8.00. (Obtainable from ICBP at 219c Huntingdon Rd., Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK or Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. 20560, USA).

The bulk of this book is made up from papers delivered at the 2nd Meeting of the Parrot Working Group (PWG) of the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) which was established by the XVI World Conference of ICBP in August, 1974. It contains fourteen papers on parrots of the Caribbean islands, eight on parrots of the mainland Neotropics and three on parrots of the Australia-New Guinea region. More importantly, at the beginning of the volume are two sections, the first with two chapters on conservation strategies developed by the PWG and the second with three papers on the import and general management of parrots which are of importance in the conservation of the New World species (and elsewhere).

The conservation strategies outlined show the country by country recommendations for both the Caribbean and mainland Neotropics. Each recommendation is given a priority designation depending on the present status of the species, e.g. to prevent extinction, halt the decline, or assure the long-term survival of those considered to be endangered. The two papers of the first section will form an important guide in the years ahead for all those persons and institutions engaged in the conservation of New World parrots.

Other papers, of which there are some twenty-five, contain a wealth of information on the status, distribution, habitat, breeding (captive and wild), and foods and feeding habits of many of the New World parrots, particularly the Amazons. The last three papers are of particular interest to Australian readers as they cover the status of our endangered species generally, the decline of the Norfolk Island Parakeet, and the functional morphology and evolution of the feeding apparatus in parrots with special reference to Pesquet's Parrot.

From the conservation strategies and the twenty-two papers devoted to the Caribbean and mainland Neotropics one can gauge the enormity of the task of the conservation of parrots in the New World, particularly in the Caribbean. The plight of the Amazon parrots in the face of rapid human expansion and its consequences (shooting, trapping for the live bird trade, increase in agriculture, felling of forests, and the loss of habitat) are amply illustrated in the fourteen papers in this section. In the West Indian region alone about fourteen species of parrots have become extinct since the arrival of Europeans and five others survive only as endangered populations. Captive breeding in this area may be the only way that some of the latter will survive, as some populations (e.g. Puerto Rican Parrot) are so small that a severe hurricane could mean their extinction.

The situation in the mainland Neotropics appears slightly better, although there are at least thirty-one species of parrots threatened for one reason or another. At least one third of these are in the south-east of the continent where the blame for their demise can be mostly, if not entirely, attributed to the indirect impact of man. It is certainly significant that the threatened Amazons all occur in regions where this impact has been greatest. However, it appears that in Central and South

America there is still much hope of halting the decline of many species by preserving their habitat and stopping the illegal trapping. Certainly, one is heartened by the amount of work already achieved and planned for the near future. It is to be hoped that such work will be backed by all the governments of the various countries concerned, and that the many institutions and persons involved will continue their support, to conserve the threatened species of the parrot group in the New World.

There are a few errors in the text, but these in no way detract from the value of the book. Two incorrect dates are worthy of further mention:- at the end of the Foreword (p. xiii) the date of the 3rd meeting of the PWG is given as 1974 and should be 1984, and the date of the introduction of the mongoose to Jamaica on p. 119 should be 1872 not 1972.

Not only will this book be of interest to the New World conservationist and those institutions which will be responsible for implementing its conservation strategies, but to all those who have an interest in parrots anywhere in the world. Australian interest will be increased by the fact that the 3rd meeting will be held here in 1984. Information on captive breeding and feeding of parrots will interest many aviculturists. My own parrots have been chomping happily on "dog chow" ever since I reached page 91.

John L. Long

Birdlife in Southern Africa, ed. by K. Newman, 1979. Johannesburg: Macmillan. Pp 260, many col. & b. & w. photos, col. p11 7, maps 7. £15.95.

This volume is a revised version of a very successful book first published in 1971, and is probably the most important contribution to the ornithological literature of southern Africa since *Roberts Birds of South Africa*. Kenneth Newman, with the assistance of eleven other contributing authors of the calibre of Peter Frost, Gordon Maclean, Alan Kemp and Roy Seigfried has succeeded in giving, in his own words, "a broad picture of the way birds live in southern Africa". The term "southern Africa" here includes South West Africa/Namibia, Botswana, the Republic of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mocambique south of the Zambezi River as well as Lesotho and Swaziland.

The book is well produced and copiously illustrated with colour and black and white photographs showing over 330 species. These photographs range from a few that are poor to many that are excellent, particularly those of the Painted Snipe, Harlequin Quail and Lesser Double-collared Sunbird. One or two somewhat artificial-looking portraits have obviously originated from an aviary. In addition, there are seven pleasing paintings by Kenneth Newman, and seven maps that relate to various sections of the text.

The main text comprises nineteen chapters, each written by a well-known authority. Of these, six deal with birds found in particular habitats, such as deserts, indigenous forests and inland waters. Other subjects covered include behaviour, migratory species, vocalization, nest construction and ringing. The region's sixty or more birds of prey are described separately, with illustrations of more than fifty per cent of the species,

while the nocturnal birds and waterfowl also have chapters to themselves. An informative and well-illustrated section describes the brood parasites, in which southern Africa is richer than Australia, with about twenty-five species. The important subject of man's influence on birds is touched on in a chapter entitled "Habitat destruction", which deals not only with pollution and urban development, but also farming practices (and malpractices) such as monoculture (large tracts of sugar cane and maize), extensive plantations of exotic trees, overgrazing, and the detrimental effect these all have on bird life.

The book concludes with pen pictures of the contributing authors, three comprehensive pages of selected references, and an index including scientific names.

Errors appear to be few. In the index there appears the startling line "Petrel, Pintado, see Hen, Cape", while the plate of the Sociable Weaver's nest on page 153 is reproduced upside-down. In chapter 6, "The Diurnal Birds of Prey", the author has unaccountably omitted any mention of the Cuckoo Falcon *Aviceda cuculoides*, which is not uncommon in the moist, eastern areas of the region, although other far less common species are included.

For anyone interested in the birds of the southern African subregion, this book will be an excellent acquisition, being not only pleasing to look at and thoroughly readable but also highly informative and professionally produced.

Gordon Bennett

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Volume II. Hawks to bustards. Edited by S. Cramp *et al.* Oxford: OUP. Pp 695, col. p11 96, many text figures. 260 × 205 mm, 2 kg £Stg 30.00.

Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas. Band 9. Columbiformes to Piciformes. Edited by U.N. Glutz von Blotzheim and K.M. Bauer. 1980. Wiesbaden: Akad. Verlag. Pp 1148, 212 maps, sonagrams and line drawings. 232 × 155 mm, 2.2 kg. DM ?

I cannot imagine how I come to be trying to review another volume of BWP plus one of G and B. I can at least read the first but, because my German starts with *Was tut die Mutter?* and ends with *Die Mutter spielt klavier*, I cannot make such headway with the second. However, both volumes give comprehensive accounts of the species that they cover and perhaps there is no need here to look for matters of detailed criticism.

This second volume of BWP takes in 105 species of hawks, vultures, eagles, ospreys, falcons, grouse, partridges, pheasants, guineafowl, button-quails, rails, cranes and bustards. The arrangement of each account and treatment according to status are the same as in Volume 1 (see review in *Emu* 78: 244-245). Each species, except accidentals, is fully illustrated in colour. Here, it occurs to me that, because no scales are given on the plates, someone unfamiliar with the birds could get the idea that, say, a Capercaillie or Snowcock is much the same size as a Partridge. Also the downy young of gallinaceous and gruiform species often seem inadequately depicted. It might have been helpful to have had separate plates for these in which the young of several species could have been assembled for better comparison of dorsal patterns or other diagnostic features. Though hopelessly rusty in identification of Palearctic raptors in flight, I get the impression that this difficult aspect has been tackled rather successfully. Doubtless experts will not say so but in any case these pictures are not

going to be much use in the field where they are most needed.

B and G, Volume 9, is another matter. It takes in forty-three species of pigeons, doves, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, hoopoes and woodpeckers, numbers that for one thing show how poorly most of these near-passerine groups are represented in Europe and, for another, implies an exhaustive treatment when one notices the size of the volume. The account of each species is divided into sections on much the same lines as those of BWP (field identification, distribution, movements, habitat, and so on). There are no coloured illustrations at all. References are for the most part included in the text or given at the end of the account of each species rather than assembled at the end of the volume as in BWP. Clearly it is solid stuff but what else ought a handbook to be?

The striking difference between the two works, which after all set out to do the same thing, is in coloured illustrations. Thus, one ought to try to assess which is the better method for a handbook. Just as a good political cartoon is better than a page of journalism, so the illustrations in BWP enhance, and perhaps enable simplifications in, the text. Moreover, coloured plates no doubt attract buyers who might otherwise be frightened off by an unadorned text. On the other hand, there is much excellent illustration elsewhere, plain and coloured, and a handbook does not have to compete in this field, something that it can do only at great cost. I think that one has to conclude that for a handbook coloured plates are a luxury, to be enjoyed only in favourable circumstances, i.e. when good illustrators with lots of experience are aplenty and where the price for their work has not run madly wild. A compendium is not meant for reading at bedtime.

To conclude this slight notice of works that deserve something better, may I, as an ordinary birdwatcher, say that awe seems to be the *mot juste* to describe my emotion when first looking into Chapman's Homer? I think that other such, now living, will hardly need more information and references about the birds discussed in the areas concerned before they can no longer read. It is for professional specialists to criticize these books at the high standard to which they have been compiled.

S. Marchant

The Birds of Borneo by Bertram E. Smythies, 3rd edn revised by the Earl of Cranbrook, 1981. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Nature Society (Box 750, Kuala Lumpur) & Sabah Society (Box 547, Kota Kinabalu). Pp xiv + 473, col. p11 47, b. & w. p11 4, map 1. 160 × 240 mm. Malaysian \$40.

The great island of Borneo straddles the equator in a key position between the South-East Asian region and the interchange zone ('Wallacea') with the Australasian region. It had its own bird book as early as 1874 with the pioneer work (*Ann. Mus. Civ. Genova*, vol. 5) of Count Salvadori, a name familiar to students of New Guinea ornithology. Smythies went to Borneo just after the war in a resurgence of activity led by Tom Harrison of the Sarawak Museum and was soon asked to produce a book along the lines of his *The Birds of Burma* (2nd edn, 1953). The first edition appeared in 1960, followed by the second in 1968. Now regarded as classics, both have long been out of print and in great demand. The book is available again, thanks to a joint venture by two Malaysian societies, supported by the editorial resources of the Earl of Cranbrook (formerly Lord Medway, who co-authored with D.R. Wells *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, vol. 5, see *Emu* 78:46).

With the approval of Mr Smythies, a "somewhat radical

revision of the text" has been made and preliminary chapters plus 49 plates of photographs have been deleted. Also deleted is the appendix on the history of Bornean ornithology. The other important changes involve: the revision of English and Scientific names to agree with *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia* (cf *Emu* 77:92); amendments and/or footnotes to the reprinted 1968 text and the addition of several species, including the rare Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, and a supplementary bibliography. The guide to place names and the list of Malay and Iban names have been retained. The original dustjacket has been reproduced on the cover boards of this solidly bound volume. For details of early records one still needs to refer to Smythies' annotated checklist (1957, *Sarawak Mus. J.* 7(24): 523-818, reviewed by Banks, 1961, *Bull. Raffles Mus.* 26: 197-203). The quality of reproduction of the colour plates in this edition is not as good as that in the first edition; however, for the number of plates involved, and their value for identification, the differences are quite negligible.

An interesting change is the elevation to species level of the montane form of the Serpent Eagle as *Spilornis kinabaluensis* (p. 54). Probably similar changes will have to be made with other forms of this complex. Cranbrook has referred to S.A. Parker's study of the *Chrysococcyx 'malayanus'* group (p. 158) (1981, *Zool. Verh. Leiden*, no. 187: 1-56) wherein it is shown that Borneo is inhabited by two sympatric species, *C. minutillus* and *C. russatus* (the name '*malayanus*' must be replaced by Parker's *C. minutillus peninsularis*). This is an aspect of the group not discussed by Ford in his study of their hybridization in Australia (1982, *Emu* 81: 209-222). One item I have noted is that in the hornbill monograph of Sanft (1960, *Das Tierreich* 76: 1-174), two new subspecies from Borneo are described, *Anthracocercus malayanus deminutus* (p. 85) and *Rhyticeros undulatus aequabilis* (p. 115); but these are mentioned in neither the second nor the third editions (nor in the *Zoological Record*). Their current status requires further investigation.

Cranbrook has correctly reverted to the original spelling for the name of the Blue-banded Pitta, *Pitta arquata* Gould 1871, not *P. arcuata* of the earlier editions, following Salvadori's emendation, supra p. 241. (Mayr, in Peters vol. 8, used *arcuata* as it has been in universal usage for over 100 years). I have discussed the case with both Mayr and Cranbrook and have changed from supporting stability of usage for such an emendation to supporting the reestablishment of Gould's name. My research on other nomenclatural problems supports the latter approach here, although some might frown on upsetting stability unnecessarily; but with recent changes to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, this is by no means an isolated case. I found only one major typographical error in the volume under review: on page 300, the Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* is listed as the previous species, the Rufous-tailed Shama *C. pyrropyga*.

The above remarks should not detract from this excellent

book, which fills a very important gap in bird literature.

It is the most comprehensive work available on any part of South East Asia and, as such, deserves a place in ornithological libraries as an introduction to a remarkable and fascinating bird fauna.

Murray D. Bruce

A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands by Herbert A. Raffaele, 1983. San Juan: Fondo Educativo Interamericano. Pp 225, col pll 24, b. & w. 16, maps and tables. 127 × 190 mm. \$13.95.

This guide deals with the 328 living and seven fossil species (in a separate section by Storrs Olsen) that have been recorded from the Caribbean islands of Puerto Rico and associated islands and the not too distant Virgin Islands. The illustrations are by Cindy J. House and John Wiessinger and occupy forty plates at the beginning of the book. Colour is used unless obviously unnecessary. Each of the fourteen endemic species is highlighted on a page by a different coloured background or has an entire page devoted to it. In general the illustrations are good but those of the pigeons are awful. Cindy House's individual portraits are quite delightful.

The text for each species is in standard field guide form. The section on waders is a little inadequate but there are lots of wader guides that one can consult. The other "difficult" groups such as *Dendroica* warblers and hummingbirds are, I think, treated well enough to provide the means for identification. The endemic species are treated at greater length, as they should be, and include quite a few behavioural notes. Some of these endemics are becoming rare and the Puerto Rican Parrot *Amazona vittata* must be one of the rarest with a population in February 1981 of twenty-two wild and fourteen captive birds.

At the back of the book is a series of maps of localities in which to find birds and check lists for them. This is very useful and an excellent idea for field guides.

The guide is well bound and produced on heavy quality glossy paper. This may be waterproof paper but I wasn't game to try to find out with the RAOU copy. It's heavy for a field guide but still portable, though it may require a compensatory shot of rum for the carrier when wandering around the Luquillo Mountains.

This field guide is available in Australia from Adison-Wesley Pty Ltd, 6 Byfield St., North Ryde, NSW 2113 and is worth getting if you are going to Puerto Rico or if you collect field guides (some people do!).

F. Crome

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The following Opinions and Directions have been published by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*, Volume 41, part 1, on 29 March, 1984:

Opinion No

- 1267 (p. 15) *Muscicapa ruficauda* Swainson, 1838 (Aves, Muscicapidae): neotype designated under the plenary powers.

Direction No

- 115 (p. 41) MEROPIDAE (Aves): attributed to Rafinesque, 1815 (correction to entry No. 1 in the Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology).

The Commission regrets that it cannot supply separates of Opinions.

R.V. MELVILLE