

Preserving Wildlife: An International Perspective

Mark. A. Michael, 2000.
Humanity Books, New York.
307 pp. ISBN 1-57392-727-9.
RRP AUD\$63.

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PRESERVING Wildlife: An International Perspective is an anthology of twenty papers exploring the issues related to the preservation of wildlife, with an emphasis on related management approaches. This topic is introduced philosophically with a discussion of moral values associated with human activities. Sport hunting, the medical aid of injured wild animals and the manipulation of wildlife during ecological field studies are discussed within this context. The focus then shifts to a selection of wildlife management strategies including habitat protection, captive breeding, culling of non-native species, eco-tourism and marketing of wildlife products.

Examples of successes and failures are used to stress the necessity for independent treatment of

each wildlife preservation situation, in terms of possible management strategies. For instance, a significant part of this book is dedicated to emphasizing that Western methods of wildlife conservation are often unsuitable and ineffective in less developed countries. No attempt is made to cover all possible solutions or management options available to the discussed examples. Rather, the book encourages readers to think about wildlife preservation and to question the morality and efficacy of commonly accepted management approaches.

Although most of the articles are extracted from professional journals, technical terms are kept to a minimum. As a result, the subject matter should attract a wide audience. It will appeal to anyone who is concerned about the preservation of wildlife, but equally will arouse the interest of those with little understanding of these issues.

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The Directory of Australian Birds: Passerines

R. Schodde and I. Mason, 1999.
CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Vic., Australia
800 pp., Hardback
ISBN 0 643 06456 7
RRP USD\$180.00

HARRY RECHER¹

THIS large, expensive and beautifully produced volume arrived on my desk in October 1999. There it has sat while I awaited it to be reviewed elsewhere. My intention was, and is, to not only review the book, but to review the reviews. I now have reviews by Allan Burbidge and John Blyth (*Western Australian Bird Notes* 95: 3–5), Walter Boles (*Australian Zoologist*, in press), W. (Ted) Davis (*The Wilson Bulletin*, in press), Stephen Debus (*Australian Bird Watcher* 18: 320–321), Ned Johnson (*The Condor* 103: 200), and Allen Keast (*Emu* 100: 341–2). Of these, Boles, Johnson and Keast are recognised avian systematists, while Burbidge, Blyth, Davis and Debus, as I am, are just plain old ornithologists. I say this because an Australian avian systematist once told me that I had no right to comment on the names of Australian birds because I was only an ecologist, but that has never stopped me before and will not now, and it appears that I am in good company.

The *Directory* is basically a book of names for Australian passerines with two more volumes in preparation to cover the remainder of the avifauna.

It is nice to see somebody start with the passerines for a change so, if the remaining volumes are not forthcoming, the most interesting birds in Australia have been dealt with. How many “handbooks” begin with the non-passerines and the authors never live long enough, or the money runs out, to complete the passerines? By profession, if not nature, systematists seem to have a very ordered approach to their publications — begin at the beginning, end at the end.

The reviews of the *Directory* have been uniformly positive, even glowing. Davis describes it as an “important book” and points out that it is the first attempt since Mathews 100 years ago to deal with the taxonomy of Australian birds at the subspecies level. Johnson commends Schodde and Mason for respecting the work of others (is this not normal in taxonomy?) and considers the work “admirable”, the authors “bold” and the work “scholarly” and “sophisticated”. Debus also thinks the effort is “scholarly” and that it is “state of the art” taxonomy. Burbidge and Blyth are of the opinion that this “is an important document”. Like Johnson, Keast appreciates the generosity of Schodde and Mason “in giving credit to their predecessors” (maybe taxonomists don’t normally do this) and says “*The Directory* is to be admired”. Boles tends to sidestep the praise and says only that the aims of the work are “highly commendable”. As an ecologist who simply studies birds, even I am impressed and

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