

REVIEWS

Edited by J.M. PENHALLURICK

Neville Cayley. The Royal Zoological Society of N.S.W. Collection of Parrots and Cockatoos of Australia by J.H. Prince, 1980. Sydney: A.H. and A.W. Reed Pty Ltd. Pp 80, Col. p11 28, b. & w. figs 2, sketches 4, distribution maps 58. 369 × 255 mm. Trade edition \$A29.95.

In 1940 Sir Edward Hallstrom commissioned Neville Cayley to produce a collection of paintings of Australian parrots for the Royal Zoological Society of N.S.W. It took Cayley two years to produce the twenty-nine paintings, which depicted all of the Australian parrots. Evidently the paintings have not been available for viewing and only eight have been hanging in the Society's rooms, because of a shortage of space. One of the paintings, depicting the Ground Parrot and Night Parrot, has disappeared. The remaining twenty-eight paintings have been reproduced in this book. Each of the paintings occupies one page, with the facing page containing a text describing the birds depicted, distribution maps and an inset (83 × 83 mm) colour plate which shows part of the facing plate, usually the head of one of the birds. As this inset is the same scale as the larger plate, it does not present any further detail and represents a profligate use of space.

There is no doubt that the original paintings are important and valuable and A.H. & A.W. Reed are to be congratulated for reproducing them in a form that makes them available to the public. By the same token, the publishers should be reprimanded for marrying the paintings to such a woefully inaccurate text.

Having acknowledged that the paintings are valuable, it seems to me that they have no scientific merit at all. There is nothing impressive about any of them, which is a shame because many of the birds they depict are very colourful. In the paintings the postures are unnatural, there is a deplorable lack of attention to detail and the colours are poor. Not having seen the originals, I do not know if the poor colours are the fault of the artist or the publisher. For example, the blue around the eyes of the corallas is a washed-out grey, not the vibrant blue-grey of the bird itself. Some of the reds in the plates, particularly in that of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo, are very dull and one wonders how the paintings now would have compared with their original appearance. Certain of the paints Cayley used, particularly scarlet, have been known to fade, as evidenced by a faulty printing of *What Bird is That* some years ago, which had been prepared from faded originals.

Prof. Prince tells the reader several times that Cayley was an observant man, yet this is belied by his lack of attention to detail. For example, the plate illustrating the White-tailed Black-Cockatoo has three birds shown. All three are shown with rounded tails (as are the Glossy, Red-tailed and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos), yet the twelve rectrices are basically the same length and give a more angular look to the end of the tail. In neither these birds nor the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos is there any evidence of sexual dimorphism. Having painted three birds in each plate surely he should have illustrated the differences in the colour of the bill, the size of the cheek patch and the presence of a periophthalmic ring? This also applies to the eye colour in the Galah and the Pink Cockatoo. A check of Cayley's (1939) *Australian Parrots in Field and Aviary* shows that if he was aware of these details he did not give written descriptions of them.

Despite these criticisms, the paintings are important and they represent an example of the state of bird painting in the 1940's. Anyone wishing to see how this art has developed over the last forty years would do well to look at some of Bill Cooper's paintings of the same species in Forshaw and Cooper's latest book,

Australian Parrots (second revised edition published this year).

Incidentally, the review copy has a patch of reddish brown above and extending into the eye of one of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, and several patches on the breast of another. The inset plate of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo has a patch of red and 3 vertical pale lines on it. The fact that they are not present in the painting opposite indicates that they are a fault associated with the printing.

Before leaving the subject of the paintings themselves, I find it interesting that Cayley depicted no less than eight Budgerigars in his painting, yet not one is in the colours normally associated with wild birds!

What of the text, which I have already termed woefully inaccurate? The first portion consists of an account of Cayley, the man and artist. I do not know enough of Cayley to vouch for the veracity or otherwise of this section. The text is accompanied by four delightful line drawings set in the middle of the pages, although they are not of birds.

The next section is headed "Birds and their territories". Most ornithologists would expect this to give an account of birds and their defended areas of real estate. They would be mistaken. The section is about climatic zones, and gives a rather disjointed account of why birds occur in some areas and not others. This section really has no relevance to the paintings and if the author felt he had to incorporate a brief section on climate he should have used a more widely accepted scheme. Spencer's system or Kikkawa and Pearse's [(1969) *Aust. J. Zool.* 17: 821-840] faunal divisions would have been preferable to the more complicated scheme used here. Prince's scheme is downright misleading to anyone not familiar with Australia. He recognizes nine climatic zones, and in the figure there is a large part of the central west coast of Tasmania which is classed as "Tropical Rainforest". Few of the birds described later in the book have their distribution described in terms of these zones and I fail to see how this section contributes anything to the book.

Then follows a section introducing the paintings. This is a page and a half of inaccuracy together with a long-winded account of how accurate Cayley's colours were. In one paragraph, Prince points out "... that the colour rendering of the following plates is accurate, and certainly truer than that which some other artists have achieved. This belief is supported by the fact that his book *What Bird is That?*, which includes many hundreds of paintings, has been the accepted reference work for nearly forty years." Prince does not add that it was one of the only reference works of that nature until Slater produced his *Field Guides* in the early 1970's. This changes the interpretation of his assertion immediately. Prince, later in this section, develops a theory on the way people perceive colour. The development is long-winded and informative, but totally irrelevant. It serves as further proof that, according to Prince, Cayley's colours are as true as possible. In fact Prince concludes "It must be said also that Cayley's interpretations of colours, which were made from carcasses (and so he was able to study the colours for extended periods), are as accurate as any observations ever made, and as he was a true artist, his ability to evaluate colours can not be questioned." After a quick glance at some of the paintings it is obvious that this statement is patent rubbish.

Prince also states in this section "Many, perhaps most, of the birds illustrated in the following plates are either endangered, vanishing, rare or now extinct in some parts or all of Australia, usually because of illegal trapping for sale overseas, a callous practice that is rapidly depriving us of many of our most valuable

birds." He then lists eighteen species of concern, which hardly qualifies as "perhaps most". Of the species listed some are not rare, endangered, vanishing or extinct, e.g. the Long-billed Cor- ella, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Gang-gang Cockatoo, to name four of the first six Prince lists. The other two, the Pink Cockatoo and Palm Cockatoo, are both uncommon but at this stage are not in any danger. In addition, iniquitous as illegal bird trapping and smuggling is, it is not the major cause of the decline in Australian Psittaciformes. By far the most significant damage is caused by the widespread destruction of the habitat that is taking place over much of the agricultural areas of Australia; yet Prince does not acknowledge this fact. Obviously illegal trapping is placing extra pressure on some species, but it should be put in perspective.

The rest of the book is devoted to the paintings and Prince's text refers to each species. The text for each is brief, usually several paragraphs and includes a discussion of the name, the range of the species, a brief account of breeding and a written description of the bird (for those who are colour blind and, therefore, perceive Cayley's colours as not being accurate). The notes presented on breeding are not consistent as clutch sizes are only given occasionally. I think it is worth discussing some of the text to point out the sort of inaccuracies that make it of no value to those interested in fact. When discussing the Galah, Prince says "this bird seems ubiquitous, but it presents a variation of colour that can only be fully appreciated by a traveller in lonely places". (Prince does not point out why such a traveller has better perception of such variation than someone who travels in less lonely places). "Crossing the Nullarbor Plain from one side to the other before it was bisected by a busy highway, one could get the definite impression of a deepening of the bird's breast colour as one travelled further west". Galahs are found only in small groups, sparsely scattered on the Nullarbor and a traveller would be lucky to see any on a trip across. In fact there is an abrupt change in colour between eastern and western Galahs, not a deepening of colour. Annoying statements creep in: e.g. Prince says Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo are "similar in habits to the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo" but does NOT describe the habits of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Prince harps on the fact that there is disagreement among experts over the ranges of the birds (or does he mean territories?). It is widely acknowledged among many people, even experts, that bird distribution maps are usually inaccurate and that is one of the reasons behind the Bird Atlas Scheme. Red-tailed Cockatoos are reported as nesting high in a tree hollow with no comments on any variation in breeding season throughout the range. Having examined well over 1000 black cockatoo nests of various species, I found that the birds will nest in any hollow of suitable size and shape regardless of distance from the ground. There are no distribution maps for the Eclectus Parrot or the Red-cheeked Parrot.

In summary this book is most unimpressive and has little scientific merit. At \$29.95 I would not buy it unless I happened to be a student of Cayley's art. There is also a limited edition of 250 copies priced at \$250.00. I did not see a copy of that but if the text is the same, then the same comments would apply.

Denis Saunders

A Field Guide to Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds by Gordon Beruldsen, 1980. Adelaide: Rigby. Pp 327, col. p11 80, b. & w. p11 2. 184 x 125 mm. \$16.95.

One of the essential requirements of a field guide is that it should be easily portable in the field. Fortunately, this book is the same size as Slater's two volumes, thus making it a convenient companion of them for enthusiastic field workers. Other requirements are that a guide should be as self-contained as possi-

ble, and precise enough to allow the field worker to identify his subject quickly and accurately, and without undue disturbance of the birds. However, the author is really the only person who can thoroughly appreciate the difficulty of meeting these requirements. This review recognizes that he has the privilege of defining the scope of his work, setting his own standards and establishing the limitations of his guide.

This guide is the first of its kind to be published in Australia. The only other well-known Australian books on nests and eggs were those of A.J. Campbell (1901 *Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*), S.W. Jackson (1907 *Jackson's Oological Collection*) and A.J. North (1911-14 *Nest and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia*). These books, however, are not field guides in the modern sense. Beruldsen is to be congratulated on his courageous attempt. The compiling of such a guide is fraught with difficulty, and faces so many complexities that simple solutions appear to be unavailable. This is true even for single species: for example, the nest of the Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis* and the eggs of the Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* could each deserve a thesis.

In this introduction the author states that it is his intention to provide for the average person the means of identifying the nest and eggs of a bird quickly. With such an audience in mind, the author should begin by emphasising the necessity of first trying to identify the bird using the nest that is under observation. It is unfortunate that Beruldsen fails to do this.

Part I opens with instructions on the use of the guide. Beruldsen takes as his standards the latest Check Lists of the RAOU, for both the English and scientific names of birds. This is an unfortunate choice as these references are not usually available to the average person, and seldom used in the field. An obvious alternative would have been to rely on Slater's names, for Slater's volumes were the most recent and most popular field guides available to the average person at the time this book was being prepared.

Although the author expressly states that he will exclude migrants, the text contains a number of New Guinea migrants, several pelagic species, passerine migrants, and some cuckoos that so far have never been found breeding in Australia or on adjacent islands. The exclusion from the text of detailed information on introduced species is unfortunate, as they are generally found breeding near more populated areas where beginners could become familiar with the guide and gain experience for working further afield.

Part II contains a wealth of information, with photographs of both nest and eggs. We find evidence of considerable research in the literature and of experience gained in the field. The guide appears to be biased towards eggs rather than nest, an orientation which makes the author's task more difficult, confusing and complicated.

The coloured photographs of nests, though excellent, have not been carefully chosen to illustrate the various types referred to in the thirty-seven divisions given under the heading 'Key to Nest Identification'. As these divisions are so interwoven, they are so indefinite that the scientific requirements of a key cannot possibly be met. Even the illustrations do not support the proposed key. For example, the only birds listed under Division 2- 'Nests that consist of a low mound of earth and similar material on the ground with a saucer-shaped hollow on top' - are albatrosses. Yet the illustration on page 33 shows a nest remarkably similar to that of the Gannet on page 22, a bird included in Division 3: 'Nest that consist of shallow scrapes in the sand, earth, mud etc.' The photographs suggest that albatrosses and the Australian Gannet should have been placed in the same division. Similarly, it is surprising to find the substantial nests

of the Emu, Southern Cassowary and Cape Barren Goose being grouped in Division 4 with those of the Flock Bronzewing and Painted Snipe. The grouping of nests into recognisable divisions would lend itself to the formation of a key based on dichotomy much more readily than does the grouping of eggs. Such a method of establishing divisions could prove to be simpler and more effective than the complicated interwoven divisions suggested by Beruldsen. Photographs and illustrations of habitats and nesting sites, as well as line drawings of typical nest, would be a desirable addition.

Good photographs of eggs are very hard to obtain. Only those that have to tried to get good serviceable photographs of cabinet specimens from collections can appreciate the difficulty of obtaining illustrations free of distortions, distracting shadows or shiny highlights resulting from flash. In addition, the photographer faces the ever-present difficulty of obtaining an acceptable reproduction of colour. Unfortunately, the forty-eight coloured plates depicting eggs suffer from many of the defects just mentioned. A successful illustration calls for a judicious selection of compatible specimens on each plate, and overcrowding should be avoided at all costs. It is essential that each plate should be accompanied by a scale, and that the captions are as accurate and clear as possible. Regrettably, Beruldsen's plates frequently fall short of these standards.

Line drawings similar to those on page 239 of Landsborough Thomson's *A New Dictionary of Birds* would have been ideal for standardizing and defining the shapes and sizes of the eggs of Australian birds. Valuable comments on shape were made and illustrated by Gilbert and Keane in *Emu* 13:80-82 ('The Blackeared Cuckoo (*Mesocallius palliolotus* lath.')

As it is, the key to Egg Identification is not precise enough to enable one to identify the specimens illustrated on plates 110 or 112, and the shapes depicted on plate 113 do not coincide with the descriptions below. An excellent opportunity was lost on Plate 89 where the last two lines of Lapwing eggs do not differentiate between the northern and southern forms of the Masked Lapwing, *Vanellus miles miles* and *V. m. novaehollandiae*. Nor is attention drawn to the fact that the eggs of *V. m. miles* resemble those of the Banded Lapwing *V. tricolor* more closely than those of *V. m. novaehollandiae*. Similar defects appear throughout the text. Under the heading 'I Unmarked pink eggs', many of the uniformly unmarked pink eggs of honeyeaters are omitted. However, if these were included, Beruldsen's method would group them incongruously with the eggs of the Orange-footed Scrubfowl and Mallee Fowl. The heading 'M Blue to blue-green eggs that are spotted and/or blotched, some with a few short streaks'; is equally surprising in that it includes the eggs of Emu and Southern Cassowary. One hardly expects to find these birds grouped with robins, cisticolas, Metallic Starling and ravens.

A great deal of research and practical experience is reflected in the text of Part III. Much of the information here is published for the first time. However, there is considerable confusion and inconsistency in Beruldsen's omission of some subspecies, and in his treatment of species and subspecies generally, especially in view of his stated intention to follow the RAOU Checklists. Thus he refers to the Helmeted Honeyeater as a species on page 375, although on the preceding page he clearly treats it as a subspecies of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater.

In Part III we find headings for Distribution, Breeding Range, Nesting Season, Breeding Frequency, Nest and Eggs. Occasionally personal notes are added which often have no relevance or place in a guide of this kind. Distribution in relation to the Australian mainland and Tasmania is satisfactorily handled, and references to habitat are welcome. However, distribution could have been shown more clearly by the inclusion of maps, or by reference to those in Slater. As it is, one has to interpret such

broad references as Cape York, the eastern half of N.S.W., and the southern half of W.A. References to occurrences outside Australia should have been omitted. They are irrelevant to this guide and far too indefinite to be of much value to serious field workers.

Breeding range is too often described as being 'throughout (the bird's) distribution range', which in many cases is misleading and inaccurate if one takes into account local movements and internal migration. With such movements, the range and distribution of a species is sometimes considerably increased after breeding has ceased. This is particularly true in the case of Blue-winged Parrots, several black-cockatoos, Pied Currawongs, Flame Robins, numerous flycatchers and honeyeaters. Here again, maps like those in W. Earle Godfrey's *Birds of Canada* would be more meaningful.

Measurements of eggs are of little help to the field worker, who should look but not touch. Comparisons in relation to size, and for that matter, colour and shape, would be more useful. To this end one could suggest the Emu's egg with which most people are familiar, and the eggs of the common fowl, bantam, domesticated pigeons, introduced starlings, blackbirds, sparrow and goldfinches.

A topic that might well deserve special treatment is birds that frequently or habitually use the nest of other species. Such behaviour is found with many birds of prey and water-birds, some cuckoo-shrikes, woodswallows and Large-billed Scrubwrens. Although Beruldsen mentions such behaviour here and there, he does not provide any coherent treatment of the subject.

Judicious editing and careful proof-reading would have eliminated errors that appear in the text, such as that on page 262, where the nest of the Common Koel is stated to be 'Unknown'; or those on pages 344-46, where the descriptions of eggs appear under the duplicated heading 'Nest'. The discrepancy between the description of the eggs of the Yellow-legged Flycatcher as 'undescribed', on page 125, and the account of those eggs on page 299 should have been detected. Obviously, the eggs were discovered while the book was being prepared, and the note on page 125 was overlooked.

In conclusion, the book has many commendable facets, and deals with a field long neglected. One hopes that if a revised edition is to be issued, the author will put more emphasis on nests and their construction. Although the subject of eggs should not be neglected, oology is so specialized and exacting a field that it is difficult to present the relevant material in the condensed form required by a field guide. Finally, one hopes that the publication of Beruldsen's guide will not encourage its users to pry too closely into the lives of our birds during the breeding season.

N.J. Favaloro

Birds of Australian Gardens by Tess Kloot and Ellen McCulloch with paintings by Peter Trusler, 1980. Adelaide: Rigby. Pp 191, col. p11 80, numerous line drawings. 275 × 363 mm. \$29.95

At first glance, this may appear to be a so-called 'coffee-table' book: pleasant to look at when there is nothing else to do. Such a superficial assessment would be wrong. Not only does the book contain superb paintings, but also the text is well-researched and informative. Some of the eighty plates include more than one species, all of them found in the suburban gardens of one or more Australian cities.

The artist's style is photographic in that the subject is accurately depicted down to the last feather. But each painting offers far more than a photograph because the birds are so placed that all identifying features are displayed, a feat not always possible with the camera. Each plate is a joy in itself and the backgrounds complement the subject, be they a grub-eaten leaf, peeling paint, lifting tiles or the human litter of the cities. The artist makes no mistakes with anatomy, a failing of some otherwise good bird artists.

After much vacillation, I found it impossible to select any one painting above all others. The Gang-gang jostled for favour with the Blue-faced Honeyeater on the satiny peeling banana leaf, the Willie Wagtail fearlessly perched on the old garden tap, the Sparrows at ease on the dilapidated tiled roof and the Common Mynah quizzically regarding an empty junk food packet. If there is a plate with even a little less appeal than others, it is that of the Galahs. The strong lighting of the late afternoon sun, mentioned in the caption, is not evident. Also, I was puzzled at first by the lack of the identifying crescent on the female Crescent Honeyeater but found it after closer inspection.

The text is simply written and the most timid tyro must surely be lured into bird-watching. The Introduction leads the reader skilfully through the rudiments of garden bird-watching; and with the detail of the individual descriptions, mis-identification would be difficult. There are surprises too for the experienced, indicative of the vast amount of research undertaken by the authors. At times, the text could have been tightened by careful editing. There is a constant reference to 'studies', but there is no annotation indicated which particular one in the List of References is being referred to. For easier reading, a statement of the facts would have been adequate because the authors are scarcely likely to make bland statement unless they are the result of careful observation or research.

Sometimes the text does not quite match the painting, although this may be the fault of the reproduction. The Laughing Turtledove does not show a tinge of mauve; nor does the Green Rosella appear to have a dull greenish hue. A surprising omission from the text is the white forehead of the female Magpie-lark, one of the main pointers to identification - males have dirty faces, females clean. But these are minor quibbles and in no way detract from the worth of the text.

Less minor are a few quirks of the publisher. Why on earth were the Rosellas separated by three other genera? And why were the three *Cuculus* species interpolated between the two *Chrysococcyx*? Printing errors are few. There are missed lines in the text for the Silver Gull and pages 76 and 120 ought to have been included in the Index. Otherwise, the quality of the book is of a high standard and its content is well able to withstand the competition of the increasing number of Australian bird books now available. It is a book which will give pleasure to those interested in birds as well as to those who appreciate the work of an artist with a sense of style and humour.

Pauline Reilly

Foliage Birds: Australian Birds and their Favoured Plants by George Martin Adams, 1981. Sydney: A.H. & A.W. Reed. Pp 112, col. p11 50, b. & w. drawings 50, figs 6. 255 x 355 mm. \$35.00.

The author of this book has the satisfaction of being his own photographer and black-and-white artist. He displays for us fifty species of birds, each in a double-page spread consisting of photograph, drawing, distribution map and some 500 words of text.

Because the photographs have all been taken by stalking the birds, there is a refreshing absence of nests, although some over-representation of feeding tables and baited ground. The best bird photographers today have set very high standards indeed, by which those who publish in coffee-table format must submit themselves to being judged. So judged, most of these photographs fall short of what can be achieved. But at their best - the Yellow-faced Honeyeater in *Grevillea robusta*, the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in *Pittosporum* - they show us real living birds, beautifully portrayed in their foliage setting, not photographers' models.

As an artist, the author has a lighter and more successful touch with the foliage in his backgrounds than with birds; the drawings, like the photographs, vary in quality.

The text is informative, but does not purport to add to published knowledge. The constant reference to "common garden birds" suggests that this may have been an earlier title of the book. If twenty-one of these native species are "common garden birds" and another twelve are described by some phrase such as "not uncommon garden visitor", where does this leave sparrows, and the other familiar exotics of the eastern capital cities? Even allowing for differences of range, there are surely few suburban gardens where even ten native birds could be said to "common".

The Scarlet Robin on page 41 has inadvertently been printed with a bright yellow breast, and the binding on the review copy is inadequate.

Rosemary Balmford

The Birdwatcher's Dictionary by Peter Weare, 1981. Calton: T. & A.D. Poyser. Pp 154, Many b. & w. p11, maps 6. 140 x 220 mm. £ 5.

"The aim of this book is to assemble in one place definitions of those terms and phrases which are most likely to be encountered by birdwatchers in Britain." (Reviewer's italics.)

In fact, those living in Australasia may find the appendices of most value. These contain: a) a list of abbreviations (e.g. CBC, Common Bird Census); b) the North American names for birds found on both sides of the Atlantic which bear different names on its eastern shores and in Australasia (e.g. Common Gallinule for Moorhen); c) a rather milk-and-waterish "Birdwatcher's Code of Conduct"; d) all birds on the British and Irish List arranged in the Voous Order, the modification of the more familiar Wetmore Order. The Voous Order was first published in 1977 and has been used in the new *Handbook of the Birds of the Western Palearctic*.

As well as scientific terms current slang is included such as "Twitching: RARITY-hunting, with perhaps an element of nervous excitement, particularly if there is a possibility of a LIFER." (Words defined elsewhere in the Dictionary are printed in capitals.) Indeed, it is the inclusion of these words which are the chief justification for the book: the scientific terms are available in a good general dictionary.

Those who complain about the incomprehensibility of *The Emu* might find the book useful. However, by the expenditure of comparatively little extra trouble and expense it could have been made less insular and therefore more valuable. It would have been more useful, for example, if the reader had been told, under *Rarities Committee*, how the universal problems referred to such a committee are handled in different parts of the world than that the panel set up in 1959 by the journal *British Birds* is often known as the "The Ten Rare Men".

Two entries on facing pages illustrate why it is possible to offer only faint praise. "Irridescent" (sic) is defined and, to show that the mistake is no mere literal, the same spelling is used in the definition. If dictionaries cannot spell . . . "Jizz: a combination of colour, size, shape and movement" is a useful word which *may* have been invented by T.A. Coward, but no reference is given in support. (I had supposed it was W.H. Hudson, but cannot find a reference either!)

Nevertheless, the book does contain some useful information. How many could define all ten of the following: Allen's Rule, Autolycism, Biome, Ecotone, Gony, Nalospi, Porro-prism, Tomia, Whiffling, Zugunruhe?

Perhaps, if there is a second edition, the author will spread his net wider (even into the Southern Hemisphere), publish his sources, where appropriate, and divide the slang from the scientific terms.

T.R. Garnett

Endangered Birds of the World: The ICBP Red Data Book compiled by Warren B. King, 1981. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press/ICBP. Pp 624. 154 x 217 mm. US \$8.96 (paper), US \$19.95 (cloth).

This important book contains data sheets on 437 species or subspecies of birds, arranged in systematic order of families and classified into five categories according to whether they are endangered, vulnerable, rare, out of danger or indeterminate (little known but suspected to be endangered, vulnerable or rare). Each sheet includes sections on status; distribution; population; habitat; conservation measures taken and proposed; and remarks and references.

The book has been reprinted as a single volume from two loose-leaf parts which were published in 1978 and 1979, as the second edition of Volume II, Aves, of the Red Data Book series of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Production was arranged by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) which continues to revise the data sheets.

The book lacks an index but at the start the bird taxa are listed in systematic order and according to the countries or regions in which they occur. The latter is useful and it is a pity that there is no direct reference between it and sheet numbers. The four regions with the largest numbers of threatened taxa listed are Brazil (41), Hawaii (29) and China and mainland USA, each with twenty-five. Perhaps the most desperate situation is in Madagascar where twenty-two taxa are listed (all except Peregrine Falcon endemic), and we are later told that the 10% of original forest remaining is diminishing fast. In 1979 only one endemic bird was protected there (Madagascar Crested Ibis) and even that was still hunted "avidly and extensively".

A list is given of four species which have been declared out of danger since the first edition in 1966, along with ninety-one other taxa which have now been deleted as recent evidence suggest they were not threatened. The four species listed as out of danger include three from Australasia (Turquoise Parrot, Western Whipbird and Saddleback) though I doubt that Western Whipbirds were ever any more threatened than the ninety-one taxa omitted from this edition. The fourth species (Seychelles Brush Warbler) has recovered as a result of deliberate habitat management by ICBP and the Seychelles government. The story of the Saddleback is well known and the New Zealand Wildlife Service earns special congratulations for its efforts. One of their techniques is to eliminate introduced predators from selected

islands and to introduce rare birds after suitable management of vegetation, a programme that has been carried out boldly with considerable success.

Another preliminary section lists 164 documented taxa believed to have become extinct since 1600 A.D. Birds lost from the Australasian region are the Tasmanian and Kangaroo Island subspecies of Emu from Australia (hope being retained for the Paradise Parrot); twelve taxa from New Zealand (including their subspecies of Stubble Quail, listed as a full species); and eighteen taxa from neighbouring islands. This highlights the general vulnerability of island forms.

The strength of the book is that it brings together information from all over the world, and enables us all to learn from other countries' successes and mistakes, to understand their problems, and to develop new ideas for conservation measures. Some valiant efforts are being made in conservation by developing and developed countries. Many countries have protected most of their bird species, from Brazil to French Polynesia. However, there are disturbing exceptions: for example, the vulnerable Ruddy-headed Goose remains on the plague list of the Argentine government. No known measures have been taken to conserve ninety-two of the 437 taxa listed. While another 114 taxa have been given legal protection, their habitat remains unprotected. Many other birds have only part of their habitat protected, often in reserves managed primarily for other purposes. Forest destruction is the commonest threat but many species have suffered from introduced birds and mammals, and human persecution, while some Hawaiian birds have disappeared through lack of immunity to avian malaria. The need for more habitat protection and management is the outstanding general message.

The selection of birds must be partly subjective (as stated in a short preface) and depends on information supplied by informants in the different countries. And here I am afraid that for Australia and Papua and New Guinea the selection is inadequate. Sixteen species are listed in Australia; fourteen in New Zealand; twenty in South Pacific islands controlled by Australia or New Zealand; five on Christmas Island; three in Solomon Islands and only one in Papua New Guinea, that one being the Peregrine Falcon which is listed for no fewer than 165 countries. I wish I believed that there were no other threatened taxa in Papua New Guinea, but this is simply not true. There are many which have declined seriously, are naturally localised or are so little known that they deserve inclusion in the indeterminate category. A number from West Irian appear to have escaped inclusion in the Indonesian list.

The Australian taxa listed are Gould's Petrel, Peregrine Falcon, Night Parrot, eastern and western subspecies of Ground Parrot, Orange-bellied Parrot, Scarlet-chested Parrot (called Splendid Parakeet), Golden-shouldered and Hooded Parrots (as subspecies), Paradise Parrot, Noisy Scrub-bird, Rufous Scrub-bird, Eyrean Grasswren, Western Bristlebird (as a subspecies of Brown Bristlebird), western subspecies of Rufous Bristlebird, and Helmeted Honeyeater (as a subspecies of Yellow-tufted Honeyeater). The Cape Barren Goose and Tasmanian subspecies of Ground Parrot are rightly omitted from this edition. But there is no mention of rare endemic species such as Plainswanderer, Red Goshawk, Masked Owl or Princess Parrot; of localised species such as Superb Parrot, Albert's Lyrebird, Black-eared Miner and several grasswrens; or of species which have declined such as Regent Honeyeater and Forty-spotted Pardalote. I am not predicting doom for these birds, but am sure that they and others should be listed. The data sheets usually give a fair summary, though a healthy increase in research and management since 1978/79 has rendered many out of date. The entry for Orange-bellied Parrots is bad; even in 1978 it was known that they rarely wintered in Tasmania, and that the breeding records for South Australia were probably erroneous. The species

should be classified as endangered, not just rare, and recent research suggests that the 1974 estimate of "fewer than 2000" was over-optimistic by a factor of ten. In the out of danger sheets I am surprised that no mention was made of the seasonal movements of Turquoise Parrots.

The selection for New Zealand and neighbouring islands is better, though two Norfolk Island endemics (Long-billed White-eye and the nominate subspecies of Scarlet Robin) should probably be included and retained respectively, despite their abundance, as only 405 ha of original forest remain, and the whole island is overrun by introduced plants, birds and mammals. On a happier note, Laughing Owl may be due for resurrection from the extinct list.

So there is a pressing need to supply current information from our region, and I understand that plans to do this are in progress. I hope there are fewer omissions elsewhere in the world. There is no mention of the programme to reintroduce White-tailed Eagles to Scotland (begun in earnest in 1975) and many of the sheets seem not to have been updated since 1974. It is important to realise that the taxa listed are not the only ones in need of conservation, and that the data sheets are summaries of information available at a point in time. If they help stimulate research or conservation measures which render them out of date, they will have served their purpose. The book will be a fascinating reference to all who are interested in bird conservation.

Richard H. Lyon

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