

BOOKS, PAPERS AND LITERARY NOTES

Edited by ALLAN McEVEY

Books

Water, Prey, and Game Birds of North America. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 1965. Pp. 464, including 643 pictures of which 600 are in full colour, and an album of six small double-sided disk records with 65 minutes of calls of 97 species each with short introduction. 7 in. x 10 in. \$11.85 (U.S.) post paid. This book is a delight indeed for the browsers among watchers, photographers and painters of birds, and for other perceptive persons. The reader must browse—the text is an assembly of essays, and essays within essays, which, with the magnificent collection of photographs and paintings in colour bring fact, scholarship and feeling into intimate description that takes one mentally into the field and captures the stimulating sensations of watching free wildlife. The records help to complete the mental imagery.

The book has 50 portions and describes 329 species in text and colour. Twenty authors provide the text—A. Wetmore (also consultant for the book), J. W. Aldrich, R. P. Allen, D. Amadon, F. C. Craighead Jr., J. J. Craighead, P. S. Humphrey, G. H. Lowery Jr., R. M. McClung, A. H. Miller, R. C. Murphy, R. J. Newman, R. T. Peterson, D. S. Pettingill Jr., A. L. Rand, S. D. Ripley, A. Sprunt Jr., G. M. Sutton, F. K. Truslow, P. A. Zahl. Photographs are by many, with F. K. Truslow, A. A. Allen, E. Porter, G. R. Austing and K. W. Kenyon mainly concerned. The principal artists are W. A. Weber, A. Brooks and J. W. Taylor. The book was prepared by staff of the National Geographic's Book Service, composed by National Geographic's Phototypographic Division, and printed and bound by R. R. Donnelly & Sons—all resulting in excellent quality of book production.—J. J.

The Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden, Their Life Histories, Breeding Habits, and Eggs by Sir Geoffrey Archer, K.C.M.G. and Eva M. Godman. Vols. III and IV 1961. Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London (pp. LXVIII and 628-1042. 7 col. plates and map). (pp. VII and 1045-1570. 7 col. plates and map.) £9.9.0d. (S).

A continent as huge as Africa and as fascinating in its bird life might well be expected to be rich in its ornithological literature. To the long line of writers on the region, (Sclater, Priest, Bannerman, Meinertzhagen, Praed, Grant, Macdonald and others) have come Archer and Godman to add the title above. This is a leisurely work giving to each species a generous discussion including reference to taxonomy, ecology, habits, movement and eggs, in addition to formal description. Here is a note on the Somaliland Richard's Pipit which might well be a field observer's note on our own—"It . . . relies on three methods of evading apparent danger rather than take wing—by squatting, standing erect and motionless, or by running . . .". The very striking coloured plates are by Thorburn and Gronveld. Ornithological shortcomings will be neither readily apparent nor significant to most Australian readers and those needing to know should see *Oologists Record*, March 1962 and *The Ibis* 1962, p. 432.

Other things however can be said here. Whatever errors may exist it is to be remembered that the work represents in part the private pursuit of a distinguished government official (the nephew of Sir Frederick Jackson of earlier African ornithology), whose African duties were concerned with sterner matters than bird study. As such it also represents a traditional by-product of British Colonial service, a rapidly waning sphere these days, and we can be grateful to both authors and publishers for seeing these volumes through so long after the first two were published, in 1937; these aspects are the justification for this late review. Vol. I incidentally, contains an interesting account of Somaliland.

The bibliographically-minded may wish to know that the format of Vols. III and IV is exactly the same as for Vols. I and II with different species gold embossed on the covers. A handsome prospectus was published for Vols. III and IV. Was there one for Vols. I and II?—A. McE.

Instructions to young ornithologists II: bird behaviour by Derek Goodwin, 1961. London, Museum Press. 123 pp. 17 photographs. 10 text figs., line drawings, cloth bound, octavo, 12/6 stg. The author as a small child was enthralled by the pigeons in a London market and has clearly never lost this enthusiastic attitude. His book is filled with detailed observations of and fascinating anecdotes about many different birds in almost all situations in which they "behave" in a particular way—feeding, communicating, fighting, courting, preening and roosting. This enthusiasm, coupled with a bent for careful interpretation, must surely be infectious to any young persons of minds enquiring about why birds do what they do, although a number of the birds discussed would be familiar only to readers living in England. (Not in R.A.O.U. Library.)—D. F. DORWARD.

Bird Migration: the biology and physics of orientation behaviour by Donald R. Griffin, 1965. Heinemann, Science Study Series No. 32. Paperback, pp. XV and 180, 27 text figs., 8/6 stg. The study of bird navigation has been one of the most important aspects of ornithology in the last 20 years, but at times has become so complex and has developed such differing attitudes as to border on the esoteric. Since questions about how and why birds migrate are among those most frequently directed at ornithologists by interested people, this obscurity in recent work has been regrettable. Dr. Griffin, one of the earliest professionals in this field, has set matters beautifully to right with this absolutely straightforward and highly readable account of the problems, the ways in which they were investigated, the results, their interpretation, the remaining unanswered questions, and the possible directions of future investigations. This book should never be far from the hands of anyone who has been or is to be asked "What do we know of migration?" and who, perhaps, has misgivings about his reply. (Not in R.A.O.U. Library.)—D. F. DORWARD.

Papers

Notes on the Flower-peckers: In a series of six papers, totalling 192 pages, Dr. Finn Salomonsen (*Am. Mus. Nov.*, no's 1990, 1991, 2016, 2057, 2067 and 2068, March 1960 to December 1961) reviews all species within the family *Dicaeidae*. This taxonomic and specific relationship discussion is "the result of studies carried out in connection with the preparation of the section dealing with these birds in Peters' *Check List of the Birds of the World*".

The generic arrangement given in a previous review of this family by Ernst Mayr and Dean Amadon (*Am. Mus. Nov.*, no's 1360, 1947, pp. 1-32) is followed by Salomonsen, except that *Prionochilus* 1841 is again reinstated for *Anuimos* 1853. Mayr and Amadon accepted 54 species, which has been increased to 57 by Salomonsen, four of those previously regarded as races being raised to species and one species reduced to a geographical race.

Apart from our sole representative in the dominant genus *Dicaeum*, the Mistletoe-bird, *D. hirundinaceum*, main Australian interest concerns treatment of the genus *Pardalotus*. Of this somewhat aberrant part of *Dicaeidae* Salomonsen states: "The pardalotes are interesting birds from a zoogeographical viewpoint. In their distribution and relationships they illustrate many points in the faunal history of Australia, and, in addition, they exhibit various stages of speciation, in this way substantially contributing to an understanding of the evolutionary processes The nest building is remarkable and probably unique in birds." *Pardalotus punctatus* and *P. xanthopygus* are correctly kept distinct because of range overlap in parts of South Australia. Part 6 is devoted wholly to the superspecies *P. striatus*, in which the four species previously determined by Hindwood and Mayr (*The Emu*, 46, p. 49), and Mayr and Amadon (*loc. cit.*) are again accepted. The author contributes some sound discussion on this difficult group of very closely allied species. There is evidence of hybridism between the striped-crowned forms and the Black-headed Pardalote (*P. melanocephalus*). Three new subspecies are described—*P. rubricatus carpentariae* (Normanton), *P. melanocephalus boweni* (Bowen) and *P. m. restrictus* (Jardine River).

—A. R. McGill.

The Effect of Forest Destruction upon a Local Population by H. Elliott McClure and Hussein bin Othman, *Avian Bionomics of Malaya* 2. *Bird-banding* 36: 242-269, 1965. During the period January to July 1962, birds were netted and banded at four locations in the Subang Forest Reserve near Kuala Lumpur. Between April and July three-quarters of the area was de-forested to make room for a village. An additional three study areas were set up in adjacent forest and kept under observation until April, 1963. A comparison of the recapture rates of the birds from the deforested and forested area suggested that many species in the deforested area were completely eliminated or left the vicinity; that about one-third of the birds from the deforested area moved into adjacent forested areas following the destruction; that the concentration of these species, which were mainly forest edge, was four times what it had been before the disturbance; and that probably less than five per cent of the birds from the destroyed areas were able to establish new territories in adjacent forest by the end of the study. The authors make the point in their introduction that in Malaya, as in other parts of the world where expanding populations and economics demand more land and resources, much of the tropical rain forest is rapidly being reduced to ashes and parkland. The effect of tree removal in tropical rain forest does not appear to have been reported previously—so the present paper ranks as a pioneer study.—W. B. H.

Birds of Victoria, by Allan McEvey, in *Victorian Year Book*, No. 80, 1966; 28 pp. (Govt. Printer, Melbourne.)

This is the most comprehensive review of the birds of a single State so far published in an Australian Year Book. Following paragraphs on local physiography, climate and vegetation, plus a note on birds in general, it summarizes each of the bird-families represented in the area, giving in each instance an informative, though necessarily brief, introduction to the group. The number of species recorded for the State is approximately 430.

Rather oddly, in referring to Australia's overall total of 707 species (1926 Checklist) having been tentatively reduced by readjustment to 650, the author neglects to mention that the "status quo" has been virtually restored by the extraordinary number of stray visitors added to the Australian list in recent years—more than 40 of these, as well as some new breeding records, are listed in the latest (1966) edition of Cayley's *What Bird Is That?*

Throughout the text there is inconsistency in hyphenation, both in general wordage and names, and, also, cause for regret is given by use of the out-moded and indefinite tag "Major Mitchell" for the Pink Cockatoo and the substitution of "Black-lored Whistler", a term quite unlikely to be favoured, for the Gilbert Whistler. Regrettably, too, the notes entitled "Study of birds" and the Bibliography are both inadequate. Neither of these sections acknowledges the basic work on birds done by Lieut. J. H. Tuckey at Victoria's first settlement in 1803 or refers to the historic bird-protection order issued there by Lieut. Governor Collins (see *Emu*, Sept. 1955, p. 253).

Nor is there any allusion to the medium of John Cotton's important list of 1848 (see *Vict. Nat.* Sept. 1941, for summary), nor to informed articles in *Trans. Philos. Inst., Vic.*, in 1857-58, nor to various basic papers in the *Southern Science Record* (Melb.) in 1880-83. And, at later dates, some of the most potent influences in cultivating bird-appreciation in Victoria are overlooked, among them the books by Hall, Gillies and Hall, Belcher, Littlejohns and Lawrence, Littlejohns (three books on lyrebirds), Les Chandler, and the mass of material disseminated during many years by the various conductors of the popular "Nature Notes" in the Melbourne *Argus*. All these mediums are much more significant in the history of bird-study in Victoria than some of the more general references given in the Bibliography.

Possibly, however, such faults are minor considerations when set against a text that is generally admirable and which is reinforced by a colour shot, 28 excellent half-tones (mostly by Graham Pizzey and Roy Cooper), and a useful map.—A. H. CHISHOLM.

In brief....

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

Australasia

Biography.—"J. R. Elsey, Explorer of the Never-Never." A. H. Chisholm. *Jl. R. Australas. Hist. Soc.* V52: 312-323. Here is further information on this interesting and neglected early naturalist, to be read in conjunction with papers in *Qld. Nat. Junc '64* and *Emu* 65: 255-78.—A. McE.

Parasites.—"The Dispersal of *Cephalobellus costelytrae*, a Nematode Parasitic in the Grass Grub (*Costelytra zealandica*)" by P. S. Dale. *N.Z. Jour. Sci.* V. 9. 3. 534 Sept. '66. Explains how the Starling and Magpies (*Gymnorhina* sp.) spread nematode infection through their droppings to the grass grub, larva of a beetle pest of gardens and farmland.—H. L. S.

Behaviour.—"Behaviour of the Australian Musk Duck and Blue-billed Duck" by Paul A. Johnsgard. *Auk* 83: (1) 98-110. Sexual displays described and illustrated. Musk Duck considered promiscuous. Blue-billed Duck appears to have definite pair bond.—J. L. McK.

Overseas

Ecology, Species.—"Volcanic heat incubation in *Megapodius freycinet* *eremita* Hartl.," by Torben Wolf. *Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Tidsskrift*. 59 (2): 74-84. The literature of volcanic heat incubation is reviewed and nesting sites of *M. f. eremita* (New Britain) described. Temperature, size and weight of eggs, and weight of adult females are given and compared with other records. Exploitation of eggs by natives is recorded.—J. L. McK.

Morphology, Study Technique.—"An Approach to the Functional Analysis of Bill Shape" by Walter J. Bock. *Auk* 83: (1) 10-51. In a scholarly paper Bock suggests a number of methods by which the influence of force, size and weight on the shape of the avian bill can be analysed.—J. L. McK.

Behaviour.—"The Bowing Display of Pigeons in Reference to Phylogeny" by Derck Goodwin. *Auk* 83: (1) 117-123. This discussion includes reference to a number of Australian species.—J. L. McK. "Snow-bathing." Rooks "dusting" in snow with heads right under. Do "High Plains" *Corvids* or Currawongs practise this habit? *The Field* 1966 Apr. 28. p. 776.—A. McE.

Regional Fauna.—*Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, edited by Günther Niethammer, and compiled by Kurt M. Bauer and Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim. Vol. 1: 483 pp. illust., maps; Gaviformes—Phoenicopteriformes. Frankfurt 1966. It is expected that ten more volumes will be required to complete the work which is comprehensive in scope and planned on generalized lines as an authoritative guide to the subject.—F. F. BOEHM.

Econ. Ornithology.—(Mid-Victorian.) "Painting with Feathers", by B. Howe. A mid-Victorian custom linked with the extensive use of feathers for hats. Illustrated and of interest in history of conservation. *Country Life* 1966 Mar. 3 pp. 470-7.—A. McE.

Literary Notes No. 6

Some Australian Checklists: The following is a list of published "checklists", in the broad sense, of Australian birds, excluding State and Regional Lists. It is hoped that readers enraged by omissions will seek redress for the authors concerned by promptly bringing neglected works to notice. The subject may then be treated more fully in a future issue with some assurance of completeness. In the meanwhile, and in keeping with the preliminary nature of the list, each title receives only the briefest of treatment.

1. 1865 *Handbook to the Birds of Australia* by John Gould (2 vols.). Though not a checklist it was intended, in part, "as a means by which the curators of the museums now established in the various colonies may arrange and name the collections intrusted to their charge". It also provided a framework for the checklist next following.

2. 1878 "Tabular List of all the Australian Birds at present known—showing the distribution of the Species", by E. P. Ramsay, F. L. S. etc. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.* 1878 pp. 177-212.

3. 1888 *Tabular List of all the Australian Birds at present known to the author . . . etc.*, by E. P. Ramsay, etc., Sydney, 1888.

4. 1888. As above, Second Edition, 1891, dated 1888 and including partly "unpaged" addenda leaves.

5. 1908 "Handlist of the Birds of Australasia," by Gregory M. Mathews. Supplement to *The Emu* Vol. VII. January 1908.

6. 1909 *A List of the Birds of Australia*, compiled by A. F. Basset Hull. Sydney, 1909.

7. 1912 "A Reference—List to the Birds of Australia", by Gregory M. Mathews. *Novitates Zoologicae* Vol. XVIII, No. 3, Jan. 1912 pp. 171-455. Index pp. 627-656.

8. 1913 *A List of the Birds of Australia* by Gregory M. Mathews. Witherby & Co. London, 1913.

9. 1913 *Official Check-list of the Birds of Australia* by Check-list Committee, R.A.O.U. Melb. 1913.

10. 1920-24 "Check List of the Birds of Australia" (Supplements Nos. 1-3 of *The Birds of Australia*, by Gregory M. Mathews. Witherby & Co. London, 1920-24.

11. 1926 *Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia* (Second Edition), compiled by Checklist Committee, R.A.O.U. Melb., 1926.

12. 1927 *Systema Avium Australasianarum. A Systematic List of the Birds of the Australasian Region*, by Gregory M. Mathews. Wheldon and Wesley Ltd., London, 1927.

13. 1931 *A List of the Birds of Australasia* (including New Zealand, Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands, and the Australasian Antarctic Quadrant), by Gregory M. Mathews. Taylor and Francis, London, 1931.

14. 1946 *A Working List of Australian Birds including the Australian Quadrant and New Zealand*, by Gregory M. Mathews. Shepherd & Newman Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1946.

Of this surprising total, it will be noted, Gould produced one item, Ramsay three, Hull one, R.A.O.U. two, while the enthusiastic vigour of Mathews carried him through seven.—A. McE.

The occurrence of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater on the coast.—

Recently, while perusing the article on the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, by N. A. Wakefield in the *Emu* 58. 189, I noted the following:

"Reports from E. McNamara of Cordeaux River, and C. Humphries of Ulladulla. (in litt. 30-11-55, and 10-12-54, respectively), indicate that melanops is absent from the coastal lowlands east of the Shoalhaven River valley".

I can now report at least one occurrence on the coast in this area. Four birds of this species were observed by me at Mollymook, within 200 yards of the beach, on August 12, 1964. Mollymook is adjacent to, and north of, Ulladulla.—C. P. Humphries, Ulladulla.