

Reviews

The Australian Bird Watcher, the journal of the Bird Observers Club, has now reached the fifth issue, and the last number, June 1961, contained a variety of interesting articles and photographs. There are notes on the nesting of the White-gaped honeyeater made at the Ord River, W.A., and a long account is given on the habits and movements of the Painted Honeyeater in the Bendigo district. A somewhat pathetic picture is painted of the devastating effects on birds in breeding time after a whirlwind in N.S.W., and in an article on the Owlet-Nightjar and the Spotted Nightjar there is a delightful photograph of the latter bird in an aggressive attitude with its wings outspread. There are numerous short notes, including a record of an Osprey being seen on the Murray river at Tocumwal. Copies are available, at 5/5 posted, from Miss B. Moore, 1191 Burke Road, Kew E4, Vic.—D.J.D.

Recent records of Palaearctic Migrants.—The Northern Hemisphere Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and the Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) are both listed as "accidentals" in the R.A.O.U. Cheeklist. In the *W. Aust. Nat.*, vol. 8, no. 2, October 1961, Peter Slater gives evidence of the occurrence of the eastern race of the Swallow (*H. r. gutturalis*) as an apparently regular migrant in Derby, Western Australia. Many birds visited the district during two successive summers (1959-60 and 1960-61) and his observations suggest that the species "is a regular visitor to Derby, arriving in early November and leaving at the end of March." It was not seen at Wyndham or at the Kimberley Research Station and it appears that the migratory limits just reach the north-western coastal fringe of the Kimberley Division.

The Yellow Wagtail is reported from the Derby area by Eric Lindgren and Peter Slater. A single bird in immature plumage was seen on December 7, 1960. The only other Australian record was that of an adult male collected by H. G. Barnard at Bimbi on the Dawson River, Queensland, in 1905.—D.L.S.

Atlas of European Birds, by K. H. Voous, 284 pp., many maps and photographs, 1960, Nelson, London; price 70/-: (originally published as *Atlas van de Europese Vogels*, Amsterdam).

The importance of an accurate knowledge of the geographical distribution of birds can hardly be overestimated. Therefore not only zoogeographers and evolutionists, but also protectionists, and in fact anybody with more than the slightest interest in birds will welcome the work under review and obtain useful data from it.

The most valuable parts of the book are the two-colour maps, three or four to a page, on which the world range of every bird known to breed in Europe is shown in red. The accompanying text gives in a compact form an amazing quantity of information on each species discussed: distribution, relations, habitat, food, nest, migrations. Moreover, photographs, the majority of them excellent, depict almost every species.

For their scale, the maps are remarkably accurate, and there is no doubt that a considerable amount of painstaking work has gone into their production (some criticism follows in the next paragraph). On the other hand, when consulting the maps one must not forget that no range can be static for any length of time, fluctuations are likely to occur from year to year. One gets an impression that Voous has tried to include areas of irregular or sporadic breeding, but this may not have been done consistently. I regret that on the maps only English names are given and no Latin names: the book is likely to be used widely abroad, and probably, even for an Englishman, made-up names like Tengmalm's Owl and Andalusian Hemipode would have little meaning.

No review is complete without some criticism, though often the main reason it is given seems to be for the reviewer to demonstrate his knowledge of the subject under review. I have concentrated on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia which are easy to pick out on the maps and which are fairly well known to me, and want to draw attention to the following inaccuracies, the majority of which have evidently been taken from old and incorrect literature. Stock Dove *Columba oenas* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* are almost certainly not breeding birds on these islands; Roller *Coracias garrulus* and Little Owl *Athene noctua* are not known to breed on Corsica; though the latter is very plentiful on Sardinia, in Corsica it is known in this century from one or two sight records only. On the other hand the occurrence of the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* on the islands need not be queried, for it is very common on Corsica whence a special race (*interni* Hartert) has been described. Few European breeding birds extend to Australia; one of these is the Kite *Milvus migrans*, which in Western Australia is incorrectly shown as extending into the North-West Division, for as a breeding bird it is limited to the Kimberley Division.

Finally a word of congratulation to the author for the accomplishment of this valuable work, and also for the very good translation into English, which for him is a foreign language.—G.F.M.

Victorian National Parks.—National Parks Authority annual reports 1957—1961 inclusive. Government Printer, Melbourne, pp. 79; 35 photographs, one map. The reports assess the present status and prospects of Victoria's national parks, which are now administered by the National Parks Authority. This body, constituted in May 1957, meets monthly under the chairmanship of the Minister for Development and Decentralization. Membership comprises senior officers of the Government Tourist Bureau, Departments of Lands, Forests, Public Works, Soil Conservation, and Fisheries and Wildlife. The Victorian Ski Association is represented and also persons interested in national parks and conservation. It is responsible for the control, maintenance, and development of existing national parks and with the acquisition of new ones. The manner in which these duties are being discharged is shown fully and clearly under appropriate headings. Balance sheets and tourist statistics appear in appendices. Descriptions of each park are enhanced by the excellent photographs of fauna and flora as well as of delightful scenery.

The reports cover the infancy and teething troubles of the Authority and now reveal a vigorous organization faced with solving a vital problem that should have been tackled 100 years ago. Added to this handicap is the miserly flow of public funds, despite the fact that nearly every paragraph stresses pungently the need for realistic expenditure on fire control, rangers' salaries, and other essential requirements.

The obituary notice of the first director, the late P. Crosbie Morrison, could have included some of the Authority's pre-natal history. He was the protagonist of national parks for the preservation of fauna and flora. Perhaps this omission may be rectified by naming a wildlife refuge in honour of a man of such stature and foresight.

The reports do not indicate definitively how the preservation of habitats in their natural state can be reconciled with the construction of walking tracks for public access through these areas. Evidently the difference between the function of a Wilderness Area (=any Fauna and Flora Reserve in Australia) — in which the sole aim is to maintain reproduceable biotic communities in as natural a condition as possible — and that of a National Park is not yet fully realised.

A practical solution would be the zoning of national parks, as in America, so that the most interesting natural history features of the park are subject to minimum human disturbance, while the recreation grounds, etc., are restricted together in another (preferably marginal) sector.

The organic content of existing and proposed national parks has not been surveyed—an admission, perhaps, that complicates the problem, since it implies that some of these parks may not be entirely suitable for conservation purposes.

Having secured firm control of Victoria's national parks the Authority still faces the problem of providing for the extension and management of adequate wildlife refuges. The answer may be found in bold and realistic planning based on research in conjunction with a revised allocation of funds.—T.G.

CORRIGENDUM

The figure below is the corrected representation of Figure 1, *Emu*, vol.61, pp.100-101, in the paper: "Breeding seasons of birds in subcoastal Northern Territory" by H. J. Frith and S. J. J. Davies.

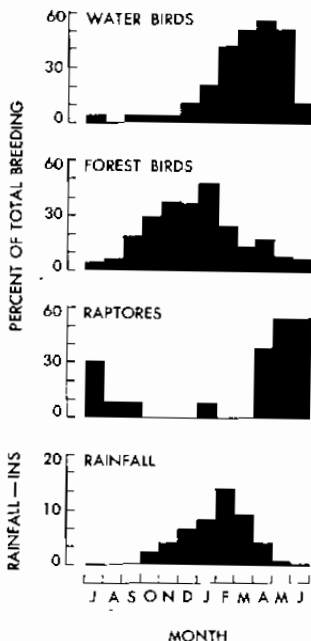


Fig. 1. Breeding seasons of birds in subcoastal Northern Territory, and the rainfall at Humpty Doo in the period 1955-58.