

# BOOKS, PAPERS AND LITERARY NOTES

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## Reviews

### Books

**The Waterfowl of the World.** This work, primarily by Jean Delacour and Peter Scott, who together probably have more knowledge and direct experience with the world's waterfowl than any other men in world history, was completed with the publication in May, 1964, of Volume 4. Volume 1, Anseranatinae, Anserinae and Tribe Tadornini, was published in 1954 (reviewed *Emu* 55: 162); volume 2, dabbling species of Anatinae, in 1956 (*Emu* 57: 292); and volume 3, diving species and perching species of Anatinae, in 1960 (*Emu* 60: 290). The four volumes have page size 7½" x 9½" (crown quarto), and are clothbound. Original prices totalled £23/2/ sterling. The volumes comprise 1,150 pages, including introductions, prefaces, text figures, distribution maps, bibliographies and indexes. They contain sixty-five full-colour plates by Peter Scott, showing each of the world's species of Anatidae, including down young (when known) and adult plumage differences for sex, breeding and eclipse. In volume 4 there are also four plates showing four natural species and twenty-eight main domestic "breeds" developed from them, and one plate for corrections and additions relating to twenty species in plates of volumes 1, 2 and 3. Each colour plate, except frontispieces, is accompanied by a facing sheet with matching outlines for convenient identifications. The work was published by Country Life Ltd., London.

The text of volumes 1, 2 and 3 was written by Delacour, and in uniform style and sequence, provided for each species and accepted race of Anatidae, comment upon taxonomy, characteristics, distribution, general habits and captivity behaviour. For volume 4 specialist assistance of four contributors was obtained. Milton W. Weller, Associate Professor, Iowa State University, U.S.A., wrote six chapters; "General Habits", "The Reproductive Cycle", "Ecology", "Distribution and Species Relationships", "Fowling", and "Conservation and Management". Mr. George Clark, Jr., Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, U.S.A., and Dr. P. S. Humphrey, Curator of Birds, U.S. National Museum, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., wrote one chapter, "The Anatomy of Waterfowl", and provided many text figures drawn by Mrs. Shirley Hartman. Dr. Hildegard Howard, Chief Curator of Science, Los Angeles County Museum, U.S.A., wrote one chapter, "Fossil Anseriformes", illustrated with ten full-page half-tone plates of type material, and several text figures.

These contributions comprise most of volume 4, which has 359 pages excluding plates. Jean Delacour wrote the Introduction and three chapters—"Aviculture", "Domestic Waterfowl", and "Corrections and Additions", the last-named for volumes 1, 2 and 3, with knowledge as at the beginning of 1963. Bibliographical references are considerable in volume 4, totalling about forty-two pages; these are given at the ends of nine of the eleven chapters. The indexes comprise ten pages. The price for volume 4 was £6/6/ sterling on publication.

Apart from the "Corrections and Additions" chapter applying to the preceding volumes this fourth volume could assume independent status since it has general application for the Anatidae, with a text that is not cross-referenced to preceding volumes. This volume alone is a valuable and major contribution because of the comprehensive and specialist writing it contains.

It is idle for a review note such as this to choose a few "bits" for attention from a comprehensive work. Adequate appraisal requires methodical assessment by specialists, and comment at length. This is true also for the preceding volumes, because *The Waterfowl of the World* is the most comprehensive work published on the world's Anatidae. Although its publication has covered a span of ten years, it remains collectively the most up-to-date overall study, and is thus essential for those who in earnest bent

would follow the intriguing Family Anatidae, or explore the scope provided by any one of its several Tribes. It is appropriate to comment appreciatively here upon the great convenience provided for workers since 1945 by Delacour and Mayr in their "borrowing" then from entomological practice the classifying of a large number of genera into tribes, in their innovating "lighthouse" for systematics of the Anatidae—("The Family Anatidae", *Wilson Bulletin* 57: 3-55).

It is fortunate that Delacour, Scott and Country Life Ltd. "saw the work through" together, creating in the *Waterfowl* an impressive and worthy achievement among the world's large and great works in ornithology.—J.J.

**Know Your New Zealand Birds**, by K. F. Westerskov, 1967. Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., sixteen colour plates (from Buller) and 75 b. and w. photographs by the author, 7½" x 5", N.Z. \$2.25. This little identification guide caters for the completely inexperienced. Keys to birds are based on habitats as indicated in birds at sea, on beaches, lakes, mountains, and in fields, bush, and town gardens, and upon natural groups such as penguins, shags, ducks, small bush song birds, small farmland song birds, etc. Like all such guides, however, although it is better than most, it suffers from the fact that some birds may be found in more than one habitat, and this is not always made clear. For example, the Chaffinch is described under small farmland song birds, but this is not much help to a novice who sees the bird in the depths of the forest where it is also common, as it is not listed under this habitat.

Descriptions are remarkably concise but for the most part adequate. There are various essays on bird-watching, migration, bird localities, birds for scout badges, etc., and these contribute much background knowledge once the bird has been identified. Attractively produced, the book should whet the appetite of beginners to look at more comprehensive books, but its deficiencies will have to be overcome in later editions if it is to be a valuable guide to New Zealand birds.—J.M.C.

## Papers

### In Brief . . .

(It is not possible for the Review Editor to check the bibliographical accuracy of all titles and references supplied by contributors).

## Australasian Literature

**Economic Orn.** "Effects of Gannets on Soil at Cape Kidnappers, Hawkes Bay", by L. C. Blakemore and H. S. Gibbs, *N.Z. Journal of Science* 11: 1-54, 1968. Analyses the chemical properties of the nest of the Australian Gannet and underlying soil. Soil structure changes resemble those made by other seabirds.—H.L.S.

**Conservation.** "The Effects of Pesticides on our Wildlife", by Roy Wheeler and Barbara Salter, *Bird Obs.* Aug. '67 Supplement, Feb. '68 Supplement. "The Yellinbo Project—Introduction", *Bird Obs.* Apr. '68.—R.W.

**Species.—Field Records.** "*The Bird Observer*":—Red-crowned Pigeon, Hattah, 3rd Vic. Record; Large Sand-Dotterel, 15 Mud Islands, also Gippsland; Little Whimbrel, Gippsland; Sanderling, Gippsland; Sarus Crane, Nornanton, Qland; Sept. '67, Dunlin, Vic., Dec. '67.—R.W.

**Hybrid.** "Hybrid Red/Little Wattlebird", Barbara Salter, *Bird Obs.* May '68.—R.W.

## Overseas Literature

**Systematics.** "The Sequence in European Bird-Lists", by David Lack, *Ibis* 110: 107-113. R. Moreau's advocacy of an alphabetical sequence for the species in each genus and for genera in each sub-family is discussed and supported.—J. McK.

**Ecology/Species.** Ecology of the Antarctic Skua *Stercorarius skua maccormicki* at Point Geologie, Adelie Land", by P. Le Morvan, et al. (In French). *L'Oiseau et la Revue Francaise d'Ornithologie* Vol. 37: 193, 1967. Records this species as not nesting socially at Point Geologie. Although it rears more young there than elsewhere, the population is small. The occurrence of the sub-antarctic Brown Skua at this spot is described.—H.L.S.

### Literary Notes No. 11

**An Ornithologist's Library** (Continued). The following question was put to several ornithologists. "If, in the light of your *present* knowledge of ornithological literature and of your *present* experience in ornithology, you were just taking up the study of birds, which six books would you aim to purchase as the first in your ornithological library and why?" (Approx. maximum price \$20 per book or total of \$120.)

**Mr. Alec. H. Chisholm.** Various problems arise when attempting to list half a dozen publications likely to be of most service to aspiring ornithologists. Gould's "*Handbook*" of 1865 is too expensive. So are the works of Campbell and North. As well, although all three remain highly useful, much of their material is out of date. Numbers of more modern books, while distinctly informative, are limited in scope; these include Alexander's "*Birds of the Ocean*", Marshall's "*Bowerbirds*", Immelmann's "*Finches*", Frith's "*Waterfowl*", Hindwood and McGill's "*Birds of Sydney*", Serventy and Whittell's "*Birds of Western Australia*", Condon's "*Hawks*", and my own "*Romance of the Lyrebird*".

On the whole, I am disposed to nominate the following books as those affording the the most general service.

"*What Bird Is That?*", by N. W. Cayley (revised ed. 1966). Although this book has weaknesses, it remains an extremely useful guide, especially since being brought up to date.

"*The Literature of Australian Birds*", by H. M. Whittell (1954). Major Whittell put an enormous amount of research into the preparing of this volume, which lists almost every article written on Australian birds to date of publication and adds a general review of the subject and brief biographies of many authors.

"*Bird Wonders of Australia*", by A. H. Chisholm (6th ed. 1965). Experiences of many writers, as well as personal observations, are here given in a gossipy assessment of the chief features of Australian bird-life.

"*Bird Display and Behaviour*", by E. A. Armstrong (1947). A fascinating study assembled by a leading British ornithologist from publications of various countries and reinforced by his own observations and shrewd comments.

"*A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*", by R. T. Peterson, G. Mountfort, and P. A. D. Hollom (1954). A neat, well-illustrated, and highly informative book covering a wide area.

"*Birds in Japan*", by Yoshimaro Yamashina (1961). Although several Asiatic and American "guides" demand respect, geographical and other considerations suggest that "*Birds in Japan*", produced in English by an eminent ornithologist, and carrying numerous colour plates, is most important from an Australian aspect.