

they bobbed frequently, jerked their tails and perched on logs. On one occasion a bird alighted in a tree three feet above the water.

It is of interest to note that this record constitutes the largest group of Wood Sandpipers seen in Australia.—  
JULIAN R. FORD, Fremantle, W.A., 4 4 57.

## Reviews

**The World's Dabbling Ducks.**—Volume 2 of Jean Delacour's work on the Anatidae, *The Waterfowl of the World*, is concerned with 43 species which in 1945 Delacour and Ernst Mayr classified, with one exception—*Merganetta armata*, the Torrent Duck—into the tribe Anatini ('The Family Anatidae', *Wilson Bulletin*, vol. 57, March 1954; reviewed *Emu*, vol. 45, p. 95). Delacour uses the comprehensive vernacular 'Dabbling Ducks' because of that distinctive normal feeding habit of practically all species of the tribe.

Volume 2 has 232 pages, including names, indexes and 29 distribution maps. The 24 full-page full-colour plates by Peter Scott, provide a frontispiece typical of waterfowl-in-marsh tradition, and illustrate 26 monotypic species and 59 subspecies of the remaining 17 species, both sexes and eclipse plumages, and all known downy young. It was published in late 1956: volume 1 in 1954 (reviewed *Emu*, vol. 55, p. 162). The work will be completed in three volumes (each 8 inches x 10), £5/5/- stg. a volume. Publisher is Country Life Ltd., London.

Thirty-eight of the 43 species are of the genus *Anas* and labelled 'true' dabbling ducks. Delacour states in the introduction: "Although the numerous species grouped here in the genus *Anas* are sometimes considerably different, they are nevertheless linked by intermediates and they form a closely connected group. Further generic distinction would obscure the concept of their relationship." Two species occur in Australia, New Zealand and New Guinea—Black Duck and Grey Teal; one is confined to Australia and New Zealand—Blue-winged Shoveler; one to New Guinea's mountains—Salvadori's Teal; one in these days is confined to southern Australia—Chestnut Teal, and one to New Zealand and its southern islands—Brown Teal (some make the two species conspecific).

The remaining five species of dabblers are monotypic and "aberrant . . . tentatively placed here as we are still unable at present to understand clearly their position in the general system of genera and species of Anatinae sub-family". They are Australia's Pink-eared and Freckled Ducks, New Zealand's Blue Duck, South America's Torrent Duck (of six subspecies) and the Pink-headed Duck of eastern India and Pakistan.

As with all such comprehensive works, adequate appraisal of the detail of Delacour's and Scott's *Waterfowl* requires methodical assessment and comment at length. It will be useful when such occurs; whoever undertakes it must necessarily wait until volume 3 is issued, not only because it will complete the Anatidae, but also it will 'round up' with a "general account of the family Anatidae and include chapters on morphological, anatomical and biological characters; on history, sport, conservation, acclimatization, care and breeding, and a bibliography". As one reviewer of volume 1 has stated in anticipation: "Let us hope that it will be a large volume!"

The *Waterfowl* is really impressive in beauty and information of illustration, and quality of 'make-up' in typography, paper, printing and binding. It joins the fine works on ornithology and will draw the admirers and collectors of such now and onwards. Owners and curators of waterfowl collections will benefit substantially from the considerable and authoritative detail of 'Captivity' comment. But there are doubts enough that the systematist has been equally well served; a sub-

mergence has occurred within the general discursiveness inseparable from a work such as *Waterfowl*. Elucidation of Delacour's and Mayr's fourteen groups within the large genus *Anas* is not cohesive. Further, no explanation is made of divergences from the 1945 statement (the 'lighthouse' for Anatidae systematics)—for example, the raising of *supercilliosa*, *hizonica* and *rubripes* from subspecies to species, and the noticeable change in sequence among the groups. Inclusion of *Merganetta* as an aberrant species within the dabbling-duck Tribe Anatini is adequately explained.—J.J.

**Bird Wonders of Australia.**—The first edition of this publication appeared in 1934 (see review, *Emu*, vol. 34, pt. 3, January 1935, pp. 245-6) and summarized in entertaining style the more fascinating habits and peculiarities of Australian birds that appeal both to the studious ornithologist and casually-interested alike. A fourth revised and enlarged edition has now appeared (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1956, pp. x + 243, 65 photographs) which (omitting any account of the intermediate editions) in contents and style differs considerably from the first edition. In the first section (biographical) two new chapters are added—'A Study in Black and White' and 'Guests of the Mistletoe' (the title of a few others have been changed), and one omitted—'The Horns of Elfland'. In the second part (general) there are additional chapters, and 'Voices of Three Cities' has been dropped. A considerable amount has also been added to the text-matter and much of it rearranged.

From a personal viewpoint this reviewer regrets the non-inclusion of chapters omitted, and whilst he compliments the author on the additional ones, he wishes the others could have been retained also. 'The Horns of Elfland' is an absorbing eight-page story which appealed greatly at a time when Sydney's fascinating 'Heath-Wren' was more 'mystery than history'. There is little doubt that its retention would have been appreciated by many.

A fine colour photograph by Ellis McNamara of the Noisy Pitta adorns the frontispiece as well as the dust-cover. The remaining 64 photographs in black and white are by various well-known photographers and have been carefully selected, many of them being taken since 1934. It is stated in the preface that the purpose of the book "is to present a factual, gossipy account of the 'believe-it-or-not' features of Australia's remarkable bird-life, and to give an indication of the high standard which the hobby of photographing wild birds has attained in this country". Whilst it continues to do so its continued popularity seems assured.—A.R.M.

**Birds of New Guinea.**—Though only one-ninth the size of Australia New Guinea has an avifauna numerically similar in species and is considered one of the most interesting zoo-geographical regions of the world. Yet "there is no book in existence dealing with the birds of New Guinea in a handy form, with coloured illustrations to guide the student". Such is stated in the foreword of Tom Iredale's recently-published book (*Birds of New Guinea*, 2 vols., xxx + 491 pp., 36 pls., map, Georgian House, Melbourne), which, because of such an obvious need, will be received with much interest. The clarity of print, colour reproduction and binding are all commendable, but the price may prevent a wide distribution, especially among the many ex-servicemen naturalists who spent war years in New Guinea and to whom the book should have special appeal. The author states that "some 650 species are described" but a count of those designated as species totals 725. Plates depict 347 figures, but male and female are not infrequently included and some subspecies and young are also depicted, so illustrations probably cover little more than one-third of the specific total. The plates are by Lilian Medland (Mrs. Iredale), who regrettably did not live to see them in published form. They depict her accuracy and quality as an artist and will be a pleasing record to her memory. The choice of species for illustration (especially among the Passerines) is

good and most genera are represented: however in Rallidae no representative of the three endemic genera (*Megacrex*, *Gymnocrex* and *Rallcula*) is included among the six species depicted.

The general arrangement of the text is by grouping related birds rather than by emphasizing each species. Thus, for example, ducks comprise the large-typed heading (which is usually followed by a general discussion covering most of the habits, nests, eggs, etc.), and sub-headings 'Geese-teal', 'Tree-ducks', 'Mountain Duck', 'True Ducks', 'Wigeon' and 'Diving Duck' follow. The absence of a Checklist supplement (such as was given in the same author's similar-styled *Birds of Paradise and Bower-birds*, 1950) leaves the reader puzzled at times as to the status of the many names involved. Under the sub-heading 'Boobook Owls', for example, nine names are discussed, but the only one given a common name, which is printed in bold type so that each species can be readily detected among the text, is the Barred Bush-Owl (*Uroglauis dimorpha*). Obviously other species are involved but just what are in that category and what are geographical races of the remaining eight is difficult to determine from the text. A similar instance may be cited under the sub-heading 'Deceitful Honey-Sucker' (it is regretted that the long-used 'honeyeater' has been changed even though the family scientific name may be more correctly translated 'suck' rather than 'eat') where the only emphasized name is the Grey-headed (*Glycichaera poliocephala*) and this would readily be surmised as the only species, but *fallax* has nomenclatural priority and its specificity is inferred as the author states "a second species, *poliocephala* . . .". Then what of *whitei*, whose description is "even more different from that of *poliocephala* than from *fallax*"? The Australian representative of the genus (*claudi*), of which there is said to be "some doubt", is considered "certainly not conspecific".

There must necessarily be diversified opinion as to the correctness or otherwise of the author's taxonomic interpretation and of the noticeable disparity with Mayr's *List of New Guinea Birds* (1941). This review, of course, can quote only a few, but mention might be made of Iredale's continued use of 'narrow' genera (no fewer than twelve additional generic names and four subgeneric are given in the list of new names), the rejection of *Poecilodryas aethiops* as a form of the Pied Chat (*Saxicola caprata*), the 'breaking-up' of all genera placed in Timaliinae (and then giving little indication as to which family each belongs), the removal of *Chaetorhynchus papuensis* from Dicruridae to the monarch flycatchers, the belief that *Oreocharis* and *Paramythia* have nothing to do with Dicacidae, the inference of three distinguishable species in the *Neositta papuensis* complex, the recognition of two species of dollar-birds ('twin-species'), the inclusion of bustards among the 'Wading Birds and Shore Waders', and the adoption of such vernacular names as 'pseudo-tits', 'false-flycatchers', 'false-thrushes', etc. Among species added to the New Guinea avifauna since Mayr's 1941 *List* are *Mareca penelope*, *Porzana pusilla*, *Megalururus gramineus* and the recently-named *Archboldia sanfordi* and *Melidectes princeps*.

Notwithstanding some indication of criticism given in the foregoing, Mr. Iredale's book contains much of interest, the illustrations are for the most part quite good, and the careful descriptions and coloured figures of so many of the types of Ramsay, De Vis, etc. (housed in Australian Museums), are a decided acquisition. There is little doubt that *Birds of New Guinea* will remain for some time the only book of its type and give a goodly measure of assistance to anyone studying the avifauna of that interesting region.

The published price is 24 guineas; the edition is limited to 1,500 sets, and the work will not be reprinted.—A.R.M.

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