REVIEWS

Edited by BELINDA GILLIES

British Birds Lifestyles and Habitat by Ian Prestt, 1982. London: Batsford. Pp 224, many vignettes by Rob Hume. 145 × 225 mm. £7.95.

These days and in all subjects one is constantly reminded of the words of the Preacher ('Of the making of many books there is no end') and may feel a bit cynical if, as I do, one thinks that none provides wares of the value given to us 200 years ago by the little old lady of 8 College Street, Winchester. In this book we have a rather brief and incomplete run-through of perhaps two-thirds of the species on the British list, presented unsystematically, according to habitat, the major divisions of habitats being into uplands, coast, lowland freshwaters, woodlands and farmlands (hedges, etc). There is not much attempt to provide information on identification of the birds themselves regarding their plumages and appearance; the emphasis throughout is more on their behaviour, 'jizz', diet, breeding habits and populations. A short final chapter gives a lead into the techniques of bird-watching and bird societies in Britain.

What, then, is the point in adding to the literature a book that does not try to help beginners with the rudiments of identification and that provides nothing new for advanced bird-watchers or students of ornithology? Not much, you could rightly suppose, but it would be quite unfair to dismiss this book in such a cavalier fashion. It is evidently aimed at the mass of ordinary RSPB members and others who simply enjoy birds; it ought to add to their enjoyment and understanding. It presents a lot of information in an unusual way with the somewhat novel inclusion of estimates of the size of populations and the like, made possible by the work on the British Atlas. If you know what sort of country you will be visiting, this book will quickly tell you what birds you are likely to see, where to look for them and what they will probably be doing. Moreover, it does not lose touch with nature but seems to me to follow the traditions of good natural-history writing.

I wish that someone had popped a copy into my Christmas stocking - very cheap for these days.

S. Marchant

The Birds of the Balearics by David A. Bannerman and W. Mary Bannerman, 1983. London: Croom Helm. Pp 230, col. p11 12 (by Donald Watson), numerous b. & w. vignettes and drawings, 1 map. 194 × 253 mm. £29.50.

I do not suppose that many Australians are among the crowds of ornithological tourists that now visit the Balearics but anyone that does will have in this book a fairly reliable and comprehensive list of the birds that have been recorded in the archipelago and of their present status. I have to say 'fairly' because, apart from the admission by the publishers, it is obvious that the treatment of many passerines is much less thorough than that of non-passerines. The reason is that the senior author, our last link with Alfred Newton, died before the work was complete and indeed was forced by failing eyesight to give up the work late in 1978. In consequence, much concerning some passerines was left unsaid and some obscure mistakes and literals that DAB would never have passed occur.

Information on identification of species, nesting and so on is generally short and conventional and in each account the emphasis is on the validity of past and present records. Scorn is reserved throughout for the unconfirmed and often uncritical records of bird-watchers on holiday. The book is too big for taking into the field; thus, it is no sort of field guide and indeed it will require considerable effort on the part of users to extract the facts.

In short, this book is old-fashioned - discursive, anecdotal, often poorly or inconsistently arranged, even naive taxonomically at the level of species and decidedly idiosyncratic. The counter to that blast, not likely to be realized by those without experience of the literature on West and North Africa, and Mediterranean birds, has been best expressed by Donald Watson in his obituary of David Bannerman: 'His contributions to knowledge, especially on distribution and taxonomy of birds, were massive, but he will be remembered most of all for his monumental books, the like of which will not be seen again.' Indeed, this book is faithfully in the traditions of Bannerman's real monuments but, compared with, say, his *Birds of Tropical West Africa*, it is as if one had some mutilated fragment of antiquity instead of the Hypostyle Hall at Carnak. Yet with all their faults, Bannerman's other monuments are inestimably valuable, even beyond the limits of the regions and countries with which he dealt, and I believe that this, his last fragment, will be as indispensably useful to ornithologists visiting the Balearics as I found his other books in West Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, one hopes that a book like this will stimulate and strengthen efforts at conservation, now being undertaken by local ornithological groups. In the Mediterranean, perhaps like nowhere else in the world, birds are under threat from tourism, development and shooting and the Balearics seem to be no exception. It is depressing but perhaps salutary to realize from this book how greatly the avifauna of the islands must have changed and decreased in one's own lifetime.

S. Marchant

Introduced Birds of the World: The worldwide history, distribution and influence of birds introduced to new environments by John L. Long, 1981. Sydney: Reed. Pp 528, 425 maps, many figs. and tables, 190 × 260 mm. $35.

In this important reference book, Long, who works for the Western Australian Agricultural Protection Board, has compiled a systematic list of 425 species that have been introduced by man throughout the world. For each species there is a map showing its native and introduced distributions and text on its distinguishing characteristics, general distribution, introduced distribution, general habits and notes on the history of each introduction. Susan Tingay has contributed some 215 high quality line drawings of the more notable introductions. The drawings are not only highly accurate but their beauty enhances the appearance of the book.

The book is well laid out and easy to use with one exception: the range maps show those parts of the world where the species has been introduced with a small shafted arrow indicating a successful introduction and a shaftless arrow, an unsuccessful

one. I found the system confusing; the shafts were difficult to see and I forgot which meant what.

Except for the odd transgression in the range maps I could find no errors of fact or omission in the book. Not only does Long provide data on the outcome of all documented introductions throughout the world he also provides general information and references on the species concerned. Under "General Habits" is summarised information on status, habitat, gregariousness, movements, food, breeding, nest and eggs. I found this section very useful as a general reference.

Those readers who seek an understanding of the biological and ecological determinants of successful avian introductions will be disappointed. They must be satisfied with a brief introduction which covers the misguided reasons for introductions, the methods used, the dangers and benefits. Surprisingly, there is little direct evidence to document the competitive effects introduced species have on native populations of birds, apart from that of islands such as New Zealand and Hawaii. There is a need for studies of this nature in Australia; the results would not only enhance our understanding of evolutionary ecology but help formulate ways to manage introduced species to ameliorate their deleterious effects.

Given the enormous amount of accurate data compiled by Long the book is likely to remain the key reference on introduced birds for many years to come.

Richard Zann

(The) Wildfowl of Britain and Europe by M. Ogilvie, 1982. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp vii, including a foreword by S. Cramp, and 84, col. pll 10 full pp, 40 half pp by N.W. Cusa and P. Scott; end paper maps. $22.50.

Wildfowl of Britain and Europe is a derivative of the relevant section of vol. 1 of the definitive *Handbook of the birds of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East: The birds of the western Palearctic* (Cramp, S. *et al.* 1977) (BWP), reviewed in *Emu* 78: 244–245. The plates are taken directly and without modification from that august volume but the text has been specially written by Ogilvie, himself a member of the editorial panel of the BWP. Why then the new book, and what does the *Wildfowl of Britain and Europe* attempt?

According to the blurb, the *Wildfowl* book illustrates the 'variety and beauty' of ducks, geese and swans, provides the 'characteristics of the wildfowl and their biology' and, through the text and plates, gives 'information on individual species and their identification'. So, it may be said, do numerous other books. Does the scope here vary much, or add anything new then, and are the apparently restricted aims achieved?

In the introduction (21pp) the Anatidae are briefly described, and the subfamilies and tribes catalogued with an indication of characteristics common to the taxa. Evolution and hybridization are then discussed lightly, with mention of subspeciation and the problems that hybrids may create to birdwatchers (? twitchers). Then comes a section on habitat (2pp) followed by distribution, numbers and mortality (2pp); here the point is made that present distributions, and perhaps some populations, are affected to varying degree by man and his associated activities. Whilst suggesting that some of the small populations of swans or geese may present some concern and still need monitoring and some protection, Ogilvie considers that most wildfowl populations are reasonably secure and indeed increasing. A summary of movements follows, with mention of the Marbled Teal *Marmonetta angustirostris* which, like some Australian waterfowl, uses shallow often temporary waters and apparently responds to 'drought and rain more than the annual seasons'. Food, the variety of feeding methods, social patterns and behaviour are briefly discussed and followed by short sections on breeding biology, plumages and moult.

The introduction is then succeeded by the main body of the text, brief discussion of species and their representation in plates. Typically, individual species are shown in the colour plates (not always identical in tone with those of BWP), with males and females being illustrated (in the various plumages where appropriate): ducklings are also shown for those species breeding within the range covered by the book. Plates of birds in flight are provided, and these usefully emphasise both shape and colour. In the text breeding range and habitat are noted, subspecies are mentioned where relevant, and identification details given for various sexes or ages. Vocalisations are summarised in a sentence or so, and population estimates given for the 54 species, whether breeding, migrant, vagrant or introduced, occuring in the western Palaearctic.

To an extent then the aims are met. Certainly the variety of the Anatidae is illustrated; yes, some characteristics are discussed and limited specific information is presented. Little about the book is, however, new or useful. Field guides are better suited to those seeking rapid identification, and more detailed information has been presented elsewhere and recently (e.g. in *Ducks of Britain and Europe* and in *Wild Geese*, both by Ogilvie, and more particularly in BWP). Those interested in wildfowl alone, might add the book to their collection, to maintain its completeness, but this example of recycling with a vengeance is not particularly useful even though the price is about a fifth of the original volume of the BWP. However, in the BWP the purchaser would get everything from the ostrich to the ducks. I trust that the BWP does not fledge other books of this nature. Better surely to abstract in entirety if indeed at all.

F I Norman

Community Ecology of a Coral Cay (Monographiae Biologicae Vol. 43) by Harold Heatwole, Terence Done and Elizabeth Cameron, 1981. The Hague: W. Junk. Pp 379, figs 101, append. 6. 160 × 250 mm. US$74.00.

In the winter of 1968 Hal Heatwole visited One Tree Island in the Capricorn Group of Great Barrier Reef, armed with two air-tight plastic rubbish bins, among other gear, to make sure that no food scraps and human refuse became sources of energy for the organisms inhabiting this coral cay of less than 5 hectares in area. Procedures to avoid trampling of vegetation and attraction of insects to the gas lamp were applied rigidly. Subsequent bi-monthly expeditions to the islands during 1969 and 1970 and irregular follow-up visits till 1978 monitored the plant biomass and animal populations in as much detail as possible in their natural state. The book is a comprehensive, scientific account of the terrestrial biota of the island studied by Dr Heatwole and his colleagues from the University of New England during this period.

The book is divided into four parts. The short introductory part (four pages) gives a rationale of their study. The authors contend: 'It is not enough to know the general body of theory about island ecology. It is also important to know just how well it applies in its various aspects to particular geographic areas.' They define the kinds of study needed for community ecology of islands. These have given rise to and have been followed

closely in their investigation. These were (1) to make as complete a community study as possible, involving as many taxa and trophic levels as feasible, (microorganisms were not studied), (2) to encompass the full range of environmental perturbutions experienced by the community, including unusual weather events as well as normal seasonal changes, (a drought and a tropical cyclone were experienced), (3) to treat a relatively common island type so as to be characteristic of many islands rather than a unique situation (the type was of a small coral cay on the continental shelf, with coral rubble rather than sand as substrate), and (4) to deal with a relatively natural community so as to be free from the necessity of interpreting the effect of human disturbance (the island later became an Island for Science and a field station was built there by The Australian Museum in 1971, transferred to the University of Sydney in 1975 and its facilities expanded subsequently).

Part Two, in twenty-five pages, provides a brief history of island biogeography from Darwin and Wallace to MacArthur and Wilson and discusses, with little technical jargon, some of the important ecological concepts being applied to the study. Part Three is the major body of the book and describes the island, methods of investigation, flora and vegetation, fauna and case histories, the pond, and biological transfer from sea to the islands. Part Four is a synthesis giving quantitative representations of various biological properties measured, together with theoretical considerations and an overview of the One Tree Island community.

Twenty-one species of vascular plants, mostly perennial and halophytic which are characteristic of strand vegetation, were established on the island. Prominent trees (*Pisonia, Pandanus*) and shrubs (*Argusia*), representing the island's climax vegetation but occurring in patches, were not very tall and were affected by drought. A total of 396 species of arthropods were found above ground, of which only 29 (7%) were permanent although 172 species were established as breeding populations at least temporarily. The rest were transient. Great fluctuations in the number of species were caused by environmental perturbations, making it difficult to arrive at the equilibrium number for the island (seventy-nine species of arthropods were considered resident). Over 130 species of soil microarthropods were also recorded and their number and biomass estimated. In spite of limited amounts of litter and soil available, the island had much larger and stable populations of soil animals than of epigeal arthropods.

Of particular interest to the readers of this journal, there are eighty-four species belonging to thirty-five families of birds recorded from the island. All species with status (some presumed and some incorrect) are listed (in an appendix) and their distribution on the island, particularly the nesting sites of terns, is described in detail. One Tree Island is unique in supporting nesting colonies of Roseate, Black-naped, Bridled, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns, though not all species nest every year, Substrate, location and vegetation type, species of nearest plant were recorded for sample tern nests and measurements were made of internest distances, vegetation height and per cent cover above nest, horizontal distances to the nearest stem of plant and sea. For the Reef Heron, the nesting tree species, nest height, nest dimensions and materials were also recorded. The authors compared the numbers of individuals they recorded with those reported by others. Seasonal and yearly variations of numbers among the 'resident' species were very large. They did not record the Sooty Tern (several were present and at least one pair produced young in 1974) nor the nesting of the Black Noddy (the first successful nesting occurred in 1978) (see Seabird Islands Series No. 66 in *Corella* 3: 37–40). They also compared the number of species with that for Heron Island. In spite of geographical proximity, only six breeding species (half the number of breeding species on each island) were shared between the two islands, reflecting the habitat differences. Among the resident land birds the Golden-headed Cisticola bred regularly on One Tree but was not recorded from Heron, whereas the Bar-shouldered Dove bred only on Heron. There were more straggling cuckoos, herons and tropicbirds recorded from One Tree than from Heron (no longer the case in 1983). Three subantarctic species (Wandering Albatross, Sooty Albatross and Antarctic Prion) listed for One Tree Island were found washed up on the beach. The number of dead birds recorded between May 1968 and December 1970 amounted to fifty-nine, involving at least thirteen species. For some species the body weight and defaecation rates were given.

One Tree Island is an important island for the conservation of breeding terns including the Roseate Tern on Great Barrier Reef. Although predation by Silver Gulls and flooding of nesting areas are mentioned as causes of breeding failure, no serious consideration has been given to the future protection of these birds.

The book is well produced, with high quality printing on glossy paper. Very few misprints occur in the text, though some minor errors such as found in p 112 (October 1968 instead of October 1969) and in p 344 (1969 instead of 1968) are annoying and make one wonder about figures in more important tables.

This is a book for serious students in biology, particularly island ecology, but if the price were not prohibitive it would be recommended also to biology teachers and naturalists who visit Great Barrier Reef. For less technically inclined readers and those interested in the coral reef and associated life underwater, the story of One Tree Island and its reef was written by Harolf Heatwole in 'A Coral Island' (1981, Collins, Sydney, $16.95).

Jiro Kikkawa

Owls of Europe by Heimo Mikkola, 1983. Calton: T. & A.D. Poyser. Pp 397, col. pll 8, photos 75, many b & w figs. 164 × 245 mm. £16.80.

Geographically, this book gives more than its title suggests, for it is not confined to owls occurring in Europe, but includes "Mediterranean" species, found no nearer to Europe than North Africa, Asia Minor and Israel. Even "Mediterranean" is not well-defined and it was still unexpected to me to find that Luristan (in south-western Iran) is within the area covered (p. 71).

The other half of the title is correct: the book deals wholly and gloriously with owls. It consists of three parts. Part I is introductory; it has six chapters: the origin of owls, taxonomy, anatomical characters, external features, some unique aspects of physique, and owl pellets. These give an adequate introduction to the sections that follow.

Part II, with chapters seven to twenty-three, deals with the different species, a chapter for each. It may come as a surprise that Europe has seventeen species of owls, but when the geographical boundaries of Europe are adhered to, this number diminishes to thirteen, the non-European species included being *Otus brucei, Ketupa zeylonensis, Strix butleri* and *Asio capensis.*

Part III, entitled "Ecological relationships in European owls", contains discussions of such interesting subjects as sexual dimorphism and difference in diet, interspecific aggres-

sion, predator-prey relationships, ecological isolation mechanisms, and a final chapter on conservation and legal status. The book concludes with a bibliography of books on European owls, a comprehensive list of references, a number of tables giving lists of food, breeding habitats, measurements, etc (apparently, these have been placed together for purely technical reasons, instead of being scattered through the text in the places where they really belong).

The author is a Scandinavian and an ecologist. Both facts contribute considerably to the value of the book. Mikkola's main interest is in food, food chains, predator-prey relationships, subjects to which he himself has made no mean contribution, and a field in which Scandinavians are world leaders. He has made full use of Scandinavian literature (in this respect the book differs very favourably from works by Anglo-Saxon authors, who usually show a naive lack of awareness that publications not written in English might be worth consulting). Moreover, Scandinavia has several species which are rare or absent from western Europe, and the author has paid special attention to these.

The text is supported by numerous graphs, diagrams and distribution maps; in addition there are photographs, coloured plates and very attractive black and white drawings by Ian Willis, which contribute considerably to the appearance of this well-produced work.

No matter how good a book is, the diligent reviewer can always find something to peck at. The first chapter, outlining the fossil record, is disappointing. Its single page does not go beyond repeating what has been said in previous owl books (Burton, 1973, *Owls of the World*): no mention is made of the fascinating recent finds in the Mediterranean as published by Ballmann (1973, *Scripta Geologica* 17: 1-75 and 1976, *Scripta Geologica* 38: 1-59), Mourer-Chauviré *et al.* (1980, *Geobios* 13: 803-810) and Weesie (1982, *Proc. Kon. Ned. Akad. Wetensch* (B) 85: 323-336). The remark about colour vision of the Little Owl *Athene noctua* (p. 29) should have been given a reference to Meijknecht (1941, *Ardea* 30: 129-174) instead of a meaningless one to Sparks & Soper (1970, *Owls: their natural and unnatural history*). In the discussion of carrion-feeding (p. 49), a reference to van Heurn (1954, *Ardea* 42: 350) would have been appropriate. The statements that the females of *Otus scops* become sterile at the age of six years and that families of this species remain together on migration (p. 66) intrigued me, so that I checked the reference (Koenig, 1973, *Z. Tierpsychol. Beih.* 13: 1-24). As regards the sterility, this was based on only two individuals, one of which actually produced fertile eggs in her seventh year, but there is no mention at all of migration in family parties: if this information is correct (which I doubt very much) it is not taken from Koenig. The discussion of sexual size dimorphism (chapter 24) could have been more valuable if the author had been aware that there are, outside Europe, species in which the males are larger than the females (for example the Australian Barking Owl, Powerful Owl and Rufous Owl).

In summary, it may be stated that this book is excellent value for money and can be warmly recommended. Its importance is not confined to Europe, but is world-wide: Australian owl addicts and ecologists will find much of interest in it, like the kind of question to ask when studying the ecology of owls, and how to go about searching for the answers.

G.F. Mees

The Barn Owl by D.S. Bunn, A.B. Warburton & R.D.S Wilson, 1982. Calton: T. & A.D. Poyser. Pp 264. 1 col. photo., b. & w. photos 31; text-figures and line drawings. Bound in black linen, 160 × 240 mm, price £12.60.

The Barn Owl is one of the very few species of land bird which Australia and Great Britain have in common, and therefore this book on the British Barn Owl will be of interest to Australian readers.

To save space for a discussion, I will give here only a very superficial review of the contents. The divisions of the book are conventional, the titles of the nine chapters being: description and adaptations; voice; general behaviour; food; breeding; movements; factors controlling population, and possible conservation measures; distribution in the British Islands; folklore. In addition there are a preface, some appendices, a list of references and an index.

The authors state modestly that they are amateurs, and this fortunate fact is displayed in the book: there are no logarithms, and the few graphs are simple and comprehensible. Most refreshing of all is that the authors have studied owls as individuals: their owls have personality, they differ in behaviour, in voice, in appearance, and have not been reduced to boring mathematics. The observers were primarily interested in owls, and the owls themselves presented the questions, which subsequently the observers have tried to answer.

Reading the book, I found discussions of many matters which were new to me, some minor, others of fundamental significance. In the first category, I would place the observation that frequent bathing in captivity may be a result of boredom (p. 80), in the second the suggestion that Barn Owls are more strictly nocturnal than they need be physiologically, because of the mobbing by Corvids they are exposed to if they try to be active in daytime (pp. 69-70). It is a widely-held notion that great differences in the ages of the young in one nest would at least ensure the survival of the oldest and strongest one, at the expense of the smaller and weaker young. Thus, the observations that, even when they were hungry themselves, larger young would sometimes try to feed smaller ones, and that it is not always the largest young that survives, are of particular significance and deserve further study (p. 133).

After hatching, young Barn Owls remain in the nest for about two months — this long fledging time explains why in the wild second broods occur only under exceptionally favourable conditions. Feeding of the young takes place almost exclusively on the nest, so that the last young remaining in the nest fares better than its older brothers and sisters that have already left it. It is not made quite clear how feeding of the young ceases in their twelfth or thirteenth week of life, if at four months a healthy bird was not yet able to hunt efficiently and starved to death (p. 139). I could go on citing interesting items from the book.

All is not well with the Barn Owl in Britain. Pesticides have been blamed for its decrease in recent years, but the major cause is that, as a result of modern farming practices (of which the use of pesticides is only one facet), its food has become scarce. Therefore, the provision of nesting-boxes etc, useful as it may be locally, will not necessarily lead to an increase in the resident population. The same is occurring in the Netherlands, where there has been a dramatic decrease (J. de Jong, 1983, *De Kerkuil*) and elsewhere in Western Europe.

As the book is primarily concerned with the Barn Owl in Britain, it is understandable that mainly English and more generally European literature has been used. There are also references to American and African publications, but

Australian literature has been neglected.

Compared with the many positive points in the text, the negative ones are minor and criticism at this level may look petty. A few small items I picked up which require correction or explanation follow here. Subfossil bones from New Zealand are mentioned (p. 24), but it has since been shown that this concerned a case of misidentification (Millener, 1983, *Notornis* 30: 15-21). The remark (p. 26) about the evolution of insular subspecies is confused, and is contradicted by the occurrence of endemic subspecies on oceanic islands like the Galapagos. The discussion about primary and secondary prey species (p. 83) seems pretty obvious: when the prey species which normally constitutes the major food is scarce or absent, some other species will become no. 1 on the menu, the alternative would be starvation. The words "predated" (p. 117) and "predating" (p. 176, 194) offend me; these words in their true meaning are derived from the word date: one can predate a letter, or one publication can be predated (antedated) by another. The authors, however, seem to have derived their verb from the noun predation! With this, they lose some of the good marks they deserve for having avoided the word "strategy" (the ridiculous mis-use of which in biological literature nowadays seems to be almost compulsory for everybody who wants to be "with it"). Misprints are scarce ("biotype" for "biotope" had me puzzled for a moment, p. 193). Any British author worth his salt will, to demonstrate his erudition, throw in a few alien words in italics in his text, and always misspelt. The present authors are no exception: *Wanderjahre* should have an initial capital, and when used in the nominative plural, as the authors do, has no "n" at the end (p. 154).

The illustrations of the book consist mostly of photographs: a very attractive coloured frontispiece, and over thirty black-and-white ones. I find, in particular, plates no. 1 (illustrating "the long flexible neck") and no. 17 (a conventional portrait) appealing. The production of the book is of the high standard one has come to expect of its publishers.

Contents, quality of production and price combine to make this a book well worth buying. In Australia it should be of particular value as a basis for comparison with the Australian subspecies of the Barn Owl, and for the many practical suggestions it contains for the study of this elusive bird.

G.F. Mees

Thirteenth Volume of Chinese Fauna Sinica (Aves). Edited by Li Guihuan, Zheng Baolai and Liu Guangzuo, 1982. Beijing, China: Science Press. Pp 117, col. pll 40, b. & w. pll 15, distrb. maps 54. 196 × 273 mm, Hardcover, 4.50 yuan (RMB), Paperback 2.05 yuan (RMB).

This 220,000 word volume, written entirely in Chinese, makes a comprehensive study of fifty-seven species and sixty subspecies from fifteen genera of the following passerine families: Paridae, Sittidae, Certhiidae, Remizidae, Dicaeidae, Nectariniidae and Zosteropidae. The Editor-in-Chief, Li Guihuan, is associate professor of the Sichuan Agricultural College.

The Fauna Sinica of China (Aves) aims to sum up the ornithological research hitherto done in China. According to the plan, it has fourteen volumes. So far three volumes have been published. The second volume, on Anseriformes, was published in 1979, and the fourth volume, on Galliformes, in 1978. The other volumes are in the process of being edited.

In the thirteenth volume, the authors devote most of the space to the morphology, classification, ecology and differentiation of subspecies as well as geographical distribution of every species. Scientific names and Chinese names for all families, genera, species and subspecies are cited in full.

The volume pays great attention to the study of the birds special to China. By the end of 1982, 1186 species of birds from China were recorded, exceeding the combined total recorded in Europe and North America. In the Paridae, there are four genera, twenty-one species and thirty-three subspecies, of which *Parus holsti, Parus venustulus, Parus superciliosus, Parus davidi* and *Aegithalos fuliginosus* are endemic to China, and they are dealt with in detail in the volume.

Another characteristic of the volume is the stress on the economic value of the birds. Of the seven families mentioned in the volume, Paridae, Sittidae and Zosteropidae are well known beneficial birds to agriculture and forestry; birds of the Nectariniidae and Diceaidae like to move about among flowers and play a part in carrying pollen.

The authors hold some new views regarding the subspecies. For instance, it has been generally accepted that the *Melanochlora sultanea* has three subspecies, but the authors maintain that there are only two. There are similar cases. The volume holds different views from Cheng Tso-hsin's *Distributional list of Chinese birds* (revised edition, 1976) regarding *Aegithalos concinnus, Cephalopyrus, Flammiceps, Nectarinia asiatica* and *Aethopyga siparaja.*

While editing the volume, the authors went through almost all the relevant specimens and data, and most of the specimens based on and data referred to were collected or published after liberation. However in some cases specimens are insufficient. The specimen of *Parus holsti* is lacking, so are those of *Parus cyanus berezowskii, Parus ater insularis* and *Parus ater ptilosus.*

There are some shortcomings of the volume. In the distributional sections, only past records are marked but no indications of the present numbers of the birds are made. It is not made known to the reader whether the birds are endangered or extinct.

The ecological data of some of the birds are insufficient. For instance, the ecological data of *Parus holsti* and *Parus varius* are lacking, and there are only one or two lines in the volume regarding the ecology of *Parus superciliosus* and *Sitta leucopsis.*

Tan Yaokuang, Secretary-General of the Ornithological Society of China.

The Doves, Parrots, Louries and Cuckoos of Southern Africa by M.K. Rowan, 1983. Cape Town, Jo'burg: David Philip. Pp xx and 429, col. pl1 8, distrib. maps. 150 × 238 mm. SA price R24 + gst.

Roberts' *Birds of South Africa*, perhaps the most successful bird book ever published, appeared in 1940 under the aegis of the South African (now John Voelcker) Bird Book Fund. Its success enabled the Book Fund since then to produce two checklists of South African birds, and two monographs by Skead, and now this third monograph, which deals with about 40 species in the families mentioned that occur south of the Zambesi and Kunene Rivers.

After a general explanatory introduction, detailed accounts of each species are given and each family is introduced with a comprehensive introduction. Each account is subdivided into ten numbered sections for general topics (taxonomy, habitat, distribution, etc.), description (weights, measurements, plumage, voice and other matters), social organization, maintenance activities (food, drink, preening, daily cycle), reproduction, hybrids, moult, population dynamics, parasites and relations with man. Subdivisions of the ten major sections are also numbered in the conventional decimalized method, i.e. 2.3.1. This makes it very easy for a reader to find what information he needs and to know what is available, the avowed implication being that, if a section or subsection is missing from an account, nothing is known about that aspect or attribute of the species.

Compared with Australia, South Africa is poorly off for doves and parrots but better provided with cuckoos and has a few louries (turacos to me), which do not reach our region. On the face of it, then, it may seem that this book will not have much interest for Australian readers. Not so; for one thing there is a model here for the arrangement of a handbook; for another, the book is worth having simply for the no-nonsense account of cuckoos in general, which seems to me to be masterly and brilliantly succinct, and for the refreshingly definite, forthright and honest way in which many of the data (e.g. incubation periods, clutch the sizes) are presented.

In her introduction Mrs Rowan is slightly apologetic for the monographic presentation of her work. I see no reason for this. With the high standards that she set herself any other approach would not have done her justice. Those standards of exactness and completeness invite comparison with compendia such as the *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, even if Mrs Rowan's scope is much less. I am inclined to think that she wins the gold medal.

S. Marchant

Les Oiseaux de Chine de Mongolie et de Corée: passereaux par R.D. Étchécopar et F. Hüe, illustré par P. Suiro et C.G. Armani, 1983. Pp 704, col. pl1 22, b. & w. pl1 2, distrib. maps, line drawings. 166 × 247 mm. Fr 520.

Twenty-five years ago the authors set out to describe the birds of the zone of deserts that fringes the south of the Palaearctic from the Atlantic to Mongolia. M. Hüe was unfortunately killed in an accident before the task was finished but M. Étchécopar has successfully completed it with this fourth volume. The previous three were: *Les Oiseaux du Nord de l'Afrique* (1964); *Les Oiseaux du Proche et du Moyen Orient* (1970); and *Les Oiseaux de Chine etc: non-passereaux* (1978) (review by Shane Parker *Emu* 80: 174). Thus we now have a fine and comprehensive record of the birds of a vast area that previously was not well covered in the literature. However, most people will probably come to regard this present volume with its predecessor as a large work on the birds of China, which in itself is a worthy and valuable contribution, seeing that there is no modern account of these birds in a western language and a book on them in Chinese is not yet complete.

About 600 species of birds are covered in a manner to which one has become accustomed by the previous volumes in the series. Where practicable, groups of birds (from families to genera) are introduced with an artificial key. Each species then has about a page of text covering identification, an outline of behaviour, habitat and voice, nest and eggs, and distribution with a break-down to the ranges of subspecies. The ranges of many species are shown on maps and for migratory species the summer and winter distributions are also usually shown. There are line drawings of many species, particularly those not illustrated in colour. The coloured plates depict about 450 species, often with more than one illustration per species. Those by M. Suiro are clear and pleasing; those M. Armani seem fuzzy by comparison and less satisfying; but without first-hand knowledge of the birds one can say no more except to speculate that probably a good many species have not been thus illustrated before or else that it would be hard to find a picture of them, another valuable attribute of the book.

Without a chance to test the book in practice, it is not sensible to attempt any serious criticism but clearly it is not going to be much use to anyone taking a three-week swing through the tourist centres of China. With its companion volume it weighs 2.65 kg and occupies about 550 cm^3; so, if you take it, you will probably have to leave your clean shirts behind. But in any case I understand from a recent traveller that one sees about five birds per 1000 km^2 in the tourist zone. I wonder then how representative of modern distribution the range maps are. As with all such things, they are inevitably so small that without a good geographical knowledge of such a large country it would be hard to make much use of them. Anyway, the book was never meant to be a field-guide and with proper records of observations, when you get home, it ought to give you a good idea of what you saw on your travels. I can believe only that the book will remain for many years indispensible to Westerners who want to know about the birds of China.

S. Marchant

Öko-ornithologisches Glossarium Eco-ornithological Glossary: Deutsch-English English-German by Rudolf Berndt & Wolfgang Winkel, 1983. Translated by Rosemary Jellis. Introduction by Stanley Cramp. Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt. Pp 79. 157 × 232 mm. DM30.

During the past two decades avian ecology has become increasingly important for ornithologists and students of the environment generally. Often birds are regarded as key indicators of subtle changes in the ecosystem. There is unquestionably a real need for those involved with the recognized and multiplying problems to keep abreast of the facts established by professional and amateur workers, in countries where other languages are used. This bilingual glossary of eco-ornithological terminology will lighten the task by making language barriers easier to overcome, and so will expedite communication with wider understanding of the findings of research.

Similar glossaries in additional languages would greatly facilitate this desired end.

E.F. Boehm

Finding Birds Around the World by Peter Alden & John Gooders, 1981. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Pp xxiv + 683, many maps. 150 × 215 mm. US$17.95 (Special offer available from Peter Alden, PO Box 912, Westport CT 06881, USA).

As the authors state in the book, this is the first world travel guide for birders (or bird watchers, as one may prefer to be called), containing the best of the world's bird spots in a single volume. The coverage is 111 areas. Such an ambitious project is subject to much criticism for the choices made, let alone the information provided, but it certainly serves to provide a useful

introduction to a wide range of places from a birding viewpoint. If you are contemplating an overseas bird watching holiday this book can certainly help you in deciding where to go. The wide experiences of the authors are amply demonstrated from reading the book, supplemented here and there with material from friends and colleagues around the world.

Each listing is provided with some basic travel details and a local map. Birding localities are given, with directions. Bird (and sometimes other) highlights are indicated, with a complete checklist appended. Only English names are given, and if any do not correspond to the names in one's bird guide, they are cross-referenced in the systematic index, where scientific names are also given. The choices of English names used may sometimes be controversial, but the authors have provided their views on this subject. Symbols also give abundance, seasonal status and general distribution by elevation (lowland or highland).

What about Australian spots? Eight are listed, covering all states except South Australia. The Northern Territory, is included, but not the A.C.T. It is easy to criticise various details, but if one was planning a birding trip to Australia, it would certainly help one's plans. The bibliography is divided by major regions, with ample references to help with most places.

This book runs the inevitable risk of becoming rather dated in sections, but as an overall introduction to global bird watching it is a useful addition to the library of any active bird watcher. It can also be a useful companion to one or more of the many world bird lists now available (e.g. see *Emu* 83: 280).

M.D. Bruce

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