LITERATURE

Edited by A. R. McEvey

BOOKS

Antarctic Map Folio Series—Folio 14, Birds of the Antarctic and Subantarctic by G. E. Watson, J. P. Angle, P. C. Harper, M. A. Bridge, R. P. Schlatter, W. L. N. Tickell, J. C. Boyd, and M. M. Boyd, 1971. Am. Geogr. Soc. Pp 18, pll 15 (14 map sheets and one sheet of 31 b. & w. photographs). 440 mm x 280 mm. $A10.00.

In a series of thirty-nine maps, information is presented on the distribution of forty-nine species of birds that breed or occur regularly south of the Antarctic Convergence or on the subantarctic islands that show much the same avifauna immediately north of the Convergence. The zenithal equidistant projection is used and most maps are more than 250 mm in diameter, thus giving considerable detail.

The authors have collated much published information on distribution. They have attempted to cover all possible data, but no doubt many specimens and unpublished field notes will inevitably have been overlooked or inaccessible. For all, except the albatrosses and giant petrels, they claim to represent on the maps a reasonable approximation of current knowledge for regions south of 40°S. Therefore, within this area gaps represent either the absence of birds or lack of observations.

The records have been plotted on the maps using various symbols to indicate breeding localities, observations or specimens, and in some cases the areas in which a species is seen frequently are lightly stippled. A full list of all sources for the maps is given in an appendix of some 700 citations. These are numbered to facilitate cross reference, in particular to many of the plotted positions. The possibility of confusion on several maps having numerous plots makes it necessary to refer in this way only to the extreme limits of range. Some species are shown together on a single map. Known breeding localities are always listed alongside the map and a suitable authority is cited by cross reference to the list of source material. All this means that the maps are very well documented.

The maps are supported by an excellent survey by G. E. Watson of the relevant aspects of zoogeography in the south polar region. The Antarctic environment is discussed in short sections covering oceanography, availability of food, climate, land conditions, vegetation, breeding sites and the influence of predators. Ecological factors affecting the distribution of species and patterns of distribution are described and a useful summary of zoogeographic zonation is given in the form of two maps and an accompanying tabulation. These maps show the zoogeographical regions, provinces and districts according to this classification of Antarctic birds.

Brief accounts of species then follow and cover the birds group by group. These contain notes to be read in conjunction with the maps and clarify some of the issues raised by the mapping procedure. This section of ten pages of text is documented throughout with numerous references. In a second appendix, geographical locations are listed and the major features of the area are shown on two additional maps.

Altogether seven species of penguin, five albatrosses, five fulmarine petrels, all species of prion, the blue petrel and five gadfly petrels, three shearwaters or close allies, three storm-petrels, two diving-petrels, two cormorants, three ducks, two sheathbills, a pipit (the only landbird), a gull and three terns are included. On the maps giant petrels are not separated into the two species now recognized. However, both are described in the text and their ecological differences discussed. The Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and the Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca* are not plotted, although both are included in the analysis of zonal distribution (p.3), and some comments are given in the text (p.7) regarding status of these two species. On the whole taxonomic arrangement of species follows current practice. In the prions *Pachyptila* however the treatment is unfamiliar though useful. A plate depicts thirty-one of the fifty-four species included, not counting the South Georgian Pipit. This is poorly reproduced and as such is of little value.

The exercise, obviously a tremendous effort, has been thoroughly done, so far as it goes; but it would have been even better if it had gone a little further to include much additional information that must be available. As far as Australian waters are concerned, the rather arbitrary limits to the plotting on the maps of data north of the latitude of 40°S reflects unreal differences. For regions of sea close to home, the Australian seabird student will have to be cautious in his interpretations derived from these maps. The format, with its fifteen loose sheets of plates and eighteen unstapled pages of text of the same size is not altogether handy. However, the contents are most rewarding of study. This folio contains a great wealth of detail, accurately and clearly presented. It must become a key source of information on the distribution of the birds characteristic of the south polar regions.

P.J.F.

Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, together with those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley, 1971. Sponsored by Bombay nat. Hist. Soc., Bomb. Lond. NY: OUP. Vol. 6, Cuckoo-Shrikes to Babaxes. Pp xii + 245, col. pll (paintings) 8, line drawings, maps 253 x 180 mm. $A18.

Volumes 1-4 have already been reviewed in these columns (70: 37; 71: 144; 72: 119). Volume 6, which appeared before Volume 5, covers the Campephagidae, Irenidae, Pycnonotidae and part of the Timaliinae. In addition, some of the plates show species of genera not otherwise treated in the present volume, e.g. *Schoenicola, Prinia, Cisticola, Lanius, Minla, Certhia, Tichodroma, Sitta, Parus, Melanochlora.*

The Indian subregion has sixteen species of campephagids compared with Australia's seven. Of these, only *Coracina novaehollandiae* is common to both areas. To judge from the remarks of Ali and

Ripley, the habits of this cuckoo-shrike in India seem little different from those of Australian populations. Besides *Coracina*, India has also the campephagid genera *Hemipus, Tephrodornis* and *Pericrocotus*, none of which is represented in Australia.

In the next family, the Irenidae, the authors include the ioras *Aegithina*, the chloropses *Chloropsis* and the fairy bluebirds *Irena*, a grouping propounded by Delacour (1946, Zoologica 31: 1-8) and repeated by him in *Check-list of Birds of the World*, 9 (1960). However, this arrangement has been questioned. Berlioz (1950, in Grassé, Traité de Zoologie, 15), reverted to the earlier view of Oberholser in maintaining *Irena* as a separate family, the Irenidae, and placed it next to the Oriolidae. Wetmore (1960, Smithson misc. Collns. 139 (11): 1-37) regarded *Irena* as a subfamily, Ireninae, of the Oriolidae, with *Aegithina* and *Chloropsis* forming the family Chloropseidae. Sibley (1970, Peabody Mus. Bull. 32: 51) found that the electrophoretic pattern of the albumen of *Irena* matched 'well enough those of *Pycnonotus, Oriolus* and *Dicrurus* to support its allocation to this assemblage . . .' It is interesting to note that whereas *Aegithina* is insectivorous, *Chloropsis* and *Irena* feed largely on berries and nectar.

Of the Pycnonotidae the Indian subregion has nineteen species in four genera. This family is best represented in Africa and the Asian tropics, and, unless the puzzling genera *Paramythia* and *Oreocharis* of New Guinea are bulbuls rather than flowerpeckers (Harrison and Parker 1966, Bull. Br. Orn. Club 86: 15-20), does not occur naturally in the Australo-Papuan region. The nominate subspecies of the Red-wiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* has been introduced into New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and the Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer* (a subspecies of which, *bengalensis*, has been introduced into Fiji) has been reported from gardens in Melbourne.

The remainder of the volume is devoted to fifty-eight of the approximately 120 species of babbler that occur in the Indian subregion, including the genera *Panurus, Conostoma* and *Paradoxornis*, placed in a separate subfamily, the Panurinae, by Deignan (1964, Check-list of Birds of the World, 10). Deignan, and Ali and Ripley regard the babblers as a subfamily, Timaliinae, of the swollen family Muscicapidae, a practice begun by Hartert in 1910. Sibley (1970: 63) after summarizing the taxonomic treatments of this assemblage, retained the babblers as a family, the Timaliidae, remarking that they seemed to be 'a natural group probably composed of the species in Delacour's . . . . . tribes Pellorneini, Pomatorhini, Timaliini, Turdoidini, and Picathartini but not including *Chamaea* or *Panurus*'. Under this last arrangement the position of the Australian 'babblers' *Cinclosoma, Psophodes* and *Orthonyx* remains as uncertain as ever.

Of special interest is the genus *Pomatorhinus*, scimitar babblers, in which were once placed, e.g. by Delacour (1946, Oiseau Revue fr. Orn. 16: 7-36), the species of *Pomatostomus* and *Garritornis*. *Pomatorhinus* and *Pomatostomus* may resemble each other superficially, but there are marked differences in behaviour. *Pomatorhinus* nests solitarily; its nest is domed or half-domed, of leaves, grass and rootlets, on or near the ground, and its eggs are white. *Pomatostomus* nests communally; its nest is retort-shaped, mainly of twigs and usually well off the ground, and its eggs are brownish with darker scribblings. Whereas species of *Pomatorhinus* scratch the head directly like many other babblers (Simmons 1963, Avicult. Mag. 69: 186), *Pomatostomus superciliosus*, at least, scratches the head indirectly (Goodwin 1967, Emu 66: 240). Of the habits of the Rufous Babbler *Garritornis isidorei* of New Guinea little has been published beyond the fact that it builds a hanging nest up to 2 m long. Current researches by Mr B. King of the University of Queensland into the breeding biology, ecology and behaviour of *Pomatostomus* may throw light on the relationship among these three genera.

Among the other babblers detailed in this volume are the wren-babblers, *Rimator, Napothera, Pnoepyga* (=*Microura* of Ripley's earlier Synopsis) and *Spelaeornis*, some species of which seem to be the ecological equivalents of some of the Australian scrub wrens and their relatives, e.g. *Sericornis keri, S. citreogularis, Oreoscopus gutturalis* and *Pycnoptilus floccosus*, being terrestrial or semi-terrestrial inhabitants of thick wet forest. Of this group the Mishmi Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis badeigularis* Ripley, 1948, is of interest in being known by the holotype only, an adult female netted at Dreyi, Assam, on 5 January, 1947. Another notable babbler is the Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis* 'lost' for over a hundred years before its rediscovery in 1948.

S.A.P.

The Swans by Peter Scott and the Wildfowl Trust, 1972. London: Michael Joseph. Pp. x + 142, col. frontisp., b. & w. pll 48, numerous line drawings and dist. maps. 250 x 200 mm. £4.20.

It is difficult to review this book without immediately launching into superlatives. It is beautifully produced, written by experts, contains biological data, maps, many black-and-white photographs of high standard, enough graphs and tables to satisfy those who consider them indispensable and enough beautiful line drawings to delight the eye of every reader. In fact there seems to be something for everyone who enjoys birds.

The introduction is by Peter Scott, who also provided the frontispiece of Bewick's Swans and many line drawings. The chapter on classification is by H. Boyd, who follows Delacour and Mayr in recognizing six species of swan including two recognizable subspecies, in two genera. Distribution is covered by M. A. Ogilvie, and includes estimates of numbers and patterns of migration for each species. M. Owen and J. Kear give details of food and feeding habits, and J. Kear contributes forty-four pages on reproduction and family life. The chapter on mortality is written by J. V. Beer and M. A. Ogilvie, and the swan in art and mythology by M. Evans and A. Dawney. Dawney also contributes the section on exploitation and domestication, and G. V. T. Matthews writes finally on conservation.

Mention of the nine statistical tables and 350 quoted references will give some idea of the detail covered.

Australian readers are at times irritated by some ornithological literature from Europe and North America that ignores published details of Australian species or gives incorrect or incomplete information. The Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* takes its place in this book, and is compared with other species in all aspects. H. J. Frith's *Waterfowl in Australia* is quoted as the source of much of this information, although some other references are given.

The 22-page chapter on the swan in mythology and art is a fascinating and varied collection of stories and legends from all over the world. In them the swan is usually a symbol of purity and grace.

Many inns in England bear the names of birds, and The Swan is very popular. It is interesting to note that some were named The Black Swan well before the

discovery of Australia. At this stage 'when the bird was still a mythical figure it was usually associated with evil. Since innkeepers would hardly have put a sign of evil upon their houses, it seems probable that the adjective was used to distinguish the inn from others near by of the same name.' Thus, one ornithological puzzle is solved. Dame Mary Gilmore's poem *Three Swans went by* concludes this section with the comment that the lovely lines might equally well apply to the flight of white swans.

The last chapter includes a plea for better general and scientific education and consequent understanding of the complex subject of conservation of all wild species. Books with appeal as wide as this will foster appreciation of work already done, and may well motivate others to become more involved in some aspect of conservation.

Finally, one must comment on the achievement of gathering the work of ten authors. G. Atkinson-Willes edited the final draft. It was 'Janet Kear who planned the book, browbeat the contributors and carried the project through to completion'. She and the Wildfowl Trust are to be congratulated.

E.M.McC.

PAPERS

Causal ornithogeography of Australia by D. L. Serventy, 1972. Proc. XV Int. orn. Congr.: 574-584.

An evil of the times is the delay in publishing proceedings of conferences. Papers read at them may stimulate riposte or further contributions that are printed before the original exposition so that the credit or originality is forgotten or not appreciated, especially when ideas are in a ferment and knowledge or the appreciation of problems is advancing rapidly. Of course, the evil may lie not so much with the delay of one sort of publication as with the easy opportunity for later comers to get their work printed quickly in periodicals.

Dr Serventy's paper, read on September 1970, is now available about two and a half years later. Without careful search, it may be wrong to say that it started the recent enquiry into, and discussion of, zoogeography in the light of implications of ocean-floor spreading, and the serious re-consideration of the extent to which vertebrates spread through Gondwanaland, but it certainly seems to have done just that for the Australian avifauna. Meanwhile, however, Cracraft, Keast and Mayr have all responded to Dr Serventy's lead (the title of whose paper now appears differently from their references), and we are liable to forget who came first, in the same way that everyone knows all about Wegener but much less about F. B. Taylor, who came first by two or three years.

It is not easy to say anything new about Dr Serventy's paper, especially because it is much more general than Dr Keast's paper reviewed last October (72: 187-189). It has already been criticized mildly for lack of geological detail and for presenting thus an oversimplified and too definite concept of continental drift. No doubt that is so, but what are zoogeographers to do? The more recent and more detailed discussions by Keast and Cracraft could be criticized in detail by professional earth-scientists, who still debate vigorously among themselves not only the esoteric details of the new global tectonics, but even the principles. It would obviously be waste of time and effort for zoogeographers to try to match earth-scientists on their own ground, and none does so. It seems enough for them to accept ocean-floor spreading, plate-tectonics and the break-up of Gondwanaland in late Mesozoic or early Tertiary as good working hypotheses, and to consider to what extent these could have influenced the dispersal and distribution of animals on the basis of an imperfect palaeontological record.

It seems to me that Dr Serventy did this admirably for Australian birds, clearly pointing out the few groups that are the best candidates for consideration as likely arrivals via Gondwanaland and avoiding detailed arguments about how and when they may have arrived. Such details can be discussed adequately only after careful taxonomic review of the various groups by experts. The non-specialist will find out all he needs to know about the exciting possibilities of zoogeographical distribution through Gondwanaland into Australia from this paper, as well as being provided with a useful discussion of subsequent speciation. It has already fallen on fertile specialized ground.

Unhappily the paper was published with several typographical errors. The only serious one is on page 575, line 14, where the first four words ought to be: 'to be *no* need'.

S.M.

Adaptive evolution and shifts in niche occupation in island birds by Allen Keast, 1970. *In* Adaptive Aspects of Insular Evolution. Ed. W. L. Stearn. Washington State University Press. Originally published in Biotropica 2 (2): 61-75.

In this paper adaptive evolution in island birds is investigated with special reference to the birds of Tasmania, a continental island of 68,000 km^2 225 km off southern Australia. The avifauna is typically insular and impoverished (only forty-three species of passerines compared with eighty-nine in equivalent habitats on the nearest mainland), and lacking certain basic kinds of birds (e.g. true trunk-feeders are absent). The study emphasizes shifts in vertical feeding zones and in morphological attributes associated with perching and feeding (e.g. bill, tarsus, hallux). The findings are that island species have moved into the vacant zone of trunk-feeding and into the under-exploited zone of arboreal foliage-gleaning; that these are species that, on the adjacent Australian mainland, already feed to some extent in these zones; that the shifts invariably involve a broadening of, or increasing diversity in, feeding; and that there is a broad redivision of ecological roles and adaptive niches on the island. Vacant niches are eliminated, and a new state of integration and balance is achieved within the avifauna.

L.E.W.

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Bibliography : Leith's Parrots

The library of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, housed at the National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, South Yarra, holds a copy of The Parrot Family and Parrots of Victoria, by T. Augustus Forbes Leith. This copy was bound by the author for the Club, and the binder's blank bears the following inscription in red ink: 'To the library of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria with the Author's compliments. 1883'.

The hard cover is of brown morocco-grained material, and apart from some very slight foxing is in excellent condition. On the basis of notes by K. A. Hindwood (1970) this appears to be the third known copy. Forbes Leith seems to have been inconsistent in the use of a hyphen in his name (see Victorian Nat. 1: 3 and 74-79). H. M. Whittell, in *The Literature of Australian Birds*, lists the name with a hyphen under 'F'.

Hindwood, K. A. 1970. Leith's Parrots (1883), Campbell's Nests and Eggs ('1883'), and The Southern Science Record. Aust. Zool. 15 (3): 227-30

McEvey, A. R. 1971. Historical collection and early books. Emu 71: 146.

T.K.