

## BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by B. GILLIES

**Seabirds: an identification guide** by Peter Harrison, 1983. Sydney: Reed. Pp 448, 88 col. p11, 31 b. & w. figs. 312 maps and 2 end papers 160 × 240 mm \$35.00.

The jacket tells us that this is 'A complete guide to the seabirds of the world'. Luckily for those of us who still aspire to make some contribution to the literature of seabirds, it does not quite achieve that admirable ideal but it is a nautical mile better than anything else for use on the ocean, cliff or beach.

This is a massive work crammed full of detailed information including nearly 1800 bird illustrations, 1600 of which are in colour. The black and white drawings are generally excellent but the colour plates vary in quality. Some of these may be faults in reproduction but the artist is to blame for those errors that appear on plate 30, which purports to portray the 'Dark Shearwaters' found in Australia, none of which is properly illustrated.

The construction, conception, form and layout of the book is generally commendable and it is simple to use — and this is a book that will be much used. However, it would have been easier to use if the distribution maps had been placed with the text rather than gathered at the back. Significant text notes appear on the page facing the plates and the number of illustrations is adjusted to provide more of those species, such as the jaegers, which exhibit extensive plumage variations. Similar species are usually sensibly grouped for easy comparison but there are some annoying and unsuitable dissociations. For instance the Black Petrel, *Procellaria parkinsoni*, called Parkinson's Petrel by Harrison, is seven plates removed from the two other members of the genus that it closely resembles and which have overlapping distributions. The text is well organised with sections on Descriptions, FHJ (Flight, Habits and Jizz), DM (Distribution and Movements), and SS (Similar Species), which highlight the features for separation. There is considerable disappointment that the only dimensions given are total length and wing span. Basic data on lengths of bill, tarsus, tail and wing would assist identification of birds found aboard ships or extracted from burrows on breeding islands, storm driven waifs as well as beach-washed derelicts, a common occurrence with seabirds.

The 'Introduction' contains excellent advice reflecting the author's considerable field experience and is illustrated with charming vignettes. It could be argued that whereas sketches are an invaluable if not essential device to record plumage characters, few observers have the ability to sketch adequately to capture jizz as is advised in the section on 'Recording Observations'. In fact jizz is an ephemeral quality that encompasses not only shape but mannerisms, impossible for anyone to represent by a single drawing. Unfortunately, many excellent sea-birders aboard tossing boats cannot lower their heads to write or sketch without becoming nauseous, so detailed notes and sketches must wait till *terra firma* is reached. Fortunately, as Harrison points out, photography is an alternative and usually superior method for recording descriptions and is generally more successful from the smaller boats, which are inherently less stable. Thus among the data to be recorded should be added the size of vessel, sea conditions and whether photographs were obtained.

The following is a *selection* of comments regarding the Plates and the Systematic Section pertinent to Australasia.

**Great Albatrosses (Wandering & Royal) *Diomedea exulans* and *D. epomophora*:** Fifteen years ago these species were generally regarded as virtually inseparable in the field and much scepticism greeted claims of field identification. In the early seventies, this reviewer began to suspect that Royal Albatrosses were more common in S.E. Australia than the literature admitted and became aware of the plumage patterns that distinguished this species from the Wandering Albatross. These characters are those which Harrison admirably illustrates.

Although the diagrams of the plumage stages, Fig. 5 p. 223, are basically correct, there is in fact less black on the wing adjacent to the body in stages 4 to 7 of the Wandering Albatross and it is never bifurcated on the trailing edge in the area of the tertials and scapulars as drawn. In fact the broad white back is a striking feature of stages 4 and 5. Royals are pure white on the breast and neck and never vermiculated as may be implied by some of the plates. The bills of birds observed in Australia are usually horn coloured with a yellowish nail, rarely as pink as Wanderers and never yellowish orange as printed.

**Mollymawks:** The colouration of head and upperparts of the adult Salvin's Albatross *Diomedea cauta salvini*, is much greyer and less brown than shown on Plate 14. Maturing Black-browed Albatrosses *D. melanophrys* do not necessarily develop the pale areas from the centre of the bill. The culmen may be the first to show some yellow. Grey-headed Albatrosses *D. chrysostoma* first develop a pale area along the base of the lower mandible, imaging the yellow of adulthood, and then the culmen becomes pale, spreading from the centre. Thus the tip is not the first part of the bill to become 'faintly yellow'.

**Giant Petrels:** The Southern Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* is well illustrated except that the tip of the upper mandible should be the same green as the lower mandible. The bill of the Northern Giant Petrel *M. halli* has upper and lower unguis the same colour, reddish or brownish, but not as red as printed and never any black. In some juvenile Northern's, the shade is so subtle as to require critical examination to determine the presence of any pinkish tint.

**Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea*:** Confusion with prions is less likely than implied. The white tip contrasting with the darkish subterminal band of the upper tail is visible at great distance and none show any black on the undertail, a feature of all prions. Thus the illustration of the ventral view is incorrect. The distinctive bluish rami stripe on the lower mandible of this species is not illustrated and the dark M mark and tail band are less prominent than shown.

**Pterodromas:** A characteristic feature of the Great-winged Petrel *P. macroptera* one of the most abundant Pterodromas, which is not mentioned or well illustrated, is that in flight the wings are held with the carpal set well forward. 'Habitually towers high in the sky' is a very misleading exaggeration for this species and an expression more readily acceptable as a FHJ of the Kerguelen Petrel.

The Tahiti Petrel *P. rostrata* extends at least as far west as the Arafura Sea (*pers. obs*) and, in contrast to others of the genus *Pterodroma*, typically has a straight winged, sea hugging, languid flight. Almost invariably those in Australian waters clearly show a pale streak down the centre of the underwing, which is also apparent in specimens so it is more than just an 'impression'.

**Cookkilaria Petrels:** Harrison has not shied away from dealing at length with this very difficult group. Although frequently contentious, sometimes oversimplified, and often wrong, much is right and his treatment has been very helpful and stimulating.

His treatment of Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera* and Collared Petrel *P. brevipes* needs considerable revision. The Caledonian population is undoubtedly Gould's (Imber & Jenkins 1981, *Notornis* 28 (3): 149-160), not Collared.

'Distinctive underwing pattern' is mentioned several times in relation to the Black-winged Petrel (*P. nigripennis*) but comparison of the plates of Gould's and Black-winged indicate only subtle differences, which is a true representation of distinctions in life.

**Prions** *Pachyptila*: Harrison has made it easy for himself by following Cox (1980, *Records of the South Australian Museum* 18 (4): 91-121) in recognizing only three full species. Thus less detailed coverage is accorded than would be necessary if the more generally accepted five or six species were considered separately. This is a shame because much interesting information is thus lost or submerged into obscurity with the classification to the less important status of subspecies. One must look elsewhere for the classical if confusing and overlapping bill characters of all forms and this is a serious omission in a 'complete' guide to the seabirds of the world.

**Procellaria:** There is much tidying up to do here also. White-chinned Petrels *P. aequinoctialis* normally seen in Australia have little or no white on the chin, rarely as much as portrayed in the plate and, as Harrison says, identification is difficult unless 'bill colour is precisely determined'. To this should be added bill shape and size of bird. The descriptions and illustrations of the bills of this species and the other very similar species, Westland Petrel (*P. westlandica*) and Black Petrel (*P. parkinsoni*), are insufficiently accurate to assist identification. The similarity of Black Petrel to Flesh-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carinipes*) is not adequately stressed.

**Dark Shearwaters:** In future editions the text for these species should be revised and Plate 30 should be redone. These paintings are beyond redemption in respect of shape and flight postures, features which Harrison says have 'a lot to do with jizz' and which are particularly important in this group. If, with all of Harrison's artistic ability, he can't get it right, what chance have we poor mortals attempting field sketches?

Although, the bill of the Flesh-footed Shearwater is stated to be diagnostic, nowhere is it properly described. The most important feature, bulk, is not mentioned or adequately illustrated. The Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* also commonly has a palish bill with a dark tip so colouration is not itself so distinctive, but the bill of the Wedge-tailed is only about half as deep. Although some Flesh-footed exhibit a dusky culmen, many do not. Compared with Wedge-tailed Shearwater, the bill of the Flesh-footed is more yellowish, less grey in tone and the head and body are more robust. No white is visible on the inner web of primaries on the underside of the wings as stated and drawn. In some birds, the base of the primaries may appear somewhat paler as indeed may also occasionally be the case with Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree.

Typically, Flesh-footed Shearwaters hold the wings straighter and the tips more rounded than portrayed. This is very unfortunate as the flexed attitude of the wings as illustrated is characteristic of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, which in the two larger images are instead shown with the wings untypically straight. Harrison is aware of these distinctions because he correctly describes them on the facing page as well as in the

text. The text does not mention that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters breed in New South Wales and migrate from there in the winter.

In the Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* the head to tail should be shorter compared with wing length in some views. The very straight trailing edge to the wings is usefully illustrated in one dorsal view and the bill size relative to Short-tailed Shearwater *P. tenuirostris* adequately indicated, if a little exaggerated. However, the Short-tailed is unrecognisable. The neck and tail are too long and the tail is drawn too broad and rounded instead of wedge shaped. It is not called 'Short-tailed' for nothing. In the Wedge-tailed Shearwater the toes fall far short of the tip of the tail, another error, but in Short-tailed Shearwater, may extend 30 mm beyond the tail, considerably further than drawn.

**Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwaters** *Puffinus gavia* and *P. huttoni*: The text does not adequately express the difficulty in separating these species and places too much emphasis on upperpart colouration, and too little on the diagnostic underwing pattern. Fluttering Shearwaters typically appear more sharply contrasting on the underwings with blacker primaries and secondaries than shown, and have mostly white underwing coverts, inner as well as outer, and never have wholly dusky 'armpits' as illustrated. Even Hutton's Shearwater usually has some white within the dusky triangle at the base of the underwing and Fluttering always has an extensive triangular area of white within the dark area at the base of the underwing. Otherwise the underwing of Hutton's is reasonably well illustrated if this is regarded as an intermediate example.

**Pelecanoides:** The layout of Figure 10, 'Bill shapes of Diving-petrels', is illogical and will cause serious confusion. The diagram for *Pelecanoides georgicus* is second from the left and *P. urinatrix*, the Common Diving-petrel is on the far right, which is not where one would assume. No mention is made of large greyish or brownish patches on the scapulars of Common Diving-petrels. Although the species nests on coastal islands of Victoria and Tasmania they are not known to nest on the 'coasts of Victoria'.

**Frigatebirds** *Fregata*: This section appears to be a major advance on anything previously available.

**Skuas and Jaegers:** Harrison is to be congratulated for this by far the best field guide treatment currently available. For the skua *Catharacta antarctica*, the use of the name 'Antarctic' is unfortunate because of its synonymy with 'South Polar' for *C. maccormicki*. 'Southern' or 'Brown' Skua is preferable.

**Gulls:** The plates and black and white illustrations for this group are masterful displaying the bewildering variety of plumages. Among a few errors is the illustration of a large white mirror on the underside of the primaries of the perched adult and juvenile Pacific Gulls *Larus pacificus*. There should in fact be none as correctly shown in the illustrations of the flying birds. Juvenile Pacific Gulls have much darker bills than pictured and the throat to vent area is essentially uniform brown, not strongly dappled as shown. The illustrations labelled 202B are first year birds, not juveniles. The white trailing edge to the wing of the juvenile Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus* is narrower than shown.

**Terns:** Australasian readers will be disappointed that more information is not given for separation of Common *Sterna hirundo*, Arctic *S. paradisaea*, Antarctic *S. vittata*, Roseate *S. dougalli* and White-fronted Terns *S. striata*. Under Common or Arctic Tern, White-fronted is not mentioned as a similar species and Arctic Tern is not mentioned in the account of the White-fronted. Breeding Roseate Terns from the Indian

Ocean and elsewhere can have wholly red bills and, in Queensland birds, some portion of the base of the bill is often bright, not 'dull' red. Legs and feet are usually bright red in Australian breeders. Perched adults in breeding plumage usually have less black visible on the primaries than illustrated.

The white on the crown of non-breeding Arctic Terns is more extensive than illustrated, imparting a monastic appearance that separates them from other species, except perhaps the Antarctic Tern. The diagnostic black along the trailing edge of the wings is well defined and clearly visible on the underwing but is more tapered than illustrated and less conspicuous from the upperside than shown in the plates.

The most useful diagnostic feature of White-fronted Tern in all plumages, which shows particularly well when perched, is not illustrated. Figures 262b, c and d should show a broad continuous white edge along the upper side (inner edge) of the folded primaries. Adults in breeding plumage have black spots on the tips of at least the five outer primaries, and these can be visible from below, but never blackish outer webs to outer tail feathers as the flight illustration 262a portrays. The text repeats this error.

Chris Corben (*pers. comm.*) points out that Harrison mistakenly states that in Australia, Lesser Crested Terns (*S. bengalensis*) have darker upperparts than Crested Terns (*S. bergii*). In our race of the Crested Tern, the bill of adults is bright not 'dull' yellow and in non-breeding is still yellow, not dusky as pictured. The upperparts of both breeding and non-breeding adults are much darker than illustrated. Neither is the bill 'drooped' as much as indicated in the plate.

Fairy *S. nereis* and Little Terns *S. albigrons* are not properly illustrated nor adequately described. When breeding, the Fairy Tern may have an unmarked wholly orange bill, but not infrequently there is a small blackish tip. In non-breeding adults there is a dusky patch at the base of the upper mandible as well as a complete dusky subterminal band at the gonys, but the tip is still orange-yellow like the remainder. There may also be a little black at the base of the lower mandible.

Only a small proportion of sub-adult Fairy Terns have wholly dark bills and the legs are always yellow or yellowish never black or blackish. The pearl-grey upperparts are a good character for distinguishing this species from the greyer, darker backed Little Tern in all plumages. Therefore on page 182, the word 'underparts' was meant to read 'upperparts' in the description for 270a. The structural differences between these species are not mentioned although quite marked and very obvious when the two are together. The Little Tern is more slender and stands much higher. The heavier Fairy Tern has shorter and thicker legs, which are yellowish-orange and never red as shown in the plate. In Australia the visiting migrant Little Terns from Asia when in non-breeding have wholly black bills lacking any pale at the base. Harrison has placed the Australian breeding population of Little Tern in a separate race *placens* and not with the Asian race *sinensis* as is the normal practice.

#### Maps

The maps are extremely useful even with the author's warning that they 'should be regarded only as a basic summary of our incomplete knowledge'. One wonders at times where the evidence for some of the distribution derives. For instance, is the Little Penguin really a pelagic species distributed across the span of the Tasman Sea? Buller's Albatross is shown as occurring all round Tasmania to the southern shores of Victoria and S.E. South Australia. This is correct but how did Harrison know? Apparently by personal observation. Few of the now numerous

records have been published. Sydney-siders might complain that an asterisk indicating vagrancy is missing from the central New South Wales coast for this species. However, the author does warn us that not all 'occurrences outside the species' normal range' are denoted. The selection is somewhat haphazard.

The map of Chatham Island Albatross will later include asterisks in Victoria, S.E. New South Wales and Tasmania. This omission is not Harrison's fault. The few records are as yet unpublished. Similar comments can be made for several species.

The Sooty Albatross also regularly occurs off eastern Tasmania and occasionally New South Wales. The Antarctic Petrel is more frequently found in Australia and New Zealand than indicated by Map 57. Kerguelen Petrels are sufficiently frequently observed or found in southern Australia and in New Zealand to warrant extending the blue shading, indicating normal distribution, to embrace our shores, especially because the much rarer Mottled Petrel is accorded this privilege in a darker blue. The same comment applies to Blue Petrel.

The presence of Gould's Petrel in Tasmanian waters and the southern Tasman Sea is not indicated but has been known since at least 1978. The Short-tailed Shearwater is not really so rare in New Zealand. White-faced Storm-Petrels are present in southern Australia at least from September to May, not just October to March. Burrows are being excavated in September.

A Leach's Storm-Petrel was recovered in Victoria before the W.A. record indicated by an asterisk. Whereas inland breeding records of the American White Pelican are indicated, the map implies that the Australian Pelican is exclusively a coastal breeder, which contradicts the text that misleadingly states 'Breeds throughout Australia'. No doubt later editions will acknowledge the presence of Long-tailed Jaegers in the Tasman Sea. The Little Tern is present in New Zealand during the Austral summer, which is also an omission in the text.

In the end papers, Lord Howe Island is depicted too far north.

The above examples by no means exhaust the comments and corrections that could be made. They are intended as an adjunct to the author's expressed reservations and to demonstrate the limited reliability of the maps.

In a book with so much detailed information it is not surprising that criticism can be levelled at some aspects and the occasional mistakes uncovered. However, Harrison is to be congratulated on his whole approach to seabird identification and his achievement with this book. It is an exacting and daunting model for other experts to emulate. Australians will still require other seabird references, particularly *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds* by Serventy & Warham, which has valuable dimensional and biological data.

I look forward to the publication of Harrison's next project, *Seabird Pocket Guide*. This will be a photographic companion volume.

M.J. Carter

**The Atlas of Australian Birds** by M. Blakers, S.J.J.F. Davies and P.N. Reilly, 1984. Victoria: Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union and Melbourne University Press. Pp xlvii + 738, b. & w. drawings ca 650, maps ca 800. 200 × 280 mm. \$56.00 (Overlays \$6 available from RAOU only).

'A bird atlas to cover Australia? Impossible', commences the Introduction; and yet that is exactly what has happened, with great success, the whole gargantuan project conceived, executed and published in the short span of 11 years. The outcome is this extremely well thought out and produced book, encompassing a wealth of detail, the data base for further monitoring studies and conservation policy-making, of which the authors and participants, the Union, and indeed the nation itself, may justly feel proud.

Although I cannot find it stated in as many words, a major objective was clearly to use national atlasing to engender growth, not only in knowledge of birds, but of Australian ornithology in all its aspects: to promote interest in bird study and bird art, and thereby to raise popular consciousness, through birds, of the environment at large. Three thousand people provided field data and thousands more doubtless had some inkling as to what was going on before, during and after the five years of the Field Atlas work, 1977-1981. To that extent, in lauding this enterprise I am preaching to the converted. All the same, some words concerning its scope may not go amiss.

Inspired perhaps by the *Atlas of the British Flora* (1962) and by the zeal of an army of birdwatchers whose field work in 1968-1972 led to *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976), the RAOU's Council and Field Investigation Committee tentatively debated the absurd-sounding notion of an Australian atlas in 1972: absurd, because a mere few hundred ornithologists would have to cover a continent of nearly 8 million km<sup>2</sup>. Feasibility atlasing was conducted in a small part of New South Wales in 1973-1974, and solidifying ideas were discussed in open forum soon afterwards at the Canberra 16th International Ornithological Congress. Each of two early, laudable decisions has proved a *sine qua non* for the project: to organize an army of amateurs as professionally as possible, by means of Government funding; and to computerize data processing. The organizers of several other national bird atlases, recently-published, in press or in planning, will envy the extent of state funding of the Australian one. As for computerization, it has not only permitted the production of the species maps themselves, but has generated an Atlas data bank that is being used for further monitoring and in the preparation of more detailed regional atlases.

There are 30 introductory pages, which make interesting but not mandatory reading. The main part of the book is preceded by a coloured 'How-to-use' page, which is comprehensive in itself. Nearly every bird species receives a page on its own, consisting of a title, vignette, text, some reporting-rate data, and a map. Maps are either of 'Australia' (Australia, Tasmania, and continental-shelf islands) with data plotted by 1° squares, or of Tasmania and its islands with data plotted by 10' squares. Specific distributions are shown, lucidly and effectively, by means of open or closed red circles, of three sizes depending on a bird's Reporting Rate (*i.e.*, the percentage of record sheets in which a species was recorded in a given square during the five year period). Maps of all but the rarer species show breeding distributions at a glance; they also show areas where a species has been recorded without it being found breeding, although no attempt is made otherwise to define the breeding and non-breeding ranges of migrants. Residential status is, however, discussed in the texts, which complement the maps and need always to be consulted when interpreting them. A fascinating section of historical maps shows the ranges of 40 species each for three periods: before 1901, in 1901-1950, and in 1951-1976. Records were abstracted from the literature, which is of course sparse for the pre-1901 period. Range contractions and expansions shown in the historical maps are discussed in each species text, and together they give a graphic demonstration of the effect of the hand of man on the geographical range, hence abundance, of wild birds.

Altogether nearly 90 000 record sheets with over 2.7 million records were accumulated. Every one of 812 1° squares on land was covered by observers at least once, and many marine squares similarly. The five most widespread birds prove to be Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Richard's Pipit; and the five species recorded breeding in the highest number of 1° squares were Australian Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie, Galah and Striated Pardalote. Analyses in the introductory section give many more such details; for instance, that the most commonly encountered birds in Tasmania were Forest Raven, Masked Lapwing and Superb Fairy-wren and in the north of the Northern Territory were Australian Magpie-lark, Peaceful Dove and Rainbow Bee-eater. One map even records zero data, a case Paradise Lost. No Paradise Parrots were recorded during the Field Atlas, and historical maps show the sad decline and evident demise of the species in the late 1920s. Impressive as the maps and their data are, they are, of course, by no means definitive. A series of graphs in the Introduction plots the increase of species recorded in given squares against increasing observer effort; clearly, in many remoter districts where only one or a few visits were made to some squares, the number of species recorded is far short of its asymptote, which is to say that relatively little further observation therein will be likely to alter the range of many species quite profoundly.

The species texts themselves are short but to the point, full of interestingly-presented information and references, set out in the topic sequence of range, movement, environment and regulating factors, status, and abundance. Each atlas page is pleasantly enhanced with a black-and-white line drawing of the bird concerned. One hundred artists submitted work, many young and aspiring, but vignettes by only 23 were ultimately commissioned. Perhaps even that was too many, for most of the figures fall far short of the enviable standard set by Frank Knight in his 109 superb drawings. In my view the only other excelling illustrator is Jeremy Boot (nine drawings).

The book is completed with short sections on uncommon and vagrant species, sources of records for the historical maps, calculation of reporting rates for field atlas maps, acknowledgements, a list of the 3000 contributors, the artists, a glossary, a list of plants, a list of 1900 references, and a comprehensive index. An inserted slip advertizes a set of six precisely-fitting transparent overlays, available from RAOU for such a small fraction of the cost of the book that it is a pity they were not included with the purchase, and the price of the book adjusted accordingly. Surely a little bit of home science, applying overlays showing geographical features, rainfall, relief, vegetation etc. onto the bird maps, will appeal to the large majority of users of the Atlas? The reviewer, for one, finds the coloured acetate overlays with Cyrus & Robson's (1980) *Bird Atlas of Natal* immensely useful (and fun!).

This is the first time that atlasing by field observation has been attempted on a continental scale. It is not, however, the first time that a continental avifauna has been accurately mapped. That has already been accomplished in *An Atlas of Speciation in African Birds* by Hall & Moreau (Passerines, 1970) and Snow (Non-passerines, 1978), using only specimen and literature sources. It is strange that neither of these immensely important, ground-breaking works is referred to anywhere in the Australian Atlas. I can only think that it is because of the emphasis on taxonomy and speciation in the African work. The value of the Australian Atlas for speciation studies is recognized by the authors in passing, but they do not elaborate upon it except to give a map of R. Schodde's and I.J. Mason's zoogeographical barriers (1980). By no means has the last word on the species affinities of Australia's birds been said, and the Atlas will surely stimulate further studies on geographical differentiation, as well as opening the door on

avifaunal analyses like those for Africa of Diamond & Hamilton (1980) and Crowe & Crowe (1982) in *J. Zool., London*.

Looking to the future once more, I note with satisfaction the inclusion of a few paragraphs headed 'The Next Atlas'. But I am sure that the great success of the present publication will be its own best ambassador, and that no exhortation from a foreigner is needed to make the future the present, to strike while the iron is hot and initiate further, even grander, atlas-making projects now.

C. H Fry

**Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Volume IV.** Terns to woodpeckers. Chief Editor S. Cramp. Oxford: O.U.P. Pp 960, coll. p11 98, many maps, text figures, sonagrams and diagrams. 260 × 205 mm, 2.55 kg. £60.

After reviews of Volumes I and II (*antea* 78: 244-245; 84: 252-253), it is difficult to find anything more to say about this monumental undertaking beyond stating the obvious, that Volume IV covers the last of the non-passerine birds: part of the Charadriiformes (Sternidae, Rynchopidae, Alcidae), Pteroclidiformes, Columbiformes, Psittaciformes, Strigiformes, Caprimulgiformes, Apodiformes, Coraciiformes and Piciformes. The format, lay-out and treatment remain wonderfully uniform, which emphasizes the care with which the whole was planned.

Like our planet, as some suppose, the work ineluctably expands as it progresses. We were given 5.1 pages of text per species in Volume I, 6.6 in Volume II and now 8 in Volumes III and IV. One wonders whether the asymptote is being reached. If not, perhaps another three volumes will not be enough for the passerines. It may seem that the cost is inflating even more rapidly but a page of Volume I in 1977 cost 3.5p and today a page of Volume IV costs 6.25p, which seems to me to be nothing to complain about in these evil times.

Users of such a compendium will be bound to find shortcomings, particularly in matters that specially interest them. For my part I regret that the myth of regurgitating water by sandgrouse is not totally squashed but on the other hand was glad to note that drivel about the laying of eggs by cuckoos is firmly dismissed; yet the matter of mimicry of eggs by cuckoos is hardly mentioned. The fact is that, unlike Jowett, none of us is omniscient; the editors of, and contributors to, this work have no doubt made sins of omission and commission but

they are probably little ones.

All the same, some criticism persists. One has to do a lot of close reading to make sure that what one wants is there or not there. In other words, clearer subdivision of the main sections (perhaps by bold type-face) would have helped users. That, of course, would have presented editors and publishers with problems of space and cost. So, because I think that the coloured plates of eggs are a superfluous elegance, I believe that the money put into them could have been better laid out elsewhere. Indeed, I still think that the worth of coloured illustrations at all in a work of this sort is debatable — no, let me be honest, I regard them as a costly incubus. Many of the plates in this volume are pleasing, beautiful and useful but those of terns, swifts and others in flight are hard to use because the birds look much alike and the numbered individuals jump about all over the plate so that it takes time to find the bird that one wants. Publishers, naturally, will always pander to *hoi polloi* or think that such lavish icing on the cake will help to sell their wares. It would be interesting to know to what extent sales would have fallen and profits been reduced if this work did not have coloured plates, though I do not see how that could be determined. Less than claimed, I suspect, because all serious students of birds are going to want the book; those less interested can get their art-work more cheaply and equally well done elsewhere. With luck I may still be on deck for Volume VII.

S. Marchant

**A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** by Graham Pizzey, 1980. Sydney: Collins.

Further to the review of this book by Peter Curry (see *Emu* 85 (4): 274-5) readers are asked to note the following points.

The publisher's error stating that the maps depict 'breeding distribution' was corrected in the first (1982) reprint.

A soft cover now replaces the hard cover.

Finally, that, partly due to the book's acceptance, the price has now defied the usual trend, selling at \$19.95, not \$25.00 as stated.

The editors wish to apologize to the reviewer, publisher and particularly, to the author, Graham Pizzey, for the delay in publishing this review.

Belinda Gillies