

## LITERATURE

Edited by A. R. McEVEY

### BOOKS

**Roberts Birds of South Africa** revised by G. R. McLachlan and R. Liversidge, 3rd edition, 1970. Cape Town: The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund. Pp xxxii — 643, col. pll (paintings) 36, by Norman C. K. Lighton; b & w pll 8, by J. Perry and K. Hooper; maps, 224 × 150 mm. R6.75.

When Dr Austin Roberts, of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, published *The Birds of South Africa* in 1940 as a simple guide to the species of birds found in South Africa, it looked superficially like an African version of Neville W. Cayley's *What Bird is That?*, having coloured plates crowded with small figures. However Roberts's book was of more conventional design. The birds were arranged in taxonomic sequence and not in ecological groups, as often inconveniently adopted by Cayley. Roberts, like Cayley, depended on the coloured illustrations for providing identification of the 875 species with which he dealt. But he provided additional matter—an introduction on nomenclature and classification, a bibliography of books and important articles in journals, a section on distribution and variation, and a very useful summary of the physical conditions in South Africa with a list of natural regions. The book proved ideal for its purpose. Up to 1953 there were nine impressions and some 28,000 copies were sold.

Interest in ornithology increased tremendously, with a corresponding accumulation of new data. Dr McLachlan (of the Port Elizabeth Museum) and Mr Liversidge (of the Cape Town University) were commissioned by the Trustees of the South African Bird Book Fund to prepare a revised edition, and this was published in 1957. To preserve the memory of the original author the revisers called it by the 'more familiar and affectionate title' that the book enjoys in South Africa, *Roberts Birds of South Africa*. Naturally there were considerable changes from the original text. First of all there was the nomenclature. Austin Roberts, like Gregory Mathews in Australia, was a follower of that school of taxonomy that split genera but lumped species (see *Emu* 49: 262). McLachlan and Liversidge brought the names and arrangement into agreement with modern ideas by following, in general, Colonel Jack Vincent's *A Check List of the Birds of South Africa* (1952). To do so, they faced the same difficulty as Cayley's revisers in Australia. The individual numbering of the birds in the coloured plates forbade any major alteration of the sequence of species, because the original blocks and plates had to be re-used. So a few birds had to be left outside their correct families, according to the latest systematics. Despite all, it was an enormously improved book. In the introductory text a modernized treatment of the nomenclature was given, and historical notes and a section on field-study were added. The accounts of species were better organized. A brief comparative description was introduced to complement the coloured illustrations, and several black-and-white figures were included to show patterns of underwing in the sea-birds and birds of prey, and appearances of waders in flight. The general account was subdivided into sections covering distribution, habits, food, voice and breeding, with a summary of local races.

Further measurements of bodies and eggs were added to those originally provided by Roberts. Small maps of distribution were included for almost every species. Endpapers were maps outlining the distribution of the main natural regions of southern Africa. The book sold well; the seven impressions between 1957 and 1969 accounted for 30,000 copies.

To cope with the greatly increased knowledge gained of South African birds in the meantime, and to keep *Roberts Birds of South Africa* up to date and in the lead, a third edition was considered desirable. The same revisers were invited to undertake the task. The result is as fine a summary of the birdlife of a great land-area as one might reasonably expect in a single volume. The major architecture of the second edition has been retained, with new data added in appropriate places. In the re-setting opportunity has been taken to provide a clearer layout and the less crowded appearance of the page permits easier reading. Although this edition contains 140 more pages than the second the size of the book, because of the kind of paper used, appears to be the same and its weight (910 g) is only a few grams heavier.

D.L.S.

**Small Birds of the New Zealand Bush** by Elaine Power, 1970. Auckland and London: Collins Bros & Co. Ltd. Pp [48], col. pll (paintings) 21, b & w pll 17. 260 × 195 mm. \$NZ2.50.

Since the expansive days of the British Empire and of the Victorians and their folio volumes on birds, few painters in New Zealand have been tempted into that field. The number of bird species in New Zealand may be limited, but from Kiwi to Kokako, and from penguin to parakeet they offer all that an artist could wish for in variety of form and colour, and of course there is always the setting.

The justly famous plates of J. G. Keulemans in Buller's historic volumes are highly professional. They were done in the grand manner and tend to show the birds in somewhat statuesque attitudes. Keulemans never visited New Zealand, but it is likely that he saw living specimens of some species in the London Zoological Gardens or elsewhere. Such was his technical skill that his paintings have been reproduced, often very poorly, for nearly a hundred years in books and magazines, on cards, calendars and wrappers. Turbott's recent (1967) edition of Buller has again brought these plates before the public, this time most competently reproduced by new techniques. Over the years pictures by Keulemans seem to have cast a spell over would-be bird-painters in New Zealand, leaving them fearful of competing with such august company.

Elaine Power's first book is therefore all the more welcome: for, with it we may see the dawn of a new era in the perceptive portrayal of New Zealand's native birds. Youthful and highly qualified both by nature and training she makes sketches of the living bird in the field and uses specimens and photographs to check accuracy of detail. Her approach is fresh and realistic; she shows a delicacy of touch and a feeling for birds that is without sentimentality.

New Zealand's tally of indigenous passerines is a modest two dozen or so full species. Of these, seventeen are depicted in this book, together with some well-marked insular races. Of non-passerines two common species, the Kingfisher and Shining Cuckoo, are shown in iridescent splendour. Many of the passerines may easily be seen in gardens or city parks. For a few only will the earnest seeker have to travel to remoter places: to Little Barrier for Stitchbirds, to the southern beech-forests for Yellowheads, or to the fellfields above the bushline in the Southern Alps for the Rock Wren.

This book will appeal not only to bird-watchers, but also to botanists because in it are some exquisite drawings of native plants. Particularly evocative for those who know them in some of their typical ecological settings are the Fernbird in Saltmarsh Ribbon-wood and the Rock Wrens with Parahebe at their feet. But outside Little Barrier it would not be easy to find Whiteheads in Tararua. Purists may claim that the Pipit is too plump and question whether the Red Clover is really necessary; or they may quibble at the Grey Warbler's nesting in alien Birch; but our Pipit is a robust species and is often among the clover along our wilder roadsides, and Grey Warblers are just as much at home among 'foreign' trees as they are in indigenous forest or scrub.

The book, attractively produced, marks a new and welcome advance in the illustration of New Zealand birds.

R.B.S.

**A Field-List of the Birds of Canberra and District.** Canberra Ornithologists Group. 20 pp paper covers. 190 × 100 mm. Obtainable from T. Gourlay, PO Box 301, Canberra, ACT 2608. Price \$A0.40.

This is the second edition of a booklet first issued in January 1966; it is essentially in the same format, and gives by means of thick and thin lines, symbols, abbreviations and other conventions the occurrence, status and breeding seasons of all species recorded in the ACT and some nearby areas. This edition is less elegantly printed than the first, but has a much better map. On a quick check, seventeen species have been added to the list since 1966, including the recently arrived Tree Sparrow and Indian Myna. Evidently the status and breeding seasons of some species have become better known in the last five years, but even so the latter could have been amended further by consultation of the RAOU Nest Record Scheme, which is no longer so easy for COG. Quibbles of this sort can always be made about condensed summaries of information such as this booklet, but that is part of their immense value. Such publications can bring to light data that observers, or even casual visitors, often think are not worth publishing. I am not sure whether the Field-List of 1966 (produced by the RAOU branch

of that time) was the first of its kind in Australia or whether it has since been copied elsewhere. I believe it remains alone in Australia as an example of what is widely done in many other countries. If so, its uniqueness is to be deplored. Admittedly it is not easy to compile such lists for other areas because Australia is so large. Well-defined political or natural districts of reasonable size are hard to choose, and there can be much conflict of opinion about the status of the birds; yet, it is about time that others followed the excellent lead given in Canberra. If we had the time and people to organize it, the FIC could profitably take up the running. Meanwhile, COG leads the field and jolly good luck to it. It deserves congratulating.

S.M.

**Index to Current Australian Ornithological Research** compiled and edited by Douglas D. Dow for the Field Investigation Committee of the RAOU, 1971. Melbourne: RAOU. Pp 112, 247 × 185 mm. \$A1.75. (Available from Secretary, RAOU.)

The usefulness of this publication and its potential interest to overseas ornithologists who intend to visit Australia for the IOC in 1974 justify the inclusion here of reference to a domestic publication. Initiated by Dr Dow, it is certainly the first time anything of this kind has been done in Australian ornithology and perhaps it has not yet been done elsewhere. Reference to its sections will quickly show its aim and use. These sections are:

Current Research, pp 5-85 (Alphabetical list of ornithologists, giving their current working interests and projects); Index to Orders and Families Under Study, pp 86-91; Index to Generic and Specific Scientific Names, pp 91-94; Index to Common Names, pp 95-98; Index to Research Interests and Types of Investigations, pp 99-103; Regional Index to Contributors, pp 104-105; Additional Sources of Information, p 106; and Publications containing Results of Research, pp 107-112. About two hundred amateur and professional ornithologists have contributed in response to circulars distributed, and the publication can be regarded as a reasonably comprehensive guide to current ornithological research in Australia or on Australian birds.

Inevitably the entries under workers, fundamentally provided by the people themselves, prove to be a little uneven in their amount of detail and the approach adopted. It is also true that the list cannot remain accurate for a long period because workers change, as do their interests and their projects. But neither of these factors really detracts from the value of the publication. It offers a most useful source of information, and its compiler and the FIC are to be congratulated on producing it.

A.R.McE.

## SHORTER NOTICES

*For simplicity the names of authors of papers are accompanied by initials only.*

### Australasian Publications

#### Species

FIEN, I. 1971. A sight record of the Lesser Crested Tern at Stradbroke Island. *Sunbird* 2: 36-37.

Twelve Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis* mingled with a flock of Crested Terns *S. bergii* on Stradbroke Island, Moreton Bay. This is near the southern limit of this species, which has hitherto been considered rare in southern Queensland.

D.J.G.

NEWMAN, O. M. G. 1971. An unusual nest of the Yellow-breasted Sunbird. *Sunbird* 2: 35-36.

A nest is described which is of open construction rather than domed with a side entrance. Apparently this type of construction has not before been recorded for the species.

D.J.G.

VERNON, D. P. 1971. Paradise Parrot *Psephotus pulcherrimus*: notes on Australian holdings, distribution and under-wing plumage pattern. *Sunbird* 2: 17-26.

A total of 34 specimens (7 mounted) and 11 eggs (from

4 clutches) are held. The recent acquisition by the Queensland Museum of two good cabinet skins from the Rowland Illidge Collection is discussed. Because of Gilbert's record from the Mitchell River area and Illidge's statement that the species was common, the author argues that the Paradise Parrot was 'not uncommon in the 19th Century but fairly widely distributed. Flocks, although in many cases possibly small, probably ranged an area 1,000 miles from north to south.'

D.J.G.

BESTE, H. 1970. At the nest of a Boobook Owl. *Wildl. Aust.* 7: 98-99.

This is an account of some of the observations made at a nest in north-western Victoria. Centipedes, beetles, mallee cockroaches, legless lizards, moths and mice were all carried in the bill. An Owlet-Nightjar was carried in the talons. During the months of observation, the 'mopoke' call was never given near the nest.

D.D.D.

MACDONALD, J. D. 1970. Striated Grass-Wren in Queensland. *Sunbird* 1: 92-96.

The author failed to find the emu-wren reported from the Opalton region, but found the Striated Grass Wren instead. The specimen collected is the first obtained in Queensland. The range of the species in Australia is reviewed. (See also **Region** in this section.)

D.D.D.

ELKS, R. 1970. First record of the Broad-billed Sandpiper in southern Queensland. *Sunbird* 1: 101-102.

A description is given of five birds observed near Brisbane in January 1971. Previous records for Queensland are reviewed.

D.D.D.

GILL, H. B. 1971. Little Grassbird in North Queensland. *Sunbird* 2: 9-10.

Six locations are listed where the author has observed Little Grassbirds.

D.D.D.

EDGAR, A. T., and P. GRANT. 1969. Nankeen Kestrels in New Zealand. *Notornis* 16: 288-298.

Occurrences of the Nankeen Kestrel in New Zealand are listed; field notes on Kestrels seen in 1969 are given in some detail.

D.G.M.

CARROLL, A. L. K. 1970. The White-faced Heron in New Zealand. *Notornis* 17: 3-24.

The White-faced Heron is one of at least seven species of Australian birds that have colonized New Zealand during the past century. The paper reviews the spread and distribution of this species, which is now the most common heron in the country.

D.G.M.

HARRISON, M. 1970. The Orange-fronted Parakeet. *Notornis* 17: 115-125.

The habitat, history of distribution and the status of this species are reviewed.

D.G.M.

MCKENZIE, H. R. 1970. A new Arctic wader for New Zealand. *Notornis* 17: 236-237.

Two White-rumped (Bonaparte's) Sandpipers seen at Karaka, near Auckland, in December 1969 are described.

D.G.M.

#### Behaviour

NEWMAN, O. M. G., and P. M. and R. D. SOTHMAN. 1970. Communal feeding of White-naped Honeyeater fledgeling. *Sunbird* 1: 97-98.

A young fledgeling was seen being fed by most members

of a flock of twelve 'adults'. One bird, which could be distinguished by its unusual coloration, not only fed the fledgeling but was itself fed by others of the flock; it was later seen feeding nestlings. Such behaviour has been recorded in another honeyeater, the Noisy Miner (Dow 1970, *Emu* 70: 131-134).

D.D.D.

CAMERON, A. C. 1971. Unusual alarm calls of the Noisy Miner. *Sunbird* 2: 38.

An anthropocentric description is given of an alarm uttered in the presence of a predator that posed no threat at the time. Each phrase started with panic notes, which were followed by scolding notes.

D.J.G.

PRATT, E. 1970. Koel display. *Sunbird* 1: 96-97.

Reciprocal displays of male Koels are described, but not in much detail. Displays involving the spreading of a wing while standing on one leg sound almost like stretching.

D.D.D.

#### Region

LAVERY, H. J., and R. J. GRIMES. 1971. Sea-birds of the Great Barrier Reef. *Qd. Agric. J.* 97: 106-113.

Twenty-nine species of seven families nest on seventy-eight islands of the Great Barrier Reef. Species and their nesting habits are described. Islands are also important for roosting birds: 3,000,000 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and 1,500,000 White-capped Noddies were estimated in the Capricorn Group. Factors affecting populations and their conservation are discussed.

D.D.D.

GRIFFIN, A. C. M. 1971. More observations at Opalton. *Sunbird* 2: 6-9.

Two sightings of Striated Grass Wrens suggest that the species may be fairly widely distributed in central western Queensland. (For Macdonald's description of the first Queensland record, see *Sunbird* 1: 92-96.) Observations of a pair of Redthroats *Pyrrholaemus brunneus* extends the range of the species by 300 miles. A flock of eight Hall's Babbblers *Pomatostomus halli* was observed building a nest; thus this species would appear similar to other congeners in showing some communal breeding (?) behaviour.

D.D.D.

#### Taxonomy

MACDONALD, J. D. 1971. Validity of the Buff-breasted Quail. *Sunbird* 2: 1-5.

The taxonomic confusion surrounding *Turnix olivii*, *T. varia* and *T. castanota* is reviewed, and the paper attempts to show that Peters' conclusion (*T. olivii* is a race of *T. castanota*) is not the most satisfactory. The author regards the three as semi-species in a superspecies. He also suggests that the race of *T. varia* in New Caledonia should be elevated to a full species, and that the three mentioned above are endemic to Australia.

D.D.D.

#### Osteology

SCARLETT, R. J. 1970. The genus *Capellirallus*. *Notornis* 17: 303-319.

*Rallus hodgeni* Scarlett is discussed, compared with *Capellirallus karamu* Falla and placed in the same genus. Additional details are given for *Capellirallus karamu*.

D.G.M.

#### Clutch-size

CAMERON, C. A. C. 1971. Large clutch sizes in central Australia. *Sunbird* 2: 34-35.

Two large clutches are reported from western Queensland; that of a Brown Songlark *Cinchorhamphus cruralis* C/5 and of a Banded Whiteface *Aphelocephala nigricincta* C/4. It is suggested that these examples support the theory that some species have adapted themselves to an extremely arid climate by laying larger clutches than usual in years when breeding is possible.

D.J.G.

### Parasites

ATYEO, W. T. 1971. *Exochojoubertia*, a new genus of proctophyllodid feather mites (*Acarina: Analgoidea*). N.Z. J. Sci. 14: 219.

This new genus of feather mites comprises two species, one of which has as its hosts the melaphagid genera *Phylidonyris* (*Meliornis*) and *Prothemadera*, and the other the bird-of-paradise genus *Manucodia*.

H.L.S.

### Overseas Publications

#### Species

STONEHOUSE, B. 1971. The Snares Islands Penguin *Endiptes robustus*. Ibis 113: 1-7.

The paper discusses nomenclature, taxonomy, diagnostic characters, egg-size, sexual dimorphism, and the dimensions of fledgelings, yearlings and adult birds. Stonehouse considers the Snares Islands Penguin to be specifically distinct from Erect-crested and Fiordland Penguins, and follows Oliver's nomenclatural changes resulting from the identity of the Penguin *E. atratus* as illustrated in Buller (1888, plate p 294).

J.L.McK.

SEGONZAC, M. 1970. La nidification du Puffin à pieds pales (*Puffinus carneipes*) à l'île Saint-Paul. Oiseau Revue fr. Orn. 40: 131-135.

A breeding colony of *Puffinus carneipes* was recently discovered on the North Cape of St Paul Island in the sub-Antarctic. Previously *P. carneipes* was known as a breeding species only on islands off south-western Australia, the North Island of New Zealand and on the main island of Lord Howe Island.

J.L.McK.

JOUANIN, C. 1970. Mascarene Petrel, *Pterodroma aterrima*. Oiseau Revue fr. Orn. 40: 48.

This rare species, reported recently again from Reunion, is described as more closely related to *Pterodroma rostrata* than to *P. macroptera*.

H.L.S.

KEAR, J., and R. I. SCARLETT, 1970. The Auckland Islands Merganser. Wildfowl 21: 78-86.

This is a review of the literature on this extinct species and includes a list of specimens preserved in world museums.

J.L.McK.

### Ecology

SNOW, D. W. 1971. Evolutionary aspects of fruit-eating by birds. Ibis 113: 194-202.

An attempt is made to explore the evolutionary and ecological consequences of fruit-eating, considered as a mutual interaction between the plant and its dispersal agent.

J.L.McK.

TERBORGH, J. 1971. Distribution on environmental gradients: theory and a preliminary interpretation of distributional patterns in the avifauna of the Cordillera Vilcabamba, Peru. Ecology 52: 23-40.

A new theoretical approach to the study of distribution is presented in this paper. The central question concerns the types of interactions between organisms and their surroundings that may function to impose limits on the occurrence of species on a smooth unifactorial environmental gradient.

Application of the theory is demonstrated with data obtained in a study of the distribution of species of birds on a uniform elevational gradient in the Eastern Andes of Peru. A series of four expeditions to the northern massif of the Cordillera Vilcabamba, a vast undisturbed mountain wilderness, provided information on the upper and lower limits of occurrence of over 410 species of forest birds.

Faunal composition and the abundance of many species were estimated at 15 stations by means of large (170-604) samples of birds caught in nets.

J.L.McK.

### Family (Anatidae)

RAIKOW, R. J. 1970. Evolution of diving adaptations in the stiff-tail ducks. Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool. 94: 1-52.

Anatomical features of the genera *Heteronetta*, *Oxyura* and *Biziura* are described and compared with anatomical features of the genus *Anas*.

J.L.McK.

### Myology

BURTON, P. J. K. 1971. Some observations on the splenius capitis muscle of birds. Ibis 113: 19-28.

A description is given of a modification of *M. splenius capitis*, best developed in the Apodiformes. A similar modification, but more simple in structure, is also found in the Aegothelidae and Turnicidae.

J.L.McK.

### Contributors to 'Literature': EMU 71

(It is regretted that shortage of space excluded this list from Emu 71, Part 4.) Mrs R. A. Balmford, J. H. Calaby, H. T. Condon, A. H. D'Andria, D. F. Dorward, D. D. Dow, D. Fleay, K. A. Hindwood, H. Jarman, A. R. McEvey, J. L. McKean, S. Marchant, S. A. Parker, R. Schodde, H. L. Secker.